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Evaluation of Torfaen's Delivery of the Rural Development Plan Business Case 2

Final Report

Torfaen County Borough Council

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1 Introduction

Torfaen County Borough Council was designated a rural programme area in 2007 with its first series of project activities under Axis 3 and 4 of the Rural Development Plan for Wales commencing in 2008 up to 2011. Miller Research (UK) Ltd carried out the Evaluation of these projects, reporting in July 2012.

The second series of project activities, Business Case 2, 2011 – 2014, commenced in March 2014, and was again evaluated by Miller Research, for Torfaen County Borough Council on behalf of the Torfaen Rural Development Plan Partnership Board. It is this second Business Case which forms the focus of this document.

1.1 Evaluation Focus

Similarly to the Business Case 1 Evaluation, this evaluation is required to fulfil the requirements of the funding received from the Welsh Government and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for implementation of Axis 3 (improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging locally delivered diversification), and Axis 4 (building local capacity for employment and diversification, delivered locally).

Project support in this instance is allocated to rural wards only, those of Blaenavon, Llanyrafon South, Two Locks & Henllys, Abersychan, Wainfelin, Cwmynyscoy, and Llantarnam.

The main focus of this evaluation is on the following:

- Understanding how the delivery, completion and resultant legacy of Business Plan 2 has met the challenges outlined by Torfaen's Local Development Strategy (LDS), initially written in 2007 with updated documents provided in 2009 and 2011;
- Ascertaining where and to what extent any other recommendations at Business Case 1 have been implemented, specifically in relation to management and governance which highlighted membership profile, training and awareness of the LDS as being areas for development;
- Evaluating communication and knowledge sharing;
- Gaining an understanding of how Business Case 2 has used rural products to re-enforce Torfaen's rural sense of place in terms of developing sustainable rural enterprises, localising the supply chain, developing co-operatives, initiating diversification activities and developing tourism hubs.

There were two projects for which Torfaen CBC's EU Policy and External Funding Team were successful in gaining funding:

Axis 3

- Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre

Axis 4

- Taste of Torfaen Project.

The programme manager role sits within the Council's European Policy and External Funding Team.

Detailed aims and objectives of these two projects are given on pages 32 and 46 of this report.

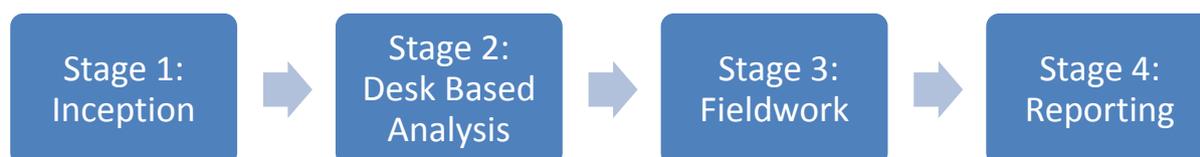
1.2 Background to the Evaluation

The evaluation is both formative and summative focussing on the overall impact of the Business Plan and its associated projects with specific consideration for project management, communication, and EU monitoring and reporting. The evaluation also provides an independent assessment on the outputs, outcomes, and, where evident, impacts.

1.2.1 Evaluation Approach

This is shown diagrammatically in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 - Evaluation Approach and Methodology



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd

Stage 2: Desk Based Analysis

This stage involved a robust analysis of existing monitoring data to assess the extent to which it met the requirements of RDP evaluation criteria, specifically the CMEF approach. A comprehensive evaluation framework and monitoring system has been developed which has guided the evaluation process and informed the delivery of future programmes.

A review and analysis of strategic management and project information systems has been undertaken which has included the following:

- Key strategic documents that support the programme and respective projects;
- Approved programme and project applications and funding letters with conditions;
- Monitoring and reporting documents; financial and physical (MIS);
- Project management manuals – systems and protocols;
- Organisation and management systems;
- Meeting notes and reports;
- Marketing and promotion activities.

On reviewing key documentation and the evaluation framework a series of topic guides was

produced for:

- Project beneficiaries
- Operational Stakeholders
- LAG workshop

Stage 3: Fieldwork

This stage of the project involved the collection and collation of primary evidence to support the evaluation, over and above that which is already available through existing information. There were various strands to the fieldwork, as detailed below.

Engagement with Delivery Team

A **workshop** was held with LAG / RP members on 3 June, with the following attending:

- David Stephens (Torfaen Voluntary Alliance)
- Rachel O'Shaughnessy (TCBC)
- Bill King (Artisan Baker)
- Sarah Brown (TCBC, Rural Development, Market & Events Support Officer)
- Victoria Parry (RDP, Project Support Officer)
- Deyolden Lewis (RDP, Rural Development Officer)
- Dawson Evans (TCBC)
- Liz Vann (LAG, RDP, TCBC Environmental Health)
- Louise Powell (RDP)

A further workshop, a **Food Tourism Workshop**, was held, on 23rd July, with the specific remit of developing a Food Tourism Action Plan. This was attended by representatives from food businesses, Torfaen County Borough Council (responsible officers from Tourism, Environmental Health, Economy and Enterprise) and Capital Region Tourism.

Project Beneficiaries (grant recipient) Interviews

Axis 4 (Taste of Torfaen)

Twelve grant recipients were interviewed either face to face or over the telephone are listed below. The majority were conducted in person, at the individual's place of work.

- Julie Nelson, Raspberry Catering and Raspberry Tea Rooms (which overlapped with Axis 3 Llanyrafon Manor objectives)
- John and Sandy Lewis, Pen Tranch Farm
- Iona Black, Tasty Bites
- Ian Glastonbury, Glastonbees
- Llian Norman, Tipizza
- Andrew Tovey, Pen y Parc Farm
- Rory Walsh, Allgood Farm
- David Harper, Harpers Home and Garden Services
- Josie Evans, Cwmffrwdoer Farm
- Mike Strange, Lower Little Beili Glas
- Sarah and Steven Warman, Pentre Bach Farm

- Amie Symes, Coffi 1860

Contact was unable to be made with Claire Scawn (Claire Scawn Ceramics), and Kevin Williams (Cut'n'Clean).

Axis 3 interviews (Llanyrafon Manor)

These were fewer in number given the nature of the objectives, but included:

- Ray Evans, Hay Meadow Community Group
- Caitlin Eales (Rural Heritage Officer)
- Julie Nelson, Raspberry Tea Rooms (as above)

Case Studies

A selection of the Axis 4 grant beneficiary interviews were developed as Case Studies, to be found in the appendix of this report.

Additional Lead Body, Project Staff, Stakeholders and Beneficiary Interviews

The following Lead Body and project staff were interviewed:

- Nicola Davies, Programme Manager
- Louise Powell, Programme Manager (maternity cover)
- Deyolden Lewis, Rural Development Officer
- Sarah Brown, Marketing and Events Support Officer
- (Attempts to interview Victoria Parry failed due to timetable).

In addition to the above, in order to increase breadth and depth of input, individual interviews were also held with the individuals shown below.

- Martyn Hughes – Chair of Local Action Group
- Dawson Evans - Team Leader Economy & Tourism, Torfaen CBC
- Katie Gates – Head of Tourism, Torfaen CBC
- Alice Brown – Capital Region Tourism

Informal 'in situ' interviews were held at the Country Fayre held on 13th April 2014, with local producers and visitors / attendees at the Fayre.

Online Survey

An online questionnaire was developed and circulated to all the following.

- Local Action Group members
- Rural Partnership members
- Programme management and delivery team officers
- Other stakeholders (TCBC officers and other organisations)
- Beneficiaries
- Users

This was developed as part of the evaluation framework and sought to establish the impact of the project on the wider community. It was also designed to understand overall performance in terms of LDS delivery and to test thematic areas for the emerging LDS document.

This attracted 28 responses, with 17 completing it in full. The data gained is interspersed with the commentary as appropriate.

Finally, findings from the Food and Craft Market Survey, June 2012, conducted by the Public Services Support Unit of Torfaen County Borough Council have also been considered and incorporated.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The evaluation report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** sets out the background to Rural Development, Local Development Strategy and the Business Plan
- **Section 3** details the management and governance of Torfaen's Rural Development Programme
- **Sections 4 & 5** document Axis 3 and 4 project activities and performance respectively
- **Section 6** incorporates the Food Tourism Action Plan
- **Section 7** sets out key findings and recommendations
- **Section 8** identifies conclusions and recommendations

2 Background

The Background to this Evaluation was primarily based around the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 for Wales, which is commented on under section 2.2 below. Since BP2 started, however, this programme has been superseded /or is in the process of being superseded by the RDP 2014-2020. Comments relating to this proposed RDP are under section 2.1.

2.1 The Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013 for Wales

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007 – 2013 for Wales had established its aims as follows:

- To improve the quality of life in rural communities.
- To strengthen the farming and forestry industries.
- To safeguard and enhance environment and rural heritage.
- To foster competitive, sustainable businesses and thriving rural communities.

The Rural Development Plan comprises four 'Axes':

- Axis 1 - Improving the competitiveness of our agricultural sectors, delivered by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- Axis 2 - Improving our environment and countryside, delivered by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Forestry Commission for Wales.

Projects and funding under Axis 1 and 2 apply to all parts of Wales and are delivered by the Welsh Assembly Government.

- Axis 3 - Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification, delivered locally in Torfaen

Specific objectives for Axis 3 are:

- Providing a broader range of better paid employment opportunities;
- Helping to raise economic activity rates;
- Enhancing or providing additional mainstream services for the rural economy;
- Providing openings for future economic development, including tourism and craft activities;
- Improving the physical environment of villages and conserving the rural heritage; and
- Addressing social exclusion by providing better links between urban and rural areas.
- Axis 4 - Building local capacity for employment and diversification, delivered locally in Torfaen.

Axis 4 actions are centred on five economic themes:

- Stakeholder partnership activity;
- Area identity and new product development;

- The natural environment;
- Sustainable rural services;
- Outdoor activities, tourism development and well-being.

Projects funded under Axis 3 and 4 are allocated to rural wards only and are delivered locally. Axis 3 & Axis 4 LEADER is implemented through a combined Local Partnership at a Unitary Authority level. As stated in Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 Local Action Groups deliver Axis 4 LEADER activities and are part of the combined Local Partnership.

2.2 The Wales Rural Development programme 2014-2020 (RDP)

The 2014-2020 RDP was submitted to the European Commission on 11 July 2014. It is a seven year European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), funded by the European Union and Welsh Government. Its aim is to open the new Wales RDP Programme from January 2015.

Full details will not be available for some time, but its aims are stated as being threefold:

- a) To increase the productivity, diversity and efficiency of Welsh farming and forestry businesses, improving their competitiveness and resilience, reducing their reliance on subsidies
- b) To improve the Welsh environment, encouraging sustainable land management practices, the sustainable management of our natural resources and climate action in Wales
- c) To promote strong, sustainable rural economic growth in Wales and encourage greater community-led local development

These aims provide a focus to those of the previous (and current) RDP, with a greater emphasis on resilience, a lack of reliance on subsidies, and greater sustainability (or the land and natural resources, as well as local populations).

The 2014-2020 programme also identifies and publishes six Rural Development Priorities which will form the context and framework for resulting activities:

- fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas
- enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability
- promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture
- restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry
- promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors
- promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

2.3 Rural Development in Torfaen

In 2007, Torfaen County Borough Council was approached by Welsh Government to consider whether the County Borough wished to put forward a case for rural

development programmes. The Council used the existing Objective 1 Partnership as a shadow Local Action Group and Rural partnership to help shape the Local Development Strategy and to help identify opportunities for a business plan application.

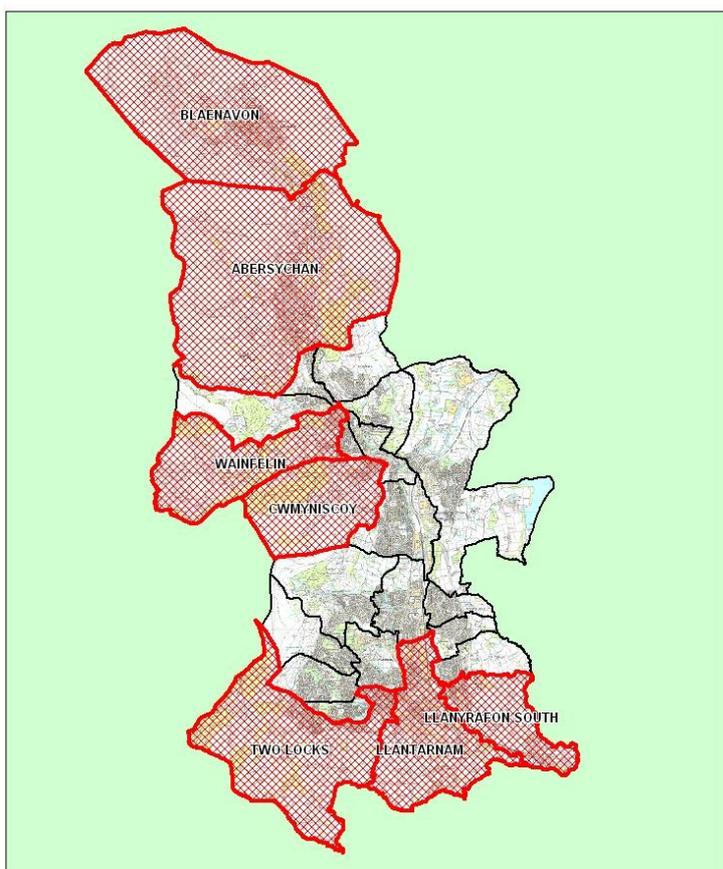
In the autumn of 2007 the Local Development Strategy was approved by Welsh Government with a refresh undertaken in October 2009 and November 2011. The 2011 version is more thematic and has helped shape direction and relate actions to thematic objectives.

2.4 Torfaen's Local Development Strategy

Torfaen's Local Development Strategy was initially written in 2007 with updated documents provided in 2009 and 2011. A new LDS is currently being prepared, the contents of which will be informed, in part, by this Evaluation and the Interim Evaluation provided at the beginning of September 2014.

Given the imminent LDS changes, what follows is substantially based on the 2007 (updated 2011) LDS, and the RDP Evaluation BP1 prepared by Miller Research.

Figure 2 - Eligible Rural Development Programme Wards



Source: Torfaen Local Development Strategy 2011

Figure 2 shows the eligible rural wards within Torfaen County Borough. Llanyravon South and Blaenavon are the two genuine rural wards whilst the wards of Abersychan, Wainfelin,

Cwmynyscoy, Two Locks and Henllys and Llantarnam are more service centre wards due to their population density and proximity to main urban settlements.

In assessing the main concerns and issues to face the rural area the shadow LAG and Rural partnership identified the following:

- Decline in incomes from conventional rural activities
- Ageing population engaged in farming
- Effects on the rural landscape and the environment
- Absence of diversification initiatives
- Low levels of sustainable economic activity
- Low levels of educational achievement
- Lack of skills and training
- Health and wellbeing

To support this, a SWOT analysis was undertaken.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers wishing to strengthen their business • A developing tourism sector • Increase in local produce • Emerging arts and crafts sector • Developing small holders • Increase in diversification activities • An establishing and professional voluntary sector • Transport links to the M4 corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline in traditional farming • Lack of opportunities for unskilled and/or unqualified people • Lack of support for smaller rural businesses • Lack of support in developing local produce • Loss of cultural traditions • Only 2 full rural wards
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for larger rural businesses • Support for smaller rural businesses and the art and craft sector • Developing Tourism attractions and accommodation • Increased demand for local produce • Promotion of alternative land use, including energy and production of bio fuels • Potential to capitalise on the natural environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current economic position • Increase in unemployment • Further decline in employment opportunities • Global Market • Climate change • Slow development of community participation

The Vision

Together both the Rural partnership and Local Action Group came forward with a vision for Torfaen's rural communities. This was:

“to create a place in which people take opportunities to thrive and motivate

themselves and others, developing a strong entrepreneurial culture, with improved economic wellbeing and a sustainable society”

Key Themes

The Torfaen Local Development Strategy aimed to meet its vision through developing a variety of objectives set down through extensive consultation with the community and businesses in all seven of the rural wards.

Through consultation with the local community in Torfaen's rural wards and the Local Action Group the following key themes and objectives were identified for Business Case 1:

- Developing land based production
- Conserve local heritage
- Promote sustainable tourism
- Business support and advice
- Enhance skill development

2.5 Business Plan 2

Business Plan 2 was submitted in November 2010 with the following projects submitted under Axis 3 and 4.

