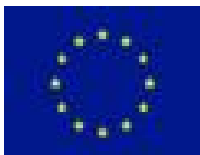


**NORTHERN IRELAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMME 2007 – 2013**

**SUBMISSION OF A LOCAL RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR AXIS 3**

**2008 – 2013 STRATEGY FORM**

**Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast Council Cluster**



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## 1.0 DESCRIPTION OF DELIVERY ORGANISATION

### 1.1 Contact Details

**Name of Joint Committee:** Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast

**Contact Name:** Paul McCormick

**Address:** Lisburn City Council

Island Civic Centre

Lisburn

BT 27 4RL

**Telephone Number:** 92509250

**Fax Number:** 92509227

**E-mail Address:** Paul.McCormick@lisburn.gov.uk

### 1.2 Membership of the Joint Committee

The Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast Joint Committee has a membership of

### 1.3 Lisburn City Council

Alderman	Edwin	Poots MLA	22 Gardners Road	Lisnastrean	Lisburn	BT27 5PD
Councillor	Thomas	Beckett	8 Gortraney Road	Balinderry	Lisburn	BT28 2JG
Councillor	Andrew	Ewing	54 Tullinisky Road	Waringsford	Dromara	BT25 2PD
Councillor	Paul	Givan	20 Chestnut Hall Drive	Maghaberry	Craigavon	BT67 0GH
Councillor	William	Ward	33 Killeaton Crescent	Derriaghy	Belfast	BT17 9HB
Councillor	Bill	Gardiner- Watson	169 Ballynahninch Road	Largymore	Lisburn	BT27 5LP
Councillor	Peter	O'Hagen	14 Waverley Avenue	Hillsborough Road	Lisburn	BT28 1JS

#### 1.4 Castlereagh Borough Council

Councillor	Anne	Beattie	Castlereagh Borough Council	1 Bradford Court	Belfast	BT8 6RP
Councillor	Jack	Beattie	Castlereagh Borough Council	1 Bradford Court	Belfast	BT8 6RP
Alderman	Gerry	Rice	Castlereagh Borough Council	1 Bradford Court	Belfast	BT8 6RP

#### 1.5 Belfast City Council

Councillor	Michael	Browne	c/o Members Room	24-26 Adelaide Street	Belfast	BT2 8GD
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#### 1.6 The Local Action Group

**Name of the Local Action Group:** Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast LAG  
**Chair** Councillor Allan Ewart  
**Address:** c/o Lisburn City Council  
Island Civic Centre  
The Island  
Lisburn  
County Antrim BT 27 4RL  
**Telephone Number:** 028 9250 9250  
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**E-mail Address:** [allan.ewart@lisburn.gov.uk](mailto:allan.ewart@lisburn.gov.uk)

## 2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategy has been completed on behalf of the Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast Joint Committee and Local Action Group and is submitted to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) as application for funding to deliver Axis 3 of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme in the region. As detailed in table 1 the strategy is for a total funding bid of £9,793,174.

**Table 1: Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast Rural Development  
Funding Bid**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Funding</b>
3.1 Farm Diversification	£1,900,000
3.2 Business Creation & Development	£2,200,000
3.3 Encouragement of Tourism Activities	£1,250,000
3.4 Basic Services	£1,000,000
3.5 Village Renewal & Development	£1,400,000
3.6 Conservation & Upgrading of Rural Heritage	£500,000
Programme Administration	£1,543,174
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£9,793,174</b>

This equates to a bid of 9.7% of total programme funds available under Axis 3 of the programme.

The strategic planning process has been informed by an extensive consultation exercise over a number of months. In total, approximately 120 people have participated in consultation meetings, with representation from farmers, rural businesses, community organisations, stakeholder organisations, elected representatives and Council officers. This strategy is a reflection of the needs that exist in the area and the LAG and Joint Committee's response with respect to how Rural Development funding

can best meet these needs. The SWOT analysis provides a summary of the needs analysis.

### SWOT Analysis

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of economic activity</li> <li>• Low level of unemployment</li> <li>• High level of employee jobs</li> <li>• Average earnings higher than NI average</li> <li>• Micro enterprise economy</li> <li>• Strong retail and service sector</li> <li>• By 2005 168 farms had diversified – potential exists!</li> <li>• Major tourism profile and potential of the Metropolitan ‘Gateway’</li> <li>• Natural landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small rural population - 6.8% of NI total</li> <li>• Pocket of high rural unemployment – Colin Glen</li> <li>• High levels of economic inactivity across the Cluster region</li> <li>• Unemployment beginning to increase!</li> <li>• Colin Glen ward is within the top10% most deprived wards in NI</li> <li>• Pockets of deprivation in respect to proximity to services</li> <li>• Worst levels of business start up amongst all 26 local authority areas</li> <li>• Weak levels of female entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Of the 1008 farms in the cluster region 727 (72.1%) are classified as very small and 155 small (15.3%) or 87.4% of all farms</li> <li>• Lack of tourism activities</li> <li>• Lack of community facilities in some rural areas</li> <li>• Poor transport infrastructure</li> <li>• Dereliction within villages</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NI Rural Development Programme funding</li> <li>▪ Lagan Corridor and Belfast Hills as two major tourism / recreation projects</li> <li>▪ Development of activity based tourism at Lagan Valley Regional Park – walking, cycling, angling, canoeing/kayaking, horse riding etc</li> <li>▪ Large target market for farm diversification</li> <li>▪ Increase enterprise start up rates by focusing on women and young people</li> <li>▪ Enhance opportunities for young people</li> <li>▪ Development of tourism infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Development of vibrant villages</li> <li>▪ Rural heritage – Harry Ferguson project</li> <li>▪ Investment in renewable energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Planning</li> <li>▪ Current economic climate e.g. construction sector which is critical to the region!</li> </ul>

## **Strategic Aim**

It is the aim of the Joint Committee and LAG that through the implementation of Axis 3 funding under the NI Rural Development Programme, they will achieve their vision of:

*A high quality of life experience, with excellent rural community infrastructure, an enterprising rural economy and quality rural recreational opportunities.*

This will be achieved through the attainment of the following aims and objectives.



**Table 2: Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast Development Strategy Aims and Objectives**

Measure	Aim	Objectives
<b>3.1 Farm Diversification</b>	To increase farm household incomes through diversification activity	1) To support 50 farmers / members of farm families to diversify by 2013
<b>3.2 Business Creation &amp; Development</b>	To develop a strong rural micro enterprise sector	1) To enhance enterprise development 2) To support the establishment of 25 new enterprises by 2013 3) To support the development of 25 existing micro enterprises by 2013 1) To support 5 social economy businesses by 2013
<b>3.3 Encouragement of Tourism Activities</b>	To develop rural tourism infrastructure that will increase and enhance the rural recreational tourism performance of the area	1) To increase activity based tourism infrastructure by a minimum of 5 new projects by 2013 2) To support the strategic development of the natural tourism resources in the area by 2013 3) To increase tourist accommodation provision, in support of rural recreational development
<b>3.4 Basic Services</b>	To meet the basic needs of the rural population	1) To support rural services that meet the needs of older people 2) To support rural services that meet the needs of children and young people 3) To improve rural transport provision within the area 4) To support community based service provision
<b>3.5 Village Renewal &amp; Development</b>	To regenerate rural villages as vibrant rural communities	1) To work with 8 villages in the implementation of a Village Renewal Plan 2) To support physical and environmental regeneration improvements recommended in the 8 village plans
<b>3.6 Conservation &amp; Upgrading of Rural Heritage</b>	To increase awareness and knowledge of the natural, industrial and cultural heritage significance of the region	1) To improve heritage interpretation

### **3.0 POLICY CONTEXT**

The Strategic Plan for the Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast region has been compiled with an understanding and appreciation of the strategic priorities that it must seek to address in terms of other policy objectives.

#### **3.1 Northern Ireland Rural Development Strategy 2007-2013**

Over the last 20 years, the composition of rural society has changed considerably, particularly near larger urban centres, as more people have chosen to live in the countryside and travel longer distances to work. Together with a rising population, this has increased pressure for improved transport networks and better public services in these accessible rural areas. It has also created opportunities for more retail outlets and consumer services.

Agriculture plays a more important role in the economy of Northern Ireland than is the case in the UK as a whole. Perhaps of more significance is the fact that approximately 80% of the total Northern Ireland land area of 1.4 million hectares is in agricultural use, which defines much of the rural landscape character. The Less Favoured Areas (so designated under EU legislation largely as a reflection of their agricultural production characteristics) account for 70% of the farmed land in Northern Ireland and are location to 67% of the region's full-time farmers and 72% of its part-time farmers.

Records show that farming communities are continuing to change, with fewer farms remaining economically sustainable in the absence of an external source of income and a consequent downward pressure on farming's level of employment. To meet the challenges that this creates requires diversification out of traditional farming and the growth of a stronger, more diverse rural economy.

The importance and relevance of the CAP and rural development at a European level have increased with the recent enlargement of the European Union. The European Model of Agriculture reflects the multifunctional role that farming plays in the richness and diversity of landscapes, the production of food and the cultural and natural heritage of rural areas.

The guiding principles for EU agricultural and rural development policies were set by the European Council in Göteborg in 2001 and confirmed in the Lisbon Strategy Conclusions in Thessaloniki in June 2003: –

*"Strong economic performance must go hand in hand with the sustainable use of natural resources and levels of waste, maintaining biodiversity, preserving ecosystems and avoiding desertification. To meet these challenges, the European Council agrees that the Common Agricultural Policy and its future development should, among its objectives, contribute to achieving sustainable development by increasing its emphasis on encouraging healthy, high quality products, environmentally sustainable production methods, including organic production, renewable raw materials and the protection of biodiversity."*

The European Commission agreed the 'Support for Rural Development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development' (EAFRD) which reinforces the EU's rural development policy and aims to promote sustainable rural development throughout the Community in a way that complements the market and income support policies of the CAP, Cohesion Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy.

EAFRD sets out three major objectives (referred to as Priority Axes) for rural development policy for the period 2007–2013, reflecting the November 2003 Salzburg conference conclusions and the outcomes of the Lisbon and Göteborg European Councils. These three comprise:

**Axis 1: Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry by supporting restructuring, development and innovation;**

**Axis 2: Improving the environment and the countryside by supporting land management; and**

**Axis 3: Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity.**

The NI Rural Strategy 2007-2013 advocates a strategic approach to growing competitiveness, fostering job creation, maintaining and investing in the region's natural, cultural and community assets and supporting innovation in rural areas. By helping Northern Ireland's rural areas fulfil their potential, rural development policy can play its part in the sustainable development of the entire region.

The overall theme of the Strategy is:

*“Diversifying the rural economy, protecting the rural environment and sustaining rural communities”.*

The NI Rural Strategy is structured around four broad aims as follows:-

**Key Aim 1: Creating a Rural Champion**

**Key Aim 2: Improving Performance in the Marketplace**

**Key Aim 3: Conserving and Investing in the Rural Environment**

**Key Aim 4: Strengthening the Social and Economic Infrastructure of Rural areas**

Undoubtedly the programmes supported under Axis 3 of the EAFRD will assist the department (DARD) to achieve all of its four strategic aims.

## **3.2 Equality Strategies and Government Priority Areas**

Equality has always been important in the delivery of the RDP and groups such as women, children and disabled people have benefited to some extent through funding of meaningful projects that have improved aspects of their lives. However, in recent years a number of separate and important strategies for Northern Ireland have been developed which focus in more detail on some of these equality groups. Some of the current action plans for these overarching strategies already reflect specific targets relating to the RDP.

### **3.2.1 The Anti-poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy / Lifetime Opportunities**

The Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland is structured around a number of general challenges which become the priorities for future policy and action. These are as follows:

- Eliminating poverty;
- Eliminating social exclusion;
- Tackling area based deprivation;
- Eliminating poverty from rural areas;

Of particular relevance to the Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast Rural Development Strategy is priority four, 'eliminating poverty from rural areas'. The strategy states:

*'Government will strive to increase the economic sustainability of all farm businesses, to increase added value in the land and marine*

*based economy and increase local and export demand for Northern Ireland produce, yielding more sustainable employment in rural areas. Actions will include targeted strategies for Research and Development and technology transfer, for food and for significant economic sectors. The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) will provide competence, development programmes to assist the development of competitive and sustainable farm businesses through improvements in existing enterprises or by on-farm diversification.*

*Government recognises the need to strengthen the social and economic infrastructure of rural areas by supporting farm based non-agri businesses and non-farm small rural businesses in the creation of rural jobs. Government will work to ensure that rural and fisheries dependent villages and communities in greatest need, are sustained and regenerated and have equitable access to public services and programmes. Government will seek to build a strong rural community infrastructure which will help provide economic and social opportunities for everyone, but in particular, for young people who want to live and work in the countryside’.*

There are obvious implications for this rural development programme, not least the need for effective coordination and cooperation between the department (DARD) and the LAG / Joint Committee as the new programme is rolled out.

There are four target groups within the Strategy’s Action Plan - ‘early years’ children; children and young people; working age adults and older citizens. The LAG and Joint Committee has already identified children and young people and older people as target groups for its programme and through effective monitoring will ensure that the same groups are benefiting from the new RDP.

### 3.2.2 The Children and Young People's Strategy

The aim of the Children and Young People's Strategy, which was launched in June 2006, is to ensure that by 2016 all children and young people are fulfilling their potential. The Strategy sets out what will be done over the course of the next ten years to bring about improvements in the lives of Northern Ireland children and young people with a focus on high level outcomes and effective measures and indicators of progress.

A Children and Young People's Action Plan 2007-2008 aims to monitor progress of Departmental actions against the following performance indicators:

- Healthy;
- Enjoying, learning and achieving;
- Living in safety and with stability;
- Experiencing economic and environmental well-being;
- Contributing positively to community and society;
- Living in a society which respects their rights.

The Action Plan states in respect to rurality:

*'Rural Northern Ireland creates its own set of challenges and opportunities for children and young people living in rural communities. The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) is an integral part of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The primary aim of the College is to develop the competences and values of people entering and working in the agri-food industry. This in turn will increase the capability of those people to contribute to the sustained economic growth of the industry and development of rural society. As part of its provision, CAFRE will offer a range of training and development opportunities targeted at children and young people. Where appropriate, these opportunities will integrate with other*

*government policies for example, Entitled to Succeed and the campaign on farm safety by the Health and Safety Executive of Northern Ireland. CAFRE will also seek, through community education initiatives and training programmes to develop children and young people's awareness of the rural environment, the links with food production, sustainability issues and farm safety across the wider community.*

*Rural Proofing is a process that aims to ensure that government policies are examined carefully and objectively to ensure that they treat rural dwellers fairly and in particular to make public services accessible on a fair basis to people wherever they live in Northern Ireland. It was a key feature of the Northern Ireland Assembly's first Programme for Government and a Rural Proofing Steering Group was established in 2002 to monitor and evaluate the implementation of rural proofing policy. Responsibility for ensuring that the rural proofing initiative is effectively developed and that departments have adequate guidance for rural proofing lies with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. However, each department must apply the process of rural proofing to its own policies. All actions within this Plan should be rural proofed by departments in their policy development and delivery stages to ensure that the needs of children and young people in rural areas are fully taken into account'.*

Again it is important that the department (DARD) establishes effective lines of communication with the LAG /Joint Committee in order to share information on departmental programmes and initiatives and to cooperate where possible and needed.

### **3.2.3 Racial Equality Strategy / A Shared Future**

The Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland was published in July 2005. The Strategy provides a framework to:



- tackle racial inequalities and to open up opportunity for all;
- eradicate racism and hate crime; and
- together with 'A Shared Future' - the Policy and Strategic framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland - initiate actions to promote good race relations.

The Race Action Plan has six strategic aims:

- Elimination of racial inequality;
- Equal protection;
- Equality of service provision;
- Participation;
- Dialogue;
- Capacity building.

A Shared Future, published in March 2005, established the Government's vision for the future of Northern Ireland - a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all. The subsequent Shared Future Triennial Action Plan 2006 - 2009 published in April 2006 detailed the practical actions that Government Departments and agencies have committed themselves to in order that the vision takes shape over the next three years and beyond.

The role of the Local Action Group (LAG) is important in respect to the representation and articulation of the needs of all sections of the rural economy. Effective channels back into the groups, sectors and networks represented through the LAG need to be established and monitored to ensure that all minorities and interests within the rural Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast areas are recognised and benefit from the RDP. One way to ensure that these communication issues are

addressed is through an ongoing marketing effort on behalf of the LAG /Joint Committee.

Table 3 provides an overview of which of the Axis 3 measures will specifically address the strategic policy objectives as discussed.

**Table 3: Compliance with Government’s Cross Cutting Strategies**

	<i>Measure 3.1 - Farm Diversification</i>	<i>Measure 3.2 - Business Creation &amp; Development</i>	<i>Measure 3.2 - Tourism</i>	<i>Measure 3.4 – Basic Services</i>	<i>Measure 3.5 – Village Renewal</i>	<i>Measure 3.6 – Rural Heritage</i>
<b>NI Rural Development Strategy 2007-2013</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Anti-Poverty &amp; Social Inclusion Strategy</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Children &amp; Young People’s Strategy</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Racial Equality Strategy / Shared Future</b>				✓	✓	✓

## **4.0 ANALYSIS OF NEED**

Analysis of need has been informed by:

- A desk based exercise, researching public data and local studies and strategies
- Public consultation
- A stakeholder round table workshop
- Discussions with Council Officers
- A Strategic Planning Day with LAG and Joint Committee members

### **4.1 Public Consultation**

Over the duration of the animation process and the strategic planning process every opportunity has been taken to consult with local people regarding the rural development needs and opportunities in the Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast areas. Meetings facilitated included:

- Elected members workshop 10am to 12pm on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April - Lisburn Civic Centre
- Public information evening at 7.30pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May – Lisburn Civic Centre
- Public workshop meeting 2 to 4pm and 7 to 9pm on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May – Ramada Hotel, Belfast
- Public workshop meeting 2 to 4pm and 7 to 9pm on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May – Glenavy
- Public workshop meeting 2 to 4pm and 7 to 9pm on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May – Hillsborough
- Stakeholder roundtable workshop 10am to 1pm Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June - Lisburn Civic Centre
- Joint Committee and LAG Strategic Planning Day 10am to 3pm Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July - Lisburn Civic Centre

In total approximately 120 people have participated in these meetings, with representation from farmers, rural businesses, community organisations, stakeholder organisations, elected representatives and Council officers. Copies of the presentations for each of these meetings are attached in Appendix 1. Details of attendees are attached in Appendix 2.

The Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast Cluster has sought to ensure that across the region, everyone with an interest in rural development has had an opportunity to input to the strategic planning process i.e. general public, farmers, businesses, young people, community organisations, elected representatives, statutory bodies, local authority staff, service delivery organisations etc. This has involved:

a) Advertising public workshops in the following local press:

- Belfast Telegraph
- North, South & East Belfast Community Telegraphs
- Andersonstown News
- Ulster star
- Dromore & Banbridge Leader
- Dromore Weekender
- Ards Chronicle
- Farm Week
- Farming Life

b) Sending personalised invitations to individuals / organisations from each of the three Council databases for the public workshops.

c) Inviting approximately 40 stakeholder organisations to a round table workshop.

d) Inviting section 75 representative organisations to public meetings (see Appendix 5 for details of those organisations contacted)

Public consultation workshops were timed to be as accessible as possible to rural residents, with one session scheduled from 2pm to 4pm and a repeat session from 7pm to 9pm.

Unfortunately time did not permit for this strategy to be widely and publicly circulated in advance of the DARD deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> July for submission. During the month of August the strategy will be circulated to organisations involved in the consultation and will be made available on Council websites for comment and feedback.

## **4.2 Area Profile**

The following area profile has been informed by publicly available statistics, and is presented by local authority area, as in many instances the type of data that is most relevant to the Rural Development Programme is only available at this scale. It is believed that this information is sufficient for the purposes of giving an overview of the economic and social conditions that prevail within the Cluster region.

In addition ward level data has also been incorporated, where relevant for the rural wards of Castlereagh namely Ballyhanwood, Moneyreagh and Carryduff East and West which are the target areas for the Rural Development Programme. However, it is noted that there are other rural areas within Castlereagh Borough outside of the three wards e.g. Carrowreagh and that these areas should not be excluded from rural development funding.

Finally, ward level data has been provided for the seven wards of Belfast included within the Belfast Hills Operational Area. This data should, however be treated with a degree of caution given that the total area of the wards is almost twice that of the Belfast Hills Partnership Area and the target area within Belfast is the open portion of

countryside outside the Metropolitan Development Limit<sup>1</sup>. Information provided by NISRA has confirmed that the majority of the Belfast rural area constitutes the area known as the Belfast Hills but two other areas in East Belfast are also designated rural. These areas constitute 4 specific postcodes on the Belmont Road and Quarry Road in the Stormont ward.

#### 4.2.1 Population

DARD figures indicate that the rural population of the three Local Government Districts (LGDs) of Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast is 40,350, which equates to 6.76% of the NI rural population. A breakdown of the rural population in each of the three council areas is illustrated in table 4.

**Table 4: Rural Population**

Area	Population
Lisburn	35,580
Castlereagh	4,285
Belfast	485
Total	40,350

Source: DARD

For Lisburn and Castlereagh 13 rural wards make up the majority of the target area for the Rural Development Programme.

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<sup>1</sup> Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan definition of Belfast City Council rural area

**Table 5: Rural Wards**

Council Area	Council Ward
<b>Castlereagh</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ballyhanwood</li> <li>▪ Moneyreagh</li> <li>▪ Carryduff</li> </ul>
<b>Lisburn</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Colin Glen</li> <li>▪ Ballinderry</li> <li>▪ Ballymacbrennan</li> <li>▪ Ballymacoss</li> <li>▪ Blaris</li> <li>▪ Dromara</li> <li>▪ Drumbo</li> <li>▪ Glenavy</li> <li>▪ Hillhall</li> <li>▪ Hillsborough</li> <li>▪ Lambeg</li> <li>▪ Maghaberry</li> <li>▪ Maze</li> <li>▪ Moira</li> </ul>

#### **4.2.2 Demographics**

The age structure of the resident population throughout the Cluster region is broadly similar. The percentage of persons under 16 years old is significantly higher in the Belfast Hills Operational Area which is typical of a more urban area (within Belfast Hills wards Upper Springfield has 32.1% aged 16 and under). It is also worth noting the significant differences between Castlereagh Borough and the three Castlereagh rural wards in particular with respect to the older population (60+) which comprises 21.2% of Castlereagh Borough and only 16.9% of the three rural; wards. The ratio of males/females is broadly in line with Northern Ireland as is average age with the exception of Castlereagh Borough which has a slightly higher percentage of 60+ years. Finally, Lisburn because of its rural characteristics is the only area comparative to the Northern Ireland average in respect to population density. Castlereagh Borough, rural Castlereagh and Belfast Hills are more urban / residential in nature.

**Table 6: Demographics**

	<b>Castlereagh Rural Wards</b>	<b>Castlereagh</b>	<b>Belfast Hills Wards</b>	<b>Lisburn</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>
% persons under 16 years old	23.8	21.7	26.0	24.5	<b>23.6</b>
% persons aged 60 and over	16.9	21.2	17.7	16.1	<b>17.6</b>
Average age	36.4	38.3	34.8	35.1	<b>35.8</b>
% male	48.6	47.6	47.6	48.7	<b>48.7</b>
% female	51.4	52.4	52.4	51.7	<b>51.3</b>
Population density (persons per hectare)	5.02	7.81	18.35	2.43	<b>1.19</b>

Table 7 shows that the proportion of lone pensioner households and households with lone parents that have dependent children.

**Table 7: Proportion of lone pensioner households and lone parent with dependent children households, by area<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Lone pensioner households – proportion of all households</b>	<b>Lone parent with dependent children households – proportion of all households</b>
Belfast Hills Wards	12.3%	13.8%
Castlereagh Borough	14.1%	5.7%
Castlereagh Rural Wards	9.5%	4.8%
Lisburn	11.3%	8.8%
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>

Table 7 suggests that the Belfast Hills Operational Area has a significantly higher percentage of lone parent households with

<sup>2</sup> Source: Census 2001 Key Statistics, NISRA, Census Standard Tables by DC, NISRA



dependents than the Northern Ireland average. Castlereagh Borough has a higher percentage of lone pensioner households but a significantly lesser percentage of lone parents with dependents which carries through to the three rural wards which has nearly half the Northern Ireland average of lone parent households. Lisburn is noteworthy only in so much as it very similar to the Northern Ireland averages for both lone pensioner and lone parent with dependent children households.

### 4.2.3 Skills and Education

The qualifications of residents of each area, according to figures from the 2001 Census, are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: Level of Educational Qualifications by Area<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Qualification Level</b>	<b>Belfast Hills Wards</b>	<b>Castlereagh Borough</b>	<b>Castlereagh Rural Wards</b>	<b>Lisburn</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>
5 or more GCSE passes	58.7	66.0	79.4	64.4	<b>63.1</b>
Higher Education entrants	32.6	43.6	51.2	36.2	<b>38.2</b>
Further Education entrants	19.1	25.2	24.9	28.8	<b>27.6</b>

These figures above highlight that the Belfast Hills Operational Area underperform in each measure of skills and qualifications with significantly lesser numbers of people achieving 5 GCSE's or more and less going on to Higher Education and Further Education. The three rural wards of Castlereagh are characterized by a high percentage of people achieving 5 GCSE's and over 50% going on to Higher Education. Interestingly, there are less people going to Further Education as a result of the high numbers going to Higher Education. Lisburn is again distinguished by its remarkable alignment to the Northern Ireland average!

<sup>3</sup> Source: Census 2001 Key Statistics, NISRA Census Standard Tables by DC, NISRA

#### 4.2.4 Economic Activity

The economic activity rates for the Cluster region compared with Northern Ireland are shown in Table 9.

**Table 9: Economic Activity Rates (2006)<sup>4</sup>**

<b>Area</b>	<b>% economically active</b>	<b>% economically inactive</b>
Belfast Hills Wards	55.6	44.4
Castlereagh Borough	66.9	33.1
Castlereagh Rural Wards	71.0	29.0
Lisburn	65.4	34.6
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>62.3</b>	<b>27.7</b>

This indicates that bar the Belfast Hills Operational Area economic activity within the region is high, with a higher than average percentage of economically active people, compared to Northern Ireland as a whole. The flip side of the coin is that there are also a significantly greater proportion of people in the area that are classified as economically inactive. Economic inactivity is not always a negative as it can indicate a high percentage of retired people or younger people in full time education which is borne out by some of the figures for Higher Education intake. However, it can also indicate a high number of people receiving benefits who are classified as being unfit to work. This particular group is increasingly being targeted by the government's new welfare to work programmes which will in the future make it more difficult for people to retain benefits without having to undertake rigorous assessments. The economically inactive group including full time students, retired persons and people in receipt of benefits should be targeted as potential beneficiaries of Measures 3.1 and 3.2 – diversification and business creation.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: NISRA, 2001 Census

#### 4.2.5 Unemployment

The most recent claimant count unemployment rates are shown in Table 10. The general trend throughout the UK has been of a gradual increase in the numbers claiming Jobseeker Allowance after years of reduction and this is also evident within the Cluster region.

**Table 10: Claimant Count Unemployment, January 2008<sup>5</sup>**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Claimant count unemployment rate</b>	<b>Annual change 2007-2008</b>
Belfast Hills Wards	6.2%	
Castlereagh Rural Wards	1.8%	
Castlereagh	1.1%	0.1%
Lisburn	2.0%	0.2%
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>

Again, the Belfast Hills Operational Area has a much greater percentage of people claiming jobseekers (Upper Springfield approximately 10%). However, the only rural ward within the Cluster region with a significant percentage of Jobseekers is Colin Glen and therefore should remain a focus for job creation activity within the Rural Development Programme.

#### 4.2.6 Jobs

The total number of employee jobs in each area is shown in table 11 broken down into gender and full time, part time employment.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: DETI, NI DC Briefing July 2008

**Table 11: Employee jobs<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Male Full Time</b>	<b>Male Part Time</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female Full Time</b>	<b>Female Part Time</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>All Persons</b>
Belfast Hills Wards	1,467 32.1%	328 7.2%	1,795 39.2%	1,280 28%	1,500 32.8%	2,780 60.8%	4,575
Castlereagh Rural Wards	1,991 48.5%	432 10.5%	2,423 59%	719 27.5%	965 23.4%	1,684 41%	4,107
Castlereagh	9,773 38.8%	1,865 7.4%	11,638 46.2%	7,639 30.3%	5,915 23.5%	13,554 53.8%	25,192
Lisburn	16,750 43.4%	3,058 7.9%	19,808 51.3%	8,984 23.3%	9,804 25.4%	18,752 48.6%	38,560
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>274,430</b> <b>40.1%</b>	<b>51,072</b> <b>7.5%</b>	<b>325,502</b> <b>47.6%</b>	<b>181,920</b> <b>26.6%</b>	<b>175,632</b> <b>25.7%</b>	<b>357,552</b> <b>52.4%</b>	<b>683,054</b> <b>100%</b>

When we look at employee jobs it is interesting to note the higher percentage of male full time jobs and female part time jobs within the Belfast Hills Operational Area. There is also a much higher percentage of males in employment within the Castlereagh rural wards than the Northern Ireland average. We also know that the number of employee jobs has been increasing throughout the Cluster region over the last 8 years, more people are in employment than ever before. The figures above indicate a greater percentage of males in employment than females in comparison to the Northern Ireland average. It also indicates the high numbers of people who are in part time employment, which is approximately a third of the total employee jobs. This is reflected in the growth of the retail sector in particular and the service sector in general which is borne out by the sectoral analysis included in a later part of the area profile.

### **Farm jobs**

The total number of farmers in the Cluster region in 2006 was 1,282. The total number of farm jobs in the Cluster region in 2006 was 1,941. A breakdown of the agricultural labour force is as follows:

<sup>6</sup> Source: DETI, NI DC Briefing

**Table 12: Agricultural labour force 2006**

	Number of farmers	Number of self employed	Number of spouses	Number of other workers	Total number of agricultural labour
<b>Belfast Hills Wards</b>	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	20
<b>Castlereagh Rural Wards</b>	98	n/a	n/a	n/a	202
<b>Lisburn</b>	1,072	611	238	372	1,682
<b>Castlereagh</b>	202	89	34	54	239
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	31,994	17,981	6,285	11,673	49,952

Agriculture is the third most important sector in Lisburn City and plays an important part in the economic development of the city council area. Retaining agriculture is a priority for the RDP and it is important that the LAG and Joint Committee promote and encourage farmers to avail of the funding available through farm diversification and business creation to help stabilize and grow the local economy.

#### 4.2.7 Earnings

Table 13 shows the median gross weekly earnings of all employees in each of the LGD's.

**Table 13: Median Gross Weekly Earnings - home postcode (2007)<sup>7</sup>**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Median earnings (all employees)</b>	<b>Median earnings (men)</b>	<b>Median earnings (women)</b>
Belfast	£370.8	£432.1	£303.3
Castlereagh	£389.0	£393.1	£377.2
Lisburn	£398.3	£447.8	-
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>£330.70</b>	<b>£396.40</b>	<b>£273.60</b>

<sup>7</sup> Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2007 by LGD, DETI

Median gross weekly earnings throughout the cluster region are higher than the Northern Ireland average which would be expected given its proximity to the major centre of commerce and industry. In Castlereagh interestingly the median earnings for men is slightly below the Northern Ireland average, yet the average female earnings is significantly higher. This might be expected given the high number of government jobs located within Castlereagh Borough?

#### 4.2.8 Enterprise

The NI Rural Development Programme is targeted at the micro enterprise sector i.e. businesses employing less than 10 employees. DETI Figures indicate that in 2002 micro enterprises constituted 89% of the total VAT registered businesses in Northern Ireland. Table 14 provides a breakdown of VAT registered micro enterprises across each LGD.

**Table 14: VAT Registered Enterprises<sup>8</sup>**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Micro Businesses Registered for VAT (0-9 employees)</b>	<b>Total VAT Registered Businesses</b>	<b>Percentage of Total VAT Registered Businesses</b>
Belfast	4,815	6,145	78%
Castlereagh	860	1,035	83%
Lisburn	2,485	2,885	86%
Northern Ireland	47,795	53,515	89.3%

In order to better understand the nature of VAT registered businesses in each LGD, Table 15 details businesses according to turnover. This shows some interesting variations.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: VAT registered businesses 2002 by employee size band and District Council

**Table 12: Businesses Registered for VAT by turnover<sup>9</sup>**

District Council	Turnover (£000)							Total
	1-49	50-99	100-249	250-499	500-999	1,000-4,999	5,000+	
Belfast	745	1,200	1,620	955	680	710	235	6,145
Castlereagh	220	240	235	115	90	110	25	1,035
Lisburn	770	610	625	315	235	265	65	2,885
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>17,930</b>	<b>11,315</b>	<b>11,270</b>	<b>5,200</b>	<b>3,475</b>	<b>3,460</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>53,515</b>
Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5 and thus may not add to totals.								

Figures in Table 16 show the industry of VAT registered businesses in each area. The top three industries in terms of number of businesses for each area are shown. In Belfast Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities (i.e. service sector) is the largest sector followed by retail and construction. In Castlereagh, Retail is the number one sector followed by construction and the service sector. Finally, the largest sector in Lisburn is retail followed by agriculture and finally construction. One thing of note throughout the region is the importance of the construction sector which is currently going through difficult times. This will have an impact upon the rural economy both in terms of employment and income generation.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Businesses Registered for VAT by turnover, DETI 2002

**Table 16: Top three industries of VAT registered businesses, 2002<sup>10</sup>**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Number of VAT registered enterprises</b>
Belfast	Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities	1,935
	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles, Motorcycles and Personal and Household Goods	1,875
	Construction	535
Castlereagh	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles, Motorcycles and Personal and Household Goods	320
	Construction	190
	Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities	170
Lisburn	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles, Motorcycles and Personal and Household Goods	735
	Agriculture	605
	Construction	460

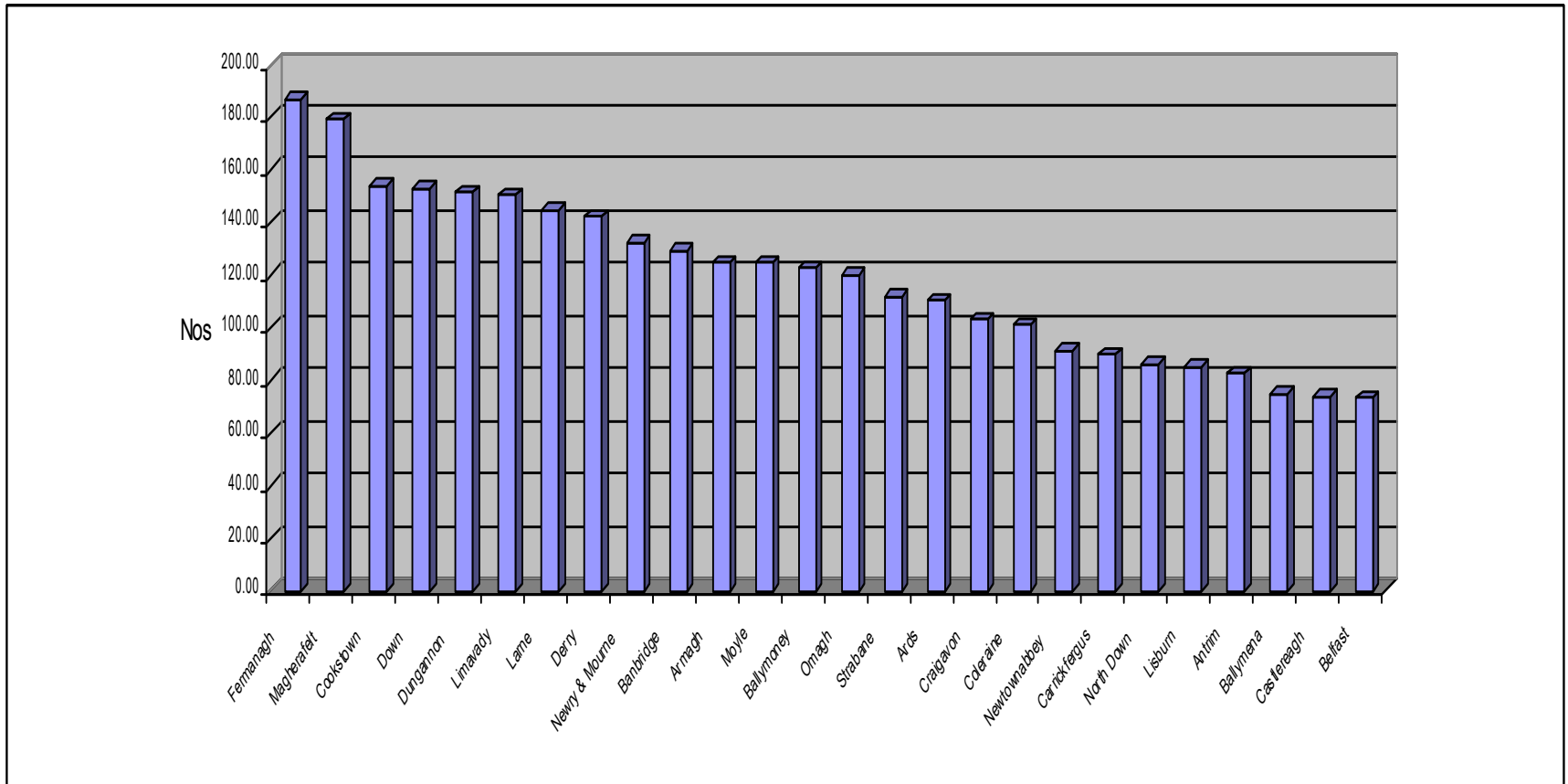
Figure 1 illustrates Start a Business Approvals for each of the 26 Local Authorities. Fermanagh, at number 1, has 186 Business Start approvals per 10,000 adult population. As the graph illustrates the Cluster region is amongst the lowest ranked and worst performing council areas on this measure.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: VAT Registered Businesses by DC 2002, DETI



**Figure 1: Invest NI Start a Business Programme Approvals by District Council Area  
Per 10,000 Adult Population 2002/03 to 2006/07<sup>11</sup>**



<sup>11</sup> Figures for 2006/07 are provisional and may be subject to amendment

#### 4.2.9 Agriculture & Farm Diversification

Table 17 shows the number of farms in each LGD and type of farms as classified by DARD and finally the % of farms which had diversified by 2005.

