

# **Lindsey Action Zone**

**Creating a vibrant future for an attractive rural area**

Contact:

Justin Brown  
Head of Economic Regeneration Policy  
Lincolnshire County Council  
Beech House  
Waterside South  
Lincoln  
LN5 7JH

[Justin.brown@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Justin.brown@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

01522 550630

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## **i. Introduction**

The Lindsey Action Zone (LAZ) is an area which includes the Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Lincolnshire Limewoods, and a network of attractive local towns. A strong sense of identity is associated with the area, and this sense of identity spreads from the designated AONB area into the surrounding market towns and villages.

Factors of rural decline affect the area, and without co-ordinated and locally led action the area will continue to suffer.

Partners have created the LAZ in order to maintain and preserve the positive attributes of the area, building on the opportunities that arise from being part of an attractive area with a strong sense of identity.

Our vision is that:

The Lindsey Action Zone recognises the importance of sustaining and developing an improved quality of life for its residents and visitors through encouraging economic and social development that recognises and works in harmony with the deeply rural character of the Lindsey area.

Maintaining and enhancing this into the future will be the role of the Lindsey Action Zone, particularly in identifying and tackling the effects of rural isolation and lagging neighbourhoods. It will enable the area to achieve its potential and become:

- increasingly self-sufficient
- an area renowned for high quality
- well known for its local character and special features
- sustainably developed
- a welcoming and attractive place to live, work, invest and visit

## **ii. Socio-economic characteristics of the Lindsey Action Zone**

The area which will be covered by the LAZ is the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a network of market towns (Market Rasen, Caistor, Louth, Spilsby, and Horncastle), the Lincolnshire Limewoods, and an outlying area which falls within the influence of the Wolds. The map attached at annex 1 shows the area in detail.

The total population of the area is 80,247 and the area covers 1,615 square kilometres. The area is within East Lindsey and West Lindsey districts, both of which have been characterised as lagging rural districts by DEFRA.

Although the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB actually goes into one ward of North East Lincolnshire, which is in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, this Local Development Strategy remains within the East Midlands. We have agreed to work very closely with the RDPE programme in that area, see section x below.

The LAZ can be characterised as having:

- A special landscape and exceptional but underdeveloped heritage assets
- A strong reliance on agriculture, a sector that has experienced significant change
- A culture of small business, but slow growth within small businesses
- A limited tourist infrastructure despite having qualities that tourists are actively pursuing

A demographic imbalance, with an ageing population and out migration of young people  
An area where rural isolation and low proximity to services is widespread  
A Lindsey Action Zone partnership that is keen to make a difference

*A special landscape and character*

The LAZ extends across three broad but comparable 'Local Character Areas' as mapped by the Countryside Agency Countryside Character study (1999). The overriding character areas are those of the Lincolnshire Wolds and Central Lincolnshire Vale, with the eastern section of the LAZ containing a smaller but distinct area of the Lincolnshire (Coast and) Marshes. The latter provides an important geographical link to the neighbouring Coastal Action Zone.

The market towns of Market Rasen, Caistor, Louth, Spilsby, and Horncastle are within the LAZ. Market Rasen is the western gateway to the area, with a weekly market, the only racecourse in Lincolnshire and a good range of independent shops. Caistor is an attractive town which retains much of its Georgian character and has significant Roman history. The Georgian town of Louth, a busy service centre known as the capital of the Wolds, is home to the county's last remaining cattle market (which performs an important agricultural and social function) and many locally run specialist shops. Spilsby is on the south east edge of the LAZ is strongly linked to the historical figure John Franklin and has a weekly market. Horncastle was a strategic Roman settlement and has gained a reputation as an antiques centre with a botanical history based around Sir Joseph Banks who had a house in the town. The market towns within the area retain their weekly markets and promote other specialist market activity.

The three broad Local Character Areas are strongly linked through combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, landuse and human settlement to create a particular sense of place. Key characteristics of the LAZ area which contribute to its collective special character, distinctiveness and landscape quality include:

1. The dominance of mixed and productive agricultural land
2. The juxtaposition of flat and gently undulating topography,
3. Broad vistas including extensive views from the Wolds across the Central Lincolnshire Vale to the west and Coastal Marshes to the east and intimate views within the Lincolnshire Limewoods
4. Sparse nucleated settlement patterns often with a church, or traditional farm buildings as the primary node
5. Vernacular buildings (often of brick and pantile or local stone), country houses, and ecclesiastical heritage interest
6. Archaeologically rich with ancient trackways, deserted medieval villages and burial mounds
7. Common pattern of similarly sized, but highly distinctive, market towns that have evolved and developed through close association with the Wolds and its wider hinterland.
8. A safe, tranquil and attractive environment.

Other common characteristics across the landscape types include scattered farms, parkland estates of varying sizes, spring-line villages, medieval earthworks, prehistoric barrows, and mature woodlands, particularly in the lower reaches of the Wolds and the Central Lincolnshire Vale.

Much of the Wolds, which forms the dominating Landscape Character Area (LCA) of the LAZ, have been designated an AONB since 1973. It is one of only two nationally protected landscapes in the East Midlands, recognised for its outstanding scenic quality, as well as for its cultural, historic and geological value. The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB is unique in forming

the only area of upland chalk that has been actively shaped by glaciation and includes a particularly rich archaeological resource. Whilst much of the area is still intensively farmed the opportunities and benefits of developing appropriate tourism is becoming increasingly apparent.

The Viking Way long distance footpath and the Hull to Harwich cycle route pass through the area. The number of public visitor sites is currently low although there is an extensive network of public rights of way and minor roads with a number of promoted self-guided walking and cycling routes. Snipe Dales country park is an example of the type of visitor site that could be developed to increase visitors and recognise the particular characteristics of the area.

The Lincolnshire Limewoods area around Wragby and Bardney contains the greatest concentration in Britain of ancient woodland characterised by small leaved lime trees, with numerous sites collectively designated as the Bardney Limewoods National Nature Reserve. Adjacent to the Lincolnshire Limewoods, beside the upper Witham Valley, lies one of the highest densities of medieval monastic remains in the county. Chambers Farm Wood, between Wragby and Bardney, is an example of an initiative that helps people to appreciate woodland heritage as is the Falconry and Conservation Centre at Langworth.

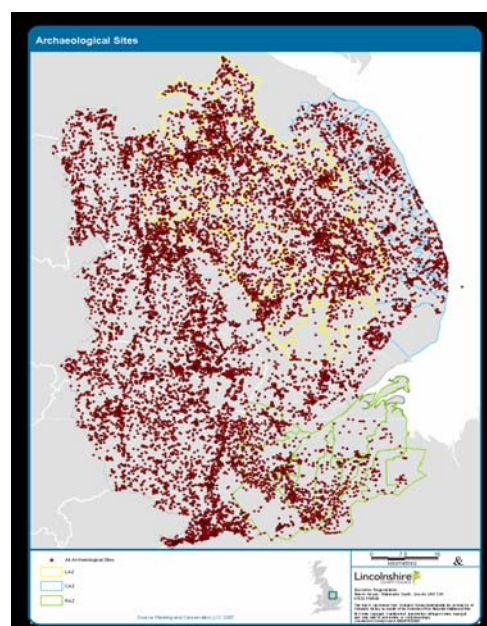
The LAZ also includes an important heathland belt known as the Coversands which extends between the two market towns of Market Rasen and Caistor and south near Woodhall Spa. This area is characterised by acidic heathland that has developed on the low lying wind blown sands that overly the Jurassic and glacial clays. Much of the traditional heathland has been fragmented by large woodland plantings, typically conifer plantations dominated by Scots and Corsican pine.

The area of the LAZ also has a number of distinctive grassland, stream and wetland habitats. These include important, but often isolated alkaline, neutral and acidic habitats, some of which remain as remnants within churchyards, and roadside verges. There is also a significant number of attractive Protected Roadside Verges which require management. There is a network of streams, calcareous marshes and spring-line flushes which form important components of the wider river catchments throughout the Lindsey area. These include the nationally important chalk streams in the high Wolds and the more acidic alder carr (wet woodland) of the southern Wolds.

There are a high number of scheduled monuments, sites of specific scientific interest, regionally important geological sites and sites of nature conservation importance. Old Bolingbroke Castle, birthplace of King Henry IV, is close to Spilsby.

Figures in the 2006 English Heritage report "Scheduled Monuments at Risk" did, however, show that around half of the scheduled monuments in the area were at high risk.

A Historic Landscape Characterisation study is being started in Lincolnshire in 2008 and this will help to shape local plans for raising the profile of heritage in the county.



*The challenge for the LAZ* is to ensure that any programme of action put in place to help residents and visitors to understand and appreciate the area's beauty is not detrimental to its special landscape and character. Any subsequent promotion and tourism developments will be carefully considered by the partnership to ensure that they are appropriate to the rural character of the area. Infrastructure improvements will also be scrutinised by relevant local planning authorities through their relevant development control policies and procedures. Whilst much of the area is still intensively farmed the opportunities and benefits of developing appropriate tourism are becoming increasingly apparent.

#### *A strong reliance on agriculture and traditional industries*

The agricultural sector is not simply an economic sector; it is part of the make up and character of the area. Agricultural businesses are custodians and stewards of the landscape's character, and therefore offer an essential part of our strategy both as an employer and as an influencer of what we deliver. That said, it is important to recognise the role that agriculture plays in the economy.

