



2003-2004  
*Supporting the Rural Economy*



# a **toolkit** for **facilitating rural delivery**

---

how to oil the wheels of rural revival



commissioned by a partnership of:



Local Government Association



Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs



The Countryside Agency



Improvement and Development Agency for local government

and the eight councils who were awarded beacon status for their work in Supporting the Rural Economy:

Lincolnshire County Council  
Caradon District Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Lancashire County Council  
Richmondshire District Council  
South Holland District Council  
Tynedale Council  
Waverley Borough Council

written by Sally Hewitt on behalf of



Lincolnshire Development  
[www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lincdev](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lincdev)



South Holland Rural Action Zone  
[www.ruralactionzone.com](http://www.ruralactionzone.com)

designed by b-creative design and produced by the IDeA

|   |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|
| <b>introduction</b> .....                       | 3  | <b>the toolkit</b> .....                                | 13 |
| who is the toolkit for?.....                    | 5  | <b>self-assessment checklist one:</b>                   |    |
| <b>what is the beacon council scheme?</b> ..... | 6  | fit for purpose   |    |
| meet the beacons.....                           | 6  | are you ready to become a model facilitator?.....       | 13 |
| <b>CPA and the toolkit</b> .....                | 8  | <b>self-assessment checklist two:</b>                   |    |
| <b>beacons are model facilitators</b> .....     | 9  | tune up your prospects                                  |    |
| a definition of facilitation.....               | 10 | how to facilitate rural delivery.....                   | 23 |
| you can shine like a beacon.....                | 11 | <b>mechanisms for facilitating rural delivery</b>       |    |
|   |    | joint ventures between local partnerships               |    |
|   |    | and the region.....                                     | 45 |
|   |    | <b>sources of further information or assistance</b> ... | 53 |
|   |    | acknowledgements.....                                   | 56 |





# introduction

---

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56



Rural areas face many economic, social and environmental pressures. Resources are thinly spread, assets dispersed and the capacity to deliver can be limited. Successful community and economic regeneration in these circumstances requires a positive 'enabler of change'. Such a 'driver' ensures support for the economy and for local communities. We describe this process as 'facilitation'.

The Local Government Association's (LGA) rural revival inquiry<sup>1</sup> told us that one of the main barriers to rural regeneration is the complex raft of often unlinked regeneration initiatives and funding mechanisms. However a local authority acting as a 'facilitator' can remove duplication of effort and get the resources to the point of delivery. These conclusions were supported by recommendations in Lord Haskins' Rural Delivery Review<sup>2</sup>, for example that 'local authorities and local partnerships should assume the main responsibility for delivery of schemes and services to rural communities.' And 'in developing a more co-ordinated approach to front line delivery Government Offices for the Regions should work with regional and local organisations and seek to spread best practice... on integrated delivery and facilitation, recognising what is practical and affordable.'

The Government has accepted these recommendations<sup>3</sup> and has established a number of regional pathfinders, who will test new ways of carrying out rural delivery. Different solutions will be required in each area to suit local conditions. This 'toolkit' does not advocate a 'one size fits all' approach. Nevertheless there are common lessons and best practice that can be applied in all areas.

A research study has analysed the success of the beacon councils in order to define the essence of rural facilitation<sup>4</sup>. The analysis showed that it is the approach and methods used which determines successful facilitation. This toolkit draws extensively on that work and shows how other authorities can assess their activities and learn from the Beacons' success. It is suggested that the assessment could form part of preparing for Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The toolkit also looks at the relationship between the national and local government tiers. It provides a model for how rural partnerships, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and other Government bodies can work with local partners to facilitate rural delivery.

## who is the toolkit for?

- all local authorities which are wholly or partially rural who want to build their rural regeneration capacity
- rural partnerships including Local Strategic Partnerships, market town partnerships, strategic sub-regional partnerships and rural development companies who want to improve local delivery in rural areas
- rural community councils, Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices, DEFRA and other statutory and non-statutory agencies with an interest in rural service delivery
- Audit Commission, peers and assessors involved in Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

<sup>1</sup> Achieving Rural Revival, Local Government Association 2003

<sup>2</sup> Rural Delivery Review, Christopher Haskins October 2003

<sup>3</sup> Rural Strategy 2004, available from DEFRA

<sup>4</sup> Facilitating the Development of the Rural Economy, by Rural Innovation & Insight Ltd for the LGA, Defra, Countryside Agency and the Rural Economy Beacons, September 2004.



## what is the beacon council scheme?

The Beacon Council Scheme was set up by the Government in 1999 as a long-term initiative. It is a positive way of recognising achievement and spreading best practice to the whole of local government. Each year the scheme focuses on approximately ten themes. Applications for beacon status are invited from authorities considering themselves at the forefront in a particular theme. An independent panel undertake a rigorous selection process before recommending appointments to ministers. Successful authorities take part in a comprehensive 15 month dissemination programme in return for a reward grant.

'Supporting the rural economy' was a theme of round four of the Beacon Council Scheme. Eight authorities were given the award in April 2003, including one joint bid. The eight 'Rural Economy Beacons' have worked together throughout the beacon year to promote their activities. One of the results of this has been a mentoring project called 'Bespoke Excellence'. Five district authorities are receiving mentoring to help them tackle service delivery issues related to supporting their rural economy, by working with a team of mentors drawn from across the beacon councils. This toolkit is another result of the joint working between the beacons.

## meet the beacons

**Caradon District Council** has an impressive record in economic development and is demonstrating how a small council can punch above its weight. It has focused on the needs of local businesses and has obtained European funding to help provide 134 business premises in response to the shortage identified by the local Federation of Small Businesses.

Since its inception in 1996, **East Riding of Yorkshire Council** – the largest unitary authority by area – has developed a highly effective strategy and partnership for tackling rural problems. It is successfully using market towns as a focus for regeneration, through local partnerships and has been invited to lead rural renaissance for the Humber sub-region by Yorkshire Forward.

The work of Lancashire Rural Futures, formerly the Bowland Initiative has received national recognition as a model of good practice in the Rural White Paper and in the Rural Delivery Review report of October 2003. **Lancashire County Council** has developed the Bowland Initiative from a countryside environmental scheme, in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, into a rural regeneration programme, now being rolled out across the whole county. Lancashire Rural Futures is delivering economic as well as environmental benefits, such as the creation of new woodland, and new bridleways, new jobs through farm diversification and the growth of the tourist potential of the area.



Photograph courtesy of David Millington

**South Holland District Council's (SHDC)** local economy is heavily dependent on the horticultural and food sectors, which offer mainly low paid and low skilled work and hence little incentive for young people to remain in the area. SHDC and Lincolnshire County Council have set up the first Rural Action Zone (RAZ) in partnership with public sector, voluntary and business interests to boost the local economy. The RAZ has secured European funds to support innovative projects. Spalding has been awarded beacon town status by the Countryside Agency and the town's Pumpkin Festival was recognised through a national award from the Countryside Agency/Action for Market Towns in 2004.

**Richmondshire District Council** takes a bottom-up approach to regeneration. It has established Community Investment Prospectuses (CIPs) covering the entire district. The CIPs have secured wide and inclusive participation from within the community in determining the vision, strategy and specific needs of the areas they cover. This approach has delivered significant outcomes, such as the Northern Dales Meat Initiative who have developed a supply chain and marketing strategy to maximise the value of locally produced meat or the establishment of rural enterprise centres such as Hudson House in Reeth which provides a one stop shop as well as low cost housing and community office facility.

**Tynedale Council** has a dynamic approach to regeneration through partnership with other agencies and local communities, As well as the council's beacon award, both Hexham and Haltwhistle have been awarded beacon town status by the Countryside Agency. The council has also attained Beacon Council Status in 2004/5 for its work on sustainable tourism. The council's work in rural enterprise development, community regeneration and rural tourism development has achieved real results on the ground.

**Waverley Borough Council** has followed a whole council approach facilitating the development of the rural economy. Waverley's support for transport, tourism, business development, affordable housing and farmers' markets. These have ranged in scale but the common themes have been demonstrating community leadership and showing that even small scale activities can build confidence and capacity.



## CPA and the toolkit

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment is changing from 2005. There are a number of areas where this toolkit could add value to the existing and new proposed CPA approach, as outlined in the consultation documents.<sup>5</sup>

For example the revised CPA process is expected to include:

- a commitment to building assessments, at least in part, around local needs and priorities as articulated through community strategies
- the need to measure the influence and impact of a council in its locality, fulfilling the community leadership role through the Local Strategic Partnership
- shaping assessments around the shared priorities of local and central government
- incorporating an assessment of partnership working in the corporate assessment (CA)
- an alignment of district council CPA with that for single tier and county councils.

