

# Leicestershire Rural Framework 2014-2020





# Vision

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

## Principles

1. **Deliver** rural projects which meet gaps in mainstream provision
2. **Coordinate** partners and stakeholders to ensure they work better together to meet rural needs and help raise their profile
3. **Influence** key agencies and partnerships to ensure they consider 'rural' within their policies, strategies and actions
4. **Advise** local communities and businesses to ensure they access the rural and mainstream services available
5. **Listen** to local communities and businesses to ensure we have the best intelligence of rural issues and needs

## Priorities

- Priority 1:** Active, inclusive and empowered parish councils and meetings
- Priority 2:** Working with communities to deliver local services
- Priority 3:** An enterprising and sustainable rural economy
- Priority 4:** More affordable homes in rural areas

## Cross cutting priorities:

- Rural transport solutions
- A better environment
- Superfast Broadband



**30%**  
of population  
live in rural areas



**70,000**  
jobs in rural areas

**80%**  
of the county's  
land is used for  
agriculture



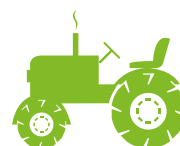
**92.4%**  
parish councils  
indicated rural  
issues are a priority



**40%**  
of businesses in  
in rural areas



**187**  
rural parishes



**5000**  
people employed  
in agriculture



**11,481**  
homeworkers in  
rural areas

## Chairman's foreword

Moving in to my second year as Chair of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP), I am very pleased to introduce the latest Leicestershire Rural Framework 2014-2020 which forms the blueprint for the work of the LRP.

Leicestershire is a rural county with over a third (c. 200,000) of its population living in rural areas. The fact that the LRP has been in existence for over 20 years is testament to not only its success, but also the importance that local partners put on helping to address the challenges and opportunities of rural living and working. We are fortunate to have the continued commitment of the County Council providing dedicated officer support, but also privileged to have such dedicated partners that help make an effective LRP Management Board.

However, over the last couple of years we have started to see the impact of reduced public sector funding and we are warned that this will continue for some time to come. This provides significant challenges for rural communities and will require new and innovative ways to help ensure that essential community services and facilities can continue; in many instances this will require communities themselves to step-in. We recognise Parish Councils as having a key role to play in supporting their communities through this change and we will continue to work with the Leicestershire and Rutland Association for Local Councils to help build their understanding, expertise and capacity to do so.

More positively, the new EU Programme will be commencing in 2015 and this provides a range of opportunities for the LRP working closely with the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP), including informing local delivery of the Rural Development Growth Programme and exploring development of a LEADER Programme in the east of the county. Rural Leicestershire is a valuable asset for the LLEP area, and we will work to ensure that this is reflected through its Strategic Economic Plan and the investment of LLEP funds.

Over the next six years it will be crucial that we prioritise our resources to have maximum impact on our four main priorities and continue to utilise the expertise, commitment and capacity of our partners. Despite the challenges, I am positive about what we can achieve together and I look forward to working with you to deliver our Leicestershire Rural Framework 2014-2020.



Mrs Pam Posnett CC  
Chair, Leicestershire Rural Partnership  
Cabinet Member, Leicestershire County Council





## Leicestershire Rural Partnership

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) is an established and successful partnership which brings together public, private and voluntary stakeholders to improve services and support to rural communities and businesses.

The work of the Partnership is shaped by the priorities in this Rural Framework, and its success is dependent on the input from a range of organisations that sit on the LRP Management Board.

Members of the Board include: Leicestershire County Council, District Councils, Leicestershire and Rutland Association for Local Councils, RCC (Leicestershire and Rutland), Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, National Farmers Union, Country Land and Business Association, Federation of Small Businesses, National Forest Company, Leicester Shire Promotions and business champions. The Partnership also draws upon specialist expertise through the other groups and partnerships that it works with.

## Delivery and monitoring arrangements

A 3 year Delivery Plan will be developed and a member of the LRP Board assigned as champion for each of the four priorities. The Delivery Plan will be monitored twice yearly and revised on an annual basis.

The LRP holds a rural conference every two years to provide a platform for stakeholders to discuss the latest rural developments. Other consultation events will be held as required.

