

A Local Development Strategy

2014 – 2020



Photos: courtesy of Nick Ford Debbie Harris of 2Up Photography

The Brecks Local Action Group

Using the strengths and coherence of the Brecks, to support truly sustainable growth and deliver economic, social and environmental benefits.

Date: 10 July 2014



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Foreword



The Brecks area ran a successful Local Action Group in the 2007-13 programme and wish to capitalise on the experience and approach developed from Leader as the foundation of a new partnership, formed from a good mix of new and experienced members.

The last programme experienced testing circumstances during delivery, which was affected by a deep-seated recession and government spending reviews which ultimately meant investments became consolidating rather than high impact. However, the timely launch of LEADER and the supporting Rural Development Strategy for Norfolk has created a solid basis from well-developed consultation and research, and provided the opportunity to feed into the formation of this local development strategy over a well-planned and structured period. This brings a new confidence that quality investments over the next programme will not only build on the previous programme, but generate new opportunities which will have a lasting positive effect on the Brecks.

Tourism is a key sector for the Brecks, and we would like to expand on the beginnings of a new identity for the area and do more to attract people to come and stay. To create a thriving business sector, we will encourage entrepreneurs to invest in new businesses, founded on innovation, and support existing businesses to grow and create new jobs in the rural community. Farming, horticulture and forestry are particularly important for rural enterprises in our area, and we hope to see strong projects coming forward which will sustain these key industries in the future.

This new programme gives us a superior starting point, using good qualitative and quantitative consultation and research as a basis for our strategy, in an economy that has turned the corner. This has to be seen in light of the vital A11 upgrade which presents a new, massive opportunity for the people and businesses of the Brecks. This strong baseline gives the Brecks LAG the best opportunity to make a positive impact and deliver a quality local development strategy for the area.

Brendan Moore,
Interim Chair

Submitted and signed on behalf of the Brecks Local Action Group by:	
Brendan Moore, Chair of the Interim LAG	
Eliska Cheeseman, Norfolk County Council	

The Local Action Group Partnership

Membership

Local Action Group members have been recruited over a six month consultation period following two events held in the local area to establish support and funding needs.

Name and organisation	Sector	Private or public
Rachel Carrington	National Farmers Union	Non-Public
Robin Upton	Park Farm - Agriculture	Non-Public
Ann Melhuish	Local Access Forum	Non-Public
Neil Featherstone	Future Environomics	Non-Public
John Pennell	Norfolk Farmers Markets	Non-Public
Fernando Vieira	Brewing	Non-Public
David Hill	Manor Farm - Agriculture	Non-Public
Abigail Nolloth	West Suffolk Council – Local Authority	Public
Lorna Laycock	West Suffolk Council – Local Authority	Public
Graeme Lockey	West Suffolk Council – Local Authority	Public
Brendan Moore	Brewing	Non-Public
Karen O'Malley	Norfolk Black Turkeys - Agriculture	Non-Public
Rik Martin	Norfolk Rural Community Council	Non-Public
Tom Cook	Sennowe Estate	Non-Public
Vanessa Scott	Strattons Hotel – tourism, food	Non-Public
Charlotte Lowry	RSPB - Conservation	Non-Public
Fiona Wood	Anglia Water	Non-Public
Peter Wilkinson	Norfolk Association of Local Councils	Public
Stuart Wright	Thetford Society	Non-Public
Jenny Locke	Greenbanks Hotel - tourism	Non-Public
Gez Chetal	Hotelier	Non-Public
Ian Chance	Wingfield College	Non-Public
Susan Smith	Breckland District Council	Public
Daniel Cox	Anglia Farmers	Non-Public
David Falk	Right of Way, Suffolk County Council	Public
Nadia Tempini	Management and Enterprise training/Higher Education	Non-Public
Andy Cuthbertson	Suffolk County Council	Public

Structure and Decision Making Process

The Local Action Group (LAG) has driven the development of this document. LAG Membership has grown around the desire to tackle the needs of the local area, from the launch of the previous LEADER programme in 2009, up to the present day. Membership has been (and will continue to be) iterative and will be reviewed regularly to ensure membership reflects the LDS priorities and that the right mix of public/non-public and socio economic interests continue to be represented.

The LAG and the AB are well aware of the private / public sector balance and the need to maintain this balance throughout the programme. It will be the role of the LAG Co-ordinator

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and Facilitator to ensure this balance is met when decisions are taken. The LAG also endeavours to be gender balanced, but we recognise that organisations nominating representatives is outside of our control. The LAG will aim to be as inclusive and diverse as possible, to ensure wider involvement and ownership of those living and working in the area. Given the focus on Leader activity on jobs and growth, we have made significant effort to ensure a wide representation from the private sector – typically small business owners from the local area and members that represent business organisations. Members of the LAG represent a range of organisations and will feedback to their organisations on the progress of the programme. They will also bring information to the LAG from their own organisations and help shape the direction and projects of the LAG to fit with the requirements of the Brecks. We consider the LAG to be developed now with the right balance of public and non-public sector, gender, sector and geographic representation. New members will be considered by the LAG and inducted by the Facilitator and AB.

The Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are fully engaged with our LAG partnership and we have submitted letters of endorsement with this LDS. Whilst the LEPs are not able to resource full membership of each LAG in their area, they are committed to engaging with LAGs and supporting our work. The LAG will agree with each LEP a point of contact and the reporting requirements through the LEP Board. Both sides recognise the close working relationship needed to make best use of the funds available, avoid duplicating activity and deliver the aspirations of their European Structural Investment Funds activity.

The LAG is a single tier group, meeting at least 4 times a year. Sub-groups or task-focused groups have proven useful in the past programme (i.e. equestrian tourism) and could be used again where relevant, for example to take forward a sector-wide issue such as tourism collaboration, or development of a strategic LAG project, for example reviewing the identity in the Brecks.

An Annual Review will bring together all LAG members across the five Norfolk LAGs to test the relevancy and success of the LDS, the performance of the partnership and its direction for the future, as well as reviewing training and developmental needs. More broadly, by bringing LAGs together, the Annual Review day will provide the opportunity for members to share best practice, exchange experiences and project ideas and network with each other. We are also discussing the opportunity to extend this invitation to neighbouring LAGs within the New Anglia and Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership areas (GCGP EP and NALEP) to broaden the opportunity for networking.

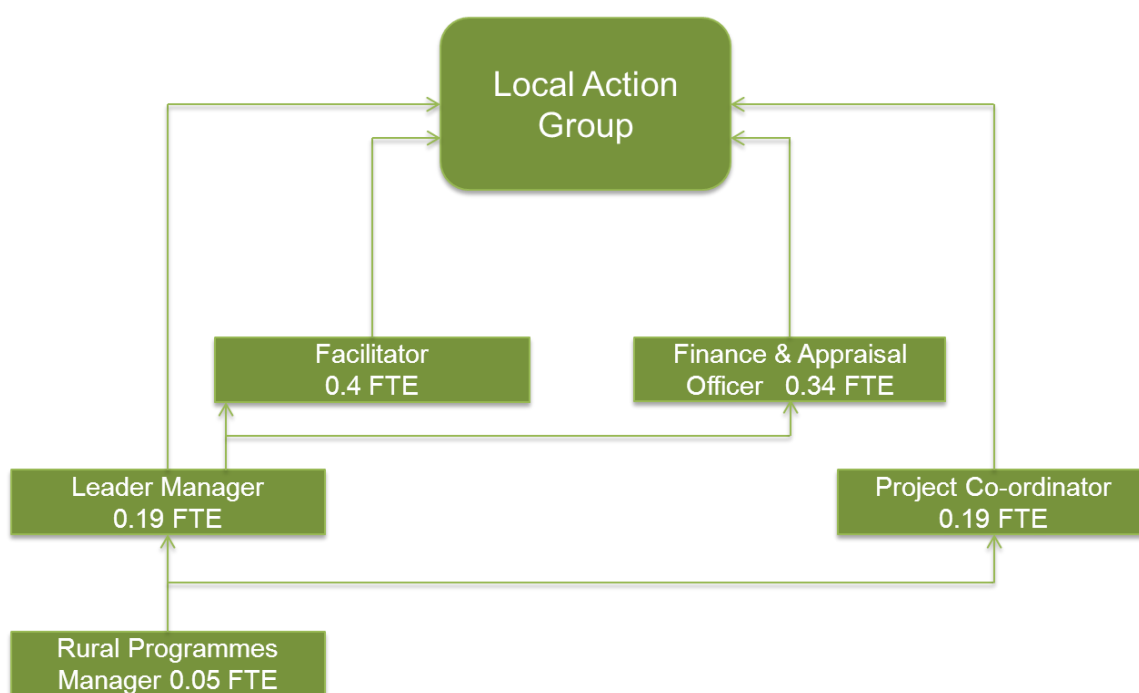
The LAG set up an Interim Steering Group during 2014 to manage the development of this LDS up until its submission. The steering group has been managed along the lines of the LAG structure required by EU legislation so a Chair and Vice-Chair from the private sector has been elected by the group. If successful in their application for funding, the LAG will formally constitute itself and elect a new Chair and a Vice-Chair at the end of 2014. These positions will be held for a maximum of three years at which point the AB will hold an election.

