

FORTH VALLEY & LOMOND LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUP MEETING

Via Zoom

19 August 2020

10 am

Minutes

Present:

Douglas Johnston	Community, Stirlingshire (Chair - Community)
Steve MacDonald	Stirling Council - Agency
Fiona Jackson	Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority - Agency
Bridget Clark	Community, Stirlingshire
Rory McLeod	Community and Business
Julie Haslam	Community, Clackmannanshire TSI
Janice Kennedy	Scottish Enterprise - Agency
Sue Wyllie	Community, Stirlingshire
Lynn Hamilton	VisitScotland – Agency

Apologies:

Mike Ewart	Community, Central Scotland Green Network Trust
Jim Livingstone	Clackmannanshire Council - Agency
Brian McColgan	West Dunbartonshire Council - Agency
Jason Clark	LEADER Cycle Tourism Officer
Simon Orr	Community and Business, STEP

In Attendance:

Anne-Michelle Ketteridge	LEADER Programme Manager
Carolyn McGill	LEADER Development Officer
Nikki Kenn	LEADER Development Officer
Shaun Marley	LEADER Community Broadband Officer
Caroline Paterson	LEADER Claims Officer and Minute Taker

	ACTIONS
<p>1. Welcome and Introduction to Today's Meeting</p> <p>DJ welcomed everyone to the LAG meeting via Zoom. AMK ran through some procedures for those new to Zoom.</p> <p>AMK noted apologies noted as above.</p> <p>DJ asked AMK if the meeting was quorate. She confirmed the LAG meeting was quorate. She noted no conflicts of interest.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising</p> <p>DJ asked if anyone had any comments in relation to the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting 10 June 2020. No comments received the minute was proposed by SMacD and seconded by SW.</p>	

<p>AMK advised only outstanding matter was for her to send out the link to FVL LEADER video and soundbites which was send out earlier this week. She noted videos haven't been published yet, so please don't share them.</p>	
<p>3. Update on Committee Spend and Claiming</p> <p>AMK noted uncommitted figure has changed to £7,207 since the last LAG meeting due to some projects completing and declaring underspends or where LAG committed more funding to projects. She added that this money is available to reallocate to projects with a new change to guidance now where we can allocate funds not just for increased costs but including new costs as a result of COVID-19 and lockdown as long as original project objectives are met. We currently don't have many projects which meet this criteria that the LAG can currently approve. At the moment we still cannot approve any project slippage into next financial year, Scottish Government Finance team discussions are ongoing, as are discussions on options for excess funding which is money going back into the pot.</p>	
<p>4. Feedback on Chairs Meeting</p> <p>DJ advised Scottish Government are keen to identify areas where resources can be clawed back and at present they are saying they cannot go beyond March 2021. He noted Chairs Group have written to Fergus Ewing explaining the case for keeping in place the LAG network for two reasons: one to distribute the UK Shared Prosperity fund and two to look at recovery from COVID-19. Each Chair has also written individually to each of our MSPs and generally it's gone down very well but Ministers have not been able to respond due to the UK Government not being clear what's happening with the proposed Shared Prosperity Fund after Brexit. It has been suggested that LAGs and ABs should be ready to make a decision rapidly if an extension or interim agreement to continue the network. It's in the hands of the politicians but as yet nothing has been resolved.</p> <p>AMK added that the Chairs Group had asked the coordinators to produce an infographic promoting the achievements of the LEADER programme at a national level which they could use if they are contacting MSPs, MPs and local politicians. This is in process of being prepared by the coordinators and covers what LEADER has achieved and how it can help with COVID-19 recovery and climate change. AMK noted it's almost complete as they are just waiting for the last few areas to submit their details.</p>	<p>Action: Infographic to be circulated when ready</p>
<p>5. Feedback from Accountable Bodies Meeting</p> <p>SMacD advised ABs haven't met since our LAG meeting in June, with the next meeting scheduled for end of September. He noted ABs are aligned with Chairs Group regarding extension and ready to respond. AMK queried if decisions can only be taken at meetings? SMacD advised to date no decisions have been made outside of meetings and limited communications between meetings but he is happy to get in touch with them if necessary.</p>	
<p>6. Update on changes LAG are allowed to approve</p>	

