Lochaber Local Area Action Plan

Highland LEADER Programme

2014- 2020

December 2015: Version 1

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Introduction

LEADER is an EU fund designed to promote rural economic and community development. Its key principle is local level decision making on funding applications for locally identified development priorities. Funding decisions are made by Local Action Groups (LAGs). LAGs are groups consisting of representatives from both the public and private/voluntary/ community sectors. There is an overarching LAG with responsibility for LEADER funding in Highland. A LAG undertakes work to identify development needs within its geographic area and identifies the types of projects that it feels will meet these needs. A Local Development Strategy (LDS) is then developed to oversee the delivery of LEADER funding within the area. The LAG then assesses applications for this funding.

In Highland, due to the size of the area and the range of diverse local communities, decision making is further devolved from the Highland LAG down to seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs). Lochaber is one of these seven partnerships. These are structured in the same way as a LAG and carry out similar functions but at a more local level. In Highland, LAPs were tasked with developing Local Area Action Plans (LAAPs) for their respective areas, to assist with the overall delivery of LEADER. These are simply plans to oversee the delivery of LEADER funding at a very local level.

This LAAP is designed to help determine where LEADER funding should be focused in Lochaber, based on local priorities identified through community consultation. For the 2014- 2020 LEADER Programme, Lochaber has an indicative budget of **£547,978.00**. In addition, Lochaber based projects will be able to bid into various other pots within the programme, for pan- Highland, co-operation, rural enterprise and farm diversification projects. Full details of the Highland LEADER budget for 2014- 2020 can be found in appendix 1.

The overall aims and objectives of the 2014- 2020 Highland LEADER Programme are set out in the Highland LDS. However, as noted above, a key part of this strategy is the devolution of responsibility for the delivery of LEADER to seven Local Area Partnerships in Highland. This is to ensure that decision making on LEADER funding is made at as local a level as possible. Each LAP will have the flexibility to focus on specific priorities from within the Highland LDS which are considered to be of most relevance locally and these priorities will be set out in the Local Area Action Plans. Collectively, the seven plans will need to demonstrate that the aims and objectives of the overall Highland LDS will be met and this will be monitored by the Highland Strategic LAG.

This LAAP sets out the priorities for LEADER funding in Lochaber and how these have been established. It includes details of the processes that have been followed both to develop the LAAP and to form the Local Area Partnership. In following these processes, every effort has been made to ensure the plan reflects local development needs and the partnership collectively possesses the skills, experience and knowledge required to oversee its delivery.

To help the Lochaber LAP determine where LEADER funding should be focused, the plan pulls together key demographic data, together with feedback and information gathered from community consultations, SWOT analysis and questionnaires in 2014.

Eligibility for LEADER is defined in the overall Highland LDS. However, the Lochaber LAAP provides a focus on the specific project activities required to meet local development needs while contributing to the overall delivery of the Highland LEADER Programme 2014- 2020.

It is important to note that there is significantly less funding available in the 2014- 2020 programme than the 2007- 2013 programme. The funding environment is likely to be very competitive as a result of this. Applicants are therefore strongly urged to familiarise themselves with the content of this plan and ensure they demonstrate how their project will contribute to its aims and objectives.

Re-cap of Key LEADER Terms

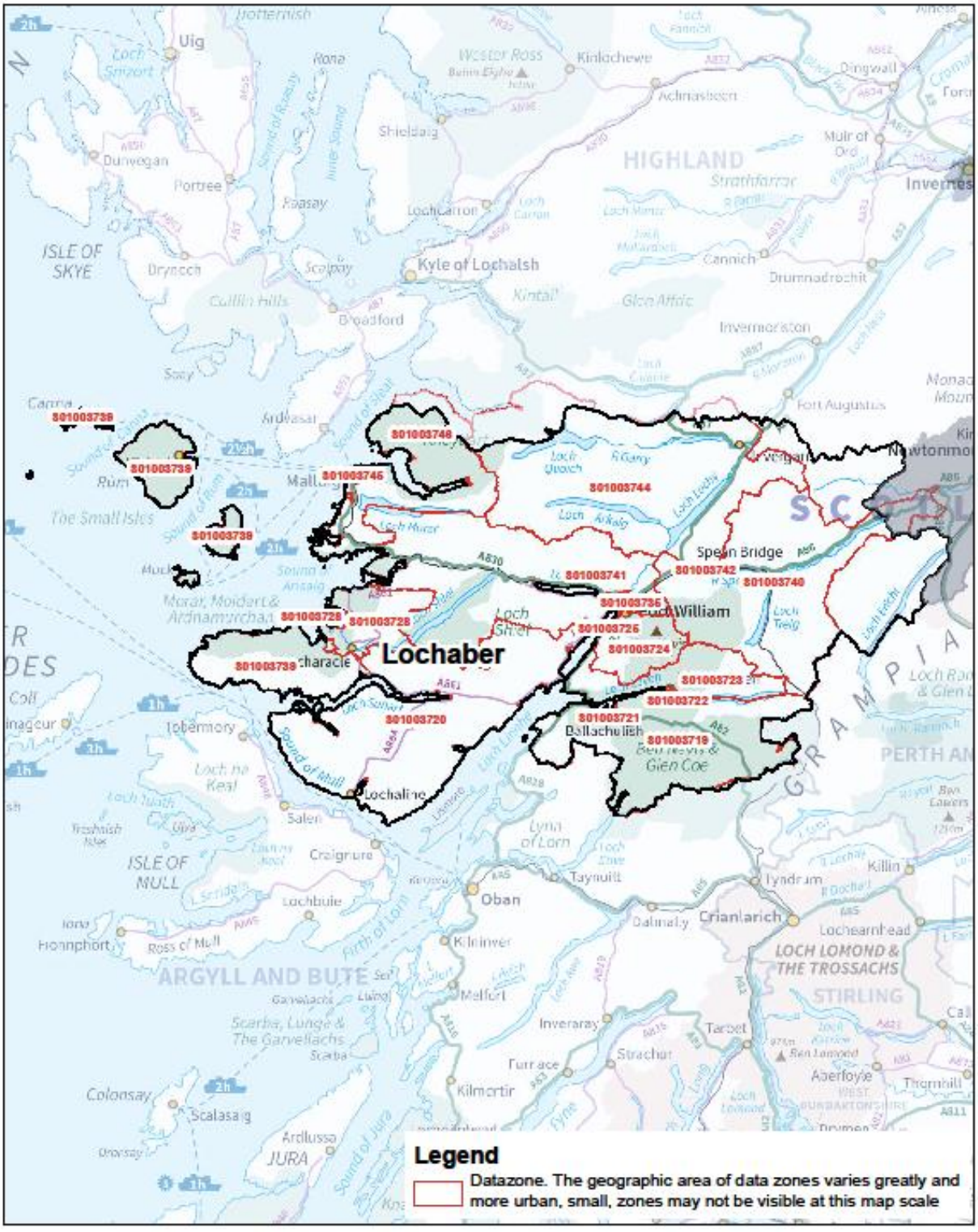
- **LAG- Local Action Group-** a group consisting of representatives from the public and private/voluntary/ community sectors, tasked with identifying economic and community development needs within a geographic area (e.g. Highland). The LAG develops a plan to meet these needs and considers applications for LEADER funding to deliver projects in the area.

- **LDS- Local Development Strategy-** the overarching plan developed by the LAG to deliver economic and community development within its area

- **LAP- Local Area Partnership-** a similar group to a LAG, but operating at a more local level, e.g. Lochaber. Intended to devolve decision making on LEADER to as local a level as possible

- **LAAP- Local Area Action Plan-** a more local level plan for LEADER funding, again reflecting Highland's desire to devolve decision making to as local a level as possible.

Lochaber Area Overview



Lochaber LAP Operating Area	1:783,000 10 5 0 10 Kilometers 1 cm = 7,830 metres © Crown copyright. All rights reserved 100023369	The Highland Council Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd Development & Infrastructure Service

Physical Features

Lochaber is a predominantly rural area with the town of Fort William the main administrative, retail and service centre. The area is largely mountainous with a significant coastline along Loch Linnhe, the Sound of Mull, the Ardnamurchan Peninsula and extending onwards to Mallaig. The area also encompasses the Small Isles and the Knoydart peninsula.

Settlement Pattern

The majority of the population resides in Fort William and the nearby communities of Caol and Corpach at the head of Loch Linnhe. There are other significant settlements in the rural areas in the south of Lochaber, including Kinlochleven, Ballachulish and Glencoe. To the west, Mallaig, Morar and Arisaig are significant population centres. There are sizeable isolated communities in Ardnamurchan and Moidart, including Strontian, Lochaline, Kilchoan and Acharacle. To the north Spean Bridge Roy Bridge and Invergarry represent the main population centres.

Demographic Profile

Lochaber has a population of 19,987 which has risen from 18,791 in 2001. This is an increase of 6.3%, compared to the population increase in Highland of 11.1%. 48.5% of the population in Lochaber are over the age of 45 years. 32.8% of the population are aged between 16 and 44 years. This compares to the Highland figures of 48.5% aged over 45 years and 33.7% aged 16-44 years.

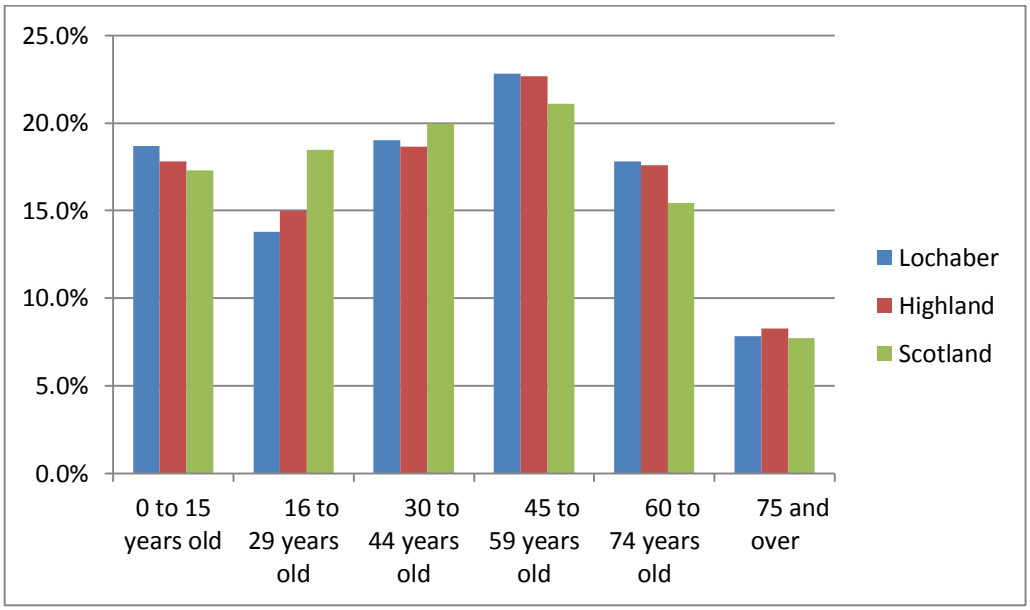
In 2001, 20% of the population were aged 15 years or younger. In 2011, 16-29 year olds made up 13.8% of the population. Whilst these figures are not directly comparable (the census categories span 16 and 14 years respectively, and not all of the people in the 15 years or younger age group in 2001 will have reached the 16-29 year old group by 2011) they do suggest a trend of outward migration of young people over the ten year period, which is consistent with the increasing percentages of older people during the same time period.