To ensure transparency and clarity and non-discrimination, the formal constitution of the LAG will require LAG members to agree and sign the following: Terms of Reference (based on previous programme), Behavioural Code of Conduct (as issued by Defra in the NDF), and Register of Interest (based on the public sector Register of Interest used by NCC, available on request). LAG meetings will be minuted. The AB will establish written procedures to manage the risk of conflict of interest in accordance with the National Operations Manual (NOM) which

will include LAG members being invited to declare any conflict of interest at a LAG meeting, the results of which will be recorded. LAG members will be required to respect the confidentiality of applications and the selection process until Defra have formally approved the decision.

Once in formal operation, the LAG will be responsible for the overall management and the strategic direction of the LDS and monitor the progress of the programme. The LAG is responsible for the functions set out in Article 34 of the Common Provisions Regulation including the selection and assessment of projects and these procedures will be established in accordance with the NOM. The AB will give training and direction to the LAG to ensure the partnership is clear and transparent when assessing and selecting projects. Where uncertainty or disputes arise, it will seek advice or guidance from Defra and the RPA.

Local Action Group staff, numbers and Job Descriptions



The staffing structure is based on the high-point indicative allocation of RDPE funds. We envisage benefiting from economies of scale in the back office function should LAGs be successful in managing other funds, such as LEP allocated ESF, ERDF or EAFRD. However we recognise the complexities that managing multi-funds will bring, particularly in terms of compliance. Working with the Local Action Group will be a Facilitator, LAG Manager, Finance and Appraisal Officer and Project Coordinator, employed by Norfolk County Council (NCC). The Facilitator post is key to animating projects in the LAG area and will encourage participation by different sectors of the community, using the animation measures and LAG members to broaden the opportunity for project development. This is supported by the communications strategy. The Facilitator will be the equivalent of 0.4 FTE.

The LAG Manager is responsible for managing five LAGs and their operational relationship with the Managing Authority (MA) as well as setting performance targets and managing the performance framework and control systems. S/he will be supported by a Project Coordinator who will provide secretariat support to the LAG, co-ordinate submission of reporting requirements and Annual Implementation Plans (AIPs) and maintain the MA database. Both posts will be shared between five proposed LAGs and line managed by the Rural

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Programmes Manager, who will provide the LAG with strategic and operational links to the LEP, the MA and other relevant external partners and stakeholders. Project appraisals, claim checking and project monitoring will be carried out by Finance & Appraisal officers on behalf of the LAG. This post will be the equivalent of 0.34 FTE. All LAG staff will have the appropriate skills described in paragraph 68 of the National Delivery Framework (NDF) included in their job descriptions (available on request).

Management and Administration costs will be a maximum of 18% of which we are proposing approximately 75/25 split running costs /animation. The staffing structure is based on the presumption that all LAGs share some back office functions creating efficiency savings. The final structure and staffing numbers is dependent upon which LAGs are successful, but the AB will always manage staffing to ensure projects are supported through the application and claim process. If necessary, the AB will utilise other staff at its disposal.

Equal Opportunities statement:

The LAG is committed to ensuring that in our approach to and the delivery of our work, it maximises the opportunities for marginalised or disadvantaged groups in our area to benefit from the investment and development that the work of the LAG will realise. Norfolk County Council as the AB will ensure that its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) responsibilities are delivered in the approach it takes to supporting the LAG to work, and it has published a statement about how it is complying with the PSED <http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC136494>. However, we see our commitment as extending further than the groups specifically identified in the PSED. We will seek to fund projects which as well as meeting our key criteria, also tackle rural isolation, poverty and unemployment amongst all groups.

Involvement of the community and consultation activity undertaken

LAG Activity		
Date	Activity	Purpose
May – Sep 13	Develop Norfolk Rural Development Strategy	Set strategic objectives for economic growth in rural areas from 2014-20. The RDS provides private sector consultation and collates the rural evidence base
1 Sep 13	Launch Rural Development Strategy	Launched by MP George Freeman, Leader of the council George Nobbs and the chair of the strategy group Richard Powell. The event set the wider rural context for Norfolk and began to generate interest in Leader
6 Nov 13	LEADER launch	Raise awareness of future opportunities – speakers from Norfolk, Suffolk, Cumbria and Northumberland LAGS and Defra RDT highlighting best practice from the previous programme
16 Dec 13	Brecks Workshop	Introduction to LAGs and funding opportunities, propose geography, workshop SWOT and priorities with local individuals
7 Jan – 28 Feb	Online consultation	Opportunity for wider audience to comment or input into SWOT and priorities to enable the widest possible consultation
6 Mar 14	Brecks Workshop	Refine geography and priorities. Suffolk County Council rural context. Discuss terms of reference, training needs and co-operation opportunities
15 May 14	Steering Group Meeting	Review National Delivery Framework, agree geography and priority headlines

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20 Jun 14	Steering Group Meeting	Review Draft LDS, feed in comments. LAG timetable and funding update.
18 Jul 14	LDS sent to LEP	Opportunity for NALEP to comment
8 Aug 14	Full Interim LAG meeting	Review Draft LDS, feed in comments. LAG timetable and funding update.
15 Aug 14	LDS sent to Interim LAG	Final draft sent for LAG endorsement prior to sign off and submission
5 Sep 14	Sent to Defra	Deadline for submission to Defra
Stakeholder Consultation		
23 Jan 14	Rights of Way (NCC) David Yates and Kirsty Webber-Walton	Discuss opportunities for potential access/tourism projects
31 Jan 14	Wild Anglia – Haidee Bishop	Raise awareness of programme and discuss potential for projects
20 Feb 14	Norfolk Farming Conference	Networking event to promote opportunities for LAG membership
7 May 14	Dan Cox, Breckland District Council	Review priorities for LDS / Breckland area to ensure synergy. Review opportunities for projects. Agree steering group membership
13 May 14	David Martin and Kate Wilde	Discussion about business advice and support within the region, and where the LAG can add to what is already being provided.
29 May 14	Terry Stork – Pub is the Hub	Meeting to investigate match funding opportunities for pubs diversifying into other activities
1 Jun 14	Mike Perry, Head of Development and Policy, Plunkett	Discussion to review opportunities for joint working on funding community owned businesses.
10 Jun 14	Jan Cockburn, NWES	Discuss programme activities regarding school/business interaction
11 Jun 14	Norfolk and Suffolk Woodlands Working Group	To understand the opportunity for forestry in the LAG area (facilitated by the Forestry Commission)
23 Jun 14	DEFRA LAG Workshop	Programme Update
25/26 Jun 14	Norfolk Show	Networking event and stand to promote opportunities for LAG membership and projects
18 Aug 14	Natural England	Consultation on environmental sustainability

In addition letters of support have been received from the Rural Development Steering Group, RSPB and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

