



NORTHUMBERLAND UPLANDS LEADER

LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)

Wednesday 6th December 2017

Powburn Breamish Hall

5.00pm - 9.00pm

Present: Terry Carroll, Steve Jopling, Mike Murray, Barbara Sexon, Alan Sharp, Tom Johnston, Jeremy Phillipson, Alistair Cochrane, Liz Brooks (observer), David Baird (NCC), Gillian Cowell (Programme Officer), Louise McCreery (Admin Officer)

1. **Apologies:** Nicola Bell, Andrew Poad, Anthony Murray, Louise Kirkwood, Ruth Dickinson (NNPA)
2. **Declaration of Interest**
MM declared an interest in The Hemmell and Wilson brothers and agreed to leave the meeting during discussion of these projects
SJ declared an interest in The Hemmell and agreed to leave the meeting during discussion of these projects
3. **Draft LAG Minutes from meeting on 7 November 2017**

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record

4. Matters Arising & Actions

Halls of Heddon

GC updated the LAG on the latest position from Halls of Heddon. They are currently preparing a tender specification but have been advised that the drawings they have are not detailed enough for the tender. consequently they are asking for an extension until the end of March. There was a discussion around whether this was feasible since it puts the LAG at risk of an underspend if the project does not go ahead. It was decided that the LAG would allow the extension on the basis that no further extensions would be granted and the project would still be able to complete by the end of the programme.

LB gave an update on the ReLocal study. The team are currently conducting interviews. progress is satisfactory

GC advised the LAG of the publicity event at Girsonfield stables with Guy Opperman MP. GC will contact the applicant to see how many LAG members can attend.

MM advised the LAG that Anneka from LEADER LINNE would like to visit in the New Year

5. Programme Officer's Update

GC updated the LAG on funds committed to date. If all EOIs seen tonight are approved the LAG will be overcommitted by £28,000. This is acceptable as it is within the agreed 30% overcommitment threshold.

The LAG were advised that a number of projects (both contracted and in development) are facing lengthy delays due to electrical connections. It is taking a long time both to get a quote and then get a date for the works.

Based on current programme dates, all projects will have to submit their final claims by December 2018 for programme end March 2019. This means that April 2018 will probably be the deadline for approving new applications.

GC advised that the current reserve list will be circulated to LAG members so they can decide which projects should be brought forward

6. Review and Decide on Outline Applications

VisitEarth Virtual Guides

The business is currently a home run business established in 2001. Has previously won an award for the most innovative new business. The applicant has a lot of experience with 360 photography and is looking for funding to buy specialist equipment. This will be matched by the sale of old equipment and, if needed, a loan. The applicant is also looking to relocate the business from home to a workspace or hub.

The applicant is planning to switch his business model away from individual businesses towards micro destinations. No advertising or market research has been done as yet and costings have not been firmed up but the applicant anticipates a low cost per project. The applicant is planning to put together a case study to show prospective clients.

Looking to create 0 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £3,800 (40% of costs)

The LAG felt that the business proposal was not well developed and that approving funding would be too much of a risk as there is no business plan and no market research has been demonstrated. The LAG felt the applicant would be better served by a business support network like NBSL.

The strategic fit score was agreed

Vote - unanimous rejection

Elsdon Village Hall - Safe and Sound Scheme

Elsdon is a very remote community with a lack of parish facilities and public transport links. Most visitors to the village park at the village hall car park. A condition survey on the car park has been done which raised concerns so the applicant is looking to upgrade the car park and correct the underlying problem of water erosion. The applicant would also like funding to refurbish a room within the hall so this can be brought into use, possibly as a community cafe.

The applicants confirmed that they have looked at other funding sources. Local windfarm funding is not on stream yet and there is no support available from the NNPA. Community Foundation support may be available towards equipment for the refurbished room.

Looking to create 0 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £3,800 (40% of costs)

Vote - unanimous approval for eligible items

GoGilsland - Private Vehicle Hire Service

The applicant is looking to start a community taxi service for residents and tourists. Gilsland has recently lost a lot of local facilities so people have to travel to other towns for doctors and similar. There is very limited public transport which makes this difficult. The taxi service will provide work for local people and relieve social isolation. Market research has been done in the form of questionnaires. Around 50 of these were returned and these were supportive. Letters of support have also been written. There are currently no taxi companies based in Gilsland and it is very difficult to persuade taxis from surrounding towns such as Haltwhistle and Brampton to come so far out for a fare

Looking to create 6 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £62,113.60 (80% of costs)

The LAG were broadly supportive but felt there were issues that need to be addressed:

- applicant should show that plans have been made for replacement vehicles when the useful life of funded vehicles is over
- the applicant must demonstrate the suitability of electric cars for rural taxi services
- look at alternative funding for charging points

The strategic fit score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

The Black Bull at Etal

The applicant took on the tenancy of the pub last year and have agreed with the landlord a programme of works to refurbish and improve the building. The tender for the works has been issued and is due back in March 2018.

