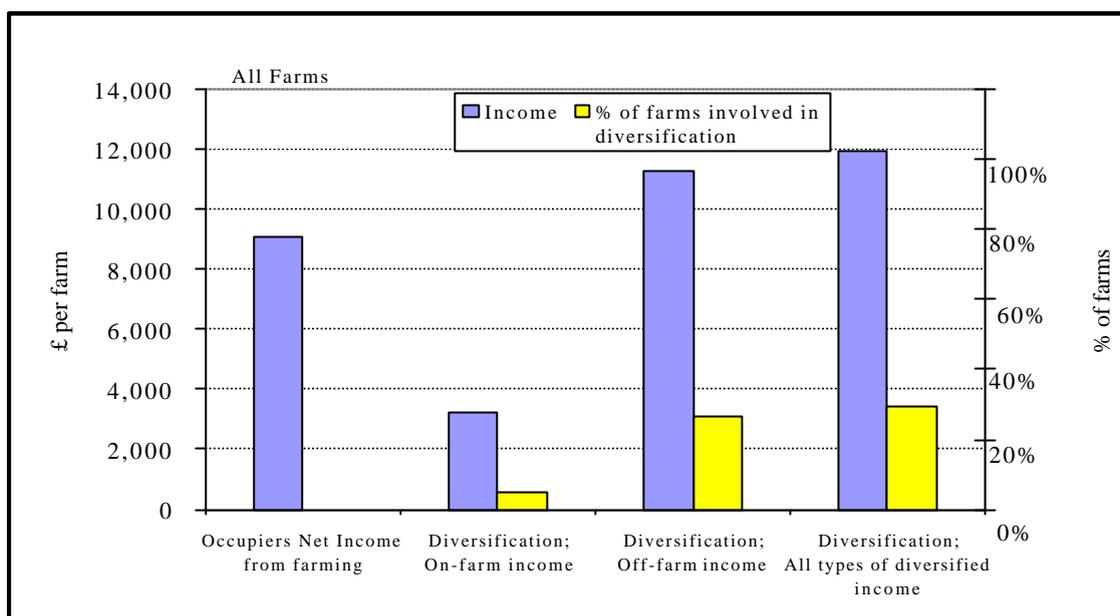# DATA ON THE SITUATION IN RURAL ENGLAND

Figure 1: Non Farming Income in England, 1999/2000

Source: MAFF, Farm Business Survey; income from investments, pensions and social payments are not included

Note: diversification in income relates only to those farms with such income

Table 1: Age Structure of Rural Population

England 1998

Age Description	Male (millions)	%	Female (millions)	%	Persons (millions)	%
under 15 years	4.9	19.9	4.6	18.4	9.5	19.2
15 - 24 years	3.0	12.5	2.9	11.6	5.9	12
25 - 44 years	7.6	31.1	7.3	29.1	14.9	30.1
45-64 years	5.7	23.3	5.7	22.8	11.4	23
65 and over	3.2	13.2	4.6	18.2	7.8	15.7
all ages	**24.4**	**100**	**25.1**	**100**	**49.5**	**100**

Rural 1998

Age Description	Male (millions)	%	Female (millions)	%	Persons (millions)	%
under 15 years	1.2	19.2	1.1	17.5	2.3	18.3
15 - 24 years	0.7	11.2	0.6	10	1.3	10.6
25 - 44 years	1.7	28.9	1.7	27.3	3.4	28.1
45-64 years	1.5	25.6	1.6	24.8	3.1	25.2
65 and over	0.9	15.3	1.3	20.4	2.2	17.9
all ages	**6.0**	**100**	**6.3**	**100**	**12.3**	**100**

Source: The State of the Countryside 2000, Countryside Agency

Table 2: Area of Natura 2000 sites in England: Breakdown by Broad Habitat Type[1]

	Special Areas of Conservation[2] (SACs) (ha)				Special Protection Areas[2] (SPAs) (ha)			
Habitat Type	England	England & Scotland[3]	England & Wales[3]	Total (ha)	England	England & Scotland[3]	England & Wales[3]	Total (ha)
Fen type habitats	48,404	2,542	731	51,677	44,834	0	0	44,834
Heath and scrub	55,877	0	18	55,895	72,838	0	0	72,838
Semi-natural grassland	72,111	0	189	72,300	63,500	0	0	63,500
Improved grassland	2,297	378	272	2,947	8,221	0	247	8,468
Other arable land	52	0	0	52	5,428	0	0	5,428
Woodland	31,394	0	1,183	32,577	21,711	0	0	21,711
Total area (ha)	**210,135**	**2,920**	**2,393**	**215,448**	**216,532**	**0**	**247**	**216,779**

Source: English Nature
[1] Does not include marine, coastal or inland water areas
[2] SACs as at June 1999 and SPAs as at June 2000
[3] Cross border sites

Table 3: Number and extent of landscape features in rural England[1]

Landscape feature	**Number/kms**	**Percent national total**
Hedges	444,000	n/a
Dry stone walls	75,000	n/a
Earth banks	31,000	n/a
Lowland ponds	200,000	n/a
Archaeological monuments	194,000	59
Listed buildings	125,000	25

[1] Data from a variety of sources – table shows situation as recorded at end 1999.

Table 4: Outcome of Monuments at Risk Survey[1]

Of a total of 1 million recorded monuments[2], some 2% are at high risk from serious damage or destruction over the next few years, and a further 285 are at medium risk of such damage and require careful monitoring
30% of monuments are under threat from agriculture, the majority (27%) from arable cultivation, one of the activities most destructive of certain categories of monument and least controlled by current protective measures or legislation (foresty is also a continuing threat to monuments and their settings)
Linear monuments have least incidence of high risk (1%) whilst field systems and standing buildings have the highest (2.4% and 2.7% respectively).
Field systems are at most risk from arable management regimes, but at lowest risk (29%) where pasture and semi-natural land use predominates.

Source document: Countryside Agency, The state of the countryside 2000
[1] The Monuments at Risk Survey (MARS) provides a baseline picture of the condition of England's archaeological resource, the threats to it, and benchmarks against which future changes can be monitored.
[2] As entered in the 'National Sites and Monuments Record at January 2000

ANNEX 2

EX ANTE EVALUATION CHECKLISTS FOR THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME AND REGIONAL APPENDICES

National Checklist

Introduction

1. In recognition of the "bottom-up" character of LEADER+, the overarching national Programme document has drawn on and reflected the themes emerging from each of the eight regional appendices. In our view, this approach was not only commendable in intent but was also effective in informing the Programme document.

2. The comments below relate to the different themes within the national checklist. They are made in relation to the fourth draft Programme document but also provide an indication of both the extent of the progress that has been made and the manner in which this has been achieved.

Themes from the National Checklist

A) Description of the context: Strengths, weaknesses and potential of the area in which the Programme is to apply

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A1. Has there been an incisive, thorough and robust analysis of the national social, environmental and economic situation using quantified data and addressing, *inter alia:*
- rural economy
- demography
- human resources, employment and labour market
- small and medium-sized enterprises
- competitiveness and innovation
- poverty and deprivation
- environmental issues and concerns

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3. In seeking to describe the situation within which the LEADER+ will operate, the Programme document has drawn on two main sources:

- a series of national documents produced over the last year or so in the context of growing concerns about the severity of economic and other challenges facing rural areas. These sources are listed in paragraph 2.1 of the fourth Programme draft and include, *inter alia,* the

Countryside Agency's "*The State of the Countryside 2000*", the PIU's 1999 report entitled "*Rural Economies*", the Cabinet Office (2000) report "*Sharing the Nation's Prosperity*" and the "*England Rural Development Programme*" (approved September 2000); and

- the regional assessments of the economic, social and environmental challenges facing particular rural areas and reported in the regional appendices.

4.   The national analysis is divided into three sections – economic, social and environmental – and in turn, each of these considers strengths and weaknesses, and potential.   The sub-themes listed above are grouped within the main headings. One consequence is that they receive somewhat uneven coverage. For example, greater attention is devoted to "demography and labour market" than issues of "competitiveness and innovation" in rural areas.   However, the arguments are made succinctly and the reader is referred to alternative sources for further information.

5.   In the analysis of strengths, weaknesses and potential, the Programme document acknowledges the mainstream rural development needs (many of which are explained and analysed in detail within the documents listed above). But rather than simply rehearsing these arguments *in toto,* it has worked hard to demonstrate the nature and type of more local strengths, weaknesses and potential; it is in this domain that LEADER+ (as opposed to the mainstream Programmes) has a distinctive and important role to play.

6.   As a summary overview document, this approach has great advantages; apart from anything else, it has resulted in an analysis that is interesting to read and highly accessible *and therefore likely to be used by LAG applicants and others*. On balance we think the approach works well. However it could be seen by some as being insufficiently developed in the following respects:

- the use of quantified data is quite limited within the main body of the Programme document. However, at a national level, this information can be found within the source material and the latter is well referenced within the Programme document; and

- references to regional examples (drawn from the Regional Appendices) in the analysis section now demonstrate the nature of regional and sub-regional difference. The rather uneven coverage in terms of regional examples is largely a function of data availability; it should not be misconstrued as an implicit comment on the strength of comparative regional needs.