Training requirements

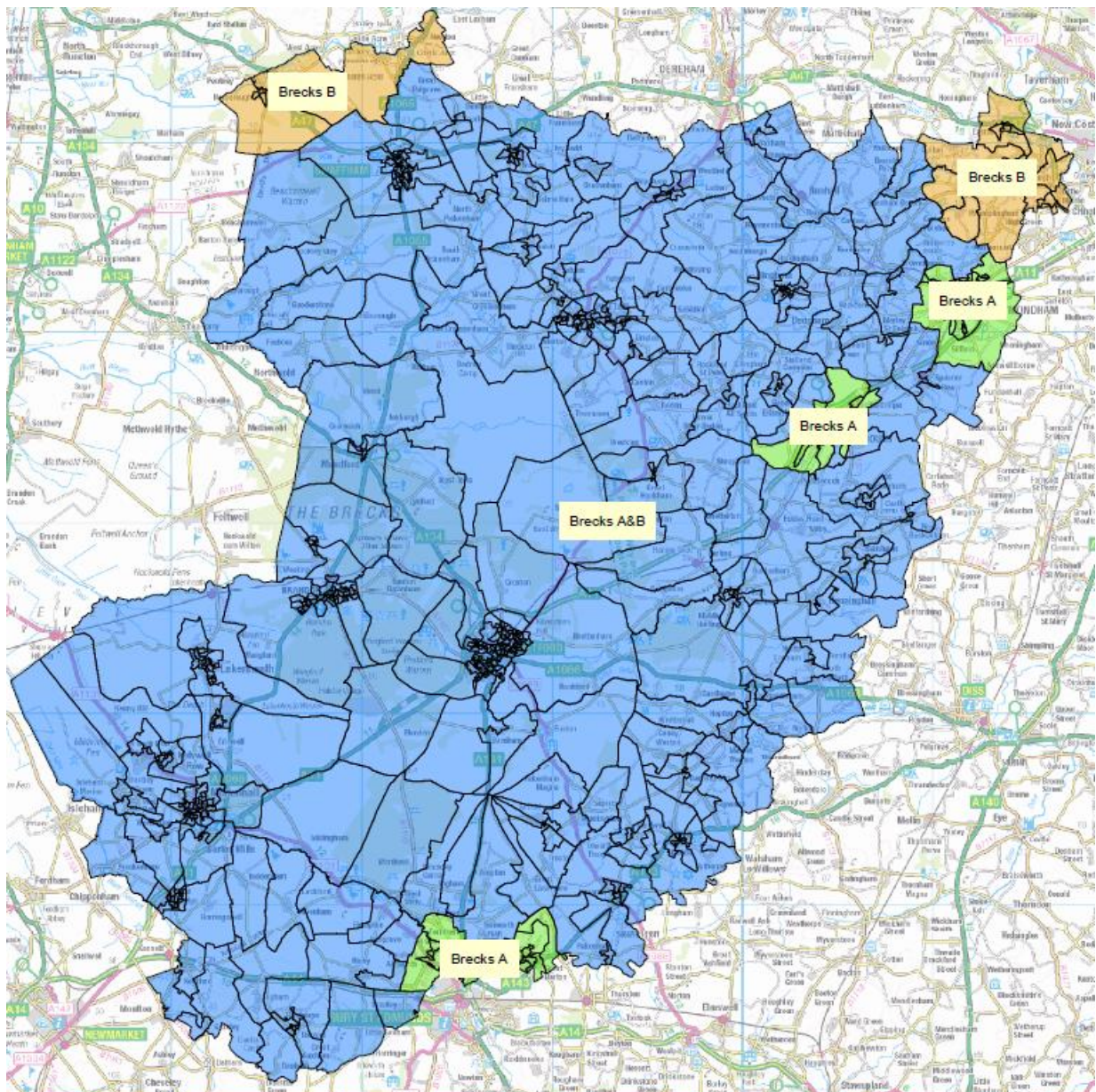
The LAG ‘consultees’ considered potential training needs as part of workshop activity in February 2014. In a scenario whereby the LAG is successful in a bid to oversee the distribution of grant funding, it was important to consider what might be expected of a LAG member in order to identify potential training needs. The information the group fed back, along with lessons learnt from Norfolk County Council’s experience as the Accountable Body for the previous programme, have formed the basis of the LAG member training plan below. It is acknowledged that not all members will require all training.

Action	Timetable
<p>Induction day with a members pack to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and funding context: refresher on the LAG LDS; LEP overview on the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and Norfolk RDS. • Role of LAG member and sign-up form to allow mapping of skills • LAG expenses allowable and exclusions • LAG governance: constitution and Terms of Reference, LAG protocol, role of Chair, confidentiality, legal accountability, and glossary of acronyms, conflict of interest register and declarations, behaviour code of conduct. • Process – application process from idea through to funding, overview of record keeping required. • Measures, outputs, eligibility and funding criteria • Specific information on other funding programmes in simple terms (LEP, Defra etc) and options to deliver (e.g. sub groups) <p>Key messages briefing sheet to support programme advocacy</p>	January 2014
<p>Project development and appraisal training – looking at a case study and following it through all aspects of the appraisal form, giving the chance to ask questions and understand the Appraisers rationale. Particular attention to be paid to the financial appraisal.</p>	January 2015
<p>Annual invitation to all LAG members to review the future direction of the LDS and the performance of the partnership; review training and developmental needs and produce Annual Implementation Plan. Opportunity for members to share best practice, exchange experiences and project ideas and network with each other. Potential to extend annual review to include neighbouring LAGs within NALEP and GCGP area.</p>	September Annual Review day
<p>Internal Management Reports - agree process to report project pipeline, commitment, spend, outputs, and issues by exception.</p>	First full meeting
<p>Induction for new members in the LAGs lifetime prior to them attending a meeting</p>	One to one with the Facilitator, supported by the induction pack
<p>Staff Training is included in the Action Plan Page 23.</p>	

The LAG Area:

The Brecks LAG has submitted two maps. Plan A is dependent on the upper population being increased to 200,000, and is requested due to the high number of hub towns in the proposed area. This area includes both Attleborough and Wymondham, which are eligible hub towns and are significant central points for the surrounding rural area. Plan B keeps within the 150,000 population threshold, which requires exclusion of both Attleborough and Wymondham but retains Thetford and Mildenhall, two hub towns which are very important service centres.

Map of the Brecks Area:



(The details of the map are not finalised as the map presented does not clearly reflect the two options submitted to the mapping team – discussions are on-going to resolve the situation.)

Environment

The Brecks is a unique and special landscape, internationally important for its rare but threatened wildlife and heritage. Spanning over 1,000 square kilometres across parts of Norfolk and Suffolk in the heart of East Anglia, it is made up of rare heathland, hosts the largest lowland forest in the UK, and is rich in farmland wildlife and unusual wetlands. Of outstanding importance for UK wildlife, 12,845 different species have been recorded here and of these, 2,149 are priority species for conservation concern; some are even endemic to the Brecks.

The area is characterised by gnarled pine trees, growing in rows through the landscape, known as the pine lines! The Brecks is distinctive because of its geology, climate and history. Its sandy flinty soils and extreme temperatures creating hot days and cool nights, and the fact that it's the driest part of Britain, create unique populations of wildlife and a distinctive landscape. People have had a big impact on the Brecks, bringing changes in farming over time, an ancient flint mining industry, rabbit warrening, military bases and forest planting.

Economy

The LAG area covers two LEP areas, New Anglia (NALEP) and Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough (GCGP LEP), although the majority sits within NALEP. It covers parts of four district council areas – Breckland, South Norfolk, St. Edmundsbury and Forest Heath. The recent recession in New Anglia LEP (NALEP) area was more severe than felt nationally¹, but despite this, the economy of the Brecks has an optimistic outlook². It is well located between Norwich and Cambridge, both growth areas for science and research (including an advanced agri-tech sector), so businesses could realise a competitive advantage from locating in the area. Infrastructure is improving with particular emphasis on the dualling of the A11 and county level broadband improvement programmes. The manufacturing sector is particularly strong in the Brecks with the Breckland district having 14% of its workforce employed in the sector; the highest of any Norfolk district³. Employment has been resilient through the recession in the area with St. Edmundsbury district leading on employment growth 2008-2012 in the NALEP area⁴. The future employment trends of the area are less clear with all areas expected to have an increase in the over 65 age group and St. Edmundsbury predicted to see a fall in the 16-64 group⁵; it is clear that the Brecks economy has solid potential to deliver on the growth agenda.

Social

To give a social overview of the Brecks LAG area is difficult and complex as with most rural areas. In terms of deprivation, there are areas of the most deprived 10-20% by output area located within the Brecks LAG boundary⁶. The picture of rural deprivation is difficult to identify and target because the problem is so dispersed; over 80% of the most deprived in rural Suffolk live outside the most deprived 10% of rural areas⁷. The market towns of Swaffham, Brandon, Thetford, Mildenhall and Watton are quite dispersed and generally a long distance from the main regional centres. Each has their own strengths and weaknesses with many diverse groups represented. The large sparsely populated areas of forest and Ministry of Defence owned land help to make the social challenges of the Brecks very difficult to address.

