

Executive Summary

*Single
Regeneration
Budget End of
Scheme
Evaluation*

Believing in Folkestone (BIF) and
Community Action South Kent (CASK)

May 2006



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This document summarises the key findings, conclusions and recommendations from the end of scheme evaluations of the Believing in Folkestone (BIF) and Community Action South Kent (CASK) SRB programmes. Separate reports are available providing a detailed assessment of these two SRB schemes.

The evaluations were carried out for Shepway District Council, the accountable body, by the Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services (CSES).

1. Study Aims and Methodology

The aims of the BIF and CASK end of scheme evaluations were, in summary, to:

- Assess the achievements and impact on strategic objectives;
- Highlight ways in which the schemes could have been managed more effectively;
- Consider appropriate forward strategies given changing circumstances and priorities;
- Identify good practices that can be learnt from past experience.

The research, which was carried out by CSES during the first three months of 2006, involved a combination of desk research, survey work and an interview programme.¹ Draft findings from the evaluations were presented to meetings of the CASK and the BIF partnerships on 20 and 21 April 2006 respectively. The final reports take into account feedback from these meetings.

2. Key Features of BIF and CASK Programmes

During the 1999-2006 period, **Believing in Folkestone** received some £10 million from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) towards a total programme cost of over £30 million. The aim of the SRB Programme was to promote the regeneration of the four most deprived Folkestone wards - Central, East, Foord and Harbour which have a combined population of some 20,000 people. Key features of the Programme included:

- A total of **55 BIF projects** were supported under Rounds 3, 4 and 5 of the SRB during the 1999-2006 period;
- Some 58% of the funding was used to support **capital expenditure** with 37% going on **revenue support** and the remainder to help cover programme management costs. The **average SRB grant** was £106,500 towards total project funding averaging £592,000;
- There were 32 different **beneficiaries**, the largest being Shepway District Council followed by South Kent College, Kent County Council and Basepoint.

¹ As part of the BIF research, face-to-face interviews were undertaken with 27 project leaders who were responsible for 34 projects. A total of 34 questionnaires (covering 61% of BIF projects) were completed, either directly by the project leader or as a result of an interview. In the case of CASK, 18 face-to-face interviews were carried out covering 21 projects. In addition, 20 questionnaires were completed (an 83% response rate) through the survey work.

Executive Summary

Overall, projects with essentially community aims predominated in the ‘Believing in Folkestone’ portfolio. Thus, the largest single group of projects by value were those relating to the Strategic Objective ‘enhancing the quality of life and the capacity to contribute to local regeneration’ (SO7). This together with projects that addressed social exclusion and opportunities for the disadvantaged (SO5) accounted for approaching two thirds (63%) of the SRB portfolio by value and a similar proportion (65%) by number of projects.

During the same period **CASK** received £2.7 million of SRB support towards a total programme cost of £9.7 million. The CASK area, based on the previous RDA designation, had a population of 43,000 and ran from Charing in the north to Dungeness in the south, Dymchurch in the east and Newenden to the west. Key features of the CASK Programme were:

- A total of **22 CASK projects** received SRB support with the average grant being £152,000;
- Over half (57%) of the SRB funding was used to assist **capital projects** with 38% being spent on **revenue support** and the remainder helping to cover programme management costs;
- There were 16 different **beneficiary organisations**, the main ones being Kent Rural Community Council, Shepway District Council and the Mid & South East Kent Council for Voluntary Services.

In the case of CASK, projects to support the Strategic Objective ‘Promoting sustainable regeneration, improve and protect the environment and infrastructure, including housing’ accounted for the largest financial allocations (48%). Most of the remaining SRB funding was used to promote the Strategic Objective ‘Addressing social exclusion and enhance opportunities for the disadvantaged’.

The SRB, which began in 1994, brought together a number of programmes that had previously been administered by different Government Departments with the aim of simplifying and streamlining the assistance available to local regeneration partnerships. Its priority was to enhance the quality of life of local people in areas of need by reducing the gap between deprived and other areas, and between different groups. During the 1999-2006 period, there were 11 SRB schemes operating across Kent and Medway with a total SRB investment of £68 million.

3. Key Findings from the BIF and CASK Evaluations

The basic conclusion of the end of scheme evaluations is that both the BIF and CASK programmes have performed well.

Although the relatively small scale of the programmes meant that they could not hope to have a major impact on overall trends, or significantly reduce disparities with more prosperous areas, the two programmes nevertheless achieved practical and useful

Executive Summary

outcomes that have helped disadvantaged communities. Key findings from the BIF and CASK research are summarised below.