Generally the population in Lochaber is ageing: in 2001, 44% of the population were over 45 years; by 2011 this had risen to 48.5%. The same trend can be seen across Highland: in 2001, 44% of the population was over 45 years and in 2011 this had risen to 48.5%

Age Distribution

In line with the Highland average, 48.5% of the population is aged over 45. This is higher than the Scotland average of 44.3%. The percentage of young people aged 0 – 15 years, at 18.7% is higher than both the Highlands average of 17.8% and Scotland average of 17.3%. The percentage of the population aged 16 to 29, at 13.8% is lower than the Highlands average of 15% and significantly below the Scotland average of 18.5%

Percentage of Population by Age



Ethnicity

	Lochaber	Highland	Scotland
White- Scottish	78.5%	79.9%	84.0%
White- Other British	15.4%	14.7%	7.9%
White- Irish	0.7%	0.6%	1.0%
White- Polish	1.3%	1.5%	1.2%
White- Other	2.8%	1.9%	1.9%
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	0.7%	0.8%	2.7%
Other ethnic groups	0.6%	0.7%	1.4%

98.7% of the Lochaber population are White, with 1.3% White Polish. 0.7% of the population are Asian, and 0.6% are other ethnic groups. There is a higher percentage of White-Other groups living in Lochaber (2.8%) than in Highland and Scotland (both 1.9%).

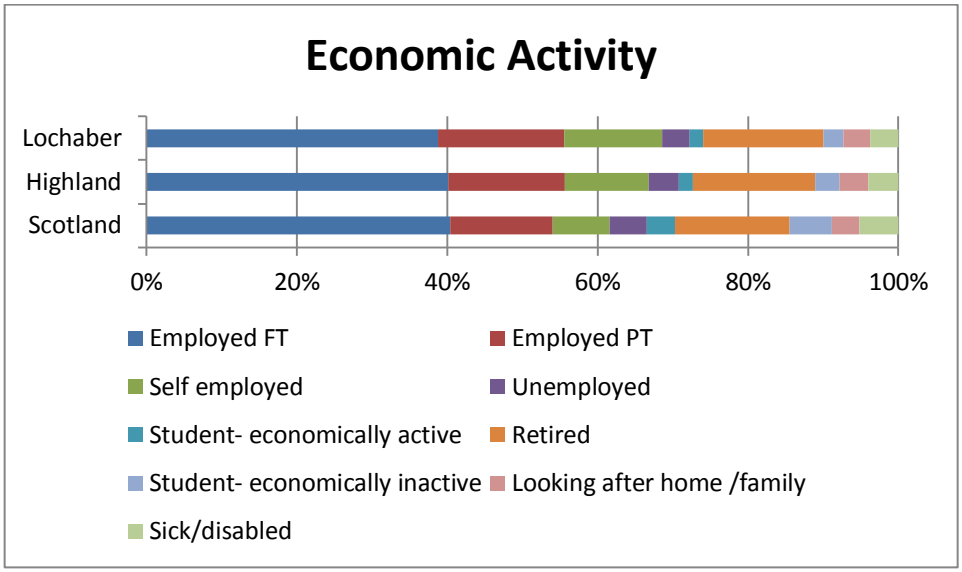
Health

83.7% of the population in Lochaber rate their health as good or very good. This is comparable to the figures in Highland (84%) and Scotland (82.3%).18.5% have a long-term health condition that limits their day to day activities. 8.8% of the population provide some unpaid care each week, with 2.3% providing 50 or more hours each week. Similar figures can be seen in Highland and Scotland.

Local Economy

Data Zones in the LAP Area with Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks in Scotland and Highland (Highlighted zones are in the 15% most deprived areas of Highland. Lochaber has no zones that fall within the 15% most deprived in Scotland).

Data Zone	Data Zone Name	Overall SIMD 2012 Rank: Scotland	Overall SIMD 2012 Rank: Highland
S01003730	Fort William Plantation	994	18
S01003731	Fort William Central	1,623	35
S01003733	Caol South East	1,735	38
S01003722	Kinlochleven	2,058	47
S01003736	Caol North East	2,075	50
S01003724	Glen Nevis	2,152	54
S01003727	Fort William Upper Achintore	2,532	74
S01003729	Fort William Argyll Road	2,541	76
S01003740	Glen Spean & Kinlochlaggan	2,749	88
S01003737	Corpach West	2,787	91
S01003746	Arisaig, Morar and Knoydart	3,129	111
S01003734	Caol West	3,160	113
S01003728	Moidart	3,242	121
S01003741	Loch Eil	3,252	124
S01003739	Ardnamurchan & Small Isles	3,613	150
S01003719	Glencoe	3,634	153
S01003725	Fort William Achintore	3,635	154
S01003726	Fort William Lundavra	3,698	158
S01003721	Ballachulish	3,775	167
S01003720	Ardgour, Sunart and Morvern	4,069	185
S01003735	Camaghael and Lochyside	4,159	190
S01003745	Mallaig	4,191	194
S01003744	Glengarry	4,249	203
S01003742	Spean Bridge	4,512	233
S01003723	Nether Lochaber	4,522	236
S01003732	Inverlochy	4,585	240
S01003738	Corpach East and Banavie	5,512	274



In 2011, 73% of the population aged 16-74 years were economically active, with 3.6% unemployed. This is slightly above the Highland average of 71.5%. In the areas in the 15% most deprived in Highland the percentage of unemployed people is higher at 5.2%. 5.9% of unemployed people in Lochaber have never worked. This contrasts favourably with the Highland average of 9.3% and the Scotland average of 13.9%.

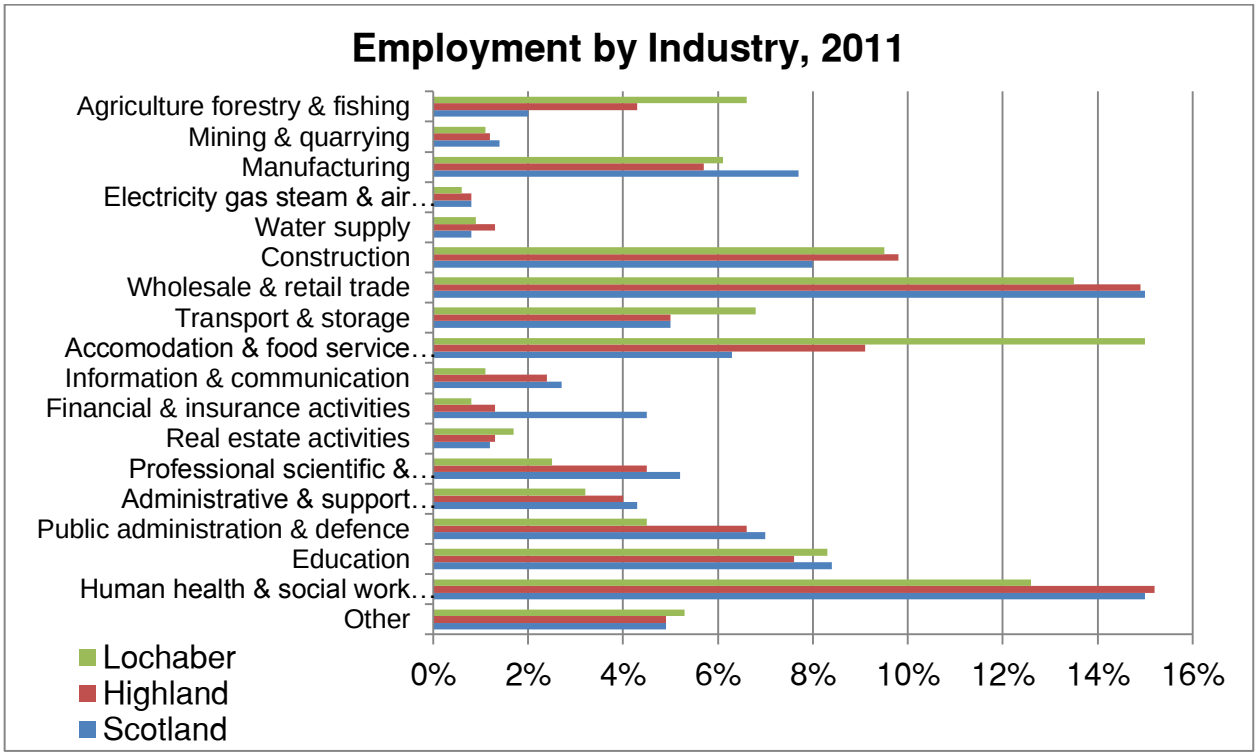
There is a smaller percentage of students in Lochaber (4.4%) and Highland generally (5%) than in Scotland overall (9.2%) 15.8% of the population in Lochaber are retired, compared to a Scottish average of 14.9%

Unemployment		**Lochaber**	**Highland**	**Scotland**
% Unemployed People in 16 – 74 Year Age Group		3.6%	4.0%	4.77%
Persons aged 16-74 who are unemployed	Aged 16 to 24	27.2%	28.5%	30.2%
	Aged 25 to 49	47.6%	48.6%	51.4%
	Aged 50 to 74	25.1%	22.9%	18.4%

2.5% of the working age population claimed job seekers allowance* in the year November 2012- October 2013. This is lower than the Highland average of 2.6% and the Scottish average of 4%. There can be seasonal changes to this figure, as many people work in seasonal jobs in Highland.

The 2012/2013 figure has been used as this is the 12 months running up to the introduction of Universal Credit. It can be difficult to make comparisons using Universal Credit as this has not been introduced nationally and it is not clear what benefits are being claimed in the Universal Credit payment.

* Not all unemployed people claim job seekers allowance.



Looking at employment by industry, Lochaber has significantly higher percentages of people employed in agriculture and accommodation and food services and significantly lower percentages of people working in information and communication, professional scientific and technical activities, and human health and social work activities, than Highland and Scotland.

Lochaber has a higher percentage of people working in accommodation and food service (15%) than Highland (9.1%), which implies there are more people working in the tourist industry.
In 2011, 16.5% of people in employment in Lochaber worked 49 hours or more a week, which is higher than the Scottish figure of 11.7%

Education

Percentage of Population 16+ Years old with Qualifications

	Lochaber	Highland	Scotland
No qualifications	27.8%	25.5%	26.8%
Level 1*	25.1%	24.5%	23.1%
Level 2**	14.1%	14.1%	14.3%
Level 3***	7.9%	9.2%	9.7%
Level 4 and above******	25%	26.4%	26.1%

*O Grade, Standard Grade, Access 3 Cluster, Intermediate 1 or 2, GCSE, CSE, Senior Certification or equivalent, GSVQ Foundation or Intermediate, SVQ level 1 or 2, SCOTVEC Module, City and Guilds Craft or equivalent; Other school qualifications not already mentioned (including foreign qualifications)
**SCE Higher Grade, Higher, Advanced Higher, CSYS, A Level, AS Level, Advanced Senior Certificate or equivalent, GSVQ Advanced, SVQ Level 3, ONC, OND, SCOTVEC National Diploma, City and Guilds Advanced Craft or equivalent
***HNC, HND, SVQ Level 4 or equivalent; Other post-school but pre-Higher Education qualifications not already mentioned (including foreign qualifications)
****Degree, Postgraduate qualifications, Masters, PhD, SVQ Level 5 or equivalent, Professional qualifications (for example, teaching, nursing, accountancy), other Higher Educations qualifications not already mentioned (including foreign qualifications)

27.8% of people in Lochaber have no qualifications, compared to 25.5% in Highland and 26.8% in Scotland. A slightly lower percentage hold Level 4 or above qualifications (25%) than in Highland (26.4%) and Scotland (26.1%).