Agricultural employment in Lincolnshire is more than three times the national average (5.1% of employment as opposed to 1.5% nationally, Census 2001). Workers in the agricultural sector generally have a higher than average age and lower than average skills. Thus with the county's ageing workforce - allied to increasing mechanisation within the sector – it is likely that fewer jobs will be available in the sector. However, because of retirement patterns there will nonetheless be vacancies that will need to be filled by skilled staff.

The contribution food and farming make to the county's economy is more than 4 times that of its contribution in the national economy highlighting the dependency the county has on this industry. The trend within the LAZ is similar to the county picture.

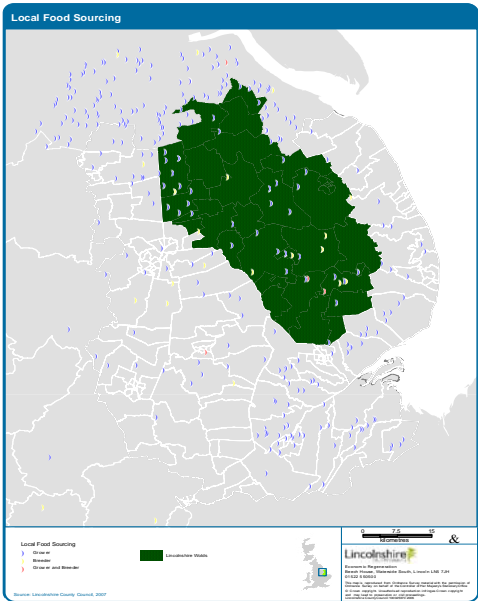
Cereal and oilseed rape production require large amounts of land use and it is not surprising that this is predominant in the LAZ - accounting on average for a quarter of agricultural output. Adapting to climate change and global warming could change farming patterns in the future. Pests and diseases, resource management and mitigating the impact of the recent extreme weather conditions will necessitate changes from the industry to reduce risk and costs. These challenges mean that we need to address any reluctance to adapt by helping to identify and promote new innovative opportunities for the sector.

The 2005 Farm Business Survey demonstrates that diversification out of agriculture offers significantly higher economic returns - average output from farm diversification is £8,242 against an average cost of £2,895. The challenge for the LAZ is to establish an environment in which agricultural diversification can be successful without moving significantly from the fact that the agricultural nature of the area is one of its unique characteristics. Doing this will help the area to adapt to global and consumer changes, and will also help to attract young farmers to stay in the sector thus reducing the ageing structure of the sector.

A big opportunity for broadening farm incomes is through alternative energy supply and use. Lincolnshire County Council are currently running a scheme - part funded by EMDA - to promote biomass to businesses. To date the scheme has provided 24 grants for companies to install biomass of which 8 are within the LAZ. This would indicate that there is a demand for this type of scheme, and that there is a foundation on which to develop the activity further. We have also been approached by a company that extracts methane from landfill sites and liquifies it for onward sale. This type of activity would reduce the capital costs associated with alternative energies and as such could be an exemplar activity to develop for the LAZ.

Opportunities associated with local food sourcing are increasing, but to date few primary producers in the area are taking advantage of this opportunity. Work undertaken by the Lincolnshire Forum for Agriculture and Horticulture to promote local food sourcing has identified that only 52 growers and breeders in the LAZ are actively promoting local food sourcing compared to 345 across the rest of Lincolnshire.

Although the figures in the LAZ are low, there are high incidences of local food sourcing elsewhere (particularly in North Lincolnshire) which demonstrates that this is a real opportunity.



The Lincolnshire Quality Beef, Lamb, and Pork network has established a strong distribution base and this represents an ideal route for meat producers to take advantage of local food sourcing. High quality farm shops, similar to “Sunnyside Up” near Market Rasen, could also be developed through this programme.

The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Sustainable Development Fund has recently supported 10 farm related projects often linked with diversification including schemes concerned with renewable energy, improving training provision, resource efficiency, accommodation and equine service provision. The scheme has operated well at the local level often achieving good economies of scale through a culture of partnership and community working.

*The challenge for the LAZ* is to support the growth of the land based sector in a way that raises farm incomes, promotes the sector as a good place to work, and retains the special characteristics of the area.

*Low levels of small business growth*

Figures relating to the growth of small businesses are kept at district level (VAT registrations/deregistrations by industry, NOMIS 2005). It is generally recognised that the rural areas of Lincolnshire, such as the LAZ, have a large number of small and micro businesses (employing less than 50) and that these provide important employment and economic growth. The attraction of inward investment as a way of creating new jobs is unlikely, so *the challenge is* to create more and higher quality jobs through nurturing the small and micro businesses that already exist.

NOMIS shows that the number of small businesses, by sector, in the districts is:

	East Lindsey	West Lindsey
Agriculture and forestry	1080	585
Mining and quarrying	5	5
Manufacturing	320	215
Construction	610	375
Wholesale and retail	1105	555
Hotels and restaurants	520	160

Transport and storage	180	175
Financial intermediation	15	20
Real estate and rental	660	540
Public administration	270	155
Education, health, social	60	45

It is evident that there is a culture of small and micro businesses in the area in sectors that are most relevant to the RDPE –agriculture, wholesale and retail, hotels and restaurants, and transport and storage- are the sectors that relate most closely to the priorities of the RDPE

However, there is evidence that the number of small businesses in the activities that RDPE would be most likely to support is at best staying level and is often slightly reducing.

For example, the 2005 NOMIS figures show that the number of businesses increasing or decreasing by sector was static. This lack of churn is impeding economic growth:

Change in small/micro business stock by sector	East Lindsey	West Lindsey
Agriculture	-5	-10
Wholesale and retail	+20	-5
Hotels and restaurants	+5	0
Transport and storage	+5	+10

The relatively static figures suggest amongst other things that the delivery of business services is not penetrating the business community. This is likely to be a particularly important issue for rural businesses. Business Link currently operates in the area, and they will shortly be recruiting an adviser with the remit of supporting land-based businesses which will help to address this issue. Other small scale business support projects, such as Advance Rural Lincolnshire which offers advice and grants towards consultancy, are currently active in the area but will cease when Objective 2 funding ends in December 2008. Advance Rural Lincolnshire has assisted 346 businesses in the area since 2005, providing information and grants so that they can expand their markets or receive technical input from specialist advisers.

Other barriers to small business growth which could be supported through this programme include limited market development, the need to improve succession planning within family owned firms, shortage of expansion space, and limited finance.

One of the principal aims of the LAZ is to develop and encourage activities which will support the growth of small and micro businesses both through direct and indirect measures. Access to advice for small businesses is generally perceived as being difficult in the area, so this will be a priority for the partnership.

#### *Limited tourist infrastructure*

Tourism is a significant part of Lincolnshire's economy. The 2005 STEAM report for Lincolnshire Tourism shows that tourism generates £850m and employs 16,000 across the county. The strongest areas for tourism in Lincolnshire are the coastal strip, the city of Lincoln, and the Stamford area. The LAZ currently has a relatively low profile as a tourist destination with a limited visitor infrastructure. However, it is an attractive environment which visitors would wish to enjoy. Some steps have been taken to promote tourism, for example the Lincolnshire Wolds Walking festival that has been in existence since 2005.

Establishing a collaborative approach with neighbouring tourism strategies, particularly those of Lincoln, Stamford and the strategy that is being produced to promote the Lincolnshire coast as a “wild coast” to tourists will be important for aiding economies of scale.

Changing patterns in the visitor economy present an opportunity for the LAZ. The area has potential for providing a unique visitor experience especially with careful marketing to promote the key assets of the area. Including, for example, the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB, the Lincolnshire Limewoods and the very distinctive market towns of the area.

There is a limited but growing number of accommodation providers throughout the area and there is a need to preserve the environment by keeping visitor car journeys low and ensuring harmony between the quiet, agricultural nature of the area and the opportunities that increased levels of tourism will bring.

In terms of tourism, *two challenges face the LAZ.*

Firstly, the need to offer more visitor attractions and activities that are sustainable and sensitive to the area. The improvements to the Viking Centre hostel at Claxby, and the high quality interpretation panels at Grimblethorpe, are examples of possible projects. Where possible, tourist projects should have the aim of enabling the tourist attraction to qualify for a brown sign. Secondly, the opportunity that the market towns offer to be gateway hubs for accommodation, transport, and services to the wider area. Tourist information points, which provide information within cafes, shops, etc have been successful in Market Rasen and this approach could be expanded across the area.

*An ageing population –with limited opportunities for young people*

The 2001 Census demonstrates that Lincolnshire has an expanding but also ageing population. 21.7% of Lincolnshire's residents are aged 60 or over, against a national average of 18.4%. This figure rises to 24.8 % in the east (where the LAZ is located). Similarly, 13.1% of residents in the east of Lincolnshire are aged 5-15 against a national average of 14.2%. This raises two issues – the first is to find ways of realising the economic advantages associated with an ageing population, and the second is to provide facilities that encourage young people to remain in the area to further their careers.

One critical element in encouraging young people to remain in the area is the provision of vocational training and further education. There is currently no further education facility in the LAZ with residents commonly travelling to Grimsby and Lincoln colleges to attend training. The difficulties associated with travelling by public transport to training, coupled with a reliance on traditional industries, mean that fewer people have undertaken training and therefore that qualifications levels are low. 32% of the workforce in the LAZ have no qualifications compared to a national average of 29%. The current number of people in the workforce who are not undertaking vocational training is 31% against a national average of 29% which suggests that the gap is likely to widen.

