



Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14

Final Consultation

April 2011

v0.4

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Chairman's Foreword

I am very pleased to be able to present this consultation draft of our revised third Leicestershire Rural Strategy, 2007-14. We have renamed this as the Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14 to reflect the significant number of changes made to the document. It has been refreshed to reflect three core principles – refocus, reduce and revise. Across 4 themes we have identified priorities critical to the future sustainability of our rural communities. Most importantly they are the priorities that we consider the LRP should lead. The

Central to this is our commitment to help deliver the Government's localism agenda. The LRP has a strong legacy of effective working at the community level. This has included helping residents to identify local issues and then empowering them to deliver solutions. Successes within rural areas provide the basis from which to deliver our shared Big Society ambitions.

Together with Lord Haskins I launched our third Strategy at our bi-Annual Rural Conference in 2007. Working closely with our partners we have made significant progress to deliver our priorities, including development of our comprehensive rural economy programme - INSPIRE Leicestershire. However, there is more we need to do and, as a starting point, I consider that this refresh is critical to ensure our future effectiveness as a partnership. I am keen to ensure the LRP has a strong, effective and united voice in order that we can best support our rural communities.

I consider there are three key areas of activity upon which we will focus our attention over the next few years.

Firstly, we need to work effectively in the rural areas which could be impacted greatest by **funding cuts** – especially where these will impact older, young and vulnerable residents. We need to work with service providers and those affected rural communities in order to help bring forward innovative and sustainable solutions. To ensure the future sustainability of our rural communities there is a need to transform delivery and I am keen to ensure the LRP is best able to lead this.

Secondly, we need to ensure we are in the best place to **influence emerging local structures** which will have a profound impact on the way public services are delivered and economic growth is secured. This will include, for example, the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy commissioning arrangements, the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership and new public health duties.

Finally, we need to reach out externally. We will be looking for **new funding sources**, including the possibility of the Regional Growth Fund, and work to ensure that national and international programmes deliver our priorities (e.g. Post-2013 CAP reform). As part of this we will influence Government, especially Defra, through consultation responses and lobbying.

In order to achieve this, therefore, it is essential that we clearly articulate our shared priorities for rural Leicestershire. I look forward to receiving your comments on our draft Leicestershire Rural Framework.

Mrs Lesley Pendleton CC

Chairman, Leicestershire Rural Partnership

Cabinet Lead for Rural Affairs, Leicestershire County Council

1. Executive Summary

To be included in final version

2. Vision for rural Leicestershire

In 2026 rural Leicestershire will be made up of thriving, and safe communities, which have access to good employment opportunities, affordable housing and essential local services.

Rural Leicestershire will be recognised locally, nationally and internationally for its:

- **Active communities with residents who influence local decisions and support the delivery of local services**
- **Joined up planning systems to support housing, services and employment**
- **Centre of excellence for Food and Drink**
- **A destination for family days out and holidays**
- **High quality equestrian services and facilities**
- **Open and maintained countryside including the National Forest and Charnwood Forest**
- **Excellent opportunities for vocational training in rural skills**
- **Well connected and innovative farming community**
- **High performing SMEs**
- **Contribution to developing and using resource efficiency programmes**

3. Introduction

3.1 The Leicestershire Rural Partnership

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) was established in 1993 in order that partners could work more effectively, benefit from shared knowledge and resources, and jointly address issues of mutual concern. Despite a number of policy changes over the last 18 years this principle has remained.

The LRP has a formal membership of 22 organisations with links to a further 40 working across rural Leicestershire. A list of formal members is included at the rear of this document. The Chairman of the LRP has traditionally been the County Council's Cabinet Lead for Rural Affairs. The Management Board provides the LRP's strategic oversight. It is supported by the Strategy and Performance Group which co-ordinates delivery. This group has delegated responsibilities to act within the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership governance arrangements.

3.2 About rural Leicestershire

Leicestershire is predominately a rural county in terms of land area. 32% of the population live in rural areas across 229 parishes and over 400 settlements

Harborough and Melton districts, to the east, are classified as amongst the most rural in the country with at least 80% of their population living in rural areas. This is compared to 57% in North West Leicestershire. Hinckley and Bosworth is regarded as Significantly Rural with 29% living in rural areas. Finally, despite Charnwood and Blaby being regarded as urban they have important rural areas. Figure 1 shows the spread of rural communities across Leicestershire.

In very general terms there is an east-west split to the County. Towards the east there is greater reliance on the agricultural sector, higher levels of home-working and greater affluence. To the west the rural economy strongly aligns to urban areas, including increased density and pockets of deprivation. It also includes over half of the area of the National Forest and is, therefore, a growing tourism hotspot within the county.

Located within the heart of rural England, Leicestershire has excellent communication links by road, rail and air (East Midlands Airport). In total there are 18 different landscape character types, including the Wolds, Charnwood Forest, High Leicestershire and the Soar Valley – reflecting our rural diversity.

