COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH YORKSHIRE: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE OBJECTIVE 5b AND LEADER II PROGRAMMES

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Research Report

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INTRODUCTION

Research context

This report documents the findings of research conducted into community development in North Yorkshire. The research was commissioned by North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) in order to contribute towards the development of policy options to assist community development in North Yorkshire. The aim of the research was the identification of the essential ingredients of successful community development initiatives, taking a critical view of past experience in order to contribute towards the more effective operation of community development policies in the future. The primary focus of the research was on the LEADER programmes and the community development priority of the Objective 5b programme (the Community Development Fund or CDF). The research was not intended to provide a comprehensive evaluation of these programmes (for which see, for example, Pieda, 1997) but to contribute towards a broader strategic goal of policy development.

Research objectives

The research had five central tasks. The first was to survey the projects funded under community development measures of the Northern Uplands Objective 5b and LEADER programmes in North Yorkshire. The second
was to conduct a review of the means by which appraisals of local needs had been undertaken as part of the community development process. The third was to examine the administrative systems and inter-organisational collaborative arrangements developed in order to deliver the programmes. The fourth was to undertake a comparative review of community development initiatives elsewhere in the Northern Uplands region and in other Objective 5b and LEADER areas. The fifth was to present the findings and recommendations to a range of local governmental, non-governmental and voluntary organisations within the County.

**Research methods**

The research drew upon a mix of research methodologies and techniques as applicable to each data source. A comprehensive survey was undertaken of programme documentation for the Community Development Fund and LEADER programmes, plus a more selective overview of the North Yorkshire Rural Development Programme and the North Yorkshire Small Project Fund. The intention was to gain an understanding of the formal structures in which these programmes operate. A selection of individual project files for the Community Development Fund and LEADER programmes were examined, with the intention of tracking the progress of individual projects within each programme from inception to completion. This gave insight into the practical issues faced by projects drawing on funding from the two programme sources. Interviews were conducted with a number of key officers from County and District Councils, National Park Authorities, Government Office, the Countryside Agency, Yorkshire Rural
Community Council and other organisations with responsibilities for the Objective 5b and LEADER programmes. Interviewees were sampled so as to gain a range of views from the broad range of organisations involved in the two programmes. The interviews were conducted in confidence, using a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix A) and transcribed for anonymous use in this report. Telephone interviews (41 in total) were conducted with a sample of community group representatives from Objective 5b and LEADER-funded projects. 21 people representing 25 CDF project applications, 17 people representing 18 LEADER projects and a small number of LAG representatives were interviewed in this way. Information from these interviews, structured around a questionnaire schedule (see Appendix B), was used to generate data on the processes by which individual projects identified needs, applied for funding, drew down the allocated grant, and used the funding. Anecdotal data was also generated on overall experiences of receiving funding from the LEADER and Objective 5b programmes. Information was also sought on experiences of community development funding from equivalent programmes in other parts of the UK, in order to place the North Yorkshire experience within a comparative framework.

**Structure of the report**

Chapter 2 outlines the context in which the Objective 5b and LEADER programmes were initiated, the rationale and conceptualisation of community development bound up in the programmes, and the key features of each programme. Chapter 3 draws on the research findings to examine
the basic criteria of successful community development programmes, and to assess the extent to which the programmes in North Yorkshire might be evaluated as successes, failures or otherwise in relation to these criteria. Chapter 4 sets out the principal recommendations and action points for future community development funding programmes.
Chapter 2

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES.

What is community development?
The current emphasis on community development in both European programmes (such as Objective 5b and LEADER) and in national and regional regeneration programmes (such as Round 5 of the Single Regeneration Budget, or the New Deal for Communities programme) reflects a broad acceptance that economic regeneration for depressed areas requires community involvement, capacity building and locally-derived ideas for development. The idea of community development has a long history, with some commentators tracing its origins back to the demise of economic systems based on colonialism (Wright, 1990). This history has produced a range of definitions of community development, its methods and its goals. Community development can be broadly defined as a process by which local economic or social problems are defined and acted upon at the local level, with the process of definition and rectification being often as important as final outcomes. Beyond this, definitions vary, usually according to the balance of power (actual or desired) between communities and the state. In an early definition, the United Nations notes that:

“The term ‘community development’ has come into international usage to connote the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into
the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress.” (United Nations, 1959, p.1)

In this definition, power rests primarily with the state. In a slightly more radical vein, Burnett quotes the Scottish Office as defining community development as:

“…the process whereby individuals and groups are invited to identify and to provide solutions to ‘their own problems’ and this is achieved through local ownership of process, participation and control.” (Scottish Office, 1996, in Burnett, 1998, p.211)

This emphasis on the need for local control over development processes and outcomes is taken further in Taylor’s definition:

“Community development is concerned with change and growth - with giving people more power over the changes that are taking place around them, the policies that affect them and the services they use. It seeks to enable individuals and communities to grow and change according to their own needs and priorities rather than those dictated by circumstances beyond their boundaries.” (Taylor, 1992, in Warburton, 1997, p.8)

Finally, the Community Development Foundation (CDF), a national voluntary sector organisation that receives support from the Home Office’s Active Communities Unit, and whose mission is to strengthen communities by ensuring the effective participation of people in determining the conditions which affect their lives, also offer a working definition of community development. They state:

“Community development can change the relationships between people in communities and the institutions which shape their lives. By encouraging involvement in local life,
community development helps people have a say in decisions which affect their lives.” (CDF, 1998, p.1).

It is interesting to note the less radical tone of this last definition. However, all the definitions of community development given above are important because, through their application, they have a direct impact on the structure and implementation of programmes and projects that can be crucial in shaping economic growth and social cohesion in rural areas.

**Two sides of the same coin**

Implicit in the above definitions is the idea that community development should be coupled directly with economic development goals. Community economic development has been a key theme in regeneration policy debates in the late 1990s. As Filion notes:

“This form of development emerges as one of the few remaining options available to promote social equity and achieve community survival in the face of economic adversity. CED is dedicated to participatory decision making and to forms of economic development that operate at a local level and advance social objectives.” (Filion, 1998, p.1101).

Drawing on this idea, the idea or model of community development used to frame this research was of local economic growth and local empowerment as two sides of the same coin. Acting upon such a definition can be fraught with difficulties. As one interviewee put it:

“…community development is hard to talk to people about because it turns into awful phrases like ‘capacity building’ but that is what it is about. There is a need within communities to provide opportunities for involvement, and for people to have
their say and a chance to improve something. […] Community development is about addressing all those issues, and it is the preliminary to economic benefit, although people try to pull the economic benefits in too early.” (North Yorkshire officer, May 1999, research interview).

Whatever the complexities, this model of community development - of economic regeneration based on social inclusivity - has much to offer rural areas faced with a range of economic, social and environmental problems, for reasons that are explained in the remainder of this section.

**What is rural community development?**

‘Rural’ means different things to different people. When talking descriptively of rural areas in this report, the term ‘rural’ is used to denote wards and postcode sectors outside settlements of 10,000 or more people following the Countryside Agency’s definition (Countryside Agency, 1999). In simple terms, rural community development is just community development carried out in rural areas. But the term ‘rural’ also has more abstract meanings, which are bound up with people’s own ideas and visions of what the countryside looks like and what it should be (Halfacree, 1993). These visions of ‘rural’ are often in opposition to one another; one person’s peace and quiet found in a remote hamlet may be another’s isolation from essential services and community life. Rural community development, at least in part, is about working towards a consensus (or an understanding) about what sort of rural areas we want, and what activities might lead to a realisation of that vision. It is also about having a strategic vision for the future, in which aspirations and goals for immediate action are framed
within a wider vision of what might be possible and achievable for an area and its people.

**Programmes for rural community development**

The point of this research was to see how community development initiatives have operated in rural North Yorkshire, and to contribute towards the evolution of future rural development strategies. We now go on to discuss two major programmes that promote, either explicitly or implicitly, rural community development - the Community Development Fund of Objective 5b and the LEADER II programme. Other programmes - the Rural Development Programme and the Small Grants Fund - are also considered briefly here.

