

FORTH VALLEY & LOMOND LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUP MEETING

2 DECEMBER 2015

CARRROCHAN, LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK HEADQUARTERS

MINUTES

Present:

<i>Peter Sunderland</i>	<i>Business and Community, Stirlingshire</i>
<i>Douglas Johnston</i>	<i>Community, Stirlingshire</i>
<i>Lynn Hamilton</i>	<i>VisitScotland</i>
<i>Janet Beveridge</i>	<i>Land Management, West Dunbartonshire</i>
<i>Mike Ewart</i>	<i>Land Management, Central Scotland Green Network Trust</i>
<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>Carolyn McGill</i>	<i>Clackmannanshire Council</i>
<i>Jo Wright</i>	<i>Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority</i>
<i>Stuart Oliver</i>	<i>Stirling Council</i>
<i>Mike Strachan</i>	<i>Forestry Commission Scotland</i>
<i>Gillian Ferguson</i>	<i>Historic Scotland</i>

Apologies:

<i>Frank Beattie</i>	<i>Scottish Enterprise</i>
<i>Jason Clark</i>	<i>Business, Stirling Enterprise Park</i>
<i>Brian McColgan</i>	<i>West Dunbartonshire Council</i>
<i>Ian Mathieson</i>	<i>Community, Clackmannanshire</i>
<i>Tony Teasdale</i>	<i>Community, Rural Stirling Housing Association</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>

ITEM		ACTIONS
1	<p><u>Welcome and Sederunt</u></p> <p><i>PS welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked the Members to introduce the person sitting on their right as a 'getting to know you' exercise.</i></p> <p><i>PS then informed members that FVL is ahead of many other LEADER areas with the preparations for the new Programme which is due mainly to the work carried out by the LAG sub-groups and thanked everyone concerned for their input.</i></p> <p><i>PS advised members that following the recent budget announcement, Scot Govt had intimated that the amount of available funds may reduce but does not know the figures as yet. He will keep the LAG informed of any further information.</i></p> <p><i>Apologies were noted from FB, JC, ME and TT.</i></p>	
2	<p><u>Minutes of Last Meeting</u></p> <p><i>PS thanked LH for chairing the last meeting and took members through the Minutes page by page for accuracy.</i></p> <p><i>PS went through the Action Points of the last meeting. The Action Point on Page 3 with reference to "Update from Scottish Government & Stirling Council", and confirmed the FVL LEADER office premises lease is now in the name of the Local Action Group's name rather than the Council's which allows the LAG to benefit from the business rates exemption which amounted to £10K over the life of the Programme.</i></p> <p><i>AMK also advised the Service Level Agreement was signed by Stirling Council on 1st December which means that expenditure on the Programme can now start.</i></p> <p><i>The Minutes were proposed by IC and seconded by JW.</i></p>	
3	<p><u>Update from Scottish Government and Stirling Council - LEADER Timescales and Opening of Programme</u></p> <p><i>AMK informed the members that there have been two Co-ordinator's meetings since the last LAG meeting and Scottish Government have promised that the Application Form and the Application Form Guidance will be with us by the end of this week. Although not yet seen, AMK understood that there has been significant changes from the draft that was previously received. The Guidance for LAGs will be sent out to LAGs in January, according to Alistair Prior.</i></p> <p><i>AMK also advised that with the SLA now being signed, this means that the website can now be commissioned and any other items of expenditure can now be paid as we were prevented from spending money on anything other than running costs until the SLA was signed.</i></p> <p><i>AMK also advised that Expressions of Interest had now been forwarded by Scottish Rural Network to the LEADER Team.</i></p>	

