

**Plain Action: The first 15 months.
Local Action Delivery Plan 1st Oct. 2008 – 31st Dec. 2009**

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Introduction and context

This document explains how Plain Action will establish itself and start meeting its objectives during its first fifteen months. The format follows guidance from the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA). There are no fundamental changes from the original bid document 'Salisbury Plain Local Action Group Local Development Strategy 22/5/08'; the bid document (the bid) remains the foundation of Plain Action and is referred to extensively here. The bid (44 pages) or individual sections are available electronically on request.

A two page summary of the bid is attached as Appendix 1 and provides a useful overview.

The following notes provide some context:

- Following submission of the bid a change of name was agreed - from 'Salisbury Plain Local Action Group' to 'Plain Action'.
- The approved grant figure is £2.5m against the £3.54m requested. The reduction has been accommodated without making significant changes (see Section 2.)
- It is becoming increasingly apparent how closely Plain Action's objectives correspond with local strategies and with current Ministry of Defence thinking. This will greatly support delivery of the Programme, and has enabled the strengthening of Plain Action's military/civilian partnership working arrangements (see Section 3.)

1 Partnership and Contractual Arrangements

This Local Delivery Plan forms the basis of a contractual agreement between SWRDA and Plain Action. This Plan was approved in final draft form at the inaugural meeting of the Plain Action Local Action Group Board (the Partnership Management Group - PMG) on 30th October 2008. Authority was then delegated to an Interim Executive Working Group to agree final adjustments with SWRDA, and authority was delegated to the Chairman and the Accountable Body to sign the Plan in its final form (Section 6.) It was agreed that the PMG would receive and endorse the final document at its meeting on 8th January.

Plain Action has a formal agreement (Appendix 2) with its Accountable Body, Wiltshire (County) Council, setting out their respective roles and responsibilities; this includes the provision of signed contracts between the Accountable Body and the organisations delivering projects and activities approved by Plain Action.

2 The Programme

The geographic area and target population

The geographical area covered has been marginally modified since the bid in recognition of the boundaries of two adjacent Local Action Groups - Sowing Seeds (which includes the Cranborne Chase AONB) and North Wessex Downs AONB. There is no overlap with the New Forest LAG in Hampshire to the south east of Salisbury, or with any other LAGs. A map and parish list form Appendix 3.

Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

The aims and objectives are unchanged from the bid and remain the basis of Plain Action's operations and activities. The objectives were developed from clearly established needs attached as Appendix 4. All projects and activities will contribute to at least one of the objectives; most will contribute to at least two. All will be 'proofed' against both overriding themes.

Themes

- *To increase understanding of the essential contribution of the military establishment to the prosperity of the area and to ensure full military/civilian integration of all activities including strategic planning.*
- *To encompass the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change and environmental issues in the unique environment of Salisbury Plain.*

Objectives

- *To maximise the skills, abilities, and opportunities of all those living and seeking work in the area, particularly in the context of the opportunities presented by the military establishment and the skills of those leaving it*
- *To strengthen the long term economic performance of the area by supporting initiatives that nurture enterprise, cross sectors and remove barriers.*
- *To work for cohesive, stable and sustainable communities throughout the area by addressing current imbalances and geographical and social isolation.*

The bid baseline position and target outcomes under each objective were qualitative (Bid Section G page 38). Detailed work is currently under way on establishing appropriate baseline measurements and targets for each objective; a current working document linking strategic objectives and outcomes is attached as appendix 5.

31st December 08 has been set as the milestone date for establishing what will be measured, and 31st March 09 for establishing the baseline figures and target figures to be achieved during and by the end of the programme on each of these measures. (see Deliverability below.)

Activities

The activities and funding profile have been reconstructed to reflect the funding now available (£2.5m) and the period of this first Delivery Plan (15 months.) A tabular description of provisional activities is at Appendix 6, and completely replaces pages 19 – 27 of the original Bid.

It is expected that up to one half of the funds allocated in the first 15 months will be expended on projects and activities that fall in the feasibility / research / pilot / 'local' category, with some resulting in larger scale or replicated projects and activities across the Programme area.

