

Vale of Usk Local Action Group

Wednesday 20th January 2016

Centenary Hall, Usk

MINUTES

Members
Present:

Gemma Bodé
Nicola Bradbear
Claire Brown
Peter Cole
Kerry Counsell
Andrew David
John Davies
John Harris
Debbie McCarty
Pamela Mason
Alan Michie (Chair)
Clare Parsons
Lynne Richards (Sub)
Alastair Robertson

Officers:

Zara Bligh
Alison Grimson
Mark Lloyd
Deserie Mansfield
Mike Powell
Sarah Armstrong

Apologies:

Helen Fletcher
Bob Greenland
Andrew Wall
Sally Richardson

Guests/
New

John Davies, WG
Mandy Moore, GAVO
Carys Edwards, RSPB

1. **Welcome** The Chair introduced John Davies, Welsh Government and the LAG introduced themselves.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.** AOB – Marketing – Alastair Robertson to speak to the five theme groups for a focused funding launch.
Minutes of 19th October 2015 - Approved.
3. **John Davies, RDP Team, Welsh Government** – John introduced himself and explained that his team will support the admin team for the Vale of Usk LAG, undertake a compliance role, manage the annual LDS review (end March) and provide information on other relevant funding. The official launch of the programme is on 11th February at Liberty Stadium in Swansea.
4. **New Membership Elections** – Chair asked LAG members to consider Mandy Moore from GAVO this would bring membership up to 21 with an equal sector representation. The LAG was quorate and voted unanimously to approve Mandy's application.
5. **Programme Update – Michael Powell** - The Local Development Strategy (LDS) annual review date is end March 2016 – officers will discuss amendments but changes should be minimal. Any amendment will be signed off by the Chair.

Rural Communities Development Fund (RCDF) – the Welsh Government administered capital fund that complements LEADER – closes for current round of applications on 31 January – all relevant applications will be sent to the Vale of Usk LAG for voting as to whether it meets the Local Development Strategy. The LAG cannot reject an RCDF application but they can say it does not meet the LDS.

6. **Thematic Group Overview**

Theme 1 – Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources – Peter Cole.

Important that projects fit within the Monmouthshire and Newport Destination Plans, as well as the Vale of Usk Local Development Strategy. Presentation already given on the

Monmouthshire plan, Newport plan will be at the next meeting. Some projects have been discussed but not eligible - they have been sign-posted to alternative funding streams.

Theme 2 – Facilitating pre-commercial development; business partnerships and short supply chains – Pamela Mason

Queen Bee breeding project that includes education and sharing of information – working with other LAG areas, progressing well.

Food producers baseline study – this could be Co-operation project with six Local Authority areas – the application will fund four officers for 3 years – co-ordinated by Bridgend.

Local producers need to be supported, skills, marketing, distribution, outlet (Raglan Services?)

Theme 3 – Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services – Alastair Roberson.

Baseline study to identify services with priorities and delivery suggestions would be valuable.

Community Toolkit – to help rural communities to plan and know what funding is available.

Three fields site – Magor and Undy - community survey to establish what facilities, services, etc are required. National Lottery – Create a Space has £8 million available – the expression of interest (EOI) has to be in by 31 January.

Community use of leisure facilities at Coleg Gwent Usk to be discussed.

Theme 4 – Renewable energy at a community level – Clare Parsons

A promotional film with regard to different renewable community options is being considered.

Monmouthshire Action Plan for Sustainable identified Llandogo as community that might benefit from a micro community hydro scheme. LEADER could consider a feasibility study but there is no grant relief available anymore. Other RDP funding could be applied for to help capitalise this project.

Theme 5 – Exploitation of digital technology - Claire Brown

Coding clubs – looking at expanding a young person scheme to VoU region, maybe making it a family scheme so parents are involve.

Digital volunteers – introduced to potential partners/schools

Digitally equipping community halls – Llanover is keen to offer training and support to community members in the village hall – no broadband at the moment - in discussions with AB Internet who has a government contract for wireless broadband enabling.

7. **Living Landscapes Update – Lynne Richards/Gemma Bodé** - Following the April 2015 presentation, the HLF application has been successful and securing £2.8 million (which will require £550,000 match funding). RSPB is leading on the project. See presentation¹
8. **Alternative funding to complement LEADER Projects – Mike Powell** - Rural Communities Development Fund (RCDF) has already been mentioned for capital funding. LEADER projects can have the support of a funding expert (Andy Smith) to help capitalize projects.

9. Any Other Business

- **Additional LAG Meeting to consider the RCDF applications (AM).** All applications from the Vale of Usk region need to reflect the Local Development Strategy and the LAG needs to confirm this. Welsh Government will forward applications the beginning of February. Additional LAG meeting will be arranged at the end of February to consider these applications.
- **GAVO Event (Mandy Moore).** Information for a half day event will be forwarded to members shortly.
- **Irresistible Offa project (Mark Lloyd).** This potential Co-operation project is now focusing more on Intereg funding.
- **Project ideas (Peter Cole).** It would be worth sharing all potential project ideas with all LAG members regardless of the theme group as members might have an interest or experience. A regular project update will be circulated, project pages with info on various stages of projects will be available to members via the website shortly too.
- **Chair Meetings (AM).** The Chair would like to attend the next Theme Group meetings and would like to see a project application for each theme at the February meeting.

Actions

- Individual theme group's focused marketing - Alastair Robertson.
- Review of Local Development Strategy – Mike Powell/Alan Michie
- Additional LAG Meeting – Zara Bligh
- Circulating project updates – Zara Bligh
- Chair to attend Theme Group meetings – Theme officer/Alan Michie

2016 Vale of Usk LAG Meetings:

Wednesday 20th April 2016 – 2pm-4pm

Wednesday 20th July 2016 – 2 pm – 4 pm

Wednesday 19th October 2016 – 2 pm – 4 pm

