

Scottish Borders LEADER Local Action Group

Annual Report to 31st March 2021





Eyemouth Harbour Access Enhancement Project – LEADER grant £126,885. Enhancement of Red Bridge linking the 2 sides of Eyemouth Harbour to provide wider, safer access for community and visitors as well as easy movement of catches and equipment for those using the harbour.

Front Page -

The Merlin Trail - LEADER grant £10,997. Creation of a trail across Southern Scotland focussing on remote communities of Upper Tweeddale where many believe Merlin was assassinated, with opportunity to explore other Dark Age locations across the Borders.

Enterprise Facilitator – Scottish Borders Small & Micro Business Mentoring Network – LEADER Grant £48,991. Employment of an Enterprise Facilitator to promote a group mentoring programme to small and micro businesses based in the Scottish Borders.

Equestrian Theatre – LEADER grant £18,649. Construction of purpose built Equestrian Theatre which will enable hosting of theatrical shows at home and training of horses throughout the winter months.



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas



The Scottish
Government



Scottish Rural
Development
Programme



Scottish Borders Local Action Group is part-financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community LEADER 2014-2020 Programme

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Contents

Preface	4
1 Foreword from the LAG Chair	5
2 Background	6
3 Project Activities to 31st March 2021	6
4 Financial Report	7
5 Funding Statistics	8
6 Monitoring & Evaluation	13
7 The Future	14
8 Funding Map	15

PREFACE

£4million in
Funding

59 Projects
Supported

Approx 60 jobs
created

The Scottish Borders LEADER programme has helped to fund an exciting range of innovative local projects over the past five years, from food producers, glamping and horse healing to recycled tweed and a skatepark.

The funding came from the European Union rural development pot, and was awarded to grassroots projects with a business and innovation angle that would help the Borders community to thrive.

The 2014-2020 programme has now drawn to a close, but its legacy lives on. Highlights benefiting from European funding include:

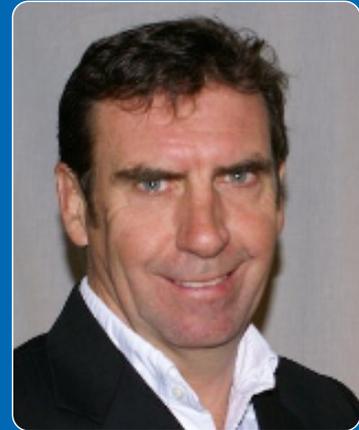
- Kelso Skate Park
- Stobs Camp
- Tweeddogs Dog Day Care
- Borders Art Fair
- Neidpath Memorial Wood
- South of Scotland Golden Eagles Project

and over 50 more projects, right around the Borders!

See the Funding Map on Page 15 for projects near you.

1. Foreword from the Local Action Group Chair

It would be an understatement to suggest that the final stages of this programme has gone according to any plan that we could have predicted in early 2020.



Delivery of the Scottish Borders LEADER Programme was beset with significant challenges in the period between 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. This was most notably due to the Covid 19 lockdown restrictions which impacted greatly on delivery of projects and drawdown of LEADER funds throughout the year. Scottish Borders was very lucky in comparison to other areas as our programme's projects were all due to complete on 31st March 2020. However, the lockdown imposed on 24th March and which subsequently lasted to the end of May still significantly delayed many projects and pushed back final completion dates, some towards the end of the year. Total lockdown and subsequent tiered restrictions, impacted on almost every aspect of project completion, from delays with contractors and essential materials, to furloughed staffing, inability to undertake final monitoring and the obtaining of official paperwork to complete. Despite the delays all projects have soldiered on admirably and we are now in the final stages of drawdown for all remaining projects apart from those with furloughed staff which are held up until restrictions lift.

The 2014-2020 programme was due to finally complete at the end of March however, due to the continued delays caused by Covid, the end date has again been extended to end December 2021 should this length of time be required.

Scottish Borders has supported 59 projects in all and committed funding of £3.1m to benefit local community organisations, micro businesses and social enterprises across the whole of the area. Seven of these have been co-operation projects with other Local Action Groups to develop cross-border larger projects across Scotland. The funding has done much to encourage tourism into the area, build the capacity of existing small businesses and encourage development of new businesses across many sectors. The Local Action Group is very proud of what has been achieved with this programme, despite the significant challenges faced by projects and our own staff.

At present there is still no confirmation as to what will replace LEADER in the future although many discussions are taking place at Scottish Government and UK Government level. Our LAG and local MSPs are very committed to assisting with discussions to shape rural development in Scotland for the future. The huge benefits of LEADER type funding are very well documented and acknowledged and we are hopeful that alternative funding will be confirmed in the very near future.