More details about the LRP and its work can be found on [www.oakleaves.org.uk](http://www.oakleaves.org.uk)

# Priority 1

## Active, inclusive and empowered parish councils and meetings

Leicestershire has 187 rural parishes. Parish and Town Councils play a crucial role in rural communities and there is a growing emphasis on Local Councils shaping local communities and directly providing local services. The importance of Local Councils within the localism agenda has been recognised through not only the Localism Act but also the Open Public Services White Paper and Sustainable Communities Act; this role is re-enforced locally through the Leicestershire Communities Strategy where Local Councils have been identified as key local enablers.

Local Councils are in an excellent position to have a close understanding of the needs of all those that live in their parish and the types of local interventions that can help improve the well being and independence of all residents. They also have statutory powers to provide a wide range of local facilities and services and remain free to increase precepts to meet the demands of parishioners, as well as implement opportunities for local service devolution.

National support for the key role Local Councils play and recognition of their importance in helping the Government deliver its localism agenda is reflected in the “New Councils Programme”. This DCLG led initiative provides over £1 million to support the creation of new Local (i.e. parish, town, and neighbourhood) Councils. The current economic and political environment has pushed Local Councils to the forefront of public service provision unlike anything experienced in recent history.

In a recent survey undertaken by the LRP, 92.4% of Parish Councils indicated that ‘rural issues’ were a priority for their council. Common themes identified by the Councils as a priority included: rural broadband, local facilities, the rural economy, protecting the rural characteristics of an area, providing and enabling community activities, and housing and planning matters.

### Delivery

The LRP will work with the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils to increase the understanding, expertise and capacity of Parish Councils to fulfil their roles in supporting rural communities.

### Outcomes:

- Local Councils are more representative of their communities through activity in the lead up to elections
- Local Councils support vulnerable members of their community
- Local Councils lead innovative service delivery, including the provision of new and/or devolved services
- The successful establishment of new Local Councils where there is an aspiration from rural communities

## Case Study



### Supporting Rural Parish Councils

In March 2014 funding through the Leicestershire Rural Partnership enabled the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils to host a highly successful training and networking event for its members. Sessions at the event included community engagement, strategic planning, the new community rights, and working with volunteers.

Feedback from those who attended was overwhelmingly positive with many commenting that the event was the best they had attended in their role as councillors and clerks.

As part of the LRP’s ongoing training programme for local councillors, a further 221 delegates from Leicestershire Parish Councils benefitted from a variety of courses aimed to help them better serve their communities throughout 2013/14.

## Priority 2

### Working with communities to deliver local services

32% (approx. 208,000) of Leicestershire's population live in rural areas, of which 80,500 residents live in villages, hamlets or isolated dwellings. In some districts such as Melton and Harborough this is much higher with approximately 46% and 71% living in rural areas, respectively.

A more challenging financial climate means that there is now less money to cope with an increasing demand for services. The effect of these changes on communities, especially those rural communities with an increasing older population, will be that fewer services will be available to fewer people.

In response to this, Leicestershire County Council has developed a new Communities Strategy thinking about the role of Leicestershire communities in a new public service environment which will ensure that the most vulnerable individuals and communities are protected whilst fulfilling its ambition to build community capacity. The Strategy aims to help individuals, families and communities to have greater independence, thus strengthening local capacity and resilience to help alleviate demand on public services.

It is therefore essential that the LRP works in partnership with the County Council, the Stronger Communities Board along with key public, private, voluntary and community sector partners to help deliver this Strategy in rural areas.

Good local facilities and services are critical to thriving and sustainable rural communities, ensuring that there are meeting places where people can socialise and share 'informal' advice and local information. Local shops, post offices, and pubs are essential to these interactions, but have been

struggling over recent years due to changes in the way people shop and socialise. The LRP aims to help support these small enterprises through these changes so that we minimise closure within our rural settlements.

There are real opportunities for local communities to generate funds through Community Benefit Schemes, whereby income from small-scale renewable projects can be used to support local initiatives.

#### Delivery

The LRP will work with the Stronger Communities Board and partners to ensure that the most vulnerable within rural communities are protected and supported. We will support communities to gain the knowledge, skills and where necessary funding to develop local projects that will deliver the outcomes below.

#### Outcomes:

- Increased community capacity to deliver services and solutions which support vulnerable people
- Improved community buildings providing a range of services and groups
- Retaining village services e.g. shop, post office, pub and libraries
- Communities have access to superfast broadband
- Communities supported to deliver small-scale renewable energy schemes

#### Case Study



#### Wymondham Windmill

Wymondham Windmill received a Rural Capital grant which it used towards the expansion of its tea room, doubling the capacity and adding extra facilities.