Figure 3 - Business Plan 2 - Torfaen



Source: Torfaen BP2 Evaluation Brief

A description of the Axis 3 and Axis 4 project activities is described in section 4 and 5 of this report.

3 Management and Governance

3.1 Context

“The way in which a partnership is structured and operates is crucial to its effectiveness. Intended benefits, such as co-ordination, shared resources, greater legitimacy, or enhanced capacity to act, may not automatically occur”.¹

A key approach to rural development programme working is to ensure close links between Axis 3 and Axis 4, as they will be implemented through a joint approach. Welsh Government through the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013 places much importance on delivery and the importance of local management and governance from within rural territory such as Torfaen. It sees greater strength between how Axis 4 LAG delivers on new products and services as well as delivering on Axis 3 activities.

Welsh Government also sees the opportunities and added value of *“the wider membership of the combined Local Partnership, and its links to other funding sources, will ensure that activities developed within the LAG will have access to a greater range of funds and be more likely to receive support when ready for mainstreaming”²*.

The Rural Development Plan for Wales sets out key actions that include:

- Developing Local Action Groups and building local partnership capacity, animation and promotion of skills acquisition;
- Improving endogenous development potential through capacity building and needs audits;
- Improving local governance by fostering innovative holistic approaches to linking agriculture, forestry and the local economy, thereby helping to diversify the economic base and strengthen the socio-economic fabric of rural areas;
- Community capacity building and empowerment;
- Facilitating links between sectors and between public / private / voluntary and community groups;
- Support for innovation and entrepreneurship;
- Piloting of new products and approaches including dissemination of best practice;
- Support for co-operative development including infrastructure; and
- Encouragement of on-line communities to disseminate knowledge, exchange good practice and innovation in rural products and services.

The importance of partnership working and the Leader approach is a critical success factor in delivering rural development projects. In acknowledging this, this section of the evaluation assesses how the lead body, Rural Partnership and Local Action Group are overseeing, developing and directing activity within rural Torfaen.

We have set out the key requirements from the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013 guidance note and used this as a baseline to understand how Torfaen have delivered.

¹ Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-13 Axes 3 and 4 Guidance for Partnerships Applying for Support

² Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013

3.2 Lead Body

The Partnership will need to appoint a suitable Lead Body and Financial Co-ordinator and define the roles and responsibilities of both. The role of the Lead Body will be to oversee the delivery of the Local Development Strategy, on behalf of the Partnership including progress on individual projects, and ensure that the projects supported underpin the overall aims and objectives. The role of the Financial Co-ordinator will be to ensure that grant is applied and used properly and within regulatory requirements in compliance with grant terms and conditions and in accordance with funding agreements, scheme guidance and all approved systems and procedures of the Partnership.

Resource

The lead body role for Torfaen's Rural Development Programme has been maintained by Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC), as part of the continued role from delivering Business Plan 1.

The post of the Rural Programmes Manager has been retained by Nicola Davies, delivering the programme from April 2011 to the present day. Louise Powell, who works within the European Policy and External Funding Team, took responsibility for the position from autumn 2013 to August 2014, acting as maternity cover.

When looking at the resource structure for the programme, Programme Management has identified the need to learn from Business Plan 1 with the need for dedicated financial management/administration³ and specific marketing and promotional expertise to be provided in future rural programmes. In relation to project delivery the post of Rural Development Officer and Rural Support Officer were key resources which were held by Deyolden Lewis and Katie Johns, respectively. Whilst the Rural Support Officer helped set up the monthly market and its administration, the post holder left in January 2013 and was not replaced. These duties were absorbed by the Rural Development Officer and Project Support Officer. There was a delay in decision-making from Welsh Government in relation to applying for more funding towards the position, which had a significant knock on effect on the broader delivery of the Taste of Torfaen project.

Approach

In comparison to the delivery of Business Plan 1, Create's second round of rural funding has had the benefit of greater awareness amongst stakeholder and community groups with Business Plan 1 stimulating interest in rural support through schemes such as the Branching Out Fund. The Lead Body subsequently recognises that the Taste of Torfaen project was easier to design, stating that "*land based production activity was providing a stronger rural focus, with people coming out of the woodwork quicker and more familiar with our community identity that is Create*".

Building on the lessons learnt from Business Plan 1, the Lead Body acknowledges that this initial period of rural development in Torfaen was quite "*generic*" and about "*market testing*" with an opportunity to be more targeted. The development of the Taste of Torfaen has therefore been seen to targetting a specific sector and audience, with the objective of developing a specific cluster of businesses by sector and by geography. The renovation of

³ Part time post – 3 days a week

Llanyrafon Manor has also been seen to provide *“a physical hub and presence for the team and for rural activities, which helped consolidate the programme's identity”*.

In relation to programme delivery the Lead Body feels the programme has *“moved forward”* with the Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre being a key rural heritage asset with activity making use of space and extending activity across the year, outside of the peak summer months. The renovation of Llanyrafon Manor has also been seen to provide *“a physical hub and presence for the team and for rural activities, which helped consolidate the programme's identity”*. The Lead Body recognises that the Manor needs to be sustainable in terms of operation with mainstreaming it as a key priority. At the time of undertaking this evaluation, a service level agreement with a private sector operator, Raspberry Catering, was being agreed for a five year period, including responsibility for the day to day operation of the Manor (including its grounds), and activities such as the monthly markets. All management was the responsibility of the Community Services Unit, with the day to day running being handled through Raspberry Catering.

Perspective on LAG and Rural Partnership

In looking at the evolution of the LAG and Rural Partnership, the Lead Body acknowledges that there has been a core group from the beginning with a number of representatives from the food sector as well as community representation. The Lead Body feels that *“the LAG and Partnership have more informed options and are willing to challenge, with the Chair of the LAG interested in evidence and what we are achieving”*. There is still however a sense from the Lead Body of *“taking time to embed with rural people and other stakeholders”*.

The co-ordination of the LAG and the Rural Partnership has changed over the period of Business Plan 2 with new guidance from Welsh Government on the need to explore closer integration seen as being *“common sense”* by some interviewees due to the size of the territory and similar people attending meetings. Subsequently, monthly LAG meetings have become bi-monthly with the Rural Partnership meeting quarterly, although in latter months there have been joint meetings that have been called to discuss strategic items such as the development of the 2014-2020 Local Development Strategy.

In reviewing best practice, the Lead Body highlighted the following:

- Attendance at the Wales Rural Network for the heritage thematic group;
- Co-operation with neighbouring LAGs and Rural Partnership on the Foodie Co-operative project, and;
- The Llanyrafon Country Fayre event which was partnered with Caerphilly County Borough Council.

Management/Processes

When asking LAG and Rural Partnership members through the on-line survey on how they rated the management of the programme for Business Plan 2, 25% rated it very good and 65% good, with 5% stating poor.

Whilst the Lead Body has been seen to efficiently manage the programme, there have been a number of external factors that have limited the impact of Create. A key issue identified by Programme Management has been the delayed decision from Welsh Government on the extension of time for the Rural Support Officer with the 7 to 8 months delay resulting in one FTE post being split between staff. This resulted in project staff dealing with

grant administration matters and not being on the ground stimulating, handling and developing projects within Taste of Torfaen. Programme management acknowledges that *"this has had an impact on grant spend and has put a lot of pressure on the team"*.

Greater consistency from Welsh Government in terms of decision-making is also identified by the Lead Body with the need for one account manager that helps build relationships.

The management of the monthly food and crafts market at the Manor has also put pressure on the team with it said to have impacted on the take up of Taste of Torfaen grants as well as weekend working and overloading staff.

In looking at the running of the Taste of Torfaen project it is acknowledged by some key officers that there was considerable time taken to raise awareness of the project at local events such as Garn Lakes with further promotion through mail-shots, letters, Torfaen Talks, etc. There was also the need to understand regulatory considerations such as trading standards, specific skills in business marketing and other areas that also took time for staff and which impacted on project delivery time.

As commented in the evaluation of Business Plan 1, the Lead Body has sound financial and physical monitoring systems in place which are thorough and structured, linking evidence to expenditure and clearly showing where and why variances have taken place. The Lead Body has commented that the key performance indicators are designed better and are easier to record and issue through the claims and reporting process.

Marketing

In looking at the wider awareness of the programme, the Lead Body has helped with press releases and print-based promotional material, but it also sees marketing and promotion as being enhanced by engagement with the local community. Create has attended events such as Garn Lakes, Pontypool Carnival and Blaenavon Winter Wonderland, to raise awareness of opportunities. It has also used these events as a platform for producers through the Taste of Torfaen project to facilitate meeting consumers. One interviewee commented in this context on the need for an integrated marketing and events related plan, so that a single brand works from strategic to operational level, and that a consistent message is maintained.

Create has also embraced social media more fully, with individual members *"initially taking turns at it"* but with it, eventually being co-ordinated by the Marketing and Events Support Officer. This was enabled through a series of workshops in October 2013 that provided training in social media through Communities 2.0 courses and other on-line media. Internally, Create has also improved its use of social media since Business Plan 1, developing a Facebook and Twitter account to promote the Manor and food and craft markets, which attracted 862 likes as of October 2014 with a twitter account having 450 followers to date.

In relation to place marketing, one interviewee identified the opportunity for Create to partner up with other places, attractions and markets e.g. Pontypool Market and local food demonstrations.

A key success within Taste of Torfaen has been the April 2014 Country Fayre which key staff believe has *"put the Manor on the map; with 6,500 people through the door"*. The Fayre was seen as *"a mix of rural culture, music, food and craft"* and helped to focus peoples'

minds on the Manor as an events venue. The success of the Fayre has led for calls for an annual event to be held, as well as possibly considering activity after 4pm which may appeal to a different segment of visitors in terms of evening entertainment.

Critical success factors for the Country Fayre included establishing its appeal to a local market of people across Torfaen and Caerphilly, critical mass in terms of the number of attendees; and effective management. Attendance at the Fayre was also helped by very good weather on the day. One interviewee pointed to the fact that the Country Fayre adopted a place marketing plan which the Manor needs to emulate in terms of its experience and constituent parts. *"The Manor too has farmhouse heritage, we need to sell it on rural life, produce, enterprise, a place to meet and to do business, a place to socialise – it's all too bitty!"* In supporting a place marketing plan for the Manor some interviewees have identified the need for the Manor site to incorporate facilities such as having Wi-Fi installed, to appeal to the right users in terms of business meetings and independent visitors.

Impacts

In relation to the two projects, Llanyrafon Manor is seen to fulfil various roles: providing a sense of place for rural heritage, to have the opportunity to fulfil its role as a regional attractor, and being a place to learn and help nurture softer outcomes such as community growing, school visits, etc. The Lead Body sees the visual impact of the Manor having *"open doors"* to all, which is a tangible outcome and impact for the project, providing a strong visual identity that needs to be maximised.

The Taste of Torfaen project is seen to meet a number of objectives and is starting to make an impact in terms of *"raising awareness of what's on local peoples' doorsteps and presenting a diverse and quality range of produce that is locally grown"*. It is also seen to be helping farming families with additional income and helping them to diversity into new products and services. Further, the Taste of Torfaen grant fund is able to provide one to one support, and is accessible, with the Lead Body commenting that *"staff are more reactive and visible, providing a strategic and operational face for delivery"*.

In considering the main beneficiaries of the programme, key target groups that have been seen to gain from the programme include women, young people and older people. Women are seen to come from and for the food and arts/crafts sector, young people are seen to be helping families on market stalls, and older people are active volunteers in organisations such as Llanyrafon Manor Community Group, as well regular users of the Manor markets. As such, cross-generational working is apparent, with the Manor seen as a place for all ages in terms of social and formal activity.

3.3 Rural Partnership

Partnerships must be relevant, comprehensive and representative of local needs and priorities and based on proportionate representation from the four sectors: private, public, community and voluntary. Membership of the Partnership Board should reflect the characteristics of its area and the opportunities identified in the LDS. In addition, due regard should be given to maximising the potential benefits of drawing upon existing experience and expertise when constituting the Partnership.

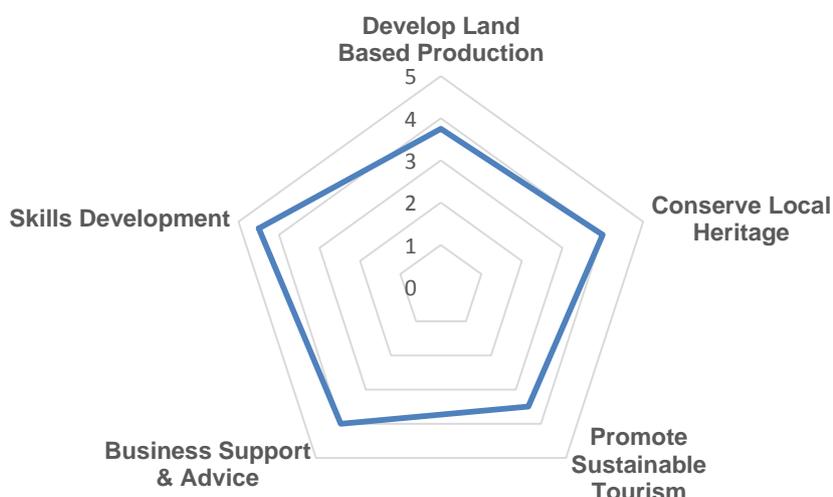
The terms of reference of the Torfaen Rural Partnership are appended to this report.

As part of the evaluation process an on-line survey was issued to Rural Partnership and LAG members. Whilst a good number of LAG members completed the survey, only two Rural Partnership members (7% of total on-line sample) completed the survey. We have therefore used graphs that represent views of *all* respondents. Some of their individual partnership comments are used augmented by a number of face to face and phone interviews.

3.3.1 How has Business Case 2 worked toward the LDS?

Figure 4 outlines how the Rural Partnership rates the degree of impact that Business Plan 2 activities have had.

Figure 4 - Rating of Business Plan 2 Activities Against LDS Themes



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd

Land Based Production

There is recognition from the partnership that the foundations of Business Plan 1 have helped raise awareness amongst farms in Torfaen of the opportunities for grant support and networking. Initially, some farms were slow to respond. This led to increased marketing which successfully led to greater engagement, encouraged and activated once people became aware of the cut-off date for funding.

In looking at the use of the grants and strategic objectives set out within the LDS there is

evidence that some farmers are returning to farming e.g. Allgood Farm, Forgeside, Blaenavon, rather than just pursuing diversification.

The April 2014 Country Fayre at the Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre was also seen as key to celebrating land based production and the area's historical connections through rural pastimes and growing/producing.

The overall consensus was that progress has definitely been made, albeit with some way to go in terms of generating a wider impact.

Conservation of Local Heritage

A key focus of rural development in Torfaen has been on the restoration of Llanyrafon Manor: which has been a landmark project for the programme and its immediate community. The Partnership acknowledges that the first phase of works under Business Plan 1 was more tangible than that of Business Plan 2, Business Plan 2 being a different style of project in terms of activity plans, education and working towards a sustainable model.

Whilst the partnership applauds the quality and enhanced setting of the Manor there is still more work to be done for it to fulfil its role as a tourist destination. The need to move the building across to a commercial operator is seen as key to its viability and sustainability and to provide the setting for testing out other new products and activities. Some specific comments were made on the need to extend the footprint of the building, possibly testing the feasibility of using the outbuildings for enterprise incubation, as a rural retail centre, or as classroom space for short courses, amongst other uses. Some partnership members believe that this would develop the breadth and appeal to visitors and would provide a collective of rural businesses that would add to the vitality of the site.

Also required are discussions and decisions relating to the potential extension of the building's footprint. Specifically, consideration needs to be given to the feasibility of using the outbuildings for enterprise incubation, as a rural retail centre, as classroom space for short courses, amongst other possible uses. Some partnership members believe that this 'footprint extension' would develop breadth and appeal to what the Manor can offer visitors, and would provide a collective of rural businesses that would add to the vitality of the site.

Promote Sustainable Tourism

The Partnership has seen a significant step forward in developing the sustainable tourism product, in spite of limitations set by the lack of a budget for tourism specific activity. This growth has come instead from private sector activity, with the Raspberry Tea Rooms at the Manor seen as a local community/visitor attractor as well as the direct support provided to food/craft related businesses through grants, networking and the monthly markets. Some partnership members see this as an area for further investment with scope for developing stronger tourism clusters across the County Borough. One issue is the need to promote food tourism at key hubs and corridors through Torfaen, and alignment with neighbouring areas such as Monmouthshire and Newport.