**The purpose of Objective 5b**

Objective 5b is one part of the European Union’s Structural Funds (which comprise the European Regional Development Fund or ERDF, the European Social Fund or ESF and the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund or EAGGF). The origins of the Structural Funds lie in long-standing goals within the EU for social and economic cohesion, and concern about the implications of uneven economic development across Europe. Following modest beginnings, the Structural Funds were reformed in 1988 with the designation of five objectives, each of which dealt with a specific aspect of uneven economic development (see Bachtler and Michie, 1994, 1995). Objective 5b was one of several territorially based objectives,
targeted specifically at the development of vulnerable rural areas. To qualify for designation, applicant areas had to demonstrate that they had:

a) low levels of socio-economic development according to criteria including the proportion of jobs in agriculture, low levels of agricultural income, low population density, trends towards depopulation; or, according to secondary criteria including:

b) low levels of economic development and one or more of the following characteristics: peripheral location in relation to the EU’s main growth poles; sensitivity to trends in agriculture especially in the context of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform; small farms and an ageing farming population; pressures on the environment and countryside; hilly and mountainous or disadvantaged terrain; sensitivity to the impact of restructuring of the fishing industry.

The first programming period ran from 1989-1993. Following an expansion of resources and areas covered, the second programming period was designated to run from 1994-1999. It comprised ECU 6.868 billion (approximately £5.722 billion), covering 32.7 million people across 12 member states (8.8% of its population), and 26% of its territory. 82 programmes were adopted under Objective 5b (20 in France, 13 in Italy, 11 in the UK, 8 in Germany, 7 in Austria, 7 in Spain, 5 in the Netherlands, 4 in Sweden, 3 in Belgium, 2 in Finland, 1 in Denmark, and 1 in Luxembourg) (DGVI, 1997). In the UK, the 11 designated Objective 5b areas were Rural Wales, Dumfries and Galloway, Rural Stirling & Tayside, Grampian and
Borders, East Anglia, the South West, English Marches, Lincolnshire, Midlands Uplands and the Northern Uplands.

The Northern Uplands and North Yorkshire

The Northern Uplands area extends over 14,286 sq.km. and covers parts of Northumberland, County Durham, Cumbria, Lancashire, East and North Yorkshire. It has a population of 374,000. Objective 5b designation has meant a total of around £90 million available for rural development projects, to be match-funded by local and regional sources. Although viewed by the EU as a single area, practicalities dictated that early in the programming period the Northern Uplands area be subdivided for ease of implementation, with this subdivision taking place across county boundaries. Objective 5b funds were sub-divided and Local Implementation Plans (LIPs) drawn up outlining in detail priorities for fund expenditure over the programming period. Whilst the whole Northern Uplands area operates under the same Single Programming Document (SPD), approaches towards rural development have differed between counties within the Northern Uplands.

North Yorkshire is the largest county in England, with a population of 561,000 and an area of 8037 sq. km. Whilst there has been an overall increase in population over the past two decades, this increase has been disproportionate with higher rates of in-migration amongst the over-40 age group, and relatively high rates of out-migration amongst younger people. The economy is dominated by agriculture, fisheries, mining and tourism, and is a low-wage economy, having 63% of the average wages for the UK.
Access to housing, transport and many services is poor in the rural areas of the county with Objective 5b designation (the North York Moors to the east, and the Yorkshire Dales in the west), compounded by problems relating to population sparsity in the uplands and the peripherality of the rural areas.

**The Single Programming Document**

The Single Programming Document (SPD), agreed between the partners involved in the initial application for area designation and the European Commission, acts as the plan or structure for all Objective 5b funded rural development activities within the Northern Uplands. It sets out the strategic aim of the Objective 5b programme:

“The creation of a sustainable economy and the creation of sustainable communities.” (GONE, 1994, p.24)

Such a statement makes clear the vision of economic and community development as two sides of the same coin, and in that respect, sets the Northern Uplands apart from other UK Objective 5b areas in terms of its basic approach. Many other areas focus solely upon economic development in their strategic objectives, like, for example, Dumfries and Galloway, who state their strategic objective as:

“To achieve *convergence* of the Dumfries and Galloway economy with the Union average by increasing economic *competitiveness* through actions undertaken by Partners in *co-operation*.” (Dumfries and Galloway Rural Partnership, 1994, p.38, emphases in original)
Many also make reference to environmental concerns. In contrast, only two Objective 5b areas other than the Northern Uplands refer explicitly to rural communities in their strategic objectives: Rural Stirling & Upland Tayside, and the Marches (McNicholas and Ward, 1997).

The SPD for the Northern Uplands sets out four priorities for action, to which it allocates varying proportions of the available funding:

- **Priority 1:** Economic development and diversification (43.9%)
- **Priority 2:** Tourism (18.8%)
- **Priority 3:** Community development (14.8%)
- **Priority 4:** Environmental enhancement and conservation (20.3%)

The Community Development priority, the focus of this research, is subdivided into three measures:

1. The development of community services and infrastructure (ERDF).
2. The promotion and encouragement of local initiatives which sustain rural and coastal communities and economies (EAGGF).
3. The provision of vocational training, including guidance and counselling, within rural and coastal communities in order to improve access to new or more secure business and employment opportunities (ESF).
The Community Development Fund

In North Yorkshire it was quickly decided that the standard application process for funds under the community development priority was inappropriate in the case of the small community group applications that the priority was intended to support. Large and demanding application forms were not suited to the abilities of such groups, and a plethora of small grant claims threatened to overwhelm the Government Office administrative structures, set up to deal with smaller numbers of bids for larger amounts of funding. Modelled on the previously successful Small Projects Fund (see below), a Community Development Fund (CDF) was set up, into which the majority of Objective 5b Priority 3 ERDF funds were channelled. The grant limit for individual projects was £50,000 from CDF funds.

The CDF started with four areas of activity it wished to promote, defined as priorities at the County level: improving village halls; providing recreational facilities; setting up community groups; and carrying out village appraisals. In the second phase it moved from this focus on support for capital infrastructure to become a capital and revenue grants scheme, also expanding its remit to include information and advice services, community facilities and services, and community communications. In the third phase it also drew down EAGGF funding.

The delegated application procedure meant that groups made their applications with the support and guidance of their District Grants Officer, who provided a known and friendly face to the fund, and was well-placed to
offer advice on other possible avenues of matched funding. A panel of officers from a range of organisations, both statutory and non-statutory, made decisions on project applications, with guidance on eligibility offered by Government Office. NYCC administered the fund in terms of sending offer letters, receiving claims for draw-down, and writing cheques to the groups. They were also responsible for the monitoring of the CDF.

The CDF is often held up as an example of good practice in the implementation of community-based development using Objective 5b funds. Other areas in the Northern Uplands have modelled similar delegated funds on the North Yorkshire approach. Cumbria was quick to follow North Yorkshire’s lead, but with a £12,500 grant limit. Teesdale in County Durham also have an Objective 5b funded Community Development Fund, but this is on a much smaller scale, with a grant limit of £1,000. However, other Objective 5b areas outside the Northern Uplands have been unable to gain approval for such a step. It appears that much depends on how such a delegated fund can be shown to fit within a broader strategy for community development, as outlined in SPDs. The Northern Uplands is thus distinctive amongst Objective 5b areas, in its conceptualisation of economic regeneration and community development as twin goals, with the SPD written around this idea and, in some parts, delegated grants schemes put in place to facilitate it.
LEADER II

At the same time as the Structural Funds were reformed, the European Commission introduced a range of smaller programmes it termed Community Initiatives. The intention of Community Initiatives was to provide a closer focus on development activities and the scale at which they were undertaken. Consequently, both the geographical and financial scale of Community Initiatives has been much smaller than those for areas designated as Objective 1, 2 or 5b. However, the EU’s emphasis on experimentation and learning within Community Initiatives has meant that they have received a disproportionate amount of both academic and policy scrutiny.

LEADER (Liasons Entre Actions de Développement de l’Economie Rurale: links between actions for the development of the rural economy), is one of 13 Community Initiatives. It is based on the premise of endogenous development. Under this principle, people in the designated rural territories should participate fully in the design of development activity with themselves as beneficiaries. For this reason, and because of its experimental nature, LEADER has been termed (by Brussels) as ‘the anarchic approach’. Nevertheless, the structures which control the implementation of LEADER ensure that it remains strictly regulated, on the same basis as the Structural Funds’ main programmes (see also Ray, 1998).

LEADER is linked to Objectives 1 and 5b in that each LEADER territory must fall within an Objective 1 or 5b area, with only 10% of resources to be
spent outside this boundary. Like Objective 5b, 1994-1999 marked the second programming period for LEADER (i.e. LEADER II), under which 66 territories in the UK were designated for receipt of LEADER funds (20 in England, 8 in Wales, 14 in Scotland and 24 in Northern Ireland). LEADER is funded through all three Structural Funds.

