Community Led Local Development Funding Programme 2026/2026 Financial Year

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25/05/2026

Tyne & Esk
Rural Communities Development Fund

Introduction **2**
Tyne & Esk's proposed activity for 2026/27 2
Section 1. Governance and Legal Basis **4**
T&E Programme Review 4
LAG Membership Update 5
The coverage and representation on the current LAG: 5
LAG Observers 6
Governance Figures April 2026 7
Communication Structure 8
Youth LAG 9
Website 9
CLLD Officer 9
Section 2. Key Responsibilities **10**
Local Action Group 10
Annual Event 10
Accountable Body 10
Community Wealth Building (CWB) 11
Tyne & Esk Review and Scottish Government Policies 11
Tyne & Esk and the CLLD Network 12
Section 3. Scope of Funding **12**
Tyne & Esk Funding and AB 13
Collaboration 13
Making the right Choices – Projects 13
LAG Led Projects 15
Conflict of Interest 15
Delegated Decision Making 15
Tyne & Esk Audit 2024/25 16
Complaints Procedure: 16
Website 17
Section 4 Financial Arrangements **18**

Introduction

1. Please briefly summarise your proposed activity against your CLLD funding indicative allocation for 2026/2027 Financial Year. Please include how your proposed activity is building on your community led vision from 2025/2026 and/or is based on local opportunities and challenges.

The Tyne & Esk (T&E) 2026/27 Programme allocation of £305,017 will be strategically invested to deliver maximum community benefit. 32% of revenue funding will support administration and animation to ensure effective programme delivery and strong local engagement. 73% of the total allocation—representing 61% of revenue funding and 100% of capital funding—will be directed to grants, enabling community-led projects to deliver tangible local outcomes. The remaining 7% of revenue funding will be invested in a two-year subscription to Tyne & Esk Open 4 Communities, strengthening communication, transparency, and community participation across the programme area.

T&E's proposed activity for 2026/27 will be split into four phases:

1. To utilise established governance and delivery structures to effectively allocate funding, actively engage communities, and empower them to lead and deliver local projects. The Local Action Group (LAG) will focus on distributing grant support through an approved allocation of £154,352 for revenue projects and £49,975 for capital projects, ensuring targeted investment in rural communities. Providing accessible grant funding remains central to the Tyne & Esk LAG's ambition to strengthen local capacity and support sustainable community-led development across the area.

2. To actively promote the Tyne & Esk Grant Finder and Open 4 Communities (O4C) subscription as a key tool for strengthening local organisations' access to external funding. Building on strong performance in 2025/26—when 249 users from 202 local organisations were registered and £47,860 was secured from other funders—this ambition seeks to further increase engagement and funding leverage, which has already totalled £104,160 since 2023. Continued collaboration with Idox through subscriber engagement events will support organisations to broaden their funding pathways, attract additional investment, and bring increased financial benefit into the Tyne & Esk area year on year.

3. Tyne & Esk uses the Social Value Engine (SVE) as a core evaluation tool to evidence social value generated through LAG governance and Programme delivery. In 2025/26, SVE analysis of the voluntary contribution of LAG members and Observers identified an SROI of £7.25 for every £1 invested, generating over £67,500 in social value. This demonstrates strong value for public investment. SVE will continue to be used at LAG and project level to evidence value for money and measurable community outcomes.

4. To prepare strategically for delivery beyond 2027 by developing a robust five-year strategic plan for the Tyne & Esk CLLD area, as requested by the Scottish Government. This work will be led collaboratively by the LAG, Observers, the Accountable Body (AB), and the Project Officer (PO), drawing on the findings of the CLLD Review. The strategy will consider the future shape of the Programme in Tyne & Esk, with a strong focus on youth engagement and other emerging priorities, to ensure continued relevance, resilience, and impact. The LAG will be working with Stratagem, funded by Economic Development East Lothian Council, to assist in the develop of the five-year strategy, strengthen leadership, and deliver the practical support needed to grow, adapt and succeed.