Business Support & Advice

This has been a key focus for Business Plan 2, aided by a stronger local producer network, and with more frequent conversations taking place due to closer working between the RDP team and the Council (with the help of the Rural Development Officer). Representation from responsible officers in the Economy and Enterprise team of Torfaen Council is also helping

to build links with other business networks and funding/support opportunities.

In relation to Llanyrafon Manor, some partnership members have commented on the opportunity to develop the site as a conference venue for businesses, due to its strategic location as well as providing a hub for local enterprise facilitation. Some small investments in Wi-Fi and infrastructure would help to develop a more business-focussed facility and would help in sustaining other activity such as on-site catering. Developments of this type would potentially enhance general awareness of the venue beyond formal events.

An example of success along these lines is the sharing of a business unit in New Inn where three local producers joined forces to provide catering services and food production, specifically bread and relishes.

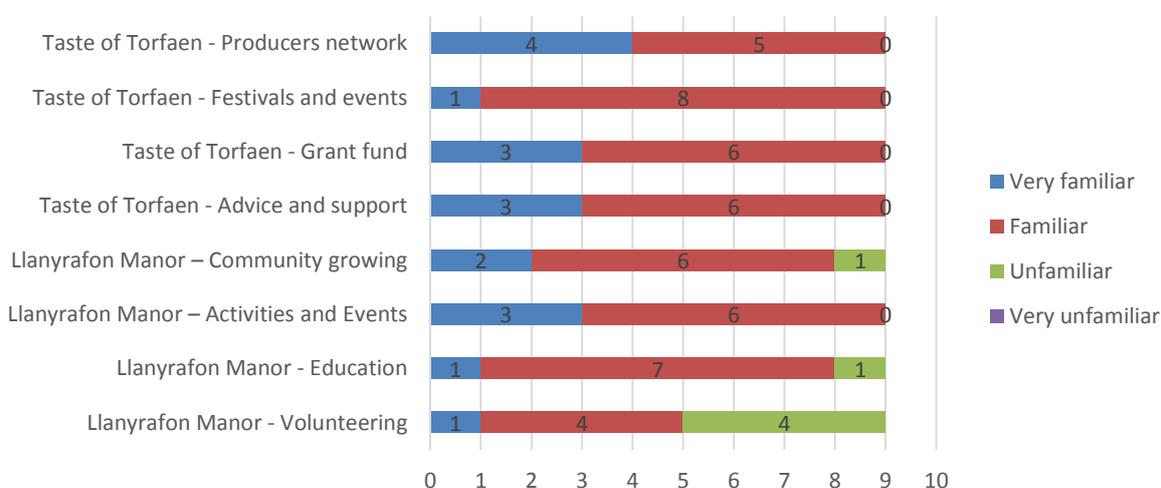
Skills Development

Partnership members recognise that a range of hard and softer skills are being developed through the BP2 process, with a number of beneficiaries improving social media, web and photographic skills as well as, for example, day to day skills in project management, communication, and financial management. There is also recognition of the value for money and return on investment from skills development in terms of sustaining projects in the medium to long term.

A number of partnership members have commented that rural development in Torfaen is relatively straight forward due to the small number of projects and the limited number of rural wards. One partnership member said “*we have a focus and we don’t get lost in what we need to achieve*”.

Figure 5 shows the degree of familiarity with the distinct project activities across Business Plan 2, which shows that most respondents have a good awareness of the producers network, the Taste of Torfaen grant fund and allied advice and support, with Llanyrafon Manor’s activities and events having the same degree of awareness. Areas that tended to be less familiar to respondents were volunteering, education programmes and community growing at the Manor.

Figure 5 - How are you familiar with the activities of Business Plan 2?



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd; On-line Survey Results, June 2012

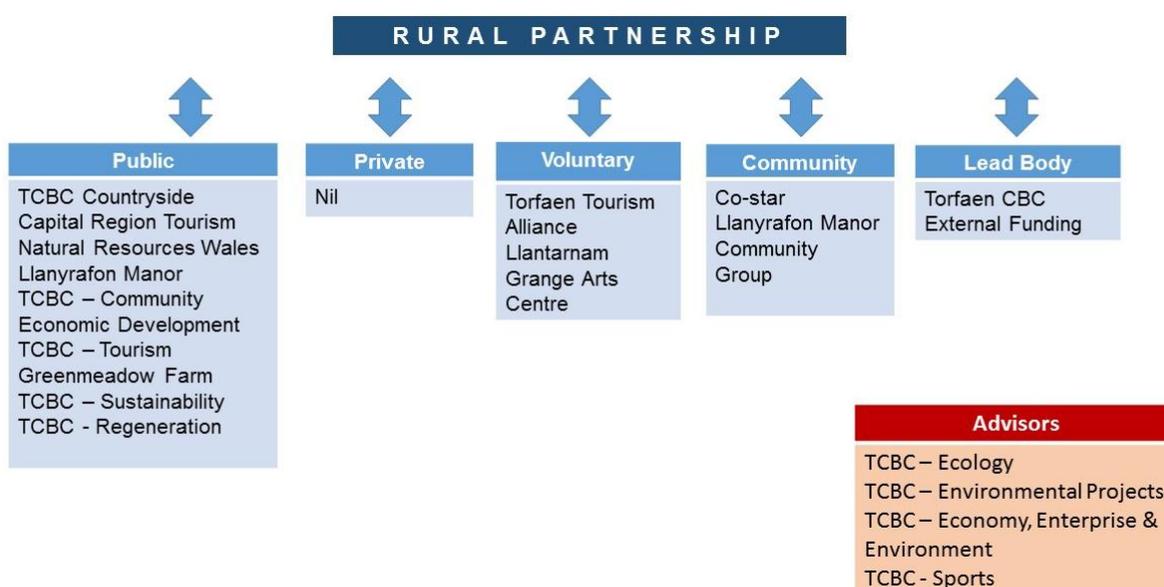
3.3.2 Partnership Working

Figure 6 outlines the sectors and organisations that make up the Torfaen Rural Partnership. At the time of evaluating Business Plan 2 it was difficult to engage with a broad cross-section of the Partnership. Whilst invitations were made to the LAG/Partnership workshop, there was limited representation along with a small response rate through the on-line survey. Our observation is that this is a typical behaviour where programmes are nearing their completion. In the case of Torfaen, we would also add that the programme is relatively small compared to other rural programmes and with other commitments; peoples' capacity to attend can be limited. One partnership member commenting at the May workshop session stated *"membership fluctuates considerably because of other demands on people's time. I welcome the anticipated streamlining of the LAG and the Partnership in the future, with this being a key positive for working together."*

The main reason for people to be members of the Rural Partnership is that there are clear synergies with the individual's work and opportunities for partnership working in terms of advice and support.

The current representation is strong on public sector organisations but appears light in terms of private, voluntary and community membership. If active in the relevant wards, Torfaen Business Voice may be a suitable network group to invite onto the Partnership in any future round of rural funding, possibly providing an effective way of raising awareness amongst rural business.

Figure 6 - Torfaen Rural Partnership



Source: Torfaen Local Development Strategy

3.3.3 Promotion of Programme

In relation to marketing and promotion of the programme, interviewees could recall campaigns that related to the promotion of specific activities within the Manor and through Taste of Torfaen, specifically the monthly markets and the April 2014 Country Fayre.

Whilst the quality of the promotional material is good and carries the Create branding and

message, activities tend to be event or beneficiary focussed, with little integration or communication of a 'bigger picture'. Building on a comment made on the need for integrated place marketing at the Manor, one interviewee commented that "*having two separate officers at the Manor has led to two separate campaigns with a missed opportunity for integration*". On a higher strategic level of marketing and promotion, one partnership member identified the need for stronger links with Torfaen's Destination Management Plan. This point has been discussed between Create and Torfaen's Tourism section, with notable actions around food tourism now included in the draft Destination Management Plan.

In looking at how the programme has related to its rural audience, one comment from the on-line survey stated "*the marketing and promotion has been aimed more at farmers and real rural people rather than the wards themselves giving more incentive to diversify*". Due to the nature of the Taste of Torfaen project and its design, it has purposefully set out to target specific groups of people as part of building land based production, supply chains and local buying/purchasing. This is important in terms of building one to one relationships and building sector based networks. There is, however, an opportunity in the next round of the RDP to look at rural wards in a spatial sense in terms of investment to date, local assets and finding ways of aggregating activity so that a wider impact is achieved with regard to rural identity and local economic growth.

Some partnership members also identified the need to promote the wider programme to local residents and users. In contrast to this, one partnership member identified the challenge of communicating a rural programme to an eastern valleys community, where the population do not perceive themselves to be rural. There is therefore a need to consider how to relate to semi-urban communities in terms of buying local, showcasing rural businesses and engaging with rural life in terms of health and well-being.

Some specific comments relate to the need to build on social media activity, through event led activity and to extend this to build a following amongst local residents as well as local businesses and stakeholder organisations. The need to integrate social media so that there is a consistent message across various platforms is seen as key to engaging local residents and encouraging attendance at events and markets and for signposting to local producers, etc. It was also noted, however, that there is a need to ensure information is also accessible to everyone, by also providing more traditional printed materials.

Web-based information is another area for development, with a need to identify links between business enquiries generated through Create that could be signposted onto other businesses or business development/marketing routes. Links to websites such as www.southwalesbusiness.co.uk need to be developed with opportunities for enhanced account management across programmes.

An area of discussion in Business Plan 1 was the need for Rural Partnership members to act as champions and ambassadors for the programme, actively promoting Create to existing and new groups. A suggestion was for champions to be linked to one of the five themes, with a close association to the lead rural Delivery Officer for the activity. This appears to have not been taken fully up in Business Plan 2, probably due to capacity issues, but we would suggest that this form of community leadership be adopted in looking at the next round of funding through the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme. Local champions provide a face for the programme, share responsibility, and enable wider engagement with local people.

3.3.4 Project Assessment/Monitoring Activities

The LAG and Rural Partnership received regular reports from the Lead Body on a monthly/bi-monthly basis in terms of physical and financial monitoring.

3.4 Local Action Group

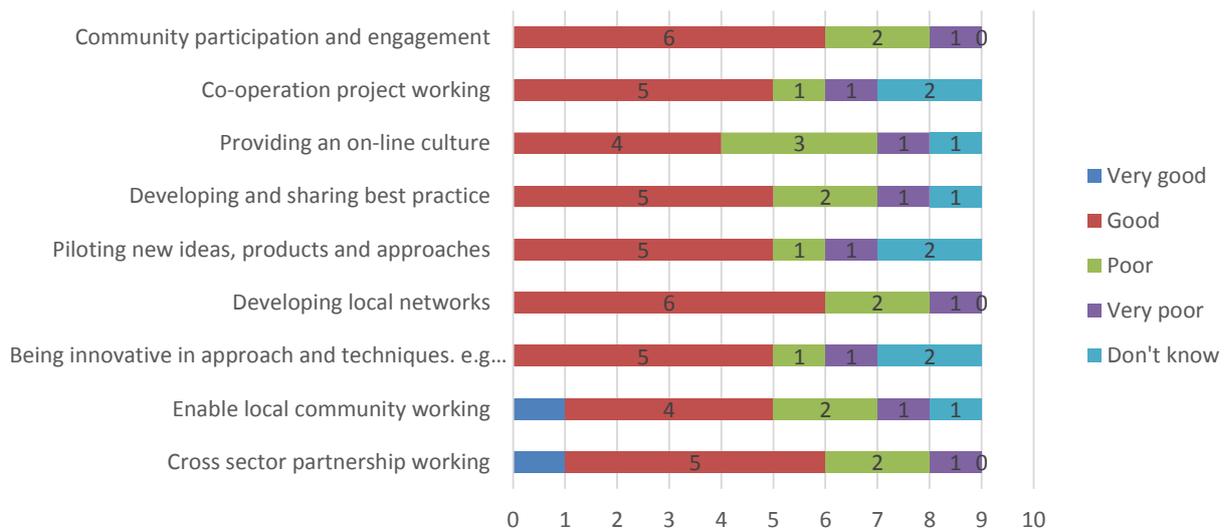
A LAG will be specifically responsible for the implementation of Axis 4 activities although it may also be the chosen delivery organisation for some or all of the activities under Axis 3 (this principle could be extended to Axes 1 and 2 as well, where appropriate). As with Partnerships, due regard should be given to maximising the potential benefits of drawing upon existing experience and expertise when constituting the LAG, namely:

- Have an area-based local development strategy intended for a well identified sub-regional rural territory;
- Be a local public-private partnership;
- Utilise a bottom-up, inclusive approach;
- Operate through multi-sectoral design and implementation principles based on the interaction between actors and projects of different sectors of the local economy;
- Implement innovative approaches;
- Implement co-operation projects; and
- Develop the networking of local partners / partnerships.

The terms of reference of the Local Action Group (LAG) are appended to this report.

Figure 7 outlines how representatives rate the LAG in terms of its core activities. There is a sense that cross sector partnership working, co-operation project working and piloting new ideas, products and approaches have been well managed, all of which are key to LEADER principles and ways of working. Areas that tend to be rated poorly (including 'the very poor') are; 'providing an on-line culture' and 'developing and sharing best practice'. The role of an on-line culture was also identified in the Evaluation of Business Plan 1, highlighting a need for an independent website and a more integrated social media campaign. This point has also been picked up through evaluation interviews.

Figure 7 - How do you rate the following activities the Local Action Group has been managing?



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd; On-line Survey Results, July 2014

3.4.1 Partnership Working

Figure 8 - Torfaen Local Action Group



Source: Torfaen Local Development Strategy

The Local Action Group has evolved under Business Plan 2 with a mixture of established members from Business Plan 1 and new members recruited. Its membership is predominantly private sector with no representation from the voluntary or community sector. This weighting towards the private sector is due to the local enterprise focus of the programme in Business Plan 2 and especially the Taste of Torfaen project, with some members being beneficiaries as well as being representative of the local rural business sector.

Reasons for joining the LAG range from “concern over local businesses” and, “to help the local rural area develop and use EU grants effectively” to “it might be of benefit to our organisation and we could bring a range of skills and expertise to the Group and assist in the

delivery of its aspirations.”

3.4.2 How has Business Case 2 worked toward LDS?

A joint workshop was held with the Rural Partnership which comments on strategic fit and direction made earlier on in this section. These are additional comments made by respective LAG members.

Land Based Production

Most LAG members feel that Business Plan 2 has built on foundations of Business Plan 1 with Taste of Torfaen stimulating interest with some good ideas supported. The land based nature of LAG members' interests helps in terms of meeting the objective of supporting rural enterprise.

The availability of small grants is acknowledged by some LAG members as being effective in kick-starting ideas and encouraging people to try other, additional funding routes. One LAG member stated *“the impact of the grant has been noticed with it leading to further funding opportunities e.g. Glastir⁴. It's like a snowball rolling downhill – now it's really going”*. Another comment related that through the grant scheme and advice and support from the Rural Development Officer *“there is an incentive to action in rural enterprise”*

One LAG member expressed concern over the disproportionate amount of time spent on raising awareness and processing grants rather than on the outputs. In their view, this hindered empowerment and succession planning within the private sector. They qualified this by stating *“it's hard for the lead body, which is answerable to Welsh Government, to take risks with relatively small amounts of money over a short time period. It's therefore difficult to maintain momentum and let the private sector lead when you're nearing the end of the programme.”*

Conservation of Local Heritage

As commented on within the Rural Partnership section, LAG members highly rate the quality of the restorative heritage works to Llanyrafon Manor and its improved setting/relationship to its community, but there are some challenges remaining in terms of use and sustainability. As with all capital led projects, LAG members recognise that this is the difficult phase in making the building work as a hub for all activities. There is notable praise for the Council in safeguarding and underwriting the community/heritage value of the building, but some LAG members comment that given the building is Council-owned, there are some limitations on its use, its conditions and vision for it. As noted by some interviewees, there is a need to explore the whole envelope of the site to see whether other activities could add to activity, footfall and sense of purpose.

In going forward into the next round of RDP funding, one LAG member stated that *“whilst we have a wow factor at the Manor we need to look at planting small acorns for local heritage schemes and not look at the bigger assets”*.

⁴ Glastir is the sustainable land management scheme for Wales, offering financial support to farmers and land managers.

