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Peak District RAZ Pathfinder Business Plan

1. Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The Pathfinder area is the Peak District Rural Action Zone (RAZ) which comprises the districts of Derbyshire Dales and High Peak (East Midlands), significant parts of Staffordshire Moorlands and the Weaver ward of East Staffordshire (West Midlands). Together these districts house 93% of the population of the Peak District National Park. The area has a population of 175,000 and covers 1,750 km². There are tracts of open countryside, many small and medium sized villages, and market towns, which serve the whole area.

There are significant pressures on our communities; yet through strong working relationships, a willingness to tackle important issues and the ability to adapt quickly to change, the Peak District partners are confident that the necessary changes can be made. These issues that face the Peak District include:

- High quality environment, which is attractive and an asset to residents and visitors alike but has high maintenance costs
- Housing affordability for local people due to high house prices/rents, low supply, and second/holiday homes
- Fading market towns and rural deprivation associated with the decline of the traditional industries of agriculture, quarrying and manufacturing, industrial closures, skills shortages, seasonal/casual employment and low wages
- Lack of opportunities and facilities for young people particularly local employment but also leisure and recreation, which are important to the population as a whole for maintaining healthy lifestyles. Raising awareness of opportunities that are already available is also important
- Maintaining safe, healthy, sustainable rural communities when central and regional funding is targeted at urban areas with more visible problems
- Sparse population pattern presenting service access and delivery difficulties.

For many years partners have worked closely to deliver “across boundary” regeneration projects and welcome this opportunity to tackle key issues together as part of the Pathfinder Programme.

Our plans, community strategies and quantitative analysis direct us to looking at how we can work together to help people in businesses and communities achieve regeneration. The unique characteristics of the area - rural, near to urban areas, high environmental values, good partnership working across boundaries - are strong assets, but our communities face many challenges. Already the Pathfinder partners and other agencies offer grant schemes, technical advice and other support to community, environmental and economic regeneration. The public, voluntary & community sector and private sectors already work well together and have also shown we can secure regeneration. We must strive to make support services much more accessible, streamlined and efficient.

2. Vision Statement

The vision for the Pathfinder is:

“To enhance access to services that support business and community enterprise in rural areas.”

3. Areas of Activity

The RAZ Pathfinder has been developed within the context of the key themes and priorities at national, regional and sub-regional / local level. Mapping the key strategies has enabled the Pathfinder to link its main concerns with widely acknowledged needs and priorities. Pathfinder, like any other regeneration activity cannot act in isolation, indeed it is the primary task of the Pathfinder to effectively and efficiently join up and deliver quality services. Partners recognition and awareness of the wide range of activities and regeneration programmes has provided the Pathfinder partners with the overall aim to make funding and support services more accessible to business and community entrepreneurs. A number of mechanisms for enhancing rural delivery have been considered including:

- Integrated advisory services
- Collaborative working / networking
- Integrated financial support
- Co-location and tandem service delivery
- Local sourcing and procurement
- Adding value based on the assets that make our area so special

Key principles which will cut across the Pathfinder proposal include:

- A sustainable approach, delivering outcomes appropriate to the maintenance and improvement of our high quality environment alongside economic and social improvements
- Ensuring genuine community involvement
- Improving the delivery of services for both businesses and the wider community
- Understanding and developing the Market Town / rural interface

4. Focus

Partners have agreed to focus on three specific projects which **aim to enhance access to services that support business and community enterprise in rural areas:**

- *To explore the benefits and resource implications of a single point of access (phone via Contact Centre, web based information) to make service delivery more streamlined and effective. Key partners inc. Business Link Staffordshire and Derbyshire Chamber and Business Link have visited a Contact Centre based at High Peak BC, Buxton.*
- *To develop opportunities for co-location / tandem service delivery (based on the recommendations of recent co-location study commissioned by Derbyshire Dales and High Peak LSP and funded by the DDEP)*

- *Scoping the business case to simplify advice and the grant giving “maze” for businesses and the community (either through remote access points across the area and/or streamlining existing organisational structures to make them fit for Pathfinder purposes).*

5. Resources to deliver the RAZ Pathfinder

- Emda / AWM funding secured in principle to support emerging Pathfinder initiatives. Defra funding already in place to support the running of the Pathfinder.
- Pathfinder Officer/s to co-ordinate the implementation of the Business Plan.

6. Measuring Success

The success criteria set for the project are:

- Through programme evaluation businesses and communities see a marked improvement in the availability of information, advice and service provision.
- That partners and other stakeholders can share best practice that arises from the activity of the Pathfinder and create delivery structures for regeneration activity on the ground to ensure they are robust and fit for purpose to take on the delivery of major rural funding post 2007.
- A cohesive approach to provision of support services, achieved by partner “buy in” and joined up working to achieve common goals
- Contribution to rurally proofed, Government LAA targets as appropriate
- Better knowledge and integrated database of business needs and a broader understanding of how to stimulate economic growth in rural areas
- That after two years of the Pathfinder resources (both human and financial) would be better aligned to provide more efficient and effective services and information.
- In the longer term, improving access to other services would be the goal of the Pathfinder both through embedding best practice and testing new approaches.

