

Evaluation of the Cleddau to Coast Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG)

FINAL REPORT

September 2015



Y Gronfa Pysgodfeydd Ewropeaidd:
Buddsoddi mewn Pysgodfeydd Cynaliadwy
European Fisheries Fund:
Investing in Sustainable Fisheries



Llywodraeth Cymru
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List of Abbreviations

BRES	Business Register and Employment Survey
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
EU	European Union
FARNET	European Fisheries Areas Network
FLAG	Fisheries Local Action Group
IDBR	Inter Departmental Business Register
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement Rural <i>Links between the rural economy and development actions</i>
N or n	Number of instances
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAVS	Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services
PESTLE	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental
PLANED	Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development
RDP	Rural Development Plan for Wales
SET	Specialist European Team
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UK	United Kingdom

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) 2007-2013¹ provided funding to the fishing industry and coastal communities to help them adapt to changing conditions in the sector and become economically resilient and ecologically sustainable. It included a stream of funding (known as Axis 4) specifically aimed at the sustainable development of fisheries communities. One of the features of Axis 4 was that it used the 'LEADER approach', a method of mobilising and delivering rural development in rural communities rather than a set of measures to be implemented. In line with the LEADER approach, Axis 4 funding was only available to groups who represent the fisheries area in which they are based known as Fisheries Local Action Groups, or FLAGs for short.

Set up in July 2011, the Cleddau to Coast FLAG was one of four set up in Wales² and includes representatives from the local fishing industry, private sector, voluntary sector and public sector. The role of the FLAG was primarily to design and then implement a bottom-up strategy that fits and addresses their area's needs, known as the Local Development Strategy (the LDS). This included an assessment of expressions of interest and applications for small (up to £5,000) and large (over £5,000) grants which were available to deliver the LDS.

The other 'key players' in this scheme were:

The Lead Body: Pembrokeshire County Council (via its European Unit) was appointed by the FLAG to act as the Lead Body on their behalf. This involved undertaking financial and administrative functions on behalf of the FLAG including providing the secretariat to the group, the technical appraisal of grant applications and submitting reports and claims for funding to the Welsh Government.

The Animators: Following a competitive tendering process, Menter a Busnes were contracted by the Lead Body (on behalf of the FLAG) to deliver the Animation service. Their role was to: (a) engage with the fisheries sector and community in Pembrokeshire on behalf of the FLAG; and (b) to generate applications for grant funding from within the community and sector.

The Welsh Government: Their role included the provision of funding to the FLAG (via the Lead Body) and the detailed assessment of grant applications after their review by the FLAG. The Welsh Government also paid approved grants to the applicants.

¹ Whilst the programme period was 2007 to 2013, spending rules meant that some activity and expenditure could be ongoing until the end of September 2015.

² The others being in Swansea Bay, Ceredigion and Anglesey & Gwynedd.

The total budget for the Cleddau to Coast FLAG was £320,000 which was broadly split as follows:

- FLAG running costs (i.e. Lead Body costs): £32,000 (10%)
- Animation and evaluation activities: £120,000 (37.5%)
- Funding for grants: £168,000 (52.5%)

The Evaluation

This is the final report of the evaluation of the Cleddau to Coast FLAG undertaken over four phases, beginning in January 2014 and ending with this final report produced in October 2015. The research undertaken during the course of the evaluation included:

- A review of FLAG literature including the LDS, its Implementation Plan and meeting minutes;
- Observation of FLAG meetings in February 2014, May 2014, November 2014 and June 2015;
- Interviews with FLAG members in June 2014 (13 interviews) and again in June 2015 (14 interviews);
- Interview with Lead Body staff and contractors appointed to deliver services on behalf of the FLAG in June 2014 (three interviews) and June 2015 (three interviews); and
- Interviews with 30 grant applicants and recipients, undertaken in June and July 2015.

Findings and Recommendations

The FLAG

Our conclusion is that the FLAG has been working well. The feedback about the quality of the discussion during the meetings and the contributions being made by members has been positive. The FLAG has however clearly been on a learning curve although this is not unexpected as they are a new group. Stakeholders continue to identify some gaps in the membership of the FLAG but no dramatic changes would be necessary should the FLAG continue into the next programme period.

In many respects, the focus of the FLAG has understandably been on the distribution of the grant funding which was available as this was the first opportunity to distribute this type of funding within the fishing community of the area. The constrained timescale within which the grant funding available had to be utilised was also a factor. However, it is important to be aware that Axis 4 and the FLAG should be about more than just the distribution of grant funding. In fact, a strong argument can be made that a FLAG is not necessary if its only role is to be a conduit for grant applications from within the fisheries sector.

The role of the FLAG could and should be much broader. For example, a key part of that role (and the LEADER approach) is to create a mechanism for and better links between the fisheries community and policy makers and those involved in regeneration activities in the local area. Assuming that the FLAG continues into the next programme period, more attention needs to be paid to those elements.

Recommendation 1: Assuming that the Cleddau to Coast FLAG is to continue into the next programme period, there should be a greater focus on delivering the LEADER approach as a whole. This would include having a greater focus on providing a forum for the fishing sector and community to contribute to ‘policy’ discussions in Pembrokeshire as well as contributing to the development of those policies.

The LDS

Benchmarking the Cleddau to Coast LDS against FARNET³ guidance identified weaknesses in the way in which the LDS was developed, which is linked to the way in which the FLAG was established (the development of the LDS and the creation of the FLAG should go hand in hand). As is acknowledged within the LDS, its development was essentially a ‘short-cut’ of the guideline process set out by the European Commission due to the restrictions imposed by the Welsh Government with the principal weakness being a lack of time to effectively consult with the local community / industry. This is an important lesson learnt which should be fed-back to the Welsh Government.

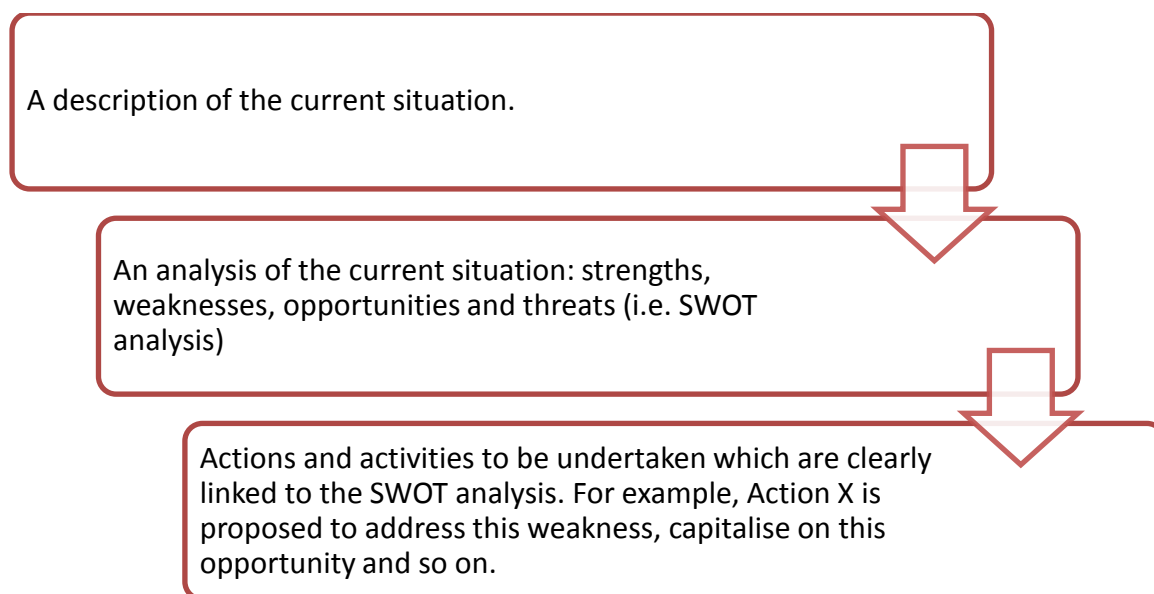
Recommendation 2: The development of the next LDS should follow FARNET guidance to a greater extent and be undertaken over a longer period and include greater consultation with the sector and community.

One of the key tasks set for this evaluation was to assess the appropriateness of the LDS as a tool for guiding the implementation of EFF Axis 4 in Pembrokeshire. The LDS has been found to be a very comprehensive document which includes all the key elements of an effective strategy and implementation plan.

Comparison with the benchmark provided by FARNET guides for a FLAG LDS has however identified potential areas for improvement, most notably in terms of the SWOT⁴ element of the strategy and its links to the preceding situation analysis and subsequent implementation plan. Essentially, this would mean making the links between the description of the current situation, the SWOT analysis and the proposed interventions (i.e. actions and activities) clearer as illustrated below:

³ FARNET is the European Fisheries Areas Network and brings together all fisheries areas supported by priority Axis 4 of the EFF.

⁴ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.



This, we would argue, would improve the LDS. In particular, it would make it easier to monitor the extent to which the actions that are being taken (or funded) are helping to address what has been identified in the LDS as needing to be done.

Recommendation 3: The next LDS should have clearer links between the issues identified in the analysis of the current situation (the SWOT analysis) and the proposed interventions. This could be achieved by undertaking a *logic mapping* exercise as part of the development of the next LDS.⁵

Given the limited resources available for its delivery the LDS is, we would argue, far too broad to be an effective tool for guiding the implementation of EFF Axis 4 in Pembrokeshire. Effectively, there was very little prospect of delivering the strategy given the resources available. Whilst the strategy that has been devised is effective and useful as an analysis of the issues facing the sector in Pembrokeshire and actions to address those issues, it has provided limited guidance on what the priorities should be for the use of Axis 4 funding.

At meetings observed by the author, there has been frequent references to whether or not an application fits with the strategy. There has however been little if any reference to whether the strategy (as a whole) is being delivered. In our opinion, the focus of a FLAG should be on delivering a strategy, rather than on funding a range of stand-alone actions or activities that fit within a strategy. This would mean focusing to a greater extent on funding / delivering a set of interlinked and mutually supportive activities rather than a series of one-off actions. One way in which this could be achieved is by developing a two tier LDS for the next programme period, as per the recommendation below.

⁵ A logic map (sometimes called a logic model) is a way of visually presenting those key steps required in order to turn a set of inputs into activities that are designed to lead to a specific set of changes or outcomes. The process is referred to by a number of different terms including 'outcome mapping', developing 'programme logic' and 'intervention logic' all of which refer to essentially the same process. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/logic-mapping-hints-and-tips-guide>

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that the LDS for the next programme period should be a two tier strategy: a longer term strategy (similar to the current LDS) which assesses the ‘big picture’ in relation to supporting and regenerating the fisheries sector and community in Pembrokeshire, and a short-term strategy which sets out the objectives of the FLAG for the next programme period and strategy which the FLAG will deliver during that period in order to achieve those objectives.

Animation

Animation activities in Pembrokeshire have largely focused on generating applications for the grant schemes. This has included members of the team meeting with individual and groups of fishermen to discuss and develop project ideas as well as subsequently supporting the development of expressions of interest (EOIs) and full applications.

There was positive feedback of the way in which the Animation activities were being undertaken with FLAG members particularly pleased with the number of EOIs and full applications for grant funding generated. The feedback from those supported by the Animation team was also generally very positive.

A key reason for the success of the process has been the knowledge and experience of the team contracted to deliver the service. The procurement approach⁶ being used in Pembrokeshire has possibly made it easier to engage such a team to the role; the individuals concerned are very unlikely to have been attracted to a short term full or part time post within the Local Authority to deliver the role (the approach used by all other FLAGs in Wales). The same knowledge and experience is also unlikely to already exist within the Local Authority. However, the procurement approach also has limitations in that it restricts the amount of days which are available to deliver the service; the number of days that procured external contractor can provide is usually less than an employee can provide at the same cost. Essentially, this is a quality versus quantity decision that the FLAG had to make and depends on the role that the FLAG wants the Animation team to undertake. In this instance, the procurement approach has been very effective.

One of the few criticisms of the Animation process was that the contractors could have done more to engage FLAG members in the process, utilising their knowledge of and links within the local area. This was especially the case in terms of engaging with the wider community in the area, beyond the fishing industry itself. This is linked to the previous comments with regard to the need to ensure that the LEADER approach as a whole is delivered going forward, not just any grant scheme element.

⁶ The organisation was contracted to deliver the service following a competitive tendering process as opposed to an organisation such as the Local Authority employing an individual to deliver the service.

Recommendation 5: Options for increasing the role of the FLAG members and the organisations that they represent within the Animation process should be explored but in the context of ensuring that the limited resources available are utilised as effectively as possible. There should also be close co-operation with the Animation activities that will be ongoing in Pembrokeshire as part of the delivery of the RDP⁷ programme.

Administration

The evaluation has found that the Lead Body has undertaken its role effectively. This positive feedback was despite the fact that very limited funds were available to deliver the role (£6,400 per annum). A number of references were made during interviews with stakeholders to the experience of the European Unit of Pembrokeshire County Council of undertaking such a role - the ability to draw upon the experience and knowledge within that team and, effectively, borrow resources from elsewhere when required. Programme regulations stipulate that no more than 10% of the total budget can be allocated to the Lead Body. There was therefore limited flexibility on this matter. The challenges (and risks) of delivering the role on such a limited budget do however need to be recognised.

Negative views were expressed about the role of the Welsh Government and in particular the changes introduced to the administration of the Small Scale Grants Scheme in January 2015. For reasons discussed within the report, the delegation for the administration of that scheme by the FLAG / Lead Bodies was withdrawn⁸ at that time and this was widely considered to have had a detrimental impact on the delivery of the scheme due to the additional bureaucracy which this change in approach introduced. This needs to be acknowledged, although the challenges that the Welsh Government have faced in terms of the administration of Axis 4 of the EFF also need to be taken into account. Most notably, there have been limitations to extent to which they were able to be flexible in their administration of Axis 4 due to the way in which the programme was set-up and being managed. The lessons that have been learnt need to be taken forward into the next programme period.

Outcomes

One of the key outcomes of the Axis 4 programme is that a FLAG has been established in Pembrokeshire for the first time. This is an important achievement and provides a foundation upon which the delivery of activity during the next programme period can be built.

⁷ Rural Development Plan for Wales.

⁸ The previous delegation meant that the FLAG (via the Lead Body) was able to approve applications to the small grants scheme and pay the funding directly to the applicant. Post January 2015, applications had to be passed to the Welsh Government for assessment and grant payments were made by the Welsh Government.

The limited evidence available to the evaluation to assess what has been achieved by the grant funding needs to be noted. In particular, there was very little monitoring data that could be assessed and much of the activity has only recently been completed when the fieldwork for the evaluation was undertaken. Where there was monitoring data collected, it was provided by the grant recipients to the Welsh Government, with very little information then being passed on to the FLAGs, despite being requested. Consideration needs to be given to addressing this for the next programme period. However, given the scale of the funding being invested via this programme, we would not be overly critical of the limited monitoring data that has been collected.

Recommendation 6: More monitoring data should be collected for activities undertaken or funded as part of any future FLAG programme. Care should however be taken when developing the progress to be used with a view to minimising bureaucracy and ensuring that it is appropriate to the scale of the interventions being funded.

Twenty-one grants were awarded in Pembrokeshire, 16 Small Scale Grants and five Large Scale Grants. The smallest grant was just £780 and the largest was £42,000.

Table ES.1: Grant expenditure per category / type of activity

Activity	No. of grants	Total expenditure	% of total expenditure
A. Purchase of equipment / facilities for fishermen	11	£ 107,100	57%
B. Funding of festival activities (lesser known fish species)	1	£ 30,988	16%
C. Funding of research / feasibility studies	3	£ 16,243	9%
D. Purchase of processing / retailing equipment	2	£ 13,963	7%
E. Development and printing of river trail promotional material	1	£ 5,000	3%
F. Funding improving the facilities of a yacht club	1	£ 4,954	3%
G. Development of a new website	1	£ 4,900	3%
H. Improving access for anglers to river beats	1	£ 4,702	3%
TOTAL	21	£ 187,850	100%

Source: Analysis of data provided by the Lead Body

For the purposes of the evaluation, the grants awarded were grouped into eight types of activities listed in the table above. The largest group, both in financial terms and the number of grants awarded, was the purchase of equipment and/or facilities for fishermen including ice machines, chillers and tractors and represents 11 separate grants; just over half of those awarded.

Potential impact is also clearest (and most direct) for this group; equipment or facilities have been upgraded and this has (or will) have a direct impact on the way in which the businesses in question are operating. In other instances the impact of the grant on the fisheries sector is going to be less direct and more long-term, with further work also being required before the intended outcome is achieved.

This should not however be interpreted as a criticism of those activities. Such activities are in fact very common where the LEADER approach is being employed. However, the risk that the anticipated outcome will not be achieved needs to be acknowledged. For example, research is only useful if the findings are subsequently used in some way. If the findings are not used, the investment in that research has effectively been largely wasted. The same is true for the investment that has been made in the new website which includes provision for fishermen to develop their own sites. The potential benefit of the website is clear. However, if fishermen do not take up that opportunity, the original project funded by the FLAG will not achieve one of its main objectives – to introduce a new method for fishermen to advertise and sell their produce.

This issue is central to the previous recommendation that there should be a greater focus in the next programme period to the delivery of a strategy as opposed to individual projects. This would involve developing and funding a set of mutually supportive and interlinked actions which seek to comprehensively tackle the issues to hand and are not dependent on follow-up activities which may, or may not take place.

Recommendation 7: The focus of future FLAG activity should be on the delivery and/or funding of a set of interlinked and mutually supportive activities that deliver a strategy, rather than funding stand-alone projects or actions.

Turning our attention back to the LDS, the actions that have been funded clearly fit within the LDS and cover each aspect of the strategy. The scale of the intervention is however very small which means that none of the objectives will have been anywhere near achieved during the current programme period.

