



North Pennine Dales Leader LAG - Minutes of Meeting held on
Wednesday 30th August 2011 at DRCC, Lanchester

Attendance:

Peter Samsom (PS), Charlotte Hursey (CH), Cliff Brown (CB), David Fruin (DF), Jeremy Ancketill (JEA), Hazel Coppack (HC), John Atkinson (JA), Shaun Stuart (SS), Catherine Pearson (CP), Sue Ellwood (SE), Fiona Green (FG), Robyn Peat (RP), Lesley Millgate (LM), Craig Wilson (CW), Jon Williams (JW), Victoria Catesby (VC), Geoff Corrigan (East Durham LAG), Nic Cullens (AONB Partnership).

1. Apologies:

Andrew Walker, Cameron Scott, Richard Betton, Mike Lazarri, Pippa Heron, Ian Forbes, Pam Forbes, Graeme Gill, Janet Seaman.

Peter Samsom chaired the meeting.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed to be a true record and were duly signed by PS. There were no actions outstanding.

3. Declaration of conflict of interest

CB declared a conflict of interest, for personal reasons, over NPD 136 (Teesdale from the Pennine Way). PS declared a conflict of interest over NPD127 (Heritage Interpretation and Information) and LM over NPD120 (DRCC) due to involvement in the applications.

4. Spend & Commitments Profile

SE reiterated that the accounting approach has now been changed and that monies must now be spent by December 2011 and not March 2012. A list has been compiled, which includes the applications on the current agenda, forecasting that the spend will be £603,000, leaving £20,000 to be spent before the end of December. SE stressed the importance of maximising what is spent this year but acknowledged that the budgets of the Upland LAGs may be slightly protected. VC commented that she is grateful for all the information fed back to DEFRA and that the problems arising because of the change in accounting period are being looked into and she should be able to feed back to the group within the next few weeks. SE queried whether next year's budget can be used from January 2012 or whether spend will be delayed until the new financial year. VC agreed to look into this.

Action: VC to feed back to the group once information has been received from DEFRA and also look into details of when next year's budget can be spent.

5. Full Applications

NPD120 DRCC

LM left the room (conflict of interest). SE summarised the project, which has developed from an initial feasibility study identifying the need for support for community buildings. The project involves employing a part time advisor to support all community buildings, mainly in Weardale, but working with the Teesdale Village Hall Consortium and Community Action Northumberland to avoid overlap. The aim is for the village halls to become more sustainable, using the Hallmark (quality standard for village halls) as a template. The advisor would be employed for 18 months at 21 hours per week. The project costs amount to £37,393 with a 74.8% intervention rate. CB commented that the project was a great idea and JT agreed that encouraging sustainability was important. CH commented that it would be important for the project to have an exit plan in place and wondered whether the project intended to deliver something substantially different from other pre-existing support mechanisms. SE explained that the project will explore joining the halls together in a network thus leaving them strong enough to take themselves forward. PS commented that the project will hit one of the targets in the delivery plan and SE agreed that there will be good outputs from the project as the halls will be trading and 55 businesses will thus be supported.

The group approved this full application but agreed that the grant offer should include a milestone (in the final quarter) that will firm up the commitment to the development of a network of village halls in Weardale.

NPD127 Heritage Interpretation and Information

PS left the room (conflict of interest) and DF agreed to chair the discussion of this application. SE reported that this project is a trans-national project between France, Scotland, England and Holland and will explore methods of communication used at visitor centres. New technologies will be explored, a joint website established and best practice shared. The AONB Partnership will focus on the Bowlees visitor centre in Teesdale, which is currently unstaffed, with a view to installing WIFI technology in the window of the centre. The project costs amount to just over £20,000 with slightly more than 72% intervention rate. The outputs will be that 30 businesses are supported and 10,000 individuals benefited. CW gave strong support for the application which ties in with the current Business Services Review. CB commented that the technology would need to be thief proof and SE confirmed that the hardware itself would be located within the building with a screen built into the window.

The group approved this full application.

NPD135 High Crane Lodge

SE summarised the application which is from two individuals who wish to develop their small holding to include an outdoor classroom for school visits. An initial open day, for a local school, has taken place, and received positive feedback from the staff and pupils who attended. The initial aim is to run the project for two years as an evaluation. The project costs were initially £12,000 but some consumables have been removed from the project costs as a result of the TA, leaving costs of approximately £10,000 with a 50% intervention rate. CB queried whether the applicants are aware of this reduction and SE confirmed that the applicants are not yet aware, but that she does not foresee a problem. JW commented that the children's experience of, and learning about, farming should not be limited to the issues involved in running a smallholding. He stressed the importance of introducing the children to the issues of wider commercial agriculture in the North Pennines and suggested that links should be made with larger farms in the surrounding area. The group agreed with this suggestion. CW further commented that as the smallholding is growing organically it may attract visitors other than school groups.

