**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014-2020 PROGRAMME**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 25th January 2017**

**ARCHIVE CENTRE**

**PRESENT:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Voting** |  |  |
| Jon Hollingdale (JH) | Community Woodlands Association | Private |
| Ian Wilson (IW) | National Farmers Union | Private |
| Sharon MacKay(SM) | Visit Inverness Loch Ness | Private |
| Stewart Sandison(SS) | SNH | Public |
| \*Nicole Wallace(NW) | Highland Council | Public |
|  |  |  |
| \*\*Yvonne White (YW) | Scottish Crofting Federation | Private |
| **Advisory** |  |  |
| Fiona Cameron(FC) | LEADER |  |
| Martin Culbertson(MC) | LEADER |  |
| Joe MacMillan (JM) | LEADER (**Minute Taker**) |  |
| David Godden(DG) | IMFS LAP |  |

**1 WELCOME and APOLOGIES**

JH chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Apologies were received from Robert Muir, Scott Armstrong, Frances Gunn, Mhairi Wylie, David Richardson, Debbie Gray, Cathy Steer, Wendy Anderson and from LAP reps., Lachie MacDonald, Amy MacDonald and Anne Sutherland.

\***As an elected member was not present at the meeting the Accountable Body representative, NW deputised.**

**The meeting was quorate at the start (3 x Private & 2 Public).**

**\*\* Yvonne White (private) was delayed and arrived prior to agenda item 6 being discussed, programme update.**

**DECLARATIONS of INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were lodged.

**2 MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed by IW and seconded by JH.

**3 MATTERS ARISING**

NW - FLAG representation at LAG meetings was discussed at the FLAG meeting on the 7/11/16 and it was agreed that the chair, Duncan Pocket, would attend with Scott Armstrong deputising.

**FC to advise WA.**

WA – format of risk register had been actioned and issued prior to this meeting (item 4).

FC - an email was sent to SG outlining a response to the caveats mentioned in Gillian McDonald’s letter. A response was received from SG to confirm that this was acceptable.

NW – It was mentioned at a Marine Scotland meeting in Edinburgh yesterday, attended by NW and SL, that the last date for project approval would be the end of March 2019 and a programme end date of December 2023.

**4 Governance and Risk**

The risk register was distributed prior to the meeting. It was agreed that there were far too many risks on the register to go through individually. NW advised that it would be good governance to flag-up risks where the direction of trend had increased dramatically. It was also noted that any risk that was no longer worth recording should be removed from the register to reduce numbers.

FC raised the following points:-

* IT system designed to protect from disallowance – guidance not comprehensive
* No degree of checking from SG on live projects – monitoring visit requested by Highland but nothing planned yet by SG
* Other LAG areas have had a monitoring visit – subsequent penalties applied
* No guidance supplied yet for breaches and penalties
* FC and WA met with HC internal audit to seek advice on issues that SG are not responding on to reduce exposure

**5 Declarations of Interest**

As previously mentioned none declared.

**Note: Yvonne White attended at this point**

**6 Programme updates (FC)**

Wester Ross LCDC project selected by SG for a pre-approval technical assessment check. Couple of minor issues raised and resolved by Development Officer.

LEADER Co-ordinators meeting being held today in Linlithgow and being attended by Wendy Anderson and Judith Wainwright. SG attending meeting and looking to establish working groups for Audit & Finance, Guidance and a LARCs IT System Group. Highland LEADER had already identified that they wanted to be part of the LARCs IT System work group.

The future of Rural Development was also being discussed and an update would be given at the next LAG meeting. **Action FC**

Highland had an On-the-Spot check in December to look specifically at admin. spend. Visit went well with the following minor issues raised:-

1. FLAG expenses sheet being used to claim mileage/expenses didn’t have enough information. FLAG members to use the LEADER form from now on.
2. HC have an arrangement with HMRC for reclaimable VAT which means that the lower amount is correctly claimed by Highland. Auditor to write to other LAG areas as Highland is the only Local Authority carrying out this practice.

LAG recorded a well done to the LEADER team.

FC advised the meeting that Highland had five live projects on LARCs. Some applicants who had submitted an EOI were no longer taking their application forward and were reporting this is due to the LARCs IT system. A number of applicants who had used LARCs had also complained about their experience with the IT system.

It was noted that the SLA for this programme period very much places the financial risks with the accountable body.

**7 Highland Council Cashflow Finance**

Paper going to the HC resources committee on the 8th February.

Key points included in paper:-

* £250k requested – reviewed annually
* Officer identified within HC Finance Service who can dedicate 5hrs/wk to work on the scheme – paid by LEADER under Programme Administration
* managed similar to the last programme
* not cashflowing a full project but to be used for crunch points
* more constrained – won’t apply to EMFF
* not available to RD/FD projects

**8 EOI for discussion – see appendix 1**

**Note: SM (Private) left the meeting at this point. Meeting remained quorate.**

**9 DO Updates**

An update for all seven LAP areas plus an update on Strategic/Co-operation Projects plus an EMFF update had been sent electronically prior to the meeting.

Additional points/questions:-

**IMFS**

IW noted that he was a LAP member.

LAP agreed at November meeting to increase min. LEADER grant from £3k to £10k (min. project costs of £20k). LAG formally approved this amendment to the LAAP.

**Lochaber**

LAP agreed at last meeting to increase min. LEADER grant from £3k to £10k (min. project costs of £20k). LAG formally approved this amendment to the LAAP.

Development Officers to do a press release on 1st project approval in their area.

**10 RE/FD Update (FC)**

Change request submitted on LARCs and FC to chase up approval. **Action FC**

Request to recruit additional Development Officer to look after these projects and additional admin. post to go to Scrutiny Committee on the 2/2/17.

DO to sift through current list of EOI’s and identify which ones are still active. All applicants will be directed to Business Gateway in the first instance.

FC to produce plain English paper. **Action FC**

**11** **AOB**

Website – recognised by staff as not being great. WA and FD to look at improving website.

**Action WA/FD**

Facebook page – managed by FD with support from WA.

FC reminded the meeting that a formal launch had not yet taken place and asked for suggestions for a launch this year.

HC elected member – not had an elected member for a few meetings now and not sure if David Alston is still the nominated person. **Action FC**

**12 Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was set for the 29th March 2017 at the Archive Centre. A request to start future meetings at **11am** was agreed.

**Meeting closed at 12.25pm**.

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

Agenda

Draft minutes of previous LAG meeting

Risk Register

LAP Updates for Caithness, Sutherland, IMFS, IMFN, Lochaber, Skye, WRSL,

Strategic/Cooperation projects and EMFF

EOI for discussion

**Papers/letters presented at meeting:**

Draft minutes of previous LAG meeting - 26/10/16

**List of Acronyms**

**BE – Business Enterprise**

**COSLA – Convention of Scottish Local Authorities**

**EMFF - European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**

**EoI – Expression of Interest**

**ERG – Equalities Reference Group**

**EU – European Union**

**FD – Farm Diversification**

**FLAG – Fisheries Local Action Group**

**FPMC – Food Processing Marketing & Co-Operation**

**IMFN – Inner Moray Firth North**

**IMFS – Inner Moray Firth South**

**LAG – Local Action Group**

**LAP – Local Area Partnership**

**LAAP – Local Area Action Plan**

**LDS – Local Development Strategy**

**RE – Rural Enterprise**

**SLA – Service Level Agreement**

**SRN – Scottish Rural Network**

**TSI – Third Sector Interface**

**WRS&L – Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh**