



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu  
Gwledig: Ewrop yn Buddsoddi  
mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig  
The European Agricultural Fund for  
Rural Development: Europe Investing in  
Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

## **LEADER 2014-2020**

# **RURAL ACTION CWM TAF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**SEPTEMBER 2014**

VERSION: 2  
DATE: FEBRUARY 2015

**Please use Arial Size 12 throughout the document for consistency**

This template is intended as a guide. Please ensure that you complete this in conjunction with the full LEADER 2014-2020 Local Development Strategy Guidance document issued in June 2014

**NAME OF LAG AND CONTACT DETAILS**

<b>Name of Local Action Group</b>	RURAL ACTION CWM TAF LOCAL ACTION GROUP
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**Administrative Body Primary Contact**

<b>Name</b>	Joanne Nicholas
<b>Tel</b>	01685 727089
<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:Joanne.nicholas@merthyr.gov.uk">Joanne.nicholas@merthyr.gov.uk</a>
<b>Address</b>	Unit 5, Triangle Business Park Pentrebach Merthyr Tydfil CF48 4TQ

**Administrative Body Secondary Contact**

<b>Name</b>	Sarah Mee
<b>Tel</b>	01685 725077
<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:Sarah.mee@merthyr.gov.uk">Sarah.mee@merthyr.gov.uk</a>
<b>Address</b>	Unit 5, Triangle Business Park Pentrebach Merthyr Tydfil CF48 4TQ

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALES**

<b>Proposed Start Date</b> (no earlier than 1 January 2015)	1 <sup>ST</sup> January 2015
<b>End Date</b> (no later than 31 December 2021)	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2021

Suggested word limits have been provided for each section as a guide however these are not prescriptive

## SECTION 1 – STRATEGIC FIT

Description	Explain how the Local Development Strategy (LDS) fits with EU strategies, policies and programmes and the extent to which it aligns with the Focus Areas of the Wales Rural Development Programme (2014-2020) and the five LEADER themes as appropriate to the context of the LDS.
Linked to	Sections 3.1 and 3.5 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

### 1.1 Definition of the area and population covered by the strategy (2,000 words)

The Local Action Group will continue to cover the existing rural wards in Merthyr Tydfil in the 2014-2020 programme. These include the following four rural wards and service centre ward:

- Vaynor
- Cyfarthfa
- Bedlinog
- Merthyr Vale
- Plymouth (service centre)

Under the new programme, Treharris ward has been designated 'host ward' status, which means that where a Project is located in a Host Ward for practical or operational reasons (e.g premises, cost efficiencies etc) none of the benefits arising from the project can accrue to the ward itself.

The area covered by the Local Action Group in the new programme has also been expanded to include rural wards situated in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The following wards have been designated full rural status:

- Rhigos
- Maerdy
- Ynysybwl

From the geographical perspective there are obvious benefits to be gained by the rural communities of Ynysybwl, Maerdy and Rhigos being included within a single Local Development Strategy covered by one Local Action Group. Rhigos in particular borders both the Cyfarthfa and Vaynor wards and the potential in terms of tackling the 'local identity & natural and cultural resources' theme alone is huge when considering both the natural and industrial heritage of that area. It is a priority of the 2014-2020 programme to engage with landowners, farmers and individuals/parties who work on the common land across the Rural Action Cwm Taf Area.

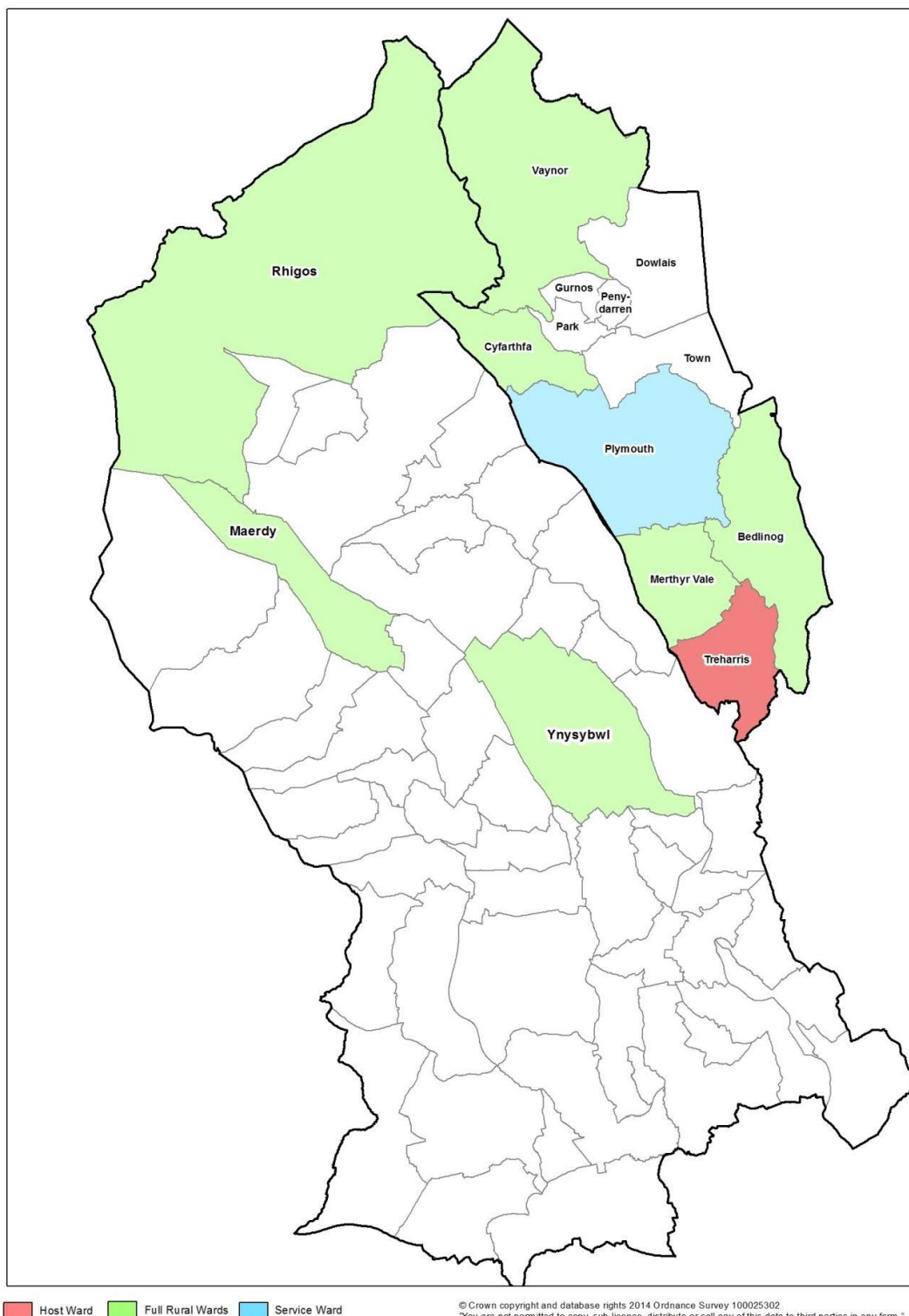
Vaynor, Cyfarthfa, Merthyr Vale and Bedlinog wards have benefitted significantly as a direct result of the Rural Development Plan 2007 – 2013 and there is a real

commitment to build upon these successes, particularly from the perspective of Local SME's and micro-enterprises within these wards. In addition to this there have been a number of key strategic projects that have had a direct impact on SME's, micro-enterprises & tourism based businesses within the rural wards during the six year programme. One major project is the Convergence Funded Bike Park Wales – the spin off and potential future opportunity that this project alone has is more than significant to all proposed rural wards to be covered by the Local Action Group. In addition to this there has been a great deal of investment via a number of sources over the past 10 years such as Heads of the Valleys, Convergence and INTERREG which has resulted in a major change in terms of perceptions of the region – particularly from the tourism perspective.

Axis 4 has in many ways opened the doors for groups/organisations that have not had the capacity or confidence to engage in European programmes and the experiences had will be important in terms of taking the programme forward in the future programme.

It is envisaged that the Local Development strategy for the 2014-2020 programme will place a strong emphasis on the benefits and opportunities to be had through involvement in Co-operation projects both nationally and transnational. Strong links have been forged with partners in European countries under the existing RDP programme through the Bee's and Biodiversity programme and there is appetite to develop projects with these partners moving forward. In addition to this there is scope to link with partners currently held which form part of the European Interreg Funded SHARE project. Discussions have also been held with Brecon Beacons National Park with regard to developing a Leader co-operation project with key partners engaged in the delivery of the Brecon Beacons Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

The map below illustrates the geographical location of the wards to be covered by the Local Action Group during the 2014-2020 period:



The following shows the total population for each ward and the LAG in total.

Source: 2011 Census

	<b>Total Population</b>
<b>Cyfarthfa (Rural ward)</b>	6,869
<b>Vaynor (Rural ward)</b>	3,551
<b>Merthyr Vale (Rural ward)</b>	3,831
<b>Bedlinog (Rural ward)</b>	3,277
<b>Plymouth (Service ward)</b>	5,296
<b>Treharris (Host ward)</b>	6,356
<b>Rhigos (Rural ward)</b>	1,700
<b>Ynysybwl (Rural ward)</b>	4,664
<b>Maerdy (Rural ward)</b>	3,160
Total	38,704

**Population:**

**Rural Ward: 27,052**

**Service Ward: 5,296**

**Host Ward: 6,356**

### **Merthyr Tydfil wards**

#### **Cyfarthfa**

The Cyfarthfa ward area covers the areas of Twyncarmel, Castle Park and Gellideg Estates stretching from the College car park of Merthyr Town Centre to the Heads of the Valleys road and west across the Winchfawr. It also covers the areas of Heolgerrig, Ynys Fach and Cae Penderyn Estates. Although the area lies within two or three miles of the main Merthyr town centre, a number of the neighbourhoods are isolated from the main business centre. Cyfarthfa Ward is unique in that it is characterised by having some of the County Borough's more affluent areas sharing boundaries with some of its most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

In terms of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011 Cyfarthfa 1 ranked 674 out of 1897 most deprived areas in Wales and the 26<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Cyfarthfa 2 ranked 21 out of 1897 most deprived areas in Wales and the 4<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Cyfarthfa 3 ranked 366 out of 1897 most deprived areas in Wales and the 16<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Cyfarthfa

4 ranked 1,579 out of 1897 most deprived areas in Wales and the 36<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil.

The 2011 Census for England and Wales shows that 74.8% of the population of the Cyfarthfa Ward believe themselves to be in good health or very good health, whilst 14.8% state that they have fairly good health and 10.4% stated that they suffered from poor health. Statistics show that 7.7% of the population state that their day to day activities are limited a lot by sickness and 9.2% of the population is economically inactive due to being permanently sick or disabled.

In the Cyfarthfa Ward, 36.5% of the population is economically active in full time employment with 13.8% in part-time employment and 6.7% self-employed. The population of the area which is unemployed is 5.3%.

