

18/02/2017.
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NORTHUMBERLAND COAST & LOWLANDS LEADER

LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)

Wednesday 18th January 2017

Executive LAG Members:

Ross Lowrie – Chair
Alex Wallace – Vice Chair
Jean Orr
Simon Cox
Chris Rushton
Julia Plinston
Robert Brotherton
Angus Collingwood-Cameron

LAG Members:

Carron Craighead
Brenda Fordy Scott
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 opened the Northumberland Coast & Lowlands LEADER LAG meeting at 18:04
CS – Confirmed that meeting was quorate

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CS - Apologies received and recorded from Executive Members: Milburn Douglas, Steve Peart, Julien Lake, Ross Weddle, Philip Angier and Iain Robson

CS - Apologies received and recorded from LAG Member: Louis Fell, Ian Moyes and Carol Moyes

Apology received and recorded from Accountable Body: Heather Smith

2. D.O.I.

None

3. Draft LAG Minutes from 14th December 2016:

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

Minutes for Coast & Lowlands LAG meeting of December 14th 2016 agreed as a true record.

Dated and signed by Ross Lowrie, Chair

4. Matters Arising & Actions to include Chairs Update:

None

Note – Chair revised order of review of OA's on agenda for January 18th LAG meeting – LAG members Agreed

5. Programme Officers Report to include Project Expenditure to Date:

IH – Presented Programme Officers Report and LAG had a general discussion about project spend to date and whether commitments for the OA's on meeting agenda would be from this financial year 16/17 or 17/18.

ACC- Where do these OA's fall into budget year 16/17 or 17/18?

IH – Advised expected spend from the OA's for consideration would be 17/18

CR – Asked if LAG would achieve spend in the Delivery Plan (DP)?

DB – Advised LAG could consider over committing

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CR - Will LAG spend this year?

IH - Applicants can ask for more grant

DB - Not guaranteed LAG will support

RL - Next meeting LAG will look at spend

DB - Risk of RPA taking underspend back, not an issue at present. LAG need to check a check

RL - Can the accountable body check with RPA?

DB - Future process will identify and clarify during development of the DP and Brexit Plans

AW - Purdah delayed LAG programme

IH - Asked if LAG members agreed to consider OA's on current project figures?

NOTE – LAG agreed to proceed on basis of figures from Programme Officers Report

ACTION - IH to bring LAG's financial commitment spend to next meeting

6. Consideration of Outline Applications Received by Executive:

a. Growing Up Naturally Eco-Classroom

DORA Ref: 104676

LEADER Priority Theme 4 – Rural Services

Total project Cost - £160.000

LEADER Grant Request - £104.000

Summary – Project to build a new, bespoke, eco-friendly building within the grounds of Swansfield Park Primary School but accessible to the wider community. This will become a hub for outdoor learning. The building will house Tic Toc Club (afterschool and holiday provision serving several local schools). It will also be a base for family learning activities such as Woodcraft Folk. It will be available for use by community groups such as Brownies and act as a meeting space for local groups such Alnwick Town Council
Scored 12/24 at Technical Appraisal which recommended approval, however the appraiser noted the project offered the LAG poor value for money and requests £104,000 providing very little in RPA outputs contributing to the jobs and growth agenda.

RL – Chair welcomed Jenny Smith and Ann Marie Grimes on behalf of Growing Up Naturally Eco-Classroom who gave a short verbal presentation and handouts

LAG Questions:

CC – What will structure be made out of?

JS – Bales of straw, assemble in a weekend with help of parents

CC – Any fire risk with straw?

JS – No, straw bales are rendered

SC – Cost to LAG?

JS – Total project costs of £160.000, asking grant for £104.000 (65% intervention), looking for match funding

SC – If it's built in a weekend that's a lot of money, what are costs for?

JS – Foundations, labour costs. It's an exciting project; it's our own version of the Alnwick Castle Tree House. Turning Tic Toc into a larger facility with main access from park and not from the school, also look to encourage access to other groups.

See's issue in park area with youth and teenagers, will look to engage with Gallery Youth Project

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

Applicants left LAG meeting

LAG Discussions:

AW – If Alnwick Town Council is intending to use this facility why is there no financial contribution from them?

IH – Don't know if they have been asked

SC – Scored this 5, high cost to LAG with low benefits and low job output. Where does responsibility for education come in?