The two checklists in the toolkit form a structured way of preparing information for CPA self-assessment. The first checklist is relevant to the leadership and partnership building blocks included in the corporate assessment. Significant weaknesses highlighted through the checklist will need to be addressed by the authority before going on to checklist 2. The second checklist will give a more in-depth assessment of the approach the authority has taken to community planning, and how partners and the community have been involved. The 'delivery' scores will assess the investment and achievements as a result of supporting the rural economy, and will be relevant to some of the shared priorities groups. Each of the stages in the 'wheel of facilitation' in checklist two relate to the corporate assessment themes of prioritisation, capacity, performance management and achievement. The assessment of partnership working for the 'capacity' theme can be drawn entirely from checklist two where the partnership concerned is the LSP.

Peer review has been an important tool to drive improvement in local authority services, and the consultation suggests that peers will continue to be involved in the corporate assessment teams. In addition councils are making use of the IDeA peer clearing house and the local government improvement programme. The beacon councils recognise that some authorities may wish to seek support either with completing the checklists or more importantly with making service improvements. A more detailed diagnostic process will be necessary for those organisations that wish to take the process further. Councils are encouraged to make use of services available from IDeA, and to contact the beacon councils directly as they may be able to offer mentoring tailored to your needs. (see 'Sources of further information and assistance' for details).

---

<sup>5</sup> CPA 2005 – the way ahead and CPA 2005 – the new approach, Audit Commission, 2004

## beacons are model facilitators

The 'supporting the rural economy' beacon councils have a proven track record of facilitating rural delivery. This means that they are at the heart of enabling, co-ordinating and delivering services that will secure rural economic revival. They do this through strong community leadership and an active approach to partnership.

The research study<sup>6</sup> showed that the beacons have exploited a number of natural advantages that local authorities have in order to support their rural economy:

- 1 Local authorities have the knowledge, drawn in many cases from their statutory responsibilities and dedicated resources, to understand conditions at the local scale. They have the sensitivity to respond appropriately, ensuring better targeting of resources and enduring relationships with local communities. This challenge could not be met by a larger and more 'distant' organisation.
- 2 Exploiting their democratic accountability to the community is central to the beacons' success. This has been achieved through the creation of formal structures to support local community participation and action and innovative consultation processes.

- 3 Beacon councils have taken the responsibility for bringing local, sub-regional and regional organisations together into mutually reinforcing partnerships. The authorities provide strategic direction without necessarily having to lead. They gain understanding through the partnership which enables them to be sensitive to local conditions, which in turn feeds into the delivery of mainstream services. The partnership approach also ensures maximum access to competitive funding regimes. Regional and sub-regional organisations gain a better understanding of local strategies, through being part of the partnership as well as getting first hand experience of the potential impact of their own funding streams. Local authorities together with local delivery partners will put together and manage funding bids which help meet the agreed needs.
- 4 The research study concluded that by providing these facilitation roles, the local authority enables the regeneration process at a local level to be much more efficient. Based on the record of the rural economy beacon councils, it is strongly believed that there is a significant impact on the scale and level of outcomes achieved and the degree to which they are sustainable. In turn this has a direct impact on judgements about value for money. Without effective facilitation there would be less activity with reduced resources, outputs and impact.

<sup>6</sup> Facilitating the Development of the Rural Economy, by Rural Innovation & Insight Ltd for the LGA, Defra, Countryside Agency and the Rural Economy Beacons, September 2004.



## a definition of facilitation

The research study into the beacon councils came up with the following definition:

*Facilitation is the empowerment of rural communities by getting the maximum resource to the point of delivery.*

Facilitation is therefore as much to do with how things are done as well as what things are done. It is supported by a culture that does what it can to make things happen. Thus, facilitation is the 'oil in the wheels' that enables development and progress to take place in a rural area, and it makes a significant difference to the outcomes that are achieved.



## you can shine like a beacon

The rural economy beacon councils include five districts, two county councils and a unitary authority, and are spread across the country from the north to the far south-west. Each area is unique and the response to facilitation in each is different. Nevertheless, the beacons represent a range of situations and experiences which have parallels for other councils and other organisations wishing to support their local economy. The research study showed that the beacon councils all have similar organisational cultures despite their different situations. And they all demonstrate a clear understanding of how to deliver effective rural regeneration through partnerships.

The toolkit aims to provide a practical way for local authorities to learn lessons from the beacon councils and for regional agencies and others to engage fully with the local level as part of 'modernising rural delivery'. The toolkit is in three parts. The first two are self-assessment checklists for local authorities. Engaging with communities to support the rural economy is a long term commitment by an authority. Answering the questions in the first checklist will highlight whether the right culture exists. There are five conditions which need to be met as demonstrated by all the beacon authorities. The second checklist is a more practical list of the activities involved in facilitation. Each one of the beacons carry out these tasks to a lesser or greater extent, though each council has developed its own local methods. The 'wheel of facilitation' has eight activities for the facilitator or 'lead delivery agent'. Questions and examples from the beacons will enable councils to assess their leadership and delivery capacity, and thus the extent to which they can oil the wheels of rural revival.

The third part of the toolkit is the starting point for a dialogue with regional bodies, especially Regional Development Agencies and Government Offices, on local delivery. The Government's Rural Strategy 2004<sup>7</sup> depicts a new era of partnership working between the regional, sub-regional and local level. Channelling funds, or working together to maximise outcomes to the local level will require formal agreements to ensure funds are distributed equitably and that the delivery agents are able to manage funds. The structure of 'lead delivery agents' implies that regional bodies will need to pass on or share some of their responsibilities with local bodies. They in turn will need to show that they are effective and responsible to the region and local community. The final part of the toolkit suggests topics that an agreement between a local partnership and the regional level may cover.

<sup>7</sup> Rural Strategy 2004, from Defra.







# the toolkit

---

## fitness for purpose checklist

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56



# self-assessment checklist one: fit for purpose – are you ready to become a model facilitator?

Delivering effective facilitation in a rural area is not an easy option. To be successful requires the necessary drive, ambition and appetite to meet the challenges. The first checklist aims to help local authorities consider whether they are able to deliver effective facilitation.

Answering the questions will enable you to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of the authority, and highlight areas for change. Getting the conditions right is an important first step in being able to demonstrate to your Regional Development Agency and other bodies that they should work in partnership with you.

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

## 1.1 is your heart in it? – effective leadership

### conditions

Facilitation works best when underpinned by focussed political leadership and clear, well understood management objectives. When this leadership approach is coupled with a commitment to supporting the rural economy, it empowers and gives confidence to local authority management at all levels. It also provides a strategic direction which can bring partners together and provide a focus for joint working.

Relationships rely upon mutual trust built from a commitment to follow through on promises. Sometimes this may mean accepting a level of calculated risk (both material and perceived) with which local government is often uncomfortable, and that may lead to failure.

### beacon examples

The rural economy beacon councils highlighted the importance of the following:

- political leadership that signalled clear priorities and style for the authority
- political 'management' between elected members from different political parties that was driven by pragmatism and a consensual view about the needs of the area
- positive relationships between elected members and officers offering a dynamic management interaction.

## self-assessment questions

- 1 How has the council demonstrated that it is committed to supporting rural delivery?
- 2 Is the commitment reflected in the corporate objectives? Are the objectives shared across all the departments and business units of the council?
- 3 Do political leaders and chief officers accept that they will need to take some calculated risks?
- 4 Is the council prepared to allocate resources?

## 1.2 a 'can do' culture enabling management

### conditions

'Enabling management' is characterised by a management style that gives freedom and responsibility, and fosters initiative. The management culture within a local authority will offer sufficient autonomy to all stakeholders (both within and outside the council) to allow relationships to thrive.

Roles and responsibilities will be allocated based on a clear understanding of objectives and resources. The focus is on achieving successful delivery and using resources flexibly, making changes to traditional structures and practices if it is necessary to do so. An enabling management structure is one which is prepared to back colleagues if things go wrong.

### beacon examples

In the beacon councils a 'can do' culture gives confidence to local authority management at all levels. Where external partners look for a strategic direction it can bring partners together and provide a focus for joint working. 'Enabling management' in the beacons achieved:

- a clarification of operational objectives for the authority and what is expected of its staff to achieve them
- securing sufficient resource to give facilitation an effective critical mass
- establishing management protocols that exemplify the approach to calculated risk taking and decision making
- the confidence to step back and let others take the lead
- a planning process and communication mechanism that is inclusive.

