

Appendix F – SRDP 2007-2013 Case Studies

1. Case Studies

1.1 Introduction

As part of the ex-post evaluation of the SRDP 2007-2013, a total of eight case studies have been undertaken across a range of Axes and Measures of the SRDP. Some of the projects were selected on the basis of having been good practice case studies before in studies during the course of the SRDP, while other projects were based on their application profile and identification in the various Annual Reports of the programme.

The group of case studies, therefore is diverse, including farm diversification projects (2), woodland creations (2), environmental improvement initiatives (2), apprenticeship initiative (1) and modernisation of farm equipment (1).

1.2 Summary Findings

In summary, the case studies have had a number of achievements, often in an integrated or multi-dimensional way in terms of impacting positively on the environment, animal welfare, community engagement, as well as employment creation.

What is common to all interviewed projects is that an emphasis on maintenance, follow up and ongoing engagement and promotion is of greatest essence to ensure the longevity and sustainability of an initiative. If attention is paid to this, most projects have seen further initiatives developed and an ongoing increase in participation and success. However, relevant resources and commitment by the applicant need to be in place to implement this in the longer term.

Achievements/Key Success Factors

In the following, a number of the most prevalent achievements and key success factors of the case studies have been summarised in no particular order:

1. working in partnership with employment and training initiatives – to make environmental projects become truly integrated projects (Scents);
2. employing local contractors, sourcing local material and goods for enhanced integrity and local impact (Balmakewan Estate; Stonehouses);
3. taking care and finding funding for continuous maintenance and/or ownership of sites through volunteering and linking up with other initiatives (Scents; Hailes Quarry Park);
4. engaging with schools can create snowball effects by drawing families to the project site on weekends/holidays etc. (Scents, Hailes Quarry Park);
5. engaging with the community by using arts and hands-on approaches creates an effective bridge between the project and the community (Scents);
6. pro-actively learning and addressing previous project weaknesses and lessons learnt (Scents);
7. employing experienced, committed staff relevant to project ambitions, can increase added value to service delivered (LLTNP);
8. setting up steering groups with a mixed group of stakeholders, community councils, local volunteer groups, and residents achieves ownership, participation and ongoing interest and commitment (Hailes Quarry Park);

9. feasibility studies can lead to successful project activity (LLTNP);
10. sufficient resources need to be available to facilitate effective beneficiary contact, mentoring, and support, particularly in new initiatives (LLTNP);
11. expanding the tourist season successfully requires additional marketing efforts and a budget to do so effectively (Stonehouses; Balmakewan Estate);
12. creating added value through novel and innovative projects requires adequate budgets (Stonehouses);
13. fit for purpose infrastructure leads to better farm management practices delivering both environmental and economic benefits (Crawlaw Farm);
14. woodland creation on farms has a multidimensional positive impact: it improves animal welfare, increases biodiversity, and improves the attractiveness of the rural area (Netherurd Farm; Barclay Farm); and
15. SRDP funding supported investment which otherwise would not have happened at all or on a much smaller scale because of the low and long-term nature of the return of investment (Netherurd Farm; Barclay Farm).

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

In the following, a number of the most prevalent challenges and lessons learnt by the case studies have been summarised in no particular order:

1. many farm holdings use consultants to fill in their application forms;
2. inefficient LEADER requirements, not adjusting to developments such as online banking;
3. large projects (in terms of hectares) require post-project maintenance and relevant resources to implement;
4. projects across two LEADER areas need to be assessed and awarded under the same conditions, so that they can go ahead as one project (LLTNP);
5. independent evaluation needs to be built into projects to achieve a final assessment of achievement (all case studies);
6. projects need to have budgets for promoting and marketing their success, so that their know-how can be rolled out and applied elsewhere (LLTNP), otherwise they remain singular events with no wider impact;
7. innovative capital projects need to anticipate a longer implementation period and a contingency budget for unexpected additional costs (Stonehouses);
8. monitoring of project outcomes are rarely undertaken, for example the extent to which new woodland shelter actually reduces veterinary bills in light of the improved animal welfare or improvement in water quality (Netherurd Farm and Crawlaw Farm, but generally across most case studies);

9. financial rules and regulations must be made clear at outset of the project to avoid last minute cash flow issues (Crawlaw Farm);
10. diversification projects on farms should ideally be undertaken in the quiet time of the annual farm schedule to prevent overload (Balmakewan Estate); and
11. challenging reporting and monitoring regimes under SRDP are a burden; only if good technical support is offered can this lead to the improvement of project development standards and increased capabilities and skills.