Section 1. Governance and Legal Basis

2. Outline the current or aspirational membership of your LAG, including your nominated Chair, Vice Chair, the expectations of LAG members and how they are qualified to deliver your Community Led Vision (CLV)? Please supply details of your LAG membership & whether they are a Community representative including the specific skills/organisations they represent?

3. Please describe your local partnership structure, including your chosen approach to either nominating or becoming a Lead Partner. Please refer to Section 1 & 2 of the 'Planning for your Community Led Vision' guidance document for more information on how to complete this section.

T&E Programme Review

Following the resignation of a LAG Co-Chair in August 2025, the LAG and the AB undertook a comprehensive review of the LAG Protocol and the Memorandum of Understanding governing their partnership. This process allowed both parties to refine and strengthen the documents, resulting in enhanced clarity, improved governance arrangements, and a more robust shared understanding of respective roles and responsibilities.

The current T&E LAG has 11 Members, with four Co-Chairs elected at the biennial AGM on 21st April 2026. Elections take place every 2 years, in April, to sync with the Scottish Government timescales for Programme development. Since the April 2024 AGM, Tyne & Esk has operated with Co-Chairs and no Vice Chair. This approach has worked well, reflecting EC members' other commitments while sharing the responsibilities of the LAG Chair role. To strengthen EC representation, this year, members from both Local Authority (LA) areas were invited to stand, resulting in two representatives from each area. At a LAG meeting held on 21st April 2026, it was agreed that, for this transition year and the move to a five-year plan, Tyne & Esk will appoint four Co-Chairs. This will ensure a balanced geographic and sector representation, support delegation of expertise and time, and maintain representation at all CLLD meetings and events. The proposed Co-Chairs represent business, community, independent and third-sector interests.

All LAG Members must sign the Protocol and disclose their interests relevant to their role as LAG Member.

5. Please detail how your planned activity for this year will meet inclusion, equality and diversity?

LAG Membership Update

Current LAG members were largely recruited through an open and transparent process prior to the 2022 CLLD Programme, with appointments based on an application process aligned to the Tyne & Esk skills matrix. While Tyne & Esk recognises the value of regularly introducing new members, recruitment has been constrained by time pressures and the short-term nature of the Programme.

To address this, a recruitment campaign was undertaken using social media, the Tyne & Esk website, Local Authorities, and Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs), alongside re-engagement with previous applicants to benefit from their prior experience of the Programme.

As a result:

- Three new LAG members joined in 2025, strengthening representation across the area.
- Two additional LAG members were appointed in 2026.
- One female LAG member resigned in 2026.

These changes reflect ongoing efforts to maintain an appropriately skilled and representative LAG while responding to programme capacity and governance requirements.

The coverage and representation on the current LAG:

LAG Co-Chairs

- East Lothian Resident
- East Lothian Resident/ ex-business owner/ex-applicant LEADER.
- Midlothian business owner/ex-applicant LEADER
- Midlothian Community Member ex-applicant CLLD

LAG Members Community /Business/Third Sector:

- East Lothian business owner/ex-applicant.
- Midlothian business Trustee /ex-applicant LEADER.
- Farming agent covering Midlothian and East Lothian / ex applicant LEADER.
- Community Members/ ex-applicants

LAG Members Public Sector:

• Edinburgh College

• Queen Margaret University

• Elected members from Midlothian and East Lothian Councils.

In 2025/26 Programme, LAG Members' attendance at meetings was an average of 72%, with the project decision meeting being 72% attendance. Therefore, the Programme is confident that decisions made are robust and evidence to support is documented[1].

LAG Observers

The LAG is strengthened with the addition of (non-voting) Observers attending meetings and discussions.

