

**North Pennine Dales Leader LAG - Minutes of Meeting
Wednesday 12th January 2011
Durham Dales Centre, Stanhope**

Attendance:

John Atkinson, Andrew Walker, Cliff Brown, Hazel Coppack, Natalie Connor, David Fruin, Graeme Gill, Fiona Green, Ian Forbes, Lucy Wearne, Pam Forbes, Peter Samsom, Cameron Scott, Richard Betton, Shaun Stuart, Louise Allenby, Victoria Catesby, Rebecca Ashmore, Sue Ellwood, Colin Grayson,

1. Apologies:

Jennie Stafford, Jeremy Ancketill, Ken Hazelwood, Robyn Peat, Sue Kelly, Victoria Catesby gave apologies for Michael Patterson

2. Minutes Of Previous Meeting

RB asked members if they felt the minutes were a true reflection and could be signed as agreed, IF pointed out in section NPD118 that PS & SS had agreed to create a scoring system for micro-enterprise applications, this was amended in the minutes. SE asked LAG members that they inform her of any changes to the minutes prior to the meeting in order for the amendments to be made for the signing of the minutes at the meeting, Richard Betton signed the minutes.

Action: RJA to amend 14 Dec 2010 minutes

6. Declaration Conflict Of Interest

IF declared a conflict of interest in NPD68, he initiated the original proposal and the EOI, although he is no longer involved with Killhope. Most LAG members have a declaration of interest in the Regional Growth Fund Bid that SS is proposing at this meeting.

SS asked that agenda point number 7. be brought forward as he had to leave the meeting at 5.15pm, RB agreed to this.

7. Regional Growth Fund

SS explained to the group that he had been very active developing a bid for the Regional Growth Fund bid, £1.5 billion nationally, which is directed at reducing the reliance on public sector funding and job creation. He said that the government want to see jobs in place, with value for money and private sector investment. SS told the group that they had ran a workshop inviting private sector investors and received very positive feedback. Working with a number of private sector investors there is potential projects in excess of £7.5 million with 500 new jobs with a balance of smaller projects. SS is looking to attract stakeholders to demonstrate interest and support for their bid to help with match funding and to maximise investment from public sector funding. SS feels that if LEADER can become involved it could broaden the geographical area of the bid. He is working to engage the county as partners, if allocation is made, LEADER could work alongside the RGF to help maximise support for micro-enterprise. CS asked SS if he is talking about Round 1, as he attended a briefing on this and his understanding was that the programme of activities will not be supported in Round 1 and primarily has to be private sector led, he also mentioned state aid and informed SS that he would have to

conform to state aid level. SS said SDEA is private sector that he would be putting a balanced pack together and the selection group may invest in some parts of the package and not in others, and if it did not succeed the first time he would try again. He also stated that he knew there would be risk attached to submitting a bid in terms of private sector, he said that SDEA through the Forum had over 600 businesses in the public and private sector and he feels that the potential rewards are worth it. Victoria Catesby introduced herself to the LAG saying she was representing ONE, she went on to say that she felt the LAG should be very cautious when considering substantial applications. ONE are going through a massive transition at the moment and that Defra are taking over responsibility for LEADER from ONE with this programme and no new contracts had been issued as yet, she said that there are some big challenges underway. On a positive she said that the Minister is very keen on LEADER and Defra is positive about LEADER, but the LAG must take into consideration that ONE are not sure of any budgets and the LAG should ensure they maximise their spend in this financial year. SS said that he was not planning on submitting an EOI and that he was actually asking if the LAG could be aligned with the bid and indicate they are interested in the Regional Growth Fund. VC said that she just wanted the LAG members to be cautious before committing as the budget is not clear yet and maybe the LAG should consider smaller projects at this time, ONE are expecting a final decision from Defra by 31st Jan 2011, and that there has been a lot of focus on the Uplands, she stated the quality of LEADER projects delivered in the region had been recognised where as nationally other LEADER areas had not been as successful as NE region. RB asked VC if we shouldn't commit until we know the budget, VC suggested the LAG deferred a decision on this. SS said he just wanted to determine if there was an interest and he would then be happy to submit a the bid and develop the detail for the next stage. SE said that the Regional Growth Fund needed to be clarified – SS will not be submitting an EOI, this will go in our delivery plan where we will demonstrate we want to be partners and work alongside the RGF, we would still expect the projects to submit their EOI individually. CS said that RDPE were going to be pushing for more farm diversification schemes and not micro-enterprise applications, he asked would that be the same for LEADER? VC replied that would be up to the LAG itself, CS said that Northumberland County Council are developing something very similar to SDEA which they could submit to NPDL. PS said he felt this would then tie in the two areas, SE suggested CS and SS work together where possible. RB said if it achieves outcomes then in principal we will back SS projects and we will continue to support micro-enterprises. SS said he would be happy to circulate the final bid to the LAG members. RB concluded the group agreed in principal to support the bid. SS left the meeting.