Schools in the Lincolnshire Wolds are working together to open a 16-19 vocational training centre in Louth. The centre is predominately aimed at school students, but it is being equipped with a distance learning infrastructure which could be used as a hub for making training available within remote communities in the LAZ.

*The challenge for the LAZ* is to develop a programme which makes the most of the skills and experience of older people whilst also establishing projects that make the area attractive to young people, encouraging them to remain in the area, creating good quality careers for themselves and adding to its vitality.

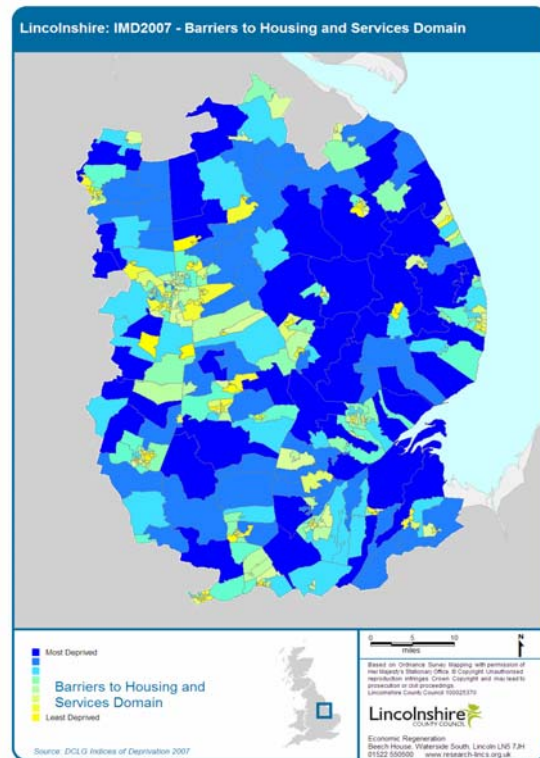
### *Access to rural services*

With the exception of the market towns, the LAZ are has poor access to services.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation's access to services and housing indicator considers the road distance from each ward to a General Practitioner, general store, primary school, and Post Office.

The majority of wards in the LAZ are within the lowest 10% in England as regards access to these services. The recent (December 2007) closures of post offices has exacerbated this problem. Public transport beyond the main A roads is limited.

SRB funding has been used in the past on a pilot basis to provide services in rural businesses (along the lines of the "Pub is the Hub" programme) and these could be replicated in the programme.



Parish plans provide a useful tool to help communities to establish services within their areas, but because the communities are generally small there is a need to provide extra support for the implementation of parish plans. Nonetheless, some communities have established community groups (eg Welton Le Wold History Society or the Belchford and Fulletby parish plan group) which can be built upon.

### **iii. the Lindsey Action Zone partnership**

This Local Development Strategy identifies how the LAZ will use Rural Development Programme for England funding to support our vision.

RDPE will provide an important catalyst for change, but the LAZ partnership will influence, shape, and deliver other funding streams in order to meet its objectives.

The partnership (Local Action Group) has been established to bring a rural development impetus to the locally derived strategies of partners in the Lincolnshire Wolds and their area of influence. By bringing those strategies together, greater coherence can be achieved and common issues can be tackled together.

The LAG is comprised of organisations from the public, private, and third sectors. Only three members of the LAG are from the public sector. All partners have joined the LAG on the basis that they have a broad representational role. This is particularly true of the third sector.

The organisations were chosen because they understand a particular set of issues and represent a wide range of interests (eg the AONB Partnership and FWAG both have strong knowledge of issues affecting the environment and land based industries) and because they have experience of delivering partnership programmes (eg Caistor Development Group etc were created out of the Market Towns Initiative and have experience of partnerships, strategy development, and delivery of funding programmes.) The LAG has a detailed

overview of rural development challenges and opportunities in the area whilst maintaining a manageable size.

#### **iv. a strategy for action**

As outlined above the LAZ recognises that there are widespread challenges facing the area. The issues are not new, and have been considered in different fora for several years. However, the Leader approach provides the impetus to create an integrated rural economy programme based on developing stronger linkages between the land based sector, tourism, existing market town partnerships, and the AONB partnership.

The LEADER method and resulting RDPE funding provides the opportunity to bring these action plans together through a broader partnership, the LAZ, and to take forward a Local Development Strategy based on the work of the various partnerships. Taking this approach will not only help to enhance existing work programmes, but encourage new and innovative activity, strategically with stronger integration between strands, to help address rural decline. Delivery could be achieved direct through eligible RDPE activity but also through individual partners on the LAZ offering both in-kind contributions as well as identifying and attracting additional funding. An overriding component of the LAZ is the aim of encouraging and fostering activity that will deliver long term benefits especially in the context of balancing economic, social and environmental development distinctive to the area.

Ultimately, the issues set out above demonstrate that the LAZ is an area that is at risk of continued rural decline unless proactive action is now taken to stem this decline. However, the analysis above also shows that there are a number of potential opportunities which, if realised, will help to address the rural decline. Balancing this mix of risk and opportunity, the LAZ partners have developed the vision set out at the start of this Local Development Strategy.

Five strategic objectives flow from the vision and from the issues that affect the area. These are:

- a. To sensitively make the most of the environmental, landscape and heritage assets across the LAZ area including those within the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Lincolnshire Limewoods and market towns.
- b. To support the growth of new business, and new business activities, in the land based sector and beyond, placing an increased emphasis on climate change mitigation and adaptation
- c. To develop a clear tourist product and help to promote the range of quality facilities available to visitors throughout the area.
- d. To enable young people to see their futures in the area through increasing training and employment opportunities.
- e. To harness the goodwill, energy, and expertise of partners in the area to deliver the shared vision

The LAG has considered these objectives in a workshop, and has the following priorities for using RDPE funding in support of the vision and objectives. We see the RDPE as a programme that is concerned with delivery, and therefore the focus in the remainder of this Local Development Strategy will be on those delivery priorities.

1. To support the sustainable diversification of land based businesses into alternative activity and facilitate the creation and development of current and emerging small businesses
2. To implement a best practice approach to encouraging visitors and to visitor management through improved promotion, interpretation, and attractions

3. To promote the role of market towns as gateways to the Lincolnshire Wolds, Lincolnshire Limewoods and surrounding areas
4. To promote links with agriculture via landscape management and regional and local food promotion.
5. To involve the community in conserving, enhancing and interpreting their local environment and cultural heritage.
6. To provide training, advice and information which enables the area's demographic groups to improve their existing skill levels and make a positive contribution to economic, environmental and social life
7. To co-operate with similar rural areas, learning from their experiences and using partnership working to enrich community activities within and beyond the Lincolnshire Wolds.
8. To continue working with other common interest groups to enrich and develop new community activities across the LAZ.

These priorities have been derived by identifying linkages between the RDPE programme measures and the existing area strategies outlined above. The priorities offer a mix of environmental and socio-economic measures. Whilst this is not a mutually exclusive distinction, it is fair to say that the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan and Limewoods Strategy has strongly informed the environmental aspects and the Market Town Initiative plans have informed the socio-economic aspects.

In addition to the priorities set out above, there are also common concerns relating to the provision of public transport and to the development of shared community facilities. If this application process is successful and the partnership moves into a delivery phase, then it is proposed that the partnership seeks additional funding from other sources so that it can address these two important and locally identified issues. Lincolnshire County Council has made some modest budget provision to address broader issues of this nature in the area.

The strategic priorities cover the range of common issues that affect the LAZ. However, it is recognised that the RDPE can only provide a finite amount of funding and has clear eligibility criteria so a programme of prioritised actions will be essential for maximising successful outcomes.

The Local Action Group proposes to produce a guide for applicants which will arise from benchmarking work in consultation with relevant partners and community groups. The baseline information and the strategic priorities will help in formulating the prospectus as detailed below. A SWOT analysis, or similar approach, will be utilised early on to help in the assessment of potential projects and aid prioritisation and timings of their intended delivery. Some initial assumptions have been used to establish the 2008/10 business plan which is set out below.

The partnership has been established by partnerships which represent rural areas and therefore have a clear role in the rural and land-based economy. The rural and land-based communities have been heavily involved in the preparation of this Local Development Strategy to help ensure it meets the needs of the local rural economy.