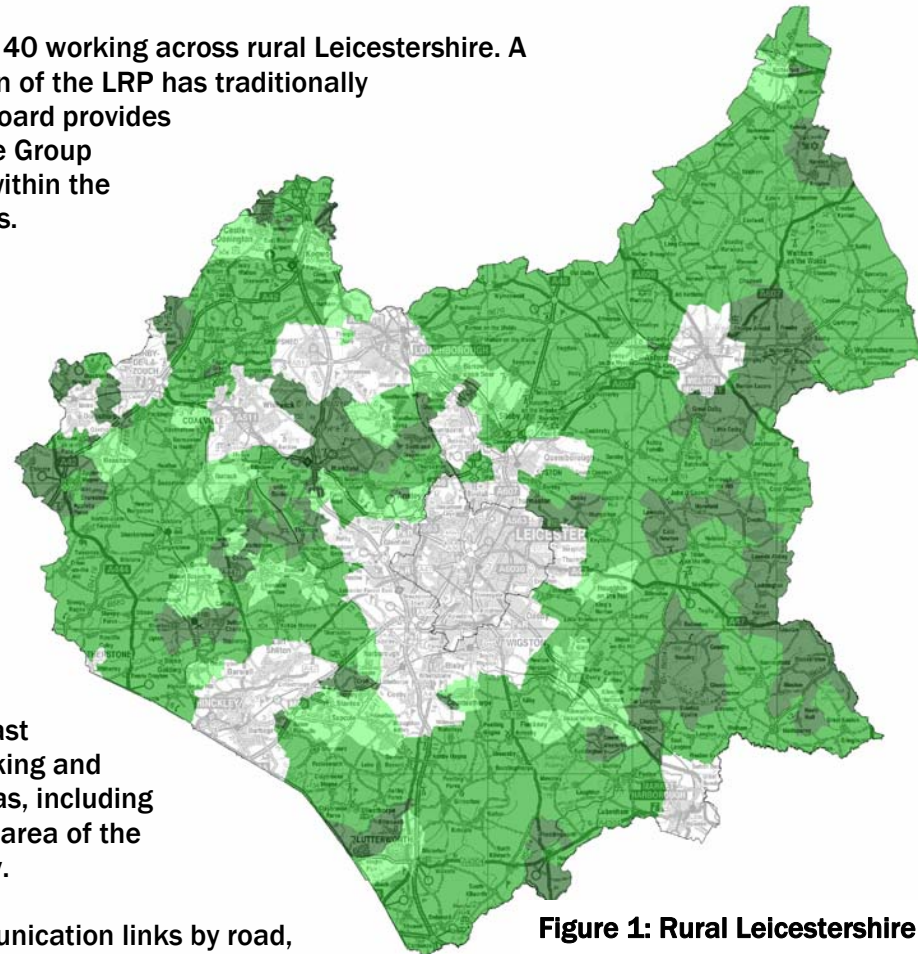


Figure 1: Rural Leicestershire

Rural Urban Definition 2004

- Hamlet & isolated dwellings - Less sparse
- Village - Less sparse
- Town & fringe - Less sparse
- Urban>10K - Less sparse

3.3 Principles of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership

There are 4 key overarching principles in which the LRP aims to deliver on. These include:

- **Deliver** rural projects which meet gaps in mainstream provision
- **Coordinate** partners and stakeholders to ensure they work better together to meet rural needs
- **Influence** key agencies and partnerships to ensure they consider 'rural' within their policies, strategies and actions
- **Advise** local communities and businesses to ensure they access the rural and mainstream services available

3.4 Delivering the Framework

The Leicestershire Rural Framework is one of a number of key strategic documents developed by the LRP. It will influence the allocation of LRP resources, including staffing capacity and funding. It will also be used to influence local and national partners who deliver services in rural areas to ensure the needs of rural communities are met, and contribute to the deliver our refreshed 2026 Vision for rural Leicestershire.

The LRP's 3-year Action Plan outlines specific interventions and projects commissioned which will help deliver the Framework. It also includes activities of member partners. It demonstrates the range of activity undertaken to support rural communities and provides the basis for identifying gaps in the LRP programme. The Action Plan is refreshed annually and is complemented by the Annual Report in which we review our past year's achievements and activity.

Outlining the governance structure of the LRP is our Partnership Agreement. This includes our membership, structure, code of governance, and working practices. Drawn up in 2008 it is periodically revised to ensure the LRP maintains its effectiveness. A revised governance structure is included in Figure 2.

With reduced capacity and funding resources in future years, there is a greater need to prioritise LRP activity. The reduction in the total number of strategic priorities from 31 to 15 will assist this process. These priorities, as outlined in Chapter 6, identify those areas where the LRP will lead. This could include directly commissioning delivery activity or leading co-ordination working with a range of partners. Elsewhere the LRP will seek to support and influence other partners through "rural proofing" exercises.

The LRP, therefore, will continue to have an active interest in the full range of issues affecting rural communities. Our priority will be to develop a strong connection to the emerging Commissioning Hubs which are being established as part of the new Leicestershire Together structure. With rural champions sitting on the Hubs, the LRP will both provide support, and challenge these key strategic organisations to ensure their delivery takes account of rural needs.

We will continue to seek opportunities to work with organisations to deliver our aspirations for rural Leicestershire. This includes, for example, close working with NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland to ensure that public health commitments and access to health care is delivered effectively in rural areas. We will also continue to help promote local and national projects and programmes, though

parish councils and the RCC, to ensure that all rural communities are informed, empowered and able to take advantage of emerging opportunities. This will include consultations, funding streams and awareness raising programmes.