The percentage of the population in full time education stands at 2.2%, although 29.6% of the residents in the Cyfarthfa Ward have no formal qualifications. The percentage of households not owning a car or van in this area is 25.2%.

There is a thriving Community Group located on the Gellideg Estate. The Gellideg Foundation Group offers various courses such as computers, First Aid etc. They run Youth Clubs, Mother & Toddler Groups as well as a range of weekly activities and very successful catering workshops.

There are a variety of shops, Newsagents, Cafes and Public Houses throughout the Ward including Nisa (Gellideg), Gellideg Community Café, Newsagents (Gellideg), Gellideg Post Office, Heolgerrig Social Club, Red Lion Inn (Heolgerrig), Heolgerrig Post Office and Castle View Stores (Twyncarmel).

### **Bedlinog**

Although Bedlinog is a 'classic' coal mining community, a settlement in this district is recorded archaeologically from very early times. In the Gelligaer and Merthyr Common area, there is evidence of Bronze Age man, a Roman road and fort, four standing stones of pagan and early Christian origins and the remains of medieval homesteads. However, the agriculturally better lands around Bedlinog Farm were well farmed from the middle ages and there are no archaeological remains. Bedlinog grew from an existing centre - that of the mill and cottages of Cwmfelin. The Bedlinog pits were developed by the Dowlais Works in the 1860s. However, the sinking of the Taff Merthyr Colliery and the subsequent opening of new levels had an impact on the area.

Bedlinog 1 ranked 418 out of 1897 most deprived areas in Wales and 19<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Bedlinog 2 ranked 323 out of 1897 most deprived areas in Wales and 13<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. When considering lifestyles, 71.4% of the population of this area declared themselves in good health or very good health, 16.8% are in fairly good health and 11.8% state that they have poor health. Statistics show that 9.1% of the population state that their day to day activities are limited a lot by sickness, with 10% being economically inactive due to ill health or disabilities.

In the Bedlinog Ward, 35.7% of the population is economically active in full time employment with a further 12.2% in part time employment and 5.9% being self employed. The population unemployed in this area is 5.4%. The percentage of the

population in full time education is 2.2%, although 37.9% of the population have no formal qualifications. The percentage of households not owning a car or van is 24.7% and public transport in the area is viewed as poor due to services running 2 buses an hour to Merthyr Tydfil. One is a direct bus which takes 20 minutes, and another involves changing at Treharris and can take 51 minutes. This issue has been identified as the main reason why unemployed people in the area have not been able to secure employment.

### **Vaynor**

The Vaynor Ward is about four miles north of the town of Merthyr Tydfil and is within the borders of the Brecon Beacons National Park. Vaynor 1 ranked 391 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and 17<sup>th</sup> in the most deprived areas in Merthyr Tydfil. Vaynor 2 ranked 972 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and 29<sup>th</sup> in the most deprived areas in Merthyr Tydfil. In the 2011 Census for England and Wales, 71.8% of the residents in the area stated that their health was good or very good, 17.9% said that their health was fairly good and 10.2% said that their health was poor. Statistics show that 7% of the population stated their day to day activities are limited a lot and 8.2% are economically inactive due to sickness or disability.

According to the 2011 Census for England and Wales 35% of the ward is in full time employment, 13.5% is in part time employment and 7.3% is self employed. Unemployment stands at 5.1%. The percentage of the population in full time education is 1.8%, although 31.6% of the population in this ward has no formal qualifications. The percentage of residents not owning a car or van is 25.4% and public transport in the area is perceived as unreliable due to the fact that there is only one bus an hour to Ponsticill from Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre.

### **Merthyr Vale**

Merthyr Vale was a coal mining community which sprung up in the 1870s around the time the colliery was sunk by John Nixon between 1869 and 1875, which was originally called the Taff Colliery. The sinking of the Colliery took over six years to complete and when the first coal was brought up there was a celebration in the Windsor Hotel. The new name of Merthyr Vale for the area around Ynys Owen possibly developed after the Taff Vale Railway Station post-1841 which adopted this title. Although originally named the Taff Colliery, the coal mine here came to be called Merthyr Vale Colliery.

Merthyr Vale 1 ranked 217 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and is the 11th most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Merthyr Vale 2 ranked 17 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and is the 3rd most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Merthyr Vale 3 ranked 643 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and is the 25th most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. According to the 2011 Census for England and Wales, 71.6% of the population deem themselves to be in good health or very good health, 17.1% in fairly good health and 11.2% in poor health. Statistics show that 9.6% of the population experience day to day activities limited a lot by ill health, and 11.6% are economically inactive because of long term sickness/disability.

The percentage of the population of Merthyr Vale which is economically active and



in full time employment is 33.9%, 13.5% are part time and 5.5% are self employed. Unemployment stands at 6.6%. Full time students represent 2.8% of the population, although 38.7% of the population has no formal qualifications. The percentage of households not owning a car or van is 34.6%.

Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Youth and Community Project aims to provide facilities in the interest of social and informed education for recreational and leisure time activities.

### **Plymouth**

With regard to the socio-economic factors that need to be addressed within the ward, Plymouth 1 is ranked 437 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and the 21st most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Plymouth 2 is ranked 523 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and the 22nd most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Plymouth 3 is ranked 615 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and the 24th most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil.

In the 2011 Census for England and Wales, 72.6% of the population in the Plymouth Ward stated that they were in good health or very good health, 16.2% has fairly good health and 11.2% suffer from poor health. Statistics show that 7.1% of the population state their day to day activities are limited a lot by sickness and 8% are economically inactive due to being permanently sick or disabled.

The percentage of the area which is in full time employment is 37.8%, with 13.7% employed part time and 5.7% self employed. Residents engaged in full time education makes up 2.4% of the ward population, with 34.1% of the ward population having no formal qualifications. The percentage of households not owning a car or van is 26.3%.

### **Treharris**

The Treharris ward borders both Bedlinog and Merthyr Vale and is the most southerly ward in the Merthyr Borough. The ward is split in to three areas - Treharris, Edwardsville and Quakers Yard. Treharris has a rich mining history as the community was formed around Harris's Navigation Colliery, which began Coal mining excavations in 1878. The pit became known as Deep Navigation Colliery and remained in production until 1991. Treharris has the oldest Boys and Girls club in the whole of the United Kingdom.

With regard to the socio-economic factors that need to be addressed within the ward, Treharris 1 is ranked 1,516 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and the 35<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Treharris 2 is ranked 779 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and the 28<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Treharris 3 is ranked 324 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and the 14<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil. Treharris 4 is ranked 340 out of 1897 of the most deprived areas in Wales and the 15<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Merthyr Tydfil.

In the 2011 Census for England and Wales, 76.1% of the population in the Treharris Ward stated that they were in good health or very good health, 14.2% has fairly good health and 9.7% suffer from poor health. Statistics show that 7.1% of the population state their day to day activities are limited a lot and 7.8% are economically inactive due to being permanently sick or disabled.

The percentage of the area which is in full time employment is 39.8%, with 13.4%

employed part time and 6.3% self employed. Unemployment stands at 5.1%. Residents engaged in full time education makes up 2.4% of the ward population, with 29.1% of the ward population having no formal qualifications. The percentage of households in the Treharris Ward that do not own a car/van is 21.7%.

### **Rhondda Cynon Taff wards**

#### **Rhigos**

The Rhigos ward is located at the far northern end of the county borough, reaching into the Brecon Beacons National Park and is relatively rural and undeveloped with a population of 1,700. In terms of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011, Rhigos ranked 753 out of 1896 most deprived areas in Wales and the 93rd most deprived area in Rhondda Cynon Taff. The 2011 Census for England and Wales shows that 71.2% of the population of the Rhigos Ward believe themselves to be in good or very good health, with 18.5% of people stating that they have fairly good health and 10.3% stating that they suffered from poor health. Statistics show that 8.4% of the population state that their day to day activities are limited a lot and 9.3% of the population is economically inactive due to being permanently sick or disabled. Of the population of the Rhigos Ward, 32.5% is economically active in full time employment with 12.8% in part-time employment and 7.9% self-employed. Unemployment stands at 3.6% of the population, with just over 1.8% of the population being in full time education and 31.8% of the residents in the Rhigos Ward having no formal qualifications.

The 2011 Census for England and Wales highlights that 18.4% of the households in the Rhigos Ward do not own a car or van.

#### **Maerdy**

The Maerdy ward is located in the northern part of the Rhondda Fach with a population of 3,160 and suffers from high levels of deprivation.

In terms of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011, Maerdy 1 ranked 107 out of 1896 most deprived areas in Wales and the 16<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Rhondda Cynon Taff. Maerdy 2 ranked 31 out of 1896 most deprived areas in Wales and the 5<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

The 2011 Census for England and Wales shows that 63.9% of the population of the Maerdy Ward believe themselves to be in good or very good health, whilst 20.4% of people state that they have fairly good health and 15.7% stated that they suffered from poor health. Statistics show that 11.7% of the Maerdy Ward population state that their day to day activities are limited a lot and 15.6% of the population is economically inactive due to being permanently sick or disabled.

In the rural ward of Maerdy, 24.2% of the population is economically active in full time employment with 12.4% in part-time employment and 4.4% self-employed. Unemployment stands at 6.8% of the population of the area, with approx. 1.5% in full time education and 47.7% of the residents in the Maerdy Ward have no formal qualifications.

The 2011 Census for England and Wales highlights that 41.6% of the households in the Maerdy Ward do not own a car or van. The area is relatively remote and has poor infrastructure with no rail service.

### **Ynys-y-bwl**

The Ynys-y-bwl ward is located in the southern end of the Cynon Valley and four miles north of Pontypridd with a population of 4,664.

In terms of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011, Ynys-y-bwl 1 ranked 347 out of 1896 most deprived areas in Wales and the 47<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Rhondda Cynon Taff. Ynys-y-bwl 2 ranked 840 out of 1896 most deprived areas in Wales and the 102<sup>nd</sup> most deprived area in Rhondda Cynon Taff. Ynys-y-bwl 3 ranked 1692 out of 1896 most deprived areas in Wales and the 143<sup>rd</sup> most deprived area in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

The 2011 Census for England and Wales shows that 77.7% of the population of the Ynys-y-bwl Ward believe themselves to be in good or very good health, with 14.2% of people stating that they have fairly good health and 8.1% stating that they suffered from poor health. Statistics show that 5.6% of the Ynys-y-bwl population state that their day to day activity is limited a lot and 7% of the population is economically inactive due to being permanently sick or disabled.

In the rural ward of Ynys-y-bwl, 38.2% of the population is economically active in full time employment with 14.6% in part-time employment and 6.8% self-employed. Unemployment stands at 4.7% of the population of the area with approx 2.5% in full time education and 28.3% of the residents in the Ynysybwl Ward have no formal qualifications.

The 2011 Census for England and Wales highlights that 22.1% of the households in the Ynysybwl Ward do not own a car or van.

### **Coherence of area & Cross Boundary Working**

It is clear from studying the statistical evidence and having undertaken community engagement sessions, that the Rural Action Cwm Taf area, albeit large enough to have distinct strategic and operational delivery goals, has a shared coherence in community need across Local Authority and geographical boundaries.

