

FORTH VALLEY & LOMOND LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUP MEETING

8 SEPTEMBER 2015

CLACKMANNAN TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present:

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| <i>John Armstrong</i> | <i>Community, Stirlingshire</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>Mike Ewart</i> | <i>Land Management, Central Scotland Green Network Trust</i> |
| <i>Gillian Ferguson</i> | <i>Historic Scotland</i> |
| <i>Lynn Hamilton</i> | <i>VisitScotland</i> |
| <i>Ian Mathieson</i> | <i>Community, Clackmannanshire</i> |
| <i>Carolyn McGill</i> | <i>Clackmannanshire Council</i> |
| <i>Tony Teasdale</i> | <i>Community, Rural Stirling Housing Association</i> |
| <i>Alex Ward</i> | <i>Stirling Council</i> |
| <i>Jo Wright</i> | <i>Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority</i> |
| <i>Jason Clark</i> | <i>Business, Stirling Enterprise Park</i> |

Apologies:

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| <i>Douglas Johnston</i> | <i>Community, Stirlingshire</i> |
| <i>Brian McColgan</i> | <i>West Dunbartonshire Council</i> |
| <i>Mike Strachan</i> | <i>Forestry Commission Scotland</i> |
| <i>Frank Beattie</i> | <i>Scottish Enterprise</i> |
| <i>Peter Sunderland</i> | <i>Business and Community, Stirlingshire</i> |
| <i>Janet Beveridge</i> | <i>Land Management, West Dunbartonshire</i> |

In Attendance:

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| <i>Anne-Michelle Ketteridge</i> | <i>Programme Manager</i> |
| <i>Neil Ramsay</i> | <i>Development Officer</i> |
| <i>Irene Watterson</i> | <i>Claims Officer and Minute Taker</i> |
| <i>Sue Wyllie</i> | <i>Development Officer</i> |

| ITEM | | ACTIONS |
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| 1 | <p><u>Welcome</u></p> <p>AMK welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the members who were able to attend the visit to Clackmannan Tower prior the start of the meeting today. AMK noted apologies from FB, DJ, PS, JB, BMcC and MS and said that she had received an e-mail from FB who had been on long-term sick leave from Scottish Enterprise but is now back at work and although unable to attend this meeting, he looks forward to attending future meetings. AMK also advised that although she will chair the meeting to begin with, Item 2 of the Agenda was the election of a new Chair and Vice Chair(s) and so would hand over the reigns to the newly elected Chairperson at that point.</p> | |
| 2 | <p><u>Election of Chair and Vice Chair</u></p> <p>AMK read out the nominations for office-bearers, CB, PS, DJ, IM and LH and asked them to leave the room in order that Members could discuss the nominations.</p> <p>CB, IM and LH left the room.</p> <p>AMK asked the Members how they wished to proceed as she had received some votes by e-mail but not from everyone. TT asked for a recap on the processes and the length of time the office-bearers should be in post, as he found the Constitution a bit confusing. The Constitution states that Chair and Vice Chair shall hold office until the conclusion of the next Annual General Meeting of the LAG and shall be eligible for re-election on a three year basis. It was agreed that the wording of the Constitution is confusing. The Members agreed that given not everyone knew each other yet, it would be better to vote initially on a one year basis, until next AGM.</p> <p>It was suggested that it may also be a good idea to have two Vice-Chairs in order to share the responsibility and this was agreed by the Members in the room.</p> <p>There was a discussion around the table and the Members elected PS to be Chair and LH and DJ as Vice Chairs until the conclusion of the next AGM.</p> <p>CB, IM and LH returned to the room.</p> <p>As PS and DJ were not at this meeting today, AMK handed the reigns of chairing this meeting to LH.</p> | |

