

FORTH VALLEY & LOMOND LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUP MEETING

30 JUNE 2015

DRYMEN CHURCH COMMUNITY HALL

MINUTES

Present:

<i>John Armstrong</i>	<i>Community, Stirlingshire</i>
<i>Janet Beveridge</i>	<i>Land Management, West Dunbartonshire</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>Douglas Johnston</i>	<i>Community, Stirlingshire</i>
<i>Ian Mathieson</i>	<i>Community, Clackmannanshire</i>
<i>Brian McColgan</i>	<i>West Dunbartonshire Council</i>
<i>Carolyn McGill</i>	<i>Clackmannanshire Council</i>
<i>Mike Strachan</i>	<i>Forestry Commission Scotland</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>

Apologies:

<i>Frank Beattie</i>	<i>Scottish Enterprise</i>
<i>Jason Clark</i>	<i>Business, Stirling Enterprise Park</i>
<i>Peter Sunderland</i>	<i>Business and Community, Stirlingshire</i>

In Attendance:

<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>

Visitors:

<i>Kyle Barrie</i>	<i>Intern, Stirling Council</i>
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ITEM		ACTIONS
1	<p><u>Welcome</u></p> <p><i>AMK welcomed everyone, new and old to the meeting and advised that as the FVL LAG does not have any official office-bearers at present, IM had volunteered to chair the meeting today.</i></p> <p><i>IM welcomed everyone and noted apologies from FB, JC and PS. IM confirmed that there are no Minutes of the last meeting with this being the first full LAG meeting.</i></p>	
2	<p><u>Around the Table Introductions</u></p> <p><i>As this was the first LAG meeting for the new Programme, IM asked everyone to introduce themselves around the table.</i></p> <p><i>A folder containing a map of the FVL LEADER area, a full list of LAG members with contact details, the Constitution for the LAG, the LAG Member's Handbook and Code of Conduct, the Local Development Strategy and Business Plan was distributed to the Members for reference throughout the Programme and were advised that updates/amendments and additions will be issued as and when necessary by the LEADER Support Team. SW advised that the Handbook is still a work-in-progress as some sections were dependent on further information to be received by Scot Govt.</i></p> <p><i>The revised cash-flow forecast annex for the Business Plan will be issued to the Members when this has been updated as soon as possible.</i></p>	<p>Action: AMK</p>
3	<p><u>Presentation on LDS Priorities</u></p> <p><i>AMK started her presentation explaining that every LEADER area in Scotland had to produce a Local Development Strategy for approval by Scot Govt, which as of the previous day had now been formally signed off by Scottish Ministers. She then presented a summary of the five strategic FVL priorities as outlined in the development strategy; the proposed Business Plan's methodology to deliver these priorities along with what would constitute eligible and ineligible activities.</i></p> <p><i>The information on screen was taken from the FVL Local Development Strategy and the Business Plan, referencing which part of the LDS/BP each slide referred to, which Members now had in their folder.</i></p> <p><i>A breakdown of the funding was presented and the LAG was reminded of what made LEADER different to other funds and in particular, the benefits of co-operation projects of which £306,131 (10% for funding and 1% for preparation) of FVL's overall allocation has been set aside for. 10% has also been allocated to supporting small businesses and farm diversification.</i></p>	

AMK advised that exploratory discussions were already taking place with neighbouring LAGs with a view to possibly working with them on co-operation projects in the future.

The LAG discussed AMK's presentation and commented on how 'top down' the situation was at the moment. AMK agreed and confirmed that the setting up of new Programme is very 'top down' as the parameters are set by Scot Govt and the EU, however confirmed that as the Programme goes forth, this will change to 'bottom up', saying it becomes more exciting when all the 'I's and 't's are dotted and crossed and the LAG can get down to appraising and developing their own projects.

JB commented on the limited detail in the Business Plan for farm diversification.

AMK agreed that unfortunately this was the case, as Farm Diversification was given late to LEADER after much of the wider consultation work had taken place but NFUs and Scottish Land & Estate had been part of the consultation group. To address this an Enterprise and Farm Diversification Sub-Group had been set up and had already met once to discuss both how best to support both farm diversification and small businesses and would be meeting again to explore this further.

LH added that whilst the LAG had to spend a minimum of 20% of its allocation on support for small businesses and farm diversification, this was a minimum amount and the LAG could spend more.

Members enquired as to how the funding for farmers has been promoted to a wider audience. AMK responded advising that as the Programme hasn't opened yet, there hasn't been a lot of promotion however this will appear on the Scottish Rural Network website, along with NFU and LEADER websites. MS added that this was also being promoted through the RPID channels and the NFUs. This was something that the Communications Sub-Group could give more thought to.

4 **Update from Scottish Government**

AMK distributed a copy of the proposed Service Level Agreement which had been sent to the Accountable Body and copied to the LAG which had just been received. AW advised that this will be looked at by Stirling Council's legal team as soon as practical given staffing changes. The SLA is requested to be signed off by Stirling Council by 31 July 2015. A separate letter from Scot Govt to the LAG with the formal offer of grant has been received at the same time and a copy of this was also distributed to Members.