All Rural wards (including service and host wards) exhibit relatively high levels of deprivation, which is exacerbated by high levels of long-term sickness and disability, low attainment of formal qualifications and extremely limited access to personal and public transport. As a result, tackling poverty (particularly fuel poverty), improving skills and encouraging economic growth and job creation within the Rural Action Cwm Taf area are key themes which future projects will seek to address.

Cross boundary working with Rhondda Cynon Taff will be enabled by the establishment of the joint LAG and LDS and working in partnership with geographically based organisations such as the Brecon Beacons National Park is an option for some of our rural wards. As all of the rural wards interconnect and border other rural wards (with the exception of Ynys-y-bwl), cross geographical boundary working will be expected by the LAG. Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf have a successful history in partnership working (for example, Valleys Tourism Marketing Campaigns) and the Rural Action Cwm Taf network will add value to this relationship. Improving eco systems, water and conservation management, renewable energy, facilitating access/community transport, enterprise facilitation, tourism destination management and uplands/local food are themes which could

have project options for innovation under LEADER. We will be willing to work on co-operation opportunities which provide meaningful outcomes and outputs in relation to the Rural Development Area's assessed need. Please see SWOT analysis in section 7.2.

## **1.2 Description of the Integration**

*(2,500 words – to be linked in to the actions described in Section 3.1 – Intervention Logic)*

It is envisaged that LEADER will provide added value to new and existing initiatives being developed or already in place. The Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG will play a lead role in ensuring that structures and initiatives do not duplicate through a thorough project assessment process which will focus on complementarity wherever possible. This process is outlined in section 2.1.

As referenced in 1.1, all Rural Wards in the Rural Action Cwm Taf area exhibit similar community characteristics in relation to deprivation, long term sickness, skills, unemployment and poverty. The Welsh Government policies and programmes which will be considered in the LAG assessment of projects to take forward under the future programme include:

- Building Resilient Communities:Tackling Poverty (and associated action plan)
- Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan
- Communities First strategic frameworks
- Equalities Act 2010 (linking to local/regional strategic equalities plans)
- Unlocking the Uplands
- A living Language: A Language for Living – Welsh Language Strategy 2012-2017
- ICT Strategy & Delivering Digital Inclusion: A Strategic Framework for Wales
- ESF Skills, jobs and growth
- Vibrant & Viable Places Regeneration Framework
- Partnership For Growth: The Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020
- The Wales We Want by 2050 – A Welsh Society's commitment to a better quality of life for future generations
- Arbed – Strategic Energy Performance Investment Programme
- Habitats Directive (particularly the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna – The Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)
- The Wales Climate Change Strategy
- National Energy Efficiency & Savings Plan
- Green Jobs Strategy
- Delivering Local Health Care – Accelerating the Pace of Change
- WG Policy Statement on Skills
- WG Programme for Growth & Sustainable Jobs
- Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition

Although quite lengthy, the above National list of policies and programme areas will play an important role in developing projects in the next Rural Action Cwm Taf RDP

programme, as any localised need identified from the community under LEADER for project implementation will be required in some way to reference a National/Regional and localised document and specify how the project adds value or contributes to achieving local, regional and National outcomes. The above list includes areas which are cross cutting themes as well as theme specific programmes and strategies because part of the LAG's role will be to inform the local community of the impact their projects have Nationally. Under LEADER we wish to encourage community engagement whilst reinforcing to them the important part they play in delivering on National Programmes and Policy.

The Tackling Poverty action plan is particularly important in the Cwm Taf Rural area, addressing needs for sustainable employment and skills development, connecting into the Equalities agenda and working to reduce "in work" poverty across the area. Fuel Poverty is a key theme in the Cwm Taf Rural Area with renewable/alternative energy sources and transportation (including active travel) being important subjects in the lives of citizens in our rural wards. Access to inexpensive leisure services and sport/play facilities has multiple health benefits and helps to achieve community cohesion, and access to affordable internet access and sustainable finance options will lie at the heart of future village sustainability.

Other National policy/programme areas which can also be addressed are mentioned below, although of course the list is not exhaustive and advice will be given on the submission of project proposals (mentioned in 2.1) on a project specific basis. The list below aligns to the themes in RDP which may direct project development detail.

- Strategic Policy Framework for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty & Protected Landscapes in Wales
- Active Travel Act
- Food Action Plans (including Food Tourism Action Plan, Local Sourcing Action Plan and Strategic Action Plan for the Welsh Red Meat Industry)
- CADW programme area
- Bus Policy
- Housing Policy Development Programme (particularly noting any impact of the LDP)
- Plants, seeds and biotechnology policy
- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
- Water Strategy for Wales
- Water Framework Directive
- NRW Corporate Plan 2014-2017

Regional and Localised policy/strategy delivery which will provide a framework for the LDS and impact upon project developments include:

- Getting on Together – community cohesion strategy
- South East Wales Regional Strategic Framework – Delivering a Future with Prosperity 2013-2030
- Stronger Together – equalities document
- Get Merthyr Active
- RCT LAPA Plan

- Merthyr Tydfil & Rhondda Cynon Taf Tourism Destination Management Plans
- Merthyr Tydfil Open Spaces strategy
- Delivering Change – A Single Integrated Plan for RCT
- Merthyr Tydfil Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017
- Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy
- Merthyr Tydfil Flood Risk – Uplands Management Strategy
- Merthyr Tydfil's Built Heritage Strategy
- Taff Bargoed Strategy
- MT Biodiversity Action Plan
- MT Sustainable Development Strategy
- MT & RCT Rights of Way Improvement Plans
- MT Play Strategy
- MT & RCT Local Development Plans

Clearly, the localised strategies intertwine with National Policy and Programmes. It will be part of the LAG's role to ensure coherence between strategies which will deliver the best outcomes possible for the communities involved.

Other initiatives and schemes within the Joint Merthyr Tydfil/RCT area include:

- Fros y Fran Fund
- Pen y Cymoedd Windfarm Community Fund
- Tower Colliery Fund
- Welsh Church Act Fund
- BIFFA Fund
- Merthyr Valleys Homes Fund
- RCT Homes/Meadow Prospect Small Grants Fund
- Rhondda Trust Fund

These schemes are mostly localised, targeted support aimed at specific sectors of the Rural Action Cwm Taf area. The Rural Development Plan in Merthyr Tydfil/RCT will enable cohesion and networking of these sector specific funds and the LAG will provide advice and guidance on how LEADER can add value and develop innovative initiatives further.

When adding value, the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG will consider alternative funding streams and programmes to get the best value for money possible for a project idea (please see section 9.1). These streams are varied, and will be based upon operational need, but a few examples which the LAG will consider include:

- Horizon 2020
- NATURE fund
- ERASMUS Plus
- LIFE +
- Atlantic & Interreg Transnational Programme
- Creative Europe (UK)
- European Cultural Foundation Grants
- Heritage Lottery Fund

- BIG Lottery Fund
- Coalfields Regeneration Trust
- Structural Fund programmes

LEADER can make a contribution to the following RDP schemes and activity:

- Promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture
- Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry
- Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy
- Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas
- Sustainable Communities and Village Renewal

At this current time, it is expected that projects will come forward covering one or more of the following LEADER themes, and all of these themes will be considered for project development by the LAG (further detail in section 3):

- Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources
- Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
- Exploring new ways of providing non statutory local services
- Renewable energy at a community level
- Exploitation of digital technology

Communication is constantly underway with partner LAGs to discuss opportunities and projects which could be integrated. In particular it is envisaged that work with the joint Caerphilly/Blaenau Gwent LAG will be undertaken in future years of the RDP programme, probably around conservation and/or forestry management. This will no doubt include partnership working with external agencies such as the Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales.

## SECTION 2 – FINANCIAL & COMPLIANCE

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group (LAG) intends to meet its financial and compliance based obligations. LAGs need to demonstrate that they have competent financial planning and will comply with all necessary legal and regulatory requirements.
Linked to	Part of Section 3.11 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 (remainder to be covered under Section 4 – Management of Operation)

### 2.1 Management and Administration

(2,500 words)

For Terms of Reference for the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG please see Appendix 1.

As the future LEADER RDP programme now incorporates two Local Authority areas (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taff), sharing central function with Merthyr Tydfil becoming the admin lead, every effort has been made to revisit the LAG membership, which has consequently been revised to reflect the new rural wards and the associated project development needs of the new programme. The LAG membership will be subject to some further refinement leading into the delivery phase of the LDS.

Membership of The Interim Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG:

Name	Title/Function	Organisation	Sector
Alyn Owen	Head of Economic Development	MTCBC	Public
Sarah Mee	European & External Funding Manager	Rural Action Cwm Taf <b>Lead Body</b>	
Joanne Nicholas	Rural Action Cwm Taf Co-ordinator	Rural Action Cwm Taf <b>Lead Body</b>	
Suzanne Lewis-Abbott	External Funding Officer	MTCBC Advisor	Public
Alison Chaplin		Wales & West Housing	Third
Alison Harris		VAMT	Third
Hilary Edwards		VAMT	Third
Simon James		Interlink	Third
Ian Benbow	Integrated Adult Services	MTCBC	Public
Chris Long	Economic Development & Strategic Tourism Manager	MTCBC	Public
Mike Jones		Wales Co-op	Third
Nicola Mahoney		Safer Merthyr Tydfil	Third
Paula Lunnon		Merthyr Valleys Homes	Third
Peter Mortimer		RCTCBC	Public
Thom Hadfield		Visit Wales	Public



Victoria Norman		Local Health Board	Public
Rachel Harding		Natural Resource Wales	Public
Karen Rees	Finance Officer	Rural Action Cwm Taf <b>Lead Body</b>	
Morgan Chambers		Heritage Forum	Third
Business Club rep MT tbc x 2		Business lead	Private
Business Club rep RCT tbc		Business lead	Private
Judith Jones	Farm Owner/Commons Land rep		Private

This interim list will be subject to minor changes and additions in line with the Terms of Reference as the LAG develops. The Administrative body will be made up of a lead co-ordinator and activity/operations support officer who will report to the European & External Funding Manager (matched into the Rural Development Plan for Merthyr Tydfil & RCT), ultimately reporting to the Head of Economic Development. Financial responsibilities will be undertaken by a lead Finance Officer in MTCBC, who will also be matched into the programme. Running & animation costs will not only include budget headings such as travel and evaluation, but also marketing which will enable the LAG to share news on the good work being achieved and training, which will build any LAG member capacity and ensure that continued membership is of a professional, and high calibre local standard. For further detail on the administrative body role please see job descriptions (Appendix 2).

