



NORTHUMBERLAND UPLANDS LEADER

LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)

Wednesday 13th September 2017

Longhorsley Village Hall

5.30pm - 9.00pm

Present: Terry Carroll, Steve Jopling, Anthony Murray, Louise Kirkwood, Alistair Cochrane, Andrew Poad, Nicola Bell, 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: Barbara Sexon, Alan Sharp, Mike Murray, Sally Shortall, Tom Johnston, Ruth Dickinson (NNPA)

2. Declaration of Interest

AM declared an interest in the Wooler Fountain application and agreed to leave the meeting during the discussion.

AP declared an interest in the Vallum Lodge application and agreed to leave the meeting during the discussion.

AC declared an interest in the John Goodfellow 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 executive group discussion regarding virement of funds. This is necessary due to the large overcommitment at EOI stage in certain priorities (Micro Enterprise and Rural Tourism). There are two main options available to reduce the overcommitment; to vire all remaining funds from other priorities or to vire some funds but leave a small amount in each priority for future projects. The LAG concurred with the executive group decision to wait until the October LAG meeting to make the final decision as by then the deadline for some of the older EOIs will have passed and there will be a better idea of the commitment status.

AC updated the LAG on his visit to the Northumberland Logs project. He felt that the project was not presented particularly well by the applicant at the meeting and is much more supportive now he has visited. The project is for a saw bench to complement the existing firewood saws so he can convert raw timber into a wider range of products. The proposal still needs more market research but is a worthwhile project.

TC & LK visited the Ravenscleugh B&B project. Not a lot of progress has been made since the EOI was endorsed and there are questions over the commitment and capability of the applicants.

TC invited the LAG members to a project review day on 3rd October 2017. The plan is to see Twice Brewed, Young & Sweet and Hadrian Holidays before the executive group have a meeting. It was subsequently suggested that a visit to Haltwhistle Swimming & Leisure Centre might also be included. GC to check with Maxine Wilson.

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record

4. Matters Arising & Actions

Covered under item 3

5. Programme Officer's Update

GC presented the current budget and commitment position. These figures assume that all EOIs presented at this meeting are approved.

At this point the LAG have supported 18 projects against a target of 63 and have committed a third of the overall project budget. Approximately half way towards the jobs target of 65.

GC advised that LAG that, due to the overcommitment at EOI stage, new projects are being put on a reserve list until budget is available. If the LAG is looking to prioritise these applications then jobs may be an important deciding factor.

The LAG agreed to take northumberland Honey, Wooler Gateways and Redesdale Forest Service off the reserve list so they can be considered at the next meeting

6. Review and Decide on Full Applications

JT Goodfellow & Son - Egg Packing Machine

The project is to purchase and install an egg packing unit in order to speed up collection and date stamping of eggs produced through a new 16,000 poultry unit which is being developed (without LEADER grant aid) by the applicant business. LEADER grant of £9,760.00 is sought at an intervention rate of 40% from a project total of £24,400.00.

Purchase of the egg packing unit and subsequent increase in productivity for the business will allow the creation of 1FTE job for a member of staff to operate the egg packing machine and look after the laying flock

Looking to create 1 FTE job

The applicant is requesting a grant of £9,760 (40% of costs)

The LAG were very supportive of the project. The concerns over displacement were dealt with in the technical appraisal. No other issues.

Vote - unanimous approval

7. Review and Decide on Outline Applications

Vallum Lodge Guest House

This project is an expansion of our current offering of 6 en suite guest bedrooms at Vallum Lodge to a total of 10 en suite guest rooms. This would be achieved by creating an additional 4 en suite bedrooms in the main house. Also; creating a boot/drying room to enable guests to have a dedicated drying area for their outdoor clothing after walking the Hadrian's Wall trail and Pennine Way. To create a new breakfast room. All expansion and renovation are to be within the main house.

Looking to create 1 FTE job

The applicant is requesting a grant of £7,720 (40% of costs)

The LAG rejected this application at the last meeting as the property was found to be on the market. IT has been reconsidered as the applicants have advised that the property should have come off the market in July.