Leaver Destinations

	Ardnamurchan HS	Kinlochleven HS	Lochaber HS	Mallaig HS	Highland Overall
Higher Education	45.5%	25.9%	30.2%	40.7%	33.7%
Further Education	27.3%	14.8%	20.4%	22.2%	23.7%
Training	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	0.0%	1.9%
Employment	27.3%	51.9%	39.5%	37.0%	31.2%
Voluntary work	0.0%	3.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.7%
Activity Agreements	0.0%	3.7%	3.1%	0.0%	1.9%
Unemployed- seeking work	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	5.6%
Unemployed- not seeking work	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.8%

The majority of school leavers in 2013 carried on to further or higher education in Lochaber and in Highland. Those going on to Higher Education are likely to leave the Lochaber area to do so.

A higher percentage of school leavers go on to employment in their local area of Lochaber, than in Highland as a whole. Over half of Kinlochleven High School leavers go on to employment.

This is also reflected in the very small numbers of school leavers who are unemployed and seeking work. However, it is important to consider the types of jobs these schools leavers go in to as these may be low-paid, seasonal jobs.

Community Consultation and Highland Leader Outcome Development

The community in Lochaber were extensively consulted in order to ensure that the LEADER outcomes prioritised locally best reflected local development needs. Initially, the Lochaber community were involved in consultation to develop the overall Highland LDS for the 2014- 2020 programme. The consultation undertaken to produce this document is summarised below:

- Initial consultation event at the Caledonian Stadium in Inverness, involving representatives from the Strategic LAG and the 11 local area partnerships in place during the 2007-2013 programme, to gather views on priorities for the new programme
- 22 public meetings were held around Highland in June and July 2014, undertaking SWOT analysis of local communities
- Electronic survey made available for anyone who could not attend or wished to make additional comments.
- To publicise the survey and invite comment a wide press and social media release was circulated, together with e-mails sent to:
    - all applicants from 2007-2013 programme
    - all councillors and ward managers
    - all local community planning partnerships and local health partnerships
    - all community councils
    - Highland Third Sector Interface's contacts network
    - Highland Council's Equalities Officer's contact network
    - Highlands & Islands Federation of Small Businesses
    - Highlands & Islands Enterprise local area offices

Following this process, there was further local opportunity to comment on the SWOT analysis and local development priorities identified for Lochaber. This included an additional opportunity to comment specifically on the draft SWOT analysis. This was offered to all local councillors, ward managers and public meeting attendees. There was also an online consultation survey on the draft Highland LDS. In addition, posters publicising the exercise were distributed through High Life Highland's distribution network, to libraries, leisure centres and community centres. Finally the opportunity was offered to complete a survey over the phone or in face- face meeting for anyone without access, or not confident using the internet.

The above produced an overall development strategy and 10 priority LEADER outcomes for Highland:

1. Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities
2. People feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities
3. Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships)
4. Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/ development
5. Increased income from local produce through adding value
6. Improvements in the visitor experience
7. People have better access to local services and activities
8. Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets.
9. Improved management/conservation/sustainability of cultural, natural and heritage assets
10. Impact of funded projects can be better demonstrated leading to increased capacity to secure future funds

Lochaber SWOT Analysis

The consultation process also identified area specific development priorities and issues. These are set out below for Lochaber.

Strengths

- In Lochaber there is felt to be a strong sense of local identity, particularly in outlying rural communities. There is an active and well established voluntary sector and growing interest in community ownership. There are numerous examples of pro-active community activity and development and well established partnership working.

- Key economic growth areas within the Lochaber economy include aquaculture, forestry, renewable technologies and the creative and cultural industries.

- People in Lochaber are positive about the area's human resource. Lochaber attracts talented people committed to its environment and has a vibrant student population. There are also strong education facilities, improving opportunities for young people. The University of the Highlands & Islands offers local access to further and higher education.

- Lochaber is well established as a film location and this offers numerous promotional benefits for the area that can be exploited. Lochaber has been a location for several international blockbusters, notably Local Hero, Rob Roy, Braveheart, the Harry Potter series and the recent James Bond film: Skyfall. The area provides 'high end' seafood and offers high quality tourist accommodation. Lochaber also benefits from having developed niche markets in marine tourism, outdoor pursuits and geo tourism.

- The natural environment, low pollution and ease of access to the outdoors were cited as factors that lead to a good quality of life. Good quality schools (including the current new build programme and major re-development of Lochaber High School) were felt to contribute strongly to quality of life. Other major factors cited were that the area was felt to be safe, with low crime levels. Good medical facilities were also felt to contribute to quality of life in Lochaber.

- The findings suggest that in terms of cultural and natural heritage, Lochaber possesses many strengths. The landscape, environment and historical narrative are attractive and of international appeal. The area's geology is of international significance and is promoted by Lochaber Geopark. Lochaber's appeal as a base for outdoor and environmental tourism is promoted by the branding of the area as the Outdoor Capital of the UK.

Weaknesses

- Retention of young people was felt to be something of a weakness for the area. Certain perceptions of the area were felt to contribute to this. These included views on the lack of shops, limited public transport and lack of other amenities such as a cinema. In common with other areas in Highland, concerns were also raised about volunteer fatigue and attracting new/ younger volunteers to support community activity

- While tourism and fisheries are viewed as strengths, people in Lochaber have concerns about the economy. There is a feeling that economic planning is too centralised and there is too much land in private ownership while there are a lack of opportunities for young people to develop their skills. There was some concern that young people remaining in the area have low aspirations for themselves, compared to those choosing to leave the area to pursue education and careers.

- A shortage of employment opportunities, together with the seasonal and low wage nature of many sectors were also raised as concerns.

- The consultation highlighted some concerns regarding quality of life. These related to the ageing population base, a concern about cuts in public services, isolation and perceived lack of engagement by young people in cultural traditions. Some individuals felt poor diet was a concern. These concerns are allayed, to an extent, by the perceived strength of local health services but there is a concern about reductions in local authority services

- There continues to be a lack of affordable housing required to attract and retain workers for business as well as for local people seeking get into the housing market or set up a family home.

- Connectivity is highlighted as a significant weakness- public transport services are generally felt to be inadequate.

- There were felt to be some particular weaknesses with Lochaber's tourism and heritage infrastructure. There is un-tapped potential to target 'higher value' tourism visitors. The weather is a weakness, both in terms of practical limitations and also with regard to the perception of potential visitors to the area. There was not felt to be a wide enough range of quality **indoor** activities and visitor attractions to counter the negative perception of the weather. It was felt more indoor activities would help significantly to attract visitors and extend the season. Similarly, it was felt that there needs to be more indoor sports facilities to encourage sport and healthy activity throughout the year.

Opportunities

- It was felt there were opportunities to improve local facilities and infrastructure, which would contribute to retaining younger people. Further development of local further and higher education provision was also felt to offer a key opportunity. The new West Highland & Islands Local Development Plan was also felt to be an opportunity to help shape local development.

- There are opportunities to develop the economy through enhancing the visitor experience and extending the tourist season. There is scope to increase visitor spend by developing higher quality holiday accommodation and related services in dining, health and wellbeing. There is also potential for more international outdoor events to increase visitor numbers, particularly during the quieter periods of the tourist season.

- The western seaboard communities continue to be economically fragile. Among the ways this is being addressed is through the work of several Community Trusts, as well as HIE's Community Account Managers. These were felt to be a helpful resource for the communities supported by them and they offered potential further development opportunities.

- There were felt to be several opportunities to develop new pontoons/ marina facilities. Examples of successful projects in Canna, Mallaig and Lochaline were cited to show the positive impact and revenue generating opportunities that such developments can offer communities.

- The developing and expanding outdoors industry in Lochaber, along with specialist courses offered by West Highland College, was felt to offer new employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people.

- The roll out of broadband and fibre optic technology offers opportunities for collaboration and access to ideas and markets.

- The proposed Development of a Multi-Sport Indoor Training Facility to be sited at Lochaber High School was felt to offer a significant opportunity to promote sport and physical activity.

- Opportunities to enhance community activity and the local economy do exist. Community ownership, social enterprise and renewable energies are seen as opportunities to enhance civic life and engage young people and there are several local community development plans which require support.

- Addressing transport and connectivity issues will underpin the community and economic developments which are planned.

- Archaeology was felt to be another area offering opportunities to promote the area and attract visitors, along with the provision of comprehensive interpretation facilities. The area's geology also offers further promotional opportunities

Threats

- There are perceived threats to community activity. These include an over-reliance on a limited number of individuals and the loss of key, social 'hubs'. Volunteers are mainly older people; there is a need to raise awareness of community activity and the voluntary sector amongst young people and to encourage their participation.

- The shortage of skilled workers is viewed as an economic threat while people continue to be concerned about the condition of the A82 and the effect of this on the economy. This is a longstanding concern.

- The key threats identified were a shortage of affordable housing, and impacts from the wider economic climate- rising prices affecting the cost and viability of rural businesses, and high fuel prices making it harder to live in remote rural communities were particular concerns. There were also general concerns about the potential impact of further public sector cuts on quality of life in Lochaber.

- The growth and influence of the National Parks elsewhere in the Highlands is viewed as a threat to local tourism. Some concerns also exist over the impact of wind turbines on the landscape.

Key Challenges for Lochaber

Out-Migration of Young People

In 2001, 20% of the population were aged 15 years or younger. In 2011, 16-29 year olds made up 13.8% of the population. This implies that young people are leaving the area. This change is not as large in Highland as a whole: in 2001 the under 15 population was 20% and in 2011, the 16-29 population was 15%. The SWOT analysis noted that there is a lack of opportunities for young people to develop their skills and there is also a lack of affordable housing for locals wishing to get into the housing market. These 'weaknesses' may contribute to young people leaving the area. However, the SWOT analysis also highlighted the improved access to Higher and Further education through the University of the Highlands & Islands, including a number of specialist courses.

Local Economy

It was highlighted in the SWOT analysis that there are concerns about the economy in Lochaber, with a feeling that economic planning is too centralised and that some of the western seaboard communities are economically fragile. There is strong community activity in Lochaber, which could be enhanced by closer working and co-operation between local organisations. Ways in which the economy could be developed included improving and extending the tourist season.

Tourism

The SWOT analysis noted that there is potential to attract 'higher value' tourists, through 'high end' seafood and high quality tourist accommodation. Lochaber has a higher percentage of people working in accommodation and food services (15%) than Highland (9.1%) so there is high local dependency upon this sector. However the SWOT analysis also acknowledged that more indoor activities are needed to attract tourists all year round, specifically noting that the weather could deter potential visitors in the winter months.

Access

The SWOT analysis highlighted connectivity as a significant weakness, with public transport seen as inadequate.

It also noted that addressing access issues will underpin any community and economic developments in Lochaber.