1.3 Case Study 1: Balmakewan Estate

(Axis 3 Measure 311: Diversification into non-rural activities)

Introduction

Balmakewan Estate is located near Laurencekirk in Aberdeenshire. The Estate is home to a 320 acre arable family farm and has been for a number of generations.

Farmers within the UK have experienced a number of external challenges in recent years such as falling food price, poor weather conditions, and increasing fuel prices. In an attempt to ensure the sustainability of the farm for forthcoming generations, the farm owners decided to diversify into non-agricultural activities. On the farm there was a disused coach house that would allow the family to develop two new enterprises: self-catering cottages, and a farm and coffee shop.

Application Process and Delivery

The family submitted an application to SRDP for £182,213.75, 50% of the total project budget. The application was successful and work began shortly after (June 2010). The family were keen to ensure all of the funding was spent in the local area and – where possible – employed local contractors to undertake the refurbishment works.



The farm and coffee shop was developed at the centre of the Coach House whilst a self-catering cottage is located at either end of the

building. One cottage (Coachman's Cottage) accommodates two guests, whilst the other (Woodcutter's cottage) is slightly larger with space for four guests.

One of the key challenges of delivery was to meet the SRDP timescale whilst continuing with the farming activities at the same time.



The cyclical nature of arable farming dictates much of the family's activities therefore it would have been more manageable/less stressful if the funding timescale was better fitted with the farming schedule. This however was not the case and limited flexibility in terms of the SRDP requirements meant delivery of the project was somewhat hectic.



Impacts and Benefits

The project was a success and the farm and coffee shop, and self-catering accommodation opened in 2012. During this time the businesses have faced a number of external challenges including: the fall out of the financial crisis, reduction in the Oil and Gas sector, reduced spend in luxury items such as holidays/eating out. In light of this, the family focused their efforts on the development of the farm and coffee shop. In the past couple of years, the family has started to actively promote the self-catering accommodation online and the cottages are listed on [Sykes Holiday Cottages](#).

The two new businesses have provided employment for three members of the family (two full-time and one part-time) and have

generated additional revenue for the overall Balemakewan Estate. The project is helping to secure the future of the Estate.

In addition to the economic benefits, the project has also benefitted the local environment. The site is now more attractive as the restoration has brought a disused building back into use. A surrounding woodland has been made more accessible and attractive to local walkers. The family were keen to provide greater access to the countryside and encourage people to take advantage of the woodland walk as part of their visit to the estate.

The next step for the diversified farm holding will be to ensure the consolidation of activities and ensure the enterprises are sustainable in the long term.

1.4 Case Study 2: Barcloy Farm

(Axis 2 Measure 221/223)

Introduction

Barcloy Farm is a 340 hectare farm located near Kirkcudbright in Dumfries and Galloway. The family run farm gained new owners in 2004, specialising in sheep farming with 400 ewes.



The farm owners had previously applied for SRDP funding, however, were unsuccessful. Undeterred they reapplied for funding to develop 22 hectares of grassland into woodland area, planting 28,000 trees (75% broadleaves and 25% conifers). They were successful and were awarded a total of £64,993 accounting for 50% of the total capital costs of the project.

The aim of the project was that by developing a woodland area a number of benefits could be achieved, namely: the woodland would:

- provide shelter for their sheep;
- diversify the natural habitat for wildlife; and
- make the farmland more aesthetically pleasing.

Application and Delivery

The application and delivery of the project was very straightforward. A consultancy and contracting service provider for woodland and forestry owners carried out a survey of the grassland and then submitted the application to SRDP on behalf of the owner. The consultants also

provided advice in terms of what type of trees to plant and where to source them.

The grant was awarded in early 2010 and work began straightaway. The trees were sourced from Fife and local contractors carried out the work over a three week period. In total 28,000 trees were successfully planted.

In addition, further funding was secured to erect a 10ft deer fence to keep the deer out of the woodland and allow the saplings to grow.