The co-ordinator and support officer will ensure the smooth running of programme, support and administer the LAG and work with the LAG to deliver training to members and identify project development needs where appropriate. The Cwm Taf LAG selection decisions are undertaken fairly and transparently, with less than 49% of votes accepted from public authorities or any single body. Due to the nature of the LAG membership, we recognise that members may not always be able to attend meetings in person. Therefore all papers will be circulated at least a week prior to any meeting, in order for written procedure and voting mechanism to be adhered to. Where there may possibly be a conflict of interest, members will be required to express it so that appropriate and fair consideration can be made on project submissions. Further detail on this and the structure of the LAG can be read in the Terms of Reference (appendix 1). LAG members are required to demonstrate an impartial strategic overall approach to being part of the Programme.

When assessing future activity/operations, the LAG will be responsible for advising community groups of the LDS targets and objectives aligned to wider policy mentioned in section 1.2.

The representatives on the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG have been identified and selected due to their expertise in relevant fields and cross boundary working. All representatives are aware of the importance of impartiality in assessing projects for development through the RDP, and acknowledge the importance of this group in shaping and developing the LDS and future reviews of it.

The current administrative body adopted Expression of Interest (EOI) approach to LAG membership. The returned EOI forms were assessed by the administrative body in order to gauge the amount of interest from the private, third and public sectors.

When recruiting members to the new joint LAG it was vital to ascertain that every one of the new members would provide a valid and effective contribution in the implementation of LEADER funding. It is important that new LAG members understood the local communities classed as rural, and the issues that they may face; be willing to undertake actions and activities as needed to animate the programme and enable it to run effectively; be impartial in their approach to implementation and project selection, with personal interests noted and think innovatively to provide solutions in the light of limited funding.

Many of the submissions for LAG membership were already known to the Lead Body through previous roles and programmes. The Cwm Taf area is one which has a number of distinct organisations, whose knowledge for the future programme will be valuable. The LAG listing above is interim at the moment, having been established from scratch to allow for transparent selection from Merthyr Tydfil and RCT. The membership will change and incorporate more representation from the private sector, although expressions of interest are still being received and assessed. Although having most representation from the public sector at the moment, this is being addressed and by April 2015 the final confirmed LAG will be in place, with balance of less than 49% representation and an equal spread from all sectors. As noted in the terms of reference, there will be only one vote per organisation, and Lead Body staff/advisors to the LAG cannot vote.

The Lead Admin staff will support the LAG in preparing and publishing calls for proposals, following procurement rules and defining selection criteria. The LAG will consequently advise project development in order to achieve the best outcomes for achieving LDS targets for RDP, as well as identifying complementary funding pots which can add value to proposed projects.

The Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG will operate in a fair and transparent way in respect of the application of the selection criteria and the management of the application and selection process. It is imperative that the audit trail is clear for project selection (see diagram below).

At the time of writing, it is the intention of the LAG to use the consultation responses collected to decide which themes to prioritise on an annual basis. This selection will be done by the Rural Action Co-ordinator presenting the full consultation responses to the LAG and the LAG assessing the level of need under each theme and how many cross cutting themes the need under each main heading addresses. (Evidence of this can be provided after May 2015).

Selection criteria will be submitted as part of future LDS action plans once the Interim Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG has full representation from each of the sectors and is therefore no longer "interim".

Once a theme/s have been identified to focus upon, the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG

will concentrate on the need to address within that theme/s and identify what actions a project needs to include in line with consultation responses received and LDS SMART objectives in order to deliver positive outcomes to address or provide a solution to that need. This is will be voted upon in a transparent manner. Experts may be then needed to be brought in (potentially including representatives from the RDP project delivery group) to build a project which will then be procured to market in line with MTCBC's procurement procedures and policies.

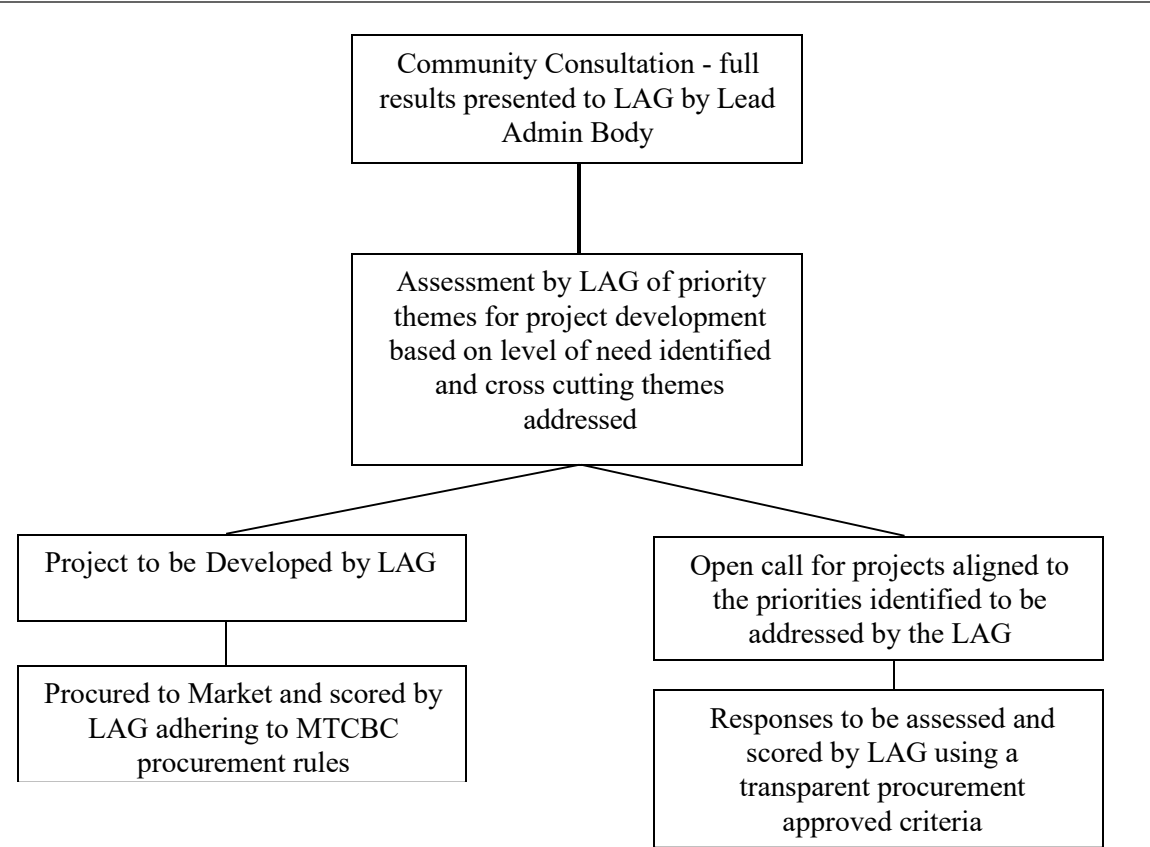
Areas of need that are not found to fall under LEADER or need which the LAG decides cannot be addressed wholly by LEADER will be worked on in association with other organisations, bodies, funding streams and initiatives.

If Welsh Government inform us that an open call for projects is an option, the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG may vote to write up a project proposal (using the same process as already outlined), including outputs and outcomes needed to be achieved and invite an open call from interested parties for project delivery idea submissions. If this is an option, assessment criteria will be developed in line with official procurement policy to score submissions. It is likely that an EOI will need to be submitted in the first instance, with successful applicants Then invited to present to the LAG. Project proposals will be widely advertised and will go out to market to get the widest possible viewing by the desired audience.

Criteria will focus on the levels of technical and qualitative competency to deliver the outcomes outlined in the LDS and the proposed monitoring and evaluation indicators. At the heart of assessment will be how organisations will deliver on the identified need in the community. After scoring, voting to appoint the delivery organisation will be undertaken in line with the Terms of Reference rules.

In both cases, the application and selection criteria will be clearly set out in the application materials and any associated publicity, along with contact details for the Lead Administrative Body. The Cwm Taf community consulted with will be kept up to date at each stage of the process to ensure that communication channels and the relationships that have been built with the LAG and local community do not suffer.

Appraisal criteria will be available and accessible to all potential applicants.



The LAG will be responsible for directing monitoring and evaluation of the LDS, supported by the Lead Administration body, and ensuring projects:

- Are eligible
- Address state aid and other obligatory standards
- Assesses the reasonability of the proposed activity

In addition to the LAG, the Lead Admin Body will establish an RDP Project Development group, which will be open to all community representatives/organisations and provide a two way communication forum between the LAG and local community from which project ideas for development could be identified. It is hoped this forum will enable the development of sustainable projects over future years which could potentially be mainstreamed. See Appendix 3 for Process for Submitting Project Proposals.

The Administrative Body has experience of running the Business Plan 2007-2013 RDP programmes in Merthyr Tydfil. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has in place the necessary systems to maintain full audit trails for expenditure and indicators through ISO accountable ICT systems and secure archive systems as directed by Welsh Government. The Administrative Body will be supported by the Councils accountants and auditors to ensure the correct information is maintained. Financial and monitoring information will be reported to the LAG on a regular basis.

## SECTION 3 - DELIVERY

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group (LAG) aims to transfer its stated objectives into delivery on the ground. The LAG should have a clear plan that links the result, the outputs that deliver the result, what activities will take place to deliver the outputs, how and when those activities will take place, and who will be responsible for delivering them.
Linked to	Sections 3.4 (including intervention logic table), 3.8, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.12 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

### **3.1 Description of the strategy and hierarchy of objectives**

*(2,500 words (narrative) plus up to 10 pages A4 in the form of an Intervention Logic Table (template provided))*

Based on the current 2007-2013 programme which Merthyr Tydfil delivered through the Rural Action Merthyr Partnership, the new joint LAG (with RCT) can learn a lot from the projects that have been implemented in the past under Business Plan 1 & 2. Previous programmes and projects have influenced the intervention logic and SMART objectives linked into the SWOT analysis (section 7.2). It has become clear from the implementation of previous projects that the LEADER approach to identifying intervention has to work alongside strategic outcomes and priorities in order to succeed, with focused, targeted support in the right areas, not just taking a blanket approach to all rural wards. Despite the coherence of the rural wards in the Cwm Taf area, we have learnt that projects need to be flexible in their approach to ensure they are delivering the best outcomes for their local communities. Evaluation work in Merthyr Tydfil as a result of BP2 interventions have proven that financial support is helpful, but only when it provides a sustainable means for continuation and enables communities to take ownership of their projects directly (see Appendix 9). By way of illustration, recommendations from the evaluation of BP2 Axis 3 include comments such as:

“The holistic perspective of the RDP, as part of a broader funding environment with complementary opportunities to work jointly with external private and third sector partners in taking different activities forward and exploiting synergies, should be sustained.”

“In order to build on the successes secured through the Project Cynnal intervention, efforts to integrate business support, recognising the important role of business planning and enterprise facilitation in making a success of specific development and investment projects, should be continued.”

“In engaging with businesses and the wider private sector in the rural wards (e.g. land owners), developing a detailed and nuanced understanding of the specific drivers and dynamics of community regeneration and economic development in rural wards (with slightly different characteristics to ‘typical’ rural wards in other more rural parts of Wales) should be continued.”

Enthusiasm for implemented projects in the community is stimulated further when projects are seen to be phased, sensible and make a notable difference to a

citizen's local community.