**LEADER II in North Yorkshire**

Parts of two LEADER areas fall within the county boundaries of North Yorkshire: the Cumbrian Fells & Yorkshire Dales, and the North of England Coastal Zone. The geographical location of the Fells & Dales is apparent from its name. The Coastal Zone does not form a contiguous area, with part in North Yorkshire, part in East Yorkshire (included with North Yorkshire in this report) and part in Northumberland. Like the Northern Uplands Objective 5b area, for some purposes the two parts of the separate programmes have developed and are treated quite distinctly. £1,350,000 was initially allocated to the Fells & Dales LEADER area, and £1,434,000 to the Coastal Zone. Although the Fells & Dales covers a larger area geographically, per capita allocations are broadly similar to those of the Coastal Zone.

**The LEADER Business Plans**

Each LEADER territory has its own Business Plan, developed by individual LEADER groups, which guides the focus of activities. Both Fells & Dales and the Coastal Zone have strategies which complement those of the
Northern Uplands area, but which also go further in terms of reflecting the principle of endogenous growth underpinning the LEADER Initiative. The Fells & Dales Business Plans states that the Programme will:

“...assist in the creation of a sustainable economy and sustainable communities within the area by promoting locally initiated, locally derived and locally managed rural development.” (Fells and Dales LEADER II, undated, p.11)

That for the Coastal Zone sets out four strategic goals:

a) To conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty of the coast and its communities.

b) To facilitate and enhance the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the coast by improving and extending opportunities for recreation, educational, sporting and tourist activities that draw on, and are consistent with, conservation of the natural beauty and protection of the coast.

c) To reduce the level of remoteness and isolation by delivery of training and business services locally and by the encouragement of self-help and co-operative action.

d) To promote innovative and sustainable forms of economic and social development that ensure the survival of the coastal communities as places with a balanced and prosperous population. (North of England Coastal Zone LEADER II, undated, p.4)
In contrast to the emphasis on local development, the measures and financial allocations for the two programmes follow a national template for priorities in LEADER areas.

**The administration of LEADER funds**

Like other LEADER programmes elsewhere in the UK, much of the funding under the two LEADER programmes is distributed through delegated grant schemes. Like the CDF, these have been set up to minimise bureaucracy, delays and inappropriate administration systems. However, unlike it, the process by which projects come forward for funding reflects and emphasises the community-based, endogenous nature of the programme. Local areas within the LEADER area form Local Action Groups (LAGs), which instigate an appraisal of needs for the territory they agree to cover. From this appraisal an Action Plan is produced. Projects that come forward should link their proposed activities into this plan. The LAG then approves the project, which progresses to the Support Group, made up of relevant officers (and, in the case of the Fells & Dales, LAG representatives) and operating at a county, rather than cross-county level. This Support Group then make recommendations. NYCC then issues offer letters to the groups concerned. Thus the administrative burden for LEADER is kept off Government Office, the partner officers are given the opportunity to be kept involved, and groups are provided with a more appropriate process for their low-budget needs. Towards the end of the LEADER II programme, however, as a result of the SEM2000 data-sheet produced by the European Commission, delegated projects have to be ratified by Government Office
before an offer letter can be sent out, tying NYCC, the Government Office and community groups back into the bureaucracy they had sought to avoid.

**Other rural community development programmes in North Yorkshire**

In terms of community-based activities, the two other most significant programmes in North Yorkshire are the Rural Development Programme and the Small Project Fund. Both funds have a direct impact on many of the communities in which LEADER II and the CDF operate. Furthermore, because there is a relatively close network of officers involved in the implementation of rural community development programmes in North Yorkshire, the way in which the RDP and the SPF have been administered in the past will have an impact on the organisation of LEADER II and the CDF.

Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) are the prime area based initiative by which the Rural Development Commission (RDC) delivered its funding and achieved its objectives. Following re-designation in 1994, and now managed by Yorkshire Forward (the Regional Development Agency for the region), the North Yorkshire RDP provides approximately £50,000 per year towards an integrated programme of social and economic projects (North Yorkshire RDP Management Group, 1998). The RDP is a key provider of matched funding for the CDF and LEADER II, as well as a significant funder in its own right. This co-ordination is enhanced by the fact that the RDP rural projects officer also administers the CDF, although there is
evidence of such balanced working at all levels. The North Yorkshire RDP’s priorities are:

**Economic Aim 1**: To provide sufficient workshop space to meet the needs of the North Yorkshire Rural Development Area.

**Economic Aim 2**: To promote and enhance the existing level of training across the North Yorkshire Rural Development Area.

**Economic Aim 3**: To encourage, where appropriate, sustainable tourism development.

**Economic Aim 4**: To ensure that appropriate advice and information and business support is available across the North Yorkshire Rural Development Area, which complements the work of Business Link North Yorkshire.

**Social & Community Aim 1**: To maintain and encourage the development of village halls, community centres, and recreational facilities.

**Social & Community Aim 2**: To maintain and improve the provision of services and facilities in the Rural Development Area with particular emphasis on the needs of disadvantaged groups.

**Social & Community Aim 3**: To assist in the development of retail advisory services to stem the decline in village shops and post offices (delivered through the Village Shops Development Scheme).

**Social & Community Aim 4**: To assist in the improvement of transport services to all parts of the Rural Development Area.

**Social & Community Aim 5**: To identify opportunities for affordable local housing within the Rural Development Area.
Social & Community Aim 6: To assist in the development of community safety. (North Yorkshire RDP Management Group, 1998)

The Small Project Fund has been in operation in North Yorkshire for nine years, funded primarily by the Rural Development Commission and confined to the RDP area, although also supported by a range of statutory and voluntary organisations. The fund is intended to be the first step for small community groups in applying for grant assistance. The grant limit is set at £500, which is provided up-front upon approval, and the less rigorous monitoring process reflects this lower level of grant assistance. It has no strong priorities, but projects are divided according to type for administrative purposes:

1. Economic
2. Tourism
3. Social & Community
   a) Community facilities / development / services
   b) Information & advice
   c) Youth / young people / children’s play
   d) Sport & Recreation
   e) Arts

The Small Project Fund is generally held to be a positive example of the potential for community development initiated from relatively modest amounts of funding. It acted as the model for the CDF delegated grant scheme.
Chapter 3

MATCHING EXPECTATIONS TO REALITY: THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The four key ingredients

Obviously, community-based development programmes drawing on public funds should succeed in their objectives. Failing programmes tarnish the reputations of institutions and officers involved, are perceived to squander scarce public resources, potentially damage the hopes and aspirations of those investing time and energy in development planning, and can become a wasted opportunity for communities engaged in the community development process. Furthermore, the perceived success of a programme is necessary in order to secure both funding and community involvement in future development opportunities. It is also a truism that perceptions of success vary with priorities and viewpoints. Thus what is seen as success from the perspective of a Government Office or even the European Commission, can potentially be seen as near failure from that of community groups and be viewed somewhat ambiguously from the perspective of officer partners responsible for the administration of matched funding. Likewise, the often intangible community gains arising from programme funding opportunities can frequently be overlooked in the search for objective measures of ‘success’ or ‘failure’ within formal programme monitoring procedures.
These misgivings aside, the findings from this research suggest four basic ingredients which can contribute towards a successful community development programme, from the perspective of all the individuals and organisations involved in the process. These are that programmes:

- combine strategic vision with realistic targets;
- work effectively with local communities;
- operate within clear administrative structures; and
- have a lasting, positive and sustainable impact.

This section draws on the evidence obtained as part of the North Yorkshire Community Development Study to assess the success of the CDF/Objective 5b and LEADER II programmes in North Yorkshire, with reference to this framework. Although meeting these criteria is clearly a demanding task, evidence from North Yorkshire and elsewhere indicates that it is attainable.

**Combining strategic vision with realistic targets**

Community development programmes are rooted within a number of contradictions. There is an inherent contradiction between the concept of community development as an organic, evolving entity and as a community development programme modelled on more traditional forms of economic development driven by outputs defined from the outset and set about by time constraints. There are sometimes contradictions between community-initiated development and development planned by central authorities, and between reactive support following community demand and the proactive promotion of community-based development. Successful programmes need
to surmount or accommodate these contradictions, by combining strategic vision with realistic targets.

*The importance of strategic thinking*

Strategic thinking is essential to good community development. Overall development strategies are required to ensure that the total development outcome is greater than the sum of individual parts. Most community groups see their development needs in terms of small individual projects. For example, as one successful CDF applicant said:

“The District Grants Officer wanted the village hall refurbishment to be done as a whole, but we are too small a parish for that.” (Community representative, May 1999, telephone interview.)