Six Years Following Project Completion

The trees have grown to three metres in height since being planted six years



ago. The majority of the trees have survived with only a small number requiring replacement (3,000). The deer fence remains in place for the time being to allow the trees longer to grow. The plan is to remove the deer fence and open the space up to the sheep and other wildlife within the next few years.

The longer term plan (i.e. 25 years) is to make use of the wood of the conifers to heat the farm buildings (three houses and an office). The aim is to create a more sustainable farm.

Impacts and Benefits

The main impact of the project is the development of a 22 hectare woodland space. Once the trees reach maturity, the space will create a haven for wildlife and will provide animals shelter from the elements, thereby impacting positively on the welfare and health of the animals.

The farm owners perceive the area as having improved in attractiveness creating a more diverse and appealing landscape. This was felt to have increased the family's quality of life in the rural area.

Without the support from SRDP, the farm owners would have only been able to fund a much smaller woodlands area e.g. one hectare. The funding has, therefore, enabled the project to occur on a much larger scale.

1.5 Case Study 3: Crawlaw Farm

(Spans Axis 1 and 2: Measures 121 and 214)

Introduction

Crawlaw Farm is a dairy farm located at Galston in East Ayrshire with a herd that has increased steadily from 85 cows in 2005 to 130 cows in 2016. This part of Ayrshire is particularly wet in the winter and run off from the fields flows into the River Irvine.



The farmer submitted a Rural Priorities application to install an above ground slurry tower for additional slurry storage, incorporating a bubbler system, through Axis 1. The project also included a plan to fence off, in collaboration with other local farmers, a large area of watercourses with the intention of increasing the water quality and number of invertebrate, small mammals and fish in the River Irvine, through Axis 2.

The project was approved and was successful in securing a total grant of £92,580 to contribute to the projects total costs.

The aims of the project were to:

- increase the slurry storage capacity;
- make better use of the slurry;
- improve the water quality of the River Irvine; and
- maintain four jobs on the farm.

Application and Delivery

The application to Rural Priorities was written with help from Auchincruive Agricultural College who advised on the best suppliers of slurry towers and the most suitable system for the farm.

An assessment was made of the volume of the slurry tower needed, and a bubbler system was recommended. A bubbler system introduces air into the storage unit which improves the quality of the slurry.

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) identified five priority catchment areas in Ayrshire that were failing to meet environmental standards for conservation, drinking water, bathing and fishing, including the River Irvine. As part of the project, Crawlaw Farm, in collaboration with other farms in the River Irvine catchment area, would fence off large areas of watercourses to reduce the risk of diffuse pollution. This was aimed at helping to improve water quality and increase the number of invertebrate, fish and small mammals such as water voles in the water. The farmer reported that to his knowledge fencing off had taken place on his farm and the farm upstream from his, but not on the farm downstream.

The application process was reasonably straight forward. The intention of the farmer had been to pay for the storage unit through a finance company, but he was told at the last minute by Scottish Government that this was not possible, which necessitated the family finding cash at very short notice. Luckily they were able to do this but found the situation less than ideal.

Impacts and Benefits

The slurry tower and fencing was completed in 2012. Prior to the new slurry tower being introduced the farmer was forced to spread slurry when his tower reached its full



capacity. This meant on occasion having to spread slurry in the winter, which they are not supposed to do, and they were not able to benefit from the slurry as the grass does not grow in the winter.

The extra capacity in the new unit has allowed much better management of the farm in general and in particular it allows slurry to be spread when it will provide most value, not just because they have run out of capacity. There has been a noticeable increase in quality of both first and second cut silage and also a reduction in the use of fertiliser, which has environmental and economic benefits.

There are increases in the milk production, but it is not possible to know whether the grant has influenced this as many factors influence milk production.

The farmer is not aware of any tests or results on the water quality and so is unable to report any changes in water quality. The area of the farm is very wet in the winter and therefore a lot of water runs off the fields into the river. The reduction of the use of fertilisers are likely to have a positive impact on the defuse run off of water entering the River Irvine. The fencing hasn't caused any problems to date, but they do restrict his access to the river banks which may cause problems in the future as he will not be able to get to straighten the river banks if required.

The SRDP grant sped up the whole project and made it a more attractive proposition, they would not have been able to do the project at the time without funding. In addition to the farm management and environmental benefits the grant has sustained four full time equivalent jobs (five people).