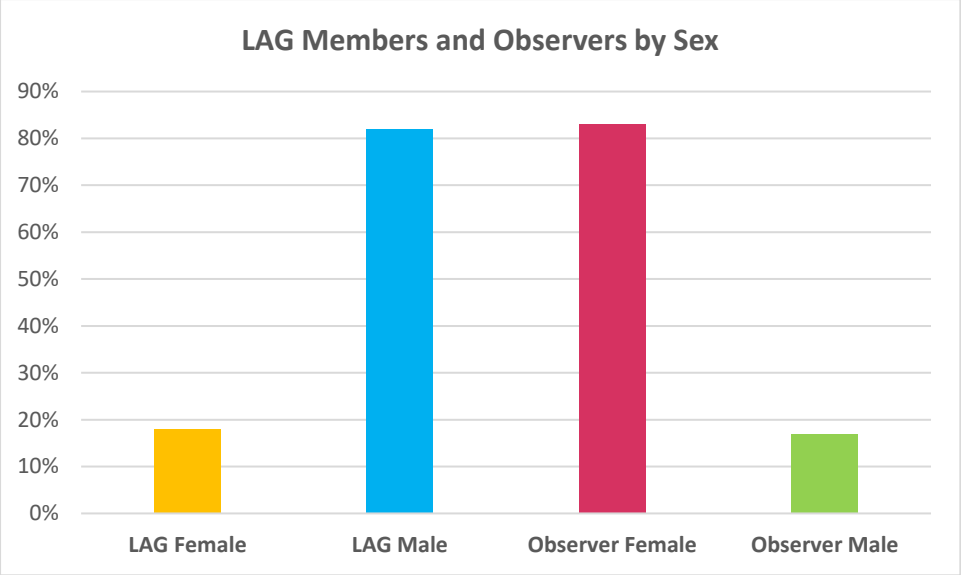
The coverage and representation on the current LAG is:

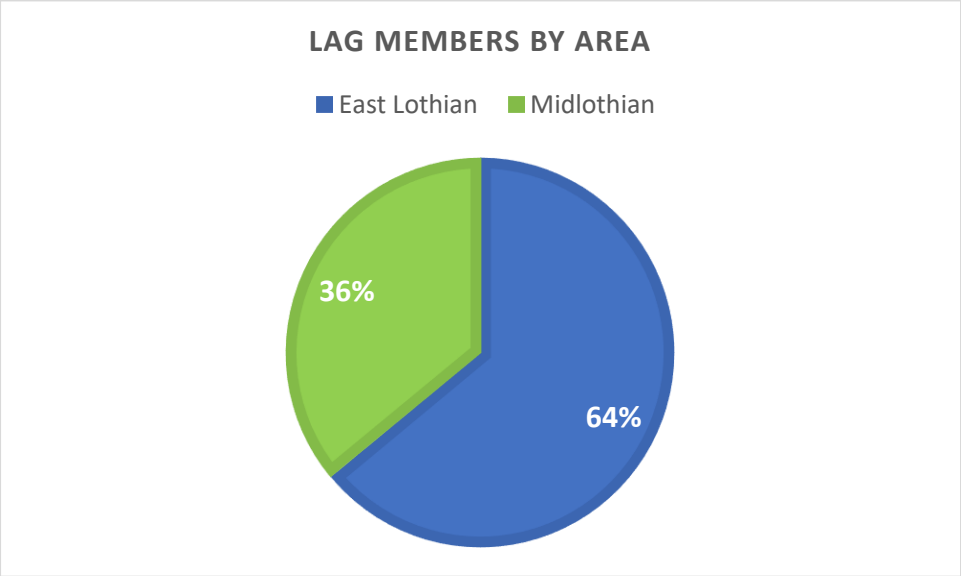
- The Economic Development lead for both Local Authority (LA) areas
- East Lothian Connected Communities Manager
- Midlothian Group Service Manager (Community Planning Partnership, Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability)
- The Midlothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP) third sector partnership lead/TSI.
- East Lothian TSI.