**Table 17: Agricultural data**

Area	Number of farms 2006	Number of very small farms 2006	Number of small Farms 2006	Number of medium farms 2006	Number of large farms 2006	% Any Diversification projects 2005
Belfast	29	19	5	2	2	13.6
Castlereagh	118	83	19	9	7	19.5
Lisburn	861	625	131	52	53	16.4
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>26,739</b>	<b>20,399</b>	<b>3,650</b>	<b>1,415</b>	<b>1,355</b>	<b>9.4</b>

Increasingly, farmers are becoming more dependent upon non-farm income as an important source of income for the farming family. One source of such income is diversification. DARD figures for diversification by District Council area across Northern Ireland indicate that in 2005 approximately 10% of all farms had diversified. For this region, the rate of diversification was higher (13.6% in Belfast, 19.5% in Castlereagh and 16.4% in Lisburn). This is however still low compared to the UK rate of diversification which is quoted by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as around 50% of farms in the UK who have supplemented traditional incomes through farm diversification.

In a DEFRA Farm Diversification publication<sup>12</sup> Farm Business Survey results for 2006-07 show that the majority of farm diversification enterprises were focused on letting out buildings for non agricultural use.

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<sup>12</sup> DEFRA Farm Diversification - January 2008

Table 18 shows the breakdown of diversification activity by the average enterprise income.

**Table 18: Income from Diversified Enterprises – England 2006 - 07<sup>13</sup>**

<b>Diversification Activity</b>	<b>% of farms</b>	<b>Average Enterprise Income (£/Farm)</b>
Letting buildings for non farm use	36%	£12,200
Processing / retailing of farm produce	8%	£14,200
Sport & recreation	11%	£5,100
Tourist accommodation & catering	4%	£13,800
Other diversified activities	8%	£10,500

In a recent report by DEFRA on Barriers to Farm Diversification<sup>14</sup> it was acknowledged that there are a wide range of issues that can affect both decisions to undertake diversification projects and the future success of those projects. These included:

- Validity of market research
- Capacity to develop a considered business case
- Quality of business skills and training generally
- Availability of appropriately skilled personnel
- Regulatory controls (including but not limited to planning)
- Lack of access to broadband
- Lack of specialist business advice
- Lack of finance

<sup>13</sup> DEFRA Farm Diversification - January 2008

<sup>14</sup> Barriers to Farm Diversification – report of the Joint Industry – Government Working Group, DEFRA, June 2007

The Working Group concluded that the two most significant barriers to diversification were a lack of generic business skills in the farming community and planning controls. The Working Group particularly identified business planning as a key skills gap for diversified enterprises and felt that the need for business planning, both as a skill and as an ongoing business activity required intervention to ensure that the agricultural industry upgraded performance to meet that of mainstream business practice.

Figures provided by DARD of diversification projects by local authority area indicate (2005):

- Lisburn                    141 diversification projects supported
- Castlereagh            23 diversification projects supported
- Belfast                    4 diversification projects supported

A breakdown of the farm diversification projects is highlighted in Table 19 below which highlights the type of diversification projects provided in 2005 throughout the Cluster region. It indicates some success and a base upon which to build with the new funding provided through the RDP.

**Table 19: Estimation of diversification among active farms –NI 2005**

<b>Diversification Category</b>	<b>Tourism</b>	<b>Direct Sales</b>	<b>Processing of farm products</b>	<b>Agricultural contracting</b>	<b>Non agricultural contracting</b>	<b>Livestock haulage</b>	<b>Equine Sports</b>	<b>Other activities</b>	<b>Any Diversification</b>
Lisburn City Council area	21	18	6	36	31	13	27	27	141
Castlereagh Borough Council area	6	0	0	8	3	0	0	3	23
Belfast City Council area	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>% of NI total</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7%</b>

*Source: Farm structure survey 2005 DARD*

DARD has also made available figures in respect to the 'Diversification Challenge' programme which is provided through the department and helps prepare farmers to develop their diversification ideas and projects. Although these figures relate to all of Northern Ireland they provide an interesting 'snapshot' of the type of projects being considered and the current degree of interest in farm diversification (figures are accurate as of June 2008).

Approximately 1,223 training places were provided through 'Diversification Challenge'. Of the 1223 that commenced training 681 successfully completed their training as follows:

- Business Planning – 347
- Business Start – 232
- Business Start Follow On -102

295 businesses have participated on a 'Diversification Challenge' course. Training has been provided to 333 farm family members within these 295 businesses. Currently, there are 253 full-time and 335 part-time jobs being provided by the 295 businesses. A further breakdown of the 295 businesses is provided in Table 20.

**Table 20 Breakdown of 295 businesses by classification**

<b>Business Category</b>	<b>Numbers in Business area</b>	<b>% Value</b>	<b>Examples of businesses</b>
Services	128	43.4%	Landscaping, alternative therapies, Business Services, Kennels, Photography
Tourism & Leisure	71	24%	Self Catering, B&B, Activities - equine, paintball
Manufacturing & Crafts	65	22%	Fabrication, Steel erecting, Handcrafts
Adding Value to Farm Produce	17	5.8%	Farm shops, Bottled water, Ice Cream
Specialist crops & Livestock	7	2.4%	Worm Farming, Nurseries
Retailing	7	2.4%	Farm supplies, quads
<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>100%</b>	

The information above highlights the interest which still exists with respect to diversification and the potential for delivering an innovative programme within the Lisburn – Castlereagh-Belfast cluster region. If Northern Ireland was to aim for 25% of all farms to diversify (based on the 50% already who have diversified in England) by 2013 this would establish a major challenge for the new programme.

#### **4.2.10 Deprivation**

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (2005) identifies areas of multiple deprivation across Northern Ireland as well as highlighting particular issues of educational need, employment deprivation, income deprivation, proximity to services, living environment and health

inequalities. In general the Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast rural target area does not suffer multiple levels of deprivation however there are exceptions and pockets of deprivation. Within the area the Colin Glen ward is the most deprived rural ward with a rank of 21 out of 582 wards in Northern Ireland and ranks within the top 10% most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. All information for Colin Glen ward is shown below and demonstrates the serious issues that the Rural Development Programme should seek to address in alleviating deprivation.

<b>Ward Scores and Ranks (NIMDM 2005)</b>	<b>Ward Score</b>	<b>Ward Rank</b>	
<b>Multiple Deprivation Measure</b>	52.69	21	5% most deprived wards in NI
<b>Income Domain</b>	0.61	8	5% most deprived wards in NI
<b>Employment Domain</b>	0.26	38	10% most deprived wards in NI
<b>Health Deprivation and Disability Domain</b>	0.71	65	15% most deprived wards in NI
<b>Education, Skills and Training Domain</b>	56.36	29	5% most deprived wards in NI
<b>Proximity to Services Domain</b>	-0.08	317	
<b>Living Environment Domain</b>	40.54	54	10% most deprived wards in NI
<b>Crime and Disorder Domain</b>	40.26	70	15% most deprived wards in NI

Other pockets of deprivation that exist in the area are primarily in relation to proximity to services, as would be expected for the more rural and remote areas. Specifically, NIMDM figures show that at a Super Output Area (SOA) in relation to proximity to service:

- Glenavy has a ranking of 66 which puts it in the top 10% most deprived SOAs in NI
- Dromara, Ballymacbrennan and Ballymacross have a ranking which puts them in the top 20% most deprived SOAs





Due to the way the annual NI farm census is recorded, it is not possible to derive figures for 2004 on the basis of the Belfast Hills boundary. Some descriptive statistics are however available for 2003 on the basis of the Belfast Hills Partnership (BHS) boundary.

The BHP boundary encloses some 4,254 hectares of lands and includes 19 farms in 2003 which together comprised 1,146 hectares (27% of the BHP area). This area supported 1,655 cattle, 392 sheep, 0 pigs and 57 poultry. In terms of farm size there were:

- 4 farms @ <20 ha.
- 7 farms @ 20-50 ha.
- 6 farms @ 50-100 ha.
- 2 farms @ >100 ha.

Of the 1,146 hectares farmed:

- 701 hectares is improved grass,
- 437 hectares is rough grazing,
- 8 hectares is crops plus horticulture and 'other land'.

It is estimated that 40 people may be employed in farming in the BHP area. This is based on the average number of employees per farm (2.1) in the total ward area.

#### **4.3.2 Issues Affecting Farmers on the Urban Fringe**

Consultation was carried out with farmers within the Belfast Hills as part of the setting up the Belfast Hills Partnership. The following main issues were identified in relation to farming on the urban fringe:

*Public lawlessness and attacks on farmers, families and stock*, mainly from people in high density urban areas close to the farm. Farmers felt

that they were under siege and often had to house stock for longer periods or to invest in more extensive security measures than their rural counterparts.

*Diminishing farm incomes.* In common with others in Northern Ireland and elsewhere farmers had seen their incomes diminish over the past five years, and were receiving poor returns for intensive and anti social working hours. Many farm families had had to change towards part time working or an additional family member working off the farm to make ends meet.

*Unwelcome recreational use.* In Northern Ireland as a whole and across the UK as a whole many people make an assumption that open upland is land accessible for recreation. In the Belfast Hills whilst there is a long tradition of walking the skyline and visiting the peaks this land has always been private and recreation has only been tolerated in places. Farmers are unwilling to give permission for paths as this leaves them in a position that they cannot control who comes on to the farm.

*Illegal dumping of waste.* Farmers have had long experience of people dumping waste on their land but this seems to be increasing as financial incentives to dump illegally increase due to Landfill tax and the cost of disposal in legal sites. Farmers become liable for any waste dumped on their lands. On the wider issue of waste many farmers resent the use made of the Hills by the cities and urban areas for dumping and find it inappropriate.

#### **4.4 Rural Tourism**

Local Authority Tourism estimates for 2006 show that the Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn Council cluster's market share of Northern Ireland tourism is 28.9% of trips, 27.9% of nights and 33.2% of spend. However performance at individual Council area shows that Belfast's share of the tourism market is 87% of the trips, 80% of nights and 88% of spend. It is acknowledged however that essentially this Belfast related tourism performance is urban related.

**Table 21: Regional / Local Authority Tourism Estimates 2006<sup>15</sup>**

	TRIPS		NIGHTS		SPEND	
	(Thousands)	%	(Thousands)	%	(£ Million)	%
BELFAST	792.8	25.2	2,765.9	22.3	141.4	29.1
Lisburn	106.2	3.4	659.5	5.3	18.7	3.8
Castlereagh	9.5	0.3	37.5	0.3	1.5	0.3
Cluster	908.5	28.9	3,462.9	27.9	161.3	33.2
TOTAL	3,147.0	100	12,417.9	100	486.5	100

**Table 22: Regional / Local Authority Tourism Estimates 2005<sup>16</sup>**

	TRIPS		NIGHTS		SPEND	
	(Thousands)	%	(Thousands)	%	(£ Million)	%
BELFAST	851.3	25.6	2,832.0	22.2	126.6	26.8
Lisburn	110.7	3.3	665.5	5.2	18.7	4.0
Castlereagh	12.5	0.4	42.7	0.3	1.6	0.3
Cluster	964.5	29.3	3540.2	27.7	146.9	31.1
TOTAL	3,325.1	100	12,759.3	100	472.0	100

Figures show that over the period 2005 to 2006:

<sup>15</sup> NITB

<sup>16</sup> NITB

- The number of trips and nights spent in Belfast City Council area decreased by 6.8% and 2.3% respectively which was similar to performance in Northern Ireland as a whole
- Spend in Belfast City Council area increased by 11.6% and constituted an increased 2.3% of total spend in Northern Ireland
- The number of trips and nights in Lisburn City Council area decreased by 4% and 0.9% respectively while spend stayed the same
- The number of trips and nights in Castlereagh Borough Council area decreased by 24% and 12% respectively while spend stayed relatively stable

Belfast is fast becoming one of the most desirable European destinations for visitors from all over the world. The 2006 Belfast Tourism Monitor shows that:

- Over 6.8 million visitors came to the City in 2006 which is 400,000 more than in 2005
- Out of state visitors represent 18.4% of the total visitor trips to Belfast
- There were 5.3 million day trips to Belfast by Northern Ireland residents, an 8% increase on 2005

Research has shown that there is a very substantial rural tourism product in the area which is under developed and it is believed that the Rural Development Programme provides an opportunity to introduce rural recreational tourism opportunities to the total visitor offering of the Belfast Metropolitan area. Specific rural resources in the region covered by this Rural Development Strategy include:

- a. The Lagan Canal
- b. Lagan Valley Regional Park
- c. The Belfast Hills

d. Lough Neagh

#### **4.4.1 The Lagan Canal**

The Lagan Canal was constructed in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and was an integral component of the Lagan Navigation from Belfast to Lough Neagh, until it was abandoned in the 1950s and part was filled in during the 1960s. The Lagan Canal is an important part of Northern Ireland's industrial heritage and its construction as a navigable link for the transport of commodities, such as coal, timber, sand and agricultural products, from county Tyrone and settlements around Lough Neagh to Belfast, was seen as vital to the growth of Belfast and its port.

The 43 km Lagan Navigation includes the Lower Lagan (17km) from Stranmillis in Belfast to Sprucefield, near Lisburn, and the Upper Lagan (26km) from Sprucefield to Lough Neagh and it runs through four local authority areas – Belfast, Castlereagh, Lisburn and Craigavon. All of the local authorities and DCAL (which has waterways responsibilities), the Ulster Waterways Group and the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland have agreed to collaborate in a partnership approach to progress the re-opening and revitalisation of the Lagan Canal and its immediate corridor. The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust was established in 2006 to oversee the development of the Lagan Navigation from Belfast, through to Lough Neagh.

A report prepared by Peter Scott Planning Services Ltd. and Judith Annett Countryside Consultancy<sup>17</sup> states that the Canal offers scope for restoration as a recreational waterway and tourism resource, which would link Belfast Lough and the maritime Lagan – including Belfast's Laganside

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<sup>17</sup> Lagan Canal – Initial Business Plan for a Partnership Organisation to Progress the Canal's Restoration, September 2006

and Titanic Quarter, to Castlereagh, Lisburn, Lough Neagh and the Lower Bann navigation. Re-opening of the Ulster Canal would link the Lagan Canal, via Lough Neagh, to the all-Ireland waterways network. Sections of the Canal's towpath are popular for walking and cycling, but offer scope for extension and promotion as the Lagan Canal Way. The Consultants state:

*“Restoration of the Canal and its corridor would safeguard and enhance their natural and built heritage values and bring well being, leisure, tourism and economic benefits to communities in the vicinity of the Canal, the wider population of Northern Ireland and visitors to the Province.”*

The Lagan Canal is an important natural rural resource which has significant heritage, environmental and recreational value.

- 1) **Built and Cultural Heritage** – all sections of the Canal on the Lower Navigation are scheduled under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order. However despite statutory protection for the lock structures, there is a serious risk of these industrial heritage features deteriorating to an irreversible extent, through neglect, if no work is undertaken to protect or restore them.
- 2) **Landscape and Natural Heritage** – the special landscape values of the Lagan Canal corridor and its wider area are recognised through its inclusion in the Greater Belfast Green Belt, Lagan Valley AONB and Lagan Valley Regional Park and its natural heritage values are demonstrated by the west end of the Canal lying in the Lough Neagh and Lough beg Ramsar site and SPA and the designation of several sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest (SLNCIs) and the Ballynanaghten ASSI in the vicinity of the Canal.
- 3) **Recreational Value** – the Lagan Canal attracts few boat users at present as all the locks, with one exception, are disused and impassable. In Belfast the Lagan Boat Company takes trips up river

from the Lagan lookout as far as Stranmillis Weir (a barrier to boat travel) and on its Titanic tours. Around 18,000 people took these trips in 2005. Some canal side houses around Lisburn have small cruisers or canoes and there are a few boats on the tidal section of the Lagan at Stranmillis. Some canoeists use the Canal for recreational canoeing and slalom training and the Lagan is the main training base for the Belfast Canoe Club and provides a venue for the Belfast Activity Centre. Scott and Annett recommend that developing a boating community on the Canal will be essential to any proposed restoration and will require:

- Restoration of waterway and associated locks
- Development of boating services and amenities e.g. on / off channel moorings, moorings at service points, attractions, day-boat / cruiser hire facilities, boating services, toilets with showers etc.
- Marketing of sections of the lock as they become available for use

The principal uses of the Lagan corridor are walking, jogging/running and cycling. The Towpath User Survey<sup>18</sup> which interviewed users on 5 sections of the Canal between Lockview in Belfast and Union Locks in Lisburn in Summer 2001 found that:

- Most users joined/left the canal at Stranmillis, Shaw's Bridge, Drumbeg or Union Locks
- 62% were walkers, 12% were joggers / runners and 24% were cyclists
- Most were frequent users – 39% use the towpath daily, 44% weekly and 7% monthly
- Most use was for pleasure (59%), sport (14%) or walking a dog (12%)

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<sup>18</sup> Towpath User Survey 2001, Lagan Valley Regional Park, Belfast



- Wildlife / natural environment, no traffic and proximity / ease of access were the main attractions

While horse riding on the towpath is discouraged, parallel routes have been developed alongside some sections of towpath in the Craigavon area, and it is considered that there may be scope to extend this approach to other areas, where there is sufficient width in the Canal corridor.

