



Argyll and Bute Council
Evaluation of the 2014-20 Argyll and the Islands
LEADER Programme
Final Report

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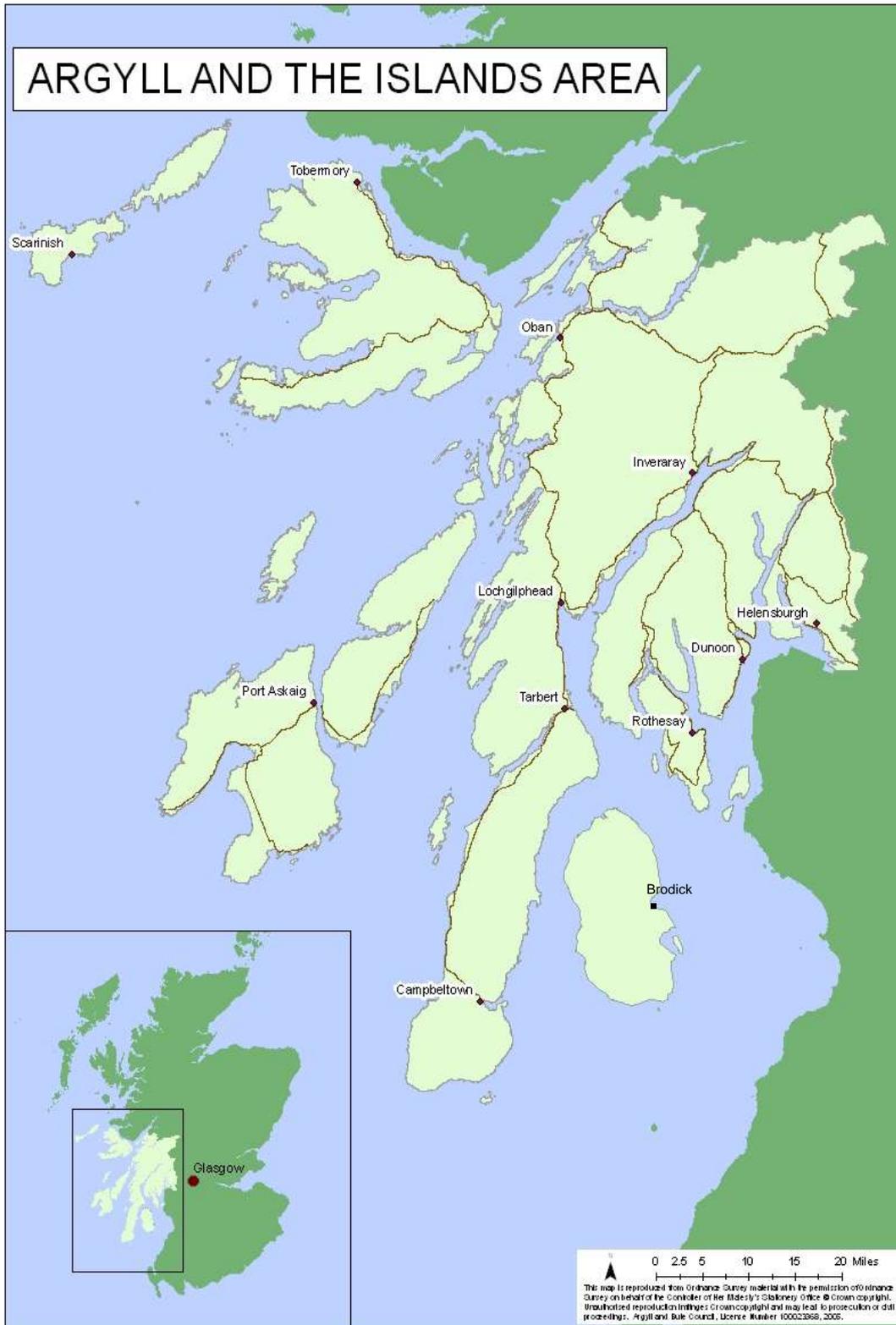


**Scottish Rural
Development
Programme**

Contents

SUMMARY: Argyll and the Islands LEADER	i
The Programme	ii
Lessons Learned	iii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 The Report	1
1.2 The Programme	1
1.3 Background	2
1.3.1 The Programme	2
1.3.2 Externalities	3
1.4 Logic Framework	3
2. Process and Inputs	5
2.1 Awareness	5
2.2 Delivery	5
2.3 The LAG	8
2.4 The Local Development Strategy	9
2.5 Inputs	10
3. Activities	11
3.1 Types of Project	11
3.2 Investment	12
3.3 Cooperation Projects	16
4. Outputs and Outcomes	17
4.1 Reported Achievements	17
4.2 Strategic Outcomes	19
5. Impact	21
5.1 Additionality	21
5.2 Economic Impact	21
5.2.1 Employment	21
5.2.2 Visitor Spend Impact	23
5.2.3 Construction	24
5.2.4 Summary	25
5.3 Social Value	25
5.3.1 Volunteering	25
5.3.2 Wellbeing Benefits	25
6. Lessons Learned	27
6.1 COVID-19	27

6.2 Processes	28
6.3 Role of LAG	28
6.4 Focus	29
6.5 Looking Forward	29
ANNEX	31
Case Studies	31



SUMMARY: Argyll and the Islands LEADER

Argyll and the Islands LEADER in Figures



- £6.5m to be invested in the local economy
- £2.8m LEADER investment
- £3.7m match funding levered



- 33 projects funded
- 9 grants to strengthen the rural economy of £0.75m in total
- 12 grants to enhance services and facilities, totalling £1.225m
- 12 grants for farm diversification and small business support, totalling £0.86m



- Investment across the Argyll and the Islands area
- Local services in receipt of £1.2m in grants
- c.25,000 increase in visitor numbers by 2022/3



- By 2022/23, the Programme is projected to have generated an additional:
 - 40.8 full-time equivalent jobs
 - £1.7m gross value added
- One-off gross value added (GVA) benefit of £1.2m from construction



- Volunteering benefits of £85,500, equivalent to 4.7 FTEs
- Additional social value in rural services and cultural heritage projects

The Programme

The European Union (EU) LEADER programme has been in existence since 1991, and has gone through five programmes, with the latest iteration in 2014-2020 intended to have a focus on community-led local development (CLLD), and being extended to cover farm diversification and business development. The area covered by Argyll and the Islands LEADER has benefited from earlier iterations of the programme, and includes Arran and the Cumbraes, part of North Ayrshire Council area, as well as the Argyll and Bute Council area.

Delivery:

Although an EU wide programme, overall management is undertaken at the Managing Authority level, under the governance of the Scottish Government in the case of Scotland, which provides the governance framework and is ultimately responsible for ensuring the European Union grant conditions are adhered to. Local financial accountability is maintained by the Accountable Body, in this case Argyll and Bute Council.

The Local Action Group (LAG) representing local interests, and the Local Development Strategy (LDS), developed through extensive local consultation, are central underpinning factors to the CLLD approach. The LAG is intended to ensure that there is local guidance and direction over the funding process, and the LDS provides the evidence base to ensure investment is rooted in local needs.

Investment:

The programme supported 33 projects across the area, making grants under the following Themes of the Local Development Strategy.

Thematic Objective	Number of projects	Total Grants	Average Grant	Match
Theme 1: Strengthening the rural economy by maximising the sustainable use of our natural, cultural and heritage resources as an economic driver.	9	£754,359	£83,818	27%
Theme 2: Enhancing the services and facilities in the Argyll and the Islands area to attract individuals, families, visitor and investors to grow and maintain economically viable communities.	12	£1,225,757	£102,146	43%
Theme 3: Small business support including farm diversification.	12	£862,567	£71,881	30%
Total	33	£2,842,682	£86,142	100%

Strategic Contribution:

The programme was perceived as being most successful in improving local services, with 75% of funded projects scoring this highly. This was echoed by the response from LAG members. However, the interpretation of 'hard to reach groups' by beneficiaries and LAG members was mixed, with some including geographical isolation within this definition. Environmental benefits did not score highly, perhaps pointing to the relative priorities set by the LDS.

Overall, there was a perception that community capacity and partnership working was already strong in the area, which has high levels of social capital, although the programme supported the development of this.

Lessons Learned

COVID-19:

Although only becoming an issue towards the end of the programme, the closedown arising from the response to the pandemic will have an impact on delivery of projects and their benefits, especially in terms of timing.

It is too early to say what the medium to longer term impacts will be, although beneficiary interviewees reported significant negative impacts in 2020, with continuing uncertainties running into 2021 which add to these problems, with some projects experiencing a delay in delivery.

Complexity of Process:

There was a consensus that the Scottish Government processes involved in allocating grants were excessively complex, especially in terms of:

- Application process – extensive effort had to be put in by Argyll and Bute Council and applicants to clear administrative hurdles, with Local Actions in Rural Communities system (LARCs) being seen as particularly problematic;
- Proportionality – small grants had to go through exactly the same process as larger grants, having the effect of incurring additional expense and time, and in some cases, discouraging applications.

In any future programme, consideration should be given to simplifying application and appraisal processes, especially for smaller grants.

Role of the LAG:

There is a value in maintaining a local interest in financial support in rural areas, and tailoring resources to specific local needs, allowing for flexibility in investment. Any future rural grant scheme should restore the central role of the LAG and LDS in decision making sustaining the link between investment and CLLD.

Constraints:

There is an argument for greater local flexibility in programme delivery, which should be a component of any new rural development scheme. This does not, of course, mean that due diligence can be wholly ignored. It also points to the importance of animation in taking forwards the priorities of the LDS and in stimulating projects.

Future of Locally-delivered Rural Grant Support:

Experience of delivery of earlier LEADER programmes, and the findings of this evaluation point to an ongoing need for a locally managed rural development programme that delivers integrated and multi-sectoral actions.

Economic uncertainties, such as those created by EU Exit and the COVID-19 crisis, create a strong argument for targeted and flexible resources that will sustain rural resilience, and future post-EU funding sources should be identified to continue this type of CLLD intervention.

