

FORTH VALLEY & LOMOND LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUP MEETING

Viewforth, Stirling

9 November 2016

10am - 12.30pm

Minutes

Present:

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| <i>Peter Sunderland</i> | <i>Business and Community, Stirlingshire</i> |
| <i>John Armstrong</i> | <i>Community, Stirlingshire</i> |
| <i>Kyle Barrie</i> | <i>Stirling Council</i> |
| <i>Jason Clark</i> | <i>Business, Stirling Enterprise Park</i> |
| <i>Mike Ewart</i> | <i>Land Management, Central Scotland Green Network Trust</i> |
| <i>Celia Burn</i> | <i>Community, West Dunbartonshire</i> |
| <i>Isla Campbell</i> | <i>Scottish Natural Heritage</i> |
| <i>Bridget Clark</i> | <i>Community, Stirlingshire</i> |
| <i>Brian McColgan</i> | <i>West Dunbartonshire Council</i> |
| <i>Carolyn McGill</i> | <i>Clackmannanshire Council</i> |
| <i>Douglas Johnston</i> | <i>Community, Stirlingshire</i> |
| <i>Tony Teasdale</i> | <i>Community, Rural Stirling Housing Association</i> |
| <i>Janice Kennedy</i> | <i>Scottish Enterprise</i> |

Apologies:

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| <i>Lynn Hamilton</i> | <i>VisitScotland</i> |
| <i>Mike Strachan</i> | <i>Forestry Commission Scotland</i> |
| <i>Janet Beveridge</i> | <i>Land Management, West Dunbartonshire</i> |
| <i>Susan Brooks</i> | <i>Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority</i> |
| <i>Ian Mathieson</i> | <i>Community, Clackmannanshire</i> |
| <i>Irene Watterson</i> | <i>LEADER Claims Officer</i> |

In Attendance:

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| <i>Anne-Michelle Ketteridge</i> | <i>LEADER Programme Manager</i> |
| <i>Sarah Phillips</i> | <i>LEADER Development Officer</i> |
| <i>Ashley Robinson</i> | <i>LEADER Development Officer</i> |
| <i>Colin Tennant</i> | <i>Historic Environment Scotland</i> |

Welcome, Sederunt and Minutes of last meeting

PS welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly to Colin Tennant who was the new member to the LAG, representing Historic Environment Scotland.

PS thanked everyone for coming to this extra LAG meeting which had been called at short notice to consider projects prior to the Autumn Statement, although we had heard a few days previously that this deadline had now been lifted. This was a relief for everyone.

He noted the apologies received from LH, MS, JB, SB, JK and IM.

He asked if anyone had any issues in relation to the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting, and if not that the minutes be approved. DJ proposed, CMcG seconded.

He proposed that the matters arising be considered at the next LAG meeting as time was tight for today's meeting and the purpose was just to consider new applications.

1. Conflicts of Interest

AMK advised that there were just two conflicts of interest in the projects being considered today - Stirling Council with the Food and Drink Co-ordinator project and Clackmannanshire Council with the Japanese Garden.

2. Projects for discussion and decision

2.1 Barrwood Campsite Extension

AR gave a presentation on the project, showing a map on screen on the location, the site being south of Stirling and 96 acres in size. The LEADER project consists of developing previously inaccessible areas of Barrwood which includes converting a rough timber extraction route into 760m of access road (rounded up to 800m in Application), creation of 400m of footpath, linking the road end to new camping/activity site - this figure was previously 370m, but was lengthened slightly to avoid removal of certain trees. The footpath will be constructed using whinstone dust which is conducive to wheelchair access, but not fully inclusive due to the difficult and non-conforming gradients. There will also be a new composting toilet - twin cubicles, one fully accessible. Footpaths, road access, and composting toilets will be open for site customers and public.

The match funding is in place with CSET also confirming an extension to their funding to allow the applicant to work with the LEADER timescales.

Questions from LAG members included:

2.1.1 Feasibility Study figures do not match Application figures. This is because the study was completed in Feb 2015 & work was expected to begin in Spring 2017 so the figures have been 'rounded up' slightly to account for this

2.1.2 How was the Inflationary figure of £1,500 reached? The figure has been calculated as 1.5% of £103,500 (and rounded down)

2.1.3 Monitoring & Evaluation - how will this be measured? Answer is that Barrwood booking system will provide quantitative evaluation and the regular monitoring and measuring of degraded areas over next decade will provide qualitative evaluation.

