



North York Moors, Coast & Hills LEADER Programme
Executive Group Meeting
NPA Offices, Helmsley, 10.00 – 12.45 pm
8th April 2015

Notes of the meeting

Attending:

Name	Representing
Steve Arnold	Community and Voluntary Sector
Robin Asquith	Agriculture
Malcom Bowes	Community and Voluntary Sector
Angela Brockbank	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Nick Cooke	Forestry
Liz Dowson	Scarborough Borough Council
Tony Gatehouse	Community and Voluntary Sector
Helen Gundry	Community and Voluntary Sector
Chris James	Rural Action Yorkshire
Helen Kemp	Hambleton District Council
Anna Lupton	Tourism and the Visitor Economy
Helen Patchett (non-voting)	North Yorkshire County Council – Accountable Body
Lesley Short (advisory)	Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership
Peter Spencer	Tees Valley Rural Community Council
Abigail Stokell Beckett	Micro and Small Businesses
Will Terry	Agriculture
Amy Thomas (non-voting)	LEADER Co-ordinator / Programme Manager
Howard Wallis	Ryedale District Council

Apologies:

Name	Representing
Liz Barker	North Yorkshire County Council / York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership
Heather Heward	Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership
David Renwick	North York Moors National Park Authority
Jo Swift	Micro and Small Businesses
Will Watts	Tourism and the Visitor Economy

(1) Welcome and apologies

Apologies had been received from David Renwick (North York Moors National Park Authority), Liz Barker (York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership / NYCC), Jo Swift (Micro and Small Businesses) and Heather Heward (Lesley Short was attending in her place) .

Robin Asquith, agriculture representative, was not present for items 1-4.

Amy Thomas (AET) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

(2) Chair and Vice-Chair Election Process

AET introduced this item and gave out a paper summarising the candidates that had been nominated for post of both Chair and Vice-Chair. In each case, the candidates had written a paragraph supporting their nomination to the role. These were shared with all Executive Group members to help them with their decision making and voting.

The candidates for Chair were Steve Arnold, Malcolm Bowes, Peter Spencer and Will Terry.

The candidates for Vice Chair were Steve Arnold, Robin Asquith, Peter Spencer and Will Terry.

AET asked the candidates for Chair to leave the room and a vote was taken and numbers against each recorded for audit purposes. Malcolm Bowes was elected as Chair. Candidates returned to the room and were informed of the vote outcome.

AET then asked the candidates for the post of Vice Chair to leave the room. A vote was taken and numbers of votes recorded. Steve Arnold was elected as Vice Chair. Candidates returned to the room and were informed of the vote outcome.

AET thanked all nominees for their enthusiasm and commitment and Malcolm Bowes (MB) thanked the Group for electing him as Chair, and assumed the role from this point in the meeting.

(3) Minutes from the last meeting of 20th January 2015

The minutes of 20th January 2015 were agreed as accurate.

(4) Matters arising from the minutes of 20th January 2015

With regard to the matters arising from the minutes, the following was reported:

- (i) Helen Patchett (HP) reported that the draft Terms of Reference (including guidance on Declarations of Interest) had not been brought before this meeting as requested. Whilst a draft had been written in readiness, DEFRA were intent on providing groups with a standard Terms of Reference, so this would be brought to the first appropriate meeting possible when available. To be carried forward as an action point. **Action: HP**
- (ii) AET reported that the same applied to the Register of Interests, a standard template was yet to be provided by DEFRA. **Action: AET**
- (iii) The proposal regarding co-opting was an agenda item at this meeting.
- (iv) The proposed training session for Executive Group members using trial applications is to be deferred until the Defra provided forms are available to be used. This is expected to now take place in late summer / early autumn. **Action: HP**
- (v) Detailed output guidance would be provided at a future meeting, once further information is available from DEFRA. **Action: HP**
- (vi) The Communications Plan would be presented on this agenda by AET.
- (vii) The Agriculture Task & Finish Group had met and was to verbally present their discussions as an agenda item at this meeting. It was agreed that a summary of the meeting would be useful to all members, to be emailed round rather than kept for the next agenda. **Action: AET**
- (viii) The Tourism Task & Finish Group had yet to meet and would report to the next meeting. **Action: Tourism T&F Group**

- (ix) With regard to the written report to Group regarding business support around broadband, some discussion ensued. Liz Dowson (LD) stated that the company was willing to provide either a written report or to come and present to the Group. It was agreed that a written report had been requested as it was not an appropriate time to raise expectations ahead of any call. It was clarified that this was intended to be about the business support programme that BE Group provide on the back of the broadband provision roll-out, with the programme due to end in June. Angela Brockbank (AB) stated that there was a similar scheme in the Redcar & Cleveland area, with a longer running time. It was agreed that a written report would be brought to the Executive Group, and LD was asked to co-ordinate this in conjunction with Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council. **Action: LD**

(5) Programme Update

Delivery Plan

AET presented the update, stating that whilst there were many unknown factors from DEFRA, we do know that:

- We have been awarded £2.336m.
- At least 70% of this has to generate direct economic activity; the remaining 30% has to be indirect economic activity.
- The year 1 budget will be smaller than anticipated due to the delays experienced.
- We are hopeful of a July launch date, but this must seek 'oven-ready' projects in order for expenditure to be defrayed in time.