The proposed activities will meet the three national Programme objectives listed below. The application and appraisal systems will have built into them criteria reflecting these three elements. Projects and activities will be expected to show that they have considered all three and can satisfy at least one to a high degree and the remainder to some degree:

Innovation: Projects and activities will demonstrate the extent to which they are innovative, and Plain Action will offer a number of interpretations of ‘innovative’ – eg a completely new approach to a familiar need, or tackling a need which has not been identified before, or adopting an approach locally which has succeeded outside the area.

Co-operation: Projects and activities will be required to avoid developing and working in isolation. They will demonstrate with whom they have worked in developing their work, whom they will work with in delivery, how their work complements other services being provided in the area, and where it fits in relation to local strategies. Co-operation may be with other existing service providers in the area, with other Plain Action activities, and/or with other Local Action groups in the UK or abroad. The intention is to avoid any duplication or unnecessary competition with existing satisfactory services.

Sustainable development: Projects and activities will be expected to demonstrate how their services will be sustainable in terms of continuing in whatever form once Plain Action funding ceases, and in terms of the environmental context and climate change. (See Bid Section J: Exit Strategy for amplification.)

Integration within RDPE Axes 1 – 3. Plain Action’s objectives and activities need to complement and integrate with other activities funded under all three axes of the RDPE.2007-13. These are

Axis 1 Improving competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors

Axis 2 Improving the environment and the countryside

Axis 3 Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging the diversification of economic activity

Complementarity and integration will be achieved by:

- The Forestry Commission and Natural England (who manage Axis 2) sitting on Plain Action’s Technical Advisory Panel which advises on proposed projects and activities. In some cases their representatives will undertake the appraisal role.
- Familiarity of the Programme Manager and associated Wilts Rural Regeneration staff with RDPE funded work under the other axes. The Wilshire Council–serviced Land Based Group is one useful means of exchange.
- Clear correspondence in the case of many of the proposed Plain Action activities, such as business support (Axis 1 and 3), and all of the Objective 3 activities (Axis 3).

Finance

The financial profile (cash flow) and other financial information for the first 15 months and programme as a whole is enclosed as Appendix 7.

Outputs

The outputs (appendix 8) have been slightly reduced from the Bid reflecting the reduction in funding by 30%. They also reflect that the main programme of activities and projects will not start flowing until some way through 2009. In due course greater definition of these output measures will be achieved and this table will then be developed appropriately.

Deliverability

Tables setting out the timetable / milestones for the first fifteen months, and the risks which have been identified and mitigation are set out in tables in Appendices 9 and 10. These have both been developed from the Bid.

3 Governance

The Partnership membership is set out in Appendix 11. The Programme Management Group is the Local Action Group. There is a high proportion of local /non-statutory ownership of Plain Action, particularly as a result of the large presence of Chairs and members of Local Development Trusts often established through Wiltshire's Community Planning Area structure.

Its roles as set out in the Bid (page 30) are:

- Overall direction of the Programme
- Supporting achievement of objectives
- Commissioning work and approving projects/activities.

The Accountable Body remains Wiltshire (County) Council. The formal Plain Action / Accountable Body agreement (Appendix 2) is currently being signed.

Other Plain Action groups are the Public Consultation Group, the Technical Advisory Panel, and the Staff Working Group. Their composition, roles and working arrangements are as set out in the Bid – pages 31 and 32, attached as appendix 12.

Community consultation and engagement will start from the base of some 80 – 100 organisations and individuals who have already expressed a variety of interests in the Programme, many of whom attended two meetings in December 2007 and May 2008. Previous experience has demonstrated that starting a Small Grants Scheme at an early stage is an excellent tool for engaging the community at large, delivering objectives, and sometimes leading to more significant projects and activities. The PMG meetings will be held at venues around the Programme area as a means of stimulating public interest. The Programme will be publicised and interested parties and public at large consulted through the means tabulated overleaf. These timings correlate to the overall milestones included elsewhere:

Initial circulation to all interested parties and potential deliverers	By 14 th November 2008
Publicity documentation complete and ready for release	By 28 th February 2009
First press release, local radio, etc	By 28 th February 2009
Website operational	By 31 st March 2009
First annual meeting of Public Consultation Group (PCG) / major launch event	By 31 st March 2009
Launch of first Small Grants Scheme	By 31 st March 2009
Second press release	By 31 st March 2009
Newsletter / progress report and consultation paper to PCG	30 th September 2009

Ongoing dialogue with the public and interested parties will take place throughout the Programme by means of the website, email and telephone contact, and meetings with individuals and groups throughout the Programme area. From previous experience a proposed small grants scheme will particularly open up dialogue and discussion.