When these conditions come together the capacity to get things done is considerable.

### self-assessment questions

- 1 How many 'business units' in the local authority are involved in rural service delivery?
- 2 Is there mutual trust between the 'unit' managers, and with lead members?
- 3 Is there a commitment to work together? Are communications between managers and between managers and lead members frequent and open?
- 4 Are structural changes necessary to bring the relevant business units closer together?
- 5 Does the management style enable and empower staff to deliver the rural development objectives?

## 1.3 be canny and resourceful

an ability to find the resources, internally or externally

### conditions

Having the right people in the right places is a key to success. Facilitation has worked well where there has been strong member and officer commitment, and these attitudes appear to be self-generating as like-minded people are attracted to posts within such organisations.

Leadership and management need to be backed up with the resources necessary to do the job. Effective facilitation requires officer time and other technical resources. These may be available from a variety of parts of the authority e.g. planning, construction management, finance and IT.

### beacon examples

A 'can do' culture is of significant value when seeking out and securing resources. The beacon councils have all demonstrated a willingness to approach the resourcing of activity in a creative way. This may be an internal commitment to funding valuable posts, or lateral thinking prompting access to funding programmes that might not immediately seem appropriate.

This commitment is also evident in a council's approach to the management of its own human and technical resources. Successful facilitators offer access to these resources to local delivery groups in order to get things done, but also to increase the value of a project and so maximise the cash element in funding.

### self-assessment questions

- 1 Have the corporate objectives led to a prioritisation of council resources for rural facilitation?**
- 2 Do the council staff have the skills and knowledge to access external resources?**
- 3 Is there a willingness to learn from other authorities and partnerships?  
E.g. through the Beacon Council Scheme, mentoring and peer review**

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

## 1.4 oil the wheels of participation

a willingness to develop delivery capacity

### conditions

Facilitation of rural regeneration is all about enabling delivery by the local community (in whatever form that might take). To do this successfully and achieve disproportionate outputs relative to available resources requires a real commitment to engage with the local community. Engagement and consultation are the first steps to identifying those individuals and groups who can play a more substantial role in delivery.

Effective local authorities recognise that constraints on resource, coupled with responsibility for delivery of core services, mean that often they cannot realistically deliver everything themselves. They must instead identify the most effective delivery vehicle, support its development, build the necessary capacity and then facilitate its delivery activities. Only in this way can local projects be fully sustainable, and enjoy a life span that extends beyond any immediate funding programme.

### beacon examples

The beacon councils have developed delivery capacity through:

- learning about local distinctiveness and understanding the issues from a local and regional perspective
- reflecting back local expectations and priorities into local and regional plans
- supporting the development of autonomous delivery bodies
- aligning expectations with regional strategy, and proposals with policy. Plans developed by local groups need to be consistent with the wider programme context to gain support
- supporting and enabling – helping with funding applications, recruitment, administration and personnel management
- making connections – for example with the work being done at other local authority levels (e.g. market/beacon town partnerships that are exploring similar topics)
- sharing resource – using the resources (human, technical and physical) of the council to add value to projects and project delivery.

## self-assessment questions

- 1 Is there a willingness to build real working relationships with local communities, voluntary and community groups?
- 2 What evidence is there that the authority is focussed on the customer? Does the ethos of the council put customers at the centre of service delivery?
- 3 Are there plans in place to get feedback from customers?
- 4 In two tier areas, do working partnerships exist between the county and district to support local delivery groups?
- 5 Would statutory and non-statutory partners agree that the council is committed to collaborative partnership working? How do you know?

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56



## 1.5 make friends

### a commitment to break down barriers to partnership working

#### conditions

Where resources and capacity are thinly spread a commitment to partnership working has been an essential pre-requisite to successful facilitation. Whether through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) or through specific regeneration partnerships, good facilitation is characterised by real working relationships that extend beyond the superficial. They will challenge organisational boundaries and methods of working to break down cultural barriers<sup>8</sup>.

Successful facilitation strikes a balance between the strategic and local through pragmatic, effective partnership. The key to achieving this is establishing a representative partnership and ensuring effective communications between partners.

Strategic partnerships should include regional bodies wherever possible. This ensures that the rural agenda maintains a voice in regional and national policy making, and that local strategies remain relevant.

The process of modernising rural delivery is focusing attention on the regional and sub-regional. It will therefore be increasingly important that all 'business units' of a council are working together and moving in the same direction.

#### beacon examples

The beacon councils have developed different partnerships models for differing situations:

- **hierarchy of partnerships** have an overarching regeneration board or management group, and independent local action groups based on locally distinctive geographical areas or thematic sub groups dealing with particular topics. For example in Richmondshire DC and Lancashire CC.
- **embedded partnerships** are partnerships which have evolved to a level where organisational boundaries have become blurred. Typically staff work together in one integrated structure to support the partnership. This can extend to project delivery where the local authority takes on the employment of staff on behalf of a community delivery organisation that does not possess the capacity or market validity to attract staff. The integration of staff from different agencies embeds the partnership philosophy within the day-to-day operation of all stakeholders. Examples are the embedded partnership between Lincolnshire County Council and South Holland District Council in the Rural Action Zone, and the Lancashire Rural Futures Delivery Unit. The unit is a multi-disciplinary team of land managers, ecologists, business advisors and conservationists often seconded from partner organisations.
- **successful internal partnerships** also exist within the beacon councils. Individual business units or directorates provide different expertise and combine to join up policy and practice across the authority. Waverley Borough Council describes this as a 'whole council approach'.

<sup>8</sup> Further case studies of how to link Parish and Town Plans, and Market Town action plans with LSPs and Community Strategies are contained in The Bridges Research Project Final Report, Countryside & Community Research Unit, University of Gloucestershire, April 2004

## self-assessment questions

- 1 Are there local partnerships which can plan and oversee local delivery?  
Do they have a shared vision for sustaining their rural communities?
- 2 Are economic, social and environmental issues all taken into account through one partnership structure?
- 3 Do changes need to be made to current structures to ensure that all the key players are represented?
- 4 If the partnership is not the LSP, does it dovetail with the LSP structures?
- 5 What role does the council play in supporting the partnership?
- 6 Is the partnership set up in such a way that it can ensure there is a link between local delivery organisations and the main partnership representatives?





# toolkit

---

## delivery checklist

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56



# self-assessment checklist two: tune up your prospects – are you ready for delivery?

The research study into the rural economy beacon councils<sup>9</sup> involved consultation with partners from the community, other public agencies and the private sector. A strong consensus emerged that local authorities are best placed to carry out the role of facilitation. The Government's Rural Strategy 2004 also underlines the vital role of local authorities.

The implementation of the strategy will test the application of the 'lead delivery agent' concept and partnership working. Authorities will need to demonstrate that they have the capability to take a leading role in collaborative partnership working. Local authorities can rate their leadership and delivery capacity using the second checklist. The checklist takes each task on the 'facilitation wheel' in turn.