The tea room is an integral part of the windmill's visitor offer, which includes a number of craft and gift shops, and plans for the development of log cabins to complement their caravan park plus an improved recreation area and outdoor facilities further widening their tourism offer.

The work supported by this grant has enabled 3 additional jobs to be created and 1 to be protected as well as bringing in over £40,000 in leverage.



## Priority 3

### An enterprising and sustainable rural economy



Rural Leicestershire is home to 9,360 businesses accounting for over 70,000 jobs. A large proportion of these businesses are micro and small enterprises, with higher than average numbers of homeworkers, presenting a real opportunity for rural growth and job creation. Sectors that will be prioritised by the LRP include: land-based, food and drink and tourism. Some of the larger and more significant employers in the area help to underpin growth and strengthen supply chains within these sectors such as Samworth Brothers, Twycross Zoo and rural estates. The LRP will work closely with the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) to support less traditional but important sectors in rural areas such as manufacturing, logistics and knowledge-based businesses.

From a settlement perspective rural Leicestershire can be split effectively into two distinctive rural areas. The sparse eastern area with three larger service centres (Melton Mowbray, Lutterworth and Market Harborough). The less sparse western area has a more densely distributed pattern of larger rural service centres. Harborough and North West Leicestershire have the largest rural economies by a significant margin.

Agriculture is the main land use accounting for 80% of the land area and employing approximately 5,000 people (higher than the national average), and Melton and Harborough Districts account for about half of these employees. As well as being a significant sector in the area, this provides good

opportunities for job creation through diversification activities. The LRP recognises the importance of sustainable land management and the associated long-term environmental and economic benefits that this can bring. Local consideration will be given to mitigation and, wherever possible, positive impacts to the environment.

The county has some strong brands that support the leisure and tourism sectors such as the National Forest and Melton Mowbray food (Pork Pies and Stilton Cheese), as well as key waterways such as the Ashby and Grand Union Canals. These can be further strengthened and exploited to enhance Leicestershire's inward investment offer and to deliver economic growth.

The area is well endowed with centres of excellence and expertise in land based industries in the context of the Allerton Project based in Harborough and Melton Brooksby College in Melton and innovation in terms of PERA in Melton Mowbray. The Harborough Innovation Centre in the south of the area provides a thriving hub for rural businesses to access advice and share knowledge, in the north there are also plans to develop a Food Enterprise Centre to support small and micro businesses in the food processing and manufacturing sector.

Whilst rural Leicestershire is less deprived than the county as a whole, there are small pockets of deprivation as well as a declining trend of young people. It is important that young people and unemployed people living in rural areas are able to receive the required level of support to access training and work. A prosperous rural economy can help address this through businesses providing work experience, jobs and apprenticeships.

Growth within the rural economy requires supporting infrastructure, including suitable premises and access to Superfast Broadband. The Leicestershire Superfast Broadband project aims to increase coverage from 75% to 93.8% of premises by March 2016. However, there will still be businesses and communities in hard to reach rural areas that will be hindered by poor broadband access. This is a cross-cutting priority that the LRP working with the Superfast Broadband project will continue to aim to address.



## Delivery:

The LRP works closely with the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) to ensure strategic alignment with the Strategic Economic Plan, City Deal and European Programmes; and to assist LLEP plans and programmes to deliver support, and growth, within rural areas. Specifically, the LRP will support delivery of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), ESF Rural Economic Inclusion funds and development of the East Leicestershire LEADER programme.

## Outcomes:

- Good quality employment opportunities
- People with the relevant skills and attributes to meet the needs of rural businesses
- High survival and growth rates in small and micro enterprises
- Thriving land-based, food and drink and tourism sectors
- Local people are able to access work and training opportunities
- Businesses have access to superfast broadband

## Case Study



### Thrussington Village Shop

Prior to 2012, Thrussington village shop and deli premises had been left derelict for 6 years. Supported by Leicestershire County Council grant funding, new owners Ben and Jo made extensive improvements to the exterior and appearance.

Later, the LRP Village Shop Support Scheme was able to offer free additional retail advice on maximising spend, introducing takeaway facilities and improving the layout features of the shop/deli. Ben and Jo now report that business is growing monthly and they have been able to employ a further full time and 5 part time members of staff.