RB – Should be grant aiding community

CC – Visions of trouble with straw bales, large amount of money

RL – Once straw bales rendered are safe but high cost of construction is a concern

ACC – Has knowledge of a forthcoming large outdoor play area for Alnwick, won't support this OA

CR – Has previous experience of this type of outdoor play project, works well

IH – Not a new building for the school

AW – Is this school a local authority school? If it were to become an academy, it's a different story

SC – What LAG trying to achieve, project not worth 1/3 of LAG budget

RL – LAG have some headroom for projects that don't create jobs

CC – Remembers the Aln Valley railway project, they came back with a lower grant request

RL – Chair recommended three options for LAG to consider decision:

Option a - LAG Approve with Conditions

Option b - LAG Reject

Option c - LAG Reject with advice

SC – Not waste applicant or LAG's time

RL – Chair proposed for LAG Executive members to vote on options:

LAG Decision:

Option a – 0 votes

Option b – 5 votes

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Option c – 2 votes – Chair did not vote
LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application - Rejected
LAG Rationale - not good value for money and too high a grant request for job creation
Process – Chair signed and dated OA Appraisal Form

b. Northern Edge Coffee

DORA Ref: 104652

LEADER Priority Theme Priority 2 - Support for Rural Micro and Small Business

Total project Cost - £25.000

LEADER Grant Request - £10.000

Summary – The grant of £10,000 is requested for eligible capital equipment in order to develop and expand the business. 1.5 jobs will be created giving good value for money (£6666 grant / job created), without grant assistance the project will not be delivered. The project is simple in scale and delivery, the applicant has secured match funding by way of a loan from a parent; there are no permissions, licences or consents required. To ensure compliance with LEADER the appraiser has recommended a number of conditions of progression below

Scored 19/24 the Technical Appraiser recommends approval to Full Application

RL – Chair welcomed Dan Inglis and Susan Moffat on behalf of Northern Edge Coffee who gave a short verbal presentation

LAG Questions:

RB – How did you get interested in Coffee?

DI – As a youngster had wanted to buy a catering van, but finally set up gardening business which earned enough to set up a Coffee Roastery, although a novice in business has been successful

JO – Who are you selling to in London?

DI - Limited sales still in London, but demand is increasing especially in local shops

AW – TV advertising indicates that meetings in coffee shops are more popular, what makes people buy your coffee?

DI – Local businesses support each other and our coffee is good

AW – have you contacted the people who promote Produced in Northumberland?

DI – In talks but a local entrepreneur has taken us under his wing. This new machine will produce better coffee

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

Applicants left LAG meeting

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LAG Discussion:

General LAG discussion

RL – Chair proposed for LAG Executive members to vote:

LAG Decision:

Vote Yes - 7, Vote No - 0, Chair did not vote

LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application approved to Full Application

c. Bamburgh Castle Walled Garden

DORA Ref: 104669

LEADER Priority Theme Priority 3 - Support for Rural Tourism

Total project Cost - £100.000

LEADER Grant Request - £40.000

Summary - The project is to refurbish and extend a small existing building located within the Bamburgh Castle Walled Garden which was formerly owned/managed by GS Clark & Son as a market garden and green grocer. The aim of the project is to strengthen the retail and service offer to residents and visitors by building a multi- purpose café, retail and landscaped space

Scored 12/24 at Technical Appraisal and the appraiser states the project is an eligible activity, but further information is required to ascertain the eligibility of all the costs. The procurement approach is currently unsatisfactory and requires a change of approach. The project fits with the LAG LDS and other strategies

RL – Welcomed Mark Swearman and John Cresswell on behalf of Bamburgh Castle Walled Garden who gave a short presentation

LAG Questions:

JO – Are you independent from Bamburgh Castle?

MS – Business used to sell veg to castle when called Clarke's, have applied for change of business name

CC – Queried business displacement in Bamburgh?

MS – Not sufficient services to cope in summer months we have identified a need for the children, pets, groups. Niche stop for visitors

RL – Is there another café?


MS – Its only open seasonally, we are more viable as we will service local community

SC – Where is other funding coming from?

MS – A bank loan and personal funds

JO – Will Brexit have any impact?

MS – We sell locally sourced produce, support local infrastructure

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

Applicants left LAG meeting

LAG Discussions:

AW – Community based, feels it will work

ACC – Who appraised this OA as does not agree with comments

IH – If approved will have to follow open, transparent procurement and will have to declare relationships

DB – Conflict of interest. I was the appraiser

RL – Poor application

SC – Was there another application from Bamburgh?

IH – Time scale for the LEADER process

RB – Keeps local community together

RL – Chair proposed for LAG Executive members to vote:

LAG decision:

Vote Yes – 6, Vote No – 0, Vote to Abstain – 1, Chair did not vote

LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application – Approved to Full Application

Process – Chair signed and dated OA Appraisal Form

d. Doxford Farm Cottages

DORA Ref: 104663

LEADER Priority Theme Priority 3 - Support for Rural Tourism

Total Project Cost - £64,065.45

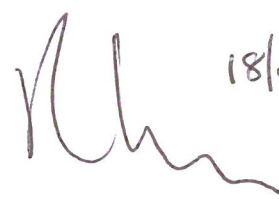
LEADER Grant Request - £25,626.18

Summary - To install central heating and hot water system in existing holiday cottages and redecorate with the aim of extending bookings into the winter season to increase turnover
Scored 16/24 at Technical Appraisal with comments: - this project is eligible, offers value for money and fits well with the LAG local priorities as per their LDS. The Full Application requires more detail on a number of key areas including market need and demand, confirmation of match funding and evidence of capability and capacity to run the project. The identified risks are the potential effect of a delayed start and failure to source the loan finance element of match funding

RL – Welcomed Richard Shell on behalf of the applicant (Sarah Shell, Mother) who gave a short presentation

LAG Questions:

CC – Questioned previous grant funding?