#### **v. Lindsey Action Zone structure**

The diagram set out at annex 2 shows the structure that Lindsey Action Zone partners will adopt in order to deliver the RDPE. The structure makes provision for

- Local Action Group
- LAG Manager
- LAG Funding Officer

- Appraisal process
- Approval panel
- Managing partner

### *Local Action Group*

The purpose of the LAG will be to identify and bring together relevant public and private sector organisations and agencies to formulate an enthusiastic, inspiring and effective partnership that will steer local delivery of the programme. All of the partners to the bid will be members of the LAG and will offer a wide range of skills and expertise. These can be summarised as:

Partner	Knowledge/interest
Business Link (private sector)	Approved supplier of advice to businesses
Caistor Development Partnership (third sector)	Caistor market town initiative Delivery of community projects Consultation on local strategies
Community Lincs (third sector)	Community representation Advice to communities Delivery of small community projects Voluntary sector infrastructure organisation
East Lindsey District Council (public sector)	Economic development Community services and development Planning Local Strategic Partnership
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (third sector)	Land based sectors Environment
Horncastle Ahead (third sector)	Horncastle market town initiative Delivery of community projects Consultation on local strategies
Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce (private sector)	Business community representation Advice to businesses
Lincolnshire County Council (public sector)	Economic development Landscape and heritage Funding programmes Access to services
Lincolnshire Tourism (private sector)	Tourism Destination Management Partnership Tourism promotion Grant programmes to tourism businesses
Lincolnshire Wolds Joint Advisory Committee (third sector/public sector hybrid)	AONB Partnership Landscape, wildlife, access and heritage Co-ordination of strategy for AONB Community involvement Delivery of small grant schemes
Market Rasen Youth Council (third sector)	Market Rasen's future Involving young people in decision making
Meridian Links (third sector)	Louth market town initiative Delivery of community projects Consultation on local strategies

Mortons of Horncastle (private sector)	Private sector perspective Delivery of training programmes within the area
National Farmers Union (private sector)	Representation of land based sectors Connections to other funding programmes
Spilsby Challenge (third sector)	Spilsby market town initiative Delivery of community projects Consultation on local strategies
West Lindsey District Council (public sector)	Economic development Community services and development Planning Local Strategic Partnership

The LAG will have the following duties:

- Setting the strategy and proposed actions for the LAZ
- Producing the promotional strategy for the RDPE
- Appointing an approval panel for RDPE applications
- Receiving quarterly progress reports and endorsing them for submission to EMDA
- Identifying gaps in provision and agreeing strategies to address them, including appointing thematic sub-groups as required
- Organising consultations with the local communities so that the strategy remains fit for purpose
- Overseeing annual financial audit reports for the programme

The LAG will meet at least four times per year. Meetings will be timed to ensure that members can attend (eg early evening meetings so that they are accessible for employed people) and venues will rotate within the LAZ area. EMDA will be invited to all meetings, and one meeting per year will be dedicated to a semi-formal review of progress between EMDA and the LAG.

A chairman will be elected by the LAG on an annual basis. It is expected that the chairman will come from the private or third sector representatives on the LAG. A formal constitution will be produced for the LAG. This will set out the role of the LAG as well as procedural issues such as the quorate number for the LAG (both number of attendees and public/private split).

The proposed structure for managing the programme makes provision both for a LAG Manager and for a Funding Officer. LAG meetings will be organised by the LAG Manager. Papers will be produced by the LAG Manager in consultation with the LAG chairman. Lincolnshire County Council will provide secretarial support to the meetings.

#### *LAG Manager*

We intend to manage the LEADER approach using two staff – a LAG Manager and a Funding Officer. The Funding Officer will be part of the managing partner and their role is considered in sections set out below.

The purpose of the LAG Manager is twofold: (i) to facilitate and support the work of the LAG, and (ii) to advise projects. Key tasks in supporting the work of the LAG will include:

- induction/capacity building for new members
- identification of opportunities for cross sectoral working

- preparation and review of the Local Development Strategy
- partnership working with other LAGs within and outside the UK
- production and presentation of monitoring and evaluation reports

Key tasks in terms of advising projects will include:

- implementation of a promotional strategy for the RDPE to potential applicants and intermediary bodies (eg business development officers, community workers, land agents)
- advice to potential applicants on eligibility and applicability of projects, both directly and through masterclass seminars
- referral to other sources of funding where projects are not applicable for RDPE
- advice on the preparation of Expressions of Interest and full applications

The LAG Manager will be employed by Lincolnshire County Council but with an understanding that they will undertake duties on behalf of the LAG partnership . To ensure, however, that the LAG Manager is accessible to the public and seen as a local resource, the LAG Manager will be based in the LAZ area (probably located in the Navigation Warehouse, Louth) and will liaise regularly with the LAG chairman.

We recognise that there will be a high number of applications from private businesses. We would not expect the LAG Manager to work directly with private businesses during the initial stages of contact with the programme. Instead we have agreed that the initial contact and screening will be done by Business Link as part of their Information, Diagnostic, and Brokerage service.

The LAG Manager will cost £27,000 + 30% on-costs = £35,100 x 6 years = £210,600

Office accommodation, consumables, and other costs of employment would be met by Lincolnshire County Council.

In addition to the LAG Manager, a Funding Officer is also proposed. The purpose of the Funding Officer is to ensure that the programme operates effectively and within the legislative framework. Their role is described in more detail in the “managing partner” section below.

### *Appraisal process*

EMDA have provided detailed guidance on the appraisal process.

In order to create a clear separation between possible projects and the appraisal/approval process, the appraisal process will be administered by the Funding Officer. All potential applicants will complete an Expression of Interest for the programme. This will be assessed by the Funding Officer to ensure eligibility, availability of funding, and compatibility with local priorities. Eligibility criteria will include (i) size (projects must be more than £7500), (ii) geography (activity should take place in the designated area), (iii) match funding (a minimum of 50% private sector match funding should be available and approved; occasionally this requirement will be relaxed if the applicant has a clear strategy for attracting the funding), and (iv) confirmation that publicity acknowledging EMDA, RDPE, and LAZ support will be consistent with the guidance. An Expression of Interest check-list will be used to support this process. Confirmation that the application does not breach state aid rules will be sought at this point, using standard information and guidance notes. Clarification on state aid issues will be sought from EMDA where appropriate. The Expression of Interest will also provide the opportunity for an assessment of the project's sustainable development potential.

Should the Expression of Interest be approved, then applicants will be asked to complete a full application form and accompanying business plan. The Funding Officer will give the applicants a target date by which they must have completed their application form and business plan.

Once the applicants have produced a full business plan, the Funding Officer will allocate the documents to two appraisal officers. Because Lincolnshire has already run ERDF, ESF, EMDA, and Leader + programmes as well as the Wolds Sustainable Development Fund there are a large number of staff in public and voluntary organisations who have been trained in the principles of appraisal. We intend to use these staff, augmented by additional new partners, to conduct the appraisals. As with the other programmes that have been mentioned, the staff will give their time in undertaking appraisals free of charge – this is partly because undertaking appraisals is useful knowledge for people to have and partly because there is a culture of co-operation within Lincolnshire.

Three points are particularly important to note on appraisals. Firstly, all potential appraisers will be asked to formally declare interests on an annual basis and to update the register as appropriate. The register will be held by the Funding Officer. Secondly, the Funding Officer will aim as far as possible to allocate projects to appraisers who have a broad knowledge of the subject of the project – e.g. appraisers with experience of environmental issues would appraise an environmental project. Thirdly, it is recognised that RDPE is different to other funding streams and that guidance on projects will change regularly. Therefore, all appraisers will receive initial training on the RDPE (EMDA's support in delivering this training will be requested) and then will attend at least annual events to update their knowledge. The Funding Officer will be responsible for organising these training events.

The appraisal will be conducted according to standard guidelines, and all projects will be recommended for approval or rejection by the appraiser along with reasons for their recommendation.

#### *Grant assessment panel*

Approval or rejection of applications will not be the responsibility of the people who are appraising the projects. Their role will be to recommend approval/rejection of a project but an assessment panel will be established to formally take those decisions.

The assessment panel will be a sub-group of the LAG. The partnership has significant experience of running approval panels, including one to oversee the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Sustainable Development Fund which will provide the model framework for the LAG.

The assessment panel will be chaired by a member of the LAG who will be appointed on an annual basis. The approval panel will comprise a maximum of nine members including the chairman, with three from the public sector and six from the private/third sector. Members of the approval panel will be chosen because of the expertise that they can bring. We will aim for the panel to have the following balance of expertise:

- Land-based businesses
- Environmental sustainability
- Small business support
- Tourism
- Community development
- Local knowledge
- Issues affecting different demographic groups

This will enable the panel to have a balanced and informed view of the applications that will have been submitted.

A register of vested interests will be taken annually, and panel members will be asked to leave the room and take no part in discussions and decisions about projects in which they must declare an interest.

It is expected that decisions on project approval will be taken by consensus. However, the Chairman will have the carrying vote in the event of tied voting.

The panel will meet quarterly in the first instance. The Funding Officer, with support from other LCC staff, will provide the secretariat role for these meetings and will be able to answer general questions about the applications. In the longer-term, the panel will meet on an “as and when” basis.

Applicants themselves will occasionally be invited to attend the panel where their projects are particularly complicated or innovative and need explanation.

#### *Appeals process*

It is possible that unsuccessful applicants will want to appeal against the decision that has been taken. The LAG will publish a clear appeal policy and accompanying set of procedures that will require unsuccessful applicants to demonstrate how they believe that their project has been judged unfairly, based on the evidence that was provided in the application. The appeal will be considered by Lincolnshire County Council’s Head of Economic Regeneration Policy and the chairman of the LAG.

#### *Managing partner*

Lincolnshire County Council will be the managing partner for this programme. Lincolnshire County Council is currently the accountable body for the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Partnership and Lincolnshire Limewoods Project, in addition to various EU funding programmes.

The Lincolnshire Wolds Joint Advisory Committee was established in 1998 with its resulting work programme coordinated through the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service (LWCS). The LWCS has run a Sustainable Development Fund which supports and advises businesses and community projects in the Wolds AONB. Since the EMDA funded pilot in 2004/05 over £300,000 has been successfully allocated to 44 projects from public, private and charitable sectors. It is proposed to use the experiences of running this Fund to help inform the development of the RDPE in the Lindsey Action Zone

The Economic Regeneration Department of Lincolnshire County Council has been the accountable body for Objective 2 (main and transition), the Childrens Fund, Single Regeneration Budget, and European Social Fund since the late 1990s. It is proposed to use the systems that have been established by the team – and which have received unqualified audits each year - to deliver the funding.

