

Section 7: Why the LEADER approach?

The Local Knowledge Local Experience review has identified a range of experience of working with the LEADER principles and developing programmes and projects to deliver an innovative approach to rural development across the six South West LAGs. This information folder has given a taster of experience with LEADER+ in the South West region and highlighted the key messages that LAGs would like to convey to anyone considering adopting a LEADER approach.



Freddie's Food Biz Transnational Project (Blackdown Hills)

The benefits that LAGs identify about the LEADER approach are many and varied. Some of the benefits most commonly cited are:

- Funds get to the grassroots, including to businesses
- Local awareness of activity in the area is heightened
- Robust management processes are in place
- Local knowledge is developed through the LAG
- Links are created across international boundaries
- Quick decisions can be taken and opportunities dealt with swiftly
- Local ownership of the process is achieved
- Local decisions are made making a local difference
- Confidence is given to an area because funding is in place to deliver actions
- An area based approach across several administrative areas can generate local engagement

- There is an ability and an opportunity to take risks on projects, innovation and experimentation
- People from different communities within the LEADER+ area work together
- Small businesses and groups can be helped with small interventions
- A specific geographical area can be targeted
- Small grants scheme can be set up which provide a real kick start to projects
- Simple forms and procedures encourage groups to apply for funding
- Projects can be pump primed and may develop into something bigger
- There is a professionalism to the LAG process regardless of grant award size
- Bespoke projects are coming forward to meet local need
- There is a commitment from staff and a willingness to give all
- Informality stemming from the LAG means the process is not too bureaucratic

The South West LAGs also recognise that the LEADER approach sets its own challenges. Their experience identifies ways in which the operation of a LEADER approach could be improved, as previous sections have indicated. However these are not insurmountable issues. By identifying them in this document South West LAGs hope that people can learn from their LEADER+ experience and improve working practices in the future.