We acknowledge that LEADER funds cannot solely change cultural values and economic activity, however, with the future programme it is the Cwm Taf's LAG's intention to focus upon the areas rural strengths, such as our water ways and river systems to address some of the weaker areas in the SWOT analysis, such as skills, youth engagement and sustainable employment.

The hierarchy of objectives for the future programme will focus on:

- Eco Systems Management
- Uplands
- Tourism Destination Management
- Access to Natural & Cultural Spaces
- Rural Business Support and Skills development.
- Families & Young People
- Digital Access & Inclusion
- Rural Transport opportunities
- Energy Efficiency (renewable energy management of community buildings, enabling communities to become economically competitive whilst reducing costs)

As noted in Section 1, WIMD statistics are very clear that the lack of skills, job opportunities, health and transport are factors which contribute to Rural Poverty. Working families experiencing poverty often lack young family support and access to appropriately paid employment.

Although projects have not been decided at this time, all projects developed by the LAG will work to address rural poverty and tackle the issues this brings. Referencing the Logic Table, eco systems projects will provide skills training, business support projects will focus on rural businesses and enterprises who are keen to expand and employ staff living locally; digital projects will seek to provide access for all by employing technical and inclusion methods, along with bodies already providing support to enable families in poverty to improve their skills on line and as a consequence opening up opportunities for job searching, increased business competitiveness and universal credit submissions. Projects implemented will aim to reduce poverty and social exclusion, often experienced in some, more remote parts of the Cwm Taf Rural area, whilst making the village area more attractive to prospective businesses, visitors and employers.

It is envisaged that these higher level objectives will interconnect to deliver comprehensive projects to take forward which will utilise complementary funding streams which will contribute to delivering outputs and outcomes necessary to deliver on the LDS.

Please also complete the Intervention Logic Table Template provided

### **3.2 Co-Operation and Networking**

*(1,000 words; up to 500 to be focused on preparatory activities)*

Having been involved in co-operation projects in the current programme, this is something we would seek to build on in the next programme, using the Hierarchy of Objectives as a basis to build co-operation development.

Although we would be open to Trans National Co-operation, in the immediacy of the LEADER being implemented the Cwm Taf LAG will seek to undertake inter territorial co-operation for exchange of experience and common actions.

We would seek to implement co-operation projects which add value to the outcomes and objectives of the need identified in the SWOT analysis and Logic Tables, with discussions, mapping and networking taking place to assess co-operation projects with LAGs sharing similar aspirations and requirements. Initial discussions have begun with Caerphilly/Blaenau Gwent LAG, Brecon Beacons National Park and the South Wales Wildlife Trust regarding the varied opportunities which exist to implement common actions. In particular the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG is keen to see co-operation projects which have a beneficial impact on the cross cutting LEADER themes such as the Uplands.

The Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG views co-operation as an option which we would use to reach the critical mass needed for some projects to be delivered cohesively and sustainably.

### **3.3 Description of Innovation**

*(1,000 words – to be linked to the actions described in Section 3.1 above and referring to the bullet point tick headings in Section 3.9 of the LDS guidance document)*

Directly associated with the Hierarchy of Objectives, the Cwm Taf LAG will use the LEADER implementation to deliver innovative projects in Merthyr Tydfil and RCT's rural wards. The LEADER approach in RCT is a new development and will be important in developing innovative delivery mechanisms across the hierarchy of objectives, building on the development of good practise from previous work in Merthyr Tydfil.

Options for innovation in the first instance could focus upon Eco Systems Management, a new area to be addressed by the rural programme in Merthyr Tydfil & RCT, and be built in such a way to deliver innovative methods of community engagement and economy practice.

We envisage that by initiating a main LEADER innovation project, which not only delivers on strategic outcomes but also on building value through cross cutting themes, co-operation and accessing complementary funding streams, we will be able to target LEADER funds in the most cost effective manner to deliver a sustainable project which could be mainstreamed after a suitable pilot period.

It is the LAGs intention by developing this innovation project that it will in the first instance build confidence, skills and engagement in the local area, which will then lead to associated asset development across the area, through using

complementary funds to support, and utilising co-operation to ensure that geographical boundaries are not a barrier to a pilot projects continuation. If the innovation project in LEADER has a strong foundation, the LAG is confident that the pilot could lead to a mainstreaming activity. Third, public and private sector engagement and involvement will be essential to the success of delivering on the Hierarchy of Objectives and innovation project.

### **3.4 Action Plan**

Insert project logic table here

*This section is to be provided as a unified document with the Intervention Logic at Section 3.1 above. The 'Who' and 'When' elements required by the Commission have been added to the Intervention Logic table (can be indicative where exact details are not known). Please also show in the relevant columns where activities are expected to contribute to Cross-Cutting Themes, Welsh Language and supporting the Uplands.*

### **3.5 Promotional Activity** *(1,000 words)*

The Cwm Taf LAG will work with the Wales Rural Network to ensure that regular promotional activity is undertaken in the programme to disseminate information and inform the local community of the success stories and case studies being implemented in their areas. For further information please see the communications document (section 7.1).

Running and animation costs will provide headings for marketing and promotion, with multi media channels being utilised according to value for money and community engagement.

Running costs for Marketing and Promotion will cover the activities of the LEADER LAG administration body and the promotional necessities to ensure the effective operation of the LAG.

Animation costs for Marketing and Promotion will cover aspects of capacity building and information sharing to build ideas into potentially deliverable projects. In both Running Cost and Animation cost headings, funds will be spent to attain best value and take advantage of the LAG partnership to contribute in sharing information and undertake activity as a commitment to the partnership they are a part of.

Implementation Marketing and Promotion will cover the delivery of operations and activity (Projects), so the three areas of running costs, animation and implementation, from a Marketing and Promotions perspective, will intertwine and complement each other throughout the length of the Programme to provide a communications stream which will envelope the LAG, capacity building and project delivery.

Methods include:



- Radio
- Newsletters
- Press Releases
- Editorial in local news
- Website updates
- Social media (Twitter, Facebook and UTube)
- Hard copy information – posters/leaflets
- Online Blogs/Press updates
- Events & Consultation Days

#### LAG work with Stakeholders

LAG members will take a proactive role in promoting operations, and we will work with local communication outlets and local press to ensure information particularly in relation to best practice is being reported on. The LAG membership incorporates representatives with differing skillsets and access to wide ranging networks. Many sit on other groups and forums (eg Heritage Forums, Tourism Businesses, Youth Forums, Business Clubs, Social Tenants in Housing Associations, Disability/Equalities groups and community groups) and will use this access to share information on Rural Programme Developments on a regular basis.

The LAG, although interim and in its infancy at the moment, will be made up of an even distribution of stakeholders from all three sectors. The lead body has built up a strong relationship with several key rural stakeholders across the area (eg Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil, who disseminates rural development information across its distribution list of over 250 organisations) and they are always very willing to help promote Rural Development Plan activities and show a proactive approach to communication.

The stakeholders the LAG works with represent and interact with all sectors of society and demographics, so as a consequence, results and impact information of the Programme will be disseminated using a variety of methods (not all of them literary).

The LAG will work with stakeholders to disseminate best practice information by:

- Communicating results through the Wales Rural Network
- Meeting regularly with RDP officers in neighbouring LAGs
- Publishing LEADER newsletters for the Cwm Taf area
- Organising yearly progress events, animation and consultation days
- Updating websites and drip feeding regular social media updates through a variety of visual mediums.

In accordance with current rules, all media activity will be passed for approval by Welsh Government and the Communications department of the Wales Rural Network, and information will be shared with LAGs across Wales to, wherever possible, combine good news messages which will result in a higher impact for the Rural Development Plans reach across the UK and Europe.

All logos and associated media requirements will be met, including bi-lingual messaging, and the EU funders will be referenced in all hard copy written/spoken materials produced for the public.

Events will be held when appropriate to reinforce the message of the EU programme (for example around the 9<sup>th</sup> May – Flying the EU Flag day), Welsh Government support and the RDP LEADER programme in the Cwm Taf area. These events will be open to all members of the community in an attempt to foster community cohesion and engender a sense of pride in being part of a rural community.

For the week running up to the “Flying the EU Flag” Day, on the 9<sup>th</sup> May there will be films developed locally (probably with assistance from Merthyr College) which will be streamed (having adhered to WRN process) on social media culminating in a morning event and EU Networking day in which the films showing the benefits of EU funding will be shown and local produce, stands and displays will be available to view along with information on future EU opportunities (such as Horizon 2020) which maybe available. This event could springboard organisations new to EU funding into further training, and encourage those involved before to learn more about the opportunities of future programmes.

Invites will be extended to EU representatives, Welsh Government and organisations across the Cwm Taf area but will be a public community event, open and accessible to all.

## SECTION 4 – MANAGEMENT OF OPERATION

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group and its elected Administrative Body has the capacity and resources necessary to successfully deliver on the planned results, output indicators and activities.
Linked to	Part of Section 3.11 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 (remainder to be covered under Section 2 – Financial & Compliance)

### 4.1 Management and Administration

*(2,500 words)*

Information on the “Management of Operation” is in addition to the information cited in section 2.1 of this Strategy “Management & Administration”.

When working on the submission of the Expression of Interest for the future RDP programme, Merthyr Tydfil entered into discussions with Rhondda Cynon Taf who were considering applying for Rural Ward status for the first time.

Rather than go through a separate process in submitting an Expression of Interest, developing a separate LAG and LDS, the two areas agreed that it would be more cost effective and less resource intensive to co-ordinate the two areas collectively.

It was agreed, as Merthyr Tydfil already ran the Rural Action Merthyr Programme, with all the mechanisms in place, that Merthyr Tydfil should take an administrative lead and submit the Expression of Interest on behalf of the Cwm Taf area. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will be responsible for the delivery of the main LEADER programme and will act as the secretariat for the LAG throughout the programme period. This will also include functions such as arranging meetings, capacity building in the area and dealing with LAG membership.

The joint EOI was approved in June, and consequently, a new joint LAG was established, with new representation from RCT. Please see Appendix 1 for the LAG Terms of Reference and Appendix 3 for the process of submitting project proposals.

Work has begun on building capacity in the area and finalising appropriate LAG membership as outlined in the Terms of Reference (Appendix 1). The progress of the LAG delivery of the programme will be monitored through the Lead Administrative Body by actions such as:

- Continual communication with delivery partners to ensure that all projects are running to budget and delivering on targets
- Regular email and telephone communication with LAG members and the wider RDP stakeholder group to keep them informed of Welsh Government and EU developments and receive feedback for response.
- Yearly review of the relevance and delivery of the LDS
- Mid term evaluation of the LAG and Lead Administrative Body’s approach and delivery of the programme, which will enable the LAG to independently ensure that it is on course to delivering a meaningful programme for the Rural

Cwm Taf Community.