4 Delivery Arrangements and Processes

Learning and Skill Development

Members Around half of the initial Board members have prior experience on the Sustain the Plain Local Action Group, but there are significant differences in the two Programmes and the new members will have particular needs. It was very clear from the previous LAG that consideration had to be given to local representatives who were justifiably interested in seeing progress and activities in their areas, and were not interested in technical discussions about EU funding regulations and grant processes. A briefing session will be held prior to the Board meeting on 9th January. Main items will be the Programme's objectives and the needs it seeks to address, prospective activities, the approval and commissioning system, and the intended establishment and operation of a small grants scheme in which they will be actively involved. As mentioned, meetings will be held around the Programme area with project visits to stimulate member engagement.

Learning from and sharing best practice Considerable benefit can be gained from comparing notes and avoiding reinvention of the wheel. There was a high degree of cooperation between the previous six South West LEADER + groups exemplified by the 'Local knowledge Local Experience' cooperation project and report on best practice. Plain Action intends to build on this through:

- Use of web-based forum established by its Accountable Body for three neighbouring LAGs
- Invite reciprocal arrangements with other LAGs for their members and staff to attend Plain Action's and others' annual and other significant meetings and events.
- Sharing the results of the mid-term evaluation with others on a reciprocal basis
- Participating in exchanges of information and good practice in the regional and national rural development press.

Staff The Programme Manager will continue to attend all briefing sessions for Local Action staff and participate in the south west network being established. He will also attend appropriate national events and conferences. The Programme Manager will provide the administrative assistant with all appropriate training.

Potential applicants, projects, delivery agents When the application and commissioning processes are in place appropriate announcements will be made to all interested parties and appropriate paperwork made available. A briefing / training event specifically for potential deliverers is envisaged, probably to be held in close proximity to the main public event in March. The Programme Manager will meet potential deliverers individually throughout the life of the Programme.

Projects and Activities development and selection There will be a dual system of arranging delivery, namely:

- Inviting interested organisations to submit 'projects' which will address the needs identified by the Programme and help meet its objectives.
- Commissioning the delivery of selected activities through an appropriate process

It is not intended initially to allocate funds between the two methods of delivery. Commissioning will occur in a variety of circumstances including the possibility that suitable projects are not forthcoming, and in avoidance of the risk of a proliferation of relatively unconnected projects. Progress towards meeting the objectives will be reviewed in October 2009 and may steer the way to increased commissioning.

Those identifying and developing potential projects in cooperation with potential deliverers will include the Programme Manager, members of the Staff Working Group (see appendix 12), members of the Technical Advisory Panel, and the Plain Action members themselves.

Development of processes and procedures Processes and the associated paperwork for project and activity applications, appraisals and approvals, and for commissioning, are currently being developed by the Programme Manager, Staff Working Group and Accountable Body. They will be considered by the Interim Executive Working Group (see Section 1), before recommendation to the PMG on 8th January for approval.

They are being drawn from a mix of the Local Action guidance issued by SEEDA, Sustain the Plain and Rural Renaissance procedures and experience, and other publicly available guidance and requirements such as those of the OJEU and OGC. In the spirit of Local Action the guidance issued and processes will be as user-friendly as is possible while serving the necessary purpose.

To undertake this work there is considerable expertise in the staff team, comprising the Programme Manager, staff in the Economic Regeneration Department of the Accountable Body, and a member of staff of the former Rural Renaissance team.

Communications –marketing and publicity

Proposed tools include the development of paper material, a website, press releases, attendance at public and private meetings and events across the Programme area, participation in appropriate networks, a six monthly newsletter, an annual public meeting and event, and at least one small grants scheme. The majority of these feature in the milestones table.