2.1.4 Costing confusion between Project Plan & Milestones. Reason for this is that milestones are laid out in relation to work timescales and expected claims - so the costing breakdown from Project Plan is an item by item list so is reflected within the Milestones but not presented in exactly the same way

2.1.5 Planning Permission. This project does not require formal planning permission due to the small size of the road construction but does require 'prior notification' to the Local Authority, which gives an informal 'heads up' that work is happening on site

Overall everyone thought this a good infrastructure project which fitted well with the LDS priorities and objectives - and would be a great resource for the area. The LAG from the previous programme had worked with this applicant and had been impressed with the projects they had delivered then. AR added that they had been very good with the application process and had checked with IW who said they were excellent with their LEADER claims. Some LAG members had been to the site since the last LEADER investment and had been impressed at how well used the site now was, although in need of upgrading. It was also felt that the indirect economic benefit of the project to the wider area was strong as the groups coming spent quite a bit of money with suppliers and support businesses in the area. It was noted that this project would open up access to the Barr Wood for the public, particularly for the new housing development at Duries Hill, but it didn't constitute a strategic path as it didn't link with existing routes - the applicant may be receptive to working with the LAG on this in the future.

There was also some discussion around innovation, and in what way was this project being innovative if they were simply transferring some existing provision to a new part of the wood. It was agreed that innovation is sometimes hard to define and is subjective. The LAG agreed that the project was showing commitment to maintain and enhance an existing site for the benefit of young people, and there was innovation in the way they are addressing the degradation of the current site with an eye to future growth. There was also the innovation in getting children interested in environmental activities as well as opening up access to a previously inaccessible part of the wood.

- **PS invited the LAG to vote on the project, and a majority voted to approve the project subject to standard conditions**

2.2 Loch Katrine Ecopods

SP presented this application explaining that Loch Katrine is in the National Park, centrally located in the FVL area, 22 miles North West of Stirling. They propose to turn a disused quarry site into a eco-camping location and to install power hook ups for motorhomes in the car park that largely sits empty over night. The project aims to: use existing infrastructure to open up overnight access for visitors, provide low cost accommodation in line with the NP and LDS, provide an official spot for camping in line with the camping management plan, support the Trust generate an additional revenue stream and safeguard 3FTE employees to deliver the project. Maps and architect's drawings were displayed on screen.

SP highlighted that the Strategic Subgroup recommended that this project be considered as an Enterprise project which would normally mean the applicant would only be able to apply for £25K, however given that the two areas of the project are geographically and developmentally distinct, the applicant was requesting that these could be considered as two separate diversifications and so be considered for £50K.

Additional detail on costings had been provided by the applicant since the application had gone to the LAG which SP had brought with her. There was a question about who was the landowner and this was confirmed to be Scottish

Water and the applicant was in the process of extending their lease with SW to include this area.

The LAG liked the project and felt there was a good fit with the LDS and Tourism Strategy. The project would safeguard three jobs and would make applicant more resilient. It also supports the National Park Camping Strategy, and is a popular daytime tourism spot there should be no problem getting it occupied. It was noted that only initial planning advice had been given so far, there was a risk that the project might become more expensive - although as the applicant was at the upper threshold of what was allowed - if this was considered as two enterprise activities - then any extra costs would have to be covered by the applicant's bank loan. A question was asked about the budget for the access path to the pods as it was felt this was on the low side. What material would they use, as it was important that it was accessible for wheelchairs.

It was noted that the bank loan had yet to be confirmed, and this would need to be a condition of funding, as would the planning permission. The question would also be asked as to whether they planned to install a barrier to stop traffic beyond the camping area.

PS asked everyone to vote, and the project was approved subject to the following conditions:

- 1. written confirmation of match funding and bank loan,**
- 2. planning permission being confirmed**
- 3. clarification on the detail of the costings**
- 4. landowner permission**
- 5. confirmation of path construction specification to ensure access for all**

2.3 Japanese Garden

CMcG, as Clackmannanshire Council rep left the room. Clackmannanshire Council have been supporting the applicant with their business planning and development.

AR presented this application to the LAG. She gave a brief history of the garden near Dollar and how it was now owned by the great-niece of the lady who built it in early 1900s. Sara Stewart had set up the charity to bring the gardens back to their former glory with the ultimate aim of opening it up to the public. Restoration works to date have been carried out by young volunteers from Japan and Scotland, including the Dry Stone Walling Association. Fundraising is in progress for the building of the boathouse pavilion, the visitor reception and further individual elements in the garden - totalling £462,000 which is separate to the LEADER application, but the site is already at a stage where it can be opened to the public.