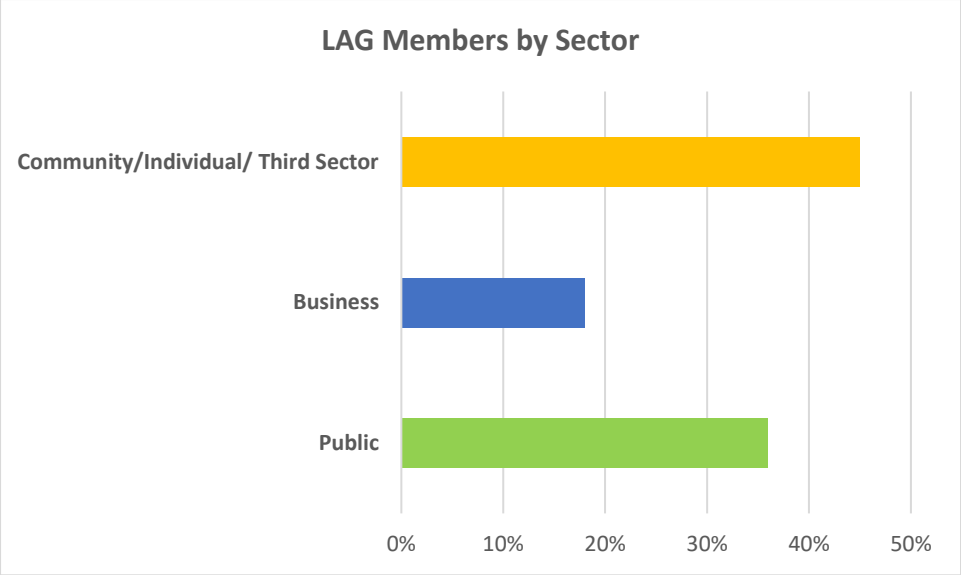
All LAG Members must complete a Register of Interest, which is continually updated which is stated in the Group Protocol.

[1] All meetings must be quorate of five LAG Members. 2025/26 had 7-8 LAG Members present at all meetings

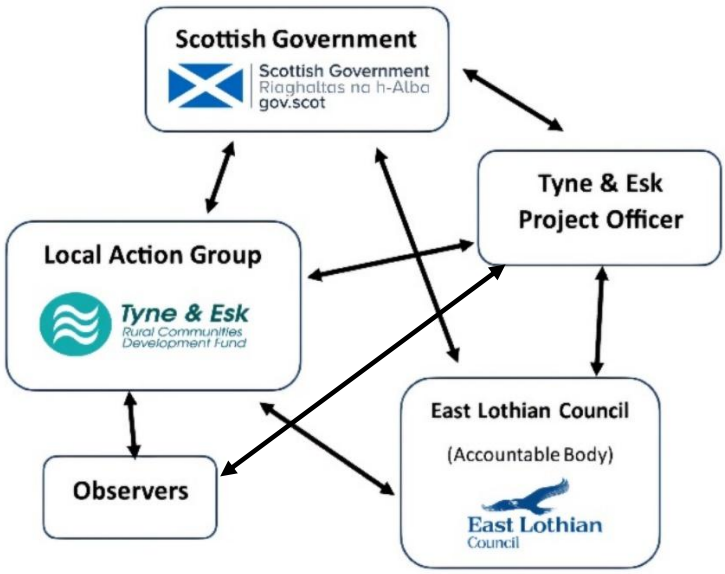
Governance Figures April 2026







Communication Structure



Youth LAG

Following the findings of the 2023/24 consultant review, the LAG acknowledges the importance of youth engagement across the Tyne & Esk area while recognising the financial and structural constraints currently facing the Programme. In particular, the scale of the Programme and its coverage across two LA areas presents additional challenges in establishing and sustaining a dedicated Youth LAG without increased permanent revenue funding.

While these constraints limit the ability to develop targeted, standalone youth-specific provision at this time, the LAG remains committed to supporting youth activity where opportunities arise. Funding will continue to be considered for youth-focused projects through open application processes. The future role, approach, and feasibility of youth engagement—within the context of the Programme's geography and resources—will be explored in detail as part of the five-year strategic review currently being undertaken, ensuring youth considerations are embedded in the long-term vision for Tyne & Esk.

Website

To further strengthen visibility, transparency and accessibility, the LAG has agreed that the Tyne & Esk website (www.tyneesk.co.uk) will be refreshed and rebranded during the year. The updated website will clearly showcase the Programme's achievements, improve the user experience for communities and stakeholders, and include a dedicated LAG page providing information on membership and the operational governance of the Programme.

In addition, the secure LAG Members area within the website will be actively utilised to support governance processes, including the scoring and assessment of applications, ensuring consistency, efficiency, and robust decision-making.

