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**NORTHUMBERLAND COAST & LOWLANDS LEADER
LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)
Wednesday 18th September, 2019**

Executive LAG Members:

Ross Lowrie - Chair
Alex Wallace - Vice Chair
Jean Orr
Robert Brotherton
Angus Collingwood-Cameron
Iain Robson
Simon Cox

LEADER Staff:

Ivan Hewitt – Northumberland Coast and Lowlands LEADER Programme Officer
Christine Stevenson – Northumberland LEADER Admin

1. Welcome to LAG Meeting & Apologies:

Ross Lowrie, Chair opened the Northumberland Coast & Lowlands LEADER meeting at 18:03

CS – Confirmed that meeting was quorate by Voting Members attending and by Theme

Apologies received and recorded from Executive LAG Members: Ross Weddle, Philip Angier, Julien Lake, Ian Moyes and Richard Waters

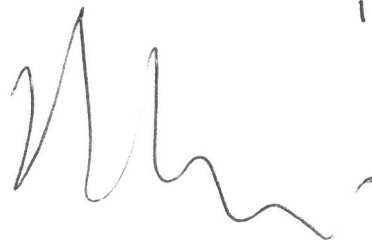
Apologies received and recorded from LAG Member: Carole Moyes

Apology received and recorded from Accountable Body: Heather Smith and David Baird

LAG Noted: LAG wished David Baird (AB) a speedy recovery and return to full health

2. D.O.I.

None recorded



3. Draft Minutes from 22nd May 2019:

Page 1 - Accepted

Page 2 - Accepted

Page 3 - Accepted

Page 4 - Accepted

Page 5 - Accepted

Page 6 - Accepted

The minutes were agreed as a true record. Dated and signed by Ross Lowrie, Chair.

4. Matters Arising & Actions to include Chair's Update:

No actions recorded from meeting of the 22nd May, 2019

RL- What were/are the criteria for allocation of project underspends?

IH - Unclear what the criteria will be or if any further reallocation.

The Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) consultation is still not happening, but good news for our area with a North of Tyne Mayor being elected.

Chair's Update:

Our LAG Celebration Event held 19th June at Carnaby's Brownieside was well received with a good attendance. Chair thanked all LAG members for their support and continued efforts. Event received good press coverage highlighting the benefits of LEADER funding and the work of LAG members

Attended a Rural Services Network event in July around development of a Rural Strategy, I did not find this useful, there seems to be a break-down in Regional Rural Networks. We need more people to be talking together

I also attended the North Northumberland Local Area Committee meeting in July with LAG Project Officer, this was an interesting meeting with a cross section of local councillors. We handed out the LEADER Event Brochure which was well received and have had excellent press with quotes and pictures in local media

AW - All council members are aware of the Area Committee meetings and information that comes out from them

RL- Looking forward - LAG meeting today with last LAG meeting to be organised for December. LAG need to discuss/decide what we want to do and what happens after December

5. Programme Officers Report:

IH - Gave Programme Officers report and informed LAG that current project budget is fully committed with Grant Funding Agreements (GFAs) totalling £1,769,852.42

Supporting 60 projects including recycled underspend. The underspend was



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allocated at May's LAG meeting to The Development of The Nursery at White House Farm project

LAG members are in the process of completing project evaluation visits and good press releases have linked the visits which highlight the LAG have had a very successful programme

RL - Is there current underspend and is there any project we can give underspend too. Will the underspend increase and project financially close?

IH - Yes, underspend may increase but not sure if it can be allocated

RL - Can we transfer underspend to the RC&A budget and can we spend that on an evaluation programme as the LAG's Local Development Strategy (LDS) allows LAG to evaluate achievements

RB - Good to back up achievements with a nice glossy brochure

IH - What would be the use of evaluating evidence and who would your audience be?

RL - Could be about the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), the audience could be the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and a Regional Rural Roundtable. There's no shortage of purpose

RB - How long are LAG staff in post?

IH - Programme Officer (IH) contracted until December 31st, 2019 Administration Assistant (CS) has a permanent contract but funding for post ends 31st December, 2019

SC - Notes that nine projects are still to draw down funds, are any at risk?

