**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014-2020 PROGRAMME**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 29 June 2016**

**HIGHLAND ARCHIVE CENTRE**

**PRESENT:**

|  |  |  |
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| **Voting** |  |  |
| Jon Hollingdale (JH) | Community Woodlands Association | Private |
| Frances Gunn (FG) | Third Sector Interface | Private |
| Yvonne White (YW) | Scottish Crofting Federation | Private |
| Sharon Mackay (SM) | Visit Inverness Loch Ness | Private |
| Robert Muir (RM) | HIE | Public |
| Cattie Anderson (CA) | SNH | Public |
| Cathy Steer (CS) | NHS | Public |
|  |  |  |
| **Advisory** |  |  |
| Scott Armstrong (SA) | Visit Scotland |  |
| Nicole Wallace (NW) | THC |  |
| Tom Davis (TD) | Inner Moray Firth North LAP |  |
| Dave Godden (DG) | Inner Moray Firth South LAP |  |
| Fiona Cameron (FC) | LEADER  |  |
| Wendy Anderson (WA) | LEADER |  |
| Judith Wainwright (JW) | LEADER |  |

**1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Jon chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Amy MacDonald, Sarah Lamb, Anne Sutherland, Mhairi Wylie and David Richardson.

**The meeting was quorate.**

**2 MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

**3 MATTERS ARISING**

ERG - Timeframes highlighted to ERG but will be covered under agenda item.

RE/FD Subgroup met on 10th May. Minutes from meeting to be circulated to the LAG **- FC**

Programme launched on 9th May, with emails being issued to all contacts and website updated.

Pre-application form and guidance – to be covered under agenda item.

**4 DO Updates**

Updates for IMFN, IMFS, Lochaber, Sutherland, Caithness, Skye, WRSL and a summary of Expressions of Interest for Strategic Projects, had been distributed ahead of the meeting.

The LAG requested the number of EOI’s are included within the area updates.

FG stated Sutherland were disappointed with the length of time between EOI and approval.

It was noted a lot of EOI’s received to date were looking for more than the Highland LEADER theshholds therefore applicants would be asked to re-work if project moved to pre-applicaton stage.

The LAG were encouraged by IMFN managing to attract 5 young people onto the LAP.

The Inner Moray Firth South Local Area Action Plan had been issued electronically and approved unanimously.

No additional points were raised at the meeting.

**5 ERG Update (verbal update from FC)**

The ERG met on 12th May, which was first formal meeting. Equalties questions were issued. All original members had been contacted to ascertain who wanted to remain members of the formal group.

The ERG initially wanted to work electronically and view every application which would cause implications for admin and chair of the group, who would need to collate all responses.

The ERG agreed the following process at the meeting:

* Pre-application will still contain the questions which had been provided by the ERG
* The LEADER DO checks the project against scoring criteria which has been provided by ERG
* If the project scores more than 6 then project progresses through application process
* If project scores less than 6, the DO contacts a member of ERG for advice. This gives applicants time to build in any recommendations from the ERG without delaying the project.
* Every quarter, with an update from DO, a list of projects approved will be issued to the ERG.
* The ERG will then randomly select projects to check for any equalities issues and provide recommendations which will form a best practice guide which will be available on the LEADER website.

The ERG are keen to adopt the process above.

A list of key members of the ERG, along with expertise, needs to be compiled and held centrally.

**6 EMFF Update (verbal update from NW)**

Responses from FLAG members have confirmed future FLAG representation from Scottish White Fish Producers Association, Moray Firth Inshore Fishermen’s Association and FOA 27.

George Farlow has offered to attend the LDS Chairs meeting on behalf of the FLAG in Falkirk on 30th June.

Marine Scotland will be holding a training day for FLAG administration on 29th July.

Moray Third Sector Interface will now be responsible for the LEADER Programme in Moray.

An introductory meeting is set up with Highland Council.

Finalised FLAG guidance has now been issued by Marine Scotland.

Highland Moray FLAG website wll be finalised over the next few weeks.

Highland LDS to be updated to reflect FLAG amalgamation.

Advertisement went out for new members of the FLAG and managed to attract 3 new members from the fisheries sector.

Chair of FLAG has advistory position on the LEADER Strategic LAG. **NW/SL**

**7 RE/FD Update (verbal update from FC)**

Sub group met on 10th May.

A number of EOI’s received to date and at least 10% needs to be allocated to Rural Enterprise. Maximum of £100k for projects with a minimum £10k project and £5k minimum grant.

There is a possiblility for HIE to support LEADER DO’s with progressing the RE applications but there may be implications with the new LARCs system. Discussons have been taking place between THC and HIE regarding the background working.