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| <p>3.</p> | <p><u>Minutes of the Last Meeting</u></p> <p><i>LH thanked AMK and asked the LAG to highlight any errors or omissions from last meeting's Minutes of June 2015. ME highlighted that he is a representative from Central Scotland Green Network Trust and not CSFT which had changed name some time ago.</i></p> <p><i>BC highlighted that on Page 7 of the Minute relating to Drymen Village Square, her suggestion of "filled tractor tyres with flowers which can be effective as a way of reclaiming large sections of tarmac-ing without requiring realigning roads" should have noted that this was an idea as a temporary pilot/try-out for realigning roads and not a permanent solution.</i></p> <p><i>AMK pointed out that from Page 5 onwards, the Actions in the Actions column had slipped down which may have caused some confusion.</i></p> <p><i>The points above were noted. As the substance of the Minute was correct, it was proposed by JC and seconded by JA.</i></p> <p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <p><i>ME advised that he does not have access to the old FVL website. NR explained that Web Sense had placed a block on the old website as there is a code causing the block, which isn't dangerous, however to some users, renders the website as inaccessible. NR assured the LAG that as soon as the Service Level Agreement is signed by Stirling Council, work on the new website will be commissioned. The LAG agreed that it would not be cost effective to spend money on fixing the old website.</i></p> <p><i>JW asked for an update on the SLA. AW informed the LAG that due to staff changes, this had been delayed but the legal team in Stirling Council is looking at it this week, and so expects it to be signed imminently.</i></p> | |
| <p>4.</p> | <p><u>Update from Scottish Government and Stirling Council</u></p> <p><u>LEADER Timescales</u></p> <p><i>AMK informed the LAG that she had received the draft documents for the new grant application process the previous day to give comment on and although there is quite a lot of paperwork to go through, SW has already started going through them and picked up on a number of points which need clarifying. What has been noticed is that the Application Form is significantly shorter than that of the previous Programme however there will also be a Project Plan template for completion so the whole picture isn't in full view as yet.</i></p> <p><i>AMK informed Members that Co-Ordinator's Meetings seem now to be the main vehicle for communication between Scot Govt and the LAGs, and the next Co-Ordinators Meeting is being held next week in Orkney where both SW and AMK will be attending.</i></p> | <p>Action: SW/AMK</p> |