A2. Has there been an assessment of the situation relating to equal opportunities (e.g. age, gender, race and disability) with regard to access to labour and other markets?

7.   Equal opportunities has not been assessed explicitly within the national Programme document. However, a discussion of the surrounding issues has been woven into the analytical sections.   The principal context in which the implications of equal opportunities issues arise is in the identification of target groups. This is an area in which the national Programme has largely drawn on the outcome of regional analyses and consultations.

A3. Arising from 1 and 2 (above), has there been an assessment of the relative importance of the disparities and threats that need to be addressed:

(a) through a review of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
• that is incisive and as far as possible quantitative?
• that makes appropriate connections between environmental, economic and social concerns?
• that is forward-looking?
• that acknowledges and responds to the fact of inter-regional and sub-regional difference?

(b) through an assessment of the economic, social and environmental drivers of change
• that (a) recognises the range of inter-connections (some positive, some negative) between the economic, social and environmental drivers and (b) highlights their implications?
• that is meaningful and relevant within the specific geographical context?

8.   The analytical section of the Programme document draws out the relative importance of the different disparities and threats. In response to some of the bullet points listed in Checklist A3:

• as mentioned above, the analytical section is not – in the main – strongly quantitative, but source material is well referenced;

• the level of interconnectedness between the environmental, economic and social domains is asserted and illustrated in para 2:10; the implications of this assertion are implicit throughout the analysis that follows;

• constructing a forward-looking analysis on the basis of data and information that are invariably retrospective is intrinsically different. However in our view, MAFF has done a good job in this regard. The assessment of potential is generally robust and efforts

have been made to think through "potential" in ways that are relevant in the context of LEADER+. Moreover the early assessment of "change and key influences for change" provides a forward-looking context for the analytical section that follows;

- the analysis provides a very good overview of some of the key issues facing rural areas. A reading of the regional appendices – on which the Programme document draws extensively – provides an indication of region-level contrasts.

A4. In coming to an understanding of strengths, weaknesses and potential, what lessons have been drawn from previous LEADER Programmes (where applicable) and other similar community-led and/or local area-based initiatives for rural regeneration?

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9.   The lessons learned from previous LEADER and other community-led Programmes are summarised very succinctly in the document and they identify – in an incisive manner - the core issues and challenges that initiatives of this type have faced. Moreover, in preparing the LEADER+ Programme, MAFF – in consultation with others – has worked hard to try and address these concerns.

B) Assessment of the relevance and consistency of the initiative's Programme

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B1.   How consistent are the Programme-specific objectives with the particular features and needs of the relevant areas?

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10.   As currently stated, there are a number of "core objectives" for LEADER+ in England. Beyond this, there are a series of national purposes, themes and regional objectives for Action 1. These in turn have direct implications for Actions 2 and 3, although each of these latter Actions in addition has its own specific objectives/purposes.

11.   The core objectives have been developed in response to both the Commission's ambitions for LEADER+ and the wider rural development objectives for England, as set out in the ERDP. They are – at this level – very generally stated and they are consistent with the needs of rural areas.

12.   The specific objectives (grouped within themes) for Actions 1 and 2 are imported from the regional appendices and are grounded in the regional assessments of rural areas' strengths, weaknesses and potential. Purposes/objectives for Action 3 are closer to the specific requirements of the Commission.

13.   The Programme document provides a succinct and incisive analysis of the range and severity of issues facing rural England, draws on the evidence from the

regional appendices, and gives examples that demonstrate the kind and degree of local differentiation that can occur within a region or sub-region. However, such is the nature of the local differences and their masking by available statistics that it inevitably proved difficult within the Programme document to be definitive about the rationale for LEADER+ based on a comprehensive analysis of local conditions. However, the final document was able to show (a) that local problems are significantly different and severe from those at regional or sub-regional level, (b) that they require the gap-filling and value-adding potential offered by LEADER+, and (c) that the procedures and criteria by which LAG development plans will be assessed reflect these local differences and opportunities.

B2. In the national context, how consistent are the Programme-specific objectives with the two objectives of LEADER+ which are to:

(i) promote integrated and sustainable rural development (e.g. by enhancing the natural and cultural heritage, reinforcing the economy in order to encourage job creation, etc.)

(ii) encourage actors to develop the inner potential and dynamism of rural areas:

  (a) will LEADER+ improve the organisational abilities of the community?
  (b) will LEADER+ become a laboratory to encourage the emergence and testing of new approaches?
  (c) will LEADER+ encourage co-operation and networking, etc.?

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14. As stated above, the Programme specific objectives are consistent with the wider objectives of LEADER+. Whether these objectives are in fact achieved will depend in large part on the processes through which LEADER+ is implemented and in particular, on the mechanisms through which local action groups are selected. In this context, we suspect that the LEADER+ Programme will have most difficulty achieving its objectives vis-à-vis the need to "become a laboratory to encourage the emergence and testing of new approaches". A requirement for innovation is inevitably difficult to effect and this is an area of the Programme that will need to be monitored closely.

B3. Does the national Programme follow a logical argument in moving from the analysis of the current situation to the specification of objectives and themes? Does the Programme contain within it recognisable and clear logic-chains (overall objectives translating into specific objectives and then operational objectives)?

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15. As stated above, the case for LEADER+ as a local and innovative approach to rural development is one that can only be generally established on

the basis of the available statistical (and other) evidence and conventional assessments of strengths, weaknesses and potential. The logic chains for the Programme are currently strongest vis-à-vis Action 1 where the regional appendices present an analysis of strengths, weaknesses and potential and from this derive rural development objectives for LEADER+. However, even here it is acknowledged that demonstration and verification of the logic chains must be an integral part of the assessment of the development plans from the local action groups rather than something that can be fully established *ex ante*.

B4. Has the fit between the LEADER+ proposals and the other programmes been assessed in terms of synergies, complementarities and overlaps, etc.?

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16. The issue of synergies, complementarities and overlaps vis-à-vis other programmes has been assessed in both the regional appendices and the national Programme. In this context, the Programme document identifies a specific niche for LEADER+ in terms of its local and innovative focus.

B5. Has the likely impact of the Programme been assessed vis-à-vis (a) the objectives of the Programme and (b) vis-à-vis the initial conditions that the Programme is seeking to address (A1, A2 and A3)?

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17. Within the body of the national Programme, whilst the likely difficulties of disentangling cause/effect relationships in terms of impact are acknowledged, there is a clear commitment to consider the impact of the Programme in the four areas which map directly onto the core objectives for LEADER+. Thus the *primary* emphasis is on considering impact vis-à-vis the "objectives of the Programme".

18. The treatment of impact is quite a generalised one and we suggest that, given the rationale of the LEADER+ Programme and the limitations identified above on giving its scope precise specification, this must be entirely appropriate at this stage. We think the Programme document's commitment to innovative approaches to impact specification and monitoring and evaluation should be welcomed: innovative forms of monitoring must go hand-in-hand with the encouragement of innovative approaches to rural development.

B6. Have the full range of relevant and interested bodies and organisations been consulted and engaged effectively in the development of the Programme? To what extent have their views been taken on board?

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19. An extensive consultation process has surrounded the development of the LEADER+ Programme at both regional and national levels. Moreover, through the mechanism of the National and Regional Steering Groups, a wide range of interested bodies and organisations have had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Programme, both formally and informally. In our view, the

consultation processes have been carried out satisfactorily and the views of consultees have been taken on board.

20.   If there is one concern in this domain, it is the observation that consultation processes have – on occasion – yielded a comparatively small number of responses. The point was made that for many consultees, LEADER+ has followed a number of other MAFF consultations over the last year and there may be some signs of "consultation fatigue".

> B7. How has the fit between the national level, regional levels and local action groups, etc. been defined and rendered effective, transparent and appropriate in terms of the aims and objectives of LEADER+?

21.   The Programme document provides a clear statement of the respective roles of regional and national tiers in the selection process and in Programme monitoring. In promoting and implementing the Programme, it may be helpful to present this information in summary form.

C) Prior appraisal of implementing arrangements

> C1. Has it been adequately demonstrated that the proposed resource allocation will lead to the achievement of the proposed objectives?

22.   Financial tables have been prepared in Section 6 of the national Programme and they relate to Actions 1, 2 and 3 as well as to the "fourth priority". The funding profiles for Action 3 and the fourth priority are based on expected actual costs and – as far as we can tell – these seem to be consistent with the relevant objectives.

23.   For Actions 1 and 2 however, the financial tables are at this stage much more of a "best guess", not least because they have been derived in advance of the local action groups' development strategies. However given that the budgets associated with Action 3 and the fourth priority are treated as a fixed cost, the key issue seems to be the allocation of funds between Actions 1 and 2. On the basis of the information available to us, this seems to be broadly reasonable and consistent with the objectives of the Programme.