The group approved this full application with an additional caveat that building up a relationship with nearby commercial farms should be encouraged.

The following applications are awaiting TAs and the group agreed that agreement could be reached today but subject to TA confirmation. Should the TAs result in issues to be addressed, the group agreed that it would be appropriate for the chair to make a decision, circulating the information to the group.

NPD133 North Pennines Dales Woodfuel Supply

SE summarised that this project aims to work with woodfuel suppliers to raise standards through training and achieve accreditation. Project costs amount to £21,000 with a 70% intervention rate. SE reported that the applicants are encountering problems in raising the remaining 30% and that there is a shortfall of £900. The applicants (Northwoods) are receiving a discount from the training provider and SE queried whether this discount could be used as an in-kind contribution. CP said that as discount is not an actual amount it would be hard to evidence and thus unlikely that it could be included as an in-kind match. JW commented that this project should also include education of consumers around the issues of sustainability and the seasoning of wood. Both JA and RP agreed that there is a need to inform consumers. VC reported that she believed that Northwoods already have an education element in place but that she would check. RP commented that not all wood suppliers have management of the woodland they are taking wood from and PS noted that this project is mainly concerned with suppliers and not woodland managers. CH commented that the project should perhaps be more flexible and also include uses of wood other than for fuel. SS commented that it has been proven elsewhere that an accreditation scheme can work and PS reported that Northwoods already work closely with the forest industries in Northumberland. JW agreed that Northwoods can be seen as reliable and trusted to deliver on the project objectives and suggested that they are given encouragement to explore opportunities to educate consumers by means of press releases to Parish Councils, articles in Parish Newsletters etc.

The group agreed to approve the application and to give additional encouragement that the applicant pursues opportunities to educate consumers.

NPD136 Teesdale from the Pennine Way

CB left the room (conflict of interest). SE summarised the project which aims to produce a DVD to highlight the benefits of Teesdale and the surrounding dales as a tourist location. This application will need to be forwarded to DEFRA as it involves marketing and DF asked whether there was a time pressure on the application. VC and SE confirmed that comments should be received from DEFRA next week and that the applicant is hoping to complete filming before Christmas. SS asked who would have access to the DVD and SE reported that the applicant will be distributing the DVD to pubs and B&Bs locally. JA commented that the prime objective of the DVD as a marketing tool should be to reach people living outside the area. HC commented that the DVD would also be beneficial to those in the area and would encourage them to explore further afield. CW commented that he is uncertain as to how valuable DVDs now are as a marketing tool and any marketing of the DVD should have the flexibility to address both pre and post arrival visitors. SS agreed that the DVD could be sold to post arrival visitors as a memento. The group agreed that a trailer or taster of the DVD should be shared via relevant websites and social media such as Twitter and Facebook. CH confirmed that the applicant has an extensive network of contacts. DF commented that acquiring income from the sale of the DVDs may be difficult and it may take a long time to recover costs. PS commented that the applicant is investing £7500 of his own money. PS queried why the application includes a DSLR camera at a cost of £1800, SE agreed to seek justification of why this was needed.

The group agreed to approve the application subject to approval from DEFRA, satisfactory justification for the purchase of the camera, the TA and the commitment to place a trailer/taster of the DVD on the internet.

NPD140 Rowneyart

SE summarised that the applicant is a local artist who wishes to pass on skills to an apprentice. The application is for the conversion of a derelict barn into workshops and a studio space. Planning permission has been granted for the conversion. He intends to purchase printing equipment which will then be available for hire and also recruit an apprentice and an admin person. Project costs for the conversion and fixtures and fittings amount to £37,000 with a 50% intervention rate. RP queried whether it is integral for the artist to have a building and whether leasing premises in a more populated, less isolated area may not be more appropriate. SE confirmed that the artist currently works from a room in his mother's house and that the building to be converted has been gifted to the artist by his family who are also bank rolling the project. SE further said that the group should be encouraging businesses in isolated areas. JA commented that the project will create an asset for the applicant and that there may not be enough potential in the project to bring about local employment. SE commented and JW agreed that the project will return a derelict building to use. FG commented that hiring out and maintenance of the printing equipment will require a technician, SE confirmed that the artist intends to take on this role himself and expressed the view that this is a great project that should be supported. SS commented that handing on a traditional craft was a laudable objective but that the group needed to ensure value for money. PS commented that the cash flow and building timetable may not be realistic and SE confirmed that the applicant is aware that he will not receive any monies until after the builder is paid. LM commented that the project will not only bring a redundant building back into use but will also ensure that a unique craft is housed in the North Pennines.

The group voted on the application with 8 votes for approval and 3 against. The application was approved subject to the TA but it was noted that this approval was specifically because of the intention to employ an apprentice and an admin person.

