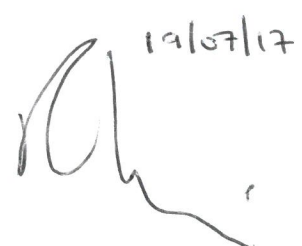


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**NORTHUMBERLAND COAST & LOWLANDS LEADER  
LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)  
Wednesday 21st June, 2017**

**Executive LAG Members:**

Ross Lowrie – Chair  
Alex Wallace – Vice Chair  
Iain Robson  
Jean Orr  
Simon Cox  
Chris Rushton  
Robert Brotherton  
Julien Lake  
Steve Peart  
Carron Craighead  
Louis Fell  
Iain Moyes

**LAG Members:**

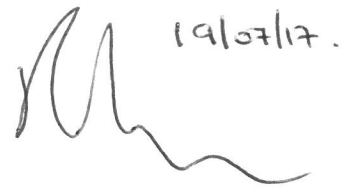
Carole Moyes  
Richard Waters

**LEADER Staff:**

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

**Advisory Group:**

David Baird – External Funding Appraisal Manager - Northumberland County Council



### **1. Welcome to LAG Meeting & Apologies:**

Ross Lowrie, Chair opened the Northumberland Coast & Lowlands LEADER LAG at 18:00

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

CS - Apologies received and recorded from Executive Members: Angus

Collingwood-Cameron, Philip Angier and Ross Weddle

Apologies received and recorded from LAG Member: Nic Best and Brenda Fordy Scott

Apology received and recorded from Accountable Body: Heather Smith

### **2. D.O.I**

RL - Introduced this agenda item by saying that IH had circulated the LAG's Code of Conduct/ Conflict of Interest Guidance for LAG members to review and that all members needed to note on the meeting sign-in-sheet if they had a Declaration of Interest and also that it required minuting under this agenda item

Carron Craighead, LAG Executive - agenda item 6a - Organic Egg Laying Unit - Personal

Louis Fell, LAG Executive - agenda item 6a - Organic Egg Laying Unit - Pecuniary

Louis Fell, LAG Executive - agenda item 6e - Eshott Heugh Animal Park - Pecuniary

### **3. Draft LAG Minutes from 17th May, 2017:**

Page 1 - Accepted

Page 2 - Accepted

Page 3 - Accepted

Page 4 - Accepted

Page 5 - Accepted

Page 6 - Accepted

Page 7 - Accepted

Page 8 - Accepted

Page 9 - Accepted

Page 10 - Accepted

Page 11 - Accepted

Page 12 - Accepted

Page 13 - Accepted

C&L LAG Minutes recorded as a true record. Dated and signed by R. Lowrie Chair

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Rh

#### **4. Matters Arising & Actions to include Chair's update:**

CR - Page 12 agenda item 8e - wording should of read: Similar to previous application, concerned with consistency of approach

RL - Noted for LAG that OA Sleepy Hare, approved by LAG to FA at May's meeting had similarities to the OA Action Chase, declined to progress at April's meeting. LAG had seen merit in Action Chase. Both OA's were circulated to LAG members to look for consistency in approach, challenging for LAG

SC - LAG need to make objective assessment of OA's at OA stage. Agrees that the group judgement is important part of LAG decision making process. The OA assessment stage is not just about eligibility. Remain mindful of time input by LEADER Admin/Technical Appraisers and Applicants as good quality applications important and consistent judgement too. LEADER does not have unlimited funds, nor can we give a green light to all applications irrespective.

DB - Informed LAG that the RPA's Attestation Visit has been rescheduled to Wednesday 28th June

#### **5. Programme Officers Report:**

IH - Gave Programme Officers Report and informed LAG of current project budget commitments and spend. Asked that LAG agree to consider project applications on the basis of those figures

As of June 2017 LAG has committed £446,986.78, with a balance of £1,017,795.60 remaining to commit.

NOTE - LAG approved and agreed Budget profile

IR - Robotic Flail could go under Forestry Theme?

CC - Report shows a project in Amber?