Promote Sustainable Tourism

LAG members recognise that tourism has not been a specific focus of Business Plan 2 due to lack of budget, but there has been cross-cutting activity in terms of Llanyrafon Manor and opportunities for food tourism through the Taste of Torfaen project. The need to work across the County Borough and with neighbouring authorities on food tourism is seen as a future priority, with a need too to see how rural wards can link into Torfaen's urban centres in terms of awareness and buying local. The role of Llanyrafon Manor as a southern gateway to other attractions such as Greenmeadow Community Farm, Pontymoile Canal Basin, Pontypool Market and Blaenavon's World Heritage offer is a significant opportunity to explore.

The April 2014 Country Fayre, has been held up as a great example of co-operative working within Torfaen and has helped to showcase rural producers in addition to the actual Llanyrafon Manor building. If a similar event was to happen again, some LAG members identify the need to develop a more targeted marketing and promotional campaign, and where resources allow, more comprehensive advertising. There is also a need to look at using the event as a "hook" to the regular monthly markets as well as other splinter events with marketing databases and use of social media.

Other comments on tourism activity relate to the need for the LAG to seek guidance on matters such as planning related issues in rural areas which can prove problematic when the Lead Body is Torfaen County Borough Council, who are also the Local Planning Authority. One LAG member stated that RDP policy is often at odds with local planning policy with an objective related to rural diversification needing independent and constructive planning advice, stating *"it's been hard for the LAG to steer rural policy and delivery when we are limited in how we commission advice"*.

Business Support & Advice

Through a strong cluster of local businesses on the LAG and with closer ties between the RDP team and the Council's Economy and Enterprise team, the network has been stronger. Business advice and support through the Taste of Torfaen project has been acknowledged as being accessible and tailored in spite of delays in decision-making on programme funding. The markets steering group, formally producer network, has helped provide a focus for food and craft businesses with the need for this to be sustained as part of the tender for Llanyrafon Manor.

Skills Development

Skills Development did not attract significant comment from LAG members. Members recognise that training courses have been provided and through the process of being on the LAG, individual members have developed their organisational and development skills.

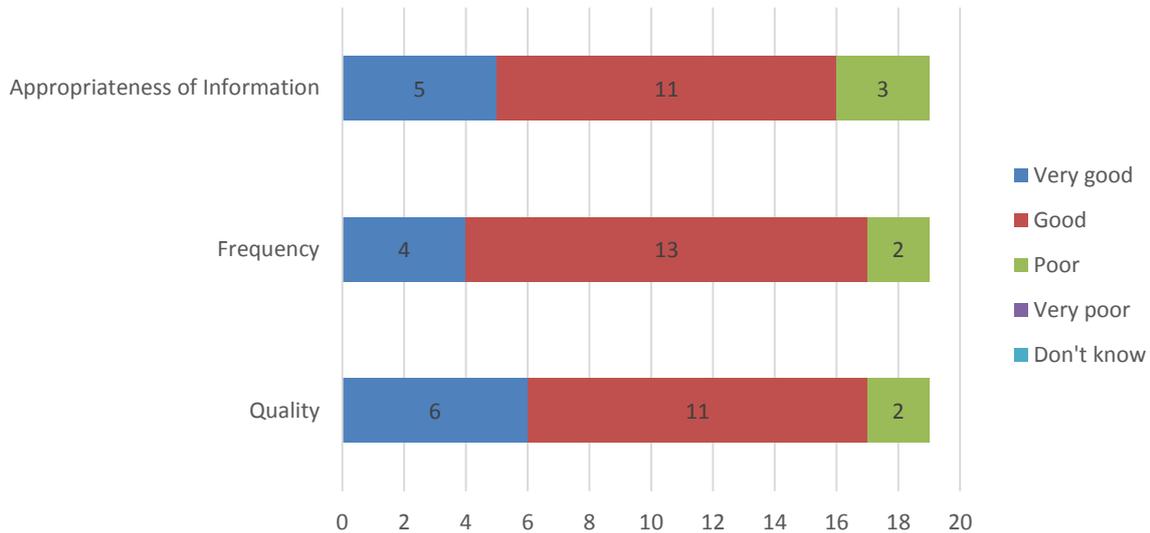
3.4.3 Capacity Building

The capacity building activities of the LAG have mainly been channelled through the Axis 4 Taste of Torfaen project, through support and advice, networking and festivals and events. This has involved the dedicated Rural Development Officer with support from the Marketing and Events Support Officer. An evaluation of these capacity building activities can be found in Section 5 of this report.

3.4.4 Local Promotion

Figure 9 shows that respondents are 'satisfied' to 'very satisfied' with how communication has been handled within the Create rural programme.

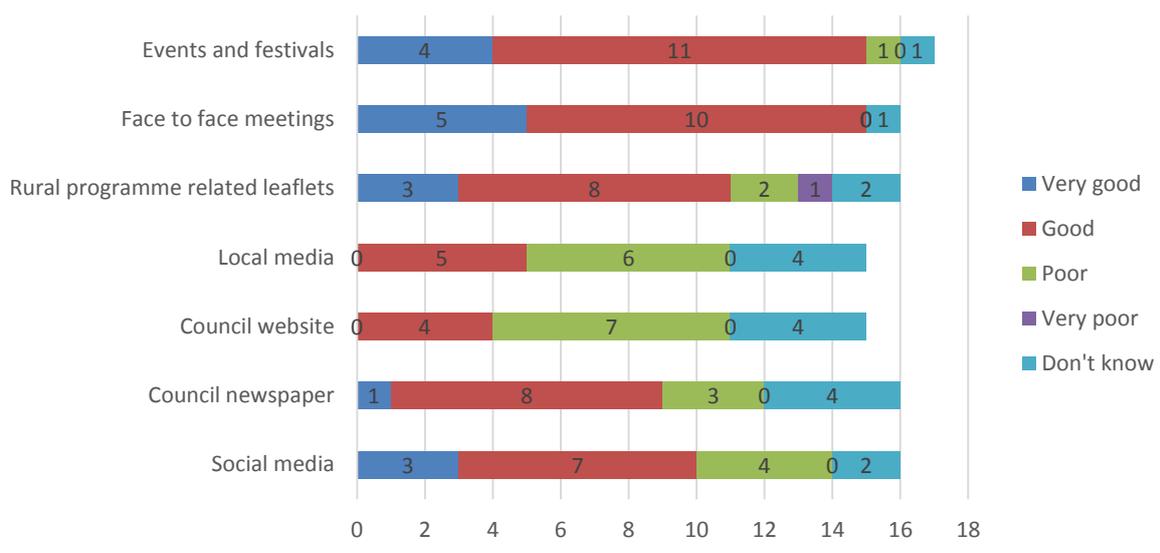
Figure 9 - How would you rate the communication you have received from Create between 2011 and 2014?



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd; On-line Survey Results, July 2014

Figure 10 below illustrates that respondents are happy with those marketing and promotional activities that are within the direct control of project specific officers e.g. events and festivals, face to face meetings and rural programme related leaflets. Areas for improvement relate to greater use of local media, Create's placement within the Council's website, greater use of Council newspaper and use of social media.

Figure 10 - Rating for Marketing and Promotion of Create for Business Plan 2



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd; On-line Survey Results, July 2014

As identified earlier on in this section, there is a need for a stronger and independent web

presence that is accessible, dynamic and linked to respective rural sectors and communities. LAG members see the need for greater use of social media that projects the personality of the programme as well as signposting opportunities and wider awareness of activity. One LAG member commented that *"there's been a lot of talk amongst a limited group. We need an explosion that ignites people"*.

3.4.5 Engagement and Local Networks

Engagement and communication is generally through direct project activity with the Rural Development Officer dealing with initial grant requests, scoping, appraising and guiding potential applicants through grant and support processes.

In terms of local networks, a sub group of the LAG was developed with a food and craft focus for developing the monthly market and raising attendance at other events. As referred to earlier within this report, some informal networks and collaborations have arisen as a result, and three LAG members entered into a shared lease of a business unit for food production purposes on the Polo Grounds Industrial Estate in New Inn.

Within the LAG, engagement is through regular meetings with members having updates and invites through email.

One challenge for LAG members has been to observe the administrative-heavy process, with a LAG member commenting that *"at the start people jumped in with their two feet, then they saw the administrative process and soon realised that there were limitations to owning the local decision-making process"*. At the same time, the same LAG members noted that the Lead Body is often restricted by Welsh Government before any local conversation can be had, which can place them in an invidious position.

At the time of writing this report, it is also noted by some LAG members that as the programme is nearing its end and with a significant break between funding rounds, there is some cooling down in terms of engagement and uncertainty regarding role and purpose.

3.4.6 Innovation

As identified within Business Plan 1, the LAG feels that the process of developing rural projects, creating new networks, and trialling new ideas in Torfaen, is still innovative to the rural County Borough in its early years of rural development.

3.4.7 Co-operation Project Working

Some local co-operation working was undertaken as part of the April 2014 Country Fayre within the Taste of Torfaen project, with Caerphilly's Rural Development Programme partnering Torfaen on producer promotion and joint marketing as well as training courses and other knowledge sharing.

3.4.8 On-line Culture

LAG members, supported by other interviewees, see the need for a strong and independent on-line presence that is enabled by the Lead Body but is accessible and customer facing for its rural audience. Alongside a dedicated Create website, there is a need to have a stronger social media presence at a programme level that also has space to promote specific project activity and build a local following. This is a fairly cheap and cost effective method of

communication, but will require some staff resource or delegation to LAG members to maintain and keep it topical and informative.

3.4.9 Training and Best Practice

The LAG has held training through updates at their regular meetings or through direct best practice visits. Internal training opportunities have been held on introduction to social web, Facebook and twitter, word press, communities 2.0.

Best practice

It is also recognised within the LAG that individuals bring their own expertise in terms of local crafts/produce development, landscape management with members of the LAG also using their professional skills such as the Chair of the LAG, Martyn Hughes, who has a background in accountancy and project management.

3.4.10 Pilot New Ideas, Products and Approaches

As iterated within this report, Business Plan 2 has been innovative in terms of its rural focus, its engagement with rural communities, building capacity and trialling new products.

4 Axis 3

Figure 11 - Llanyrafon Manor



Source: Create

Whilst Torfaen RDP Business Plan 1 was tasked with the physical restoration of Llanyrafon Manor, Business Plan 2 aimed to build on this restoration, addressing the following aims:

- To bring the site and its history back to life, through sensitively conserving and re-developing Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre into a focal point for the community, establishing a sense of place for the area
- Provide a sense of ownership and pride for the local rural community
- Exploit opportunities to access the natural heritage of the area
- Develop a natural space for the development of learning

In order to achieve these aims it established a number of project objectives:

- To create a desire within the community to become involved with activities at the site
- To increase opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of the rural heritage amongst different audiences by addressing their particular needs and aspirations
- To improve skills, employment and lifelong learning opportunities, whether formal or informal, for people in Torfaen of all ages and abilities through working in partnership with the Torfaen Rural Training Scheme.
- To provide a series of interactive events celebrating local culture and heritage

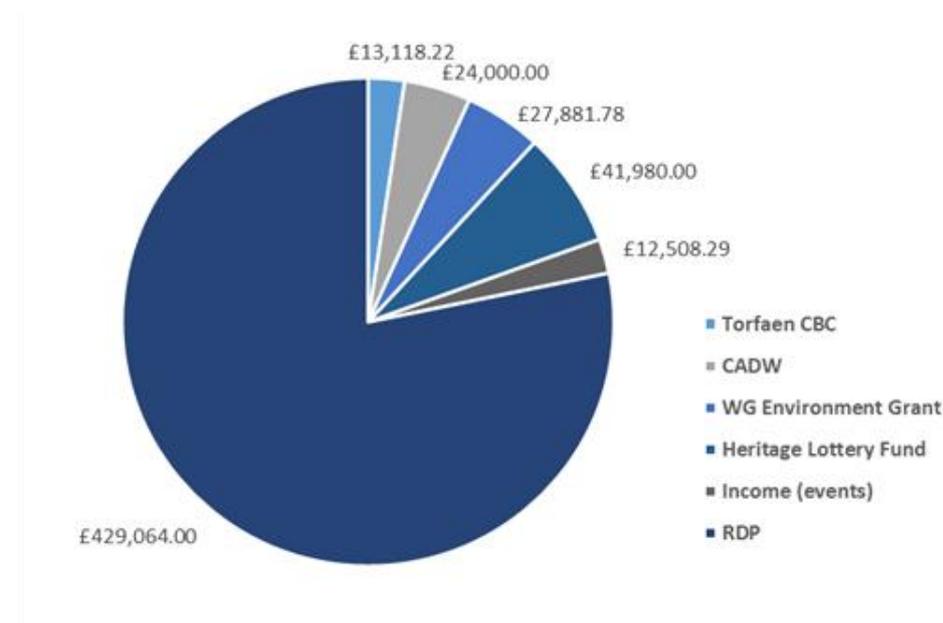
- To strengthen existing and develop new partnerships with local businesses to support the local economy
- To establish best practise in physical, sensory and intellectual access to the range of activities the site encompasses
- Taking practical measures to enhance biodiversity at Llanyrafon Manor Farm (the bat habitat being made a feature of the development, as well as riverside species being protected)
- Raising public awareness of biodiversity (turning bat habitat at Llanyrafon Manor into a positive feature of the experience, creating observation centre by the river bank for riverside protected species, training the community in respecting the rare plants such as the bee orchid in the grounds).
- To cater for as many audiences as possible, where a valuable and significant effect can be had upon programmes of study, or contribution to personal enjoyment and enlightenment can be made.

In order to carry out the programme of work described above, the project costs provided in the Expression of Interest were stated as follows:

Total Project Cost (£)	Total RDP Funding (£)	Total Levered Funding (£)	RDP Funding Grant Rate	Levered Funding Grant Rate
£536,330	£429,064	£107,266	80%	20%

The final Funding Package for Llanyrafon Manor was constituted as follows:

Figure 12 - Llanyrafon Manor BP2 Funding Package



Source: Torfaen County Borough Council

4.1 LDS Fit

The Llanyrafon Manor work that has been carried out fits closely with the themes and objectives of the LDS: the development of land based production; the conservation of local heritage; the promotion of sustainable tourism; provision of business support and advice; and the enhancement of skills development.

The Torfaen LDS highlighted a number of problems which need to be addressed in the Torfaen area, indicating a demand for this project. Detailed in the Expression of Interest form, these encapsulated the following. Much work was successfully achieved with BP1, and BP2 was required to continue on from where BP1 had left.

- The Manor had looked somewhat dilapidated, and the grounds overgrown and, rather than being left in this state, BP2's remit was to ensure it was brought back to life and turned into a focal point for the surrounding community to use and enjoy.
 - This will contribute towards the acknowledged problem of unused or under-used properties in Torfaen
 - It will also contribute to Torfaen's significant biodiversity, and help turn this biodiversity into a visitor attraction
- This community focal point could then help re-establish the currently eroded community infrastructure, AND become a gateway attraction for visitors coming into the area thus helping to develop its tourism potential
- Torfaen currently has an under-documented, under-conserved and under-interpreted heritage: restoration of the Manor will take this into account and ensure that the conservation and interpretation of the property and its heritage are encouraged.

In summary, the way in which this project will meet the demand, as highlighted in the LDS, will be for Llanyrafon Manor to be restored and re-developed as a Rural Heritage Centre, creating a focal point for rural communities. It will provide the catalyst for business development and enterprises, enabling the rural communities, micro and small businesses and individuals to work in innovative ways, encouraging entrepreneurship.

4.2 Activities Undertaken

Key activities undertaken in order to build on BP1's restoration of Llanyrafon Manor were the following:

- The appointment of Caitlin Eales as Rural Heritage Officer
- The work of the Hay Meadow Community Group
- The development of the Raspberry Tea Rooms.

The Project came under Measure 323 – Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage.

The Rural Heritage Officer, Events and Activities held at Llanyrafon Manor

Caitlin Eales was appointed Rural Heritage Officer on 1st February 2012, her post lasting until March 2014 when RDP funding ended. Caitlin had previously been employed at Tredegar House, and held an MA in Museum Studies, recently completed.

Initially, Caitlin's role had been "to get the tea rooms up and running". At that point, the Manor's restoration work had largely been completed, but it was still "predominantly a shell". Caitlin was tasked with helping the development of an events and activities programme for 2012. The activities which followed from the establishment of the tea rooms are numerous. They include the following, with more detail of each being given below:

- Evening Ghost Tours
- Halloween and Christmas Events
- Historic Dances
- Volunteer Christmas Party
- School visits and workshops
- Making of a patchwork quilt (LMCG)
- Website design and development.

