**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014-2020 PROGRAMME**

**MINUTES OF LAG MEETING HELD ON 28th OCTOBER 2015**

**VENUE – ARCHIVE CENTRE**

**PRESENT:**

**Voting**

Jon Hollingdale (JH) CWA Private

Frances Gunn (FG) Third Sector Interface Private

Alistair Swanson (AS) NFU Private

Sharon MacKay (SM) – Visit Inverness Loch Ness Private

(deputising for Graeme Ambrose)

Robert Muir (RM) HIE Public

**Advisors**

Catherine Bateson (CB) High Life Highland

Andy McCann (AM) HC

Nicole Wallace (NW) HC

Sarah Lamb (SL) EMFF

Fiona Cameron (FC) LEADER

Wendy Anderson (WA) LEADER

Liz Whiteford (LW) LEADER

Martin Culbertson (MC) LEADER

Fiona Daschofsky (FD) LEADER

Judith Wainwright (JW) LEADER

Paula Betts (PB) LEADER

Joe MacMillan (JM) LEADER

1. **WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

JH chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone. JH confirmed with WA that the meeting was quorate (4 x private & 1 x public).

Apologies were received from Cathy Steer, Mhairi Wylie, David Richardson, Yvonne White, Graeme Ambrose & David Alston.

1. **MINUTES & ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Amendments to the last minutes:-

The last meeting was held on the 26th August and not the 28th as on the draft minutes. Apologies from Graeme Ambrose to be added to the last minutes.

Minutes agreed by FG and seconded by WA.

All actions from previous meeting have been actioned.

1. **UPDATE FROM CO-ORDINATORS MEETING & RDOC**

**Co-ordinators meeting**:-

FC & WA attended the co-ordinators meeting in Orkney on the 17th/18th September 2015.

* Guidance Programme – finalised in the next week or so
* LARCS – system to be launched live on 18th April 2016
* LARCS phase 3 & 4 (reporting/monitoring/inspections) is scheduled to be available Summer 2016
* FC was re-assured by the update given by each of the LAG Areas -

number of LAGs at the same stage as Highland with some areas still to form a LAG

* Next meeting to be held in Aviemore on the 25th November 2015

**Rural Development Operational Committee (RDOC):-**

* UK Government spending review due on the 25/11
* Anticipated reduction in grant for devolved services – Health Services monies protected
* Substantial reduction in SRDP budget - £100m or more being talked about
* Modified SRDP plan to be submitted to EU by end of calendar year
* SG might seek to dilute LEADER further by reallocating operations from other SRDP strands with no budget to deliver them

The meeting was advised that the LAP indicative budgets could be changed with actual figures known by the end of the year. DO’s to remind LAPs that previous allocations were indicative and could still change.

The meeting agreed that JH should work with as many LAGs and accountable bodies as possible in making a strong and co-ordinated case for the protection of the LEADER budget. Action JH & FC

1. **SLA UPDATE**

There is still one outstanding issue with the SLA and Internal Audit has advised not to sign until issue is resolved. This has been passed to COSLA for resolution. This delay has a negligible impact on the Programme at this stage.

1. **REGISTER OF INTEREST**

* alternative form much more user friendly
* no response yet from SG if it complies with audit requirements
* voting members or nominated substitutes only to complete
* LAP members will be required to complete as well
* staff conflict of interest to be identified at the meeting
* Councils code of conduct covers HC officials
* suggestion that the appraisal form includes a section for conflicts of interests

1. **LAG MEMBERSHIP**
2. **Update on Equalities Reference Group(ERG)**

FD presented a paper on the first meeting of the ERG held on the 13th October 2015.

* preference for face to face meetings on a quarterly basis
* all LAG and LAP members should undertake Equalities training
* working group set up to develop a job description for the chair and vice-chair prior to next meeting
* next meeting of the group on Monday 23rd November

FD reported that some members of the ERG felt the ERG should have voting membership on the Strategic LAG. Another view that was put forward at the ERG meeting was that this could constitute a conflict of interest and would not be appropriate.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the ERG will be providing feedback/recommendations in an advisory role as part of the appraisal process. This should be kept separate from the approval process.

Chair of the ERG to be invited to the next LAG meeting. **Action WA**

1. **LAG composition & new members**

Due to poor attendance of members at previous meetings it was proposed that a stricter stance be taken on regular non-attendees and to increase the LAG by a couple of new members.

* Strong message to be sent to membership about need to attend meetings or send deputy (WA to send JH attendance records for JH to write letter) **Action WA & JH**
* Agreed to consider an increase in membership on the community/private/voluntary side
* Skills matrix could direct where additional members could be sought – least covered areas currently are Health and Social Care
* Small Businesses – business needs represented at a higher degree

There were still some skills matrix forms to be submitted and it was suggested that more general equalities training would be beneficial.

Question raised for LAG & LAP members to sign a confidentiality clause.

