LEADER+ is a European Union funded initiative for assisting rural communities to improve the quality of life and economic prosperity in their local area. It funds local partnerships, known as Local Action Groups, to develop and implement bottom-up, innovative and sustainable solutions to local rural development issues.

LEADER+ aims to encourage and support rural people to think about the longer-term potential of their area and encourage the implementation of integrated, high quality, innovative strategies for sustainable development. LEADER+ differs from other funding programmes in two main ways:

- It is managed by local people for local people to help them make a real difference in their communities;
- It seeks to promote and fund new and novel approaches to rural issues.

**Chalk and Cheese: Our Leader+**

Chalk and Cheese operates throughout Dorset’s rural heartland until the end of 2006, and has a budget of £2.6 million for a range of rural projects focused on small scale, innovative, community led projects. Projects supported must either add value to local products, or improve the quality of life in rural areas. They can be single events or long term initiatives, but must bring sustainable benefits to people living within the area, particularly for women and for rural businesses and workers affected by restructuring. These benefits can be economic, social, environmental or a mix of all three.

Through funding a range of projects we hope to:

- Increase employment levels
- Increase the number, diversity and sustainability of small businesses and visitor enterprises
- Increase economic activity based on local products linked to the area
- Diversify farm activities, with a focus on sustainable tourism
- Increase the range of people involved in community action and local issues
- Increase understanding of the environment and countryside skills amongst local people and visitors alike

**Local people and Chalk and Cheese**

The Chalk and Cheese programme would not work without the direct involvement of those living and working in the area. The local focus of the funding means the rural community themselves manage the Programme through the Local Action Group. The group is open to anyone living or working in the Chalk and Cheese area and currently has over 100 members.

**Chalk and Cheese projects and achievements**

Twenty five projects have already been funded through Chalk and Cheese, representing approximately 60% of the budget. These range from large scale environmental projects to small grants for community groups. In order to ensure the maximum benefits are created through the funding, all the projects supported must fit into the LAG’s strategic framework.

During the first two years of the Programme the LAG spend on projects in rural Dorset has totalled: £458,803
This spend has attracted in to rural Dorset an additional sum of: £317,275

The high profile and success of the Programme has also led to Chalk and Cheese receiving over £100,000 more in funds from the EU – all to be spent on more projects.
**Chalk and Cheese projects operating in West Dorset**

**Building Bridges**: Establishment of a network of communities learning and sharing community development techniques to implement themselves.

**Centre for Local Food**: Bridport based centre offering local food product development and marketing support, plus serviced office space for local food and community initiatives.

**Chalk and Hawks**: Sustainable tourism project integrating owl, raptor and other key species conservation, community action and rural tourism provision with the use of innovative audio and visual technologies.

**Community Movies**: A Beaminster community are writing, directing, producing, filming and acting in a film that explores aspects of living in rural Dorset.

**Continuum and Change**: The production of a collection of West Dorset folk songs from the Hammond Brothers collection, for performance throughout the area.

**Dorset Woodland Project**: The Dorset Woodland Group are working in schools and attending events raising awareness of their role in the countryside and the high quality products that can be made from sustainably managed wood.

**Farm Radio**: An internet-based radio station run by and for small family farms in the Chalk and Cheese area.

**Farm Paths**: A collaboration of local farmers improving access to their farms and using interpretation tools to raise awareness of agriculture’s beneficial impact on the landscape.

**Fire Sculpture**: Community development through the creation of spectacular art.

**First Dorset Credit Union**: Expansion of the Credit Union common bond area to extend into west Dorset.

**Fruit Swap**: A community group in Symondsbury is working to enable orchard owners to meet, learn the best ways of managing their orchards and swap their fruit.

**Heritage Orchard**: Using old records to identify and restore old orchards in the parish of Symondsbury.

**Magdalen Teepee**: Design and erection of a teepee at the Magdalen Centre, West Dorset to act as an inspiring and innovative classroom space.

**Open Churches**: A pilot to examine using three churches in the Chalk and Cheese area to promote church tourism and to use churches to promote local businesses.

**Purple People Eater**: A mobile catering co-operative, promoting the sourcing of local, and often organic foods from within the Chalk and Cheese area.

**Rustic Films**: A film project using its trading arm to finance community film making and teach film skills, exploring issues pertinent to those living and working in rural Dorset.

**Wessex Ridgeway**: Enhancing the route and corridor area of this long distance trail, offering a permanent resource for the people of Dorset and an important visitor attraction to support sustainable tourism.

**The Art of Craft**: The project is linking Dorset craftspeople with contemporary artists to give a new twist to traditional Dorset craft, promoting the industry and supporting businesses through touring and permanent exhibitions in Dorset and further afield.

These projects have generated spend in the communities of West Dorset so far totalling: £172,705

This spend has attracted into West Dorset an additional sum of: £132,410

This means that every £1 of WDDC money spent by the LAG on projects has generated £16 worth of match funding.

The Chalk and Cheese LAG are proud of their achievements and would like to thank West Dorset District Council for their continued support. We look forward to another successful two years ahead.

**SARAH WATSON**

Programme Manager, Dorset Chalk and Cheese LEADER+ Programme