<p>AMK talked the LAG through the current guidance managing underspends, which can be managed locally for projects incurring increased costs as a result of Covid or Lockdown and projects incurring new costs but must be to deliver the original project objectives.</p> <p>Regarding slippage - there is no cover at present for costs that may slip into 2021-22. SG continues to work with finance colleagues on this issue and will update ABs should this position change. Therefore the position remains that all costs require to be incurred and submitted to SG by 31 March 2021.</p> <p>Options for excess funding – SG is working to identify whether there is any excess uncommitted funding remaining from the £82m LEADER 2014-20 programme budget. ABs will have to how any excess funding might be reallocated.</p>	
<p>7. Requests for changes to projects/more funding/projects not using all their funding</p> <p>AMK shared some positive news that co-operation projects can use underspends in one LAG area to cover the increased costs in another area within the same project, which might be useful for extending the Crowdfunding project.</p> <p>More generally who can we give extra money to? At our previous LAG meeting we discussed writing to all projects to offer additional funding but given that only £7k is available at the moment this would raise expectations which we couldn't meet.</p> <p>Also, we can only give money to projects that -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a very clear picture of their increased costs (i.e. have new quotes) • can complete by 31 December 2020 • have demonstrated they can submit claims via LARCs timeously and with minimal errors <p>It was noted that the LAG led projects have the advantage of flexibility so we can ensure that only activities are included that contribute to the original project objective and only use funding as it becomes available.</p> <p>AMK asked the LAG if they had any additional criteria they would like to add? LAG had nothing further to add.</p> <p>NK requested clarification on moving money within co-operation projects. AMK advised it has to be within the same co-operation project.</p>	
<p>8. Questions on Projects in Risk Register not being covered in presentations</p> <p>AMK circulated the Risk Register, which is now being prepared for the Scottish Government once a month for all our live projects detailing in what way they might be at a risk. At the moment 4 present the greatest risk as not yet started – Leny Falls, Bowling, Old Manse Farm and Gartness Glamping along with 3 projects which cannot complete in full as they involve visits or events that cannot feasibly take place before March 2021 – Smart Villages, Wild Wonders and Foraging Fortnight.</p> <p>AMK noted admin costs are linked to project spend so if any of these big projects don't complete then that gives a risk to Stirling Council that there might be a shortfall in the admin costs for FVL LEADER overheads.</p>	

LH queried no response from applicant regarding Leny Falls project. AMK noted that since the risk register was shared with the LAG she has that morning heard from the applicant to say that they have a new contracts manager who is working through the quotes and they still expect to complete by end December 2020, with works expected to start on site in September 2020.

SMacD noted risk of admin costs and will pick this up offline with AMK.

AMK noted previously DJ queried what happens if a project doesn't complete? Would they be required to repay everything paid up until that point? AMK still awaiting clarification from Scottish Government.

AMK presented candidate projects for additional funds that fit the limitations:
Crowdfunder – extension by 3 months to Dec 2020 = £4,500 from FVL
Crowdfunder – use some of our underspend to support extension in partner areas that don't have underspend (if we have underspend).
Regional Food Hubs/Local Food and Drink project – purchase of an e-cargo bike to support deliveries from new market garden (horticulture)
Wildwonders – purchase of portable hand basins and reusable event signage that can be used for future Wildfood Festivals/other festivals in the area.
Cycle Tourism – more marketing activity

AMK added that this wasn't a formal request to the LAG, but just to give idea of what projects *could* use any underspends that we may end up with. She invited the LAG to suggest any ideas they may have too.

LAG response was that all these ideas could be considered and none were jumping out as activities they wouldn't want to support, but the timing by which projects had to spend was very limiting.