CLLD Officer

The CLLD PO will continue to play a central role in supporting the LAG and delivering the Tyne & Esk Programme through effective project development, application management, and grant administration. This will be complemented by the AB's ongoing responsibility for line management and robust financial processing, ensuring strong governance and accountability.

For 2026/27, total staffing costs of £70,000 (23% total allocation) is allocated to administration, providing a stable and well-managed foundation for Programme delivery. In addition, Tyne & Esk will retain the flexibility to procure additional specialist support where required, following the AB's procurement procedures. This proactive and adaptable approach will help ensure the Programme remains responsive, efficient, and well positioned to deliver its strategic ambitions.

Section 2. Key Responsibilities

Local Action Group

Approved minutes of each meeting are uploaded to the Programmes website (LAG Minutes).

Annual Event

Over recent years, the LAG has prioritised open engagement through *Meet the LAG and Project* events, which have played a key role in shaping Programme priorities and supporting the development of guiding documentation. Building on this strong foundation, 2025 marked a shift toward greater outward engagement, with the PO attending local events and delivering presentations across the Tyne & Esk area to broaden reach and strengthen connections with communities and stakeholders.

This commitment to visibility and advocacy was further demonstrated through LAG Members and the PO participating in a three-day exhibition at the Scottish Parliament from 24–26 February 2026, sponsored by Colin Beattie MSP. The exhibition provided an important platform to showcase the impact of the CLLD Programme in both Scotland and T&E, engaging directly with 22 MSPs, three MSP staff, and members of the public.

Looking ahead, continued in-person engagement will remain central to the Programme's bottom-up ethos, enabling meaningful dialogue between communities, projects, and decision-makers. These experiences and relationships will directly inform the forthcoming five-year strategic plan, ensuring it is grounded in lived experience, responsive to local needs, and well positioned to deliver positive, long-term outcomes for the Tyne & Esk area.

Accountable Body

Since November 2022, Tyne & Esk CLLD has been delivered through a collaborative LAG partnership with East Lothian Council as the AB. East Lothian Council has been confirmed as the AB for 2026/27, providing continuity and stability in financial management and staffing arrangements.

A *business-as-usual* approach will be maintained for 2026/27, ensuring established and effective delivery structures remain in place. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Group Protocol, first agreed in 2022, continue to underpin strong governance and partnership working. As part of an early-2026 review, these documents have been strengthened to further support and protect both the LAG and the AB, reinforcing a solid foundation for future delivery.

T&E LAG have remained an unincorporated body governed by a Group Protocol and MoU with the AB.

Community Wealth Building (CWB)

The PO works in close partnership with colleagues in East Lothian and Midlothian Councils to ensure Tyne & Esk CLLD delivery is fully aligned with wider community regeneration priorities and the ambitions of the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act 2026. In East Lothian, this is strengthened through co-location with the Council's Economic Development Service, while in Midlothian the Economic Development Manager with responsibility for CWB contributes as an Observer to the LAG.

The Programme supports the core Community Wealth Building pillars—plural ownership of the economy, progressive procurement, fair work, socially just use of land and property, and financial power—with climate change recognised as an additional pillar in East Lothian. In Midlothian, climate change is a cross-cutting theme across each of the pillars and is also a theme in the community planning partnership.

Through its established bottom-up approach, CLLD brings local insight, supports community-led enterprises, and enables inclusive, locally driven economic development.

Continued partnership working across the Tyne & Esk area will ensure CLLD plays a key role in delivering CWB outcomes, helping to generate, retain and circulate wealth within communities and build resilient, fairer local economies.

As part of the five-year strategy, the PO will work with East Lothian and Midlothian Council Officers to align Tyne & Esk CLLD with the strategic pillars and strengthen collaboration.

Tyne & Esk Review and Scottish Government Policies

Tyne & Esk will review its long-term strategic ambitions beyond March 2027 through the development of a new five-year strategic plan, to be adopted in 2026. This process will bring together East Lothian Council, Midlothian Council and the LAG to reflect on the CLLD Review and agree the future direction of the Programme.