1.6 Case Study 4: LLTNP Employability

LEADER+ Programme Case Studies: Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Community Partnership, Feasibility Study and Pilot Apprenticeship Programme.

Introduction

This project has originated before the SRDP 2007-2013 programme period and received its first funding to undertake a feasibility study from Leader+ in 2004. It is featured within the current ex-post evaluation to show that feasibility studies can make a difference and lead to longer term success over a number of SRDP programme periods.

Overview

LEADER+ provided support for the pilot development of a Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Apprenticeship Scheme focussing on plumbing, building and electrical trades. A Business Development Officer offered financial support and other assistance to local businesses interested in employing apprentices. Local businesses participating in the Apprenticeship Scheme provided valuable training for the National Park's young people and aided economic development in the Park.

The key employment issues in the Park at the time were: jobs and training opportunities for young people; limited awareness of micro businesses about funding and support for training and employing young people; and a number of barriers such as poor transport, unaffordable housing, low wages and a lack of confidence and isolation of young people.

Rationale and Project Aims

The aim of the first phase was to undertake a feasibility study to quantify the shortfall of tradespeople in the National Park area and the demand for apprenticeship places. Additionally, the capability and awareness of small businesses in taking on apprentices and the key constraints to youth employment in the National Park were addressed. A steering group worked alongside the consultants in exploring the possibility of 'growing our own' skilled tradespeople. The second phase aimed to test the concept through a four year pilot apprenticeship project.

In summary, the project demonstrated the following:

- targeted support to provide training opportunities for young people, so that they do not have to leave the rural area (i.e. reverse out-migration);
- targeted support for small and micro businesses that have never taken on an apprentice in the past, thereby changing their behaviour towards providing new training and employment opportunities in the rural area;
- focus on the opportunities in trades in support of the more 'strategic' industry sectors in the rural area so that they benefit from a local provision of relevant services; and
- engaging with larger employers and their Corporate Social Responsibilities agendas to raise funding for the project and to act as mentors for the small and micro businesses taking on apprentices for the first time.

From Feasibility Study to Successful Pilot Project Implementation

The feasibility study quantified the extent of the gap of apprentices in the National Park and developed a scheme providing incentives and training grants for employers and apprentices.

In order to attract small businesses taking part in the scheme, larger companies operating in the construction field offered advice and sponsored the smaller business and its apprentice.

- the National Park provided a dedicated project office space for the project team;
- the volunteer project manager had experience in working with businesses (large and small), able to understand the issues of SME fully and signpost to other support if needed;
- to gain trust and offer effective support businesses need to be visited in person;
- the project team was enthusiastic and committed with the right background and experience in the subject matter and in dealing knowledgably with a wide range of businesses;
- taster sessions between employer and apprentice are important stages to ensure the successful placement;
- a good level of support and flexibility was delivered to address unforeseen circumstances effectively (i.e. if apprentices are made redundant, if mediation is required, etc.); and
- the project has produced two interim reports to demonstrate progress and achievements, which were presented to the Steering Group and stakeholders.

Follow-on Projects in SRDP 2007-2013

In 2005, the feasibility study delivered quantitative information that justified the rationale of the original project idea. The need and demand for the project in the National Park was confirmed and a set of recommendations guided the development and operation of the new support scheme.

Further fundraising activities were challenged by the closures of funding schemes and gaps in funding periods. Helpfully, a further LEADER+ grant was allocated late in the programme period filling the gap between the old SRDP and the new SRDP 2007-2013.

By April 2008, the project was sponsored by 18 large companies and supported 15 small businesses and their apprentices including administrative costs and a small contingency fund.

The next challenge was the 2008 economic crisis creating considerable lack of confidence of businesses in their sustainability. This affected the high number of interested businesses in the project and many withdrew their interest.

The pilot project was operational until 2014 and its success encouraged the Community Partnership to explore how this model could be rolled out to other business sectors within the National Park. Again from LEADER, funding was secured to explore these options regarding: Tourism, Land Based Work and Local Food Production.

Outcomes and Impacts

The feasibility study designed a project model on which basis the pilot project successfully supported 16 employers providing places for 19 apprentices. The dedicated project officer generated the sufficient amount of interest and confidence in the scheme to succeed.