I would just like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at SBC LEADER team and the LAG members who have so generously volunteered their time, for their commitment and perseverance in what has been a particularly challenging programme.

Gary White
Chair, Scottish Borders LEADER LAG

2. Background

With the support of Scottish Borders Council, the Local Action Group delivers the LEADER programme in line with the requirements of the Scottish Borders Local Development Strategy (LDS) and supports projects which drive through change in line with the LDS priorities. The Local Action Group (LAG) is a voluntary group drawn from local rural stakeholders. It manages the LEADER Programme in the Scottish Borders and it makes decisions on grant funding.

The LAG is supported by the LEADER team, employed on the LAG's behalf at Scottish Borders Council. The LDS also informs the work of the **Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG)**, which makes recommendations on local development funding from the **European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF)**. Marine Scotland, the Government agency that manages the fund in Scotland, via the Forth FLAG is supported by Scottish Borders Council, as lead partner.

Each programme has separate reporting procedures and the LEADER annual report does not report on EMFF activities. Some EMFF administration costs are paid through LEADER Admin/Animation, so there is some reference to EMFF in the budget section.

3. Project Activities from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

Scottish Borders projects were all due to complete on 31st March 2020. Only a few projects intimated a requirement to extend beyond this period due to unavoidable hold ups with capital works or project activities.

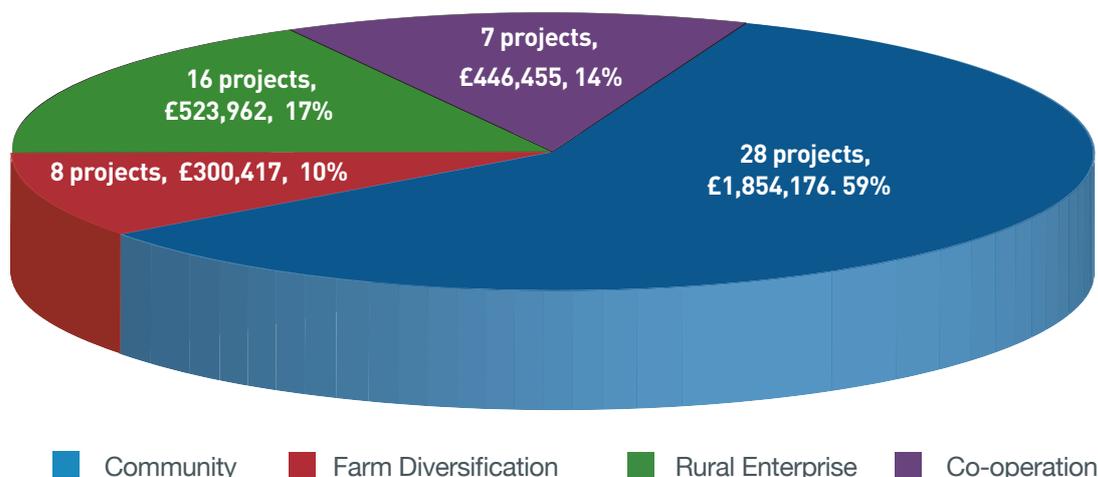
The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and imposed lockdown on 24th March 2020 resulted in many more projects requiring to extend beyond this date. Project completion was extensively held up until lockdown restrictions were relaxed in May 2020. Lockdown not only delayed finalisation of capital projects due to inability to have contractors and materials on site, but also impacted on revenue project activities which were disallowed following initial lockdown.

Final monitoring visits were also interrupted which held up final sign off procedures. Relaxation of restrictions in May 2020 enabled LEADER staff to carry out final monitoring in line with social distancing requirements, however further lockdown in January 2021 again unavoidably held up finalisation of remaining projects.

Scottish Government confirmed in March 2020 that the programme would be extended to 31st March 2021 to take account of disruption caused by the pandemic. At the time of writing there are still 20 LEADER projects which, although completed, are still held up at final sign off due to lockdown delays. Scottish Borders LEADER has supported 59 projects to a total of £3,125,010 (see Fig 1).

Fig 1

Scottish Borders Allocation of LEADER Funds Across the 4 Funding Strands



More information can be obtained about the programme from the following link www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20065/business_funding_and_grants/365/leader, along with copies of the Minutes of LAG meetings.