The fact that the LDS sets out a very broad strategy, prepared when the resources that would be available to the FLAG to deliver the strategy was unclear, also needs to be taken into account. This is important as it highlights a weakness in the process; FLAGs were effectively asked to prepare a strategy that they had no prospect of delivering. This undermines the requirement to develop that strategy. The objective for a FLAG should be to deliver a strategy, not to deliver projects that fit with a strategy. A more effective approach would, we would argue, be to focus on developing a strategy which it was reasonable to deliver with an awareness of the timescale and the resources available.

1. Introduction

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) 2007-2013 provided a stream of funding specifically aimed at the sustainable development of fisheries communities, known as Axis 4. This is the final report of the evaluation of the Cleddau to Coast Fisheries Local Action Group (hereafter referred to as the FLAG), funded by Axis 4 of the EFF, and the delivery of their Local Development Strategy (LDS).

The brief describes the principal objectives of the evaluation as follows:

An evaluation is required to assess appropriateness and utility of the LDS as a tool to guide the implementation of EFF Axis 4 in Pembrokeshire, and the extent to which projects funded through the EFF by the Cleddau to Coast FLAG have contributed towards the aim and objectives of the LDS both individually and collectively. The evaluation is also to assess the performance, contribution and value added of the FLAG itself.

The evaluation was undertaken alongside the work of the Cleddau to Coast FLAG in order to allow the findings to feed into the ongoing work. It included four phases, beginning in January 2014 and ending with this final report produced in October 2015.

The research undertaken during the course of the evaluation included:

- A review of FLAG literature including the LDS, its Implementation Plan and meeting minutes;
- Observation of FLAG meetings in February 2014, May 2014, November 2014 and June 2015;
- Interviews with FLAG members in June 2014 (13 interviews) and again in June 2015 (14 interviews);
- Interview with Lead Body staff and contractors appointed to deliver services on behalf of the FLAG in June 2014 (three interviews) and June 2015 (three interviews); and
- Interviews with 30 grant applicants and recipients, undertaken in June and July 2015.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides the context for the discussion that follows by briefly introducing the fisheries sector and community in Pembrokeshire, the source of the funding for the activities being evaluated (Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund), the Cleddau to Coast FLAG and their Local Development Strategy;
- Chapter 3 reviews of the Local Development Strategy document including its development and its contents;
- Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the evaluation in relation to the FLAG including how it was set up and how it has operated;
- Chapter 5 considers the way in which the Lead Body and the Welsh Government have delivered their administrative functions in respects of the Cleddau to Coast FLAG;

- Chapter 6 is focused on the findings of the evaluation in respects of the delivery of the Animation activities undertaken on behalf of the FLAG;
- Chapter 7 sets out the key findings of the interviews with applicants regarding the application process including both the expression of interest and full application stages;
- Chapter 8 considers what has been achieved by the grants that have been awarded, individually and collectively; and
- Finally, Chapter 9 sets out the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

A number of references are made in the report to guidance and best-practice that has been published by FARNET and which is used where appropriate as a 'benchmark' for activities in Pembrokeshire. FARNET is the European Fisheries Areas Network⁹ and brings together all fisheries areas supported by priority Axis 4 of the EFF. Through information exchange and a dedicated support unit, this network aims to assist the different stakeholders involved in the sustainable development of fisheries areas at local, regional, national and European level.

⁹ Further information about FARNET is available online:
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/welcome-farnet-european-fisheries-areas-network>

2. Setting the Scene

This chapter provides the context for the discussion that follows by briefly introducing the fisheries sector and community in Pembrokeshire, the source of the funding for the activities being evaluated (Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund), the Cleddau to Coast FLAG and their Local Development Strategy.

Key points

- Axis 4 of the EFF was a stream of funding specifically aimed at the sustainable development of fisheries communities. It was delivered using the LEADER approach and only available to groups that represent the fisheries area in which they are based, known as FLAGs, one of which is the Cleddau to Coast group in Pembrokeshire.
- The overarching aim of the Cleddau to Coast FLAG, as set out in their Local Development Strategy, is to increase the capacity of local fishing communities and business networks to build knowledge and skills, innovative and co-operate in order to tackle local fisheries development objectives.
- The total budget for the activities of the FLAG was £320,000 with £168,000 (53%) being allocated to grant funding.
- Following a competitive tendering process, a contractor (Menter a Busnes) was engaged to deliver Animation services on behalf of the FLAG designed to, amongst other things, generate applications from the local area for: (a) a Small Scale Grant Scheme (up to £5k) and (b) a Larger Scale Grant Scheme (over £5k) which are forwarded to the Welsh Government for approval.

2.1. The Fisheries Sector in Pembrokeshire

This brief section, drawing heavily upon the Local Development Strategy prepared by the Cleddau to Coast FLAG, introduces the fisheries sector and community in Pembrokeshire.

Fishing was taking place around the Pembrokeshire coast from as early as the 17th Century. The first fishing port to develop was Tenby but this was eclipsed in the 19th Century by Milford Haven. By 1925, the fleet at Milford Haven had 110 steam trawlers in addition to a large number of drifters. After the Second World War the fishing industry in Milford Haven declined considerably due to overfishing. By 1983 the amount of fish landed at the port had declined to 1,062 tonnes and since 1991 the future of Milford Haven was seen not to lie with the fishing industry. The extensive fish market was demolished along with other infrastructure and the Old Mackerel Quay was converted into a landing place for pleasure craft.

Pembrokeshire no longer has an indigenous high seas fishing fleet and most of the Pembrokeshire fishing industry comprises under ten metre vessels fishing principally within the six mile limit. Today, many fishers operate not only from ports and harbours (such as Fishguard, Abercastle and Porthgain, Solva, St Brides, Dale, Milford Haven, Pembroke and Pembroke Dock, Tenby and Saundersfoot) but also from beaches, coves and by launching from trailers.

In 2014 IDBR data showed that there were 55 marine fishing local business units in Pembrokeshire.¹⁰ The number has not changed substantially in recent years showing as 50 in 2010. ONS data¹¹ suggests that under 100 people are in employment within the marine fishing sector in Pembrokeshire. This equates to about 0.2% of the employment in Pembrokeshire. An analysis based on information contained in Lenton, W.S. (2010) "The Fishing Boats and Ports of Wales: A Way to Explore" suggests the distribution of fishing vessels around the Pembrokeshire coast is as set out in the table below. Whilst this data may be out of date, it provides a useful indication of the scale of the sector.

Table 2.1: Pembrokeshire's Fishing Fleet (2010)

Port / Harbour	Number	Comments
Abercastle	4	All potters
Angle	2	
Broad Haven	2	All potters
Castle Pill	3	
Dale	2	
Dinas Head	1	Potter
Fishguard	11	Mostly potters; one scalloper
Freshwater Bay & Stackpole	5	Potters
Goodwick	2	
Llangwm	1	Mackerel jigger
Little Haven	3	
Llanstadwell	2	Netters and potters
Milford Haven	26	Including a beam trawler and a trawler/oyster dredger
Neyland	9	Mostly potters but one beam trawler, one whelker and one netter

¹⁰ Source: Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), the ONS database of all UK VAT/PAYE registered businesses. It is important to note that this only records VAT or PAYE registered businesses which account for most business activity (in terms of employment or turnover) but around half of businesses in Wales (source@ Welsh Government).

¹¹ Office for National Statistics (ONS): The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) is the definitive source of official employee statistics and can be used to derive employment estimates at varying industrial and geographical levels. It is important to note that BRES is a sampled survey estimating the number of employees which gives rise to sampling errors especially when used for small geographic areas and sectors.

Port / Harbour	Number	Comments
Pembroke	4	Two anglers
Porthgain	7	All potters and netters
Porthclais	1	Potter
Saundersfoot	11	Includes three potters, four whelkers and two trailer launched
Solva	10	Potters and netters
St Brides Bay	2	
St Davids	1	Potter
Tenby	8	Mostly potters and whelkers

Source: in Lenton, W.S. (2010) *"The Fishing Boats and Ports of Wales: A Way to Explore"* via the Cleddau to Coast LDS.

Pembrokeshire's fishing grounds extend all around the coast but mapping their exploitation reveals a complex mosaic of seasonal activity. Many of the inshore fishermen pursue different fisheries throughout the year utilising complementary fishing methods in response to the dynamic nature of the stocks of their target species and the marine environment.¹²

The main fish processing in Pembrokeshire concerns shellfish; predominantly crab and lobster. There has been an increase in local shellfish fishermen adding value to their own catch, as well as businesses processing local bought in catch. This has come from demand to fill the gap in supply chain to the hospitality sector locally and regionally as well as direct sales. Fully licensed shellfish processing units may be found in Walton West, Porthgain, Bethesda, Llanstadwell and Johnston. Smaller shellfish fishermen processing mainly for direct sale may be found in Solva and St Dogmael's.

With regard to wet fish, processing mainly comprises filleting and portioning to add value and prepare for the retail and hospitality trade. The main centre for this in Pembrokeshire is Milford Haven which processes both locally caught and imported fish, though filleting is also carried out at Burry Port in Carmarthenshire. Most scallops fished are sent to Cornwall for processing. Local fish merchants target their sales towards the local foodservice and retail channels.

There are a number of charter boats offering recreational fishing trips, mainly for mackerel, from Pembrokeshire harbours. Other charter boats are also available that may on occasions be used by recreational anglers though some are mostly used for diving. The fishing charters operate from Porthgain, St Davids, Milford Haven, Tenby and Saundersfoot.

The SWOT¹³ analysis for the fisheries sector in Pembrokeshire, taken from the LDS provides a useful overview of the state of the sector.

¹² Woolmer, A. (2008) "Using Fishermen's Knowledge Base to Map Fishing Activity in South Wales" SWWFC Ltd. Study part funded by Objective 1 FIFG.

¹³ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Table 2.2: SWOT Analysis for the Fisheries Sector in Pembrokeshire

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established links between food and hospitality sectors • Sport fishing • Recognised tourist destination • Pembrokeshire Coast National Park • Established tourism destination • Pembrokeshire Fish Week festival • Good infrastructure at Milford Docks • Burry Port hub • World renowned coastal landscape • Important wildlife and habitats • Various existing fishermen's organisations • Recognition of importance of conservation – e.g. the Lobster V-notch scheme • Fish quality • Interest in fishing heritage 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consumer knowledge of fish • Fragmented industry • No local fish market • Export of catch without local value added • Lack of a brand for Pembrokeshire fish or shellfish • Distance to larger markets • Low incomes • Hard pressed communities though few designated regeneration areas • Sector lacks political influence • Lack of infrastructure at some ports / harbours • Fledgling entrepreneurial attitude amongst some fishermen • Lack of continuity of supply • Focus on a few target species, especially lobster and crab • Fishermen's lack of knowledge of the market • Conflict between recreational and commercial fishing
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell to visitors and tourism trade • Technological innovations to reduce waste, reduce costs and increase margins e.g. internet sales • Added value processing • Diversification away from fishing • Support for fishing families • Create a brand for Pembrokeshire fish and shellfish, building on the Pembrokeshire Produce Mark linked to responsible fishing scheme • Increase local sales of fish • Introduce apprenticeships linked to fishing industry • Develop knowledge of how to prepare and cook fish • Multiple distribution centre • Further collective action • Enthusiasm for development of fish tourism • Enhance existing coastal initiatives • Saundersfoot harbour revision order • Environmental enhancements • Appropriately located aquaculture • Celebrating fishing heritage and culture 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of experience as people retire • Supermarket domination of retail market • Black market presents a threat to legitimate sales of fish • Deterioration of town centre environments deters visitors • Possible over-fishing of scallops • Depressed prices to fishermen

Source: Cleddau to Coast LDS

2.2. The European Fisheries Fund

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) provided funding to the fishing industry and coastal communities to help them adapt to changing conditions in the sector and become economically resilient and ecologically sustainable. The EFF targeted five priority areas (known as Axes):

- Axis 1: Adaptation of the community fishing fleet;
- Axis 2: Aquaculture, inland fishing, processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products;
- Axis 3: Measures of collective benefit;
- **Axis 4: Sustainable development of fisheries areas;** and
- Axis 5: Technical assistance to facilitate the delivery of assistance (i.e. to manager the programme).

Axes 1 and 2 of the EFF were open to applications direct from the industry (i.e. from individual businesses). Axis 3 provided support for collective actions for the benefit of the fishing industry generally, for instance improvements to fishing infrastructure and/or actions proposed by fishing collectives. This evaluation relates to Axis 4, a stream of funding specifically aimed at the sustainable development of fisheries communities.

2.2.1. Axis 4 and the LEADER Approach

The type of activities that Axis 4 could support were specified within the relevant European Commission (EC) regulation:

- a) Strengthening the competitiveness of fisheries areas;
- b) Restructuring and redirecting economic activities e.g. by promoting eco-tourism;
- c) Diversifying activities, maintaining and creating employment opportunities for fishermen;
- d) Adding value to fishing products;
- e) Supporting small fisheries and tourism-related infrastructure;
- f) Protecting the environment in fisheries areas;
- g) Re-establishing production potential in areas damaged by natural or industrial disasters;
- h) Promoting inter-regional and trans-national co-operation amongst fisheries areas through networking and disseminating best practice;
- i) Facilitating the preparation of the local development strategy; and
- j) Contributing to the running costs of FLAG groups.

One of the features of Axis 4 is that it used the 'LEADER approach'. LEADER is an acronym for the French *liaison entre actions de développement rural*, or in English *links between actions of rural development*. As its name suggests, it is a method of mobilising and delivering rural development in rural communities, rather than a set of measures to be implemented¹⁴.

¹⁴ Further information regarding the approach is available in the following document:
The Leader Approach: A basic guide - http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/pdf/factsheet_en.pdf

The approach includes seven key features:

- Local Action Groups (or FLAGs in this case);
- Area based local development strategies;
- Bottom-up elaboration and implementation of strategies;
- Integrated and multi-sectorial actions;
- Innovation;
- Co-operation; and
- Networking.

In line with the LEADER approach, Axis 4 funding was only available to groups who represent the fisheries area in which they are based, known as FLAGs, described as being ‘at the heart’ of Axis 4.¹⁵

FLAGs are partnerships between the fisheries sector, community representatives and other local private and public stakeholders. Together, they design and implement a bottom-up strategy that fits and addresses their area’s needs to increase economic, social and environmental welfare, known as the Local Development Strategy (the LDS).

According to the FARNET, as of July 2015, there were more than 300 FLAGs in 21 EU Member States. This includes 23 FLAGs in the UK; four of which are in Wales.¹⁶

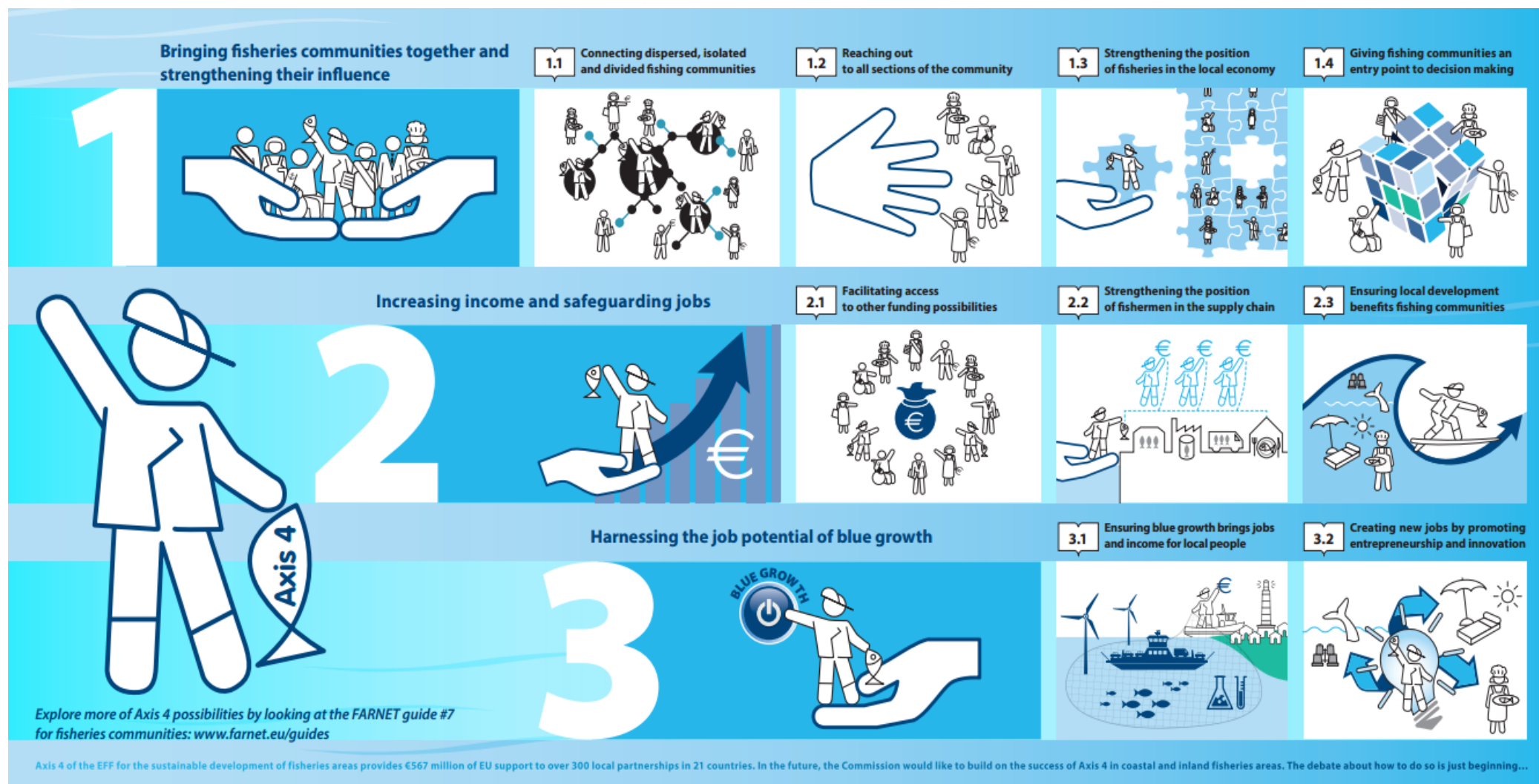
FARNET have produced a useful ‘pocket guide’ to Axis 4 which explains the main features of Axis 4.¹⁷ A copy of the infographic from that guide can be seen on the following page.