Trades Covered by the Pilot Project	
Trade	Number of Apprentices in Project
Electrical	5
Construction/Builders	4
Plumbing	2
Joinery	2
Roofer / Tiler / Plasterer (one company)	2
Stonemason (one company)	2
Painter / Decorator	1
(drop out)	1

The net impact of the project is difficult to quantify. Although some businesses said they would have employed trainees anyway, most participants would not have hired the apprentices without the support of the project. Many of the participating employers offered an apprenticeship for the first time and have since continued to provide such opportunities.

The young people clearly benefited from skills development. In a project survey, they appreciated the scrutiny as part of the scheme which helped to motivate and improve their performance. As part of the project, they were offered financial support to cover expenses such as tools and textbooks, but few took up their respective allocation.

With the exception of two participants, all others are still with their host companies. One of the apprentices won the gold medal in the national “skillbuild” competition.

The Community Partnership has received recognition for this innovative scheme, and has presented to other rural community and young people’s groups and organisations as well as the Scottish Parliament.

The project's Interim Report in July 2011¹, describes the model as follows:

The project model ... depends on obtaining (modest) external sponsorship from a large company or organisation such that funds may then be disbursed to a small business and its apprentice as a series of training grants and/or training expenses. The sponsor and the small business are linked on a one to one basis.

A period of 'Taster Training' precedes the apprenticeship. The project delivery agent maintains contact with the participants throughout the four year period and assists their endeavours wherever it can.

The project encourages 'added value' opportunities for the business and the apprentice and small enterprises benefit from regular, direct contact with someone acting as a business mentor / advisor. The project has met with much acclaim and it seems likely that the model could be applied to other rural industries.

Lessons Learnt

There are no shortages of young people willing to become an apprentice. The challenges have been greater in terms of building up capacity and confidence among the small rural businesses to take on an apprentice. The following lessons were highlighted:

- this type of project is time demanding due to its aims to change awareness and behaviour for the long-term; ongoing stakeholder engagement should be integral part of the project. Resources must be available for promotional activities;
- the pilot project produced a comprehensive set of project tools and templates; however due to the absence of a dissemination budget, this tool kit is inaccessible;

¹ Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Community Partnership – Business / Apprentice Support Project, 2nd Interim Report, July 2011

- the project was self-evaluated (there are two interim reports providing detailed information and evidence), however, no final, independent evaluation was made; and
- a dedicated project co-ordinator post is vital to accomplish the various project engagement and mentoring tasks successfully.

1.7 Case Study 5: Netherurd Farm Overview

(Axis 2: Measure 223)

The SRDP provided funding for the felling and restocking of a number of areas of woodland on Netherurd Farm, Peeblesshire.



Netherurd Farm has an estate of 220 hectares, mostly sheep with some cattle and agriculture.

The project was approved in 2011 and planting was completed in 2013, with the total grant being £23,000.

Rationale

The rationale for the project was that a renewal of the existing poor quality trees on the farm (windblown and nearing the end of their life) would create new woodlands on the farm for improved shelter for the animals in poor weather. Further, the new trees would create additional value from harvesting for firewood.

SRDP funding was accessed because of the urgency of the work that needed done, and the inability of the farm to fund this without going bankrupt.

Aims and Objectives

The main aims of the project were the quick and efficient extraction of the old timber, selling the timber, and replanting and fencing of the new areas of woodland.

Implementation

Netherurd Farm approached the Scottish Agricultural College, now Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), about the project idea. SRUC handled the application process and paperwork, whilst the farm managed the project following the award.

The main way in which the project was delivered was through the use of sub-contractors, i.e. felling trees, erecting fences and planting the trees.

Outcomes and Impacts

There have been a number of impacts from the project. A total of around ten hectares of woodland was felled and replanted and the woods are now more attractive as they are now mixed plantations. Much improved shelter for animals has been created, impacting positively on the animals' welfare and health (although this is not being monitored as such).

With regards to environmental impacts, the farm owner believes that the mixed plantations are good for a number of wildlife species and improved biodiversity, particularly a number of bird species.



The new more extensive plantations will also help combat soil erosion on the steep hills.

Lastly the site of the plantation used to be an area of bracken which can be poisonous to animals, therefore, the project also helping to reducing this risk for the animals.