2. Introduction

The Pathfinder area is the Peak District Rural Action Zone (RAZ) which comprises the districts of Derbyshire Dales and High Peak (East Midlands), significant parts of Staffordshire Moorlands and the Weaver ward of East Staffordshire (West Midlands). Together these districts house 93% of the population of the Peak District National Park. The area has a population of 175,000 and covers 1,750 km². There are tracts of open countryside, many small and medium sized villages, and market towns, which serve the whole area.

For many years partners have worked closely to deliver “across boundary” regeneration projects and welcome this opportunity to tackle key issues together as part of the Pathfinder Programme.

3. Context & Rationale

a) Underpinning/baseline evidence

The population of the area has an even balance between males & females. 72.5% of the population is economically active (16 – 74). However 23% are over 60, 32% are under 30 and 45% aged between 30 – 59. There is a marked divide on qualifications, 27.7% have no qualifications (below the national average) yet 22.6% of 16 – 74 year olds have a higher level qualification (above the national average).

¹From the statistics it is clearly demonstrable that there are significant pressures on our communities; yet through strong working relationships, a willingness to tackle important issues and the ability to adapt quickly to change, the Peak District partners are confident that the necessary changes can be made. These issues include:

- High quality environment, which is attractive and an asset to residents and visitors alike but has high maintenance costs
- Housing affordability for local people due to high house prices/rents, low supply, and second/holiday homes
- Fading market towns and rural deprivation associated with the decline of the traditional industries of agriculture, quarrying and manufacturing, industrial closures, skills shortages, seasonal/casual employment and low wages
- Lack of opportunities and facilities for young people particularly local employment but also leisure and recreation, which are important to the population as a whole for maintaining healthy lifestyles. Raising awareness of opportunities that are already available is also important
- Maintaining safe, healthy, sustainable rural communities when central and regional funding is targeted at urban areas with more visible problems
- Sparse population pattern presenting service access and delivery difficulties.

The Peak District RAZ Pathfinder area contains some of the most stunning landscape in England. This landscape in turn attracts those that chose to migrate and those who wish to holiday or day trip. The popularity of the area has inevitably led to increased demand for housing and, like many other locations, the cost of that

¹ Evidence from the RAZ – Survey of Businesses in the Peak District & RAZ, November 2004, has also informed the priorities for the Pathfinder. The survey is available from the DDEP website, www.ddep.co.uk.

Full statistical information, supplied for the Business Plan is available on request.

housing has increased significantly, excluding an increasingly significant percentage of the indigenous community. This exclusion has been heightened by holiday and retirement home purchases and buy-to-let market.

The traditional role of the market town has been steadily eroded over the past decades, however, the market town still provides a service centre for many outlying rural communities providing centralised services that once would have been found in the villages. These typically could include health and educational facilities. The relative isolation and the sparsity of population only serves to exacerbate the problem of service delivery. The reduced role of the market town can be linked with the overall decline of the traditional industries associated with the RAZ Pathfinder area: agriculture, quarrying and the manufacturing / industrial closures.

Seasonal or casual employment, whilst providing many with an income, ultimately affects both quality of life and the economic prosperity of an area as income is seasonally generated and is not constant throughout the year. This can have the result of producing a pattern of highs and lows of an individuals or families economic prosperity and, when grouped with others within a community, may well impact on local businesses and service provision. 13.5% of 16 – 74 year olds work part-time compared to 11.8% for England as a whole. This is a clear indication of the importance that the part –time and seasonal employment market has for the Pathfinder area economy.

Self employment, home working and SME's are all above the regional and national average which was a contributing factor in setting the RAZ Pathfinder objective to support business and community entrepreneurs.

However, significant and tangible opportunities exist and more will emerge as further economic and social regeneration programmes are undertaken. The inward migration of people can produce new opportunities for existing businesses and can stimulate the development of new enterprise catering for the requirements of incomers. Business opportunities may also be bought into the area by the incomers themselves who then invest in local people and goods.

New markets or the evolution or diversification of existing enterprise that provide a service to special interest groups or specific ethnic groups could encourage more visitors to the area and help to further develop the year round tourism industry. There is also significant potential for developing the environmental economy of the Peak District. Additional business support and financial guidance will assist rural businesses to make shrewd decisions that will benefit local communities and ultimately strengthen the overall economy of the RAZ Pathfinder area.

b) Policy Context

The Peak District RAZ Pathfinder has been developed within the context of the key themes and priorities at national, regional and sub-regional / local level. Mapping the key strategies, see Appendix 1, has enabled the Pathfinder to link its main concerns with widely acknowledged needs and priorities and to refine its focus.

National

The following Defra PSA targets provide the overall framework for the Pathfinder. Reference is also made to other strategic documents, towards which the Pathfinder can make significant contributions.