4. Spend Profile

SE presented the Spend Profile figures:

£1,019,830 LEADER allocation

£1,022,478 Approved projects (GOL issued) £584,796 claimed

£117,108 Approved awaiting GOL

£108,295 EOI's approved by LAG – full applications currently in development

£84,658 New EOI's for consideration by LAG at this meeting (12 Jan)

£9,664 Full Applications for consideration by LAG at this meeting (12 Jan)

£0 Full Applications currently with ONE for Technical Appraisal

£202,617Total allocated to projects not yet approved

-£322,373

LEADER over programmed as at 12 Jan 2011.

NB Includes Cybermoor Broadband project £75,000 and Broadband in Weardale project £100,000

SE said the initial budget allocation had been allocated, with an over allocation of £2,648 this will be absorbed by under spend within some projects, we now

need to push for projects to get their claims in before March 2011 as this could have an impact on future allocation, SE informed the group that she would spend most of her time now chasing projects to spend the approved funding within the financial year, she is still in discussions with ONE and DCC regarding the £175k additional allocation for the broadband projects, she said there are projects that can go forward but haven't received GOL's which are not being supplied by DCC, DCC say they can go ahead at their own risk which is very difficult for most projects as they do not have major reserves to bank roll for any extended length of time. SE stated she thinks this is appalling this situation has been created due to the broadband funding, £175K. DF asked if we had still not had clarification on the return of this money, SE said no and she does not want the LEADER project to be criticised for under spending, as projects which could deliver within this financial year cannot go forward as no further GOL can be released above our allocation. She is not getting clear answers on this and has spoken to a number of people. PF asked if the LAG members could help SE to chase project spend by contacting clients, SE accepted the help, but it is not easy to do as she requests the project claim information from DCC which is a large database which is updated as projects claim and constantly changing. RB asked LA if it would be possible to get together with SE to have up to date information in order for LAG members to help. LA said agreed. PS asked which 3 projects are awaiting GOL's: SE said NPD113 Borehole Well which is due to complete in April but she felt she could bring this forward, NPD104 Enterprise Coach and NPD105 Micro Renewables, she said NPD105 would be a quick and easy project which is due to complete this financial year, NPD104 are not in a position to commence this project at their own risk without a GOL. VC said she would take up these points at their next meeting with DCC. SE told the LAG that the projects spend is growing as projects are starting to claim. VC said she appreciated the LAGs support in maximising the spend this financial year.

Action: VC to discuss GOL situation with DCC

5. Expression Of Interest Submitted

NPD120

SE explained that this EOI is to create a development officer to work with community groups, it is a joint application with East Durham and will cover a the two areas making groups more sustainability, the project is for 2 years and the total cost is for £100,163, they are asking LEADER for £84,658, 50% contribution from each LAG, SE said she hadn't actually spoken with the applicant and would need to arrange a meeting with ED and the applicant, to discuss in more detail, she also had concerns with regard to in-kind costs. RB said outputs would need to be looked at carefully. SE said that value for money in the future will be even more focussed, and we will have to quantify outputs. CB said that if we don't support village halls they will go and never to be seen again. AW said that village halls and community buildings are a very high priority for Weardale Area Action Partnership and he felt much more could be done to support them. PF said that this type of project had been done in Weardale and was very successful, e.g. cooking for single men had been oversubscribed twice and she suggested maybe encouraging PCT to work together with Love Food and village halls. IF said this post would need to demonstrate they were to look at financial and business planning to focus on sustainability. PS said the feasibility study supported by the LAG was the start of this activity and this is the continuation, with a greater emphasis on village halls to prepare a good business plan with commercial focus to keep sustainability. CS suggested the project could be expanded to work with CAN and work all over the LEADER area and said it is a missed opportunity worth asking about. RB said he felt general willingness to support this EOI and did all members agree to invite for a full application, all agreed.