Few have a vision of a broader agenda of local development, apart from perhaps a series of refurbishment projects. There is also evidence from the fieldwork that project officers and development workers can get swamped in the detail of a number of projects, rather than engaging in wider strategic thinking. LEADER officers in particular have been clearly over-stretched, and the changeover of staff has meant there has been a necessary emphasis on picking up the pieces rather than developing a strategy for action. The solution rests with the ability of project officers to fit individual projects within a wider framework, teasing out key issues, common themes and local responses in accordance with a broader development strategy. One officer suggested:

“[…] all district grants officers try to view the wider picture.” (North Yorkshire officer, May 1999, research interview)
while another, speaking for those involved in the CDF, said that

“We have tried to take a strategic approach. [...] But while we have identified a strategy and key things to work on, we have struggled to find projects and providers, if we want to keep to the approach of coming from the community.” (North Yorkshire officer, April 1999, research interview)

However, despite this assertion, there are examples of projects which fit into a wider strategy. For example, the Pied Piper project in Ryedale complements the District’s focus on Rural Arts. It is important that a distinction is made between this sense of strategic working and the translation of individual project applications into the language of funding panels in order to deliver the required outputs. The latter is an exercise in ensuring a fit between programmes demands, and the needs of community groups. As one officer stated:

“I help them get the right emphasis or spin on the application form - make sure they emphasise the positive side of what they want to do. Often communities know what they want but you have to turn it round [...] It is important to write the right application to the right fund - you have to stress different elements.” (North Yorkshire officer, April 1999, research interview)

Although vital, this activity has little strategic impact.

Despite the contradiction spelt out at the beginning of this section, strategies can be drawn up without compromising the ethos of endogenous development. Although not strictly strategies, the LEADER delegated grant schemes and the different streams of the CDF demonstrate the principle of this way of working. These categories have little direct impact on
community groups; officers slot applications into the appropriate place. Similarly, the CDF panel, rather than the individual applicant, pulls the economic outputs out of each application. It is up to officers to make the connections between projects and draw out the links between economic and social goals. This is vital if the long-term impact of community development programmes is to be maximised. In short, project officers have a duty to think strategically.

*The evidence for strategic thinking in North Yorkshire*

Given that a strategic approach is both desirable and achievable without compromising the ethos of community-led development, how can full strategies be developed? The approaches taken by the CDF and LEADER programmes in North Yorkshire are instructive, in that they embody two very different ways dealing with both the need for a strategy and the formulation of one (or its nearest equivalent).

The CDF has been guided by little that could be termed a coherent strategy, beyond the broader thematic plan set out in the SPD for the Northern Uplands. The thematic focus of the SPD is no substitute for a clearly thought-out, inter-locking development plan. In one sense, this absence of a strategic vision for the CDF reflects the fund as a simple and accessible grants programme. The CDF set out to do no more than provide funding to specific types of community-based projects, and its administrative structure is appropriate to this remit. However, the lack of a broader strategy has limited the ability of the funding panel to provide support for more ‘difficult’ projects, such as those with less immediately apparent benefits.
The CDF has been successful in funding projects with clear outputs and tangible benefits - village halls are an obvious example. A large proportion of CDF money has gone to support village hall projects (approximately 67% in Phase One, 88% in Phase Two, and 38% in Phase 3). Clear physical need can be demonstrated, and village hall committees are relatively accustomed to putting forward grant applications, due to previous funding programmes targeted at village halls in North Yorkshire. Furthermore, village halls are cast as ‘the champions of the community’ with the consequence that ‘it is an easy decision for the panel to make to fund village halls’ (North Yorkshire officer, May 1999, research interview). Yet, despite the emphasis on village halls, they are in general poor or limited in meeting the output targets set for the CDF. Outputs alone are not enough to shape the development that CDF supports, and the lack of a wider strategic vision about the purpose of the CDF allows project approvals to be guided by ease and absence of contention.

Brief mention of the role of the SPD is relevant in this context. It is undeniable that the SPD has facilitated economic regeneration and community development in the Northern Uplands (including North Yorkshire). However, there is a need for greater clarity as to what purposes the document serves. Its main purpose is to secure an agreement with the EC over the allocation of funds. Beyond that it has little strategic capacity. The Northern Uplands SPD is less guilty than others of tailoring a collection of measures to fit existing project ideas, but it remains a static document that cannot be responsive to needs and circumstances. The Local
Implementation Plans (LIPs) are similarly a mechanism for the delivery of the programme, rather than strategic working documents.

LEADER has a different ethos, in that it is based on principles of local empowerment and local capacity building, as well as the flexible funding of innovative projects. In theory, the structure of the LEADER programmes is orientated towards the development of local strategies, through the involvement of the Local Action Groups in the execution of appraisals and action plans. However, three factors mitigate against the implementation and pursuit of strategic plans in LEADER. First, because of the timescale and structure of the LEADER programme (dictated by the European Commission), the Business Plans for LEADER areas had to be written before local appraisals of need had been even initiated in most localities. It is the Business Plans that set out the outputs to be met, and consequently, any development activities recommended by the locally produced strategies must fit within this separate framework. The ordering of the development of the LEADER programme itself worked against the potential of nesting a number of small-scale strategies in a wider but related one. Furthermore, the use of a national template in England for LEADER measures detracts from a locally developed response to individual area circumstances. Finally, a significant proportion of projects that have come forward have not displayed the connection to the local action plan that is theoretically demanded of them. With LEADER and the CDF alike, many projects that have been funded have been examples of piecemeal development that are neither linked to other activities nor the result of any locally inclusive identification of need, such as appraisals.
Although the original intention was the completion of appraisals, in the Coastal Zone the high turnover of Project Officers meant that this process has not been completed. In the case of the Fells & Dales, the geography of the area has worked against the formation of appropriately sized groups and consequently successful appraisals. While Richmondshire divides naturally into three groups, Craven District is more problematic, with smaller groups of communities, perhaps more prone to internal conflict as a result of an absence of a sub-regional tradition of co-operative working, and a lack of identification of areas with each other.

The need for realistic targets
Strategies that are developed must be realistic in their aims given the time and resources available to them. There is a need to fully appreciate the limitations of programme-based development, in order to avoid achieving too little by aiming too high. Strategies should be working documents that can be put into practice to deliver effective economic regeneration and community development. This requires carefully selected outputs, which should stretch but not over-strain the capacities of all those involved in the programme. Selecting output targets demands a significant degree of experience of both the target area and development programmes.

Working effectively with local communities

When implementing a community-based programme, the need to work closely and effectively with local communities and their representatives is clear. This principle of community involvement needs building into
programmes in a systematic and comprehensive fashion. Community development programmes will not work if such community involvement is tagged on as an afterthought as the implementation of the programme unfolds. LEADER is a good example of a programme with deep roots in the community-based premise of endogenous development. It is because of this structured approach that LEADER can, when working well, deliver benefits above and beyond the immediate outputs envisaged by the programme operators, benefits which can in turn have a significant impact on the well-being and sustainability of local communities and community groups.

The benefits of delegated grant schemes
The system of delegated grant schemes, in place to assist in the implementation of both the LEADER programmes and Objective 5b in North Yorkshire, indicates recognition of the imperative for community involvement to be facilitated from a programme’s inception, through its operation, to its conclusion. Delegated grant schemes as a general principle are significant in that they make funds more attainable to local communities by removing and reducing some of the barriers between the two. This research found much explicit and implicit recognition amongst officers and community groups alike of the benefits of delegated grant schemes. The running of the CDF and LEADER delegated funds, although sometimes problematic in terms of administration, has had a beneficial impact by facilitating the flow of funds to community groups. While the popular perception of their bureaucratic nature suggests that more could be done (see 3.4 below), community groups have doubtless been shielded from some of the bureaucratic excesses of the original procedures. The relative speed
with which delegated grants schemes were put in place has also allowed their benefits to be maximised. Although other LEADER areas have put in place similar schemes, the model exemplified by the CDF is rarer, and North Yorkshire should be commended for its success in seizing the opportunity offered to it by the Northern Uplands SPD.

