

Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14

Revised

September 2011

v0.9
www.oakleaves.org.uk/framework

Contents

Chairman’s Foreword

1)	Vision for rural Leicestershire	p4
2)	Introduction	p5
3)	Priority outcomes – the Big 7	p6
4)	LRP Membership	p9

Chairman's Foreword

I am very pleased to be able to present our Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14. This has been refreshed to reflect three core principles – refocus, reduce and revise. Through consultation we have identified the **Big 7** priorities for rural Leicestershire. These are considered as those most critical to rural Leicestershire, and those on which we should lead.

Central to our approach is our commitment to help deliver the Government's localism agenda. The Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) has demonstrated strong, 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. Most recently our successes have included the development of our comprehensive £1.2m rural economy programme -INSPIRE Leicestershire, development of a rural planning toolkit and our strengthening relationship with Leicestershire's rural estates.

There is more we need to do, however, 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. All our partner organisations have taken an active lead in helping to deliver the Partnership's shared priorities. As a result of public sector funding cuts this will continue to be of paramount importance.

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 affect older, young and vulnerable residents. We need to work with service providers and those affected rural residents in order to help bring forward innovative and sustainable solutions.

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** and work to ensure that national and international programmes deliver our priorities (e.g. Post-2013 Common Agricultural Policy reform).

In order to achieve this it is essential that we clearly articulate our shared priorities for rural Leicestershire. I look forward to working with you to deliver our Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14.

Mrs Lesley Pendleton CC

Chairman, Leicestershire Rural Partnership

Cabinet Lead for Rural Affairs, Leicestershire County Council

1. Vision for rural Leicestershire

The LRP's refreshed Framework will help deliver our 20-year Vision for rural Leicestershire. We have revised this to focus on specific priorities for rural Leicestershire. Our vision states that:

In 2026 rural Leicestershire will be made up of thriving, cohesive and safe communities, which have access to a choice of high quality and sustainable employment opportunities, mix of housing and essential local services.

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

- Active and cohesive communities with residents who influence local decisions and support the delivery of local services
- Joined up planning systems to support good quality housing, services, employment and green spaces
- Well connected and innovative farming community
- Excellent opportunities for vocational training in rural skills
- Centre of excellence for Food and Drink
- Open and maintained countryside including the National Forest and Charnwood Forest
- High performing home-based businesses, micro-enterprises and SMEs
- Contribution to developing and using resource efficiency programmes
- A destination for family days out and short-break holidays
- High quality equestrian services and facilities
- Excellent town and rural centres in which to live, work and to visit
- Well integrated network of community and public transport systems

2. Introduction

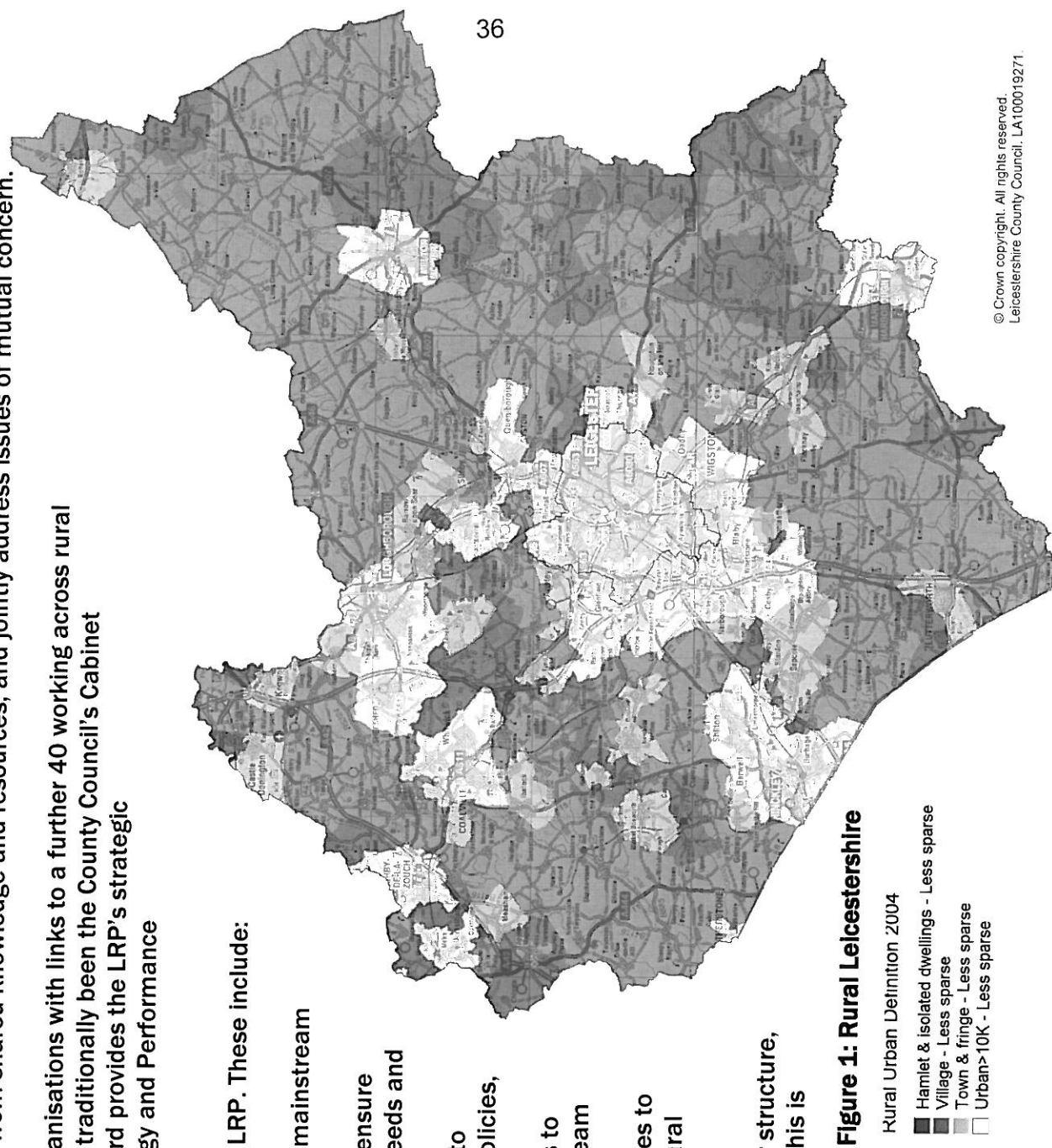
Leicestershire is predominately a rural county in terms of land area (see Figure 1). 32% (c.200,000) of the population live in rural areas across 229 parishes and over 400 settlements. The Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) was established in 1993 in order that partners could work more effectively, benefit from shared knowledge and resources, and jointly address issues of mutual concern.