- Attendance at consultations, events and stakeholder meetings to continue communication on the running of the programme and implementation
- Ongoing consultations with the assistance of LAG members of the Rural Cwm Taf community, including events, surveys and online questionnaires
- Regular reports to Welsh Government and LAG (quarterly and yearly)

#### Proposed Management Structure

Under the 25% for Running Costs and Animation budget, the employment of a full time Rural Action Cwm Taf Co-ordinator will be essential to deliver the 2014-2020 programme (see Appendix 2). The post costs will be split between Running Costs and Animation in order to manage and build a strong and effective LAG, co-ordinate capacity building and animation activity and impartially reflect the values and priorities of the LAG to build meaningful projects for delivery under implementation. The co-ordinator post will be based in the Plymouth ward of Merthyr Tydfil, but will share their time across all rural wards.

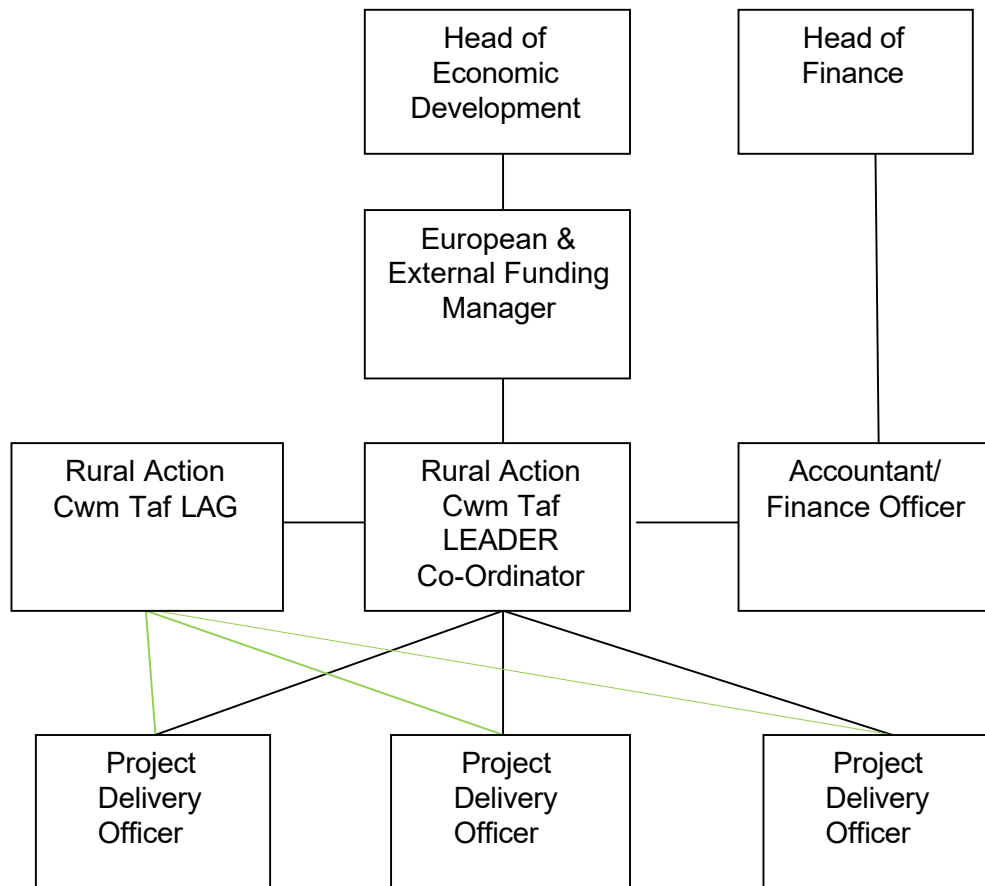
#### Administrative Function

- Head of Economic Development (MTCBC) - Employed by MTCBC, current Chair of the Interim LAG, match funded into the Programme
- European & External Funding Manager (MTCBC) – Employed by MTCBC, the manager provides additional support to the LAG and programme (e.g. sourcing complimentary funds to support implementation), match funded into the programme
- Rural Action Cwm Taf Co-Ordinator – Manages the RDP joint programme for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf (see Appendix 2). Fully funded through the 25% Running Costs and Animation budget.
- Accountant/Finance Officer (MTCBC) – Employed by MTCBC, match funded into the programme, this officer will collate and interpret financial and monitoring information, prepare and submit quarterly financial and monitoring claims, ensuring that these are undertaken in accordance with project spend profiles

#### Implementation

- Project Delivery Officers – Funded through implementation, these posts will report to the LAG and Rural Action Co-ordinator to deliver implementation as prioritised by the LAG. Projects have yet to be agreed, but the financial profile under Implementation allows for three members of staff which will be essential for the smooth delivery of the implementation part of the programme.

This diagram illustrates the management structure for the programme.



The Strategy will undergo a yearly review to ensure that monitoring of priority need is still relevant and that the LAG are managing this process correctly with the support of the Lead Administrative Body. The LAG will meet at least six times a year, and agendas will include operations monitoring when appropriate. When the LAG assesses project ideas coming forward, or builds projects for procurement to the market, reference will be constantly made to the LDS, which will enable the Strategy to be implemented correctly. Please see Appendix 3 for “Process of Submitting Project Ideas & Proposals”.

Within the constraints of the 25% allocation for Running Costs/Animation in the Cwm Taf area, it is envisaged that one staff member (RA Co-ordinator) will run and animate the LDS. Costs for this role will be split between Running Costs and Animation, with time sheets completed accordingly. The officer will co-ordinate and support animation, as well as administering the LAG (with continued support from MTCBC) and responding to Welsh Government requirements. Staff matched into the programme include senior managers and a finance professional, with support being received in kind from LAG members in attending the LAG, supporting at events and dissemination of LAG/LDS activity.

The skills of the staff in the Administrative body will include:

- An experience of previous RDP/European Programmes
- Strategy writing skills
- Analysis and monitoring capabilities
- Financial and Claim co-ordination skills
- Excellent communication skills
- Consultation experience
- Presence on a variety of community forums and groups bringing specific sector knowledge to the group.

For further information on staff administrative requirements, please see Appendix 2.

Training plans for administrative staff will be identified through an ongoing appraisal process and through regular LAG meetings. Training will be determined by the types of operations undertaken by the LAG and training budgets in animation will also allow for LAG members to be included in this training to ensure the continuity of the implementation of the Strategy.

## SECTION 5 – VALUE FOR MONEY

Description	Explain how the proposed actions and expenditure outlined in the Local Development Strategy represent the best use of EU funds. Explain how the costs included are reasonable, such as the cost and number of staff required to deliver the proposed activities.
Linked to	Section 3.4 and 4.0 of the LDS Guidance June 2014 Details of Section 3.4 have already been provided in Section 3 of this template (Intervention Logic)

### 5.1 Financial Delivery Profiles

*Please complete the delivery profile templates provided. Insert delivery profiles here as an Annex.*

Please also see sections 2.1, 3.1, 3.4 and 4.1 of the Strategy, which give information on intervention logic, hierarchy of objectives, management and administration.

The Cwm Taf LAG represents Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf rural wards and therefore is combining costs to deliver the programme under one Lead Administrative function.

Total Indicative Allocation = £1,211,000.00 – preparatory costs = **£1,196,546.00**  
Administration (Running Costs) - £119,654.60 (10%)  
Animation - £179,481.90 (15%)  
Implementation - **£897,409.50 (75%)**

At this stage, the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG have identified a hierarchy of objectives and priorities to pursue through the programme, however detail around the costs for implementation have yet to be confirmed. This will be finalised through the scheme control plan once focus for animation has been clarified. Supporting documentation to back up the delivery profile rationale can be found in Appendix 7.

We can confirm that we will not exceed the budget allowable under the implementation project profile.

Rural Action Cwm Taf does not intend to use simplified costs.

## SECTION 6 – INDICATORS & OUTCOMES

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group intends to deliver the result and output indicators identified and all associated targets.
Linked to	Section 4.1 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

### 6.1 Monitoring and Results

*Please also complete the Performance Indicator table provided (within the delivery profile template) and the intervention logic table at Section 3.1.*

Having taken advice from the Welsh Government Monitoring and Evaluation Team, the following narrative outlines the outputs, results and impacts from the proposed operations.

As evidenced in the SWOT analysis undertaken across the Rural Action Cwm Taf area, it became clear that there were three main outcomes (listed as “Development Needs/Opportunities” in the Intervention Logic table in section 3.1) the Strategy needed to work to:

- Develop Prosperous, skilled and sustainable rural economies.
- Create vibrant and diverse rural communities in which people will wish to live, work and visit.
- Support and enable safe and healthy rural communities.

The hierarchy of objectives (Section 3.1) outlines the areas which were viewed as development needs and opportunities against which to deliver operations. The Strategy, as referred to in previous sections will be reviewed by the LAG and internally on an annual basis, and the outputs will be assessed to ensure results are being met.

Overall, expected outputs for the Cwm Taf area from 2014-2020 are:

- No. of Operations – 11
- No. of volunteers developing skills as a result of project activity – 60
- No. of formal qualifications received – 50
- No. of jobs created – 2
- No. of people entering into employment as a result of project activity – 13
- No. of communities benefitting – At least 8 rural wards
- No. of LAGs involved in co-operation by project – 3
- No. of Interterritorial co-operation projects – 1
- No. of businesses benefitting – 50
- Number of actions to disseminate information on activities undertaken in the LDS to the local population - 25
- Number of promotional activities associated with the delivery of the LDS and/or its projects – 50



The indicators above will be supplemented with information which includes characteristic indicators such as beneficiary details, type of project promoter from selected categories, and number of operations contributing to cross cutting themes. Indicators reflect the intentions of the programme to provide best value for LEADER funds. The indicators mentioned in the logic table and above include direct outputs (No of volunteers developing skills) and longer term impact considerations (No of people entering into employment as a result of activity).

The output indicators have been chosen which will measure the direct operational objectives of the intervention, and based on previous programme experience of the opportunities and limitations of intervention in Rural Action Merthyr areas. As the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG is a new entity as of Sept 2014, monetary units against operations have not been discussed in depth at this time. High level development needs have been assessed from SWOT analysis and consultation with key stakeholders and community leaders to ensure a basis from which to start operational delivery.

Outputs will be achieved through work undertaken by implementation staff and delivery partner organisations. As rationale in the delivery profile, existing staff within delivery organisations will have the skills required to deliver on projects, with volunteers being upskilled and encouraged to undertake qualifications which will make them more attractive to the labour market. Projects have not been clearly identified at this stage and we will take the lead from the Monitoring and Evaluation Team as to appropriate targets depending upon the scale of the operation,

It is envisaged that once the programme is underway, that impact indicators will be able to be assessed and these will be evaluated fully at the end of the programme.