LEADER has been approached to fund the missing link as the restoration is now at an advanced stage - but physical access into the garden is currently poor and dangerous where it joins the main road. LEADER is being asked to fund a new

access road as well as two gates to allow the gardens to actually be opened up to the public.

Match funding has not yet been confirmed.

Questions from the LAG:

- 2.3.2 Why have they not applied to Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland to fund this part of the project? Project is currently in the process of bidding for a Heritage Lottery Fund for the rest of the restoration works in the Garden which has a max grant of £100,000 which then need for the restoration works. HES provided funding for the preparation of the Conservation & Management Plan. The Access & Gates is not eligible, as actual work is not on the garden and not in respect of a listed building
- 2.3.3 Match funding? Match funding is being sought from a variety of sources. LEADER would be the first confirmed match funder for this project. All correspondence with potential match funders to date has been very positive. Applicant is aware of LEADER match funding rules and various relevant timescales involved with securing match funding
- 2.3.4 Is pricing competitive? Pricing have been based on quotes obtained from a variety of sources, but due to the tight timescales of this LAG meeting, have not been able to present all quotes. All costs will be going out to tender as per LEADER rules and Applicant is aware of this.

It was noted that this was a very innovative project and would be a unique tourist attraction and asset for the FVL area with particular benefits for Clackmannanshire. The project had also benefitted from some impressive specialist expertise. It was noted that the applicant proposed to plant Japanese plants along the access road which the LAG liked.

PS invited the members to vote on the project, noting that match funding would need to be confirmed and quotes would need to be provided. The project was approved unanimously, subject to standard conditions

CMcG returned to the room.

2.4 Loch Katrine Brenachoile Pier and Visitor Centre

SP presented this second application from the Sir Walter Scott Trust - this project being to bring the ruined Brenachoile Pier back into use by installing a pontoon and information area. SP gave some back ground to the business operations of the Trust which is run by a not for profit operating company which has grown over the years to include a restaurant, three boats, visitor facilities and business opportunities for other businesses to operate such as bike hire. SP displayed a map of the loch which showed that Brenachoile Pier is a 30 minute walk and a 30 minute sail from the main visitor facilities which is much shorter than their current cruise offering.

The applicant has identified demand for shorter boat cruises on Loch Katrine to appeal to bus tour operators, who currently don't have enough time to take a cruise.

It will also appeal to those with limited mobility increasing access for those who aren't able to walk for long periods of time and also opens up access to the network of paths which start from there.

SP displayed on screen the architects plans for the new pontoon. The project would take place between Jan-May 2017 and will involve ordering the pontoon, groundworks and civils, refurbishment of boat shed to make into a visitor information area, delivery and installation of recycled pontoon and final ground works.

It was noted that the applicant was looking for £48, 950 at 50% intervention rate. It was also noted that some of the details needed to be finalised, including written confirmation of the Trust's Match funding, the final claim projections must be a minimum 10% of total project costs, confirmation of Planning Permission and further information on the costings without quotes was needed as some of the costings didn't match up.

The LAG liked the project and thought the economic benefit would be significant and so expressed surprise that the applicant had not been able to provide evidence of this - even from the coach providers. The LAG was uncomfortable about proceeding with the project without hard evidence of demand. It was also noted that it was quite risky to the Trust to be taking on both projects at the same time without a comprehensive plan for the business - especially as both projects required taking out a substantial bank loan. It was noted that the Trust were currently working with Business Gateway to produce a business plan and it was suggested that given that the Autumn Statement deadline had now been lifted in terms of LAG commitments, it might be prudent and better for the applicant to have a little more time to produce the evidence of demand needed to mitigate the risk the applicant was taking on, and to reassure the LAG of the return on their investment. It would also allow the applicant to progress with their business planning.

PS invited the LAG to vote on the project and the unanimous decision was to defer the project until the applicant could produce stronger evidence of demand for the project.

2.5 Central Scotland School of Jewellery

AR presented this application to the LAG. This applicant is a sole trader, Jo Pudelko, a jewellery teacher who has operated for over 10 years as a small scale jeweller, and whose work is frequently selected for national and international exhibitions. She has been teaching jewellery making at the Edinburgh College of Art for over 5 years where main focus is the delivery of technical and design skills for first year students within the Jewellery and Silversmithing department. She currently operates from a mobile caravan studio/workshop in Menstrie, but is keen to have a more permanent 'front-facing' space for jewellery making and retail. She is also keen to participate in FV Open Studios, which is difficult with her current limited space.