Evening Ghost Tours, Halloween and Christmas (2013) events were very successful. In the lead-up to Christmas (2013), the Manor held historic dances, the volunteer Christmas party, school workshops and a core Christmas event with Father Christmas as the main attraction. Father Christmas was visited by approximately 100 children, 600 people overall. The Ghost Tours were also very successful becoming fully booked out, and private tours were held too to accommodate interested parties.

As reported in the quarterly project progress report (Oct 2013 - Dec 2013):

"Many visitors offered highly positive comments and expressed a desire to return next year for a similar event. Comments left at the

Figure 13 - Marketing of Events at Llanyrafon Manor



Source: Create

Figure 14 - Ghost Tours and Other Promotional Activities



Source: Create

Christmas event described the experience as 'magical' with one visitor expressing how much effort has gone into the event – “really excellent” ... This expression of enjoyment and excitement regarding events at the Manor was a fantastic benefit to staff and volunteers with young visitors actively seeking future experiences at the Manor. It is encouraging to note that the site is viewed as a fun, interesting place for all visitors and one that is recognised and loved by many”.

The two historic dances carried out in December 2013 were well attended by over 50 members of the public. The dances utilised historic musicians who gave demonstrations of the instruments they were playing. Medieval and Tudor dances were taught to and then performed by the visitors. Those who attended left with a greater knowledge of historic dance, music and social tradition, and all were keen to return for further dances in 2014.

In addition to Events, Caitlin's role included encouraging school visits to the Manor. This was highly successful. School group attendance tripled in November 2013 with three weeks of successive school sessions, accommodating over 300 school children. Many expressed an interest in returning for a second visit in 2014.

During the October – December 2013 time period, over 300 children visited the Manor as part of a school group. Sessions held covered topics such as the Tudors, Guy Fawkes, WWII and the 1950s. The progress report stated that the strong levels of attendance acted as a 'useful evaluation of the sessions, demonstrating that not only is the educational programme on offer a valued and sought after experience, but also that awareness of the Manor's schools programme is growing quickly'.

The Manor's activities were not limited to events. Again, as detailed in the October 2013 Progress Report, it was reported that:

“the Llanyrafon Manor Community Group (LMCG) are currently working on a community patchwork quilt and invite any members of the public to join them on a Tuesday afternoon.”

In this way a local hub has been created for visitors who share an interest and with some specialists among the group they are now keenly skill sharing and developing their individual skills quickly.

An organised visit to the National Trust owned Duffryn gardens gave a talk on planting fruit trees, pruning and greenhouse maintenance, attended by members of the LMCG. This expanded their knowledge base and the information gained will help them further with their work in the Kitchen garden at the Manor.

The final Manor website has also been developed and designed. This has been written carefully with the aim of featuring text and information for all ages. Again, in an attempt to encourage young visitors to the site, the website features a 'kids zone' where children can send questions to the historical characters utilised in interpretation on site as well as the Bugglington character Beeves the Butler. The website aims to ensure that visitors are well informed about the Manor before visiting and to support continued learning in children following a visit. The website also features information on the history, gardens and wildlife at the site for adults as well as information on room hire, weddings, news and upcoming events.

One of Caitlin's achievements whilst working as the Rural Heritage Office was, with a colleague, to start and develop the 'Bugglington Manor Bug Hunt'. This involved installing interpretation points / panels around the grounds encouraging the exploration of biodiversity. It was aimed particularly at young families, and children were invited to explore and find out about the 'bugs' living in the grounds. Hopes for producing a book had to be dropped through a lack of funding, but the 'bugs' can be seen on the Llanyrafon Manor website.

Caitlin Eales invested considerable enthusiasm and energy into her role as Rural Heritage Officer, and was very pleased at the way it attracted both children and their parents / carers. The public "adored" the Manor in her view, and took pride in it as a local resource. She believed that the Manor was maybe trying to "do too many things": providing office space / historic house/museum / entertainment venue, and that these different roles clashed. Her view was that the focus should be on tourism and that attracting visitors to the Manor should be the key driver to shaping what the Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre offered. A focus such as this would then have implication for the Manor's content and use.

Figure 15 - Bugglington Manor Educational Interpretation



Source: Create

Volunteers

Volunteers were key to the success of the Manor and its grounds. The Community Group used to have 40 members, but this number gradually reduced once the restoration work was at a more advanced stage. By the summer of 2014 approximate numbers comprised ten 'active' members and 30 'inactive'.

An MA student from University of South Wales, Llewellyn Smith, completed and presented a market research project at the Manor. In total Llewellyn worked on site for a month, speaking with various members of staff and volunteers.

The Work of the Hay Meadow Community Group

Ray Evans had been central to the campaign to restore Llanyrafon Manor to its former condition and role within the local community. After considerable perseverance, the Hay Meadow Community Garden officially opened in June 2012 and a steering group established, who meet once per year.

Speaking about the Torfaen RDP BP1, Ray talked of her aims as being "to see the Manor restored as a place for people in Llanyrafon to enjoy, including special events, educational, sitting out in nice gardens and learning about the history of the house". At the end of the project she described it as her "passion and dream achieved!".

For BP2, Ray continued to work with Andrew Nevill, a member of the Environmental Projects Team at Torfaen County Borough Council during the time of BP1.

Ray succeeded in gaining funding of £3,000 (from Taste of Torfaen), which was required for investing in a Management Plan, with the work being undertaken by Gwent Wildlife Trust. This was "really valuable" in that it provided the Community Team with a framework to guide their project. Monies received were also used for buying clay for the pond, a strimmer, boundary fencing, and knotweed spray. (Additional funding was received from the Countryside Council of Wales, and from the Community Foodie project).

The Hay Meadow Community Group's aim is to further the development of a wildflower meadow and community orchard, including a traditional working kitchen garden. They had already had to expend considerable effort clearing the land in advance of work starting on the Manor, and then planting 100+ edible trees such as medlar, apricot, mulberry, apple, cherries, gages and plums. Now, the Manor garden provides a horticultural haven and complimentary landscape to the Manor. The old cottage within the grounds is also home to bats roosting, and the introduction of new wildlife habitats are showing success in increasing the garden's biodiversity. As well as the bats, owls, otters, and sand martins are also seen

Figure 16 - Llanyrafon Manor Volunteers



Source: Create

within the grounds.

Their hope is to use the produce grown to make jams and chutneys for sale as a social enterprise, selling products at Llanyrafon Manor's monthly market, supplying the Raspberry Tearooms, and maybe also distributing them further afield.

Schools have visited the Hay Meadow to see the work that is taking place, and they themselves went to visit other community projects to learn from others and share knowledge. As referred to above, a visit to Duffryn Gardens was described as providing the group with a stronger knowledge of planting and pruning which would be utilised and conveyed to visitors within the Kitchen Garden.

Development of the Raspberry Tearooms

A small café was envisaged for Llanyrafon Manor, with work underpinned by Axis 4. With support from Taste of Torfaen, Julie Nelson applied for two funding grants. The first was used for her Raspberry Tearooms business at the Manor and comprised an oven, aprons with the Raspberry Tearooms logo, Sage software, cooler boxes and marketing. With the second grant, and working alongside two others (Bill King and Liz Bettridge, both members of the LAG), she established Raspberry Catering.

Julie, Bill and Liz are all Torfaen food producers / providers. They combined their efforts and found a unit in Pontypool with a commercial kitchen to rent. Within this shared space, Julie has established her catering business, Bill, as an Artisan Baker, makes bread and bread products, and Liz makes a range of relishes branded 'Inner Pickle'. They are all able to lend each other mutual support.

At the time of interview, Julie was waiting to learn if she had been successful in being appointed preferred operator to manage Llanyrafon Manor. If she was to be successful, she had plans to carry out weddings and functions there, and would also be responsible for managing the monthly market.

The funding Julie has received has helped her business grow considerably. From being one person working from her own kitchen at home, she now has four people working on the catering side of the business, and two full time staff working at the tearooms (increasing to five at weekends), supported by JobsGrowth Wales. Two of her chefs are apprentices. She has recently become a limited company and VAT registered.

Julie herself has engaged with the RDP via training and workshops, which she described as finding very useful. She also went to visit a number of different craft and food outlets with the Monmouthshire RDP team to share knowledge and experiences. In this way, she has been well supported by the RDP team and hopes to both consolidate her current business activities, and then grow them for the future.

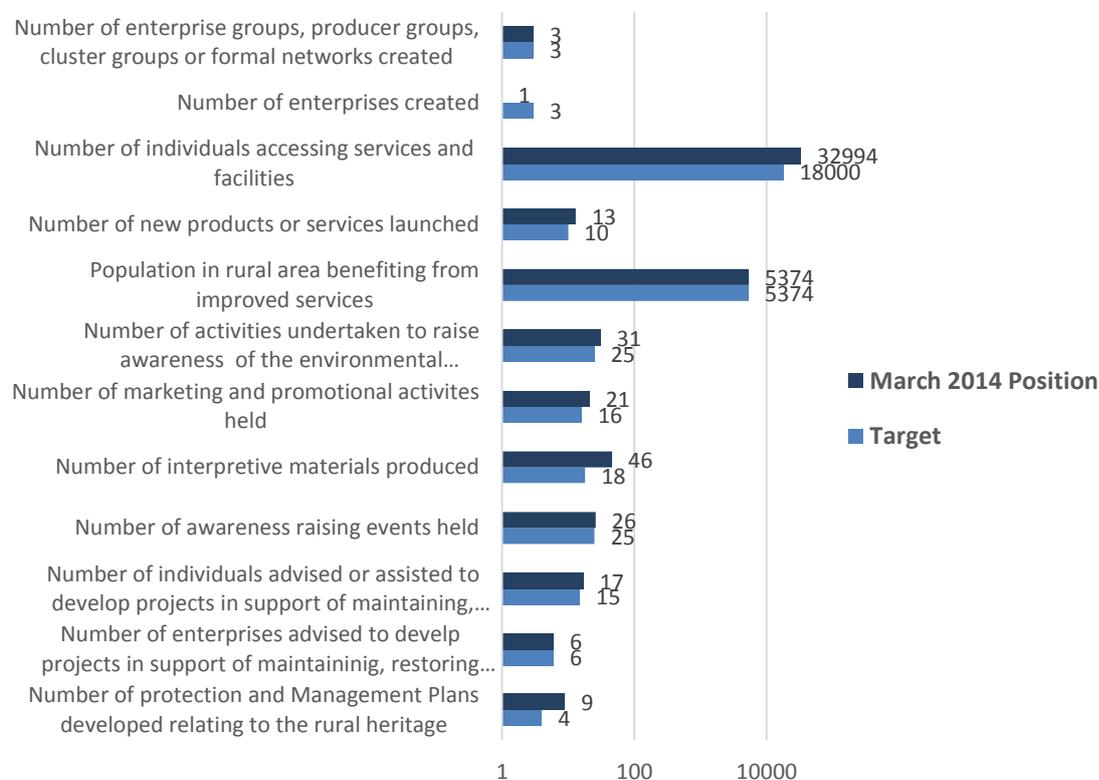
Fit of Activities with Llanyrafon Manor Aims and Objectives

The work carried out by the Rural Heritage Officer at Llanyrafon Manor and her colleagues combined with the work of the Hay Meadow Community Garden Group and the presence of the Raspberry Tearooms have made a significant contribution to meeting the aims and objectives set for it under the RDP.

4.3 Performance

4.3.1 Outputs

Figure 17 – March 2014 Position on Outputs from Axis 3 Project



Source: Performance Indicators – March 2014 Position, Axis 3

Figure 17 shows the monitoring return for March 2014, with a commentary on outputs and outcomes below.

WO 323.2 - Number of protection and management plans developed

Nine studies and investigations have been undertaken which have helped to support the operational management, marketing as well as procedural documents. These include event plans, marketing plans, grounds maintenance schedules, bat monitoring reports, amongst other documents.

This output has been exceeded with 9 actual plans/studies delivered against the original target of 4.

WO 323.3 Number of enterprises advised or assisted to develop projects in support of maintaining, restoring or upgrading the rural heritage

This output is related to enabling local enterprises or community groups to play a role in the rural heritage of the Manor. The target of 6 has been met with groups such as Llanyrafon Manor Community Group, The Ghost Room and Ancient Cwmbran Society supported. Written time records and confirmation of beneficiary support have been received.

WO 323.4 Number of individuals advised or assisted to develop projects in support of maintaining, restoring or upgrading the rural heritage

In addition to local enterprise or community groups being supported, this output relates to individuals that have received direct support through advice, assistance in the development of project activity that supports the rural heritage of the Manor. Some of the activity relates to educational support such as a University MA project and internships/work placements. Other advice has related to website design and other business development related support.

In terms of site related activity linked to individual micro businesses, support has ranged from a number of stands at a Manor Wedding Fayre, which included flower design, vintage transport, stationary, cake stand, wedding chair covers and photography. Written time records and confirmation of beneficiary support have been received.

17 individuals have been supported against the planned target of 15.

WAO Measure 1 – Number of awareness raising events held

26 events have taken place against the planned target of 25, with over 13,000 people attending a wide range of activities. The activities range from the formal launch of the RDP in July 2011, 17th century re-enactments at the Manor, seasonal events, children's activities, 'Cwmbran on your Doorstep' event and a Wedding Fayre. The awareness raising was undertaken through physical events, promotional fliers and other activities.

WAO Measure 4 – Number of interpretative materials produced

These have been extensive, with the planned target of 18 significantly exceeded. In total, 46 sets of materials were produced. These have been very varied, encompassing the following: on-site marketing materials including pop up banner; information sheets on specific Manor rooms (parlour, buttery, kitchen etc); outdoor interpretation panels (bugs, otters, amphibians); interactive boards; welcome videos and guide books.

WAO Measure 5 – Number of marketing and promotional activities held

This output has also been exceeded with 21 activities generated against the planned target of 16. These have mainly focussed on print materials such as Rural News articles, annual events flyers, and event specific materials for, for example, the Victorian Funfair, WWII Event Marketing and Halloween/Heritage Day/Ghost Tour flyers. General promotional adverts have been placed in Torfaen Council publications, local magazines and direct marketing to coach business magazines. One website has been launched for the Manor.

WAO 14 – Number of activities undertaken to raise awareness of the environmental consequences of a project

This output has been exceeded with 31 activities generated against the planned target of 25. Activities undertaken have targeted young people through educational awareness and the wider public through general talks. The children's activities have included bug hunts, summer activities (animals on the farm, plants and herbs, flowers). Talks have focussed on plant identification, fruit tree planting and biodiversity. A series of workshops run over Easter focussed on beetles, hedgehogs, otters and frogs. A visit by Llanyrafon Manor Community Group to Duffryn Gardens for a Planting Talk has been undertaken with wildlife talks for the public also held.

4.3.2 Results

ECR 323.1 - Population in rural area benefiting from improved services

The Manor is accessible to a local catchment population of 5,374 residents (based on 2011 Census figures of rural wards).

WR 323.1 – Number of new products or services launched

This output has been exceeded with 13 activities generated against the planned target of 10.

This has mainly involved direct activities that support the Manor in terms of events, school sessions, theatre performances, wedding ceremonies, bug hunts, guidebooks and the Manor website.

WR 323.4 - Number of individuals accessing services and facilities

The planned target of 18,000 individuals accessing the Manor has been exceeded with 36,332 attending between July 2012 and March 2014. Figure 18 below shows the seasonality trends of the Manor in terms of people visiting, with the summer months being a peak period.

Figure 18 - Llanyrafon Manor Visitor Numbers 2012-2014



Source: Manor Visitors Records – July 2012- March 2014

WR 323.15 – Number of enterprises created

This shows that 1 new enterprise has been created out of the planned target of 3. This micro enterprise is Raspberry Tearooms.

WR 323.17 - Number of enterprise groups, producer groups, cluster groups or formal networks created

The final result relates to the number of new groups created as part of the project process. The target of 3 planned for this indicator has been full met, the groups being: Manor Health

and Safety Group, the Learning Facilitator Network Group, and the Local Community Sewing Group.

