

FORTH VALLEY & LOMOND LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUP MEETING

Via Zoom

10 June 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
Jim Livingstone	Clackmannanshire Council - Agency
Simon Orr	Community and Business, STEP
Mike Ewart	Community, Central Scotland Green Network Trust
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:

Brian McColgan	West Dunbartonshire Council - Agency
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In Attendance:

Anne-Michelle Ketteridge	LEADER Programme Manager
Carolyn McGill	LEADER Development Officer
Nikki Kenn	LEADER Development Officer
Shaun Marley	LEADER Community Broadband Officer
Jason Clark	LEADER Cycle Tourism 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 our first LAG meeting held via Zoom and requested a round of introductions. AMK ran through some procedures for those new to Zoom.</p> <p>AMK noted apologies received from BMcC.</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 4 March 2020. No comments received the minute was proposed by LH and seconded by SW.</p> <p>AMK noted increase to grant request and approvals which will be discussed later in the meeting.</p>	

3. COVID-19 and LEADER

AMK advised LEADER staff have been working from home and supporting projects in all ways possible to help projects work through some stressful project problems which have been triggered or exacerbated by Covid-19 lockdown. Our priority has been to help projects submit claims and pay their claims as quickly as we can to ease projects' cashflow.

LEADER staff have helped with Stirling Council's coordination of community response in the rural wards covered by LEADER. We have been providing risk assessment information to Scottish Government to help them plan for any Covid-19 response or creative uses of underspends. We have been supporting the national LEADER staff group – with Shaun's Smart Digital Villages project convening the first 2 Scotland wide LEADER meetings online – we've never had such good attendance.

The impact for projects:

1. Primarily cashflow. This has been particularly acute for our business applicants, the farm based ones have not been eligible for the business grants.
2. Our events based projects have had to cancel, postpone or reshape the delivery (workshops have moved to being online events)
3. Our cooperation projects have been particularly hit as learning visits abroad cannot happen during lockdown, and even after we come out of lockdown there is scepticism that we would be able to recruit people to go.
4. Our two large capital projects have gone on hold – neither had started – both are optimistic that they can start quickly after lockdown. More generally we are being told that the building industry is warning of supply issues and increased prices

SMacD updated on the Stirling Council Covid19 support to businesses where they had got all partners working together to provide an advice service for grants which has been inundated with calls and emails. He thanked the LEADER team for their support with the community response work.

4. Update from Scottish Government

AMK advised that SG have extended the period by which projects can theoretically claim from LEADER by 3 months so it's now until 31 March 2021. Unfortunately the LAG/AB has to then submit claims to Scottish Government by the same date, so realistically projects have until the end of December 2020 with a few exceptions.

AMK noted Scottish Government is interested in LEADER projects who can support Covid recovery but has not yet committed funds to do this. They are also considering whether LAGs can use underspends to extend projects.

SMacD attended AB meeting held on 9 June, and flagged up a possible programme extension to 31 December 2021 which was currently being looked at. LAG member queried discussions on transitional agreement arrangement for LEADER? SMacD advised there was some discussion at the end of the meeting but nothing to update on. LAG member queried risk assessment on clawback if projects don't complete?

SMacD advised each area has done their own risk register and Scottish Government are in process of compiling an overall risk register at the moment.

DJ advised he raised these points at the Chairs meeting on 26 May, there was due to be a separate joint meeting of Scottish Government, ABs, Chairs and staff representatives to go through what was needed to help ensure there was a successor programme – including a transition period to December 2021 which allows us to participate in the projects which are currently being delayed in Europe. Meeting scheduled to take place on 16th June.

5. LEADER Projects

AMK noted she circulated the same project update before the meeting – see below.



Programme Update

Main Programme	£1,257,163
Co-operation Projects	£339,170
Farm Diversification/Rural Enterprise	£556,613
Total	£2,152,946
Revised FVL Allocation	£2,881,740
Available to Spend on Projects (75%)	£2,161,305
Amount Currently Uncommitted	£8,359

AMK noted main programme figure has increased due to securing additional funding, co-operation and farm diversification/rural enterprise remain the same. At the previous LAG meeting in March £12,322 was uncommitted but due to some projects declaring underspends and other projects requiring more funding the uncommitted figure is now £8,359 – this figure will continue to be a moving feast.

5.1 Risk Register

AMK advised that risk register was emailed to everyone before the meeting and wanted to flag as having some issues.

Achray Farm Ice Cream – hit by COVID-19 and struggling to get Environmental Health sign off so weren't trading when lockdown hit. Farm not eligible for business rates grant and no income from self-catering accommodation so business has been hit particularly hard.

Most businesses with a tourism element have been hit which sadly includes most of our rural enterprise and farm diversification projects. Two farm diversification projects (Old Manse Farm Glamping and Gartness Glamping) are still waiting on planning permission being granted. So even with an extension to December 2020 it's still quite risky.

AMK noted some of our strategic and co-operation projects had overseas visits planned, these will be discussed later in the meeting.