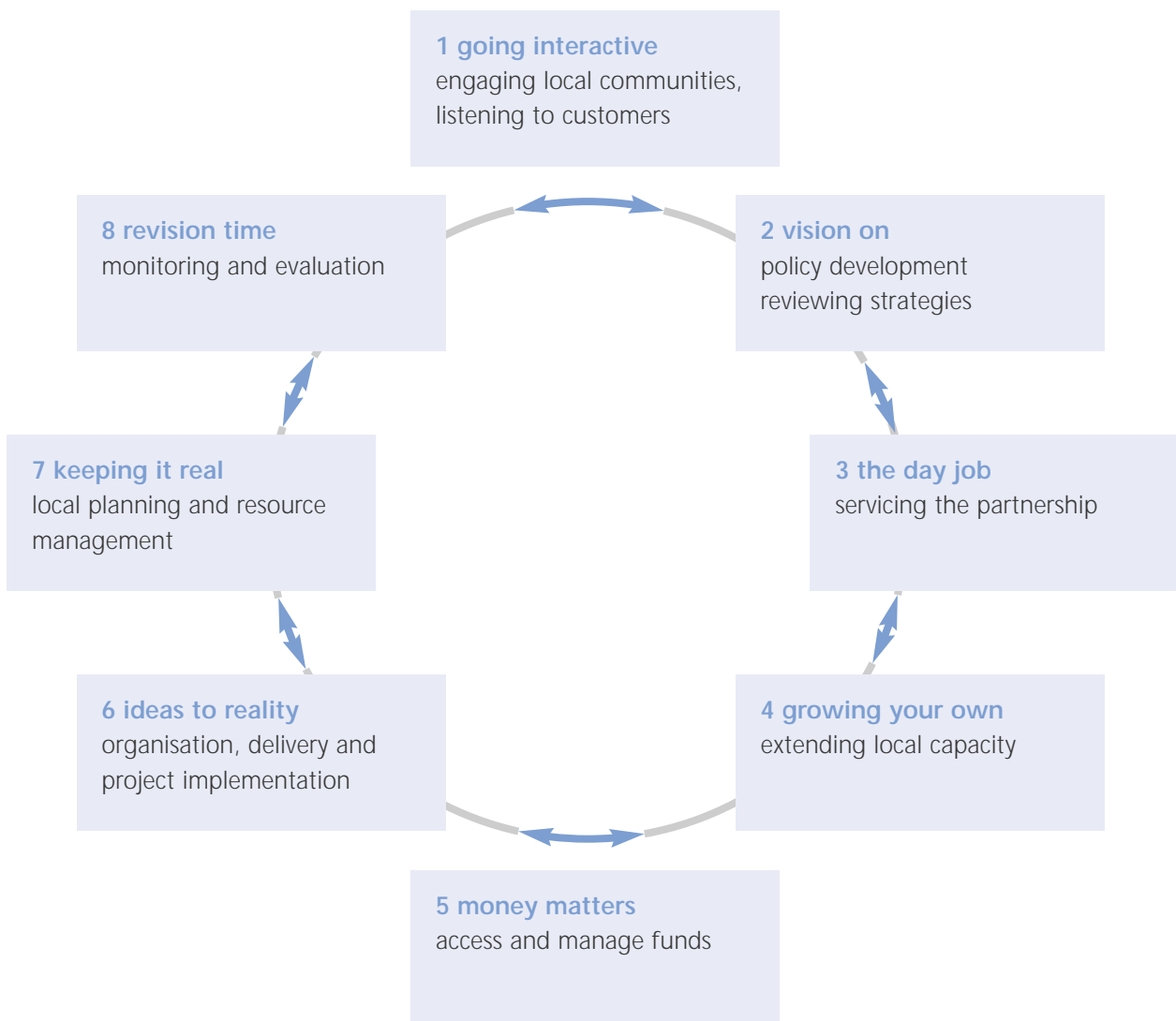
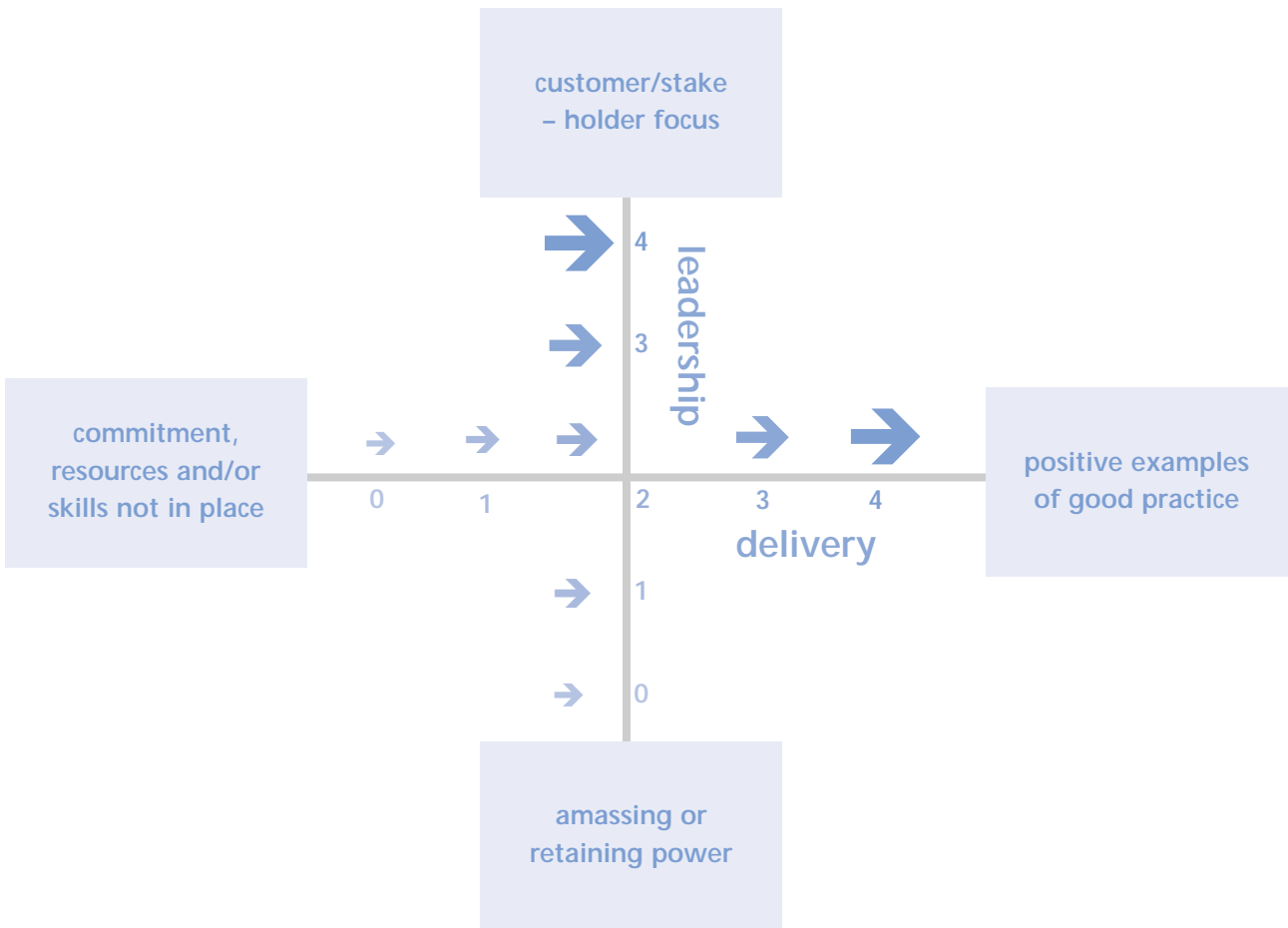


diagram one: checklist two facilitation wheel

<sup>9</sup> Facilitating the Development of the Rural Economy, by Rural Innovation & Insight Ltd for the LGA, Defra, Countryside Agency and the Rural Economy Beacons, September 2004

Applying 'effective leadership' and 'enabling management' will lead to a focus on the customer, working through partnerships. If a partnership is in place and there are plans to develop a vision, and build consultation and communication mechanisms then you would rate at the mid point of the scale (2 points).

Delivery can be assessed by examining the resources, skills and quality of provision. If investment is taking place, but this is not yet feeding through into achievements then, rate yourselves at the mid point of the scale. Rate your activities on the two scales to point out where improvements in managing rural facilitation are required.



## scores

---

Rate each of the eight topics on both the leadership and delivery scales.

|   |          |   |
|---|----------|---|
|    | 4 points | <b>excellent</b> mostly 3's and 4's and no 0's or 1's |
|   | 3 points | <b>good</b> mostly 3's and 4's                        |
|  | 2 points | <b>fair</b> any other combination                     |
|  | 1 point  | <b>weak</b> mostly 0's, 1's or 2's                    |
|  | zero     | <b>poor</b> mostly 0's, 1's or 2's and no 4's         |

## 2.1 going interactive

engaging local communities, listening to customers

### facilitating rural delivery

Rural communities are often small and dispersed and can be difficult to reach for a local authority with scarce resources. However, where facilitation has been most successful there has been a commitment to building long-term engagement with these communities.

A continuing dialogue enables local people to see the decision-making and investment as legitimate. Consulting communities regularly builds confidence and thus, the process strengthens effective governance.

Engaging communities can be time consuming and resource hungry. And consultation will be quickly seen through if it is in any way token. Nevertheless effective engagement can be done on a relatively modest scale by supporting communities to take the lead.

Listening to customers can be measured by the tangible difference made to the actions that are planned and implemented. The engagement process should take the opportunity to add value to proposals, and develop greater ownership and responsibility.

### beacon examples

Three approaches have been applied by the rural economy beacons.