Scott and Annett recommend that towpath user market development will require:

- Improvements to sections of towpath where restricted widths and sightlines pose safety hazards
- Completing the western section of towpath from Aghalee to Lough Neagh and connecting it to the Lough Neagh cycle route
- Developing the missing link from Union Lock to Lady's Bridge
- Promoting the towpath as the Lagan Canal Way / Cycleway – a Waymarked way or similarly promoted multi use recreational route
- Developing and promoting cycle hire and repair services in the vicinity of the Canal

#### **4.4.1.1 Draft Vision for the Future of the Lagan Canal**

Organisations with an interest in the Lagan Canal have agreed a vision for its restoration.

*“The Lagan Canal Corridor will provide a restored and revitalised waterway and ‘greenway’ linking Belfast, Castlereagh, Lisburn and Lough Neagh. –*

- *Where the special industrial, cultural and natural heritage values associated with the Canal and its corridor have been sensitively restored and/or conserved and are appreciated and cared for, as a result of their interpretation, education and enjoyment by people of all ages*
- *Which is a major recreational and tourism asset for Northern Ireland*
- *Which contributes to the attractiveness, well being and economic regeneration of the communities along its route.*

*In particular,*

- a. The waterway is a focus for water-borne tourism and recreation*
- b. The restored canal provides a popular link to Lough Neagh and Ireland's waterways*
- c. The towpath offers an attractive, popular, traffic free route for recreational and other trips*
- d. Local people and visitors appreciate and understand the industrial and social history and culture associated with the Canal*
- e. The Canal corridor is appreciated for its scenery and rich and diverse wildlife*
- f. Environmental qualities of the Canal and its corridor have been greatly enhanced, with aesthetic benefits and enhancement of the aquatic ecology and angling opportunities*
- g. Individuals, communities, schools and interest groups are maintaining a strong interest, sense of ownership and care for the Canal and its corridor*
- h. The restored canal is providing a new focal point of interest and activity for Canal-side communities and has helped them to develop a distinctive identity and pride in their heritage and environment*

- i. *Commercial and social enterprises in the vicinity of the Canal are serving visitor's needs, providing training and employment and contributing to the local economy*

#### **4.4.1.2 Benefits of Restoring the Lagan Canal**

Each of the three Councils, Belfast Castlereagh and Lisburn recognise the many benefits to be accrued as a result of the restoration of the Lagan Canal.

*“Canal restoration programmes and projects can contribute to the implementation and achievement of a range of national and local policy agendas including in particular the conservation and enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage of the Canal corridor and catering for recreation and visitor markets. Consequently the restoration and revitalisation of canals and their corridors often achieve much wider community and economic benefits.”<sup>19</sup>*

Specifically the potential benefits from the restoration and its related initiatives will include:

**Safeguarding and conserving the built heritage** – restoration to standards appropriate to the Canal's status as a scheduled monument and its listed historic buildings will safeguard, conserve, display and interpret its heritage features as part of a functioning Canal, rather than these continuing to deteriorate

**Habitat creation and increasing biodiversity** – wildlife and landscape conservation and enhancement projects linked to restoration of the Lagan Canal could provide an enhanced 43km of wildlife corridor

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Scott Planning Services Ltd. and Judith Annett Countryside Consultancy - Lagan Canal – Initial Business Plan for a Partnership Organisation to Progress the Canal's Restoration, September 2006

**Visitor development and economic benefits** – restoration of the Lagan Canal will create an additional focal point for visitors to complement existing waterside tourism assets. Also the development of canal boat trips and towpath walking and cycling will spread tourist visits and expenditures to areas not often visited. An indicative estimate of direct expenditures by waterborne and towpath visitors to a reopened Lagan canal is £1.3m/year<sup>20</sup>

**Opportunities for sports and fitness training** – there is scope for enhanced facilities for leisure canoeing, canoe touring and slalom training / racing, leisure cycling, jogging, running and marathon training

**Community health and well being** – through opportunities for relaxation, casual recreation, sport and fitness training

**Greenspace provision and enhancement** – restoration will create a ‘green/blue’ spine along the entire Canal corridor and stimulate greenspace improvements and urban regeneration in the vicinity of the canal

**Access for all** – enhancement of the towpaths and routes providing access to these, including provision of parking places, rest places and all-abilities surfaces, can ensure that the opportunities for access to and along the Canal towpath are available to all ages and all abilities

**Sustainable transport corridor** – the existing lagan towpath and its potential improvement / extension along the entire length of the Canal offers potential for safe, off-road travel to work, school, shops etc.

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Scott Planning Services Ltd. and Judith Annett Countryside Consultancy - Lagan Canal – Initial Business Plan for a Partnership Organisation to Progress the Canal’s Restoration, September 2006

**Community regeneration, involvement and integration** – improved canal side environments can generate community pride and stimulate community regeneration. In particular restoration projects offer scope to involve local residents in practical work, researching local history and other voluntary projects. As a linear feature, projects along the canal can link divided communities and encourage cross community activity. Importantly also, there may be scope to develop community based enterprises to develop and operate facilities for Canal users.

**Formal and informal learning and discovery** – the Lagan Canal and its associated built heritage and communities offer a wealth of opportunities to raise awareness and understanding of the industrial and social history, culture and ways of life associated with those living and working on / along the Canal.

**Reduction in crime and anti social behaviour** – improving the appearance of neglected sections of canal and towpath, encouraging more people to use such areas and specific initiatives such as training voluntary rangers can change the Canal's image and provide 'eyes and ears' to deter or report anti social behaviour.

**Training and skills development** – including for unemployed and special needs groups and ranging from training in landscape maintenance, through craft skills to specialist skills, such as countryside furniture design, interpretation design, fund raising and organising events.

**Focus for re-/development of canal side properties and up-lift in property values** – canal restoration can create a focus for new development and the redevelopment of disused or neglected properties on

/ near a canal. Even just the presence of attractive waterspace in the vicinity of properties can increase their values.

**Focus for partnership working by public, voluntary and private sectors** – successful restoration of the Lagan canal will require partnership approaches at all levels. At a wider level, restoring the Lagan canal will encourage partnership programmes for the sustainable regeneration of the Lagan Valley and Lough Neagh's shores. This presents opportunities for the Rural Development Programme in respect to potential collaboration on specific projects.

*“Overall, investments in canal restoration can turn a liability into an asset, which is reasonably cheap to operate in terms of cost per user, if use and enjoyment of the towpath and wider canal corridor is taken into account.”*

#### **4.4.2 Belfast Lagan Corridor Project**

Belfast City Council employs a Lagan Corridor Officer, with the responsibility of overseeing the restoration of the Lagan navigation in the Belfast City Council area. Current work has begun on technical studies and a feasibility study in respect to Lock one at Stranmillis Weir, which when complete will allow for further work upstream. The second stage will include the restoration of Lock two at Morelands Meadows and stage three will be the development of the Lock at the Lock Keepers Cottage (Castlereagh Council) and the building of a new Weir at Shaws Bridge, downstream of the existing Weir, allowing navigation all the way to the city of Lisburn.

#### **4.4.3 Lisburn Lagan Corridor Programme**

Lisburn City Council has developed a Strategic Framework for the development of the Lagan corridor that lies within Lisburn City Council area. Lisburn's Lagan Corridor currently comprises the section of the River Lagan and Lagan Navigation running between Edenderry to the north of Lisburn and Young's Bridge at Halftown to the south west of Lisburn. The Lagan Corridor covers a distance of seven miles comprising a diverse and attractive landscape characterised by open countryside, rural villages, suburban areas and Lisburn City centre. The Council employs a Lagan Corridor Programme Manager to oversee the implementation of their strategy.

Lisburn's vision for the Canal Corridor is;

*"A vibrant, attractive and clean river environment incorporating facilities for the reopened Lagan Navigation. A special place which draws people from the local area and beyond to enjoy the life and vitality of the high quality riverfront and the peace and tranquillity of the unspoilt natural environment with its historic mill villages nestling in the Regional Park."*

The result of the strategy will be a multi faceted environment, which has wide ranging benefits, at a local and regional level, and provides a portfolio of facilities and services from which people can pick and choose. The Strategic Framework for Lisburn's Lagan corridor consists of 10 areas that have been identified for development potential that will enhance and complement the restoration of the Canal. The rural areas that present potential for the Rural Development Programme are:

- Edenderry – designated as an Area of Townscape Character it is proposed that future development will be sympathetic to the traditional mill village character and strengthen the relationship between the village and the river. Future development is likely to focus on the

regeneration and reuse of the mill site with some potential for informal recreation / amenity development.

- Drumbeg - designated as an Area of Townscape Character it is proposed that future development will be sympathetic to traditional rural village character and will strengthen the relationship between the river and the village. Future development is likely to focus on redevelopment of brownfield sites for residential use, potentially including the Charley Memorial Primary School.
- Ballyskeagh – this is an important site which has significant potential to become a destination or stopping off point along the Lagan Corridor. This potential comes from its proximity to Ballyskeagh Bridge, the Lock keepers Cottage, lock number 7, the old Beetling Mill, the adjoining Lisburn Distillery football ground and greyhound track and the pedestrian footbridge leading to Seymour Hill. Future development will focus upon informal and formal recreation and general amenity use including footpaths and car parking, with potential for a small café development to provide service for those using the parkland and towpath.
- Glenmore – the lands at Glenmore are all within the Lagan Valley Regional Park, in an area of High Scenic Value. There is potential to develop this area to create a significantly improved public recreation area incorporating parkland, river access, new playing fields and water sports facilities, with further potential for a limited amount of social and affordable residential development.
- Hilden – the site at Hilden Mill has long been identified as an important opportunity site characterised by the impressive mill buildings which are noted for their industrial heritage interest, situated on an island



between the river and the canal. The site has opportunities for mixed use development including residential units, workspace units, navigation facilities and recreational facilities. The future reopening of the Lagan Navigation would bring with it the potential for further facilities such as a restaurant and bar.

- Hillsborough Road – Union Locks currently form the end point of the Lagan Valley Regional Park and the towpath. There is strong potential to develop an informal recreation/amenity area centred around the Council land at Hillsborough Road on the upstream side of Moore’s Bridge. It is recommended that the Council land should be developed as an attractive high quality urban park located at the water’s edge. The established woodland area fronting Hillsborough Road should be regenerated and enhanced with additional landscaping and amenity provision including recreational provision, a car park and picnic area close to the river supported by directional and interpretative signage.
- Knockmore – the eastern corner of the Knockmore site falls outside the Lisburn Urban Area boundary. There is potential for mixed development characterised principally by residential development but also allowing for an informal recreation / parkland amenity area at the riverfront, supported by a small car park with low key visitor facilities.

A series of links will form green routes connecting these areas. The majority of these links are already in place either as a towpath or footpath. It is proposed that these links can be enhanced through the use of directional and interpretation signage and upgraded in terms of improved access facilities and the creation of new access points.

The Maze / Long Kesh Masterplan<sup>21</sup> also makes reference to the potential for the Lagan Canal Navigation to link into the proposed developments at

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<sup>21</sup> OFMDFM Maze / Long Kesh Masterplan and Implementation Strategy, May 2006

the Maze site. The development of this site is of great significance. It is the largest publicly owned regeneration site in Northern Ireland, the regeneration of which the Government intends as a key physical expression of the transformation from conflict to peace in Northern Ireland. The inclusion of the Lagan Corridor development within the overall Masterplan further raises the importance of the potential opportunities and benefits of the Canal restoration.

#### **4.4.4 Lagan Valley Regional Park**

Lagan Valley Regional Park stretches for approximately 11 miles between Stranmillis at Belfast and the former union Locks at Sprucefield, Lisburn. It comprises 1,600 hectares (4,000 acres) of land and lies within the Council areas of Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn. The park is a mosaic of countryside, urban parks, heritage sites, nature reserves and riverside trails. The Regional Park sits within Northern Ireland's smallest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – Lagan Valley AONB established in 1965 and covering 21km<sup>2</sup>.

The Regional Park was established in 1967 with the aim of protecting the local countryside and its wildlife and developing quiet recreation activity. Agricultural land currently accounts for over one third of the total area and is the single largest land use. Public and private open space together however account for almost half of the land in the Park. A significant proportion of this open space (60%) is publicly owned.

The Park is managed by a regional Park Committee consisting of representation from Belfast City Council, Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, DCAL, Environment and Heritage Service and the National Trust. NITB Survey of Visitor Attractions, 2006 indicates that Lagan Valley Regional Park had 500,000 visitors in 2006 and Sir

Thomas and Lady Dixon Park also had 500,000 visitors. This places both Parks joint fourth in terms of the most popular Country Parks visited in Northern Ireland.

The Lagan Valley Regional Park Countryside Recreation Strategy<sup>22</sup> reports that recreational activities in the Park include:

- **Walking** – by far the most popular recreational activity. The spine of the Regional Park is the river, canal and towpath corridor which provides a continuous, mostly off road walk of approximately 11 miles in length.
- **Running** – most trails in the park are used by serious runners and joggers. The attractiveness of the area, safety in being away from busy roads and proximity to home being important reasons for the attraction
- **Off road cycling** – the Lagan towpath has been developed as a National Cycle Network (NCN) traffic free route. In a survey carried out by Roads Service in 2000 the Lagan towpath at Drumbeg had an average daily use of 66 cycles and in an NITB cycling survey in 2001 the towpath at Stranmillis had a throughput of 8.6 cycles per hour.
- **Game angling** – this is considered to be one of the most underdeveloped activities within the Park, which is considered to have great potential for development
- **Coarse angling** – a designated coarse fishery stretches from the Stranmillis Weir to the first canalised section upstream. Fishing points area available all along the old Towpath which is on the West side of

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<sup>22</sup> Fergusson McIlveen and Judith Annett Countryside Consultancy, The Lagan Valley Regional Park Countryside Recreation Strategy, May 2005

the river from the Red bridge, downstream to Stranmillis Weir and beyond with three fishing stands provided for people with disabilities.

- **Canoeing / Kayaking** – this takes place for the most part above the Stranmillis Weir. The Shaw's Bridge Canoe Slalom site is the main focal and access point to the river but the whole length of the river within the Regional Park is regularly used. Belfast Canoe club has identified 19 groups who use the Lagan during the year, including schools, youth groups, activity centres and canoe clubs, with two major clubs based in the Lagan Valley area. There are few formal facilities for canoeing on the river other than at Shaw's Bridge, which despite its frequent use has no changing or toilet facilities.

The Lagan has been considered as part of the currently developing Northern Ireland series of canoe trails, being promoted by the Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN), which also includes Strangford Lough, Lough Erne, the Lower Bann, the Blackwater and the Foyle. At present however the level of facilities and the difficulty of access makes it suitable only for experienced canoeists and kayakers

- **Horse riding** – there is currently no formal provision for riding within the publicly accessible sections of the Park. One riding Centre, Lagan Valley Equestrian Centre operates within the Park with two further centres close by.
- **Orienteering and Ecotrails** – most of the major public access areas in the Park have been mapped for orienteering and user packs and maps are available, a fact which is not widely known. Promotion of the existence of the permanent orienteering courses is quite low key except amongst organised school groups.

#### 4.4.4.1 Development Opportunities

Fergusson McIlveen and Annett<sup>23</sup> recommend a series of developments that would greatly enhance the use of Lagan Valley Regional Park for key recreational and sporting activities.

- i) In respect to running there is a need for the provision of posts indicating accurately measured miles along the towpath and the provision of a lit area for evening training in winter
- ii) Cycling proposals include guided cycling tours, better signage and stronger promotion of the Towpath
- iii) The Lagan Valley Angling and Conservation Association was formed in 2003 and has an action plan for the development of game angling on a stretch of water from Lambeg Mill to the M1 Motorway bridge
- iv) There is potential to develop the coarse angling interest of the canal sections between Lisburn and Ballyskeagh
- v) To capitalise on the canoeing and kayaking potential and opportunities on the Lagan there is a need for:
  - Improved access to the river
  - Improved water quality
  - Enhancement work on key weirs
  - Development of portage points
  - Enhancement of parking at key access points
  - Management of river banks

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<sup>23</sup> Fergusson McIlveen and Judith Annett Countryside Consultancy, The Lagan Valley Regional Park Countryside Recreation Strategy, May 2005

- Upstream warnings of key hazards
  - Maintenance of the Shaw's Bridge slalom course
- vi) There is a demand by Horse riders for access routes within the Regional Park or alternatively a purpose designed route away from other activity
- vii) There is a need to develop a higher profile for the orienteering facilities in the Park and an opportunity to develop a permanent orienteering course for people with disabilities

General countryside recreation issues that need to be addressed within Lagan Valley Regional Park include:

- The need to raise the profile of the Park and the many activities available
- There is an obvious lack of toilet and eating facilities throughout the Park
- There is a lack of facilities for those participating in water sports
- There is a need for more car parking
- There is a need for improved and more effective signage

#### **4.4.5 The Belfast Hills**

The Belfast Hills have traditionally, albeit informally, been an area of quiet countryside recreation for the immediate and surrounding vicinity in North and West Belfast. People have also visited the Hills from further afield to undertake a skyline walk as part of the Ulster way in the area. The importance of the area as an important tourism and visitor destination should not be overlooked, as the area contains the following visitor attractions:

- Belfast Zoological Gardens – attracted 257,713 visitors in 2006 and was the third most popular tourist attraction in Northern Ireland. Visitor numbers were up by 22% on 2005 figures, which was the greatest percentage increase of all the top ten attractions
- Colin Glen Forest Park – attracted 258,340 visitors in 2006 and was the 7<sup>th</sup> most popular Park visited in Northern Ireland. Visitor numbers were up by 7% on the 2005 figure.
- Cave Hill Country Park – attracts approximately 140,000 visitors per year<sup>24</sup>
- Cavehill Visitor Centre – attracted 39,375 visitors in 2006, which was consistent with 2005 visitor numbers

The following open space is available within the Belfast Hills:

- Cave Hill – 700 acres of Park owned by Belfast City Council
- Colin Glen Forest Park – 200 acres of woodland, river and open grassland, waterfalls and wild flower areas, managed by Colin Glen Trust.
- Glenside Community Woodland – largest privately owned community woodland in Northern Ireland consisting of 65 acres of planted trees and a further 10 acres of open meadow and wetlands
- Divis and Black Mountain – owned by the National Trust, it is an area of 1,480 acres of upland grassland and heath rich in biodiversity and archaeological interest

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<sup>24</sup> Belfast City Council web site, Redevelopment of Cavehill Country Park, July 2008

- The Black Mountain – currently in private ownership but is accessed unofficially by the community for recreations. There are community based proposals for a Country Park (the Saffron project).

