

MINUTES

Local Action Group – Rural Enterprise Group Meeting

Wednesday 14 June 2017, 14.00

Held at The Usual Place

Present	Gill Khosla (GK) Teresa Dougall (TD) Judith Johnson (JJ) Peter Ross (PR)	Heather Brash (HB) Amanda Hannah (AH) Eva Milroy (EM) arrived at 14.05 Carol-Ann Brown (Observing)
Leader Staff	Ellen Grant (EG) Nicola Hill (NH)	Lewis Boddy (LB) Jessie Mason (JM)
Apologies	Gill Dykes (GD) Lesley Jackson (LJ)	Sharon Glendinning (SG) Tony Fitzpatrick (TF)

Meeting commenced at 1.55

1 Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Chair, Gill Khosla opened the meeting at 2pm and welcomed Chairs, Peter Ross (SMG) and Heather Brash (Communities) to the meeting, in order to make the meeting quorate and thanked them for stepping in. She also welcomed Lewis Boddy, Communities Project Officer and Carol-Ann Brown of Business Gateway. Carol-Ann was attending in an observation capacity, prior to hopefully becoming a member of the Group.

1.2 **Declarations of Interest:** there were none noted.

2 Minutes of previous Meeting held on Wednesday 8 March 2017

Minutes were proposed by JJ and seconded by TD.

The Chair reordered the agenda to accommodate EM being held up in traffic.

NH updated the Group on Doug Wilson, he has left Visit Scotland and Paula Ward (previously McDonald) has returned to her post. It is hoped that Paula will resume her membership of the group but it is work dependant at the moment. GK asked if we could send a "thank you" to Doug Wilson for stepping in.

4 Strategic Projects

4.1 Food & Drink

GK had posed the option of a strategic project on Food and Drink. Meeting has been held with Chris Churms of Economic Development and Lorna Young of DG Food & Drink. They are going to advise who should be contacted. Perhaps Visit South West Scotland, in the hope of opening it up to tourists.

4.2 Farm Diversification

It could have been said that we have not seen enough 'different type of project' coming through. But, EOI's currently in the system are very encouraging. Have clarified with Scottish Government that a strategic project steering group could be set up to design or propose a project to inform and encourage

farmers to diversifying. TD suggested that farmers would likely be thinking along these lines as there will not be as much funding around after Brexit. They will be looking at ways of supporting their primary income. The steering group could look at areas of training, mentoring and how to make the shift. The legacy might be that a group of Mentors could be in place after the end of LEADER.

The Group would like to see collaborative working and bring together expertise from across the region as well as working in partnership. HB questioned if colleges were in training around this subject. EM has just taken up a new role Curriculum Development and is working with Dumfries and Galloway Colleges and businesses in the area to identify future vocational, academic, professional and technical training. At present a review is being done and the colleges are starting with a blank canvas. It was thought that it is a very worthwhile subject to explore and featured highly in the Local Development Strategy.

GK asked for any interest in sitting on a steering group.

NH advised that any of the members were welcome to sit on the steering group, but if an application came to the group for funding then they would have to declare an interest and therefore not be able to be involved in the decision making process. NH will circulate an invitation to the LAG to ask if anyone would like to sit on the steering group to develop this idea.

The Group would like to see an application to the December meeting to allow for a 2 year project.

3 Consideration of Applications

EG advised members that all project decisions are based on Scottish Government issued Guidance version 4.0

R068 – Esk Valley Events

The total project cost is £15,000 and the applicant is applying for £7,500 which represents 50% intervention. All match funding is evidenced and the project is technically eligible for support.

EG gave a synopsis of the application – the applicants, who are young adults, recently returned to live in rural D&G, were very aware of the economic and employment challenges that lead to outward migration of young people.

With a professional background, experience of events management and an understanding of the importance and value of local provenance, they believe that there is an opportunity to build a company that can develop a full-service events provision and management service. It is believed there is a gap in the local market that could be exploited; however felt throughout the application more could have been done to evidence how they will:

- Work in partnership with local visitor attractions/heritage sites, to develop new creative events
- Identify new opportunities for event development
- organise and manage the complexities of creating bespoke events in this rural area
- Source and recommend local suppliers and providers
- Work to promote the 'offering' of local producers/suppliers and identify other gaps/opportunities

TD liked the application, seemed to still have a lot of development required to show need and demand, but there may be a gap for a smaller option.

EG advised there were more documents on LARCs showing need and demand.

The group felt it was good to see young people returning to the area but the group would like to see more evidence of making connections with local organisations.

EG advised they had been in touch with Business Gateway and knew they had contacted the Princes Trust, they will be appointed a mentor. This should help immensely.

HB could see scope for this in the east of the region as they seemed to be less well served. The Group would have liked to see more evidence in their application of local links having already been made.

EG gave the Groups feedback at draft stage, which seemed to be taken well but not translated into their full application.