¹⁵ Source: *Axis 4 - A tool in the hands of fisheries communities*; FARNET Guide 7. Available here: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/files/documents/FARNET_A_Tool_In_The_Hands_Of_Fisheries_Communities-7_EN.pdf

¹⁶ Details of the FLAGs in the UK and Wales can be found here: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/united-kingdom-flag-factsheets>

¹⁷ A copy of the guide can be downloaded from here: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/farnet-guide-7-tool-hands-fisheries-communities>

Figure 2.1: Infographic from the leaflet, 'Axis 4 in a nutshell: a pocket guide'



Source: FARNET.

2.3. The Cleddau to Coast FLAG

Set up in July 2012, the 'Cleddau to Coast' FLAG includes representatives from the local fishing industry, private sector, voluntary sector and public sector, as shown in the table below.

Table 2.3: Sectors and organisations represented on the Cleddau to Coast FLAG

Sector	Organisation
Fishing industry / private sector	West Wales Shellfishermen's Association
	South & West Wales Fishing Communities Ltd
	Fishing Charter Boat Operators
	Welsh Seafish Training Association
Private Sector	Pembrokeshire Business Network
	Federation of Small Businesses
	Milford Haven Port Authority
	Landsker Business Consultancy
Voluntary Sector	PLANED
	Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS)
	The National Trust
Public Sector	Pembrokeshire County Council
	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
	Pembrokeshire College

Source: Pembrokeshire CC

The name of the FLAG, Cleddau to Coast, is an acknowledgement of the importance of fishing not just of the Pembrokeshire coast but also of the Cleddau rivers¹⁸ to the county's geography, economy and environment.

The FLAG comprises 14 members; four of whom are drawn from the fishing industry. These include people in the catching, processing and support sectors. As required by the UK EFF Operational Programme, at least one fishing enterprise is included on the FLAG. In addition, the FLAG includes four private sector, three voluntary and community sector members (including the RDPW Axis 3 LEADER Local Action Group for Pembrokeshire), and three public sector members. Thus a majority of the members of the FLAG are drawn from the private sector.

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Cleddau

2.3.1. The Local Development Strategy

The overarching aim of the Cleddau to Coast FLAG as set out in the LDS is:

To increase the capacity of local fishing communities and business networks to build knowledge and skills, innovation and to co-operate in order to tackle local fisheries development objectives.

The LDS, and its accompanying implementation plan, documents the FLAG composition and operation, is an assessment of the socio-economic and environmental situation of the area and provides a strategy for the use of the Axis 4 funds to address the needs and exploit the opportunities identified. It was submitted to the Welsh Government in January 2012 and approved on the 3 September 2012.

Four main objectives have been identified within the LDS with each objective then being divided into two measures:

Objective A: Improving competitiveness in the fisheries area

- Measure 1: Collaboration in the fisheries area
- Measure 2: Innovation in the fisheries area

Objective B: Adding value to fisheries products

- Measure 1: Processes and processing
- Measure 2: Market differentiation

Objective C: Regeneration and tourism in the fisheries area

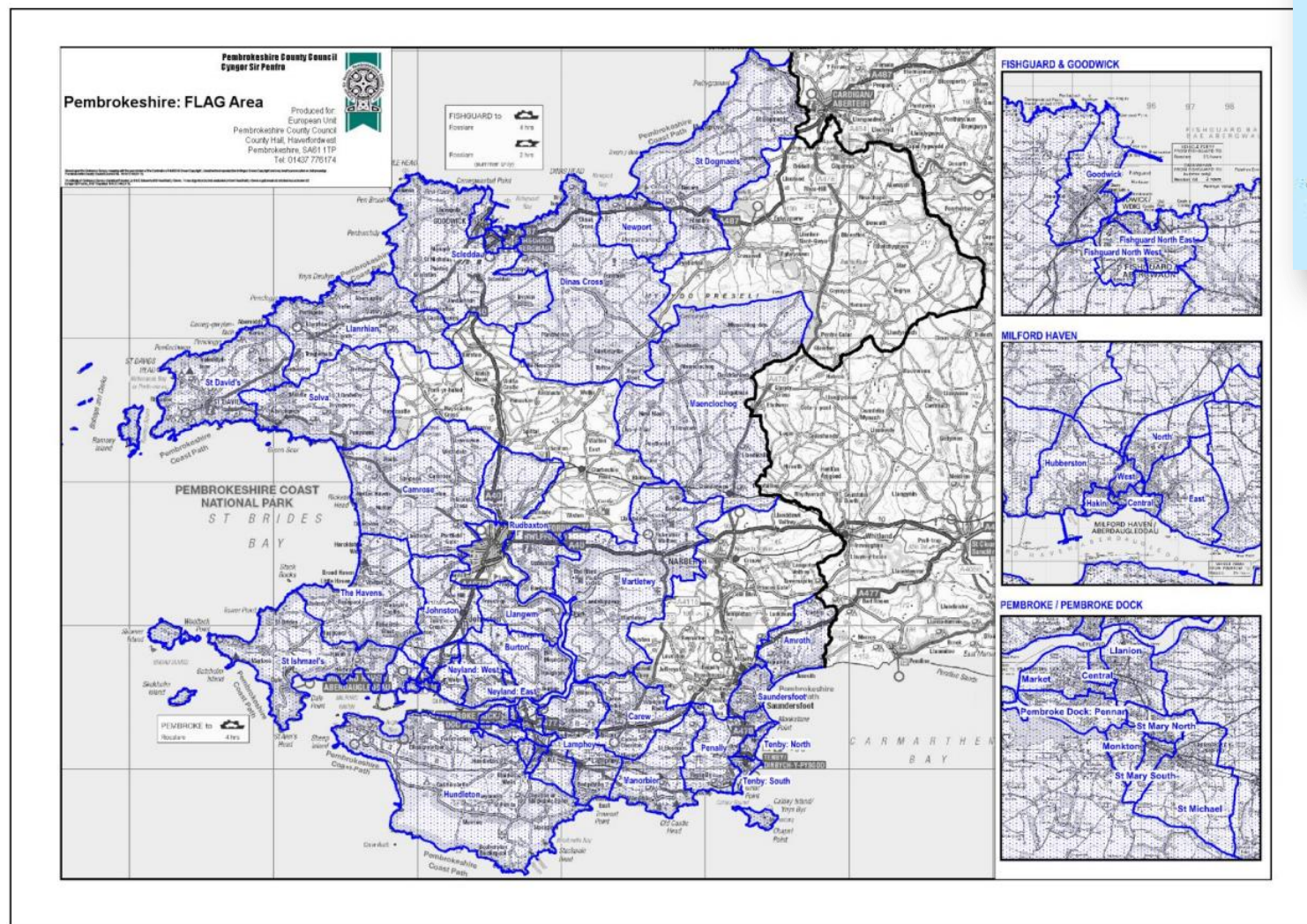
- Measure 1: Supporting tourism infrastructure and services
- Measure 2: Regeneration of the fisheries area

Objective D: Diversification from and within the fishing industry

- Measure 1: Investment in diversification
- Measure 2: Skills for diversification

The Pembrokeshire Fishing area as defined for the purposes of this programme (see Map 2.1) covers approximately 70% of Pembrokeshire's land area and about 70% of its resident population.

Map 2.1: Map showing the Pembrokeshire FLAG area



Source: 'Cleddau to Coast' LDS.

2.3.2. Implementation

Pembrokeshire County Council (via its European Unit) was appointed by the FLAG to act as the Lead Body on their behalf. This means undertaking financial and administrative functions on behalf of the FLAG including providing the secretariat to the group and submitting reports and claims for funding etc. to the Welsh Government. These functions are undertaken by European Unit staff on a part time basis alongside a range of other activities (estimated to be the equivalent of 0.3 full time equivalent members of staff).

As will be discussed later, the LDS was designed on the basis of having a budget of £640,000 to deliver. The budget was however subsequently reduced to £320,000 which has been broadly split as follows:

- FLAG running costs (i.e. Lead Body costs): £32,000 (10%)
- Animation, communication and evaluation activities: £120,000 (37.5%)
- Funding for grants: £168,000 (52.5%)

The Animation, Communication and Evaluation elements of the work of the FLAG were packaged together and approved by the Welsh Government as the 'ACE project'. A key part of this project is the Animation process, described within the LDS implementation plan as follows:

The aim is to engage the community in the work that the FLAG is carrying out, raising awareness of opportunities for funding and to benefit from project delivery as well as to obtain feedback from the community regarding their perception of the work that the FLAG and project deliverers are undertaking. This will be used to identify and inform any adjustments necessary in the Local Development Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Following a competitive tendering process, Menter a Busnes¹⁹ were contracted by the Lead Body (on behalf of the FLAG) to deliver the Animation services, which was split into two distinct elements:

1. *Community actions*: supporting the development of projects amongst the fishing communities in Pembrokeshire, particularly with a focus on building capacity within the industry, by employing an 'action learning' model.
2. *Individual and organisational development*: support for individual organisations / businesses to develop projects that fit with the aims and objectives of the LDS.

Both elements were designed to support the development of projects / grant applications for consideration by the FLAG, initially as expressions of interest and subsequently as full applications.

¹⁹ An economic development company – www.menterabusnes.co.uk

Grant applications were split into two categories:

- *Small Scale Grants*: applications for a grant of up to £5,000 (total project cost can be higher); and
- *Large Scale Grants*: applications for a grant of over £5,000.

Full applications for a Large Scale Grant were discussed by the FLAG before being forwarded to the Welsh Government for appraisal together with comments and a recommendation from the FLAG. If approved, funding was provided directly to the applicant by the Welsh Government.

Up until January 2015, applications for Small Scale Grant funding could be approved by the FLAG with the funding being distributed by the Lead Body on their behalf; a 'small grants scheme' had been approved as a 'project' by the Welsh Government to allow this. As discussed later in this report that approach was however, upon review by the Welsh Government, deemed to be ineligible on the grounds that the distribution of grant funding could not be delegated to any organisations other than the Welsh Government. After that point, Small Grant Scheme applications were also forwarded to the Welsh Government for approval with funding being provided directly to the applicants by the Government.

3. Review of the Local Development Strategy

This chapter discusses the finding of a review of the LDS document including its development and its contents. The fit, demarcation and added-value of the activities being undertaken is also considered.

Key points

- The development of the LDS did not include all the steps within the benchmark set by the FARNET guidance; essentially it was a 'short-cut' version of the process due to the restricted timescale that was imposed by the Welsh Government.
- The main weakness of this was that it restricted the potential to engage the local community in the process of developing the LDS.
- Although very broad in its scope, the LDS is generally considered to be a very comprehensive and effective strategy document which is driving the activities of the FLAG.
- In terms of structure, the LDS is largely consistent with the good practice guidance that is provided by FARNET.
- In terms of content, comparison of the LDS with the FARNET benchmark suggests that there is scope for improving the SWOT analysis; in particular the links between it and the preceding situation analysis and the subsequent objectives and measures.

3.1. Development of the LDS

The LDS was developed largely by Pembrokeshire County Council with input from the FLAG. It was also developed relatively quickly, drawing on a significant amount of pre-existing work. This was supplemented by desk research conducted by the County Council's Regeneration Division including research on the RDP Local Development Strategy and research conducted in preparation for the Council's Local Development Plan. It was further supplemented by the knowledge contributed from the FLAG members. Efforts were also made to validate the contribution of the FLAG members by means of an online self-completion questionnaire (via the County Council website) on the draft SWOT analysis to which 27 responses were received.

Comments made by FLAG members, as part of interviews in July 2014, about the development of the LDS were generally favourable with a number of positive comments being made in relation to the role played by the County Council and their ability to compile such a comprehensive LDS within a short timescale. This is something we would agree with; it is clear that the LDS has benefited from the experience of the County Council's European Unit in preparing this type of strategy document.

Where FLAG members were critical of the process it was because they would have favoured greater consultation with the local community, although they also acknowledged that this was simply not possible given the timescales imposed by the Welsh Government.

FARNET produced a factsheet focused on the LDS development process of which again can be used as a benchmark for the progress in Pembrokeshire.²⁰ The fact-sheet stresses that strategies should be drawn up through a 'bottom-up' approach involving a representative cross section of local stakeholders. The objectives of this are twofold; firstly to fully utilise the knowledge that 'local actors' have of their area and secondly to engage them in the development process and the FLAG. The process of developing the strategy is broken down into seven main phases comprising sixteen distinct steps, the numbers giving an indication of the amount of work that is considered necessary.²¹ It is also stressed that the quantity and nature of the work involved this will take some time and effort which should neither be underestimated nor hurried.

The development of the Cleddau to Coast FLAG LDS did not include all the steps within the benchmark set by the FARNET guidance; essentially it was a short-cut version of the process. The reason for this, as previously noted, was the short timescale given by the Welsh Government in which to develop the LDS. We would not therefore criticise the FLAG (or the Lead Body who led the process) for these shortcomings. They should however be recognised at both a FLAG and a Welsh Government level as it meant that Axis 4 of the EFF was not delivered fully in the way that had been anticipated by the European Commission.²²

3.2. Contents of the LDS

FLAG members were generally positive about the LDS and its use as a mechanism for improving the way in which the resources available were being used. The following points made during discussions on this matter:

- The procedure of developing the LDS has been helpful for building the FLAG;
- It provides a clear set of criteria with which the FLAG can assess applications fairly and consistently;
- It ensures that there is a cohesive strategy rather than just a group of projects;
- It provides 'outsiders' with a clear understanding of the purpose, aims and objectives of the FLAG; and
- It provides criteria against which the success of the FLAG can be assessed.

²⁰ Source: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/sites/default/files/documents/FARNET_Good-strategy_Process.pdf

²¹ **Phase 1:** Preparatory Steps and Resourcing; **Phase 2:** Preliminary Analysis of Secondary Sources and the Formulation of Hypotheses for the Strategies (desk research); **Phase 3:** Preliminary Interviews with Key Stakeholders to Test Hypotheses and Mobilise Support; **Phase 4:** Public Meeting's to Inform the Local Community and Decide On the Next Phases of the Strategy Development and Building of the Partnership; **Phase 5:** Detailed working groups; **Phase 6:** Building a consensus. Joint negotiations and meetings to agree on the principles of the strategy, budget and final composition of the partnership; and **Phase 7:** Preparation of the operational programme and final application. Source: Ibid.

²² In passing, we would note that up to date guidance on the development of a LDS has relatively recently been made available as part of the European Network for Rural Development 'LEADER Toolkit': http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader/leader/leader-tool-kit/the-strategy-design-and-implementation/the-strategy-design/en/how-to-build-up-a-participatory-local-development-strategy_en.cfm

In terms of structure, the LDS is largely consistent with the good practice guidance that is provided by FARNET.²³ In fact, it goes beyond good practice in a number of instances, for example the inclusion of the PESTLE analysis.²⁴ In terms of structure, the strategy can therefore be considered to be comprehensive. We would however make the observations that follow with regards to the contents of the strategy.

The socio-economic analysis within the Cleddau to Coast LDS is, in the main, focused on Pembrokeshire as a whole rather than the fishing area as defined. This is not in line with the FARNET good-practice, although we would note that the fisheries area in Pembrokeshire as defined does include over 70% of both the geography and population of the county. An analysis of the statistics for the area as a whole (an analysis which was already available from other strategic documents) will therefore provide a very good indication of the issues within the fisheries area. Again, the limited time and resources available to develop the LDS also need to be taken into account. However, a more focused analysis of the fisheries area is the identified good-practice and, in the evaluator's view, this would greatly enhance the usefulness of the document as a monitoring tool. A more focused analysis would make it easier to assess whether the actions that have been taken have addressed (or will address) the issues identified. The same comments apply to the PESTLE analysis.

The section on community and stakeholder consultation describes the process undertaken during the development of the strategy which is consistent with FARNET guidance. The LDS also describes the shortcomings of the consultation process and discusses actions that will be undertaken to address those issues during the implementation phase of the strategy, highlighting the activities to be undertaken by the Animation team.

The FARNET guidance states the SWOT should show an analysis of the implications for the fisheries area and community of each factor identified which would provide a basis for prioritisation of actions and resources. It is described by FARNET as a "*pivotal element*" which connects the evidence base, the community engagement and the proposed programme of actions. The SWOT within the Cleddau to Coast LDS only consists of a list of issues that have been identified and so does not meet the guidance that we are using as a benchmark. Whilst the many of the issues identified do relate to the previous discussion about the situation in Pembrokeshire and the fisheries area, there is scope for making those links clearer and further exploring why the issues noted have been identified as strengths, weaknesses and so on.

²³ Source: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/sites/default/files/documents/FARNET_Good-strategy_Development.pdf

²⁴ Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental.

The FARNET guidance is typical of many similar documents when it states that the interventions described by an LDS should be SMART:

- Specific – clearly stating what the strategy will address and by what means.
- Measurable – containing a basis for measurement and a quantified target.
- Achievable – technically attainable given the scope of action proposed.
- Realistic – attainable given the resources provided, the time allowed, etc.
- Time-bound – incorporating the date by which the targets should be achieved.

This is a strength of the LDS. Each objective included a number of measures with their rationale, scope of actions, complementarity and demarcation, target beneficiary, anticipated resources and outputs and result indicators identified. This makes the objectives easy to understand and (assuming the indicators are collected) monitor. This information was also being used by the Animators as part of the guidance they issue to potential applicants for grant support.