Summary

Argyll and the Islands LEADER 2014-2020 provided rural grant support as part of a European Union Programme.

The evaluation is framed in the context of a logic framework, examining the impact of delivery and spend over the area.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Report

This is the Final Report for the evaluation of the Argyll and the Islands LEADER Programme 2014-2020.

The report draws on activities to date, including:

- Review of programme documentation;
- Interviews with the Argyll & Bute Council delivery team and Local Action Group (LAG) members; and
- Interviews with 31 of the 33 beneficiaries¹;
- Interviews with six beneficiary case studies.

The Report has been prepared to:

- Undertake analysis of project records. The data interrogated for this report dates to January 2021;
- Map performance against the Logic Model; and
- Identify lessons learned for future interventions.

It should be noted that the evaluation does not include co-operation actions, none of which were led through Argyll and the Islands LEADER.

1.2 The Programme

Argyll and the Islands LEADER forms part of the Scottish approach to the EU-wide rural community led local development (CLLD) programme, operating under the guidance of the Scottish Government (SG).

The approach of the Programme is informed by a Local Development Strategy (LDS) developed through widespread consultation across the area and approved by the LAG in 2015. The LDS has a broad focus on:

- Strengthening the rural economy;
- Enhancing the services facilities;
- Small business support including farm diversification.

¹ One declined to participate, and one did not respond to contacts.

Importantly, the programme is seen as having a significant role in addressing depopulation, through the creation of local facilities, infrastructure, and activities that support potentially fragile communities.

It is intended to be complementary to other interventions targeted on business development and agri-environmental support, and is often used to match other sources of grant for community led projects, such as National Lottery funds.

The LEADER approach has been applied in Argyll and the Islands through a number of programmes. The locality therefore has extensive experience of delivery of the LEADER approach, with some LAG members having been involved for some time. The area includes Arran and the Cumbraes, part of North Ayrshire Council area, as well as the Argyll and Bute Council area.

The 2014-2020 iteration of LEADER in Scotland introduced some changes from earlier iterations, which had a primary focus on community organisations, with the inclusion of small grants for farm diversification and business development.

1.3 Background

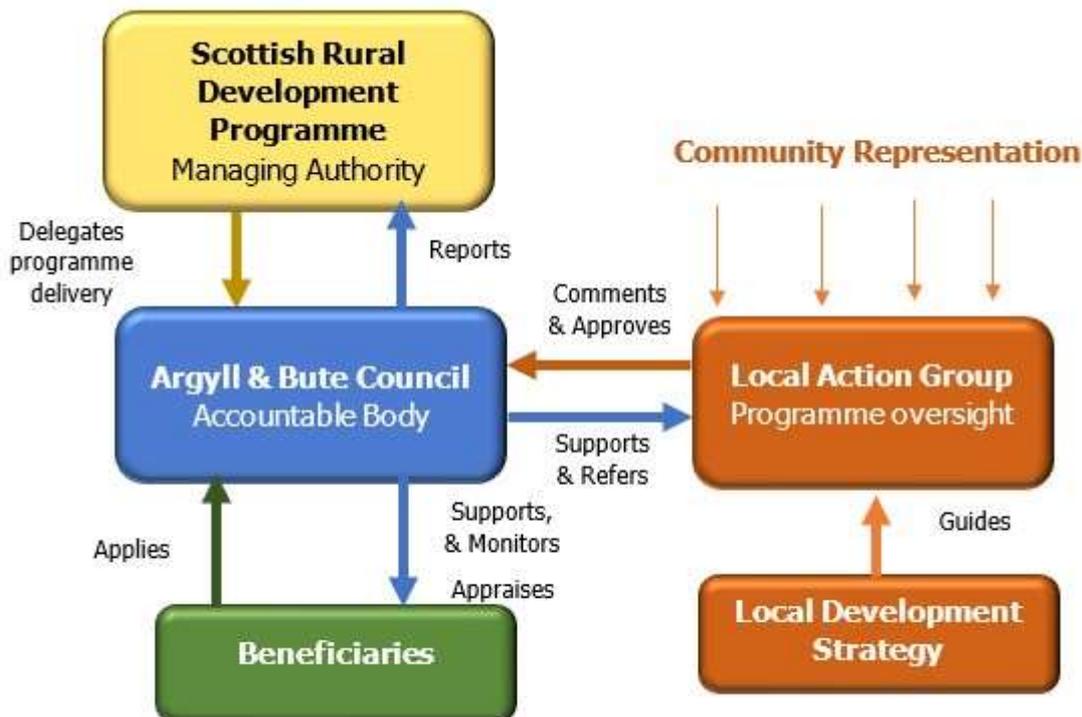
1.3.1 The Programme

The European Union (EU) LEADER programme has been in existence since 1991 and has gone through five programmes, with the latest iteration in 2014-2020 intended to have a focus on CLLD, which is based on seven key principles:

- Area based Local Development Strategies (LDS);
- Bottom-up approach;
- Local public-private partnerships: Local Action Groups (LAGs);
- Innovation;
- Integrated and multi-sectoral actions;
- Cooperation; and
- Networking.

Although an EU wide programme, overall management is undertaken at the Managing Authority level, under the governance of the Scottish Government in the case of Scotland, which provides the governance framework and is ultimately responsible for ensuring the European Union grant conditions are adhered to, which sets overall priorities, and ultimately approves funding. Local financial accountability is maintained by the Accountable Body, in this case Argyll and Bute Council. The primary tool for the application of the programme at local level is the LAG, a locally appointed body that oversees the allocation of funding, guided by an LDS developed through local consultation. **Figure 1.1**, over, illustrates the relationships between key partners.

Figure 1.1 Argyll and the Islands LEADER Delivery



1.3.2 Externalities

A number of externalities impacted on programme delivery, most notably that of COVID-19 restrictions after March 2020. While this had limited impact on approvals and project submissions, it has clearly led to the delay of projects in the face of lockdowns and the subsequent difficulties in getting back to previous productivity levels due to COVID-19 safe working practices and the national shortage of building materials. This is further discussed in **Section 6.2** below.

Secondly, the UK leaving the EU introduced a further level of uncertainty, impacting on:

- Confidence and access to markets; and
- Concerns over future rural development support, and the role of local communities in directing this.

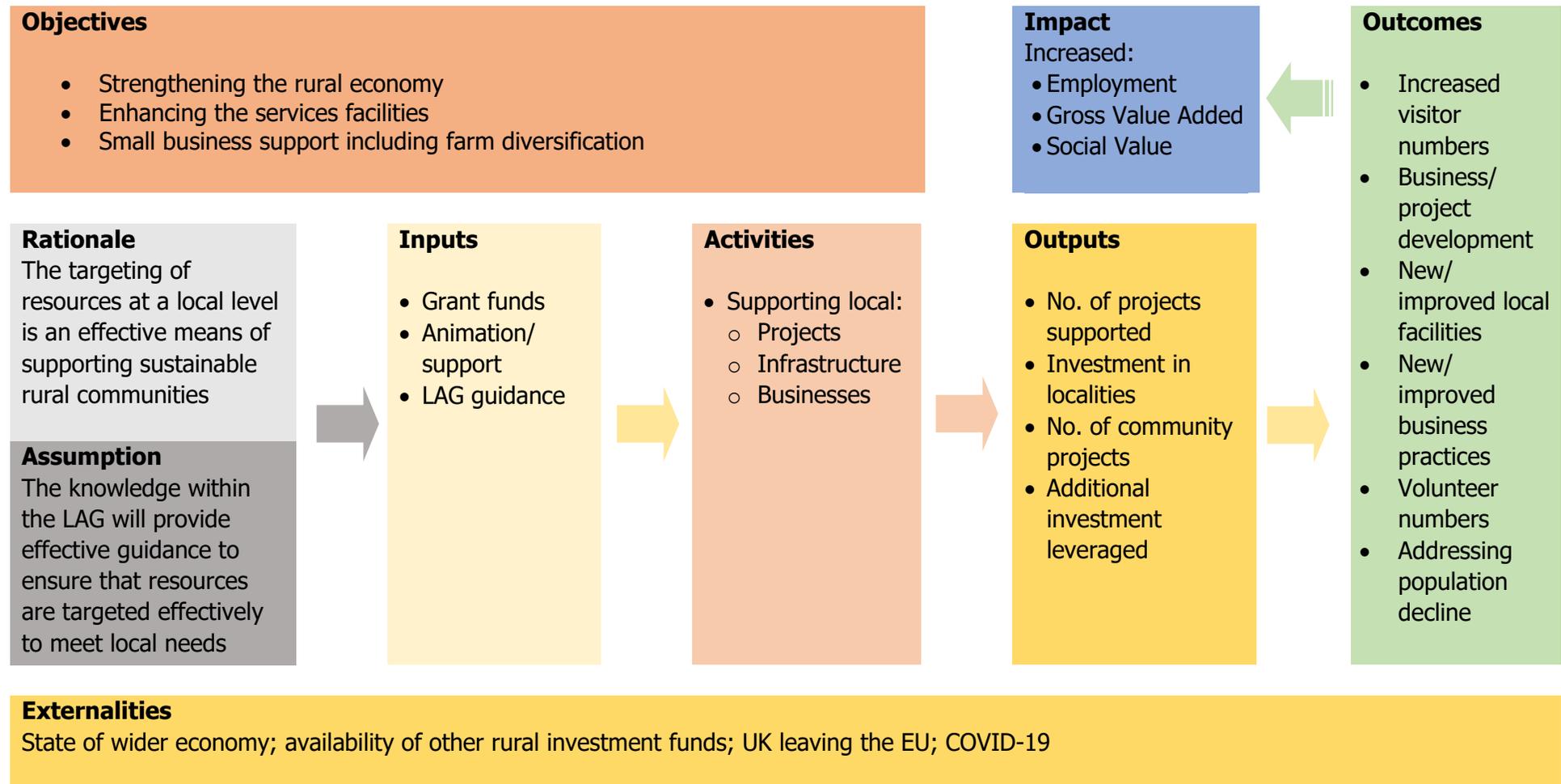
1.4 Logic Framework

The impact assessment in this evaluation uses a Theory of Change² approach that maps out the inter-relationships from the rationale underpinning the Programme, to the outcomes and impacts that emerge. It frames the various stages and linkages that occur, and uses the approach to place the evaluation within the context of the Green Book³ ROAMEF (Rationale; Objectives; Appraisal; Monitoring; Evaluation; and Feedback) cycle. **Figure 1.2** overleaf shows the logic framework underlying the intervention, which informs the structure of the Report.

