

Evaluation Report



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Background

Following the closure of the 2014-2020 LEADER programme, Local Action Groups in Scotland were allocated Community Led Local Development (CLLD) funding by the Scottish Government. This funding gives local communities the power to tackle their own, local challenges. The Scottish Borders Local Action Group (LAG) work collaboratively to help rural communities thrive through community-led initiatives. As there were previously no mechanism for young people to be involved in the Scottish Borders LAG, their priority for 2022/23 was to develop a new “Borders Youth Local Action Group” (Borders Youth LAG) to represent the wider community and help tackle one of the most unrepresented and challenged groups. In June 2022, Scottish Borders Council, the lead partner in the Scottish Borders LAG, approached YouthBorders to explore the development of the new Borders Youth LAG. YouthBorders supported the delivery of Borders Youth LAG and managed the administration of the fund. This project ran from October 2022 to March 2023.

Borders Youth LAG is a voluntary youth participation and leadership group of young people aged 16-26 who live, work or study in the Scottish Borders. This new group is a youth decision-making forum for rural community development in the Scottish Borders. Scottish Borders LAG made available £20,000 of their CLLD funding for capital investment to be distributed by the Youth LAG in the first quarter of 2023. This group is a vehicle for powerful and continued learning, including development of organisational and personal change, political skills and knowledge, as well as changes in attitudes, values and enhancement of self-esteem and sense of personal efficiency. Young people volunteer their time to participate in social action to make a positive difference to their community.



About YouthBorders

YouthBorders is the network of voluntary and community-based youth organisations in the Scottish Borders, supporting and promoting good quality youth work. As a membership organisation YouthBorders facilitates networking opportunities and events, and provides information and advice to organisations, their volunteers, trustees, youth workers and other partners in the community. YouthBorders is recognised regionally as the strategic voice of third sector youth organisations and works closely with partners in the public sector to improve outcomes for young people.

Recruitment and Engagement of Young People

With assistance from our freelance communications specialist (Lisa Cowan at Dynamite Initiatives), YouthBorders put out an open call in September 2022 for young people aged 16 to 26 to join the Borders Youth LAG. We approached stakeholders, YouthBorders membership network and utilised YouthBorders e-bulletin, website and social media platforms to encourage those from a range of backgrounds to get involved. Young people were directed to use an online form to register their interest to join the Youth LAG.

Initially, three males aged 16 to 26 and six females aged 21 to 25 registered their interest. However, due to young people's availability, one male and four females remained committed throughout the project. Young people were supported using a confidential check list to help determine whether they faced any personal, socio-economic, financial or transport barriers prior to participation.

Borders Youth LAG Delivery

Borders Youth LAG met regularly on Thursday evenings over 11 sessions using a hybrid model of online and in-person group meetings at a central location in Kelso. The vision and priorities for the fund were decided by the young people: *"We want to invest in you and your ideas. If you are under 30, have a great idea which you believe will make a positive impact on the Scottish Borders community, economy, or environment then we want to hear from you"*.

Youth LAG Fund Priorities:

"We encourage you to apply for ideas that meet one of more of our priorities:"

- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Rural Poverty
- Cost of Living (group applications only)
- Business & Enterprise
- Community



Young people also co-designed and developed grant-making tools and frameworks, application guidance and form, application scoring system, engaged in peer-to-peer learning from other established Youth LAGs, took lead on decision making to allocate funding, and followed-up with successful applicants to put their ideas into action.

"Attending the first session alone has given me confidence as it showed me that I can try new things. It has taken a lot of confidence to keep going and share my ideas. This will help me in the future to step out my comfort zone". – young person

"Choosing to join the Youth LAG was a bold move and I have realised the benefits of reaching out and seizing this novel experience. Not only has this journey enriched my life as a young adult, it has inspired me to make changes in Borders communities" – young person

The table below outlines Borders Youth LAG meeting locations, dates and session plans from October 2022 to March 2023.