The review will consider relevant Scottish Government policies alongside national and local priorities, ensuring the renewed strategic direction for Tyne & Esk is well aligned, forward-looking and responsive to the needs of communities across the area.

Tyne & Esk and the CLLD Network

It was agreed at the Tyne & Esk AGM (April 2026), a LAG Co-Chair and the PO will join the CLLD Network Working Group to strengthen collaboration with other CLLD areas and help shape the current and future Programme

Section 3. Scope of Funding

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4. Please detail how your planned activity for this year will meet the overarching outcomes for CLLD funding this year including more detailed projected expenditure and specific deliverables/outcomes.

6. Please describe how your aspirations for this year will contribute to Scottish Governments top 4 priorities for 2026/2027 Scottish Budget as below :

- Helping families and services through the cost-of-living crisis
- Eradicating child poverty
- Transforming the economy to deliver net zero and;
- Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services

The Tyne & Esk Programme will support CLLD funding outcomes in 2026/27 by strengthening collaboration, partnership and learning across the area.

• Connecting people, sectors and programmes: Building strong links between community groups, organisations, the LAG network and the business sector will remain a priority. The LAG benefits from robust regional representation, including business members and Business Gateway Observer involvement. Where aims align, the Programme will actively connect with complementary initiatives such as the Shared Prosperity Fund and cost-of-living support activity to maximise impact.

• Embedding partnership working for community impact: Rural partnership working will continue to be a central requirement of the Programme, supporting collaborative approaches that deliver meaningful, locally led change. Tools such as the Grant Finder platform will support communities to identify funding opportunities and strengthen delivery of shared initiatives.

• Building learning and evidence for the future: Building on the strong foundations established in 2024/25 around effective grant management and robust monitoring, the 2026/27 Programme will further embed evidence-led practice. This will ensure learning, outcomes and impact are clearly demonstrated, helping inform future rural CLLD policy, delivery and strategic development.

7. If applicable, please describe how your aspirations for this year will meet any other Scottish government's key priorities for 2026/2027 Financial Year.

Tyne & Esk Funding and AB

As part of the five-year strategy review, Tyne & Esk will consider how it can strengthen alignment with complementary local, regional, national and UK Government funding streams, helping to maximise opportunities and improve overall programme impact. The LAG will be working with Stratagem, funded by Economic Development East Lothian Council, to assist in the develop of the five-year strategy, strengthen leadership, and deliver the practical support needed to grow, adapt and succeed.

