

# Press Release

For immediate use  
18<sup>th</sup> March 2015



## **New Funding Secured for the Rural West of England**

Communities and businesses in the rural parts of North Somerset, Bath & North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire will benefit from £1.56 million of Government and European Union funding over the next five years.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has confirmed the allocation to the West of England LEADER Partnership following a successful bid into the new Rural Development Programme for England. This new scheme is one of 80 such projects now being funded across rural England.

This LEADER programme is the fifth iteration of the Europe wide programme which seeks to improve the quality of life in rural areas by linking the rural economy with locally devised actions.

As the scheme has not previously run in the West of England, a Local Action Group has to be set up to help steer the project. This group will oversee grant applications, make decisions about allocation of funding and shape eligibility criteria.

The Local Action Group will be made up from representatives across the area; from business and farming interests, environmental and forestry groups, heritage and training organisations, the voluntary sector, Parish and District Councillors, in addition to rural community representatives.

It is anticipated that an announcement on eligibility criteria and the first call for projects will not be made until later in the year. In the meantime further information will be posted on the project site <https://westofenglandleader.wordpress.com/>

**Ends**

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**Notes to editors:**

The acronym 'LEADER' derives from the French words "*Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale*" which means, 'Links between the rural economy and development actions'. The idea was to enlist the energy and resources of people and bodies that could contribute to the rural development process by forming partnerships at a sub-regional level between the public, private and civil sectors.

In practical terms, LEADER gives both the development strategy design and funding powers to the local level, which makes it an effective decentralisation tool. The basic administrative unit is a non-profit **Local Action Group** (LAG) open to all participants in a given rural area.

Further details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leader-approach-in-the-rdpe-national-delivery-framework>

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**About the West of England Network**

The West of England Rural Network is a charity established to provide an expert resource for rural communities in South Gloucestershire, Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset & Bristol.

We support and work with communities, businesses, social enterprises, organisations and individuals on a wide range of topics that impact on rural areas.

The West of England Rural Network aims are;

- To support & encourage community-led action and strong local governance
- To increase the long-term sustainability of local community life
- To influence policies and services to achieve equity for rural communities

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