

29th August 2007



Dr Hugh Insley
Chief Executive, Forestry Commission
By e mail: hugh.insley@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Hugh

Anne-Michelle Ketteridge of LEADER+ contacted CVDG for a second time on 1st October. Initially asking if the meeting with FCS on 21st September had been productive and requesting, again, if CVDG might still be in a position to utilise the £15,000 funding previously allocated under the programme.

You are aware of the problems we faced in undertaking the planned trail work in the timescale intimated to LEADER+ and the reasons for rescinded the funding allocation. Anne-Michelle confirmed she has subsequently been unable to reach any agreement with Clanranald in respect of the possible disbursement of this money to their organisation and she also explained the FCS position remained unclear to LEADER+. She intimated that unless CVDG could come up with a possible solution immediately, the money could now be returned to Brussels or invested outside the Carron Valley area.

CVDG held a full committee meeting on 2nd October and the matter was discussed once again. Due to circumstances which are completely out with CVDG control we have been prevented from using this money for its original purpose. CVDG also considers the 21st September meeting between the Carron Valley Partners and FCS did not offer an immediate solution to the problem within the context of the original scheme, particularly given LEADER+ increasingly diminishing timeframe. Some members of the committee tabled various potential solutions and options, all of which could have been workable with FCS full cooperation. It was agreed however, that rather than CVDG pushing for exploration of any of these options we should clear the way for the money to be used to finally resolve the issue of the toilet in the interests of all recreational users of Carron Valley.

This proposal was subsequently raised with other members of the CVP including North Lanarkshire Council, Stirling Council and Scottish Water, and we are pleased to say we received unanimous agreement.

The toilet is a very small construction project but it has been "work in progress" for over 5 years. There is general agreement the situation has become a matter of acute embarrassment to **all** partner organisations and we feel that it is now in everyone's interest to resolve the matter immediately.

As we understand it, Clanranald has a land lease agreement with FCS and this extends to the area including the toilet block itself. We believe it is a condition of this lease that Clanranald "build the toilet block" prior to physical development and the toilet is then to be transferred into public ownership. Additionally, the toilet requires a Reed Bed to function and thus be commissioned and FCS has apparently already offered to provide the Reed Bed at no cost to Clanranald.

Unfortunately, LEADER + has now confirmed to CVDG their programme cannot fund the completion of the construction works on the toilet block itself however, there is a straightforward solution at hand: Given the toilet building is largely finished and now only requires cladding, roofing and fitting out we envisage the costs to complete it will be relatively modest therefore utilising the LEADER+ money would provide a straightforward solution which in principle would be acceptable to everyone.

CVDG would be prepared to clear the way for LEADER+ to offer their funding to FCS and LEADER+ could then fund construction of the Reed Bed. Obviously, LEADER + requires match funding therefore FCS could complete the building construction in lieu of its previous undertaking to complete the Reed Bed. This will ultimately result in no additional cost to FCS and it will utilise the allocated LEADER+ money for the development of the Carron Valley if not for its original intention.

It is our joint view that FCS has the resource to resolve this immediately and that this will only bring forward what it will inevitably be forced to attend to in 6 months time - at less cost to the public purse. FCS can save money and the project can be executed within the timeframe stipulated by LEADER+ (end of Dec 07) This represents a win - win scenario all round and will afford FCS positive publicity in respect of recreation at Carron Valley.

Additionally, there are a number of key factors which we feel need to be taken into account.

- The fact that North Lanarkshire Council along with East Dunbartonshire Council are currently developing a new LEADER programme for the Kelvin Valley, (that will include the Carron Valley). Failure to utilise the existing LEADER+ allocation could affect any likely future applications for the area.
- Given the growing usage of the Carron Valley for recreation there is the matter of public hygiene. Provision of suitable toilet facilities would be a significant step forward to avoiding any potential criticism of the Partnership or its members.
- It would provide a significant opportunity for positive PR for all involved. Likewise, failure to do so may open us all up for criticism.

We suggest that the Partnership now collectively works together, to use whatever resource is at our joint disposal and to resolve the matter immediately. One way or another we need to respond to LEADER+ by return so a prompt response would be appreciated.

In terms of the partnership we believe there was consensus on 21/09 that the “relationships define the partnership.” We are continuing to talk and we are working together to resolve the situation as quickly as possible. Effectively, we remain in ‘partnership’ therefore the physical document is of little importance at this precise moment in time.

Unless FCS and CSFT state a position to the contrary, CVDG and the other members of the Carron Valley Partnership consider the current arrangement continues as before until it is revised. It is also our view that Clanranald be persuaded to return to the partnership and CVDG welcomes your thoughts in terms of the desirability of this and how it might be achieved.

Yours sincerely

Niall Thomson
CVDG