- PSA3 Care for our natural heritage, make the countryside attractive and enjoyable for all and preserve biological diversity
- PSA4 Reduce the gap in productivity between the least well performing quartile of rural areas and the English Median by 2008, demonstrating progress by 2006, and improve the accessibility of services for people in rural areas
- PSA5 Deliver more customer-focused, competitive and sustainable farming and food industries

Defra's Rural Strategy 2004

The Peak District Pathfinder shall contribute to many aspects of the Government's vision as set out in the Rural Strategy of "sustainable rural communities in which economic, social and environmental issues are all taken into account".

- Economic & Social Regeneration
- Social Justice for All
- Enhancing the Value of our Countryside

The Peak District countryside is a very important aspect of life and its protection will continue to be of primary importance to Pathfinder partners and the communities they work for.

ODPM's Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future 2003

The Pathfinder will also make contributions to the ODPM's Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future 2003. There is a strong and growing infrastructure of support to voluntary and community sector organisations through the work of our CVS's, DRCC and Derbyshire Consortium. The Pathfinder will aim to compliment this activity by supporting Social Enterprises, being mindful of the major work through the GOEM/Defra funded "Change Up" Programme which is just beginning.

Sub regional strategic work driven by "Creating Sustainable Communities in the East Midlands, as identified in the Regional Action Plan " provides a framework for the Pathfinder to set in motion ambitious goals to help the region "build successful, thriving and inclusive communities – communities in which people want to live". The RAZ Pathfinder will focus on economic prosperity and improving access to services and support for entrepreneurs in businesses and communities.

Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks

The development of Rural Delivery Frameworks in each region, lead by the Government Offices is an important part of the implementation of Defra's Rural Strategy. The frameworks commission Rural Pathfinders as ways to test and improve practical options for local delivery of rural services.

In developing the regional frameworks during 2005 and in refining and further developing them in 2006 and 2007, the experience of the RAZ Pathfinder will therefore play an important part in identifying ways in which access to funding, information and services can be improved for rural customers.

Regional Sustainable Development Strategies

In both regions, Regional Economic, Rural and other strategies sit within the context of Regional Sustainable Development Strategies. These strategies provide a strong policy context for our Pathfinder, where we believe economic, environmental and social initiatives must work closely together. The East Midlands Integrated Regional Strategy and the West Midlands Sustainable Development Strategy both have visions, targets and indicators to which the Pathfinder will contribute.

emda's Regional Economic Strategy 2003 – 2010

Sustainable Communities is a cross cutting theme in emda's Regional Economic Strategy where tackling social exclusion through "economic inclusion" and enterprise including social enterprises is the focus. There is also a focus upon a quality environment by ensuring no adverse effect from economic development. Partners are currently contributing to the review of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) being undertaken by emda.

emda's Rural Team is reviewing their work in light of Defra's Rural Strategy 2004. Two particular aims are:

- To improve the overall productivity of our rural economy, especially where performance is especially 'lagging' at present.
- To support access to services for rural communities.

These are key themes for both emda and the Peak District RAZ Pathfinder to enable access to the full range of business advice and support available.

Further links and benefits will be possible due to the Pathfinder being developed as part of the RAZ, and DDEP. This Partnership will create the opportunity to strengthen and develop support that can be offered to our Peak District businesses, through the Pathfinder projects at a local level and emda's broader goals of:

- 'Broadband for all'.
- Providing access to learning and skills for workforce development
- Working with partners to improve the rural infrastructure, including transport and workspace.

emda are to take over responsibility from Defra for the successor programmes to the England Rural Development Programme from 2007 and the Pathfinder could provide a useful "test-bed" for the new arrangements.

The GOEM-led Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food, has a range of partnerships supporting delivery of specific projects, and has a number of initiatives that could support the Pathfinder.

West Midlands Economic Strategy

Advantage West Midlands covers the Staffordshire area of the RAZ Pathfinder and its Economic Strategy states that "At the heart of the West Midlands Economic Strategy is a shared vision for 2010". The Peak District Pathfinder is most likely to focus on the first of the four pillars, "Pillar One: Developing a diverse and dynamic business base - supporting enterprise and innovation and securing inward investment to establish, retain and grow more businesses in the West Midlands".

A further supporting document is Rural Renaissance, AWM's rural framework. The framework is an integrated approach to rural development demonstrating AWM's role and strategy for implementing the West Midlands Economic Strategy in the rural West Midlands.

At a regional level Advantage West Midlands maintains ongoing liaison with partners through the Rural Affairs Forum and the Rural Accord. A recently appointed Partnerships Manager is dedicated to Rural Staffordshire and is working closely with Pathfinder partners in developing cross boundary activity through projects such as the Rural Innovation Initiative.

At a national level the Agency also represents the West Midlands interests in cross-RDA networks relating to food, farming and rural affairs and maintains close working relationships with Defra."

Links with other Regional / Sub-Regional Activity

The Northern Way was launched in September 2004 and is developing mechanisms to promote faster economic growth. Partners have already contributed to its development and as it continues, it will be important to ensure that the Peak District, a rural area, can benefit from the planned economic growth.