JJ felt the application was quite simplistic but had looked at the market and felt there was room for this type of project as there didn't seem to be anyone else doing it. It was felt, however, there was simply not enough evidence in the application and felt it should be further developed.

PR also thought it was a simplistic application and wondered how they were going to transport their equipment as the purchase of a vehicle was not until later in the project.

Following a full discussion, GK invited Members to score the project.

SCORING

1	Does the project embody originality, embrace experimentation or demonstrate innovation?	2
2	Does the project applicant demonstrate adequate knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to deliver?	3
3	Does the project demonstrate clear linkages to other related local activities or strategies?	2
4	Does the project demonstrate evidence of community, market or business need/demand?	2
5	Does the project demonstrate value for money?	3
6	Does the project clearly demonstrate additionality?	3
7	Does the project adequately recognise and address participation barriers or risks?	2
8	Does the project clearly tackle at least one of the LDS themes: a. Economy b. Land, Coast and Marine Environments c. Sustainable Settlements	3
9	Does the project clearly demonstrate what will be achieved by the project – Outcomes/Indicators/Target Groups?	2
10	Are you happy that this project fits comfortably with the LEADER LDS?	yes
TOTAL SCORE		22

Number of Members **APPROVING**: 0



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Number of Members **NOT APPROVING**: 0

Number of Members **DEFERRING**: 6

The decision was taken to **DEFER** the application for decision at the next meeting in September.

The Group would like to see the application further developed, especially with:

- More evidence of need/demand.
- Research of looking at need/demand in a wider context of the region
- Evidence of working with other businesses
- More detail about previous experience of applicants
- Evidence the financial costs are realistic

R079 – Ernespie Farm Centre

The total project cost is £158,000 and the applicant is applying for £50,000 which represents 31.64% intervention. All match funding is evidenced and the project is technically eligible for support.

EG gave a synopsis of the project; as part of this long term vision the farm is proposing the part opening of the farm to the public, in the form of Ernespie Farm Centre which will be an educational, fun, learning centre with café and indoor play area.

There will be an outdoor learning experience. This will be very much a hands-on learning experience for children and adults alike. As part of the 'meet the animals' barns, there are many activities planned, including small animal petting, large animal feeding, milking demonstration and woodland walk. This will be an educational, yet fun experience, allowing children to not only see how food is produced but also be engaged with activities.

There will be an indoor play area. This will be a soft play area which forms part of the main building. The soft play area is intended to be a fun entertainment facility for children aged 2-14 which will help children grow physically and mentally through interactive play with their parents, peers and the facility itself. We believe in creating an inclusive community and have designed the farm shop to be as disabled friendly as possible, with this in mind we have planned sensory play equipment and interactive learning for children and families who identify with sensory and communication needs.

EG advised the group that planning permission has been secured.

AH felt positively about the project and felt there were strong elements of innovation. The Group could see this as being a "draw" for the Stewartry and HB noted that it was within walking distance of the town, so readily accessible for visitors without transport. TD also noted elements of sameness but agreed that the A75 was a long stretch of road which would benefit from alternative attractions, away from standard coffee stops. The town and nearby holiday destinations would lend support and hopefully make the venture successful.

Confirmation that funding was acceptable had been received from Scottish Government. They are already involved in "Open Farm" events and are known in the area, the Group felt this was a positive reflection of the applicant. The Group also felt that there was not a lot for people to do in Castle Douglas, so this should bring opportunities, bringing children and families into the town.



Following a full discussion, GK invited Members to score the project.

SCORING

1	Does the project embody originality, embrace experimentation or demonstrate innovation?	3
2	Does the project applicant demonstrate adequate knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to deliver?	3
3	Does the project demonstrate clear linkages to other related local activities or strategies?	4
4	Does the project demonstrate evidence of community, market or business need/demand?	4
5	Does the project demonstrate value for money?	3
6	Does the project clearly demonstrate additionality?	3
7	Does the project adequately recognise and address participation barriers or risks?	2
8	Does the project clearly tackle at least one of the LDS themes: a. Economy b. Land, Coast and Marine Environments c. Sustainable Settlements	4
9	Does the project clearly demonstrate what will be achieved by the project – Outcomes/Indicators/Target Groups?	3
10	Are you happy that this project fits comfortably with the LEADER LDS?	Yes
TOTAL SCORE		29

Number of Members **APPROVING**: 6

Number of Members **NOT APPROVING**: 0

Number of Members **DEFERRING**: 0

The decision was taken to **APPROVE** the application.

Standard condition 1 and 2

It was suggested that connection may be made with The Usual Place, and DG Voice for advice on sensory play and interaction. It is good to make linkages.

5 AOCB

The Group discussed the Expressions of Interest received and were happy to see the diverse nature of them and would be pleased to see a number of them progress to application stage.

The meeting was brought to a close by GK who thanked EG for her diligence on encouraging the applicants in their applications and expressions of interest and the Group for their discussions.

Date of next meeting

Next meeting is **13 September** to be held at the Usual Place, Dumfries.

The meeting closed at 15.50