Lessons Learnt

Netherurd Farm believed they managed the project well – the key challenges were getting the right sub-contractors for each job and ‘managing’ the weather. Both challenges were overcome with good local contacts and knowledge of local contractors. Keeping in constant communication between farm and the contractors with regards to the weather also helped to save time and costs.

In the absence of the grant, this project would have unlikely gone ahead as it would have been too expensive in view of the low potential to generate substantial revenue.

1.8 Case Study 6: Scents and Sensitivities Project

Overview

This project represented the second phase of an environmental improvement project in line with a marina development. Phase 2 focused on the involvement of a wide range of community groups, schools and individuals, in the creation of an enjoyable outdoors space. The lead partner was The Waterways Trust Scotland with a range of other funding partners including British Waterways Scotland, Deepfired, Urban Design Futures, May Gurney, North Lanarkshire Council and the Forestry Commission Scotland. Total project costs were £298,700.

This two-year project started in September 2009 and was completed in 2011, although LEADER funding only contributed towards the first year of implementation.

Rationale

The project site is at the Auchinstarry Basin on the Forth and Clyde Canal near Croy in North Lanarkshire. Following the conversion of a former boathouse into a pub with marina, Phase 2 of the project aimed to expand and improve the environmental works of Phase 1 (3 hectare of grassland) and create a visitor friendly environment (a sensory garden and nature trail) that would be used in future years.

Aims and Objectives

Special design features and art activities had the purpose to link the developments with the local industrial heritage, raise awareness of the site's historical context while creating at the same time a direct link with its natural environment.

Phase 2 integrated the implementation of an [Employability Programme](#) aiming to:

- work in Partnership with the Twechar Environmental Training Project (TETP) & Twechar Community Action project to recruit three apprentices;
- provide three two-year apprenticeships aiming to achieve SVQ Level 2 attainment for Amenity Horticulture & Landscaping;
- employ a full time supervisor for two years from TETP; and
- use of Auchinstarry Basin as part of a wider employability programme.

This created a close and direct link to other projects funded under LEADER (such as community gardening services and maintenance works in Twechar and East Dunbartonshire Council & Canal maintenance projects) demonstrating an integrated and well-co-ordinated implementation of the programme.

The [involvement of the local community](#) through volunteering (planting) and ongoing use of the site was of key relevance to Phase 2. The community was engaged in a number of ways: through the employment of three apprentices; work with schools and a number of volunteer organisations.

Planting events, learning and playing initiatives as part of the development of the sensory garden and trail and the interpretation panels had a direct impact on people's understanding of the environment and its industrial heritage.

[Implementation](#)

Fundraising for Phase 2 of the project began in 2008, at the time when LEADER became available for applications. Similarly to Phase 1

funding (nine funders) the new funding package included seven different funding bodies.

Once the partners were in place, applying for LEADER funding was described as being relatively straight forward; monitoring and claiming, however, was more challenging.

Care was taken to select environmental contractors/designers who would integrate and take on board the lessons learned from Phase 1. Here, maintenance issues of plants (such as avoiding invasive plants and wildflowers) and the choice of the right material for the footpath were important weaknesses from Phase 1 that required a solution. In addition, an easy maintenance regime was of paramount importance, so that maintaining the area in future would be (a) low cost and (b) feasible to be undertaken by community volunteers.

The project commenced on site in March 2010 with a strong focus on community engagement and training. Working closely with other LEADER projects (Twechar Community Action – Employability Skills Project) enabled the project to source and employ suitable apprentices effectively.

Whilst, community engagement utilised the contracting of a ceramic artist to work with five local schools and volunteers to jointly design a number of outdoor feature points and interpretation panels.

Further site interpretation regarding existing wildlife added to the project's ambitions to increase environmental awareness and appreciation.

The focus on community engagement led to close partnerships and increased collaborations and networking activities in the area. The work with the artist was considered to have been inspirational to the local community and visitors alike.

A final celebration event completed the project, bringing together all participants.

Outcomes and Impacts

Phase 2 involved a range of community groups and individuals including five primary school classes with 125 pupils, 100 corporate volunteers, and 30 local volunteers. In total, 2,882 trees and shrubs were planted, one artform, two love seats, and 245 m of new path were created.

The project successfully linked two LEADER initiatives in a robust integrated project approach. This has led to further joint work between the two organisations.