Within the Welland SSP area a separate pathfinder project is being developed. The Welland Strategic Alignment Pathfinder project is a national demonstration project of action-based research studying the delivery of business support services within a rural context. The project and its evaluation will feed into Defra's policy decisions on MRD and help shape recommendations on the future alignment of business support at the national level. Links with the Welland project will be made where possible and appropriate to ensure that the Peak District can benefit from lessons learnt and best practice to support local businesses, community and social enterprises.

In addition to these initiatives, where appropriate, we will also consider other good practice examples of joined up service delivery in rural areas e.g. South Holland RAZ and Leicestershire Rural Partnership.

Local Area Agreements (LAA)

Linkages between the LAAs impacting on the RAZ Pathfinder will be developed as the Pathfinder gathers momentum. The two pilots are already linked through partner representation on the steering groups for initiatives. The Pathfinder will particularly relate to the LAA Sustainable Communities Blocks which are currently being developed. Information from this Business Plan has already been included in the preparatory work of the Derbyshire LAA. Both the LAA and Pathfinder are likely to be able to make support services much more accessible, streamlined and efficient and adopt effective rural-proofed targets.

c) Fit with Local Strategies & Plans

The following section provides evidence from the various local partnerships and Forums that the direction for the Pathfinder is embedded in local strategies.

Peak District RAZ Development Plan 2005 - 2008

The overarching strategic objective of the RAZ as set out in the Development Plan is “to create a high skills – high wage economy in the Peak District”.

The Strategic Priorities / Themes for the RAZ identified as having the most potential for improving the area’s economy are as follows:

- a) Improving the Competitiveness of Businesses
- b) Developing and Growing the Knowledge Economy
- c) Encouraging the Development of Creative Industries
- d) Promoting high quality, Sustainable Tourism
- e) Developing the Environmental Economy

These themes and wider work of the RAZ clearly link well with the aim of the Pathfinder to enhance access to services that support business and community enterprise in rural areas.

Peak District Objective 2 IFE 2000-2006

Action Plans for the Main and Transitional areas covered by the Objective 2 programme in the Peak District were produced in February 2002.

The Action Plans aim to support four key objectives:

1. To diversify and strengthen the local economy which relies too heavily on declining industries, including agriculture and quarrying and a low wage economy.
2. To build on the strength and opportunities of the area including tourism, micro businesses and creative industries.
3. To strengthen the marketing of the Peak District and the quality of the local tourism product.
4. To strengthen the capacity of village communities to identify their opportunities for the future and to take action on them. Particular emphasis is to be given to encouraging local community enterprise activity.

The Action Plans identify a series of projects, many of which are currently being taken forward and will complement Pathfinder objectives.

LEADER+ in the Peak, Dales and Moorlands

The LEADER+ programme is a European community initiative to assist rural communities in improving quality of life and economic prosperity in their local area. In the Peak District, the programme which runs until December 2006 contains six experimental projects focusing on the needs of women and young people (14-30 year olds).

The six projects include:

- *Gateway (to the Arts)*

- *Tourism Forum*
- *Access*
- *Young People's Enterprise Unit*
- *College of the Peak*
- *Women's Enterprise Unit*

Again there is clear potential to link the work of the LEADER+ programme with Pathfinder objectives.

Local Strategic Partnerships, Partners Corporate Strategies, Market Towns Forums, Village Plan Analysis

The RAZ Pathfinder area covers 2 main Local Strategic Partnership areas, 4 Local Authority areas and 2 further County Council areas. Corporate Strategies such as the HPBC Regeneration Strategy and Joint Housing Strategy documents have influenced the proposed work of the Pathfinder.

As identified in Appendix 1, in developing the focus of the Pathfinder, consideration has been given to LSP priorities. Work is currently ongoing to roll forward the existing Community Strategies for the period 2006-2009 and the Pathfinder will take account of the emerging priorities.

There are also 12 town partnerships relevant to the RAZ Pathfinder; 10 in the Derbyshire Market Towns Forum, Ashbourne, Bakewell, Buxton, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Darley Dale, Glossop, Matlock, New Mills, Whaley Bridge and Wirksworth. Leek serves the Pathfinder specific area of Staffordshire Moorlands and Uttoxeter serves a small area of the Weaver ward.

The RAZ Pathfinder will challenge the current structures, and delivery mechanisms for regeneration activity on the ground to ensure they are robust and fit for purpose to take on the delivery of major rural funding post 2007.

More than 40 villages have been involved over a number of years in Village Planning. The RAZ Pathfinder sees the importance of fully engaging these active village groups and building the capacity of those that have not yet become engaged in the process. The current enthusiasm has been built up through Programmes such as the Single Regeneration Budget and ERDF Objective 2. Partners are exploring methods to engage communities in the decision making process through village planning, Area Forums and Youth Forums across the area. This will help strengthen not only the RAZ but LAA and LSP's delivery mechanisms.