> C2. Have selection criteria, procedures, timing, arrangements for financing been specified in ways that are appropriate in the light of the strategy that is proposed for LEADER+? Have the national arrangements been designed to reflect the outputs of the regional chapters?

24.   A great deal of effort has gone into the development of selection criteria and procedures that are both transparent and fully consistent with the strategy proposed for LEADER+. For instance, the notion of calling for Expressions of Interest is itself an innovative response to the challenges and opportunities of

LEADER+ and this could prove to be especially beneficial for groups with no previous experience of the LEADER Programme. Beyond this, the proposal to have both regional and national assessments is useful in terms of ensuring that regional objectives are reflected in the selection process while still ensuring national consistency. In this manner, the regions will retain a clear "stake" in the process; in the context of a national Programme that could have left them disenfranchised, this is an important initiative.

25. Within the LEADER+ Programme, there is a very full list of specific selection criteria. Given that we have noted earlier the difficulty of specifying the rationale and scope of the Programme from an *ex ante* point of view, we think it entirely appropriate that such care and thought should have been given to the selection criteria. In promoting and implementing the Programme, it may be desirable to present the criteria in summary form and put in place procedures to explain them and to provide some indication the relative importance of different criteria.

C3. Have appropriate mechanisms been put in place that will, as far as possible, involve the full range of rural actors, within the Programme? Have actions/mechanisms been designed to encourage the formation of new local action groups and the involvement of areas that were not eligible for LEADER I or II?

26. A series of largely informal mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that new local action groups and groups from areas new to LEADER are encouraged to engage in the Programme. Each of the regions has developed a publicity strategy and, from our work with the regions, we are aware that Regional Steering Groups have been in informal discussions with would-be applicants. Beyond this – as stated above – the inclusion of an Expression of Interest process should be helpful in terms of "leveling the playing field" on which new groups will have to compete.

C4. Have mechanisms been designed to bring about co-operation between territories - intra-/inter-regional, national and international?

27. Inter-territorial co-operation and networking are the primary objectives of Actions 2 and 3 within the LEADER+ Programme and in this context, they have been afforded some importance, not least because specific budgets have been attached to these activities. In addition – and importantly – commitments to both networking (Action 3) and to co-operation (Action 2) feature prominently within the specified selection criteria for LAG applications.

C5. Have mechanisms been put in place to ensure that the output of LEADER+ (in terms of both projects and processes) are - as far as possible - transferable?

28.   Again, the "extent to which the approaches and methods proposed in the strategy are transferable" comprises one of the selection criteria for the assessment of local action groups' development plans. Beyond this, effecting transferability and the dissemination of good and innovative practice will be a primary objective for the LEADER+ network.

> C6. Has adequate consideration been given to the way in which the local action groups will be assisted in drawing up appropriate development strategies?

29.   As explained above, a good deal of consideration has gone into clearing the ground for all local action groups – both new and established – such that they are in a position to draw up their development strategies. However, given the competitive nature of the bidding process and the need for bottom-up and innovative strategies, it is important and appropriate that local area strategy development remains a local issue.

> C7. Have procedures been considered that will encourage the local action groups to respond appropriately to some of the wider aims of LEADER+:
> - use of new know-how and technologies
> - improving the quality of life in rural areas
> - adding value to local products
> - making best use of natural and cultural resources
> - addressing the needs of women and young people

30.   These issues have been addressed in the first instance through the development of appropriate selection criteria and procedures. Beyond this, the network will have a role in ensuring that these principles are "live" and visible throughout the operation of the LEADER+ Programme.

> C8.   Has the organisation of the LEADER+ network been adequately considered? Is there a proposal in place to develop an appropriate structure? How will this be linked into the European Observatory?

31.   Issues relating to the LEADER+ network are considered in some depth in the national Programme and there is a clear statement of the role of the network and the manner in which this should be organised. Moreover there is a stated intention to let a contract for the network by competitive tender such that the network is in place and operational by September 2001.

> C9. Have appropriate arrangements been put in place for evaluation, including the definition of indicators?
> - how will the three levels of LEADER+ infrastructure fit together in this regard?
> - how will this structure be made to work? What issues / challenges may need to be resolved?

32.   The Programme Complement will set out the indicators to be used in monitoring the England Programme. This must be submitted within three months of the Commission approving the LEADER+ Programme. It is, therefore, too early to comment on this part of the Programme.

33.   The national Programme provides a clear statement of the respective roles of the local action groups, the Regional Programme Monitoring Sub-Committee and the Programme Monitoring Committee (to be chaired by MAFF) in terms of Programme monitoring. Arguably, in the context of a relatively small Programme, this is potentially quite an elaborate structure: in implementation, care will have to be taken that it does not become overly cumbersome.

34.   In terms of evaluation, specific provision has been put in place for mid term and ex-post evaluations to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of Programme implementation. The mid-term evaluation will be completed by the end of 2003 and the ex-post evaluation will be conducted within three years of the end of the programming period. While recognising the potential contribution of both of these exercises, we would also endorse a commitment to on-going appraisal of the LEADER+ Programme, particularly if this can be effected through a commitment to the development of innovative and bottom-up forms of Programme monitoring as described above.

Synthesis Of The Regional Checklists

Introduction

1.   During the drafting process, the *ex ante* evaluators engaged with the drafting teams through attendance at early Regional Steering Group (RSG) meetings; informal meetings with the FRCA drafters and their RSG chairs; formal written responses to early drafts; informal (email) responses; and verbal feedback. The precise mix of these different elements varied from one region to the next and was driven by the region's progress and by its cycle of RSG – and other – meetings. In all cases, regions received a full formal and written response to the drafts of the appendices dated 21st July. These responses were followed by at least one further formal meeting with the relevant *ex ante* evaluator and a continuing dialogue thereafter. In addition, both our interim report (August, 2000) and our draft final report (October, 2000) provided comments on the progress of the regional appendices.

2.   Regional drafters and RSG chairs have gone out of their way to co-operate with the *ex ante* process and to discuss progress in an open and frank manner with their nominated *ex ante* evaluation consultant. In this context, we are very grateful for the assistance that we have received.

3.   In the paragraphs that follow, we reflect on the progress that has been made with respect to the regional appendices and we contrast the current situation with that at the time we submitted our interim report (August, 2000). We revisit some of the comments that we made at that stage, reflecting on the principal checklist themes. As with the interim and draft final reports, we are not seeking to identify "good" or "bad" appendices: all have strengths and weaknesses and all have made progress since our earlier reports were submitted.

Themes from the Regional Checklist

A) Description of the context: Strengths, weaknesses and potential of the area in which the Programme is to apply

---

1. Has there been an incisive, thorough and robust analysis of the area's social, environmental and economic situation using quantified data and addressing, *inter alia:*

- rural economy
- demography
- human resources, employment and labour market
- small and medium-sized enterprises
- competitiveness and innovation
- poverty and deprivation
- environmental issues and concerns

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4.   All of the regional appendices have assessed the strengths, weaknesses and potential that exists across the Programme area. In reporting it, most – but not all – of the regions opted to follow the guidelines provided by Rural Division and at the interim report stage there was broad consistency in approach. This was helpful in drawing together the national analysis (indeed, as discussed against the National Checklist, one of its strengths is the degree to which it reflects on themes from the regional appendices). At about the interim report stage, it was decided that within certain parameters, regions could opt for the structure that best met their own needs.

5.   At the interim report stage, the regional appendices varied in terms of their analytical rigour. Over the last few weeks there has been some (but not total) convergence. All of the regional appendices now provide a clear indication of both the specific issues that face rural areas within the relevant region and the context within which the LEADER+ Programme will operate.

6.   In this overall context, the concerns we raised in our interim report related principally to the level of analytical rigour. Below we rehearse these concerns and then comment on the progress that seems to have been made subsequently.