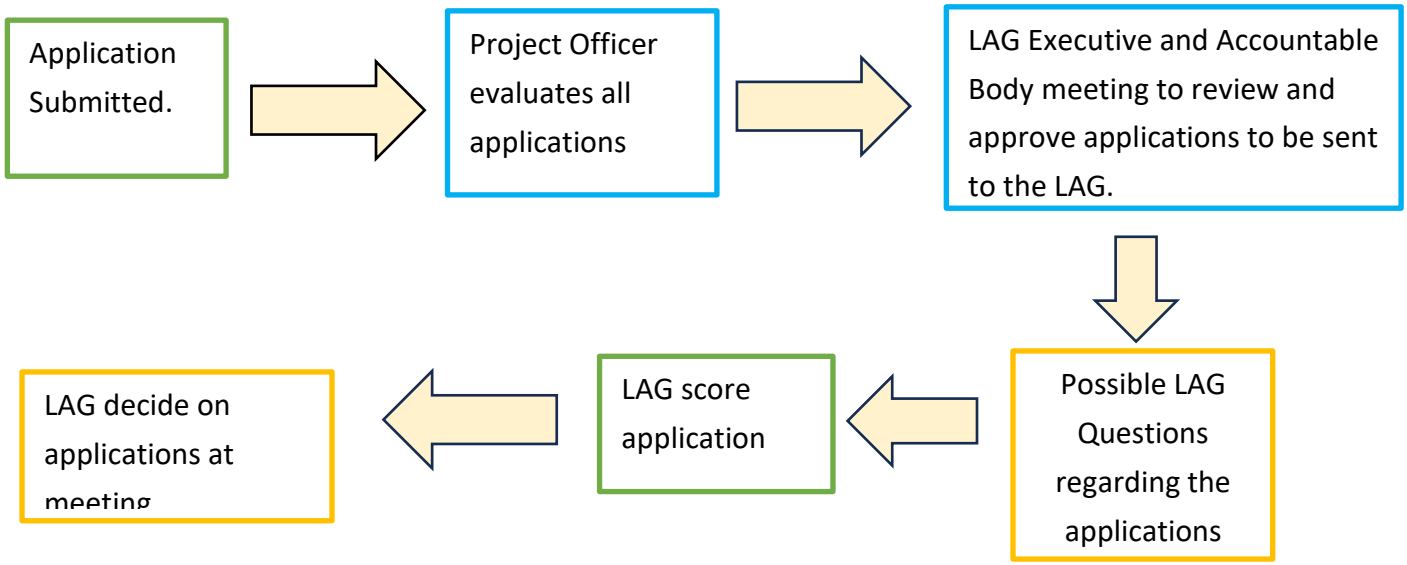
Collaboration

The Tyne & Esk LAG will encourage collaborative projects across the Programme area. Where projects propose activity across wider CLLD areas, the LAG will work with other LAGs to support alignment and access to funding, within the restrictions governing the expenditure of Tyne & Esk funds.

8. If applicable, please outline the project selection and decision making process that your LAG will employ when allocating funding, including selection criteria, procedures for projects led by the LAG itself and what your process is for any delegated decision making? Please refer to Section 3 of the 'Planning for your Community Led Vision' guidance document for more information on how to complete this section.

Making the right Choices – Projects

Project Selection Criteria:



A secure members' area of the Programme website is used by LAG members to score applications and provide comments. Applications are scored out of 60 by members, with an additional score of up to 20 from the PO. Average scores and a traffic-light system support transparent and consistent LAG decision-making.

Traffic Light Scoring System Average			
Red	**0 - 39**	**declined/ deferred**	**(49% and below)**
Amber	**40 - 59**	**deferred/ approved**	**(50% - 74%)**
Green	**60 - 80**	**approved**	**(75% and above)**

Projects must:

Applicants are required to complete an application form and provide supporting documentation, which is assessed against the following criteria:

Project & Social Inclusion (scored by LAG):

- Robustness of the project plan in delivering stated aims and objectives
- Credibility of identified beneficiaries and alignment with intended outcomes

Organisational Capacity & Delivery (scored by LAG):

- Confidence in the organisation's ability to deliver the project
- Identification and mitigation of risks

Legacy & Sustainability (scored by LAG):

- Long-term legacy of the project
- Future sustainability through income generation or grant funding

Climate & Environment (scored by PO):

- How well does the organisation and its project demonstate a positive impact on Climate Change or the environment?
- Has the applicant understood the impact of their activities on the environment?
- Alignment with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Scottish National Performance Framework

Alignment with Scottish Government Priorities (scored by PO):

- Fit with one or more national priorities:
    - Eradicating child poverty
    - Growing the economy
    - Tackling the climate emergency
    - Improving public services
- Strength and authenticity of alignment (not artificially fitted)
- Clear evidence of need demonstrated in the application

Where the applicant is a business or business-focused community organisation (e.g. a social enterprise or community company), priority will be given to those demonstrating sustainability and equitable pay. This supports Community Wealth Building objectives and contributes to fair work and net zero outcomes.

The LAG Executive, AB and PO work together to carry out an informed and proportionate review of all applications prior to submission to the full LAG. This process considers eligibility, strategic fit, financial robustness and alignment with Programme priorities, ensuring only well-developed and compliant applications are recommended for LAG consideration and decision-making.

LAG Led Projects

Previous programmes attracted a strong and diverse range of applications that met Tyne & Esk's objectives. Since 2022, LAG-led projects have supported a more joined-up response to the cost-of-living crisis and promoted funding opportunities. With a longer delivery timescale, it is anticipated that 2026/27 will generate more genuinely bottom-up projects. As such, no LAG-led projects are currently planned; however, should the LAG act as a project lead, all decisions will be fully documented and transparent, clearly demonstrating community benefit.