Analysis of the various consultations and action plans suggest that many of the driving principles and priorities are shared by local partners including market town partnerships and village action groups. For example to:

1. Ensure that the environment is protected and improved and it is an attractive, enjoyable place to be
2. Provide more affordable homes for local people
3. Reduce inequalities in access to services for people living in rural communities including ICT and public transport
4. Increase opportunities for young people to participate in social and recreational activities
5. Build the structures and capacity to effectively implement the community strategy

6. Have a safe & healthy place to live
7. Have a thriving local economy & tourism & cultural industries
8. Maintain a quality natural and built environment

d) Funding Streams Analysis

Research has been undertaken focusing on the funding programmes that are likely to fall under the scope of the new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. This includes funding for many different types of activity. Some of these activities include:

- Training activities for businesses to enable them to participate in other measures
- Advisory Services
- Business development in the agricultural and forestry sectors, including adding value to primary products
- Food quality schemes including promotional activity
- Land management including agri-environment schemes
- Diversification of the rural economy, including support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises, encouragement of tourism etc.
- Village renovation and development

There are at least 31 different funding schemes operating in the Peak District RAZ which support environmental management, business development and community projects. These 31 schemes currently involve over £6 million per year (excluding administrative costs) of public expenditure. The different schemes operate over different geographical areas in the Peak District.

This research, completed for Defra by the Peak District National Park Authority in March 2005 will need to be supplemented by the wider analysis of funding streams in each Pathfinder area commissioned by Defra, the initial results from which should be available in December 05. However, it provides a good starting point for developing the Pathfinder and a useful insight into the issues from a businesses / customer perspective.

e) Linkages with Key Themes related to the Pathfinder

Appendix 2 identifies the links between partner organisations and themes related to the Pathfinder and Appendix 3 provides a flavour of activity already taking place in the area through successful joint working initiatives which the Pathfinder will link with / build on.

4. Project Scope

Our plans, community strategies and quantitative analysis direct us to looking at how we can work together to help people in businesses and communities achieve regeneration. The unique characteristics of the area - rural, near to urban areas, high environmental values, good partnership working across boundaries - are strong assets, but our communities face many challenges. Already the Pathfinder partners and other agencies offer grant schemes, technical advice and other support to community, environmental and economic regeneration. The public, voluntary & community sector and private sectors already work well together and have also shown we can secure regeneration. Through the Peak District RAZ Pathfinder, we

will strive to make support services more accessible, streamlined and efficient. The Pathfinder creates an opportunity to demonstrate practical ways of combining our services and orientating them more towards the needs of those entrepreneurs in communities and business who will make sustainable regeneration happen.

The vision for the Peak District RAZ Pathfinder is therefore to:

“To enhance access to services that support business and community enterprise in rural areas.”

5. Major Activities

Key principles which will cut across the Pathfinder proposal include:

- A sustainable approach, delivering outcomes appropriate to the maintenance and improvement of our high quality environment alongside economic and social improvements
- Ensuring genuine community involvement
- Improving the delivery of services for both businesses and the wider community
- Understanding and developing the Market Town / rural interface

The Market towns are key drivers for the rural economy and in the majority of towns a health check / action planning process or something similar has now taken place. Many of the market towns now have well established or emerging town partnerships which will be used for private sector consultation and involvement by the RAZ Pathfinder. Likewise, many villages have prepared parish plans or local action plans, which are being taken into account as the Pathfinder develops. Our partner, DRCC is supporting an informal network of villages involved with Action Plans along with CVS's and this network shall be used to communicate with active communities looking to become more enterprising.

Parish Councils are involved in a number of ways, through Parish Liaison meetings where information is exchanged and through newsletters and regular contact by Derbyshire Association of Local Councils (DALC) and Local Authority partners in particular and strong, local links through SMCVS. These mechanisms shall be employed to ensure active engagement with Parish Councils.

Pathfinder, like any other regeneration activity cannot act in isolation; indeed it is the primary task of the Pathfinder to effectively and efficiently join up and deliver quality services. The scope for the Pathfinder has been informed by existing strategies and activities analysed in Appendices 1 to 3. This recognition and awareness of the very many other activities and regeneration programmes has provided the Pathfinder partners with the overall aim to make funding and support services more accessible to business and community entrepreneurs.

We have considered a number of mechanisms for enhancing rural delivery including:

- Integrated advisory services
- Collaborative working / networking
- Integrated financial support
- Co-location and tandem service delivery
- Local sourcing and procurement

- Adding value based on the assets that make our area so special

The Pathfinder has set itself the following goals / challenges to deliver during its 2 year duration to improve existing service provision for business and communities.

Project 1

- To explore the benefits and resource implications of a single point of access (phone via Contact Centre, web based information) to make service delivery more streamlined and efficient

Project 2

- To develop support within the area of co-location/tandem service delivery and in support of the phone and web based service, develop a network of first stop or one-stop information shops.

Project 3

- Scoping the business case to simplify advice and the grant giving “maze” for business and community, and giving practical consideration to a single application form agreed by funding bodies with similar objectives / targets.