HP added that the timescale anticipated from DEFRA in January was:

- Three-year Delivery Plans to be submitted to DEFRA by the Groups by the end of February 2015, based on a template to be provided by DEFRA
- Contracts to be negotiated and issued by the end of March 2015
- Training on new computer systems, forms and guidance to be provided in April / May 2015
- Once training completed (and only then), application forms and suite of documents to be given to Groups in June or July, for a July launch.

Clearly, this timescale has now changed as the creation of a Delivery Plan, contracting or training has not yet taken place but firm dates for all of these actions have yet to be confirmed by Defra.

Assuming the July launch AET went through the programme level delivery plan, indicating which activities would have to be completed each year in preparation for the following years spend.

However, it was noted that the July launch may slip, as the templates have yet to be provided by Defra to produce the Delivery Plans (supposedly by end of February). This would seem to indicate at least a further 6 week delay.

AET talked through the spreadsheet showing the colour-coded activities for each call for projects, categorised under the different priorities.

It was pointed out that some times of year were to be avoided within the agricultural calendar for calls for farm productivity or farm diversification. However, setting dates for a call for projects would not pose a problem for this sector as it was standard practice.

There was a discussion on the ability of the RPA to make the payments to applicants on time, and what liability would be incurred if the RPA failed to make a payment on a claim. It was agreed that this would be raised by AET / HP when training is provided on the claims process.

Action: AET / HP

There was a discussion on what constituted match funding. It was confirmed that the intervention rate was likely to be 40% grant in most priorities, and this would be finalised by DEFRA rather than being at the discretion of Groups. The other 60% was seen as coming from private funds, primarily from the applicants in the case of businesses.

Work Programme

AET presented the work programme for the year (2015/16) to confirm that there were no additional tasks that the Group saw as being relevant for her role. With one typographical error corrected, the work programme was agreed as appropriate.

Draft Budget

AET handed out a revised budget, emphasising that this was a draft and was not yet to be discussed in wider forums. It showed a lesser amount of money in Year 1 to reflect the current delays. The budget was to be re-visited after item 8 (Call for Projects) had been discussed.

(6) Update from the Agriculture Task & Finish Group

Robin Asquith (RA) presented a summary of the Group's meeting on 10th March.

Networking had been discussed in detail, looking at trying to group similar enterprises (farm types) and trying to offer something different to existing networks such as EBLEX.

Training had been identified as a key issue for this sector, in terms of access to the training rather than provision.

Links between farming and forestry were discussed, with many farms having small areas of woodland that are not managed, or under-managed. Training could be provided to help to unlock the potential of this woodland.

Small grants of £5k or less could be provided directly to farmers.

With regard to the above ideas, consultation would happen with the sector in June, working with the NFU and other groups to ensure as much engagement as possible. Following this a more detailed proposal would be brought to the next meeting.

Action: Agriculture T&F Group

It was queried how the above ideas would provide the job creation outputs necessary. One idea had been to have a Fodder-style project at the Auction Mart at Malton, which would provide job opportunities.

(7) Calls for Projects

AET talked through the main points of the paper provided, setting out the various options open to the Group, i.e. (1) to hold a targeted call for projects, (2) to have a more open call for projects, and (3) to promote the various priorities as a single pot.

A discussion brought out the following points:

- Balance of low spend in Year 1 due to delays versus the message to the public that LEADER is here and starting;
- Need for transparency with applicants about whether they can spend and claim before the end of January, or whether they could wait without detriment to the following year;
- Capital grants would be less risky, although capital build would be too time-consuming;
- Machinery can have a 2-3 month order time (offer letters would be October at the earliest);
- Evidence needed before a claim could be paid would be evidence of expenditure defrayed, i.e. bank statement and invoice showing money out of the bank before the final claim deadline and before the date the claim was made. The claims process will be very strict so there will be no scope for applicants to submit incorrect claims and then later amend them – pressure on NYCC team to support applicants to get this right.

There was a debate on the merits of asking applicants to make a presentation on their applications. It was agreed that this would not be part of the Group's procedures at this stage, but may be put in place in a future call for projects.