The need for effective officer support
Working effectively with rural communities entails more than simply making sure that the paperwork and application procedure is suitable to the needs of most community groups. Effective support from officers is also vital. (Officers in this context mean individuals employed by local authorities or the voluntary sector.) Individual officers can make a profound difference to a community group’s experience of the implementation of a programme. They need to be knowledgeable of the local area, have a grasp of other potential funding sources, an understanding of the administrative structures, and vision to see the direction of the programme (Arkleton Trust, 1990). Many officers working in North Yorkshire combine this range of skills and knowledge. This research found clear evidence that their respective roles in helping shape projects, assembling matched funding packages and assisting in the completion of appropriate application forms was clearly valued by community groups. The complexities of such a role make continued contact throughout the lifetime of funding programmes and beyond a valuable asset. The LEADER Coastal Zone has struggled because of this lack of continuity. New officers have steep learning curves to contend with in terms of developing an understanding of local capacities and characteristics.
However, individual characteristics are not the only factor enabling the provision of community support and involvement. Individual officers all operate within organisational contexts that have an impact on their ability to act (Glen and Pearse, 1998). Without a supportive environment of their own to work in, they will be restricted in the help they can offer to community groups. The LEADER Project Officers, for example, were over-stretched from the start. The size of the areas that individual workers covered were simply too large for them to do the intensive work that was needed in some communities. Furthermore, the Support Group did not develop their role of supporting the Project Officer to the extent that was perhaps appropriate or necessary. In contrast, YRCC officers, although also over-stretched, could at least work in the relative security offered by an organisation that has extensive experience of promoting community involvement, and fully understands and supports the principles of bottom-up development (YRCC, 1997).

Community perspectives of the people and organisations whose remit it is to assist them are critical in developing an understanding of how to work effectively with local communities. During the research for this report, community group representatives were quick to draw attention to the vital role District Grants Officers play in CDF, and Project Officers and some District Council officers play in LEADER. In addition, assistance from officers from the YRCC, NYCC and other organisations was also relied upon and much appreciated. Officers, particularly those that work most closely with community groups, provide a key link between those groups
and the administrative structures that have the potential to fund local development activities.

**Who is best placed to provide community support?**

This link function in turn raises two issues. First, who is best placed to provide such a link? Findings from this research suggest that a range of potential sources of support is perhaps the most effective resource to offer community groups wishing to apply for funding. Different groups have different needs, which can be met most effectively by different officers. Thus, some groups may not even be fully established, and therefore require the help of a YRCC fieldworker, or perhaps a District Council Grants Officer, to enable them to come together and identify the needs they hope to meet through the development of a project. Other more established groups may have detailed, specific questions to ask about a particular fund, to which a NYCC officer is better placed to respond.

The second issue concerns the position officers should hold in relation to community groups and officer-led funding programmes. For example, LEADER project officers have been variously described as both too close to community groups and not independent enough. We suggest that this is an issue best addressed by spelling out more explicitly both what is expected of animateurs, and the roles of the other officers involved. By drawing out these relationships, better working practices can perhaps be cultivated. In contrast, it appeared that clearer divisions of labour and lines of command and management had been established in the CDF, which in turn facilitated more effective officer support. Caution should be exercised in terms of not
losing sight of projects and community activities once they pass into the care of other officers, but there is no reason why this should not be managed through effective reporting and monitoring structures.

**The need for inclusivity in community**

Overall, this research found evidence to suggest a distinct need for animateurs operating at a grass-roots level. There is a clear need for support for groups (established or emerging) that do not have the resources of more secure community organisations. Given the pressure to meet output targets and spend the allocated financial resources, there has been a tendency in both LEADER and the CDF to fund straightforward projects brought forward by groups well-versed in the practice of applying for funds. Lack of time and resources has meant little has been done in many areas in the way of pre-development. When this is added to the evident fudging of appraisal work, which offers the opportunity to undergo a consultation and involvement exercise, the version of ‘community’ community-based development programmes are working with has to be questioned. Although it is a widely recognised fact that those groups able to shout loudest receive most attention and funding (McMichael *et al.*, 1990), little has been done to remedy this skewed development during the short duration of the funding programmes in question.

**Operating within clear administrative structures**

The administrative structures of a programme are vital to its success. They are the backbone of a programme, in that they provide a structure for the
development process. Consequently, it is important to get them right, and to get them right for everyone. The administrative structures, like the programme as a whole, must be designed so as to satisfy the needs and requirements of all parties concerned, from the applicant seeking a few hundred pounds to help produce a business directory, to the group that has applied for several thousand pounds to completely renovate their village hall. Administrative structures must also be appropriate to the needs of all officers, be they heavily or marginally involved in the development and funding process.

Administrative structures must be visible
Administrative structures must be visible, logical and understandable to all. It is through satisfying these basic requirements that some of the guiding principles of EU Structural Funds can be met. Clear structures will facilitate a meaningful partnership between different organisations and interest groups, only possible if everyone can see and understand what is happening. In addition, demonstration of additionality in the provision of resources, and monitoring and evaluation will be made easier by such an emphasis on clarity.

The CDF is an example of good practice in terms of administrative structures. Following some initial hold-ups, the grants programme has run relatively smoothly throughout its lifespan. Key features of the administrative system for the CDF that have contributed to its success are:

- the relatively short and simple application form;
- community support from familiar faces in the District Councils;
• District Grants Officers able to speak for projects and explain
  the details to the panel; and
• continual programme monitoring and feedback from NYCC.
The model the CDF employs was based on the successful and long-running
Small Projects Fund, and a large degree of its success can be attributed to
this fact. Having a model upon which to base the new grants scheme meant
that officers and community groups alike were accustomed to a particular
method of working. Although CDF demanded adherence to a fairly tight set
of requirements, this was generally found to be appropriate given the greater
sums of money made available. There is a delicate balance between
demands on applicants for sufficient information to ensure financial
accountability, and a requirement not to over-burden applicants with
unnecessary obligations given the often relatively small amounts of funding
requested. It was suggested to the research team that achieving this balance
had a significant impact on community groups’ perceptions of the efficiency
of the CDF/Objective 5b programme.

The perils of bureaucracy
In contrast, LEADER in North Yorkshire has been administratively more
problematic. In both the Fells & Dales and the Coastal Zone, the
application process was seen as overly bureaucratic, particularly by
community applicants, but also by some officers. Such bureaucratic opacity
is partly a result of the innovative nature of the programme. The rush to set
such a new process in place at the start of the programme, in order to begin
to provide financial support to groups and achieve spend on the funds,
resulted in the development of inadequate administrative structures. The
delegated grant schemes that were set up to reduce the bureaucratic burden falling on community groups have not been entirely successful in meeting this aim. Initial forms failed to demand an adequate level of information, thus adding to the paperwork for both community groups and Project Officers, and involving increased work-loads for NYCC and the Government Office. The processing of applications has also been inappropriately slow as they pass through the various approval stages. Applicants have been unable to track the progress of their applications through the system. Individual projects have lost local support or gone ahead in a diminished form as a result of the length of time taken (over a year on some cases). The slow and bureaucratic nature of the process conflicts with LEADER’s original intention of being a radical and potentially empowering programme for endogenous development.

*The need for consensus within administrative structures*

To ensure that clear administrative structures are both developed and run effectively, there needs to be a level of consensus between all involved (be they statutory and non statutory sector officers, representatives from Government Office, Project Officers, or members of the community) as to what a programme is ultimately about, and in more specific terms, what is eligible for funding and what is not. Whilst potentially hard to build, consensus is possible, as this research found. A degree of consensus can make the different roles, agendas and experiences of the officers involved in making funding decisions a positive attribute of the programme. The varied areas of expertise and interest to be found on the CDF panel, for example, meant there were people able to contribute to the consideration of all types
of project application. The benefits of effective partnerships cannot be overstated. Partnerships which can provide a supportive environment, develop creative solutions, and evolve over time (Leadbeater and Goss, 1998) are an essential ingredient for effective community development. This research found that one of the great strengths of both the CDF and LEADER programmes has been the partnerships that have developed. Despite the difficulties encountered, individuals and organisations have continued to work together, to the credit of all those concerned. This collective will to draw some positive conclusions, particularly from LEADER, rather than write off community involvement as a failed experiment, should be recognised as a valuable asset, and something that offers great hope for the future.

The need for stability

For such a productive environment to develop among officers and community groups alike, a large degree of stability is required. This involves a number of aspects. Officers should be able to feel confident that the decisions they are making and the actions they are taking, either individually or as a group, will be supported by other officers if support is sought. Criteria and procedures that guide the administrative process should be set and then adhered to. Moving the goal-posts creates constant problems and tension for all those involved. Moving the goal-posts is not the way in which programme learning and evolution should be manifested, but to avoid this requires a great deal of forward planning when a programme commences. Some LEADER and Objective 5b programmes both inside and outside North Yorkshire have run into difficulties towards
the end of the programming period precisely because of poor or misguided planning at an early stage. There is clear evidence to suggest that the emphasis should be upon keeping options open through general priorities for action rather than focusing down too early on the minutiae of the programme. However, problems with forecasting spending are inherent in community-based development programmes.

