

Yorkshire Dales LEADER
Notes of Management Group meeting
13th April 2011, 10.30am – 12.15pm
Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes

Present:

Management Group:

Kevin Lancaster – Chair	Yorkshire Dales National Park
Prue Keigwin – Vice Chair	Community/rural services representative
Mike Keeble	Heritage/culture representative
Tom Wheelwright	Business/tourism representative
David Doorbar	Business/tourism representative
Cllr Margaret Atkinson	Nidderdale AONB
Stephen Ramsden	Agricultural representative
Cllr Richard Foster	Craven District Council
Colin Bailey	North Yorkshire Work & Skills Partnership

Support Officers:

Rita Lawson	North Yorkshire County Council
Rima Berry	LEADER Co-ordinator
Catherine Maudsley	North Yorkshire County Council
Norma Hood	North Yorkshire County Council

Apologies for absence:

Cllr John Fort	North Yorkshire County Council
Alan Simpson	Richmondshire District Council (Substitute)
Graham Wilkinson	Community/rural services representative
Cllr Jimmy Wilson-Petch	Richmondshire District Council
Cllr Les Ellington	Harrogate Borough Council
Rachel Allen	Community/rural services representative

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted

2. Minutes of the meeting 9th February 2011

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed as correct and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

Along with other LAG Chairs, Kevin Lancaster had attended a meeting at Yorkshire Forward with Elizabeth Scott. The Chairs, collectively wanted to write to Sir Humphrey and Jim Pace around the current situation with LEADER funding. They wish to have clarity and their concerns answered about the layers of administration that are in place as well as reassurance about the future of LEADER in the UK. Yorkshire Forward are putting together a letter for Government and the Chairs have been asked to return in two weeks to see the proposed letter. Kevin does not wish to attend this meeting as he feels the expense and time taken for another visit to Leeds is a waste of public money. The Group agreed that he did not have to attend and could have sight of the letter by email. A draft of the letter has been seen and it is felt that it is too long in its current format. All those present felt it would be of more use to request a meeting with DEFRA direct in order to air their concerns and obtain answers at that time.

4. Financial update

Rita Lawson has been informed that Defra has allocated £30k less for 2011-12. There is full commitment for Dales projects this year, in fact it is slightly over committed. However,

historically there is always slippage during the year from the projects which will cover the over commitment amount. The projects that are on hold from the October panel where they were favourably received will not be 'signed off' by YF. No approval can be given until there are discussions with Defra in July/August when the budgets will be discussed for 2012 and 2013. In the meantime we will look at our current commitments and endeavour to identify any spare money to give to those four projects.

Letters have gone out to the four October panel projects, the Parish Council applications and other projects that had been received before the moratorium on spend. This told them that it was unlikely that they would be funded under the current LEADER Dales scheme. A copy was also sent to County Councillor Shelagh Marshall as she has expressed concerns about the situation.

The budget for 2011/12 should be £749,875 but instead YF have confirmed it as £720,000. The 2010/11 claim was submitted to YF on the 15th March 2011 with a £70,000 underspend, though at first it was expected to be £90,000. The team had also processed extra claims which would be taken from 2011/12 lessened commitment. The team are currently awaiting the return of profiled spend from each of the projects in order to issue the annual offer letters next week which may be amended amounts if the profiles are not as expected. These figures will be put into a table and circulated to the Management Group as soon as they are all collated.

Action Rita Lawson & Team

Group discussion once Rita Lawson concluded her update.

- Disappointment expressed of situation and concerns about projects let down
- Concerned about lack of speed in making decisions by Defra and YF - want to get over to Defra that scheme has been hampered by processes which must be simplified for the future
- Problem lies with transition from RDA to Defra – why so long
- Central Government are committed to both the RDPE and LEADER
- Minister is Jim Paice – has RDPE as well as many other agricultural remits and problems such as TB
- Jim Mortimer should be contacted as JP will not have time to deal with this matter – then Group want to at least meet with Jim Mortimer
- Layers of bureaucracy and the enforced moratorium ruined scheme - wish to express frustration
- Not happy with inflexible approach with moving funding from one year to another
- Concerns over 'log jam' in RDA's and their inability to make decisions
- Members of Management Group finding it hard to see their role - RL asked Group not to walk away from LEADER now but wait until meeting with Defra in summer
- Chair suggests letter to three local MP's (William Hague, Julian Smith and Tim Farron) covered by LEADER Dales area and copy to Anne MacIntosh
- David Doorbar offered to draft letter for Chair **Action David Doorbar**
- Chair to send letter - should invite to meeting with Chair and Vice Chair will need to draft questions, working plan and suggestions ready for meeting when arranged
Action Kevin Lancaster, Prue Keigwin
- Keep letter simple so details can be given at meeting – need to do test case on the suggested work plan
- What will MP's get from response to letter? - Photo opportunity, chance to win votes?
- LEADER is funding for less favourable parts of these MP's constituencies, it could be something that they themselves are not aware of and is obviously not seen as a priority for Defra
- All these MP's could raise questions on the floor of the House and Defra should know that MP's are watching them
- Maybe they could speed up the process and break up the 'log jam'