Location	Date	Session Plan
1 Kelso	18/10/22	Introduction to Youth LAG
2 Kelso	27/10/22	Distinguish Tasks and Roles and Fund Criteria
3 Online	3/11/22	Visions and Priorities, Application Guidance, Media and Marketing Introduction with Lisa Cowan
4 Kelso	10/11/22	Visions and Priorities, Media and Marketing with Lisa Cowan
5 Online	17/11/22	Visions and Priorities, Dragons Den Prep
6 St Boswells	26/11/22	Development Day – Online learning with Cairngorms Y-LAG, design Stakeholder Pack, Application Guidance and Form, Application Scoring System. Filming with Lisa Cowan and Tom Swift (Alchemy Film and Arts) to advertise fund.
7 Kelso	1/12/22	Finalise Scoring System, Dragons Den Activity
8 Online	8/12/22	Finalise Application Guidance and Form, Conflict of Interest
9 Online	15/12/22	Recap and plan for Grant Making Day
10 Kelso	21/01/23	Grant Making Day
11 Online	9/2/23	Follow up funded people
12 Orkney	17/2/23 – 19/2/23	Orkney Youth LAG Cooperation Project
13 Aviemore	24/3/23 – 26/3/23	Aviemore Youth LAG Residential

Who we've funded

Borders Youth LAG were thrilled to receive 36 funding applications, requesting over £38,000. Youth LAG made the decision to fund a total of 21 individuals and groups. Youth LAG discovered that the young people of the Scottish Borders have an abundance of amazing ideas, and they wished they could have funded them all. Some funded ideas include a pop up refill shop selling recyclable, eco-friendly cleaning products in Duns, a new cooker for young people to use at Escape Youth Café and a free Community Resource Exchange pop up shop for transgender individuals. These projects reflect incredible levels of youth innovation and talent, as well as an impressive sense of community. The full list of funded young people can be viewed on YouthBorders website: [Borders Youth-LAG Fund \(youthborders.org.uk\)](https://youthborders.org.uk)



“Scoring the applications is something I’ve never done before and next time it will be easier as I’ll know what to expect. I hope to do the process again and build on these skills”. – young person

Learning Experiences

Youth LAG Co-operation Project in Orkney

Borders Youth LAG were invited to join the rest of Scotland's Youth LAG network in Orkney for a three day residential in February 2023. The residential involved of a mixture of staff, young adults, Youth LAGs and local authority members from Cairngorms, Fife, Forth Valley & Lomond, Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Scottish Rural Action. The focus of the residential was to develop a youth voice. Young people gave presentations in their groups to inspire each other and share their learning, and participated in interactive workshops where they problem-solved together. Young people also enjoyed exploring Skara Brae, Ring of Brodgar and Scapa Beach where they created film content for their evaluation video.

“This was my first time on a plane since I was a baby, I’m buzzing to see what Orkney is like.”

“I felt so nervous before the presentation but I can’t believe I spoke in front of that many people and we answered the questions well as a group. I have learned how to present myself to others.”

“If we didn’t join up the other Youth LAG’s we’d never have known about the other opportunities coming up and we’ve learned loads from everyone.”



Aviemore Youth LAG Residential

Youth LAG travelled to Aviemore for their second residential in March, where they celebrated their achievements through exciting group activities including ice skating, quad bike trekking and marshmallow toasting. The group had focused time for project evaluation and discussions for next steps and future Youth LAG plans. After building new connections in Orkney, the Youth LAG were also visited by Cairngorms Youth LAG in Aviemore, where they were able to further develop relationships, share learning and discuss plans and aspirations for the future.



Learning and challenges

We asked Borders Youth LAG:

<p>What have you learned?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant making process • What capital funding is • How to make good filming clips • Developing an idea into a reality • How to work well in a team • How to present myself to others • There is a variety of community projects and ideas in the Borders • Awareness of renewables and environment • Social issues and challenges • Equalities and pronouns • A small pot on money can make a big difference 	<p>What can you do now, that you may not have done before?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public speaking • Flying in a plane – new experience • Chatted to a taxi driver – social skills • Scoring applications fairly and being mindful of bias • Sharing my opinions with people • Making videos / filming • Making contact with funded people • Ceilidh dancing • Youth work residential
<p>What have you got better at?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking on camera • Public speaking • Working under pressure • Decision-making • Debate and justifying my view • Organisation and planning skills • Explaining what Youth LAG is • Confidence to express views, answer questions and put forward ideas • Ice skating 	<p>What has challenged you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervous of going into the unknown and new situations with new people • First day at residential was scary as didn't know anyone • Balancing time and commitment with other things • Learning to say 'no' • Completing the expenses form • Getting to places by bus



“Throughout the Youth LAG journey I have improved my communication skills. The trip to Orkney helped as I was mixed with new groups, communicating to people I didn't know. Sharing my thoughts and ideas is something I am working on. The presentation wasn't as scary as I thought it would be.” – young person