The need for realistic expectations

The need for realistic targets has already been identified as a component of successful community development strategies. It is also pertinent to the need for clear administrative structures. When programme areas are first designated, there is a natural tendency to promote such an achievement in terms that will be understood by all. However, unless this is done carefully, and with as detailed a knowledge as possible of the structures that will be guiding the distribution of funds, there is the danger of giving a false impression of the availability of funding. Raising expectations can set a programme up for failure all too easily, if a misleading picture is given of the gate-keeping functions served by the application and administrative process. The LEADER Coastal Zone is a case in point. In an effort to encourage local interest, the Coastal Zone financial allocation was calculated on a per capita basis, and individual communities were informed of the amount that LEADER had for them, as a result of their population. Clearly, this is not the way in which LEADER funds are distributed. When groups came up against the reality of the application procedure, they understood it as a barrier between them and ‘their’ money, and were therefore naturally predisposed to judge the system harshly. Furthermore,
expectations must be managed, and applications procedures made clear throughout the lifetime of the programme. A community that has gone through the required steps of completing an appraisal and drawing up an action plan is reasonable when it assumes that projects that work towards such a plan will be funded by LEADER. When it finds that this is not the case, it is only natural that people will be disappointed and angry. This example is also a clear case of the model of development that emphasises stages of activity not fitting with the administrative and allocative structures in place.

**Having a positive, lasting and sustainable impact**

This final ingredient for successful programme implementation is more nebulous than the proceeding three. While the others all relate directly to fulfilling programme requirements, the requirement to have a positive, lasting and sustainable impact relates more to the need to promote meaningful rural community development.

This report has so far argued that successful programmes rely upon projects that fit into a wider strategy, have broad community support, and have an uncomplicated and auditable passage through the administrative structures. In addition, good projects are also those which meet the designated output targets, usually expressed in terms of jobs created, visitor numbers, activities promoted and so on. Output targets are important. Set out at the beginning of the programme (in, for example, LEADER Business Plans and the Objective 5b SPD), they represent a means by which the impact of a
programme can be quantified. Projects are judged for funding on their ability to meet such targets. Thus a Post Office renovation project funded under B5 of the Coastal Zone LEADER programme will have outputs that meet the Business Plan performance measures: safeguarding jobs; providing and upgrading workspace; and perhaps increasing the level of local trading. Output targets are also important in that they have a feed-back function into project design and execution. The identification of outputs can determine the shape development will take by emphasising the targets that individual projects need to work towards. A difficulty arises in attempts to assess the success of projects and programmes in terms of their continuing relevance. While the demonstration of need for a particular scheme offers a proxy for lasting impact, the nature of short programming periods means that it is impossible to incorporate the longer-term impact of projects into outputs targets. Because there is a tendency to equate what is measurable with what is valuable, programme co-ordinators run the risk of not placing sufficient emphasis on sustainable development, in a broader sense. Yet although it is not easily measured, the lasting impact of a programme is a criteria by which its success can be judged, particularly from the perspective of community groups and individuals, who remain most concerned about a project once funding has been secured. So, what are the key factors that influence a programme’s sustainability?

*The need to match needs, funding and abilities to deliver*

One way in which sustainability goals can be addressed is through the careful matching of the scale of funding to the scale of identified need as expressed in a project. As with many of this report’s conclusions, this
perhaps sounds more obvious than experience would suggest. Some interviewees argued that modest amounts of funding to small-scale projects could potentially offer far greater rewards than more ambitious projects which ran a greater risk of failure due to their size and (over)ambition. It was also suggested that the availability of large grants had encouraged some community groups to develop projects that were inappropriately large for their needs, and could potentially become a burden on local communities in the future. A successful application for a significant expansion to a village hall, for example, will increase the running costs of the building. An entrepreneurial committee may find it relatively easy to raise those funds, but subsequent groups may have less ability to do so. Care should be taken to ensure a balance between community needs and project scope.

Getting the funding isn’t the only goal
A concern with the lasting impact of programmes leads to a consideration of the events that take place after a project has gained approval. Retrospective funding can clearly cause problems for community groups, particularly those that aim to involve local businesses in the work they are carrying out. Project management can also prove difficult, especially for capital projects, in terms of ensuring the work is completed according to the specifications and timescale. To be successful, project applicants must demonstrate their ability to spend the funding, but this stage of development can still often be a (relatively unsupported) struggle.
Sustainability can sometimes be immeasurable

This research found much evidence that the programmes studied had effectively provided a forum for increased networking between communities, officers, local government, non-departmental government bodies, and voluntary sector agencies. The linkages developed through such networks are a potentially long-lasting result of both the LEADER and CDF programmes. While neither as visible nor as quantifiable as, for example, the number of village hall renovations completed, the impact of new and reinforced networks can be far-reaching. Inter-community networking can be useful for the practical delivery of programmes, in terms of shared experiences and advice. In addition, the enduring networks that are formed within communities, between communities and officers, and among officers themselves, can encourage confidence, as well as allowing connections to be made between different funding programmes.

Intangibles such as networks are a vital component of a programme’s success, particularly in terms of long-lasting development. If development programmes are to be genuinely community-based, then they must reflect the things that communities care about. Communities do care about things that can be easily quantified: jobs; housing; village halls; and services. But they also want a sense of community and cohesion, and to learn how to take advantage of opportunities in the future. It is hard to imagine how such outputs might be incorporated into future funding programmes, given the present central government and EU equation of quantifiable with valuable. One potential way forward lies in the creation of imaginative and creative
strategies that recognise and accept subjective assessments of such invaluable achievements.

The importance of monitoring

The importance of effective monitoring of programme expenditure cannot be overstated. Monitoring assesses a programme’s performance against its targets. Much damage can be done to a largely successful programme if the final months are a period of uncertainty or a scramble to allocate remaining funding. Continual monitoring can help avoid this, by providing up to date information on the state of the programme. This allows adjustments to be made on a rolling basis to maximise the benefits to be gained from the programme. A lack of monitoring had impeded the progress of the LEADER programme. Problems of maldistribution between measures could have been avoided had clear procedures for monitoring expenditure been incorporated into administrative structures at the outset.

Monitoring should ideally be carried out by those with responsibility for the administration of programmes. Those organisations are best placed to do so, given that they have the data readily available. The CDF has been a good example of effective monitoring. Spread-sheets of spend and the state of the projects are produced for the regular panel meetings. LEADER has also moved towards such an approach towards the end of the programme.

However, monitoring needs to be more than the collation of information onto spreadsheets. It has the potential to be a strategic tool that can hone the implementation of development programmes. Annual reports, such as
those produced by LEADER, and promised for the CDF but not consistently delivered, could provide a means to focus on what needs to be done in the light of projects that have come forward. Monitoring is a necessity for proactive working.
Chapter 4

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION POINTS

This report has been written with the intention of drawing some lessons from the implementation of the Objective 5b and LEADER programmes in North Yorkshire. Account has been taken of both their serious problems and significant achievements. The lessons learnt can inform the development and implementation of future community-based programmes. It is important to appreciate that such future activity must be built on a sound understanding of the present state of community development. The following action points are aimed at providing an agenda for immediate development.

Develop a model for community development

There is a wealth of both academic and practical literature on the form community development can take, much of which shares a common approach (Arkleton Trust, 1990; Baines, 1990; Henderson and Francis, 1993; Wilcox, 1996). To learn from experiences elsewhere, this material should be drawn on to develop a basic model for community development in North Yorkshire. Such a model will be a useful tool in clarifying what it is that community development involves to community groups, officers, and other interested parties who lack a community development background. It can emphasise the common experiences community groups share, and help them to see the progress they make.
Community development as a process
The model for community development should first and foremost express community development as a process (Lumb, 1990). For effective community development, capacity building, learning and group development must be prioritised and valued. A model that is both well spelt-out and structured could help shift the focus from quantitative outputs to the process experienced by community groups.

Phased development
An emphasis on process leads to a concern with the stages through which development groups may progress. The LEADER Coastal Zone Business Plan set out six phases of development: awareness raising; strategy development; project development; project delivery; project monitoring and evaluation; and development of exit strategies. There is evidence that progressing through these stages helped community groups develop their thinking and build their capacity. However, many communities struggled against this structure which they felt to be imposed upon them, seeing it as a constraint upon their activities rather than an opportunity. Given the importance of process, and the apparent contribution such a phased approach can make to the standard of development, such a perception must be confronted.

Reinforced phases
One possible solution would be to reinforce the structured nature of development by employing funding rules and requirements to guide community groups into the desired type of activity. Project funding could
be deferred for the first six months of a programme, for example, to remove one barrier to the completion of appraisal work. If groups were sufficiently motivated by the possibility of receiving funding, then this has the potential to produce good end results, in terms of implementing a particular model. However, it would also detract from any emerging sense of community ownership, and go against one of the basic premises of community development: how things are done is as important as what is done. Furthermore, it offers rather a clumsy solution. The phases of development in the LEADER Coastal Zone were applied to the programme, as well as individual groups. Although a degree of leeway was allowed, programme implementation was expected to progress through the different stages. This was not an entirely successful approach.

Flexible phases
Another option for increasing the acceptance of a phased model of community development is to take a more flexible approach. In the lifetime of a programme, different community groups become involved at different times. Groups also move through the phases at different speeds, according to their capacity and priorities, and so progression through the stages of development will be neither clear nor regimented. Furthermore, while a phased model is a useful conceptual tool, groups will rarely sit unproblematically in one particular phase. A degree of movement should be allowed (for example by encouraging a group to bring forward some small-scale physical projects while still in the process of completing their needs identification exercise), in order to both meet local requirements and keep group members involved in the wider process of development.
Prioritise the development of administrative structures

Evidence from both the LEADER programmes and, to a lesser extent, Objective 5b, showed that the absence of clearly thought out administrative structures in the early stages of the programmes created a number of immediate and longer-lasting problems. The development of those structures during the implementation of the programmes also caused difficulties for community groups and officers alike.

Learn from past lessons

Following the implementation of LEADER and Objective 5b, as well as the RDP, SPF and other community-orientated programmes, officers in North Yorkshire from a range of organisations now have a great deal of experience in a variety of administrative structures designed to help distribute funds to community groups. The implementation of future programmes should involve a consideration of these different structures, in order to draw from them lessons of what has worked in practice, and what has not.

In addition to selecting the best parts of previous administrative structures for incorporation into future programmes, there are a number of actions to be taken, and more basic principles to be followed, that do not spring as obviously from past experiences.
Make administrative structures part of the process of community development

Administrative structures are the key to how community groups experience funding programmes. Thus, it is vital that such structures reinforce the ultimate goals that programmes are working towards. Capacity building will not be achieved, for example, if the application procedure groups must go through alienates all but the most capable as a result of its bureaucratic nature. Administrative structures must help, rather than hinder, the process of community development.

Develop structures to suit scales

Past programmes have come up against many charges of bureaucracy from community groups involved in project applications. This is despite the efforts that have been made, through delegated grant schemes, to protect groups from the bureaucratic burden of European funding. This mis-match of perceptions is partially explained by differences in the scale of activity taking place. Administrative structures and requirements designed around a premise of large-scale projects coming forward will not be suitable to the needs of applicants seeking smaller amounts of funding. Although delegated grant schemes are intended to support small applications, they have not been able to move far enough away from traditional structures. While there is some evidence that appraisal requirements reflected the size of the project under consideration in the CDF, there is a need to place greater emphasis on this flexibility in the future.
**Co-ordinated application procedures**

One of the great strengths of the implementation of both LEADER and the CDF in North Yorkshire has been the development of working partnerships between the officers from the various organisations involved. Many projects have had their progress through the application procedure eased by officers representing different funding bodies acting in a co-ordinated fashion to agree a matched funding package. However, groups must still go through the arduous process of completing and tailoring separate applications to potential funders. One way of taking co-ordinated working a step further, and facilitating the application procedure for community groups, would be to draw up an application form that could be used by all funders. This is not to suggest that funding should be pooled, which is a step that at present is unlikely to meet with approval. Instead, it would replicate what happens already for EAGGF and MAFF applications, whereby MAFF consider an application to EAGGF as also one to them.

**Work out where support should come from**

This report has highlighted the importance of animateurs working closely with communities to assist in their capacity building, and enhance the implementation of community-based development programmes. A recommendation of this report is to endorse the use of animateurs (in the form of development workers) as a matter of priority in any future strategy or funding programme, for the impact they can have on promoting a more balanced form of working with communities, and thus community-based
development. However, recommending a continued and expanded focus upon such animateurs raises a number of issues.

Animateurs’ limitations
One of the criticisms commonly raised about both the LEADER programmes was that the Project Officers were drastically over-stretched. While this does not explain all the problems they faced, it is certainly true that expectations of the area the animateurs could cover were unrealistic. In the future, there should be a more accurate and realistic matching of animateur support to the impact aimed for. If intensive capacity building is required, then staffing levels will have to be considerably higher. However, if simple facilitation of spend is the goal, then fewer animateurs will be needed. Getting staffing levels right is particularly important in the light of a concern to avoid skewed development that responds primarily to those with the resources and capacity to attract the attention of officers.

Support for animateurs
Related to the above is the need to provide animateurs with adequate support for them to work efficiently. Operating closely with community groups can lead to isolation from other officers. Acting as the first point of contact and, to an extent, the human face of funding programmes for local groups can create a stressful working environment. Animateurs must be able to be sure of the support and backing they will receive from those with management responsibilities and also others involved in programme implementation (Derounian, 1998).
Animateurs at the interface

The position of animateurs is a valuable one in terms of facilitating community development. Animateurs should operate at a point mid-way between community groups and funders. Being too close to either will detract from their impact. At the interface, animateurs can understand the felt needs of community groups, and match them to the opportunities offered by funding programmes (Bristow, 1998). Furthermore, working in more than one community, they are ideally placed to pull out common themes and help the flow of good practice. The advantages and disadvantages of this interface position need to be fully appreciated when future support for community development is planned.

Promote more learning and networking

The rhetoric of LEADER II stressed the importance of trans-national co-operation and networking. Yet in practise, in North Yorkshire and elsewhere, little linking actually took place. In North Yorkshire this was in part due not so much to a lack of will, but to the struggles the programme was undergoing. However, links between different community groups, and between officers responsible for different programme areas, can be extremely productive in terms of the implementation of a programme. In the future there should be a greater emphasis on networking and learning than there has been in the past.
Community networks, capacity building and practical solutions

Networks between community groups can help promote the development of a range of skills that are valuable in the process of community development. Furthermore, just as winning funds from a distant source such as the EU can create a greater feeling of empowerment among community groups than gaining funding from the local council, networks with communities further afield could do the same (North Yorkshire officer, May 1999, research interview). Networks can also act as a stimulus to activity, as groups see what it is possible to achieve, and view their own community in the light of successes elsewhere. As well as capacity building, networks between community groups can allow for the transfer of innovative solutions to common problems. It has been argued that this goes against the ethos of community development, in that community development is about finding local solutions to local problems (Community representative, May 1999, telephone interview). However, such local solutions can only be enhanced by more information, perspectives and ideas. It is anticipated that the new LEADER+ programme to operate from 2000 will emphasise the role of networking (Environment Sub-Committee, 1999, p.4).

Officer networks and common themes

Officer networks provide similar opportunities to those between community groups, in terms of avoiding reinventing the wheel, and allowing for the transfer of innovative ideas. In addition to this, they encourage officers to see common problems that perhaps need to be acted on in a more strategic fashion. They also offer a valuable supportive role. For such officer networks to be effective, officers need the space to prioritise time away
from the field, something that is difficult to do if their working environment becomes too pressured and focused upon immediate results, as has been the case with LEADER officers in some areas outside of North Yorkshire.

**Continuity**

As has been stressed throughout this report, the existing networks between officers in North Yorkshire are a valuable asset (Barnes, 1994). They can be drawn upon as the present funding programmes draw to a close and new ones come on stream, to offer some degree of continuity in terms of support for community development.

**Recognise the limits**

Programmes have limits. Of course this is clear to all those involved with community-based development programmes in the past, including LEADER and Objective 5b. However, such an appreciation needs to be acted upon for it to have a meaningful impact.

**Honesty and openness**

The goals towards which a programme is working should be explicit and visible. The degree of capacity-building, community development and empowerment that is envisaged as resulting from a particular programme must be both clearly spelt out and realistic. People’s ideas of what community development is about vary. To some it can be a radical process of local empowerment, leading to all sorts of deep-seated changes. To
others it is an alternative means to the end of economic development. As one officer from outside North Yorkshire put it:

“…one person’s community development is another person’s grant scheme”. (LEADER Project Officer, May 1999, telephone interview)

For this reason, a programme’s goals need to be explicit and communicated in a meaningful way to the target audience.

Resources
As well as the shape and limits placed on a programme by the ideology informing it, the resources available will also determine what can and cannot be done. There is a real danger and tendency for programmes to attempt to do too much, in the time and with the resources available. By aiming too high, such large and also more modest goals may be missed. Some basic structures which cause low levels of community empowerment and economic development cannot be changed within the relatively short time-frame of a programme. In addition, although community-led development does produce economic benefits, it does so largely in the long-term. Pushing for economic outputs in the shorter-term can endanger the balance of a project.