¹ New Anglia LEP EU Investment Strategy

² http://www.edp24.co.uk/business/insight/the_edp_regional_business_review_2012_breckland_1_1784220

³ Norfolk Rural Development Strategy: http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Economic_intelligence/NCC126058

⁴ New Anglia LEP EU Investment Strategy

⁵ New Anglia LEP EU Investment Strategy

⁶ http://www.norfolkkrcc.org.uk/wiki/images/DeprivedRuralAreas_33_Norfolk.pdf

⁷ http://www.transformingsuffolk.co.uk/files/laa2/useful_documents/ocsisuffolkruralfinalv10.pdf

The Strategy

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT was developed through a LAG workshop and supported by an on-line survey. This section reflects the input with particular relevance to RDPE. Evidence bases are linked through references in the Priorities section.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><u>Economic</u> Developing Tourist destination High value agricultural activity Sits on border between NALEP & GCGP Local food and drink production Large farm businesses producing high quality food, particularly vegetables A11 improvements complete Sep 14 Birthplace of Thomas Paine – transnational human rights campaigner and author</p> <p><u>Social</u> Existing LAG with knowledge of RDPE Developing sense of place The Breckland Society, Skills from diverse communities and other EU countries.</p> <p><u>Environmental</u> Unique Landscape Thetford Forest – the largest lowland pine forest in Britain (19000 ha and an Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Conservation is a high priority Breaking New Ground (HLF project) Nationally important biodiversity</p>	<p><u>Economic</u> Broadband/mobile network Lack of Brecks Partnership (area champion) Poor public transport service because of reducing services and the difficulties of sparse rural areas Networking – added value and linked activity is often a missed opportunity Lack of commitment to support and promote local food and distinctiveness Large number of micro enterprises without time/understanding to be part of the Brecks Low skilled employment, low pay Lack of infrastructure for tourism Lack of local business support to bring ideas to fruition Poor awareness of natural assets like the Peddars Way</p> <p><u>Social</u> Further education facilities lacking Diverse communities face integration problems Thetford population separated from forest by A11</p> <p><u>Environmental</u> Water availability Tension between farm diversification and SPA/Habitats Directive Legislation Poor understanding of Stone Curlew nesting and feeding behaviour</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p><u>Economic</u> Tourism potential (responsible & high value) Use the strength of the environment as a tourism positive rather than a constraint Developing food sector American bases – untapped economic potential (e.g. tourism (Thomas Paine) and local food) Water tourism around the River Wissey, but need to be sensitive to all users Improved quality timber production support for timber supply chain businesses Marketing the unique – forest experience</p>	<p><u>Economic</u> Lack of clear champion/coordination Loss of information provision and marketing (e.g. Brecks Partnership website) Retail and Public sector employment decline Lack of funding for Brecks Food Festival</p> <p><u>Social</u> Increasing population – dormitory villages Skills development Ageing population</p> <p><u>Environmental</u></p>

<p>Permanent Breckland food hub Daytrips from Cambridge –tourists could link with recent work on stone age history Growth in rural craft businesses Water storage/abstraction reform Long distance, circular trails LEP activity Deer overpopulation, processing and markets Diverse food and drink offer Positioned between the growth areas of Norwich and Cambridge giving business opportunities. A dualled A11 improving connection of the area for all sectors Potential of Thetford forest</p> <p><u>Social</u> Integrate the most isolated communities through IT and multi-purpose use of community buildings Overcome many issues through a pride of place</p> <p><u>Environmental</u> Market towns work together with a common aim to promote themselves as ‘Brecks’ Improvements to cycle networks, especially links in to the forest Farming and environmental delivery working together</p>	<p>Water availability Housing development without green infrastructure provision New road bringing international companies Loss of environmental value Climate change damage to the environment</p>
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Evidence of Alignment with LEP activity

Strategic fit with the evidence base

New Anglia ([NALEP SEP](#)) and Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough ([GCGP EP SEP](#)) Local Enterprise Partnership’s Strategic Economic Plans and European Structural Investment Fund plans have informed the high level evidence base and SWOT analysis of the Brecks LAG LDS. In these documents the LEPs recognise the vital part the rural economy plays. (have taken a rural mainstreaming approach,).

The Brecks LDS has also been informed in part by Norfolk’s Rural Development Strategy (RDS), produced in consultation with over 200 private businesses, organisations and individuals to present the view of the private sector on what is required to deliver a sustainable rural economy in the county.

The Norfolk Rural Development Strategy (RDS), which sets out some of the key investment requirements to enable rural parts of the county to make a contribution to future growth, feeds into the developing Norfolk Growth Prospectus and the LEP strategic plans.

The Norfolk RDS highlighted the important contribution LAGs can make to the rural economy at a local level and has provided the statistical and evidence base to inform the LDS. LAG members and support staff have tested the LEP plans and other evidence bases at the local area-level.

The Norfolk RDS was commissioned to serve two key objectives

1. Provide the framework for sustainable business growth in rural areas in Norfolk
2. Providing a comprehensive evidence base to support the framework for growth

By consulting with over 200 businesses and individuals from the private and public sector, as well as key stakeholder in the rural economy, the RDS has built a consensus on the key challenges facing the Norfolk's rural areas. Through targeted interventions, the Norfolk community can ensure the continued vitality and development of its rural areas.

The RDS focusses on growth in employment in four inter-related sectors. These sectors have a high GVA per job where Norfolk has globally competitive advantages:

1. **Agriculture and the food chain** deliver innovation; add value to food by processing and marketing; technology to increase agricultural productivity
2. **Energy** the largest offshore investment in the World is expected in the Southern North Sea creating thousands of new jobs offshore and onshore. Potential to utilise agri-food waste streams, solar and small scale wind power on land to generate further renewable energy
3. **Manufacturing and engineering** food processing, agri-tech and energy equipment
4. **The knowledge economy** using Norwich Research Park (NRP) research to support growth in the agri-food, energy, manufacturing, engineering sectors. Requires improved broadband, new skills and improved links between rural businesses and the research base

To **deliver growth** in these sectors of the economy a number of areas need to be addressed to help rural communities fulfil their potential, including:

- The creation of **Vibrant Rural Communities** is the ultimate aim of the strategy and calls for specific actions at the community level. Local Action Groups utilising Leader funding to deliver jobs and business growth are key to delivering these actions.
- **Meeting the skills challenge** - help schools raise attainment, address skills gaps, transport and remote access solutions.
- **Embracing an enabling planning system** which supports jobs growth in rural Norfolk.
- **Improved connectivity** - the Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN), mobile access, transport connectivity.
- **Green infrastructure** to support the natural environment and attract visitors. Working with private landowners, building green space and infrastructure into new developments.

NALEP's ESIF plan (chapter 15), informed in part by the Norfolk RDS, champions the significant experience of the previous Leader programme in the county and the local support for the approach. In recognition of this, NALEP intends to allocate 7.5% (£6m) of the total notional EU allocation for the New Anglia LEP area to a similar bottom-up approach. GCGP EP also intends to allocate funding to a CLLD approach, but to areas not related to Brecks LAG.

There is an opportunity for the Brecks LAG to manage European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) on behalf of New Anglia LEP. The LAG welcomes the opportunity to manage a wider range of funds for our local area and would suggest setting up a sub-group of the wider LAG with a specific responsibility to oversee a particular funding stream. But we also recognise the complexities of managing multi-funds and have asked the AB to consider, in particular, the impact on project applicants and compliance.

Fit with LEP delivery

We will work closely with our Local Enterprise Partnerships to ensure that our activities add value to their activity and do not duplicate. We will ensure that we make businesses aware of the LEPs and LAG activities most relevant to them.

Our Local Enterprise Partnerships will lead the wider business growth agenda in our LAG area, delivering the investment and activity set out in their SEP and ESIF strategies. Previous Brecks LAG experience shows that Leader can deliver effective, well-targeted projects which are 'owned' by the local community, in the LEP areas, complementing the large-scale interventions of the SEP and ESIF. An independent review by Lincoln University describes Local Action Groups (LAGs) as "a vital mechanism that provides the kind of support most needed to grow and sustain small rural businesses and communities" and highlights how Leader complements regional and 'top-down' interventions, such as those led by the LEPs.

The NALEP ESIF Plan ([NALEP ESIF](#)) sets out investment that contributes to 'smart, sustainable, inclusive' growth. Rural issues have been 'mainstreamed' in the LEP approach where they are generic across sectors or geographies (for example access to finance, business planning and management training). But they recognise that whilst the needs of rural areas may be similar to non-rural areas, the solutions for delivery are often different. The rural funding element will be used to support activity in rural areas which complements ESF and ERDF activity. Rural funding will support knowledge transfer and skills, support for micro, small and medium sized rural businesses, tourism activities and small scale investment into broadband enhancements.

The GCGP EP ESIF Plan ([GCGP EP ESIF](#)) sets out delivery of the rural funding element of the Growth Programme, contributing to delivering economic growth through; Building knowledge transfer in rural areas; Funding new, and developing non-agricultural, micro, small and medium sized rural businesses; Funding small scale broadband investments in rural areas; supporting tourism activities in rural areas. GCGP EP is also the lead partner in the delivery of the Agri-Tech East cluster, operated jointly with NALEP, and manages the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) funded £3.2m Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative.

Both LEPs recognise the importance of rural businesses as an important part of the foundation for future economic growth, and the LEPs want to ensure enterprise is encouraged and supported. The EAFRD allocations will provide additional support for skills development in rural areas and through specific support for rurally based businesses across the area. See strategic fit matrix on page 28. The Brecks LAG will work with our LEPs to ensure a 'joined up' approach to funding across the various funding streams available.

