

LEADER 2014-2020 Meeting & Visit Reports

Vale of Usk Local Action Group

Administrative Body Monmouthshire County Council

Meeting Title	Vale of Usk Virtual meeting due to Covid19	Meeting Date	23 rd April 2020
Venue	Remote video access from homes	Meeting Time	2.00pm
MONCC Attendees	Zara Bligh, Louise McGuinness, Mike Powell, Mark Lloyd, Deserie Mansfield, Lucinda James, Alan Michie, Mandy Moore, Ruth Waycott, Andrew David, Neville Hart, Elaine Blanchard, John Davies		
Apologies	Alastair Robertson		
Meeting Description	Virtual -LAG meeting. Telephone Conference due to Corona Virus.		

Notes from the meeting, which was I understand recorded by Des Mansfield.

- Mike Powell started the meeting by explaining and outlining the new work the RDP team has been asked to take on, on behalf of MCC because of Covid19. The LAG work has nearly all been put on hold but it is expected that Alison Howard and Zara Bligh (assisted by Louise McGuinness) will endeavour to keep the balls rolling albeit at a reduced rate until things can get back to whatever the new normal looks like. Louise read the reports prepared by the project officers about the state of the RDP work to date and where it is able to edge forward. It was noted that the Exhibition Unit for the Farming Community will be more needed than ever during and after this period of hardship.
- Mark Lloyd read a report on behalf of himself, Alison Grimson and Lucinda James, explaining the work they were now doing. He estimated that over 400 business have been spoken to using a hunt group phone system. Initially the people were friendly but over the weeks some are becoming desperate. They are having to cope with people in tears. Registration for business rates is the main key to open up funding and many are not eligible. The team is having to be really strict and careful that the correct eligibility points are checked. Claims are being put on hold whilst these checks are put in place to ensure payments are legal. Alison has been working late evenings to process payments once the claim is considered genuine.
- Des gave a report on the Food Project that she is working on alongside Food Banks and other charities. Many more people are experiencing Food Poverty caused by the Covid 19 hardships. She gave details about Social Supermarkets and bulk purchasing for key distribution to targeted families and individuals.
- Mike Powell explained about the different grants, loans and funds that are available to support local businesses. He noted how hard the team was working answering calls from increasingly distressed people who were facing financial hardship.
- Mandy Moore voiced concern and was reassured that there was no repetition of existing services and she also made a comment about the small businesses and charities that will fall between the cracks in the Government support net. How to keep them viable for post pandemic period when they will be needed more than ever.
- Mike Powell explained about the Economic Resilience Fund that charities involved in Covid19 work can apply to and mentioned that other charities not delivering Covid aid should keep an eye open for a new fund due to come on line in the next few days. He thanked everyone for logging on and stated that he hoped the July meeting would be

a more normal affair.

- Alan Michie commented that it was not possible to keep up the level of work that is being undertaken at the moment. The pressure is too great. He thanked everyone for organising the video conference and mentioned that we need to attract more volunteers to communicate in this way going forward. Perhaps this is the new normal.

Actions arising from the meeting of 23rd April 2020

- *The majority of the RDP team will continue to assist in the Covid 19 MCC aid.*
- *Zara Bligh and Alison Howard will continue to work on the RDP delivery.*

Notes prepared by:

Louise McGuinness/Zara Bligh

Date:

23rd April 2020