4. Financial Report

The Scottish Government allocated a budget of just over £4m to Scottish Borders LEADER at the start of the programme. Following some adjustment over the 6 year period, the final programme allocation for Scottish Borders was £4,015,888. £3,125,010 has been allocated to project development with £864,852 allocated to Admin/Animation. An underspend of £26,026 has been incurred due to some projects not utilising full grant awards on completion (see Table 1).

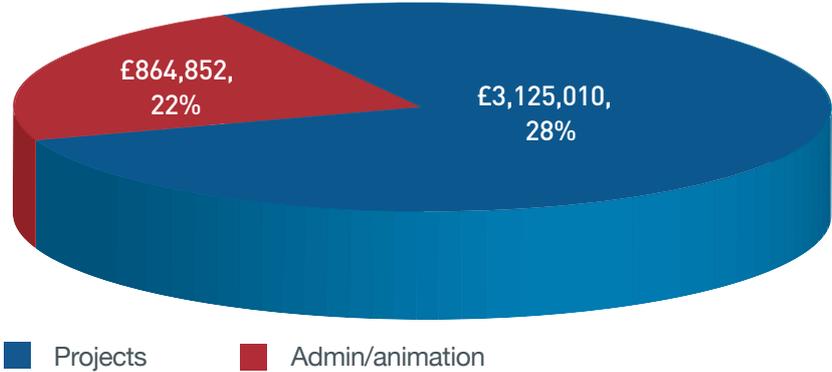
Table 1

	Original Budget £	Revised Budget as at 31/3/19 £	Revised Budget as at 19/12/2019 £	Allocated £	Balance £
192. Community Projects	1,601,135	1,753,329	1,925,731	1,854,176	71,555
192. Farm Diversification	401,843	401,843	823,686	824,379	-693
192. Rural Enterprise	401,843	401,843			
193. Enterprise Facilitator	200,000	194,254	0.00	0.00	0.00
193. Co-operation	401,843	401,843	440,019	446,455	-6,436
194. LEADER Admin & Animation	734,005	753,871	753,871	781,446	-27,575
194. EMFF Admin & Animation	227,758	72,581	72,581	83,406	-10,825
Balance of remaining additional EMFF	-	60,719	-	-	-
Totals	4,018,427	4,040,283	4,015,888	3,989,862	£26,026

£864,852 has been spent on admin/animation activities to the end March 2021. This is approximately 22% of the overall budget but less than the 25% maximum allowable for admin/animation. It should also be noted that LEADER admin/animation budget also covers the running costs of the EMFF programme. £781,446 was allocated to LEADER admin/animation and £83,406 to EMFF admin/animation. (See Fig 2)

Fig 2

Estimated Spend as at 31st March 2021



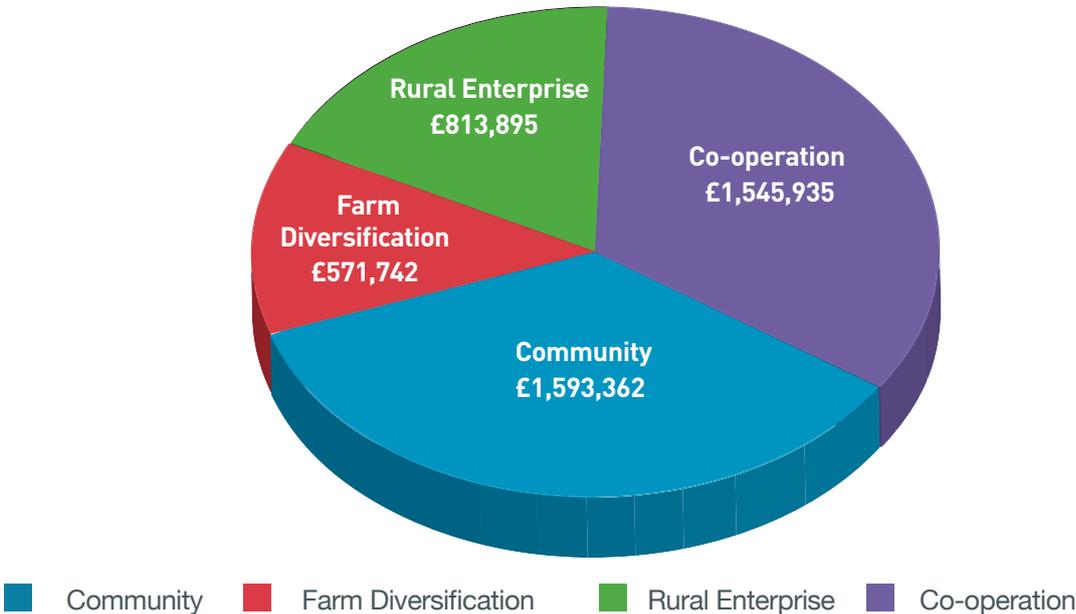
5. Funding Statistics

The LEADER 2014-2020 programme has supported both community and rural business projects. The majority of the funding supported core community projects. Minimum targets were in place to support Farm Diversification/Rural Enterprise projects (20%) and Co-operation projects (5%). Despite some unexpected project underspends over the 6 year period, Scottish Borders has still met the minimum requirement for each.