Finally, as a result of increased funding pressures there is greater need to encourage public authorities to utilise existing assets and resources to deliver shared priorities. The LRP will support such activity to bring added benefit to rural communities. This is currently most clearly demonstrated, for example, in current efforts to identify how the County Council estate can help bring forward affordable rural housing schemes.

3.5 Geographical priorities: town and rural centres and remote rural areas

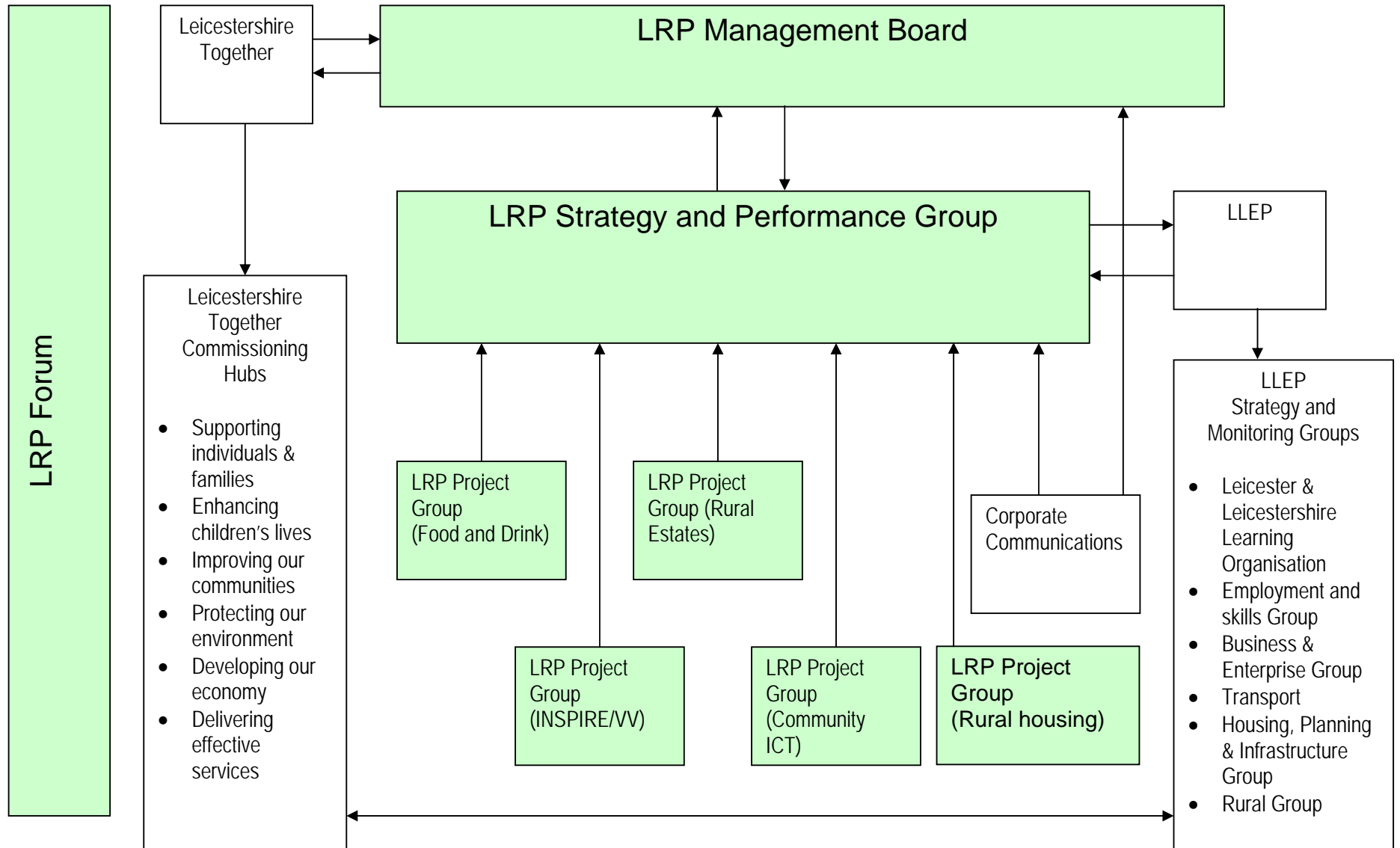
In addition to ensuring that all rural residents have access to essential services locally, within their communities, we recognise the important role town and rural centres have in providing rural communities with a wider range of services. The LRP has identified a range of settlements as principal service centres which act as key hubs, providing a range of additional services for residents in rural areas.¹

Despite many rural communities being sparsely populated they should not be viewed as inherently unsustainable. Innovative and flexible solutions need to be identified to improve service delivery and help develop the economic base. Whilst we will work with partners, especially district councils and the County Council's Communities and Places Team, to ensure a range of services in larger settlements, our focus of attention will be in more rural locations. The LRP will seek to work with clusters of rural communities to help build the critical mass that will support both the delivery of services and the development of economic growth initiatives.