She is in the process of buying a property in Dunblane which she proposes to convert in to a jewellery studio and retail area and will run a programme of classes from the neighbouring Victoria Halls which is opposite Dunblane train station. LEADER funding grant is sought for retrofitting the property to make into workshop space, purchase

of equipment and tools to run workshops, a website and promotional costs and event costs.

Match funding has not yet been confirmed from Creative Scotland, but the decision was due on 15 November.

LAG Questions:

- 2.5.2 What stage is she with her building purchase? AR would need to double check the exact stage at this point in time, but when she last spoke to her it was in the process of going through the solicitors. The applicant had expected to complete by early November.
- 2.5.3 What were her projected workshop numbers? These figures were in the business plan which looked robust as she had been conservative in her expectations, calculating what the minimum number would need to be for each course to go ahead. It was noted that she has already started advertising for classes to start in January.
- 2.5.4 Was she aiming to reach the hobby market or the training market? AR replied that she had identified both as her market as often one leads to the other. This was concurred by other members of the LAG.
- 2.5.5 Would she consider renting her workshop space to other jewellery makers? AR said she understood this to be part of her business model to ensure viability.

It was noted that the location of the workshop training at the Victoria Halls was ideal because of the accessibility provided by the train station. The LAG welcomed the project as Creative Industries had been identified as a strategic priority as the sector and individual businesses needed more support in the FVL area so it was great to have this first project come forward.

PS invited the LAG to vote on the project, and subject to the match funding being confirmed, the LAG approved the project unanimously with standard conditions.

2.6 Local Food & Drink Co-ordinator

KB, as the Stirling Council rep, left the room as Stirling Council is the match funder.

SP presented this project to the LAG. She explained that this project had come about from the discussions of the Strategic Activity group who had been asked by the LAG to identify some potential LAG-led projects. These discussions had been widened to include some Forth Environment Link because of their work in the local food and drink sector, and Stirling Council who had recently produced their Rural Stirling Economic Action Plan which had identified Food and Drink as a priority sector for the area. Both organisations had recently commissioned consultancy work relating to the food and drink sector.

So the aim of the project is to increase the range and number of food producers, processors, retailers and marketing activity across the FVL area. This will involve developing a vision, strategy and action plan, a Local Food and Drink Network, delivering the Action Plan in partnership with the Network. It is proposed that the LFDC will be in post for 18months with the post hosted by the FVL LAG, supported

with HR by Stirling Council and the direction of role guided by the project steering group which will include Forth Environment Link, Stirling Council and FVL LAG.

It was noted that so far the project looked quite Stirling centric, even though the role would be for the whole FVL area. SP responded that in the meetings with the three partners and at the last Strategic Sub-group it was made clear that this coordination role is needed to support food and drink sector across the whole FVL area, even if the other local authority areas were not in a position to match fund at this stage. The subgroup had suggested proposing a higher intervention rate to allow the other areas to benefit from this role also. It was also noted that the nature of local food and drink supply and demand means that there are many common issues across the FVL area, and it makes sense to look wider than just one local authority area. The intervention rate will also allow for a great delivery budget for the Action plan which has also been a concern of the strategy group.

A question was asked about the engagement of food and drink businesses in the development of this project. SP replied that the engagement had been more with the organisations who are working with food and drink businesses rather than food and drink businesses per se, although in the consultation events run by the LEADER team last year a good number of food and drink businesses had participated and this was one of their requested actions as many of the businesses are just too busy to develop joint activities themselves - they are keen to advise and oversee but are not in a position to deliver themselves. JC concurred with this as he has worked with many food and drink businesses over the years, and there are many good ideas but the limiting factor is always time available to develop and deliver projects.

The LAG liked the project as it had come directly from the LDS process and it had scored highly across all criteria. The Scottish Enterprise rep also added that they were very supportive of the project as they were keen to see more co-operative activity happening in the food and drink sector and this role would be key to this happening in the FVL area.

PS invited the LAG to vote on the project. The project was approved unanimously with standard conditions.

KB returned to the room.

3. AOCB

IC asked that project papers be circulated sooner. PS agreed noting that this was an extraordinary meeting scheduled at relatively short notice and which had attracted more than the usual number of projects. Everyone had worked hard to make sure the community didn't lose out as a result of the Autumn Statement deadline and he wanted thank the LAG and staff team for the extra time they had put in to allow this meeting to happen.

4. Date of Next Meeting

14 December 2016 10am. Venue to be confirmed.