The 2014-2020 LEADER Programme has provided leverage to attract match funding at an overall value of £4,524,934 across Scottish Borders (see Fig 3).

Fig 3

Total Value of Match-Funding for each of the 4 Funding Strands

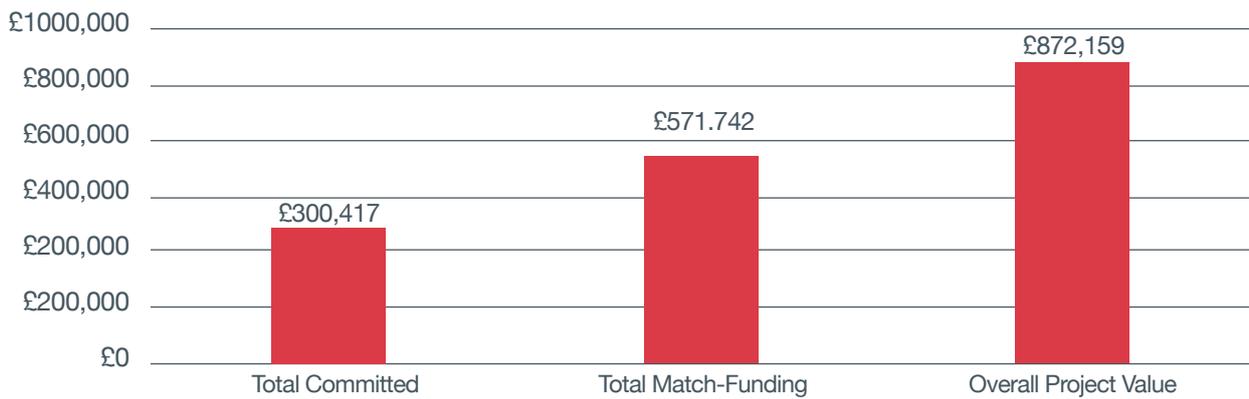


Farm Diversification

LEADER has supported 8 farm diversification projects to a total of £300,417 (see Fig 4). These projects have assisted in building the business income potential for farm businesses across the Tweeddale, Berwickshire, Roxburghshire and Ettrick and Lauderdale areas. Projects have ranged from specialised holiday accommodation such as glamping pods, log cabins and multi-functional refurbishment of farm buildings to a unique equine clinic for the area, a cattle show prep training/team building facility, memorial wood for the scattering of ashes and alternative therapy holiday experience.

Fig 4

Farm Diversification



Recently completed Farm Diversification Projects:-

Falnash Glamping Pods

LEADER Grant £26,758

Farm diversification project to construct 2 luxury glamping pods at Teviothead, Hawick with hot tub facility.
www.holidaycottages.co.uk/cottage/75347-falnash-lodge



Rural Remedy

LEADER Grant £50,000

Farm diversification into specialised holiday accommodation offering Walk and Talk Therapy which is increasing in popularity.
<https://www.ruralremedy.co.uk/>

Neidpath Memorial Wood

LEADER Grant £20,000

Transformation of 2.44ha of grassland into a memorial wood for the scattering of ashes on the outskirts of Peebles.