In addition, the team has been the managing agent for the Lincolnshire Fenland Leader+ LAG staff and has run Community Development Worker projects in most of the Lindsey Action Zone area in recent years. Again, this experience will be used to guide the work of the LAZ partnership.

The managing partner function will be hosted within LCC's Economic Regeneration Policy service area. The role of the managing partner will be to implement robust systems that allow a transparent, effective, and auditable flow of funding from the programme to the applicant.

The managing partner will employ a Funding Officer. The Funding Officer will ensure that the programme operates effectively and within the legislative framework. Key tasks will include:

- administration of the appraisal process for projects
- establishment and monitoring of contracts with projects
- checking claims and audit certificates for compliance, irregularities, errors and fraud and acting accordingly
- advice to project managers
- liaison with EMDA on funding/output claims and provision of quarterly monitoring returns, accruals, and profiles
- production of an annual statement from external auditors and liaison with EMDA over the systems audit that they will conduct

The Funding Officer will cost £22,000 x 30% oncosts =£28,600 x 6 years =£171,600

Office accommodation, consumables, and other costs of employment would be met by Lincolnshire County Council.

Lincolnshire County Council, East Lindsey District Council, and West Lindsey District Council have agreed to part fund the LAG Manager and Funding Officer posts because of the benefit that the programme will have to the communities in the area. Together, the partners will provide £40,000 per year (LCC £20,000, ELDC £10,000, WLDC £10,000) over six years towards these two posts. This means that the total administrative cost and proportion of budget is as follows:

- a. LAG Manager: £210,600
- b. Funding Officer: £171,600
- c. Total administrative cost: £382,200
- d. Contribution from LCC, WLDC, and ELDC: £240,000
- e. Net administrative cost (c-d): £142,200
- f. Total programme cost: £2,000,000
- g. Percentage of programme spent on administrative costs ((e/f) x 100): 7.11%

In terms of achieving efficiencies, Lincolnshire County Council is strongly involved in three Expressions of Interest for the RDPE – this Local Development Strategy, plus the Coastal and Rural Action Zones. We would expect that each successful area would need a LAG Manager, but if all three EOIs were to be successful then it is likely that only two Funding Officers would be required. This would bring the cost of administration down to £323,856, or 16% of the overall budget.

If that were the case, then the proportion of the budget would be:

- a. LAG Manager: £210,600
- b. Funding Officer: £113,256
- c. Total administrative cost: £323,856
- d. Contribution from LCC, WLDC, and ELDC: £240,000
- e. Net administrative cost (c-d): £83,856
- f. Total programme cost: £2,000,000

g. Percentage of programme spent on administrative costs ((e/f) x 100): 4.19%

Because Lincolnshire County Council will be the managing partner, it can provide, in-kind, a wide range of “backroom functions” such as internal audit, cashier, financial advice, management, etc which add a further efficiency to the equation. Internal audit will be carried out by Lincolnshire County Council staff, and an annual external audit will be carried out by the Council's appointed auditors (currently the Audit Commission). Financial records will be held on the Council's SAP system and achievement of targets will be monitored on the Council's Performance Plus system.

All records will be held until the RDPE programme is formally closed down between DEFRA and the European Commission –probably 2015 but we will seek EMDA guidance as the timetable becomes apparent. This will be done in accordance with the Council's Data Capturing and Security policy.

All staff would report to their respective LAGs, but would have a day-to-day management line to Lincolnshire County Council's Economic Regeneration Policy service area, thus enabling easy and clear cross working for example on difficult to solve issues.

#### **vi. Consultation and strategy review**

As part of the development of this strategy, we recognise that it is important to consult widely and to review the strategy. The initial approach, as set out in this Local Development Strategy, has been compiled by taking the work done by five market town initiative partnerships, the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan and the Limewoods Project. Each of these organisations undertook extensive public consultations to help identify key local issues and inform resulting aims and objectives.

We expect to review the strategy in late 2009 when the initial stages of the programme are completed. The review will assess progress against the business plan, any shifts in the socio-economic structure of the LAZ, and any changing policy priorities. This information, which will be collated by the LAG Manager with the assistance of the Lincolnshire Research Observatory, and will be used to produce a draft revised strategy to be considered by the LAG.

After the LAG has approved the draft revised strategy, it will be circulated to the relevant communities and interest groups for their views and comments. The LAG members will be responsible for identifying the businesses, communities, and organisations that they most associate with in order to build up a comprehensive list of consultees. Lincolnshire County Council has recently produced a Best Practice Guide to Community Consultation which will be used as a framework for managing the consultation and which will identify ways of working with hard to reach groups as well as ways of framing questions in plain English in order to ensure that comments/responses are forthcoming.

The results of the consultation will be fed back to the LAG in order to inform the completion of the revised strategy.

#### **vii. delivering the national programme – a business plan to 2009.**

The LAG has appointed a small drafting team to produce this Local Development Strategy and business plan. The team has held workshops and has networked with key partners to identify demand for projects. The LAZ will provide capital and revenue funding to a maximum of 50%, but will seek to maximise match funding as far as possible. The projects clearly deliver against the RDPE national programme as is set out below:

### *Diversification into non-agricultural activities*

There is a need to raise competitiveness within the LAZ in order to help reduce rural decline. The area has a large number of farm businesses, but limited numbers of businesses have diversified despite opportunities to do so in alternative energy crops, local food sourcing, and tourism.

The objective of this measure is to help farm businesses to restructure and at the same time contribute to developing the area's unique characteristics.

Types of projects will be around land management, local food sourcing, alternative fuels, tourism and retail development, re-use of buildings (RDPE indicative activities: grant aid towards the cost of capital investment, marketing support; product development, branding and design costs; and technical skills acquisition, coaching and mentoring support). We will work with the NFU, FWAG, and the Lincolnshire Forum for Agriculture and Horticulture to stimulate applications.

Indicative outputs are the number of beneficiaries, total volume of investments, and number of micro-enterprises supported/created.

£0.350m will be allocated to this measure

### *Support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises*

Micro and small businesses are critical to the competitiveness of the LAZ. However, there is currently little growth in micro and small businesses in the area due to a lack of advice, obstacles to developing new markets, and little business to business co-operation.

The objective of this measure is to create the environment in which entrepreneurs can establish and grow businesses that create high quality jobs whilst reinforcing the rural identity of the LAZ.

Types of projects will include improved information on business development, creation of a business forum, provision of business space, and support for home working (RDPE indicative activities: marketing support, product development, branding and design costs; technical skills acquisition, coaching and mentoring support; and technical support to help new businesses and social enterprises to become established and to help existing businesses to consolidate and expand). We will work with the three local authorities' Economic Development Units, the Chamber of Commerce, and Business Link to stimulate projects. All Information, Diagnostic, and Brokerage will be carried out by Business Link.

Indicative outputs are the number of beneficiaries, total volume of investments, and number of micro-enterprises supported/created.

£0.300m will be allocated to this measure

### *Encouragement of tourism activities*

The attractive nature of the area means that tourism presents a real opportunity for economic growth. The market towns can operate as a hub to attract and signpost tourists, and there are a number of opportunities concerned with rural heritage and the natural and built environments.

The objective of this measure is to create sustainable tourism that capitalises on the unique and natural landscape and is sensitive to this.

Types of projects will include visitor research and planning, production of promotional materials, provision of accommodation, festivals and events, and specialist trails eg equestrian or cycling (RDPE indicative activities: small scale infrastructure such as information points and the signposting and interpretation of tourist sites; recreational infrastructure such as that offering access to natural areas and the historic environment; small capacity accommodation provision and upgrading of existing provision; the development and/or marketing of rural tourism services; networking and collaboration within the tourism industry including benchmarking; supporting the development of new niche markets; and promotion of quality regional and local food culture and rural crafts.) We will work with Lincolnshire Tourism, the local Destination Management Partnership, and the Wolds Tourism Partnership to stimulate projects.

Indicative outputs are the number of new tourism actions supported and the total volume of investments.

£0.600m will be allocated to this measure.

#### *Conservation and upgrading of rural heritage*

There is tremendous untapped potential both to reinforce a sense of place and to add to a quality tourism product through the conservation and upgrading of rural heritage. The LAZ has attractive agricultural land, ancient monuments, and architecturally rich market towns. By preserving them and interpreting them, visitors and residents will appreciate and understand them better and develop a sense of pride in the area.

The objective of this measure is to sensitively make the most of the environmental, landscape and heritage assets across the LAZ area including those within the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB, Lincolnshire Limewoods and market towns.

Types of projects will include studies and investment associated with maintenance, restoration and enhancement of cultural heritage, village renewal, promotion of local culture and crafts, public art, open farm days, increasing the uptake of agri-environment schemes, providing recreational infrastructure that offers access to natural areas and the historic environment, interpretation, and landscape/ecosystem/catchment scale approaches to agriculture and land management (RDPE indicative activities: identify local community needs and develop environmental audits and action plans; and to studies and investment associated with maintenance, restoration, and upgrading of the cultural heritage). We will work in partnership with Market Town Initiative partnerships, Heritage Officers, Lincolnshire FWAG, and the AONB Partnership (within the boundary of the AONB) to stimulate projects.

Indicative outputs are the number of rural heritage actions supported; and the total volume of investments.

£0.390m will be allocated to this measure.

#### *Training and information related to the above activities*

Delivering the activities set out above will require new skills and competencies. Skills levels are low in the LAZ and there is a limited infrastructure available to provide those skills.