IH - That project is now developing

RL - Informed LAG members that he as asked:

- Simon Cox to Chair the LAG Evaluation Subgroup
- Chris Rushton to Chair the Communications Subgroup
- Robert Brotherton to look towards implications for Rural Sustainability post Brexit

#### **6. Presentations of EOIs received by Executive:**

##### **a. Organic Egg Laying Unit**

**DORA Ref:105955**

**LEADER Priority Theme Priority 1 - Farm Productivity**

**Total Project Cost - £209,859.72**

**LEADER Grant Request- £41,971.94**

Summary - The project will create an Organic Poultry laying unit for 12,000 hens in

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Belford. This will be another strand activity on the farm that will generate income without relying on a farming subsidy

RL – Chair informed LAG members that the applicants were unable to attend and that Louis Fell (LAG Executive) would give a short presentation on their behalf having given his D.O.I.

LAG Questions:

RL - Knows of other farms in area have put in same

LF - Yes, aware of them

RL - Raises question of impact on other businesses?

LF - Knows that Bainbridge Farms have applied to the NULAG. Demand in area, all transported to Harrogate

RL - So there's no local displacement, its national?

LF - Demand for free range eggs

IR - Is it all happening at Easington, a new build?

LF - Specialist build, does need planning permissions. Will be well hidden and is low lying

SP - Will eggs all go to wholesaler?

LF - Yes

JO - Who will be employed?

LF - As this is a specific unit will require specialised employment

JO - Do the birds get out?

LF - Yes, trained from young as soon as light comes on, they are free to get out and roam around

Louis Fell left meeting

LAG Discussions:

RL - Large shed with chickens, grant for £42,000

DB - NULAG have already supported I and have another in pipeline. Displacement issues

SP - National, not for local

SC - Technical Appraisal sated strong fit, large scale project for expansion and diversification. LAG should support

LAG Decision:

a. 9 Vote - Yes

b. 0 Vote - No,

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c. 1 Vote - Abstain - Chair did not vote

LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application Approved to Full Application

LAG Scored - 4 on strategic fit

Note:

IR - No planning permission yet

Process – Chair signed and dated E.O.I. Appraisal Form

**b. Northumberland Haven Cottages**

**DORA Ref:106008**

**LEADER Priority Theme Priority 3 - Rural Tourism**

**Total Project Cost - £440,400.00**

**LEADER Grant Request- £176,160.00**

Summary - Provision of 3 holiday cottages in Alnwick for short term letting by conversion & restoration of Grade II listed barn building at Greensfield Farm Steading

RL – Chair welcomed Alan Bell and Olga Mironova on behalf of Northumberland Haven Cottages who gave a short presentation

LAG Questions:

CR - 3.5 job creation seems high due to seasonal business?

AB - Hope to run all year through. Change over 2 times per week so need staff to cover, also have booking team

SP - Are you expecting guests to stay a week?

AB - Trend is a weekend of a short stay, still require service

LF - Target occupancy rate?

AB - 75%, can fill gaps with friends/colleagues

JO - Size of accommodation?

AB - Main has 4 bedrooms, second 2 bedrooms and third has 3 bedrooms

JL - Have secured planning permission, status of land purchase?

AB - Currently negotiating purchase price

RL – Informed applicants that the LAG celebrates success of projects. Thanked applicant for their presentation

Applicant left LAG meeting

LAG Discussions:

SC - High grant low value for money. verify jobs as £45,000 per job, not convinced, not happy to support

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JL - Feels same as SC, can't support

IR - Feels that they have understood the market as short breaks and long weekends are the norm

AW - Agrees with IR

RB - Are we supporting displacement, is there a real need?

IR - Northumberland Tourism priority is not to support self catering, this has high specification

LF - 3-4 hours to clean a bedroom, not in his experience and has knowledge in this field. Is the site purchase eligible? Feels big amount of grant for this

CM - Is it job creation for another part of business?