Action: SE to invite applicant for a Full Application

6. Full Applications

NPD68

AW started the discussion saying that this application had asked Weardale Area Action Partnership for match funding, which has not been confirmed, and the WAAP only had £5k remaining which would leave a shortfall in match funding WAAP had not agreed any funding at this time, AW said he had spoken with the Manager at Killhope to see if they could make up the rest of the outstanding money if WAAP agreed to give £5K. Killhope Manager said he would try and see if there was money elsewhere to make up this sum. AW said that WAAP would be making a decision by the end of the financial year, but emphasised that they could only give £5K. RB asked the LAG for approval if match funding is in place. SE said this is a capital project, an easy spend but we are still not in a position to give out a GOL, she suggested if we like the project we could increase the intervention rate from NPDL as it was to be supported through measure 313 Tourism which attracts up to 100% intervention. RB asked if we can increase contribution, SE said we are still unable to release any more money and WAAP need to approve the match funding, £5K. AW said that all their applicants would normally go through a 'task group' prior to support funding, and this application had not yet been through a task group, but he did think that this application would go through their village halls and community buildings process, *he said they have a board meeting next week where he will be take the project proposal for a Board decision.* SE said she thinks this is an interesting project with good outputs and value for money. RB concluded that this project could still go ahead if the contribution from LEADER was increased and WAAP approve the match funding. PS said he is favour to up the grant and CS gave his support. VC said that ONE will work with the LAG to support this.

Action: SE to contact applicant to make aware of the position

8. Variations to Projects

No major variations which required LAG approval for projects.

9. Budget Allocation

SE said that this had mainly been discussed earlier, regarding the concerns over the GOL's, the under spend of funds allocated to projects and next year's allocation. ONE are not in a position to indicate the level of budget for the next financial year. However Defra and ONE are committed to the LEADER approach and are optimistic. SDEA are not in a position to bank role the capacity costs of the LEADER project after March 2011, without a contract in place, therefore to comply with employment law redundancy notices will be issued to NPD staff. VC said that LEADER is here to stay and Defra are in favour of LEADER. RB said it would be very bad to lose SE, he said SE is the reason LEADER does so well, IF said we should ensure this is minuted in support for SE and how well she does, PF asked if all LEADER Co-ordinators are in this position? RB explained that it is SDEA that bank roles LEADER as a project and SE said it would depend who bank rolled the other LEADERS. PS said that the AONB had received indication of their allocation and asked what the holdup is. VC said that she didn't know the situation with other regions and stated that it was ONE that put this break, to review the project in March 2011, she explained that Defra are very busy with the handover and Adrian Sherwood is working very hard promoting the NE with Defra, she said AS is pro-actively working closely with Defra. PS asked if representative from the LAG's to Defra would help resolve the situation, VC felt too many contacts would not help. RB said if we have an indication of the budget allocation by 31 January we will not need to apply additional pressure.