Prioritising Highland LEADER Themes, Outcomes, Outputs and Target Groups for Lochaber

SWOT analysis and community consultation identified key challenges for Lochaber. The next task was to determine which of the ten LEADER outcomes should be priorities to focus on in Lochaber in order to address these challenges. Also a plan had to be developed to deliver these outcomes locally. In order to do this, an initial LEADER Steering Group was established to progress these tasks.

Process for Convening Lochaber Steering Group

Invitations to form a Lochaber LEADER Steering Group were issued in May 2015 to:

- All Lochaber community councils asking them to nominate an individual from the community/business sector who would bring local knowledge and expertise to facilitate delivery of the Programme
- Previous Lochaber LAP members
- Lochaber Ward Manager
- Lochaber Councillors

(For Steering Group Membership- see appendix 2)

Drawing on their local knowledge and experience, together with the help of a "toolkit" comprising key information from the community consultation process outlined above, the Lochaber Steering Group undertook the following tasks:

- Prioritising Highland LEADER Themes, Outcomes, Outputs and Target Groups for Lochaber
- Determining the types of eligible project activity that would be supported locally
- Identifying the skills, knowledge and experience that would need to be represented on the Lochaber LAP in order to deliver the LAAP

The Steering Group met four times between June and September 2015 to carry out its remit. It also considered draft versions of the Lochaber Local Area Action Plan electronically in between meetings. This resulted in the following being decided.

Prioritising Highland LEADER Themes

Following community consultation, Highland LEADER programme themes ranked in order of priority to Lochaber were:

1. Stronger and More Resilient Communities
2. A Growing and Diversified Economy that Promotes Sustainability
3. Increased and Sustained Local Services and Activities
4. Enhanced cultural and natural assets

The Steering Group endorsed this ranking. However it felt that due to the interconnected nature of the themes, ranking should be considered as a guide only and that collectively, projects in Lochaber should deliver against all four themes over the course of the programme.

Cross- Cutting Themes

- Fairer Highland – advancing equality (addresses equality issues or benefits people in groups that are under-represented or disadvantaged)
- Innovation (a new or different approach is proposed within the area)
- Sustainability/Legacy (the project outcomes will continue beyond the life of the project)
- Carbon Clever (the project can demonstrate a positive impact on the environment)
- Skills Development (the project aims to expand the skills of those involved in implementing the project and/or on its participants)

The Steering Group recognised that there may be challenges for projects impacting on all five cross cutting themes and there is therefore an emphasis on projects demonstrating how they can meet a number of these themes efficiently rather than all of them to a weaker extent. Therefore **all** projects will have to demonstrate how they meet the Fairer Highland, Innovation, and Sustainability/Legacy cross cutting themes and the remaining cross cutting themes of Carbon Clever and Skills Development will be delivered by projects only where a direct link can be made.

Selection of LEADER Outcomes to Focus on in Lochaber

The Lochaber LEADER Steering Group selected seven of the ten LEADER outcomes to focus on. These are set out in the table below. Initially the group considered focussing on all ten outcomes. However, with a significantly reduced budget from the 2007- 2013 programme, it was subsequently felt that this risked diluting the impact of local LEADER funding. Therefore, the group decided not to focus on the following three outcomes:

- "Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships)"- In terms of achieving partnership working, it was felt that Lochaber was already well served in this area and had strong local structures in place. The Lochaber Partnership is well established and supported. It was also felt that increased partnership working could be arrived at indirectly via other LEADER outcomes/ interventions.
- "Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/ development"- due to the reduced funds available compared to the 2007- 2013 LEADER programme, the Steering Group felt that applications relating to this outcome should be directed towards the rural enterprise pot within LEADER in the first instance.
- "Impact of funded projects can be better demonstrated leading to increased capacity to secure future funds"- The Steering Group felt that this was more of a generic outcome for the programme as a whole, rather than something that would attract individual applications in Lochaber. It was felt that this would be delivered by an increased focus on monitoring and evaluation across the programme and additional support for applicants from development officers.

Use of Existing Community Planning Structures in Lochaber

Because of the well-established community planning structure in Lochaber, the Steering Group felt it was sensible to make use of the wider Lochaber Community Development Plan and ensure linkages with LEADER funding priorities.

The Lochaber Community Development Plan has been operating and evolving since 1996. This work has included regular community consultation to update the plan's priorities. The Steering Group felt that the plan offered a good basis to inform the types of priority development activity that LEADER should be supporting in Lochaber under their selected outcomes. The Lochaber Community Development Plan has undergone some significant changes in the past 18 months. It has been rationalised and now reflects key priority actions for local community development locally that are NOT being addressed as part of the day-day work of community planning partner organisations. These are actions that require additional work/ funding in order to deliver them. The Steering Group felt that targeting these areas of activity would be an effective use of LEADER funds.

The combination of ongoing consultation on the Lochaber Community Development Plan, its recent rationalisation and the specific LEADER consultation, offers strong re-assurance that the LEADER outcomes selected, and the specific types of project sought to deliver these, are the ones best placed to meet the needs of the community in Lochaber.

On the above basis, and following discussion at several meetings, the Steering Group selected the following LEADER outcomes and project activities to meet local development needs and help deliver the overall aims of the Highland LEADER 2014- 2020 programme. This selection was endorsed by the Lochaber Local Area Partnership at its first meeting in December 2015.

Highland LEADER Outcome and Description of Eligible Activity	To Achieve This We Will Seek To Support Projects That:
Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities "Eligible projects will include all aspects of community ownership from feasibility through to acquisition; support for future planning and developments to existing community owned and led services; projects which increase community engagement with community development and planning; projects that aim to put income earning opportunities within the hands of local communities".	Provide the opportunities and conditions for businesses and social/ community enterprises to grow and become more productive support the sustaining and further development of quality facilities & services which encourage the uptake of regular community activities Develop and sustain resources that support personal and community well-being Strengthen the image of Lochaber as a tourist destination of choice, and improve the quality of tourism provision locally Support communities in the initial feasibility/ consultation phases of projects to acquire ownership of community assets and services Support communities to acquire land/ income generating assets which enable them to become more sustainable Target interventions in areas of most need
People feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities Eligible projects might include capacity building for volunteer managers; support for new ways to engage younger volunteers; communication and feedback tools for working with volunteers; projects that provide volunteers with transferable skills; provision of tools to help volunteers communicate and support each other. Projects which promote/value community based volunteering or combat volunteer fatigue	support volunteering as a pathway to employability Encourage young people to engage in volunteering Support the development of skills training across the whole tourism sector including volunteer training Develop structures that support and encourage the participation of young people in community based activities Provide enhanced training opportunities for new and existing volunteer trainers and assessors to develop and grow. Encourage a 'sense of place' and civic pride, supporting the development and sustaining of voluntary run initiatives/groups

Highland LEADER Outcome and Description of Eligible Activity	To Achieve This We Will Seek To Support Projects That:
Increased income from local produce through adding value Projects including development and feasibility work on adding value to local produce; promotion of local produce including through a co-ordinated approach; collaboration between food/drinks producers and cultural activities/events; development of food networks and trails.	Support safe, responsible use of the natural environment Strengthen the image of Lochaber as a tourist destination of choice, through projects that aim to attract visitors through the promotion of local produce. encourage developments that promote the growing of local foods for own or retail consumption i.e. creation of community growing spaces, encouragement of local produce markets, social enterprises (food production & retail) & key promotional events develop innovative ideas and solutions which help positively promote the area and support tourism Attract, retain and develop regionally, nationally and internationally significant food & drink events to the area
Improvements in the visitor experience Eligible projects: anything which can demonstrate it will lead to an improved visitor experience which may include enhancing an existing attraction/service, providing wet weather facilities (as this has been identified as an area of need in several areas) developing and testing innovative ideas; provision of sustainable transport solutions for visitors; projects which promote cultural tourism.	Strengthen the image of Lochaber as a tourist destination of choice, and improve the quality of tourism provision locally Support safe, responsible use of the natural environment Develop innovative ideas and solutions which help positively promote the area and support tourism. Support the development of skills training across the whole tourism sector Encourage developments that promote the growing of local healthy foods for own or retail consumption, encouragement of local produce markets, social enterprises (food production & retail) & key promotional events Attract, retain and develop regionally nationally and internationally significant events in the area Encourage collaborative working across partners to develop innovative ideas and solutions which help positively promote the area and support tourism. support organisations to ensure Lochaber is consistently promoted as a destination of choice Further develop the cruise ship market and provision of relevant infrastructure Further develop opportunities that encourage more use of the Caledonian Canal and surrounding area Further develop opportunities that encourage more use of our forests Promote the use of and development of local paths and nature trails

Highland LEADER Outcome and Description of Eligible Activity	To Achieve This We Will Seek To Support Projects That:
People Have Better Access To Local Services & Activities Examples of projects eligible to achieve this outcome include: feasibility studies and development costs for new services/activities identified as a need within the community; local solutions for community transport issues, including ways of integrating transport schemes; feasibility and development of local internet/WiFi centres for use by residents and visitors; wider initiatives to tackle increased broadband provision and access; improved information-sharing locally including local website improvement; feasibility and development of projects that address access to housing and improved access to job opportunities; projects that promote inclusion and well-being; health activities across age groups; local solutions to address the needs of an ageing population; services for vulnerable individuals and families including piloting initiatives; services that tackle re-offending, youth disengagement and substance misuse; community re-use and recycle IT schemes; training for basic repairs and maintenance.	Support safe, responsible use of the natural environment for health promoting activity Develop and sustain resources that support personal and community well-being Lochaber to have the infrastructure in place that meets 21st century demands Encourage the wider involvement of young people in the community Promote the development of community capacity to support self-management of initiatives Encourage population growth and economic prosperity across the whole of Lochaber Support the sustaining and further development of quality facilities & services which encourage the uptake of regular community activities

Highland LEADER Outcome and Description of Eligible Activity	To Achieve This We Will Seek To Support Projects That:
Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets Projects that would contribute to this outcome could include: new pathways and cycle paths, particularly where they link up to other existing paths/cycle routes or create linkages between local villages and sites or have health related benefits; improved access for disabled people to sites; feasibility studies/development of new sites; information products, websites, marketing and promotion initiatives; projects which promote safe access and appropriate signage; projects which promote the opportunities for cultural activities to be accessed locally, opportunities to improve biodiversity and habitats around paths and tracks; improved access to archaeological sites; projects which promote the Gaelic language and culture. **Improved management/ conservation/ sustainability of cultural, natural and heritage assets** Examples of projects that will achieve this outcome include; capacity building for volunteers/staff in managing cultural, natural and heritage assets; conservation projects that involve local people/volunteers and potentially can benefit visitors to the area; feasibility studies to explore new ways of sustaining what exists; projects that contribute to energy conservation and carbon reduction as well as general protection for the environment (marine and terrestrial); conservation of built heritage; management of natural assets; projects identifying and enhancing ecosystem services and training for conservation volunteers; community asset ownership.	Support safe, responsible use of the natural environment Strengthen the image of Lochaber as a tourist destination of choice, and improve the quality of tourism provision locally Continue to provide access to Lifelong learning across Lochaber Support activities which encourage wider uptake of the Gaelic language and promote, develop and maximise the potential of Lochaber's Gaelic culture and heritage Promote and support measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change encourage developments that promote the growing of local foods for own or retail consumption i.e. creation of community growing spaces, encouragement of local produce markets, social enterprises (food production & retail) & key promotional events Support and develop action to conserve and enhance Lochaber's natural heritage including landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity Encourage/promote small scale renewable energy projects/ partnerships Encourage and support community energy conservation Promote development of climate change adaption plans in Lochaber Encourage the development of renewable sources/ technologies as a substitute for fossil fuels Encourage recording of natural (biological, geological, marine and terrestrial), meteorological and historic heritage information

Highland LEADER Outputs in Lochaber

Guidance from the Scottish Government is currently awaited regarding the output categories that will need to be delivered Highland wide. Once this is known and Local Areas have been advised on an indicative LEADER budget, outputs will need to be added.

