



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

Wednesday, 8th March

Breamish Hall

5.30pm - 8.00pm

Present: Terry Carroll (chair), Steve Jopling (vice chair), Mike Murray, Tom Johnston, Louise Kirkwood, Alistair Cochrane, David Baird (NCC), Gillian Cowell (Programme Officer), Louise McCreery (Admin Officer)

1. Welcome and Apologies

TC welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was thematically and numerically quorate.

Apologies: Dagmar Winter, Barbara Sexon, Andrew Poad, Alan Sharp, Kate Cairns, Ruth Dickinson

2. Declaration of Interest

None

3. Draft LAG Minutes from meeting on 7 February 2017

GC advised the LAG that after last month's meeting there have been some proposed changes to the Charlton hall Glamping project:

- the preferred supplier has gone out of business so an alternative has been sourced but this is not the cheapest option
- the new supplier lowers the value for money of the project as it raises the cost per job

As this is a significant change to the project the LAG must decide whether to raise the grant amount to cover the new costs or to keep the grant at the level previously approved.

Vote - unanimous agreement not to increase funding

The Bird in Bush may withdraw their application as the money put aside as the money has been spent in other areas. GC will contact the applicants for more information

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record

4. Matters Arising & Actions

GC gave an update from the LEG meeting on 23rd February. There is a possibility that the 70/30 economic focus will be relaxed in 2018/19 and it is looking likely that a simplified application process will be put in place this Spring.

TC advised he may have found two potential LAG members. GC will follow up. It was agreed that the website needs to be kept more up to date

5. **Programme Officer's Update**

GC presented a summary of the funds committed to date. After factoring in probable drop-outs the LAG still have to commit £752,642 in the next 18 months

The LAG discussed the difficulty of guiding applicants through the process. It was agreed that many applicants have dropped out or been completely put off by the bureaucracy involved and the large list of ineligible items.

The LAG formally requested that GC be made full time but accepted that this would be dependent on budgetary constraints.

The LAG discussed the possibility of meeting applicants at outline rather than full application stage. This would give the LAG more opportunities to guide the applicant but may cause issues with the sheer volume of people that would have to be seen.

The LAG agreed to trial the proposal for 6 months

GC asked the LAG to approve the Statement of Arrangements between the LAG and Northumberland County Council. MM raised the issue that having a representative of NCC on the LAG was a requirement but the representative rarely attends.

Statement of Arrangements approved

GC presented the delivery plan budget. Currently projecting an 80/20 split of funding between 2017/18 and 2018/19. The LAG considered moving money between priorities but decided to leave these unchanged.

Authority was delegated to the Executive Group to approve the final delivery plan. This will then be circulated to the full LAG

6. **Publicity**

GC and BS have developed a publicity programme to try and ensure a steady release of information and publicity. It was agreed that the website needs to be updated more frequently

7. **Outline Applications for Consideration**

Sharpe's Folly Repair Project

This project aims to repair and restore the Sharpe's Folly pele tower back into its original condition. Sharpe's Folly will then be used as an observatory for the local community and general members of the public to participate in 'dark sky' star-gazing evenings throughout the year. Sharpe's Folly was built to help alleviate unemployment for local stone masons circa the beginning of the 17th century. We aim to employ local conservation skilled professionals to assist with the repairs and to offer specialised skills and training to apprentices looking to learn more about their profession

The applicant is requesting a grant of £20,000 (40% of costs) and will not create any jobs.

The LAG discussed the project and commented on the poor value for money and lack of defined goals and objectives for future use

Vote: unanimous rejection

Vallum Accomodation

Looking to convert an existing office building into B&B accommodation and holiday lets. This will add to the existing food outlets and encourage further visitors to the farm and the area. We have a tearoom and farm shop, selling our home made icecream and home produced products from pies to cakes; we have a bakery that produces bread for wholesale as well as for the tearoom and shop; we have a restaurant and marquee for weddings, functions and events. We employ between 20/30 people full and part time, which varies during the seasons, but most are local people from outlying areas where work is scarce and therefore we hope to continue to help and increase local employment.

The applicant is requesting a grant of £62,000 (40% of costs) and looking to create 2 FTE jobs

The LAG discussed the project. It was felt that the applicants have a good track record and that the project may fill a need as there is not a lot of accommodation in the immediate area.

Vote: approved by majority vote (5 for, 1 against)

TC and LK agreed to visit the project to help develop the full application.

Hadrian Holidays - variation request

The applicants contacted CG to advise that the quote they used in their full application form has been superseded and the current quote leads to a cost increase of £624. The applicants have asked for the grant to be increased to reflect this

Vote: variation rejected unanimously

8. AOB

MM asked about co-operation projects. GC advised that RPA are hoping to give an announcement in the spring. Terry agreed to raise the point at the Chairs' meeting in York.

GC advised the LAG that she has been in touch with the Estonian group and suggested a tour around Hexham Abbey as the group is too large to tour LAG projects.

Arrangements are still being made for a meeting with Guy opperman MP and Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP. Neither MM or TC can attend on the date currently suggested.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Monday 3rd April – venue to be confirmed (probably Rothbury)