The NALEP SEP sets out an ambition to harness the areas sector strengths and natural assets to deliver more jobs, new businesses and housing. Growth is targeted around five high impact sectors that can deliver improved productivity (agri-tech, advanced manufacturing and engineering, energy, ICT and digital creative, and life sciences) and four further sectors that provide most of the jobs in the LEP area (agriculture, food and drink, financial and insurance services, ports and logistics, tourism and culture). It is focused on five elements to support the sector based approach, underpinned by the Green Economy Pathfinder status of the LEP

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1. Enterprise and innovation
2. Skills
3. Growth locations
4. Broadband, mobile and other infrastructure
5. Providing more homes

The GCGP EP SEP calls for £500m of investment in the local economy and is focused on five priority areas:

1. Digital - To become the UK's exemplar for digital connectivity and bolster our position as leader in the Internet of Things
2. Infrastructure - To enable a transport network fit for an economically vital high growth area, supporting road and rail infrastructure improvements
3. Skills - To remove skills barriers and facilitate growth building a business-led approach to skills delivery
4. Commercial property - To support the provision of additional commercial space where there is demand to meet need
5. Business growth - To accelerate business growth by offering targeted and coherent support and advice through the Growth Hub providing both virtual and face to face support, to access advice and funding

The Brecks LAG identified demand for investment in areas such as skills, digital connectivity, infrastructure and business support in its SWOT, but as these areas are not fundable using Leader support, the LAG will be working closely with both LEPs to address these areas and deliver the SEP ambitions.

The LAG will also ensure that businesses which are seeking support on these issues are signposted to the LEPs. The LEPs EAFRD allocations can support larger projects in the agri-food and rural economy which are not suitable for Leader funding. The LAG will signpost these larger projects to the LEPs and will also work with the LEPs to provide support to smaller projects which are too small for direct LEP funding and support.

Local Priorities

The LAG is covering all 6 Defra priorities in the LDS (see matrix mapping Defra priorities to that of the LAG on page 29). The partnership will make a minimum of 70% direct contribution to the rural economy. This is reflected in the outputs we anticipate in delivering (see outputs table page 23) and the percentage split of the budget (pages 29).

Vision:

Using the strengths and coherence of the Brecks to support truly sustainable growth and deliver economic, social and environmental benefits.

Cross Cutting Theme

Brecks Identity

The Brecks is a unique landscape and this core characteristic must be considered as an asset for businesses coming forward for funding and when assessing project applications. The LAG would like to see projects acknowledging and promoting the Brecks area to build on the last programme and strengthen the brand. More businesses could link their products or services to the quality and distinctiveness of the area; the LAG wants to help businesses and communities to generate a sense of pride that will have mutual economic benefits for all sectors.

Priorities

- ***Increase responsible tourism opportunities which make the most of the natural and cultural environment.***

A 2010 landmark study led by the University of East Anglia highlighted the Brecks to be a biodiversity hotspot of national importance with 28% of the UK's rare species found in Breckland, which equates to just .4% of the UK's land coverage⁸. With the natural resources of the area providing such an important asset, it is paramount they are maintained and enhanced to support the promotion of environmental tourism and regarded as an opportunity and not as a constraint to economic development.

Connecting the tourism offer to the environment to encourage visitors to experience the great outdoors, while also demonstrating a mutual benefit is an area for projects to explore. The LAG can learn from other areas that have been successful and can provide examples how businesses that work together can offer joined up solutions for tourists⁹. There is an opportunity to link with the Breaking New Ground project, which is been granted £1.5m funding towards a £2.2m project to benefit part of the Brecks landscape, heritage and communities.

This three year project will fund a new conservation volunteer centre, access trails, and heritage interpretation, involving training in conservation, the arts and community events, so it will be important to co-operate fully with this programme so LAG investments can build on

⁸ <http://www.wildlifeextra.com/go/news/biodiversity-norfolk.html#cr>

⁹ www.boudiccaaway.co.uk

these initiatives, avoid any duplication and ensure that funding is leveraged to the greatest advantage to the wider Brecks area.

An opportunity exists to respond to the recent increase in cycling and projects looking to improve cycle networks and encourage people to enjoy the area while safely linking residents and tourists to forest trails and local services¹⁰, and especially for those working within forestry businesses or on local estates. The key to these projects is fostering new business relationships to make better use of the forest as a tourism asset and an opportunity for growth.

Opportunities exist for water-based tourism using the Rivers Wissey, Little Ouse and Thet as valuable assets to attract visitors. Water borne activities are a great way to get close to nature, and any planned activity will need the relevant permissions to ensure it will not cause any harm to the river or the wildlife it supports and not displace any existing activity.

The Brecks has a rich and long historical heritage, famous for the works of Thomas Paine, a champion for democracy and human rights, and Maharajah Duleep Singh, owner and developer of the Elveden Estate¹¹. In the south of the area, the Anglo-Saxon village in West Stow¹² takes visitors back further to experience life over 1000 years ago.

Military history is also important in the area from training the armed forces at Stanford, hosting strategic air force bases at Lakenheath and Mildenhall, and of course the strong affiliation through providing the set for the TV institution, Dads Army. Such diverse visitor attractions can generate interest from a wide array of tourists, offering opportunities for supporting businesses.

A new Brecks tourism businesses forum, led by the private sector, could fill a gap left by the Brecks Partnership in terms of marketing and promotion of the area. Building on the success achieved in the previous programme is paramount, and it should be able to demonstrate sustainability in the long term, in order not to be reliant on funding for its existence, for example, the Brecks Explorer newspaper is now established and self-funding.

An important area of growth for the Brecks is the ability to increase the take up by tourists, which means encouraging them to spend more money during their stay, either through staying longer, visiting more venues or through higher value experiences and quality food and drink. Better defining the offer made to tourists is a critical step, and applications that can diversify the tourism offer through innovative projects, and adding to the mix of tourist attractions will be encouraged. Priority will be given to projects which link to the natural and / or historic environment.

- ***Support small businesses to start, grow and be sustainable.***

The recent recession has had an impact in Norfolk and Suffolk with business start-up rates, declining by 25% between 2005 and 2012¹³. The Brecks LAG area is well positioned

¹⁰ Sustrans: Get Britain Cycling:

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/get%20britain%20cycling/get-britain->

¹¹ Norfolk Museums Service:

http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/Visit_Us/Ancient_House/A_History_of_Ancient_House/Maharajah_Duleep_Singh/index.htm

¹² <http://www.weststow.org/about/west-stow-anglo-saxon-village>

¹³ Norfolk Rural Development Strategy: http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Economic_intelligence/NCC126058

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geographically and economically between Norwich and Cambridge using the A11/A14 link, to offer great potential for new business opportunities. Located here it lies between the two centres of Cambridge and Norwich, and there is the possibility of innovative approaches to benefit the area including building on the work of the Eastern Agri-tech Growth Initiative, led by GCGP EP in partnership with NALEP.

Support for the establishment and growth of micro and small enterprises is a priority which is critical to create new jobs and continued growth for the Brecks. Funding will be prioritised for niche or innovative business proposals which can increase the business capacity in the Brecks.

Jobs and growth are a priority for funding and the diverse mix of businesses in the Brecks provide good options. Manufacturing and processing are strong in the area and an improved A11 will improve opportunities for growth in these well-established sectors¹⁴. Concentration on sectors like engineering for example should add much needed higher value jobs¹⁵. The LAG would like to see projects from entrepreneurs and micro businesses that aim to develop a business and take on new staff or bring wider benefits for the area.

The LAG will support businesses to start up and grow and will work in a complementary way to the provision offered through our LEPs, District Council grant schemes and any other activity that exists locally. LEP business support activity will continue to develop, but LAG initiatives might include the provision of a business champion¹⁶ for the area providing business advice and support alongside promotion of the Brecks as a brand. This would support businesses of all types with consistent messaging about the identity of the area, and the quality and values of the companies associated with it.

The natural environment is the cornerstone of the area, so the LAG would like to encourage business activities that protect and enhance it. Historically, rabbits were a vital management tool of Breckland Heath, keeping vegetation short and conserving bare ground, and at one time employing almost 500 people in Brandon alone, so activities such as commercial warren businesses linked to conservation groups and development of new markets for rabbit and venison products could be favoured.

Internet and mobile phone connectivity is an issue that countywide schemes are aiming to address but the importance of poor connectivity cannot be underestimated with many of the growth sectors heavily reliant on this technology¹⁷. Within projects there may be opportunities to complement mainstream activity and fill a specific need with a local communications solution; where this is possible the LAG will contribute to enabling Brecks businesses to operate on a connected basis similar to competitors in other areas.