4.4 Summary

The Evaluation of the Torfaen RDP BP1 reported on the way in which the restoration of Llanyrafon Manor had succeeded in several different respects. In this second Business Plan this success has continued, with the focus having moved on from the foundation and physical structure of the building to its role and function as a Rural Heritage Centre. **With one exception, all the targets set for this round of Axis 3 funding have been met, if not exceeded, sometimes significantly, and note that this is based on March 2014 data.**

Specifically, BP2 specified its objectives as being as follows:

- To bring the site and its history back to life, through sensitively conserving and re-developing Llanyrafon Manor Rural Heritage Centre into a focal point for the community, establishing a sense of place for the area.
- To provide a sense of ownership and pride for the local rural community
- To exploit opportunities to access the natural heritage of the area
- To develop a natural space for the development of learning.

These objectives can be hard to measure, but feedback from those involved, such as Caitlin Eales, Ray Evans, and Julie Nelson, report on very positive responses from users of the Manor and it would appear that it is succeeding in becoming a 'focal point for the community', and providing a 'sense of ownership and pride'. It is also making use of opportunities to access the natural heritage of the area and creating space for the development of learning, as experienced by the young people in particular who visit the Manor.

The exceeding of the target for 'individuals accessing services and facilities' is testament to the above. (32,994 people were recorded, as against the target of 18,000).

The appointment of Caitlin Eales as the Rural Heritage Officer, the development of the Raspberry Tearooms as managed by Julie Nelson, and the dedication of Ray Evans to the Manor's grounds, have been key to achieving the successes to date⁵.

Caitlin, as the Rural Heritage Officer held the post for two years, working closely with other members of Torfaen Council and the RDP team to fulfil the objectives set. Her role, combined with the hard work of Ray Evans and the Hay Meadow Community Group, and that of Julie Nelson of the Raspberry Tearooms, when brought together served to make Llanyrafon Manor a real focal point for the community, and succeeded in establishing a sense of place for the area. This was achieved through the coming together of many different strands, as described below.

First, the Rural Heritage Officer, with colleagues, succeeded in establishing the Tearooms, and second, they held numerous events which included:

- Evening Ghost Tours

⁵ It is regrettable that Caitlin Eales was moved from her post, given the successes she achieved.

- Halloween and Christmas events
- Historic Dances.

They also worked closely with schools arranging trips to Llanyrafon Manor and themed workshops, and for younger children there was Bugglington Manor to explore and bug hunts to take part in. In these and other ways, the Manor has provided a natural space for the development of learning, provided interactive events celebrating local culture and heritage, and involved a wide range of audiences.

As reported above, the Raspberry Tearooms appear to have been very successful in attracting visitors (although no visitor records have been consulted).

The Rural Heritage Centre has been partially successful in 'sensitively conserving' the Centre. There appears to be a lack of clarity over the most effective use of the space it has. This is an issue which needs addressing, and its prime role and purpose needs to be identified before this can be done. Is it office space for the RDP, a venue for events, or a museum? If the latter, the strip lighting on the first floor needs to be removed: this is not 'sensitive conservation', OR the office space needs to be restricted to the top floor with no public access.

"People are really disappointed when they walk into my office and see that that's what it is, a bog standard office!"

A third key element of the Manor and BP2 was the work of the Hay Meadow Community Group. This work was critical to bringing the grounds back to life and contributing to its biodiversity.

The work undertaken has had a medium to long term focus: growing 100+ trees and planting a community orchard takes considerable time and commitment. As well as succeeding horticulturally, the work has succeeded in bringing together a group of volunteers, learning from other similar projects to be found elsewhere, increasing skills and learning new ones.

The funding received was primarily used for payment for a Management Plan from Gwent Wildlife Trust. This is now their reference for future work and planning, providing a framework from which to work.

The Llanyrafon Manor Community Group does not only work in the grounds. They have also set up a sewing group and are currently working on a community patchwork quilt.

With time, it is anticipated that the work carried out by the Hay Meadow Community Group and its volunteers will help 'exploit opportunities to access the natural heritage of the area'. It is also a sign of practical measures being taken to enhance biodiversity and raise public awareness of biodiversity.

5 Axis 4

5.1 Overview

A Taste of Torfaen's aim was stated in its EOI as being to 'build capacity in land based production to help develop the availability and quality of new and existing local produce'.

Four main themes were detailed as follows:

1. Developing food and drink
 - Develop capacity in local food producers
 - Add value to existing small producers
 - Develop the current offer to the consumer
 - Help improve current levels of health and well being
 - Reduce food miles

2. Developing art and craft
 - Develop a variety of art and craft groups using materials from the land
 - Promote alternative art and craft materials

3. Encouraging alternative energy sources
 - Explore opportunities to harness and develop renewable energy sources
 - Develop methods to provide bio fuels
 - Help to make Torfaen's rural communities a greener place to live work and play.

4. Encouraging recycling
 - Support local producers to recycle unused or wasted produce
 - Support co-operative projects that will utilise shared resources
 - Encourage producers to use recyclable packaging and marketing

For these themes, the following objectives were set:

1. Developing food and drink
 - Support small scale producers to work together
 - Develop new products and/or techniques in food and drink
 - Improve access to locally grown food and drink through expanding sale opportunities
 - To fully market locally produced food and drink
 - Promote the benefits of growing, cooking and eating local food

2. Developing art and craft
 - Bring art and craft groups together with producers to develop alternative materials
 - Encourage the wider rural community to re-use waste products for artistic and creative means

3. Encouraging alternative energy sources
 - Encourage land owners to grow bio fuels to help develop alternative energy sources
 - Link producers together to increase the supply

4. Encouraging recycling
 - Encourage producers to compost biodegradable waste
 - Link producers together to bulk waste to increase product and profit

5.2 LDS Fit

These aims and objectives meet the first theme in the Local Development Strategy `Developing Land Based Production`.

In order to help achieve success in the four themes listed above, a Rural Development Officer and Rural Support Officer were employed to help with provision of the following:

- Support and Advice
 - The project Officers will build capacity of existing small enterprises offering information and advice on developing their business idea. In his way, their role will be a capacity building one, prior to producers being at the stage to receive formal support from organisations such as COWAINN, Farming Connect and Sustainable Supply Chains. This support will range from help writing documents and business plans, to training and marketing, to help with financial planning as appropriate.
- Grant support
 - A small grant scheme, with a maximum of £3,000 per applicant was made available to individuals, micro enterprises, small enterprises and community groups to help them develop their ideas, conduct research and feasibility studies, develop sustainable business plans and market their produce to help increase their customer base.
 - A maximum of £3,000 was available to each applicant. The grant scheme could fund both capital and revenue costs and provides up to 70% of the project costs, with the applicant providing a minimum of 30% private match funding.
- Networking
 - The project will aim to develop a producer network for Torfaen's rural wards coordinating all producers and processors in land-based production
 - Subgroups will be developed based on food and drink, art and craft, and the environment, providing opportunities for the sharing of ideas and experiences and resources.
- Holding of Festivals and Events
 - Key festivals and events include Henllys Village fete, Garn Lakes, Pontypool Carnival, Blaenavon World Heritage Day and Cwmbran Mini Festivals
 - A Festivals Committee will coordinate these events, the Rural Development Officer engaging with local producers, working with smaller enterprises and community groups to develop their businesses, promote awareness to Torfaen residents as to what is available to them, liaise with the school meals services, assist producers to develop speciality foods, and work with partners

to identify ways to develop a shared distribution of goods and produce.

Delivering the above required assistance from the Rural Support Officer in terms of logistics, organisation and administration.

5.3 Activities Undertaken

The prime focus of the Activities undertaken in this Business Case was on the provision of grants to eligible applicants. These are summarised below, with a selection of brief Case Studies to be found in the Appendix.

Before these, details of one out of two feasibility studies are provided. These were undertaken under measure 41: the Haymeadow Community Group Haymeadow Conservation Management Plan, provided by Gwent Wildlife Trust, and the Taste of Torfaen Land Based Production Study. It is the latter which is summarised below.

Finally, summary reporting is provided where relevant and appropriate, based on the June 2012 Food and Craft market Survey conducted by the Public Services Support Unit of Torfaen County Borough Council

The 'Land based production study in the rural wards of Torfaen'⁶

This study aimed to "provide a rich understanding of the challenges and opportunities for land based production in the seven rural wards of Torfaen ... and provide(s) a needs analysis to identify the support requirements and factors that motivate rural land based producers and businesses".

Its conclusions were reflected in some of the interviews undertaken as part of this Evaluation, and have already led to implementation in many instances as part of BP2 and LAG activities. They cover a range of areas encompassing business to business support and mentoring, rural business innovation toolkits, waste reuse and recycling, re-localisation of the supply chain, producer directory and co-operatives, community supported agriculture, a 'Made in Torfaen' quality mark, producer hubs and tourism clusters, and providing support for emerging sectors such as renewable energy.

Some of the findings to have emerged are also reflected in the Torfaen Food Tourism Action Plan which was carried out in conjunction with this Evaluation. Its findings are provided at the end of this document.

⁶ Ecostudio, 8 May 2012, author Iain Cox, in collaboration with f3 and supported by IBERS at Aberystwyth University, on behalf of the Torfaen Local Action Group

5.3.1 Taste of Torfaen Grant Beneficiaries

A total of 16 grant applicants were successful under the Taste of Torfaen eligibility criteria and received funding up to £3,000.

A brief synopsis of each successful businesses is given below⁷. A selection, as marked, also formed brief Case Studies, to be found in the Appendix.

Raspberry Tea Rooms⁸

Raspberry Tea Rooms is the café situated within Llanyrafon Manor, providing teas and lunches for visitors. The Raspberry Tea Rooms application was for a grant of £2,397.36 towards a project with a total cost of £3,424.80. This funding was used in the establishment of the Raspberry Tearooms business at the Manor and comprised buying an oven, aprons with the Raspberry Tearooms logo, Sage software, cooler boxes and marketing. Julie now employs two full-time members of staff at the tearooms, with up to five staff working at weekends. She supplied match funding through private funds.

Raspberry Catering

Once the Tea Rooms were running smoothly, Julie also used funds from a second successful grant application to establish Raspberry Catering. In particular, she started to work with two other Torfaen food producers (and fellow LAG members), Bill King and Liz Betteridge, by renting commercial kitchen space in an Industrial Unit in Pontypool. For this micro enterprise, she applied for, and received £1,882.20 towards a total project cost of £2,688.61. She provided match funding through private funds. Establishing this kitchen has meant that Julie can provide a more extensive catering service (including supplying Raspberry Tea Rooms), and Bill King can act likewise with his Artisan Breads, as can Liz Betteridge with her 'Inner Pickle' relishes. All three work to support each other's businesses, sharing knowledge, experience and expertise.

Hay Meadow Community Group⁹

The Hay Meadow Community Group led by Ray Evans and supported by Andrew Neville of Torfaen County Borough Council, is discussed above under Axis 3 Projects in relation to the external work carried out at Llanyrafon Manor. Taste of Torfaen funding received amounted to £3,000.00, total project costs amounting to £5,016.00. As noted above, funds were also received from two other sources, enabling them to carry out the work required, to the standard required.

Figure 19 - View from Allgood Farm, Forgeside (Grant Beneficiary)



Source: Miller Research

⁷ Contact was unable to be made with two further beneficiaries, Claire Scawn of Claire Scawn Ceramics, and Kevin Williams, Cut and Clean.

⁸ Case Study in Appendix

⁹ Case Study in Appendix

Pen Tranch Farm

John and Sandy Lewis received £709.80 towards their £1,014.00 project to buy a chipper shredder. This was in part for their own use, especially to create animal bedding, but also as a service to offer others. In terms of cost, they were able to offer a cheaper service to horse owners, and smallholders, for example, compared to larger firms. John and Sandy had received funding under BP1 too, which was used for trailer purchase and courses in dry stone walling, chain saw use, and knapsack spraying. The chipper shredder purchase was a further extension of their farming business and the services they were able to offer others. Key, from John's point of view, was being able to use the experiences gained in order to be able to reduce their reliance on a farming income.

Glastonbees¹⁰

Ian Glastonbury received £1,696.99 towards his project which cost a total of £2,424.28.

As a bee enthusiast, Ian turned his life-long interest in bees into his business. The mainstay of his business is 'natural' beehive making, but he also sells bee by-products and spends time visiting schools and community groups to raise awareness and understanding of bees. The money he received was for equipment, - jigsaw, rota, bench top saw, and dust extractor, - in order to help him work more quickly and efficiently. He also received IT and marketing training in Wordpress, marketing, and social media.



¹⁰ Case Study in Appendix

Tipizza¹¹

Llian Norman had a project costing £1,367.00, to which the RDP contributed £956.90. Llian has a mobile wood fired pizza oven which she takes to various festivals and events within Wales. Now in her second year of trading, she was keen to create more of a presence for herself / her business, and needed funding to help with branding, website support, business cards, logo development, banners, T-shirts and aprons. She now believes she owes her branding to the fund, and that *"it's helped us to get to where we are"*. She also benefitted from an hour's consultancy to discuss her project which she found very helpful.

Pen y Parc

Andrew Tovey received £3,000.00 funding for diversification into the sale of animal feed. (Total project cost £4,348.50). The funding contributed to a feed assurance scheme which involved bringing the buildings and equipment up to standard, making alterations for health and safety purposes and introducing equipment to record the process of manufacture, ensuring the traceability of produce. The funding has allowed him to take the business forward, it is likely that he would have done the same without the funding but it has been made a lot easier by the RDP. It has impacted, not only him, but also his customers who would otherwise have had to go elsewhere.

Allgood Farm

Allgood received £3,000 towards a £4,676.93 project.

The focus of the application for grant support was on the need to safeguard and diversify the farm holding with Rory seeing farms disappearing across Torfaen and the opportunity to retain local food production. The application therefore focussed on equipment to manage the farm land better and to develop it into a more productive land based asset. In particular, the application focussed on a cattle crush, feeders, and troughs, gates and fencing. Rory also received training on website development which he hopes to use for the benefit of the wider farm business operation.

Harpers Garden

David Harper had recently lost the job he had held for thirty years and, wanting and needing to be employed somehow, he decided to set up his own gardening business. With the help of the Project Manager, which he found extremely valuable, he applied, and received funding for a shredder. The total cost was £1,295.00, and ToT contributed £906.49. For him, having a shredder will be a "huge help" for his gardening business. Before receiving the shredder, he would need to take all his gardening 'waste' to landfill. With the shredder, the 'waste' can be shredded and spread on the ground: ie recycled.

Cwmffrwdroer Farm

Josie, and her husband have lived on their sheep and cattle farm for fifty years and had not thought grants would apply to them because they were very 'established'. The opposite turned out to be the case, and Dee and Vicky encouraged them to apply for funding when they came to visit the farm.

An application was granted for funding of £3,000.00 from the RDP towards their £4,324.00 project. Funds were needed to provide fencing in order for them to improve their stock

¹¹ Case Study in Appendix

handling / management. Without the contribution of the RDP they would not have been able to afford the fencing, in particular as a result of the cut of the single farm payment.

Having received the money, their stock handling is now much more efficient ...“and it will always be there now, and always in use”.

Lower Little Beili Glas

Mike was able to receive £3,000.00 from the RDP to put towards his £4,800.00 fencing project. With “excellent” help from the Project Manager, the funding meant he could raise more stock (Welsh Blacks and Dexters), and sell more locally.

The majority of the expenditure he has incurred has been spent locally, so local businesses receive benefit from his farm in this way. He would have hoped to have been able to pay for the fencing himself at some stage, but this could have been quite a long way in the future so he was able to “move forward much faster” thanks to the RDP.

Pentre Bach Farm¹²

This was the second RDP grant received by the Warman family, and helped them to build on the benefits of the first. £3,000.00 was successfully applied for, the total cost of the proposed project being £4,000.00. The first grant enabled them to launch a new service providing a mobile saw mill and operator to clients across South Wales. The second tranche of funding received was used to buy a cone splitter. This has helped their ability to work on projects on behalf for clients such as Torfaen County Borough Council, and local schools, and sell firewood to local customers. This means that they are now able to recycle otherwise unusable timber, hence contributing the sustainability of the local economy as well as the sustainability of their own farms.

Coffi 1860¹³

Amie received £3,000.00 from the RDP to put towards the £5,283.97 required to set up and start operating Coffi, a café in central Blaenavon. The money received meant she did not have to turn to bank loans for the key items she required, a fridge and coffee machine. As well as providing funding, the RDP team, and especially the manager of the Raspberry Tearooms at Llanyrafon Manor, were able to help with support and advice on equipment.

Her hope is that Coffi 1860 becomes an integral part of Blaenavon's development and transition into a thriving community, with local businesses working together supported by Torfaen County Borough Council.