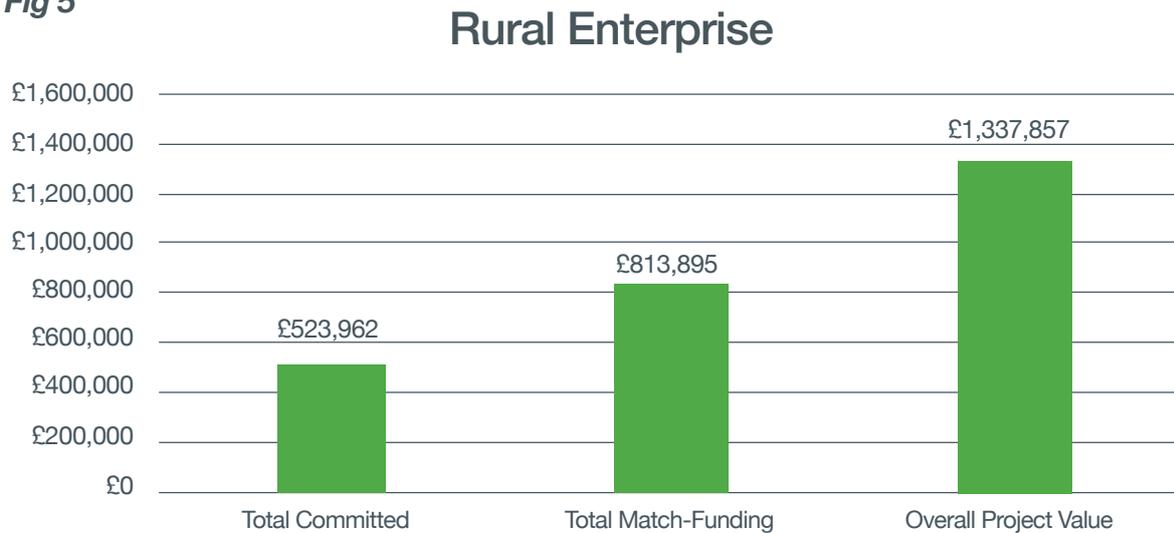
[Manor Sware](#)



Rural Enterprise

LEADER has also supported the development of 16 projects for new small rural businesses or expansion of existing businesses totalling £523,962 (see Fig 5). LEADER has again supported a diverse range of projects to encourage start up and growth of small businesses across the whole of Scottish Borders. Examples of projects include set up of a Dog Day Care Centre, unique equestrian theatre, sheepdog training facility/holiday accommodation, Small Animal Hydrotherapy Centre and gin distilling business. LEADER has also supported expansion of existing businesses through increased employability, development of further business ventures, increased access as well as bespoke holiday accommodation.

Fig 5

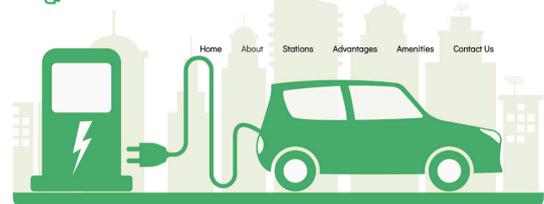


Recently completed Rural Enterprise Projects:-

EV Destinations

LEADER Grant £12,000

Practically test the feasibility of electric vehicle routes linked to tourism/food & drink in the Scottish Borders.



Eildon Glamping

LEADER Grant £36,143

Construction of unique log cabin accommodation situated at the foot of the picturesque Eildon Hills.

www.eildonmelrose.co.uk/log-cabin/

Bloodline Spirits

LEADER Grant £17,758

Creation of new micro business to set up a micro-distillery in Peebles specialising in locally produced flavoured gin

<http://www.rulegin.co.uk/#>

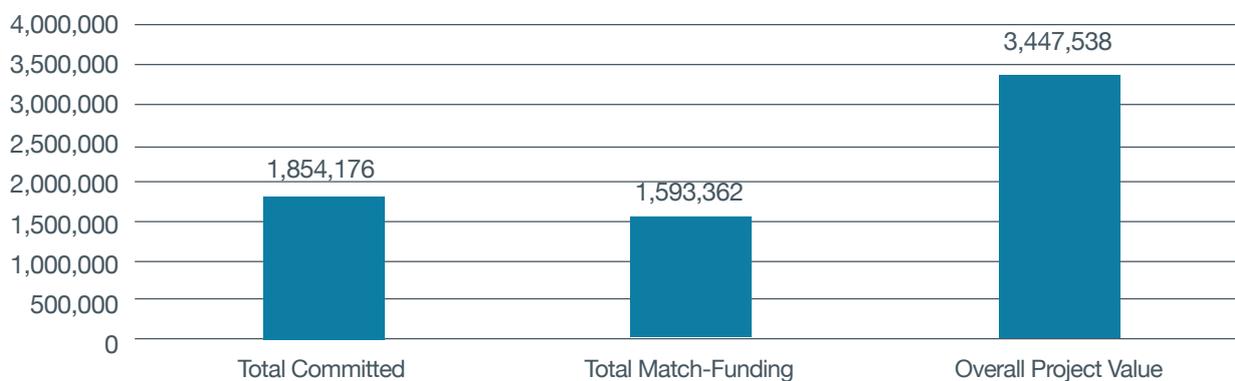


Community

Scottish Borders LEADER has contributed £1,854,176 towards the development of 28 community projects run by voluntary organisations and social enterprises (see Fig 6). LEADER has assisted the development of skills/employability opportunities for young people and hard to reach groups to improve chances for the future. It has also improved community facilities and created opportunities for increased tourism through arts, heritage, sporting, educational and wildlife projects. Examples of these include expansion of young people’s mobile catering/bike mechanic business, improvement to leisure/arts facilities, development of horse riding/accommodation routes across the area, development of mountain biking and skate park facilities, promotion of local archaeological sites, marine seabed interpretation, and Bird Garden Visitor Centre.