The area of the Belfast Hills stretches across three local Authority areas, Belfast, Lisburn and Newtownabbey. The Belfast Hills Partnership is an independent Charity that has been established to improve how the Hills are managed and consists of representation from Belfast City Council, Lisburn City Council, Antrim Borough Council, Newtownabbey Borough Council, Environment and Heritage Service, DOE, Landowners, Farmers and community based organisations. The Partnership is keen to see the Hills area recognised and valued as an important rural recreational and tourism asset that, as an easily accessible rural resource, adds value to the total visitor and tourist package that Belfast has to offer. Potential exists within the Rural Development Programme to consider possible collaborative projects with the Antrim Council Cluster.

#### **4.4.6 Lough Neagh**

Lough Neagh is a large inland lough of almost 400km<sup>2</sup>, in the centre of Northern Ireland, bordered by seven local authorities who have responsibility for the areas within the Lough Neagh Wetlands. In former times the lough formed the hub of a set of inland waterways linking to the sea via the Lower Bann, to Lough Erne via the River Blackwater and the Ulster canal, to Coalisland via the Coalisland canal, to Belfast via the Lagan and to Newry via the Newry / Portadown Canal and the Upper Bann River. The Lough Neagh Partnership, established in 2003, has, amongst others, representation on its Board from each of the seven Local Authorities that border the Lough, including Lisburn City Council. The Partnership has provided an effective joint implementation mechanism for the strategic development of the Lough and its Wetlands and through



funding secured for the Lough Neagh Strategic Fund has delivered the following outputs:

- First ever whole of Lough Neagh canoe trail
- 150 new berths
- 2 fishing projects
- 2 new tour boats
- 12 built and cultural heritage projects
- 3 sculpture trails
- 1 new Lough Neagh Rescue Lifeboat
- 4 new local nature reserves
- 17 tourism recreation and signage projects
- 11 marinas and water based infrastructure developments
- 24 environmental projects
- 4 new interpretation and visitor centres
- 10 landmark buildings restored

The Partnership has recently launched a Sustainable Rural Development Strategy for the Lough for the period 2008 – 2013, which identifies opportunities to realise the economic potential of tourism. These include:

- Marketing activity
- Development of recreational hubs
- Water sports activity
- Guided walks and cycle tours
- Accommodation close to the Lough with Lough or Wetland views
- Development of the Lough as a quality angling resource
- Networks of pubs and inns
- Small tourism infrastructure such as viewing points, bird watching sites and access arrangements for historic monuments
- Development of opportunities to swim from inland beaches

- Interpretation
- Development of driving trails

The implementation of such opportunities presents potential collaboration opportunities for the Rural Development Programme across different Council Clusters.

#### **4.5 Rural Heritage**

The Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn area has an important rural heritage that is characterised by:

- A strong natural heritage resource in the Lagan Canal and its associated influence on industrial heritage
- Areas of archaeological significance in the Belfast Hills. The Belfast Hills Baseline Study<sup>25</sup> has identified that the area is rich in historic monuments, some of significant size and interest, but most of which remain inaccessible and on which there is little information available to the general public.
- Areas of archaeological significance in Lisburn, such as the Duneight Motte and Bailey, a very fine example of a 12th Century Norman fortification and the Giant's Ring, a Stone Age monument which has a date of around 3000 B.C.
- Areas of industrial heritage significance in the Belfast Hills, with much evidence of the former industries that shaped Belfast and its surrounding landscape during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Sites of interest include relics of derelict quarries and workings, linen and textile factories associated with Belfast, reservoirs and waterworks,

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<sup>25</sup> Judith Annett Countryside Consultancy, Belfast Hills Baseline Study, June 2005

fragmented demesnes with associated buildings and structures, relics and existing structures associated with transport routes, including bridges.

- Important historical figures, such as Harry Ferguson (born in Dromara) who achieved worldwide fame with his invention of the Ferguson 3 point linkage system. This system still forms the basis of almost every tractor made today. He was the second Briton to build and fly his own plane and was responsible for the first powered flight in Ireland. He also achieved considerable success in motor racing and motor cycle trials.
- Villages such as Hillsborough Village which is a fine example of a Georgian village, with buildings of historical significance such as the Courthouse, St Malachy's Church, Hillsborough Castle and Hillsborough Fort.

Consultation has identified that there is a lack of community awareness of local heritage and that work is needed to build local knowledge to ensure that the heritage of the area is not forgotten. Specifically there is concern about:

- The lack of interpretation across the area
- Lack of access to areas of interest
- The loss of skills and local knowledge as skills, stories, folklore etc. are not being passed down

The consultation has highlighted the need to ensure that opportunities under the Rural Development Programme should ensure close working with local communities to ensure that investment in rural heritage is sustainable.

## 4.6 Rural SWOT Analysis

The socio economic profile for the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast Cluster region is summarised in a SWOT analysis which presents the strengths and weaknesses of the region and identifies the opportunities and the threats that the NI Rural Development Programme can hopefully address over the period 2008 to 2013.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of economic activity</li> <li>• Low level of unemployment</li> <li>• High level of employee jobs</li> <li>• Average earnings higher than NI average</li> <li>• Micro enterprise economy</li> <li>• Strong retail and service sector</li> <li>• By 2005 168 farms had diversified – potential exists!</li> <li>• Major tourism profile and potential of the Metropolitan ‘Gateway’</li> <li>• Natural landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small rural population - 6.8% of NI total</li> <li>• Pocket of high rural unemployment – Colin Glen</li> <li>• High levels of economic inactivity across the Cluster region</li> <li>• Unemployment beginning to increase!</li> <li>• Colin Glen ward is within the top10% most deprived wards in NI</li> <li>• Pockets of deprivation in respect to proximity to services</li> <li>• Worst levels of business start up amongst all 26 local authority areas</li> <li>• Weak levels of female entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Of the 1008 farms in the cluster region 727 (72.1%) are classified as very small and 155 small (15.3%) or 87.4% of all farms</li> <li>• Lack of tourism activities</li> <li>• Lack of community facilities in some rural areas</li> <li>• Poor transport infrastructure</li> <li>• Dereliction within villages</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NI Rural Development Programme funding</li> <li>▪ Lagan Corridor and Belfast Hills as two major tourism / recreation projects</li> <li>▪ Development of activity based tourism at Lagan Valley Regional Park – walking, cycling, angling, canoeing/kayaking, horse riding etc</li> <li>▪ Large target market for farm diversification</li> <li>▪ Increase enterprise start up rates by focusing on women and young people</li> <li>▪ Enhance opportunities for young</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Planning</li> <li>▪ Current economic climate e.g. construction sector which is critical to the region!</li> </ul>

<p>people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Development of tourism infrastructure</li><li>▪ Development of vibrant villages</li><li>▪ Rural heritage – Harry Ferguson project</li><li>▪ Investment in renewable energy</li></ul>	
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## 5.0 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### 5.1 Strategic Aim

The aim of the Belfast, Lisburn and Castlereagh Cluster is to achieve their vision of:

*A high quality of life experience, with excellent rural community infrastructure, an enterprising rural economy and quality rural recreational opportunities.*

This will be achieved through the implementation of Axis 3 and its 6 measures, the objectives of which are detailed below.

### 5.2 Measure Aims and Objectives

#### 5.2.1 Measure 1: Diversification into Non Agricultural Activities

<b>Aim</b>	<b>To increase farm household incomes through diversification activity</b>
<b>Objective</b>	1) To support 50 farmers / members of farm families to diversify by 2013

Of the approximately 1,000 farms in the Cluster area, statistics show that approximately 168 have already diversified, which equates to a diversification rate of 16.8%. This leaves a target of 832 who will be targeted for the new Rural Development Programme. The Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast Cluster has set a target of an additional 6% of total farms to have diversified by 2013. Despite the fact that the area has not benefitted from past LEADER funding, there has been a high level of interest in farm diversification, with the rate of diversification activity higher than the Northern Ireland average. It is considered that a target of a minimum of 50 new diversification enterprises will be achievable by 2013.

In keeping with the Rural Development Programme objectives of ensuring that women and children and young people benefit explicitly from rural development intervention, the Cluster will aim to achieve the following targets within the 50 diversification projects supported:

- Young people will represent 20% of those diversifying
- Women will represent 30% of those diversifying
- Tourism / recreational diversification activities will represent 20% of all activities supported.

There is much experience on the LAG and Joint Committee of members who have been involved in current and previous farm diversification programmes, through the Lisburn Leader programme which supported farmers to diversify into tourist accommodation projects and Laganside Rural Development Ltd. who administered Peace II funding under Measure 1.7a obtaining Alternative Employment. This experience has been extremely useful in making decisions about the targets and indicative activities for funding.

In the implementation of Measure 3.1 an annual budget will be set and applications will be sought under this measure by publicly advertising a call for applications. Indicative activities that will be supported under measure 3.1 are in keeping with the findings from the needs analysis that has informed this strategy and will include:

- 1) Pre enterprise and enterprise support programmes targeted specifically at farmers and members of farm families, increasing their awareness of opportunities to diversify and their business development skills. It is strongly believed that this is necessary to ensure the successful uptake of Measure 3.1 funding and when delivered locally will be an initiative which will complement DARD service provision. A

budget of up to £20,000 per programme has been estimated and it is proposed that five programmes will be delivered over the duration of the Rural Development programme. Each programme will target an average of 15 participants.

- 2) Capital funding of up to £50,000 for diversification projects. The maximum level of grant aid has been left at £50,000 although in order to encourage smaller diversification projects it is proposed to offer two levels of funding – one programme for projects seeking up to £25,000 and another for projects seeking up to £50,000. This is to ensure that potential applicants of businesses seeking only a low level of support are not discouraged by believing that the programme is for large scale investment initiatives.
- 3) Technical support of up to £5,000 in support of a diversification business proposal. While it is acknowledged that DARD provide assistance to farmers to enable them to complete their own business plans, consultation has suggested that not all farmers feel confident in completing their own business plan. Technical support will be awarded to enable applicants to avail of expertise to assist them in developing their business proposal.
- 4) Marketing support for farmers of up to £5,000 in support of a diversification business will be available both in advance of setting up business in terms of market research, product development etc and also for marketing activity once the business is established.

Indicative activity targets which have been set for Measure 3.1 are summarised below. These are indicative only as implementation of the Programme will be via open calls for applications.



**Table 23: Measure 3.1 Indicative Activities**

<b>Indicative Activities</b>	<b>Total Budget</b>
Enterprise Support Programmes – 1 annually @ £20,000 / year	£100,000
50 capital grants	£1,500,000
10 marketing grants @ £5,000	£50,000
50 technical support grants @ £5,000	£250,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,900,000</b>

Implementation of Measure 3.1 will necessitate close working with DARD in the delivery of Axis 1 and other Rural Development supports to ensure that farmers and members of farm families are signposted correctly and that they receive the full complement of available help.

As per DARD's target sheets the following measure targets have been set.

**Table 24: Measure 3.1 Targets**

<b>Target</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Cluster</b>
Number of beneficiaries receiving support	600	60
Increase in non agricultural gross value added of supported businesses	3.5% increase	3.5% increase
Number of new businesses created	400	50
Gross number of jobs created	400	30
Potential volume of energy generated from RDP funded renewable energy projects expressed as kilowatt hours per annum	750,000 kw hours	67,500 kw hours
Number of supported new businesses which are still in existence two years after final funding	300	38
Economic growth (net value added expressed in Purchasing Power Standard PPS)	2%	2%
Employment creation (net additional FTE jobs created)	360	25

### 5.2.2 Measure 2: Business Creation and Development

<b>Aim</b>	<b>To develop a strong rural micro enterprise sector</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To enhance enterprise development</li> <li>2) To support the establishment of 25 new enterprises by 2013</li> <li>3) To support the development of 25 existing micro enterprises by 2013</li> <li>4) To support 5 social economy businesses by 2013</li> </ol>

Invest NI figures show that Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn are within the bottom 5 Local Authority areas in terms of the rate of start a business approvals per 10,000 adult population. Belfast ranks bottom at 26<sup>th</sup>, Castlereagh is 25<sup>th</sup> and Lisburn is 23<sup>rd</sup>. In a recent Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report on Entrepreneurial activity in Belfast<sup>26</sup>, it was highlighted that:

- The level of early stage entrepreneurial activity in Belfast was 2.8% in 2007. This compares to 4.9% in Northern Ireland as a whole and 5.6% for the UK
- Levels of female entrepreneurship in Belfast are low. The rate is now 1.5% compared to 2.1% in Northern Ireland.
- Female entrepreneurship is still significantly lower than men
- The level of male entrepreneurship in Belfast is significantly lower than in Northern Ireland as a whole.
- Young people in Belfast (less than 35 years of age) are less likely than older individuals to be starting their own business.

Research has confirmed that there is a need to stimulate a greater awareness of and interest in enterprise and self employment. While it is acknowledged that the Start a Business Programme will be available in the area it is clear from the figures that uptake to the programme is perhaps not as high as it could be. Dedicated rural enterprise support initiatives that are focused may help to direct more potential businesses to the Start a Business Programme. Currently however there is no funding available to deliver such programmes as DETI has advised that pre-enterprise support initiatives will not be eligible under the new Competitiveness Programme. In Belfast there will be a specific focus on enterprise development in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, which further

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<sup>26</sup> Mark Hart, Small Business Research Centre, Kingston University, Entrepreneurial Activity in Belfast: Results From the GEM Northern Ireland 2007 Survey

reinforces the need to focus upon rural areas through the Rural Development programme..

The needs analysis has indicated that there will no longer be grant aid available for new small businesses under the new Start a Business Programme and the universal grant available under the Social Entrepreneurship Programme is also being removed and although a grant element will still be available, it will not be available to all social enterprise start ups. It is therefore considered that the availability of funding under the Rural Development Programme will be much needed. Consultation with Invest NI has confirmed that they see the funding available under the Rural Development Programme as being complementary to the support that they can offer in that the availability of Rural Development funding will enable those businesses whom Invest NI cannot support to be assisted.

DETI Figures indicate that in 2002 micro enterprises constituted 89% of the total VAT registered businesses in Northern Ireland. In the Lisburn and Castlereagh area the corresponding figure was 86% and 83% respectively. Or collectively as a region, the rate is 85%. This is below the Northern Ireland average and it is believed that there is opportunity to develop the sector, thorough the intervention of the Rural Development Programme.

There is much experience on the LAG and Joint Committee of members who have been involved in current and previous micro enterprise programmes, through Council led economic development initiatives or Local Enterprise Agency initiatives. This experience has been extremely useful in making decisions about the targets and indicative activities for funding. Specific experience of the Lisburn Leader company which supported the establishment of 14 rural enterprises in 18 months would

infer that the targets set for this new Rural Development Programme are achievable and realistic.

An annual budget will be set and applications will be sought under this measure by publicly advertising a call for applications. Liaison with Invest NI, Local Enterprise Agencies and Council Economic Development officers will be crucial to the delivery of Measure 3.2 to ensure complementarity and a joined up approach to rural micro enterprise support in the area. Indicative activities that will be supported are in keeping with the findings from the needs analysis that has informed this strategy and will include:

- 1) Pre - enterprise and enterprise support initiatives. It has been identified that there is currently no funding for such initiatives and therefore it is the opinion of the LAG and Joint Committee that there is a need for a pro active approach to be adopted locally to develop an entrepreneurial culture and to improve the region's performance in respect to the rate of Start a Business approvals. This will be necessary to ensure the uptake of Measure 3.2 funding. It is also proposed that such enterprise initiatives would target specific sectors and encourage clustering arrangements for example in the food processing, creative industries sector. A budget of up to £20,000 per programme has been estimated and it is proposed that five programmes will be delivered over the duration of the Rural Development programme. Each programme it is estimated will have an average of 15 participants.
- 2) Capital funding of up to £50,000 for new businesses and for the development of existing businesses, including social economy enterprises. As for Measure 3.1 the maximum level of grant aid has been left at £50,000 and similarly to Measure 3.1, two levels of entry

will be made available to the programme – for those wishing to access up to £25,000 and for those wishing to access up to £50,000. The budget available based upon a target of 50 micro enterprises receiving support gives an average of approximately £30,000 per applicant. It is anticipated that social economy organisations will potentially access the £50,000 maximum grant aid available.

- 3) Technical support of up to £5,000 for new and existing businesses, including social economy enterprises, in support of a business proposal. Such technical support may include for example, feasibility studies, business plans, technical expertise in process development etc. A budget of supporting 55 technical support grants has been set. The new Business Start Programme will provide business plan support for new businesses and therefore support under the Rural Development Programme will have to be additional. For existing micro enterprises it has been highlighted that there are currently no sources of funding available for technical support for non Invest NI Clients which presents a target market for Measure 3.2 funding.
- 4) Marketing support of up to £5,000 for new and existing businesses, including social economy enterprises, in support of a business proposal. This marketing support will cover market research, product development, promotional activity, web site development, attendance at trade shows etc.