Tasty Bites

Iona received a grant of £3,000.00 towards her £4,367.00 project.

Tasty Bites was formed in 2010, established to sell West Indian/Jamaican food through local markets and events. The business is located in Iona's house with a separate kitchen/production area for her food processing. Her main products are jerk chicken, patties, in addition to cupcakes and brownies/birthday cakes. The application and grant has supported the purchase of capital equipment which has involved the following: a large chest freezer; a mixer; chef's whites; a small generator; a top display box. The equipment is

¹² Case Study in Appendix

¹³ Case Study in Appendix

helping her to store food items pre and post market sales activity, ensuring less waste and overall better resource efficiency.

TCBC Food & Craft Market Survey

A survey was conducted by Torfaen County Borough Council in June 2012 to “ascertain the demand for a food and craft market survey to take place in Llanyrafon Manor, Cwmbran”. It took place during June 2012, and a total of 413 responses were received. 61% of the total responses said they would visit a food and craft market based at Llanyrafon Manor once a month or more often, predominantly (68%) seasonally. Saturday was the preferred morning of the week to hold the market (78%), followed by Sunday morning (55%), then Friday morning (34%), and 91% claimed that they would definitely or probably buy produce at the market.

The most popular type of produce that respondents would purchase at the market would be vegetables (86%), cheese (83%), breads (75%), plants/flowers (68%) and meats (61%). The list of ‘other produce’ that may be bought featured fresh fruit/ fruit juices followed by beer/cider/wine, eggs and continental/speciality foods. Compared with foodstuffs, mentions of items such as clothing and fashion were relatively few, but it was interesting that a small number (7) were interested in receiving advice, and in charity / community groups.

Figure 20 - Country Fayre Promotion



Source: Create

Freshness of produce	99%
Quality	98%
Hygiene	98%
Price	93%
Local produce	93%
Variety of products	90%
Seasonal produce	90%
Supporting Welsh production	89%
Convenience	88%
Location	85%
Chemical residues	83%

Farming methods used	78%	When rating factors in terms of their importance when shopping, freshness of produce, quality, hygiene were at the top of respondents' lists, closely followed by price and produce being local. The table below provides the detail:
Grown/ produced by vendor	74%	
Unusual products	58%	
Quantity	57%	

The survey's final question questioned people's beliefs about food and craft markets. This yielded the following results:

'Food and craft markets ...'

Promote sustainable means of food production	89%
Are friendly, approachable environments	89%
Are likely to become more popular	87%
Promote ethical production and consumption of food	86%
Are under used because they are poorly marketed/advertised	74%
Are aimed at people like myself	72%
Offer a realistic alternative to the normal (supermarket) shopping experience	70%
Offer a wide range of products	69%
Provide a wide range of foods	67%
Are the social hub of the community	62%
Are affordable	62%
Are used by all members of the population	39%
Are expensive, therefore exclusive to high earners	32%
Are aimed at wealthy shoppers	27%

Encouragingly, 87% thought that markets were likely to become more popular, and if marketing and advertising were to be improved this figure would be likely to increase.

TCBC Report on the Llanyrafon Manor Country Fayre Event, 13 April 2014

Organised by the Torfaen Rural Development Team in collaboration with Caerphilly Rural Development Team with support and delivery by partners and stakeholders¹⁴, the Llanyrafon Manor Country Fayre event provided an opportunity for local producers to showcase the essence of rural Torfaen and Caerphilly and celebrate the best of farming, food, drink and the countryside within a 30 mile radius.

Designed as a pilot event, the objectives of the Fayre were as follows:

- Raise awareness of locally produced food, drink and craft within a 30 mile radius and where it can be accessed
- Provide an opportunity for demonstrations in rural skills and crafts
- Provide an opportunity for local producers to attend marketing workshops and raise the awareness of locally produced food and drink to business in the area
- Raise awareness of both Llanyrafon manor and attractions and facilities easily accessed from the adjacent cycle route
- Encourage visitors to circulate around the attractions and the surrounding countryside
- Encourage cycling and walking to access visitor attractions.
-

The Fayre was split into Zones: the Micro Brewery Zone, Food Zone, Demonstration and Talks Marquee, the Craft Zone, and the Torfaen Bake Off Competition, each of which received sponsorship. There were numerous activities, events, displays and demonstrations appealing to a range of ages, men and women, and, helped by a day of sunshine, attendance levels were very high. There was also a marketing workshop for producers, and one to one business support available.

The total budget was £18,000, with funds from the RDP (£10,000), the Capital Regional Tourism Destination Plan (£5,000), and South East Wales Local Food Talks (£3,000). Local sponsors also supported the event.

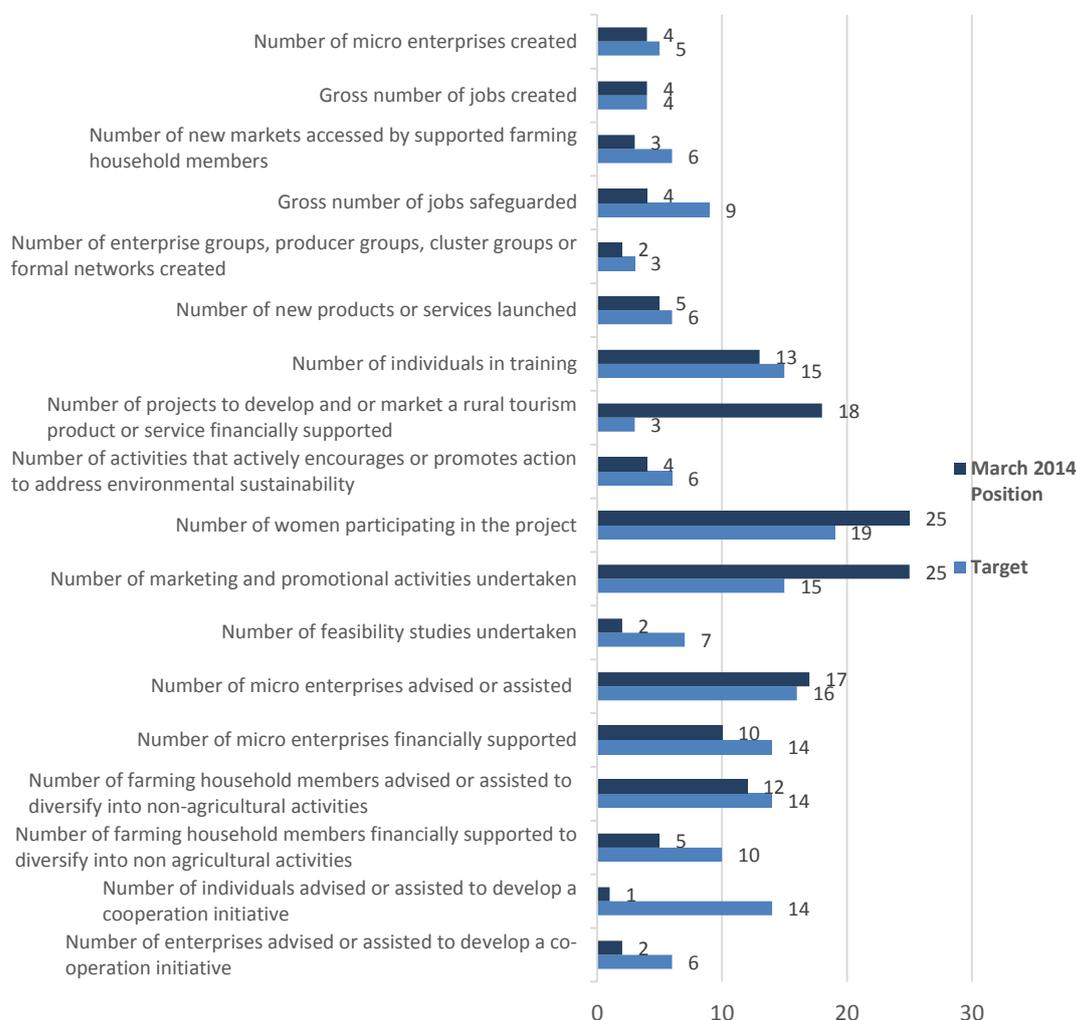
The event received extensive marketing due to the efforts of the TCBC Communications and Graphics Team, and a total of approximately 6,500 visitors attended. Visitor feedback was extremely positive. Deyolden Lewis, Rural Development Officer, concluded her report on the day as follows:

I believe that the event certainly met all of (its) objectives and more. Producers and the public have both requested the event is held on at least an annual basis to enable rural heritage, culture and food and craft production to be promoted in the borough and would like the event to include more food and drink producers to be included in the future. With a focus for the next phase of the Rural Development Programme being placed within Food Tourism the event has been used as a springboard for both the future of the RDP programme in Torfaen and Caerphilly but also to leave a legacy of awareness of food production, food tourism, and tourism in general for Llanyrafon Manor and the borough.

¹⁴ Greenmeadow Farm, Cottage Coppicing, and Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre

5.4 Performance

Figure 21 – March 2013 Position on Outputs from Axis 4 Project



Source: Performance Indicators – March 2014 Position, Axis 3

Figure 21 shows the monitoring return for **March 2014**, with a commentary on outputs and outcomes below. More recent figures were unavailable at the time of the writing of this report.

5.4.1 Outputs

ECO 124.1 – Number of enterprises advised or assisted to develop a co-operative initiative

This output involves providing between 2 to 7 hours of consultancy advice, guidance and information through face to face, telephone and other mediums. Two enterprises or community groups had received support to date: Llanrafon Manor Community Group and Llanrafon Manor Enterprise Group.

ECO 124.2 - Number of individuals advised or assisted to develop a cooperation initiative

From the planned target of three individuals, one individual has received support to date that has been claimed for, specifically on product development advice.

ECO 311.1 - Number of farming household members financially supported to diversify into non-agricultural activities

Five beneficiaries have gained support across a number of farms at Pen-y-Parc, Cwmfrodoewr and Allgood Farm amongst others, with wood recycling and retail activities being supported.

WO 311.1 - Number of farming household members advised or assisted to diversify into non-agricultural activities

Twelve farming households have received support to date through them receiving between 2 to 7 hours or more consultancy advice, guidance and information that has focussed on wood recycling, equestrian, service sector, orchard development, tourism and retail.

ECO 312.1 - Number of micro enterprises financially supported

This relates to the grant scheme with 10 claimed for against the planned 14 enterprises as of March 2014. Grant support was for existing and newly created businesses which covered businesses related to ceramics, catering, bee-keeping, farms, amongst others.

WO 312.2 - Number of micro enterprises advised or assisted

Of those businesses that received consultancy, advice and support, 17 enterprises were advised or assisted against the planned 16, with advice to private sector enterprises, community enterprises and new/emerging businesses.

41 WAO (measure) 3 - Number of feasibility studies undertaken

Against the planned target of seven studies, two studies have been completed with Taste of Torfaen Land Based Production Study and Llanyrafon Community Group – Haymeadow Conservation Management Plan. Further activity includes market stall holder questionnaires, customer questionnaires and food tourism research.

41 WAO (measure) 5 - Number of marketing and promotional activities undertaken

This activity has exceeded its planned target of 15 with 25 marketing and promotional activities undertaken including a presentation at Blaenavon Communities First, Taste of Torfaen Launch, Cwmbran Big Event and a presentation to the Federation of City Farms and Gardens. Other activity has included social media, promotional of monthly market in various regional and local media, various leaflets and other media.

41 WAO (measure) 8 - Number of women participating in the project

This activity has exceeded its planned target of 19 with 25 individual women participating across the range of project delivery.

WAO (measure) 15 - Number of activities that actively encourages or promotes action

to address environmental sustainability

This activity has achieved 4 out of the planned target of 6 activities which include Costar – financial support for community growing project, Llanyrafon Manor Enterprise Group with its Haymeadow development plan and with a local business that has a focus on Welsh Wool.

ECO 313.3 - Number of projects to develop and or market a rural tourism product or service financially supported

This output has exceeded the target of three, with 18 projects receiving financial support from the project grant scheme. This has supported the monthly Food and Craft market, the Garn Lakes event, Blaenavon Heritage Day, amongst others.

ECO 331.1 - Number of individuals in training

The main focus of training has been on social media and content management based website development. 13 micro enterprises have received training out of the planned target of 15, with these tending to have also received grant support through ECO 312.1.

5.4.2 Results

ECR 124.3 - Number of new products or services launched

Against the planned six new products or services to be launched through the project, five have been with new products/services in jams/chutneys, catering, Jamaican/Welsh fusion foods and a mobile pizza business.

WR 124.6 - Number of enterprise groups, producer groups, cluster groups or formal networks created

Two formal networks have been created through the project, against the planned three which include the Llanyrafon Manor Community Enterprise Group and the Producer Network.

WR 312.5 - Gross number of jobs safeguarded

Against the planned nine gross jobs to be safeguarded, four have been secured to date with these being in retail, craft and recycling related.

WR 311.2 - Number of new markets accessed by supported farming household members

Three of the planned target of six have been met with new markets, products or services being made more accessible to a number of farms including Lower Pentrench, Pen Tranch and Cwrt Henllys.

ECR 312.1 - Gross number of jobs created

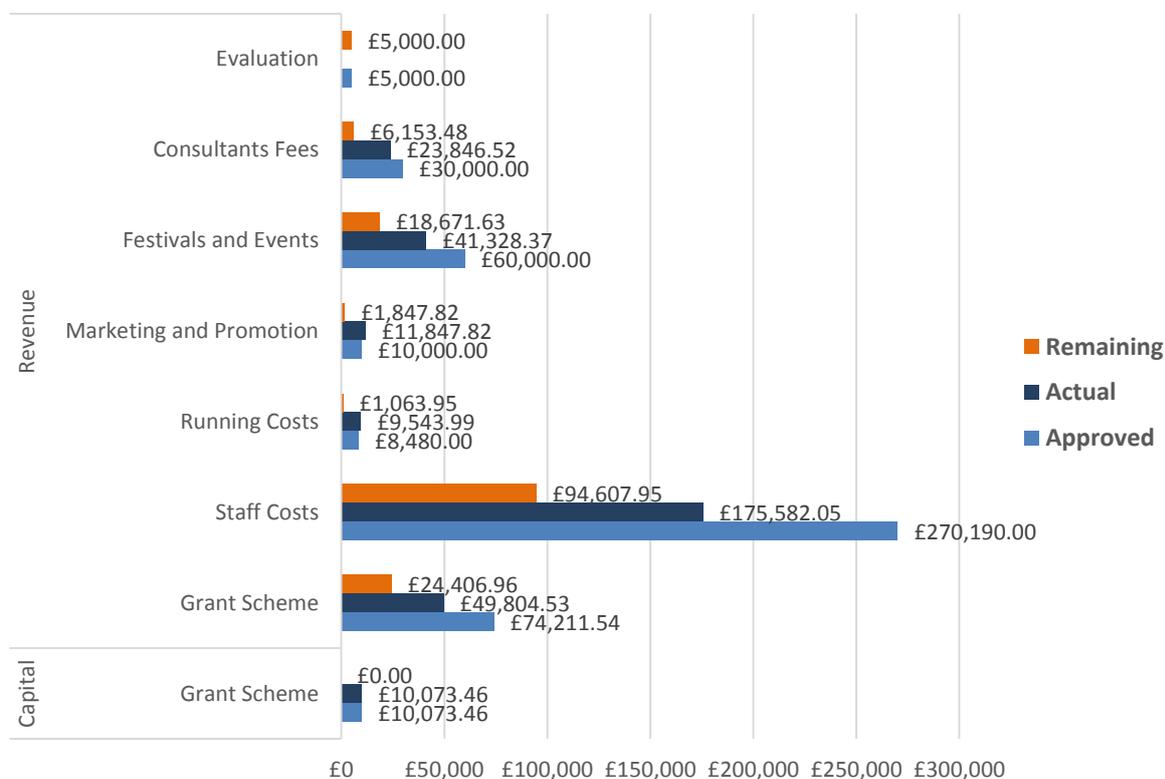
The project has met the planned target of four full time equivalent jobs which have been generated in the retail and craft sector through Raspberry Catering, Kathryn Jarman and Ian Glastonbury enterprises.

WR 312.1 - Number of micro enterprises created

Four new micro enterprises have been created as a result of the project activity, against the planned target of five. These have a retail and craft focus ranging from craft quilts, Llanyrafon Haymeadow Enterprise Group and mobile pizza company.