10. Open Discussion on LEADER

SE explained that she wanted to know what the LAG members felt about how and what LEADER has achieved so far, what their experiences are on LEADER from their personal or work environment, she opened the table for discussion. PS said from his experiences he wanted to see networks developed, he wants to see smaller projects that have been reasonable successful give a more regular feedback, e.g. what they did achieve, what they didn't achieve, what effect it had, RB said outcomes instead of outputs, need to look at jobs safe guarded, jobs created etc. what have we achieved, SE asked what would the LAG like from the projects without putting more work on the projects such as, written reports, presentation feedback at LAG meetings or any other type of evaluation. PS suggested we get the actual beneficiaries, not necessarily the projects to spend 5 minutes to present feedback to the LAG. RB said he would also like to see successful projects linked and seen in other areas, PS said, IF, PF and himself had met to discuss delivering a similar type of project which came via the Tynedale Trio, somewhere else, we were unable to support for other reasons. SE said she had been actively encouraging the NeST and Pebbles at Allendale to work together, and joining up projects like the Love Food project to others. CS said as well as this going forward it could work with the High Growth Business. PS said looking at all LEADER groups sharing best practices and expanding projects to other areas. CS said an example of supporting the rural shops could be on-line shopping within the shop, SE said it's a case of trying to get the high street shops to change their mind set. RB felt it was important to work with the agricultural sector to encourage collaborative projects, but felt these had been stifled because of RDPE restrictions, SE mentioned Rima Berry's presentation at the previous meeting as they had managed a number of farming collaborative projects and felt more could be delivered with LEADER through UTASS. CS said promoting farm based businesses rather than micro-enterprise, he would assume that would be collaboration, VC said they are definitely going to support collaboration, JA said we need to look at ways, e.g. investing and running the business. VC said capturing outcomes was important – LEADER fundamental is bringing together communities. SE mentioned tourism, RB said that we had not supported many tourism projects and that he would like to see more. SE said following a meeting with VCD they had suggested looking at gaps in provision such as all weather activity. JA said he had spoken to projects that had been looking into the possibility of camping pods etc to extend the visitors season. CG said we needed activities to hold visitors when the weather is poor. LW said it was about how to get the message out to potential projects. SE said we have this in the delivery plan to work closely with Visit County Durham. HC said a very important aspect is packaging activities and providers, she is looking at a potential projects to deliver this which LEADER could support. GG gave an example of a hotel he works with which listed activities that can be booked on their website prior to arriving. IF said we should be encouraging all areas to work together pro-actively and need to work beyond geographic boundaries. PF said networks need linking up with Weardale, Teesdale etc. SE agreed but said it is a hard one to crack. RB asked if we had done enough for the young people. AW said TAAP priorities are young people, NPD can work with them to deliver this. GG said that there are two things to look at, entertainment for young people and employment to keep the young in the dale, he mentioned the fantastic £5M hub that has just been built in Teesdale, PF said Weardale and Allendale don't have a hub. PS said it needs to have an age range, CS said schools can play a big role in this, he explained that Northumberland CC had been working with the high school in the area in the last 10 years and it now started to show an effect, schools need to know what skills businesses are looking for in order for schools to work with the businesses, schools into businesses and businesses into the schools to develop these skills. GG asked how often do young people start up businesses, JA said as an example farmers for the future, which is difficult for the young to get capital reserves to start a new business, VC noted that there was a cycle with the young, she said they do leave and come back, which brings new skills back to the area which can support new businesses. CS said

new businesses need the infrastructure and support. PF said Killhope Museum ran a day for young people to find out how to make their own money and run their own business, maybe they could help with feedback from this day. HC said young people will leave, it's a way of life and that it would need to be encompassing rather than selective. CG asked if the railway had impacted on the area, SE is trying to develop some projects with Weardale Railway but this is proving difficult. He said that the opening of Pickering railway had made a massive difference on the tourism there. RB concluded there had been a lot of useful discussion here and that the LAG would like to see a funded project feedback, PS said for it to also include what had not worked well so we can develop this better, RB said that this discussion would require re-visiting when doing the delivery plan.

11. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

SE informed the group that the Chairman and Vice Chairman are due for election, DF had indicated he wanted to stand down, SE thanked him for his support to date. It is suggested that all LAG members nominate a Chairman and Vice Chairman before the next meeting, 08th February 2011, SE will send out nomination papers, all LAG members to reply.

12. AOB

SE wanted to inform the LAG members that she had not ask for a 6% pay rise, that SDEA and the LAG had agreed this two years ago, to bring her in line with all other LAG Co-ordinators, however SDEA do not feel they can honour this agreement.

SE said the annual meeting was due and she had an idea for a 'Road Trip', hiring of a 52 seated bus for all LAG members and invited guests to visit some supported projects with guest speakers and presentation on the bus, any comments appreciated, RB felt it important we held an AGM which is an open meeting for all to attend.

SE announced that LA is leaving DCC next week and this is her last LAG meeting, SE said LA had been terrific to work with and thanked her for all her support, RB wished her well for the future.

Date of next meeting – Wednesday 09th February 2011, UTASS, Middleton, 4.30pm-6.30pm

These minutes are a reasonable reflection of what was said and agreed.

Richard Betton
North Pennine Dales LEADER Chairman

Date -----