The type of actions identified as part of the development needs and opportunities of the Cwm Taf Rural area are:

#### Skills Development & Educational Interaction

In the SWOT analysis, it was identified that a lack of skills and formal qualifications was leading members of our rural communities into poverty by being uncompetitive in the jobs market. The LDS, through operations, aims to increase the number of skilled volunteers in our rural communities and as a result enable them to enter the job market. Using volunteers and including schools/further education bodies within operations provides two functions. In the first instance, awareness is raised within the local community of the need and LEADER work ongoing in their area, allowing them to become involved within their community, take ownership and pride in where they live and work and support/improve social cohesion. The other outcome enables community members to gain the skills that will enable them to enter the job market. Projects will engage with educational bodies as part of their promotion and information sharing process (actions and activities indicator) and encourage wherever possible the uptake of training for successful delivery of the operation. Volunteers who sign up to a project will undertake a skills needs assessment and be encouraged to undertake classes and courses which will provide them with not only skills to deliver the LEADER projects effectively, but to increase their competitiveness within the job market.

Involvement will be unknown until projects are identified.

#### Job Creation

The need for jobs in the Cwm Taf area is high, with a significant population of the Rural Action Cwm Taf area being unemployed. Operations will seek to empower members of our rural communities by supporting the development of entrepreneurship and upskilling volunteers to be more competitive in the Labour market. Job creation WITHIN operations is unlikely, but we have included the indicator for people entering into employment as a result of the projects as we feel that this could be a realistic impact of the programme.

The indicator which includes the number of businesses benefiting is based upon the knowledge of the local network following interventions in the 2007-2013 programme. The output for the indicator reflects the fact that the potential interventions (although yet to be identified) will probably have an indirect (if not a direct) positive impact to local businesses/enterprises. We envisage the benefit in this instance to be proved by a long term impact assessment plan, identifying those businesses that can really enhance and contribute to village renewal, job creation and the sustainability of our rural areas.

#### Diversification into Tourism & Access to Open Spaces

In previous rural programmes, Merthyr Tydfil has seen a marked improvement in the tourism economy in its Rural Wards, and Destination Management will play an important role in the continued diversification of the Cwm Taf Rural wards over the next five years. Encouraging visitor spend and enabling our community access to the open spaces of our rural wards will see not only an economic benefit, but a health one also. Many citizens in the Rural Action Cwm Taf area, suffer from poor health, but we know from survey information undertaken as part of the Merthyr Tydfil Open Spaces Strategy, that even those citizens who do consider themselves in good health, do not always know where they can access and which areas are well maintained. Sharing information on the Destination and Rural Action Cwm Taf area as a whole is an important output in the intervention, and it is envisaged that the rural wards of Rhondda Cynon Taf will see a benefit to the LEADER intervention over the next five years.

#### Habitat Maintenance & Development

Whether, in our rivers, uplands, woodlands or open spaces, the maintenance and preservation of habitats as well as improving the biodiversity of our rural areas for future sustainability is important to ensuring our rural areas stay vibrant and healthy for future generations to enjoy. By taking a strategic catchment based approach to eco systems management, it is envisaged that the assessment of riparian corridors and identification of maintenance needed in open access areas in line with the water framework directive will be achieved as a result of the operations carried out. This will not be delivered through capital investment but by implementing a volunteer training programme within the Catchment areas in the Cwm Taf area which will include the rivers of the Taff Fawr, Taff Fechan, Rhondda Fach, Rhondda Fawr and

the Bargod. It is realistic that the proposed indicators will be met and achieved. The level of involvement and assessment within the catchment areas has yet to be identified, but considering the connection to our Upland and agricultural areas and the need identified within those areas, we can assert that intervention would have a significant positive impact upon the Cwm Taf Rural area.

### Rural Poverty, Isolation & Family Development

The LDS seeks to address the issues of rural poverty through LEADER intervention. Families living in poverty are not just the ones suffering from ill health or unemployment; fuel poverty and in-work poverty are real issues facing the communities in the Rural Action Cwm Taf area. This has been identified in ongoing consultation with community stakeholders in the development of the LDS. Through the reduction of non-statutory local services locally, this poverty is compounded by the reduction of community engagement hubs, threatening the community cohesion of a rural area, leading to increased isolation for some members of our rural communities and a reduction in access to services. Services for young people appear to be suffering, and a focus on innovative youth engagement provision has been identified as an opportunity.

Opportunities also exist to provide intervention in rural broadband access and renewable energy systems, which not only enable communities to become competitive in an economic sense, but also addresses basic needs of online service provision and reducing energy costs.

## **6.2 Evaluation Plan**

Baseline data from the Rural Action Merthyr RDP programme 2007-2013 will be used as appropriate to inform future project activity and provide additionality to the evaluations being undertaken in the 2014-2020 programme (see Appendix 9). The survey information still being undertaken of beneficiaries through Axis 4 will be submitted in April and the evaluation of the previous Axis 3 programme will serve as baseline data until operations have been decided upon. The evaluation of Axis 3 and its projects is attached under Appendix 9.

Once priority for animation has been agreed by the LAG, LEADER funds will seek to undertake feasibility studies, drawing in other funds wherever possible to add value to the programme. Baseline data of this nature will be sourced when required, following operation identification by the LAG. This will be procured appropriately within MTCBC and Welsh Government guidance.

Evaluations within the programme delivery period will take the form of:

- Case studies
- Feasibility reports
- Analysis of monitoring data
- Surveys of beneficiaries
- Stakeholder interviews

- On line surveys
- Communication materials (leaflets etc)
- Community surveys

Evaluation will take the form of annual internal Action Research, identified and undertaken by the LAG with support from the Lead Administrative Body, assessing the success of animation delivery, and providing information to direct the development of the LDS moving forward. Each evaluation will be held in conjunction with the LDS yearly review. Assessment will be made on how PIs have been achieved and how appropriately cross cutting themes have been addressed. The evaluation will report back on delivery of the Rural Action Cwm Taf outcomes as listed in section 6.1 and the Intervention Logic Table (3.4), as well as assessing value for money from the programme to the local rural community.

Data will be stored securely within systems put in place by MTCBC, who adhere to the most up to date ISO standards. In addition to this, data will be submitted through the PPIMS system and as a consequence will be available for evaluators to view at any time.

At the end of the programme, a summative evaluation will be undertaken by externally procured professionals to complete the programme evaluation fully. This evaluation will draw on the yearly internal evaluation activity and provide an overarching report, outlining successes, case studies and lessons learnt from the joint programme.

At each part of the process, advice will be sought from the WEFO Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Team (RME), and training for LAG members provided by this team will be attended. The RME team will be consulted with for each evaluation, and these will be submitted to the team for the assessment of LEADER benefits on a National scale.

## SECTION 7 – SUITABILITY OF INVESTMENT

Description	Explain the need and demand for the Local Action Group and the actions identified in the Local Development Strategy and whether this demand is already being met through existing provision. Explain how the Local Action Group will be able to successfully deliver the proposed activity.
Linked to	Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

### **7.1 A description of the community involvement process in the development of the strategy**

*(1,000 words plus a list of consultee groups and organisations)*

Once the joint expression of interest was approved in June 2014, work has been undertaken to meet with, consult and engage with community stakeholder groups and organisations. Rural Action Cwm Taf promotes and encourages a transparent, open process in communication and will continue with this approach throughout the programme delivery period.

Meetings of cluster groups, community groups and management boards have been attended, with one to one meetings with individuals being undertaken when diaries have prevented wider focus meetings. Particularly time intensive, this approach has resulted in organisations and individuals being fully immersed in the development process and this has resulted in the Lead Administrative Body receiving numerous emails and information on community need, from strategic management plans of community priority to basic logic tables outlining wish lists upon which to focus LEADER funds.

Following these meetings, communication has been regular, with the development of the new joint RCT/MT LAG – Rural Action Cwm Taf. The representatives on the LAG have an overview of community need, being involved in the third, private or public sector and are highly experienced, professional individuals. The project development group, which will be established to encourage operation development under animation, will have representation from the community organisations/representatives that interact with regularly with LAG members ensuring continued communication of process and development throughout the programme. At the centre of this is the Lead Administrative Body which will provide the co-ordination and function of ensuring communication is appropriate and at regular intervals throughout the programme delivery period. (please see appendix 3)

There are many groups in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf, set up for a variety of reasons, but no provision exists in the form of Rural Action Cwm Taf. Not only does the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG have representation across the geographical area of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf, but it also represents all areas of community interest. Many groups in existence have been set up from a necessity to address an area of priority eg, Biodiversity, tourism or trails, but none of these groups work on an even, unbiased basis towards assessing **rural** need. The needs set out in the Intervention Logic Table are being addressed perhaps on an

individual basis by certain funds/groups, however the LAG and LDS take an holistic view of these operations, and works primarily on a results based accountability approach in assessing a priority need for our rural wards and then coming up with innovative solutions to deliver on the priority. This could include partners and alternative funds to add value to delivering on the priority need, but the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG is unique in that it has a responsibility to deliver on overarching Rural need across the entire geographical rural area.

For further information on the list of stakeholders/individuals engaged with please see Appendix 4. Evidence of dialogue exists in the form of emails, proformas, logic tables and meeting minutes. Some examples are included in Appendix 6. In addition to the evidence in the aforementioned Appendices, workshop and community engagement exercises continue to be held as part of the capacity building and animation of the programme. The wider Cwm Taf RDP stakeholder group is a group which receives information and contributes on a regular basis to LEADER events (distribution list of groups attached to Appendix 4). Meetings on the LDS and consultation will continue to be undertaken. A yearly consultation event, open to all rural community members and organisations will be held, along with regular updates and communications from the LAG and Lead Administrative function to keep organisations involved throughout the life of the programme.

Communication detail from June 2014 until December 2015 can be found in the communications plan (Appendix 5). From June 2014, the number of meetings with stakeholder groups and organisations is 19, with ongoing meetings and extended consultation with the general public still being undertaken until the end of March 2015. Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (as part of its commitment to the LAG) has held a forum on RDP to which 250 groups were invited and Interlink have disseminated information across their networks. Social Housing Landlords have shared information on RDP consultation events with their tenants to give them the opportunity to contribute to animation for the LAG to assess priority need and identify implementation projects for development. The communications plan has been developed as a working document, and will therefore be in continued use following the LDS submission. The communication document will be revisited and re-assessed yearly in tandem with the LDS, which is why at this stage the planned communication is only listed until December 2015. The communications plan will then be revised as per evaluation and extended into future years. Communication regarding the dissemination of information on the Welsh Governments Community Development Fund will also be included in this plan as soon as information is clarified on role out and process of application.