The objective of this measure is to raise skills levels and to make training more relevant to the needs of communities and businesses in the LAZ.

Types of projects will include studies into barriers to training, an extension to the Learn Direct programme, delivery of training courses for communities and businesses, and outreach facilities/tools including potentially video conferencing (RDPE indicative activities: trainers/facilitators/mentors; training venues and refreshments; course materials and examination fees; and small scale infrastructure/capital costs). We will work in partnership with the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce (who run the Train To Gain programme), the Lincolnshire Wolds Educational Cluster, Young Farmers' Clubs, and the Wolds Training Network to stimulate projects.

Indicative outputs are the number of participating economic actors to supported activities; and the number of days training received by participants

£0.160m will be allocated to this measure.

A further £0.200m will be allocated to co-operation activity, running costs, skills acquisition, facilitation and animation.

The drafting team has also undertaken an assessment of the speed with which projects could come forward and the benefit that they would have to the area. To do this, the team assessed projects against the following criteria:

- How to facilitate the project
- Barriers to delivery and how they might be overcome
- Benefits and wider impact on the rural economy
- Compatibility with other initiatives
- Relationship with CAZ and Fenland bids
- Equality and diversity
- Sustainable development
- Risks and risk management

The full assessment could be made available to EMDA as part of the Local Development Strategy approval process. The table at the back of this document titled "Lindsey Action Zone: business plan to December 2009" shows the drafting team's assumptions for project delivery from January 2008 to December 2009. We expect to allocate £485,000 of the programme's £2m during that period. Annex 3 shows the financial table for the LAZ.

#### **viii. Embedding sustainable development principles within our programme**

The LAZ seeks to promote and apply the principle of sustainable development throughout its programme, encouraging and enabling appropriate development that enhances the rural economy, community, and landscapes for current and future generations. The LAZ includes an AONB, the Lincolnshire Limewoods, and market towns which have conservation areas. Therefore an over-riding factor in the delivery of this programme is sensitive and sustainable development which recognises AONB, conservation area, and other statuses.

The most relevant strategic priorities are:

1. To support the diversification of land based businesses into alternative activity and
2. facilitate the creation and development of small businesses
3. To implement a best practice approach to visitor management through improved promotion, interpretation, and attractions
4. To promote links with agriculture via landscape management and regional and local food promotion.

5. To involve the community in interpreting, preserving, and improving their local heritage
6. To provide training and information which enables the area's demographic groups to make a positive contribution to economic and social life

Together, these priorities relate to the type of activity that will address rural decline in the LAZ. However, they are a good indication of how local issues connect very clearly with global sustainable development objectives.

The East Midlands Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) was written as a sustainable development strategy for the region, reflecting global sustainable development objectives. It can be seen as setting the framework in which global sustainable development principles should be delivered within the East Midlands. It has several objectives which the LAZ will deliver at a local level:

IRS objective 3 "To provide better opportunities for people to value and enjoy the region's heritage and participate in cultural and recreational activities" and IRS objective 6 "To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of the natural, cultural and built environmental and archaeological assets of the region" directly link to the LAZ priority "To involve the community in interpreting, preserving, and improving their local heritage"

IRS objective 5 "To promote and support the development and growth of social capital across the communities of the region" directly links to the LAZ priority "to provide training and information which enables the area's demographic groups to make a positive contribution to economic and social life"

IRS objective 6 also directly links to the LAZ priority "To implement a best practice approach to visitor management through improved promotion, interpretation, and attractions" and to the LAZ priority "To promote links with agriculture via landscape management and regional and local food promotion"

IRS objective 12 "To develop a strong culture of enterprise and innovation, creating a climate within which entrepreneurs and world-class business can flourish" directly links to the LAZ priority "To support the diversification of land based businesses into alternative activity and facilitate the creation and development of small businesses"

The LAZ clearly, therefore, meets strategic sustainable development principles. However, LAZ projects will also meet sustainable development principles on an operational front. Projects can be classed in two ways – (i) those that directly meet sustainable development priorities, and (ii) those that incorporate sustainable development principles more generally.

i) Projects that directly meet sustainable development priorities: a significant number of projects that arise through the partnership's work will be concerned with delivering sustainable development activity. For example, we have identified that projects that promote the use of local crops and agricultural waste in order to provide alternative energy will be developed. These projects directly meet the IRS objective to minimise energy usage and to develop the region's renewable energy resource, reducing dependency on non-renewable resources. Similarly, we expect that the programme will encourage local food sourcing, making links between producers and local outlets, and therefore reducing food miles and maintaining wealth and jobs within the local area. As such, these projects will meet the Integrated Regional Strategy's objective to involve people, through changes to lifestyle and at work, in preventing and minimising adverse local, regional and global environmental impacts.

ii) Projects that incorporate sustainable development principles: as stated above, at appraisal stage we will assess projects' approach to sustainable development and ensure

that actions within their project take account of those principles (eg resource use, local purchasing, community involvement). The EMIT (East Midlands Integrated Toolkit) system has been developed regionally, and is particularly valuable to the assessment of large projects. However, this system is probably too onerous for the scale of projects likely to be brought forward in the LAZ. Therefore, a lighter touch but nonetheless valuable sustainable development assessment framework will be developed. This framework will be developed in collaboration with colleagues from the Coastal Action Zone and Fenland RDPE submissions, should we be successful, and the Funding Officer will be asked to identify ways in which projects might be able to collaborate on these issues if appropriate when the sustainable development assessment has been completed.

#### **ix. Axis and sectoral integration**

The LAG that has been established for the LAZ is made up of several other partnerships, each of whom have representation from sectors and interests in the rural economy. Ensuring that the LAG works effectively, and that the Local Development Strategy takes full account of the other axes in the RDPE, will help to develop closer integration.

We see integration as having two facets – i) integrating the different programmes that support rural development in the area, and ii) integrating different sectors of the community in the programme's delivery and management

(i) Integrating different programmes: links to axis 1 and 2 will be made partly through the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service (LWCS) whose primary purpose is coordinating the protection and enhancement of the Wolds AONB through coordination and review of the statutory AONB Management Plan. Natural England is a core funding partner to the LWCS and provides regular guidance and support through the Wolds Joint Advisory Committee and its associated working groups. The LAG partnership will utilise these contacts to build understanding and links between public, private and charitable organisations with an emphasis on promoting innovative and appropriate rural recovery.

In addition the Funding Officer will screen potential applications – identifying which are eligible under strand 1 (conserving and enhancing the environment and countryside) and which under axis 3 (enhancing opportunity and quality of life in rural areas) and making connections accordingly. Links to strand 2 (competitiveness, collaboration, and diversification) will be made primarily due to the scale and nature of proposed agricultural diversification. Clearly axis 2 provides major funding to support farm diversification, and a protocol will be developed to demonstrate the connectivity between axes 2 and 3. The training which will be offered under axis 3 will be specific to realising the aims of the Local Development Strategy. Where training is more geared towards specific agricultural skills, then referral will be made to the managing agents for strand 4 (skills development).

Regular liaison with EMDA, and an annual informal conference with a range of rural stakeholders will also support this process.

The Local Development Strategy is based on a series of more locally targeted consultations and strategies. These have been prepared according to frameworks that have been developed primarily by the Countryside Agency (Natural England) and subsequently by EMDA. As such, they recognise the connections between socio-economic and environmental issues.

In terms of the strategy, some actions have been identified that will improve the social and economic wellbeing of the area. These include the development of small business and the promotion of tourism. However, the strategy also identifies that it is essential to protect the unique nature of the LAZ environment, and its links with the market towns, who together with

the larger service villages and farm buildings, can provide the location for much of the small scale development.

Utilising a settlement hierarchy approach for aiding assessment of prospective projects involving new built infrastructure or a change of use will in general terms accord well with the emerging Local Development (Planning) Frameworks for both East Lindsey District Council and West Lindsey District Council, (although consultations on both LDFs are currently ongoing).

The proposals align with the Local Area Agreement, ERDF Competitiveness programme, and other potential RDPE LAGs.

LAA: the Local Area Agreement block 4 connects Economic Development and the Environment. It identifies a series of ambitions that relate to the economy, conservation, housing development, and accessibility. This proposal will provide small-scale innovative actions that make the connection between the economy, conservation, and accessibility.

ERDF: the Competitiveness programme is concerned with business innovation. Within Lincolnshire a group has been established to prepare a strategy by which Lincolnshire organisations can use ERDF to strengthen the county's environmental and green infrastructure. These actions are likely to be at a large scale, but the proposed actions in this EOI will be complementary but at a more local level.

(ii) Integrating different sections of the community: the Leader approach encourages areas to ensure that different sectors of the community are involved in programme design, development, and delivery. We have followed that approach in the establishment of the LAG.

For example, we have sought to create a partnership that has community representatives as well as statutory organisations. One particular strength of the partnership is that young people are represented via the Market Rasen Youth Council. Land based industries are represented by the National Farmers Union, and the broader business community by a private sector employer and by the Chamber of Commerce.

Similarly, we will seek to make strong connections between the role of market towns and that of businesses in remote rural areas, providing outlets for their products within the market towns. This could take the form of farmers' markets, or could be more specialised. One example is Bridge Street, Horncastle, which is a community building that houses a social enterprise selling horticultural products from small producers.

We have structured our grants assessment panel and our proposed theme groups so that a broader range of people can be involved in identifying whether projects will be successful.