Although details are still to be developed, the following longer term goals have been provisionally identified which are likely to be informed by evidence from the first three projects.

- A rural development bureau or unit to provide assistance on a range of funding streams / rural services. This could also include an outreach service and / or mobile service.
- To continue to explore the potential integration and delegation of funding streams by learning from existing models in liaison with Defra.

Project 1

To explore the benefits and resource implications of a single point of access (phone via Contact Centre, web based information) to make service delivery more streamlined and efficient

Whilst it is recognised that Derbyshire Chamber & Business Link have a strong track record of delivering in this area, there remain potential businesses and social enterprises for a range of reasons that do not access business advice and support through this national route. The project will provide a wider service, sharing data and information across a number of partners and by using the technology of the Contact Centre to **develop improved access to services that deliver support to business and community & social enterprise in rural areas.**

The Contact Centre is currently open from 8am – 8 pm Monday – Friday. It already handles a growing number of calls (3500 – 4000 per week) and works with external organisations to deliver a customer service provision.

Features of the System

- Customer Relations Management System (CRM) which is ICT based:
 - Captures all previous customer contact and details of calls
 - Holds a range of information on services that can be promoted
 - A specific greeting can be recorded as required
 - Letters or emails can be generated giving information to the customer (including web links) or requesting the partner organisation to follow up on a specific piece of information
 - Can complete online forms from other organisational websites and submit on behalf of the customer. Through the Local Authority (DCC and DDDC) portal e-forms can be produced & sent on behalf of customers
 - Information can be sorted by postcode and the customer could find out what is available with regard to grants, events, workshops etc.
 - During quieter periods, customer surveys/sales for relevant courses/workshops etc could be undertaken by call handling staff.
 - Can tailor monitoring and status reports breaking down caller details as necessary i.e. to help partners meet pre-determined “market penetration” targets.
 - The system can pick up the location of the caller and pick up mobile phone numbers if the caller has previously contacted the Centre.
 - Staff work is varied, on reception and in the Contact Centre
 - Staff are customer focused and fully ICT literate
 - Staff have experience of working with multiple information screens at a time which, initially, is likely to be the case if this Pathfinder concept goes ahead
 - Training is very important and regularly takes place
 - Flexible work patterns for both organisation and employees

Advantages & Future Developments & plans

- No “press button” system, each call is handled by a trained person
- The staff involved in the HPBC Contact Centre have over 2 years of experience in developing the range of structures and continue to improve service provision
- Knowledge management is a big “Spin Off”
- Data Integration – LLPG and property owners, by gathering data and information about which properties are vacant, possibilities arise for identifying land and property owners who may wish to sell for affordable housing and/or release land for suitable developments (i.e. training centres/managed workspace/live/work units)
- Staff could be based anywhere – recommended to keep staff within the Peak District to retain the economic benefit to the area

Project 2

To develop support within the area of co-location / tandem service delivery

- A Co-location Study commissioned by Derbyshire Dales & High Peak LSP and part funded by the DDEP RAZ sets out clear mechanisms and live examples of co-location opportunities.
- People want services within walking distance and available on demand, but this costs more to deliver in rural areas such as the Peak District. Studies and experience show that co-location is a cost effective means of delivering services in rural areas. The question is what potential is there in the Peak District to develop co-location activities and what can be done to bring this about?
- Lord Haskins advocates economies of scale. The Rural White paper calls for the increase in services to villages and rural communities.
- A key opportunity is at the Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell, along with many other possibilities. It would be the role of the Pathfinder Project Officer to work with partners to establish a range of projects. This would depend a number of factors as to which may progress
- It is possible to have Contact Centre “hubs” around the Peak District, co-located with other services, (e.g. farm advice centres, Business Link offices, CVS’s) and even offer work from home options (through Voice over IP Technology) – which keeps the jobs local and maintains local knowledge whilst being supported through training.
- An Executive Summary was presented to the Pathfinder Steering Group on 1 July 2005 and a full copy is available from the DD/HP LSP website, www.derbyshirdales.gov.uk/LSP. The recommendations contained in the report have largely been endorsed by the DD/HP LSP Board and Pathfinder Steering Group.

Project 3

Scoping the business case to simplify advice and the grant giving “maze” for business and community (either remote access points across the area and/or streamlining existing organisational structures to make them fit for Pathfinder purposes

The funding research (referred to in Section 3) undertaken by PDNPA indicates that the tendency in recent years has been for a growth in the number of schemes, a growth in the number of strategies and a growth in expenditure. This has undoubtedly contributed positively to the local economy, community and environment. However, business feedback is that the system as a whole has become too complicated and participation has become too time consuming. The plea is for new arrangements embracing five principles (with an overall aim of providing better outcomes for the economy, community and environment):

- a. A coherent, easily understood strategy with a consistent approach for all schemes based on that strategy.
- b. Simplification of the number of schemes and their administration.
- c. More user friendly systems - local contacts, easier paperwork.
- d. Focused on positive results to inspire and encourage business effort.
- e. Linkage between different business sectors (especially farming and non-farming).