Comment made in the interim report	Subsequent progress and current assessment
"statements are sometimes made with little or no supporting evidence and some of the assertions are so general in character that they could apply to almost anywhere. In developing the appendices further, the regional drafting teams will need to draw in more quantitative data and they will need to "ground" these statements in the specific context of their particular region. They will also need to cite references more fully and consistently"	The regional drafters have made an attempt to address these concerns and progress has been made. However there is currently a data deficit relating to rural issues at a local level: a problem that exists far more generally than in the drafting of this Programme. For the most part, references have now been cited
"where data are quoted, there needs to be some indication of how they should be interpreted and why. For instance, the statement that "in 1999, X% of farmers had other part time jobs" would be more valuable if it was benchmarked, either against the same observation made in (say) 1990 or against the current situation in other regions"	Some progress has been made on this front, although with more time, it could have been taken further
"the relevant chapter of the ERDP has – inevitably – been the principal reference point for many of the appendices. But in terms of the analysis of strengths, weaknesses and potential, this brings with it certain dangers…"	In most cases, as more work has been done on the appendices, the "read across" from the ERDP has diminished. More analysis and interpretation that is relevant to LEADER+ has been introduced and this has strengthened the appendices
"consideration given to social and community issues – core themes within LEADER+ as a whole – is not as extensive as it probably should be"	This is an area on which the regional drafting teams have worked hard. In particular they have sought to draw in the expertise and knowledge of colleagues within the region. However as stated above, they were facing a difficult task because of current data limitations

Comment made in the interim report	Subsequent progress and current assessment
"across the appendices, there is some inconsistency in the manner in which "potential" is interpreted. Although this should be as specific to the region as possible, it should not – in this context – start to propose specific projects. Instead it should start to inform the vision as to what could be achieved"	Drafts have been revised to consider "potential" in a more rounded sense.
"across most of the regional appendices, it is currently unclear what the main storyline is with regard to rural development issues. Some of the regions have sought to flag the two or three key "headlines" in a short introductory section and this has generally worked well by providing the context for the detail that follows"	In response to a specific suggestion from Rural Division (following the interim report), most of the regions have now addressed this issue. The appendices have been strengthened as a result.

2. Has there been an assessment of the situation relating to equal opportunities (e.g. age, gender, race and disability) with regard to access to labour and other markets?

7.   The issue of equal opportunities has been approached in different ways. It is a theme that has permeated different sections of the analysis of strengths, weaknesses and potential (principally demography, labour market and social exclusion). The issue of equal opportunities has also been implicit within discussions of target groups.

8.   Progress has been made since the interim report stage in terms of justifying the choice of target groups. In some cases, there is still reliance on the consultation process itself as the *justification* for the choices that have been made. That said, the fact that many regions have gone through a process of trying to reduce the number of target groups has in itself provided an important discipline and incentive for re-appraisal.

9.   Across the appendices, issues relating to age and gender have been addressed more fully than other elements of the equal opportunities equation. In part this has been driven by data availability, but through the RSG meetings and other forms of consultation, issues relating to age (both young people and the elderly) and gender have consistently emerged as primary rural concerns at a regional level.

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3. Arising from 1 and 2 (above), has there been an assessment of the *relative importance* of the disparities and threats that need to be addressed :

(a) through a review of *strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats*
- that is incisive and as far as possible quantitative?
- that makes appropriate connections between environmental, economic and social concerns?
- that is forward-looking?
- that acknowledges and responds to the fact of sub-regional difference?

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10.   Since we submitted our interim report, there has been progress with regard to assessment of the *relative importance* of different disparities and threats. This analysis has been largely qualitative in character and in this domain, some of the Regional Steering Groups have played an important role.

11.   With regard to the sub-questions listed above:

- the appendices vary in the extent to which they have drawn on quantitative data. But in most cases, the data that are available have been made to "work harder" since the interim report stage;

- it remains the case that not all of the appendices have explicitly drawn connections between environmental, economic and social concerns. However – as reported in August – the structure of the analysis has meant that links between the economic and social dimensions occur implicitly throughout the discussion;

- overall, the regional drafters have struggled to ensure that the analyses are genuinely forward looking. However progress has been made since the interim report stage as drafters have sought to tease out the implications of current strengths and weaknesses; and

- in the context of data limitations, the analysis of s*ub-regional difference* has proved to be quite a challenge. In this context, some of the regional appendices have drawn effectively on discussions within RSG meetings and illustrative local issues have also been flagged. Although qualitative in character, these have provided some useful insights which are very relevant in the context of LEADER+.

3 (b) through an assessment of the economic, social and environmental *drivers of change*

- that (a) recognises the range of inter-connections (some positive, some negative) between the economic, social and environmental drivers and (b) highlights their implications?
- that is meaningful and relevant within the specific geographical context?

12.   Since the interim report stage, progress has been made in teasing out the *drivers of change* across many of the appendices. As stated in our interim report, this is an important component of the appendix, for it joins the analysis (which inevitably, in part, is retrospective) and the strategy, and thus contributes significantly to the overall logic chain.

4. In coming to an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and potential of the region, what lessons have been drawn from previous LEADER Programmes (where applicable) and other similar community-led and/or local area-based initiatives for rural regeneration?

13.   Over the summer months, Rural Division advised the regions to remove the sections entitled "Issues arising from earlier schemes" from their appendices: the view was taken (in discussion with the drafters) that the lessons learned were really quite similar from one region to the next and were best dealt with centrally.

14.   It is however important to note that the regional teams have sought to reflect on past experience when drafting their appendices. For instance, during the drafting process, several drafters have sought to meet with those individuals that have been concerned with running LEADER Programmes in the past, whether from their own region or elsewhere.

B)   Assessment of the relevance and consistency of the initiative's Programme

1.   How consistent are the Programme-specific objectives with the particular features and needs of the relevant areas?

15.   Since the interim report, the drafters have worked hard to "fine tune" the regional objectives and to align them more closely with the Programme objectives of LEADER+ and the specific needs of their region (identified through the analysis of strengths, weaknesses and potential). In part, this has been achieved by developing a matrix showing the relationship between the regional objectives and the relevant LEADER+ themes. There is a broad consistency in approach and this has meant that the regional objectives have been able to inform the national Programme directly.

16.   Over the last few weeks, the regional drafters have also worked to ensure that the appendices are internally consistent with a clear logic chain running from the identification of needs to the specification of regional objectives. Overall, this logic chain has been tightened.

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2. In the regional context, how consistent are the Programme-specific objectives with the two objectives of LEADER+, which are to:

(i) promote integrated and sustainable rural development (e.g. by enhancing the natural and cultural heritage, reinforcing the economy in order to encourage job creation, etc.)

(ii) encourage actors to develop the inner potential and dynamism of rural areas:

  (a) will LEADER+ improve the organisational abilities of the community?
  (b) will LEADER+ become a laboratory to encourage the emergence and testing of new approaches?
  (c)   will LEADER+ encourage co-operation and networking, etc.?

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17.   As specified, the regional objectives should serve to *promote integrated and sustainable rural development*.

18.   However the extent to which the regional objectives will help to (a) *improve the organisational abilities of communities*; (b) *support the emergence and testing of new approaches* and (c) *encourage co-operation and networking*, is less certain. Our view is that none of the objectives as stated should preclude any of these Programme-specific objectives. However their attainment is likely to depend on the mechanisms that have been put in place to deliver LEADER+ (in particular, the selection process for local action groups). Arguably, these concerns have existed principally in the domain of the national Programme rather than the regional appendices.

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3. Does the Regional Appendix follow a logical argument in moving from the analysis of the current situation to the specification of regional-level Programme objectives and themes?

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19.   As argued above, regional objectives are generally consistent with regional needs, and attempts have been made to strengthen the logic chain since the interim report stage. In addition, more consideration has been given to the specific contributions that LEADER+ could make.

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4. Has the fit between the LEADER+ proposals and the other Programmes that are operational within the region been assessed in terms of synergies, complementarities and overlaps, etc.?

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20.   Since the interim report was submitted, the national Programme has developed significantly and in the process, a national statement was made regarding the distinctive role of LEADER in terms of its complementarity vis-à-vis other Programmes.   Most of the regional appendices provide a full and informative discussion of the mainstream rural Programmes that are operational within the region.

21.   Over the last few weeks, the regions have worked hard to consider the manner in which LEADER+ actually *fits* alongside all the other Programmes and there has been some assessment of *complementarities, gaps and overlaps*. Some regions have opted to use a matrix approach in considering the fit between different Programmes in the regional context and this exercise has arguably been a useful one.

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5. Have the full range of relevant and interested bodies and organisations been consulted and engaged effectively in the development of the Programme?   To what extent have their views been taken on board?

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22.   As stated in our interim report, for the most part – and despite the time pressures – the regions have engaged in an extensive consultative process and comments received in this manner seem to have been taken on board.   The consultation process has taken many different forms – some reflecting specific suggestions from Rural Division, others very much on the initiative of individual regions.

23.   In terms of the former and during the earlier stages of drafting, all of the regions considered the regional responses to the LEADER+ consultation document and many held seminars with regional players.   More recently, awareness raising and other events have been held.

24.   Throughout this process, the Regional Steering Groups have provided a constructive contribution and many of the drafters/chairs have used RSG meetings creatively and to great effect in developing the regional appendix. Partners have also had an important role to play, although in some cases, material promised by partners was slow coming forward and this was a frustration.

25.   Although not part of the Regional Steering Groups, several drafters have also sought to engage those with first hand experience of LEADER II in developing the regional appendices for LEADER+. As mentioned above, this has – in our view – been an important and useful exercise.

C) Prior appraisal of implementing arrangements

1. Has the region (a) considered selection criteria in the light of its own regional circumstances and (b) contributed to wider discussions about selection?

2. Are appropriate mechanisms in place in the context of involving rural actors from within the region, within the Programme?
What actions/mechanisms are in place to encourage the formation of new local action groups and the involvement of areas that were not eligible for LEADER I or II?