<p>4</p>	<p>AMK advised that EOIs would soon be followed up by the Development Officers which would involve meeting with applicants arranged prior to the issuing of the Application Forms to avoid any ineligible projects wasting their time completing forms unnecessarily.</p> <p>DJ asked if there was going to be a template for the Business Plan. AMK advised that there will be a project plan template which she understood was based on the Business Gateway template, but not exactly the same.</p> <p>AMK informed members that Gillian McDonald has taken over Alistair Prior's position at Scot Govt as the Manager of the overall LEADER Scheme within SRDP. The coordinators met Gillian for the first time at the Coordinator's Meeting in November.</p> <p><u>Proposed Early Stage Strategic Priorities (led by Strategic Projects Sub-Group)</u></p> <p>LH feedback on behalf of the sub-group and advised that they had been asked to identify four or five project themes or types to become priorities for the Programme in its initial phase - to focus attention and resources and to get things going. The sub-group wished to give options to the members for consideration. The sub-group's initial suggestions are Food and Drink projects, Sustainable Tourism projects, Environmental Landscapes projects, Community Empowerment projects and Creative Industries projects. These themes would not be for the whole of the Programme but initial priorities to give the Programme a kick-start. They would be cross-cutting for all types of applicants.</p> <p>It was suggested that Sustainable Tourism might include outdoor activities skills development, social enterprise and low carbon projects if there was a tourism aspect to them. Community Empowerment might include asset transfer and broadband projects. Creative Industries - there might not yet be many projects, but it gives the message that the LAG wants to see more.</p> <p>PS thanked the sub-group and asked members as the LAG if they agreed with the proposed priorities as the LAG needs a clear message at the Launch of what sort of projects, themes and actions it is initially wanting to prioritise.</p> <p>MS highlighted that LEADER cannot consider any primary food and drink production or processing, however retailing and marketing is acceptable.</p> <p>AMK confirmed that across Scotland, LEADER teams will be expected to signpost to other SRDP funds and funders available as the message must be clear that LEADER will only fund activities not eligible for other SRDP funds. LH added that other funders would also need to be checked, although might come in as match funders, depending on the project. The priorities were approved.</p> <p>AMK displayed on screen a list of the Expressions of Interest that had been received on signing the SLA - 7 community EOIs and 4 business EOIs had been received.</p>	<p>LAG: Agreed Priorities</p>
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5	<p><i>AMK advised that the information on EOI was limited and further communication with the applicants by the Development Officers would be carried out to secure more information as to whether they fitted with FVL LEADER's aims.</i></p> <p><i>MS asked if the EOIs could be circulated to the members in order for them to see what type of projects have come forth. AMK replied that She could already see that some of the EOIs received were not eligible and would prefer to get some more information before circulating to the LAG, but it was good to be seeing interest from those businesses given that there had been no promotion activity to date. JW said she would prefer to see a list after there had been some analysis or the Development Officers had spoken to applicants. This was agreed although AMK said to email her if anyone did want to see the EOIs.</i></p> <p><i>JA suggested having a link on the FVL website to the 100 LEADER Projects publication in order to show potential applicants the types of projects that were funded in the last Programme and also to show potential applicants how many other funders there are. There could also be a paragraph on the homepage listing the activities not eligible for funding which are the most common ones which can be ruled out early on. This was agreed and will be implemented as soon as the new website is up and running.</i></p> <p><u>FVL LEADER Launch (led by Communications Sub-Group)</u></p> <p><i>NR advised that having previously agreed that Callander was the most central and accessible location, the Communications Sub-Group had selected Callander Youth Project as the best venue. This has now been booked for Friday 29th January from 3pm - 6pm. Bruce Crawford MSP has been invited to be the main speaker along with the Chair, LAG members and previous LEADER applicants.</i></p> <p><i>Members discussed the launch and highlighted that it would be sharing a popular date for Burns Suppers but even if it was brought forward one week, again this was popular for Burns Suppers. It was agreed to go ahead with 29th January.</i></p> <p><i>NR suggested the running order of the Launch with CB acting as MC and PS speaking as Chair introducing the LAG, and also talking about the aims and vision of the LAG.</i></p> <p><i>NR said that Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary had also been invited but he had not yet responded. Bruce Crawford MSP would formally launch the Programme and he has confirmed his attendance.</i></p> <p><i>Jason Glass from Camphill Blairdrummond has confirmed his attendance and will speak about Camphill's projects supported by FVL in the last Programme along with Frank Park for the Callander Hydro Project. Chris Martin from CYP has also agreed to speak about the Bridge End Hostel Project.</i></p> <p><i>PS suggested holding a mock interview by JW and AMK, where JW would ask questions and AMK would give the answers with a small window of opportunity for attendees asking AMK some questions too. This was agreed by all as a good idea.</i></p>	<p>Action: LAG/AMK</p> <p>Action: NR / LEADER Team</p> <p>Action: JW/AMK</p>
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8	<p><i>The sub-group had also been asked to recommend how frequently the LAG should meet and the suggestion was to continue with the quarterly meetings with the first being brought forward to February, if possible with the aim of this being the first assessment meeting even if only for one project so the Programme can start getting money out the door.</i></p> <p><i>There was a brief discussion around the table and the members agreed that quarterly meetings should continue together with the application deadline of six weeks and this information should be shared at the Launch. Sub-group meetings would continue in between.</i></p> <p><i>The LAG agreed to aim for a LAG meeting at the end of February. IW flagged up that she would be on leave at the end of February and LH said to avoid half-term. AMK said a Doodle Poll would be sent round to avoid these dates.</i></p> <p><i>AMK asked the LAG if they had any preference to what day the meetings should be on and at what time of day - am or pm. The members discussed this and opted for the last Wednesday of the month with a morning meeting (start time 10am) but with a certain amount of flexibility with this.</i></p> <p><i>The format of the LAG meetings were also discussed and it was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chairs would convene to discuss this and get back to Members.</i></p> <p><i>The order of the agenda was then changed to allow CB and JB to introduce the Local Area Update for Balloch and West Dunbartonshire.</i></p> <p><u>Local Area Update - Balloch and West Dunbartonshire</u></p> <p><i>CB started by highlighting Balloch Castle as a potential project in the Programme. It is owned by Glasgow City Council and leased to West Dunbartonshire Council however it is closed to the public, needing extensive remedial work carried out. Also mentioned the Balloch is in danger due to the loch flooding and erosion of land.</i></p> <p><i>Going on to broadband, CB advised that both mobile and community broadband was patchy with some areas being told that their area was ineligible for work being carried out to improve broadband. CB advised that small businesses are suffering as they cannot get on line with speeds other than extremely slow. PS advised that Gartmore area is due to get a wireless solution very soon, and wondered if this could be a solution in West Dunbartonshire too, given that improvements in the area are desperately needed.</i></p> <p><i>It was agreed to discuss broadband at a future meeting. AMK displayed on screen a list of projects from these areas funded in the last Programme - 10 groups from West Dunbartonshire, 4 groups from the National Park Authority and 4 groups from National Park Community Partnership.</i></p> <p>CB, JB and GF left the meeting.</p>	Action: IW
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Strategic Projects - LAG led project activity & strategic assets map:

An update paper had previously been circulated, and it was noted that most of the projects identified were reliant on other people or organisations to do some work first, although were still important strategic areas of activity.

The points of strategic activity were displayed on screen for the members to discuss.

PS updated the LAG on the recent meeting he and AMK had had with Argyll LEADER and the LLTNP where it was discussed that with the reduced budgets, the NP development officer would not currently be pursued with the focus remaining on the stimulation of cooperation projects. On the basis that neither the LLTTNPA nor Argyll LAG wanted to proceed with the NP Officer at this point in time, PS recommended that FVL LAG should also drop this as a strategic action. This was agreed.

Farm Diversification and Rural Enterprise - proposed detail of schemes

The proposed detail on this Scheme had previously been circulated.

AMK displayed on screen the Sub-Group's recommendations which included ring-fencing £50K for feasibility studies with the remainder for project implementation, which would be capped at £25K per project.

It was suggested that the LAG could procure the consultants for feasibility studies in order to alleviate the applicant the pain of it. The LAG would have a pool of consultants for applicants to use. The members agreed that this could work in theory. Applicants would be able to choose to use pool consultants or go through the process of getting three quotes themselves. The LAG would insist on paying/recommending the lowest tender costs.

The Members discussed this and approved that 70% intervention rate on Feasibility Studies would be acceptable to a value of £2,500 cost in total, subject to State Aid rules.

The question whether or not a feasibility study was obligatory was raised. The LAG decided that this would not be obligatory and that £25K per project at 50% intervention rate was agreed. The LAG also agreed that no staff costs would be permitted however the LAG are willing to fund costs of a development member of staff.

LH pointed out that the message of no electric/gas/maintenance etc will be accepted by LEADER should be stressed to enquirers.

Strategic Assets Mapping

NR displayed maps on screen informing the members that there have been two meetings so far about Strategic Access Routes.

IC and BC bounced ideas back and forth about strategic mapping.

<p>7</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p>	<p><i>IC confirmed that SNH has all the relevant information for the area apart from perhaps north of Callander and has concerns of how much information can be useful. IC also confirmed that the local authorities should hold most of this information too. BC reported that at the last Cycle Stirling meeting, NR was invited to discuss LEADER and explained the mapping exercise. The group expressed an interest in contributing to the map if that was appropriate. David Hopper, Stirling Council, felt a map would be very useful.</i></p> <p><i>After some discussion, the members agreed that this should be put on the Agenda for the next meeting in February where the LAG can decide on where to concentrate the LAGs focus on and what the LAG wants from this map.</i></p> <p><u>Finance Update</u></p> <p><i>AMK distributed the revised proposed programme cost for the duration of the Programme and asked members for any comments. There were none.</i></p> <p><u>DJ left the meeting</u></p> <p><u>ACOB</u></p> <p><i>PS announced to the members that Sue was leaving FVL LEADER on to pastures new and although not here today, wanted it noted the members thanks to her for her work as Development Officer over the last seven years. PS spoke on behalf of the members and wished Sue well for her future.</i></p> <p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p><i>A date for the next LAG meeting will be in February/early March. A Doodle Poll will be sent to members with options/choices of dates and a venue will also be arranged.</i></p> <p><i>PS wished the members and staff a very good Christmas and New Year when it came.</i></p>	<p>Action: NR/Sub-Group</p>
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