The LRP has a formal membership of 20 organisations with links to a further 40 working across rural Leicestershire. 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, supported by the officer-led Strategy and Performance Group.

There are 5 key overarching principles of the LRP. 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 and help raise their profile
- **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
- **Listen** to local communities and businesses to ensure we have the best intelligence of rural issues and needs

The LRP's Partnering Agreement outlines our structure, code of governance, and working practices. This is periodically refreshed.¹



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¹ Available at www.oakleaves.org.uk/reports

3. Priority outcomes – the Big 7

3.1 The Big 7 priorities for rural Leicestershire

We have significantly reduced the number of strategic priority outcomes from 31 in our former Strategy to 7. It is not intended that these 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 targeted activity. Delivery against each priority outcome will be identified through the LRP's 3-year Action Plan.² This will be refreshed annually.

Priority Outcome	Supporting Information ³	Delivery partners
1 Sustainable growth, high quality employment opportunities and increased vocational training in rural priority sectors including land-based, food and drink, equestrian, visitor economy, creative and knowledge-based	- The LRP will support and enhance existing delivery organisations' role to develop priority sectors. - Ensure support to home-based businesses, micro-enterprises and SMEs which are predominant in rural areas. Need to encourage the establishment of new business and expansion of existing enterprises - The Supporting Leicestershire's Rural Economy study identified growth opportunities in priority sectors – food and drink, equestrian, and land-based. - Continue to support a positive approach to planning within rural areas. - Help promote existing business advice and vocational training services (e.g. Lantra, and other business support services) - Promote the economic benefits of resource efficiency and climate change adaptation measures, and ensure economic growth is considered alongside environmental consequences.	Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, Leicestershire Promotions Limited, Leicestershire Food Links, Food and Drink Forum Limited, LEEP, CLA, NFU and The National Forest Company, ⁴ rural estates, business support service, Lantra, Further Education colleges, sector member organisations, County Council, district councils
2 Increased availability of affordable, well-designed, suitable and fuel efficient rural housing for local residents to help ensure the future sustainability of rural communities (including social and entry-level market housing)	- Indicative need of c.250 affordable homes per annum in rural Leics. - Reduced grant funding through the Homes and Communities Agency increasingly means that innovative delivery solutions are needed. This could include the community right to build, cross-subsidy and the community infrastructure levy, supported by neighbourhood planning - Continued support of the critical role undertaken by the Rural Housing Enabler to bring forward affordable housing schemes - Evidence of the need to ensure a range of housing options in rural areas including social housing and entry-level market housing. - Households in rural areas are more likely to be in fuel poverty than those in urban areas. 20% in rural compared to 15% in urban.	Leicestershire and Rutland Rural Housing Enabler, district councils, parish councils, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

