
Market and Coastal Towns and the Rural Hinterlands: 'collaboration' priorities



1. Background

Making it Local is a five year, locally managed grants scheme in the Blackdown Hills and East Devon area. It runs from summer 2009 to the end of 2013. It aims to 'use the outstanding landscapes and local skills as a springboard for healthy and lasting development'.

Funding comes from the Local Action part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), through the South West Regional Development Agency. Decisions are made locally by a Local Action Group which has community, business and local authority membership. There are fourteen similar Local Action Groups (LAGs) in the South West region, all with their own local priorities.

The operational structures for Making it Local include MCTI/Town groups as part of a wider network. Whilst networks already exist within the towns and across both counties, there is no real relationship across the group of towns included in the programme area as yet.

2. Developing connections between Market Towns and Rural Hinterlands

The programme wants to enable greater connections between the market towns and their surrounding rural areas. We have some priority areas which reflect the three main objectives of the Making it Local programme.

As such, we wish to address the following areas as part of developing the market town and rural hinterland networks:

- Strengthening the market town links across the Counties – Devon Towns Forum and Somerset Market Towns Forum
- Develop the "gateway towns" principle across the area so that visitors and local communities become aware of and build on the tourism, local food and products in the towns and villages and their associated rural hinterland
- Identifying models of good practice that can be shared across the area (e.g. pilot Local Rewards Card Schemes) that can be scaled up across several market towns or villages to offer economies of scale and new technology to small independent businesses
- Jointly developing models/examples and priorities in town and village action plans that could be delivered across the area in one or more towns or villages and their hinterlands
- Build on good examples in other LAGs regionally or nationally which support local retailers and offers collective marketing potential eg "shop locally, save locally" campaigns; community shops.

- Build on and encourage good practice in community engagement in market towns development

2. Opportunity areas

2.1 Visitor Gateways & Access to the Countryside - The larger towns in the area effectively act as gateways to the countryside, offering information to visitors and local services to all. This principle has been developed by the World Heritage Coast "gateway towns" group. Specific projects such as the interpretation centres at Seaton and Exmouth and "coast-hopper" buses are developing information services and branding. Equally the development of the Somerset Tourism Partnership brand is exemplified through the South Somerset Market Towns Investment Group's Interpretation Boards project. Heritage and town trails, cycleway and footpaths add to the experience and opportunity.

These all serve to link the environment, local communities and tourism together often around the market towns and are all key components of the governments drive towards healthier living.

2.2 Business Hubs and community connections Some towns have active business networks (Chambers or Associations) which have the opportunity to develop as modern business networks or wider community fora serving a larger hinterland area.

2.3 Developing the Marketplace – Markets take place in the towns and some of the outlying villages and there is a Farmers Market circuit in the area. There is potential to develop and promote these markets further and collectively develop networks across other business sectors other than just the high street to improve economic viability, marketing, and promotion.

2.4 Culture, Festivals and Events – Towns predominantly act as hubs for cultural groups and community groups in a number of market towns have organised festivals and events which;

- a) Link the town with its surrounding countryside and environment
- b) Have a significant economic impact
- c) Achieve objectives that the community have identified in their community plan.
- d) Achieve sustainable tourism objectives
- e) Take forward initiatives that promote sustainable development

Based on analysis of Devon and Somerset Coastal and Market Town Plans and other evidence and using the objectives of the Making it Local Programme, the Programme Management Group wishes to encourage the development of collaboration projects and initiatives across the market towns and their surrounding village and rural hinterland within the programme area – these are outlined below.

Please note:

This is not an exclusive list and is not to exclude villages or indeed individual towns from within the area from proposing stand alone projects. However, one of the main purposes of the Making it Local programme is to encourage network development across the area and therefore we wish to develop the relationship between the towns, their outlying villages and rural hinterlands.

3. The collaboration priorities

The three objectives of the Making it Local programme provide a framework for identifying potential scheme areas which towns and villages and the rural communities to consider for collaboration. Again this is not exhaustive or exclusive.

Objective 1. Raise business performance and local employment.

For projects that support micro and small businesses, to make them more ambitious and productive, to create more sustainable jobs and to make the most of markets for local products and services.

Making it Local Priorities	Potential collaborative schemes
Develop business skills and leadership	Business support, resources, training & facilities
Develop markets for local products and service	Skills programmes and sector business networks
Develop and promote exemplar projects	Link with Devon Town Forum awareness and training events

Objective 2. Communities and Connections

For projects that help communities and businesses to be more resilient and sustainable by developing strong local connections, essential community services and community held assets.

Making it Local Priorities	Potential collaborative schemes
Increase joint working and cooperation between communities and groups	Encourage community fora and planning for real
Develop and improve sustainable rural services	One stop shops, improved access, transport improvements
Collaborate on the development and use of renewable energies	Town energy audits/ schemes – town carbon action plans

Objective 3. Make the most of local resources

For projects which strengthen the local economy through sensitive and sustainable use of the landscape and natural resources, and that work with local culture and built heritage.

Making it Local Priorities	Potential collaborative schemes
Increase sustainable tourism, recreation and access	Farmers /country markets, sustainable tourism initiatives, transport improvements
Encourage new and sustainable use of existing natural resources	Green tourism activities, green trails, renewable energy projects
Make the most of the local environment as a product particularly through cultural, arts and heritage activities	Heritage trails, arts/music/food & drink events, walking/cycling infrastructure and leisure Cultural/Celebratory programmes /initiatives

Making it Local Programme Management Group, August 2009

www.makingitlocal.org