



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

**Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April**

**Jubilee Hall, Rothbury**

**5.30pm - 8.00pm**

**Present:** Terry Carroll (chair), Steve Jopling (vice chair), Mike Murray, Andrew Poad, Louise Kirkwood, Barbara Sexon, 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. Prospective new members Sally Shortall and Nicola Bell were introduced to the LAG

**Apologies:** Dagmar Winter, Alan Sharp, Kate Cairns, Tom Johnston, Alistair Cochrane, Alan Sharp, Ruth Dickinson

## **2. Declaration of Interest**

MM declared an interest in The Hemmell and will not take part in the discussion of this project

## **3. Draft LAG Minutes from meeting on 8 March 2017**

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record

The LAG also discussed the minutes from the executive group meeting on 22nd March 2017 and TC briefed the group on the RPA update meeting held in York. The RPA are considering increasing the RPA budget from 18% to 25% of LAG budget. Trans-national cooperation was raised at the meeting but the RPA remained non committal.

**Action** - It was agreed that TC will write to RPA in support of increasing the LAG budget

## **4. Matters Arising & Actions**

### **- Meeting with Guy Opperman MP**

GC advised the LAG that no date has been set for this yet

### **- LEADER Celebration Event**

It is hoped that this will be a joint event with Coast & Lowlands LAG to talk about the successes and challenges of the current programme. TC has drafted a programme and it is hoped that representatives from the RPA will attend

- **Sharpe's Tower Rejection**

GC updated the LAG on emails sent by Alan Winlow regarding the Sharpe's Tower project. The LAG discussed this and confirmed they were happy with their decision to reject the OAs that were submitted. Both had a low appraisal score and were not of a high quality. It was agreed that if the applicant could demonstrate the public benefit of the project the LAG would look at another application.

- **NCC Rep**

MM raised the issue of the NCC representative on the LAG. The current representative is Cllr Kate Cairns but she has not attended meetings very often. GC advised that Kate is invested in the group but has a busy calendar which makes it difficult to attend. There were no other councillors interested in joining the LAG but arrangements can be looked at again after the local elections in May

5. **Programme Officer's Update**

GC presented a summary of the funds committed to date. There is currently an underspend in Culture & Heritage, Rural Services and Micro Business Support. There is also a big difference between funds committed and funds spent as projects are not claiming as quickly as predicted

The issue of meeting capacity was discussed. It was agreed that if there was too much business to manage at the monthly meeting, the Executive Group had the authority to consider the rest of the applications.

The LAG reviewed the budget changes included in the 2017/18 Delivery Plan. Budget has been moved from Micro Business Support, Culture & Heritage and Rural Services to Tourism as this is the priority that the majority of projects are falling into  
**Budget changes were agreed by majority vote. 1 abstention**

**Action** - TC to write to Andy Dean about publicising rural services grants

6. **Publicity**

The website is now up to date but there can be no further publicity until after the local elections. There is more publicity planned for the farming projects once lambing season is over. LK agreed to visit Bainbridge farm to take project photos.

7. **Outline Applications for Consideration**

The Hemmell

The aim of this project is to provide further high quality, accessible, self catering holiday accommodation for up to 6 people. We have noticed in the past 2 years that demand for holiday cottage accommodation has far exceeded supply in this area, mainly due to the Dark Sky status that was awarded to Kielder. This development will allow us to reduce the number of bookings we are currently having to turn away or re-direct elsewhere. The additional income that this project will provide will help ensure that the farm business continues to be sustainable for the future of our young family.

The applicant is requesting a grant of £78,000 (40% of costs) and looking to create 1.5 FTE jobs

The LAG discussed the project and agreed there was a need for more accommodation in the area but the value for money was considered low

**Vote: approved by majority (4 approve, 1 abstain)**

#### Coalburn Cottage

This project involves upgrading a cottage to provide holiday accommodation for two occupants. The cottage is in a secluded situation and will give any visitor a unique holiday experience. North Northumberland is well known as a "must place to visit" having a beautiful coastline leading to the Cheviot Hills and all the heritage in between. Situated on a working family farm, this project will create a diversification enterprise to the business, providing employment and supplying quality accommodation to support the tourist industry whilst improving the success of the business. This will provide sustainability to the business, especially, as changes are evermore likely in the near future as to how and the level of support that will be available. Creating new income streams are becoming essential.

**Vote: unanimous approval**

#### The Dod Barns

Conversion of redundant buildings into accommodation for 10 people in the bunkhouse and 4 in the cottage in a unique, remote location on our hill farm at Ilderton Dod in the northern corner of the NNP (1.5 miles off a public road and 4 miles from the nearest A road, close to Hedgehope, Cheviot, and between the Harthope and Breamish valleys). This is 10 miles from the nearest bunkhouses (Wooler Youth Hostel, Barrowburn and Mounthooly). The location is ideal for walkers, horse riders, cyclists, wildlife enthusiasts, and archeologists. The dark skies will astound astronomers as will the panoramic views across to the coast. It will provide access to an outside toilet for walkers. The bunkhouse will be basic but comfortable and allow for shorter stays for large groups. The cottage will accommodate families or couples with more comfort and weekly or half-weekly lets. The accommodation can be reached by vehicle but we will encourage people to cycle, ride or walk here. This will diversify our farming business in this beautiful but difficult environment. The LAG discussed the project and felt that the bunkhouse style may be a bit risky but it is very appropriate to the area. There is no planning in place yet but the NNPA are supportive of the project.

**Vote: unanimous approval**

#### Northumberland Sporting Clays

The project involves expanding and moving our rural clay pigeon shooting business into new areas of Northumberland to offer the public something that does not exist at present in the area. The project will also bring tourists into the area which is substantiated by our track record whilst based at Longwitton. We aim to provide more opportunities for people of all ages, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability to enjoy and learn new skills in rural Northumberland. To achieve these aims we

need to invest in equipment which are essentially clay pigeon traps of particular types.

The LAG discussed the project and felt that, although there are no jobs attached the project is a valuable one

**Vote: unanimous approval**

**8. AOB**

MM asked about co-operation with LEADER LINNE as they are looking to visit in July. TC confirmed there is no current prospect of cooperation projects and the group may have to advise them to look elsewhere for prospective partners. The LAG agreed the group are welcome to come and visit as long as they understand that the LAG has no budget to fund costs. It was decided that there is no benefit in writing to DEFRA about this issue at present.

GC went through the itinerary for the Estonian LAG visit and thanked SJ and LK for meeting the group for lunch

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May – venue to be confirmed (probably Bellingham)