There is however, in our view, scope to improve the clarity of the link between the measures set out and the SWOT and situation analysis that precedes it. This would make it easier to monitor the implementation of the LDS as a whole rather than as individual objectives or measures. One potential way in which this could be done would be to reference the issues within the SWOT being addressed by the measure within the rationale. Whether or not all issues were being addressed would then be assessed by a matrix drawing together the issues noted in each measure rationale at the end of the section.

A substantial amount of detail is provided within the implementation plan including:

- Terms of reference for the FLAG;
- Administrative and financial arrangements; and
- Details of the communication, information and publicity actions to be undertaken.

The inclusion of this level of detail means that the administrative processes for the FLAG and its administration are very clear and robust. This is an indication of how the FLAG has been able to benefit from building on the previous experience of the European Unit at Pembrokeshire County Council.

3.3. Fit, Demarcation and Added Value

Assessing how a scheme or project fits with²⁵ and adds-value²⁶ to other activity is an important part of any evaluation. The stakeholders interviewed were therefore asked to comment on these issues and specifically on how they ensure that FLAG activities fit and add-value to other support which is available.

The key elements in this respect for Cleddau to Coast are the FLAG, the Lead Body and the LDS. As previously discussed, one of the features of the FLAG is that it draws together representatives from a range of different organisations including those with an awareness of other activities in the region. This is especially the case for the public sector representatives. Advisors have also been invited to attend the FLAG meeting in order to offer their expertise in this respect.

This is something that the Lead Body (being the European Unit of the Local Authority) can also provide; for example they are also the Lead Body for Axis 3 of the Wales RDP and provide a Specialist European Team (SET) service for the Structural Funds programmes. Our view is that the membership / advisors of the FLAG, together with the Lead Body, are broad enough to ensure that this is the case although it is something that needs to be kept under review on an ongoing basis.

The animators were in a strong position to be able to advise the FLAG on issues of demarcation and added-value given that they have direct involvement with other schemes providing support to the fishing community. It is also clear from discussions with the animators that they are very aware of demarcation between the activities of the FLAG (in particular, what can be funded) and that of other schemes in this field of work.

The LDS and its Implementation Plan included substantial detail on how interventions will fit with other activities including sections on complementarity with the wider policy framework (at European, UK and Wales levels) and complementarity with other EFF Axes. The complementarity and demarcation of proposed activities under each measure is also noted. There is not a substantial amount of detail provided. However, given the 'specialist' focus on the FLAG and the LDS, substantial detail is not necessary.

The reality of the situation 'on the ground' is that the nature of the FLAG scheme is such that duplication with most other funds is unlikely. Activities are focused on the fisheries sector and the reality is that very little (if any) other funds are targeted at the same area / sector. The other axes of the EFF are now closed with Structural Funds and Wales RDP programmes also drawing to an end. Given that the membership / advisors of the FLAG include individuals who will be very familiar with the focus of those other funds, the processes that are in place are adequate in our view. The low value (and hence 'risk' in financial terms) of the Axis 4 scheme in financial terms also needs to be taken into account when considering this matter.

²⁵ Avoids duplication and supports / complements other activities.

²⁶ Addresses a need that is clear and which is not or only partly being addressed by other activities, and role process, scope and volume of activity undertaken.

3.4. Conclusion

Benchmarking of the LDS against FARNET guidance has identified weaknesses in the way in which the document was developed, which is linked to the way in which the FLAG was established. As is acknowledged within the LDS, its development was essentially a short-cut of the process as intended by the European Commission due to the restrictions imposed by the Welsh Government with the principal weakness being a lack of time to effectively consult with the local community / industry. This is an important lesson learnt which should be fed-back to the Welsh Government.

In terms of structure and contents, it has been found that the LDS is largely consistent with the good practice guidance that is provided by FARNET. There is however potential to improve the SWOT analysis and in particular the links between it, the preceding situation analysis and the subsequent objectives and measures.

4. The FLAG

This chapter discusses the findings of the evaluation in relation to the FLAG including how it was set up and how it has operated.

Key points

- Delays in the approval of the LDS by the Welsh Government caused a significant loss of momentum in the work of the FLAG.
- It is a positive reflection on the FLAG that members remained motivated and continued to participate despite the delays.
- The general view of interviewees, at both the interim and final stages of the evaluation, was that there was a good range of views represented on the FLAG with no obvious gaps.
- There are many positives about the way the FLAG is operating, including the high quality of discussion which the range of membership is stimulating. It is clear however from the interviews and the meetings observed by the author that the FLAG has been, and continues to be, on a learning curve. As such, its working practices are evolving as it progresses.

4.1. Setting up the FLAG

The EU regulation requires FLAGs to comprise of “*representatives of the fishing sector and of other relevant local socio-economic sectors*” and that this should be “*according to the principle of proportionality*”.

FARNET guidance states that the approach to developing a FLAG should therefore be inclusive and the mapping of stakeholders should seek to take account of groups who may frequently be excluded. LEADER experience shows this can include various groups e.g. the young (whose future is at stake), economically active (who may be working when meetings are held), women (frequently excluded in male dominated traditional industries) or the elderly (overlooking their experience, skills and relatively free time).²⁷

The ‘Cleddau to Coast’ FLAG was established in July 2011 in response to the invitation issued the Welsh Government to participate in the Axis 4 EFF scheme. Individuals were invited to become members of the FLAG by Pembrokeshire County Council based on their knowledge of the sector. A ‘snow-ball’ approach was also used whereby those being approached were asked to recommend others. The inaugural FLAG meeting was then held on 4 July 2011. It met again then in September, November and December 2011 and to prepare its LDS and its accompanying Implementation Plan.

²⁷ Source: FARNET paper: *Partnership Building for Axis 4 EFF* (not dated).
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/sites/default/files/documents/FARNET_Partnership-building-Axis4.pdf

The general feedback from those interviewed who were involved at that time was that the process of setting up with FLAG was as effective as it could be; *“how else could you do it?”* was a common comment given that no such group had existed in the area previously.

There was some concern that the process was led by the Local Authority but also a recognition that they had done a *“good job”* of identifying key individuals and organisations to become members. The fact that the European Unit of Pembrokeshire County Council had extensive experience of setting up partnerships to oversee local administration of European Funding was also acknowledged and identified as a strength.

Once the LDS had been developed (a process discussed later in this chapter), it was submitted to the Welsh Government for approval. That process however took longer than had been anticipated and essentially resulted in a number of months of inactivity on the part of the FLAG. There were numerous comments during the interviews with regard to this and subsequent delays in approving the ACE and small grants scheme projects with one FLAG member describing it *“crippling”* to the FLAG. Examples of other comments made are noted below:

“It hasn’t been a pain free journey this one, it was difficult to get any momentum going as you’d never... it was meant to be launched one month and then it wasn’t six months later...”

“It was very frustrating in the early stages. You can’t keep going along to meetings and saying you don’t know when it [the LDS] is going to be approved, it’s rubbish.”

The key point is that the FLAG lost its momentum, something that is important for groups and partnerships for a number of different reasons. Perhaps the most important of these is the potential loss of motivation on the part of FLAG members, many of whom were attending meetings in a voluntary capacity and with an expectation of being provided with access to funds to support the development of the local fishing industry and community.

In this instance, it is a positive reflection on the FLAG that members would seem to have remained motivated and continued to participate in the scheme despite the delays. As one member put it:

“We did well to stay together and retain the membership for one to two years without any activity.”

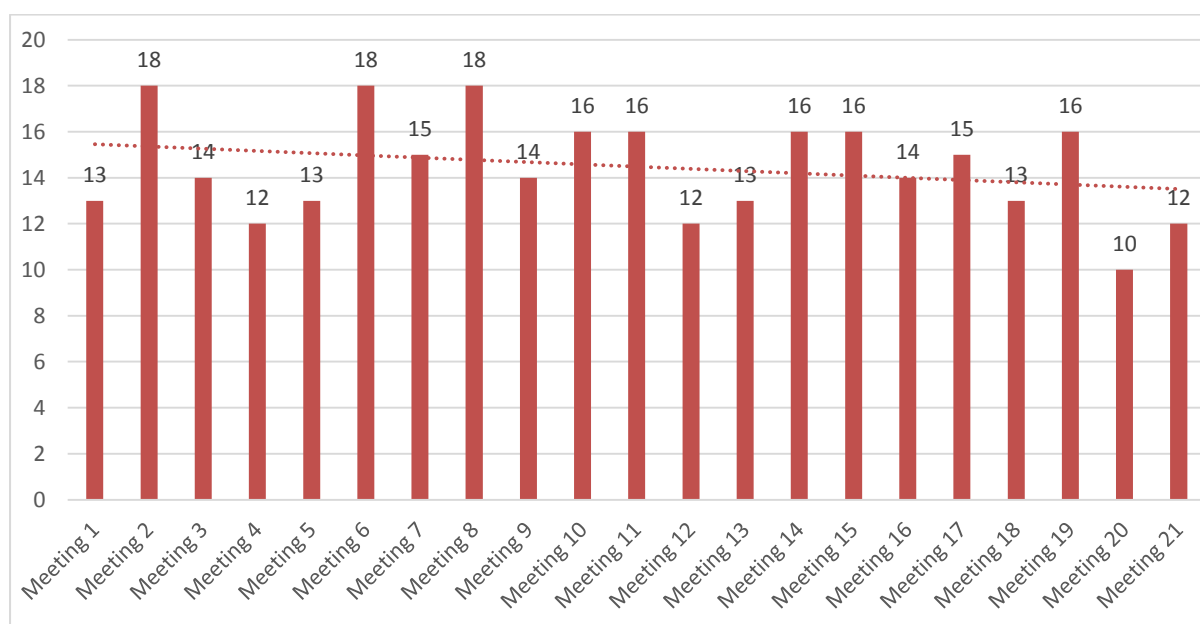
This was apparent from the comments made during interviews with FLAG members as well as during the meetings observed by the author. It is also apparent from the attendance record at FLAG meetings as discussed below.

4.2. Attendance Record at Meetings

Attendance records provide a useful indicator of how effectively groups or partnerships are operating. Members who are motivated and feel there is value in their attendance will keep attending if they can. This is especially the case for members from the private and voluntary sector who are not being paid to attend the meetings.

As shown in Graph 4.1, there had been 21 meetings of the Cleddau to Coast FLAG between the 4th June 2011 (meeting one) and the 4th June 2014 (meeting 21). This includes a break of over ten months between meeting six (24th January 2012) and meeting seven (11th December 2012) due to the delays in approving the LDS discussed above. The average attendance (including advisors and Lead Body staff) at meetings has been 14 with at least ten attending each meeting. This is a positive indication of interest in and a strong commitment the activities of the FLAG. The trend-line on the graph does however show a small downward trajectory in attendance numbers.

Graph 4.1: Total numbers attending FLAG meetings (includes members, Lead Body and advisors)



Source: FLAG meeting minutes provided by Pembrokeshire CC

Thirteen people have attended more than half the meetings with seven people attending more than three quarters of meetings. This means that there has been a good continuity amongst attendees which will improve discussions during meetings and the effectiveness with which the FLAG is able to undertake its role.

If we look only at members of the FLAG (i.e. exclude Lead Body staff and advisors), ten have attended over 50% of meetings (five each from the private and public sectors) with five attending more than three quarters (three of whom were from the private sector, two from the public sector). This, again, is very positive demonstrating a strong commitment to the work of the FLAG.

The attendance records also show that a wide range of partners from different sectors have been attending meetings. This is important, as it means that discussions and decisions are unlikely to have been dominated by one sector or a few partners. As discussed below, a wide representation on the FLAG is considered to be important.

4.3. Representation on the FLAG

FARNET guidance highlights that it is important to ensure from the start that no single sector or partner dominates, and that a balanced and inclusive partnership is likely to produce a more effective and balanced strategy reflecting the needs of the area including relevant special needs or interests.²⁸ This will tend to motivate cross community involvement by valuing people's contributions and encouraging them to contribute their resources (such as commitment, time and unique knowledge of the area) to the FLAG.

Those interviewed in both 2014 and 2015 were asked to comment on the representation on the FLAG and in particular on whether there were any gaps. The general view of interviewees in both sets of interviews was that there was a good range of views represented on the FLAG. A number of interviewees commented that they would like to see more fishermen attending but said that this was not likely given that they were very unlikely to prioritise attending such meetings. As one interviewee put it:

*"It would be nice to see more of the actual fishing industry represented...
The industry themselves are too busy fishing."*

The potential to have some meetings during the evening was suggested as a way of possibly enabling more fishermen to attend; this is something that a lot of groups where people attend on a voluntary basis do (at least for a proportion of meetings) in order to make it easier for those with day jobs to attend.

Two gaps in the membership of the FLAG were identified by the interviews in 2014 although they were not considered to be significant issues / problems by those making the comments. The first was that there was scope to have greater input from the recreational fishing sector. The other was that options for having greater input from the local community more generally should be considered. Both these gaps were also identified during the 2015 interviews; they had not been addressed between the phases of the evaluation. Other gaps identified in 2015 were the recreational boat charter fishing sector, local training providers and the hospitality sector. All of these are groups that have places on the FLAG allocated to them. However the members in question either do not attend, or do so only intermittently.

²⁸ Source: Ibid.

An interesting point made during interviews was that the willingness of FLAG members to participate in meetings (most notably in terms of contributing to discussions) was important as well as the sector that they represented. In the author's opinion, this is a very valid and important point. The potential to invite individuals who are considered to have a lot to offer to become members of the FLAG regardless of their sector (possibly as advisors in order to maintain proportionality) should therefore be considered; the need for proportionality should not be a constraint on the ability to invite individuals to become members in some capacity of the FLAG.

4.4. Representing the FLAG on Other Groups

One of the indicators that can be used to monitor the development of a Local Action Group is whether its members represent the group elsewhere in the local area, perhaps on other partnerships or groups. For example, a member of the group *representing* the FLAG on an economic development partnership for Pembrokeshire. In other words, the FLAG is established to the point that it is recognised as a group in the local area and as a result is asked to nominate representatives to sit on other groups and partnerships.

At the time of the final evaluation, this was not the case; members did not represent the FLAG on any other partnerships or group. This is not an issue which should be of serious concern at the current time; the FLAG is still a relatively new group in the local area and has been very much focused on the administration of Axis 4 funding. It is however an issue which should be considered as the FLAG continues to develop with a view to assessing its success in terms of integrating with and representing the sector / community within the broader regeneration and development structures in the area.

At the time of writing the FLAG had been invited to nominate a member to the Pembrokeshire Business Panel. This is a positive indication of the ongoing development of the FLAG and its activities.

4.5. Views on the Effectiveness with which the FLAG is Undertaking its Role

Interviewees were asked to comment on how effectively²⁹ and efficiently³⁰ the FLAG was undertaking its role. In all instances in 2014, the response to this question was very positive with the group described as operating very well. Points made by respondents as evidence of this included:

"Turnout has been excellent."

"Passion is excellent."

"Members want to be there and want to get involved."

"There is an excellent range of knowledge and experience"

²⁹ Definition: successful in producing the desired or intended outcome.

³⁰ Definition: achieving maximum productivity with minimum wasted effort or expense.

“The wide ranging involvement, the expertise around the table considering the grants coming forward has been invaluable. There is a balance of views. They come to a good and reasonable conclusion.”

As the final quote above demonstrates, one of the recurring issues in discussion was that the FLAG included a range of different types of members including those with extensive experience of working in this type of group and those without such experience. This was considered to be a good thing as it led to effective discussions and debates which is very important for any Local Action Group of this nature.

When interviewees were asked whether having a FLAG improves the scheme the response was generally very positive. Reasons given included:

- It offers local knowledge regarding the needs of the sector / community;
- Creates links into the community / sector which raises awareness of the scheme;
- Generates a discussion / sharing of different perspectives amongst the FLAG members; and
- Improves the standards of projects / grant applications due to the knowledge and experience of the FLAG members.

These are all benefits associated with the LEADER process. The fact that they are being identified by FLAG members, advisors and Lead Body staff is an indication of the value they place on the role they are playing, an understanding of why the scheme exists and what it is designed to achieve which is positive.

The majority of stakeholders interviewed in 2015 expressed similar views to those described above. A number of weaknesses were however identified including:

- A full understanding of the industry in Pembrokeshire (this was considered to be improving);
- Some confusion about what was eligible activity;
- A lack of understanding in some instances of meeting protocol;
- Dealing with / understanding conflict of interest / tension between members; and
- Some members were not considered to be vocal enough in terms of expressing their views.

It is apparent from the comments made that, on occasion, there has been a lack of capacity within the FLAG to deal with the volume of applications being considered. This included:

- At times, there have been too many projects to assess in meetings / not enough time to fully assess applications which was perceived as having undermined the scoring process; and
- Members have limited time to commit to undertaking their role (not just attending meetings).

A small minority of those interviewed were very critical in their views on the effectiveness of the FLAG as a group. In particular, they were critical of the decision making process in relation to the appraisal of grant applications and expressed a perception that some decisions were being made outside the group and in advance of meetings.³¹

It is important to note that this was a minority view and that the majority disagreed when it was discussed in a meeting where the emerging findings of the evaluation were presented. The fact that some members expressed such a view about a key part of the role of the FLAG does however need to be noted and, if possible, addressed to ensure that any concerns members may have are allayed.

It is clear from the interviews, especially those in 2015, and the FLAG meetings attended by the author that the FLAG has been, and continues to be, on a learning curve. As such, its working practices have evolved as it progressed. For example, information on appropriate conduct in meetings was discussed during a meeting attended by the author. A new process for commenting on expressions of interest for funding if the member was unable to attend meetings was also agreed. We consider this to be a positive development and an indication the ongoing development of the group.