Furthermore, the LRP will focus its efforts on supporting sectors that are predominantly located, do business, or are dependent upon their rural locality. Thematic and economic sector priorities are outlined as part of the priority outcomes contained in Chapter 6.

¹ Included within the Rural Economic Priorities, 2009-12. Available at www.oakleaves.org.uk/reports.

Figure 2: Proposed LRP governance structure



4. Strategic policy context

4.1. National

Reflecting the Government's localism agenda no single strategic document outlines the rural vision of the Coalition Government to replace Defra's Rural Strategy 2004. Current Government strategy has been outlined within departmental **Business Plans** which will be refreshed annually. Much of the Defra family, established to deliver the Rural Strategy 2004, remains in place. This includes Natural England, the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency and the National Forest Company. Alongside the role of the Rural Advocate, the Commission for Rural Communities has been abolished, and replaced by an enlarged Defra Rural Policy Unit.

4.2 Regional

Under the current Government there is a reduced emphasis on the regional tier. Both the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM) and the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) will be abolished in March 2011 and 2012 respectively. There remains some activity at a regional level.

The **East Midlands Rural Framework 2010-13**, published by the East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum (EMRAF), identifies the priorities for the region's rural areas against 4 key policy themes.

- Sustainable and Inclusive Communities (Including Housing)
- A Thriving Rural Economy
- Quality Services Accessible to All
- High Quality Rural Environment

Through their influencing and co-ordination role, EMRAF works to support agencies and organisations deliver these shared priorities. Regional priorities and delivery arrangements for the Rural Development Programme for England, 2007-13, is managed through the **Regional Implementation Plan (RIP)**. This was refreshed in 2010 to revise funding allocations and reflect changing priorities. Funding cuts and the transfer of socio-economic elements from emda to Defra means that elements of the adopted plan are not current.

4.3 Local

Leicestershire Together, established in 2002, is the County's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Bringing together 28 different organisations the Partnership's is working to;

- improve life chances for vulnerable people and places (click on the title for the text below to come up)
- build stronger, more cohesive communities
- make the county a safer and more attractive place in which to live and work
- deliver a more effective response to climate change
- ensure the county has a prosperous, innovative and dynamic economy
- make the people of Leicestershire healthier
- deliver more effective and efficient service delivery

These are delivered through the partnership's **Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)**, which was revised in 2011 to reflect new priorities and develop strategic commissioning as an approach to allocate pooled funding. Leicestershire Together is structured around six themed commissioning Hubs:

- Supporting individuals and families
- Enhancing children's lives
- Improving our communities
- Protecting our Environment
- Developing our Economy
- Delivering effective services

The LRP is one of six theme groups within the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership (LLEP). Although it has no project budget the LLEP will allocate local authority funding for economic development and seek external funding (e.g. ERDF, RGF) to deliver a range of economic regeneration, transport, and housing priorities. The LLEP is supported by a range of strategic documents including the sub-regional **Tourism Strategy** and **Food and Drink Strategy**. These have been developed to drive forward priority growth sectors. The **Local Investment Plan** identifies the capital investment required to deliver our economic priorities initially over the next 3 years. This includes c£16.5m required to deliver current planned affordable rural housing schemes which total 350 homes.

The third **Local Transport Plan (LTP3)**, to be adopted in March 2011, identifies how transport provision in Leicestershire will be managed and improved to 2026. In the short-term, to 2014, the LTP3's priorities are to optimize the existing network and services, to ensure value for money, and to minimize the impacts of population growth.

There have been significant changes to the planning system to devolve decision making to the local level. Although temporarily reinstated, the East Midlands Regional Plan (RSS8) will be abolished and all strategic planning decisions will be devolved to local planning authorities (Districts and Borough Councils) through their **Local Development Framework** documents. These have a critical role allocating local housing and outlining policies which will support rural communities and economic development.

There are a number of sub-regional strategies outline priorities and delivery which aligns to the current Framework. The National Forest Delivery Plan 2009-2014, for example, sets out how the National Forest will continue to grow to 2014 and beyond, implementing the National Forest Strategy 2004-2014.

Finally, many local authorities, including all those in Leicestershire, have signed the **Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change**. By signing, they pledged to actively tackle climate change and work with others to reduce emissions country-wide. Within Leicestershire, the Environment Hub's **Climate Change Action Plan** has been developed to encourage individuals and organisations to pick and adopt specific actions relevant to their own situation

5. Rural Leicestershire – a changing place

5.1 Demographic change

Population change between 2001 and 2008 reveals that across all age groups the population of rural Leicestershire has grown at a slightly faster rate than urban areas. There is a continuing pattern of domestic migration with younger people moving out of rural areas and older people moving in. This is shown in Table 1. Recent data has identified that the difference between inflow and outflow has slowed significantly in rural areas.

	All ages	0-15	16-29	30-44	45-64M /59F	65+M/ 60+F
Urban > 10k	5.7%	-3.3%	18.2%	-5.3%	8.2%	13.8%
Town and Fringe	5.9%	-1.3%	10.0%	-4.0%	5.7%	23.6%
Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwellings	6.4%	-0.3%	13.1%	-7.3%	8.7%	21.5%

Table 1: The change in population by age and urban/rural areas between 2001 to 2008.