The Pathfinder will aim to try and address some of these issues through this project.

Sharing Lessons learnt

Mechanisms to share the good practice and learning, emerging from the RAZ Pathfinder have been considered. The links and partnerships that are involved in the RAZ Pathfinder shall receive regular progress reports. Through possible future developments of the Contact Centre, data and information will be more accessible and be web based. Direct links are possible to Defra, DDEP, LSP and partner websites. As with the LSP, a hyperlink has been created to and from partner sites and the main LSP website. Through the RAZ structures, the LSP networks, and the web of existing support staff on the ground, namely community workers, tourism officers, business advisors, town centre managers; information can be disseminated and word of mouth will be a powerful tool, supported by ICT and phone based technology. This network and goodwill is likely to be the foundation for and strength of any new mechanism to deliver rural regeneration in the Peak District.

Research and surveys have been produced by partners on a range of business activity and gaps in provision, most available on partner websites. Further information, yet to be available includes the evaluation of Defra's business support projects with Business Link in lagging districts and the Defra, DTI and emda Business Support pathfinder in the Welland which will be useful to inform future working practice.

6. Success Criteria/Benefits

The success criteria set for the project are:

- Through programme evaluation businesses and communities see a marked improvement in the availability of information, advice and service provision.
- That partners and other stakeholders can share best practice that arises from the activity of the Pathfinder and create delivery structures for regeneration activity on the ground to ensure they are robust and fit for purpose to take on the delivery of major rural funding post 2007.
- A cohesive approach to provision of support services, achieved by partner "buy in" and joined up working to achieve common goals
- Contribution to rurally proofed, Government LAA targets as appropriate
- Better knowledge and integrated database of business needs and a broader understanding of how to stimulate economic growth in rural areas

- That after two years of the Pathfinder resources (both human and financial) would be better aligned to provide more efficient and effective services and information.
- In the longer term, improving access to other services would be the goal of the Pathfinder both through embedding best practice and testing new approaches.

7. Governance and Accountabilities

It has been agreed that the existing RAZ Steering Group will oversee and manage the Peak District RAZ Pathfinder and the Group agreed revised Terms of Reference in May 2005 taking on this additional responsibility. Appendix 4 identifies the Membership of the RAZ Steering Group and revised Terms of Reference. The Steering Group has responsibility for overseeing the administration of Single Programme, Objective 2 and LEADER+ funds within the wider Peak District. Below this, an officer group has been established to take a day to day management role reporting to the Steering Group.

With regard to employment & financial control, a shared arrangement has been developed. Derbyshire Dales District Council have agreed to take responsibility to employ the Pathfinder Officer/s and oversee the financial arrangements for the Pathfinder:

- Responsible for employing staff on behalf of the Steering Group on the normal terms and conditions of the Local Authority, Derbyshire Dales District Council.
- Financial administration
- Personnel administration (salary, expenses administration, etc.) and personnel services.
- Reasonable use of other services and equipment as may be expected by those engaged in the work of the Host agency itself.

It has been agreed that the Pathfinder Officer/s will be placed with DDEP's RAZ Support Unit based in Bakewell. The roles / responsibilities of DDEP will be as follows:

- Reasonable management supervision, which should be carried out on behalf of Steering Group partners and not on behalf of the Host agency.
- Admin support and other normal office services (post, reception, etc.)
- Serviced office accommodation such as to afford reasonable working conditions and such as not to cause unnecessary disruption to the work of the RAZ Support Unit – provided to DDEP by PDNPA.
- Adequate office equipment and discreet computer facilities such as to enable the efficient progress of the Pathfinder work.

As indicated, the RAZ Pathfinder shall be subject to three tiers of management, scrutiny and advice. From the outset we have aimed for an inclusive approach; the cross-border nature of the area makes this imperative.

A strength of the Pathfinder is the direct involvement of the LSPs in both Derbyshire and Staffordshire. In the Derbyshire part of the RAZ, the two districts worked

together to establish a single LSP for High Peak and Derbyshire Dales. This is the only joint LSP operating in the sub region and is now well established with active engagement from all partners. The RAZ has a direct link with the LSP in that it is the lead body for delivering economic activity required in the area on the behalf of the LSP. Regular reports to the LSP Board maintain dialogue and provide the opportunity to learn and disseminate information as well as acting as a wider body that can add value on a range of locally defined themes.

8. Resources

Financial resources available include:

- £100,000 available through Defra to support the development / running of the Pathfinder.
- £100,000 in principle available from emda over the duration of the Pathfinder.
- Advantage West Midlands have pledged their support for the Pathfinder through the Rural Innovation Initiative (RII). RII is a strategic fund designed to stimulate innovation through the award of themed and targeted grants for demonstrating new approaches to the challenges facing rural renaissance. A total of £100,000 is to be made available to the RII. The financial support pledged by the Agency therefore differs from the funding allocated to the Pathfinder by EMDA in that although the fund supports the business plan and those potential projects identified within in it is not a resource for general allocation to the pathfinder.
- Up to £100,000 (indicative) in kind contributions from partners in both Staffordshire and Derbyshire to Pathfinder actions (subject to the specific actions / activities developed).