² Available at www.oakleaves.org.uk/reports

³ Also see Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14: Appendix available at www.oakleaves.org.uk/framework

⁴ Leicestershire Equestrian Enterprise Partnership, Country Land and Business Association, National Farmers' Union

3	Retaining good access to essential services within rural areas to meet the needs of local residents and ensure sustainable communities, and working to retain the "Last Service in the Village" within remote rural areas.	- A lower level of access to services in rural areas greatly impacts older people, younger people and those most vulnerable. - Priority services include healthcare, libraries, general shops, post offices, adult education, childcare provision and village halls - Need to seek innovative solutions to ensure effective access to services, including multi-use locations. - In addition to supporting the provision of services within remote rural areas we will also support the deployment digital technologies to improve access to services.	Parish councils, service providers, County Council, district councils, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)
4	Active, inclusive and empowered parish councils and meetings able to represent and support rural communities and lead innovative service delivery at the local level.	- The Government's localism agenda gives greater emphasis to the role of communities and small local councils. The LRP will work with the LRALC and parish councils to identify new opportunities for councils to take greater responsibility for service provision which meets the needs of residents and businesses within their communities. - To realise this there will need to be significant support to parish councils, including ensuring access to funding. - Develop parish councils' role in ensuring reduced isolation of older, disabled, young and vulnerable people.	Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC), parish councils, parish meetings, local authorities, Community Forums. VCS sector
5	Deployment of super-fast broadband connectivity across rural areas to support community, education and business needs as supporting increased access to a range of digital services.	- 190,000 residents in Leicestershire are at risk of not receiving market-led super-fast broadband - Estimated that between 25,000-80,000 Leicestershire households receive connectivity of less than 2Mbit/s. - Secure funding through Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK,) European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and other sources. - Great opportunity to capitalise on the benefits of a range of digital services and technologies.	Telecommunications companies, BDUK, parish councils, funding bodies, County Council, district councils, other public sector organisations.
6	Effective and integrated public and community transport provision including targeted and innovative travel solutions which meet specific needs, especially for older and young people	- Reduced public transport subsidies will mean difficult decisions regarding the future of certain services will have to be made. - Need to explore how innovative and flexible transport solutions can ensure continued transport services for older, disabled, young and vulnerable people. - Capture and share examples of best practice	County Council, transport providers, VCS Sector.
7	Rural communities and businesses take responsibility for reducing their carbon footprint	- Economic opportunities from increasing resource efficiency and reducing waste - Capitalise on existing community-led climate change programmes - Need to explore the role of parish councils bringing forward community-based solutions	Leicestershire Together's Environment Partnership, parish councils, County Council, district councils, businesses

3.2 Wider interests of the LRP

The LRP has a wider role to support agencies and bodies who work with rural communities and businesses. The LRP will not seek to duplicate existing activity but will, however, aim to add value by encouraging organisations to “Think Rural”. We will actively support delivery of the priority outcomes contained with Leicestershire Together’s Sustainable Community Strategy, including the following:⁵

People

- Improved health outcomes for people in Leicestershire, in particular a reduction in health inequalities
- More people walk, cycle and use public transport as part of their daily journeys

Place

- Leicestershire is made up of stronger, thriving, integrated and cohesive communities
- Communities are empowered to play a role in decision making
- There are more well supported volunteering opportunities
- An enhanced, accessible and protected natural environment
- Improved green infrastructure
- Continue to reduce anti-social behaviour, particularly in those areas with the highest levels of incidents
- Increase user satisfaction with local crime and disorder services, especially in priority areas
- Our contribution to climate change is reduced
- Less waste is produced and a reduced proportion of this goes to landfill
- A productive economy with high performing businesses
- A highly sustainable environment with an excellent infrastructure, especially for rural communities

Services

- Public services are provided in the most efficient and effective way

3.3 Delivery principles and monitoring arrangements

With reduced resources available following public sector funding cuts there is a need to clearly identify the LRP’s delivery principles. The LRP will, for example:

- Commission activity which supports priority rural areas including those which are most remote and does not duplicate existing provision.
- Provide support to organisations and delivery bodies, encouraging them to “Think Rural”.
- Seek efficient, cost-effective, innovative and flexible solutions.

These will be incorporated within a future refreshed of our Partnership Agreement.

In addition the LRP will develop effective monitoring arrangements. It is proposed that a small set of key performance indicators be developed. This will align to new performance management arrangements being developed for the Sustainable Community Strategy. Performance will be reported in the LRP’s Annual Report.

⁵ More information about the Leicestershire Together and the Sustainable Community Strategy is available at www.leicestershiretogether.org

4. LRP membership

Blaby District Council
 Charnwood Borough Council
 Country Land and Business Association (CLA)
 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 Promotions Limited
 Melton Borough Council
 National Farmers' Union
 The 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 and Rutland)
 Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL)

Contact

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