5.2 Transport and access to services

Rural communities are reliant on either services being made available locally or a range of travel options to reach services delivered elsewhere. The higher cost of delivering services in and to rural communities means that they are potentially threatened when public funding is reduced. The LRP has undertaken significant steps to ensure key services, such as village shops and post offices, remain in villages. A tool to explore access to services has been developed as part of LSR Online.² With Leicestershire's Accessibility Partnership the LRP has worked to provide a mixture of conventional bus services and bespoke taxi buses. In addition, a Wheels to Work project, aimed specifically at providing access to work for young people in rural areas has been extended due to high demand.

5.3 Rural economy

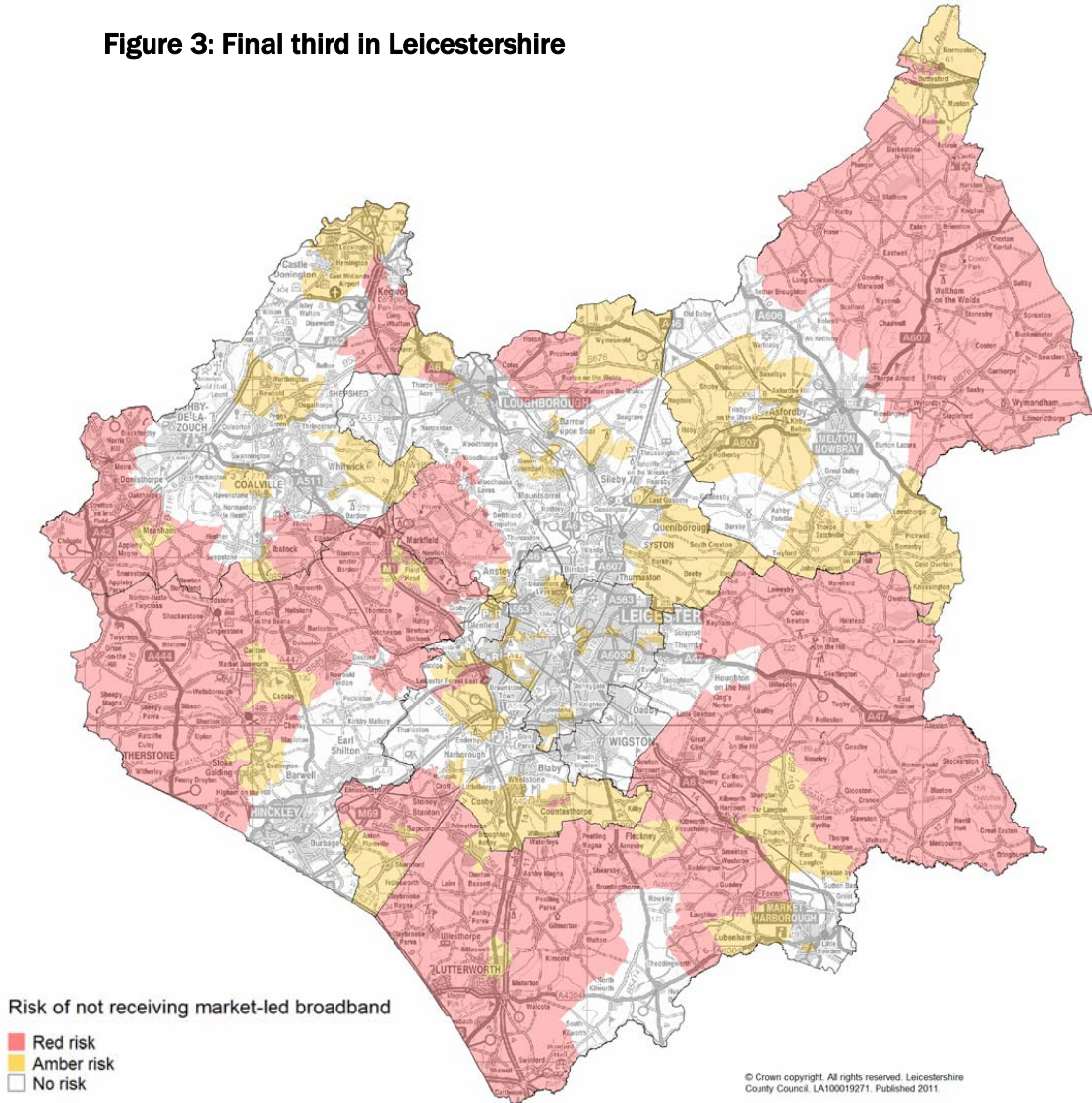
In structural terms Leicestershire's rural economy aligns significantly to urban areas. A diverse range of business interests are represented within rural areas, including creative, knowledge-based and financial services. There are a higher proportion of SMEs and home-based businesses within rural areas.³ Despite the range of business types there are priority rural sectors, including equestrian and outdoor recreation, food and drink, visitor economy and land-based.⁴

² This is available at www.lsr-online.org/access-to-services

³ Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Assessment (2010)

⁴ Supporting Leicestershire's Rural Economy: A Sector Scoping Study (2009)

Figure 3: Final third in Leicestershire



Although employment within the land-based sector is low, employing only 0.5%, it remains a significant sector – especially agriculture, equestrian and the woodland economy. Collectively land-based businesses manage about 79% of Leicestershire’s land area and have a critical role in ensuring landscape distinctiveness, enabling public access for recreation, and encouraging species biodiversity.