#### **x. Approach to co-operation**

We will seek to co-operate at three levels.

Firstly, with other LAGs in the East Midlands. For example, we will share best practice in project design and where appropriate we will seek to establish common activities. This may include such projects as business support with contiguous areas or improved visitor management amongst LAG areas.

Co-operation will be particularly strong amongst any LAGs which are established within Lincolnshire. Because Lincolnshire has three lagging rural districts as defined by DEFRA, submissions have been made for RDPE to be available over all of these three districts. The submissions are the LAZ, Coastal Action Zone, Fenland LAG, and Three Towns/Hill Holt

Wood. As has been stated above, it is expected that backroom administrative functions will be shared. This will enable cost savings to be made, and will also will provide a consistency of approach to successful projects. However, there is also the strong opportunity to co-operate on project activity because the areas are contiguous.

Coastal Action Zone: the LAZ and CAZ share a long boundary to the east of the Wolds. The area is generally arable, with market towns and dispersed villages. We will encourage coherent projects that cross over the boundary –for example, projects that promote local food in a market town like Louth or Spilsby may include food sourced from producers in both areas. The CAZ has the following objectives that are most connected to those of the Lindsey Action Zone:

- Helping land based businesses on the regional coastal strip to find new income streams; this is likely to lead to collaborative projects concerning alternative energies, local food sourcing, and improved marketing
- A programme of landscape and building conservation, creating sustainable employment and visitor interest; this is likely to lead to collaborative projects concerning the community involvement in heritage and joint tourism promotional strategies. One area of commonality that could be explored is the sensitive enhancement and promotion of the ‘Wild Coast’ and the tourism/recreation linkages to other environmental assets within the LAZ.
- A programme of training and skills development to ensure that all strands of the coastal leader programme are supported by young people; this is likely to lead to joint work on projects to promote training to younger and older communities.

Fenland: the two programmes share a small boundary in the south east of the LAZ where the area surrounding the Wolds merges into fenland. This is a sparsely populated area but with villages that perform an important rural service centre role (eg Mareham le Fen, Butterwick, and Kirton). The Fenland submission has the following objectives:

- Widening the economic base through innovation, diversification, and entrepreneurship; this is likely to lead to collaborative projects concerning business start up and advice to small rural businesses
- Progress through knowledge and skills; this is likely to lead to collaborative projects on distance learning and on promoting training/learning to all members of the community
- Conserving and enhancing the natural culture and landscape; this is likely to lead to collaborative projects concerning community involvement in heritage and festivals

Three towns/Hill Holt Wood: the two programmes share a long boundary along the west of the LAZ. The area comprises linear villages along the A15 trunk road and commuter villages to Lincoln. The three towns proposal is largely concerned with developing the area for residents and communities. However, the area includes a number of attractive villages and tourist attractions (eg Whisby Nature Park) which can act as tourist gateways to the Wolds. Therefore collaborative projects on tourism promotion are likely.

The proposal also seeks to strengthen communities’ relationships with the land based communities, particularly in terms of local food sourcing, and again collaborative projects could be developed. The LAZ incorporates the Lincolnshire Limewoods, and complimentary work on forestry based skills between the Lincolnshire Limewoods and Hill Holt Wood could be foreseen.

Secondly, we will collaborate with other LAGs in England.

One strong area for collaboration is with the North Lincolnshire Rural LAG which has been developed by North and North East Lincolnshire Councils in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. This LAG includes a ward that is part of the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB. To reduce administrative burdens it has been agreed that the ward should be included in the Yorkshire Forward bid rather than the one to EMDA. Nonetheless, we have agreed to collaborate strongly with the North Lincolnshire programme on strategy and on projects. The North Lincolnshire programme has identified two priorities that are most relevant to collaboration:

- Business diversification in the rural economy: areas where the survival of existing businesses is at risk (shops, pubs and post offices as well as traditional agricultural businesses) and entrepreneurship is low compared to regional and national averages.
- Tourism: A concentration of tourism opportunities around the resort of Cleethorpes similar to opportunities in the Lindsey Action Zone's relationship with Lincoln, so there are challenges to overcome about how we can grow the tourism product in the rural areas whilst being sensitive to the needs of the environment. Green Tourism is an issue that the North Lincolnshire programme is particularly interested in.

We will work closely with the National Association for AONBs and Europarc to identify which other protected landscapes are part of the programme and will seek to establish joint projects with them, probably concerning approaches to involving the community in interpretation and conservation schemes.

Thirdly, in the later years of the programme we will work with LAGs across Europe. We will use the East Midlands European Office (Lincolnshire County Council is a main sponsor of the office) to help identify a partner area which shares common issues and will establish a small number of meaningful co-operation actions with them. For example, Leader programmes in West Cork, Ireland, have been very effective at sensitively promoting green tourism and local food initiatives, leading to micro business creation, and there will be an economic benefit to the LAZ learning from those examples.

In summary, co-operation will be used to (i) improve the Local Development Strategy and its application, (ii) to increase the impact of specific projects, and (iii) to enrich the personal experience that participants have in the projects that they lead.

#### **xi. Lindsey Action Zone – a local programme meeting regional strategic priorities**

The East Midlands Rural Action Plan has two relevant priorities

i) Enterprise, Innovation, and Employment which includes a priority to increase business start ups. As such, it provides the framework for our support for the objectives of the diversification of land based businesses into alternative activity and facilitating the creation and development of small businesses. The LAZ will deliver projects concerned with information and advice for small businesses which will directly link to this priority and will therefore increase the numbers of businesses starting up in the area.

ii) Active Communities which has the priority of increasing economic activity in the most disadvantaged rural areas and in so doing broadening and enhancing employment opportunities. It therefore provides the framework in which our strategy's work to broaden the employment base –therefore offering more better quality jobs- can operate. In particular, the LAZ proposes to promote home working which is particularly relevant in rural areas, and will offer opportunities for knowledge based small businesses to be established within rural communities.

The Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food has three relevant priorities:

- i) Raising awareness of food/moving farms up the food chain which links to our objective “to promote links with agriculture via landscape management and regional and local food promotion”. Projects are proposed which will promote local food at farmers’ markets and within local festivals.
- ii) Encouraging agricultural diversification activity which links to our objective “to support the diversification of land based businesses into alternative activity...” As well as projects to help farms diversify into tourism and alternative energies, the programme will also provide for small scale capital projects eg to sensitively convert buildings into office or business units.
- iii) Rural energy creation/conservation which has been identified as a likely key target in the delivery of our priorities concerning small business development/start up. Initial work on this will be delivered in the Caistor area where feasibility studies are currently being undertaken.

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) has two strongly relevant aims – to protect and enhance the environment through sustainable economic growth, and to ensure all people and communities have the opportunity to create new and sustainable futures. One of our strategic priorities is “to involve the community in interpreting, preserving, and improving their local heritage” which clearly links to the RES priority of protecting and enhancing the local environment. Sustainable growth is the over-riding purpose of the expression of interest. The RES specifies that ensuring all people and communities have the opportunity to create new and sustainable futures is focused onto priority rural areas, of which East and West Lindsey as lagging rural districts are two. The LAZ has identified that access to training is a critical part of helping people to contribute to their social and economic wellbeing, and several training projects are planned.

In addition to the broad priorities of the RES, East Midlands Tourism are starting to shape their long term priorities around quality/skills, marketing, and investment. By encouraging a quality visitor experience and by supporting small scale tourist products, this programme will meet two of those three priorities.

Natural England’s strategic objectives include enjoyment of the natural environment and sustainable use of the natural environment. This proposal has the priority “to involve the community in interpreting, preserving, and improving their local heritage” which will raise residents’ and visitors’ enjoyment of the natural environment. The overall aim of the proposal is to support sustainable development of the LAZ which links to Natural England’s sustainable use of the natural environment objective. Proposed projects also aiding NE’s objectives include mapping heritage and offering access to the countryside..

The regional forestry framework “Space 4 Trees” has the priority of promoting opportunities for everyone to enjoy the benefits of trees and woodlands. The Local Development Strategy for the LAZ has been established through identifying key actions from within various partners’ local strategies including that of the Wolds AONB partnership. The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB partnership has identified volunteer tree wardens and the retention and enhancement of beech clumps as priorities, and it is expected that RDPE funding could add value to that work.

The Lincolnshire Limewoods Project partnership is delivering an integrated vision which aims to increase awareness of the unique landscape and providing and promoting more opportunities for everyone to enjoy the countryside and features of the area and heritage asset to local people, landowners and businesses, along with providing opportunities for woodland and habitat enhancement at a landscape scale. RDPE funding could add value to work already fitting within the Space 4 Trees priorities.

Lincolnshire Enterprise’s Sub Regional Investment Plan has a priority of reducing the level of economic and social disparity. It also prioritises new ways of tackling rural learning needs.

Our proposal is directly concerned with raising economic and social conditions in the LAZ. The availability of training facilities in the area forms one of our strategic priorities – “to provide training and information which enables the area’s demographic groups to make a positive contribution to economic and social life.”

Lincolnshire County Council’s economic development strategy identifies that rural communities, and embracing Lincolnshire as the rural county, should be long term priorities. This proposal will provide additional impetus to rural communities in the target area, and will recognise the area’s heritage and agricultural traditions thereby linking into both of these priorities.

The LAZ will complement the current statutory AONB Management Plan by paying particular regard to the requirements of the national designation and assisting in delivery of the Plan’s twenty-five year vision. The LAZ will ensure that the Lincolnshire Wolds continues as a vibrant living and working landscape through providing fresh opportunities for appropriate rural diversification and innovation across a range of sectors.

