

**Vale of Usk Local Action Group
Bridges Community Centre, Monmouth
Thursday 18th January 2018
MINUTES**

Members
Present:

Gareth Baker
Nicola Bradbear
Sarah Coakham
Andrew David
John Davies
John Harris
Angela Jones
Sharran Lloyd
Pamela Mason
Alan Michie (Chair)
Clare Parsons
Phil Powell
Lynne Richards (Rep)
Alastair Robertson
Ruth Waycott

Officers:

Zara Bligh
Alison Grimson
Lucinda James
Mark Lloyd
Deserie Mansfield
Mike Powell

Apologies:

Claire Brown
Neville Hart
Mandy Moore

Welcome. The Chair welcomed LAG members and new member, Ruth Waycott. The meeting was quorate (4 private; 4 voluntary; 7 public).

1. **Minutes of the last meeting.** Actions all completed or addressed in this agenda.
Minutes of 18th October 2017 - Approved.

2. **Financial Update and Project Evaluation System – Mike Powell (See attached¹)** 29 approved projects, £640 k with an average project size of £22k, 52% is now committed and 14 projects in the pipeline, £443k – if all approved, 87% of funds would be committed. Studies = £146k – 23% of approved projects. An update was given of the studies and how they have progressed.

RDP Capital funding – RCDF – Vale of Usk region has not got many RCDF applications but the success rate to date is good – TVWS project has just been awarded £130 k. Awareness raising of the opportunity important.

3. **Approved Projects update – Pam Mason (see attached presentation²)**

International Food Hub Co-operation Project – the Vale of Usk has been invited to join three other European partners – Pays de Condruses (Belgium) will be the project lead in association with ADEGA (Spain) and Rude (Portugal). Project details are in the development stage but could include an e-shop and the benefit of shared best practice. There is a separate Co-operation budget for this type of project. At this stage a LAG letter of Commitment signed by the LAG Chair, is sufficient. LAG agreed unanimously.

Agri-Urban project comes to an end in April 2018 – should the LAG become more involved with the next stage? Deserie Mansfield to give an overview of Agri-Urban project at the next meeting.

4. **New Project Overview/vote:**

Living Levels Big Sky Community Arts Project – Gavin Jones and Alison Boyes, RSPB (see presentation³) £32,000

A comprehensive presentation was given on behalf of the Living Levels Partnership. This project is available on the website for comment, question and vote next week.

St Mary's Project, Abergavenny £9,000 – business plan for the Centre to offer professional guidance to the Priory Development Trust, which is largely run by volunteers.

- There are some reservations because they have received a lot of funding since 2003, which must have included a business plan, this should be made available to any consultant, if approved.
- Abergavenny is a Service Centre, so 70% the beneficiaries of any funding need to come from the rural area and beyond. Visitor numbers are high to this location with Jesse, tapestry, museum and tourist information centre.
- Concern over the level of expertise of the volunteers who will be running the Centre. One main supporter should be looking to delegate and share the responsibility. Is additional expertise needed? Does the current arrangement have adequate capacity?
- The Centre is visitor destination in Abergavenny, any tenants should complement this – local culture and heritage (history and food). Project should be about increasing tourist economy for the town, not just renting out space.
- The café is currently closed and this has had an impact on visitor numbers to the Brecon Beacons National Park.
- The project needs to be sharper with clear objectives.
- On-line vote following amended project application.

Village Hall Energy Makeover Project £17,520 – pilot to create an energy neutral village hall, the information will then be shared with other halls in the Vale of Usk and capital funding opportunities shared. **Vote – Approved (11 YES)**

5. Outline of five part Marketing Plan – MP (See attached⁴)

Building upon Alastair's marketing report. We need to promote what we have achieved to encourage new projects and to help promote the importance of rural funding post Brexit. Raise awareness of studies, so they are well used. Leader profile can be increased through networking, eg GAVO newsletter. Engage with local politicians – David Davies and Nick Ramsay, Sara Jones – MCC Cabinet member; Community Councils, church newsletters. Other RDPs have done short videos with beneficiaries. Should we do Road Shows around the region? Supermarket car parks – who are we targeting – two directions?

Mike will liaise with Alastair and MCC Communications – there is a marketing budget for promotion/event.

6. LAG Member Meeting Comments:

- IT tested prior to meeting
- Sub-groups discuss marketing
- Some Members happy to be more involved with Programme
- Increase VoU applications for capital (RCDF)
- Members need more time to consider projects
- Studies should be developed to justify investment

7. Any Other Business – date of next meeting is Wednesday 18th April 2018 at 2 pm

8. Actions

AM/DM – Letter of Commitment for Food Hubs Co-operation
MP/AR Marketing sub-group meeting. To be arranged February.
DM/MP/AM Future role of the LAG with Agri Urbac

2018 LAG Meetings:

Wednesday 18th April 2018 – 2 pm

Thursday 19th July 2018 – 10 am

Wednesday 17th October 2018 – 2 pm

