

**FORTH VALLEY & LOMOND LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUP MEETING**

**Engine Shed, Stirling**

**13 December 2017**

**10am – 12.30pm**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Peter Sunderland	Business and Community (Chair)
Steve MacDonald	Stirling Council - Agency
Mike Ewart	Land Manager, Central Scotland Green Network Trust - Community
John Armstrong	Community, Stirlingshire
Janice Kennedy	Scottish Enterprise - Agency
Douglas Johnston	Community, Stirlingshire (Vice Chair)
Lynn Hamilton	VisitScotland – Agency (Vice Chair)
Paul Roberts	SNH - Agency
Colin Tennant	Historic Environment Scotland - Agency
Bridget Clark	Community, Stirlingshire
Julie McGrath	Community, Clackmannanshire TSI
Jim Livingstone	Clackmannanshire Council - Agency

**Apologies:**

Brian McColgan	West Dunbartonshire Council - Agency
Jason Clark	Community and Business
Susan Brooks	Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority - Agency
Mike Strachan	Forestry Commission Scotland - Agency
Ashley Robinson	FVL Local Food & Drink Co-Ordinator

**In Attendance:**

Caroline Paterson	Claims Officer
Anne-Michelle Ketteridge	LEADER Programme Manager
Rachel Sedman	LEADER Development Officer
Nikki Kenn	LEADER Development Officer

	<b>ACTIONS</b>
<p><b>1. Welcome and Sederunt</b></p> <p>PS welcomed everyone and thanked Historic Environment Scotland for hosting. CT advised a tour of the facility has been arranged after the LAG meeting. PS thanked CT and noted apologies from MS, JC, SB and AR.</p> <p>PS paid tribute to Celia Burn, whose funeral had taken place on 24 November. He, DJ and AMK had attended, and all had been amazed at Celia's commitment to community action all her life and her contribution to LEADER had been phenomenal too – noting her extra contribution to helping the Wester Third project right up until August this year.</p>	

## 2. Quorum and Conflicts of Interest

PS asked AMK if the meeting was quorate. AMK confirmed that we are quorate in totality, although as some members had declared interests in some of the projects for discussion today, there would be times when the number of agency members would outnumber community members and so in anticipation of this, as per our business plan, some agency members had volunteered to refrain from voting in order to ensure there were always more community votes than agency.

PS read out the conflicts of interest:

Strathard Business Development Officer – PS (applicant)

Falls of Leny Visitor Destination – SB (applicant), PR (match funder), SMacD (match funder) & MS (landowner of part of project)

Drymen Community Business Hub – SMacD (match funder)

Gartmore Glamping – PS (neighbour), JC (advisor to business)

John Muir Way – ME (applicant), SMacD (funder) , B McC (funder)

Maid of the Loch – JK (match funder), BMcC (advisor to project)

## 3. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

PS asked if anyone had any issues in relation to the accuracy of the Minutes of the meeting in September. No-one had any issues and the Minutes were proposed as accurate by JA and seconded by PR.

MINUTE  
APPROVED

### Matters Arising

PS noted from previous Minute NK to meet with Lisa Campbell, Stirling Council's Marketing Officer. NK advised that Lisa has since left Stirling Council but she has a meeting in the diary to meet new Marketing Officer, Sarah Carmichael in January 2018.

NK TO MEET SARAH  
CARMICHAEL

## 4. LEADER Update

PS asked AMK to update the LAG on the funds already allocated so AMK circulated copies of LAG budget allocation and project commitments as at 4 December 2017. AMK noted that FVL LEADER is ahead of projections in terms of project allocations, and compared to other LEADER areas on the Scottish Government chart we are at the higher end of allocations as a proportion of our total budget – although pointed out that areas that have larger budgets will be finding it more challenging.

