



**NORTHUMBERLAND UPLANDS LEADER
LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)**

Tuesday, 7th February

Stamfordham Village Hall

5.30pm - 8.00pm

Present: Terry Carroll (Chair), Andrew Poad, Louise Kirkwood, Alan Sharp, Alistair Cochrane, Ruth Dickinson, David Baird (NCC), Gillian Cowell (Programme Officer), Louise McCreery (Admin Officer)

1. Welcome and Apologies

TC welcomed everyone to the meeting

Apologies: Steve Jopling, Mike Murray, Barbara Sexon, Tom Johnston, Pat Beaumont, Kate Cairns

2. Declaration of Interest

None

3. Draft LAG Minutes from meeting on 15 December 2016

Minutes accepted as a true and accurate record

4. Matters Arising & Actions

- Executive Group Minutes were agreed as an accurate record
- TC advised the LAG that the Young & Sweet project was approved at the executive group meeting in January. The group were very impressed with the project and the applicant.

5. Programme Officer's Update

GC updated the LAG on the funds committed to date. So far £388,000 has been committed against a target for the year of £426,000. The RPA have said that final project claims must be submitted by September 2018 so there is now only 18 months left in the programme. It is taking applicants 5-6 months to go through the application and appraisal process which means that the LAG have roughly a year to spend the remaining allocation of approx £900,000.

DB confirmed that, while the LAG have committed over £300,000, actual spend is only approximately £8,000.

The RPA have asked LAGs to start considering their delivery plan for next year. This will include expenditure forecasts for the next two financial years. At this time it is not known how rigidly the LAG will be held to these forecasts. A draft will be prepared for the LAG to review at the next meeting.

Action: GC to prepare draft delivery plan

6. **Publicity**

GC advised that she is meeting with BS next week to look at the publicity schedule and draft a press release to generate interest in the programme. The slow start to the programme has meant that there are not many projects who are publicity ready yet TC advised the LAG of a meeting with local MPs in March. It is hoped that they will help to publicise the programme

7. **Full Application Presentations**

NU27 Charlton Hall Glamping Pods

The application proposes to procure, purchase and install 8 glamping pods at Charlton Hall in order to expand the accommodation offer already provided by the self-catering cottages. The pods will be supplied as frames and assembled on site. This will allow the applicant through increase in visitor accommodation to increase farm productivity and the long term sustainability of the farm enterprise by increasing the profit margin of the business. It is proposed that some of the income generated through investment in the glamping pods will be used for future livestock purchase, allowing growth of the existing sheep flock within the farm enterprise alongside expansion of the visitor accommodation offered at Charlton Hall.

The applicant is requesting a grant of £78,228.69 (40% of costs) and looking to create 2.5 FTE jobs

Presented by Nina Mickleburgh

The site for the glamping pods will be in a small woodland. Planning has been granted for 15 units. These will be raised cabins with decking and, for half, wood fueled hot tubs. The units will be built by a Lithuanian business which will supply fully insulated pods which can be used all year round. They will all have full kitchen and bathroom facilities.

As well as the site itself, guests will also have access to the farmland and the applicants are planning to sell farm produce and bbq packs to their clients.

Marketing and booking will be done through Hoseasons, under their Bijou Boutique brand. The applicant has secured a discount on commission for the first year.

The full plan is for 15 units at the site but they cannot all be built at the same time.

The applicant is looking for LEADER funding towards the first 7 pods, which will be built by July. 2.6 jobs will be created at this point, with the rest following once the remaining units are installed.

The applicant advised that they have already spent over £10,000 on the development work for this project. The bank loan they will use as match funding is predicated on receiving the leader grant so if funding was not granted the project would not go ahead.

AS asked if a lot of research had been done into demand in the immediate area. The

applicant advised that there is not a lot of competition locally to compare it to as many places have been repurposed into wedding venues.

AC asked if drainage and utilities have been considered. The applicant advised that they have a private water supply and they will be putting in electricity. Back up generators will be onsite if needed.

The LAG discussed the project and were broadly supportive but wanted clarification on the funding requested and the amount of huts applied for.

Vote - unanimous approval based on 7 huts

8. Outline Applications

First & Last Brewery

The First & Last Brewery plans to install a 5 barrel brewery in Elsdon in a leased garage space at the rear of the Bird in Bush pub to brew a range of beers. Brewing equipment, casks will be purchased and building improvements undertaken to support the establishment of the new business. The business has been registered with Companies House and is currently test brewing using a small brew kit at the premises.

The applicant is looking to create 3 FTE jobs and requesting a grant of £17,415 (100% of costs)

BS advised she has visited the project and was impressed with the facilities and the knowledge of the applicants

Vote - unanimous approval

Brown Rigg Phase 2 Development

The project aims to improve the accommodation provision at Brown Rigg. The funded project will provide additional accommodation through the installation of four glamping pods sited on wooden decking. An unused building will be renovated into a bunkhouse for use by walkers and cyclists. The Function Hall will have a heating system installed to improve its appeal. The wider self-funded project to improve Brown Rigg also upgrades the four existing lodges and the site infrastructure, improves signage, converts a building into a café, refurbishes a building for use communally (games area, secure storage, laundry etc) and installs additional glamping pods.

The applicant is looking to create 2 FTE jobs and requesting a grant of £111,600 (40% of costs)

The LAG felt that the project offered poor value for money, especially as 3 of the jobs listed in the application form cannot be counted. It was also felt that the Rural growth Fund may be a better fit for this project

Vote - unanimous rejection

The Bird in Bush

The applicants have purchased the Bird in Bush pub in Elsdon as a going concern and this phase of the project is to refurbish the kitchen to a commercial standard and bring back the serviced accommodation into use. The pub is recognised as an Asset of Community Value and will again become a community hub for the village.

The applicant is looking to create 5 FTE jobs and requesting a grant of £25,351 (100% of costs)

LK advised she has visited the project and feels it is a good space with a lot of potential. The applicants are very well organised.

The LAG felt that not all jobs were realistic but even if the FTE reduced to 3 it would still offer value for money.

Vote - unanimous approval

Breamish Valley Cottages

The project would include the construction of a purpose built log cabin venue to be used alongside the existing holiday cottage business. The proposed log cabin building will be a single storey building of approximately 15m x 8m in size, it will include the provision for a large communal area with tables and chairs and a bar. There will be a kitchen facility located within the building and public toilets. The venue is to be used to diversify the income stream of the business to help the succession of the business within the family. The new project will address the lack of venue currently available to the existing holiday makers to gather for socialising in the locality.

The applicant is looking to create 1.35 FTE jobs and requesting a grant of £33,800 (40% of costs)

The LAG discussed the project and were broadly supportive but felt there were questions to be answered at full application stage

Vote - unanimous approval

9. **AOB**

none arising

10. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Wednesday 8th March – Breamish Village Hall, Powburn