3. How will the local action groups within the region be encouraged to respond appropriately to the themes agreed regionally and nationally for LEADER+?

4. How will co-operation between territories - intra-/inter-regional, national and international - be encouraged?

5. What mechanisms are in place to ensure that the output of LEADER+ (in terms of both projects and processes) are - as far as possible - transferable?

26.   The National Steering Group (NSG) has taken lead responsibility in addressing these different issues. The regions have been able to provide comments on different drafts, etc. and – through the lead region (South West) – they have had an input into NSG debates.

27.   In the main, implementation issues are not addressed in the regional appendices. However all of the regions have developed publicity strategies and all are planning to take these forward. In addition, there have been *ad hoc* meetings with would-be local action groups to raise awareness and stimulate action. The regions have therefore responded to the need to raise awareness in advance of the programme's launch.

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ANNEX 3

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OTHER KEY RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND LINKS WITH LEADER+

Section A – Non-England Rural Development Programme Measures

1.   The key measures that contribute to rural development are set out below, but there are a wide range of other measures particularly at the regional or local level which may also be relevant, such as National Park land management agreements. Local action groups will need to be aware of these measures and where necessary take them into account when preparing their local action plans.

Title	Summary of areas linking into LEADER+	Region(s) where available
1. Objective 1	• environmental enhancement (with economic benefits) • tourism • community regeneration including; capacity building, business development skills and training • operates through partnerships	Merseyside, South Yorkshire, and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
2. Objective 2 and transitional areas	• community regeneration including; capacity building, support for business development skills and training • promoting sustainable economic development • operates through partnerships	Parts of all English regions; apart from the South East and London where only available in urban areas (see Map 1, England Rural Development Programme)
3. Objective 3	supports: • welfare reform; • active labour market measures for unemployed people • promoting social inclusion • lifelong learning • adaptability and entrepreneurship • promoting equal opportunities	Non-objective 1 areas in England

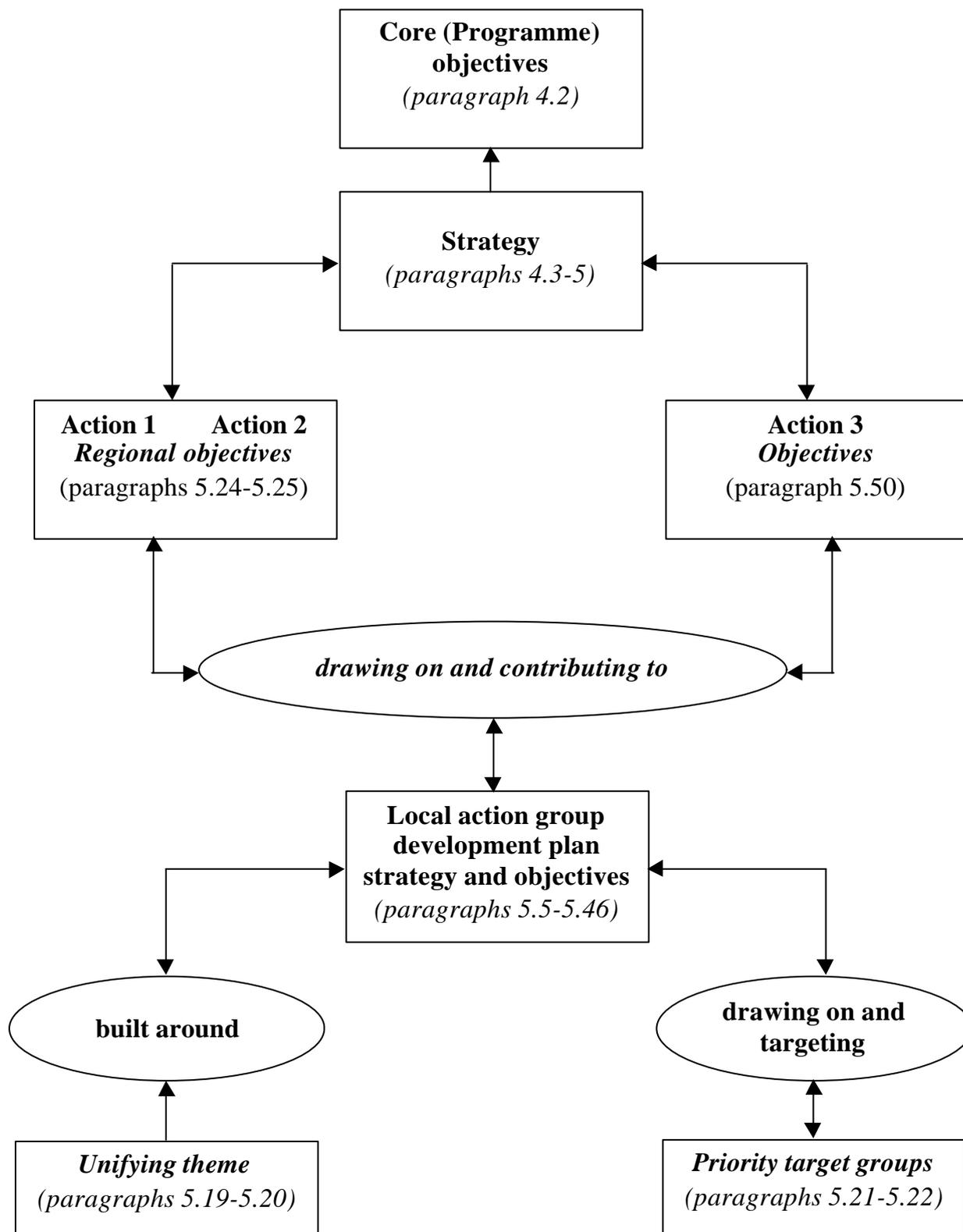| Title	Summary of areas linking into LEADER+	Region(s) where available
4. EQUAL	• thematic approach to test and promote new ways of dealing with discrimination and inequalities in the labour market • implemented by national, regional and local Development Partnerships • emphasis on transnational co-operation	England
5. INTERREG	• operates through cross border or transnational partnerships • some rural focus – in particular environmental, tourism, and cultural issues	Strand A: operates in parts of the South East (Kent and East Sussex) Strand B: whole of England
6. Regional Development Agency Rural Development Programmes	• supports a broad range of projects addressing economic, social and community regeneration in line with regional economic development strategies • targets people and communities experiencing deprivation and social exclusion • delivered through local partnerships	Rural Priority Areas in every English region which are defined by 10 key indicators of rural deprivation (due to be reviewed in 2004)
7. Regional Development Agency Redundant Buildings Grant Scheme	• safeguards/creates jobs by bringing back into productive use derelict rural buildings, thus reducing the need to develop green field sites	Rural Priority Areas. However, additional funds have been made available for farmers in all rural areas in England.
8. Regional Development Agency Single Regeneration Budget	• community involvement in addressing broad range of economic, social and community regeneration issues • targets people and communities experiencing deprivation and social exclusion • delivered through local partnerships	Areas of deprivation, including rural areas (nationally about 6% is targeted at rural areas)

Title	Summary of areas linking into LEADER+	Region(s) where available
9. Regional Development Agency Community Investment Fund	• supports capital projects by voluntary groups based in and involving local communities • provides and/or improves land and buildings in order to bring social and economic benefits at community level	England
10. Regional Development Agency land reclamation programme	• restores vacant and derelict land in local authority ownership or control for the benefit of the community • principally used to create public open space	England
11. Countryside Agency Schemes	Supports a range of activity including: • Sustainable land management initiatives • regional food initiatives • development of community greenspace • healthy walking projects • market town health checks • a range of community initiatives including village shops and pubs, village halls, village design statements and community capacity building. • rural transport initiatives • rural housing initiatives • local heritage projects	England generally but some schemes are targeted geographically or at specific groups.
12. English Nature Sites of Special Scientific Interest	• Supports management agreements to safeguard and manage land of high conservation value	Designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (with minor exceptions)

Title	Summary of areas linking into LEADER+	Region(s) where available
13. Rural White Paper Initiatives	A wide range of measures which support: • community development through improving basic village service provision, shared-use of community facilities, local transport schemes and community capacity building • market town regeneration and action on skills, and business support • improving local governance through support for parish councils and town and village plans	England generally, but some initiatives will be targeted geographically or at disadvantaged groups

Section B – England Rural Development Programme Measures

Title	Summary of areas linking into LEADER+	Region(s) where available
12. Energy crops	• supports investment in energy crops on agricultural holdings with economic and environmental benefits	England (but within Objective 1 areas delivered via Objective 1 SPDs where appropriate)
13. The vocational training scheme	• skills training for people in agriculture and forestry	England (but within Objective 1 areas delivered via Objective 1 SPDs where appropriate)
14. Hill farm allowance scheme	• supports sustainable farming in hill areas, maintaining employment and rural populations	Less favoured areas – in North East; North West; Yorkshire & Humber; East Midlands; West Midlands; South West (see map 3, England Rural Development Programme)
15. Agri-environment schemes: a) Countryside Stewardship Scheme	• sustains the beauty and diversity of landscapes, improves and extends wildlife habitats, and conserves archaeological and historic features	England
b) Environmentally Sensitive Areas	• maintains traditional farming practices in designated areas	parts only (22 designated areas)
c) Organic Farming Scheme	• supports conversion to organic production	
16. Processing and marketing grant scheme	• supports processing and marketing of products; new outlets; and collaborative marketing ventures	England (delivered via Objective 1 SPD in Objective 1 areas)

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Title	Summary of areas linking into LEADER+	Region(s) where available
17. Forestry schemes	• supports planting of new woodland and sustainable management of existing woodland.	England (on non-agricultural land in Objective 1 areas delivered via Objective 1 SPD)
18. Rural Enterprise Scheme	supports a range of measures: • setting-up farm relief and farm management services • marketing quality agricultural products • services for rural populations • renovation/development of villages and protection and conservation of rural heritage • agricultural diversification • agricultural water resources management • development of agriculture infrastructure • encouragement for tourist and craft activities • environmental protection	England (delivered via Objective 1 SPDs in Objective 1 areas, some aspects delivered through Objective 2 SPDs in Objective 2 areas)

ANNEX 4

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND LOCAL ACTION GROUP DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Core (Programme) objectives
(paragraph 4.2)

Strategy
(paragraphs 4.3-5)

Action 1   Action 2
Regional objectives
(paragraphs 5.24-5.25)

Action 3
Objectives
(paragraph 5.50)

drawing on and contributing to

Local action group development plan strategy and objectives
(paragraphs 5.5-5.46)

built around

drawing on and targeting

Unifying theme
(paragraphs 5.19-5.20)

Priority target groups
(paragraphs 5.21-5.22)

PRIORITY TARGET GROUPS FOR EACH REGION IN ENGLAND

Priority target group	East of England	East Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Women	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Young people	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The older population	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Unemployed and under-employed[1]	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Rural businesses and workers affected by rural restructuring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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[1] In the West Midlands region this group also incorporates people on low incomes.

ANNEX 6

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES FOR ACTIONS 1 AND 2

*Note: objectives are shown against the theme to which they are **primarily** relevant. However, some will be relevant to more than one theme.*

Theme 1 – the use of know-how and new technologies to make the products and services of rural areas more competitive:

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES	REGION
• to promote sustainable environmental land management practices which enhance landscape character and biodiversity	South East
• to promote and develop the use of information and communications technology to: a) address barriers to participation; and b) increase access for rural businesses and other rural users	South West; South East, East of England, East Midlands, West Midlands, North East
• to raise levels of investment in the community especially in relation to information and communications technology development	North West
• to support new technology and collaborative activity	East Midlands
• to develop a highly skilled and flexible rural workforce, able to utilise work opportunities.	Yorkshire & the Humber
• to increase the level of knowledge and understanding of the countryside and skills in environmental management.	East of England, West Midlands
• to develop business and marketing skills for rural businesses e.g. through local supply chains and development clusters	South East
• to develop locally relevant skills e.g. through education providers, business and the community	South East
• to promote the take-up of training, including through the use of partnerships, to improve standards and accessibility of business, technical and marketing skills	South West

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES	REGION
• to encourage existing businesses to diversify and attract new businesses into rural areas, and provide support for rural businesses locally	West Midlands
• to develop alternative uses for surplus rural resources	South East
• to encourage sustainable natural resource management including the use of renewable energy	South East
• to encourage new community based initiatives for shared or mobile services	East Midlands
• to develop and promote the use of community based renewable energy schemes	North East

Theme 2 – improving the quality of life in rural areas

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES	REGIONS
• to create a rural information resource base and develop integrated centres for rural community support and cohesiveness in market towns, larger rural settlements and at village level	South West
• to improve provision and use of multipurpose facilities within rural communities	South East
• to improve access to services and employment opportunities through the provision and use of multi-use facilities and community businesses	North East, East of England, West Midlands
• to develop access to rural infrastructure for residents and visitors to rural areas	Yorkshire & The Humber
• to increase provision and access to local services for people living and working in rural communities	South West, North West, West Midlands, South East
• to facilitate provision of a range of basic rural services	East Midlands
• to develop fair and equitable access to services and integrated transport for all in rural areas	Yorkshire & The Humber

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES	REGIONS
• to identify opportunities for improving rural transport	East Midlands
• to improve opportunities for young people and the socially excluded, particularly in relation to access to a range of job opportunities	North West
• to increase access to the labour markets for those groups identified as at risk from exclusion, to include those displaced from industry or currently on the margins of the labour market	South West
• to assist the integration of partnership working in addressing rural deprivation including collaboration amongst rural businesses	North West
• to develop and strengthen links between rural service centres and their hinterland	North West
• to improve links between market towns and surrounding areas to: a) increase job opportunities b) increase rural service provision	East of England, West Midlands
• to identify and map local needs at community level	South West
• to strengthen links between urban and rural communities	South West, West Midlands
• to create balanced, empowered, inclusive communities	Yorkshire & The Humber
• to develop leadership and facilitation skills in rural communities, thereby enabling them to identify their needs and develop appropriate solutions	North West
• to build capacity in rural areas in order to maintain their distinctiveness and quality	North East
• to encourage devolved decision making with community involvement more widely across the region	East Midlands

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES	REGIONS
• to develop needs-based training and education in rural areas, including support for countryside, traditional building and environmental skills	North West
• to encourage healthier lifestyles by promoting enjoyment of the local produce and environment	South East
• to encourage appreciation and enjoyment of the countryside	East Midlands
• to increase and improve access to the countryside and broaden the community's level of knowledge and understanding of it.	North West, West Midlands
• to enhance the natural environment in areas where human action has led to degradation of local natural assets	North East
• to increase local economic and environmental benefits from tourist and recreational activity	East of England

Theme 3 – adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES	REGIONS
• to develop new and existing produce, products and services which build on local distinctiveness and competitiveness	West Midlands
• to add value to primary produce	East Midlands
• to increase the processing and add value to products and services through collaborative activities with other supply and marketing networks	West Midlands
• to develop new products and services and increase the use of local material and produce	South East
• to increase the proportion of products sourced and processed locally and to improve local networking and distribution systems for the development of higher value markets	South West, North East, West Midlands, East of England

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES	REGIONS
• to identify regional products and promote them locally and elsewhere	East Midlands
• to enhance local distinctiveness and sense of place through measures including the improved development and marketing of local products and their links to the environment	North West
• to develop the supply chain for locally produced countryside products	North East
• to improve the marketing and competitiveness of countryside products and services	West Midlands, South West
• to improve the marketing of countryside products into urban areas and beyond	East Midlands
• to improve the marketing of added value products	East Midlands
• to create a stronger, more competitive, integrated regional economy, developing market and employment opportunities	Yorkshire & The Humber
• to develop business and marketing skills for rural businesses through local supply chains and development of clusters	East of England
• to encourage knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the countryside, recognising linkages of the environment and agriculture that benefit the environment, animal welfare, food safety and local provenance	South West
• to promote good practice in the development of new rural enterprise and improve information dissemination to providers and customers	South West
• to develop sustainable tourism which builds on local character and brings benefits to rural communities	South West

Theme 4 - making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites of Community interest selected under Natura 2000

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES	REGIONS
• to raise awareness and understanding of the value and importance of the region's natural environment and conservation assets.	North East
• to increase the level of knowledge and understanding of the countryside and skills in environmental management	South East
• to protect and enhance the local countryside and historic environment including the traditional landscape and cultural and architectural features	North West, West Midlands, East of England
• to conserve and enhance the character of the landscape and built environment	North East
• to promote positive environmental and sustainable land management practices which enhance landscape character, biodiversity and cultural heritage in the wider countryside	South West
• to use natural and cultural resources wisely, in order to develop and maintain a sustainable environment	Yorkshire & The Humber
• to increase the awareness of the region's environment, in order to conserve a high quality countryside	Yorkshire & The Humber
• to promote diversified rural land use that is in sympathy with the conservation of landscape character, biodiversity and historic features	South West
• to help retain and enhance traditional landscape features and characteristics	East Midlands
• to encourage sustainable natural resource management including the use of renewable energy	East of England, East Midlands, South East
• to develop and promote the innovative and alternative use of rural resources	West Midlands

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES	REGIONS
• to encourage sustainable tourism which increases local economic activity and has environmental benefits	West Midlands, North West
• to develop sustainable tourism which builds on local character and brings benefits to rural communities	South East
• to encourage communities to develop cultural/heritage festivals and events, particularly celebrating local distinctiveness	West Midlands