PS queried if LAGs offering 90% intervention rate were making much difference? AMK said that her impression was that that hadn't found to be the case but actually sometimes created cashflow problems for applicants. PS then queried if allocation for areas that are not spending may be reallocated? AMK advised that the Accountable Bodies group were due to be discussing this at their next meeting but areas were usually reluctant to give up funding and as she understood it, in this programme no funds were held back for allocation further into the programme which has been done in previous programmes.

## **5. Projects for discussion and decision**

### **5.1 Strathard Business Development Officer**

#### **PS left the room – DJ took over as Chair**

AMK started the presentation with some photos of Aberfoyle with its vacant premises which this project was hoping to address. She pointed out that Guyana (garden centre) was the most recent casualty closed leaving a huge tourism and retail gap in the village and a loss of a number of jobs.

AMK explained that the application to LEADER is to employ a business development officer part time for 2 years to work with businesses and community groups to improve shop occupancy and economic stagnation. They would also produce an agreed tourism and economic development strategy/action plan for Strathard, along with producing marketing material and interpretation panels on outdoor activities, set up a cycle hub, organise events, develop a local market plus implement at least 2 other activities identified from strategy/action plan and ensure the ongoing viability of the Business Hub which is being developed by Stirling Council and the Trust above the Visitor Centre.

As a relatively new community trust, the group does not yet have any unrestricted funds to put into projects, so the group has asked for a 100% contribution from LEADER to the project, on the basis that they wouldn't be able to go ahead with the project without it and also because originally the plan had been to combine this project with the proposed new business hub for the village with the Council providing the match funding. However matching in this way wasn't going to work so the Council agreed to fund 100% of the new business hub if the LAG would consider approving 100% of the staff post.

In order to ensure that the LAG could discuss reasonableness of cost in more depth, AMK presented the LAG a more detailed breakdown of the marketing and interpretation costs which the applicant had submitted after the papers were sent to the LAG.

DJ thanked AMK for her presentation and invited members to discuss this application. A number of LAG members said they were aware that Aberfoyle had lost a lot of their shops in recent years and that it was good that the community had come together to try and find a solution, as it wasn't going to be easy. However, the LAG felt there are a lot strategies and wider related activities happening in the area, including the LAG's own cycle tourism project, so it was important that this project linked into these and the focus of this project should be to spend most of the project time on action and implementation. Discussion included whether the group could be more ambitious with organising events such as running, orienteering and triathlons. LAG suggested splitting project into 2 phases with first phase producing document linking with current strategies and second phase focussed on implementing projects, however then decided that if the strategy was now going to be produced in a shorter space of time then it should be kept as one project.

The LAG also discussed whether the project merited 100% intervention rate as they were not keen. However it was noted that the Trust needed support to increase its capacity in order to deliver projects and that if the LAG didn't support the project at 100% there was no other obvious funder to step in, and this would only delay the project whilst things deteriorated further. A big plus was that it was good that the community were taking the initiative on the project and being so involved and determined to change the economic situation for the better.

The LAG voted to approve project on a majority basis with specific conditions:

1. Amending milestones to show greater emphasis and time allowed for implementing projects
2. Amending job description to show greater emphasis on implementing new projects.
3. Project activities to include building relationships with the wider area and economic projects happening in the wider area, with particular reference to the LAG's cycle tourism project

APPROVED WITH  
SPECIFIC  
CONDITIONS

## **5.2 Falls of Leny Visitor Destination Project – Design Study**

### **SMacD and PR left the room - DJ still Chair**

NK presented this project to the members advising that in 2015 The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park was awarded funding to establish the Callander Landscape Partnership with the Falls of Leny Visitor Destination their highest priority and the centrepiece of the Callander Landscape Partnership Scheme.

NK advised that it fits with 5 areas of our Local Development Strategy so appeared to be a good strategic fit for the LAG. She then explained the site for the bridge has already been determined in earlier feasibility work funded by HLF, and a more detailed feasibility contract, including QS costings is due to be complete by the end of February 2018. This application is for development and design stage costs - elements to be covered in contracts include design, technical drawings and QS reviewed bill of quantities of bridge, paths to the bridge, walkway restoration, car park upgrade, and interpretation planning to inform and enable the capital works phase.