² <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government>

Figure 1.2: Logic Framework – Argyll and the Islands LEADER 2014-2020



Summary

The Programme contracted 33 grants, with a total value of £2.8m. There was a high attrition rate from expressions of interest to grant, with a number of applications withdrawn by applicants.

Argyll and Bute Council provided project management and appraisal and supported the LAG, who oversaw applications.

2. Process and Inputs

2.1 Awareness

Word of mouth and being a previous LEADER applicant were the most common ways that successful funding applicants heard about LEADER funding with these two methods accounting for 72% of consulted projects. Referrals from support organisations also played an important role (18%) with Business Gateway playing a key role here.

Figure 2.1: How Projects heard about LEADER funding

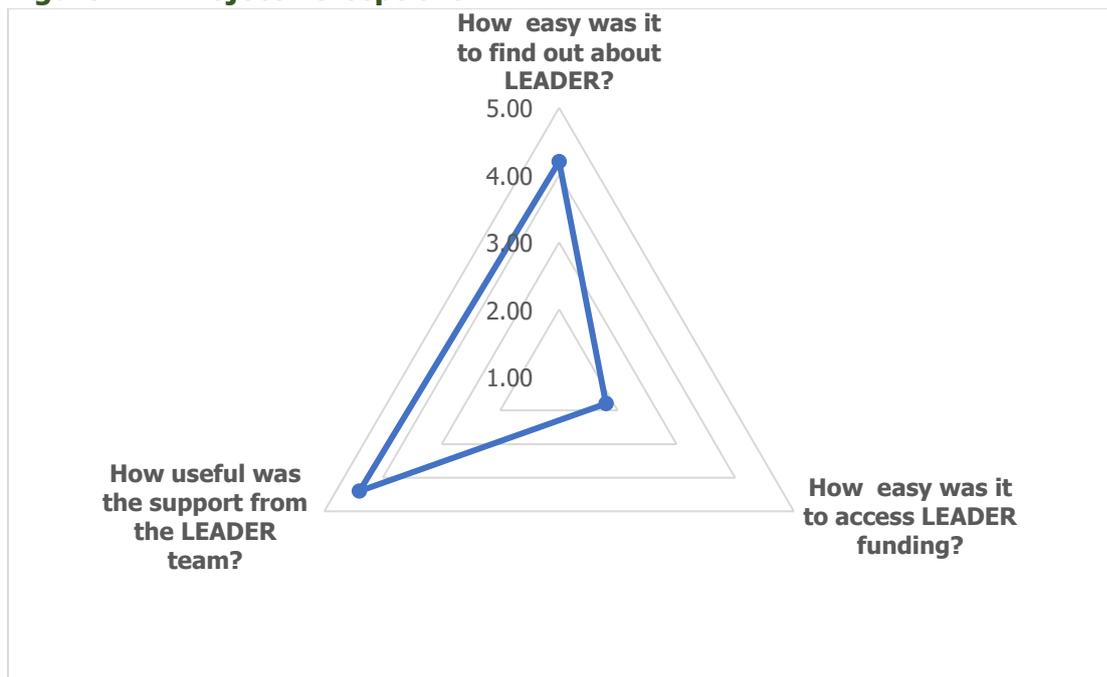
Source	% of respondents
Word of mouth	39%
Applied for LEADER funding before	33%
Referral from support organisation	18%
Website	6%
Email contact	3%
Total	100%

2.2 Delivery

Argyll and the Islands LEADER is locally managed by Argyll and Bute Council as the Accountable Body, who provided appraisal and administrative support. Some concern was expressed over a high turnover of staff within the LEADER funded support team, although it was generally acknowledged that the support provided to beneficiaries was valuable, with one respondent noting their '*patience*'.

Consulted projects were asked to rate a number of their engagements with the programme on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not at all easy or useful and 5 being very easy or useful. Responses to these questions are summarised in **Figure 2.2**, which shows that project lead organisations found it easy to find out about the LEADER programme and found the support provided by the Argyll and the Islands LEADER team useful to their application; although the application process itself was largely seen as difficult with many suggesting it was not at all easy to apply for the funding. This is acknowledged by the LEADER team themselves who recognised that the process established by the Scottish Government in response to EU guidelines presented challenges to applicants and lacked proportionality, with all applicants subject to the same process regardless of the size of their project.

Figure 2.2: Project Perceptions



Many of those consulted were keen to highlight the value of the support they received from the LEADER team:

Grateful to the support team for their efforts

Had really good support in keeping us right

The LEADER Support Team went above and beyond to help overcome the shortfalls that were in the admin system

The only way it worked at all was with the help of the Support Team

2.2 LARCs

The delivery of LEADER in Scotland was underpinned by the Local Actions in Rural Communities system (LARCs). In consultation with both the delivery team and beneficiaries, it was widely acknowledged that the system was complex, unresponsive, and difficult for beneficiaries to navigate, with a number reporting that they had to use the Argyll and Bute Council LEADER team to contact Scottish Government officials to make changes to their entries. The majority of LAG members, especially those from the private sector, also felt that the volume of information on the system made it difficult to identify relevant background when undertaking appraisals, making it time consuming for those not on the LAG as part of their job.

The system came in for severe criticism by beneficiaries, with comments including:

Overly bureaucratic for funding applications details. Portal not fit for purpose. Locally IT is very poor and the system frequently crashed. Questioned its effectiveness - all that was needed was to report progress. System not inclusive.

Bureaucracy and form filling was very stressful. Seemed to be almost obsessive. Agree an audit trail is necessary - but needed constant advice from local office to complete.

Paperwork, no flexibility to re-allocate to other headings when carrying out own work. Not real world - staff reluctant to advise because LARCS system is so difficult.

Bureaucratic nightmare - large % of funds wasted on the form filling burden and jumping through hoops.

This dissatisfaction also manifested itself when beneficiaries were asked to compare LEADER with other sources.

Respondents were asked whether they had previously accessed grant funding from any other sources and how the ease of accessing the support and grant conditions for this LEADER programme compared to the other source(s) of grant funding previously accessed. **Figure 2.3** below shows their responses and further emphasises the challenges and issues projects encountered through the LEADER programme application and claims processes, with all 28⁴ respondents to this question stating that the ease of accessing LEADER was worse and 27 out of 28 stating that grant conditions were worse for LEADER. This led to a number of project leads suggesting that in hindsight they would rather not have accessed the support’.

Figure 2.3: How LEADER compares with other grant funding previously accessed

Comparison with others	The same	Worse	Better
Ease of access	0	28	0
Grant conditions	1	27	0

Reasons given for these ratings include:

Worst experience in 25 years - should not have gone for this grant

Worse without exception in many years of seeking grants

This is worst I have ever seen

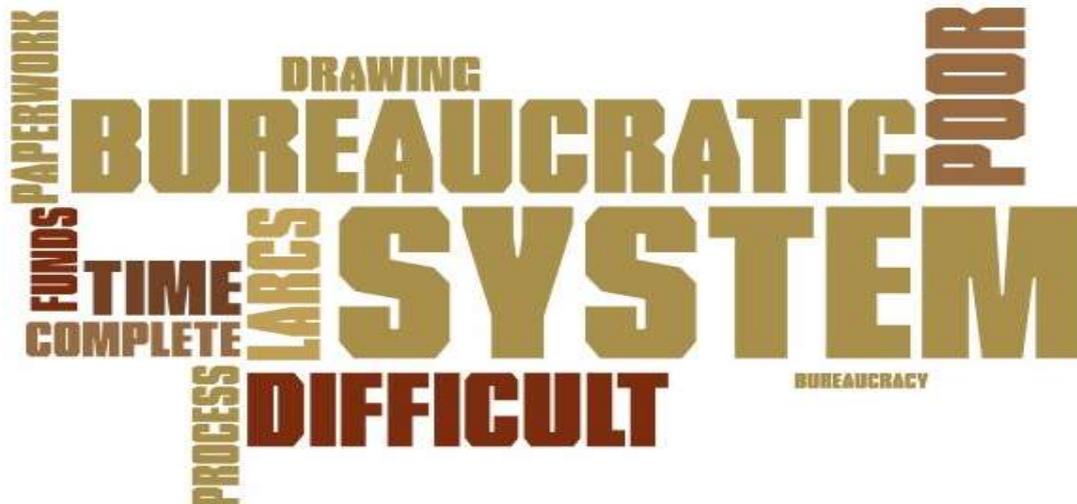
Got £400k from another funder without this level of bureaucracy

Other grants much more straight forward

⁴ 3 interviewees made no comment on this aspect.

Indeed, the bureaucracy associated with the application and claims processes were overwhelmingly the most commonly mentioned issue when project leads were asked to identify the least good thing about the programme, as demonstrated by the word cloud in **Figure 2.4** below which shows the 12 most commonly used words used by project leads when asked this question.

Figure 2.4: Least good thing about the programme



Additionally, there was a perception that smaller businesses and community organisations avoided accessing LEADER funds because of the administrative burden, leaving it to cater to those 'serial applicants who are used to funding success'.

There is clearly an issue to be addressed here, which is covered in **Section 6**.

2.3 The LAG

The LAG, and its LDS are central underpinning factors to the CLLD approach. The LAG is intended to ensure that there is local guidance and direction over the funding process, and the LDS provides the evidence base that is rooted in local needs.