The recession and slow recovery has particularly affected the survival rates of established young businesses, and not just early stage start-ups¹⁸. One approach to reversing this trend is a targeted approach for small businesses with a small capital grants scheme that could operate as a delegated scheme. This could provide interventions on a small scale which could make the difference between the success and failure in a number of cases.

¹⁴ Norfolk Rural Development Strategy: http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Economic_intelligence/NCC126058

¹⁵ Norfolk Rural Development Strategy: http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Economic_intelligence/NCC126058

¹⁶ <http://www.bitc.org.uk/east-midlands/what-we-offer/business-champions>

¹⁷ Norfolk Rural Development Strategy: http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Economic_intelligence/NCC126058

¹⁸ New Anglia LEP EU Investment Strategy

- ***Help farming businesses to innovate, modernise and take advantage of new opportunities, including diversification into other areas of activity***

The Brecks has a unique micro climate¹⁹, but the sandy soil means that farming options are limited and pressure on resources is great²⁰. However, with advances in scientific understanding, soils can become more productive, and be suited to high value vegetable crops. The availability of water is critical for the agricultural industry and the LAG has previously funded irrigation projects to install and upgrade systems which are more efficient and help to reduce pressure on summer abstraction. Innovation in farming at all levels to take advantage of new technology can help farms to future proof their business, supply new markets or make new products, and is a priority for the LAG. This could be applied to livestock farming and animal welfare issues as well as arable growing or horticulture.

Farm diversification projects are a solution to open up additional income streams to protect the farm for future generations and bring added value for the local community. Diversification can encompass many types of projects and the LAG would like to focus on those that contribute strongly to jobs and growth. Any projects around Thetford Forest will need to respect the Special Protected Area (SPA) status assigned to the forest.

Adding value to produce in the Brecks is a real opportunity to create new and strengthen existing businesses. Farming develops quality crops that could be part of a developing supply chain, and forestry offers strong opportunities for adding value in areas like wood fuel, timber products and new product development for example.

- ***To promote local food and drink by co-operation***

There is an opportunity to create new markets and shortened supply chains, particularly in the food and drink sector, where businesses can work together to reduce costs and create efficiencies²¹. The Brecks has a strong tradition of food production, and can offer distinctive products such as game (specifically rabbit and deer), which differ to other areas in Norfolk/Suffolk. Large numbers of deer are culled each year to protect Thetford Forest and surrounding farmland from a fast increasing population²². There are many opportunities for collaboration across food sectors to jointly promote the depth and breadth of Brecks food supply. Supporting this sector could also develop and support a strong Brecks brand identity.

The Brecks has successfully developed an annual food festival (in its 3rd year) and food markets, and building on this success could present new opportunities for food supply development and collaboration.

The Brecks has areas where communities are very diverse and issues and opportunities may not be easily communicated resulting in some proactive approaches to secure inclusion²³. One opportunity to reflect and integrate the diversity of communities is through food. Successfully incorporating diverse food offers within quality food and tourism represents a

¹⁹ <http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/gallery/interests/a-living-landscape/breckland>

²⁰ <http://www.taa.org.uk/assets/landingpagefiles/frederickhiamfarmsfinal.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/making-the-food-and-farming-industry-more-competitive-while-protecting-the-environment>

²² <http://healthbenefitsofeating.com/meat/health-benefits-of-eating-venison/177/>

²³ <http://www.norfolk.police.uk/newsevents/newsstories/2011/april/diversecommunitiesreached.aspx>

good way forward on many levels; creating jobs and growth as well as embedding the Brecks Identity.

- **Support an increase in productivity from forestry and woodland**

The Government's Forestry and Woodland Policy Statement ²⁴(Jan 2013) clearly states the intention to get more woodlands into active management, moving from currently around 50% to 66% of woodland in management by 2018. It is widely recognised that one of the barriers to this is the under-capacity of the businesses working in the woods and the support for local markets. Led by the growth in wood fuel markets, there is a renaissance in the forest sector, with an industry-led marketing initiative Grown in Britain²⁵.

Thetford Forest and pockets of smaller woodlands around the Brecks bring great opportunities for both environmental improvements and business growth. This could be through the development of new or existing supply chains, processing facilities such as mills or kilns, or encouraging businesses to use the woodland to develop alternative products which add value to the wood as a resource.

The Brecks LAG will complement the activities of the Farming and Forestry Productivity Scheme and other grant schemes and look for opportunities to add value to forestry holdings.

- **To improve the wellbeing of communities and prepare for demographic change**

The Brecks has a low population density²⁶ which contributes to rural isolation. The age demographics are changing with a 6% decrease in 0-24 age group and an 8% increase in the 65+ age group predicted by 2026²⁷. The "grey pound" must not be overlooked as a key opportunity for businesses to develop and grow²⁸. The solutions to isolation issues have many layers, and could attract funding from other EU funds, but the LAG will look to support activities that provide basic services in rural communities and dovetail and support a holistic approach²⁹.

Parts of the Brecks LAG area are particularly rural with communities being very isolated. Innovative local solutions within wider projects could be supported where communities (and businesses) could benefit from central rural activity. One approach is to maintain and enhance existing community assets, specifically through supporting community hubs that are multi-functional and accessible. This has the overall aim of ensuring a sustainable infrastructure for the delivery of local services³⁰. One example of this could be through a pub doubling as an internet café/ICT training facility and village shop by day, reverting to a traditional pub in the evening.

²⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221023/pb13871-forestry-policy-statement.pdf

²⁵ <http://www.growninbritain.org/>

²⁶ http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Economic_intelligence/NCC126058

²⁷ http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Economic_intelligence/NCC126058

²⁸ <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/business/economics/article3730229.ece>

²⁹ Community Service and Wellbeing Issues (Norfolk Rural Community Council 2014)

³⁰ Community Service and Wellbeing Issues (Norfolk Rural Community Council 2014)

Programmes of Activity

Priority	Programme of Activity
<p>Increase responsible tourism opportunities which make the most of the natural and cultural environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and awareness initiatives within projects that promote the area and complement the HLF Breaking New Ground project. • Development of cycle ways and footpaths to improve access to outdoor activity, and joining up with forest trails. • Themed tourism can offer opportunities for growth and add value to the Brecks economy. • A new private sector led Brecks based business/tourism forum. Interest could be fostered through business awareness days to establish the level of commitment that exists which could drive this forward. • Maintain and improve promotional presence through a commercial Brecks website. • Water tourism around the River Wissey, unique natural immersion such as star gazing or joining up the Peddars Way trail to reach Thetford.
<p>Support small businesses to start, grow and be sustainable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro and small enterprise start-ups and growth of existing enterprises. Priority will be for niche or innovative business proposals which can increase the quality of offer in the Brecks and projects that aim to develop or take on new staff. • Projects that help to further a Brecks brand through new product development. • In order to decrease their ecological footprint, projects which take advantage of green technologies or reduce environmental impact through improved processing, will be favoured.
<p>Help farming businesses to innovate, modernise and take advantage of new opportunities, including diversification into other areas of activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LAG will support innovative solutions which encourage better water management, increased efficiency and taking advantage of technological advancement, such as rainwater harvesting and water recycling. This can apply to livestock farming and animal welfare issues as well as arable growing or horticulture. • Projects setting up new diversified businesses to support farm income. • Projects adding value to agricultural and forestry produce
<p>To promote local food and drink by collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply projects creating or supporting a 'Brecks' brand, i.e. "Brecks Venison". • Projects could include food hubs to enable businesses to share facilities such as kitchens or storerooms, or provide incubator space without the capital outlay required if setting up individually. • An artisan food and drink tour to promote annual food festival and increase trade links for producers. • Offer more permanence to the local food sector such as Truly Local, a funding farmer's market shop in the Norfolk Coast and Broads area providing a permanent venue for local producers to sell on the high street. • Raise the profile of the diverse food offer of the Brecks.
<p>Support an</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects to encourage businesses to introduce new technologies to

increase in productivity from forestry and woodland	<p>process and market forestry products. For example capital purchase of harvesting, extraction, primary processing or drying equipment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration across businesses such as sharing storage and processing facilities. • Improve transportation of timber products.
To improve the wellbeing of communities prepare for age demographic changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small scale projects to create or improve infrastructure in a rural community and/or add value to other social initiatives. • Creation or expansion of rural services for the local community. This could be through adding services to an existing provision, such as a pub or village hall introducing an internet café or farm shop.

Action Plan

Assuming successful selection by Defra, the following action plan will ensure the commencement of the delivery of the programme. The plan takes account of key dates, but further details are contained within the 'Training Requirements' and 'Communications Plan' sections of this strategy.