- Need to ensure that the MP's know what is needed to enable them to pick up the phone and tell those involved to sort it out
- YF has not disappeared yet – some people who are being 'lent' to Defra will move to new premises (ex-GOYH) 1st July 2011.
- October projects were sent on an investment decision to Liz Scott but she would not sign them off unless NYCC agreed to take a risk – could not be allowed
- Group would like to see timetable for meeting with Defra and sending of letter by YF from LAG Chairs to Defra
- The whole country could lose money that has been fought for from Europe when we get to 2013
- Group feels that their credibility is on the line

5. LEADER Dales Coordinator update

Rima Berry will contact all projects who received the letter about the funding situation to try and signpost them to alternative sources of funding. Rima also has expressions of interest coming in and she is telling them there may be funding in later years.

All funded projects will be visited in the next two months, processes will be checked and true updates of progress will emerge. Any members of the Group wishing to join Rima on any of the visits are welcome. Some projects are also being signed off and so will need a final visit. The projects must be reminded again to put in a claim when advised even if it is a nil claim it keeps the team up to date with progress. The offer letters clearly state that if correct procedures are not followed then funding can be withdrawn or even taken back after being paid. Some projects under both Dales and Moors, Coast and Hills have not been receptive to advice and therefore are no longer being funded. The projects have a legal requirement to run their project in a proper manner but some community projects can drown in good intentions.

Rima has the following visits arranged up to now, but asked that members call her to see what her schedule is: St James Tower, Clapham – 3pm on 18th April; Washburn Heritage – 10am on 27th April; Wigglesworth – 9.30am 28th April.

The Group asked what the project worker's response is to advice, Rima assured them that it was down to the individual but many were grateful for assistance with the required processes. Business disciplines were often not in place – David Doorbar asked again about members offering mentoring to the project managers. The Group noted that when any further applications can be processed in the future the business plan will be more carefully scrutinised and possibly more probing questions asked about the procedures they will have in place. Rima and Rita were in agreement with this and Rita pointed out that she was compiling a list of what she saw the changes that would be made for the next programme.

Rima then followed with an update on more of the projects (this can be seen if requested).

Rima has had some responses for the forthcoming event at Studley Royal on 8th June 2011, this will be discussed with Rita after the meeting.

6. Nominations for Environmental representative

There have been two nominations received for the above post on the Management Group. The members took time to read the background of the nominees and there followed a show of hands after which Jill Armstrong was duly elected. It was decided that the other applicant, Christopher Beazley should be asked to be deputy and substitute for any meetings that Jill was unable to attend. Rima Berry will contact the two new members.

Action Rima Berry

7. Skills in the Hills revision of Year 2 activity

Rita Lawson had a meeting with Lindsay Johnson at Craven College. Lindsay agreed that the project had not been delivered to standard and was anxious that she be given the opportunity to prepare a report on how she and her team could take over the project and make it work 2011/12. This had been received and was circulated to the Group with the Agenda. A new project manager would be appointed and certain changes would be made both to the delivery and processes required for LEADER claims and monitoring. It would be ensured that the previously indicated Summer School and 26 Skills Days would be delivered during this financial year. The skills undertaken by those residing within the LEADER area would be the type that could lead to employment opportunities or vocational careers. Their management system would easily identify the eligible students. It was requested that the Management Group have sight of the brochure showing the courses being offered to assure them none of the previous errors were repeated. The draft will be circulated for approval before being published. Mike Keeble asked that it be suggested that Lindsay spoke to Hazel Baker from the Yorkshire Agricultural Society for advice as she has a good track record of delivering sound training. Kevin Lancaster hoped that a lesson had been learned from the previous year.

8. Retiring with Dignity – revision proposal

Sarah Brown (Farm Crisis Network) for Retiring with Dignity had withdrawn after deciding that the provision of the required evidence for claims was too onerous a task. Unfortunately she did not inform Helen Benson who continued to carry out the project. Rita was then approached by Ian Bell from Arc Addington (the project partner) who asked if he could be given the opportunity to submit a proposal for them to run the project. This was agreed but nothing had been received despite several reminders. The withdrawal decision was therefore upheld. Rita Lawson will email Ian Bell to inform him of decision

Action Rita Lawson

9. Any other business

There being no further business the meeting closed

10. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is scheduled as 1st June 2011, it was decided to cancel this meeting because of its close proximity to the event at Studley Royal on 8th June 2011.