The Argyll and the Islands area has benefited from LEADER funding under the earlier programmes, and a number of LAG members have experience over these different iterations. There is general agreement over the importance of the LAG in signing off funds, introducing local knowledge, with comments including:

The LAG addresses local need through local understanding

Good conversation in LAG

There is also consensus over the importance of the LAG to the administration of the funding, with members considering that the range of experience and commitment of LAG members meant that there was good and full consideration over the proposals put to it. Strengths included:

Some robust challenge within LAG

LAG not formal – you could speak up

However, one member felt that discussion could ‘*veer off course*’, and that the LAG could be smaller, both to ease decision making, and address issues of being quorate.

In addition, some members felt that there could have been a better balance between private and public and voluntary sector interests, and one member felt that the LEADER Team within Argyll and Bute Council was ‘*very risk averse*’ in putting projects forward, although the technical guidance over projects meant that there was a high bar to overcome to comply with regulations. Another commented that some ‘*poor decisions*’ were made by the LAG.

Looking to the future, LAG members felt that:

- There was a role for a LAG in directing any future rural funds;
- There was a need for greater flexibility in allocation and delivery;
- Applications, in all cases, but especially for smaller amounts of investment, needed to be simplified.

2.4 The Local Development Strategy

Under the LEADER approach, the LDS is intended to underpin CLLD, targeting local needs under specific priorities. The priorities laid out in the original LDS, developed through extensive local consultation, are summarised in **Figure 2.5** below.

Figure 2.5: LDS Priorities

Theme	Objectives
Theme 1 - Strengthening the rural economy by maximising the sustainable use of our natural, cultural and heritage resources as an economic driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support capacity building, research and development to identify and implement development opportunities • Improve collaborative working to increase the opportunities for sustainable economic growth • Develop shortened supply chains
Theme 2 – Enhancing the services and facilities in the Argyll and the Islands area to attract individuals, families, visitor and investors to grow and maintain economically viable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support community-based initiatives to improve and/or retain access to services for those living within rural areas and to encourage people to come and live in these communities • Support innovative community-led initiatives and events to enhance the visitor experience • Support innovative approaches to rural services
Theme 3 – Small business support including farm diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start-up/growth grants • Farm diversification support

There was some concern that the LDS had been ‘*overtaken by events*’, and could have usefully been revisited, although this was not done. While the majority of LAG members felt that the LDS was essential to help score and understand projects, others felt that environmental concerns were under-represented, leading to some projects being rejected. One commented that ‘*the LAG could do the job without the LDS*’.

The view was also expressed that business and community interventions should be dealt with by separate schemes, with the scoring and review system being skewed towards community projects, with, for example, supply chain issues not being addressed. One LAG member expressed the view that the approach was insufficiently strategic, and funding was *'pretty poor from an agricultural point of view'*.

2.5 Inputs

Figure 2.6 below shows the financial position on the programme at February 2021.

Figure 2.6: Inputs to February 2021

	Original allocation	Final figures per LARCs	Commitment to Date	Underspend
Themes 1,2	£2,328,332	£2,238,203	£2,148,086	£90,117
Theme 3	£977,226	£861,430	£694,592	£166,838
Co-operation	£488,613	£137,647	£141,502	-£3,854
Admin and Animation	£1,091,955	£712,415	£669,845	£42,571
Allocation	£4,886,126	£3,949,696	£3,654,024	£295,671

The 'Final figures per LARCs' column reflects the position after the return of uncommitted funds, shown in **Figure 2.7**, below. These amounts were re-allocated to other Scottish LEADER programmes. It should also be noted that the figures reported here do not reconcile to the grant figures in the subsequent section (**Section 3**), where the figures date from December 2020.

Figure 2.7: Returned Funds

Date	Description	Amount
	Initial allocation	£4,886,126.00
22/05/2019	Return of co-operation funds	£106,678.02
25/06/2019	Return of uncommitted funds	£500,000.00
01/09/2019	Return of uncommitted funds	£324,650.37
Allocation as per LARCs February 2021		£3,954,797.61⁵

The return of funds is perhaps an indication of some of the difficulties faced by local organisations in accessing funds, through those discouraged by the processes involved, and issues over match funding. It also indicates the relative lack of priority for co-operation projects, and again issues over match funding.

⁵ There is a slight difference between the allocation figures between Figures 2.6 and 2.7. This is likely due to the fact that the figures were reported to the consultant on different dates

Summary

The Programme allocated £2.8m in grants, with most (43%) being paid to enhance local services and facilities. This levered £3.7m further investment.

The largest number of grants (21%) were made in Arran, with Iona having the largest share of funds (29%), based on one project.

3. Activities

3.1 Types of Project

The programme invested in a wide range of different interventions to support social, economic and environmental improvements in local communities and economies. This included destination management investments to fund capital infrastructure improvements, accommodation upgrades, and diversification.

Projects broadly fall into the types summarised in **Figure 3.1** below.

Figure 3.1: Grant by broad activity

Type	Number	Project cost	Grant value	Average grant
Property build/improvement	8	£3,639,263	£1,756,518	£219,565
Other construction	10	£1,808,615	£562,296	£56,230
Equipment	6	£433,537	£216,066	£36,011
Staffing/infrastructure	6	£278,925	£120,070	£20,012
Study/consultation/planning	3	£385,516	£187,732	£62,577
Total	33	£6,545,856	£2,842,682	£86,142

Project descriptions included:

An Officer was provided to deal with the Hard-to-Reach groups

Set up consortium of woodland groups. Identified other funding streams. Established opportunities for skills training using shared experiences.

Tours involve tour information on history, folklore, wildlife spotting - to much larger groups bringing in new people from wider geography.

Improved facilities for boat hire encourage a lot more business/visitors/ use of the loch

Partnership with NHS /GP referrals have been motivated to take on activities - seeking self-management

3.2 Investment

Analysis of programme spend by LEADER thematic objective shows that Themes 2 and 3 accounted for the joint largest number of projects, with Theme 2 having the largest total grant allocated (£1.225m) and highest average grant per project (£102,146). In contrast Theme 3 had the lowest average grant per project (£71,881) while Theme 1 had the lowest number of projects (9) and lowest total grant allocated (£754,358).

Figure 3.2: Investment by LEADER thematic objective⁶

Thematic Objective	No. of projects	Total Grant	Average Grant	% of total grant
Theme 1 - Strengthening the rural economy by maximising the sustainable use of our natural, cultural and heritage resources as an economic driver	9	£754,359	£83,818	27%
Theme 2 – Enhancing the services and facilities in the Argyll and the Islands area to attract individuals, families, visitor and investors to grow and maintain economically viable communities	12	£1,225,757	£102,146	43%
Theme 3 – Small business support including farm diversification	12	£862,567	£71,881	30%
Total	33	£2,842,682	£86,142	100%

Figure 3.3 shows the total project cost, and levered match funding by theme.

⁶ Figures from December 2020

Figure 3.3: Match Funding

Thematic Objective	Total Project Cost	Grant	Match
Theme 1 - Strengthening the rural economy by maximising the sustainable use of our natural, cultural and heritage resources as an economic driver	£2,241,344	£754,359	£1,486,986
Theme 2 – Enhancing the services and facilities in the Argyll and the Islands area to attract individuals, families, visitor and investors to grow and maintain economically viable communities	£2,459,327	£1,225,757	£1,233,571
Theme 3 – Small business support including farm diversification	£1,845,185	£862,567	£982,618
Total	£6,545,856	£2,842,682	£3,703,175

Analysis of the distribution of grants by type of project shows that community focused projects accounted for the vast majority of successful projects (22 out of 33) and allocated grant funding (£2.148m or 76%), with an average grant size of £97,640. SME projects accounted for the next largest proportion of total grant allocation (20%) receiving £558,000 of grant funding across 8 projects; while 3 farm diversification projects were allocated £136,309 of grant funding (5% of the programme total).

Figure 3.4: Investment by farm diversification and enterprise sub type

Farm Diversification and Enterprise Sub Type	No. of projects	Total Grant	Average Grant	% of total grant
Community	22	£2,148,090	£97,640	76%
Farm Diversification	3	£136,309	£45,436	5%
Small Medium Enterprise - Micro <10	8	£558,283	£69,785	20%
Total	33	£2,842,682	£86,142	100%

It should be noted that 'thematic objectives', 'farm diversification & enterprise sub type' and 'lead organisation type' are not mutually exclusive categories with each project being classified within a sub-category for each of these categories. So, for example, there are four projects categorised as 'community' rather than 'SME' within the farm diversification and enterprise sub type, that are funded under Theme 2 (*Enhancing the services and facilities in the Argyll and the Islands area...*) and are led by an SME.

Given the focus on community projects and enhancing local services and facilities, it is unsurprising that community groups and other third sector organisations accounted for a significant amount of lead organisations, with 14 of the 33 projects being led by such

groups. SMEs accounted for the largest number of funded projects with 15 being SME-led, while 4 were led by public bodies, such as local authorities.