Extensive planting to increase woodland cover in the Leicestershire parts of the National Forest has helped to provide a platform for the development of a new visitor economy. As the Forest develops there is opportunity to grow the tourism market and develop woodland management, timber processing and renewable energy opportunities.

Leicestershire’s rural economy, therefore, has significant economic growth potential but there are key barriers which need to be tackled in order to release this – including broadband and planning regulations.

Improvements to broadband connectivity are critical for a range of community, education and businesses needs. There is a growing Digital Divide between urban and rural areas. In total 190,000 residents live within the Final Third. This is the percentage of the population which, it is calculated, will not receive market-led connectivity improvements delivered by BT or Virgin Media. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

Planning restrictions have often been cited as preventing growth opportunities. The application of planning guidance and concern over the potential increase in traffic congestion has often resulted in missed opportunities to ensure the creation of local jobs and the growth of local economies.

5.4 Rural housing

To ensure their future sustainability, rural communities require a range of housing options. This includes affordable housing and housing for an increasing older population. It is estimated that in total 250 affordable rural homes per annum are required in Leicestershire to meet local needs.⁵ Despite current low delivery rates there are a significant number of pipeline projects. The Leicester and Leicestershire Local Investment Plan has identified that there are at least 350 homes within settlements of less than 10,000 population to 2014 in the pipeline. Under current public funding models this would require £16.5m.

Affordable rural housing is currently delivered through the Exception Site policy and Section 106 agreements, with the former focused on villages of less than 3000 population. Increasingly there is a need to explore a range of solutions, including Local Housing Trusts, as part of the localism agenda, and cross-subsidy which will bring forward private sector investment.

5.5 Community capital and volunteering

Research in Leicestershire has identified that the “ultimate” volunteer has been characterised as being more likely to be female and living in a rural area.

A number of organisations have helped support volunteering in rural areas. The Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland) (RCC), funded by Leicestershire County Council, has been highly successful in raising the capacity of rural communities. To date c.50% of Leicestershire’s rural communities have undertaken community-led consultation to identify their local priorities. The RCC and service providers work with the communities to help deliver a range of priority actions. This activity has been further strengthened by aligning it to the network of 27 Community Forums. Other organisations, including the National Forest Company and Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) have successfully encouraged high levels of volunteering within rural areas. In the National Forest, for example, high levels of volunteering, linked to woodland management, health walking and environmental education, have been encouraged.

There will be an increasing reliance on volunteers to deliver services and support the needs of local communities and the provision of continued support and capacity building will be essential.

⁵ Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008)

6. Priority theme chapters

This section outlines priority outcomes which the LRP will work to deliver over the remainder of the Framework. It is not intended that these will comprehensively reflect the range of priorities for rural communities and businesses in Leicestershire. They are, however, those priorities where it is considered the LRP has a critical role to help lead delivery – principally by commissioning specific activity. The LRP will continue to support agencies and organisations that deliver across Leicestershire to ensure rural communities gain maximum benefit.

Each of the 4 priority theme chapters outlined below includes specific Rural Framework outcomes which, working in partnership, we seek to achieve. It also cross-references priorities for Leicestershire, outlined in the revised Sustainable Community Strategy, and introduces key delivery partners.

Preceding each priority theme chapter is a brief summary which helps to support inclusion of individual outcomes.

Delivery against each priority outcome will be identified through the LRP's 3-year Action Plan. This will be refreshed annually.

6.1. Strong, safe and inclusive communities

There are popularly perceived advantages of living within a rural area. This includes, for example, a greater sense of community and proximity to the countryside. This idyllic vision of rurality, however, masks pockets of disadvantage and isolation which can be exacerbated by reduced access to services. Whilst generally rural communities in Leicestershire are active, inclusive and empowered, as demonstrated through community-led planning and high levels of volunteering, there is a need to ensure all residents have the opportunity to influence the delivery of the services that they rely on. It is likely that those who most rely on support services are less empowered to influence their delivery.

Across rural Leicestershire there is need to work with all agencies to ensure that those who most rely on services, including young people, older, disabled people, are not disadvantaged.

Generally rural Leicestershire is a safe place to live. Theft from properties and fear of crime within rural Leicestershire is, however, of particular concern. Land-based businesses and companies based in converted redundant buildings within remote areas, for example, are particular targets due to the high value of machinery or computer equipment. Targeted campaigns, led by Leicestershire Constabulary, and the on-going vigilance of residents, through Farm and Neighbourhood Watch schemes, are critical to ensure the successful reduction of crime levels.

It is generally accepted that there is a need to increase the supply of affordable rural housing to meet local need. Young families and those who provide local services are often forced to move to urban areas where housing is more affordable. It is essential that suitable housing is made available in perpetuity. Increasing supply relies on strong partnership working across a range of different organisations together with political and community commitment.