The three apprentices working towards their SVQ Level 2 in horticulture all passed their qualifications and were successful in gaining employment thereafter.

Overall the usage of the Basin site is substantial, with an average of 10,000 visits per week (Scottish Canals have path counters on site for monitoring purposes). The project is regarded as a full success.

Key Initiatives after Project Completion

Due to the size of the area, maintenance and up-keep of the site is an ongoing challenge. The following initiatives have been organised to ensure the longevity:

- establishment of a wider Friends of Auchinstarry group to assist in the maintenance through regular volunteering;
- Woods and Canals on Prescription –a joint project with the Forestry Commission Scotland and TWTS;

- Green Action Project – youth training and employability programme;
- sharing project experience as part of a European Interreg project; and
- creation of a Community Canal Officer post to promote volunteering (a most relevant feature in securing the ongoing success of the site).

Lessons Learnt

During the development phase, a number of funding rejections had to be managed, stretching the project development phase over a two-year period. This required not only the flexibility and understanding of already agreed funding bodies, but also necessitated a number of changes to the original Phase 2 ideas to be negotiated.

Some of the LEADER/SRDP requirements were regarded as unnecessary burdens and based on a lack of understanding of circumstances of local delivery organisations. This includes the need to demonstrate payroll details – which can be extremely difficult to come by if head offices are located elsewhere. There are also issues of confidentiality to consider. It was thought that LEADER requirements are old-fashioned and costly, e.g. print-outs from online bank account are deemed unacceptable - this is not only time consuming, but also costly to acquire the requested account details from the bank.

Six Years after Project Completion

Six years after LEADER investment, SRDP ex-post research indicates that the project has been successful in creating a community asset, continuously engaging large amounts of volunteers in maintaining the site and attracting a large number of visitors throughout the year. The

project also continuously works with established employability initiatives such as the Princess Trust.

The ongoing community involvement includes regular groups from colleges, mental health initiatives, health groups such as people suffering from dementia, as well as parents and young people from disadvantaged areas. However, a key barrier for the project in reaching out further to target groups, is transport.

Over the years, the site has developed into a highly valued space, an environmentally beautiful and peaceful place, which attracts people. Many of the volunteers on the site come back later with their families such as on the weekend.

In 2016, the site has been successfully entered in the 'Scotland's Gardens' programme. In addition to organising ongoing maintenance of this large site, a small number of further developments are planned, but still need funding such as improvements to wheelchair access, getting more children involved, creating new features such as a polytunnel to expand the areas of activity and environmental learning.

1.9 Case Study 7: Stonehouses

(Axis 3: Measure 312 and Axis 1: Measure 111)

Overview

The SRDP provided support for the construction of two 5 star luxury self-catering houses in Ullapool. This was used for construction materials and the employment of a local tradesman to construct the building. A small additional grant was used to pay for a chainsaw safety course.

Grant approval was in late 2009, with final completion in



March 2014. Total grant award was £262,000 for the construction and £1,750 for training.

Rationale

The rationale for the project was based on the experience of the beneficiaries' time working in East Africa, where they had experienced a number of lodges built to match their surroundings and using local materials. They felt that Scotland, particularly the Highlands, was lacking in this type of high quality self-catering accommodation.

The aim was that high quality accommodation would attract high income, high spend visitors. This would also benefit local shops and restaurants, as well as attracting out of season tourists to provide a year-round income.

A further objective was to diversify the household income and to have a greater level of job satisfaction.

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the project was the construction of two five star luxury lodges, blending modern architecture with traditional construction techniques, in-keeping with the natural environment. The aim was to use local contractors and materials as far as possible to ensure that economic impacts would be retained in the local area.

The aim was to gain a sustainable livelihood in the area, however, due to the seasonality of the tourism market, it was recognised that this would be challenging. This required increased marketing efforts and a particular focus on out of season offers. The business plan of the lodges, supported by Highland and Islands Enterprise and Business Gateway, aimed to achieve 50% occupancy over the course of a year.

Implementation

Construction commenced in 2010 and was scheduled for nine months, taking place in stages as more SRDP funding was released.

The plans for the build were ambitious, incorporating a number of innovative architectural techniques to ensure that the houses blended in with the surroundings, minimising environmental impact, whilst maintaining a luxurious feel. This included a turf roof, underfloor heating, solar panels and air source heat pump heating.