5.4.3 Financial

Figure 22 - March 2013 Position on Project Expenditure Claimed to Date



Source: March 2014 Project Claim

Figure 22 above shows the expenditure incurred by the project activity as of March 2014, with most spend in proportion to the timescale for delivery. Some items such as evaluation and consultant fees fall into the final six months of the programme with markets, staff costs and grant schemes committed in terms of grants and resource allocation.

5.5 Summary

A Taste of Torfaen, with its aim of 'building capacity in land based production to help develop the availability and quality of new and existing produce', achieved considerable success in some areas, especially in the area of food and drink. Fewer achievements were reported in relation to art and craft, and also in relation to the encouragement of alternative energy sources and the encouragement of recycling, but again it needs to be stressed that figures are likely to have increased since the March 2014 issue of the data used for this evaluation.

The successes reported in March had come in relation to the following measures in particular:

- ECO 313.3 - Number of projects to develop and or market a rural tourism product or service financially supported
- 41 WAO (measure) 8 - Number of women participating in the project
- 41 WAO (measure) 5 - Number of marketing and promotional activities undertaken
- WO 312.2 - Number of micro enterprises advised or assisted
- ECR 312.1 - Gross number of jobs created.

The successes that have been achieved have done so as a result of high levels of commitment, hard work and focus amongst the Project Team and the beneficiaries themselves. The short time-scales allowed for projects, understaffing, the limited resources and financial strains resulting from a challenging economic climate, have made these successes particularly challenging to achieve.

6 Key Findings – Summary and Recommendations

This Business Case 2 for Torfaen's RDP has been a success in that it has achieved targets and has featured some important successes, such as the continued sustainability of Llanyrafon Manor and individual grant achievements and collaborations. These have been achieved despite some major challenges in terms of continuity of delivery team, lack of critical mass on the ground and the relative immaturity of the partnership.

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 What have been the main successes?

Llanyrafon Manor has been safeguarded, and its setting improved, both in and out thanks to the hard work of the Llanyrafon Manor Community Group with support from the RDP. It has provided high quality entertainment and education for local residents and school children through its activity programme and the various events held. Further, visitors have enjoyed their engagement with the Manor, they talk of being 'proud' of the Manor, and visitors have also been attracted from outside the immediate locale.

There is still potential for further development of the Manor, perhaps especially incorporating the outbuildings, potentially for start-up units, meetings, incubators. Reliable Wi-Fi will be essential for these developments. Inside the Manor there is also scope for reconsideration as to how the space is used, for example, how /where /if RDP offices are contained, and the museum/heritage/entertainment mix. This will need to be a focus for the new Management of the Manor.

Taste of Torfaen has greatly benefitted individuals with their projects, such as those of buying a wood chipper, or cone splitter. Individuals are able to use such items for themselves, but also for work in the local community. Glastonbees has managed to make considerable progress thanks to funds they / he received, and the benefits spread beyond the owner in that supplies are bought locally, and in Glastonbees' case, schools and community groups benefit from their knowledge and experiences as Ian Gastonbury 'spreads the word about bees'.

Coffi 1861 is serving to enhance the centre of Blaenavon with its delicious home-made and locally produced fayre, and other successes are reported from Tipizza and Tasty Bites. Raspberry Tea Rooms at the Manor goes from strength to strength, now with eight people on its payroll across the Tea Rooms and Raspberry Catering combined. This latter venture is a prime example of networking and collaboration, as three local food producers have come together to rent and occupy a unit for food production in New Inn. It has also embodied peer to peer support and collaboration.

These activities, and this collaboration was in evidence at the Country Fayre held in April 2014: a highly successful event which attracted people from a wide geographic spread and encompassed old and young alike. The monthly markets have been less successful, but the new Manor Management is planning to take steps to address this.

Collaboration was also evident in the Food Tourism Workshop which was held in August 2014, with the attendance of a range of food producers and providers.

6.1.2 What have been the key challenges for Rural Torfaen?

The challenges faced have included some issues around developing a rural programme in an area that has not traditionally (or at least for a very long time) perceived itself to be rural and requiring time and resource to develop a rural consciousness.

Within programme management, delayed decision-making by Welsh Government had a negative impact on staff and delivery, and staffing changes have affected both continuity of delivery and the momentum of the programme at times. Although outputs have been achieved successfully, challenges remain in terms of achieving an overall rural identity and sense of direction for the area. This is not a criticism of the RDP team, but an acknowledgement of the scale of challenge.

In terms of resource, there has been a sectoral imbalance in terms of governance on both the LAG and Rural Partnership and the programme would benefit from arrangements closer to the four sectors principle of private, public, community and third sector representation. Allied to this, there was a sense of an onset of fatigue amongst the LAG and Partnership especially towards the end of the programme, and a lack of an aligned vision of a cohesive direction for the future.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Management and Governance

In relation to management and governance, it is understood that the LAG and Board will be merged in the next programme. It is important that the new body is as active and representative as possible. Local business representation would be a considerable asset, with community and voluntary sector representation to help provide balance.

6.2.2 Communication

The focus of communication needs to move from an internal audience to a more external one in order to promote the LAG activities and rural Torfaen identity to local businesses, residents and visitors to the area.

Allied to this, marketing also needs addressing. This implies a need to encompass a fully independent website, and, critically, social media presence through Facebook and twitter. This should then help maximise the potential of the Manor and the activities that are planned for the Manor and its outbuildings, whether weddings, wedding fayres, private rental, business meetings, conferences, or local history events. Provision of Wi-Fi will be an essential component for the success of these activities.

6.2.3 Knowledge Sharing

Whilst there has been evidence of knowledge sharing and supply chain collaboration amongst businesses and beneficiaries, this needs to become more formalised through networking events; both within Rural Torfaen and with businesses in neighbouring areas, such as Monmouthshire.

6.2.4 Going Forward

The successes of Taste of Torfaen need to be built on and consolidated. Food tourism activity needs further development, and it is suggested that stronger links

are made with Torfaen's neighbours, in Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons, for example, with Torfaen possibly using the hook of food linked to its rich heritage offer to consolidate a position in a wider area network. Within Torfaen itself, a more formal producer network should be linked into the food tourism offer, as an additional layer to the existing heritage assets of Blaenavon and the upper Torfaen area. This could then be used to "pull" visitors down through the County Borough, utilising assets such as the canal, to an enhanced Llanyrafon Manor experience in the South.

There needs to be stronger projection and communication of local food companies outside of the food and craft market(s). There is the potential to further develop clusters of producers (such as the current Polo Grounds collaboration) and identification of food champions / ambassadors to build awareness amongst local residents and hospitality businesses of what Torfaen has to offer.

Appendix:

Case Studies

Glastonbees

Tipizza

Pentre Bach Farms

Raspberry Tearooms

Coffi

Terms of Reference

Torfaen Rural Partnership Terms of Reference

Local Action Group Terms of Reference

Glastonbees

Total Project Cost: £2,424.28

RDP contribution: £1,696.99

Match funding: £727.29

Ian Glastonbury had previously worked in Community Development, and when he wanted to start his own business he was aware that funds were available for him to do this. He started Glastonbees, that of making and selling beehives, in 2011, with the vision of "bringing beekeeping to more people".

In the early days he had succeeded in gaining funding from a source based outside the county. In 2012, he received a letter inviting him to a Torfaen RDP meeting. When he met Deyolden Lewis, one of the Project Officers, Dee was able to explain the funding available, and how they may be able to support him in his business. Specifically, this included opportunities for mentoring, grants and training which encompassed IT, WordPress, marketing and social media.

Dee was "great", and he happily and successfully became involved with the Taste of Torfaen.

Ian takes beekeeping very seriously, setting himself exceptionally high standards, and refusing to compromise on quality. Making a beehive from scratch, using the best materials possible, is hard, slow work, and he applied for a grant to help him buy tools to make the process more efficient. The grant gave him access to the funds he needed in order to buy, a jigsaw, a new router, benchtop drill and dust extractor were some of tools that were purchased. The dust extractor in particular proved to be very time-saving and added significantly to his efficiency.

In addition to using funding to help buy tools, Ian also received IT training at Llanyrafon Manor which helped him develop his website and presence on the Internet.

As part of Ian's vision for Glastonbees, he gives talks to community groups and schools, and also gives advice to people at fairs / wherever he's asked for help. He will do "whatever is needed" to raise awareness of bees, beekeeping, and the benefits beekeeping provides. As well as training others in beekeeping, beehives, and extolling the benefits of bees, he also sells bee-related products (ie honey) and by-products such as wax candles, polish and products made from recycling his wooden offcuts.

So, not only does Ian make very high quality beehives, he also educates and supports the local community by using local suppliers (as far as possible) for all Glastonbees needs, encompassing materials such as wood, glass, and sundry supplies.

Tipizza



Llian is in her second year of trading with a mobile wood fired pizza oven. She applied for £956.90 funding through the RDP team for marketing (with match funding of £410.10). She had found out about the funding in her previous employment locally within the third sector where she became familiar with the RDP team. From late spring/early summer through to April, Llian and the business attend various festivals and events in Wales.

Prior to the funding she had no marketing, website, or business cards. The funding provided her with branding, website support, business cards, logo development, banners, t-shirts and aprons. This has played an integral part of the setting up process and helped to give Tipizza a presence within the fast food / Street food industry.

Llian thinks the opportunity to establish the business last year has provided her with a competitive edge in what her research showed was an increasingly fast-growing sector. She was able to introduce marketing at the same time as launching the business, allowing her to hit the ground running. Llian claims it has also benefitted her local suppliers as she tries to buy in local produce which include meat toppings, infused oils and now freshly chopped vegetables from a small family run firm locally.

"It's helped us to get to where we are".

Llian found the application and funding process straightforward, including writing a business plan and providing quotes. She had informal contact with the "very welcoming ... knowledgeable, hardworking and honest" RDP team through farmers' markets. She also attended meetings of the RDP team discussing future funding, craft fairs and Llanyrafon Manor. Although she was successful, Llian identified a potential challenge for others: the requirement for applicants to demonstrate they have adequate money in the bank before they can receive funding, a requirement which could deter/prevent applications.

Llian also received one hour's consultancy support to discuss her product which she described very positively. As a source of additional help / expertise, Llian attended an internet workshop which she did not rate very highly.

She also attended the Torfaen Country Fair which was set up and run by the RDP team. She described the day as a great success and good business. Despite this, the Monthly market which followed continued to attract only a small number of visitors. Llian explained that the low level of attendance means traders like her are not making enough

money on the day and lack an incentive to attend. Llian believes the market is potentially on the wrong day (there are no buses on a Sunday that pass the Manor), and possibly the market should be extended in duration or a different venue to be considered.....

Tipizza has a lot of room to grow and flourish which includes greater use of the tipis and to employ someone to run the oven. She has a five year plan which is constantly being updated but admits the nature of the work is unpredictable. If she did need funding she thinks it would be via Business Wales, a bank loan, or some sort of governmental innovative: "There is always support out there, - you just need to research and find it"

Pentre Bach Farms

“Receiving a second grant from the RDP had helped in our diversification on the farm, lessening our reliance on our Angus Beef business”

With a grant from the RDP1 Branching out Fund, Steve and Sara Warman, who run Pentre Bach Farms, were able to launch a new service providing a mobile saw mill and operator to clients across South Wales.

This second round of funding helped them build further on this service by enabling the purchase of a cone splitter. The cone splitter has meant that they can split wood from the trees they have on the farm, and, with narrower pieces of wood, contribute to the local economy by building, for example, a pagoda for Torfaen County Borough Council, a bat runway at Llanyrafon Manor, benches for schools, and garden furniture, fencing, and firewood for local customers.

They are able to recycle otherwise unusable timber, hence contributing the sustainability of the local economy as well as the sustainability of their own farms.

They plan to continue working to add new services to their business, and firmly believe that all rural business should be able to benefit from funding schemes such as the one they have benefited from, across all rural areas within the county.

Total Project Cost: £4,000

RDP contribution: £3,000

Match funding: £1,000



Raspberry Tearooms and Catering



A small café was envisaged for Llanyrafon Manor, with work underpinned by Axis 4. With support from Taste of Torfaen, Julie Nelson applied for two funding grants. The first was used for her Raspberry Tearooms business at the Manor and comprised the purchase of an oven, aprons with the Raspberry Tearooms logo, Sage software, cooler boxes and marketing.

The Raspberry Tearooms enjoy a loyal local clientele, and attract visitors from further afield.

In Julie's own words:

"We make, bake and cook everything fresh, choosing quality ingredients, free range Welsh eggs, milk, cream, butter and cheeses. Raspberry Catering are delighted to be part of this beautiful Heritage Centre and are passionate about serving delicious food using seasonal, local ingredients in our recipes. We change our menus with the seasons and always have daily specials on the menu".

Many tripadvisor users report on a very favourable eating experience at the Tearooms, one commenting on it being a "hidden gem", and several praising the quality of the food and staff.

With the second grant, Julie established Raspberry Catering, sharing a commercial kitchen unit with two other LAG members, - Bill King and Liz Bettridge.

Julie, Bill and Liz are all Torfaen food producers / providers. They combined their efforts and found a unit in Pontypool with a commercial kitchen to rent. Within this shared space, Julie

has established her catering business, Bill, an Artisan Baker, makes bread and bread products, and Liz makes a range of relishes branded 'Inner Pickle'. They are all able to lend each other mutual support.

At the time of interview, Julie was waiting to learn if she had been successful in winning the contract to manage Llanyrafon Manor¹⁵. If she was to be successful, she had plans to carry out weddings and functions there, and would also be responsible for managing the monthly market.

The funding Julie has received has helped her business grow considerably. From being one person working from her own kitchen at home, she now has four people working on the catering side of the business, and two full time staff working at the tearooms (increasing to five at weekends), supported by JobsGrowth Wales. Two of her chefs are apprentices. She has recently become a limited company and VAT registered.

Julie herself has engaged with the RDP via training and workshops, which she described as finding very useful. She also went to visit a number of different craft and food outlets with the Monmouthshire RDP team to share knowledge and experiences. In this way, she has been well supported by the RDP team and hopes to both consolidate her current business activities, and then grow them for the future.



¹⁵ She subsequently found out that she had won this contract and is currently in the process of implementing some of her plans

Coffi 1860

Amie set up, and now manages Coffi 1860, a café in Blaenavon which is succeeding in establishing a healthy customer base.

Amie was determined to set up the coffee shop anyway, (alongside her work as a midwife and mum of two), but rather than turn to bank loans to raise the finance she needed, the Taste of Torfaen fund was able to help her with the funding for key items of equipment such as a fridge and coffee machine. Not only did it help with the funding, the Taste of Torfaen Project Officers and a local café owner (Julie Nelson, or Raspberry Tearooms), were able to help by providing advice on equipment.

Amie is keen to maintain a very strong local emphasis, buying all her supplies within a 30 mile radius. She now employs eight staff, a mix of full and part time, and wants to support her local community as much as possible. Amie has big hopes for Blaenavon: "Blaenavon needs help!" and she hopes her café will become an integral part of its development and transition into a thriving community. She certainly believes this is possible, especially if the local business community works together and is supported by the local council.

Total Project Cost: £5,283.97

RDP contribution: £3,000

Match funding: £2,283.97

Torfaen Rural Partnership Terms of Reference

- To ensure the proper running of the Partnership, including appointing a Chair, Lead Body and Finance Coordinator.
- To develop the Local Development Strategy (LDS) before submission to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and review it as necessary over the life of the programme.
- To develop the Business Plan before submission to WAG.
- To approve systems and procedures for the day-to-day running of the Partnership and the financial management of any funds.
- To monitor and approve reports on the progress in implementing the LDS and identify gaps in provision.
- To be responsible for any sub-contracting to other appropriate and competent local delivery organisations, including the Local Area Group (LAG), and for monitoring the activities of any such delivery organisations.
- To ensure that robust, good value for money and well developed projects are put forward and selected for appraisal and funded.
- To promote the programme locally.
- To ensure synergy between the Rural Development Plan and the Convergence Fund programmes in Torfaen.

Local Action Group Terms of Reference

- To assist with the development of the Local Development Strategy (LDS), focusing in particular on Axis 4.
- To develop innovative projects that fit with the aims and objectives of the LDS and which follow the LEADER approach.
- To assist in building community consensus behind the LDS.
- To monitor Axis 4 expenditure and the preparation of grant claims, working closely with the Finance Coordinator.
- To promote cross-sectoral working, e.g. with Monmouthshire LAG.