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

John Goodfellow - Mobile Sheep handling

Presented by J Goodfellow

The applicant has recently expanded his sheep numbers to provide a job for a young farmer. This expansion has meant the applicant has taken on more land away from the main farm. The application is for mobile sheep handling equipment to provide a higher standard of care for the sheep on more distant land. The project will safeguard, rather than create, 1 FTE job.

The applicant is requesting a grant of £3,480 (40% of costs)

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

Haltwhistle Swimming & Leisure - Upgrading of Plantroom

Presented by Maxine Wilson and Kathy Keadie

The plant which operates the swimming pool is costly to run both in terms of energy and staff time, as it is labour intensive. This project will upgrade the plant and therefore provide consistently good water quality which will eradicate cancellations and enable a full pool programme to be developed which will create additional employment.

The centre currently breaks even but has no reserves. A recent survey of the pool and equipment concluded that installing new equipment could reduce running costs by 33% as well as cutting down on expensive repair bills.

Looking to create 2 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £78,937.04 (80% of costs)

The LAG questioned whether any other funding has been sought. The applicant advised that they have applied to the Big Lottery Fund for other works and were turned down by Sports England as they have already had funding from that body. They do a lot of local fundraising but are situated in a small community so there is a limit to the amount which can be raised.

The LAG discussed the project and felt that there was a definite need for the facility. It has quite a wide catchment area as there are few other options for local schools. The LAG did feel, however, that they are unlikely to fund the full 80% and want an explanation for the loan from NCC which has been applied for.

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

S&J Smith Timber Haulage

The aim of this project is to become more efficient in the way we move timber from the forest to the processor and win new contracts. The only way we are able to meet this improved efficiency is through investment into a Central Tyre Inflation system which will allow us to work on sites with restricted access due to pressures on the forest road network. The current demand for wood has increased over the last few years in the North East; however the capacity to meet this demand from a haulage point of view has not due to restrictions being placed on the road network in terms of weight limits, therefore creating a bottleneck within the timber supply chain. By making this investment we would be able to haul timber from restricted sites as the CTI technology will reduce the impact on the network.

Looking to create 0.5 FTE jobs

The applicant is requesting a grant of £4,000 (40% of costs)

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

Wooler Fountain Restoration Group - Rebuild Fountain

This project will restore lost heritage by rebuilding the William Wightman Memorial Fountain, raising awareness for present and future generations as to the importance of introducing fresh water and its impact on public health. The fountain once again will be a focal point and meeting place for the Wooler community. The group has just been awarded a donation of £25,000 from Northumbrian Water towards the cost and they have agreed to look into ways of making the structure a working, clean water fountain

A survey was done through Facebook and about 80% of the 300 responses were favourable.

No jobs created

The applicant is requesting a grant of £25,500 (30% of costs)

The LAG felt that the application was very well put together and the applicants were very passionate and enthusiastic.

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

East Todholes Barn

This project will develop a stone barn on the farm, turning it into a holiday let, sleeping 2 to 4 people. This would allow the farm business to diversify, giving an alternative income and decreasing the reliance on uncertain subsidies. This project will benefit from an extended tourism season due to the "dark skies" park and farm tourism, providing something to see all year round. The local economy will benefit, as an increase in tourism will provide benefits to other local businesses.

The pre-planning visit has been carried out but the full application has not been submitted yet. There are another two unused buildings on the site which can be converted in the future if this phase goes well.

The applicants have spoken to Northumberland Tourism Board and the NNPA and both are supportive of the project

Looking to create 1 FTE job

The applicant is requesting a grant of £28,768 (40% of costs)

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

It was agreed that LK and NB would arrange to visit the project

Saw Mill Carpentry / Joinery workshop and showroom shop phase 1

The applicant currently employs 4 staff based at Meldon. The business undertakes a variety of joinery work including furniture, construction, staircases and restoration work. The project will repair the business buildings to create staff facilities, improve security and introduce a biomass boiler which can burn the offcuts produced by the business. This will also create a space next to the workshop which can be used as a shop to sell their own work. The funding will also go towards new machinery, generators or upgraded electricity supply, new website

The applicant is expecting the project to create 7 jobs

The applicant has not looked into planning yet but is aware he will need to do this.

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

8. AOB

No business

9. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 5th October - Elsdon Village Hall