However, there were a number of challenges with the build which led to cost overruns, increasing the expenditure from £660,000 to £850,000. Further, delays led to the construction lasting three years, much longer than the originally planned nine months. This overrun was due to unrealistic expectations regarding the costs and timeframe of the build, partly due to some of the innovative building techniques

having not been done locally before, and partly due to the difficulty of accessing the location on top of the hill.

Difficulties and delays in accessing finance, both from SRDP and from the bank further challenged the implementation of the project.



Outcomes and Impacts

The project has had a number of impacts – so far they have far exceeded their plans, and achieved 96% year round occupancy – far in excess of what was expected. It has created a number of jobs including those of the owners now working full-time and part-time, as well as two part-time cleaners and a part-time groundsman. Further, the construction has positive employment impacts on local tradesmen. It is also having a positive impact on the local economy, bringing in high spending visitors, particularly during the winter when turnover in local shops and restaurants is low.

Lessons Learnt

In retrospect, some of the project design features are considered extravagant and the project owners believe they should have been less ambitious. For example, a number of aspects of the build did not add any value, such as every join in the roof was curved, which was more attractive, but also more expensive. Once plasterboard was put in, the effect was lost.

In the absence of the grant, the buildings would have been constructed in a more ordinary manner – the grant cushioned the risk of innovation and allowed the owners to build something more ambitious and ahead of its time.

The beneficiary believes that without the grant it is unlikely that the same very high occupancy rate (96% all year-round) could have been achieved and that a similar positive impact on the local community could have been made.

1.10 Case Study 8: Hailes Quarry Park

(Axis 2: Measure 227)

Overview

The SRDP provided support for physical improvements to Hailes Quarry Park and a programme of community outreach. Hailes Quarry Park lies on the site of a former quarry and landfill site and has long been in need of attention. The SRDP project was part of a wider set of improvements and activities to the park led by Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust. SRDP funding (£4,495) for the Hailes Quarry Bike Club was approved in May 2010.

Rationale

The rationale for the project was to improve access to green spaces for surrounding communities. The area surrounding the park is deprived, with poor access to high quality green spaces. Although the park is available to anybody, many local residents did not use it. It



was therefore felt that by improving the green space that this would create a sense of ownership and consequently increased usage of the park.

Implementation

There have been a number of different elements to the project, involving both physical improvement and community outreach, including the following:

- improvements to existing woodlands and new tree-planting;
- flower planting, mainly around edges and entrances to the park;
- creating new paths;
- new noticeboard and signage outlining the history of the park;
and
- creating a learning and discover area in a central woodland with stone storytelling circle and nature trail, used by school groups.

The community outreach programme has involved an ongoing programme throughout the year, mostly focusing on woodland activities with a number of local schools such as shelter building, tree identification, woodland art, etc. There are also adult groups who are active in the park, mainly volunteers, but also some corporate groups on team building exercises.

Outcomes and Impacts

The local community is now much more involved in the park and people know what's going on, mainly through the influence of local school children who bring their families to the park. The school visits pull in families from the area, who have previously not used the park.

There have been a number of impacts from the project. The main environmental impacts have been that trees look better and healthier, there are more and better maintained flower beds, the attractiveness of the park has improved. It is also felt that the biodiversity has

increased, with a total 16 or 17 different bird species observed in a recent survey.

Social impacts relate to the increased usage of the park by local children and families, and the associated positive health implications outdoor activity will bring. There is also a cumulative effect with



improved people's perception regarding community safety, the more people use the space, the safer it will be perceived, the more likely it is to be used.

Lessons

The main things that has made the project a success has been the presence the Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust in the park of and the ongoing efforts to encourage repeat visits from schools.

There is a regular timetable of events and activities happening in the park. The Trust has been able to steadily add to the green infrastructure through which people can see measureable progress.

Having the Trust as a professional organisation leading the project was seen as both a positive (consistent drive and professional approach) yet also potentially a negative concerning the risk that the Trust could have over-shadowed any local involvement. This risk was successfully addressed by organising a steering group with representatives from both the local community councils and volunteer groups. In fact, most ideas for the park stem from the steering group, which continues to guide the direction of the park.