LAG Decision:

0 Vote - Yes

11 Vote - No, - Chair did not vote

LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application Rejected

LAG Scored - 1 on strategic fit

LAG Noted:

High Grant Intervention

Low value for money re-job creation

Low confidence that 3.5 jobs would be created

Process – Chair signed and dated E.O.I. Appraisal Form

#### **c. Robotic Flail**

**DORA Ref:106010**

**LEADER Priority Theme Priority 1 - Farm Productivity**

**Total Project Cost - £42,000.00**

**LEADER Grant Request- £16,960.00**

Summary - The project will remove scrub and invasive regrowth on steep grassy banks (which are inaccessible by tractor), by means of purchasing a remote control robotic flailing machine and associated specialist transportation trailer

RL – Chair welcomed Frank Dakin on behalf of Robotic Flail who gave a short presentation

LAG Questions:

JO - Are the steep sides of any historical interest?

FD - Banks have been eroded over years, narrow gorge. If it gets overgrown is lost to woodland

IR - Good bit of kit, how far would you travel to hire it out?

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RQ

FD - Maybe 20-30 miles, I have someone in mind who has a trailer can maybe go further

RL - Environment Agency has one

AW - What type of warranty and what about spare parts?

FD - Operator specific. 12 month warranty on new piece of machinery, maybe once every three years maintenance . Currently spraying gorge from back of a quad

CC - Late spring any issues of disturbing birds?

FD - Land is within Stewardship from October - end of February

RL – Informed applicants that the LAG celebrates success of projects. Thanked applicant for their presentation

Applicant left LAG meeting

LAG Discussions:

IR - How to get three quotes for machinery?

IH - Not always necessary if non available

IR - Have seen a demo of this, machines other attachment can be used more but nothing like this in Northumberland

RL - I have a different approach as an environmentalist

IR - Could've made a better application

RL - Interchangeable heads

CC - RPA put pressure on farmers to utilise land that is scrub

SP - Is grant representing value for money?

JO - Quite a bit of ancient history on land

IH - Guidance of £25,000 per job. LAG can give advice on application

RB - Cutting back on scrub a good thing to do but need to ask environment impact?

JL - Nice to see an application for Farm productivity. Detail was scant and hazy for hiring out machine, if we progress would like to see more detail

SC - Lack of detail of increased turnover. Alternative proposal for a lower grant?

LAG Decision:

- a. To Fund as is
- b. Not to fund
- c. Offer advice if they tackle issue of hire

- a. 10 Vote - Yes
- b. 0 Vote - No
- c. 1 Abstain - Chair did not vote

LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application Approved to Full Application

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LAG Scored - 3 on strategic fit

LAG Noted:

Value for jobs, up jobs drop grant

Multifunction of machinery with interchangeable heads

Better business case for hire

Process – Chair signed and dated E.O.I. Appraisal Form

**d. St. Margaret's Cross**

**DORA Ref:106185**

**LEADER Priority Theme Priority 3 - Rural Tourism**

**Total Project Cost - £400,000.00**

**LEADER Grant Request- £16,0,000.00**

Summary - A new business start-up aiming to redevelop a derelict farmhouse with four barns (outbuildings) and 10 acres of land. The applicant's intention is to: create a permanent farmhouse residence; a 3 room bed & breakfast (in the farmhouse); redevelop the outbuildings to form 3 holiday cottages; 'Northumbrian' landscaped area (1 of each accommodation type will be wheelchair friendly). 2.5 FTE jobs are forecast to be created

RL – Chair welcomed Fiona Thompson on behalf of St. Margaret's Cross who gave a short presentation

LAG Questions:

IR - What experience of running a service accommodation have you?

FT - Always been involved

CC - 3 units, how long to rent out?

FT - All have 2 bedrooms, look to start per week but would consider shorter breaks

CC - A large estimated turnover?

FT - £500 per week, 30 week occupancy, £15,000 per annum

JL - Questions 2.5 F/T jobs?

FT - I job for myself to set up B&B, look at seasonal work as will need help

JL - What will they be employed to do?

FT - I will run it, 1 employee for breakfasts then there's maintenance for buildings

SC - What are your links with silvermoor?