Action:
SMac/AMK to meet to discuss

9. Strategic Project Presentations

9.1 Wild Wonders and Foraging Fortnight

Wild Wonders

NK advised due to delay in confirmation of whether we can get an extension or not from Scottish Government we decided to go with plan B rather than risk running out of time. To recap, the second festival and learning trip to Latvia can't take place so therefore there is underspend in the budget. The event manager from Rogue Village has advised underspend of £15-16,000, made up of £6,754 from event, £8,000 from Latvia trip and approx. £1,000 from other areas. Happy to hear the news from AMK that money can be moved around within a Co-operation project.

Plan B is to build on the support side for running the festival into the future. The positive fact is that we have an event group based at Tir na Nog who what to continue running the festival, so the more we can do at the moment to enable and support them within the existing budget the better.

To repurpose the grant the idea was a new brief to the event manager which we have already received a quote for to cover:

- build website content and arrange website work to suit their vision
- Run event handover sessions
- Arrange photography and video on new site for PR and website
- Arrange training day with professional forager on new site
- Organise purchase of festival resources – e.g. signage, sandwich boards, portable hand wash basin –list to be finalised
- Final Report

More PR work, two further months of project management and possibly some kind of virtual learning exchange with Latvia. NK asked the LAG if there were any other resources they can think of, where do we store them, how projects can access them in the future and criteria for who can use them. Could the LAG invest some money in equipment seating or cooking facilities? AMK agreed although the bigger the item the more it's an issue regarding storage.

AMK noted that if these resources were purchased they would belong to the LAG, but with LEADER coming to an end we would need to enter into some kind of arrangement with a third party to store and manage those resources – such as Forth Environment Link who run their own events and an interest in local food.

RMCL asked if we could charge for use of resources? AMK said she would need to check but it may be an option for the third party to charge. AMK queried if storage was available with Stirling Council. SMacD said he would make enquiries. SW queried the LAG owning the resources and asked if a partner in project could own them? AMK advised that due to LEADER rules we have to own the resources and when LEADER is no longer in existence we can give, with the approval of the LAG, to a third party to use who has agreed to continue to use the equipment for the purpose it was awarded.

DJ asked LAG members to note the changes incurred by the project and vote on the principle of doing this using the thumbs up in Zoom – unanimously agreed.

Foraging Fortnight

A virtual foraging festival is taking place in Orkney as part of their Science Festival which is available to everyone from 29 August to 13 September. There is a steering group meeting tomorrow will decide on whether to keep waiting to find out if a decision is made on an extension to deliver mainland Foraging Fortnight in May 2021.

The visiting speakers budget is now proposed to be used for presentations and video footage which will be housed on the Foraging Fortnight website for the time being and social media. For the legacy of the project beyond

<p>LEADER, as SNH are a partner they may have the digital resources to look after them – awaiting confirmation.</p> <p>LAG approval requested is an extension to the end of 2020 and two months of project management time.</p> <p>Looking at potential underspends, the main area will be the local budgets – particularly in FVL area as we had planned most spend in this the second year as we had so much going on in 2019 with the Wildfood Festival which is part of the other (Wildwonders) project, the LAG will need to decide to divert it to another activity or accept it as an underspend.</p> <p>DJ advised decision required and asked LAG members to vote. Decision was to agree to NK’s proposal to extend and ideally use the underspend in another but related activity.</p>	<p>LAG Decision – Approval to extend and use underspend in related activity</p>
<p>9.2 Local Food and Drink Project/Local Food and Drink Network</p> <p>CMcG advised Forth Valley Food and Drink (a community interest company with large membership) was fully incorporated on the 31st July 2020. The five inaugural members of the board represent a cross section of the areas food and drink businesses and organisations.</p> <p>One of the key strengths of this board is their established links to wider networks across the Forth Valley, encompassing both food and drink and tourism which will be valuable going forward in the networks growth.</p> <p>Since the last LAG meeting, we have continued to take advantage of media opportunities and delighted to collaborate with Julie Howden Photography’s ‘Local Food Hero’ project, which has provided some excellent visual content that we have used in recent Sunday Herald and Love Local magazine features. The Forth Valley Food and Drink Network will be hosting the ‘Local Food Heroes Exhibition’ later this year.</p> <p>The network now has a logo and we are currently out filming for the promotional film which will feature a range of local food and drink businesses.</p> <p>The website is nearing completion - businesses who have registered their interest in the network to date will be given access next week to see the product, and allow them to officially sign up for membership. The site will go live to the public in September, where we hope to attract further businesses who have not engaged to date. This two phase approach will allow us to 1) Formalise the base membership and 2) develop more content for the website before going fully live to the public. We have approximately 40 businesses lined up in the first phase. And a further 150+ targeted between now and December.</p> <p>The network has a dedicated email address. It is important that we maintain the integrity of the network as being led by members for the</p>	