Action	By when
Notification by Defra	November 2014
Sign contract with Defra	December 2014
-AB to recruit initial staff to meet needs of successful LAGs in Norfolk -Deliver staff training (application, appraisal, and financial training in Leader context, state aid, measures and fiches)	December 2014
Begin promoting funding opportunity	December 2014
LAG induction day, to include governance process, expenses, application process. See 'Training Requirements' section for full detail.	December 2014
LAG training (project application and appraisal)	January 2015
Launch marketing and promotion of funding opportunity to potential applicants / stakeholders / networks including website and promotional material. See 'Communications Plan' for full detail.	January 2015
Facilitate development of project enquiries (or signpost to other opportunities)	On-going
Hold LAG meetings to assess and select projects and Expressions of Interest; receive reports on programme performance, induct new LAG members	Quarterly
Recruitment of new LAG members to meet needs of programme. Induction by LAG Facilitator/ Chair/AB.	On-going
Recruitment of new staff to meet needs of programme	As required
LAG Annual Review day (date can change depending on needs of programme)	Annually, in September
Defra training	As offered

Targets, Outputs and Results:

LEADER Policy Priority	RDPE expenditure per FTE job created (£)	Average RDPE grant size (£)	Relevant CMES output indicators for LDS application	End of programme forecast (by December 2020)
Support for increasing farm productivity	61,011	29,884	Total RDPE expenditure Number of projects supported Jobs created (FTE)	£361,620 12 6
Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification	11,931	19,951	Total RDPE expenditure Number of projects supported Jobs created (FTE)	£542,430 27 45
Support for rural tourism	32,477	31,764	Total RDPE expenditure Number of projects supported Jobs created (FTE)	£361,620 11 11
Support for culture and heritage activity	55,991	28,165	Total RDPE expenditure Number of projects supported Jobs created (FTE)	£180,810 6 3
Provision of rural services	33,272	23,378	Total RDPE expenditure Number of projects supported Jobs created (FTE)	£180,810 8 5
Support for increasing forestry productivity	77,045	21,788	Total RDPE expenditure Number of projects supported Jobs created (FTE)	£180,810 8 2

Sustainability appraisal

Sustainable development flows through the entire Brecks Local Development Strategy. Using the natural asset of the environment to support and promote rural business growth, will in turn present opportunities to protect and enhance the sensitive landscape. Developing rural growth will help to sustain rural communities attracting services and encouraging people to come and live and work in the Brecks.

Sustainability Objectives	Projects
Sustainable procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Purchasing sustainable services and goods supplied from the local economy to support local supply chains e.g. Venison. ● Purchasing better quality longer-lasting goods over cheaper/disposable option.
Energy Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minimise energy consumption through use of renewable energy or improved processes. ● Improve resilience towards climate change
Resource efficiency and waste reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce water consumption and maximise efficiency of use ● Reduce waste creation by encouraging reuse, recycling and recovery of waste materials.
Sustainable Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minimise car use through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ improved access to broadband/mobile services ○ bringing the work place into the community ○ increasing the use of public transport ○ creating opportunities for cycling or walking to work or amenities
Biodiversity and Nature:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce adverse and increase beneficial impacts on biodiversity through introduction of agricultural technology on farm ● Increase efficient water use and minimise risks of water pollution and flooding ● Encourage 'out of season' or positively manage activity to reduce pressures on environmentally sensitive areas. ● Ensure activities do not adversely impact on biodiversity or local environment ● Educate visitors about the sensitive nature of the landscape.
Historic and Culture:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Protect the built environment by redeveloping unused buildings into sustainable community /business assets ● Support new arts, crafts and food festivals to promote culture.
Communities and Social:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage new ventures in rural communities to improve communication and reduce isolation ● Improved services for rural villages and hamlets ● Integrate diverse communities
Economy and Employment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support existing and encourage new investment opportunities in the rural environment where it will result in new employment

Proposed Co-operation Activity

The LAG will seek inter-territorial and transnational co-operation to add benefit to business.

Area branding has been successfully achieved on various scales all over the UK. Knowledge transfer is important to take advantage of lessons learnt from previous investments to ensure any developments, LAG or otherwise, do not attempt to re-invent the wheel but learn from successful techniques.

The LAG is especially keen to find out more about gaining business growth through links to the landscape. Given the delicate and important nature of the Brecks environment the LAG would like to seek very similar environmental types in partner LAGs to ensure real value. Denmark has similar heathland habitat and is a possible partner to investigate. Areas of focus will be how the tourism, farming and local food sectors interact with the environment for business growth purposes. Opportunities to take forward innovative approaches to recognising ecosystem services and natural capital will be supported.

Technological advancements in manufacturing, engineering or processing are also areas that Brecks businesses want to explore in other areas.

Management and Administration

Accountable Body

NCC will fulfil all the functions of the AB on behalf of the LAG and ensure financial propriety and compliance. NCC will carry out the roles and responsibilities described in the National Delivery Framework (NDF) paragraphs 39-59 and in accordance with the National Operations Manual (NOM), and ensure the operational guidance is implemented in full. NCC will ensure the LAG and its operations meet the regulatory requirements of the funds and are compliant.

NCC will ensure the LAG undertakes the functions described in paragraph 60 of the NDF (Article 34) but go beyond the minimum requirements by delivering training and development to LAG members, facilitate the sharing of best practice and project experiences, and provide opportunities to network in order to develop the capacity of the LAG in its own right.

NCC has a good track record in managing funding programmes and complying with EU programmes; it was the AB for three LAGs in the previous RDPE programme, the AB for the RDPE project Landskills East, and managed Regional Development Agency funds. The Authority currently manages a number of European funded programmes and NCC's Finance, HR and Audit departments work within the compliance requirements for a number of European funded programmes we currently manage. NCC is also the new Managing Authority for the France Channel England (FCE) programme with a direct relationship to the European Commission. Senior management will regularly review and share best practice between Leader, FCE and other EU funded programmes for which the Authority is responsible, to improve programme compliance.

Project Development and Assessment Procedures

These procedures will be delivered in accordance with the NOM and paragraphs 39 to 44 of the NDF. We anticipate that the LAG Facilitator will be responsible for project development and the Finance and Appraisal Officer responsible for project assessment. This ensures 'chinese walls' between the two functions. Programme staff responsible for developing and appraising the projects will be required to sign a declaration to confirm they have no conflict of

interest with the project being assessed. LAG members will have to declare any conflict of interest they may have at the LAG meeting, and a pecuniary interest will prevent any LAG member of staff taking any part in a project assessment.

Our communications strategy will ensure that as many sectors of the community can participate as possible and a key role of the Facilitator, LAG and AB is to stimulate local interest to bring forward ideas and projects. Through the LAG and under guidance from Defra, the AB will be responsible for selecting projects which meet the LDS. The AB will ensure openness, transparency in the project selection criteria, the analyses of proposals and selection of projects.

The AB will use its internal audit service to check that the correct procedures are being carried out and examine a representative sample of the projects themselves. This service worked well in the previous programme, giving reassurance to the LAG and the AB that procedures were being followed and grant was not at risk.

Claims and Payments

As the AB for three LAGs in the last programme, NCC gained considerable experience in the application of European Union regulations to this funding programme, particularly as the AB processed and paid project claims before seeking re-imbursment from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). The AB sought to continually improve procedures to comply with programme requirements following feedback from the local Defra team and the RPA. The AB contracted the service of Norfolk Audit Services to provide independent assurance that the terms of the grant were complied with, and the AB intends to do the same in the next programme. The AB will undertake the calculations and grant checks due to be paid to projects, including maintenance of an asset register. The AB will also perform the management checks and inspections in accordance with the NOM and the NDF. The AB will process grant payments for the programme using the new CAP-D IT system.

Communications and Publicity

This is the first draft of the Communications Strategy and will be developed further when the LAG formally constitutes. The strategy will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis.

1. Overall Outcome

A LAG programme able to demonstrate it is delivering against targets, communicating to stakeholders and ensures The Brecks is a sustainable and vibrant place for its businesses and communities.

2. Objectives

- Raise awareness of the funding programme and attract quality projects to apply
- Deliver consistent, accessible and quality communications
- Provide visibility of processes to ensure efficient and transparent decision making.

3. Methods

Target Audiences:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents and businesses within the LAG area • LEP • Sector groups and organisations • Local authority officers and delivery partners • MP's, MEP's, County, District and Parish Councillors • Staff and members of organisations represented on the LAG • NCC departments and key staff
Key Messages:	<p>What RDP can deliver in the LAG area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities for the area; examples of projects to support these priorities. • Funding is available; advice on how to apply; contacts; access to expression of interest; <p>What RDP has achieved so far in the LAG area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates about funded projects through case studies and press releases • Towards end of programme, an overall summation of LAG achievements focussed on outputs of funded projects.
Tools:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of existing media where feasible • Face to face communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events, one to ones, workshops • Electronic communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter, social media, website • Printed materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospectus, flyers, banners, cards • Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote attendance at shows
News Releases:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector specific publications • Local and regional press • Partner newsletters

4. Resources

Resources (budget and time) needed for event space, website costs and electronic communication, which can be shared across the five areas, saving costs for each respective LAG. Budget will be required for printing LAG specific promotional materials.