To end on a more positive note AMK acknowledged a few projects doing some really amazing work during COVID-19. The Food and Drink Business Network which has been supporting businesses and the Regional Food Assemblies project have been successful in setting up two new markets, one in Killin and another in Fife. Also generating a lot of interest from all over Scotland.

5.2 Projects requesting changes



Projects Requesting More £ since Dec 2019

Applicant	Project	Amount Requested	Original Amount Approved	% of Original Amount	Approved Yes/No
Bannockburn House Trust	Bannockburn House	£ 4,409	£ 153,000	2.88	Yes
FVL LAG	Foraging Fortnight	£ 1,658	£ 31,720	5.23	Yes
FVL LAG	Wildwonders	TBC	£ 67,082		
Killin & Ardeonaig Trust	More than a Post Office	£ 1,594	£ 35,509	4.49	
SOEC	Dounans Conference Centre	?	£ 25,000		
FVL LAG	Legacy Project	£ 550	£ 17,165	3.20	Yes
Strathard Development Trust	Strathard Business Development Project	?	£ 54,881		
Our Little Outdoor Classroom	Our Little Outdoor Classroom	£ 49	£ 23,408	0.21	

AMK noted not many projects coming forward who meet the criteria.

Bannockburn House - asked to extend project and additional funds as insurance costs escalated.

Foraging Fortnight - extra PR costs due to rescheduling.

Wild Wonders – still waiting on details.

More than a Post Office – extended until December 2020 plus additional staffing costs.

Dounans Conference Centre – additional money for upgrading a toilet block. This revealed there had been a change of building layout which we were unaware of, as there was supposed to be toilets within the layout. Currently awaiting confirmation of reinstating the toilets within the conference centre and not requiring delegates to have to go outside.

LEADER Legacy – awarded by LAG at previous meeting for music for video.

Strathard Business Development – additional money for new website.

Our Little Outdoor Classroom – benefitted from COVID-19 as it's given them time to reconcile as they overspent on safety requirements and equipment. Still waiting on formal request for additional £49.

LAG member raised concerns at the Dounans project as it goes against the original application which was to extend length of time it could be used, ie over winter as well. Other LAG members agreed and raised concerns and queried why we would give more money? AMK advised they are looking for additional money for furniture but as that's an additional activity it doesn't meet the criteria. She added that as we've already paid 2/3 of the grant we may need to take money back.

LAG member queried if business objectives had changed? AMK thought yes, compounded by COVID-19 as no business for a while. Another LAG member queried if they required business support? AMK to put them in touch with Business Gateway.

<p>6. LAG Strategic Projects – Achievements and Dilemmas</p>	
<p>6.1 Cycle Tourism & Sustrans Promoting Cycle Tourism</p> <p>JC advised the COVID-19 has impacted lots of things but still managing to move forward with some things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #worthwaitingfor has been rolled out on social media and feedback has been positive • Learning journey to Eurobike in Germany with up to 10 businesses is no longer going to happen so planning to hold a series of 5 webinars focussing on domestic market. • Gravelfoyle Memo of Understanding has now been signed by all partners and regular zoom meetings are being held. Route signage and marketing has been procured and should be ready by end of August. FTC Events have been appointed for marketing. • Ebiking launch was due to take place in April with map/leaflet already published just waiting to be distributed. Ebike fast chargers need to be delivered to cafes and businesses. In discussions with a company called Roots in Doune who plan to develop a community ebike rental scheme. • VisitScotland/Sustrans website content is ready just waiting on a suitable time to launch. Now looking at developing content for a new route – Round the Forth working with LAG member Bridget Clark. <p>LAG member felt it was a great opportunity in terms of domestic market but noted the need to be sensitive to communities fears due to tension between businesses bringing extra people into communities in the current situation. Another LAG member noted that it also should be tie into National Park timelines. JC agreed.</p>	
<p>6.2 Local Food and Drink and Business Network</p> <p>CMcG advised AR’s post finished at the end of March with much of the Food and Drink project concluded. One aspect still to complete was the formation of the Food and Drink Business Network, with the businesses initially meeting whilst AR was in post and have continued to have meetings organised by CMcG – more recently in an online way. AR had secured £5k of funding from Connect Local to cover the cost of networking meetings and gatherings to help consolidate the emerging network. These had to be cancelled due to lockdown but businesses were keen to continue the work taking part in regular online meetings, and Connect Local allowed the funding to be used to pay one day a week of CMcG time to support the establishment of the network. First action has been the design of a logo and commissioning a ‘Showcase’ Food and Drink website for the area which is currently in progress.</p> <p>The remainder of the funding in the LEADER project is being used for PR costs – currently 2 days a month for the network and some additional PR costs for the October FV Food and Drink Festival which we hope will still be able to go ahead.</p> <p>CMcG noted that she had been working closely with Scotland Food and Drink who will launch at the end of June a Co-ordinator support scheme. Offering grants of £10 -15K funding to be matched by Local Authority, to fund a co-ordinator within</p>	

regional food groups across Scotland for 1 year. LAG member felt this was very positive and noted Stirling Council are keen to support the sector.