## **7.2 SWOT Analysis to show development needs and potential of the proposed area**

*(No word limit – table format)*

For evidence of SWOT please see Section 1 – Strategic Fit

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Due to small populations and a resilient community	Young people becoming engaged in community groups	Local communities still have a sense of pride and want the	Membership of groups including LAGs fades due to

spirit, community cohesion is more willing to be embraced	is weak	best for their community, with the ability to produce good project ideas for development	lack of transparency and trust in programme delivery
Shared rural boundaries facilitate greater networking	Cycle of poverty is difficult to break out of	Community cohesion could improve through community cohesion events	Future funding continues to reduce = community groups break down leading to no LEADER communication
Active local groups across the Cwm Taf rural area	Unemployment is high, and current opportunities for employment are low	Improvements to local education facilities = more opportunities for upskilling, inspiring confidence and aspirations	Sickness and disability continues to limit a significant number of the population, regardless of will or intent which can lead to social exclusion
World Class heritage product/features	Traditional reasons for a ward/village existence no longer remains, lessening a feeling of sense of purpose for existing communities	Digital inclusion projects	Increase of low paid part time employment which reinforces in work poverty
Geographical location – good road links	A high level of the existing population has no formal qualifications	Heritage & Tourism development to increase visitor economy	Developed projects that lead to unsustainable, seasonal employment
Thriving Partnership groups (BID, Heritage Forum, Tourism)	High percentage of the population have no access to a car/van	Uplands projects have yet to be explored	Further cuts to the public sector lead to a reduction of public transport availability, limiting rural community access to services further
Majority of population believe themselves to be in good or very good health	Rural public transport is intermittent/non-existent	Eco system services, water management and species conservation to improve community life and enhancing tourism destination management product	Universal credit in future will only be available online, which further penalises the poorer, more deprived areas of the rural community who are digitally excluded.
Progressive work being undertaken in conservation and biodiversity development	High levels of deprivation (WIMD) across wards	Bordering National Park	Community cohesion reduces due to lack of service provision and central contact

			points of community support.
		Communities are becoming more Carbon aware and acknowledging the cost benefits of energy saving measures	
		Community resilience projects to address fuel poverty, community food growing and projects to tackle flooding.	
		Links to natural resource management work such as upskilling the rural population through heritage skills qualifications	
		To create area statements for priorities and opportunities in managing an areas natural resources for long term benefits for people, economy and environment eg NRW's RCT Trial.	
<p>Ranking of operation need at this stage has not been undertaken fully by the LAG, however this SWOT analysis has enabled the development of the hierarchy of objectives as outlined in section 3.4.</p>			



## SECTION 8 – CROSS CUTTING THEMES

Description	Explain how the Local Action Group will maximise its contribution towards the Cross Cutting themes of Equal Opportunities, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty.
Linked to	Sections 3.6 and 3.7 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

### 8.1 Cross-Cutting Themes

*(1,500 words)*

The LAG have agreed that all projects coming forward for assessment will need to outline in a Project Proforma (Appendix 8) how they intend to integrate and address the cross cutting themes of:

- Equal Opportunities
- Sustainable Development
- Tackling Poverty
- Social Exclusion
- Welsh Language

When assessing project proposals weighting criteria will be developed to incorporate the above themes so that an assessment process through the LAG can work in an open and transparent way.

Projects will need to include Equalities Impact Assessments and Sustainable communities information, so that an holistic approach can be reinforced. The aim of this is to mitigate and minimise risk of implementing projects which may be beneficial to one particular area or section of the community which could, as a consequence, have a detrimental impact upon another area or section of the Rural Action Cwm Taf community.

Tackling Poverty is a key outcome for the Rural Action Cwm Taf RDP Programme and all projects/operations will need to have this cross cutting theme at the heart of their delivery. Health is another cross cutting theme (which commonly goes hand in hand with poverty) which the Cwm Taf LAG has decided to address in addition to those themes outlined by Welsh Government, and all operations will need to contribute towards healthy living community outcomes.

Work could potentially be undertaken to provide a baseline of qualitative data which researches the Tackling Poverty issues which need to be addressed with the local Cwm Taf area. If this is advised by the LAG, the research will take place early in the programme delivery period to ensure all operations are addressing the correct priorities within the specific area of need.

Welsh Language is a statutory requirement and will continue to be promoted and implemented across the Rural Action Cwm Taf area. All communication materials will be available in the medium of Welsh, and external press communications will be

fully translated before submission. Translation costs for Rural Action Cwm Taf will be incorporated into the MTCBC translation agreement, and its commitment to the “Living Language” National Action Plan for Wales produced by the Welsh Government.

Projects being put forward for consideration will need to outline how they will encourage the use of Welsh Language in operations and how this will add value to their project. Partnership working with Menter Iaith on this theme, and research to provide baseline data on Welsh Language usage and engagement could be implemented as one of the first actions of the LAG (this has yet to be agreed). This baseline data across the Cwm Taf Rural wards would enable cohesive evaluations to be undertaken to prove the impact of the LEADER programme in the rural wards of Merthyr Tydfil & RCT.

## **8.2 Supporting the Uplands**

*(1,000 words)*

With continued advice from Welsh Government, Rural Action Cwm Taf is seeking to undertake operations in the Uplands area of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

A new and exciting area of exploration for the rural programme in Merthyr Tydfil & RCT, it is envisaged that this cross cutting theme, will provide the basis for potential Inter-Territorial co-operation working and the implementation of positive eco system management projects. Information held on the uplands in this area is scarce, and so research and studies into this area, working with partners such as the Caerphilly/Blaenau Gwent Rural LAG, BBNPA, Local Landowners, South & West Wales Wildlife Trust, NRW and the South East Wales Rivers Trust is important in understanding the Uplands in this area fully to enable the best possible intervention. Please see the Intervention Logic Table in section 3.4 for the Uplands inclusion in the hierarchy of objectives under the LEADER themes.

The following are all options for consideration under this theme and will be discussed and prioritised by the LAG will support from Welsh Government were appropriate.

- Managing ecosystems (including river management)
- Access to services
- Rural transport (if opportunities arise)
- ICT connectivity
- Destination Management & Local Food Supply chains
- Agricultural development/Diversification
- Timber Management
- Renewable Energy Systems

As referenced in Section 8.1, the project proforma submission document for LAG consideration (appendix 8) stipulates that each project should make a concerted effort to benefit all cross cutting themes. Where projects are being submitted from upland areas across the Rural Cwm Taf area, said project will have to draw reference to the proposed beneficial activity for the Uplands.

As noted in the Logic Table (Section 3), there are opportunities to create one

overarching implementation project within the LEADER programme which could incorporate a number of the above priorities and have the Uplands at its heart. Taking a river catchment approach to the Uplands and eco system management, the map below illustrates the upland areas within Merthyr Tydfil and RCT, along with the associated farms and agricultural areas which form part of the Uplands. The map represents land over 300m, which is a rough approximation and each location is likely to have a different height of 'uplands' depending on localised geographic features, history etc and will have to be identified on a needs basis.

Although projects have yet to be identified, the river catchment approach, incorporating Taff Fawr, Taff Fechan, Rhondda Fach, Rhondda Fawr and Bargoed (where falling under rural wards) will likely be supported, which should positively impact upon at least 8 rural wards in the Cwm Taf area and benefit the associated farms associated with those upland areas. As you will see from the map, the connection to our Upland and agricultural areas and the associated need within those areas suggests that intervention with these outputs would have a significant positive impact upon the Cwm Taf Rural area.

Priority areas have to be decided by the LAG, but taking the catchment approach, Merthyr Vale, Bedlinog, Treharris, Vaynor, Rhigos and Maerdy will be areas of project priority, which enables collaboration with adjoining LAGs where possible. Upland projects will aim to increase economic benefits to the area, through upskilling, business development/diversification and eco systems management which will increase the use and footfall of rural villages and communities, open spaces and visitor attractions in the area. Our Upland areas are some of the most beautiful in the South Wales Valleys and interventions will seek to promote the opportunities created, long-term.

Community venues in the uplands could see a benefit from implementing low carbon/low cost energy reduction measures to sustain the future of these important community hubs and digital connections in our uplands areas to enable mapping, tourism smartphone applications and connectivity has been highlighted as an area of interest for the LAG to look into further through animation.

Co-operation projects (for e.g. Timber Management) as referenced in the Logic Table, will work to utilise the strengths of the uplands for socio-economic benefit and the best value for community development and village renewal. There will be no duplication with Farming Connect in relation to any implementation developed under this priority and relationships will be built with Farming Connect to ensure that projects under LEADER are complimentary to the Farming Connect scheme.





## SECTION 9 – LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Description	Explain the potential of the Local Action Group to continue the proposed activity beyond the lifetime of the Programme.
Linked to	Section 5.0 of the LDS Guidance June 2014

### 9.1 Mainstreaming Plan

Please read this section in conjunction with Section 1.2. Communication on mainstreaming activity and ongoing operation intervention will be part of the communications document (appendix 5). This information will not only be disseminated to all stakeholders/organisations (appendix 4), but also be part of workshop/event information sharing and the project development groups bi-monthly update. The LAG membership will also take a responsibility in disseminating all relevant information across the networks they have access to. When working on project proposals, all groups, stakeholders and organisations should consider future sustainability and mainstreaming opportunities, as the LAG will be taking this into consideration when assessing the successfulness of an application. Support will also be provided through the Rural Action Cwm Taf Lead Body and the European & External Funding Teams of MTCBC and RCTCBC.

As referenced in Section 1.2, mainstreaming will be enabled through the added value of other funds. Rural Action Cwm Taf LEADER funds can enable innovation and provide priority intervention in the rural wards of Merthyr Tydfil and RCT, however, to deliver sustainable, comprehensive projects/operations, mainstreaming in most cases will be required. It will be a priority for the LAG to focus upon mainstreaming (please see Terms of Reference Appendix 1) projects. Once identified, support will be delivered through the most appropriate organisation to deliver mainstreaming in partnership with LEADER funds. This will either be through Local Authority European & External Funding Teams or through the support of the Project Development Team meetings, co-ordinated by the Rural Action Cwm Taf Administrative Body. MTCBC & RCTCBC are represented on the LAG and this will ensure updated communication between the group mainstreaming an activity and the LAG will be maintained.

On occasion it will be necessary for organisations/operation delivery partners to present to the LAG updates. Mainstreaming activity will be a requirement of these updates.

Where the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG has identified priority intervention, the Lead Administrative Body, working with the appropriate EU & External Funding Team will source opportunities for mainstreaming.

It is envisaged that eventually the Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG will become constituted in its own right. This will be done with the support of the Rural Action

Lead Body, MTCBC & RCTCBC. If constituted and continuing to be successful, it is hoped that the LAG will continue to develop and support activity to support the rural economy and community post 2021.

## SECTION 10 – DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I am acting with the authority of the Local Action Group and certify to the best of my knowledge and belief the information provided in this Local Development Strategy application and supporting documentation are true and correct and the application for financial assistance is for the minimum required to enable the project to proceed.

I undertake to notify the Welsh Government in advance of carrying out any changes to the nature of this project.

I also confirm that I am not aware of any reason why the project may not proceed and that the commitments and activities can be achieved within the timescales indicated.

### **Local Action Group (LAG) Representative**

<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Alyn Owen
<b>Chair/Deputy Chair LAG:</b>	Chair of Rural Action Cwm Taf LAG
<b>Date:</b>	09.07.2015

### **Administrative Body Representative**

<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Joanne Nicholas
<b>Position in Administrative Body:</b>	Co-ordinator
<b>Date:</b>	09.07.2015

**A signed hard copy of the Local Development Strategy must be received at the address below no later than 30 September 2014**

Scheme Management Unit, Welsh Government, Rhodfa Padarn, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion. SY23 3UR

Please submit an electronic copy to: [LEADER2014-2020@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:LEADER2014-2020@wales.gsi.gov.uk)