NPD147 The Biltong Man

SE reported that this applicant has great experience and knowledge of this product and has been selling small scale to family and friends. He is now looking to expand and market the product to major chains and also health and fitness clubs, as an alternative healthy snack. The application is to lease premises in Wolsingham and equip them to appropriate health and hygiene standards. SE commented that at the moment there is a problem with the lease which is only for 3 years. SS commented that the short lease is a significant risk but that the business would be something new and different in the North Pennines. JW asked whether there was demand for Biltong and RP confirmed that the applicant has carried out some market research. SE commented that the applicant is investing some of his own money and feels that demand is sufficient. HC confirmed that the applicant has outlets ready to stock the product. SE confirmed that the applicant will be sourcing beef locally.

The group approved the application subject to the TA.

6. EOI's submitted

NPD149 South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society (STRPS)

SE reminded the group that STRPS have previously received LEADER funding for an extension to the line and building of a new platform. STRPS now want to develop infrastructure and a car park at Slaggyford, and also enhance the village green. CP pointed out that should the project go ahead it will need close monitoring to ensure that the money is spent by December. PS commented that the line currently stops about a mile and a half away from Slaggyford and that the line is not expected to be extended to the proposed car park for another two years. JW commented that it may not be appropriate to fund the car park at this time and the group agreed that should funding be approved there should be an

expectation that the line would be extended by December 2013. CB commented that the car park and village green improvements would be of benefit to the village and PS confirmed that it will be possible to walk from the car park to the nearest station at Lintley.

The group agreed to invite a full application.

NPD150 Renewable North Pennines

SE said that this project has arisen from a pilot project by UTASS which provided 12 farms with advice and guidance on renewable energy. Phase 1 of the project will provide objective advice and guidance; Phase 2 will bring on projects that will provide an income stream for UTASS and the Teesdale Village Halls Consortium from managing alternative energy sources. CB commented that specific instances of what was actually going to be done would be needed in any full application. RP said that there is a definite need for Phase 1 and that Phase 2 is a clever project idea.

The group agreed to invite a full application.

NPD151 DCC Durham Dales Business Support

SE said that this application had arisen as a result of the Dales Centre becoming a business hub. The project would fund two part time roles giving business advice, including start up advice. The outputs would be 50 businesses helped and 10 created. Project costs are £64,000 with a 50% intervention rate. SS commented that there is a proven need for this kind of advice and JA queried whether the project would be sustainable. HC commented that there could be overlap with others doing a similar thing and SS noted that 'Be Enterprising' is coming to an end in the near future. JA commented that business advice is readily available from local accountancy practices and high street banks and CW reported that Visit County Durham has an officer in post who is giving one-to-one support to businesses. SS commented that it was always a good idea to continue something for which there is a clear need and PS said that the applicants would need to provide a sound business plan and exit strategy.

The LAG members agreed to invite a full application.

NPD152 North Pennine Country Cottages

SE said that this application would need to go to DEFRA as it is a marketing application. The application is from Pennine Ways Estate Agency in response to a demand for a locally co-ordinated marketing effort for holiday cottages post arrival as existing marketing sites tend to be nationally run and commission fees are high. CW commented that the national sites have national and international channels and charge accordingly and that Visit County Durham signpost to local provision. HC wondered whether the project is to be run as a profit making business or a tourism tool for the whole area. She mentioned that the Weardale Visitor Network already market holiday lets on their website. RP commented that the identified demand appeared to be too anecdotal and CW said that the need was for pre and not post arrival marketing. CB agreed that there does not appear to be a post arrival business opportunity.

The group decided not to invite a full application.

NPD153 Wardle Business Solutions

SE informed the group that this application was for a micro business based in Stanhope and project costs cover the equipping of an office. JW asked what differentiated this business from other accountancy firms, for example, do they provide lower cost services for start up businesses? SE reported that the firm has a client base nationally and does not charge special rates for start up businesses. The group considered the project did not fit with the high level objectives of the

current delivery plan as it was not providing a unique or specialist service and there are sufficient providers throughout the region offering this type of activities.

The group decided not to invite a full application.

7. Variations to Projects

SE reported that Whitfield Pantry has a claim of £825 outstanding and CP confirmed that she had been in phone and email contact with Whitfield Pantry to discuss the matter.

The group agreed that in view of the under spend for this year that Whitfield Pantry be asked to provide invoices and payment would be made.

8. AOB

CH asked the group to consider tabling small business and tourism support as agenda items to allow for full discussion of how applications could best be invited. SE reported that a previous call for projects had had a limited response and she will be meeting with CW and Melanie Lowes (Visit County Durham) to discuss the demand in the tourism sector. The group agreed that it is important to keep the emphasis on small business and tourism support and that this will be added to the agenda for a meeting post December.

CW reported that there is to be a presentation in the near future on tourism support. Further details can be obtained from CW.

9. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 12th October UTASS.

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

Richard Betton –
North Pennine Dales LEADER Chairman

Date -----