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| <p>5.</p> | <p><i>The final version of the documentation should be made available to LEADER areas shortly after the Co-Ordinators have had the opportunity to discuss the documents and this falls in line with the Scot Govt's timescale of end August/September 2015 for the documents to be made available, so assuming this timescale does not slip, these should be going live by November 2015.</i></p> <p><i>Projects have been able to complete Expressions of Interest since mid-July but are being held centrally until the SLA is signed. We should have a better idea of what projects have expressed interest once the SLA has been signed. The enquiries that have come in to the office direct have been logged and will be contacted – again - once the SLA has been signed.</i></p> <p><i>NR has been working with the Government's Communications Workstream to help design a communications toolkit for all LAG areas.</i></p> <p><u>National LEADER Conference</u></p> <p><i>AMK informed Members that the next National LEADER Conference will be held in March 2016 in Aviemore or Inverness. The locations and exact date is still to be confirmed. In the past, numbers have been very limited so this time it is suggested that 10 places be reserved for every LAG, and asked Members if this was a reasonable number of places for Members and (some) staff to attend. The LAG agreed that this was an adequate amount of places for FVL LEADER attendance.</i></p> <p><i>AMK confirmed that attendance at the Conference is free however travel and accommodation would be paid for out of the FVL budget.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed FVL Budget</u></p> <p><i>Copies of the Proposed Programme Costs for 2015 – 2020 were distributed to the Members and the LAG perused the information. AMK advised the Members the figure of £695,753 is the maximum spend available on administration/animation activity with the bulk of these costs on staffing.</i></p> <p><i>JW noted that a result of cutting the budget to fit the allocation is less development work available, which will impact on the projects coming forward.</i></p> <p><i>AMK informed the Members that the Governance Sub-Group have met and are looking for ways and ideas to reduce/trim the costs, such as relocation of the LEADER Support Office. One proposed action is to put the Office lease in the LAG's name rather than the Council's as otherwise we have to pay business rates which amount to £10K over the life of the Programme. Another option was to explore moving the office to somewhere which was cheaper.</i></p> <p><i>CB asked about the proposed costings for ICT. AMK informed the Members that the budget factored in replacing the existing PCs/laptops in case they broke down or needed upgrading, adding that the LEADER Team is lucky to receive free IT support through Stirling Council.</i></p> | <p>Action: Scot Govt</p> <p>Action: Scot Govt, Stirling Council & LEADER Team</p> |
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| <p>6</p> | <p><i>TT asked when the LEADER Financial year ran. AMK replied that the budget year is January to December however she must submit various annual reports, sometimes based on fiscal years, some times calendar years and some times agriculture years! AMK did however say that the allocation was for the whole of the Programme and there were no set spending targets for any particular year within the Programme.</i></p> <p><i>LH advised that as the budget is so tight, she proposed that the Governance Sub-Group would monitor the spending but reiterated that this is a projection for the whole of the Programme. AMK agreed and proposed that, like the last Programme, every LAG meeting will have an item on the Agenda for an update on expenditure. This was agreed.</i></p> <p><u>Feedback from Sub-Groups</u></p> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <p><i>NR feedback from this Group saying there had been two Communications meeting so far. There were four activities the Group had been focussing on: a website brief, a branding brief, a promotional flyer and the Programme Launch.</i></p> <p><i>NR had brought copies of the draft briefs to the meeting and invited anyone to take a copy if it would be of interest. There was some discussion about the briefs, with a question raised about the budget and whether it was essential to have an intranet given that funds were tight. It was agreed to request designers to give costings with and without an intranet so that comparisons could be made. It was also suggested that an archiving facility be requested.</i></p> <p><i>NR advised that the brief would be advertised on Public Contract Scotland using Quick Quotes and would alert other ICT companies of the need to register on PCS. NR advised that he would be using Stirling Council Procurement rules and would take further guidance from the Procurement Team on scoring criteria</i></p> <p><i>It was noted that the branding will be useful for the website and for new letterhead, (generic) business cards and compliment slips for the new Programme, and it was anticipated the branding would cost circa £500.</i></p> <p><i>Regarding the promotional flyer, NR said that the Sub-Group was requesting further guidance from the wider LAG about the amount of detail to include. He showed on screen the flyer that was used in the last Programme which as a previous applicant himself, had found quite useful. The LAG said it was important that the flyer should include all the information on one page. It was suggested that a member of the Strategic Projects Sub-Group attend the next Communications Sub-Group to assist with the flyer.</i></p> <p><u>Launch Event</u></p> <p><i>The Sub-Group was proposing that the formal Launch Event takes place in January 2016 which would allow for the website being up and running and the Programme being 'open for business', with money readily available to be allocated.</i></p> | <p><i>Action: Governance Sub-Group & AMK</i></p> <p>Action: NR</p> <p>Action: Communications Sub-Group/Strategic Activity Sub-Group</p> |
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| | <p><i>The Group felt that one big launch event with several small ones throughout the Programme would be the best way to communicate the LEADER message. They proposed that Callander would be a good, central location and with good access whatever the weather. Possible venues need to be explored.</i></p> <p><i>It was agreed that one big event followed by smaller events was the best way, given the budget constraints and CMcG also suggested that if there are other events happening in our area, then this gives us the opportunity to piggy-back on these event. This was agreed also with Members agreeing to let the Support Team know if they hear of any such events coming up.</i></p> <p><i>The Communications Sub-Group was asked to explore a possible structure to the launch event – possibly to include a political speaker although the LAG Chair and LAG Members would lead the event. It was suggested that neighbouring LAGs be invited also possibly other match funders, so space to have display stands was important.</i></p> <p><i>The final point the Sub-Group had discussed was whether it would be more cost effective to have a media or events contract with a third party rather than undertake it in house. This was initially ruled out as being too costly but it was suggested it might work out cheaper in the long run. The Sub-Group agreed to discuss this in more detail at their next meeting.</i></p> <p><u>Governance</u></p> <p><i>A note of the inaugural Governance Sub-Group Meeting had been distributed to the Members.</i></p> <p><i>TT feedback on behalf of the Group going over the points contained in the note and highlighted the actions still to be undertaken.</i></p> <p><i>TT added that the LAG Guidance document from Scottish Government was confusing and it implied that the LAG was part of the recruitment process. AMK agreed that it was confusing but her understanding was that there is a role for the LAG, as although the Council is the employer, the LAG needs to be consulted on changes on staff or other operational issues that affect the running of the Programme.</i></p> <p><i>Looking at the note of the Sub-Group meeting, CB said that she thought it was interesting that 10% of the last Programme’s budget was not spent, when it came to final drawdown so was wondering what they should do as a LAG to ensure that as much money was spent in the area as possible. AMK agreed that this was interesting as a number of projects did not spend as much money as expected although said right up to the last minute that they would. There were also projects that did spend but fell foul of the procurement rules or other compliance issues which meant they couldn’t claim their full amount. JW asked if this was to do with the SRDP overspend from the previous Programme. AMK said there was a lot of reinterpretation of existing rules which had made it difficult for all the LEADER programmes but had no doubt helped to reduce some of the overspend at a national level.</i></p> <p><i>It was suggested that the LAG might need to over-allocate by 10% to ensure 100% spend, although the new LARCs system might prevent this as it is sounding quite mechanistic as a system.</i></p> | <p>Action: Communications Sub-Group</p> |
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KVF LAG ended up not going ahead with this in full, but it was an interesting idea. GF asked if FVL LAG could do something similar or even require every project to consider how it might provide an employability benefit.

The Members asked if a simple document with sign-posting/simple guidance with no legal requirement be produced to encourage this in the FVL area. CMcG cautioned that Clacks Council did this with their own area and it was found to be extremely time consuming.

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IC & GF left the meeting

Project Grants – Max Intervention Rates and Amounts

AMK introduced this topic saying it had been raised at the Strategic Project's Sub-Group that the LAG would need to discuss its policy regarding intervention rates and maximum grant amounts as there was a lot more flexibility in this new Programme, although there was less money available.

Previous discussions with SG had indicated that the minimum grant would be raised to £5K but the recent draft application guidance has it back to £1K, but the LAG had discretion to raise it higher if it so wished. Her recommendation was to raise it to £5K because of the huge amount of work now expected from applicants when preparing and then implementing their LEADER projects. This was agreed.

