



NORTHUMBERLAND UPLANDS LEADER

LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)

Thursday 5th October 2017

Elsdon Village Hall

5.30pm - 9.00pm

Present: Terry Carroll, Andrew Poad, Nicola Bell, Mike Murray, Barbara Sexon, Sally Shortall, Tom Johnston, Alan Sharp, David Baird (NCC), Gillian Cowell (Programme Officer), Louise McCreery (Admin Officer)

1. Welcome and Apologies

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

Apologies: Steve Jopling, Alistair Cochrane, Anthony Murray, Louise Kirkwood, Ruth Dickinson (NNPA)

2. Declaration of Interest

TJ declared an interest in the Wooler Gateway application and agreed to leave the meeting during the discussion.

3. Draft LAG Minutes from meeting on 17 August 2017

TC updated the LAG on the project review visit that was carried out on 3rd October. LAG members visited Northumberland Honey, Young & Sweet, Hadrian Holidays and Haltwhistle Pool. The LAG are keen to do another visit of this type if enough projects can be found within a reasonable distance for travelling. The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters Arising & Actions

none arising

5. Programme Officer's Update

GC advised that LAG that the overcommitment level has dropped due to projects not meeting submission deadlines. The only budget which is now overcommitted is Rural Tourism. The LAG discussed virement options and agreed to implement option 2 - vire the majority of funds into Rural Tourism but leave a small amount in the others for future projects.

The LAG also agreed that future accommodation projects would be given a low priority when deciding which projects to bring forward from the reserve list. The current reserve list does not have any viable projects.

GC gave an update on current projects:

- The First and Last is slightly delayed as they have not been given a date from Northern Power Grid for upgrading their electricity supply. MM suggested they write to their MP
- The Twice Brewed and Girsonfield are both almost complete
- Stuart Brodie did not respond to the final letter and the RPA have agreed that the funds can be decommitted. The LAG agreed to terminate the project
- Doddington have agreed to provide a full project update for the LAG to consider at the December meeting. The current claim has been flagged by the RPA as less than expected. They are advising that the applicant withdraws this claim and resubmits when the spend is closer to the expected level
- Kielder have requested a variation to reprofile the claims structure back to three claims. They do not anticipate any delay to the completion date. The LAG agreed the revised schedule

6. Review and Decide on Outline Applications

Northumberland Honey

This project will allow the company to grow the development of Sparkling Mead already in production. The process of disgorging is complex and technique sensitive when done manually, this machine will allow disgorging to be carried out quicker, more reliably and with less technique sensitivity which will allow us to take on an employee to help with this vital stage of Sparkling Mead production.

Looking to create 1 FTE job

The applicant is requesting a grant of £3,000 (40% of costs)

The LAG were very supportive of the project. There is an issue over whether the job can be included as an output - this would need to be clarified at full application stage. The LAG agreed they would be open to a second application for further equipment in this case.

The LAG increased the strategic fit score to 3

Vote - unanimous approval

Redeswood Forest Services

Presented by D Allen

The applicant was a farmer but stopped after the foot and mouth outbreak and diversified into other areas. The business is now predominantly a forestry contractor. The applicant currently has four Forestry Commission contracts as well as some local estates. They are looking to mechanise to increase efficiency and employment. The new equipment will make thinning of small woodlands economically viable. The vehicles chosen should do very little damage to the surrounding woodlands. The project will increase and stabilise the employment of two workers who are currently part time casual.

Looking to create 1 FTE job

The applicant is requesting a grant of £35,210 (37.9% of costs)

The LAG were supportive of the project. BS advised she has used the company before and would recommend them

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - 7 approve, 1 abstain. Project approved on majority vote

Woodland Thinnings

Presented by R MacNeill

The business currently specialises in hand felling but is looking to expand its offering to include thinnings as the applicant is currently having to turn down work. The applicant currently employs two full time cutters and would take on another two FTE if project goes ahead.

The applicant advised he lives in Gateshead but the business is based in Elsdon.

The applicant is requesting a grant of £21,000 (40% of costs)

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

Wooler and Glendale Gateway Improvements

This project will entail physically improving the gateways and green spaces within Wooler and Glendale settlements through the introduction of structures for planting as well as the actual plants and groundworks necessary to complete the works. Where possible new signage will be developed in a bid to foster a recognised 'Glendale' brand.

The approach to the town from the south is past a row of derelict buildings. These cannot be changed as they are in private ownership and not for sale so the project would hope to improve the space around this area to try and change the focal point and make a more inviting gateway into the town. It is hoped that this will boost

tourism and encourage growth in the accommodation and dining sectors.

The applicant advised that local businesses are supportive but this generally takes the form of goods/services in kind rather than donated cash.

Future maintenance will be down to volunteers. There is no plan in place yet.

No job creation

The applicant is requesting a grant of £8,080 (80% of costs)

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - 7 approve, 1 reject. Project approved on majority vote

The LAG asked for two conditions to be placed on approval:

- plans/sketches of the proposed works
- a volunteer maintenance strategy for the planters

7. Full Applications

GC advised that High Staward Barns and Black Sheep health are both still with the RPA. High Staward is not time critical as they have not received planning permission yet. GC asked the LAG if they would delegate the decision on Black Sheep Farm to the chair as the applicant wants to start as soon as possible. The LAG agreed that this could be delegated and that they are happy to support if no issues are raised by the RPA.

8. AOB

International Co-operation

MM advised the LAG that he has spoken to Aneka from LEADER LINNE and they are still keen to collaborate. MM would like to be able to tell them whether we will be able to do this or not. TC agreed to write to Andy Tordoff to see if he will give a definitive response regarding co-operation projects. The LAG agreed that they would be happy to meet with LEADER LINNE if they want to come over but there is no budget for hospitality etc.

Publicity

The LAG agreed that the next meeting would be held at the Twice Brewed and the press would be invited to the start of the meeting for a photo opportunity. GC advised she is still trying to arrange a photo op with Guy Opperman MP at Girsonfield

LEADER Underspend

DB advised that the RPA methodology for allocating underspend will be based on a percentage of programme allocation in the form of full applications received. Currently the RPA are considering reallocation to LAGS which have committed over 90% of their allocation as full applications, so NULAG would not be currently eligible. SS asked if she could alternate attendance at meeting with other members of the Centre for Rural Economy. The LAG agreed this.

AS raised the point that the LAG should consider offering a lowered intervention rate to projects coming forward so as to be able to fund more projects

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 7th November - Twice Brewed Inn