6.3 Wild Wonders and Foraging Fortnight

NK hopes Scottish Government will give an extension until December 2021 which would allow for 2020 events and learning visits to be rescheduled to 2021, like our European partners. Due to seasonality of foraging it's not possible to just move to another time of year. The implication for LEADER is that most of the festival planning was complete (so contractor fee mostly used) and as of end of May the full PR contract is completed.

1. NK advised the new Wild Wonders website which is now live and near fully functioning.
2. If govt guidance allows, **travel to Latvia later this year for a learning exchange** to visit relevant wild food/product businesses and meet with their festival team for briefing.
3. **take a few targeted people and a videographer/film maker** to produce material that we can share with the wider audience on return. (similar to Swedish Tourism trip to Scotland)

Remaining festival budget (minus contractors time):

EITHER use to strengthen the festival legacy for the team taking it forward post LEADER?

1. build website further to suit their vision
2. run handover sessions and materials/contacts
3. continue some PR budget to support next year's festival, fund some further market research etc?
4. possibly purchase festival materials – eg signage, shelters etc

NK noted Foraging Fortnight project is in a similar position with planning mostly complete and contractors already completed the bulk of the work. Although the toolkits are now well underway

NK noted any changes to project are on hold until we receive confirmation from Scottish Government, she ran through a series of plan B options.

- mainland areas **not keen to do virtual festival as expect online festival/workshop fatigue** AND the Orkney FF programme available to all anyway.
- Visiting speaker budget could adapt to cover **video footage of a selection of chosen 'speakers'** which could then be used online OR if guidance allows, at small scale live screenings during 2021 FF?
- **Rethink what we can deliver**, in particular in FVL, Fife and Moray as we all have local budget to use
- **FVL budget** – something to support food and drink businesses using wild ingredients? SNH was going to run a masterclass pre May FF to help with this – something to build knowledge and confidence

6.4 Community Broadband and Smart Villages

SM advised Lochend and Dykehead (near Port of Menteith) project has come online since the last LAG meeting, which connections 70 premises. Stronachlacher and Inversnaid project was on hold due to lockdown but has recently started up again along with projects at Crianlarich, Kilmahog and Keir Estate/Blair Drummond.

SM noted that over 1,000 people have benefitted from our broadband project in lockdown not just for streaming TV but working from home and home schooling that would have previously had a very poor service or no service at all.

Looking at 6 communities to develop and pilot Smart Village initiatives. Gartness IOT Tourism demo is now online with footfall counters, river level sensor and weather station. This data will shortly be available on a platform which anyone can access.

SM advised that he was due to travel to Greece next week for a transnational study visit which was cancelled due to Covid-19 lockdown. Visit has been rescheduled to end of October 2020 (if restrictions are lifted) along with a trip to Latvia in February 2021. Planning a virtual conference to be hosted by Finland with guested speakers from all partners in September 2020.

LAG member queried number of footfall counters along the West Highland Way and John Muir Way. SM advised it's just at Gartness, as it's not been rolled out any further. AMK asked LAG members to get in touch if they hear of any other examples of technology being used in innovative ways. LAG member advised Community Partnership are offering a micro grant scheme for digital inclusivity – see the website for more details.

6.5 Crowdfund Coaches

AMK advised in the Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER area 54 projects have been supported, with 16 projects having raised funds totalling £84,000.

The wider project covers 9 LEADER areas and until March we were the top but Perth and Kinross have run a campaign, Masks for All which has raised an impressive £228,000.

AMK advised Maid of the Loch have launched a crowdfunding campaign and asked the LAG to share. She noted Loch Katrine are developing their own campaign but not launching just now due to similarities with Maid of the Loch.

Crowdfunding project comes to an end in September 2020 and we would like to extend but this is dependent on permission from Scottish Government.

6.6 Legacy Project

AMK advised legacy videos are ready but will wait until after lockdown to publish them. She felt it would be more valuable, since we have the extension from Scottish Government, to have a space between and of lockdown and having the workshops otherwise people will only think of life in lockdown. The LAG agreed.

<p>AMK to share the video along with the soundbites to the LAG.</p> <p>The contract for the case study brochure has still to be let.</p>	
<p>7. AOCB</p> <p>AMK queried the Zoom experience for a LAG meeting. LAG members agreed it's worked ok but that it's not as good as face to face for discussion.</p> <p>It was commented that a lot of people, including LAG members, have been benefiting from the Weigh Ahead project during lockdown, which has been a success during Covid-19. AMK noted she was impressed they have adapted well as they weren't originally going to sell fresh produce.</p> <p>Others commented on the benefit of foraging during lockdown!</p>	
<p>8. Date of next Meeting</p> <p>Date of next meeting will be in August via Zoom.</p>	