ANNEX 7

MEASURES UNDER THE LEADER+ PROGRAMME

ACTION 1	
Measure 1	Local action group administration costs
Measure 2	Local action group capacity building, training, skills development, publicity and promotion
Measure 3	Retrospective costs on 'acquisition of skills' for new local action groups
Measure 4	Theme 1 project costs. The use of know how and new technology to make the products and services of rural areas more competitive
Measure 5	Theme 2 project costs. Improving the quality of life in rural areas
Measure 6	Theme 3 project costs. Adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions
Measure 7	Theme 4 project costs. Making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites of Community interest selected under Natura 2000
ACTION 2	
Measure 8	Co-operation within the UK
Measure 9	Transnational co-operation
ACTION 3	
Measure 10	Network Costs
ACTION 4	
Measure 11	Programme management, monitoring and evaluation
Measure 12	Other actions deemed helpful by the Programme Monitoring Committee

ANNEX 8

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PROGRAMME MONITORING COMMITTEE

The LEADER+ Programme Monitoring Committee will comprise representatives from the following organisations:

DEFRA Rural Division (Chairman and secretariat)

Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions

Department for Work and Pensions

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Forestry Commission

Government Office lead region for LEADER+

A representative from each of the eight Regional Programme Monitoring Committees

A local action group representative (if none of the eight Regional Programme Monitoring Committee representatives are from a local action group an additional local action group representative will be nominated)

Countryside Agency

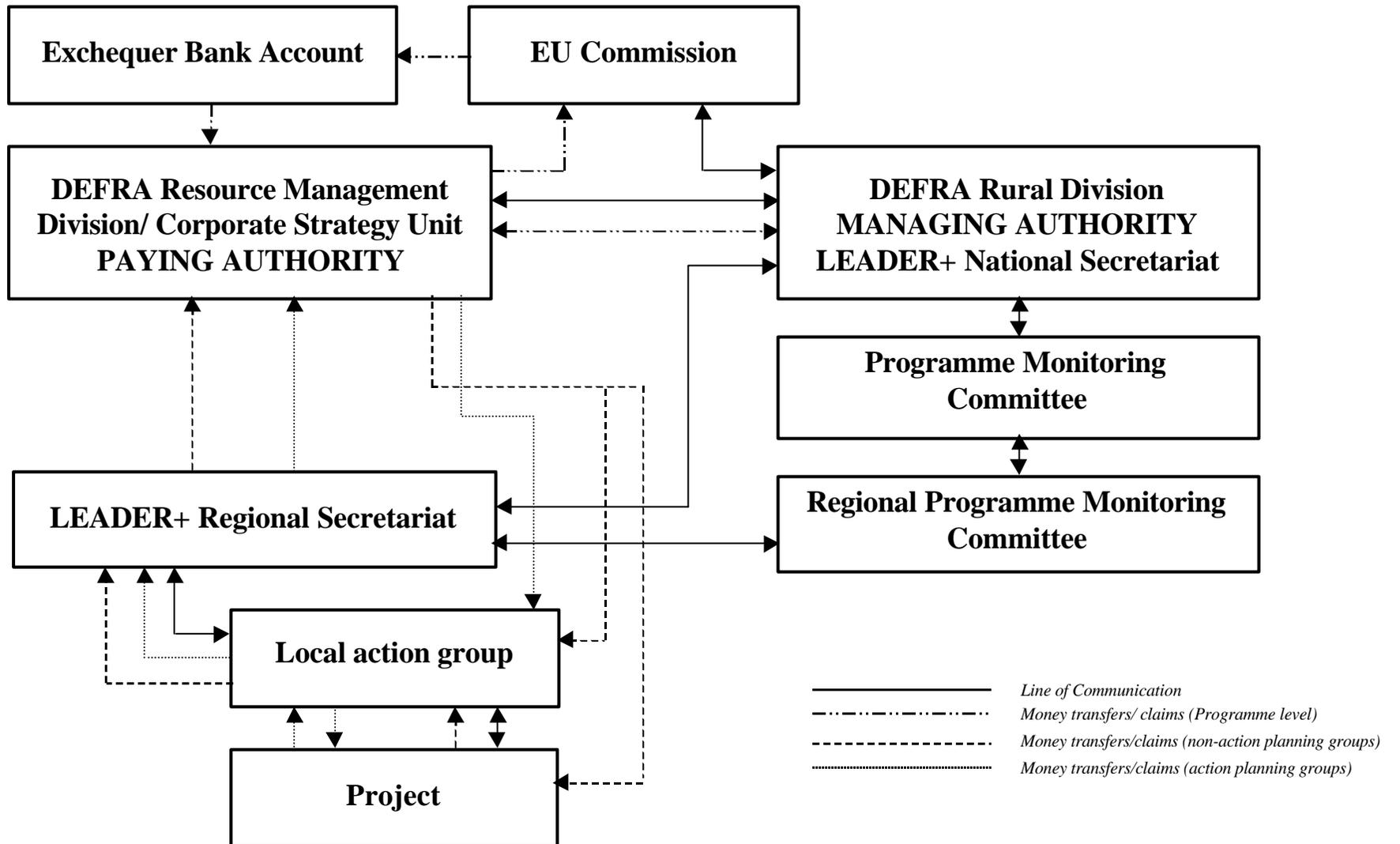English Nature

Environment Agency

English Heritage

East of England Regional Development Agency (acting as lead region for all RDAs)

Voluntary sector organisation

European Commission (the Commission representative will sit on the Committee in an advisory capacity only)

ANNEX 9

LEADER+: MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

Exchequer Bank Account	**EU Commission**

DEFRA Resource Management Division/ Corporate Strategy Unit PAYING AUTHORITY	**DEFRA Rural Division MANAGING AUTHORITY LEADER+ National Secretariat**

Programme Monitoring Committee

LEADER+ Regional Secretariat

Regional Programme Monitoring Committee

Local action group

Project

————————	*Line of Communication*
—·—·—·—·—·—	*Money transfers/ claims (Programme level)*
– – – – – – –	*Money transfers/claims (non-action planning groups)*
··················	*Money transfers/claims (action planning groups)*

ANNEX 10

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STEERING GROUPS: MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

A.   National LEADER+ Steering Group

1.   This group comprised representatives from MAFF[1] HQ (the head of LEADER+ Branch chaired the group); the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency; the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions; the Department for Culture, Media and Sport; the Department for Education and Employment; the Department of Trade and Industry; the Countryside Agency; English Nature; English Heritage; the Environment Agency; the Forestry Commission; the East of England Development Agency representing all Regional Development Agencies; and also regional representation from MAFF and the Government Office. The *ex-ante* evaluators also attended several of the meetings as observers.

2.   The terms of reference for the group were:

To oversee drafting of the England LEADER+ Programme in accordance with the Commission guidelines, for submission to the European Commission by 18 November 2000; and, in particular:

(i)   to ensure appropriate consultation is carried out with relevant bodies at national level by LEADER+ Branch and also at regional and local levels by the Regional Steering Groups;

(ii)   to oversee and contribute to guidance for Regional Steering Groups on drafting the regional appendices and to appraise the appendices to ensure consistency, relevance and compatibility with scheme objectives;

(iii)   to oversee and contribute to drafting of the England Programme in accordance with the European Commission guidelines and legislation governing the EU structural funds;

(iv)   to consider and advise, as necessary, on over-arching technical or operational issues, including selection criteria, scoring systems etc.

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[1] On 11 June 2001 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) was incorporated into the new Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

B.   Regional LEADER+ Steering Groups

3.   The membership of the regional groups essentially mirrored that of the national group with representatives from the MAFF Regional Service Centre; the Government Office; the Regional Development Agency; the Countryside Agency; English Heritage; English Nature; the Environment Agency; the Forestry Commission and the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency. Each group also had local authority representation. Some groups also had additional representation.

4.   The final terms of reference for the groups fell into three main areas:

(i)   Publicity and consultation

a)   To draw up and implement a regional plan to publicise LEADER+.

b)   To consult all the relevant authorities and organisations, including social and economic partners, at regional and local level on its implementation.

c)   To take account of the results of this regional consultation in the draft regional appendix to the LEADER + Programme and in input into the over-arching national section to the Programme.

(ii)   Drafting the regional appendix to the Programme and feeding into the over-arching national Programme

a)   To draft a short regional appendix to the Programme taking account of:

- the EU guidelines set out in the Commission Notice;

- the results of the consultation; and

- any feedback from the *ex-ante* evaluation;

b)   To cover in the regional appendix, in particular:

- a summary of the strengths, weaknesses and potential of the rural areas in the region, taking account of the England Rural Development Plan Regional Chapter and the RDA Regional Economic Development Strategy and any other relevant programme;

- analysis of lessons learnt from previous community led/rural development (e.g. LEADER II; rural priority areas etc) experience;

- other government-funded rural development measures operating in the region;

- the objectives of LEADER + in the Region and how LEADER + will complement and add value to other rural development measures in the region; and

- the priority themes and target groups applicable for the region;

c)   To contribute, as necessary, to the over-arching national Programme, including the requisite indicative financial plan setting out national and Community financing for each of the Actions.