FT - Sons business, I am Company Secretary

RL – Informed applicants that the LAG celebrates success of projects. Thanked applicant for their presentation

Applicant left LAG meeting



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LAG Discussions:

- LF - Producing more towards tourism, value for jobs more realistic but grant rate per job is high
- JL - Agrees with LF. It's a massive amount of grant. Presentation was light on detail. Nice to provide niche accommodation
- JO - Respite care accommodations are few and far between but agrees is asking for a large grant
- IH - If LAG approve to FA, costs to be revised
- RL - Deal with EOI as it is
- CM - Feels that if it were only for serviced B&B would be a better application
- SP - Costs ineligible, is there a way of revising costs?
- DB - It's a private residence

LAG Decision:

- 0 Vote - Yes
- 10 Vote - No
- 1 Vote - Abstain, Chair did not vote

LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application Rejected

LAG Scored - 2 on strategic fit

LAG Noted:

High grant value

Low value for money re-job creation

Advise to look at smaller project with a better grant rate

Process – Chair signed and dated E.O.I. Appraisal Form

**e. Eshott Heugh Animal Park**

**DORA Ref:106337**

**LEADER Priority Theme Priority 3 - Rural Tourism**

**Total Project Cost - £48,000.00**

**LEADER Grant Request- £19,200.00**

Summary - The project will create an interactive outdoor children's play area within the grounds of this established animal park / zoo

RL – Chair welcomed Maxine Bradley and Brian Bradley behalf of Eshott Heugh Animal Park who gave a short presentation

LAG Questions:

Jo - Where are you based?

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Ag.

MB - Past Eshott, middle of nowhere

JO - Do you own the land?

MB - No lease the land

AW - Have to keeping bringing new attractions, will you charge?

MB - No charge

AW - Where is the next nearest same?

MB - Alnwick gardens

IR - What evidence that a play area will increase and create jobs?

MB - Working with company who design and install play area's, say 100% increase

SC - How many visitors per year?

MB - 20,000 per year, hope to at least double visitor numbers

SC - How much do you charge for zoo admission?

MB - Adults = £6.50 Children £4.75

JL - If child is in playpark where will parents sit?

MB - New play park plans in handouts

SP - Zoo is value for money, when do you expect to create jobs?

MB - Looking to hire by end of this year and more next year

BB - Looking to expand staff upto 35

RL - What about signage?

MB - We have asked for a brown sign but as we currently don't have 65,000 visitors we can't have a sign. Single track down to zoo, we can't cope with larger numbers to quickly

CC - How long have you been open for?

MB - About 2 years

RL – Informed applicants that the LAG celebrates success of projects. Thanked applicant for their presentation

Applicant left LAG meeting

LAG Discussions:

AW - An excellent presentation

JL - Liked this EOI a lot, keen to support. Needs clarity around jobs as application could be better

SC - Very honest presentation. Generating 20,000 visitors. Low value grant, protects current jobs. Good for LEADER and LAG

RL - Under declared on jobs, disagrees

DB - Not direct jobs discussed, have to be only direct jobs created for play ground

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LAG Decision:

10 Vote - Yes

0 Vote - No, Chair did not vote

LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application Approved to Full Application

LAG Scored - 3 on strategic fit

LAG Noted:

Review direct jobs created

Process – Chair signed and dated E.O.I. Appraisal Form

#### **7. Consideration of EOIs received:**

CS - minuted under item agenda 6 a,b,c,d & e

#### **8. A.O.B:**

None

##### **b. Project Evaluations:**

SC - LAG Evaluation Group have started this process, identified on end column of the Programme Officers Report. 2 members attend with members of LAG staff per visit, LAG look for sight of evidence and take photographs

Out of 15 projects available to evaluate currently have completed 4 and are on track to follow on. We complete a template report which is available for auditing process and forwarded to CS for integration into a full Evaluation Report.

We are linking up with reports for the Communications Working Group.

LAG members can flag up Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory

DB - Useful to understand scope of evaluation visits as AB do project closure visits, need to join up

RL - Thanked SC for report, Communications Report at next meeting

Date & Time of the next C&L LAG meeting - Wednesday 19th July at Crossman Hall, Holy Island. Time tbc

**Ross Lowrie, Chair closed the Northumberland Coast & Lowlands LAG meeting at 20:30**