The West Lindsey Community Strategy has the vision that West Lindsey should be “a rich mix of rural and urban areas, including bustling historic market towns...and rich farmland”. By promoting the role of market towns and by supporting agricultural business development this proposal meets those objectives. The Wolds area forum of the West Lindsey LSP will be used to encourage joint work. The West Lindsey District Council economic development strategy also embraces the range of activities proposed in this Local Development Strategy.

The East Lindsey Community Strategy prioritises reducing rural isolation and social exclusion. This proposal will do so by supporting the sustainable growth of the LAZ. The strategy also seeks to ensure the wellbeing of the natural, cultural, and historic heritage. This proposal will do so through its priority “to involve the community in interpreting, preserving, and improving their local heritage”. The proposals in this Local development Strategy are consistent with East Lindsey District Council’s economic development strategy.

## **xii. Leaving behind a lasting legacy –appropriate exit strategies**

This RDPE programme is a grant programme, and as such it will end in 2013. The programme will be delivered in a way which ensures that there is an effective exit strategy in place, both at programme (i) and at project level (ii).

*i) Programme level:* At a programme level, there are two issues that are particularly pertinent to exit strategies. These are that the programme will address rural decline and that the programme will establish a new partnership.

In terms of addressing rural decline, the programme has developed a strategy which is closely linked to the economic needs of the area. This strategy is based on the type of businesses that should be supported and the type of activities that recognise the unique nature of the LAZ. It is therefore expected that the programme will go some way to reversing rural decline in the area. However, it is recognised that the programme is relatively small and is unlikely to overcome issues of rural decline in its own right. Instead, the importance of integrating the programme with other activity – especially direct support to land based businesses under the other axes of the RDPE (as set out above), the East Midlands 2007-2013 ERDF programme, and investments proposed by public organisations and EMDA - should collectively make a significant difference to the socio-economic prospects of the area.

The government’s Sub National Review of Economic Development (2007) has given County Councils the duty to produce an annual economic statement. This statement will focus on issues such as quality of life in rural areas, and will have a geographical focus which will

include the LAZ. This statement will be used to identify that there has been an improvement to the economic status of the area.

The statement will also identify where further development is required. Where further development is required, in the form of public sector investment, the findings of the economic statement will be considered by senior representatives from key decision makers as part of their long term budgeting. The forum that this discussion would take place in is the management board of block 4 of the Local Area Agreement.

In terms of the LAG, we will run it in a professional and effective way thereby maintaining a sense of purpose for the partnership. Assuming that we are successful in that aim, then the partnership will provide the catalyst for coordinating and implementing the LAZ strategy.

The partnership will also seek continuous improvement of the strategy, which will include identifying what needs to be done post 2013 and whether it is the correct vehicle to take forward future actions. Experience of other programmes suggests that the partnership will become a useful way of sharing information and aligning strategies. The partnership will undertake an evaluation of its purpose in 2011. If the partnership agrees that it should continue beyond the RDPE, then it will have two years in which to set out the detail of its exit strategy. This would include identifying future funding streams and in-kind support, for example volunteers to act as secretariat, meeting rooms that can be provided for free, etc.,.

*ii) Project level:* Exit strategies are important for projects in two ways. Firstly, they need to be delivered in a way which enables them to operate viably into the future. Secondly, projects will develop a relationship with the partnership and there needs to be something in place when the programme ends.

In terms of a project's long-term viability, the appraisal of projects will include a section on understanding the project's ongoing financing. Projects that are led by private businesses will ideally be expected to show a business plan which shows how the project will be self financing. Projects led by community groups are more likely to be time-limited and therefore the appraisal will concern what legacy will be left behind when the project finishes, and how the community group will support that legacy. The LAG Manager will advise applicants on exit strategies as part of the general support that is given, but ultimately the Grant assessment panel will not approve a project if its exit strategy is considered to be inadequate.

All projects will develop a relationship with the LAG Manager and the Funding Officer. This will involve them seeking advice as part of the application and claims process, and with our experience of running similar programmes, we are confident that a strong working relationship would be quickly established. The LAG Manager and Funding Officer posts will end in 2013, and so it is important that projects are directed to other sources of advice. For businesses, this will be to Business Link advisers (Business Link are a member of the LAG which will help this to take place swiftly) and for community groups this will be with one of the four voluntary sector infrastructure agencies that have been established in Lincolnshire – Voluntary Action East Lindsey, Urban Challenge, Boston CVS, and the Community Council for Lincolnshire ("Community Lincs"), the last of which is on the LAG and would be able to coordinate and support this transition).

In summary, then, the Lindsey Action Zone partnership has established a clear vision which will provide an improved quality of life for residents and visitors alike. Funding from the RDPE will provide significant support to achieving that vision. This Local Development Strategy sets out how RDPE funding will be used. It demonstrates that partners have identified clear priorities for using the funding, have established robust systems for managing the funding, and will put in place strategies to ensure that there is a lasting legacy from the funding.

Lindsey Action Zone		Business plan to December 2009				
Strategic priority 1:		to support the sustainable diversification of land based businesses into alternative activity and facilitate the creation of small businesses				
Project	RDPE measure	Timescale for starting project	Grant required (£'000s)	Match funding (private unless otherwise stated)	Outputs	
Provision of additional advisers to promote business development to rural businesses	312	Jun-08	30	30	50 beneficiaries, 50 micro-enterprises supported	
Establishment of Lindsey Business Forum	312	Jun-08	40	40	25 beneficiaries	
Buy Local Campaign, possibly linking farm shops to school dinners	311	Jan-09	20	30	8 beneficiaries, 40K of investments	
1 alternative fuels project (probably Caistor)	311	Mar-09	25	35	35K of investments	
Strategic priority 2:		to implement a best practice approach to visitor attraction and management through improved promotion, interpretation, and attractions				
Project	RDPE measure	Timescale for starting project	Grant required (£'000s)	Match funding (private unless otherwise stated)	Outputs	
GIS mapping local attractions	313	Sep-08	10	10	1 new tourism action supported	
Production of local maps and guides	313	Jan-09	15	15	6 new tourism actions supported	
Interpretation of gateway towns	313	Jan-09	10	10	5 new tourism actions supported	
2 x improved accommodation projects in businesses	313	Sep-09	50	75	75K of investments, 2 new tourism actions supported	
Strategic priority 3:		to promote the role of market towns as gateways to the Lincolnshire Wolds, Lincolnshire Limewoods, and surrounding areas				
Project	RDPE measure	Timescale for starting project	Grant required (£'000s)	Match funding (private unless otherwise stated)	Outputs	
5 x tourist information points	313	May-08	5	5	5 new tourism actions supported	
2 x local festivals: walking, literature, touring arts, etc	313	Sep-08	20	20	2 new tourism actions supported	
Public art in 1 market town	323	Sep-09	20	25	25K of investments	
Strategic priority 4:		to promote links with agriculture via landscape management				
Project	RDPE measure	Timescale for starting project	Grant required (£'000s)	Match funding (private unless otherwise stated)	Outputs	
Open Farm Days linked to Year of Food and Farming	323	May-08	5	5	10 rural heritage actions supported	
Promotional campaign to increase uptake of agri-environment schemes	323	Mar-09	15	25	1 rural heritage actions supported	

2 x Environmental project (eg Roadside Verge Scheme, community composting)	323	Sep-08	10	20	2 rural heritage actions supported
Interpretation of sites and features (eg additional bird hides in Kirkby on Bain, interpretation of monasteries)	323	Mar-09	10	10	4 rural heritage actions supported
Eat The View projects to promote links between food production and the landscape	323	Sep-08	15	15	1 rural heritage actions supported
<b>Strategic priority 5: to involve the community in conserving, enhancing, and interpreting their local environment and cultural heritage</b>					
Project	RDPE measure	Timescale for starting project	Grant required (£'000s)	Match funding (private unless otherwise stated)	Outputs
Community outreach programme	323	Sep-08	30	30	1 rural heritage actions supported
Community groups document local heritage	323	Mar-09	10	10	4 rural heritage actions supported
2 x historically important building re-use projects (especially to improve derelict buildings in market places creating art galleries and other community space)	323	Mar-09	25	50	2 rural heritage actions supported, 50K of investment
<b>Strategic priority 6: to provide training, advice and information which enables the area's demographic groups to improve their existing skills levels and make a positive contribution to the economic, environmental and social aspects of rural life</b>					
Project	RDPE measure	Timescale for starting project	Grant required (£'000s)	Match funding (private unless otherwise stated)	Outputs
Statistical analysis of training take-up rates	331	Sep-08	10	20	1 participating economic actors to supported training activities
Provision of targeted outreach training in village halls and community centres	331	Jan-09	20	30	200 of days of training received
1 x new outreach facility	331	Mar-09	25	35	1 participating economic actors to supported training activities
<b>Strategic priorities 7 and 8: to co-operate with similar rural areas, learning from their experiences and using partnership working to enrich community activities within and beyond the Lincolnshire Wolds; to continue working with other common interest groups to enrich and develop new community activities across the LAZ</b>					
Project	RDPE measure	Timescale for starting project	Grant required (£'000s)	Match funding (private unless otherwise stated)	Outputs
Co-operation project	421	Jun-09	10	10	1 supported co-operation project
Managing partner administrative costs	431	Mar-08	50	100	55 supported actions