The Objective One Partnership
for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Rural Tourism Improvement Fund

Final Report

The Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Rural Tourism Improvement Fund started 1st April 2001. The programme ended on the 30th June 2008 after an extension agreed in December 2007. All of the targets have been exceeded.

The key objectives of the scheme were to increase the quality of farm tourism businesses and add value to the businesses by adding facilities and help seasonality. The scheme also allowed land based businesses to diversify into tourism. The scheme invested in *237 upgrading* projects, *41 projects creating new facilities, 35 new self-catering accommodation projects for new businesses,* seven of which are for the disabled market, other markets include art, fishing, youth hostelling, holistic, adventure, under 5s, large parties, equestrian, field sports and 2 projects on the Isles of Scilly, *24 new self-catering accommodation projects for existing good quality businesses, 9 new Bed and Breakfast accommodation project*s including 2 with existing businesses and *167 Rural Access*. There were 40 projects which received business support before the Rural Business Support Initiative was developed.

Twelve projects have gained awards since undertaking a project under the scheme this includes Pollaughan Farm, Hale Farm, Forda Farm, Trerosewill Farm, Trevornick Holiday Park, Dairylands, Crealy, Wheatley Farm, Polmanter Caravan Park, Bosinver Farm, Treworgey Cottages and Tredethick Farm Cottages.

One to one support has been an important part of the programme and the Manager has undertaken over 300 visits to farm tourism businesses advising on business improvement, quality, sustainability, skills and post investment support.

Position of the Sector before the Investment

The sector was suffering from lack of investment due to the viability of the agricultural sector. The income from the tourism business was often supporting the agricultural business or supporting the household. This meant that there was no surplus investment to put back into the tourism businesses and the quality and added value were suffering.

The level of investment needed to diversifying was prohibiting farms diversifying into tourism and the quality of the businesses that did diversify was often low and below the standard recommended by the regional tourist board.

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Lessons learnt during the programme

It is absolutely essential that support for the applicant is available throughout the whole process. One to one advice is important to ensure that projects which are not right for the applicant and the sector do not go ahead. For the applicant who wishes to take a project forward it is important that all aspects of the project are addressed and the reasons are put to the applicant so they understand how important each aspect is, this includes the level quality required and what is quality, sustainability and the links with the local economy.

This has meant that no project has had a quality level below 4 star standard and alternative energy sources have been included. Energy sources have included geo-thermal, solar and wind power. Natural water sources have been developed and all projects have included aspects of recycling, local sourcing and energy saving devices.

Many of the projects have gone on to be credited with Green Tourism Business Scheme Awards from Bronze to Gold; some of the applicants have gone on to gain qualifications in Sustainable Tourism. Feedback from the applicants has shown that the advice has been received well and often 'we would not have done it unless you advised us too'.

All projects now offer a welcome to the guests that are sourced locally due to a condition within the offer letter; this is a welcome of a tea, homemade using local products or purchased locally. Other welcome's include baskets of local food products such as meat produced on the farm or local meats, dairy products, vegetables (home produced or locally purchased) bakery products, wine, juice, chocolate/fudge etc. All businesses that provide catering are now including local foods in the production. This has a benefit to the local economy.

All businesses have attending undertaken some form of training due to a condition within the offer letter 259 have attended training organised by the programme through West Country Rivers Trust or Duchy College. Others have attended specialised training through other agencies. A list of applicants who attended the above courses can be found in the annex.

Monitoring of projects is hard as all information seems to be collected in different ways and the monitoring requirements have increased and changed as the programme was progressing.

Things for the future

It is now thought by the industry that the rural tourism business has now had enough capital investment in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to ensure future investment.

The number of accommodation business is now adequate for the number of visitors to the rural sector in Cornwall at the present time.

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It is now time to focus on the productivity of the rural tourism businesses to make them more viable and competitive. It is also thought that we need to invest in the attractors in the region which will have a wider benefit to individual businesses.

Target Achievement

Type of Output	Target to be achieved as per offer letter	Actual Achieved	% Difference to Offer Letter
Measure 4.6			
Number of agricultural and other rural enterprises assisted	268	417	+ 156%
Number of agricultural SME's supported	57	67	+ 118%
Number of businesses establishing or improving alternative enterprise	235	484	+ 206%
No of environmental visits or surveys achieving environmental and economic gains	8	31	+ 388%
Gross direct FTE jobs safe guarded	190	259	+ 136%
Gross direct FTE jobs created	81	135	+ 167%
Gross sales safeguarded	5,641,434	6,364,115	+ 113%
Gross sales additional	7,147,715	8,622,337	+ 121%

A comprehensive list of beneficiaries can be found in the annex.