Fig 6

Community



Recently completed Community Projects:-

Jedburgh Pool Enhancement Project

LEADER Grant £151,035

Improvement of pool facilities to create unisex changing area, install bigger soft play area, relocation of disabled toilet and improved airlock door to swimming pool

<https://laidlawmemorialpool.org.uk/>



Coffee Shop & Play Area

LEADER Grant £103,180

Creation of a coffee shop and play area at Bird Garden Scotland, Oxtou. Coffee shop includes educational facility which can be used by families, schools and other visiting parties.

Ride Scotland's Horse Country

LEADER Grant : £58,488

Development of horse riding routes and accommodation across Scottish Borders promote the area as a destination for people to holiday with horses

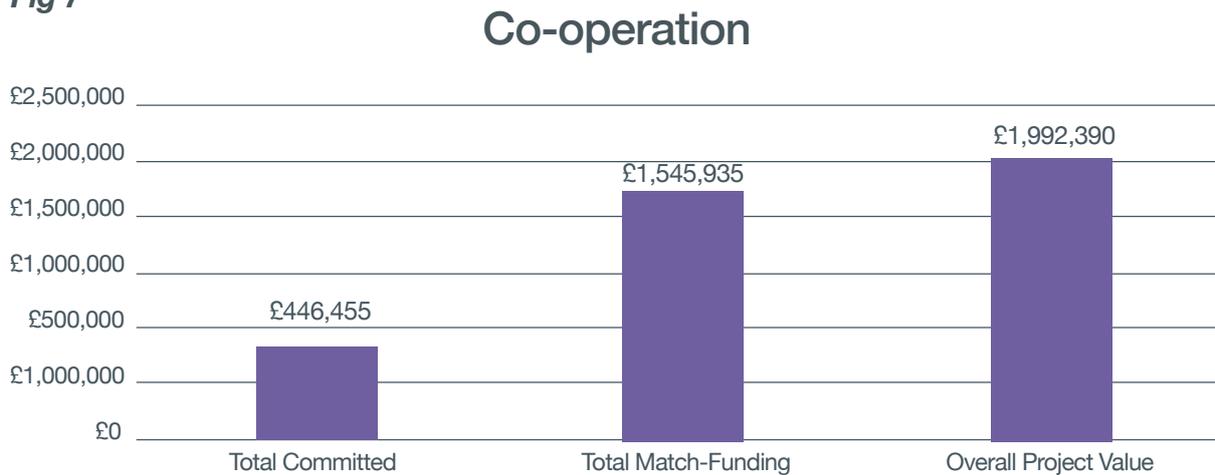
<https://ridescottishborders.com/>



Co-operation

Scottish Borders LEADER supported 7 co-operation projects totalling £446,455 which are partnered with LAGs and organisations across Scotland (see Fig 7). These projects included Crowdfunding Coaches to assist local organisations to increase income potential to finance community projects, development of a centre to increase the golden eagle population across the South of Scotland, feasibility to develop a network of access pathways across Scottish Borders and Tyne-Esk areas, rural youth project to engage and promote entrepreneurship among young people and development of online local produce distribution.

Fig 7



Recently completed Co-operation Projects:-

Crowdfunding Coaches

LEADER Grant £44,710
(overall £402,390 LEADER split between 9 LAGS)

Led by Forth Valley and Lomond, this project provided Crowdfunding Coaches in each of the 9 Local Action Group areas across Scotland to work with local organisations to maximise income/funding appeals.

Whiteadder: Heart of the Lammermuirs

LEADER Grant : £143,698.80
(overall £205,284 LEADER jointly with Tyne-Esk)

Led by Scottish Borders this project developed an historic landscape study in the Scottish Borders and East Lothian area using LiDAR data. A community archaeology team decided from collected data which sites to dig to create a path network and virtual exploration as a permanent legacy.