Outputs will be used to show what progress is being made towards achieving the Programme Outcomes. All projects that are awarded LEADER funding will commit to delivering a number of Outputs selected from a list of Programme Outputs.

Project Applicants that are awarded LEADER funding will be asked to monitor achievement of Outputs.

LAPs will monitor Output achievement across all projects awarded LEADER funding in the LAP Area.

Output achievement will also be monitored as part of the Highland LEADER Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy to ensure each LAP is on track to deliver its Local Area Action Plan, and Highland is on track to deliver its Local Development Strategy.

Highland LEADER Target Groups in Lochaber

During the consultation process in 2014, communities were asked to identify any groups:-

- that would benefit from removing/ minimising barriers or disadvantage,
- that have particular needs,
- where under-representation or prejudice could be tackled or understanding could be promoted.

Across Highland the main groups identified were:

- Young people
- Older people
- Disabled people (including people with mental health issues)

A number of additional groups were identified (for example homeless people/people with housing problems, people suffering from substance abuse/addictions, people from the LGBT community).

There was also widespread reference to remoteness and transport (cost, lack of, exposed bus stops) as being a key barrier to inclusion.

The Lochaber LAP acknowledges the groups identified in Highland that have particular needs and might benefit from removing/minimising barriers or disadvantage, or where under-representation or prejudice could be tackled or understanding promoted. The LAP and will remain vigilant of such issues and take account of any particular recommendations for projects highlighted by the LEADER Equalities Reference Group.

At this stage, the Lochaber LAP has decided not to specifically target any single group for additional LEADER support. As per its approach to LEADER themes, it expects that collectively projects in Lochaber will support a range of groups over the course of the programme. The LAP will ensure this is monitored as part of its review cycle and will move to more targeted interventions if it feels this is necessary, or if directed by the Strategic LAG as part of supporting the wider Highland LEADER programme.

Lochaber Local Area Partnership Establishment

As well as defining the outcomes and activities that LEADER funding should be targeted towards in Lochaber, the Steering Group's other key task was to agree the necessary membership composition of the Lochaber Local Area Partnership which will have responsibility for approving LEADER applications.

The collective skills, knowledge and experience of the Lochaber LAP must be sufficient to enable informed assessment of Expressions of Interest and Applications against the themes and prioritised local outcomes for Lochaber and the wider Highland LEADER strategy.

The steering group considered the types of projects it was seeking to deliver in Lochaber. Through discussion, it identified the following skills sets from a wider skills matrix as being essential for the Lochaber LAP membership:

- Biodiversity
- Business development
- Communication
- Community development
- Community development/ownership/engagement
- Conservation/Construction & Building
- Cultural and Natural heritage
- Energy conservation/ Renewables
- Equalities /From or representing under-represented groups
- Experience of right to buy/asset transfers
- Financial management
- Innovation
- Partnership, collaboration and networking
- Project assessment
- Project management
- Project monitoring/ evaluation
- Public services
- Recycling
- Sales
- Sectoral experience – healthcare, transport
- Sectoral experience – tourism, transport
- Training & Mentoring/coaching
- Training/Coaching and mentoring
- Voluntary sector
- Website
- Youth sector
- Direct experience of LEADER projects/ other funders

The group firstly identified the public sector representation it felt was required on the LAP. It was agreed that this should be:

- Highland Council (one member from each of the two Lochaber wards)
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise
- UHI
- SNH

The group also considered it was essential that the following local organisations were represented:

- Voluntary Action Lochaber
- Lochaber Chamber of Commerce

As part of the process of establishing the membership of the Lochaber LAP it was agreed that any members of the Steering Group wishing to put their names forward for consideration would complete a Skills Checklist.

This was in order to identify which of the skills areas sets listed above they could contribute to. Four members of the Steering Group put themselves forward to join the LAP

An advert was placed in the local press (Lochaber News) seeking up to ten additional LAP members and identifying the key skills sets required (a copy of the advert can be found at appendix 5). The advert was also circulated via the mailing lists of Voluntary Action Lochaber and Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, together with being circulated to all Community Councils in Lochaber and a copy being placed in Fort William library. Applicants were required to complete a skills checklist and provide additional background information on their skills and experience. A further three applications were received in response to this advert.

The skills checklists were collated and cross checked against the necessary skills identified for group membership by the LEADER Development Officer for Lochaber. The results of this exercise can be seen in appendix 7. One public sector member and one private sector member of the Steering Group examined this cross checking exercise and agreed that the applications received met the requirements for the new LAP.

Lochaber LAP Membership as of December 2015

Name	Organisation	Public/ Private	Voting/ Advisory
John Fotheringham (Chair)	Spean Bridge Community Council	Public	Voting
Stuart MacPherson	Highlands and Islands Enterprise	Public	Voting
Allan Henderson	Highland Council Ward 12	Public	Voting
Andrew Baxter	Highland Council Ward 22	Public	Voting
Michael Foxley	University of the Highlands and Islands	Public	Voting
Corrina Mertens	Scottish Natural Heritage	Public	Voting
Tiina Heinonen	Morar Community Council	Public	Voting
Lilia Dobrokhodova	Morvern Community Development Company	Private	Voting
Marion Smith	Kinlochleven Community Trust	Private	Voting
Ann Martin	Westword Community Newspaper	Private	Voting
Flora McKee	Voluntary Action Lochaber	Private	Voting
Lesley Benfield	Lochaber Chamber of Commerce	Private	Voting
Linda Campbell	Lochaber Rural Education Trust	Private	Voting
Gary Servant	Arkaig Community Forrest SCIO	Private	Voting
Youth Representative	Lochaber Youth Forum	Private	Voting
Dot Ferguson	*Highland Council*	*Public*	*Advisory*

Lochaber LAP Operating Guidelines

Where applicable and not otherwise varied in this Local Area Action Plan, the Lochaber LAP has decided to adopt the Highland LEADER Programme Operating Guidelines that have been agreed by the Strategic LAG. These can be viewed at Appendix 8.

Additional Funding Considerations and Lochaber Specific Guidelines

The minimum LEADER grant in Lochaber will be £5,000

The maximum LEADER grant in Lochaber will be £50,000

The maximum grant intervention rate will be 50% of total eligible project costs

The above considerations mean that in practice, the Lochaber LAP will not consider applications for projects whose **total eligible costs amount to less than £10,000**. The Lochaber LAP considers, given the

requirements associated with applying for and administering LEADER grants, that applicants seeking less than £5,000 are best advised to pursue alternative funding options

Lochaber LAP support for projects will largely be determined by the extent of their contribution to the delivery of the LEADER outcomes prioritised for Lochaber and the benefits being delivered in the Lochaber area. However, the level of financial support secured by applicants from other sources will also influence their decision making.

Where Lochaber based projects are eligible for funding under the 'ring-fenced' Rural Enterprise or Farm Diversification LEADER budgets or under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), the Lochaber LAP expects that these sources of funding will be considered by applicants in the first instance.

LEADER is one of several schemes included in the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) and applicants will be expected to have explored the availability/eligibility of other Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) funding sources before approaching LEADER. For further information about all the SRDP schemes refer to http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP/. Identifying the most appropriate SRDP funding for a project is essential.

LEADER funding cannot be match funded with other EU funding including any other SRDP funding.

The Lochaber LAP recognises the value to applicants of issuing 'in principle' grant offers to applicants as a means of levering match funding from other match funding sources and will consider issuing 'in principle' LEADER grant offers for a maximum period of two months in line with Scottish Government guidance. The group's preference however is that applicants have all match funding in place **before** applying to LEADER.

Whilst there is no set limit for the number of members required for each LAP, it is anticipated that the Lochaber LAP will have between approximately 12-16 voting members. This is in order to maintain a balance between an appropriate level of assessment for an application, and efficient operation of the group

All Lochaber LAP members will be given the opportunity to provide the name of a substitute from their organisation or sector who can attend LAP meetings and make decisions in their absence.

The Lochaber LAP will ring fence £200,000 for allocation in the first year of LEADER funding. This will be kept under review.

The Lochaber LAP will meet as often as required which is expected to be quarterly. Meetings will be held on Tuesdays at 2pm wherever possible.

The Lochaber LAP will assess and address its training needs on an ongoing basis.

Plan Review Cycle

The Lochaber LAP will therefore review its Local Area Action Plan following two cycles of LAP meetings at which applications and/or expressions of interest have been considered and assessed against the delivery of the prioritised local outcomes for Lochaber. This will allow for an early re-assessment of the initial outcome priorities and any other funding criteria to be considered in light of the actual applications/expressions of interest coming forward and the budget available to distribute.

The LAAP will then be subject to review on an annual basis thereafter. Potential LEADER applicants should therefore be aware of the possibility of changes to the Lochaber LAP's priority outcomes, LEADER grant intervention rates and the level of LEADER grants available for the Lochaber area.

Appendices

1. Highland LEADER Programme Finance
2. Lochaber Steering Group Members
3. Skills Matrix for Delivery of Highland LEADER Local Development Strategy
4. Prospective LAP Member's Skills Checklist
5. LAP Recruitment Advert
6. LAP Member's Job Description
7. Lochaber LAP Members' Completed Skills Matrix
8. Highland LAG Operating Guidelines

Appendix 1: Highland LEADER Programme Finance

The Highland Strategic Local Action Group (LAG) has agreed the following split of its indicative 2014-2020 LEADER Programme budget:

Administration/Animation	£2,201,347 (25%)
Co-operation Projects between two or more LAG areas	£440,269 (5%)
Co-operation Projects between two or more LAP areas in Highland	£440,269 (5%)
Rural Enterprise Projects	£880,538 (10%)
Farm Diversification Projects	£880,538 (10%)
Strategic Pan Highland Projects - across all/most Highland LAP areas	£500,000 (5.68%)
Local Area Projects	£3,462,427 (39.32%)
Total Indicative Allocation	**£8,805,388**

The Strategic LAG has indicated that it would like the local areas to have as much local control over what they are funding as is possible within the parameters set out by the EU/Financial Regulations. As such, and providing it is detailed as part of the approved Local Area Action Plan, Local Area Partnerships should be able to decide the following locally:

- Local intervention (pending any limits set by the LAG during discussions over a Highland wide rate)
- Whether to consider issuing time-limited "decisions in principle"
- Whether to set a limit on maximum grant or project costs
- Whether to increase the Highland wide limit of a minimum of £5,000 project costs

Setting of annual allocations within initial review period

Indicative Budget Allocations to LAPS

Using the methodology that the Scottish Government have adopted across Scotland for the 2014-2020 Programme, the Highland LAG agreed the following indicative allocations to LAPs