The store was new to the village, so introduced many new services including local fresh bread, dairy and household items. It is now a real asset to the village and community life and popular with local residents.

“This store has brought the local community together - and this is possibly the most rewarding aspect” (Ben - Thrussington village shop owner)

## Priority 4

### More affordable homes in rural areas

Demographics of the rural population is changing, since the 2001 census the number of people living in Leicestershire rural areas between the age of 25 and 39 has significantly decreased. Noticeably this is the age where new households typically emerge, suggesting a trend of young adults and families moving out of rural areas at this point. Recognising that not all people in these age groups will want to live in a rural community there will be those for whom living in rural areas is a choice and in some cases a necessity. The data for the Leicestershire SHMA suggests that the housing market is failing to provide opportunities for this group.

There is also a more rapidly aging older population, than the county as the whole, at a point in life where housing changes can occur. It is important that we are able to provide suitable and affordable accommodation for this group to remain within their communities.

Rural communities can be fragile to changing demographics, whatever their cause, resulting in the demise of local services and reduced levels of community and family-based support. For many people it is important that they are able to stay close to support networks whether that is to help care for older relatives or to receive help with childcare enabling parents to work.

The LRP has therefore prioritised Rural Affordable Housing to help enable people on low incomes to remain within their home or work communities, and consequently to support balanced and sustainable communities for the future.

#### Delivery:

Leicestershire has an established and effective Rural Housing Group which includes District Councils, Registered Providers and other rural and housing specialists; this Group will lead on delivery of this priority.

#### Outcomes:

- A robust county-wide evidence base of rural affordable housing need
- Increased availability of affordable homes where there is a need
- More fuel and water efficient housing in rural areas

### Case Study



#### Carlton

Partners worked together to help finance and develop a new rural affordable housing development in Northfields, Carlton. In 2014, 11 new affordable homes officially opened.

Carlton Parish Council, Shackerstone Parish Council and Midlands Rural Housing all helped to consult with the local community to help evidence and address the long-standing need for housing in this rural area.

County Councillor for Carlton Ivan Ould commented: “The new affordable homes will enable more families and couples to live in Carlton and I hope they will thrive in their new homes. Rural affordable housing is a key priority of the County Council and the Leicestershire Rural Partnership, enabling local people to live in their local community, at a price they can afford.”

# Cross Cutting Priorities

The ability to access services and work, physically and digitally, is crucial to the functionality of individuals and communities. This is often exasperated in rural areas by cost premiums making it commercially difficult for bus companies and broadband providers. The LRP will work with the voluntary and community sector, and public bodies to where possible address this through tailored transport schemes and community broadband schemes.

The LRP recognises the importance of sustainable land management and the associated long-term environmental and economic benefits that this can reap. Local consideration will be given to mitigation and, wherever possible, positive impacts to the environment through delivery of its programmes. Local expertise will be maximised through strengthened relationships with environmental partners and the Local Nature Partnership.

## Rural transport solutions

### We will:-

- Support people to access work and training
- Flexible transport solutions enabling people to access services in larger settlements
- Encourage the business community to become involved in creating innovative transport solutions

### Working with:-

Community Transport Operatives  
 Jobcentre Plus, colleges and training providers  
 Rural businesses  
 Leicestershire County Council  
 LLEP

## A better environment

### We will:-

- Support implementation of the Carbon Reduction Strategy e.g. small-scale community renewable energy schemes
- Improve our sustainable land management
- Encourage the creation of 'green' businesses opportunities.

### Working with:-

Local Nature Partnership  
 Leicestershire County Council  
 LLEP

## Superfast Broadband

### We will:-

- Significantly increase the number of businesses and homes with superfast broadband

### Working with:-

Leicestershire Superfast Broadband Project  
 LLEP

## Case Study



## Wheels to work (W2W)



Julie lives in a rural village near to Market Harborough. She was unable to use public transport to access College in Leicester and her part time employment, in a restaurant 9 miles from home, as they did not run at times that would enable her to attend both and often would involve a long walk to make rail or bus connections. She had tried to arrange car sharing but no other students lived in her village and although her parents could offer some lifts this was not always possible.

Julie accessed a W2W scooter and was able to go to college and work to save for other means of transport. She has recently passed her driving test and now has a car to commute to work.

The LRP has supported the W2W scheme since 2006 already helping over 400 people like Julie into employment or training.



[www.oakleaves.org.uk](http://www.oakleaves.org.uk)