(iii)   *Operational arrangements*

a)   To advise, as necessary, on regional arrangements for implementing the programme including:

- the structure of the programme monitoring sub-committee to succeed the Regional Steering Group;

- arrangements for administration, processing and payments; and

- monitoring and control arrangements (taking account of national guidance and Community obligations).

ANNEX 11

LEADER+ CONSULTATION EXERCISE

1.   The LEADER+ consultation document for England was issued on 26 April 2000. The document was sent to a wide range of government, local authority, trade, business, voluntary and community organisations at both the national and regional level. Respondents had until 26 June 2000, i.e. two months, in which to reply with their comments. In total, 174 responses were received.

2.   The consultation document asked the following questions:

Q1.   **Are there any strengths, weaknesses and potential (particularly regional or local) which you consider the England LEADER+ programme should address and which are not already covered in the analyses in the ERDP[1] Regional Chapters and REDS[2]?**

Q2.   What additional national or region-specific aims and objectives should the three actions supported under the programme (i.e. integrated rural development strategies; co-operation and networking) have?

Q3.   Should LEADER + be available everywhere? If not, which areas should be excluded and why?

Q4.   What criteria should be used to define local action group areas?

Q5.   Are the population criteria reasonable for all areas; or are there regions where a limited relaxation might be warranted? If so, what are the objective criteria justifying such a relaxation?

Q6.   Are the four Commission themes appropriate for needs in England?

Q7.   What other themes should be included in the programme taking account of the specific features (economic, social/cultural and environmental) of English regions?

Q8.   What additional priority target groups might be appropriate reflecting local rural needs (e.g. the elderly)?

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[1] England Rural Development Programme, 2000
[2] Regional Economic Development Strategies – produced by the Regional Development Agencies for each of the Government Office regions in England

Q9.   What other objectives or roles might be appropriate for the national network organisation and what lessons should be learnt from the operation of the national network under LEADER II?

Q10.   What should the percentage funding split be by year between the three Actions and the fourth priority to be funded under LEADER+?

Q11.   How can we help to ensure new areas have fair access to LEADER+?

3.   Respondents commented generally that the LEADER+ Programme should be simple to administer and should keep bureaucracy to a minimum. This was also identified as a key lesson to be learnt from LEADER II (see Section 2) and has been one of the overriding objectives in the development of the England LEADER+ Programme. A number of more specific points were made in response to the individual questions asked. The key points to emerge, and how they were taken into account in the England LEADER+ Programme, are set out below.

Market towns

4.   The inclusion of market towns within a local action group area was raised by many respondents. Indeed, the development of market towns was identified as a specific aim of LEADER+ in response to question 2. Responses to questions 4 and 5 showed that respondents thought that criteria for defining local action group areas should allow for the inclusion of market towns because of the key role they have in serving their surrounding villages.

5.   The English authorities have, therefore, decided to allow the inclusion of rural service centres, such as market towns, within local action group areas. Groups will need to demonstrate that these are integral to the local rural economy or the social fabric of the area. To ensure that LEADER+ is targeted on rural areas and that the major part of the population of a local action group is not located in a large market town, an additional population criterion will be applied to local action groups. That is, no more than 40% of the population can be in towns over 20,000 people.

LEADER+ Network

6.   Respondents thought that the UK LEADER+ network should play a key role in helping, and providing advice to, local action groups, particularly new groups, when setting themselves up. It was also seen as a key vehicle to help with the delivery of Action 2 projects e.g. in providing partner searches for co-operation projects. Responses also indicated that the network should be established from the start of the Programme and that it should have a role in networking at both the national (England) and UK levels.

7.   In drawing together proposals for the UK network, the authorities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all agreed that it should be operational from the outset of the respective national Programmes. It is therefore proposed that the network be set up by September 2001. The network will provide for networking at the UK and national levels. This will help to avoid duplication of activities, e.g. by having only one organisation and hence a common database and website, whilst at the same time catering for the particular needs of each of the national Programmes.

Availability of LEADER+

8.   Of those who responded directly to question 3, 117 thought that LEADER+ should be available in all rural areas in England and only 23 thought that Objective 1 and/or 2 areas should be excluded. In response to question 11, the UK network was seen as playing a key role in providing help and advice to areas new to LEADER.   Many respondents suggested that operating an expression of interest exercise would help groups, particularly new groups, in developing their proposals for LEADER+ funding.

9.   As a direct response to the consultation exercise, the English authorities decided that the LEADER+ Programme should be made available to all rural areas in England. A voluntary expressions of interest exercise was also carried out to provide potential groups with the opportunity to develop their proposals prior to the launch of the Programme and call for applications.

Local action group criteria

10.   Most respondents to question 4 thought that the criteria to be used to define a local group area were sensible but that a flexible approach should be adopted. In response to question 5, 16 respondents thought that the population criteria were reasonable whilst 106 thought that there was need for relaxation of the criteria.

11.   The English authorities are trying to develop a Programme which is flexible to the different needs of rural areas in England. In doing so it is proposed that exceptions to the population criteria be allowed under strictly defined circumstances. These are set out in section 5.

Themes

12.   In response to question 6, 107 respondents thought that the themes provided by the Commission guidelines were broadly appropriate. Only four thought that they were not. The English authorities have therefore developed the LEADER+ Programme in England using as its basis the four themes provided by the Commission.

Target groups

13.   Many different target groups were identified by respondents in response to question 8. These tended to reflect the particular needs and priorities of their own areas. In addition, some respondents suggested that local action groups should have the flexibility to identify their own priority groups.

14.   As a result of the different priorities of the English regions, each regional appendix to the LEADER+ Programme identifies priority target groups for that region. Each local action groups must choose at least one target group identified as a priority for their region. However, local action groups also have the option of selecting further target groups according to their own needs and priorities.

Funding

15.   All respondents who commented on question 10 thought that the vast majority of funding should go to Action 1 projects. Typically, respondents indicated that Action 1 should receive between 80% to 95% of the LEADER+ budget. Respondents also thought that Action 2 projects would take more time to develop so there should be gradual access to this funding.

16.   In deciding upon the split of funding for the England LEADER+ Programme, the English authorities propose that the majority of funding be directed towards Action 1 projects (nearly 88% of the total EU allocation to England is earmarked for Action 1 and 10% for Action 2 – see Section 6 for a further breakdown). In addition, it is proposed to give greater access to Action 2 funding towards the end of the Programme in recognition of the time it will take groups, particularly new groups, to develop co-operation projects. However, all groups will be required to participate to some extent under Action 2.

ANNEX 12

TYPES OF AGRICULTURAL STATE AID ELIGIBLE FOR SUPPORT

1. Aid for investment in agricultural businesses, including agricultural holdings, is subject to the Community Guidelines for State Aid in the Agricultural Sector. This guidance puts maximum limits on the total state aid (EU and UK) that can be paid to agricultural businesses and sets out a range of conditions which the support must adhere to. All investment in agricultural holdings must pursue at least one of the following objectives:

- reduce production costs;
- improve and re-deploy production;
- increase quality;
- preserve and improve the natural environment, hygiene conditions and animal welfare standards; or
- promote the diversification of farm activities.

2. The table below sets out the maximum rates for state aid to the agricultural sector allowed under Measures 4 to 9 of the LEADER+ Programme. These rates are based on the total eligible costs of the project.

Table 1. Maximum rates of state aid for the agricultural sector under LEADER+

Types of aid	Conditions	Total state aid rate (as percentage of total eligible costs)
Investment aid on farms	- holding must be economically viable - farmer must possess adequate occupational skill - there must be assurance of market outlets	50% for Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) 40% elsewhere + 5% for young farmers
Investment in processing and marketing	- business is economically viable; - compliance with minimum standard for environment, hygiene and animal welfare - there must be assurance of market outlets	50% Objective 1 areas 40% elsewhere

Types of aid	Conditions	Total state aid rate (as percentage of total eligible costs)
Aid for the conservation of traditional landscapes	• investments or capital works for the conservation of non-productive features (i.e. archaeological features)	• 100% real costs incurred
	• investments or capital works to conserve heritage features of productive assets (i.e. farm buildings)	• 60% of eligible costs (75% in LFAs)
	• if there is an increase in the production capacity	• 40% of eligible cost (50% in LFAs)
Diversification of farm activities into non-agricultural activities (agro-toursim, crafts, etc)	• rules for non-agricultural state aid apply	• Max. 100,000 euros over 3 years *(De minimis)* • >100,000 euros, aid for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) applies.
Soft aids	• education, training, seminars • farm management and replacement services • consultancy costs • competitions, exhibitions, participation in fairs • small scale demonstration projects	• Max. 100,000 euros over 3 years *(De minimis)* • > 100,000 euros, 50% SMEs
Promotion and publicity	• no aid for individual companies • no aid incompatible with article 28 of the Treaty of Rome	• 50%