Figure 3.5: Investment by lead organisation type

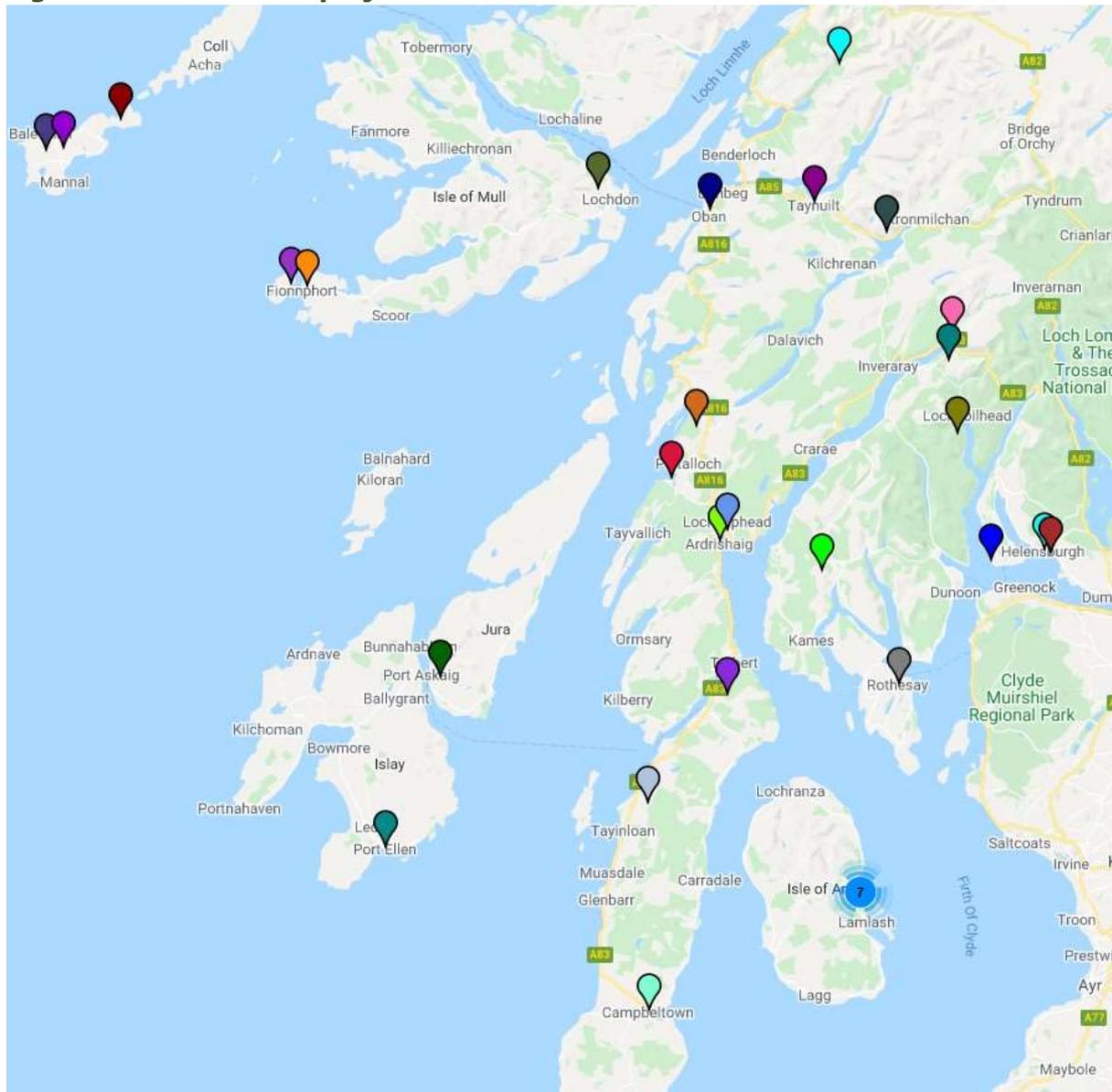
Promoter Type	No. of projects	Total Grant	Average Grant	% of total grant
Other	14	£1,514,812	£108,201	53%
Public Body	4	£638,952	£159,738	22%
SME	15	£688,919	£45,928	24%
Total	33	£2,842,682	£86,142	100%

Figures 3.6 and 3.7 over show the distribution of funding by location of the lead organisation. It should be noted that the majority of projects were delivered by local organisations and as such the location of the lead organisations largely correspond closely to the location of the funded project. Consequently, this data demonstrates a good geographical spread of funding across the LAG area, with Arran the locality with the highest number of projects (7 or 21% of projects) although at an average grant of £33,731 these projects were significantly smaller than the programme average of £86,142). By contrast Iona had the highest average grant per project with its only project (the village hall) receiving a grant of £817,945.

Figure 3.6: Investment by location of project lead organisation

Organisation Town/Island	No. of projects	Total Grant	Average Grant	% of total grant
Appin	1	£17,644	£17,644	1%
Ardrishaig/Crinan	2	£418,897	£209,448	15%
Cairndow	2	£140,687	£70,344	5%
Campbeltown	1	£12,272	£12,272	0%
Cove	1	£80,746	£80,746	3%
Glendaruel	1	£25,058	£25,058	1%
Helensburgh	2	£162,999	£81,499	6%
Isle of Arran	7	£246,378	£111,454	9%
Isle of Bute	1	£65,800	£65,800	2%
Isle of Iona	1	£817,945	£817,945	29%
Isle of Jura	1	£167,975	£167,975	6%
Isle of Islay	1	£195,508	£195,508	7%
Isle of Mull	2	£33,794	£16,897	1%
Isle of Tiree	3	£201,769	£184,872	7%
Lochawe	1	£21,492	£21,492	1%
Lochgilphead	2	£52,599	£26,300	2%
Oban	1	£39,924	£39,924	1%
Tarbert	1	£68,000	£68,000	2%
Tayinloan	1	£5,000	£5,000	0%
Taynuilt	1	£12,800	£12,800	0%
Total	33	£2,842,682	£86,142	100%

Figure 3.7: Location of projects



Collectively this evidence demonstrates that the programme successfully distributed grant funding to target beneficiary groups across the Argyll and the Islands LEADER programme area and its communities; acting as a catalyst for further private and public sector investment through match funding that enabled activities that directly related to the thematic objectives of the national programme.

3.3 Cooperation Projects

The project also contributed a total of £146,868 to seven co-operation projects, although Argyll and the Islands LEADER is not the lead organisation in any of these.

Figure 3.8: Cooperation Project Contributions

Total Argyll and the Islands Allocation to Cooperation Projects	£146,868
Total number of Cooperation Projects	7
Average Argyll and the Islands allocation per Cooperation Project	£20,981

Summary

90% of beneficiaries reported growth in their activities, 61% involved more volunteers and 52% took on new employees.

The primary outcome from projects was improved local facilities and services, followed by community empowerment and partnerships.

4. Outputs and Outcomes

4.1 Reported Achievements

Consultation highlighted the positive outcomes and impacts generated by programme funding for organisations, businesses, individuals and communities. This includes ensuring the sustainability and/or continuation of businesses and community organisations or improving their efficiency and viability; supporting the development of new products or services; and helping to safeguard or create jobs. For example:

- 77% of project leads felt that the funding improved the efficiency or viability of their business or organisation;
- 26% of project leads felt their business or organisation would not be trading without the support;
- 84% of businesses or organisations supported have developed new products or services as a result of the funding;
- 61% have involved more volunteers and 52% have taken on new employees, with funding enabling the same proportion to safeguard existing jobs.

Figure 4.1: What difference did the LEADER grant make to your organisation

Outcomes	% of projects
Supported growth of existing activities	90%
Improved quality of activities/products	87%
Enabled new products/services	84%
Expanded our marketplace	77%
Improved the efficiency and viability of the business/organisation	77%
Brought in more visitors	74%
Brought forward planned activities	74%
Involved more volunteers	61%
Took on new employees	52%
Safeguarded existing jobs	52%
Would not be trading otherwise	26%
Made no real difference	3%

The LDS identified a number of intended outcomes and results that should arise from the projects, although did not quantify these. **Figure 4.2** summarises those that were achieved – the data is drawn from a review of project proposals, and interviews with beneficiaries, and are best estimates of future outcomes after COVID-19 restrictions.

Figure 4.2: Outputs and Results from LDS

Measurable Outputs and Results	
Theme 1: Strengthening the rural economy by maximising the sustainable use of our natural, cultural and heritage resources as an economic driver.	
Objective 1: To support capacity building, research and development to identify and implement development opportunities.	
Outputs	Results
Jobs created in supported projects	4
Feasibility studies supported	2
Development plans supported	2
Workshops held	5
Community asset developed	4
Objective 2: To improve collaborative working to increase opportunities for sustainable economic growth	
Jobs created in supported projects	3
Project promotional activities	2
Sharing of best practice models	1
Feasibility studies supported	2
Development plans supported	2
Community assets developed	3
New product developed	2
Collaborative community land based initiatives	2
Collaborative community marine based initiatives	1
Theme 2: Enhancing the services and facilities in the Argyll and the Islands area to attract individuals, families, visitors and investors to grow and maintain economically viable communities	
Objective 1: To support community-based initiatives to improve and or retain access to services for those living within rural areas and to encourage people to come and live in these communities	
Jobs created in supported projects	3
Community facilities created	3
Community facilities improved	3
Community action plans supported	4
Implementation of community priority projects	5
Objective 2: To support innovative community-led initiatives and events to enhance the visitor experience	
Jobs created in supported projects	4
Adding value to local products	2
New products developed	2
Marketing activity undertaken	4
Support for projects developing innovative methods of local service provision	1
Theme 3: Small business support including farm diversification	
Objective 1: Provision of a start-up/growth grant	
Jobs created in supported projects	3
New starts supported	2
Growth businesses supported	3
Objective 2: Farm diversification support	
Jobs created in supported projects	1.5
Number of farm diversification projects supported	3

In addition, a number of standard outcomes are expected to arise from LEADER funding. These are summarised in **Figure 4.3** below.

Figure 4.3: Additional Outcomes

Outcome	
Volunteers engaged	300
First time volunteers	50
Existing jobs safeguarded	15
Annual change in the number of visits to facilities/attractions	25,000
Local residents who have access to new/improved community-based services	10,000
People accessing training/development opportunities	300
Individuals trained/gaining new skills or re-skilled	50
Young people trained/gaining new skills or re-skilled	20

4.2 Strategic Outcomes

Leads for funded projects were also asked to identify how the support of grant funding has led to a range of desired outcomes and rank⁷ these in order of the outcomes achieved.