INDICATIVE ALLOCATIONS TO HIGHLAND LAPS	
Lochaber	**£ 547,978.15**
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	**£ 506,688.74**
Skye	**£ 313,745.13**
Caithness	**£ 497,080.51**
Sutherland	**£ 633,673.16**
Inner Moray Firth North	**£ 550,574.97**
Inner Moray Firth South	**£ 412,683.91**
Total	**£ 3,462,424.57**

Appendix 2: Lochaber Steering Group Members

Invite Capacity	Name	Representing
Community Councils	John Fotheringham	Chair- Spean Bridge Community Council
Community Councils	Catriona Spence	Kinlochleven Community Council
Community Councils	Dave Smith	Glencoe & Glenetive Community Company
Councillors & Ward Managers	Andrew Baxter	Highland Council
Councillors & Ward Managers	Ben Thompson	Highland Council
Councillors & Ward Managers	Allan Henderson	Highland Council
Councillors & Ward Managers	Bren Gormley	Highland Council
Councillors & Ward Managers	Brian Murphy	Highland Council
Councillors & Ward Managers	Thomas MacLennan	Highland Council
Councillors & Ward Managers	Bill Clark	Highland Council
Councillors & Ward Managers	Dot Ferguson	Highland Council
Former LAP Members	Ann Martin	Westword Community Newspaper
Former LAP Members	Jimmy Smith	Kilmallie Community Centre
Former LAP Members	Linda Campbell	Lochaber Rural Education Trust
Former LAP Members	Michael Foxley	University of the Highlands & Islands
Former LAP Members	Flora McKee	Voluntary Action Lochaber
Former LAP Members	Marion Smith	Kinlochleven Community Trust
Former LAP Members	Stuart MacPherson	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Former LAP Members	Stewart Sandison	Scottish Natural Heritage

Appendix 3: Skills Matrix for Delivery of Highland LEADER Local Development Strategy

Highland LEADER Theme	Key Elements of Theme	Skills/ Knowledge/ Experience Required
Stronger and more resilient communities	• Higher quality of life • Support for volunteers • Encourage partnership working • Better knowledge of what's available locally • Project assessment to assess potential benefits	• Voluntary sector • Partnership working and networking • Project management/assessment • Funding • Marketing • Website development/training • Equalities
Growing and diversified economy that promotes sustainability	• More business start-ups • Economic diversification • Best possible visitor experience • Extend tourist season • New social enterprises • Value added to local produce	• Business start-up/finance/planning/ development/support • Financial management • Economic development and analysis • Employment law and advice • Social enterprise • Sectoral knowledge/experience
Increased and sustained local services and activities	• Services and activities that make a difference to visitors and locals • Increased community ownership and control • Improved access (including transport) to services and activities	• Public services (especially Health and welfare, Transport) • Care of elderly • Community facilities/ownership/broadband • Website development • Communications • Equalities
Enhanced cultural, natural and heritage assets	• Best possible access to assets • Excellent marketing and websites • Conservation of existing assets • Development of new assets	• Voluntary sector • Website development • Wildlife and ecology • Cultural and built heritage • Gaelic language and heritage

Cross Cutting LEADER Themes		**Additional Skills/ Knowledge/ Experience not listed above**
Fairer Highland – advancing equality (addresses equality issues or benefits people in groups that are underrepresented or disadvantaged)		• From or representing underrepresented groups
Innovation (a new of different approach is proposed within the area)	• Creativity • Adapting	• Innovation
Sustainability/legacy (the project outcomes will continue beyond the life of the project)		• Project evaluation • Voluntary sector
Carbon clever (the project can demonstrate a positive impact on the environment)	• Energy efficiency • Environmental protection	• Energy conservation • Renewables
Skills development (the project aims to expand the skills of those involved in implementing the project and/or its participants)	• Training and capacity building • Mentoring and coaching • Collaboration	• Training & skills development • Mentoring/Coaching • Partnership and networking

Highland LEADER Outcome	Key Aspects of Outcome	Skills/ Knowledge/ Experience Required to Assess
Impact of projects can be better demonstrated leading to increased capacity to secure future funds	• Clear and measurable project deliverables • Robust monitoring and evaluation • Evidence of the impact • Good communication/promotion • Administrative support	• Project evaluation • Monitoring & evaluation • Marketing & promotion • Administration
Increased community ownership/control of assets	• Community owned and led services • Increased community engagement with community development • Income earning opportunities within the hands of local communities • Community 'Right to Buy' • Asset transfers	• Community development/ownership/engagement • Business development • Experience of right to buy/asset transfers • Sales • Training/Mentoring & coaching
People feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities	• More volunteers, especially younger people • Good support for volunteers, including skills provision and development of tools that help volunteers communicate & support each other	• Voluntary sector • Youth sector • Communication • Website • Training & Mentoring/coaching
Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships)	• Capacity development • Communication/knowledge sharing • Networking tools/shared learning events • Mentoring	• Partnership and Collaboration • Communication • Mentoring/Coaching • Community Development • Website
Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/development	• Support for social enterprise • Partnership within and across sectors • Support for new businesses • Training & employability skills • Business infrastructure and efficient processes including supply chain	• Social enterprise • Partnership and Collaboration • Business development/support • Training and mentoring/coaching • Sales • Employment law and advice

Highland LEADER Outcome	Key Aspects of Outcome	Skills/ Knowledge/ Experience Required to Assess
Increased income from local produce (including crafts & use of traditional practices) through adding value	• Increase value to local producers (rather than value added at a distance) • Innovation • Co-ordination and collaboration between food/drinks producers and cultural activities/events • Development of food networks and trails	• Business development • Sales • Financial management • Innovation • Partnership and collaboration
Improvements in the visitor experience	• Enhancing existing attractions/services • Provision of wet weather facilities • Sustainable transport solutions • Promotion of cultural tourism • Diversification of tourism	• Sectoral experience – tourism, transport • Cultural and Natural heritage • Business development • Innovation • Partnership and networking
People have better access to local services and activities	• Development of services • Improving access to existing services and activities • Improved transport – access and integration of transport schemes • Improved internet access and websites • Information sharing • Promotion of inclusion, wellbeing and health activities • Services for vulnerable individuals and families • Community re-use and recycling	• Sectoral experience – healthcare, transport • Public services • Recycling • Website • Business development • Communication • Equalities /From or representing under-represented groups • Community development
Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets	• Better pathways/cycle paths and linkages between sites • Development of new sites • Better knowledge/awareness through newsletters, websites, marketing & promotion • Improved access to sites and assets • Safe access and appropriate signage • Local access to cultural activities • Improved biodiversity and habitats • Promotion of Gaelic language and culture	• Pathways/cycle paths • Sectoral experience - tourism • Equalities • Communication • Website • Natural and cultural heritage • Wildlife and Ecology/Biodiversity • Marketing/Promotion • Gaelic

Highland LEADER Outcome	Key Aspects of Outcome	Skills/ Knowledge/ Experience Required to Assess
Improved management/conservation/sustainability of cultural, natural and heritage assets	• Capacity building for staff and volunteers involved in managing assets • Exploring new ways of sustaining existing assets • Energy conservation and carbon reduction • Protection of the environment • Training of volunteers • Conservation of built heritage	• Natural and cultural heritage • Conservation/Construction & Building • Energy conservation • Biodiversity • Training/Coaching and mentoring • Community development

Appendix 4: Prospective LAP Member Skills Checklist

Name	
Name of Organisation/Group being represented (if relevant)	
Is this a Public or Private Organisation (if relevant)?	

Sectoral	
Farming	
Forestry	
Fisheries	
Food/drink	
Construction/building	
Transport	
Tourism	
Education	
Healthcare	
Social care	
Leisure	
Youth	
Elderly	
People with Disabilities	
Equalities	

Environmental	
Wildlife and ecology	
Biodiversity	
Natural heritage	
Cultural heritage	
Energy conservation	
Renewables	
Recycling	
Pathways/cycle ways	

Commercial	
Business start-up/development	
Business finance	
Business support	
Financial management	
Economic development and analysis	
Communications	
Sales	
Marketing/promotion	
Website design/development	
IT systems/software	
Employment law and advice	
Training/skills development	
Mentoring/coaching	

Voluntary/Community	
Voluntary sector	
Community representative	
Social enterprise	
Partnership working & networking	
Funding	
Fundraising	
Community ownership	
Community development	

Project Development/Management	
Project assessment	
Project management	
Project monitoring/evaluation	

Other – please give details of any other skills/knowledge/experience or interest that may be called upon to support delivery of the Programme

To ensure that the Strategic Local Area Group meets the requirements set out in our Local Development Strategy, in terms of representing a good geographic and demographic mix of members, could you please provide the following information:

1) **How would you prefer to describe your sex** – please tick

Male	
Female	
Other	
Prefer not to answer	

2) **Age Group** – please tick

Under 16	
16 - 29	
30 - 44	
45 - 59	
60 - 74	
75+	

3) **Geographic Area Represented** – please enter

4) **Do you consider yourself to have a disability?** – please tick

Yes	
No	
Prefer not to answer	

Appendix 5: Local Area Partnership Recruitment Advert: Lochaber News 08/10/15

Community Decision Makers Wanted

The EU funded Highland LEADER Programme provides grants for community development projects. In order to ensure local decision making, we are seeking ten individuals to sit on a Local Partnership which will play a key role in allocating £548,000 of funding in Lochaber over the next 3-4 years. Specifically, we are seeking individuals with experience of the following areas:

Rural Development; Tourism; Culture & Heritage; Environment; Produce; Older People; Young People; Community Asset Acquisition

The role will require a commitment to attend 4-5 half-day meetings per year in Lochaber, review applications in advance and respond to periodic e-mails. Training on assessing LEADER applications will be provided. You will be requested to complete a "skills matrix" form and an independent panel will make the final decision on allocating places on the Partnership based on the information you provide. This will be in accordance with the standards set out in the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland, April 2011. The panel may contact you to discuss your application further.

The posts are non- salaried, however travel expenses can be reimbursed.

If you would be interested in this role, please contact Martin Culbertson, LEADER Development Officer, Highland Council, on 01397 707 209, or by e-mail at martin.culbertson@highland.gov.uk for further information and an application pack.

The deadline for applications is **5pm on Friday 30th October 2015**

Appendix 6: Local Area Partnership Member's Job Description

Members of Local Area Partnerships will be required to deliver agreed outcomes of the Highland Local Development Strategy at a local level, to ensure that the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme delivers on its commitments. Key Responsibilities will be to:

- Review, score and make decisions relating to applications for LEADER funding, supported by a Development Officer
- Respond to periodic e-mails from the Development Officer regarding live projects
- Ensure applications contribute to delivering the outcomes of the relevant Local Area Action Plan (L.A.A.P) for LEADER funding
- Supported by reports from the Programme Administrative Team, Monitoring & Evaluation Committee and Equalities Review Group, monitor and review delivery of the L.A.A.P
- Identify potential projects to address any gaps in contribution to the themes, outputs and target groups set out in the L.A.A.P
- Promote the seven LEADER principles of: area-based local development strategies, bottom-up implementation of strategies, Local public-private partnerships (Local Area Groups), integrated and multi-sectoral actions, innovation, co-operation and networking
- Promote and raise awareness of the LEADER programme generally, at a local level

Additionally, the Local Area Partnership Chair, or a nominated substitute, will attend meetings of the Highland- level strategic Local Action Group for LEADER, in an advisory capacity

Person Specification

- Specific skills/knowledge/experience of at least one of the following sectors: agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, education, small business/enterprise, natural/cultural heritage, community/voluntary, and/or: representative of youth organisations, organisations that provide services/support for the elderly or groups of people with protected characteristics
- Keen interest in rural regeneration in the Highlands and willingness to work in co-operation with other LAPs, FLAG, Enterprise Group and members of the Programme Administrative Team to deliver a successful Programme
- Capacity and time to undertake the role. The LAP will meet at least four times a year, in a central location. LAP members will be required to:
    - Read and review all material circulated prior to meetings, to enable informed decisions to be made at the meetings
    - Attend all meetings, or where this is not possible, ensure that a named substitute attends (travel expenses can be reimbursed for non-public sector members)
    - Participate in electronic decision making or requests for comment between Local Area Partnership meetings
    - Act as a two way communication channel between the Local Area Partnership and local communities, to maximise engagement and interest in the Programme
    - Engage with individual projects which would benefit from the member's specific skills/ knowledge/ experience.