In keeping with the Rural Development Programme objectives of ensuring that women and children and young people benefit explicitly from rural development intervention, the Council Cluster will aim to achieve the following specific targets within the 50 projects supported:

- Young people will represent 30% of those receiving support

- Women will represent 20% of those receiving support
- To support the creation of 2 renewable energy businesses by 2013

Indicative activity targets for Measure 3.2 are summarised in table 25.

**Table 25: Measure 3.2 Indicative Activities**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicative Activity</b>	<b>Budget</b>
1. To enhance enterprise development	1 enterprise support programme annually @ £20,000/yr	£100,000
2. To support the creation of 25 new micro enterprises	25 capital grants	£750,000
	25 technical support grants	£125,000
	5 marketing grants	£25,000
3. To support the development of 25 existing micro enterprises	25 capital grants	£750,000
	25 technical support grants	£125,000
	5 marketing grants	£25,000
4. To support the creation / development of 5 social economy businesses	5 capital grants	£250,000
	5 technical support grants	£25,000
	5 marketing grants	£25,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£2,200,000</b>

As per DARD's target sheets the following measure targets have been set for the area.

**Table 26: Measure 3.2 Targets**

<b>Target</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Cluster</b>
Number of micro enterprises receiving support for creation / development	1,200 20% new business creation	130
Increase in non agricultural gross value added in supported businesses	3.5% increase	3.5% increase
Gross number of jobs created	700	75
Potential volume of energy generated from RDP funded renewable energy projects expressed as kilowatt hours per annum	300,000 kw hours	32,000 kw hours
Economic growth (net value added expressed in Purchasing Power Standard PPS)	2%	2%
Employment creation (net additional FTE jobs)	360	38

### 5.2.3 Measure 3.3: Encouragement of Tourism Activities

<b>Aim</b>	<b>To develop rural tourism infrastructure that will increase and enhance the rural recreational tourism performance of the area</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To increase activity based tourism infrastructure by a minimum of 5 new projects by 2013</li> <li>2) To support the strategic development of the natural tourism resources in the area by 2013</li> <li>3) To increase tourist accommodation provision, in support of rural recreational development</li> </ol>



The rural tourism strategic objectives have been informed by the area profile needs analysis and the extensive consultation exercise that has been completed, both of which have highlighted the excellent rural tourism resources and opportunities available in the Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn areas. In the context of tourism marketing in the Belfast Metropolitan Area, the Rural Development Programme provides a great opportunity to raise the profile of the rural offering in terms of developing quality rural recreational resources, activities and accompanying accommodation.

In defining the strategic aims and objectives, reference has also been made to the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMA) and specifically to the BMA Tourism Strategy which seeks to:

- promote a sustainable approach to tourism development;
- protect a varied range of tourism development opportunities;
- facilitate the development of tourism infrastructure; and
- enhance the urban environment generally, and in particular “first impression” points at major gateways, and in city and town centres.

The Tourism Plan highlights that the BMA contains a high quality natural heritage of landscape, Lough shore and wildlife, and a significant man-made heritage of buildings, culture and industrial past which have the potential to attract visitors. It states that:

*“The development of tourism presents a significant opportunity for increased expenditure, economic development and job creation in the Plan Area and in NI as a whole.”*

The Plan also acknowledges that realising the tourism potential of the area will continue to require investment in marketing, product development

and physical facilities in terms of visitor infrastructure, and especially visitor accommodation. Since a vibrant tourism sector depends on a quality host environment, its growth must be based on the provision of tourism facilities and accommodation to a high standard that contribute to the industry.

Specific examples that have been referenced that are of relevance to the Rural Development Programme for Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn and include:

- a. Opportunities along the River Lagan and Lagan Canal within the City Council areas of Belfast and Lisburn and Castlereagh Borough provide an opportunity for expanding water based tourism with the wider Lagan Valley Regional Park providing a significant recreational asset for the City.
- b. Recreational tourism also presents opportunities focused on the Colin Glen Linear Park, the Belfast Hills and Cavehill Country Park. The network of Lough shore, lakes and rivers are important assets, where angling for game fish, as well as sea and coarse fishing is an attraction for visitors to the area.
- c. Lisburn has significant tourism assets based on its proximity to the Belfast Hills, indoor recreational facilities, industrial heritage, focused on the Irish Linen Centre and the recreational potential of Colin Glen Linear Park, the Island Civic Centre, the River Lagan, Canal, Towpath and wider Lagan Valley Regional Park.
- d. Castlereagh has developed leisure provision that has the potential to generate tourism revenue such as the Dundonald International Ice Bowl Complex and the Billy Neill Soccer School of Excellence. Continued appropriate recreational and tourism development at locations such as the River Lagan and Canal and Belvoir Park Forest in the Lagan Valley Regional Park will continue to enhance visitor numbers.

The aims and objectives have also been informed by the experience of Lisburn City Council in delivery of a Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP) rural development programme which is coming to an end in August 2008. Under this initiative the development of new rural accommodation was funded and proved to be extremely successful. Lisburn, Castlereagh and the Belfast Hills area have a unique advantage in that their urban fringe location offers many opportunities to provide a rural accommodation base for visitors and tourists close to the city. It is therefore proposed that the Rural Development Programme would build on the experience of the Lisburn Leader initiative and offer funding of up to a maximum of £50,000 for rural accommodation projects. A minimum of five projects will be funded and projects must complement and enhance rural recreational opportunities.

Implementation of Measure 3.3 will be via an open call for applications, with specific criteria developed for each of the measure objectives. An annual budget will be set for each year. Indicative activity targets for Measure 3.3 are summarised in table 27.

**Table 27: Measure 3.3 Indicative Activities**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicative Activities</b>	<b>Budget</b>
1) To increase activity based tourism infrastructure by a minimum of 5 new projects by 2013	5 small grants @ a max of £50,000 each	£250,000
2) To support the strategic development of the natural rural tourism resources in the area by 2013	3 large grants @ a max of £250,000 for Local Authorities / Strategic Bodies / Social Economy organisations	£750,000
3) To increase tourist accommodation provision, in support of rural recreational development	5 projects @£50,000	£250,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£1,250,000</b>

Implementation of Measure 3.3 will be through close co-operation and liaison with NITB, Council Tourism Officers, Council Countryside and Recreation Officers, EHS, National Trust, Strategic Bodies and Partnerships, landowners and community based organisations.

As per DARD's target sheets the following measure targets have been set.

**Table 28: Measure 3.3 Targets**

<b>Target</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Cluster</b>
Number of tourism actions supported	300	13
Additional number of tourist visits	10% increase	10% increase
Gross number of jobs created	50	5
Number of new tourism businesses created	60	6
Potential volume of energy generated from RDP funded renewable energy projects expressed as kilowatt hours per annum	200,000 kw hours	20,000 kw hours
Number of supported new businesses which are still in existence two years after final funding	45	5
Economic growth (net value added expressed in Purchasing Power Standard PPS)	2%	2%
Employment creation (net additional FTE jobs created)	30	3

## 5.2.4 Measure 4: Basic Services for the Economy and Rural Population

Aim	To meet the basic needs of the rural population
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) To support rural services that meet the needs of older people</li><li>2) To support rural services that meet the needs of children and young people</li><li>3) To improve rural transport provision within the area</li><li>4) To support community based service provision</li></ol>

Despite the fact that the Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast rural region is close to large urban areas of Belfast and Lisburn, there are many rural residents who are experiencing disadvantage as a result of their rural location. Specific target groups include children and young people, living in rural communities with little recreational opportunities and isolated elderly members of the community.

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust contributed to the stakeholder round table workshop and have provided project proposals that they believe would benefit from Rural Development intervention in terms of addressing improving outcomes for children and young people and addressing social isolation of the elderly.

- a) Current research evidence in relation to improving outcomes for children demonstrates the need for early intervention to support vulnerable families, especially in the most deprived areas. New programmes of family support are therefore very important in developing communities in a rural setting. The Sure Start programme is a well established family support programme that aims to improve outcomes for children in the most deprived areas. The programme is funded by the Department of Education but is managed by the Trust. However, funding for new extensions of Sure

Start are currently not available despite the potential that these schemes have for developing rural communities. In this context, the Trust believes that a Rural Development funded Sure Start scheme would make a material difference to the development of a rural community. Moreover, the implementation of such a scheme and the demonstration 'on the ground' of its effectiveness, would maximise the chances of the funding being mainstreamed by the Department of Education at the end of the funding period.

- b) The Trust currently operates a 'Safe and Well' scheme in the rural Lisburn area that seeks to tackle social isolation through the provision of befriending, assisted shopping and light housework. This project, which will last until April 2009, is vitally important in the Lisburn area, which will see a c.40% growth in its elderly population in the coming years. Schemes such as developing volunteers as be-frienders can therefore be very valuable but require resources to develop the required infrastructure.
- c) In Downpatrick, the Trust has developed a Handy Van scheme in partnership with Help the Aged through DSD Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. This has involved purchasing a van and paying for a skilled and trained worker to take referrals from older people for fitting locks, fixing curtain rails and providing home security and basic maintenance advice. From its experience in this project and the feedback received in Downpatrick, the Trust believes that developing a Handy Van service for rural Lisburn, at a cost of c. £20k per annum, would be very valuable for the elderly population.

It is proposed that Measure 3.4 will be implemented via a call for applications for projects that will address the needs of older people and children and young people. An indicative budget of £250,000 has been set for both objectives and all applications will have to prove evidence of

need and detail the impact that Rural Development funding will have on addressing such needs. A maximum of £50,000 will be made available for such projects. A call for applications will also be made to improve rural community transport in the region, with an annual budget of £50,000 available.

The role of the community sector in addressing community needs is an important contributor to quality of life experiences for rural communities. Community organisations provide value for money alternatives for delivering services for all sections of the community and it is therefore proposed that a small grants programme will be made available to enable community organisations to deliver new rural community initiatives that will enhance quality of life for members of the rural community. A maximum of £10,000 will be made available for such initiatives.

Indicative activity targets for Measure 3.4 are summarised below.

**Table 29: Measure 3.4 Indicative Activities**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicative Activities</b>	<b>Budget</b>
1) To support rural services that meet the needs of older people	5 projects @ £50,000	£250,000
2) To support rural services that meet the needs of children and young people	5 projects @ £50,000	£250,000
3) To improve rural transport provision within the area	1 annual grant of up to £50,000	£250,000
4) To support community based service provision	25 grants of up to £10,000	£250,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£1,000,000</b>

Implementation of Measure 3.4 will work closely with the implementation of Measure 3.5 Village Renewal as it is believed that both measures complement each other and that the process that will be implemented in facilitating village renewal also lends itself to facilitating improved service delivery.

As per DARD's target sheets Table 30 illustrates the following measure targets that have been set.

**Table 30: Measure 3.4 Targets**

<b>Target</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Cluster</b>
Number of supported actions	60	36
Population in rural areas benefitting from improved services	5,000	1,000
Gross number of jobs created	10	1
Projects benefitting children & young people in the rural community	10	5
Potential volume of energy generated from RDP funded renewable energy projects expressed as kilowatt hours per annum	300,000 kw hrs	24,000 kw hrs
Economic growth (net value added expressed in Purchasing Power Standard PPS)	2%	2%
Employment creation (net additional FTE jobs created)	6	0.5



## 5.2.5 Measure 5: Village Renewal and Development

<b>Aim</b>	<b>To regenerate rural villages as vibrant rural communities</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To work with a maximum of 8 villages in the implementation of a Village Renewal Plan</li> <li>2) To support physical and environmental regeneration improvements recommended in the 8 village plans</li> </ol>

Within the Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast area, there are 17 villages as defined in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015. Table 33 indicates that 15 of the villages are in Lisburn City Council area and 2 within Castlereagh Borough Council area. Belfast does not have any rural villages although Hannahstown is designated within the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan as a small settlement within the rural area of Belfast City Council area. Small settlements include clusters of development in the rural areas which had not previously been identified in development plans.<sup>27</sup>

**Table 31: Villages<sup>28</sup>**

<b>Council Area</b>	<b>Villages</b>		
<b>Lisburn</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aghalee</li> <li>▪ Anahilt</li> <li>▪ Culcavy</li> <li>▪ Dromara</li> <li>▪ Drumbeg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Glenavy</li> <li>▪ Hillsborough</li> <li>▪ Lower Ballinderry</li> <li>▪ Upper Ballinderry</li> <li>▪ Maghaberry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Milltown</li> <li>▪ Moira</li> <li>▪ Ravernet</li> <li>▪ Stoneyford</li> <li>▪ Drumbo</li> </ul>
<b>Castlereagh</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Carryduff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Moneyreagh</li> </ul>	
<b>Belfast</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hannahstown</li> </ul>		

A tour of the villages and the consultation process has identified that the villages vary greatly in terms of their:

<sup>27</sup> DOE Planning Service, Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2105

<sup>28</sup> DOE Planning Service, Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2105

- Community infrastructure – some are well catered for in terms of shops, services, play areas, community facilities and local amenities while others are poorly serviced, with some having no facilities at all and are simply a collection of housing developments
- Sense of community - some villages lack any central meeting place where the local community can get together and interact. This reinforces the sense of ‘dormitory’ villages, where residents work, shop and socialise outside of their community and has a negative impact in terms of creating vibrant communities with a strong sense of community cohesion
- Aesthetic appeal – some villages have a strong visual identity while others suffer from dereliction, vacant properties and poor environmental conditions

The focus of investment under Measure 3.5 will be upon those villages with greatest need in terms of:

- physical infrastructural improvements
- environmental improvements
- community facilities
- community cohesion

Selection criteria will be compiled and it will be the responsibility of the LAG to decide which villages will be selected for this measure. The village renewal process will be facilitated by the relevant Council within which the village(s) are located. A budget will be provided for technical expertise for the completion of a Village Plan and if needed, for capacity building support to enable those areas with weak or no community infrastructure, to develop the necessary skills to engage in the planning

process. Once the Plans are complete, the relevant Council will work with local stakeholders and the community to facilitate the implementation of the Plan.

In considering how measure 3.5 would be delivered the option of employing a worker was also considered. However it was felt that such an individual would need to have an extensive range of technical skills and competencies, which it was felt would be best achieved through the utilisation of existing Council officers and the purchase of specialist expertise as required.

A capital budget will be available for the villages that have availed of the planning support and have completed a village plan. All villages will have to complete an application for funding to avail of the capital support, which will be up to a maximum of £250,000. It is envisaged that Local Authorities in partnership with local communities, will make application for this funding and implementation of the Village Plans will be facilitated by Council officers.

Indicative activity targets for Measure 3.5 are summarised in table 32.

**Table 32: Measure 3.5 Indicative Activities**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicative Activities</b>	<b>Budget</b>
1. To work with 8 villages in the completion and implementation of a village regeneration plan	Funding for 8 village plans – technical expertise in the facilitation and completion of 8 plans	£150,000
2. To support physical and environmental regeneration improvements recommended in the 8 village plans	8 capital grants	£1,250,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£1,400,000</b>

As per DARD's target sheets Table 33 illustrates the following measure targets that have been set.

**Table 33: Measure 3.5 Targets**

<b>Target</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Cluster</b>
Number of villages where actions took place	50	8
Number of community groups supported to undertake rural development within their communities	50	8
Population in rural areas benefitting from improved services	100,000	8,000
Gross number of jobs created	10	1
Projects supported to encourage good cross community relations	20	3
Number of funded projects undertaken by RDP supported community groups	50	8
Economic growth (net value added expressed in Purchasing Power Standard PPS)	2%	2%
Employment creation (net additional FTE jobs created)	6	1

## 5.2.6 Measure 6: Conservation and Upgrading of Rural Heritage

<b>Aim</b>	<b>To increase awareness and knowledge of the natural, industrial and cultural heritage significance of the region</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	1) To improve heritage interpretation

As highlighted in the area profile, there is significant natural, industrial and cultural heritage significance in the Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast area. Specific opportunities have been identified for:

- The development of the Lagan canal as both a natural and industrial heritage resource
- The development of the Harry Ferguson tourism product
- Investing in improved access to sites of natural and cultural heritage significance
- Working with local communities, especially young people to ensure that local people have a sound understanding of their local heritage

It is proposed that implementation of Measure 3.6 will be via a strategic approach, with potentially one large grant of up to £250,000 available for strategic bodies, Local Authorities or social economy organisations to implement heritage initiatives. 5 small grants of £50,000 will also be made available for smaller community based initiatives. There is evidence of successful community based working currently in the region and it is believed that such work can achieve significant impact by engaging local people. All awards will be made on the basis of a public call for applications and indicative activity targets for Measure 3.6 are summarised in table 34.

**Table 34: Measure 3.6 Indicative Activities**

1. To improve heritage interpretation	1 large grant @ £250,000	£250,000
	5 small grants @ £50,000	£250,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£500,000</b>

As per DARD's target sheets Table 35 illustrates the following measure targets that have been set.

**Table 35: Measure 3.6 Targets**

<b>Target</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Cluster</b>
Number of rural heritage actions supported	20	6
Population in rural areas benefitting from supported actions	50,000	6,000
Share of population enjoying access to amenity land/nature or conserved rural heritage sites as a result of assisted actions	5,000	600

### **5.2.7 Options Appraisal**

Delivery of the Rural Development Programme has been determined by DARD who have set the model for delivery in terms of the Joint Committee and the LAG and their associated roles and responsibilities. There has therefore been no other option in this respect other than not to get involved in the programme. Delivery of the Programme could have remained with DARD to administer directly but this would not meet the local delivery requirements of Axis 4.

It has been agreed by the LAG and Joint Committee that all awards for funding under the Rural Development Programme will be via a public call for applications. Other options that could have been considered were:

- To deliver self implementation projects – but these are not allowed under this current programme
- To ring fence money for specific organisations - but this would be exclusive and would eliminate any opportunity for innovation

The strategy objectives have also been kept broad and strategic to allow for innovative and new initiatives to come forward over the life time of the Programme, which may not be evident at this current point in time.

Potential risks to the delivery of the Programme include:

- A lack of applications to the measures
- An underspend in the measures
- A sense of apathy for the Programme amongst the rural community
- Economic downturn

It will be the role of the staff employed to ensure that there is widespread awareness of and interest in the programme and to provide support to enable people to make application for funding. Communications and publicity will be extremely important in this respect.