FLAG members were asked to agree with a number of statements designed to ascertain their views on the decision making process within the FLAG. As shown in the table that follows, the majority of responses were positive in both 2014 and 2015 although the negative views of a minority of members are again apparent.

Table 4.1: FLAG members' response in 2014 and 2015 to the question: to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Mid-term evaluation: 2014	Not at all	To a limited extent	In most cases	In full
The FLAG has procedures in place to ensure transparency of decision making and implementation procedures	0	0	5	8
The FLAG uses the procedures to ensure transparency of decision making and implementation	0	0	7	6
The FLAG monitors the effectiveness of decision making and implementation procedures	1	1	7	4

Total number of interviewees: 13

³¹ The process for assessing grant applications was that, following a report from the Lead Body which set out the eligibility of the application and its fit with the LDS, each FLAG member would independently score applications against a number of set criteria. The FLAG would discuss the merits of each application and agree whether or not it was approved.

Final evaluation: 2015	Not at all	To a limited extent	In most cases	In full
The FLAG has procedures in place to ensure transparency of decision making and implementation procedures	1	1	5	7
The FLAG uses the procedures to ensure transparency of decision making and implementation	1	1	6	6
The FLAG monitors the effectiveness of decision making and implementation procedures	1	3	4	5

Total number of interviewees: 14

The statement to which respondents were the least positive was in respect to whether the FLAG monitors the effectiveness of decision making and implementation procedures. This is an indication of the fact that, to date, much of the discussion at FLAG meetings has been on the assessment of applications for support. As the current programme draws to a close that will shift to a greater focus on monitoring. Accordingly, the fact that four members were less positive about the effectiveness with which that will be done may not be unexpected. It is however an issue that needs to be addressed going forward as monitoring is, we would argue, an important part of the role of the FLAG.

4.6. Understanding of the LEADER Approach

As noted previously, Axis 4 of the EFF is delivered using the LEADER approach. As part of the 2014 interviews, LAG members and Lead Body staff were asked how they would describe the LEADER approach to somebody who has never heard of it. The purpose of the question was to test the level of understanding of the approach amongst FLAG members.

It was apparent from the responses that members generally had a good understanding of the core components of the LEADER approach, in particular the bottom-up / community led / grass-roots elements. The following comments are typical of those made:

“It’s community led action.”

“The first thing that would come to mind is a bottom-up approach, involving local partnerships, networks from a variety of sectors that come together, that can come up with innovative approaches with ways of working to ensure that what is needed is at a local level is delivered, rather than being dictated down from the top.”

“It’s a bottom-up rather than a top-down... it’s going and finding out what the local community actually want, then trying to empower them into getting it.”

“It’s an inclusive, community based approach to coming up with solutions and the distribution of European funding.”

“Bottom-up community involvement I suppose, so it’s a sort of experimental or community driven approach rather than a prescriptive, top down centrally planned approach. I guess it’s more organic.”

Less reference was made to other aspects of the LEADER approach including the focus on co-operation, networking and innovation suggesting that there is scope to further emphasise those aspects of the approach to members. Those aspects do however exist within the scheme with FLAG members having, for example, considered the potential for joint projects with the neighbouring FLAG (Ceredigion) and planning to attend upcoming UK level networking events.

Whilst there was reference to how innovation will be encouraged within the LDS, the emphasis on innovation was less clear in discussions with FLAG members and during the meetings observed. It could justifiably be argued that the creation of the FLAG in Pembrokeshire and the introduction of the Small-scale Grant Scheme is in itself innovative as they did not exist previously. Further, the decision to procure the Animation service is also innovative in that no other FLAG in Wales has taken this approach. There may however be scope for encouraging greater levels of innovation within the activities of the FLAG (this is an issue that we will return to in the discussion about added-value later in the report).

4.7. Potential improvements

Only a few areas for improvement were identified either in 2014 or 2015 when discussing the way in which the FLAG was operating with stakeholders. It should however again be noted that a minority of members were very critical.

Negative comments mainly focused on the bureaucratic process which the FLAG was required to work within and its appropriateness given the value of the funds being overseen. As two respondent put it:

“There are too many hoops to jump through.”

“The lack of money and clarity and the multi-layered processes has been too much trouble than it’s worth.”

In 2014 the Small Scale Grant was felt to be a very positive aspect of the scheme in that it simplified the application process for very Small Scale Grant applications and put the approval of those projects completely in the hands of the FLAG. There were however concerns about the complications associated with the Large Scale Grant Scheme applications. A specific issue of concern was the time it could take the Welsh Government to approve applications once they had been submitted to them (up to 90 working days) which was considered as being far too long.

By the time of the 2015 round of interviews, the Welsh Government had withdrawn the delegation of the Small Scale Grants Scheme to the FLAG meaning that it too, was subject to the same issues that concerned those interviewed about the Large Scale Grants Scheme. The reasons for this change are discussed in the following chapter but we would note here that the change was considered by all the stakeholders interviewed to have been a negative development.

Another potential area for improvement identified in 2014 was the presence of the FLAG on the internet, currently restricted to some information on the Pembrokeshire County Council and FARNET websites; specifically the lack of a dedicated website for the Cleddau to Coast FLAG. The rationale for this was, as we understand it, that promotion of the scheme was not considered necessary given (a) the limited funding available and (b) the level of interest being generated by the Animation process which are both valid reasons for not promoting the scheme from a grant availability perspective. It is however important to be aware that Axis 4 and the FLAG is about more than just the provision of grant funding. Another key part of the role of the FLAG (and the LEADER approach) is to create a mechanism for, and better links between, the fisheries community and policy makers and those involved in regeneration activities in the local area. This means promoting the sector / community to those groups and a web-presence would clearly be helpful in that respect. The situation had not changed at the time of the final evaluation report.

4.8. Conclusion

The main conclusion of our review of the FLAG is that, whilst it is apparent that there has been a learning curve, the group has generally been working well. No dramatic changes are apparent as being needed should the group continue into the next programme period. There should however be a greater focus on delivering the LEADER approach as a whole.

5. Administration: the Lead Body and the Welsh Government

This chapter sets out the findings of the evaluation which focus on the way in which the Lead Body and the Welsh Government have delivered their administrative functions in respects of the Cleddau to Coast FLAG.

Key points

- The Lead Body was found to be undertaking its role effectively with a number of references being made to the experience of the European Unit of Pembrokeshire County Council of undertaking roles of this nature.
- Negative views were expressed about the role of the Welsh Government and in particular the changes introduced to the administration of the Small Scale Grants Scheme.

The feedback from members on the activities of the Lead Body in both 2014 and 2015 was generally positive as illustrated by the comments below which are typical of those made:

“The Lead Body who are the secretariat are doing a good job, I have no problems with them at all; they are doing an excellent job.”

“I genuinely feel that the Lead Body PCC have been perfectly reasonable in their approach with this, not everyone agrees with them all the time but my view has been that they’ve tried to be as collective and inclusive in their approach as possible.”

“Administration wise, everything seems to be done in a timely fashion; the paperwork is meticulous, the accounting is excellent, and the meetings are frequent.”

Some concern was expressed in 2014 that the Lead Body, due to the fact that it was a Local Authority, was adding additional (and unnecessary) bureaucracy to the grant application process over and above the requirements of the Welsh Government. Prior to the changes to the Small Scale Grants Scheme, Pembrokeshire County Council had been undertaking technical checks³² on applications. This was something they had to do in light of the fact that they were effectively contracting with the applicant and the Welsh Government on behalf of the FLAG and therefore were required to safeguard the interests of the Authority (as well as those of the FLAG). There is however no suggestion that those checks were over and above the minimum required.

³² Planning permission required, etc.

One of the lessons learnt identified by one FLAG member was that the members should be more willing to challenge the Lead Body / Secretariat. Again, this demonstrates that FLAG members are increasing in their confidence as a group and in their comfort with the role they are undertaking.

The limited resources (funding) available to Pembrokeshire County Council to undertake its role should be noted. The total funding available within the budget was approximately £6,400 per annum.³³ This meant that the Lead Body functions were being undertaken on a part-time basis by staff also funded to undertake other activities, primarily those of the RDP programme Lead Body. The advantage of this was that it created a useful link with those other programmes. The disadvantage was that the resources available to undertake the Lead Body role were very limited to the extent that the Lead Body role was effectively being operated by the Local Authority at a loss. The longer term sustainability of such a situation must be questionable.

There were a number of references during the 2015 round of interviews to the perception that the role of the Lead Body had been made more difficult by what some described as *“Welsh Government level issues”*. Principally, this was in reference to the changes in the arrangements for the Small Grant Scheme introduced in January 2015.

As noted previously, a key part of the activities of the FLAG was to assess and approve applications to a Small Grants Scheme, approved by the Welsh Government as a project to be delivered by the FLAG, and administered on their behalf by the Local Authority. Our understanding is that it became apparent in January 2015 that such a project was ineligible as part of the EFF scheme on the grounds that the Welsh Government could not delegate responsibility for approving and paying EFF grant funding to another organisation.³⁴ As such, the Small Grant Scheme project was ineligible and had to be withdrawn. The alternative approach introduced was that the Welsh Government would administer the Small Grants Scheme directly as it was already doing for Larger Scale Grant applications (over £5k).

³³ A total of £32,000 spread over a five year period.

³⁴ We would note that the arrangements for the administration of the Small Grants Scheme being delegated to FLAG / Lead Bodies mirrored those in place in Wales for the administration of projects funded by the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013 (the RDP). An assumption was made that given that such a process was eligible under the RDP, they would be eligible as part of the delivery of Axis 4 of the EFF in Wales. In the event, that was not the case with the regulations governing EFF differing to those governing the RDP.

One of the consequences of this transfer of responsibility for the appraisal and approval of Small Scale Grant applications to the Welsh Government was that the process took longer and was more bureaucratic from an applicant's perspective. As discussed in this report, this has been a cause of frustration for applicants and FLAG members. A number of factors led to this situation. Firstly, the Welsh Government's Scheme Management Unit had not planned to administer the small grants scheme; as such the process was being done alongside the range of other responsibilities Unit undertook. Secondly, the process in place to administer grant funding being provided from the EFF did not take into account the scale of the funding being applied for. As such, the same process had to be followed for very Small Scale Grant applications as was being used for very large scale applications submitted to other parts of the EFF funded programme; in other words the process did not distinguish between an application for a grant of £3,000 and an application for £3million.

Introducing an alternative approach small scale applications would have been a very complex and time consuming process in light of the fact that the Welsh Government was not the Managing Authority for the EFF.³⁵ Given the timescale in which the Axis 4 programme needed to be delivered, this was therefore not an option.

The knock-on implications of this are of some concern. As discussed later in this report, some applicants have clearly developed a negative perception of the Welsh Government as a result of the way in which the Axis 4 grant schemes have been administered. There was also a concern amongst some FLAG members and the Animation team that there may be a negative ongoing impact on the reputation of the FLAG as a result. In particular, the fact that the Small Scale Grant Scheme was reportedly sold to fishermen as a simple and relatively quick process (which was not necessarily the case post the changes to the administration of the scheme) was highlighted.

³⁵ The Marine and Fisheries Agency is an Executive Agency of Defra and undertakes and manages EFF delivery functions for Defra.

6. The Delivery of the Animation Activities

This chapter sets out the findings of the evaluation in relation to the delivery of the Animation functions undertaken on behalf of the FLAG. It includes a review of the views expressed by stakeholders including FLAG members, Lead Body staff as well as those of the contractors delivering the activities. It also discusses the feedback from those supported by the team delivering the service.

Key points

- There was positive feedback from stakeholders about the way in which the Animation activities were undertaken and the benefit of employing an experienced external contractor to deliver the role.
- The procurement approach being used in Pembrokeshire has made it easier to attract such a team to the role; the individuals concerned are very unlikely to have been attracted to a full or part-time post within the Local Authority to deliver the role. However, the approach also has limitations in that it restricts the amount of days which are available to deliver the service. Essentially, this is a quality versus quantity decision that the FLAG had to make.
- One of the few criticisms of the Animation process expressed during interviews was that the contractors could have done more to engage FLAG members in the process; utilising their knowledge of, and links within, the local area.
- The feedback from those supported by the Animation team was also generally very positive.

6.1. What is Animation?

The invitation to tender for the delivery of the Animation services summarises the role as follows:

*The Council, working with the Pembrokeshire FLAG, wishes to commission the services of a suitably experienced and qualified organisation to both develop and implement an Animation plan in order to facilitate **awareness raising, community engagement** regarding the activities of the Pembrokeshire FLAG and EFF Axis 4, and **to generate good quality, eligible project applications**. The successful tenderer will also be expected to work with successful applicants **to ensure the delivery of their projects**.*

Animation is described as follows with the European Network for Rural Development LEADER Tool-Kit website:³⁶

Traditionally Animation refers to info events, workshops and trainings organised in different localities of the LAG territory. The participants will hear the basic information about the possibilities of the local LEADER development strategy. There may also be a brainstorming session where the people are asked to bring up new ideas for the local development. Some organisations would then commit themselves to implementing the ideas and applying for funds from the LAG. The LAG staff input in the process is crucial from the beginning for the most up-to-date information on what is possible and what is not. The staff members also have a coordination role and can make sure that the planned activities are not overlapping with anything else and that the possible best practices / innovative elements from elsewhere can be utilised. The LAG would also collect the name lists of all Animation event participants that would later be used for reporting the Animation work results.

Animation activities in Pembrokeshire have largely focused on generating applications for the grant schemes. This has included members of the team meeting with individual and groups of fishermen to discuss and develop project ideas as well as subsequently supporting the development of EOIs and full applications.

6.2. Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholders were generally positive when asked to comment on the effectiveness and efficiency with which the Animation role was being undertaken during both the 2014 and 2015 round of interviews.

One of the consequences of the procurement approach to Animation that has been employed in Pembrokeshire is that an organisation / individuals are contracted to deliver the service for a certain number of days and “once it’s gone, it’s gone”. The challenge in such a situation is obviously to use the resource in the best possible way. However, the procurement process does usually mean that the group is able to engage an organisation or individual with significant expertise in the field of work in question to undertake the work. This is the case for Cleddau to Coast where the contractors, and specifically the individual who was primarily responsible for providing the service, had significant relevant knowledge and experience.

³⁶ The LEADER Tool-Kit can be accessed here: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/leader/leader-tool-kit/the-strategy-design-and-implementation/the-strategy-implementation/how-to-get-value-adding-project-applications>

The alternative approach used by all other FLAGs in Wales is that the Lead Body (i.e. the Local Authority) employs a member of staff to undertake the Animation process on behalf of the FLAG on a full or part time basis. In that scenario, there is likely to be more resources available to undertake the process (i.e. more days) which is clearly advantageous. However, the level of experience and expertise of the individual concerned may be lower. Both approaches therefore have their strengths and weaknesses.

The approach which is most appropriate depends on the priorities and circumstances of the FLAG in question. In the case of Cleddau to Coast the procurement approach would seem to have been very effective, especially in terms of generating interest in the grant funding amongst local fishermen and creating links with other schemes and sources of funding. There has been some discussion about the limited resource (i.e. time) that the Animation team had available during FLAG meetings although it would not seem that this has had any detrimental impact on the delivery of the support.

FLAG members said that, generally, they considered themselves to have been well informed about the work of the animators. They did however request that they receive updates regarding (a) the number of enquiries being received; and (b) the number of interested parties (businesses, etc.) with whom the animators were having discussions. In our view, this is an important point as it would be wrong to measure the success of the Animation process via the number of expressions of interest and full applications submitted alone. A key part of the Animation process is to also raise levels of interest and knowledge regarding the work of the FLAG in general within the fisheries community and more widely.

One of the few criticisms of the Animation process expressed during interviews was that the contractors could have done more to engage FLAG members in the process; utilising their knowledge of, and links within, the local area. This was especially the case in terms of engaging with the wider community in the area, beyond the fishing industry itself. The potential to strengthen the links with the FLAG animators and those undertaking the same role for the RDP Local Action Group in Pembrokeshire was also highlighted. The risk however is of course that the animators are asked to spread their limited resources too thinly, something which a FLAG will need to be aware of as they oversee and manage the activities of the animators.

6.3. Feedback from Those Supported

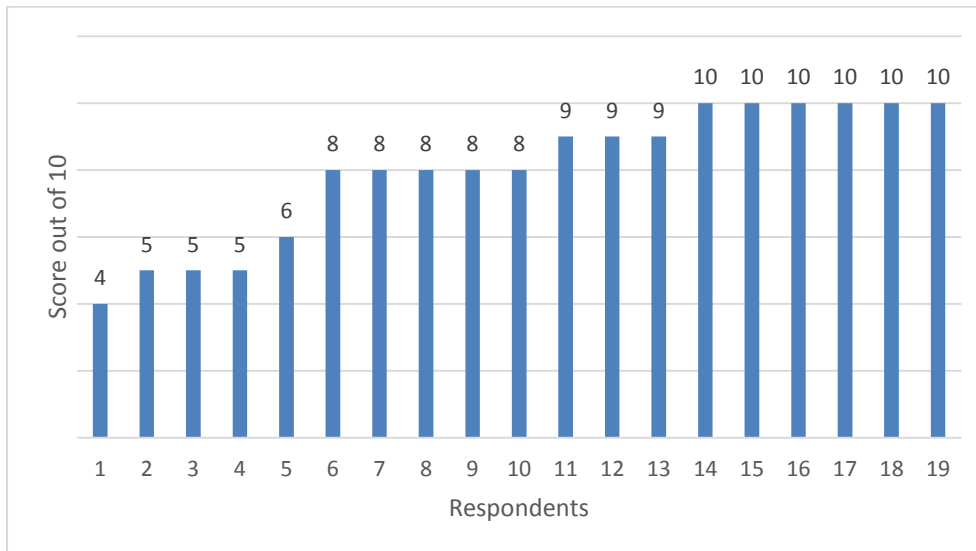
Nineteen (19/30) of the grant applicants interviewed for the evaluation said that they had been supported or advised by the Animation team. Those respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the support they had received.