Appendix 7:

Lochaber LAP Members' Completed Skills Matrix

The table below shows the skills sets of applicants for the Lochaber LAP. It shows that the skills and knowledge/ experience felt necessary to assess the types of project the LAP is seeking are covered within the group's membership. It also references additional background information supplied by applicants regarding their skills and experience.

Skills/ Knowledge/ Experience Felt Necessary To Assess Lochaber LEADER Applications	JF	MS	LC	AM	LD	TH	GS	Total	Relevant Additional Skills Referenced by Applicants
Biodiversity							1	1	Will also be covered by SNH representative
Business development		1	1	1	1		1	5	public sector also includes HIE representative
Communication				1		1		2	Editor of community newspaper for 16 years
Community development	1	1		1	1	1	1	6	12 years' experience of working in community development in Lochaber. Experience of community consultation. Community Trust Development Officer. Community Development Team Leader with VAL. Established Arisaig Community Trust. Secretary of Arisaig District Community Council for 11 years and member for a further 6. Local Development Officer for Morvern Community Development Company since 2010. BSC Hons in Sustainable Rural Development from UHI. Work with small Isles to develop long term forest plans including consideration of recreation and access, as well as timber production, wood fuel and natural heritage issues. Establishment and chair of ABC group.
Community development/ownership/engagement		1		1	1	1	1	5	MCDC working on several projects that involve community land ownership- Development officer behind successful applications and also securing funds from the Scottish Land Fund to allow purchase of land. MCDC have undertaken the operation and management of a community petrol station in Lochaline. Involvement with Arkaig Community Forest SCIO. Experience of forestry and land management - engaging people with woodlands.

Skills/ Knowledge/ Experience Felt Necessary To Assess Lochaber LEADER Applications	JF	MS	LC	AM	LD	TH	GS	Total	Relevant Additional Skills Referenced by Applicants
Conservation/Construction & Building				1			1	2	Village hall manager- experience of £450,000 hall renovation project. Involved with upgrade of Achnacarry village hall.
Cultural and Natural heritage			1	1		1	1	4	Undertaking BSC Masters Degree in Eco Tourism. Project officer with Sunart Oakwoods Initiative- engaging with local people, schools and agencies and providing support to local groups to develop local native woodlands.
Energy conservation/ Renewables		1			1		1	3	Knowledge of hydro scheme development. Experience of negotiating with renewable energy developers and the forestry commission to secure community benefits from hydro schemes.
Equalities /From or representing under-represented groups		1						1	Chair of Spean Bridge and Achnacarry Senior Citizens Association. Trustee of Highland Disability Sport Lochaber. Community networker for Highland Third Sector Interface- experience of working with older people's organisations, setting up self- help groups and sourcing funding.
Experience of right to buy/asset transfers					1		1	2	Arkaig Community Forest- to progress the acquisition of the Glenmallie and South Loch Arkaig forests from FCS under the National Forest Land Scheme.
Financial management	1		1	1	1			4	Experience of managing charity trustees on financial matters, and undertaking financial management directly as a trustee. Treasurer of parish church. Accountancy experience- 40 years of working in public sector in fraud detection. Role as an LDO involves writing business plans, financial projections and cash flows.
Innovation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	Not mentioned specifically - however innovation defined as development in local context- elements of this present in all applicants' skills sets
Partnership, collaboration and networking	1	1		1	1		1	5	
Project assessment	1			1	1	1		4	Skills include chair of Inverness based Charity Partnership- directors assess, manage, monitor and evaluate projects. Individual experience of project development and management.

Skills/ Knowledge/ Experience Felt Necessary To Assess Lochaber LEADER Applications	JF	MS	LC	AM	LD	TH	GS	Total	Relevant Additional Skills Referenced by Applicants
Project management	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	Member of committee which managed the build of the Land Sea & Islands centre in Arisaig- involved in management of centre for 15 years. Board member of Lochaber Enterprise and Mallaig & District Swimming Pool. Lochaline Pontoons- £316K- Shore facilities and Access Road- £270K. Running a successful small business which has delivered 150 contracts since 2003
Project monitoring/ evaluation	1	1		1	1	1	1	6	Experience of evaluating community development plans and making recommendations.
Public services								1	Highland Council
Recycling	1					1		2	
Sales								1	Lochaber Chamber of Commerce
Sectoral experience – healthcare, transport	1							1	
Sectoral experience – tourism, transport					1	1		2	
Training & Mentoring/coaching	1					1	1	3	
Training/Coaching and mentoring		1						1	
Voluntary sector	1	1	1	1	1		1	6	12 years' experience of working in community development in Lochaber. Continuing professional development undertaken- qualifications and experience gained- experience of supporting both organisations as a whole and individuals working within them- particular experience of good governance, funding applications, charity regulation, social enterprise and volunteer development. Previous community development officer for Voluntary Action Lochaber.
Website								0	LAP will review and seek additional advice if felt to be necessary
Youth sector			1					1	Additional discussions to be held with High Life Highland regarding local involvement of young people.

Skills/ Knowledge/ Experience Felt Necessary To Assess Lochaber LEADER Applications	JF	MS	LC	AM	LD	TH	GS	Total	Relevant Additional Skills Referenced by Applicants
Direct experience of LEADER projects/ other funders	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**		**1**	**6**	Member of all Lochaber LEADER committees except the first one- heavily involved in developing local area application for LEADER + programme- chairing local group. CAM Officer- Lochaline- MCDC- direct management of LEADER applications in excess of £300K- good networking with other CAM officers- experience of similar projects/ community development issues. Experience of working with a range of other funders such as Big Lottery, Climate Challenge Fund, HIE and INTERREG IV. Experience of previous LEADER LAP. Fundraising and applications for support for rural skills training, upgrading community buildings and rural capacity building projects. Funding obtained form LEADER, SNH, FCS, HC, LHA, HIE, Investing in ideas and Awards for All. Funding ranged from £5K to £200K for LEADER transnational project.

Appendix 8

HIGHLAND LEADER (2014-2020) PROGRAMME OPERATING GUIDELINES

1. Name of Local Action Group

Highland LEADER Local Action Group (LAG)

2. Objective

In line with the Highland LEADER Local Development Strategy, the Highland LEADER LAG will deliver the Highland LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020 Programme.
The Highland LEADER area will include all of the Highland Council area, except for the Settlement Development Area for Inverness (as given in the 2012 Inverness Local Plan) and the part of the Highland Council area within the Cairngorms National Park.

3. Structure and Composition

The LEADER Programme will be delivered through the Highland LEADER LAG, which consists of a strategic LAG and a suite of seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs), a Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) and an Enterprise Group. Local Area Partnerships will cover the following areas: Caithness, Sutherland, Wester Ross, Skye, Lochaber, Inner Moray Firth North and Inner Moray Firth South).
Two sub groups to the strategic LAG will also be established to advise on Monitoring & Evaluation (Monitor & Evaluation (M&E) Committee), and Equalities (Equalities Reference Group (ERG)). .

4. Governance

4.1 The Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP)

The Highland LEADER Programme is a Highland Community Planning Partnership supported initiative which is central to the partners support for community development across the region and the place communities have in the delivery of the Highland Single Outcome Agreement 2013/14 – 2018/19.
The Board of the Highland Community Planning Partnership therefore have an active interest in the success of the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020 and have agreed that while the delivery of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) will be overseen and managed by the Strategic LAG, the Board will receive an annual report on progress. The Board's operational involvement with the Programme will be via the Highland Council, as Accountable Body.

4.2 The Highland Council

The Highland Council, on behalf of the LEADER strategic LAG, has agreed to be the Accountable Body for the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020. In doing so the Council has accepted delegated responsibility for administering LEADER finances under the terms of a Service Level Agreement that will be entered into with the Scottish Government.
The Council has also accepted that in being the accountable body it will be responsible to the Strategic LAG (including the Local Area Partnerships and the Fisheries and Enterprise Groups) for supporting the operation of the LEADER Programme and supporting the successful implementation of the Local Development Strategy.

4.3 Memorandum of Understanding

In order that all involved in the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020 are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities, it is proposed to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This will build upon the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020 Operating Guidelines and the positive and supportive working arrangements already established. The MoU will specifically address the relationships, roles and responsibilities between the:

- Council (as accountable body) and the Strategic LAG;
- Council/Strategic LAG and LAP's and Fisheries and Enterprise Groups

In addition, to aid understanding of the context within which the LEADER Programme operates, the MoU will set out the headline roles and responsibilities contained within the Scottish Government/ Accountable Body Service Level Agreement.
The MoU will be subject to review during the 2014-2020 Programme period.

5. Decision Making

5.1 Application Approval

Local decision-making on local projects based on a local development strategy is the core principle around which the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2010 will be based. This means essentially, decisions on pan Highland or strategic projects will be taken at the Strategic LAG and decisions on local projects will be taken by the respective LAP. This decision-making approach will be continued and complemented with the Enterprise Group making decisions on enterprise applications and the Fisheries Group making recommendations to Marine Scotland on fisheries applications.

Projects will be considered and assessed as part of a two phased approach, with the first phase being triggered by the submission of an Expression of Interest, allowing early consideration of project proposals by the strategic LAG, LAP's, Fisheries or Enterprise Groups. This will provide the opportunity to identify projects which meet the objectives of the local development strategy and to offer comments during the development of a project and before a formal application is completed and submitted for grant approval.

The Strategic LAG, each of the LAP's and the Enterprise Group will have authority to make grant award decisions on applications that come before them. As per Scottish Government guidance, the FLAG will make recommendations to Marine Scotland on grant award decisions.
Approval of Expressions of Interest and Applications will be assessed against agreed scoring templates

If for any reason any of the LAP's or the Fisheries or Enterprise Groups are unable to determine a request for funding, it will be referred to the Strategic LAG for a final decision.

If the LAP's, Fisheries or Enterprise Groups conclude that a specific project is required to deliver the Local Development Strategy, a partner organisation who is a legal entity, will be invited to develop a project proposal. Such a project will be considered in accordance with the established two phased decision-making process, but amended whereby the decision on grant award (or in the case of EMFF, the recommendation to Marine Scotland) is taken by the Strategic LAG. This division in decision making ensures that the project proposal receives the same level of scrutiny as any other project and cannot receive preferential consideration.