IH - Project Zero Tillage who took up a hire purchase agreement can only finally claim when the project has paid off the balance owing to his HP agreement

SC - Project Post Driver has not claimed?

IH - Claim is with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA)

RB - Do projects have to be paid in full?

IH - All project final claims must be in before 31st December, 2019

AW - If no LEADER staff, who does the final work?

IH - Accountable Body will put arrangements in place

AW - I have had reports that LEADER funding has really helped and enabled many good works

RL - Do project applicants understand their timeline for drawing down funds?

IH - Yes they do, this is an ongoing process to keep projects informed

Post LEADER Arrangements:

RL - What happens if an email for LEADER arrives 1st January 2020?

IH - If any LEADER staff in post would mop up otherwise the Accountable Body will make sure the cover is in place if required

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RL

RL - Can LAG members think and email RL with any post LEADER suggestions

ACTIONS:

- **IH to organise an Operational Group Meeting with the Accountable Body as soon as possible**
- **IH to send SC a fortnightly claims update**
- **Add LAG suggestions to OGM agenda**

a. RC&A Update:

ALL - Discussion of LAG RC&A budget

RB - If LAG needed to pay evaluation report/achievements costs, would we have enough in the budget?

IH - I don't know if the money in total is available

RL - LAG need to ask Accountable Body for clarification on budget underspends for projects/RC&A side

IH - Cut off date for RC&A is 31st December, 2019

RB - LAG members can pay for themselves if we want to attend a Christmas Party

SC - If large number we need to book early

RL - Look for dates in early December, suggests 4th and 11th

ACTION: CS to email LAG members dates for a December meeting 4th/11th

b. Code of Conduct:

RL - A reminder that LAG members have signed a Code of Conduct which identifies the values in how we behave. We should all be aware that there are opportunities for miscommunications, crossed wires and a scope for things to happen on visits.

We notify applicants of visits, we don't just turn up, no mystery shoppers and we don't expect special treatment as LAG members.

A gentle reminder to avoid crossed wires as we are all representing the LAG when we are on site visits

6. LAG Closure Planning:

RL - Covered under agenda items 4 and 5

7. Communications Working Group:

RB - LAG Events went well, would like to thank I. Moyes (LAG Executive) for taking photographs for the brochure and at the event, much appreciated

ACC - Stories still coming out from event, good press coverage

RB - Agrees with ACC regarding media coverage and also from the North L AC meeting the Chair attended

RL - What is De-minimis for contracting out?



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ACC - Enquired what was Peter Jackson's thoughts at the Round Table meeting

RL - PJ recognises the opportunity for Rural. There is a lack of rural voice

ACC - Would it fit in with Northumberland County Council (NCC), Borderlands or the North of Tyne Devo Deal?

RL - Challenge is to deliver in rural Northumberland, we don't need to look at Durham. We are coming to the end of LEADER and we have been clear that we would want the council to continue support a LEADER approach

ACC - Pushing on the NoT Devo Deal, for a bottom up rural development. The Round Table is good rural platform

RL - Referring to press articles that mentioned two missed rural opportunities already, there is still opportunity which might need leadership

AW - The Borderlands Conference is coming up in November at Slaley Hall

RL - Would be useful to have a LEADER voice there

JO - PJ was very positive about the future of Rural Northumberland at the LAG Event

IH - Confused, was the previous meeting with PJ and the LEP the Round Table meeting or are we encouraging PJ to organise one?

ACTION: RL to contact PJ to organise and take forward

8. Evaluation Working Group:

SC - From my last evaluation report we have 60 projects fully approved, of these 51 projects have had claims partially/fully paid totalling £1.482m and by the end of September we will have evaluated 42 projects out of the 60 approved, which leaves 18 visits to complete. We are on schedule to complete all visits and I would like to thank members for all their good work

RL - Thanked SC and evaluation members for their hard work

ACTION: CS to continue to organise evaluation visits in October, November and December

9. A.O.B:

None

The next meeting for the Northumberland Coast & Lowlands LAG - December's date to be confirmed

Ross Lowrie, Chair closed the Northumberland Coast & Lowlands LEADER LAG meeting at 19:49