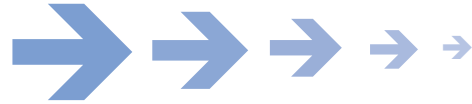
**1 The strategic approach** Consulting communities on a regular basis to build a body of comprehensive information which can be used to underpin a wide range of planning and decision-making. 'Riding around' delivered by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council working with the Local Strategic Partnership is a good example. This major annual consultation exercise is a partnership activity. In 2003 119 council officers, 28 council members and 59 representatives from partner organisations took part. Over 5000 people were interviewed through 100 different events and surveys. This approach is suited to local authorities and partners that have a critical mass of staffing. The recruitment and training of staff volunteers is a key factor. Training helps ensure that data collection is consistent.

**2 Supporting local development** Caradon's approach to town forums lends itself to small communities where there is a desire 'to get something done'. Engagement has principally been around the local development agenda and specific regeneration projects. However the infrastructure and open dialogue is leading to wider engagement.

**3 Target groups** using story-tellers, video artists and the medium of music has enabled Waverley to engage with young people and hard-to reach groups to find out about their aspirations for the future of their communities. In Cranleigh, the 'FLY' (for local youth) project now provides regular activities for young people as a direct result of consultation with them through the market town health check.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The Market Towns Toolkit is another practical tool to help local communities find ways to assess and improve the vitality of their town.

## how would you rate your ...



...success in building long term engagement? Does the public trust the process?

...use of consultation to influence the planning and delivery of services? Are there examples of feedback being used to change service delivery?

...effectiveness at communicating the results of consultation? Are you really reaching all groups of the population?

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

## 2.2 vision on policy development and reviewing strategies

### facilitating rural delivery

Local authorities have an important role to play in enabling the partnership to develop a strategy or Action Plan to guide their work. Local strategies will need to be in line with regional plans, if they are going to attract external resources. There will increasingly be a requirement to ensure that plans are consistent with the sustainable development framework. A broad based partnership will be able to link economic, social and environmental plans and policies.

Successful facilitation strikes the balance between the strategic and local through pragmatic partnership. Establishing the right representation and ensuring effective communications between partners is key to achieving this. Local authorities have the knowledge, drawn in many cases from their statutory responsibilities and dedicated resources, to understand conditions at the local scale. They can use this to help all stakeholders build a shared understanding of local issues. Furthermore, the council can demonstrate its leadership through aligning its own plans and actions with that of the partnership.

Rural proofing is a useful tool to ensure that plans reflect rural needs and circumstances.

Some of the beacons consider that their entire area is a rural economy, and have subsequently aligned their Corporate Plan with the Strategy or Action Plan prepared by the local partnership. Others have focused on a set of actions and objectives as the priority and have set out to deliver activity on the ground that will support the core objective (e.g. job creation).

### beacon examples

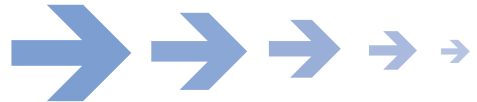
The beacon councils have all demonstrated the need to set an agenda for Rural Regeneration, and to incorporate it within their own corporate strategy or business plan in a way that provides a clear statement of its importance and supports prioritisation of resource. The Chief Executive's commissioning Forum in the South Holland RAZ is an integrated approach to bringing together service delivery plans of many organisations. The 'Whole Council Approach' of Waverley Borough Council shows how the local vision has been integrated into the activities of the different parts of the council, backed by an Executive Councillor with a portfolio for rural issues. Both East Riding and Lancashire have an integrated rural strategy. In Lancashire this approach has provided a framework for directing and co-ordinating the rural regeneration work of both the county council, the Lancashire unitary and district councils and a wide range of other public, private and voluntary sector agencies. In addition Lancashire is setting up a country-wide network to share best practice in rural proofing. Waverley's Local Plan incorporates strengthened policies in support of the rural economy including the retention of local services and employment land and support for farm diversification.

Tynedale's i-Space managed workspace is an example of the action-focused approach. For some years Tynedale had been frustrated by the failure of the market to provide modern office accommodation in its main service centre, Hexham. The council's property enquiry database confirmed strong demand for good quality office accommodation for knowledge-based businesses. Their belief in the level of latent demand was strengthened by a study to explore the potential for i-Space to contribute to the growth of small businesses in market towns.

### beacon examples

The study demonstrated the speed with which comparable workspace had filled in the North East region. Additional research and anecdotal evidence of demand gave the Council the confidence to drive forward provision in partnership with a private developer. The development was fully occupied within six months of completion and has led to the opening of a second i-Space workcentre at Barnard Castle. More importantly it has generated sufficient confidence that the private sector has subsequently developed new office space on two sites in Hexham.

### how would you rate your ...



...understanding of and involvement in regional plans, and plans of stakeholders?

...dedication to the local economy?  
Are the authority's own functions focused on finding new ways of realising rural revival?

...skills to facilitate the development of a shared vision, involving partners and the local community?

...experience of using local intelligence to develop strategies? Are there examples of innovative solutions to local problems?

## 2.3 the day job

### servicing the partnership

#### facilitating rural delivery

Local authorities do not have to lead partnerships or be seen to dominate their activities. Nevertheless it is important to support the organisation through guidance and administration. Membership criteria and the roles of members are often set out in a written constitution or other form of agreement.

Servicing the partnership will include:

- organising meetings and maintaining records
- enabling members to network and share information
- encouraging all stakeholders to take part
- managing sensitivities between partners
- providing training and development to enable all partners to contribute fully to the partnership
- communicating activities and successes to the partnership
- creating links with other relevant strategic and community partnerships.

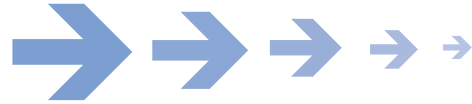
#### beacon examples

The rural economy beacon councils have proved that 'Partnership' is necessary for effective facilitation. Delivering local regeneration increasingly relies upon resources provided by a wide range of organisations operating at the local, sub-regional, county or regional level. The beacon councils have been responsible for bringing those organisations together into a mutually reinforcing partnership. In so doing, the beacons have:

- provided strategic direction without necessarily having to lead
- developed sensitivity to site specific local conditions for delivery of mainstream services and
- ensured maximum access to competitive funding regimes.

The beacons have initiated and supported many inclusive and cohesive local action groups or partnerships. Richmondshire relies on six local Community Investment Prospectus Groups. These groups fit within the framework of the Richmondshire Regeneration Board. Towns and villages in Caradon have set up and operate their own Forums independently of the district council and sometimes town councils. Similarly, in many of the beacons local partnerships in market towns are responsible for driving the regeneration agenda.

## how would you rate your ...



...resource availability to guide and administer the partnership? Can you support the structure long term?

...ability to communicate and network with members on a continuing basis?

...understanding of the responsibilities, history and aspirations of members?

...support for the partnership through sound procedures and administration? Is accountability clear?

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

## 2.4 growing your own building local voluntary and community capacity

### facilitating rural delivery

Successful facilitation organisations achieve greater value for money when projects are delivered jointly with other delivery agencies. These agencies may be official bodies (e.g. a school or parish council), a local forum (e.g. town centre partnership, residents group or chamber of trade), or a community group dealing with one issue (e.g. after school club, local charity or trust). The capacity of these partners to deliver will substantively influence value for money.

A vital pre-requisite is to apply the 'can do' culture and encourage the delivery organisation to do the same. One committed officer spending a few hours a week supporting a specific project can make a great deal of difference. Similarly, investment in developing a local champion can go a long way toward developing the capacity of their community.

Aspects of building delivery capacity include:

- initiating new forums and action groups, and supporting local champions
- assisting groups to identify their needs and priorities, and understand options for change
- encourage commitment and involvement
- brokering joint working between groups.

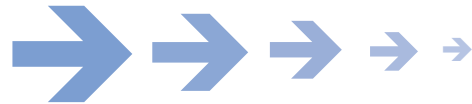
### beacon examples

An example of building delivery capacity is the development of the Kielder regeneration initiative led by Tynedale Council. Kielder is a village of 200 people at the heart of the country's largest forest, at the head of northern Europe's largest reservoir and just a couple of miles from the Scottish border. The development of the chainsaw transformed timber harvesting and at a stroke, human resource needs were dramatically cut. The Kielder reservoir brought new jobs and helped mask the impact of the changes in forestry for a time but during the 1990s the need for economic regeneration of the village became clear.