The respondents had received a wide range of advice and support including:

- General advice and guidance on the application process;
- Advice on the development of ideas and applications;
- Support with interpreting eligibility criteria; and
- Comments on draft application forms.

When they were asked to rate the quality of the support that they had received on a scale of zero (useless) to ten (very useful), the average was a very positive eight out of ten. As shown by the graph below, the scores given ranged from four to ten out of ten. Fourteen of the nineteen respondents (74%) gave a score of eight or higher.

Graph 6.1: Response to the question: How useful was the support provided by the Animation team? Please use a scale of 0 (useless) to 10 (very useful) to respond



Source: Wavehill telephone survey

The following are examples of the quotes made by respondents when asked to explain the score they had given:

Average or above score:

- “[Officer] was very knowledgeable about the industry and well connected with different organisations working in the field, he has a good understanding of grant funding as well.”
- “We had some difficulty with understanding some of the stuff on the forms, didn't know exactly what they were after, [Officer] guided us through it and gave us a lot of help.”
- “Just having a point of contact to be able to talk to or ask questions to was really helpful. Sort of putting a face on the whole process which made it more approachable really.”
- “[Officer] was very knowledgeable and quick to respond to queries.”
- “[Officer] was very professional and efficient.”

Below average score:

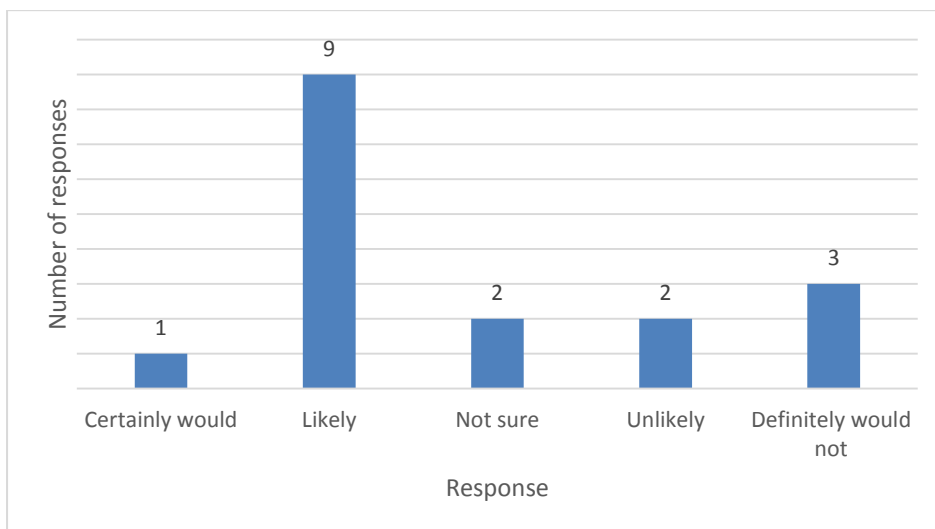
- “The advice didn't lead to a successful conclusion.”
- “It was ok, nothing majorly useful.”

As is apparent from the quotes given by those who gave a positive score, the knowledge and experience of the individuals providing the service has been identified as the key factor in the perceived effectiveness of the support provided.

The examples comments from those who gave a lower than average score show that, in a number of those instances, the reason given is actually outside the control of the Animation team. Essentially, the score given is being influenced by a separate issue; in this instance whether or not the application for a grant was successful and negative views about the application form.

When respondents were asked how likely it was that they would have submitted their application without the support provided by the Animation team, five of the respondents (29%) said that it was unlikely or certain that they would not have done so (Graph 6.2). This demonstrates the value of the support and advice provided in some instances.

Graph 6.2: Response to the question: How likely is it that you would have submitted your application for a grant (small scale or large scale) if the Animation support did not exist?



Total number of responses to this question: 17 (two non-responses) Source: Wavehill telephone survey

Despite the positive feedback previously discussed, ten of the seventeen respondents were of the view that they would have submitted their application without the support although only one respondent was certain that they would have. This suggests that, whilst the support is perceived to have been helpful, in the majority of cases it is not perceived as having been essential to the submission of the application.

6.4. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter the feedback from FLAG members, the Lead Body team and those supported has generally been very positive in respect to the activities of the Animation team. Much of this would seem to be a result of the knowledge and experience of the team delivering the role. The procurement approach being used in Pembrokeshire has made it easier to attract such a team to the role; the individuals concerned are very unlikely to have been attracted to a post within the Local Authority to deliver the role. However, the approach also has limitations in that it restricts the amount of days which are available to deliver the service. The question for any FLAG considering which is the best option for their area is whether the focus should be on quality or quantity.

7. Feedback from Applicants about the Grant Application Process

This chapter sets out the key findings of the interviews undertaken with applicants regarding the application process including both the expression of interest and full application stages. In total, 30 applicants were interviewed by the evaluation team. Twenty-four interviews were undertaken in May 2015, five of whom were re-interviewed in July in order to collect additional data about the impact of the grant they received. A further six new interviews were undertaken in July 2015, giving a total of 30 respondents.

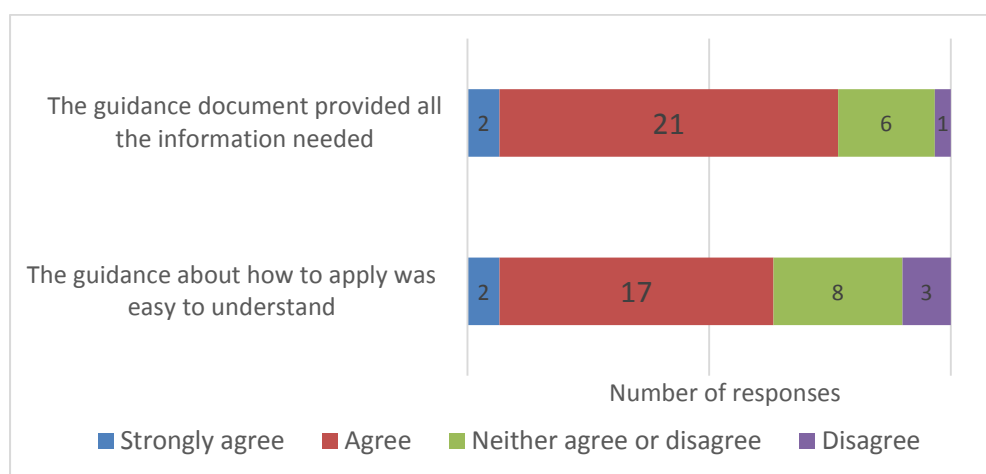
Key points

- The feedback from applicants about the guidance received as part of both the EOI and full application process was generally positive.
- The views of applicants involved in the process since the administration of the Small Scale Grants Scheme shifted to the Welsh Government in January 2015 have been less positive.

7.1. The Expression of Interest (EOI) Stage

The feedback from applicants about the guidance received as part of the EOI process was generally positive with the majority of respondents agreeing that the guidance document provided all the information that they need and was easy to understand (Graph 7.1)

Graph 7.1: Response to the question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement about the guidance documents that you received regarding the EOI stage?

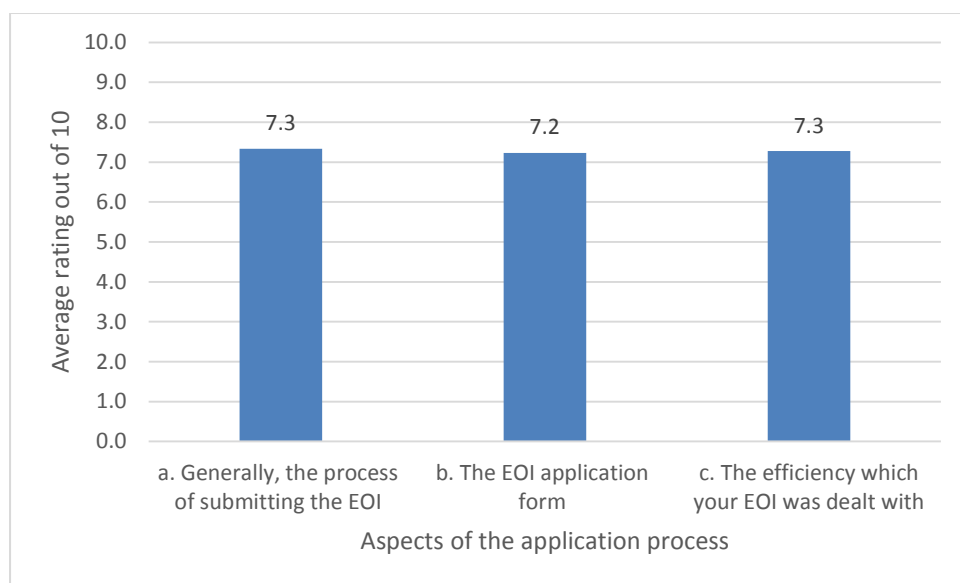


Total number of responses to this question: 30 Source: Wavehill telephone survey

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the positive feedback, only a few comments were made when respondents were asked to suggest possible improvements to the guidelines which were focused in the main on simplifying the language within the documentation and the process itself although no suggestions on how that could be achieved were offered.

Graph 7.2 shows the response when those interviewed were asked to rate the different aspects of the application process. As shown, on average, the response was positive with applicants rating each aspect of the application process higher than seven out of 10.

Graph 7.2: Response to the question: How would you rate the following? Again, please use a scale of 0 (very poor) to 10 (very good) to respond



Total number of responses to this question: 30 Source: Wavehill telephone survey.

On average, the total combined score (all three of the above aspects added together) was a positive 22 out of 30. The following are examples of the comments made when applicants were asked to explain their response.

Average and above average rating:

- *“The EOI was very clear and supportive.”*
- *“Had a fairly rapid response.”*
- *“It went fairly smoothly due to the fact that we had assistance from [Animation team].”*
- *“We learnt very quickly that we weren’t going to receive the grant.”*
- *“They need to be a little bit more straight-forward but they were easy enough to understand and prepare.”*
- *“Very straight forward... I had good support from [Animation team] and [Lead Body] at the county council.”*

Below average rating:

- *“The application was ridiculous considering the amount of money we were applying for, we also had to chase up and find out what they were doing with it.”*
- *“The whole process was pretty convoluted, we started off with applying to Pembrokeshire county council but we had correspondence from a huge number of people from the Welsh government too.”*
- *“Originally our application went in on time to Pembrokeshire County Council but then the Welsh Government took over which held up the whole process, but our completion date was then extended. However this cost so much time which was exasperating because of that confusion.”*

A number of the comments made seem to relate to the application process as a whole rather than the EOI specifically which was the purpose of the question. However, it is clear that a number of the negative comments related to the change in the application process introduced in January 2015 when the approval of Small Scale Grant applications shifted from the FLAG to the Welsh Government.

Fourteen (47%) applicants responded when asked to suggest possible improvements to the application process. The main suggestions were:

- Require less information x 4
- Simplify language / process x 4
- Clarify the process X 3
- More communication with the applicant x 2

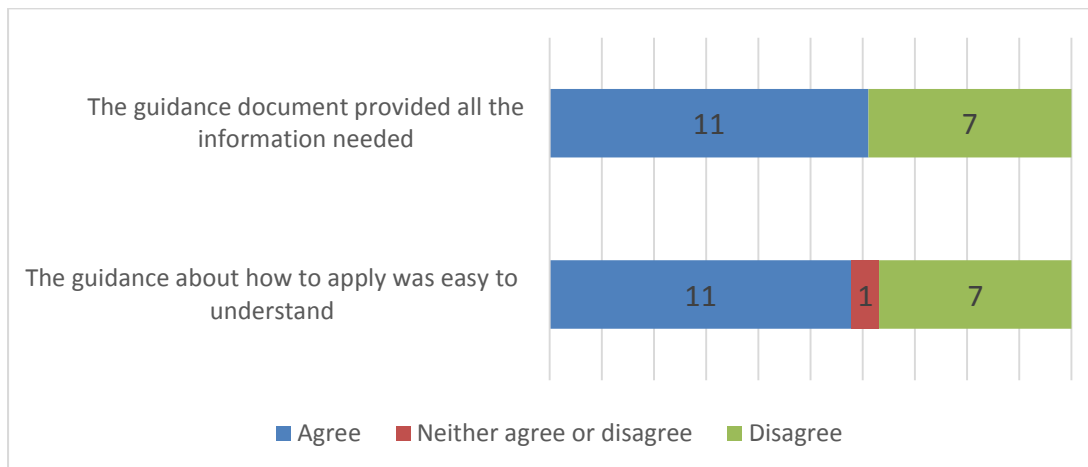
These are not unusual responses to this type of question, especially the suggestion for simplifying the application process. Keeping any application process as simple as possible is clearly important. However, the limited extent to which this will be possible does however also need to be recognised; a certain minimum amount of information will always have to be provided when applying for public funding.

7.2. The Full Application Stage

7.2.1. Small Scale Grant scheme

Nineteen (out of 30) of those interviewed had followed up their EOI by submitting a full application for a Small Scale Grant. The majority of respondents were again positive about the guidance documents although there was less of a consensus than there had been for the EOI guidance with a higher proportion of respondents expressing negative views (Graph 7.3).

Graph 7.3: Response to the question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement about the guidance documents that you received regarding the full application stage? Small Scale Grant



Total number of responses to this question: 19 Source: Wavehill telephone survey

The following are examples of the comments made by interviewees in support of their responses. Those who agreed with the statements said:

- *“Apart from the bit about the objectives and number of jobs created, I thought the rest of it was ok. But I found those bits really confusing, that was what I had asked for help with.”*
- *“It was all pretty straightforward.”*
- *“We' do quite a lot of funding applications so fairly used to that type of thing, nothing that I wasn't expecting.”*

Those who disagreed with one or both of the statements said:

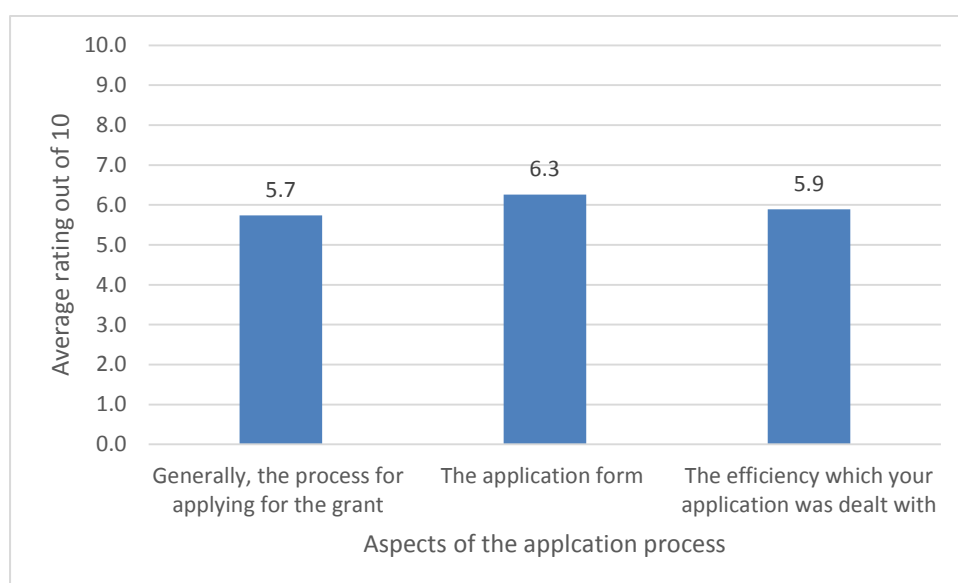
- *“Confusing / difficult to understand.”*
- *“Felt misled.”*
- *“It wasn't easy.”*
- *“Information requested was excessive.”*

Issues caused by the shifting of responsibility for approving the small-scale grant applications from the FLAG to the Welsh Government are apparent in the comments made by two respondents:

- *“It seemed to be all straight forward at the beginning, we were told that the grant could be provided by Pembrokeshire county council but it wasn't provided by them so all the schedules we worked on were wrong so we couldn't keep the deadlines we had.”*
- *“The information that they required was so excessive for a Small Scale Grant. We submitted the application to Pembrokeshire County Council and after about a month were asked to resubmit to the Welsh Government as Pembrokeshire County Council weren't dealing with it anymore.”*

When respondents were asked to suggest potential improvements to the guidance, the two main issues identified were again to simplify the whole process and reduce the amount of information that applicants were being asked to provide.

Graph 7.4: Response to the question: How would you rate the following? Again, please use a scale of 0 (very poor) to 10 (very good) to respond. Small Scale Grant



Total number of responses to this question: 19 Source: Wavehill telephone survey

As shown by graph 7.4, the application process was rated as being average by respondents. The scores given were lower than those for the EOI process, all of which were just over seven out of ten (see graph 7.2).

The range in responses is however worth noting with some applicants rating all three elements of the process as low as one out of ten whilst others rated them as highly as nine out of ten. This demonstrates the different experience than different applicants seem to have had of the application process, some better than others.

