

Administrative Body Monmouthshire County Council

Vale of Usk Local Action Group

Meeting Title	Vale of Usk Virtual LAG Meeting (due to Covid19)	Meeting Date	20 th January 2022
Venue	Remote video access	Meeting Time	10 am – 12.30 pm
LAG Attendees	Pamela Mason (PM), Sharran Lloyd (SL) late, Lynne Richards (LR), Andrew David (AD), Ruth Waycott (RW), Elaine Blanchard (EB), John Davies (JD), Alastair Robertson (AR), John Harris (JH) late, Nicola Bradbear (NA), Adam Taylor (AT), Claire Brown (CB),		
Apologies	Mark McLoughlin, Jason Hughes, Mandy Moore, Gareth Baker, Phil Powell, Alan Michie		
MCC	Mike Powell (MP), Adam Greenwood (AG1), Alison Grimson (AG), Lucinda James (LJ), Zara Bligh (ZB)		
Guests	Duncan Fisher (DF), Sue Holbrook (SH) – Our Food, Shane Vallance (SV), Simon Hooten – Ash Futures		
Meeting Description	First Meeting of Vale of Usk LAG Meeting for 2022		

10 am Welcome – Pam Mason, Chair. Meeting is quorate, 5 Public, 3 Voluntary, 4 Private. Pam Mason has noted a conflict of interest with Our Food, as she is on the board.

1. Apologies for absence: see above.
2. Approval and Matters Arising from Minutes 21st October 2021 – PM. LR – questioned if Be-Community training still available for Newport as well as Monmouthshire? Approved – L Richards, A Taylor
3. Financial Report – AG. (See attached.) RDP extended for six months to end of September. MP explained funding is enhanced by taking extra projects from the UK Government Community Renewal Fund, plus Mark Lloyd’s input into the Welsh Government Foundation Economy Challenge Grant.
4. Project Report. (See attached.) AG1 – Broadway Partners have received a £145M investment for securing Fibre for South Wales. Ogi (used to be Spectrum) also provide fibre to town and villages, with Abergavenny build underway, to be followed by Monmouth in the spring.

JD - Openreach are the prime provider but service is poor - they do not answer questions. CB stated Openreach should pay £5,000 a year if nearby properties are not connected to an accessible fibre to the cabinet as per JD situation.

LJ – covered her projects.

Duncan Fisher & Sue Holbrook, Our Food (See their attached Presentation).

AR – is there any role for tourism or heritage conservation and forestry. SH – they are all part of the picture but we have to start it by looking at horticulture.

AD – we have already given you a grant (underutilised) and I don’t think you have met that one yet, 10 acres near Abergavenny, why did the farmer pull out? SH – the farmer wanted to do something else with his farm. AD – questioned why the farm that you keep mentioning is in Crickhowell, not Monmouthshire? SH mentioned its usefulness as an example.

AT – AD made some very valid points, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Wye and Usk Foundation and Farming Connect are the best people to know about farmers in Monmouthshire. GWT has over 2,000 acres that we manage and would happily given 50 acres over to this. GWT advised that a land agent is not the best person to advise you on this, as they focus on people with a lot more land. Plus, many farmers are not on a land agent's books, they are desperate to try something new as traditional farming is not going well. GWT are willing to talk to Our Food.

AR/DF – be positive, the strengths of the local economy, climate change, etc.

RW – Mike said it was end of June, not March, that they need to spend money by, but it is still a rapid turnaround, is it possible? SH/DF – yes, is it 10 years to get project up and running but this RDP project would be only a small part of the total project. We are experienced fundraisers; they are waiting for Welsh Government for further funding. They will, however, carry on if they don't get this money.

LR – is it Newport and Monmouthshire? DF – it can be, they have very good contacts in Newport.

Vote: 4 = yes; 5 = no; 2 = abstention. Pam Mason – not voting (conflict of interest). NOT PASSED FOR FUNDING.

5. Ash Futures – Shane Vallance (see attachment). A draft report is available, Mike Powell and Pam Mason to review it and discuss.

JH – Newport is important, it has been Monmouthshire centric.

6. Any Other Business. None
7. For the record, an extension and additional funding was granted for the Llanover Digital Inclusion project - total of £30k, £24k RDP, £6K in kind volunteer time as match and the IoT – total of £20k, £16k RDP, £4K in kind match from KOMP devices from the recovery fund. Approved - a new project Abergavenny Lido feasibility study - £20,000 RDP value.
8. Pam thanked everyone for the time given to the Vale of Usk LAG. The next meeting is on 28th April 2022 at 2 pm. She closed the meeting at 12.30 pm.

