

Cree Valley Lodges

Final Report



Background

The idea of the project stems from us trying to think of a way to generate non-farm income and developed from my wife's experience in the equestrian industry, and family experience in the hospitality industry.

The development of the project idea was led by us, supported by consultant Alan Stannet. We looked at different makes, designs and packages before deciding that we wanted to choose a bespoke high-end accommodation for both human and horse. We felt this was the way to attract the best clients.

Aims

The main aims of this project were:

- to provide two holiday lodges over-looking an uninterrupted view over the Cree Estuary,
- providing one lodge equipped for wheelchair accessibility, something which is not available in abundance in our area.
- The stables we designed to provide bespoke DIY livery accommodation for horses
- And also provide horse holiday livery for those staying in lodges, and those who just wish horse cover while the holiday elsewhere.

In doing this we hope to help improve local economy, bring employment for at least one individual, improve knowledge of rural life and lastly provide something that insulates our business from a volatile industry.



Funding

Leader provided a grant of £148,00.00 which we matched with £148,000 of our own funds.

Time frame

The project gained approval from the LEADER Local Action Group in December 2018 but due to planning hold ups, it didn't break ground until August 2019.

Work undertaken

Start date: 26/03/2019

End date: 29/02/2020

Groundwork's took the initial first six weeks providing roads, concrete pads before the barn and lodges were put on site. Water, gas and electric were also connected at this time.

Decking started in January 2020 but due to horrendous wet spell this took longer than expected. Eight local tradesmen have benefitted from this project over the six-month period and we will provide employment for one when project is finished.

Budget

The final budget is looking slightly over budget, firstly due to a rise in material costs as estimates were over a year old when planning was passed. Also, a lesson learnt was make sure estimates are water-tight, an example being that planning requested different foundations on barn, costing an extra £5,000.00 not in original costs. The total project costs finished at £370,000, the amount extra we covered ourselves.

Final budget:

Approved Project Costs per application = £296,000

LEADER approved grant = £148,000

Total eligible spend is £293,918.65, less match funding of £148,000

LEADER provided £145,918.65.

Project Management

Day to day responsibility for Project management was undertaken by A & J Campbell.

Fit with LEADER Local Development Strategy

The Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Strategy identifies a number of key areas or themes in their business plan for the LEADER programme where it is felt most difference can be made to the region.

The three over- arching themes are:

1. Economy

- 2. Land, Coast and Marine Environments
- 3. Sustainable Settlements

This project chimes with a number of these themes but in particular the one under the heading of economy.

This aims to 'enable younger people to find employment and purpose' and this project will create new employment opportunities for younger people and provide work experience in conjunction with Douglas Ewart High School's programme for student work experience.

Tourism is identified as a target area and this project obviously is primarily aimed at this market.

The second theme targets 'land and environment, including development of farming, forestry and natural environment assets'.

This project aims to take full advantage of the area of Wigtown Bay Nature Reserve that lies within the farm boundary and beyond to encourage enjoyment of it to the wider community with support from SNH. The farm has been working with SNH for many years to enhance and preserve this Merse habitat and now is a good time to share it with the wider public as part of SNH's wider remit.

Sustainability

Looking forward we hope the project will be self- sustaining from the provided projections and when combined with the existing business they should cross support with other enterprises, providing an exciting future for Cree Valley Lodges & Stables.

A Marketing Plan has been put in place to maximise the opportunity to promote the Cree Valley Lodges & Stables to as wide an audience as possible.



Marketing

A full Marketing Plan has been prepared as part of the project and can be found below:



Beneficiaries

The applicant plans to partner with a number of local businesses including food and drink producers, visitor attractions and fellow tourism businesses in order to ensure a wider community benefit to this initiative.

Targets

| Project Outputs | Number | Progressing as planned | | Achieved |
|---|----------|------------------------|----|---|
| | | YES | NO | |
| No of businesses supported to diversify | 1 | X | | A&J Campbell has been supported to diversify into tourism business – detailed in Final Report |
| No of businesses supported to grow | 1 | X | | As above |
| No of farm diversification projects | 1 | X | | As above |
| No of projects supporting the development of tourism businesses across the region | 1 | X | | As above |
| No of projects supporting the development of environmental, nature-based, cultural, activity and experiential tourism | 1 | X | | As above |
| No of promotional/marketing projects | 1 | X | | Applicant has provided a Marketing Plan for the promotion of the lodges/stables business. |
| No of projects that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance these environments. - Support the sustainable use of any of these environments. - Demonstrate the value of these environments to the lives of the people of Dumfries & Galloway. | 1 | X | | As above |
| No of projects supporting nature based tourism initiatives | 1 | X | | As above |
| No of projects developing initiatives to raise awareness of the diverse landscapes, habitats and species of Dumfries & Galloway | 1 | X | | As above |
| No of projects promoting an environmentally and resource efficient economy | 1 | X | | As above |
| No of projects developing urban/rural relationships | 1 | | X | The lodges are being marketed widely to attract visitors from urban areas but until the lodges have been launched and begin to attract visitors it is difficult to assess this. |
| No of projects promoting volunteering opportunities | 1 | | x | None identified as yet. |