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Extension targets 30/12/07 to 30/06/08

Type of Output	Target to be achieved as per offer letter	Actual Achieved	% Difference to Offer Letter
Measure 4.6			
Number of agricultural and other rural enterprises assisted	12	18	+ 150%
Number of agricultural SME's supported	12	3	- 75%
Number of businesses establishing or improving alternative enterprise	6	18	+ 300%
No of environmental visits or surveys achieving environmental and economic gains	0	0	-
Gross direct FTE jobs safe guarded	6	17.25	+ 288%
Gross direct FTE jobs created	1	3.3	+ 330%
Gross sales safeguarded	30,000	448,111	+ 1494%
Gross sales additional	10,000	172,008	+ 1720%

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Over the years of the programme we have received many comments verbally and written about the programme, staff and Objective one. Comments from the monitoring forms about Objective One and the CRTIF team include:

Mrs A Webber, Lanjeth Farm, St Austell
"An excellent initiative which was a life line to me."

Mr C James, Churchtown Farm, Gwithian
"We found the help, advice and support given to us by Annette Cole was very helpful to us. It was very reassuring that we could always ring her for advice and guidance."

Mrs J Campbell Taylor, Pennant Farmhouse, Lostwithiel
"It is already having an effect on the local economy and atmosphere. Standards have become higher."

Mrs L Drew, Laity Farm, Redruth
"As tenants, we would not have been able to diversify in this way without the support of the Objective One Programme through South West Tourism."

Mr R Halliday, Browda, Callington
"The Project Manager's knowledge and understanding of farming as well as tourism was particularly helpful."

Mrs S Rees, Carnwidden Farm, Penryn
"If we had not had the help of Objective One we would still be surrounded by derelict buildings and without a sustainable growing tourism business."

Mr A Higman, Higher Menadew, St Austell
"Fantastic scheme that has helped many farm tourism businesses, enabling many farm businesses to remain sustainable and thus feed monies back into the local economy."

Mr M Wright, Woolstone Manor, Bude
"Excellent, our indoor tennis court is used by many local people/clubs and it would not be here but for Objective One."

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Partnerships

We have worked with many partnerships over the life of the programme, the main partners have been:

1. The Rural Business Support Initiative
2. Duchy College
3. West Country Rivers Trust
4. Cartwheel
5. FWAG
6. COAST

We have also attending meeting involving the entire delegated grant schemes under the Objective One Programme.

The Rural Business Support Initiative: the Manager has been a member of our steering group and we have liaised closely on the pre investment support for business plans and planning of rural tourism projects.

Duchy College: the college has organised programmes of day training for the applicants, this has included adding value, sustainability, networking, statutory regulations and adding Cornish Distinctiveness. They have also held and administrated the benchmarking project. The Manager has also attended the Rural Leadership Course run in partnership with Plymouth University. This partnership has now extended outside the programme to advising on the qualifications of rural tourism businesses and content of courses.

West Country Rivers Trust: the Trust organised some pond creation courses for applicants who put ponds in under the Rural Access scheme. These were very popular, applicants found them very useful.

Cartwheel: the group were invited to share CRTIF's steering group and it has been very useful for the applicants to be able to have some investment towards marketing once the project is completed. Both schemes complimented each other very well.

FWAG: The farming and wildlife advisory group have undertaken wildlife audits for the applicants of Rural Access so the applicants are able to interpret the access to the countryside. Applicants' found this very useful.

COAST: the COAST Cornwall Sustainable Tourism Project has been used to signpost applicants to sustainability support. They have been able to encourage businesses to be more sustainable and have taken one of the applicants on as an ambassador for sustainability.

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Financial Records

An audit has been undertaken by Bishop Fleming. This shows a total of eligible expenditure £19,221,858.12 and £8,106,774.14 of grant has been invested. This amounts to an under spend of £32,969.57. The grant rate was 42.17%.

This complies with the offer letter of £18,464,127 eligible expenditure and £8,139,748.00 grant. The grant rate was 44.08%.

Irregularities

For the number of projects awarded investment the number of irregularities have been relatively small.

Business Name	Reason for Irregularity	Status
Cheney Mill	Bankruptcy	Outstanding - dividend due
Providence Farm	Sold	Completed - monies returned
Middle Lords	Not trading - illness	Completed
Penperthy Farm	Sold	Complete – now with RDS
Mount Pleasant Farm	Sold	Completed - monies returned
Lower Polgrain Farm	Sold	Completed – monies returned

Monitoring/Audits/Management and Control Systems

South West Tourism has developed a full management control system with an operation manual with guidance notes which would enable an outside person to understand and use the process.

All of the large projects (over 10,000) would have had a visit from the Manager before the start of work. All projects will have had a final visit when the project is complete and before the final 5% is played. The offer letter is checked at this stage and conditions and targets monitored and discussed. The large project could be visited again (or a meeting with the applicant) on an adhoc basis to ensure the project is progressing well.

The manager undertook over 300 visits to projects before or during the application stage. Advisory visits have also been undertaken at the claiming stage to ensure a smooth process. Claims were checked by at least two people to any problems were picked up.

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We have received an Article 4 and 10 visit from GOSW – all comments have been noted and actions applied. All audits were passed.

The programme has had a full audit by Bishop Fleming (report available). No problem arose from the audit and it was completed within a week's visit.

Annette Cole
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Project Manager
SOUTH WEST TOURISM LTD

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