Rural Framework outcome	Leicestershire's Priorities 2011-2013⁶	Key partners
1.1 Active, inclusive and empowered rural communities able to influence decisions and deliver their own priorities	Improving our communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities are empowered to play a role in decision making • Everyone participates in the cultural life of the county 	VCS sector, parish councils, Local Authorities
1.2 Equality of opportunity for all rural residents and reduced isolation of older, disabled, young people and	Supporting individuals and families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved life chances for vulnerable individuals and families • More older people able to live independent lives at home Improving our communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leicestershire is made up of stronger, thriving, integrated and cohesive communities 	NHS LCR, VCS, Local Authorities
1.3 Safe and secure town centres and rural communities with reduced fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.	Improving our communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to reduce anti-social behaviour particularly in those areas with the highest level of incidence • Increase user satisfaction with local crime and disorder services especially in priority areas 	Leicestershire Constabulary, Local Authorities
1.4 Increased availability of affordable, well-designed and suitable rural housing for local residents within sustainable locations	Developing our economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing supply meets the needs of Leicestershire people. Supporting individuals and families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More older people are able to live independent lives at home 	Leicestershire and Rutland Rural Housing Enabler, parish councils, local authorities

⁶ Taken from the Draft Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy, 2011-13 and Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Priorities

6.2. Thriving economy

The need for increased economic development in rural areas has been strongly advocated from many sources; the Rural Coalition in their Rural Challenge Report 2010 affirmed the importance of rural economies estimating that rural businesses are worth nearly £145bn to the national economy every year.⁷

Recognising that the rural economy is, on the whole, a reflection of its urban counterpart, the LRP aims to focus its work towards issues or opportunities that are explicitly or largely due to a rural location. With this in mind, sector development support has been prioritised for the land-based, food and drink, equestrian and visitor economy. Continued development for the woodland economy will also be encouraged through close working with the National Forest Company.

Town and rural centres are vital places for people to live, work, and visit. The quality and range of services they provide (including retail), as well as their physical environment and recreational offer have a marked affect on the counties economy.

In general, larger proportions of the working age population in Leicestershire have higher level qualifications and smaller proportions have no qualifications, than in urban areas.⁸ There is also significant out-commuting from rural areas to higher paid employment within urban areas; meaning those who work in rural areas are on average paid less than those that live there. To help address this imbalance the LRP will work with planners and the private sector to ensure that there is adequate workspace provision and associated high quality jobs within the county.

The LRP sees the promotion, accessibility and development of career paths within rural sectors as a priority to secure high quality services, facilities and products for the future.

⁷ The Rural Challenge: Achieving sustainable rural communities for the 21st century. August 2010

⁸ The Rural East Midlands 2008 (emda)

Rural Framework outcome	Leicestershire's Priorities 2011-2013	Key partners
2.1 Thriving town centres, rural centres, and rural clusters which act as economic and service hubs.	Developing our economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A productive economy with high performing businesses • Improved job opportunities for vulnerable people and communities • A highly sustainable environment with an excellent infrastructure, especially in rural communities 	Local authorities, Town Centre Partnerships
2.2 Growth in rural priority sectors including land-based, food and drink, equestrian and the visitor economy.	Developing our economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A productive economy with high performing businesses • Improved job opportunities for vulnerable people and communities • A high quality environment with an excellent infrastructure, especially in rural communities 	CLA, NFU, LEEP, LPL, LCC, Leics. Food and Drink Steering Group, NFC
2.3 Increased vocational training and apprenticeships within rural priority sectors.	Developing our economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A productive economy with high performing businesses • Improved job opportunities for vulnerable people and communities 	Higher Education, colleges, private sector, Sector Skills Councils, NFC
2.4 High quality employment opportunities in rural areas.	Developing our economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A productive economy with high performing businesses • Improved job opportunities for vulnerable people and communities • A high quality environment with an excellent infrastructure, especially in rural communities 	Local authorities, Local delivery vehicle, private sector

6.3. High quality and accessible services

Access to services is one of the most important issues affecting the sustainability of rural communities. Residents' ability to access services varies significantly depending on how and where they are delivered. This priority theme chapter aims to ensure that services are delivered in a way that is most suitable to individual needs. This includes fixed services delivered locally (e.g. childcare, convenience retail etc.), transport services to enable access to other, sometimes larger, settlements for other services, or remote services taking advantage of technological improvements,

Increased commuting patterns and the opportunity to access services through a range of methods, has resulted in greater pressure on the viability of some services delivered within rural areas. This can, therefore, have a disproportionate impact on those without access to private transport, including young, older and disabled people.

The Commission for Rural Communities has argued that services delivered within rural areas are not inherently unsustainable. Instead they identified that innovative solutions, including delivery of a range of services through one-stop-shops, can ensure all have access to the services they need. There is a danger that as a result of reduced public funding, rural areas could be impacted greatest as services are concentrated within town centres. A critical role for the LRP will be to help bring forward innovative solutions.