5. Action Plan

Communication	Action	Timescale
1. Communication Strategy agreed and signed off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission to LAG and LEP as part of LDS 	Aug 14
2. Norfolk/Suffolk LAG website, with specific space for each LAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission new website link to/support existing Up and running Add funded project case studies to website as they complete Deliver LAG papers through secure area Link e-newsletters and press releases 	Jan 15 Feb 15 On-going Each LAG meeting when released
3. Electronic Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop e-newsletter and update distribution list Send out e-newsletter 	Jan 15 Bi-Monthly or as needed
4. LAG Summary Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop quarterly summary report to keep external stakeholders informed 	4 x a year
5. Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding Launch for the Brecks Attendance at relevant rural shows Attendance at appropriate business events LAG Annual Review and workshops 	Spring 2015 Annually
6. Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take paid-for space to reach stakeholders and support attendance at shows 	1-2 in first 2-3 years
7. Press Releases (PR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate significant milestones: i.e. 1st project funded, 50th project funded, First £100,000 spent Showcase project case studies Quarterly review 	On-going
8. Monitoring and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of press releases issued (media coverage will be tracked) LAG Annual Review Day Number of newsletters delivered Number of case studies prepared 	Minimum of 4 per year Annually Minimum 6 per year 20 minimum for programme

Financial Plan:

Defra Measures	GCGP SEP Priorities	NALEP Thematic Objectives	Brecks priorities	Budget Split %	Budget Split £
Support for increasing farm productivity	Accelerate the momentum of business growth by facilitating targeted support Respond to existing pressures for growth and retention of businesses by facilitating the provision of additional commercial space	Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency Promoting the shift towards a low carbon economy	Help farming businesses to innovate, and modernise	20%	£361,620
Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification	Accelerate the momentum of business growth by facilitating targeted support Respond to existing pressures for growth and retention of businesses by facilitating the provision of additional commercial space	Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises Promoting the shift towards a low carbon economy	Support small businesses to start, grow and be sustainable. Help farming businesses to diversify	30%	£542,430
Support for rural tourism	Accelerate the momentum of business growth by facilitating targeted support	Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Increase responsible tourism opportunities which make the most of the natural and cultural environment.	20%	£361,620
Provision of rural services	To be the UK's exemplar area for digital connectivity	Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT Promoting the shift towards a low carbon economy	To improve the wellbeing of communities and prepare for demographic change	10%	£180,810
Support for cultural and heritage activity	Accelerate the momentum of business growth by facilitating targeted support	Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises Promoting the shift towards a low carbon economy	To promote local food and drink by collaboration	10%	£180,810
Support for increasing forestry productivity	Accelerate the momentum of business growth by facilitating targeted support	Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises Promoting the shift towards a low carbon economy	Support an increase in productivity from forestry and woodland	10%	£180,810
M&A					£396,900
Total					£2,205,000

Use of Grants, Procurement or other types of Financial Support

Match funding for projects will be sought primarily from private sector businesses and social enterprises. Projects coming forward will be designed to fulfil the requirements of this LDS, and fit policy priorities and align with NALEP strategy. Benefits and value for money of projects will be investigated during appraisal, and projects will be expected to have carried out a business plan, so the private sector can establish the expected return for their investment.

The average funding level is set at 40% based on experience gained in the previous programme and set below minimum rates estimated to be 50% for a commercial project. The LAG will challenge funding requests to achieve a lower intervention where possible to ensure the funding is leveraged across the maximum number of projects.

The Brecks LAG would like to be able to procure projects at any point in the period if through on going evaluation the needs of the area are not being met and can only be addressed by the LAG. The LAG would like to use delegated grants schemes if the option becomes available to target small interventions which will spread the impact of the funding.

Expenditure (by year, for each measure)

The LAG has profiled using the high point from the indicative allocation range. The LAG decided this approach based on the fact it had an 89% spend in the previous programme despite the considerable inconvenience of having a project return a considerable sum after the programme had been closed, being 100% contracted. There is also the advantage of having an earlier start within the programme and time to develop a project pipeline.

Expenditure Forecast (£)								
Policy Priority	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total Programme
Support for Increasing Farm productivity		36,162	72,324	72,324	72,324	72,324	36,162	£361,620
Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification		54,243	108,486	108,486	108,486	108,486	54,243	£542,430
Support for rural tourism		36,162	72,324	72,324	72,324	72,324	36,162	£361,620
Provision of rural services		18,081	36,162	36,162	36,162	36,162	18,081	£180,810
Support for cultural and heritage activity		18,081	36,162	36,162	36,162	36,162	18,081	£180,810
Support for increasing forestry productivity		18,081	36,162	36,162	36,162	36,162	18,081	£180,810
Running Costs and Facilitation	15,876	63,504	63,504	63,504	63,504	63,504	63,504	£396,900
	£15,876	£244,314	£425,124	£425,124	£425,124	£425,124	£244,314	£2,205,000



By e-mail

26th August 2014

To whomever this may concern,

**LEADER 2015-2020 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – The Brecks LAG
Letter of Endorsement from New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership**

In accordance with the stated requirements of Defra, I am writing to you on behalf of New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) to confirm our support and endorsement of the above Local Development Strategy for the delivery of the LEADER Programme between 2015 and 2020 for the area.

We have worked with the Local Action Group to ensure that LEADER activities are in alignment with NALEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy (ESIFS).

In reviewing the Local Development Strategy (LDS) we have taken care to ensure that the LDS has been developed in the context of the wider strategic growth agenda of the LEP, whilst recognising and respecting that locally determined strategies reflect the desires and priorities of the LAG and wider stakeholders, as established through considerable engagement and consultation over recent months. We are very aware that LAGs fulfil a unique role within targeted local rural communities which the LEP, given its wider remit, cannot undertake as effectively.

We believe that the LDS is complementary to our SEP and the EAFRD investment priorities stated within our ESIFS, and will jointly make a valuable contribution to developing the rural economy and making it a sustainable place to live and work providing opportunities for growth across all sectors. This is a well-established LAG which delivered strong performance in the previous LEADER programme and has the benefit of continuity with an experienced Accountable Body.

We are committed, where resources permit, to continue to help to develop and deliver the Local Development Strategy for this area, and will consider the most appropriate mechanism to contributing to the LAG meetings. We have a shared aspiration to join up activity, knowledge and awareness in the future to ensure the most appropriate use of public funds to benefit rural communities.

New Anglia LEP strongly supports the ambition of the Brecks LAG in its efforts to attract LEADER status and I hope this letter is helpful with that aim. We look forward

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership
Walpole Suite | Ketteringham Hall | Church Lane | Ketteringham | Norwich | Norfolk | NR18 9RS
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to working closely with the LAG and to hearing about a positive outcome in the near future.

Yours sincerely



Alastair Rhind
European Programmes Manager

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01603 510080



Brendan Moore
Chair, Brecks Local Action Group
c/o Eliska Cheeseman
Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
NR1 2SG

28 August 2014

Dear Brendan

LEADER programme 2015-20: Brecks Local Development Strategy

I am writing to support the Brecks Local Development Strategy (LDS) submission for the 2015-2020 Leader programme. Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (GCGP) covers a large rural geography, and the Brecks LEADER area would cover some key locations including Mildenhall, Lakenheath and Brandon. We believe it will be important to work together to ensure growth of the rural economy.

Your LDS demonstrates consultation with the wider rural community and a re-invigorated partnership in the Brecks. It reflects the local economic needs, whilst also demonstrating strategic fit with the priorities and ambitions of GCGP. The development of small businesses is an important area of focus for investment by the LEP and I am pleased that this is a key priority for the Brecks LAG as it is vital for sustaining the rural economy as well as safeguarding and creating jobs.

I am pleased that your LDS highlights areas identified in your consultation process which it is not possible for LEADER funding to support, but which are addressed in our Strategic Economic Plan, such as skills, housing and road and rail infrastructure. All of these areas are priorities for us and are supported by our Growth Deal with Government. I am also pleased to see that you will be working with local authorities on broadband connectivity, promoting Defra's RDPE skills programme as well as supporting and complementing delivery of GCGP's EAFRD funding.

GCGP strongly supports the Brecks LAG in its aspiration for LEADER status in the next programme and looks forward to working with you in partnership to implement your ambitious LDS.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barnes
Programme Manager
Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP
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