**General Meeting 18 March 17**

Present Garry, Lesley, Jane, Paul, Tony, Steve, Howarth, Rachel

Apols Mick, Maria

1. Paul thanked Rachel for supporting the organisation of Gibside Community Farm, especially for the minute taking in meetings.
2. **Bright Ideas fund** – Paul gave some background information to the application to the Bright Ideas Fund. We had decided that we were not ready to apply for Power To Change, so when P2C brought out Bright Ideas Fund to help organisations to be able to apply, it seemed appropriate for us. We applied and have been successful in getting through the first stage which meant that we had an advisor allocated to us. Our advisor is Debbie Lamb who has helped us with the second stage application. This had to be completed quickly with little time to consult members. The advisor suggested that we should apply for a grower for 6 months for this year so we could test out the market by growing more this year. This would give us more time and experience to build up our markets, especially with bulk purchasers. So we have applied for

* 80 days growing and costs for equipment to support more mechanisation.
* a marketing and consultation process for £3900, which we hope that one of GCF members will complete. (The advisor checked that this would be ok with BIF).
* an accountancy software package
* a development plan for how much crop we could achieve at different stages and how much income it would raise. (Rachel has offered to do this work.)

Debbie submitted the application on 13th March. Debbie asked them to consider the application on March 16th. We will hear next week whether we are successful. The next grant that we would apply for would be P2C to develop the field and we can still get advice from Debbie for that even if we don’t get the grant from Bright Ideas.

1. **Implications if we get the money for a grower** – We discussed whether we needed to have toilet facilities for the grower, but decided that any grower would be on a contractor basis and that they would have to decide whether they can cope without toilet facilities.

What additional crops to sow? Rachel identified potatoes, broad beans and leeks as possible veg for bulk sale that are feasible to do.

How much more crop to grow? Do we grow in the 2 plots that have already been ploughed or do much more? The meeting decided that we needed to decide with the grower. Leeks can be started in walled garden and transferred to field.

1. **Finance** – balance in bank is £5011.28 and we have 23 members. Unrestricted is £1.683.64 and restricted is £3404.30. We are aiming for 30 members this year.
2. **Lease** – the lease has been signed by all parties and is now complete. Garry is completing the process to register the land with the rural payments agency. The meeting agreed to buy the entitlements to allow us to claim for rural payments. Garry offered to make a long term loan to GCF to cover this.
3. **Dates for meetings** – the meeting agreed to revert to Thursday evenings for meetings but noted it would be easier to hear if the meeting was not in a pub. Is anyone prepared to offer their house? Paul and Rachel have offered their houses but Gateshead is not very convenient. Agreed to keep growers group next Friday at 10.30 and after that revert to Thursday evenings in the Red Kite until we can find an alternative venue. Please can members say whether Thursday meeting is no good? Use social events for members as sounding board not as a meeting.
4. **Health and safety** – Rachel presented a draft health and safety policy and risk assessment. Rachel to email draft to Tim to ask for his comments. We could also ask GoLocal and NEOG if they will share their policies and risk assessments. Each member is responsible for their own safety and parents are responsible for the safety of their children. The induction pack is where much of the advice and information for all members needs to go, so we need to update the induction pack and make sure all members read it.
5. **Publicity** – Rachel to ask mick what was happening with the leaflet, and about the signs for the display stands. Howarth has got the logo for the stencil, he was given permission to go ahead with this.
6. **Field** – We still have not heard from Forward Assist whether they want to use the land on our conditions or not. We are assuming they don’t as they have not got back to us. It was agreed that Paul should apply to Greggs Trust for the money for the compostable toilet.

Further discussions about truck bodies versus containers. Howarth has obtained some estimates of costs from a farm management handbook. These are

Cladding round a single container or truck body = £1900 for labour and materials

Pole barn (no cladding) around a single container or truck body = £1789

Pole barn (no cladding) around 2 truck bodies and space between = £5426

Hardcore (6 inches deep, not 12 inches recommended,) £4068. (We have £3500 from NT.) This includes access track but no fence or gate.

Howarth recommended that we did the pole barn roof over container/truck body and then filled in with cladding later when we could afford to do so.

Truck bodies are much cheaper than containers and weigh a similar amount.

Paul happy to go with truck bodies if they are made from aluminium or steel and have the same lockable doors that containers do. Rachel wanted to ensure that the water container could be stored on the roof of a truck body. Howarth recommended to go for the minimum cost of a single truck body and pole barn because the cost of the pole barn over 2 truck bodies was a big increase in cost. He thought that the barn could be extended easily when we had funds for another truck body. Howarth would go for truck body rather than container as it is wider, higher and longer so more useable space, but to avoid fibre glass, he is happy with aluminium or steel. The meeting agreed to aluminium truck body. Paul thinks sensible to go for one however it would be good to get firm costs for both options ie 1 or 2 truck bodies. We also need the estimate for converting a truck body by putting in a door and a window.

1. **Woodland trust vol conference** – nobody at the meeting was able to go.