**Note: At this point FG left the meeting and it was agreed that AM as the representative for the accountable body could deputise for David Alston as a voting Highland Council representative. This meant that the meeting remained quorate.**

1. **LAAP ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

FC went over the proposed assessment form which was subsequently approved for use with the following additions suggested by AM.

**Action FC**

Assessment Prepared by:

Date:

Assessment Approved by:

Date:

AM also suggested that the date and version number are put on the bottom of each LAAP. **Action: FC to remind DOs**

1. **SUTHERLAND LAAP for APPROVAL**

FC presented the assessment sheet for the Sutherland Area Action Plan. FC had carried out an assessment on the plan prior to the meeting and discussed the findings with everyone. The assessment was approved with comments/actions added to certain criteria.

The main points that should be fed back to the Sutherland LAP were as follows:-

* Reiterate that the local allocations are indicative figures
* LAP members cannot nominate other voting LAP members as deputies
* In-principle approval is being given on the condition that proposed project activities are reviewed in light of future guidance on eligibility received from SG
* A full register of interests must be completed
* There should be a commitment from the LAP for the ongoing identification of training needs
* Further consideration should be given as to how the LAP can seek input from young people

A letter detailing the points above will be sent from the LAG chair to the Sutherland LAP chair. **Action: FC/JH to issue approval letter**

It was also agreed that JH should write to all steering groups to reiterate that the LAAP should detail how the LAP will involve young people in its work. **Action: FC/JH to write to all LAPs/steering LAPs**

1. **LOCAL AREA UPDATES**

Each of the Development Officers gave a quick overview of their area update which had been presented as a paper prior to the meeting.

**Additional points:-**

**LW – SKYE:**

* Min. grant set at £5,000(although they are retaining discretion to consider lower requests)
* LAAP to be submitted for next LAG meeting
* Next meeting 5/11/15

**LW – Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh**

* Min. grant set at £10,000(although they are retaining discretion to consider lower requests)
* Two youth representatives invited from Secondary Schools
* Next meeting 5/11/15

**MC – Lochaber**

* Youth involvement – commitment to bring one on-board
* Submission of LAAP planned for next LAG meeting

**PB - Caithness**

* LAAP to be submitted for next LAG meeting
* Next meeting 29/10/15

**PB - Sutherland**

* Next meeting 12/11/15

**FD – IMFS**

* LAAP to be submitted in new year
* The Steering Group felt that 25% of the Highland LEADER Programme budget for adminstration is too much. They have requested details of how this is broken down.

**Action – JH & FC to formally respond**

**JW – IMFN**

* First LAP meeting to be arranged once recruitment process has been completed
* Request for two members of the LAG to form an assessment panel on 17th & 18th November (**JH to attend + SM to confirm attendance**)

It was requested that the four plans due to be submitted for assessment at the next LAG meeting are e-mailed to members as soon as they are ready.

It was also requested that the Highland LEADER website publishes LAP intervention rates.

1. **Scottish LEADER 2016 CONFERENCE UPDATE**

A written update was e-mailed to the LAG prior to the meeting. The LAG was asked to consider the following:

* Are the workshop topics appropriate? : it was suggested that engaging with the youth sector should be put forward as a possible workshop
* Do you have any recommended inspirational speakers with a connection to rural development, LEADER or any of the potential workshop topics? : action point for next meeting
* The LAG to nominate the single most inspiring project from the last Highland LEADER Programme? : shortlist of six projects to be submitted to LAG members

**Action – LEADER staff to select projects**

1. **FLAG AMALGAMATION**

SL updated the LAG that the EMFF UK operational programme has yet to be approved and has delayed the anticipated programme launch.  The Commission has highlighted the number of Scottish FLAGs as an issue in their Operational Programme feedback. Marine Scotland have therefore entered into discussions with existing Scottish FLAGs to determine where potential partnerships could be made to deliver the Community Led Local Development(CLLD) programme.  Highland and Moray FLAGs have been proposed as a potential partnership.

Highland FLAG have agreed in principle and now look to the LAG to confirm whether they also agree in principle to the amalgamation.

**LAG agreed in principle**

1. **AOB**

AM mentioned the HC loan arrangement that was made available for the last programme.

As finances at the HC are under pressure it may be more difficult to secure the capital to make available as loan finance for this programme.

Not having such a facility in place would seriously disadvantage some groups who often had limited cash flow to access LEADER funding.

AM also noted that the staff resource to administer the loan fund in the previous programme was provided in kind by Highland Council. This is unlikely to be available in this programme and it was suggested that the LAG may wish to consider commissioning a project that would allow funding for a staff resource to run such a facility in the 2014-2020 period.

The LAG agreed that JH should write to the head of the HC and AM should explore the potential for other LAG partners to contribute to such a project – for example HIE. **(Action JH/FC to write to HC)**

Summit for Scottish Rural Parliament meeting on the 24/11

One of the actions for this meeting is to discuss how money can be freed up?

1. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING - TBA**