The Pathfinder Officer shall be a major resource to the Pathfinder in maintaining momentum of the Programme and being dedicated resource at every stage.

By aligning or working with other organisations further benefits could be accrued. For example through the “Change Up” Programme run through the Derbyshire Consortium, the VCS Infrastructure Investment Plan, which supports social enterprises.

As Pathfinder develops, opportunities to align funding sources will be exploited in order to get best value for the businesses and communities.

9. Goals and Objectives

- a) **The Peak District RAZ Pathfinder aims to enhance access to services that support business and community enterprise in rural areas**
- b) Develop and support within the area of co-location / tandem service delivery; a key aim of the Pathfinder
- c) explore the benefits and resource implications of a single point of access (phone via Contact Centre, web based information) to make service delivery more streamlined and efficient

- d) To make funding and support services more accessible to business and community entrepreneurs
- e) Scoping the business case to simplify advice and the grant giving “maze” for business and community (either remote access points across the area and/or streamlining existing organisational structures to make them fit for Pathfinder purposes)

10. Deliverables

See Appendix 5 - Pathfinder Action Plan

11. Timescale

The following work programme covers the development phase over the next 24 months.

Timescales	Tasks
March 05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Pathfinder launch – small group to attend including RAZ Steering Group Chair, PDNPA Chair and representatives from the LSPs and LAs • Agree Governance arrangements within the context of existing RAZ structures • Agree use of Defra £100,000 to support costs of either a project post or small team of secondees
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint project team to develop the detail of the business plan including actions and targets for the next 2 years
May - June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map services being delivered in the area • Map delivery points and field staff of agencies • Establish strategy for consultation as part of the planned community engagement programme being led by the LSPs and PDNPA, including Citizens Panels, Area Community Forums, Parish Conferences and voluntary / community sector workshops • Engage with Market Towns Forum, local town partnerships and village agents/Action Groups to determine views / use as sounding board • Agree communications strategy for promoting the Pathfinder including agreed publicity protocol.
July – August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop to engage practitioners, businesses, voluntary and community organisations, statutory agencies and other stakeholders to establish views on the support services which would benefit from inclusion in the Pathfinder. • Agree the specific services to be included within the Pathfinder • Review and agree the funding streams to be included within the Pathfinder following completion of funding

	analysis by Defra <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Audit Commission with Pathfinder Evaluation – process of setting up pathfinder
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree short to medium term delivery actions for the Pathfinder from ideas identified • Recruit Pathfinder Project Officer • Complete detailed Business Plan • Assist Defra in the funding streams review

Timescales	Tasks
October – March 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure other match funding (emda, AWM, Obj2?, In Kind) • Commence detailed work on enhanced delivery actions • Contact Centre set up activity • Publicise early successes
April – September 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore Co-location/hubs to deliver on Pathfinder projects • Undertake process and outcomes evaluation within Audit Commission framework
October – March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop evidence and business case for a funding/advice unit
April – September 2007 & beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake final evaluation within Audit Commission framework to explore: • That after two years of the Pathfinder resources (both human and financial) are better aligned to provide more efficient and effective services & • Access to other services have improved both through embedding best practice and testing new approaches.

12. Risks & Assumptions

Risks and assumptions	Option to minimise risk
The largest assumption is that the early discussions about the level of financial support towards the planned elements of the Pathfinder will be positive.	Applications will be made for the funding informed by the full Business Plan. No major expenditure will be incurred by partners prior to confirmation of funding.
Securing the necessary additional capacity to drive forward the Pathfinder.	Unfortunately the recruitment of a Project Officer proved unsuccessful. However, 2 officers from the accountable body have agreed to undertake the duties of the Pathfinder Officer on an honorarium basis.
Assumptions that outcomes of the project should be both processes / demonstration / structure and also practical outputs on the ground.	

13. Performance Management

Performance of the Pathfinder will be overseen by the RAZ Steering Group and on a day to day basis by the Pathfinder Officer Group. The Group will meet on a quarterly basis to monitor progress and more often as or when necessary. The Steering Group

will receive progress reports and the LSP's, at Board level and at the LSP Executive team will be involved to support the Pathfinder to develop.

The Pathfinder Officer will work with the Steering Group to set performance objectives for the Pathfinder and will be responsible for monitoring progress. The Steering Group has responsibility for taking action in response to progress reports.

As a key outcome, the Pathfinder will aim to enhance integration across the range of social, economic and environmental funding streams aimed at addressing these priorities and demonstrate how to make delivery more effective, efficient and customer-focused for both businesses and communities.

With regard to the national programme, the Pathfinder "family" has agreed to adopt the evaluation framework produced by the Audit Commission to provide a common basis for assessing the progress in the development and delivery of the Pathfinders. This is attached as Appendix 6.