

## Priority 3

### An enterprising and sustainable rural economy



Rural Leicestershire is home to 9,360 businesses accounting for over 70,000 jobs. A large proportion of these businesses are micro and small enterprises, with higher than average numbers of homeworkers, presenting a real opportunity for rural growth and job creation. Sectors that will be prioritised by the LRP include: land-based, food and drink and tourism. Some of the larger and more significant employers in the area help to underpin growth and strengthen supply chains within these sectors such as Samworth Brothers, Twycross Zoo and rural estates. The LRP will work closely with the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) to support less traditional but important sectors in rural areas such as manufacturing, logistics and knowledge-based businesses.

From a settlement perspective rural Leicestershire can be split effectively into two distinctive rural areas. The sparse eastern area with three larger service centres (Melton Mowbray, Lutterworth and Market Harborough). The less sparse western area has a more densely distributed pattern of larger rural service centres. Harborough and North West Leicestershire have the largest rural economies by a significant margin.

Agriculture is the main land use accounting for 80% of the land area and employing approximately 5,000 people (higher than the national average), and Melton and Harborough Districts account for about half of these employees. As well as being a significant sector in the area, this provides good

opportunities for job creation through diversification activities. The LRP recognises the importance of sustainable land management and the associated long-term environmental and economic benefits that this can bring. Local consideration will be given to mitigation and, wherever possible, positive impacts to the environment.

The county has some strong brands that support the leisure and tourism sectors such as the National Forest and Melton Mowbray food (Pork Pies and Stilton Cheese), as well as key waterways such as the Ashby and Grand Union Canals. These can be further strengthened and exploited to enhance Leicestershire's inward investment offer and to deliver economic growth.

The area is well endowed with centres of excellence and expertise in land based industries in the context of the Allerton Project based in Harborough and Melton Brooksby College in Melton and innovation in terms of PERA in Melton Mowbray. The Harborough Innovation Centre in the south of the area provides a thriving hub for rural businesses to access advice and share knowledge, in the north there are also plans to develop a Food Enterprise Centre to support small and micro businesses in the food processing and manufacturing sector.

Whilst rural Leicestershire is less deprived than the county as a whole, there are small pockets of deprivation as well as a declining trend of young people. It is important that young people and unemployed people living in rural areas are able to receive the required level of support to access training and work. A prosperous rural economy can help address this through businesses providing work experience, jobs and apprenticeships.

Growth within the rural economy requires supporting infrastructure, including suitable premises and access to Superfast Broadband. The Leicestershire Superfast Broadband project aims to increase coverage from 75% to 93.8% of premises by March 2016. However, there will still be businesses and communities in hard to reach rural areas that will be hindered by poor broadband access. This is a cross-cutting priority that the LRP working with the Superfast Broadband project will continue to aim to address.

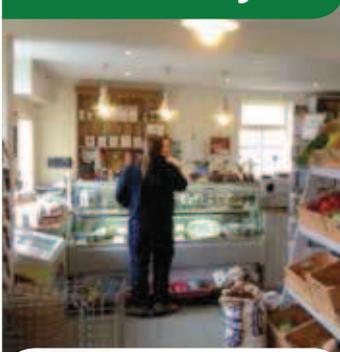
## Delivery:

The LRP works closely with the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) to ensure strategic alignment with the Strategic Economic Plan, City Deal and European Programmes; and to assist LLEP plans and programmes to deliver support, and growth, within rural areas. Specifically, the LRP will support delivery of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), ESF Rural Economic Inclusion funds and development of the East Leicestershire LEADER programme.

## Outcomes:

- Good quality employment opportunities
- People with the relevant skills and attributes to meet the needs of rural businesses
- High survival and growth rates in small and micro enterprises
- Thriving land-based, food and drink and tourism sectors
- Local people are able to access work and training opportunities
- Businesses have access to superfast broadband

## Case Study



### Thrussington Village Shop

Prior to 2012, Thrussington village shop and deli premises had been left derelict for 6 years. Supported by Leicestershire County Council grant funding, new owners Ben and Jo made extensive improvements to the exterior and appearance.

Later, the LRP Village Shop Support Scheme was able to offer free additional retail advice on maximising spend, introducing takeaway facilities and improving the layout features of the shop/deli. Ben and Jo now report that business is growing monthly and they have been able to employ a further full time and 5 part time members of staff.

The store was new to the village, so introduced many new services including local fresh bread, dairy and household items. It is now a real asset to the village and community life and popular with local residents.

“This store has brought the local community together - and this is possibly the most rewarding aspect” (Ben - Thrussington village shop owner)