- Most applicants (62% BIF and 70% CASK) found the **application procedures** either ‘very easy’ or ‘quite easy’.
- The **reason for applying for SRB funding** (65% BIF and 70% CASK) was because although other sources were available, more assistance was needed for projects to go ahead. In some cases, the SRB topped up funding from other sources whilst in other cases it had a catalytic effect by helping to leverage additional finance.
- The extent of **financial additionality** demonstrated by the SRB was high – in most cases, projects would not have gone ahead at all without support (56% BIF and 55% CASK) and in almost all the remaining cases, projects would have been delayed and/or proceeded on a smaller scale (34% BIF and 40% CASK).
- New **partnerships** were often stimulated by the SRB and in around a third of cases, community groups were set up specifically to help prepare an application. Partnership working to implement projects was generally good (58% BIF and 43% CASK). At a programme level, partnership working was stronger in the BIF programme than with CASK but the latter covered two local authority areas and was geographically far less compact and coherent.
- In almost all cases, SRB-supported projects achieved their **basic aims** (88% BIF and 80% CASK). An analysis of monitoring data on performance against targets suggests a lower achievement rate but many of the indicators used were not well suited to fully capturing project outcomes.
- Most projects are likely to have lasting outcomes. **Sustainability** in this sense was high for both programmes (85% for both BIF and CASK).
- A high proportion of project leaders considered that Shepway District Council had played a very positive **programme management** role (76% BIF and 85% CASK). There were few complaints and these mainly related to SRB monitoring requirements and procedures for settling financial claims.

Overall, on most if not all evaluation criteria, the BIF and CASK programmes have been a success. They have done much to kick-start the regeneration process in disadvantaged urban and rural areas and strengthened the community dimension that is so important if this process is to fully benefit local people and be socially inclusive.

4. Looking Ahead

The regeneration of the BIF and CASK areas is a long-term undertaking that requires a timeframe and level of funding that was beyond the possibilities that were available under the SRB. The final reports argue in favour of a post-SRB strategy to ensure that efforts to regenerate the BIF and CASK areas continue.

Executive Summary

In the case of **BIF**, the strategy should take as its starting point the physical transformation of the Folkestone area that is likely to take place in coming years as a result of the construction of the Bouverie Place shopping Centre, the re-development of Folkestone Seafront and Harbour, the Creative Quarter, plans to establish a Higher Education presence, and other developments such as the introduction of CTRL domestic services.

These developments will help to create a favourable environment for regeneration but will not be sufficient on their own to ensure that local people in the four Folkestone wards fully share in the benefits of economic development and growing prosperity. Three main priorities are for a post-SRB strategy are suggested – (1) **business** – encouraging entrepreneurship, the development of local small businesses and further inward investment; (2) **education and skills** – ensuring that local people in the four Folkestone wards are in a position to take advantage of new employment opportunities; and (3) **community infrastructure/services and housing** – continuing to improve community facilities, and the quality of local housing and ensuring that there is sufficient affordable accommodation in the four wards.

With **CASK**, major developments in or near to Romney Marsh including the possible expansion of Lydd Airport and the de-commissioning of one of the nuclear power stations at Dungeness need to be factored into any post SRB strategy. But the report argues that of probably greater importance to Romney Marsh's future are developments in the area as a whole - Ashford's designation as a growth area and the improved prospects for Folkestone. The benefits to Romney Marsh from these wider developments could be considerable. It is suggested that priorities for a post-SRB strategy should include: (1) ensuring that local people in the former CASK area benefit from developments in Ashford and Shepway as a whole **through investment in skills, transport links, housing, etc**; (2) balancing this with continued support for rural regeneration in the CASK area itself, i.e. **promotion of entrepreneurship and local businesses**, to improve **facilities and services**, and the **quality of life for rural communities** generally; and (3) **identifying alternative sources to the SRB** to fund rural regeneration projects and putting new partnership structures in place to replace CASK.

The final report points out that there is likely to be less **funding** available for urban and rural regeneration than previously. With strict limits on Council Tax increases in place, there is very limited scope for Shepway District Council to raise the additional funding needed to fill the gap left by the ending of the SRB Programme. Although not regarded by SEEDA as a replacement for the SRB, there was a widespread perception that the **Channel Corridor AIF** would fulfill this role. But for a number of reasons, this has not proved to be the case. **European funding** (the ESF and INTERREG) is one possible source of future funding for post-SRB projects. Other sources include **Lottery** funding and the **private sector**, and (in the case of CASK) LEADER +, KCC and SEEDA schemes to promote rural development.

New **partnership structures** are needed to replace BIF and CASK. The final reports argue that whilst the LSP and Community Strategy should provide an overall framework, there is a need for a local body – perhaps the Shepway Economic Regeneration Partnership if its remit is extended – to lead the regeneration effort and to ensure that it is rooted in the local community.