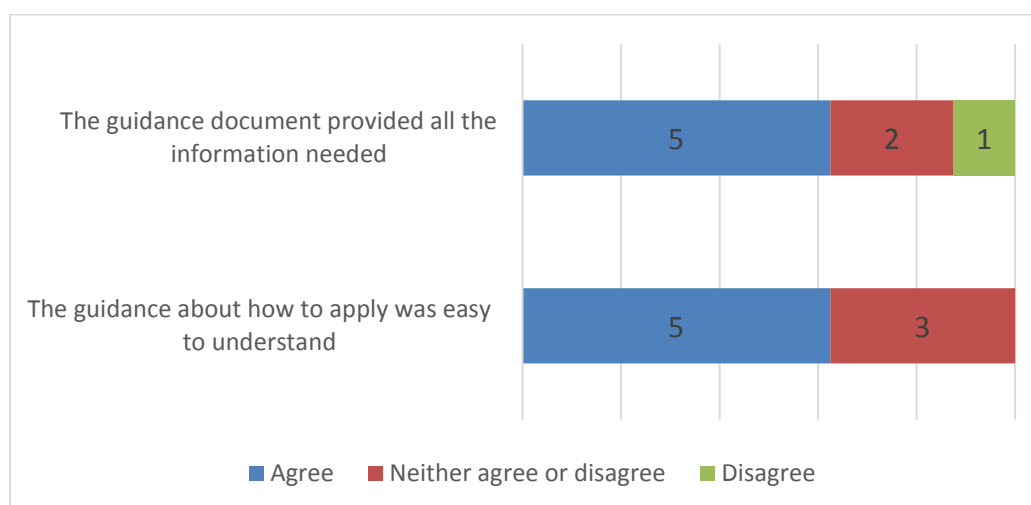
Comments made by those critical of the process highlighted the same issues as discussed previously regarding the complexity of the application process and included:

- *“With regards to the administration costs for a £5,000 grant, we most probably spent that much in administering our application.”*
- *“The whole process was too long winded.”*
- *“When applying for the small grant through the Lead Body, it was fine. I was hoping that the approval would be made by January and that I could get the project finished by April. But then there was a huge hold up, literally months’ worth of hold ups between the lead bodies and the welsh government. The Welsh Government then decided that they needed to approve any small grants, which is totally and utterly diabolical, especially being half way through a programme like that.”*

7.2.2. Large Scale Grant scheme

As shown in Graph 7.5, those respondents who had applied for a Large Scale Grant, where there had been no change in the administration of the applications, were more positive about the guidance provided than their Small Scale Grant Scheme counterparts.

Graph 7.5: Response to the question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement about the guidance documents that you received regarding the full application stage? Large Scale Grant

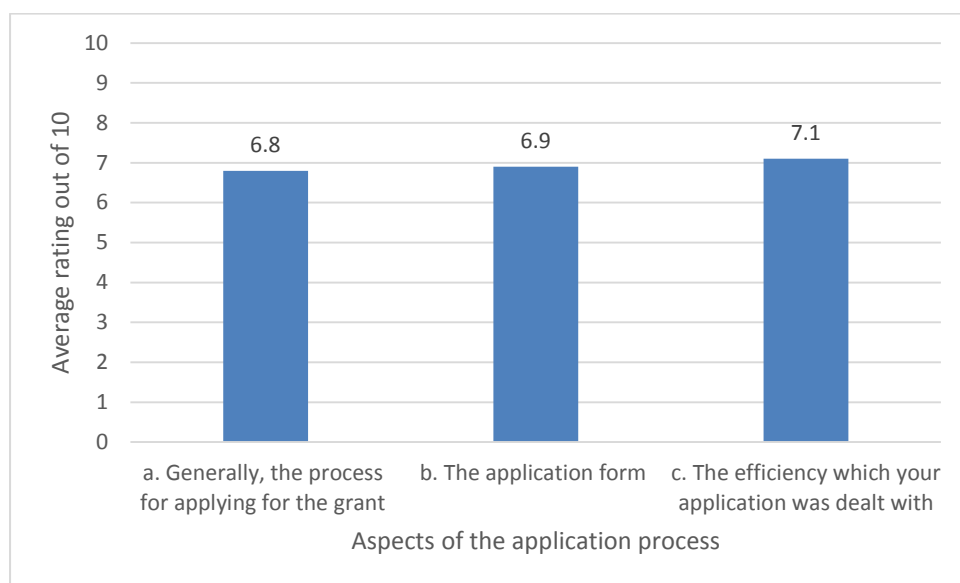


Total number of responses to this question: 8 Source: Wavehill telephone survey

Some of the comments made suggested that there was more experience amongst some of the applicants for this larger grant which could have contributed to the more positive feedback:

- *“It was pretty straight forward, I've been dealing with these sorts of documents for nine years now.”*
- *“The guidance was easy to understand but I think it was a lot easier for me than it would've been for someone who hadn't applied for a grant before because some of the jargon was quite complicated. I was still glad to have the advice from the Animation team because it was a little daunting.”*

Graph 7.6: Response to the question: How would you rate the following? Again, please use a scale of 0 (very poor) to 10 (very good) to respond. Large Scale Grant



Total number of responses to this question: 5 Source: Wavehill telephone survey

The response when interviewees were asked to rate the different aspects of the application process were just below seven out of ten on average which is again more positive than the response for the Small Scale Grant scheme. The only suggested improvements to the process were that it should be speeded up (two comments).

7.3. Conclusion

The findings of this review of the application process are, in the main, positive. The feedback from grant applicants did not identify any major issues within the application process. The views of applicants involved in the process since the administration of the Small Scale Grants Scheme shifted to the Welsh Government in January 2015 should however be taken into account when arrangements for the management and delivery of any future programme are being discussed.

8. Outcomes of the Grants Provided

This chapter discusses the outcomes of the grants that have been provided. The discussion draws upon information gathered during interviews with thirteen recipients of grant support as well as monitoring information that that Lead Body was able to provide.

Key points

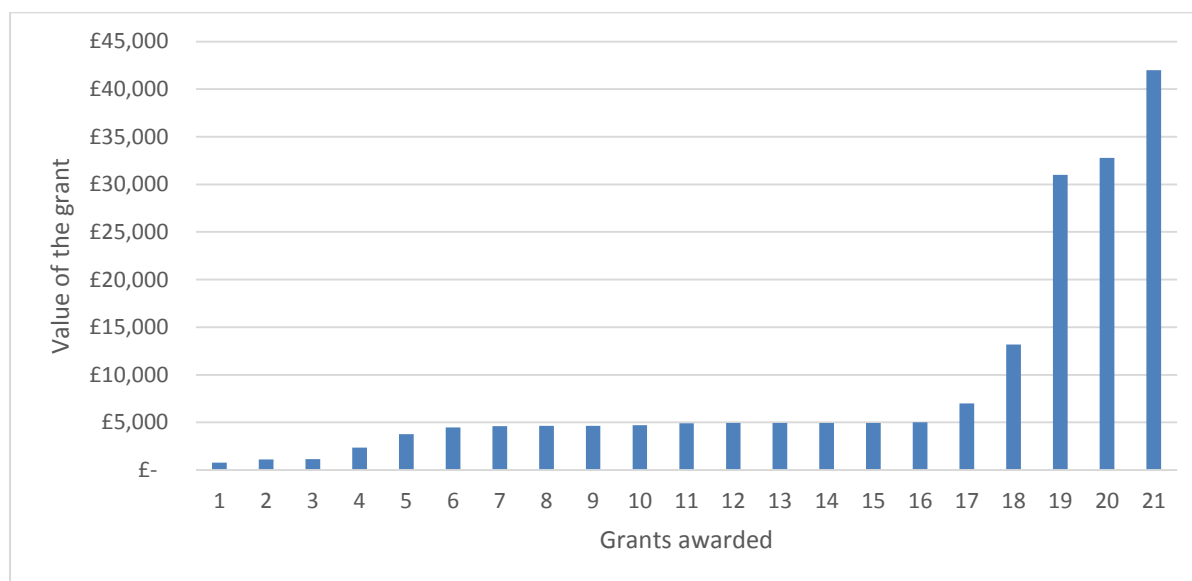
- Twenty-one grants were awarded with a total value of £187,850.
- The actions funded can be grouped into eight types of activities with the largest group, both in financial terms and the number of grants awarded, being the purchase of equipment and/or facilities for fishermen (£107,100).
- The impact is also clearest (and most direct) for this group.
- In other instances the impact of the grant on the fisheries sector is going to be less direct and more long-term, with further work being required before the intended outcome is achieved.
- This creates a risk that the outcome of the actions that have been funded should contribute towards will not be achieved.
- It has been found that the actions funded fit within the LDS and cover each aspect of the strategy.
- The scale of the intervention is however very small meaning that none of the objectives will have been anywhere near achieved during the current programme period.
- The LDS was too broad for the funding available which highlights a weakness in the process; that FLAGS were asked to prepare a strategy that they had no prospect of delivering. This undermines the requirement to develop that strategy. The objective for a FLAG should be to deliver a strategy, not to deliver projects that fit with a strategy.

8.1. Grants Awarded

Twenty-one Axis 4 grants were awarded in Pembrokeshire, 16 Small Scale Grants and five Large Scale Grants. The total value of the grants awarded was £187,850 with an average (mean) of £8,945, although this figure is skewed by a few larger grants as can be seen in Graph 8.1. The smallest grant was just £780 and the largest was £42,000. As shown in the graph below, three grants stand out as having a far larger expenditure than the others. They were:

- The purchase of a tractor for Porthgain fishermen;
- The provision of new multi-user cold store facilities at Milford Haven Port; and
- The provision of activities relating to lesser known fish species at the Fish Week Festival.

Graph 8.1: The value of each grant awarded



Source: Analysis of data provided by the Lead Body

The table below shows the activities that have been funded (by category) together with the total and percentage of expenditure on those activities. As can be seen, the majority of the funding has been provided to fund the provision of equipment for fishermen and this includes ice machines, chillers and tractors and represents 11 separate grants; just over half of those awarded.

Table 8.1: Grant expenditure per category / type of activity

Activity	No. of grants	Total expenditure	% of total expenditure
I. Purchase of equipment / facilities for fishermen	11	£ 107,100	57%
J. Funding of festival activities (lesser known fish species)	1	£ 30,988	16%
K. Funding of research / feasibility studies	3	£ 16,243	9%
L. Purchase of processing / retailing equipment	2	£ 13,963	7%
M. Development and printing of river trail promotional material	1	£ 5,000	3%
N. Funding improving the facilities of a yacht club	1	£ 4,954	3%
O. Development of a new website	1	£ 4,900	3%
P. Improving access for anglers to river beats	1	£ 4,702	3%
TOTAL	21	£ 187,850	100%

Source: Analysis of data provided by the Lead Body

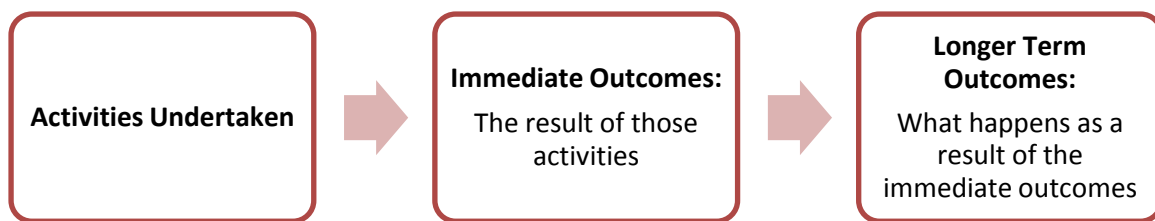
8.2. Review of Project Achievements

The table on the following page draws upon the research undertaken for this evaluation to describe the achievements of the activities that have been funded.

- Column A describes the activity funded using the same categories as noted above.
- Column B then sets out what has been the immediate outcome of the activity³⁷ that has been undertaken i.e. what has or will happen as a *direct consequence* of the activity undertaken.
- Column C notes what we would anticipate would be the longer term outcome of the activities that have been undertaken, achieved as a result of the immediate outcomes listed in the previous column. These longer term outcomes are often why activities have been funded and relate to the LDS.

The approach is summarised by the graphic below.

Graphic 8.1: Basic logic model structure



Column D lists some of the assumptions that have been made when considering what the longer term outcomes will be. This column is important as it often highlights an inherent weakness within an activity; a reason why the longer term outcome may not be achieved.

³⁷ Or where there is no evidence available to date, what *should be* the immediate outcome of the activity.

Table 8.2: Activities, outcomes and assumptions for the Axis 4 supported projects in Pembrokeshire

(A) Activity	(B) Immediate Outcome	(C) Longer Term Outcome	(D) Assumptions
(A) Equipment / facilities for fishermen Total Investment = £107,100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the revenue that can be generated from the existing product Improves the quality of the product New markets for existing products Improves the efficiency of the business (reduces costs and increase product shelf-life) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses are sustained and grown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Businesses make the best possible use / take full advantage of the new equipment / facilities that have been provided</i>
(B) Festival activities Investment = £30,988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing awareness and knowledge of different products amongst the public and within the hospitality sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in demand for a new product Increase in supply of a new product Businesses are sustained and grown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Public / hospitality sector awareness is maintained post the festival</i> <i>Public / hospitality sector awareness translates into demand</i> <i>There is adequate supply of the new product to sustain the demand that has been generated</i>
(C) Research and feasibility studies Total investment = £16,243	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concept testing Improves understanding and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New service / product development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The findings of the feasibility studies are shared and used</i>
(D) Processing / retailing equipment Investment = £13,963	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved processing processes Improves the presentation of the product Increases the volume of raw product sourced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses are sustained and grown Knock-on benefit within the local supply chain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Businesses make the best possible use / take full advantage of the new equipment / facilities that have been provided</i>

(A) Activity	(B) Immediate Outcome	(C) Longer Term Outcome	(D) Assumptions
(E) Development of river trail promotional material Investment = £5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information to users and potential new users of the resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the number of users of the resource Increases the number of visitors to the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Users can access the information that has been provided</i> <i>Users use the information that has been provided</i> <i>The information is what the users require</i> <i>There are no other restrictions on access to the trail</i>
(F) Development of a new website Investment = £4,900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information about the sector to the public Provides an opportunity for fishermen to develop a website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces new / better route to market Increases business turnover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Fishermen develop their micro-sites</i> <i>Fishermen make use of the websites</i> <i>Buyers make use of the websites</i>
(G) Improving the facilities of a yacht club Investment = £4,954	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved facilities for users (including fishing vessels) Enhancing the overall aesthetics of the seafront 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased users Benefit to businesses operating in the area / using the facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Businesses / users make the best possible use / take full advantage of the facilities that have been improved</i>
(H) Improving access for anglers to river beats Investment = £4,702	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves access for users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing users make more use of the river beats New users use the river beats Visitor numbers increase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Users are aware of the better access that had been provided</i> <i>Potential new users are aware of the better access that is now available</i> <i>Users make use of the better access provided</i>

Source: Analysis of FLAG monitoring data, literature and evaluation survey data.

Impact is clearest (and most direct) for those grants which have funded the purchase of equipment or facilities for fishermen. The interviews with recipients of grants relating to the purchase ice machines and/or cold store facilities were very positive about the impact of the machine / facility on their business and other users of the resource. The outcomes identified included:

- Improves the quality of the fish and hence the price of the fish
- Increases the shelf life of the fish
- Removes the need to travel to purchase ice and the cost of doing so
- Makes fresh fish available to the local community
- Improves the efficiency of the business

One interviewee claimed that their turnover had doubled as a result of the purchase of the ice machine. However in other instances it was too early to be able to quantify the impact on the business although a substantial impact was anticipated.

One interviewee described the benefit as follows:

“The cold store facility is something the fisherman need to keep their catch at a good temperature... that will extend their shelf life until they have transport available. It just means that they have a storage facility there that they might not have had otherwise to that standard of chill... it will mean that the fish stay fresher for longer.”

Another said:

“This year is the first year we've had all the equipment so it's a lot easier as we can store more fish in the fridge and freezer, we were always running out of space before and we could only store so much... We're able to store a lot more fish at a better temperature now which will hopefully increase our turnover, we won't find out if that has happened until the end of this year.”

In other instances any impact of the grant on the fisheries sector is going to be less direct and more long-term, with further work being required before the intended outcome is achieved.

The additional activities funded at the 2014 Fish Week festival were seeking to facilitate a longer term change / benefit with the sector. The funding was used for a mini project within the festival promoting the use of less favoured fish in the seas, in preparation for when there could be more unfamiliar species on the market. The interviewee said:

“We're looking at achieving better prices and return for the fishermen's catches. Also improving competitiveness in fishing communities and hospitality sectors, being able to add creativity to their menus and increase profitability. What we were hoping to do in the skills teaching that we put on, was to look at how to get the most out of the fish that is being caught so that the fisherman themselves could learn how to add value before they sell on to the next part of the chain. This will also have a positive impact on hospitality and the general public.”

It will be important to follow up on the activities that have been undertaken during the Festival to build on what has been achieved.

Two of the grant recipients interviewed by the evaluation team had used the funding to fund research regarding the management of slipper limpets, careers associated with the coastline and the potential of pesca-tourism.³⁸ The impact of research is obviously going to be different to that of a grant which is used to purchase equipment for a fisherman as discussed above. The research does however have the potential to lead to new products / services for the local fisheries sector and could, depending on the findings, generate a tangible impact within the sector at a later time. The key will be the extent to which the findings are distributed within the industry and discussed by stakeholders.

The objective of the WWSFA Website was described by the applicant during the interview as being to give fishermen the opportunity to sell their fish as soon as possible by creating a micro-site as part of the new WWSFA website. He added: *“the next stage would be to get funding for fishermen to get 3G phones so they can update the website and twitter whilst at sea and sell fish before they even arrive back on land.”*

The logic for the project is very clear and strong. As the above quote suggests, the risk with this project is however that it only part of the solution to a problem (or opportunity) that has been identified. In this instance, the objective is to develop a method for fishermen to market their catch and to do that as soon as possible after the catch. The website will go some way to address this issue but, as the applicant himself says, there is an additional step before the problem is resolved or the opportunity is realised, as is the case for the research projects previously discussed.

A more effective approach, we would suggest would be to develop a broader project (or group of projects i.e. a strategy) which more comprehensively deals with the issue to hand.

Pembrokeshire Riven Trust identified a wide range of benefits as a result of their project. Their primary aim was to engage with the local community and this project was designed to try and achieve just that. However, a much broader benefit was identified during the interview:

³⁸ Pesca-tourism involves professional fishermen welcoming a certain number of tourists on to their boats in a tourism-recreation activity.