Conflict of Interest

T&E Register of Interests process is completed annually; an update will be completed in May 2027. Each Member/Observer completes a Register of Interests form and these are held by the PO. Declaration of Interest is a standing agenda item at each LAG meeting, and Members are asked to declare any conflicts before any decision making. When there is a conflict of interest this is recorded within the LAG minutes.

* Group Protocol and Register of Interest forms available on request.

Individual LAG Members and Observers have previously applied for and received funding; in all cases, conflicts of interest were declared, and the individuals took no part in discussion or decision-making.

Delegated Decision Making

It is envisaged that decision making will continue with the full LAG who are committed and well engaged. Proxies exist for the elected members via the Economic Development lead for both Council areas.

Decisions can be made via the proxy or sent direct to the LAG Chair. For non-funding decisions, the LAG Executive (Co-Chairs) may be given delegated powers by the LAG within criteria which will be incorporated into the Group Protocol.

Tyne & Esk Audit 2024/25

The 2024/25 audit confirmed Substantial Assurance in respect of the programme's operations. Following recommended protocol updates by the LAG and AB, the 2025/26 audit will be completed in June 2026. Thereafter annual audits will move to an intermittent basis, with Tyne & Esk continuing current operations and submitting completed audits to the Scottish Government.

9. Please outline the appeals process you have in place as part of your project selection procedure.

10. Please detail the process by which you will record conflicts of interest. To ensure all LAG minutes are stored electronically for future Audit purposes.

Complaints Procedure:

The T&E LAG made the decision not to have an appeals process. It has been made clear on all documentation that the LAG decision is final.

As part of the application process, the PO delivers online and in-person funding surgeries in partnership with local Third Sector Interfaces. These sessions, offered at varied times, broaden access and ensure potential applicants clearly understand the programme, eligibility and application process.

* Feedback from the 2025/26 surgeries is available on request.

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint, the following process will apply:

Stage 1: Contact Tyne & Esk

- Initial contact should be made with the PO, informally by phone, email or in person.
- Where possible, the issue will be resolved immediately. If not, the concern will be recorded and followed up in writing within five working days.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- If unresolved, a formal complaint may be submitted in writing to the Co-Chairs of the Tyne & Esk LAG, outlining the issue and suggested resolution.

- Where needed, the PO or a LAG Member may record the complaint on behalf of the applicant.
- The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days and fully investigated by the PO or a LAG Member.
- A full response will be issued within 21 working days, or the complainant will be contacted if more time is required.

Stage 3: Review by the LAG

- If the complainant is not satisfied, the complaint may be escalated to the LAG. Members or Observers not involved in the original decision will review the case.

Stage 4: Final Stage

- If the issue remains unresolved, the complainant may refer the matter to the AB for Tyne & Esk.

Website

Approved minutes of each meeting are uploaded to the Programmes website (LAG Minutes).

Section 4 Financial Arrangements

11. In as much detail as possible, please capture your projected expenditure and how you will allocate your budget against your proposed activity this year.

Revised Tyne & Esk Budget 2025 - March 2026		
	Allocation	**£305,017.46**
		Budget
Expenditure Staffing		
Direct Staff costs		
Additional staffing hours (Line Management/ Financial Support)		
	Total	**£70,000**
Programme Revenue/ Animation		
Stationery etc	**£100.00**	
Website redesign, maitanence and Domain Name	**£4,600.00**	
SVE Dashboard annual update	**£150.00**	
LAG Expenses (Room hire/ Confrences/ travel/ refrshments)	**£3,000.00**	
LAG Owl Meeting Equipment	**£900.00**	
Filming (£320 each *6)	**£2,160.00**	
Charges for mobile	**£100.00**	
5yr Plan development to include links with other policies and YLAG/ youth activities?	**£2,000.00**	
		£13,010
Project Costs		
Revenue Projects	**£154,352.91**	
Capital Projects	**£49,975.55**	
Funder Finder (2years)	**£17,679.00**	
		£225,007.46