Limited expectations
Allowing expectations of a programme to run unchecked does little but set it up to fail. The limits of a programme should be reflected in what it is expected to achieve, and particularly the way it is promoted to community groups. Limited targets will result in a greater sense of achievement,
whereas targets that cannot be met will detract from the positive impact the programme has made.

**Write a strategy**

All the action points listed and discussed above lead and contribute to the most significant action to be taken to ensure more effective community development and implementation of community-based programmes in the future: writing a strategy. A strategy is essential if a long-term and sustainable approach to development is to be taken (WVCA, 1998). A well-thought out strategy can not only help in the implementation of funding programmes, but can also allow such programmes to be transcended and more meaningful development to take place.

*Involvement and ownership*

Ideally, a strategy for community development should be created by a partnership of officers from all the relevant organisations, including local government, Government Office, the voluntary sector, and non-departmental government agencies. There are a number of advantages flowing from such a shared approach. Firstly, the more people and organisations involved, the greater the impact such a strategy will have. Because of the well-established partnership and matched funding approach to community development, a strategic vision for the future needs to be shared between representatives from the variety of funding bodies involved, in order to have any real impact. If only one funder is working to a particular strategy, then the lack of matched funders for projects will
minimise the difference it makes. Secondly, community development is about a holistic and joined-up approach. A strategy cannot therefore be confined to one particular department or organisation, but must be shared by all those that can potentially contribute towards its fulfilment.

Nevertheless, there are some disadvantages related to the development of a joint strategy for the county that need to be confronted. Firstly, because such a strategy is a relatively new concept that goes beyond traditional organisational and programming boundaries, it may take a long time to encourage all the necessary organisations to participate in such an approach. Bringing everyone on board may mean the shift towards a strategic approach is slowed down. Secondly, it is likely that there may be some resistance to an over-arching strategic approach that appears to pool the sovereignty of the organisations concerned. With a shift of perspective it becomes clear that this is one of the reasons why organisations should be involved from the start in the creation of a strategy for community development, so they can develop their understanding and ownership of the approach. In addition, the idea of nested strategies also helps demonstrate that a county strategy will add to rather than detract from any individual organisation’s control of development. Finally, there is the danger that involving many organisations in the development of a strategy could lead to a diluted approach, reflecting the lowest common denominator of what can be agreed. However, the strong partnerships evident in North Yorkshire should be able to overcome such a concern.
The structure and scope of a strategy

A comprehensive strategy should include a number of inter-locking sections, some of which spring from the preceding action points in this report.

- **Baseline indicators:** A sound knowledge and understanding of the state of the county — in economic and social terms — is required upon which future development activities can be built. Not only does the condition of communities and officers affect what should be done to advance forwards, but it also provides a starting point for the subsequent measurement of progress.

- **Available resources:** A thorough listing of available resources is a necessary input when defining the scale of operation, as has been argued earlier in this report. Resources include not only funding programmes, but partnerships, individual officers, and also the capacity and interest of community groups.

- **Aims and goals:** Obviously a strategy should set out clearly what it is ultimately working towards achieving. This is one of the most important sections of a strategy, and time spent reaching agreement on what community development in North Yorkshire is intended to accomplish would be time well spent, as it provides the reasoning for much that flows from it.

- **Steps or phases:** Flowing from the goals of the strategy are the steps to be taken to get there. While the aims may be quite general in expression, the steps should set out specifically what activities and processes are envisaged as contributing to the strategic approach to community development in North Yorkshire.
• **Monitoring:** One of the key recommendations of this report is the need for more effective and comprehensive monitoring. An over-arching strategy should consider exactly how progress towards all its goals, tangible and intangible, will be measured.

_Nested strategies_

Finally, a strategy for community development in North Yorkshire should consider where it fits into the strategies and approaches taken by others, including the EU, national, regional and local government, other organisations, including those in the voluntary sector, and local community groups. This report recommends that a county-level strategy should be seen as one that various potential funding programmes can be slotted into. Furthermore, it should be fed by and draw from locally developed strategies, at the same time encompassing them and drawing together higher level themes and approaches.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

Beyond the specific recommendations produced by this research, there are some wider observations to be made in conclusion. The first concerns some of the tensions or contradictions inherent in large-scale funding programmes emanating from the European Commission. One of these is the tension between the imperative of the Structural Funds to effect change at a structural level within the regions of the European Union (as their name suggests) versus the difficulties (perhaps impossibility) of achieving this to any degree within a five-year programming period. Regional disparities occur because of wide-ranging and complex processes of uneven development. The abilities of a region to turn itself around in the face of such economic processes will, because of the very nature of these processes, be limited. Another tension arises between the opportunistic nature of funding applications to programmes such as Objective 5b and LEADER II, and the very nature of community development as a process, taking place over medium- and long-term timescales. Community development takes time (Asby and Midmore, 1996). Furthermore, there is a tension is between the ethos of bottom-up or endogenous development, which promotes the idea of communities and localities being enabled to help themselves, and the practical experience of many involved in programme delivery of the need for continued support to communities in order to enable them to realise their development goals.
As we have suggested in this report, strategic thinking is an essential ingredient to successful community development programmes. It is important to emphasise that strategic thinking in itself cannot overcome some of the inherent tensions within European funding programmes, but it is also important to emphasise that it should at least recognise constraints within which such strategies are produced. One of the lessons from the 1994-99 programming period is the need for strategic planning, which goes beyond the work programmes set out in SPDs and such like. SPDs themselves, as Lloyd and Meegan (1996) point out, are not strategic documents but rather plans for expenditure.

The programmes that will succeed Objective 5b and LEADER are currently in preparation, for launch in 2000. It is clear that the new Objective 2, which will include provision for rural development, will be very tightly drawn, providing smaller quantities for funding for more focused development programmes, with an emphasis on economic development. LEADER + will provide funding for bottom-up development in rural territories, although it is unclear whether LEADER + territories will coincide with areas eligible under the new Objectives 1 and 2. Although many details remain to be confirmed, it is clear that the provision of increasingly scarce resources for community development will need to be justified thoroughly and spent wisely. Strategic thinking can help towards that goal.
Appendix A: NYCDS INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The programme

- What are the goals of the programme?
- Do you have a sense of the part of the programme that you are involved with fitting into a wider arena (e.g. Northern Uplands, region, UK, EU)?
  - In terms of learning about project practice
  - In terms of guidance
  - What forms of guidance have you had, and from whom?

- Where is the balance of power — who is loud and who is listened to?
- Who are the key players, upon whom the success of the programme depends?
- Who isn’t involved that should be?

Administrative Structures

- Describe the process of a project moving from beginnings to final funding.
- What is your involvement in the programme?
  - Role on board / administrative structures
  - Project support, etc.
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the administrative structures in place?
- What have been the key problems in terms of administering the programme?
Have those problems been resolved?
How could those structures be improved?

- Do you have a sense of the administrative structures evolving over time?
  If so, then in what ways have they changed?
- In terms of the administration of the programme, what elements are set in stone and which have been chosen, or are more flexible?

**Community Development**
- Is the programme about community development? What definition of community development do you work to?
- Does the structure of the programme promote community projects coming forward?
  - If yes, which bits, and how?
  - If no, then what obstructs them and can it be changed?
- How is community development prioritised within your own organisation. Is it taken seriously? What about other agencies?

**Strategic Approaches**
- Is having a strategy important?
- Is it the role of the administrative structures to promote a strategic approach?
- Is there a sense of a strategic approach?
- If you have joint membership on various boards, then what are the implications of that — both good and bad? Does it have an impact on strategic working?
Outcomes

- Have the types of projects that have come forward been the right ones?
  Has the programme promoted the right things?
- What have been the right things?
- What has the programme changed?
  ⇒Re: networks / partnerships
  ⇒Re: grassroots activities and circumstances.
- What is needed now, given that there have been such changes?
### Appendix B: NYCDS QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Project reference number</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Date / time called</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fund applied for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amount (£)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of application</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location (parish and district)</td>
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<td>Funding received</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How many active members in the group?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How group came together?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Did group exist prior to hearing of funding?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aims / nature of project?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How was need for project was identified?</td>
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<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why X fund applied for?</td>
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<td>What support received?</td>
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<td>From where?</td>
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<td>Was it useful?</td>
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<td>Was the application process straightforward?</td>
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<td>What made it easier / harder?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project part of broader agenda?</td>
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<td>Funding led to another project?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would group do something similar again?</td>
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<td>What did group get out of the process?</td>
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<td>Comments</td>
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<td>Community’s comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviewer’s comments</td>
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