



**NORTHUMBERLAND UPLANDS LEADER
LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)
Thursday 17th August 2017
Cheviot Centre, Wooler
5.30pm - 8.00pm**

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

2. Declaration of Interest

No interests declared

3. Draft LAG Minutes from meeting on 3 April 2017

GC advised there has still been no contact from Stuart Brodie.

AS visited High Staward Barns and is very supportive of the project

TC visited Halls of Heddon. The applicant is currently having issues with the planning permission which may make the project financially unviable. GC will update when further information is received from the project

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record

4. Matters Arising & Actions

Young & Sweet have now completed their property transfer from NCC. Costings may have to be amended due to the delay

5. Programme Officer's Update

DB advised the LAG that, based on EOIs approved and coming forward, LAG funds are now overcommitted. SME support and micro tourism were the most overcommitted priorities so it was proposed that funds are vired from other priorities to cover this.

It was agreed that the LAG would continue to overcommit by 30% at EOI stage. The LAG cannot overcommit at GFA stage as this represents too great a risk to the AB. The LAG agreed the projects which have been approved to FA but have not yet submitted should be given a final deadline and that going forward a strict submission deadline will be imposed on all projects.

It was agreed that GC and DB will present options for viring funding at the next Executive Group meeting

6. Review and Decide on Outline Applications

The LAG agreed that, in order to keep to time, they would see all the presentations first and vote afterwards

Northumberland Logs

Presented by James Cookson

The applicant is a firewood merchant looking to expand. The applicant wants to manufacture log stores that can be sold to customers and can be refilled when needed. Also want to start making their own fencing materials.

The LAG asked for specifics of the log stores but applicant advised these had not been designed yet.

The LAG felt that the project was not well developed but has potential. The applicant will need to prove that the goods provided must be for the market and not for the enhancement of the estate

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

AC agreed to visit project

The Wheatsheaf

Presented by Alan Newton

The Wheatsheaf is a traditional pub with six letting bedrooms and some redundant outbuildings. The applicant has applied for funding to develop the buildings into a function room with private courtyard and to refurbish the main building. They will update the decor and are looking to create four more ensuite guest rooms from the current manager's accommodation. The pub has a large car park and space for a children's play area so the idea is to make it a focal point of the community.

The business currently employs 10 FTE posts but they are looking to increase this to 22 FTE plus casual/seasonal staff.

The current accommodation is well used. A lot of bookings come from walking and cycling holiday companies.

The planning application has been submitted. There have been no issues with this so far.

The LAG discussed the project and felt that, due to the budget restrictions discussed, they could not approve the project. It was felt that other funding streams would be better suited to this project.

Vote - unanimous rejection

Chirdon Head Outdoor Experience Centre

Presented by Robert Hall

Cramlington Voluntary Youth Project currently engage with about 300 people a week and are looking to invest in facilities to grow their operation. They currently have a lease on a site near Tasset which they are renovating to make into an outdoor experience centre. The hope is that the site will be used by the Prince's Trust as an activity centre and will in time become self funding.

The centre will have space for 26 beds plus outdoor camping facilities

Planning permission has been approved.

The LAG discussed the project and felt that it was a very worthy enterprise but there were concerns about the sustainability of the jobs. Due to budget restrictions the LAG decided they were only able to approve at a 40% intervention rate

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

Vallum Lodge

No presentation

This project is an expansion of the 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.

The LAG discussed the project and decided they were unable to approve as it was discovered that the property in question has been put up for sale.

Vote - unanimous rejection

Hay Farm Heavies

Presented by Viv Cockbur

This project is looking to introduce a concrete floor in a main display area that currently has a sand based surface which is difficult for those with young children or the disabled. Additionally the visitor experience will be improved through the provision of a touchscreen display and projector. The applicant is also looking for

funding to purchase a compact tractor and dungbeetle. This will reduce the labour involved in cleaning the sheds and free up volunteers to concentrate on visitor experience.

The LAG discussed the project and decided that due to budget restrictions they were only able to approve at a 40% intervention rate

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

Whittonstone Mobile Sheep Handling

No presentation

This project will provide the business with a set of mobile sheep handling pens following the increase in farmed area, which is up to 5 miles away from the main farm at Whittonstone.

Vote - unanimous approval

Ravenscleugh B&B

Presented by G & S Kenny

The project is to develop an unused farm outbuilding/barn into short term accommodation. There is a lack of accommodation in the area to support the market that has grown up around wedding venues. Would also like to develop some bunk style accommodation for cyclists etc which would include space for bike storage, mending and similar. The final point is access to the property. the applicants would like funding to extend their drive to a point which has better access to the main road as the current entrance is situated on a blind hairpin.

Applicants still need to check planning regulations to see if an application is needed

The LAG were broadly supportive but felt that the planning situation needs to be resolved before a full application is submitted.

The appraiser's score was agreed

Vote - unanimous approval

7. AOB

GC advised that there are several EOIs which will be ready soon and asked whether the LAG would be willing to hold an August meeting to ensure there wasn't a large backlog in September. This was agreed provided a date could be arranged that enough members could attend.

It was agreed the the date of the September meeting will also be changed as this may not be quorate.

Action - GC to email the LAG with possible dates for the next two meetings

8. **Date of Next Meeting**

TBC - venue likely to be Longhorsley