On completion of the development phase in 2018, a second application to LEADER will be made for the construction phase, which seeks to reinstate and regenerate the Falls of Leny Visitor Destination with support from Heritage Lottery Fund, Callander Community Development Trust and Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER.

DJ thanked NK and invited members to discuss this application. The LAG liked the sound of the project but were a little concerned about the lack of detail in some areas. They asked if by funding the design stage they would then be obliged to fund the next phase? AMK advised no. They then asked why the design work was being commissioned before they had done their feasibility study as that didn't sound right. The LAG also queried if the bridge and walkway would be accessible and if a road crossing would be installed as it had been a motorbike accident black spot in the past. NK advised bridge would be accessible to all,

although the walkway would not be, and that the applicant had consulted with Stirling Council Roads Department who had told them it wasn't necessary for a road crossing. The LAG asked for clarity on the procurement process and asked why the brief for the work hadn't been provided. NK explained she had asked for the brief but the applicant had not been able to provide it.

It was noted that the LAG were supportive of the project but as the design work wasn't going to be commissioned until after the next LAG meeting anyway, there was time for the design work brief to be produced and the feasibility study to complete which would answer a lot of the LAG's questions before the LAG committed its funding. Clarification of the tender and procurement process was needed.

On the basis of the detail of how the project was going to be delivered being too vague and confusing at this stage, the LAG unanimously voted to defer project until tender document is produced and resubmit to March 2018 LAG meeting.

DEFERRED

**PR returned to the room (SMac stayed outside)**

### **5.3 Drymen Community Business Hub**

**PS returned to the room and took over chairing the meeting**

RS presented this project to the members advising Fraser C Robb's main business is sales, hire and servicing of horticultural and agricultural machinery. They are an established family business, rooted in the community, evidenced by the number of letters of support they have gained.

This project will involve turning unutilised space in part of their premises into a Community Business Hub providing the services shown on screen. It will benefit from the economies of scale by being located within Fraser C Robb both during the build and ongoing operation. The project's fit with LEADER extends to all objectives under our 'Strengthening the Rural Economy' aim. Fraser Robb's premises is right on the A811 just outside Drymen and has a large car park.

The work is set to take place over the quiet winter months to cause least disruption to ongoing business services. Because of this Fraser Robb have already invited a number of people to quote for the different services required by the project.

RS explained that the Business Hub will have its own separate entrance not through either the Fraser Robb showroom or their own offices. It will operate under a separate cost code and once up and running will have a separate staff member plus a newly developed online booking system. Other Fraser Robb office staff will be trained to provide back up and holiday cover when required.

PS thanked RS and invited the members to discuss. The LAG asked why the drawings didn't match up and planning approval doesn't include lift access. RS advised that the applicant was proposing a flexible space in terms of layout and the lift access doesn't require planning permission only a building warrant, which

is being applied for separately. LAG noted that it's located quite a bit out of Drymen and queried wheelchair access. RS advised it has a large car park and a lift is being installed for access reasons. LAG then discussed the layout and asked how confidential would it be for business meetings – the thinking being that separate meeting rooms were important and they needed to see a layout plan. The LAG thought the project was very innovative because of what will happen within it and the uses the local businesses will make of it, and also because of the partnership way of working between the Council, a private business and LEADER and that this could be an example of how other business issues across the rural area might be addressed in the future.

APPROVED WITH  
SPECIFIC  
CONDITIONS

The LAG voted unanimously to approve project with specific conditions:

1. A copy of a layout plan of the business centre is required.
2. Layout to provide suitable meeting space for businesses as required.
3. Evidence of planning permission being provided
4. Evidence of building warrant for lift and other works being provided.

FVL LEADER staff will run the new layout by DJ and JA before final approval given.