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RS – Was all pre- 2007

IH – Doesn't impact on this OA

SC – How many cottages 8/9?

RS – 9 cottages, will do half at a time

SC – How long will it take?

RS – Hope to do 4 cottages in a month

JO – What size are cottages?

RS – 1-3 bedroomed

DB – Process for FA and OA by RPA does take awhile

IH – A lot of the work already done

RL – Process will still take a couple of months

RS – If delay would have to split up work schedule as we are very busy in the summer months

AW – Year-end financials, could work not be delayed?

RS – Tried to get everything together as quick as possible

RL – Can you explain the 1.5 FTE?

RS – Will need to see an increase in revenue before any job creations

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

Applicants left LAG meeting

LAG Discussions:

AW – When did this application come in?

IH - December 2016

AW – Had applicant earlier questions?

IH – Would not have come in any earlier, trying to push as quick as possible through process

ACC – Depressing application as output only 0.5 cleaner. LAG can do better

IH – Increase in demand for some tourism

DB – Could direct to EAFRD funding

SC – Sceptical about job creation, feels with turnover could self-fund this project

RL – Wedding venue sees as a package

RL – Chair proposed for LAG Executive members to vote:


LAG Decision:

Vote Yes – 0, Vote No – 7, Chair did not vote

LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application – Declined

LAG Comments:

- Not value for money
- Does not fit with local priorities
- Concerns over job creation

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Process – Chair signed and dated OA Appraisal Form

e. Longbank Bunk Barn

DORA Ref: 104567

LEADER Priority Theme Priority 2 – Support for Rural Micro and Small Business

Total Project Cost - £80,350.00

LEADER Grant Request - £20,587.50

Summary - The project converts a redundant traditional farm building to become bunk barn style accommodation aimed at walkers and cyclists. The accommodation will provide a communal area with provision for cooking, cleaning and laundry facilities, two dorm-style rooms able to sleep 4-6 people each, shower and toilet facilities and a lock-up facility for bicycles

Scored 15/24 at Technical Appraisal with comments - This project is eligible, offers value for money and fits well with the LAG local priorities as per their LDS. The Full Application requires more detail on a number of key areas including market need and demand and evidence of capability and capacity to run the project.

The identified risks are that planning permission is not granted, loan finance is not in place and the potential effect of a delayed start

RL – Welcomed Caroline Crisp on behalf of Longbank Bunk Barn who gave a short presentation with handouts

LAG Questions:

RB – Geographically, where is next Bunk Barn?

CC – Ellingham or Sea Houses are the next

AW – If I was a walker from the North, where can't I walk?

CC – Coast Route goes all the way up as links in with bridle path

AW – Aware of national campaign to increase walk ways

IH – That's correct

CC – Area is lacking in Bunk Barn type of accommodation

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

Applicants left LAG meeting

LAG Discussions:

RL – Have we seen this OA before?

IH – Yes, have come back with a better OA

CC – Useful project for youngsters

AW – Many more cyclists in area, demand is growing

RB – Agrees with AW, good idea

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CR – No evidence as how it fits, happy to progress to FA

RB – Iain Robson works for AONB on LAG would know details of area

JO – Would it be helpful to have a map with details of facilities on for LAG?

Aw – Northumberland Tourism has a map

SC – Applicant not being greedy, a better ratio of 27%. Risk is spread

RL – Chair proposed for LAG Executive members to vote:

LAG Decision:

Vote Yes – 7, Vote No – 0, Chair did not vote

LAG Executive Decision – Outline Application – Approved to Full Application

Process – Chair signed and dated OA Appraisal Form

6. A.O.B:

a. LAG Training – IH circulated Draft Training Schedule, LAG to review and email comments back to Ivan within 7 days

b. LAG Working Groups:

ACTION – CS to arrange initial setup meetings

Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG):

DB - We have appointed the FLAG Officer, will be in post in 4-6 weeks. Expect to hold first FLAG meeting in March, £600,000 for projects

RL – Is there a FLAG group?

DB – Currently forming FLAG group

AW –Have volunteered to sit on FLAG, received last notification in July 2016

Applicant Handbook

RL – New version of Applicant Handbook v4.1 now available, would be good idea for LAG members to familiarize themselves with it

ACTION – IH bring details to next LAG meeting

Date & Time of the next C&L LAG Meeting:

The next Coast & Lowlands LAG meeting will be held at Alnwick Youth Hostel from 18:00 – 20:00

Ross Lowrie, Chair closed the Coast & Lowlands LAG meeting at 20:17