A Village Appraisal was completed in 1996 and many small scale projects were completed. Following an unsuccessful Rural Challenge bid, local agencies and groups formed a partnership to launch a successful SRB bid based on a business plan for the village completed in 1999.

Tynedale Council employed a Regeneration Manager responsible to the local steering group and the programme began to get underway in 2000. The starting point being to set, through a series of local meetings, the village's own priorities for the next few years. Attracting younger people to stay and so reverse the population decline was important. But the key was promoting a sense of enterprise in the village. Not just creating opportunities for local people to develop business ideas but looking for ways to stimulate other ideas to improve life in the village. The Kielder experience demonstrates the importance of an integrated approach to rural regeneration. The plan aligned the actions which offered best value investment in the village's future with the immediate needs and concerns of the residents.

## how would you rate your ...



...commitment to deliver through voluntary and community organisations? Are you ready to work alongside volunteers? Are grants available for administration?

...capacity building skills to enable groups to hone their own priorities? Are delivery bodies encouraged to lead?

...expertise to work with all target groups, including the least affluent or articulate? Are there examples of reaching young people, and older people?

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

## 2.5 money matters

### accessing and managing funds

#### facilitating rural delivery

Local authorities can make a significant contribution to financial management through the facilitation process. Councils have financial procedures and systems in place and experience, for example, of tendering. The capacity to run projects through local authority accounts and making use of technical expertise can be essential to a project's success. The authority needs to remember, however, that it is managing the funds on behalf of the project partners. Whilst in some cases it may legally own the assets, in other cases it will not, and in all cases it does not 'own' the project.

Accessing and managing funds will include:

- making applications for programme funds which can be distributed locally to projects, including carrying out the administrative role of accountable body
- advising on or carrying out tendering
- bankrolling projects either by managing activities through the council's financial systems or by loans which are repaid once grants are received
- making use of external funds to employ project staff
- using internal mainstream funds to support projects and develop assets.

#### beacon examples

A project example from Richmondshire where funding support was critical is the Georgian Theatre Royal in Richmond. The theatre is the oldest surviving theatre in its original form in Britain. After decades of redundant use, it was re-opened as a theatre in the mid 1960s and a campaign to restore it commenced in 1996.

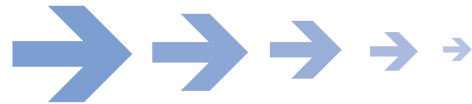
A local volunteer group of Friends led the refurbishment project and raised funds from a range of sources. The district council was asked to help fill a funding gap. By identifying potential new uses for the refurbished and extended building they were able to access Objective 2 monies to support the use of the facility as a business venue for conferences, meetings etc.

These uses have created material additional income. The local authority were able to unlock additional funds through an innovative and commercial approach – filling a key capacity gap within the Friends who were inevitably focused upon refurbishment and performing arts.

The district council also made the commitment (with associated risk) to act as accountable body on a major capital project that it did not control. This allowed the project to be managed from within the town, thus maintaining the quality of local relationships, and critically local 'ownership' of the project. The theatre opened in 2003, and has won several awards.

Waverley, an area that does not attract regeneration funding, has redirected internal funds to create a partnership funding scheme by top slicing the council's budget. A Partnership Funding Officer targets funds for council and community activities. The fund worth £1.5 million over five years has been matched, resulting in Waverley leveraging in over 400% of additional funding worth in excess of £6 million for some 110 local community projects.

## how would you rate your ...



...knowledge of funding programmes and success in making bids? Have external funds been used to support third party capacity?

...finance departments' preparedness to manage project accounts? Can they produce the right information to meet claim, monitoring and audit requirements?

...willingness to take on lease, purchase and tendering tasks? Would the council do this even if it didn't own the asset?

...readiness to bankroll or make loans to community-led projects?

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

## 2.6 ideas to reality

### organisation, delivery and project implementation

#### facilitating rural delivery

Extending the delivery capacity of partner organisations ranges from something that can add value to particular projects to being absolutely fundamental to a facilitation organisation's chances of success. Very often the relationship that emerges between council officers and local groups is one of mutual respect and commitment. This is especially true in deeper rural areas. Elected members can make a difference by taking an active part and supporting the outreach work within the council.

Working with community groups can be a substantial commitment, and is by nature a long-term investment. However, it is very often directly aligned with the council's obligations to deliver core services, and is necessary to inform the development of a valid Community Strategy.

Facilitating project delivery will ensure that the local group understand that the responsibility for action and delivery lies with them. Continuing guidance and support may be required on:

- administration and financial management
- grant claims and how to collect monitoring information
- sharing knowledge of exemplar projects
- training and development
- building or project management.

Practical assistance may be given through grants for administration, arranging training, enabling groups to make use of external funding streams, and commitment of officer time to carry out specific tasks. The beacon councils have understood that the better equipped their delivery partners, the greater and more sustainable the outputs and return on investment.

#### beacon examples

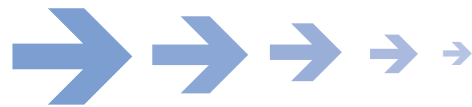
Two examples of supporting delivery come from Caradon and Lincolnshire. Caradon has supported a number of capital projects, to acquire and develop buildings. In the Liskerrett Centre in Liskeard the council worked with the local project group as a core part of the development team. They provided officer time to work on the project, not just from the economic & community services team, but also from the construction and technical services, ICT and financial/accounts units. Council staff took on responsibility for technical aspects of acquisition and development in addition to providing help in creating the accountable company and an interest free loan to cover the gap between expenditure and receipt of grant monies. After three year's operation the centre is thriving. Plans are being developed to replace some of the older buildings and introduce a wider range of uses, including small scale workshops and a new hall.

The Long Sutton Market House in South Holland is an historic building in need of renovation. Local trustees have led the refurbishment, organising fundraising and promoting it locally. They will manage the building when it is opened. South Holland DC initially acquired the site on behalf of the Trust, subsequently passing it on to the county council in order to best allocate risk and liability of ownership. South Holland produced a business plan to support funding bids. The county council are responsible for managing the building project, making grant applications and claims. The volunteer trustees have maintained their enthusiasm despite numerous setbacks, partly due to the support of the two local authorities. Once open, the Market House will house outreach facilities from police, PCT, local college and local authorities all of which will underpin the running costs of the centre and support the on-site social housing project.

## beacon examples

In both cases, commitment of resources allowed the total project value to be enhanced, thus improving the overall outcome. In Caradon delivery was supported by the willingness of independent business units within the council to work together. In South Holland implementation depended on the strengths of both the county and district councils.

## how would you rate your ...



...member understanding and enthusiasm for facilitating rural delivery?

...commitment in all the 'business units' of the council to deal with setbacks and find solutions when problems arise with project implementation?

...staff availability and expertise to work with communities? Do you have experience of development training for the voluntary and community sector? Are you aware of national and regional bodies or local experts with this capability?

...willingness to work in partnership with your district or county council to maximise the strength of both (if in a shire council area)?

## 2.7 keeping it real

### local planning and resource management

#### facilitating rural delivery

Councils will need to keep an overview of projects, internal resources and funding to ensure that expectations can be fulfilled. It is inevitable when a local authority formally engages with a local community that expectations can be raised. It is therefore important that capacity is extended in a manner that scopes and manages expectations. Failure to grasp this nettle will lead to a mutual lack of respect and can materially prejudice local capacity to deliver.

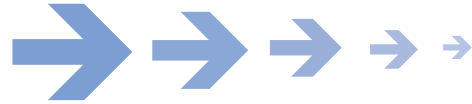
Authorities may need to reallocate resources if the regional or local partnership strategies change. Delivery bodies may need specific support through transition periods. Exit strategies need to be in place to manage time-limited external funding. Similarly, authorities can keep a lookout for new funding opportunities which will help to meet identified needs. Councils can bring them to the attention of the local partnership and delivery bodies and make speculative applications on their behalf.

#### beacon examples

The employment and maintenance of locally dedicated project staff has been made possible in most of the beacons by use of European or other external funding streams such as SRB. This process has been extremely valuable, and has allowed local groups to develop their capacity over a reasonable period. The project officer also provides a permanent link with the programme and policy context. As SRB and Objective Two programmes wind down, many of these local groups are beginning to anticipate life beyond direct revenue support, and are starting to make the transition from directly supported community group to sustainable social enterprise.