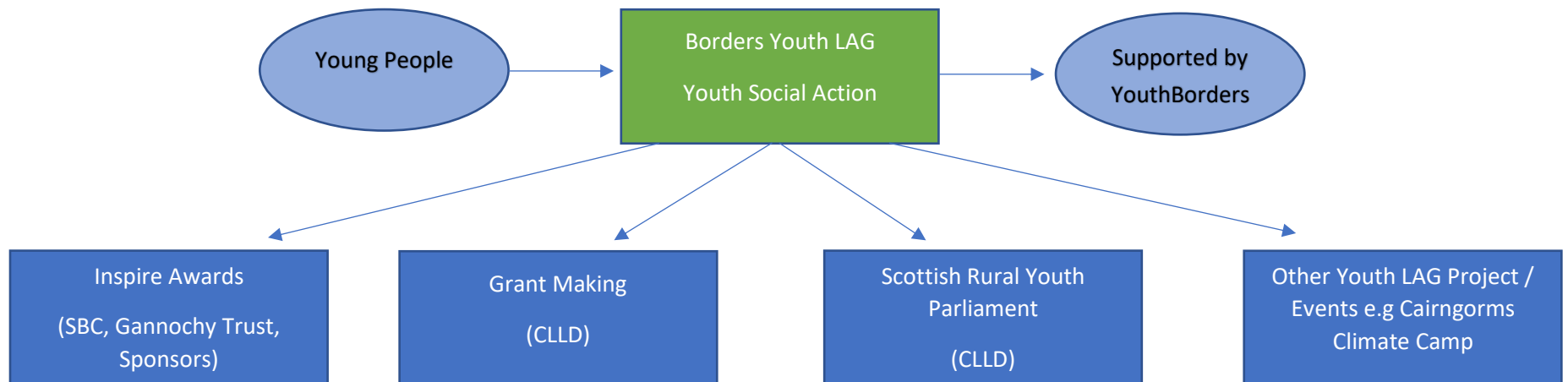
Issue	Challenges	Recommendations
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially, 9 young people signed up but only 5 remained committed There was a gender imbalance in the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline expectations and commitment more clearly Approach young people over 16 that were funded in round one to join the Youth LAG Encourage more males to join the group Ensure a more inclusive approach to recruiting new Youth LAG members to ensure that the group is more representative of all young people in the Scottish Borders Reach out to different communities out with YouthBorders membership including public sector bodies or approach specific groups such as those with additional needs Host an open Youth LAG information/ Q&A event online to explain future leadership opportunities
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Youth LAG members did not hold a driving license and relied on public transport, taxi or lifts by family/friends/staff to participate in meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure travel expenses and concessionary bus travel for (under-22s) are available for Youth LAG Ensure meeting location is central and accessible for all young people
Application Guidance and Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some applicants were unsure of the definition of capital funding, therefore applied for revenue Some applicants did not submit supporting evidence Some applicants did not specify why they were applying for specific items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host an information/Q&A session online for applicants to help them complete application form Clearly define what the fund is for and what is meant by a 'group' Ask for a clear linkage of what equipment/items are required and why that specification is needed Provide a template for budget and space for links to equipment/items Applications must submit supporting evidence e.g video, photo etc. Encourage the use of local suppliers
Advertising the fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The video and content was repetitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Youth LAG social media account e.g Facebook / Instagram Mix messaging up on social media Continue to use video to promote the fund but have a few different versions
Decision making day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One day was too short to score applications Young people read applications in advance but forgot ideas by time of scoring Wildcard points were rushed at the end of scoring and young people forgot details of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater time could have been afforded to review applications or split scoring over 2 days e.g residential weekend More time is needed for the scoring process Each young person to keep note of wildcard points and allocate these in advance of collective scoring

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some hyperlinks did not work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all hyperlinks work before grant making day
Following up funded people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some applicants had purchased equipment but had not started their project yet • Some applicants did not reply to emails • Some applicants were under 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it clearer that if young people are funded they are required to engage in a follow-up conversation • Set up Youth LAG email address with Youth LAG signature and contact details • Ensure staff and parents/guardians (if young person under 16) are copied into all emails

Looking forward: Potential Youth LAG Projects

Borders Youth LAG are committed to making positive change and are motivated to recruit more young people to join Youth LAG and participate in other youth-led social action opportunities. Some potential Youth LAG projects and events for 2023 are displayed below – subject to funding. Young people may choose to participate in one or more projects/events.

Ideas – Issues – Action - Change





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