**SMacD returned to the room**

#### **5.4 Gartmore Glamping**

**PS left the room – DJ took over as Chair**

RS presented this project to the members advising that in response to the LAG's comments and deferral from the LAG Meeting in March earlier this year, Fiona has now addressed the points made and planning permission approval is now in its final stages. At that time there were questions over optimistic occupancy rates which has now been amended to reasonable levels and more detail has been put into both activity plans, cashflow forecasts for the next few years and a marketing plan. Fiona has also been working closely with STEP to ensure her new business will set off on the right foot.

Previously the applicant had proposed two large cabins and 4 safari tents being the start of this eco-campsite. Having attended the National Glamping show in Coventry earlier this year, they researched further their options including a number of small cabins that would fit onto a wooden platform still allowing for outdoor living space and a rustic feel. They heard bad reviews about the safari tents so are no longer including these in their proposal. They also picked up the idea of outdoor baths, although each unit will also have an indoor shower. The LEADER project is to pay for these 4 small cabins and the equipment associated with each one. The larger cabins will be installed at a later date.

The applicant plans to be the most 'eco' accommodation in the National Park, showcasing their rural business to school groups and working with a charity providing outdoor opportunities for volunteers with additional learning support requirements. She is keen to support other local businesses and provide local employment in the longer term.

The planning application has been submitted and is for change of use, 4 small cabins on decking, 2 large cabins, 2 vehicle accesses, parking areas and an internal footpath network. Stirling Council Roads and Environmental Health have raised no concerns. West of Scotland Archaeology Service have no issues and SEPA have no objections. A final decision is expected by mid-January at the latest.

DJ thanked RS and invited the members to discuss. The LAG noted that the applicant has complied and developed further original application, taking on board the LAG's points and ultimately they were risking a lot of their own money with the venture. The LAG suggested careful marketing will be required as not aiming at the usual glamping market due to the eco aspects. A question was raised over the marketing budget as it seemed high, although RS explained that this was to join a marketing/booking facility to remove that element of the operation from the business at the early stages and also to be able to benefit from wider marketing activity. The utilities and outdoor bath were queried, as this was unusual for a glamping experience. RS advised that SEPA have commented on planning application and each cabin to have a separate septic tank, but a drainage license was still required. It was then noted that this is what makes the project ambitious and innovative.

The LAG agreed by majority to approve project with specific conditions:

1. Evidence of planning permission being provided.
2. Evidence that waste water treatment is SEPA compliant.
3. Project to start on site by 31 March 2017 at latest.

**PS returned to the room**

## **5.5 John Muir Way Business Engagement Project**

**ME & SMacD left the room**

NK presented this project to the members and advised that this was a cooperation project with four other LEADER areas. Tyne Esk is the lead LAG and we are the last LAG to make a decision on this co-operation project.

The John Muir Way crosses the south-west part of the Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER area, passing through the southern fringes of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park and its gateway town at Balloch, the Kilpatrick Hills, Wester Cameron, Croftamie, Gartness, Dumgoyne, Carbeth and Strathblane.

The Local Development Strategy identifies the JMW as a key visitor attraction and opportunity for co-operation/joint working with other LEADER areas – with reference to developing the economic and community potential of the area's strategic landscape assets. The LDS priority sectors of tourism, outdoor recreation, cycling, local food and drink, are all supported by the JMW.

APPROVED WITH  
SPECIFIC  
CONDITIONS

A recent report on the route recommended more marketing and engagement with businesses along the route, so this project will market the JMW to increase use by staying/spending visitors and will support businesses in benefitting from their proximity to the JMW. Increased footfall and spend will create opportunities/demand for additional tourism infrastructure (accommodation, food/drink, retail, bike hire, heritage interpretation, etc), with potential for new jobs, businesses and diversification.

The longest and remotest section of the JMW runs between Balloch and Strathblane (18 miles). Services on this section are limited and there is already potential for development, for example for accommodation around Carbeth to make a shorter day.