Figure 4.3: Strategic Outcomes Generated

Outcomes	Ranking in order of greatest impact								% of projects
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Improved local facilities and services	52%	23%	21%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	94%
Contributed to inclusive growth	3%	3%	25%	30%	18%	0%	0%	0%	55%
Helped to address low carbon outcomes	0%	0%	4%	10%	9%	33%	0%	0%	16%
Enhanced biodiversity/landscape/environment	3%	7%	4%	5%	0%	33%	100%	0%	23%
Improved heritage	6%	10%	7%	25%	36%	33%	0%	0%	55%
Empowered your community and/or strengthened community capacity	6%	33%	11%	5%	18%	0%	0%	0%	58%
Reached hard to reach groups	10%	3%	4%	5%	9%	0%	0%	100%	26%
Strengthened partnership working and created networks	19%	20%	25%	20%	9%	0%	0%	0%	77%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Clearly, the programme was perceived as being most successful in improving local services, with 75% scoring this aspect as a 1 or 2. This was echoed by the response from LAG members. Additionally, the interpretation of 'hard to reach groups' by beneficiaries and LAG members was mixed, with some including geographical isolation within this definition.

⁷ 1=most successful; 8=least successful

Environmental benefits did not score highly, perhaps pointing to the relative priorities set by the LDS.

Overall, there was a perception that community capacity and partnership working was already strong in the area, which has high levels of social capital.

Further examples of the difference funding made to supported businesses and organisations and the communities they support include:

Building in decline over period of years. Capital programme to extends the life of the building and provide a space for local residents and community events

Contributed to community cohesion - improved quality of life of young people in terms of mental and physical health

Museum has gained World Heritage status, support was needed for this

Gave village higher profile. TV coverage of finale - knock on brought more visitors

Connected with the wider group of stakeholders...raised the profile of the organisation - identified priorities and issue which needed to be addressed. Signposted future policy

Improved diversity can now cook/supply farm cooked product

Clearly the funding has provided vital support and made a significant contribution to those businesses and organisations that accessed funding; helping to sustain and enhance the ongoing viability of important rural organisations and businesses across the Argyll and the Islands LAG area and making a positive contribution to communities.

Summary

Argyll and the Islands LEADER investment supported:

- 40.8 jobs at the Scottish level
- £1.7m gross value added (GVA)
- A one off GVA benefit of £1.2m from construction
- Volunteering with a proxy value of £85,500, or 4.7 FTEs
- Wider wellbeing benefits within communities served by projects.

5. Impact

5.1 Additionality

Figure 4.1 in the previous section shows beneficiary assessment of additionality levels, with:

- 26% reporting absolute additionality to LEADER funding;
- 87% quality additionality;
- 77% scale additionality.

Other points that were considered are:

- **Leakage:** the programme is directly targeted on rural needs in Argyll and the Islands. It is therefore the case that there is no leakage of impact. There may, however, be some leakage outside the LEADER area of construction costs;
- **Displacement:** there is no evidence of significant displacement effects, as the majority of beneficiaries are community organisations providing very localised facilities and services;
- **Substitution:** there is no evidence of LEADER support forcing out other investment.

5.2 Economic Impact

5.2.1 Employment

While a number of projects have been delayed due to the impact of COVID-19, it has been assumed that there will be a post 2021 recovery, and that target employment gains will be achieved by 2022/3. The projected employment by sector is summarised in **Figure 5.1**⁸. It has been assumed that posts that were initially funded through grant will become self-sustaining, as intended in the applications. There may also be additional jobs created if feasibility studies and consultations funded through grant are acted upon.

⁸ Data drawn from review of applications and interviews

Figure 5.1: Gross Employment by Sector

Sector	FTEs
Arts and Culture	3.5
Tourism and Hospitality	12
Sports	1
Health and Wellbeing	1
Forestry	1
Total	18.5

On the assumption that additionality of LEADER funding is 56%⁹, this means that **10.4 FTEs** are attributable to grant support.

There are also multiplier effects to be considered: indirect jobs created through the supply chain, and induced, through spend in the wider economy. Applying Type II Scottish Government multipliers¹⁰ for the sectors, suggests net additional employment as summarised below.

Figure 5.2: Net Additional Employment

Sector	FTEs	Employment Multiplier	Net additional FTEs
Arts and Culture	2.0	1.6 (SIC 90)	3.1
Tourism and Hospitality	6.7	1.2 (SICs 55/56)	8.1
Sports	0.6	1.4 (SIC 93)	0.8
Health and Wellbeing	0.6	1.4 (SIC 86)	0.8
Forestry	0.6	2.0 (SIC 02.2/3)	1.1
Total	10.5	-	13.9

The GVA contribution of this employment can be calculated by using turnover per head in each sector for Argyll and Bute from the Scottish Annual Business Statistics¹¹. Using this as a proxy generates the figures shown in **Figure 5.3** below.

Figure 5.3: GVA per head

Sector	GVA per head
Arts and Culture	£16,958
Tourism and Hospitality	£17,801
Sports	£16,958
Health and Wellbeing	£13,486
Forestry	£150,474

⁹ Quality and scale additionality being allocated 15% additionality, in addition to the 26% absolute additionality

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/input-output-latest/>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-annual-business-statistics-2018/>

In order to calculate FTE employment, the ratio of full-time to part-time employment has been taken from the Business Register and Employment Survey¹² for SIC 55-56, 2019 GB estimates. This is shown in **Figure 5.4**.

Figure 5.4: Ratio of full to part-time employment

Sector	Full-time	Part-time
Arts and Culture	57%	43%
Tourism and Hospitality	45%	55%
Sports	37%	53%
Health and Wellbeing	48%	52%
Forestry	63%	37%

Applying these ratios to the GVA per head data provides GVA per FTE as shown below.

Figure 5.5: GVA per FTE

Sector	GVA per FTE
Arts and Culture	£21,466
Tourism and Hospitality	£24,385
Sports	£26,497
Health and Wellbeing	£18,224
Forestry	£183,505

The net additional GVA is summarised in **Figure 5.6** below.

Figure 5.6: Net additional GVA

Sector	GVA	GVA Multiplier	Net additional GVA
Arts and Culture	£66,544	1.6	£106,470
Tourism and Hospitality	£197,518	1.5	£296,277
Sports	£21,198	1.7	£36,036
Health and Wellbeing	£14,579	1.5	£21,869
Forestry	£201,855	2.5	£504,638
TOTAL GVA			£965,290

5.2.2 Visitor Spend Impact

Supported projects are estimated to increase the number of visitors by 25,000. On the assumption that 20% are overnight visitors, who spend an average of £236 per visit¹³, and the remainder day visitors, who are estimated to spend an average of £10, this suggests an additional tourism spend of £1.38m. 56% of this spend is estimated to be additional to grant support (£0.77m).

¹²

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/industry235digitsicbusinessregisterandemploymentsurveybrestable2>

¹³ <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/argyll-and-the-isles-factsheet-2019.pdf>

Using turnover per head in Accommodation and Food Services (SIC 55-56) for Argyll and Bute from the Scottish Annual Business Statistics¹⁴ as a proxy generates:

- An annual turnover per head count of £31,190;
- GVA per head of £21,141.

In order to calculate FTE employment, the ratio of full-time to part-time employment has been taken from the Business Register and Employment Survey¹⁵ for SIC 55-56, 2019 GB estimates. This suggests that 45% of private sector employees are full-time¹⁶, and 55% part-time. On the assumption that a part-time post represents 0.5 FTE, the 'per head' figures are generated by 72% of an FTE. This means that:

- The turnover per FTE is £43,319;
- GVA is £29,363.

In terms of earnings, the median full time gross weekly figure in the Argyll and Bute has been estimated at £536¹⁷. However, wages in the tourism and hospitality sector tend to be lower, and for the purposes of estimating earnings generated through tourism spend, an average annual gross wage of £18,200¹⁸ has been assumed.

On this basis, visitor spend is estimated to support:

- 17.8 FTEs;
- £521,931 GVA.

Applying Type II multipliers for Tourism and Hospitality (SICs 55/56), generates net additional benefits of:

- 21.4 FTEs;
- £730,703 GVA.

5.2.3 Construction

In addition, there are construction impacts, since the programme supported the creation or improvement of 1,628m² of buildings, plus 2.5km of multi-use pathway and other built infrastructure (such as towpath improvements) at a total project cost of £5,447,878.

To calculate employment costs, data from 'Construction of Buildings' (SIC41) average data from 2015-18 for Argyll and Bute from the Scottish Annual Business Statistics have been used. This generates:

- An annual turnover per head of £93,104;
- GVA per head of £19,077.

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-annual-business-statistics-2018/>

¹⁵

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/industry235digitsicbusinessregisterandemploymentsurveybrestable2>

¹⁶ Comprising FTE employees and working proprietors

¹⁷ <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/info/statistics/quick-facts-and-figures-about-argyll-and-bute>

¹⁸ Based on £10 an hour for a 35 hour week annualised

In order to calculate FTE employment, the ratio of full-time to part-time employment has been taken from the Business Register and Employment Survey¹⁹ for SIC 41, 2019 GB estimates. This suggests that 87% of private sector employees are full-time²⁰, and 13% part-time. On the assumption that a part-time post represents 0.5 FTE, the 'per head' figures are generated by 94% of an FTE. This means that:

- The turnover per FTE is £99,047;
- GVA is £20,295.

From a spend of £5.45m, this then generates 55 jobs over the period of construction. On the assumption that an FTE is generated from 10 years of annual jobs, this will therefore create 7 FTEs. In addition, this input will generate GVA of £1,116,270. Attribution to LEADER support is therefore 3.1 FTEs and £625,111 GVA.

Applying Type II multipliers for Construction (SIC 41), generates net additional benefits arising from construction of:

- 5.5 FTEs;
- £1,187,711 GVA.

5.2.4 Summary

The net additional economic benefit²¹ arising from LEADER inputs is summarised at **Figure 5.7** below.