[Whiteadder – The Historic Heart of the Lammermuirs](http://aocarchaeology.com)
(aocarchaeology.com)

6. Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the current LEADER programme was expected to be underway during the summer of 2020. The significant delays in project completion caused by the Covid 19 pandemic held this piece of work up considerably. It had been anticipated that a LEADER Celebration Event would take place in May 2020, whereby project representatives would be asked to engage in workshop activity to provide feedback for the evaluation, however this required to be cancelled due to lockdown restrictions. Questionnaires were sent out to projects in December 2020 to obtain the information required and a good response received.

However the most recent lockdown imposed by Scottish Government on 26th December 2020 created a further hold up in submission of target information for those projects still progressing towards final claim and it is likely to be the middle of 2021 before this is finalised.



Ettrick & Yarrow Valley Projects – LEADER grant £24,292. Engagement of a Project Officer to develop 6 projects in the Ettrick Valley including E-bike hire.

7. The Future

Due to the ongoing pandemic and consequent delays across all areas with project completion, Scottish Government has again extended the LEADER programme to end December 2021 to enable finalisation of all programme activities to completed state. Scottish Government announced on 28th January 2021 as part of its budget commitment that £10.4m would be allocated to LEADER in 2021/22, however this is only to ensure finalisation of the existing programme and will not provide funding for new projects.

At present there is no information regarding a future fund or transitional fund to replace LEADER although Scottish Government

Ministers are very aware of the importance of LEADER type funding and are currently lobbying UK Government. There is no indication as to whether the new UK Prosperity Fund will cover this type funding and a decision is still to be taken by UK Government in regard to this.



Whitglen Small Animal Hydrotherapy – LEADER grant £10,000. Development of existing buildings into a hydrotherapy pool with drying room, office and toilet facilities to provide water based rehabilitation for orthopaedic/neurological conditions in dogs and small animals.

LEADER team

- LEADER Programme Coordinator Linda Cornwall
- LEADER Programme Facilitator Simon Lynch
- EU Programmes Support Officer Bartje Magee, Nesta Todd, Joanna Pringle, Gail Blacklock

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Contact details for individual team members are on the [Contact Us](#) page

LEADER Projects

Approved Projects

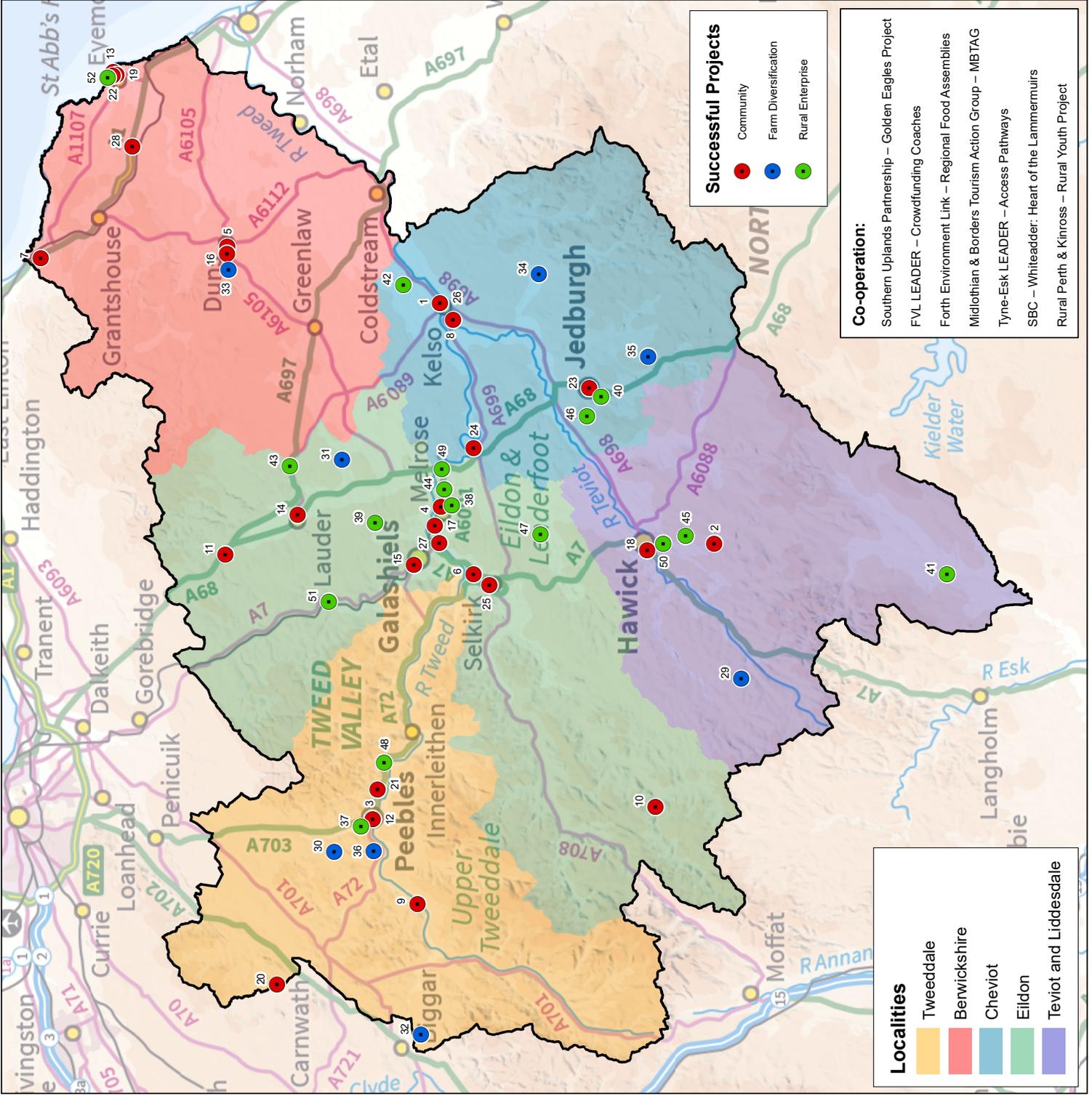
LEADER Programme 2014 - 2020.
Map as of March 2021