members, while recognising the valuable contribution the local agencies brings.

So we are now on the map! We could not have got the network off the ground without support from external funders. In addition to the existing funding from Connect Local and Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER we have been successful in securing an additional grant from Scotland Food and Drink's 'Regional Food Group Support Scheme'. Details are still to be finalised, but this will provide valuable resource to support the organisation and deliver activity over the next 12 months – we will be working with our partners in the tourism sector and with the wider business agencies and organisations in the area, to maximize on all opportunities.

A paid membership scheme is proposed for introduction in 2021, to support the sustainability of the Network in the medium to long term, and therefore reduce reliance on external funding. Our 10 point action plan for the year ahead is very much in step with both the 'Alive with Local Food' strategy and the National Food Tourism Scotland Action Plan. The establishment of the Network is in itself a successful outcome for the Alive with Local Food strategy.

One of the key actions within the plan is to deliver the 3rd Forth Valley Food and Drink Festival. This year's festival will take on a new profile with events aimed at businesses, as well as building on the previous events for residents and visitors. Events will be delivered on-line and where permissible on-premises. This year's festival will be extended across two weeks 10 – 25 October, this covers the longer school holiday period, so should enable people to get involved in the first or second if not both weeks.

It has been a busy 3 months, and we will continue to be busy in the months ahead. Response from business to date has been really positive, and indeed being out filming has garnished lots of interest. The promo film should be fully edited at the end of next week and will be shown on the website and via social media. In the meantime - you can follow us on Facebook, or get in touch if you would like a copy of the action plan or have any questions. We have come some way since Ashley laid the foundations back in November 2019, to where we are today, and we will continue to forge ahead despite all the challenges up ahead.

DJ thanked CMcG for presentation and good to see progress and becoming an actual organisation. DJ asked AMK whether her board membership had gone through? She advised it went through very recently so the Board has not actually met yet due to summer holidays. As we have learnt, food businesses are very busy businesses so there was a reluctance from some to become board members but through the hard work by CMcG, it showed the businesses that we were serious.

SMacD said from Council perspective they are very supportive and appreciative of the work that's been done and are keen to support in terms of time and financially. The money from Scottish Food and Drink needs match funding and he has an allocation in budget but this needs to be