An example of planning and managing resources is the Social Inclusion programme, an integrated programme of eight complementary projects in the South Holland RAZ. All the projects, which ran from 2001 to 2004, had a strong element of intervention, aiming to 'break the cycle' of social exclusion for future generations. A part-time project manager gave extensive support with grants, claims, monitoring and evaluation, and problem solving. Some of the projects involved schools and business people gaining skills, and making links between schools, FE/HE and the workplace. These projects can now continue with little or no support. Two community development projects in the most deprived parts of the district are continuing with alternative funds which the project officer helped to obtain. The community development officers are an integral part of the District Council's community team.

## how would you rate your ...



...resources to continue to support existing and planned activities? What are the risks concerning the long term availability of staff time, technical support and money?

...reliance upon time limited external funding? What measures are in place to ensure a smooth transition to sustainability?

...ability to spot and take advantage of new funding or other resource opportunities? What examples are there in the authority?

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

## 2.8 revision time

### monitoring and evaluation frameworks, maintaining an evidence base

#### facilitating rural delivery

Effective evaluation and monitoring is a key part of successful facilitation. It informs policy and prioritisation, and demonstrates what has been achieved. An effective monitoring framework:

- measures progress against objectives and outcomes
- measures the impact of actions
- assesses how efficient service delivery has been
- demonstrates what has changed to external bodies, funders and the local community
- benchmarks activities against other areas and initiatives.

The consistent use of accessible and relevant indicators, rather than reliance on high-level themes which may be more appropriate to an urban area, provides a clearer picture of the outcomes of activity. Even when recorded at ward level, traditional indicators can give a distorted picture. Low unemployment rates can mask a very low wage and seasonal economy, high property values and levels of car ownership might obscure a local problem of access to affordable homes and limited public transport. Local measures provide a hard currency to inform partners and stakeholders.

#### beacon examples

The beacon councils all demonstrate a systematic approach to monitoring outcomes, using local indicators which reflect the local conditions.

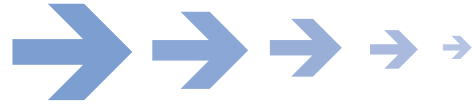
The sharing of indicators and performance information between rural councils can provide both benchmarking and performance data for the purposes of continuous improvement. Intelligence is shared through partnerships, member and officer networking, attendance at national and regional training and conference events. A good example is the East Cornwall Officer Group (ECOG) comprised of regeneration officers from Restormel, North Cornwall and Caradon District Councils, which meets regularly to exchange ideas and share experiences.

The beacons' experience shows that speaking to the customer and getting a first hand view of delivery at regular intervals can be a more powerful form of evaluation than hard statistics. This was Tynedale's experience with i-Space managed workspace and East Riding's Riding Around examples described above.

Caradon District Council has generated measurable feedback through a citizen's panel. Depending upon the subject matter, 800 to 2000 local residents can be surveyed to find out about need and demand for services. The panel results are weighted to reflect the demographic profile of the local community and are statistically valid. Postal stakeholder surveys are also carried out to generate information about quality of delivery as well as need and demand. Focus groups made up of stakeholders and practitioners are used to inform the Best Value process. The council also distributes a free newspaper about its policies and activities to all households and businesses in the district, in which responses are encouraged.

Lancashire Rural Futures include feedback from customers and stakeholders as a fundamental part of regular programme evaluation.

## how would you rate your ...



...understanding of the local economy?

Is there a set of local indicators that are relevant to the strategy or action plan of the partnership?

...processes to monitor the outcomes of individual projects?

...skills in interpreting and presenting the information to local partners and the community?

...role in sharing information and benchmarking with similar organisations? Can you access expert advice from a local research observatory? Are they part of the partnership?

...processes to provide feedback and measurement of the experience and perceptions of customers? and stakeholders?

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56



# joint ventures

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56



# mechanisms for facilitating rural delivery

## joint ventures between local partnerships and the region

### background

Key tenets of the Government's Rural Strategy 2004 and the experience of the rural economy beacon councils are that making changes in rural areas relies on three things; inclusive partnerships, a lead delivery agent, and local groups who can deliver. Under the Rural Strategy 2004 sub-regional pathfinders are being set up in each English region (except London) to:

*explore and test opportunities for more joined up, flexible and effective approaches to rural delivery at a local level.<sup>11</sup>*

The new framework implies that more formal and deeper relationships will need to be fashioned in all areas. The first part of the toolkit aims to enable local authorities and partnerships to assess their contribution, and through making improvements, ensure they can fulfil their obligations. This section looks at the interface between the regional bodies, local partnerships, and lead delivery agents.

#### lead delivery agent facilitation role

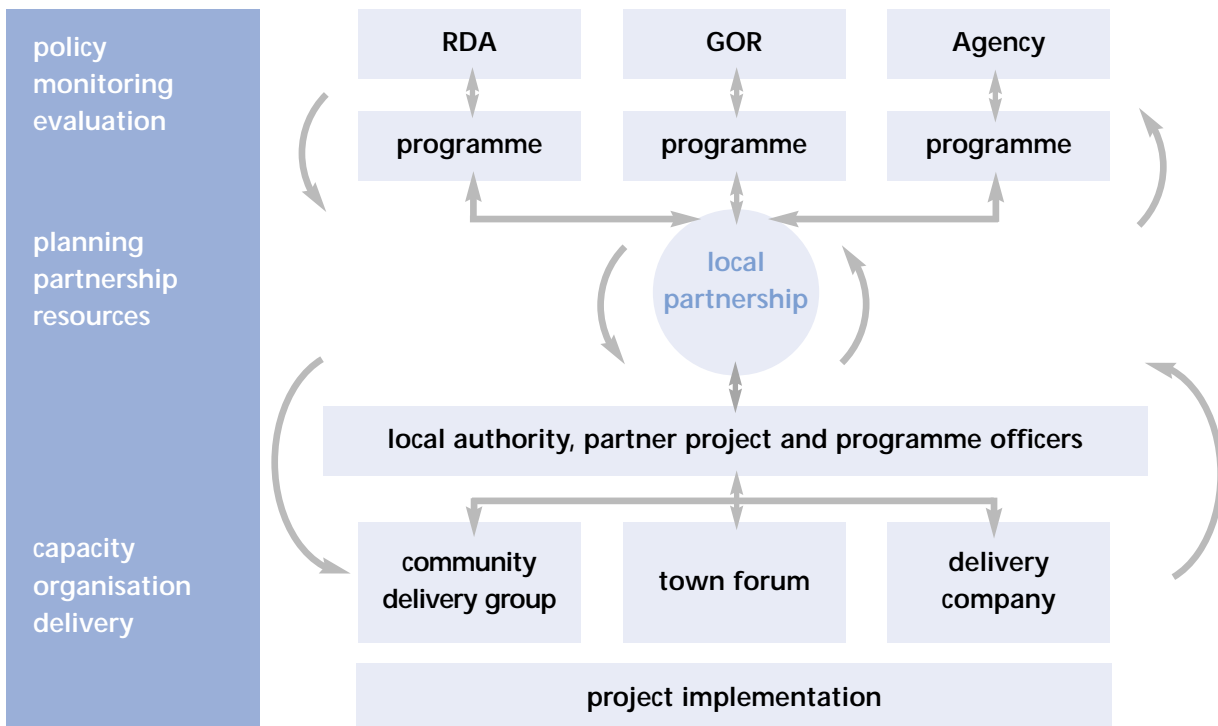


diagram two: key points of facilitation

<sup>11</sup> Rural Strategy 2004 Fact Sheet: Local Delivery Pathfinders

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

Diagram two shows that there are three key points for facilitation:

- building positive relationships between organisations which are responsible for planning and implementing policy, providing funding, and monitoring and evaluating programmes of public investment
- establishing and enabling the development of an appropriate local partnership that secures cooperation and resources
- turning strategy and planning into effective delivery, through building local capacity and effective engagement of local communities.

As the diagram shows, the first level of facilitation is focused around the regional and sub-regional interface. The differing circumstances and structures that already exist in regions mean that different solutions to local delivery are likely to evolve in each region and indeed within the same region. It is not the intention of this report to be prescriptive, but to set out some of the themes that joint ventures could explore based on the beacon research. The Regional Delivery Plans and the experience of the pathfinders can be expected to build and refine a variety of local models.

Joint ventures may range from simple consultation to agreements to carry out specific actions or to more comprehensive models. Examples of specific agreements could be the local delivery of all or part of one of the three simplified funding streams (sustainable farming and food, rural regeneration, and natural resource protection) or local resource-hungry tasks such as encouraging grant take-up by target groups or in target areas. This would mirror existing arrangements in many regions to deliver European funds such as ERDF and LEADER+ through Action Plans.