PS thanked NK and invited the members to discuss. There was a discussion about the JMW having a possible identity problem as John Muir is associated with wilderness, but the route is more industrial and would therefore need to be marketed differently. However there is scope to develop diversions to the route to take in the Kelpies, Stirling Castle, etc to show more of the area.

The LAG liked the project and the co-operation aspect to it. The fact that project was sharing the cost across all areas meant that it was very low cost for what was expected to be achieved. The LAG were also keen to be part of any consultation events or surveys about improvements and marketing of the route as there was a lot of knowledge about the route sitting around the LAG table.

The LAG agreed to approve project with standard conditions, but asked to be included in any consultation work.

**ME & SMcD returned to the room**

## **5.6 Maid of the Loch**

**JK left the meeting**

RS presented the project to the members. In 2015 Loch Lomond Steam Ship Company received a development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to assist them in putting together a £5.5 million pound project to restore the Maid of the Loch to a year-round sailing visitor attraction as well redeveloping Balloch Pier.

The HLF grant would be for £3.8 million leaving LLSC to raise the further £1.7 million before September 2018. So far over half a million pounds has been raised towards this total and a Capital Appeals Manager has been appointed to undertake this aspect of the HLF requirement. Maid of the Loch have also just completed a crowd funding campaign to raise funds which raised just under £83,000 of the £125,000 needed towards buying and installing a new boiler.

RS explained the timeline of the project as it was a bit confusing. The first part of the application to LEADER is to help LLSC 'cross the finish line' to get their completed HLF bid in by June 2018. It additionally covers other jobs and project support until the main HLF capital project begins which is planned for September

APPROVED WITH  
STANDARD  
CONDITIONS

2019. The HLF Stage 2 bid has to be in by June 2018 and the capital match funding must have been raised by September 2018 when the committee meet. If successful LLSC predict the 'permission to start' will take 5 months (based on past experience), which take them up to January 2019. LLSC have planned in a period from January to July 2019 for advertising and issuing tenders, gaining planning permission and appointing contractors before the official HLF start date. The LEADER application covers technical jobs and project management during this interim period, before the capital project begins. The Digital & Social Media Officer is for a longer period because it is not included in the HLF project as it was not thought of in 2014. All jobs are self-employed contracts for various lengths of time.

RS explained the noted discrepancy with the cashflow came from costs such as fitting out an office, that were in earlier drafts of the application but were advised to take this aspect out but it seems to have stuck in the cashflow.

Going through the comments from scores most people thought that the overall Maid of the Loch project would have a big economic impact. Some felt the impact of this segment that the applicants are coming to LEADER for is not innovative and fairly limited but others thought the part LEADER was funding was important to lever in the bigger HLF money and in getting a more experienced team behind the Maid of the Loch, although there were questions about the method of recruitment of a range of consultant posts and the transparency of funding a series of short term posts.

PS thanked RS and invited the members for comments. LAG members discussed what would happen if the HLF application in June 2018 was unsuccessful as the LAG didn't want to commit funds for beyond that period if it wasn't successful as it was noted that project could still be rejected for HLF funding. RS confirmed the HLF funding is a risk but advised Scottish Enterprise would match what LEADER pay. LAG queried if consultants being engaged or employed. AMK noted contracting briefs have been written as job descriptions.

Overall, LAG agreed that it is an exciting project and should be approved with specific conditions:

- Project costs approved up until September 2018 (or HLF decision, whichever is the sooner) with the costs beyond this stage only approved if HLF stage 2 application is successful and if there are funds left in the LEADER pot.

PROJECT  
APPROVED WITH  
SPECIFIC  
CONDITION

## **6. Feedback from Subgroups/Working Groups**

### **6.1 Strategic Activity Subgroup**

AMK advised that she had received positive responses from LAG members to her email in November which outlined the proposal from the Strategic Activity Group on the fairest and best way to deal with delayed projects now that we are getting so many new projects coming in, given that the LAG will soon run out of funds The group had recommended that all projects whose expected start date was

before 1 May 2017 but haven't yet started be advised that if they have not met their grant conditions and started their projects by 15 February 2018, then the LAG will decommit from those projects. These projects will then be invited to re-apply to the following (March) LAG meeting where they can be considered alongside the new projects coming in. AMK had received positive support for this motion by email but wanted to check that everyone was in agreement. This was agreed unanimously.