<p>confirmed after Stirling Council's emergency budget meeting in October 2020.</p> <p>LH queried what type of training the network might be organising? CMcG advised it depends on what businesses need i.e. food photography, e-commerce websites, PR and marketing, etc. LH advised she's had enquiry from her Industry Manager, Lindsay Eckford, asking regarding need for training for food business, so she's passed on CMcG details and will be in touch.</p> <p>SMacD regarding the match funding set aside it would be worthwhile having a conversation with STEP, Stirling Council and VisitScotland to discuss funding for business support.</p>	
<p>9.3 Community Broadband and Smart Villages</p> <p>SM advised on activities since previous LAG meeting - Lochend/Dykehead local community network is now live and received some good press relating to how important it was during Lockdown. Stronachlacher/Inversnaid and Keir Esate/Blair Drummond are underway and still exploring options at Crianlarich and Mugdock.</p> <p>SM advised of new Scottish Government scheme launched to provide up to vouchers worth £5,000 to help homes and businesses not in scope of either R100 contracts or planned commercial investment. Interim vouchers up to £400 are also being made available for premises where superfast broadband is planned for after end of 2021, with an additional £250 for those in the hardest to reach areas.</p> <p>SM recapped the aims and objectives of Smart Digital. He noted that FVL had hosted the first of the transnational visit in Gartmore in November 2019 but none of the other visits have been able to take place. As part of the co-operation project, we are participating in a virtual conference next month, which is being hosted by Finland, the lead LAG area. We have a draft agenda looking at various aspects of what makes a smart village. SM will send out information closer to the time.</p> <p>We are now looking at how we reallocate £20,000 which was to cover the costs of the visits and we are thinking that a better use of the funding will be to explore some local 'smart' solutions which will support local projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project at Gartness and Drymen already have footfall counters and flood prevention but looking for additional footfall counters and sensors outside primary schools to monitor air pollution. The children would also be able to access this information. - Video consulting service for GPs (NHS Near Me) - our role is to join up with our communities in Callander and Balquhiddier which now receive good broadband service. This is a pilot which could be rolled out throughout the Forth Valley. - Digital enabled home care - putting devices into homes of elderly in Strathyre to monitor quality of home i.e. damp and monitor energy use and entrance systems. Looking to identify 6 premises as a trial. 	<p>Action SM</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual high street – working with Cowie to produce an online presence for businesses. - National Park smart car park monitoring – can we use our smart village know how to help with the visitor management problem of car parks being full and cars parking on the roadside in dangerous places? Early discussions with the National Park Authority is showing that they are keen. <p>LH queried which schools? SM advised just currently only at Drymen and Aberfoyle primary schools as it’s an extension of the current project but could be rolled out across the area. LH followed up querying if there is an issue with air pollution in these areas. SM advised this has come from the Headteacher in these schools. AMK advised Aberfoyle primary is closed so maybe think of another school? SM advised we could just use Drymen.</p> <p>LAG voted to agree change.</p>	
<p>9.4 Cycle Tourism</p> <p>AMK noted JC is on annual leave but has prepared a presentation.</p> <p>#ebike Smile promo – e-biking in the Trossachs leaflet/map published in March. AMK noted landslip at Loch Katrine had closed a popular route last year which will now not open until April 2021 due to a delay to the works. Good news is 9 fast chargers have been delivered to Drymen (G63Hub), Balmaha, (St Mocha Coffee Shop) Gartmore (Black Bull Hub) Aberfoyle (Bike Hire) Stronachlachar (Pier Cafe) Loch Katrine (Pier kiosk) Strathyre (Broch Cafe) Kinghouse (Roll Outdoors Bike Hire) Balquhidder Glen (Monachle Mhor Hotel)</p> <p>NK queried if fast charger is available at Loch Katrine if route not open as it’s relevant to her press release. AMK advised charger is there and some of the route can still be cycled. So far received good feedback on social media and shared on other websites.</p> <p>New VisitScotland/Sustrans planning microsite – went live in July. Lots of day routes and long distance routes being promoted. BC cycled and written discriptions for most of the day routes. Thanks Bridget!</p> <p>‘Gravelfoyle’ trails – Risk assessments now complete. Post of 3 trails will be delivered on 28 August. Branding has been agreed and website is underway. Installation timetable still be confirmed with Forestry and Land Scotland.</p> <p>Webinar programme for business – part of Sustrans cooperation project with Cairngorms & Argyll. LAG approved repurpose funds to do online delivery. Webinars will take place in September and October 2020 with topics 1: Intro Sustrans/VS leisure cycling website, 2: Cycle friendly business-what does it look like?, 3: How to successfully market your business to the leisure cycling market, 4: International best practice (case studies) and 5: Facilitated brainstorming workshop: marketing promotion for each area (£8k)</p>	

Improved facilities for cyclists in Gartmore – AMK advised Black Bull pub was bought by the community. Due to JC’s contact with Sustrans they have agreed to provide a bike maintenance station for the community to be sited in Gartmore. This complements a new cycle shelter the community has installed there with help from cycling Scotland. They also have an e-bike fast charger on site provided by the project.

AMK congratulated Bridget on being awarded Community Cycling Champion by Cycling UK.