<p>5</p>	<p><i>TT asked for clarity about who was responsible for employing the staff. AMK explained that as detailed in the business plan, the Accountable Body employed the staff although the staff worked to the LAG, so it was important that there was mutual understanding and satisfaction with how that worked and if new staff were recruited, it would be expected that the LAG would be part of that process. SW added that the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the LAG will refer to this.</i></p> <p><i>AMK then took the LAG through Scot Govt's proposed timeline. The LAG asked if the LEADER Support Team is happy to receive expressions of interest from the end of July, as proposed. AMK advised that some expressions of interest have been received already and the Support Team is happy to accept new ones now and to keep potential applicants up-to-date with any new information forthcoming from Scot Govt and the LAG.</i></p> <p><i>It was noted that no spending commitments can be made by the LAG until the Service Level Agreement has been agreed by Stirling Council and Scot Govt and the projects Technical Guidance is provided by the Scottish Government which is estimated for August/September 2015.</i></p> <p><i>AMK informed Members that the LARC IT system going 'live' has been delayed and so Scottish Government will be issuing paper versions of the full Application to be used by Applicants in the interim period. This is scheduled to happen by 31 August, and should also include all the templates required to be used by Applicants.</i></p> <p><i>It was noted that new Applicants who complete a paper version may have to complete the process again electronically when LARC is up and running next year. Acceptance testing of LARC is scheduled from February – April next year with it going live mid-April 2016. It was noted that DJ had offered to assist with the acceptance testing.</i></p> <p><i>AMK fed back on the recent co-ordinators meeting in Ayrshire where Scot Govt outlined what was happening with the new Scottish Rural Network, which has now been taken in-house, although this will be spread across three offices, including one in Falkirk. The Rural Network will be a team of seven with a designated person responsible for LEADER and also a designated person for events. One of the events will be National LEADER Conference which is being held in March 2016 and she will share more information to the Members when she has some.</i></p> <p><u>Time-Line - LDS Milestones and</u></p> <p><i>AMK asked Members what their thoughts were for the frequency of future LAG meetings should be, saying that in the last Programme, the LAG met quarterly (March, June, September and December) but as the meetings belong to the LAG, the Support Team would support how the LAG want to run the meetings. It was agreed that meetings should occur</i></p>	<p>ACTION: Commun- ications Sub- Group – GF, JC, JA, AMK, NR</p>
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<p>7</p>	<p><i>across the geography of the FVL area. The LAG briefly discussed this and said that LAG meetings timetable should coincide with the LAG's key milestones and Sub-Groups could meet between meetings and/or more frequently.</i></p> <p><i>The LAG asked if Scottish Rural Network has a work-plan or programme of events for the new LEADER Programme. AMK confirmed that she has not seen a work-plan yet and will ask them for a draft timetable.</i></p> <p><i>The LAG briefly discussed the launch of the new Programme in our area and it was agreed that the Communications Sub-Group should meet to discuss and get back to the full LAG with progress after their meeting.</i></p> <p><i>AMK also asked Members their thoughts on what they would like to see on the regular LAG Meeting Agenda. The LAG discussed this and decided that they need to know what the LAG is responsible for and want to see regular finance reporting in order to keep track as to how the spending is progressing and would also like a regular report on monitoring and adjusting of the LEADER Programme investment as the Programme progresses. The above information should be emailed to Members prior to the meeting to allow the Members to digest the information prior to the meeting.</i></p> <p><i>AMK explained to Members that at every LAG meeting, certain Agenda items must be discussed and Project Allocations was one of these Agenda items, which lists the projects, their allocation, their spending and how much money is remaining. MS added that in the past, considerable time was spent monitoring the progress of projects and the Programme. He suggested that an Agenda to a previous meeting be circulated for information.</i></p> <p><i>The Members also felt that a new website should be a high priority. AMK explained that the website in situ at the moment can be used until such times as a new website is built. NR is to ensure all Members are given logins so they can access the Members Intranet area in the meantime.</i></p> <p><i>MS left the meeting</i></p> <p><u>Constitution</u></p> <p><i>SW advised that the Constitution, which had been circulated prior to the meeting had been amended as a result of the discussions at the two training days held in April and May, and was now ready for the LAG's consideration and approval. The LAG agreed that it approved the Constitution.</i></p> <p><i>The Constitution was circulated around the table for Members to sign individually.</i></p>	<p>ACTION: AMK</p> <p>ACTION: NR</p>
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6 **Process for selecting Chair and Vice Chair**

AMK asked the LAG if they wanted a nomination form to be sent round following the meeting to allow members to nominate themselves or others for the post of Chair and Vice Chair. TT asked that a paragraph be included by interested Members giving some context and detail on their interest. This was agreed and it was said that ideally, the Chair and Vice Chair would be in place before October 2015.

ACTION: AMK

ME left the meeting

Local Area Update

As each LAG meeting will be held in different parts of the FVL LEADER area, the LAG Meeting is a good opportunity of the local area being reported on. To start, NR presented some photos and maps of Drymen and surrounding area and commented on how struck he was with the number of long distance walking and cycling routes that come close or through Drymen. This presents tourism potential along with community development potential. In terms of the recent community projects, NR commented that Drymen Community Development Trust acquired ownership of Drymen Village Square back in 2006 and wanted to redevelop it through a large-scale regeneration project (Phase 1). Drymen Community Development Trust were successful in receiving funding from LEADER to employ a consultant to consult with local residents, business and statutory authorities and produce a business plan outlining costs, potential funding sources and expected outcomes for the project, however the capital works on the square have yet to be successful in raising the necessary funds.

Another LEADER Project from the last Programme was Drymen Church which was successful in receiving funding from LEADER for their Time to Build Project and this meeting today is being held in the versatile and well utilised community space created by that project.

CB brought the LAG's attention to an issue which was affecting the people of Drymen and surrounding area and that was the cut in medical service from the GP surgery since the opening of a pharmacy in the village which meant the surgery could no longer dispense medicine, a source of income for the practice. As a result, the community no longer had any regular GPs; they were all locums and it was now difficult to get an appointment. She noted that the surgery used to be a hub for the community and this had now been lost.

JW made reference to the most recent Drymen Community Action Plan and read out some of the priority actions included. She also alerted Members to the work the community trust has been doing with Sustrans to make a safe off-road cycling route to connect to Balmaha.