PROPOSED  
PROCEDURE  
CONFIRMED

### **6.2 Local Food and Drink Steering Group**

LH feedback on a very constructive Local Food and Drink Subgroup meeting THE previous week. There had been some really valuable discussion over the focus and structure of the strategy with agreement reached that the strategy needed to focus on supporting food businesses and the economic development potential of the local food sector. Ashley was busy reworking the themes to capture this more tightly.

### **6.3 Chairs meeting**

PS noted that their meeting took place a few weeks ago where the recruitment process for the Cycle Tourism and Broadband Officer had been discussed and the jobs were just waiting to be advertised. They had also discussed ensuring the LAG was in the best position to access any further funds which could be channelled through to the FVL area, although they are awaiting further advice from the Scottish Government before much can be done. The LAG had also been approached to take on an intern from Sweden for 3 months – a student of public administration who would like some work experience at no cost to the LAG. The Chairs had agreed to accept this request, as they could help with some of the LAG led projects. The intern was due to start February time.

### **6.4 Accountable Bodies meeting**

SMacD reported that unfortunately he had been unable to attend the last meeting by Kyle Barrie had attended in his place and taken some notes, although his impression was that it hadn't been a good meeting with a lot of disagreement with the Scottish Government over some of the monitoring and appeals process being proposed. The next meeting is in February which he would endeavour to attend in person.

## **7. Project Allocations and Projects Requiring LAG Attention**

AMK reported that Community pot is running out of funds and it looks like we won't have enough money for all the projects who have said they are coming in to the March meeting. However once the main pot of funding is allocated it will free up staff time to focus on our cooperation, farm diversification and rural enterprise activity.

AMK displayed the Project Allocations Update on screen showing that the total allocations so far is £904,418 which is 43% of the total amount (prior to today's meeting).

<p>AMK advised the Members that up until today's meeting £704,278 had been approved for community projects (58% of the community pot), with £106,101 being approved for rural enterprise projects (38% of the rural enterprise pot), £87,475 approved from farm diversification projects (32% of the farm diversification pot) and only 2% of the co-operation pot being allocated to Co-operation projects.</p> <p>AMK wanted to share the good news that the first project that the LAG had approved, but subsequently was massively delayed because of the lease issue, had now completed and showed a photo of the Balmaha's new pontoon now in place.</p> <p>AMK reported that there were 3 projects who have been delayed and haven't yet started:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AMK spoke with Japanese Garden project this morning. They have verbally been told that planning has been approved, just waiting on official confirmation.</li> <li>- Dounans Centre have submitted a change request and hope to start in January 2018 as they need to do their work over their quiet season.</li> <li>- Brenachoile Pier project is very much delayed as the applicant has been very preoccupied with their other LEADER project, the Ecopods at Loch Katrine, so this second project won't start until October 2018, so a candidate for resubmitting to the March LAG to be assessed alongside the new projects coming in.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>8. AOCB</b></p> <p>PS advised that regretfully he will be stepping down as Chair and from the LAG due to pressure of work. He thanked everyone for their support and contributions in his time as Chair and said was very proud of the very big difference LEADER had made to the area and wished the LAG well as it continues to improve lives in the rural area with the projects it supports.</p> <p>The members thanked PS for his Chairmanship from the start of the programme and for guiding them to where they were now. Thank you from everyone!</p>	<p>ALL: THANK YOU TO PETER</p>
<p><b>9. Date of next Meeting and AGM</b></p> <p>The next meeting will also be our AGM and will be held on Wednesday, 21 March 2018 at 10am – venue to be confirmed.</p>	