Increasingly the provision of super-fast broadband is now recognised as essential to ensure both access to services and the future competitiveness of rural businesses. Sparsely populated rural areas are not commercially viable for BT to invest. Public and private sector investment and alternative delivery methods will help bring forward super-fast broadband into rural areas. Alongside ensuring the availability of super-fast broadband there is a need to encourage residents to take advantage of digital services. Nationally, ensuring greater uptake is the principal aim of Race Online 2012.⁹

⁹ <http://raceonline2012.org/>

Rural Framework outcome	Leicestershire's Priorities 2011-2013	Key partners
3.1 Retaining good access to services (e.g. healthcare, libraries, shops, PO, adult education, child care) within rural areas to meet the needs of local residents and ensure sustainable communities.	Delivering effective services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information, facilities and services is enhanced across the County • Public services are provided in the most efficient and effective way 	Public sector organisations, retailer, Post Office Limited.
3.2 Deployment of super-fast broadband connectivity across rural areas to support community, education and business needs.	Developing our economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A productive economy with high performing businesses • A highly sustainable environment with excellent infrastructure, especially for rural communities Delivering effective services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information, facilities and services is enhanced across the County • Public services are provided in the most efficient and effective way 	Telecommunications companies, Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), public sector organisations, communities.
3.3 Supporting everyone to access an increasing range of digital services (e.g. learning opportunities, banking, digital media)	Delivering effective services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information, facilities and services is enhanced across the County. 	Local authorities
3.4 Effective public and community transport provision including targeted and innovative travel solutions which meet specific needs	Improving our communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is improved satisfaction with our transport system amongst residents and service users 	Public sector organisations

6.4. Countryside and the environment

A well managed and healthy natural environment is fundamental to many areas of our lives including leisure, the economy, biodiversity and the provision of essentials such as food, water and fuels. The LRP can play a key role in connecting partners who work within sectors that impact on the environment, including land owners, businesses, environment agencies and planning authorities.

In contrast how we design and maintain our built up areas impacts on the sense of place and general well being of our communities, the enjoyment of visitors and the attractiveness as a place for businesses to invest.

In Leicestershire 36% of carbon emissions come from industry and commerce, 28% come from domestic sources, 33% from road transport and 3% from land use change. The LRP can have a key role in raising awareness and supporting rural communities to become greener whilst ensuring that local businesses take responsibility for reducing their carbon emissions through efficient energy use and good waste management.

The National Forest covers 200 square miles across three counties and is an excellent example of how good woodland management can support the local economy and provide a renewable energy source.

Rural Framework outcome	Leicestershire's Priorities 2011-2013	Key partners
4.1 An accessible, diverse and well-managed natural, built and historic environment which emphasises Leicestershire's unique offer	Improving our communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An enhanced, accessible and protected natural environment • Improved Green Infrastructure 	LCC, Environment Hub, CLA, NFC, Natural England
4.2 Rural communities and businesses take responsibility for reducing their carbon footprint.	Developing our economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A highly sustainable environment with excellent infrastructure, especially for rural communities 	RCC, Environment Hub, LCC, NFC
4.3 Increased uptake of resource efficiency programmes which secure economic benefits and improve waste management	Protecting our environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our contribution to climate change is reduced • There is a high resilience to the effects of climate change. • Less waste is produced and a reduced proportion of this goes to landfill 	Environment Hub, NFU, CLA.

7. Monitoring the Leicestershire Rural Framework

Following the abolition of Local Area Agreements (LAA) and Comprehensive Area Assessments local authorities have greater flexibility to establish their own performance management arrangements. This is currently being developed as a key component of the commissioning cycle to manage delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Measuring outputs and outcomes

Whilst the LRP has previously monitored delivery of individual projects to ensure the delivery of outputs against allocated expenditure it has never developed a comprehensive set of indicators to monitor outcomes in rural Leicestershire.

It is proposed, therefore, that a small set of key performance indicators be developed which align to the continued monitoring of LRP funded projects and to the new performance management process established to monitor delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Individual measures developed will be based on the agreed set of priority outcomes within the Framework.

It will build on the work done by the LRP to develop 2 Local Indicators as part of the LAA and efforts to disaggregate data according to the Rural Urban Definition as part of the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Assessment.

8. Abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy (due to be reformed in 2013)
Defra	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Emda	East Midlands Development Agency
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
GOEM	Government Office for the East Midlands
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LEEP	Leicestershire Equestrian Enterprise Partnership
LLEP	Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership
NFC	National Forest Company
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England, 2007-13
RGF	Regional Growth Fund

LRP membership

Blaby District Council
Charnwood Borough Council
Country Land and Business Association (CLA)
East Midlands Development Agency (to April 2012)
Government Office East Midlands (to April 2011)
Harborough District Council
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership (LLEP) Support Unit
Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC)
Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce
Leicestershire Constabulary
Leicestershire County Council
Leicestershire Learning & Skills Council (to April 2011)
Leicestershire Promotions Limited
Melton Borough Council
National Farmers' Union
National Forest Company
Natural England (East Midlands)
NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland
North West Leicestershire District Council
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council
Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland) (RCC)
Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL)

Contact

We welcome your views on our draft Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14. Please either e-mail matthew.kempson@leics.gov.uk or write to Matthew Kempson, Leicestershire Rural Partnership, Room G49, c/o Leicestershire County Council, Glenfield, Leicestershire, LE3 8RA. A questionnaire seeking specific comments is available at www.oakleaves.org.uk/framework.

For more information about the Leicestershire Rural Partnership please visit www.oakleaves.org.uk