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From David Heath CBE MP  
Minister of State for Agriculture and Food

*DH* January 2013

*David Heath Jones*

**Transition of Leader**

Thank you very much for your email of 21 December about supporting the Leader approach into the next Rural Development Programme. I fully recognise the impact of any gap between programmes on the ability of Leader Local Action Groups to function effectively from the start of the next programme.

The pressure on budgets will be significant during any programme transition period. However, after careful consideration we have decided to make available an allocation of transition funding for 2014 to continuing, and also any potential new, Leader Local Action Groups to help them respectively maintain or create capacity in this period. We envisage this will amount to approximately £30k to £40k per Local Action Group. This would be subject to a set allocation process and levels of demand. The use of these funds will also depend partly on the transitional arrangements agreed for any gap between the programmes. We are pressing the European Commission to acknowledge the risk of a gap and to propose transitional arrangements that ensure there is an appropriate legal framework in place for us to proceed.

Defra officials will, with the Leader Exchange group, work up over the coming months the detail of the new Leader arrangements and what this funding would be used for. Defra remains fully committed to the Leader approach. We hope this commitment to support will help make for a productive transition period and help secure the best that the Leader approach has to offer for the next programme. If you would like to discuss this further please contact David Wilford in the Rural Communities Policy Unit on 07775027760.

The Head of the National RDPE Delivery Team will also be simultaneously writing out to Leader groups setting out further information on financial arrangements in the current programme.

*David Heath*

**DAVID HEATH CBE MP**