9.5 Crowdfunding Coaches

AMK advised crowdfunding project has gone from strength to strength. A LAG led project cross 9 LEADER areas. Contract with Crowdfunder UK who employ 4.5 FTE coaches on project - each area has a named coach. And there is a Crowdfund Scotland Platform which shows all the projects currently Crowdfunding as well as historic ones – AMK displayed some funded projects. AMK displayed table showing money raised to date by the projects who had Crowdfunded:

Area	Total projects supported (Cumulative)	Completed projects (Cumulative)	Completed projects this month	Total raised
Fife	43	9	1	£54,067
Forth Valley & Lothian	61	21	3	£110,403
Greater Renfrewshire & Inverclyde	50	10	3	£13,986
Kelvin Valley & Falkirk	55	13	2	£26,706
Lanarkshire	62	12	1	£10,745
Rural Perth & Kinross	98	34	9	£359,717
Scottish Borders	109	27	4	£97,822
Tyne Esk	111	29	6	£74,067
West Lothian	74	19	1	£72,572
TOTAL	663	174	30	£820,085

AMK flagged target was to provide support to at least 450 projects (businesses and community groups) across the whole project. Project has surpassed this by quite a distance having supported 663 projects in total in the 9 LEADER areas. Another target was to organise at least 90 awareness raising, training or support events held across the region over the 2 years. So far completed 70 workshops/train the trainer events and another 11 online workshops currently booked in.

AMK advised that Crowdfunder have noticed during lockdown that number of people booked on events has been dropped but they were all very geographically based so changing tack to focus on covering different types of workshop for different sectors which will be available to all 9 areas.

AMK advised project currently runs to end of September and as project has gone really well, she would like to recommend extending the contract with

<p>Crowdfunder for a further 3 months. AMK noted all areas would need to make their own decision on whether to continue. AMK asked LAG if they would like FVL LEADER to extend by 3 months costing £4,500.</p> <p>JH advised from a community point of view it would be fantastic to extend as the coaches have great local knowledge and go above and beyond, especially in the current climate.</p> <p>DJ asked everyone to vote – all approved.</p> <p>AMK asked how LAG would feel if we did have a large underspend about funding another area? LAG agreed they would rather underspend was used by another area than it being returned.</p>	<p>LAG Decision- Approved</p> <p>LAG Decision – Agree in principle</p>
<p>10. Roundtable discussion on preparations for leaving the EU</p> <p>DJ asked LAG members to give their 60 second update on what their organisation/their networks/or an individuals what they are doing to prepare for leaving the EU</p> <p>SMacD – Stirling Council is working with STEP to put in place a programme of specialist business support. Working on drafting programmes around exporting, new regulations, etc. Also feeding into replacement programmes, using LEADER as an example. At Council level SMacD sits on the Brexit Risk Group looking into trading standards, employability, supporting EU citizens, food regulations, etc.</p> <p>RMcL – Moray Estates at Doune, no formal preparations but looking at diversification due to trimming back of agricultural subsidies. Looking to move into more forestry and more renewable energy projects. Might look at encouragement of more visitors using antiques centre at Doune. From Scottish Land and Estates point of view it's very similar, looking to diversify i.e. collaboration between estates, efficiency and carbon capture.</p> <p>SW – Working for small charity (Greenspace Scotland) it doesn't really feel like it affects them. As a member of community, she feels very disempowered. She queried if the LAG has seen the One Billion Challenge Document put together by lots of group and quangos in Scotland and asked if anyone else had seen it? Seems to be a movement away from public funding.</p> <p>BC – Doesn't have an impact on her activities. AMK queried if it would have an impact on cyclists coming from abroad. BC thought it wouldn't have an impact, visitors will come anyone and getting more people from UK on bikes.</p>	<p>Action – Document to be shared</p>
<p>11. AOCB and date of next meeting</p> <p>CMcG queried impact of Gillian leaving Scottish Government? AMK the immediate thing to note is the Accountable Body meeting has been moved but apart from that unsure of impact.</p> <p>Next meeting confirmed as Wednesday, 11 November 2020 at 10am on Zoom.</p>	