Staff will also maintain close working relationships with applicants through rigorous monitoring that will ensure projects are being implemented according to plan and spend targets are being met. The mid term evaluation will provide an opportunity at a strategic and programme level to review spend within each of the measures and to consider what necessary steps to take should there be an underspend.

### **5.2.8 Promoting Sustainability**

It is believed that the approach proposed in terms of the aims, objectives and indicative actions will promote sustainability in the rural areas of Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast by:

- Increasing farm household incomes
- Increasing enterprise development
- Supporting business development
- Adopting a strategic approach to tourism development across the region which will ensure increased economic impact from increased tourism revenue
- Developing high quality tourism infrastructure which is appropriate to the area
- Supporting community based delivery that will help to generate and sustain community based activity
- Supporting community organisations to become more sustainable through a social economy approach to development
- Regenerating local villages through a bottom up approach, facilitating the engagement of local communities with key stakeholder organisations
- Facilitating the conservation of the region's rich rural heritage
- Adopting an environmentally friendly approach to development



## **6.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

An Implementation Plan for delivery of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme in Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast is presented in Appendix 3.

## **7.0 ADMINISTRATION / DELIVERY**

### **7.1 Role of the Joint Committee**

There are 11 members of the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast Joint Committee comprising of seven members from Lisburn City Council, three members from Castlereagh and one member from Belfast City Council. Each of the five main political parties in Northern Ireland is represented on the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee is responsible for:

- Ensure strong accountability and transparency in delivery.
- Ensure integration and complementarity with other social and economic programmes delivered at a local level;
- Establishment and constitution of a Joint Committee;
- Submission of strategy/funding bid to DARD;
- Signatory to contract with DARD for delivery of rural development strategy;
- Adherence to the contract/guidance notes that issue by DARD;
- Administrative and Financial lead actor with responsibility for the administration of public funds and satisfactory operation of the partnership;
- Ratifies approval/rejection/deferral of projects;
- Issue of Letters of Offer;
- Verification and approval of payments;
- Management of EU database;
- Ensure compliance with the EC Information and Publicity rules which are set out in article 76 of Council Regulation (EC) 1698/2006 and articles 58-59 and Annex VI of Commission Regulation (EC) 1974/2006.

## **7.2 Role of the Local Action Group (LAG)**

There are a total of 22 members of the Local Action Group (LAG) comprising of 11 council members and 11 social partners. The allocation of places on the LAG is based on the percentage of rural population within each of the three local authorities (Lisburn 88%, Castlereagh 11% and Belfast 1%). There are 11 council members of the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast Joint Committee comprising of seven members from Lisburn City Council, three members from Castlereagh and one member from Belfast City Council. In addition there are eight social partners from Lisburn City Council area, two from Castlereagh council area and one from Belfast council area. The Local Action Group is responsible for:

- Implementation and delivery of the approved strategy, animation of the rural area;
- Issue calls for applications for funding;
- Issue standardised application forms and guidance notes and assist potential project promoters in the development of suitable projects and issue guidance on the application process.
- Arrange/chair selection panels which meet equality requirements and ensure potential conflicts of interest are properly handled
- Determine eligibility of applications
- Recommend, for formal ratification by the council cluster, the projects to be financed under the strategy including co-operation projects.
- Prepare Letter of Offer documentation.
- Publicise the availability of funding to potential beneficiaries through issuing press notices or articles, holding information seminars, use of website, addressing any enquiries from the general public.
- Co-operation - deliver a joint action with another Leader Group or with a group taking a similar approach, in another region.

- Make available a review/complaints procedure for unsuccessful applicants.
- Agree with project promoters appropriate outputs, results and impact targets and specify financial information that will be required throughout the life of the project;
- Participation in National and European Networks;

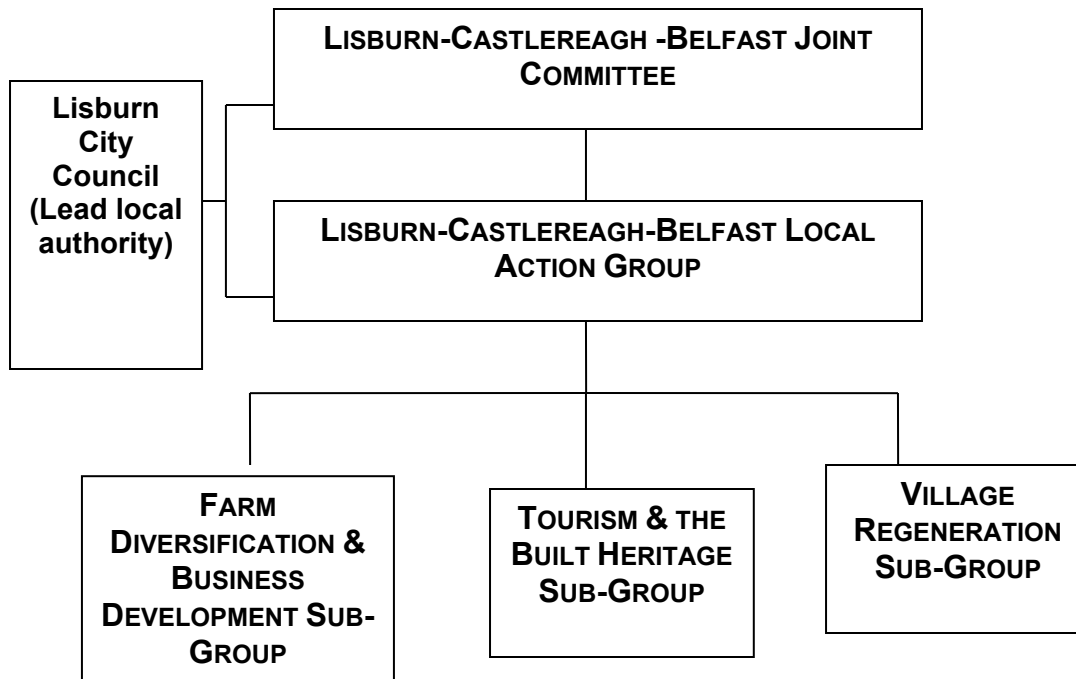
### **7.3 Working in Partnership**

The Joint Committee and LAG in partnership will:

- be responsible for drawing up, delivering and monitoring their strategy;
- not duplicate or compete with any activity/measure being carried out by another programme; and
- adhere to contracts and guidance notes issued by DARD.

### **7.4 Sub-Groups, Their Role and Responsibilities**

Delivery of the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast rural development programme will be facilitated through three thematic sub groups, namely Diversification & Business Creation, Tourism & Heritage and Village Regeneration. It is proposed that up to four members of the LAG will be assigned to sit on each of the sub groups, in addition to up to 6 others who will include specialists and government agencies (a maximum of 10 sub group members in total). The LAG will agree the additional 6 members to be invited onto each of the sub groups. Each sub group will be responsible for providing advice, support and expert input to the LAG in respect to its respective thematic area. The structure for delivering the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast Rural Development Programme is outlined in the diagram below.



The Lisburn –Castlereagh-Belfast LAG will agree the final composition of each sub group but initial discussions have identified the following organisations as potential sub group members:

<b>Farm Diversification &amp; Business Development Sub-Group</b>	<b>Tourism &amp; the Built Heritage Sub-Group</b>	<b>Village Regeneration Sub-Group</b>
Local Enterprise Agency members	Belfast Hills Partnership	TADA Rural Community
Invest NI	Lagan Navigation Trust	Network
Southern Regional College	NITB	South Antrim Community
Ulster Farmers Union	Environmental Heritage	Network
Economic Development Officers –	Services	NICVA
local authorities	Private sector operators	Community Relations
Private sector representatives	Local authority tourism	Northern Ireland Housing
	officers	Executive

The sub-groups will have responsibilities including:

- Appraisal of applications for funding;
- Preparation of recommendations for the full Board;
- Advising the Board on other potential directions it might pursue;
- Assisting with monitoring and evaluation of projects.

## **7.5 Operational Rules**

### **7.5.1 Relationship between sub groups and the LAG**

Ultimately all 3 Sub Groups are responsible to and compliant with the LAG. Recommendations from Sub Groups must be validated and agreed by the LAG. In the case of a dispute arising between a Sub Group and the LAG it is recommended that the Chair of the LAG, the Chair of the Sub Group and the Rural Development Manager meet to discuss and to come up with a compromise recommendation to be agreed by both the Sub Group and the LAG. However if a compromise can not be reached the final decision resides with the LAG.

### **7.5.2 Appointment of Sub Groups**

The LAG shall determine and review membership of the Sub Groups annually.

### **7.5.3 Chair / Vice Chair of Sub Groups**

A Chair/Vice Chair of each of the Sub Groups will be agreed by ALL members at or before the second meeting of the Sub Group.

#### **7.5.4 Frequency of Meetings**

The Sub Groups shall meet not less than 4 times in each year. A quorum at each meeting shall be at least one-third of all members, and must comprise of at least 1 member from the social partner sector and 1 government / statutory body representative.

#### **7.5.5 Record of Meetings**

Lisburn City Council's Rural Development staff will be responsible for providing secretariat support to each of the three sub groups and ensuring progress reports are forwarded to the next LAG meetings.

#### **7.5.6 Linkages with existing rural development related programmes within the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast cluster region**

The LAG is aware of a number of existing thematic based programmes and initiatives within the cluster region, e.g. Comet, Belfast Hills and Lagan Corridor. Ideally linkages should be established with these groups in order to avoid duplication of effort and to enable the sharing of information and expertise.

#### **7.5.7 Timescale**

Sub Groups to be established for an initial two year period with an opportunity to review and revise at the end of the period.

## 7.6 Stages of Project Development

Set out below are the formal procedures which will govern the processing of applications received:

- LAG issue an 'Open Call' under one of the three themes;
- Initial enquiry made by applicant;
- Support and assistance provided to the potential applicant through Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast RDP Project Staff
- Application form and Guidance Notes issued;
- Application received, copied and acknowledged;
- Basic application input into computer database;
- Assessment of application form based on eligibility criteria;
- Applicant advised if eligibility criteria are not met;
- Eligible applications undergo economic appraisals;
- Further information gathered if necessary through site visit;
- Application scored and prioritised by manager and sub-group;
- Report drawn up by manager and presented to LAG;
- Report accepted or rejected by LAG;
- Recommendation and report provided to the Joint Committee;
- Report accepted or rejected by Joint Committee;
- Applicant informed of Board decision; reasons for rejection provided;
- Letter of Offer issued to successful applicants;
- Check made that prior conditions, if any, are completed;
- Project implemented;
- If necessary project site visit carried out during progress of project;
- Final inspection visit and award of grant on completion of project;
- Project monitored throughout;
- Final exit evaluation undertaken



## **7.7 Processing Applications**

### **7.7.1 Receipt of Application**

Whenever applications are received, the date, reference number and likely measure should be recorded by the Project Manager. Copies of each should be sent on a regular basis (in batches) to DARD, Rural Development Division, Ecos Centre.

### **7.7.2 Eligibility**

An eligibility check will be undertaken by the Officer assigned to the particular measure. The eligibility check will review:

- Application form is completed as stipulated within guidance notes
- The applicant is within an eligible area
- The applicant's business proposal is within an eligible sector i.e. non retail etc

### **7.7.3 Competitive**

The issue with regard to possible displacement issues of all applications will be assessed. Clients will be reminded that RDP funding is a competitive process and they will be advised of the need for innovation / niche product /differentiation /unique selling point etc.

### **7.7.4 Maximum Grant**

Private businesses	Up to £50,000 at 50%
Social Enterprises & Local Authorities	Up to £250,000 at 75%

### **7.7.5 Other Funding**

Evidence of matched funding will be required (bank loans / private sources of finance).

### **7.7.6 Previous Grants**

Have they received any previous grant-aid in the last 3 years (outside agricultural subsidy system)? Problem if this aid exceeds £180,000 (de minimus rule)

### **7.7.7 Assessment Panel**

The LAG will appoint an assessment panel representative of both council members and social partners to undertake the assessment of the LAG applications. All members of assessment panels will undertake assessment training provided through the department. Each member of the assessment panel will be provided with a full copy of the application together with the Project Officers report / appraisal. Each application will be assessed using criteria which the applicant will have been provided with prior to submitting the application as part of the Guidance Notes.

If the assessment panel does not or cannot come to a decision a site visit may be proposed or further information requested in support of the application.

Following agreement at an assessment panel level a report and recommendation will be submitted to the LAG. At the LAG meeting a member of the assessment panel will be nominated to present the report and take any questions or queries from LAG members.

Finally, the LAG will submit its report to the Joint Committee for formal ratification and approval.

## **7.8 Review Process**

a Review Panel will be established, the membership of which will be different to that of the assessment panel. The purpose of the review procedures is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed by the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast LAG for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently. The review will provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate to the Review panel that either the outcome was unreasonable or that the proper procedures were not followed. Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered. The applicant must submit a request for a review in writing within 28 days of the date of the letter of rejection, or 14 days after a debriefing discussion has been held. The request must clearly demonstrate the grounds upon which a review is being requested.

The applicant should be afforded the opportunity to discuss either over the telephone or in a meeting the reasons for rejection with a member of staff from Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast RDP. During this discussion the scoring and the basis for the decision taken should be communicated to the applicant.

At the same time the applicant should also be informed of the formal Review Process and advised that a decision will be reviewed under the following criteria;

- The outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would have made on the basis of the information provided in the application;  
And /or

- That there was a failure in adherence to procedures or systems.

At this point the review panel will be convened. The Chairperson should be a member of the LAG. The Review Panel will receive all the documentation considered by the original Selection Panel, including signed documentation relating to all stages of the selection process including the record of the reasons for the selection decision.

The Review Panel will consider whether the applicant has demonstrated sufficient grounds for the review to be upheld. No additional project information from that supplied for the original selection should be considered during the review procedure. The Review Panel will inform the applicant in writing of its decision on whether it has recommended to the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast LAG to uphold the original decision or asked for it to be reconsidered.

Having considered the Review Panel's recommendation the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast LAG will:

- Confirm its decision; or
- Amend or alter its decision in any respect; or
- Revoke its decision in its entirety and substitute a new decision.

In coming to its decision on the recommendations, the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast Joint Committee must have regard to the Review Panel's findings and recommendations but is not bound to follow all or part of these. However the Joint Committee will normally accept the recommendations of the Review Panel unless there are over-riding legal or other relevant and defensible considerations.

## **7.9 Administrative Systems**

The lead local authority for the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast RDP is Lisburn City Council. All staff employed to deliver the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast RDP will be Lisburn City Council staff members and will be housed within the council's development section. Line management of the RDP will be provided by Paul McCormick, Assistant Director of Environmental Services (Economic Development), Lisburn City Council. Paul has considerable programme management experience and has managed European programmes totalling over £5 million pounds in the past 5 years. In addition the council are currently recruiting specialist rural development staff with proven delivery expertise and technical competencies to deliver the rural development programme. Finally, Lisburn City Council has in place the HR, finance, legal and administrative services which will help deliver an effective programme.

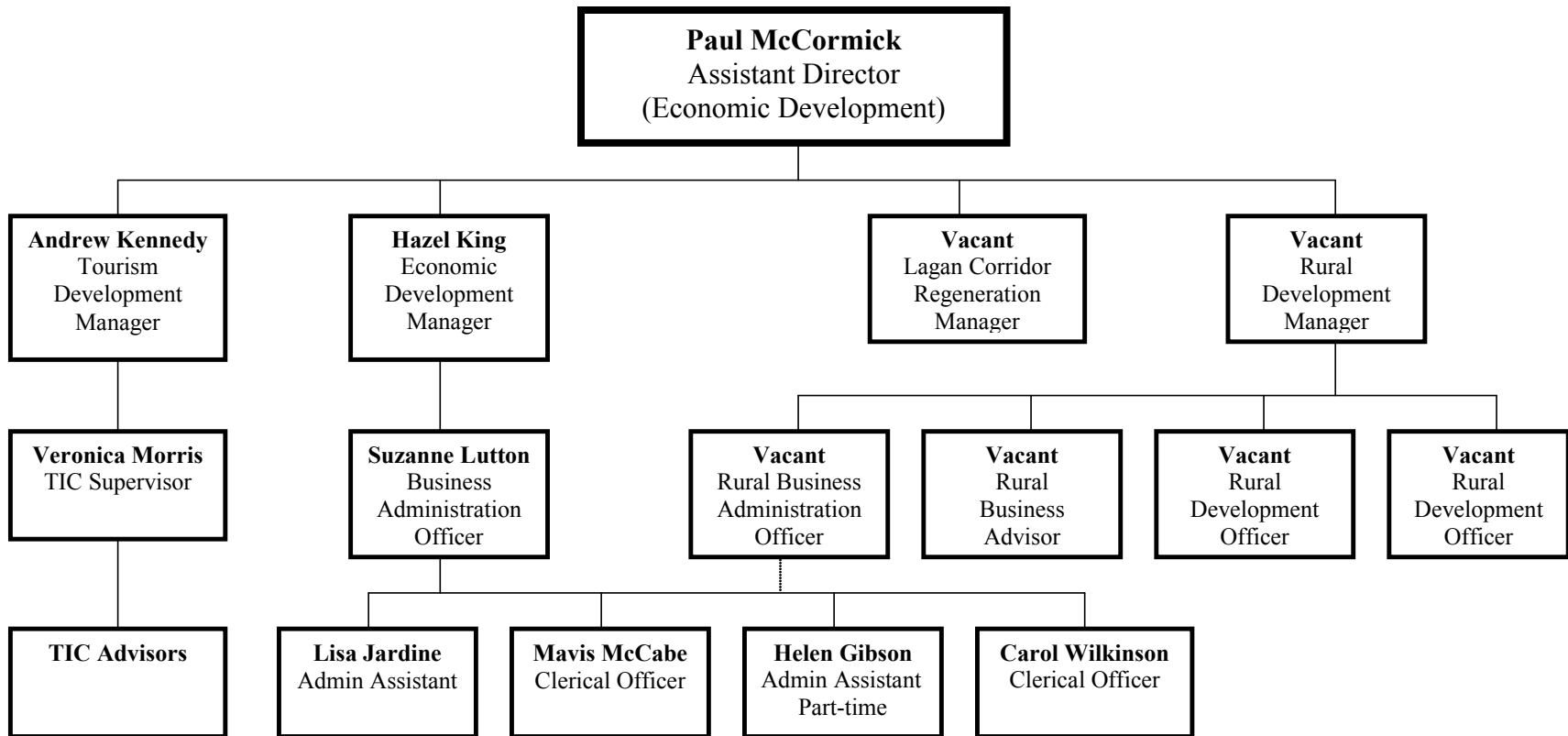
Lisburn City Council will recruit 6 staff members to help deliver, manage and monitor the RDP. Three job descriptions which cover 4 of the 6 posts are attached in Appendix 4. These represent the posts which will be part of the initial recruitment phase to the programme. The Clerical Officer position includes an existing Lisburn City Council staff member. The staff employed will include:

- Rural Development Manager (middle manager) who will have overall responsibility for the effective and efficient delivery of the Rural Development Strategy across the eligible area. This will include staff management and financial management of the programme budget, as well as responsibilities in respect to communication and promotion of the programme.
- Rural Development Officer (2 posts) who will be responsible for assisting the Rural Development Manager in the delivery of the Rural

Development strategy. They will play a key role in the assessment process of applications, ensuring that applications and all necessary paperwork is complete in advance of going before the LAG assessment panel. They will also have an important role in ongoing monitoring of projects.