Figure 5.7: Economic Benefits

	FTEs	GVA
Project	13.9	£965,391
Visitor Spend	21.4	£730,703
Construction	5.5	£1,187,711 ²²
Totals	40.8	£2,883,805

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 Volunteering

It is estimated that an additional 300 volunteers were generated through projects. On the basis that a volunteer contributes on average 30 hours in a year, this suggests an in-kind contribution of £85,500 at the real living wage²³, equivalent to 4.7 FTE posts.

5.3.2 Wellbeing Benefits

There are additional wellbeing benefits²⁴ that arise from projects, with one project, Developing Healthy Communities, having this specific focus, and other spin-off wellbeing

¹⁹

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/industry235digitsicbusinessregisterandemploymentsurveybrestable2>

²⁰ Comprising FTE employees and working proprietors

²¹ Impacts are at Scottish level

²² This is a one-off benefit during construction

²³ <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>

²⁴ <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/improving-publics-health/strong-communities-wellbeing-and-resilience>

benefits arising from active activities and use of towpaths and walking routes. While it is difficult to quantify this benefit²⁵ across the programme as a whole, it is suggested that access to outdoors exercise and community facilities enabled by the programme contribute to wellbeing.

For example, a 2011 study looking at the wider benefits of the Forth & Clyde and Union canals²⁶ suggested a monetised wellbeing benefit of £6.7m. The benefits arise from:

- Physical activity, which will address wellbeing issues and bring mental health benefits in an area with a poor record in health;
- Road safety by people using the towpaths and access routes for travel; and
- Addressing absenteeism at work through increased physical activity.

Access to community facilities will also provide mental health benefits, for example to those who may be suffering from loneliness. Analysis of friendship enrichment programmes²⁷ suggests that they can provide a proxy benefit of £391 per person per year.

²⁵ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00127-019-01733-7>

²⁶ GVA (2011) Positively Affecting Lives: The Health benefits of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals

²⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/Morebattle1>

Summary

Learning from the evaluation covered:

- The future impact of COVID-19;
- The complexity of the processes involved;
- Role of the LAG;
- Programme focus;
- Future implications for rural grant support.

6. Lessons Learned

6.1 COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted on the outcomes of the programme, with the majority of beneficiaries consulted reporting constraints introduced by the lockdown. **Figure 6.1** shows the various ways in which COVID-19 has impacted on supported businesses, organisations and projects. Only around one in twenty supported projects reported the pandemic and subsequent restrictions as having had little or no effect, whereas more than half reported profit being down, more than half reported that turnover is down, almost half reported having had to cancel (non-LEADER) projects and one in six reported having to stop activities over this period.

Figure 6.1: Impacts of COVID-19

Impacts	% of Projects
Our turnover is down	58%
Our profit is down	55%
We have had to cancel projects	45%
We have had to make staff redundant	16%
We stopped activities over lockdown	16%
It has had no/little effect	6%

Specific example of the pandemic's impact on projects and organisations or businesses funded by the LEADER programme, include

Lock-down delayed completion by 9 months

Delayed completion by 12 months

Transport Scotland rules mean that we can only carry 4 (of the 16) passengers. Also 1,000 place ferries can only carry 70 people. Have had to suspend operations until lock-down over

Immense impact - most visual arts events cancelled - other organisations have helped in the absence of the Arts Coordinator

Staff furloughed, were not yet making profit, main issue was the changed delivery of projects

We are still in business. Tried some events in collaboration on-line as people can't visit even though internet poor. These have been well received across UK and Europe. See this as a positive...

We have shut down until lockdown is lifted

This demonstrates the huge impact the pandemic has had on businesses and organisations across the LAG area and further highlights the value and importance of LEADER funding against this backdrop, supporting resilience in local projects, businesses and organisations.

6.2 Processes

The application process, dictated by the Scottish Government to meet EU guidance, is relatively complex, with applicants presented with a significant amount of guidance and documentation to work through as well as having to provide extensive evidence in support of their application through the LARCs system. While the allocation of public funds requires the use of robust systems, the complexity of the application process has required many applicants to seek external support during the application process, with Argyll and Bute Council playing an important role.

Section 2.2 highlighted the negativity expressed around the LARCs management system. The level of dissatisfaction across the board highlights the need to review the way in which future rural grants are administered, to make access easier. A number of consultees indicated that local organisations were put off applying to LEADER for this reason, and that only experienced '*serial grant appliers who were used to funding success*' could cope with the systems.

In addition, any future small grant provision will therefore have to give due regard to proportionality of input to support.

6.3 Role of LAG

LAG members and beneficiaries considered it to be important that people with local and sectoral knowledge were able to review and give advice on applications for support. A number of LAG members felt that this role should be enhanced, with more flexibility in the type and level of support being devolved to the LAG. Comments included:

The process is so convoluted – appraisal could be made simpler

There is a cocktail of funders, and LEADER is often the last piece of the jigsaw

One LAG member noted that there is an issue over appraisal costs from multiple funding for single projects, which could be simplified by greater collaboration.

The clear shared opinion was that there should be a rural and local element within future funding.

6.4 Focus

A number of consultees questioned whether the combination of business with community support was the most effective way of supporting both sectors, with some seeing a need for a separate rural business fund. This was an issue raised in the earlier national LEADER process evaluation²⁸.

It was, however, acknowledged that there is a need to get support to small rural businesses that play an important role in maintaining fragile rural communities, who would otherwise find it difficult to access larger grant funds, such as those available through the Local Growth Accelerator Programme.

With the many issues that Argyll and the Islands faces in the current period, with both COVID-19 and leaving the EU having significant impact; the evaluation suggests that the community led local development approach has something to offer, in terms of tailoring support to specific local rural needs.

As part of the evaluation funded projects were asked to state what they think is best about the programme. Unsurprisingly, responses were most likely to highlight the positive impact of the funding on their project, with specific responses including:

Scale of funding was excellent. Support staff were excellent – patient and understanding. Held our hands.

The money enabled a worthy scheme to go ahead with benefit to the community as planned.

Giving business the ability to build a new lifeline for our farm.

Enabled us to build capacity – gather information on the needs and aspirations of woodland owners and suppliers.

6.5 Looking Forward

It is clear that locally directed funding within Argyll and the Islands has provided tangible economic and social value. The LEADER principles of bottom up, partnership, integration, innovation, co-operation, networking and area-based approaches collectively have the potential to make a significant contribution to the micro businesses and social enterprises that make up the rural economy.

With the UK having left the EU, and the consequent withdrawal of EU Programmes, there is an urgent need to consider what will replace the current Programme, to ensure that impetus is not lost and to avoid re-inventing the wheel. Within this context there is scope for a locally directed rural fund that aims to support integrated socio-economic approaches, incorporates animation and developmental support and which, importantly, provides financial support to the crucially important micro-businesses in the area.

²⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2018/11/process-evaluation-leader-2014-2020/documents/process-evaluation-leader-2014-2020/process-evaluation-leader-2014-2020/govscot%3Adocument/00542937.pdf>

Consideration therefore needs to be given as to how such a fund can be supported and managed, building on the UK Government's commitment to maintain a level of support through mechanisms such as the Shared Prosperity Fund, and ensuring complementarity with Highlands and Islands Enterprise support, and other Scottish Government initiatives.

In addition, any future programme design should ensure that the processes involved are both flexible enough to meet a range of local needs, and proportionate to the aims and values of support being offered.

ANNEX

Case Studies

Project name:	CHArts Place Partnership Plan
Applicant:	Argyll and Bute Council
LEADER Theme:	Theme 1 – Strengthening the rural economy by maximising the sustainable use of our natural, cultural and heritage resources as an economic driver
LEADER Objective:	To support capacity building, research and development to identify and implement development opportunities.
Locality:	Argyll and Bute
Amount of grant:	£154,254.94
Intervention rate:	50%
Date of award:	December 2016
Project focus:	Increase collaborative working
Web:	https://www.chartsargyllandisles.org/



CULTURE, HERITAGE & ARTS. ARGYLL & ISLES

The Project

Culture, Heritage and Arts (CHArts) used the grant to match a Creative Scotland, Place Partnership²⁹. The Place Partnership Plan (PPP) addresses geographic and demographic challenges facing Argyll and Bute through the promotion of a vibrant Culture, Heritage and Arts (CHA) sector

The PPP recognises the imperative of creating a strategic development organisation to set priorities and to champion Culture and Heritage. The organisation (CHArts) fosters collaborative working which will create events and products that are of sufficient quality and scale to promote the locality, create jobs, and attract visitors.

The project was developed as a partnership between Argyll and Bute Council and the CHA sector. One of the project outcomes was that CHArts is now structured as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Association SCIO, using the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator two tier membership organisation structure (trustees and membership), and currently has 398 members, with 86 organisations represented.

It is therefore designed as a sustainable, constituted, sector led organisation. It supports business training to enable sector sole traders and small businesses to develop the potential of their businesses, and promotes opportunities for CHA businesses. In addition, it has created a visitor package and provided opportunities for young people on placement.

²⁹ <https://www.creativescotland.com/funding/funding-programmes/targeted-funding/place-programme>

Impact

The project is absolutely additional to LEADER support, in that there were no other sources of funding to match the Creative Scotland grant.

The project has:

- Expanded the marketplace;
- Enabled new products/services;
- Brought in more visitors;
- Involved more volunteers;
- Supported growth of existing activities;
- Improved quality of activities/products;
- Improved the efficiency and viability of the organisation;
- Allowed financial continuity;
- Enabled the creation of an independent SCIO.

The project also contributed to the strategic objectives of:

- Strengthening partnership working and created networks.
- Improving local facilities and services.

COVID-19 Impact:

'Across the sector events have been cancelled, staff have been made redundant and furloughed.'

'We have had to work differently – have adapted our programmes to on-line making them more accessible.'