Project Name:

1. Visit Kelso Marketing Officer
2. Stobs Camp Project
3. Enterprising Young Peeples
4. St John's Base Energy Efficiency Solution
5. Berwickshire Futures
6. Ride Scotland's Horse Country
7. Re-Tweed
8. Borders Art Fair
9. The Merlin Trail
10. Etrick & Yarrow Valley Projects
11. Coffee Shop & Play Area
12. Eastgate Development Project
13. Eyemouth Harbour Access Enhancement
14. Castle Facility Upgrade
15. Enterprise Facilitator - The Bridge
16. Heat for Heart for Duns
17. Whistestop Café
18. Enterprise Facilitator - Chamber of Commerce
19. Marine Seabed Interpretation
20. Galvanising Garvald
21. Tweed Valley Mountain Bike Development
22. Re-Tweed Scaled Up
23. Jedburgh Pool Enhancement
24. Enterprise Facilitator - Social Enterprise Chamber
25. Border Young Creatives
26. Kelso Skate Park
27. Learning in a Heritage Landscape
28. Eat Sleep Ride
29. Falnash Glamping Pods
30. Borders Log Cabins
31. Legerwood Steading
32. The Hideout
33. Agrilait Equine Clinic
34. Fluffy Moos
35. Rural Remedy
36. Neidpath Memorial Wood
37. Bloodline Spirits
38. Eildon Glamping
39. Ice Cream Growth
40. The Byre
41. E.V Destinations
42. Eden Valley Cabins
43. Dod Mill
44. Tweeddogs Day Care Centre
45. AC Williams Flat Racing
46. Equestrian Theatre
47. Riddell Estate Visitor Experience
48. Nethill Sheepdog Holidays
49. Old Melrose Green Office Development
50. Whiggin Hydrotherapy
51. Borders Firewood Employee
52. Oblo Bar & Bistro Lift Project



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Successful Projects

- Community (Red dot)
- Farm Diversification (Blue dot)
- Rural Enterprise (Green dot)

Co-operation:

- Southern Uplands Partnership – Golden Eagles Project
- FVL LEADER – Crowdfunding Coaches
- Forth Environment Link – Regional Food Assemblies
- Midlothian & Borders Tourism Action Group – MBTAG
- Tyne-Esk LEADER – Access Pathways
- SBC – Whiteadder: Heart of the Lammermuirs
- Rural Perth & Kinross – Rural Youth Project

Localities

- Tweeddale (Orange)
- Berwickshire (Red)
- Cheviot (Teal)
- Eildon (Green)
- Teviot and Liddesdale (Purple)



Borders Arts Fair, LEADER grant £34,167. Development of an annual visual arts fair to celebrate creativity in the Scottish Borders. This event is held at Springwood Park, Kelso and incorporates workshops and demonstrations as well as showcasing the work of over 60 artists and galleries.

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LEADER TEAM

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