- Rural Business Administrative Officer who will have responsibility for the operation and development of all business administrative systems within the Rural Development section, including administrative procedures associated with the allocation of grant aid.
  
- Rural Business Advisor who will be responsible for targeting enterprise creation and development in the rural areas by taking a pro active support role in helping applicants to make a successful bid for funding to the Programme. Specifically they will work with anyone interested in developing a new on or off farm enterprise or an existing micro enterprise looking to expand. They will also work with social economy organisations in the development of new / existing social enterprises.
  
- Clerical Officer who is an existing Lisburn City Council member of staff and will provide all clerical and administrative support needed in the delivery of the Strategy.

Diagram 1 below details the full staff compliment and structure for delivery of the RDP within Lisburn City Council's Economic Development Unit.



Finally, the skills set, experience and expertise of the 22 members of the LAG will undoubtedly contribute to the overall success of the rural development programme. This will be supplemented by the introduction of experts who can join sub groups for specific time bound tasks, again constantly reinforcing the technical, managerial and appraisal skills required to deliver an effective programme.

The Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast RDP will be located at the Lisburn City Council Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn.



## **8.0 COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY STRATEGY**

The Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast Cluster recognises that communication and publicity is vitally important to the implementation of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. It is proposed to establish a stand-alone communications and strategy which will seek to promote the Rural Development Programme throughout the Cluster region. The excellent response to date to the animation process and the strategic planning process is evidence that the Cluster is already pro-active in promoting the programme and has excellent links and working relations with key stakeholder organisations. Such processes can only be built upon and improved during the implementation of the programme.

It is proposed that the communications and publicity strategy will focus upon three key areas of activity:

- Awareness raising
- Encouraging participation
- Promoting the success of the Programme

### **8.1 Awareness Raising**

Awareness raising will be a continual activity from the outset of the Programme, rising awareness within the rural community as well as with stakeholder organisations and Council staff who may have both a delivery role in rural development funded initiatives but who will also be important as a referral source to the programme.

Once funding has been agreed for the region a press campaign will ensure that press releases are submitted to all local press, detailing the amount of funding that has been awarded, what will be funded and contact details for all programme enquiries. Annually, as calls for applications

are being made, advertisements and accompanying press releases will also be submitted to the local press.

The press that will be used will include:

- Belfast Telegraph
- Saturday Newsletter Farming Supplement
- Irish News Farming Supplement
- North, South & East Belfast Community Telegraphs
- Andersonstown News
- Ulster star
- Dromore & Banbridge Leader
- Dromore Weekender
- Ards Chronicle
- Farm Week
- Farming Life

Promotional materials will be produced that will help to sustain awareness. These will be widely distributed across the region using the extensive Council databases, which will be centrally pooled into one regional database.

A Rural Development Programme web site will be developed which will have a link from each of the Council web sites and will provide details on the programme and each of the measures, contact details, rates of funding, the application process and success stories / case study details.

As Rural Development funding is European funding it will also be important to ensure that the rural community is aware of the source of funding. European regulations will be adhered to in this respect and will ensure that all publicity makes reference to the source of funding, that all advertisements have appropriate logos included, that all publicity events

have promotional materials with the Rural Development and European logos displayed and that every project supported displays the funding logos.

## **8.2 Encouraging Participation on the Programme**

Over the duration of the Programme, the Rural Development Manager will host information sessions across the region making people aware of the Programme Measures and encouraging them to make contact with Programme staff. Case studies will be presented to motivate potential applicants and people will be made aware of the assistance available with the application process both through Programme staff and through the Rural Business Advisor Service.

The Rural Development Manager will also focus upon stakeholder engagement as an important element in encouraging participation. This will entail making contact with relevant individuals and organisations and meeting on a one to one to discuss the Programme, with the aim of both encouraging their participation and encouraging them to encourage others to consider rural development opportunities.

## **8.3 Promoting the Success of the Programme**

Monitoring and evaluation will be a core activity within the management of the Rural Development programme. This will be an important exercise for collating information from a PR perspective. Success stories will be regularly communicated via the local press, via the web site and through a Rural Development newsletter which will be produced twice a year.

Formal evaluation reports will be an important source of information for promoting successes and these will be made publicly available via the web site for general public to access.

## **9.0 NETWORKING AND CO-OPERATION**

### **9.1 Networking**

It is acknowledged that the LAG will have a responsibility to participate in the National Rural Network, the NI Regional Rural Network and the European Network. The Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast LAG is fully committed to fulfilling its networking obligations under the Rural Development Programme. They will ensure that at least two members (rotating) and the Programme Manager attend all meetings and will contribute to:

- Identification and sharing of good practice
- Exchange of experience
- Participation in training and support provided

### **9.2 Co-operation**

*“I am confident that with an increased emphasis on territorial cooperation in 2007-2013, we will dynamise regional development and innovation, and thus prove that we are a driving force for territorial cohesion in Europe.”*

Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hübner,

The Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast LAG is unique in that it is the only new LAG covering an area which has never received or benefited from rural development funding in the past. Therefore in respect to cooperation and transnational networking the Cluster has no direct experience to build upon. However, Belfast City Council is the only local authority in Northern Ireland to have a dedicated European Unit. The Belfast City Council European Unit is recognized as best practice throughout the United Kingdom with considerable expertise, experience and resource. The unit has 4 full-time members of staff and 2 members of staff delivering specific

European funded projects which are timebound in nature. The European Unit has been responsible for delivering and managing the following EU programmes / projects:

- Interreg III – Comet partnership which includes Castlereagh and Lisburn councils
- Peace II –Connect partnership which includes Castlereagh and Lisburn councils
- Urbact
- Eurocities
- BERI –Brownfield Europe Regeneration Initiative
- Quartiers en Crise
- Future Cities
- Cities of the Isles
- Opportunity Europe events
- EQUAL –Women into Non-traditional Sectors (WINS)
- EU Bulletin

It is proposed that Belfast City Council's European Unit will take the lead in respect to the Co-operation and Transnational Networking element of the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast RDP. This proposition is based on the available resources to the Cluster to undertake networking and co-operation and that this approach is the most cost effective and efficient way of providing this particular service.

Co-operation and networking has always been identified as an integral part of LEADER, whereby new ideas and best practice could be drawn together from all over Europe. Initial consultations with the LAG /Joint Committee and stakeholders has identified the following themes for consideration under co-operation and networking:

- River based / canal based rural tourism activities
- Walking based rural tourism activities
- Edge of cities rural enterprise opportunities
- Rural village renewal – branding and niche marketing
- Development of Lough Neagh
- Development of the Belfast Hills rural recreational opportunities

There are also opportunities for cross border development and it is proposed to develop the work already carried out through the Comet Interreg III initiative which includes all three local authorities with cross border partners.

A service level agreement will be entered into with Belfast City Council to deliver the co-operation and transnational networking element of the RDP. This will detail specific services, costs and targets for the co-operation measure. Ultimately, however responsibility for the delivery and management of co-operation resides with the Joint Committee and Local Action Group.

## 10.0 FINANCIAL PLAN

Table 36 demonstrates the running costs that will be associated with the implementation of Axis 3 in the Lisburn Castlereagh Belfast area. It is proposed that running costs will be £1,543,174 to cover the period up to June 2015.

Tables 37 to 42 detail programme costs in respect to the delivery of each of the six measures. These costs have been determined on the basis of the project targets detailed in chapter five - Development Strategy. Specifically the tables show that based upon a proposed project expenditure budget of £8,250,000, it is estimated that £4.2 million match private sector funding and £1.34 million public sector funding will be secured.

Co-operation funding is shown under Measure 3.3 only as it is considered that co-operation is most likely to occur in respect to tourism sector initiatives. However the potential for co-operation initiatives will be considered across all measures once the programme is operational.

Throughout the Programme value for money will be achieved by ensuring that a strategic focus is adopted in the delivery of the Strategy, engaging all relevant stakeholder bodies who will have a role to play in the rural development process in terms of enterprise development, tourism development, delivery of services, village regeneration and conservation of heritage. This will help to lever in additional resources in support of the rural development aims and objectives.

At a project level, all funding will be awarded via an open call for applications and each will be assessed against scoring criteria that will include a value for money assessment.



**Table 36: Administration Costs**

	2008/2009						2014/2015
<b>STAFF COSTS</b>	<b>(6 Months)</b>	<b>2009/2010</b>	<b>2010/2011</b>	<b>2011/2012</b>	<b>2012/2013</b>	<b>2013/2014</b>	<b>(6 Months)</b>
Assistant Director of Environmental Services	3,400	7,764	7,997	8,237	8,484	8,738	4,500
Rural Development Manager	18,986	37,972	39,111	40,284	41,493	42,738	22,010
Rural Development Officer	14,736	29,742	30,634	31,553	32,500	33,475	17,240
Rural Business Administration Officer	14,736	29,742	30,634	31,553	32,500	33,475	17,240
Rural Business Advisor	14,736	29,742	30,634	31,553	32,500	33,475	17,240
Rural Development Officer	-	29,742	30,634	31,553	32,500	33,475	17,240
Clerical Officer	7,183	14,798	15,242	15,699	16,170	16,655	8,577
Staff Costs (Recruitment, Sickness, Redundancy Costs & Insurance)	3,500	2,000	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	3,000
<b>SUB-TOTAL STAFF COSTS</b>	<b>77,277</b>	<b>181,502</b>	<b>187,387</b>	<b>192,934</b>	<b>198,647</b>	<b>204,531</b>	<b>107,047</b>
<b>OPERATIONAL</b>							
Capital Costs	7,500	-	-	2,000	-	-	-
Travel Costs	1,250	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	1,250
Rental Charges	3,500	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	3,500
Insurance	500	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	500
Audit/Compliance	2,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	5,000
Hospitality/ Facility Hire	7,500	10,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	7,000
Telephone/Fax	650	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	650
Stationery	1,600	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	1,100
Internet/Web	8,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,000
Miscellaneous	300	750	750	750	750	750	300
<b>SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONAL</b>	<b>32,800</b>	<b>29,750</b>	<b>31,750</b>	<b>33,750</b>	<b>31,750</b>	<b>31,750</b>	<b>20,300</b>

Marketing & Promotion	8,000	18,000	18,000	18,000	15,000	15,000	5,000
Technical Assistance	-	4,000	5,000	5,000	4,000	3,000	-
Networking/Training (JC/LAG Staff)	6,000	5,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	-
Evaluation/Monitoring Costs				10,000			15,000
<b>SUB-TOTAL LAG PROGRAMME ACTIVITY</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>27,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>26,000</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>
Annual	<b>124,077</b>	<b>238,252</b>	<b>249,137</b>	<b>266,684</b>	<b>256,397</b>	<b>261,281</b>	<b>147,347</b>
<b>TOTAL (Cum)</b>	<b>124,077</b>	<b>362,329</b>	<b>611,466</b>	<b>878,150</b>	<b>1,134,546</b>	<b>1,395,827</b>	<b>1,543,174</b>

**Table 37: Measure 3.1 Expenditure**

<b>MEASURE 3.1 Expenditure</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Project Expenditure	£200,000	£350,000	£550,000	£500,000	£300,000	£1,900,000
Co-operation project expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-
Network expenditure	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£5,000
Other public expenditure	£6,666	£6,666	£6,666	£6,666	£6,666	£33,333
Private match funding	£200,000	£350,000	£550,000	£500,000	£250,000	£1,900,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£407,666</b>	<b>£707,666</b>	<b>£1,057,666</b>	<b>£1,007,666</b>	<b>£557,666</b>	<b>£3,838,333</b>

**Table 38: Measure 3.2 Expenditure**

<b>MEASURE 3.2 Expenditure</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Project Expenditure	£200,000	£440,000	£550,000	£550,000	£460,000	£2,200,000
Co-operation project expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-
Network expenditure	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£5,000
Other public expenditure	£3,333	£6,666	£8,333	£8,333	£6,666	£33,331
Social Enterprise match funding	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£100,000
Private match funding	£165,000	£360,000	£450,000	£450,000	£375,000	£1,800,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£389,333</b>	<b>£827,666</b>	<b>£1,029,333</b>	<b>£1,029,333</b>	<b>£862,666</b>	<b>£4,138,330</b>

**Table 39: Measure 3.3 Expenditure**

<b>MEASURE 3.3 Expenditure</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Project Expenditure	£200,000	£250,000	£300,000	£300,000	£200,000	£1,250,000
Co-operation project expenditure	£12,500	£12,500	£12,500	£12,500	£12,500	£62,500
Network expenditure	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£5,000
Local Authority / Strategic Bodies match funding	-	£83,333		£83,333	£83,333	£250,000
Private match funding	£80,000	£100,000	£120,000	£120,000	£80,000	£500,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£293,900</b>	<b>£446,833</b>	<b>£433,500</b>	<b>£516,833</b>	<b>£377,233</b>	<b>£2,067,500</b>

**Table 40: Measure 3.4 Expenditure**

<b>MEASURE 3.4 Expenditure</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Project Expenditure	£100,000	£200,000	£250,000	£250,000	£200,000	£1,000,000
Co-operation project expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-
Network expenditure	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£5,000
Community /voluntary /social enterprise match funding	£33,333	£66,666	£83,333	£83,333	£66,666	£333,333
Private match funding	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£134,333</b>	<b>£267,666</b>	<b>£334,333</b>	<b>£334,333</b>	<b>£267,666</b>	<b>£1,338,333</b>

**Table 41: Measure 3.5 Expenditure**

<b>MEASURE 3.5 Expenditure</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Project Expenditure	£140,000	£280,000	£360,000	£360,000	£260,000	£1,400,000
Co-operation project expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-
Network expenditure	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£5,000
Community /voluntary /social enterprise match funding	£46,660	£93,333	£119,000	£119,000	£86,000	£463,993
Private match funding	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£187,660</b>	<b>£374,333</b>	<b>£480,000</b>	<b>£480,000</b>	<b>£347,000</b>	<b>£1,868,993</b>

**Table 42: Measure 3.6 Expenditure**

<b>MEASURE 3.6 Expenditure</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Project Expenditure	£50,000	£100,000	£250,000	£50,000	£50,000	£500,000
Co-operation project expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-
Network expenditure	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£5,000
Local Authority / Strategic Bodies match funding /other match funding	£16,666	£33,333	£83,333	£16,666	£16,666	£166,666
Private match funding	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£67,666</b>	<b>£134,333</b>	<b>£334,333</b>	<b>£67,666</b>	<b>£67,666</b>	<b>£671,666</b>

## **11.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of the Rural Development Programme will be the responsibility of the Joint Committee. Day to day responsibility will be with the Rural Development Manager and staff.

### **11.1 Monitoring**

All financial monitoring and evaluation procedures will be carried out in compliance with the CIPFA / SOLACE “Delivering Good Governance: Framework” and the requirements of the EU and DARD systems of administration in the delivery of the Rural Development Programme.

The Programme Manager will be responsible for developing, establishing, managing and maintaining the financial monitoring and audit systems for the delivery of the Rural Development Programme in the Cluster area. They will ensure that project promoter’s systems are capable of meeting the financial reporting requirements of the programme and providing a full audit trail and will complete quarterly financial monitoring inspections of projects supported.

The Council has in place robust financial management policies, systems, software and auditing and reporting structures as required by the Local Government Auditor to meet all the legislative requirements of a Local Authority. In addition the Council has its own internal Audit Office and qualified accounting personnel to provide the support and administration expertise which will be required in the delivery of this programme.

Project targets will be monitored through the return of monitoring reports by recipients of funding. Targets will be detailed in letters of offer and it will be the role of the Business Administration officer to monitor project performance in terms of implementation timescale, spend, outputs and impacts achieved as a result of Rural Development funding.

## **11.2 Evaluation**

Evaluation will focus upon both project and programme level evaluation. At a project level, all recipients of project funding will be required to complete a post project evaluation, for which they will have an allocated budget within their overall grant aid. Project evaluations will focus upon the achievement of the project aims and objectives and the rural impact that the project has had. Specifically project evaluations will collate information in respect to the measure targets to enable an assessment to be made of the contribution that each project has made to the respective measure, the Lisburn-Castlereagh-Belfast Rural Development Strategy and the NI Rural Development Programme.

At a Programme level the Joint Committee will commission an independent organisation to conduct a mid term evaluation in 2010 and a final Programme evaluation in 2014/15. The evaluator will be appointed at the outset of the Programme to work with the staff to ensure that monitoring and evaluation systems and procedures are in place to gather information that will enable an assessment to be made of progress at a project and programme level. Upon completion of the Interim Evaluation the LAG and Joint Committee will reassess spend across each of the Programme Measures and will make decisions with regard to improving the quality of the programme and its implementation and will examine proposals for any necessary changes to the programme.

Within the final programme evaluation the exit strategy for the Rural Development Programme will be addressed. However it is anticipated that the exit strategy for the programme will be that rural development responsibilities will transfer to local Councils with the implementation of RPA, post 2011, thus potentially mainstreaming rural development activity at a local level.