A query was raised about the level of evidence a business would need to provide to show community support as there may be issues around displacement. - **FC to query**

No guidance has been received from Scottish Government to date for farm diversification projects. It was agreed the best approach is for the LAG sub group to define guidance and forward to SG for clarification.

LEADER DO’s will determine whether projects are more suited to LEADER, RE or FD.

RE and FD have approximately £880,000 each to allocate to projects. It was noted there was not much scope to increase this figure as it will use up LAP allocations.

**8 Monitoring and Evaluation – Revised Framework**

LDS approval letter requested all LAG areas revise their monitoring and evaluation section.

The first meeting of the Monitoring and Evaluation Group was held on 27 May.

JW ran through the papers issued with the Agenda, highlighting the key priority was to formalise indicators as required by the Scottish Government.

Prior to meeting, Highland took part in a Scottish Government working group to develop indicators. The indicators will be used to monitor and evaluate individual projects and collectively by the Highland LEADER Programme.

Some indicators are requirements of Scottish Government or EU where others are specific to LAGs.

Scotland wide indicator list was reduced from 250 to 30.

There is additionally scope for LAG specific indicators where the Scotland wide indicators don’t cover local requirements.

Indicators will be required for all projects, therefore there is a need to ensure Highland have a set of indicators which will monitor delivery of all themes and outcomes. Where possible Scotland wide indicators will be used.

Updated Terms of Reference, which were originally presented to the LAG in June 2015, now approved.

The draft Monitoring and Evaluation framework builds upon the framework outlined in the LDS.

Any comments from the LAG to be forwarded to FC or JW.

**9 Simplifying the Pre Application Stage**

It was felt the pre application initially issued did not capture the information required to make an assessment, it added a delay in the process and it was very difficult to complete the technical checklist.

It is proposed to use the pre-application tabled at the meeting is used for the next 3 months and then review.

The updated process would be:

DO’s receive application and assess against the 3 points below, along with the score sheet for equalities.

* Fit with LDS
* Level of funding requested
* Suitability for LEADER funding or any other fund

The pre-application will then go forward to the relevant LAP without the need for a full technical check therefore reducing the timeframe for receiving pre-applications. It is still expected they are received at least 2 to 3 weeks prior to the meeting but could be tabled on the day if needed.

One suggested option had been to use the full application and get applicants to complete certain sections but it was felt this may cause confusion with some applicants completing the majority of sections on the forms. Another suggested option was to use the project plan but with either option, the equalities questions would need to be added.

A firmer statement has been added to the top of the pre-application form and guidance to ensure applicants are aware they need to complete as fully as possible otherwise the LAP might return the form and this could case a delay with any projects going forward to full application stage.

The LAG requested that, to illustrate the level of information required on the pre-application form, samples will be created based on fictional (or old) projects, these will beforwarded to JH for comment before being made available on the website

Each LAP area will have the ability to determine which information they receive from pre-application forms to enable them to make a decision.

Website to be updated with relevant deadlines dates for LAP meetings.

LAG agreed to use the updated pre-application for 3 months and then review at the LAG meeting following this date.

LAG agreed any minor amendments to the form can be agreed by JH without the need for the full LAG’s appoval.

**10 Programme Issues – Scottish Government & Referendum**

At present no guidance has been issued from the Scottish Government apart from “business as usual”.

Concerns were raised over projects approved after the 2 year exit period.

LEADER LDS has been approved until 2020.

THC will be looking for more comfort than “business as usual” before making any approval decisions to reduce any risk.

**Changes within LDS**

It is clear from Gillian MacDonald, Scottish Government, the Highland LDS defines eligibile activity for the Programme.

Changes are currently being made to the LDS to ensure all eligibile activites listed in the LDS are clear for audit purposes.

Revised LDS to be forwarded to Strategic LAG, once the changes are complete.

**AOCB**

The Youth Convenor term of office finishes over summer and adverts are out for a new youth convenor who will have an advisory postion on the LAG.

**Youth Cooperaton**

A paper was circulated at the meeting following a meeting with 4 LEADER areas, and the LAG were asked whether this was something they would be willing to see brought forward.

The LAG agreed with the proposal and it was requested an effort be made to ensure harder to reach young people are included.

**11 Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 31st August time and venue to be confirmed. It is hoped to hold the M&E subgroup on the same day as the LAG meeting.

 **Papers Submitted in Advance to inform this meeting:**

Agenda

 LAP Updates for Caithness, IMFS, IMFN, Lochaber, Skye, Sutherland & WRSL, Strategic/Coopereration projects

 Draft M&E Terms of Reference

 Draft M&E Framework

 Proposed Highland Outcome Indicators

 Minutes of last meeting

 **Papers presented at meeting:**

 Pre Application form

 Pre Applicaton form guidance

 Youth Cooperation paper