The budget for Year 1 was discussed, and a revised figure of £80k was agreed for projects, with the split being for £10k for agricultural productivity, £30k for micro and small businesses and farm diversification, and £40k for rural tourism. Expenditure on any commissioned projects would also come from within these amounts. These figures would be submitted in a Delivery Plan to DEFRA, assuming no further delays to the timescales discussed.

Action: AET

(8) Co-operation Projects

Given timings, AET advised that there was no need for discussion on this item. The paper circulated had been informing the Group of discussions that were being held for potential co-operation projects, but no decisions or commitments had been made yet. Given the nature of the co-operation projects, this was potentially an area for discussion by the Agriculture T&F Group.

(9) Co-opting

AET presented the paper on co-opting someone to represent the southern parishes of Scarborough Borough.

It was confirmed that a co-opted member would not have a vote; a suggestion was made that there would be no incentive or appeal for an individual to attend meetings if no vote was available. A discussion then followed on whether the membership of the Executive Group should be amended to include this new additional member, rather than co-opting being considered. There was some concern that any changes would set a precedent for other areas recently included in the revised NYMCH LEADER area.

After some debate, MB suggested taking the decision in two steps: (i) to see if Executive Group members felt that a representative for this area should join the Executive Group, and (ii) if so, whether this place should be as a co-opted or a full voting member.

On this basis, MB put forward a proposal of Option 4 from the co-opting paper, which stated that the Executive Group maintained its status quo but that concerted efforts were made to engage and communicate with key groups in this and other areas.

The Group voted with 9 in favour of this proposal and 6 against.

It was therefore agreed to proceed with Option 4, and to ask AET to put particular effort into engaging groups from this area. It was also requested that AET write to the members that nominated themselves and the Parish Councils from this area to explain the situation.

Action: AET

(10) Communications Plan and Key Messages

AET explained the paper and requested views on various proposals at the end of the Communications Strategy.

- (a) It was agreed to phase out the monthly e-bulletin and bi-annual Programme newsletters and replace them with use of social media and direct emails to LAG members.
- (b) It was agreed that two LAG events per year would be ideal in the first part of the programme to engage people, but this might not be needed throughout.
- (c) AET had already gone ahead with changing the website as current web hosting costs were due to expire at the end of April (this paper had been brought forward from the January meeting), and it was agreed that the logo was to have a slight 'refresh'.
- (d) Press releases would continue to be released through the National Park Authority as Lead Partner.
- (e) It was agreed to use the NPA's existing Twitter account and tag the Tweets as 'LEADER', so that all partners could then re-tweet to their own networks. Whilst some members felt that the creation of the Programmes own Twitter account rather than using the NYMNP's account would be preferable, it was accepted that a new Twitter feed would not attract the necessary volume of followers and the time input that would be required to make it an effective and engaging form of communication was not feasible with current staff resources.
- (f) It was agreed to not use Facebook.

It was agreed that the Communications methods would be looked at in more detail at the next Officers Support Group (with AB to attend) and a more detailed paper would be brought to the next meeting.

Action: AET

(11) Any Other Business

No other business was reported.

(12) Date and time of next meeting

Date to be confirmed by doodle poll, NPA Offices, Helmsley

Summary of Action Points

	Action	To be completed by
1	To present the standard DEFRA Terms of Reference for approval by the Executive Group in July 2015, including detailed guidance on Declarations of Interest (see para 4, i)	Helen Patchett
2	To present a Register of Interests, when this had been received from DEFRA (see para 4, ii)	Amy Thomas
3	To provide example project applications and appraisals for 'practice' for meeting in summer 2015, when forms available from DEFRA (see para 4, iv)	Helen Patchett
4	To provide detailed output guidance at a future meeting, once it is available from DEFRA (see para 4, v)	Helen Patchett
5	To further research and discuss possible specification for strategic project, to be presented to meeting of July 2015 (see para 4, viii)	Tourism Task & Finish Group
6	To invite company to give written report to Group regarding business support around broadband (see para 4, ix)	Liz Dowson
7	To raise the question of the possibility of failed RPA payments – who would then be liable? (see section 5)	Amy Thomas / Helen Patchett
8	A more detailed proposal would be brought to next meeting following sector consultation of Agriculture T&F group ideas (see section 6)	Agriculture T&F Group
9	Submission of revised budget within Delivery Plan to DEFRA (see section 7)	Amy Thomas
10	To write to the nominees from southern parishes and Parish Councils of Scarborough Borough to explain that the Executive Group had voted that co-opting was not necessary, but active engagement would be undertaken. (see section 9)	Amy Thomas
11	The Officer Support Group to consider communication more fully, especially social media and report to next meeting (see section 10)	Amy Thomas

*Helen Patchett,
NYCC, 9/4/2015*