More comprehensive plans would achieve greater integration to improve the service to the customer. Local delivery would include targeting and hand-holding to support grant applicants, collecting local outcome data and acting as an agent for communication. Lead delivery agents will often be working with the rural voluntary and community sector already and are well placed to maximise the impact of new programmes. The Lancashire beacon is an existing example of integrating agri-diversification, business support, agri-environment and nature conservation. As all the beacons show, local delivery increases outcomes and impact.

One way that regional and local bodies can explore new arrangements is to work through the activities and responsibilities of the key players at the three levels shown in diagram 2. The following discussion is offered as a way of enabling the regional and local tiers to investigate the potential for formal partnership and local delivery, and is not intended as a rigid blueprint.



introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

## steps to a joint venture

### 1 Define the geographic area or thematic scope

Most arrangements are likely to be based on a defined geographic area with a known boundary, such as a local authority or LSP area. However in some cases the scope of an agreement may be defined by specific rural issues which the partnership is committed to tackling. It may also be helpful to note adjacent or overlapping area partnerships that may have a complementary role. The partnership may wish to establish, at the outset, the barriers to effective facilitation and problems affecting rural delivery.

### 2 List those who are party to the joint venture

A typical arrangement is likely to be supported by regional players, a local partnership and a lead delivery agent.

- the **regional tier** will include the RDA and/or Government Office. Other regional agencies could include the regional rural affairs forum, regional assembly or sub-groups, the Integrated Agency, and the Environment Agency. Strategic Sub-regional Partnerships (SSPs) can bridge the gap between the local and regional levels and be a strong advocate for local views to the regional bodies.
- the **local partnership** is likely to be a fully inclusive regeneration partnership which can show that it has the support of all the main public service providers, business, community and voluntary organisations. A strength of local partnerships is often to undertake consultation with local communities on a regular basis to keep in touch with their views. Some rural areas may have an overarching partnership supported by a network of smaller partnerships based on market towns, programmes or activity themes e.g. tourism, agricultural diversification. Other areas may consider that a range of forums, for example at a district or market town level, are sufficient and the best way to engage their local community.

- the **lead delivery agent** will probably be responsible for servicing the local partnership(s), initiating relationships with the regional tier and supporting local groups. Local authorities are at the centre of their communities and the only organisation which is accountable in multiple ways to that community. Council officers and members provide a permanent local presence that is both formally and informally accountable and accessible through the administration of the authority. Where a local partnership is made up of a network of smaller partnerships, then there could be more than one lead delivery agent. The lead delivery agent could also be an embedded partnership with representatives of different organisations and groups working side by side in the joint venture.

### 3 Partner commitment

All the partners will be committed to the process of facilitation which is defined as *empowering rural communities by getting the maximum resource to the point of delivery*.

Partners will commit to tackling social, economic and environmental issues, within a sustainable development framework. Partners will need to discuss how the strategic objectives of the regional partners dovetail with the objectives of the local partnership. An agreement may refer to an agreed integrated rural strategy if one exists or is being developed by the partnership.

#### 4 List the roles and responsibilities of each party based on:

- the regional tier
- the local partnership
- the lead delivery agent

The following principles set out by DEFRA<sup>12</sup> are relevant when determining responsibilities and working arrangements:

##### “ What will be better?

- better targeting of services and resources, because decisions will be taken closer to the point of need
- joint working at local level, and agreeing on clear roles – including what organisation will lead for what (lead local delivery agent) – will reduce the time spent on talking and increase the time available for ‘doing’.
- closer working relationships between partners with responsibilities for social, environmental and economic decision making will provide complementary and mutually reinforcing sustainable solutions.”

#### 5 Delegated financial arrangements

It is envisaged that the regional tier will wish to formalise arrangements to delegate the delivery of DEFRA grants to improve the customer interface at the local level, as well as other RDA/ERDP funds for rural activities. An agreement would set out the objectives that any core funding was expected to achieve and the parameters of grant monies. There may also be individual delivery plans for each significant funding stream. These could also extend to other service areas which impact on rural areas including health, crime and disorder, transport etc.

#### 6 IT systems and information exchange

There may be a need, depending on the details of the joint venture, to feed information from all partners into the new DEFRA ‘family system’. A joint venture will need to explore these IT links, as well as handling of data protection and freedom of information issues.

#### 7 Monitoring and review

A joint venture will need to be subject to review. Performance measures that the regional tier require and a definition of outcomes will need to be clear, as well as how the impact of activities will be evaluated. This information will, in turn, contribute to DEFRA’s Public Service Agreement targets and RDA performance targets. Performance measures may include customer service standards and complaints procedures.

<sup>12</sup> Rural Strategy 2004 Fact Sheet: Local Delivery Pathfinders





## further information

---

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56



## sources of further information or assistance

### for information about the beacon councils scheme and IDEa peer clearing house

[www.idea.gov.uk/beacon](http://www.idea.gov.uk/beacon)  
[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

### for information on Modernising Rural Delivery and DEFRA's Rural Strategy

[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

### enquiries about this toolkit

email [sally.hewitt@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:sally.hewitt@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

Lincolnshire Development  
Beech House  
Waterside South  
Lincoln LN5 7JH

### the beacon councils

#### Caradon District Council

Steve Besford-Foster  
email [sfoster@caradon.gov.uk](mailto:sfoster@caradon.gov.uk)  
telephone 01579 341460  
[www.caradon.gov.uk](http://www.caradon.gov.uk)

#### East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Helen Wright  
email [helen.wright@eastriding.gov.uk](mailto:helen.wright@eastriding.gov.uk)  
telephone 01482 391690  
[www.eastriding.gov.uk](http://www.eastriding.gov.uk)

#### Lancashire County Council

Andy Ashcroft  
email [Andrew.Ashcroft@env.lancscc.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Ashcroft@env.lancscc.gov.uk)  
telephone 01772 264168  
[www.env.lancscc.gov.uk](http://www.env.lancscc.gov.uk)

#### Lincolnshire County Council/ South Holland District Council

Ansar Ali  
email [aali@sholland.gov.uk](mailto:aali@sholland.gov.uk)  
telephone 01775 761161  
[www.ruralactionzone.com](http://www.ruralactionzone.com)

#### Richmondshire District Council

Kirsty Scott  
email [beacon@richmondshire.gov.uk](mailto:beacon@richmondshire.gov.uk)  
telephone 01748 829100  
[www.richmondshire.gov.uk](http://www.richmondshire.gov.uk)

#### Tynedale Council

Andy Dean  
email [andy.dean@tynedale.gov.uk](mailto:andy.dean@tynedale.gov.uk)  
telephone 01434 652372  
[www.tynedale.gov.uk](http://www.tynedale.gov.uk)

#### Waverley Borough Council

Iain Lynch  
email [ilynch@waverley.gov.uk](mailto:ilynch@waverley.gov.uk)  
telephone 01483 523203  
[www.waverley.gov.uk](http://www.waverley.gov.uk)

### for further guidance on applying rural proofing

*Rural proofing the Shared Priorities: a decision makers' guide* by SOLACE and the Countryside Agency August 2004

Contact the rural proofing network  
email [Moir.Mortimer@env.lancscc.gov.uk](mailto:Moir.Mortimer@env.lancscc.gov.uk)

### for more information on the Market Towns Toolkit

[www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

introduction  
pages 3-11

fitness checklist  
pages 13-22

delivery checklist  
pages 23-44

joint ventures  
pages 45-52

further information  
pages 53-56

## acknowledgements

This toolkit has been prepared by Lincolnshire Development following a study commissioned by DEFRA, Local Government Association (LGA), Countryside Agency, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the following beacon councils: Caradon District Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Lancashire County Council, Lincolnshire County Council, Richmondshire District Council, South Holland District Council, Tynedale Council, Waverley Borough Council. The initial work by Rural Innovation & Insight Ltd analysed the success of the Rural Economy Beacons and defined the essence of rural facilitation. Copies are available from IDeA, telephone ihelp 020 7296 6880.





For further information, please contact:

Improvement and Development Agency

Layden House

76-86 Turnmill Street

London EC1M 5LG

telephone ihelp 020 7296 6880

fax 020 7296 6851

**published October 2004**

b-creative design. IDT 935. Printed by Geoff Neal Litho.