The application guidance also uses the wording of 'normally' 50% for the intervention rate although the regulations allow for grant intervention rates much higher than this, but this would result in the LAG's budget being used up by just a few projects and so the LAG may wish to stick to a 50% maximum. She also flagged up that the State Aid rules prevailing at the time of an award would override any maximum set by the LAG – which would impact particularly on the business applications. To give some context, AMK informed the Members that the average grant awarded last Programme was £27.5K and the projects overall ranged from £1.5K to £200K.

The Members discussed the intervention rates and amounts and decided to go for the minimum allocation of £5,000 with an intervention rate of normally 50%. The Members thought that there should be some flexibility with intervention rates but this should be for the exception and not the rule as the LAG was expecting more strategic projects to come forward. The LAG also said that partnership working/funding should be encouraged and if a project fails to receive all their match funding, then the project can come back to the LAG to see if there is more the LAG can offer. AMK advised that this happened in the last Programme where the LAG approved additional funds in order to allow an approved Project to carry on. The LAG agreed that in exceptional cases, the intervention rate can be increased to over 50%, but would be on a case by case basis.

LH pointed out that the LAG must be able to get the message across to applicants so thought it best to advertise the overall amount available rather than individual grant maximum.

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| <p>8</p> <p>9</p> | <p><i>This may be different for individual schemes but added that the best potential projects coming forth, but reminded the Members that the bigger the intervention rate, the bigger problem there is for cash-flowing a project. Without sufficient cash-flow, projects may fail. This is also the case when the other match funders may have a time delay on their funding being given.</i></p> <p><u>Feedback from LAG Members</u></p> <p><u>Strategic Assets Mapping</u></p> <p><i>This has been covered in previous discussions during this meeting and nothing further was discussed.</i></p> <p><u>DTAS Social Enterprise Conference</u></p> <p><i>CMcG attended the above Conference on behalf of the LAG on 24 July 2015.</i></p> <p><i>CMcG sent the information/slides from the Conference to AMK today. There is a lot of information and so NR will arrange to send this on to each Member via Dropbox over the next few days. She found the conference very interesting and relevant to the types of social enterprise projects and activities the LDS had referred to and the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act which came into force in July 2014 although the full range of powers come into effect in Summer 2016.</i></p> <p><u>Local Area Discussion – Clackmannan and surrounds</u></p> <p><i>NR introduced the topic, thanking all those who had met at Clackmannan Tower prior to the LAG meeting and hoped it had been useful. He had put together a short presentation of project activity in the Clackmannan area, starting with a map on screen pointing out the Innerforth Landscape Initiative which came to the last Programme for its pre-development and then development costs. This was a big strategic project for the River Forth area.</i></p> <p><i>The next screen showed a photograph of the Clackmannan Tower. £60K is soon to be spent on the exterior/interior and access to the tower which at present is only open one day a year. The tower has an estimated 300 visitors in that one day. This year Historic Scotland planned to open it 2 days and already demand for the tours was high.</i></p> <p><i>Another photo presented by NR showed the remains of the Kennet Distillery, apparently the first distillery in the world. £60K is the estimate to make this site safe and will need a considerably larger amount to make this into a tourist attraction. CMcG informed the Group that the £60K is coming from the Clackmannanshire and Stirling Environment Trust and Clackmannanshire Council, and it is hoped that Kennet Distillery will be added to the list of distilleries on the whisky trail.</i></p> <p><i>NR advised that the Town Hall Trust took over the running of the Town Hall where this meeting is being held – so a sign of a community keen to take on responsibility for things. The community has also recently produced a Community Action Plan.</i></p> | |
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| 10 | <p><i>There is only one Bed and Breakfast and no Tea/Coffee Shop but has so many historical landmarks and the SUSTRANS Round the Forth Route runs right through it. There is huge potential for Clackmannan to flourish with good connection routes to Falkirk (Kelpies and Wheel), Dunfermline, Edinburgh and so on.</i></p> <p><i>BC advised that she had checked out the cycling and bus routes and noted that the village was incredibly accessible and had all these wonderful assets, but the tourism potential had yet to take off. The LAG agreed that as an area that had previously received no support from the LAG, may well produce some excellent projects for the LAG to consider.</i></p> <p><u>ACOB</u></p> | |
| 11 | <p><i>Enterprise and Farm Diversification Sub-Group is to meet prior to the next LAG Meeting.</i></p> <p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p><i>The date of the next meeting is to be arranged. The regularity of the LAG meeting is to be discussed at the next Governance Sub-Group Meeting. In the last Programme, LAG meetings occurred quarterly but this is up to the Members what they want for this Programme – it was likely to be at the end of November.</i></p> <p><i>This has now been confirmed as 2nd December at 10am at LLTTNPA Headquarters, Carrochan, Balloch.</i></p> | |