“There's lots of things that's come out of it for us. We're now more recognised, a lot of people are aware of the rivers trust and the sort of things we do because we've been involved with the FLAG and taken this nice leaflet round to places so people tend to see the benefit of it. Before, people weren't aware there was a river trust.”

The Cleddau trail idea was described as *“having been around for a while”*. The Axis 4 grant had *“reinvigorated that idea”* by allowing the production of the leaflet which had now been widely distributed.

Again, there was no clear evidence of the impact of the project available although the applicant said:

“The local MP is coming to talk about the leaflet, he's suddenly now aware of the trust and likes the idea of Cleddau trail because it's highlighting Pembrokeshire instead of just the coast. We have a website counter so hopefully if more people start clicking on the link, it will show how many people are going onto the website. If we hand out the box of leaflets (1,000) that's gone out there. Potentially that's a 1,000 people that's going to have benefitted from using the trail.”

8.2.1. Achieving the LDS aim and objectives

Table 8.1 (on the following page) lists the objectives of the Cleddau to Coast LDS (Column A). It also lists the actions that have been funded which will, based on the outcomes discussed above, contribute to achieving those objectives (Column B).

The analysis suggests that the actions that have been funded fit within the strategy and cover each aspect of the strategy. The scale of the intervention is however very small which means that none of the objectives will have been anywhere near achieved during the current programme period. Essentially, the funding that has been in place has been insufficient to deliver the strategy devised by the FLAG and no other funding has been attracted in order to deliver any aspects of the strategy.

As noted in Chapter 3 the LDS for the Cleddau to Coast FLAG sets out a very broad strategy, prepared when the resources that would be available to the FLAG to deliver the strategy was unclear. Assessing the extent to which the grants awarded have been able to deliver that strategy is therefore somewhat unfair. The finding that the strategy was too broad for the funding available is however important as it highlights a weakness in the process; that FLAGs were asked to prepare a strategy that they had no prospect of delivering. This undermines the requirement to develop that strategy. The objective for a FLAG should be to deliver a strategy, not to deliver projects that fit with a strategy.

A more effective approach would, we would argue, be to focus on developing a strategy which it was reasonable to deliver with an awareness of the timescale and the resources available.

Table 8.1: LDS objectives and actions that have / will contribute to the achieving of those objectives

LDS Objective	Actions funded contributing to this objective
Improving competitiveness in the fisheries area <i>Increasing prices achieved for produce, or reducing costs of production or enhancing the environmental sustainability of operations, for instance by reducing waste.</i>	A. Purchase of equipment / facilities for fishermen B. Funding of festival activities (lesser known fish species) D. Purchase of processing / retailing equipment F. Funding improving the facilities of a yacht club G. Development of a new website
Adding value to fisheries products <i>The introduction of methods to improve the efficiency with which fish products are brought to market, and/or the modification of basic fisheries products so as to prolong its shelf life, increase its convenience or open up new market possibilities. Branding of local products.</i>	A. Purchase of equipment / facilities for fishermen B. Funding of festival activities (lesser known fish species) D. Purchase of processing / retailing equipment G. Development of a new website
Regeneration and tourism in the fisheries area <i>Increasing the economic contribution of tourism to the economy of Pembrokeshire's fishing area; visitor management initiatives where conflict exists or is expected; visitor facilities, particularly those that also benefit other users including fishermen. Or, projects to improve areas suffering from notable degradation whether in the built or natural environment.</i>	C. Funding of research / feasibility studies E. Development and printing of river trail promotional material F. Funding improving the facilities of a yacht club H. Improving access for anglers to river beats
Diversification from and within the fishing industry <i>A weakness identified in the Pembrokeshire fishing industry is the reliance on a few key species, notably lobster and crab. In addition, it has been identified that there are opportunities for diversification. Encouraging fishermen and other fishing related businesses to diversify their income sources either through under-exploited species or through non-fishing activity. Or skills training for people involved in fisheries related enterprises who are looking to diversify.</i>	B. Funding of festival activities (lesser known fish species) C. Funding of research / feasibility studies

Source: Analysis of FLAG monitoring data, literature and evaluation survey data.

8.3. Conclusion

One of the main findings of this review is that there is very little evidence at this time of the outcomes or impact of the grants that have been awarded. In particular, there was very little monitoring data that could be assessed and much of the activity has only recently been completed when the fieldwork for the evaluation was undertaken.

The potential impact is clearest (and most direct) where grants have been used to purchase of equipment and/or improve facilities for fishermen - this will have a direct impact on the way in which the businesses in question are operating. In other instances the impact of the grant on the fisheries sector is going to be less direct and more long-term, with further work also being required before the intended outcome is achieved. This should not be interpreted as a criticism of those activities. Such activities are in fact very common where the LEADER approach is being employed. However, the risk that the anticipated outcome will not be achieved needs to be acknowledged.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

This final chapter draws together the findings and conclusions of the evaluation and notes a number of recommendations that are being made.

The FLAG

Our conclusion is that the FLAG has been working well. The feedback about the quality of the discussion during the meetings and the contributions being made by members has been positive. The FLAG has however clearly been on a learning curve although this is not unexpected as they are a new group. Stakeholders continue to identify some gaps in the membership of the FLAG but no dramatic changes would be necessary should the FLAG continue into the next programme period.

In many respects, the focus of the FLAG has understandably been on the distribution of the grant funding which was available as this was the first opportunity to distribute this type of funding within the fishing community of the area. The constrained timescale within which the grant funding available had to be utilised was also a factor. However, it is important to be aware that Axis 4 and the FLAG should be about more than just the distribution of grant funding. In fact, a strong argument can be made that a FLAG is not necessary if its only role is to be a conduit for grant applications from within the fisheries sector.

The role of the FLAG could and should be much broader. For example, a key part of that role (and the LEADER approach) is to create a mechanism for and better links between the fisheries community and policy makers and those involved in regeneration activities in the local area. Assuming that the FLAG continues into the next programme period, more attention needs to be paid to those elements.

Recommendation 1: Assuming that the Cleddau to Coast FLAG is to continue into the next programme period, there should be a greater focus on delivering the LEADER approach as a whole. This would include having a greater focus on providing a forum for the fishing sector and community to contribute to ‘policy’ discussions in Pembrokeshire as well as contributing to the development of those policies.

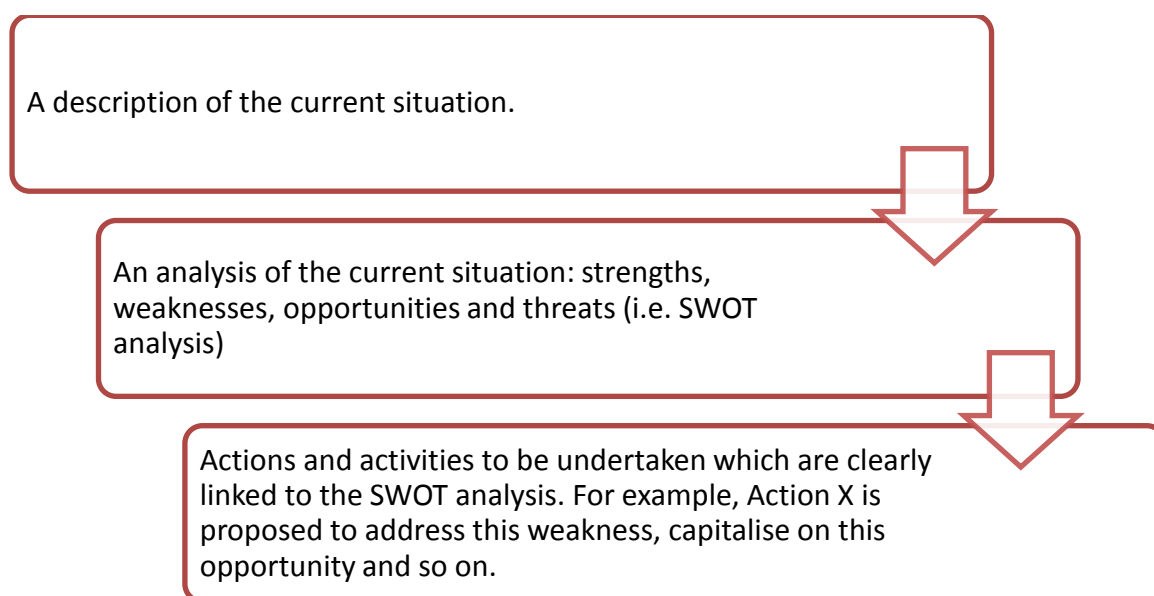
The LDS

Benchmarking the Cleddau to Coast LDS against FARNET guidance identified weaknesses in the way in which the LDS was developed, which is linked to the way in which the FLAG was established (the development of the LDS and the creation of the FLAG should go hand in hand). As is acknowledged within the LDS, its development was essentially a ‘short-cut’ of the guideline process set out by the European Commission due to the restrictions imposed by the Welsh Government with the principal weakness being a lack of time to effectively consult with the local community / industry. This is an important ‘lesson learnt’ which should be fed-back to the Welsh Government.

Recommendation 2: The development of the next LDS should follow FARNET guidance to a greater extent and be undertaken over a longer period and include greater consultation with the sector and community.

One of the key tasks set for this evaluation was to assess the appropriateness of the LDS as a tool for guiding the implementation of EFF Axis 4 in Pembrokeshire. The LDS has been found to be a very comprehensive document which includes all the key elements of an effective strategy and implementation plan.

Comparison with the benchmark provided by FARNET guides for a FLAG LDS has however identified potential areas for improvement, most notably in terms of the SWOT³⁹ element of the strategy and its links to the preceding situation analysis and subsequent implementation plan. Essentially, this would mean making the links between the description of the current situation, the SWOT analysis and the proposed interventions (i.e. actions and activities) clearer as illustrated below:



This, we would argue, would improve the LDS. In particular, it would make it easier to monitor the extent to which the actions that are being taken (or funded) are helping to address what has been identified in the LDS as needing to be done.

Recommendation 3: The next LDS should have clearer links between the issues identified in the analysis of the current situation (the SWOT analysis) and the proposed interventions. This could be achieved by undertaking a *logic mapping* exercise as part of the development of the next LDS.⁴⁰

³⁹ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

⁴⁰ A logic map (sometimes called a logic model) is a way of visually presenting those key steps required in order to turn a set of inputs into activities that are designed to lead to a specific set of changes or outcomes. The process is referred to by a number of different terms including 'outcome mapping', developing 'programme logic' and 'intervention logic' all of which refer to essentially the same process. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/logic-mapping-hints-and-tips-guide>

Given the limited resources available for its delivery the LDS is, we would argue, far too broad to be an effective tool for guiding the implementation of EFF Axis 4 in Pembrokeshire. Effectively, there was very little prospect of delivering the strategy given the resources available. Whilst the strategy that has been devised is effective and useful as an analysis of the issues facing the sector in Pembrokeshire and actions to address those issues, it has provided limited guidance on what the priorities should be for the use of Axis 4 funding.

At meetings observed by the author, there has been frequent references to whether or not an application fits with the strategy. There has however been little if any reference to whether the strategy (as a whole) is being delivered. In our opinion, the focus of a FLAG should be on delivering a strategy, rather than on funding a range of stand-alone actions or activities that fit within a strategy. This would mean focusing to a greater extent on funding / delivering a set of interlinked and mutually supportive activities rather than a series of one-off actions. One way in which this could be achieved is by developing a two tier LDS for the next programme period, as per the recommendation below.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that the LDS for the next programme period should be a two tier strategy: a longer term strategy (similar to the current LDS) which assesses the 'big picture' in relation to supporting and regenerating the fisheries sector and community in Pembrokeshire, and a short-term strategy which sets out the objectives of the FLAG for the next programme period and strategy which the FLAG will deliver during that period in order to achieve those objectives.

Animation

There was positive feedback of the way in which the Animation activities were being undertaken with FLAG members particularly pleased with the number of EOIs and full applications for grant funding generated. The feedback from those supported by the Animation team was also generally very positive.

A key reason for the success of the process has been the knowledge and experience of the team contracted to deliver the service. The procurement approach being used in Pembrokeshire has possibly made it easier to engage such a team to the role; the individuals concerned are very unlikely to have been attracted to a short term full or part-time post within the Local Authority to deliver the role. The same knowledge and experience is also unlikely to already exist within the Local Authority. However, the procurement approach also has limitations in that it restricts the amount of days which are available to deliver the service. Essentially, this is a quality versus quantity decision that the FLAG had to make. In this instance, the procurement approach has been very effective.

One of the few criticisms of the Animation process was that the contractors could have done more to engage FLAG members in the process; utilising their knowledge of and links within the local area. This was especially the case in terms of engaging with the wider community in the area, beyond the fishing industry itself. This is linked to the previous comments with regard to the need to ensure that the LEADER approach as a whole is delivered going forward, not just any grant scheme element.

Recommendation 5: Options for increasing the role of the FLAG members and the organisations that they represent within the Animation process should be explored, but in the context of ensuring that the limited resources available are utilised as effectively as possible. There should also be close co-operation with the Animation activities that will be ongoing in Pembrokeshire as part of the delivery of the RDP programme.

Administration

The evaluation has found that the Lead Body was undertaking its role effectively. This positive feedback was despite the fact that very limited funds were available to deliver the role (£6,400 per annum). A number of references were made during interviews with stakeholders to the experience of the European Unit of Pembrokeshire County Council of undertaking such a role and the ability to draw upon the experience and knowledge within that team and, effectively, borrow resources from elsewhere when required. Programme regulations stipulate that no more than 10% of the total budget can be allocated to the Lead Body. There was therefore limited flexibility on this matter. The challenges of delivering the role on such a limited budget do however need to be recognised.

This was partly due to the fact that the role was being undertaken on a part time basis by staff within the European Unit of the Local Authority. Programme regulations stipulate that no more than 10% of the total budget can be allocated to the Lead Body, which has also caused challenges to the team undertaking the Lead Body role. There is limited flexibility in this matter and this is an issue which needs to be acknowledged. Despite this, the European Unit undertaking the Lead Body role was also a considerable strength as it meant it was possible for the FLAG to draw upon the experience and knowledge within that team and, effectively, borrow resources from elsewhere when required.

Negative views were expressed about the role of the Welsh Government and in particular the changes introduced to the administration of the Small Scale Grants Scheme in January 2015. The delegation for the administration of that scheme by the FLAG / Lead Bodies was withdrawn at that time and this was widely considered to have had a detrimental impact on the delivery of the scheme. This needs to be acknowledged, although the challenges that the Welsh Government have faced in terms of the administration of Axis 4 of the EFF also need to be taken into account. Most notably, there have been limitations to extent to which they were able to be flexible in their administration of Axis 4 due to the way in which the programme was set-up and being managed. The lessons that have been learnt need to be taken forward into the next programme period.

Outcomes

One of the key outcomes of the Axis 4 programme is that a FLAG has been established in Pembrokeshire for the first time. This is an important achievement and provides a foundation upon which the delivery of activity during the next programme period can be built.

In terms of the grants that have been funded, the limited evidence available to the evaluation to assess what has been achieved needs to be noted. In particular, there was very little monitoring data that could be assessed and much of the activity has only recently been completed when the fieldwork for the evaluation was undertaken. Where there was monitoring data collected, it was provided by the grant recipients to the Welsh Government, with very little information the being passed on to the FLAGs, despite being requested.

Consideration needs to be given to addressing this for the next programme period. However, given the scale of the funding being invested via this programme, we would not be overly critical of the limited monitoring data that has been collected.

Recommendation 6: More monitoring data should be collected for activities undertaken or funded as part of any future FLAG programme. Care should however be taken when developing the progress to be used with a view to minimising bureaucracy and ensuring that it is appropriate to the scale of the interventions being funded.

For the purposes of the evaluation, the actions that have been funded / grants awarded have been grouped into eight types of activities with the largest group, both in financial terms and the number of grants awarded, being the purchase of equipment and/or facilities for fishermen (£107,100). The potential impact is also clearest (and most direct) for this group; equipment or facilities have been upgraded and this has (or will) have a direct impact on the way in which the businesses in question are operating.

In other instances the impact of the grant on the fisheries sector is going to be less direct and more long-term, with further work also being required before the intended outcome is achieved. This should not be interpreted as a criticism of those activities. Such activities are in fact very common where the LEADER approach is being employed. However, the risk that the anticipated outcome will not be achieved needs to be acknowledged. For example, research is only useful if the findings are subsequently used in some way. If the findings are not used, the investment in that research has effectively been largely wasted. The same is true for the investment that has been made in the new website which includes provision for fishermen to develop their own sites. If fishermen do not take up that opportunity, the original project funded by the FLAG will not achieve one of its main objectives – to introduce a new method for fishermen to advertise and sell their produce.

This issue is central to the previous recommendation that there should be a greater focus in the next programme period to the delivery of a strategy (as opposed to individual projects). This would involve developing and funding a set of mutually supportive and interlinked actions which seek to comprehensively tackle the issues to hand and are not dependent on follow-up activities which may, or may not take place.

Recommendation 7: The focus of future FLAG activity should be on the delivery and/or funding of a set of interlinked and mutually supportive activities that deliver a strategy, rather than funding stand-alone projects or actions.

Turning our attention back to the LDS, the actions that have been funded clearly fit within the LDS and cover each aspect of the strategy. The scale of the intervention is however very small which means that none of the objectives will have been anywhere near achieved by during the current programme period.

The fact that the LDS sets out a very broad strategy, prepared when the resources that would be available to the FLAG to deliver the strategy was unclear, also needs to be taken into account. This is important as it highlights a weakness in the process; FLAGs were effectively asked to prepare a strategy that they had no prospect of delivering. This undermines the requirement to develop that strategy. The objective for a FLAG should be to deliver a strategy, not to deliver projects that fit with a strategy. A more effective approach would, we would argue, be to focus on developing a strategy which it was reasonable to deliver with an awareness of the timescale and the resources available.