Project name:	Feasibility study into the establishment of a shared forester resource in Argyll and Bute
Applicant:	Argyll Small Woods Co-operative
LEADER Theme:	Theme 1 - Strengthening the rural economy by maximising the sustainable use of the natural, cultural and heritage resources as an economic driver
LEADER Objective:	To improve collaborative working to increase opportunities for sustainable economic growth
Locality:	Argyll and Bute
Amount of grant:	£4,860
Intervention rate:	49%
Date of award:	December 2016
Project focus:	Investigation of shared resource
Web:	https://www.facebook.com/argyllsmallwoods/

The Project

The Argyll Small Woods Cooperative (ASWC) supports woodland owners and workers to develop their understanding of small woodlands through training, workshops, study tours and practical demonstrations case/studies. A survey of members showed that the main support that members need is management advice from a professional forester. In addition, a study undertaken by the Community Woodlands Association (CWA), showed that many small woodland owners perceive that larger forestry companies/agents may not have the understanding or expertise to deliver the holistic approach to management they require and are expensive. This suggested a model of a shared forester who acts as a broker/mediator with woodland owners linking to this person depending on their needs.



This project employed a consultant to explore how feasible the model would be in Argyll through carrying out research to establish the nature of the woodland resource, understand

'Enabled us to build capacity - gather information on the needs and aspirations of woodland owners and suppliers.'

the motivations and aspirations of woodland owners as well as those innovations that they might be open to considering. The project also identified the market for the environmental and social woodland services that can be developed and the economic benefits that might be expected.

Impact

The project led to the:

- Establishment of a consortium of woodland groups;
- Identification other funding streams;
- Establishment of opportunities for skills training using shared experiences.

The project has:

- Expanded the marketplace;
- Enabled new products/services;
- Supported growth of existing activities;
- Improved quality of activities/products;
- Widened the stakeholder group;
- Sign posted future policy.

COVID-19 Impact:

'We have had to cancel projects'

'We are still in business. Tried some events in collaboration on-line as people can't visit, even though internet poor. These have been well received across UK and Europe. See this as a positive.'

The project also contributed to the strategic objectives of:

- Strengthening partnership working and created networks;
- Strengthening community capacity.

Project name:	Cove Burgh Hall improvements
Applicant:	Cove Burgh Hall Ltd
LEADER Theme:	Theme 2 – Enhancing the services and facilities in the Argyll and the Islands area to attract individuals, families, visitor and investors to grow and maintain economically viable communities
LEADER Objective:	To support community-based initiatives to improve and or retain access to services for those living within rural areas and to encourage people to come and live in these communities
Locality:	Rosneath
Amount of grant:	£80,746.09
Intervention rate:	48%
Date of award:	June 2019
Project focus:	Community asset renovation
Web:	https://www.coveburghhall.org.uk/

The Project

Opened in 1893, Cove Burgh Hall is an excellent example of built heritage positioned at the centre of continuous community and civic service and still the local heart of communal activity. However, the Hall's location makes it particularly vulnerable to the west of Scotland weather in all its manifestations. Since 2001, following an asset transfer from Argyll and Bute Council, the hall has been owned by Cove Burgh Hall, a Company Limited by Guarantee.



The LEADER grant supported a repair and renovation project to meet the safety and preservation requirements of the exterior walls and connected internal structure of the 126-year-old community hall on the Rosneath Peninsula.

The need for the project arose from an awareness of noticeable deterioration and crumbling in the stone-work at the front of the building – the area completely exposed to the elements. In 2017, an initial survey was carried out which identified that remedial work was required to maintain the wind and water-tight integrity of the structure. However, a full survey in 2018 showed that water penetration had also resulted in internal steel structural supports being weakened, thus necessitating both façade and structural work.

'Provides a meeting space for local people and venue for community development'

Listed Building Permission and match funding were in place at the time of application, with other funders comprising Historic Environment Scotland, The Robertson Trust, and the Trusthouse Charitable Foundation.

Impact

The project led to the maintenance of a sustainable community resource.

The project has:

- Enabled new products/services;
- Brought in more visitors;
- Improved quality of activities/products;
- Supported growth of existing activities;
- Extended the life of the building to provide a space for local residents and community events.

COVID-19 Impact:

'Our turnover is down and we had to cancel projects'

'Had been advertising events which have had to be cancelled/delayed -momentum has been lost.'

The project also contributed to the strategic objectives of:

- Improving local facilities and services;
- Strengthening community capacity.

Project name:	Rothestay Cultural/Heritage Programme
Applicant:	Argyll and Bute Council
LEADER Theme:	Theme 2 – Enhancing the services and facilities in the Argyll and the Islands area to attract individuals, families, visitor and investors to grow and maintain economically viable communities
LEADER Objective:	To support innovative community-led initiatives and events to enhance the visitor experience
Locality:	Rothestay and Isle of Bute
Amount of grant:	£65,800
Intervention rate:	50%
Date of award:	December 2016
Project focus:	Programme of events to support physical regeneration programme
Web:	https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/rothesay-regeneration

The Project



Argyll and Bute Council developed a Townscape Heritage (TH) project for Rothestay to be delivered between 2017 and 2022. A partnership project between Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council, Rothestay TH is a heritage-led regeneration programme which will effect physical change as well as supporting learning potential around culture and heritage.

As part of this learning opportunity, there are activities around community engagement in connection with supporting, celebrating and understanding the historic environment of

'Although Rothestay TH is administered by Argyll and Bute Council, it is very much a community project, and seeks to continue to work in partnership with local community groups such as Bute Island Alliance. The learning potential from the project will reach all areas of Bute's community.'

Rothestay, and the Isle of Bute, as well as a programme of events and capacity building exercises, paying particular regard to nurturing the growth of the creative and innovative industries on the island. This includes a hub within a long-term vacant shop to support co-working potential and offer the ability for start-up and homeworking businesses to test products within a town centre location, in order that this can offer the confidence required to start or grow businesses.

Impact

The LEADER support provided essential match funding to enable the cultural programme to help engagement with the TH project.

The project has:

- Brought in more visitors;
- Involved more volunteers;
- Safeguarded existing jobs;
- Improved quality of activities/products;
- Supported growth of existing activities;
- Brought forward planned activities.

COVID-19 Impact:

'We have had to cancel events and projects'

The project also contributed to the strategic objectives of:

- Improving local heritage;
- Improving local facilities and services..
- Increasing awareness of maintenance

Project name:	Office rental unit
Applicant:	Ardkinglas Estate
LEADER Theme:	Theme 3 – Small business support including farm diversification
LEADER Objective:	Farm diversification
Locality:	Cairndow
Amount of grant:	£103,487.29
Intervention rate:	33%
Date of award:	August 2017
Project focus:	Business premises
Web:	https://www.ardkinglas.com/building-plots-for-sale.html

The Project

A survey carried out by local charity Here We Are in 2014 showed over 25 SMEs located in the area employing over 340 people. The lack of modern, suitably equipped, affordable business accommodation and appropriate services is a major barrier to continued growth of existing businesses and to support wider economic growth and regeneration.



HIE and Argyll and Bute Council both report a lack of available office and light industrial space in the area. In addition, the development of small business units/workspaces was ranked the second most important priority, after affordable housing for rent, in the Housing and Commercial section by those responding to a community survey carried out in November 2014.

LEADER funding was therefore used to build a commercial office rental unit on land adjacent to the old sawmill at Clachan, near Cairndow in Argyll.

The unit is a two-storey building comprising 216 square metres of office space subdivided into 8 offices, with additional space for WCs and staff rooms. The eight offices will be suitable for let either to eight individual tenants or combined into larger units for let to a smaller number of tenants. The office units will be owned and administered by Ardkinglas Estate.

The project is part of a masterplan for the development location, which is within the Local Plan at Clachan, Cairndow and is owned by Ardkinglas Estate. The full development is intended to transform this predominantly underused site and comprises the erection of

commercial units, houses and a childcare centre. The facility is located near public bus services.

Impact

The project has:

- Expanded the marketplace;
- Enabled new products/services;
- Safeguarded existing jobs;
- Brought forward planned activities;
- Improved the efficiency and viability of the estate;
- Diversified income stream, supporting the core business, and making it more resilient.

The project also contributed to the strategic objectives of:

- Improving local facilities and services;
- Strengthening community capacity.

COVID-19 Impact:

'Profit and turnover are down'

Project name:	Creating business space for a sustainable Jura
Applicant:	Jura Community Business Ltd
LEADER Theme:	Theme 3 – Small business support including farm diversification
LEADER Objective:	Start-up/growth grant
Locality:	Isle of Jura
Amount of grant:	£167,975
Intervention rate:	50%
Date of award:	October 2017
Project focus:	Affordable workspace

The Project

Jura Community Business Ltd is a community owned social enterprise which was established to secure the sustainability of the islands fuel filling station in 1997 in recognition of the essential nature of access to fuel for the sustainability of the island. The social enterprise has operated the islands only fuel filling station for the past 20 years. Changes to legislation resulted in the need to reduce the operating hours of the fuel filling station, which was previously operated on an unmanned basis 13 hours per day. The turnover from fuel sales would not cover staffing costs and so the short-term solution has been to operate the filling station with volunteer cover.

Jura Community Business devised an innovation response to this issue, ensuring extended hours of operation, but also

addressing a wider community and economic need for the island, utilising the community land asset they already own by developing business workshop space on the land adjacent to the fuel filling station.



LEADER funding matched HIE investment to create new business space. Delays in completion meant the project costs were increased and some additional loan funding was required. The business units ensure the sustainability of access to fuel sales on the island which in turn is a key determinant for local people having access to essential services and the sustainability of the island as a whole. The development also provides the opportunity for ongoing economic growth on the island.

Impact

The project is absolutely additional to LEADER support, in that there were no other sources of match funding for the HIE investment to support the build.

The project has:

- Brought in more visitors;
- Involved more volunteers;
- Supported growth of existing activities;
- Brought forward planned activities;
- Improved quality of activities;
- Improved the efficiency and viability of the business.

The project also contributed to the strategic objectives of:

- Improving local facilities and services;
- Strengthening community capacity.

COVID-19 Impact:

'Turnover and profit are down'