Evaluation

The overall evaluation plan is as in the Bid, page 41. As stated there a more formally stated monitoring and evaluation process will be developed by 31 December 2008 with due reference to GRADE. Initial plans are as follows:

Projects and activities: Quarterly claims and reporting process against project's own milestones and target outputs; each project to be physically visited by a LAG member and the Programme Manager (separately) at least annually and evaluation sheet completed.

Programme overall: Six monthly progress review throughout; mid-term and end reviews against outcome targets; review in October 2009 specifically re development of 2010 Delivery Plan. An independent evaluation at the close of the Programme

Strategic links

Strategic links, strategic 'fit' and working arrangements with other organisations remain as in the Bid (pages 12-17), with some strengthened in the meantime. The main elements are:

- The Board membership includes senior representatives of the Wiltshire (County) Council, local economic and regeneration partnerships, business associations, the community (third) sector, and the Ministry of Defence – all key players in Wiltshire and many of them regionally. In addition it has seven representatives of Community Planning areas, Development Trusts, or their equivalent. All of these provide excellent links into local and regional strategies and policies.
- The Technical Advisory Panel includes representatives of the Forestry Commission and Natural England, Rural Enterprise Gateway, Business Link, and GWE Business West.
- The Wilts Rural Regeneration Partnership member of the Staff Working Group is involved with the Convergence and Competitiveness programmes and is one of the key people who will be bringing forward and developing Plain Action potential projects and activities.
- Since the Bid was written it has become apparent that Ministry of Defence plans for the Super Garrison structure across the country, and on Salisbury Plain and in Aldershot initially, depend on a vision which corresponds entirely with that of Plain Action. This results from wide agreement on the socio economic issues arising from past Ministry of Defence housing policies which it is now seeking to address. In Wiltshire a senior level military / local authority / third sector 'champions' group has been established to promote military civilian integration in all respects. The Chairman of Plain Action and the Brigadier of 43 Brigade are members of this group. Many of the proposed activities will pave the way for permanent changes in the military civilian partnership and meet the declared 'vision' of the Salisbury Plain super garrison.
- The bid (pages 14 to 17) explained in detail the synergy between Plain Action's themes and objectives and elements of a number of Regional, County and local strategies and plans. All of these remain valid.
- SWRDA's objectives (productivity-led growth, and growth within environmental limits) are specifically addressed by Plain Action's second theme, and first and second objectives.
- Beyond permanent working arrangements as set out above the six monthly newsletter will be circulated widely to all potentially interested parties, there will be links between Plain Action's and related organisation's websites, and invitations to the annual consultation event will be broadcast widely.

5 Forward Strategy

The forward strategy remains exactly as in the bid, and is reproduced in full here.

Plain Action is concerned that its targeted outcomes should ‘stick’, and that the benefits of the individual projects and commissioned work programmes do not end with the end of the Programme. As indicated, an exit strategy for each project and piece of commissioned work will be built into the selection criteria in order to help achieve permanent outcomes. Projects and commissioned work will be identified as to falling into one or more of the following categories at the application stage, thus securing permanent benefits and results:

- *Some projects will be pilots, with the intention of trying out innovative and creative ideas, for subsequent and more permanent replication if successful*
- *Some work will be research-based and one-off, and will inform the development of other activities thus having enduring influence.*
- *Some projects will be restricted to start-up or tapered funding, and be designed to become self-funding during the life of the Programme. Social enterprise type projects and organisations may particularly match this model.*
- *Some projects and work programmes once established and demonstrating their worth will seek adoption by existing and more permanent providers.*

If the Group succeeds in its objectives its work will be over in 2013. In reality the defining features of Salisbury Plain will remain, and there are likely to be new challenges in the context of 2013 and beyond. The Group will consider in its last two years whether it should remain in its present form and seek further funding, whether it can change its structure and become self-financing, or whether the individual members can work better through other existing organisations and partnerships.

6 Signatures

We the undersigned have been authorised to commit our respective organisations to this Plain Action Local Delivery Plan covering the period 1st October 2008 – 31st December 2009.

..... Date:

Fleur de Rhe-Philippe Chairman Plain Action

..... Date:

Wiltshire County Council as Accountable Body