The venue includes a dining room, function room and space for a beer garden. There are also a number of open fronted buildings which could make ideal spaces for outdoor events such as hog roasts.

The applicant confirmed that investment by the landlord was in the region of £100,000. The LEADER funding will be specifically used to purchase kitchen equipment.

Looking to create 6 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £11,840 (40% of costs)

The strategic fit score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

Wilson Brothers - Ingram Valley Venison

The applicant runs a mixed livestock hill farm. Looking to diversify into venison due to dwindling returns from sheep farming. The applicant is hoping this move will help to make the business less dependant on subsidies. The venison market is growing and there is currently a supply shortfall in British venison.

The applicant is looking for funding for a padded crush and handling system and chiller. Other costs such as fencing will be met by the applicant.

The applicant has canvassed local butchers who have expressed support for the project.

The applicant confirmed that planning permission is not required and the NNPA are supportive of the project. It will have no effect on the high level stewardship agreement which is currently in place.

Looking to create 1 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £12,000 (40% of costs)

The strategic fit score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

7. Full Applications

S&J Smith Haulage

The project is to purchase Central Tyre Inflation (CTI) technology to be installed on a truck and timber trailer. This is a system to provide control over the air pressure in each tire of a vehicle as a way to improve performance on different surfaces. CTI significantly reduces environmental impact when transporting logs, or travelling on gravel or dirt roads. Benefits include ironing out ruts and previous road damage, like washboards or corrugations. Reducing the tyre pressure also reduces the grinding action on the gravel, significantly reducing dust and silt. Forests and timber sites including those operated by the Forestry Commission are increasingly restricting access to hauliers due to pressures on the forest road system. These sites now require CTI technology to be fitted to timber trailers. LEADER grant is sought towards the purchase of the CTI system. This project will therefore enable the applicant to bid for additional work.

Looking to create 0.5 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £2,672 (40% of costs)

Vote - unanimous approval

The Hemmell

The applicant is looking to convert a metal cattle shed into holiday accommodation. There are already holiday cottages on site and this project will add a further six bed property. The existing cottages are 4 star gold standard and attract a lot of repeat business.

Costs have increased since the EOI stage. They were initially based on previous conversions but the structure of the current site means that more work will be needed.

The accommodation is marketed through Northumbrian Cottages as well as their own website, social media and newsletter.

Job creation is based on additional hours for the applicant and will consist of changeovers, marketing and front of house duties.

Planning has been approved by NNPA.

Looking to create 0.75 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £98,580 (40% of costs)

The LAG discussed the project and acknowledged that the appraiser had recommended rejection. The project offers poor value for money. The LAG discussed making an offer based on job creation

Vote - based on an offer of £25,000

1 - reject

4 - approve

Approved on majority vote

Corbridge Business Premises

The aim of the project proposed for LEADER funding is to convert and expand a redundant former workshop in Corbridge to create business accommodation with access to high speed broadband, parking and town services. The project offers NULAG no direct job outputs but will directly support 4 businesses (the applicant business plus 3 prospective tenant businesses). Although not claimable as outputs the applicant expects the project to create indirectly 3 FTE jobs within the tenant businesses

Looking to create 0 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £43,185 (40% of costs)

Vote -

1 - reject

1 - abstain

5 - approve

Approved on majority vote

Wittonstone - Mobile Sheep Handling

The business has grown from 100 to 700 head of sheep. Have recently been offered land near Mitford and the spread of the business means that the current handling systems are not up to task.

The project will improve the productivity of a sheep enterprise by purchase of a mobile handling equipment that will allow the business the opportunity to increase output, reduce cost and improve the health and welfare status of the flock, allowing improvements to business efficiency and productivity through the business being able handle and work sheep whenever required, and also to enable data collection to assess and research existing flock performance in more detail which will inform future decisions on the best flock management strategy.

Looking to create 0 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £3,247.60 (40% of costs)

Vote - unanimous approval

8. **AOB**

First and Last Brewery - Variation

GC advised the LAG the applicants have asked to delay the project until the end of February 2018 due to delays by Northern Powergrid

Vote - unanimous approval

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 11th January - Longfamlington (tbc)