

Upper Usk Valley Rural Alliance

Proposed Action Plan – November 2014

Background:

The European Rural Alliance project is focused on the following key aims:

- Distinguish and improve your business
- Be part of an active & really interesting community
- Create new and better prospects for people to work & live in rural areas
- Gain a reputation for being a fun and friendly place to visit & stay
- Improve and safeguard essential services

Project Concept – as defined by Brecon Beacons National Park *“The essence of the project is about establishing and supporting structures and mechanisms to integrate community and economic interests at a local level using tourism as the key focus”*

Sustainability & Sense of Place

It will be important that all Alliances and their work is aligned to the Brecon Beacons brand and particularly to the values of Sustainability & Sense of Place. This is both part of their commitment to community based values and a practical way of ensuring Alliances are working to common objectives.

Upper Usk Valley Background:

During 2012(?) and 2013 a number of workshops and meetings were led by BBNP and a designated consultant, at which a vast number of action points and ideas were identified.

In the autumn of 2013, a working group emerged and began working on a lengthy and in hindsight, unrealistic action plan, loaded with confused detail, over ambitious tasks and lack of structure.

During 2014 there were a number of notable successes:

- UUV Branding and a logo were designed and agreed upon.
- The group became constituted and officials took up roles within the group.
- Community leaflets were produced for the area and for each settlement including historical information, facilities and amenities and walks in the area.
- A short series of Community Walks was established.
- A launch event for the leaflets was held in Trecastle in April.
- A blog was launched upperuskvalley.wordpress.org as well as Facebook & Twitter Accounts for publicising the area.
- The UUV stand at the Sennybridge Show was well received and won a prize
- A Trecastle Dark Skies Discovery Site at the Usk Reservoir was finally agreed to.

Much of these successes are attributable to effort over structure, both the group, its status and the UUV brand lack definition and a cohesive approach, there is a lot of energy and talent within the group, though equally, frustration and a lack of common understanding on priorities.

The aim for 2015 is to establish a new action plan, create a structure within the group of strength and direction and to build on the successes of the group in order to establish a clear way forward.

Proposed UUV Action Plan – for discussion within the group.

Structure

- Establish a solid constitution fit for purpose
- Clear procedures for meetings, minutes, reporting, etc.
- Make the UUV 'group' financially sound – i.e. bank account, insurances – Public Liability.
- Strategy for inclusion within the UUV group

Sustainability:

- Identify the UUV role within local projects, i.e. where to take the lead, where to assist, where to signpost
- Develop a strategy for having a fully self-sufficient organisation
- Develop a few critical events or plans for UUV organisation – not anything competing with other events locally.

Branding/Information

- Leaflets
- Website/blog
- Social media channels – with a clear outline of what does get highlighted
- Interpretation/information boards – cohesive strategy for continuity across the area.
- Ambassador Scheme – Signpost UUV members towards this.
- Walking/cycling/riding trails – titled self-guided activities.

Knowledge Build:

- What is the UUV area, what information should we highlight, a brief history, geography of the area, common species, changes in seasons, when is best to come, traditions, events, where to go?
- Rounded, useful information made available to all, each accommodation provider, pub, tea room, etc. should be able to tell the story.

Visitor Opportunities:

- Facilities/amenities audit – pubs, accommodation, tea rooms, attractions
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- Annual events list – *an annual event to be defined as over X visitors and having a regular time slot*, e.g. Sennybridge Show, Trecastle Show, Eisteddfod's, Pentrebach Sports, any Epynt events, fishing competitions, etc.
- Dark Skies – both organic and sited, with events planned.

Partnerships:

- Establish working partnerships with wider organisations, e.g. BBNP, Rural Alliances, local stakeholders (Dwr Cymru, NRW, Cadw) and ensure a regular input into meetings.
- Establish internal partnerships within the locality, e.g. Defynnog Yew Project, Shows, etc. where UUV has input but does not directly lead the project.
- Young person engagement – YFC, guides, youth forums?
- Community group engagement – inc. Community Councils, Hall committee, Parish councils

Heritage & Culture:

- Revisit the story of the area as a wider community project, protecting and safe guarding the information & stories for future years.
- Identity key historical events and create a timeline
- Bring our history, culture & heritage to life (drama, film, web) creating a lasting legacy.
- Heritage trails in each settlement and surrounding area, or within key destinations, such as Usk Reservoir/Roman Camp/Physician's well or Twyn y Gaer hill fort, Fforest Fach Royal Hunting grounds, Crai Reservoir/Pillow Mounds.
- Celebrate traditions and culture of the area?