If the Strategic LAG is advocating that a strategic project is developed, a similar process will be followed but amended in that each of the LAP's will be asked to score the application. These scores will be presented to the Strategic LAG to inform their discussion – the final decision on grant award will be made by the strategic LAG. This will help ensure that any strategic project developed will receive local scrutiny and cannot receive preferential consideration.

If a grant award decision is taken by any of the LAP's or the Enterprise Group and the LEADER team have concerns over the propriety of the decision reached, the grant award will not be acted upon and the matter referred to the Strategic LAG Chair to determine whether the decision taken should be reconsidered or referred to the Strategic LAG for determination. This will also apply to recommendations that the FLAG make to Marine Scotland for grant award decisions.

5.2 Appeals/Complaints

Procedures for appeals will follow national guidance issued by the Scottish Government.

Complaints will be dealt with through the Highland Council complaints process:
http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/670/consultations_complaints_and_compliments/368/make_a_complaint

6. Operational Management and Delivery

6.1 Strategic Local Action Group (Strategic LAG)

The Strategic LAG will be responsible for the overall management and strategic direction of the LDS. It will monitor progress in the delivery of the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020 and either through direct action itself or through directing others ensure delivery of the LDS.

Membership of the Strategic LAG will reflect the aims of the LEADER Initiative regarding involvement of community representatives while achieving the necessary balance of statutory, private and community representation, i.e. 49% public maximum with the other 51% drawn from private/community representatives.

Initial formal voting members of the Strategic LAG (membership may change over life of the Programme) will be drawn from the following:

NFU
Tourism Sector
Forestry Sector
Federation of Small Businesses
Crofters Federation
Third Sector Interface
FLAG
Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Scottish Natural Heritage
University of Highlands and Islands
The Highland Council
NHS Highland

Initial advisory members of the Strategic LAG (membership may change over the life of the Programme) will **be** drawn from

Accountable Body Advisor
Visit Scotland
Forestry Commission
Enterprise Group
Representative from each LAP
Monitoring & Evaluation Committee
Highland Youth Convener
Highland Council Environment Manager
Equalities Reference Group
Programme Manager and Administrative Team
Members
Ad hoc Advisors, as required

Strategic LAG members will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair for a two year period, and will appoint/re-appoint the Chair and Vice Chair every two years. The Chair will not be a representative of the Accountable Body. Best practice will be that where possible the Chair and Vice Chair will not represent the public sector.

The Group will also complete a skills matrix to ensure that it includes representation from key sectors, and target groups which should be given priority for LEADER funding, as well as demonstrating a good geographic and demographic mix. Where any gaps are identified, the Group will call on specialist advisors and/or make a public call for additional membership (using the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies, April 2012). This process will be repeated as required or at least every two years. It may be required if for example consideration of a specific project proposal requires specialist skills or knowledge.

Any requests to join the LAG will be submitted in writing, along with a completed skills matrix, and decided at the next meeting following receipt of the request and in line with the decision making process outlined below.

If a member of the strategic LAG **or their substitute** does not attend over three consecutive meetings, the presumption is that membership will be terminated at the discretion of the Chair.
The Strategic LAG's role will be to oversee the successful establishment and operation of the Programme throughout the Highland LEADER Programme area. In doing so it will;

- Meet at least 4 times a year (to be reviewed as appropriate)
- Approve, monitor and review as appropriate a financial strategy for the allocation of funding to achieve the aims of the LDS
- Consider reports from the Programme Manager and the Monitoring & Evaluation Committee concerning the delivery of the Programme. This shall include progress on applications received, approved, grant committed, grant claimed and progress on achieving the agreed output targets
- Consider annual reports, which will be forwarded to the Scottish Government as part of their monitoring and evaluation process
- Consider regular financial reports, which will detail expenditure, accrued on the administration and delivery of the Programme and on projects. These will reflect the information submitted to the Scottish Government as quarterly financial claims
- Maintain liaison with the UK/Scottish LEADER Network and ensure representation at its meetings
- Review progress made towards achieving targets set in the business plan and if necessary, issue revised guidance to the LAPs, FLAG and Enterprise Group to address any anomalies
- Advise on communication and publicity strategies

This Strategic LAG will:

- Take the lead on transnational/transregional aspects of the Programme; supported by the Programme Manager and Local Development Officers
- Seek a link to the Highlands & Islands Transitional Committee (HITC) to ensure consistency and added value
- Ensure the horizontal themes of Fairer Highland, Innovation, Sustainability/Legacy, Carbon Clever and Skills Development are adhered to
- Approve Local Area Action Plans which will be prepared by LAPs. The strategic LAG will, after consulting with the relevant LAPs, local groups, or equivalent, assess and approve project applications for individual pan Highland projects or projects that span more than two LAP areas.

Subsidiary groups of the strategic LAG should follow these operating guidelines or establish their own, which should be signed off by the strategic LAG in order to ensure consistency with the LEADER requirements.

As a minimum, operating guidelines for these groups should ensure compliance with LEADER requirements as set out in this document around:

- Membership
- Quorum
- Appeals/complaints
- Chair
- Declarations of Interest
- Decision making
- Delegated authority

And should provide for delivery of the functions as described below:

6.1.1 Monitoring & Evaluation Committee

The main function of the Monitoring & Evaluation Group will be to monitor, assess and report progress against the Monitoring & Evaluation Plan and to ensure that any actions agreed at the Strategic LAG are followed through.

6.1.2 Equalities Reference Group Equalities Reference Group (ERG) - advisory

The main functions of the Equalities Reference Group will be:

- Reviewing applications for projects that have significant equalities issues/impact and providing guidance to applicants, decision making groups and the LEADER Team, including recommendations on project specific conditions to address the issues/impact.
- Providing guidance and support to the LEADER Team in the development of processes, communications and guidance for applicants to ensure equalities issues are considered from the pre-application stage to project completion (for example in relation to Publications & Printed Materials, Websites, Community Engagement, Holding Public Events, Holding Training Events)
- To input to the ongoing EQIA process and monitor actions being taken to address issues arising
- To keep the Strategic LAG updated by reporting on any trends/key issues, and progress against EQIA actions.

6.2 Local Area Partnerships (LAPs)

LAPs will provide the local focus for the new LEADER programme, bringing local knowledge and expertise to determine prioritisation and the allocation of funding to project applications and facilitate delivery of the Programme. A transparent process should be used to establish these groups as agreed by the strategic LAG and the following guiding principle will need to be adhered to: groups must reflect public, private and voluntary sector interest in their area (49% public maximum with the other 51% drawn from private/community representatives) and must be able to demonstrate through the preparation of a local area action plan and its implementation a link with the Highland LEADER Plan.

Local groups will be expected to:

- Co-ordinate the preparation of and implement a local action plan for their area, which meets the aims of the Highland LEADER LDS
- Work with local groups to exploit opportunities offered through LEADER and other funding streams
- Meet on a regular basis (as a minimum 4 times per annum, to be reviewed as appropriate)
- Promote the Programme across area
- Assist and lead as appropriate with the development of local project proposals/plans
- Once the local action plan is approved consider and make decisions on applications seeking grant assistance.
- Ensure wide community involvement in line with the National Standards of Community Engagement
- Comment to the strategic LAG on projects which impact locally but are of a pan Highland or are of wider local area coverage
- Monitor delivery of LEADER funded projects and either through direct action via one of its partner organisations or through the encouragement of others, ensure delivery of the LDS

6.3 Fisheries Local Area Group (FLAG)

The FLAG will oversee the delivery of the European and Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) funding in line with the integrated vision of the LDS, bringing local sectoral knowledge and expertise to determine prioritisation and the allocation of funding to project applications and facilitate delivery of the Programme. The FLAG will:

- Work with local groups to exploit opportunities offered through EMFF and other funding streams
- Meet on a regular basis (as a minimum 4 times per annum, to be reviewed as appropriate)
- Promote the Programme across area

- Assist and lead as appropriate with the development of local project proposals/plans
- Consider and make recommendations to Marine Scotland on applications seeking grant assistance.
- Ensure wide community involvement in line with the National Standards of Community Engagement
- Monitor delivery of EMFF funded projects and either through direct action via one of its partner organisations or through the encouragement of others, ensure delivery of the LDS

6.4 Enterprise Group

The Enterprise Group will oversee the delivery of the Rural Enterprise funding in line with the integrated vision of the LDS, bringing local sectoral knowledge and expertise to determine prioritisation and the allocation of funding to project applications and facilitate delivery of the Programme. The Enterprise Group will:

- Co-ordinate the preparation of and implement a local action plan , which meets the aims of the Highland LEADER LDS
- Work with local groups to exploit opportunities offered through Rural Enterprise funding and other funding streams
- Meet on a regular basis (as a minimum 4 times per annum to be reviewed as appropriate)
- Promote the Programme across area
- Assist and lead as appropriate with the development of local project proposals/plans
- Once the local action plan is approved consider and make decisions on applications seeking grant assistance.
- Ensure wide community involvement in line with the National Standards of Community Engagement
- Monitor delivery of projects awarded Rural Enterprise funding and either through direct action via one of its partner organisations or through the encouragement of others, ensure delivery of the LDS

6.5 Partners

Partner organisations across the community, business/third sector and public sectors, in addition to submitting representatives to the strategic LAG, LAP's and Fisheries and Enterprise Groups, will provide overall guidance on policy and project matters and, through its emphasis on ensuring a balanced representation of public sector agencies and community and the voluntary sector, to ensure a bottom up approach based on the ideas of local people, encouraging community involvement, partnership and innovation.

It is the responsibility of partners to communicate with other organisations in the sector which they represent. Organisations will be encouraged to appoint substitutes to attend meetings on their behalf if the usual representatives are unable to attend.

If the strategic LAG, LAP's, FLAG or Enterprise Group considers it necessary to encourage or facilitate direct action to deliver aspects of the LDS, the partners, or The Highland Council, may directly deliver a project/activity on their behalf.

7. Delegated Authority

Authority is delegated to the Secretariat, the Chair/Vice Chair of the LAG and the Accountable Body in respect of changes to approved applications. The following is a non-exhaustive list of example situations where this authority might be exercised:

- Where, during the course of an approved project, expenditure exceeds or is less than the indicative budget set, permission to switch budget between one budget head and another (referred to as project virement), may be granted by the Secretariat. Virement should only be considered if the existing purpose of the project is not affected; the change is complimentary to the project and or brings additional value to the project.
- Where the scale of the change exceed 10% of the total project costs the request for approval will be passed to the strategic LAG Chair and Vice Chair for authorisation. Where the changes are deemed to be significant the strategic LAG or LAP views will be sought.
- Where total project costs increase by up to 10% and provided the increase is within the spirit of the approval, the Programme Manager, Chair and Vice Chair will have delegated authority to

approve this change. If the change is in excess of 10%, the request is passed to the original decision making authority for a decision.

- Where a project requires an extension to the finish date or a revision of project milestones the Secretariat may approve a change to that date.
- Where alternative, but sufficient, match funding is proposed, relative to the original application, the Secretariat may approve the necessary changes.
- Any matters of ambiguity around delegated authority will be referred to the Chair, Vice Chair and Accountable Body.

8. Additional Rules of Procedure for the Strategic LAG

8.1 Conduct of Meetings

Meetings of the partnership will be arranged to ensure that they are as accessible as possible to all members of the partnership and that timing, venues and the need for video/ teleconferencing are suitable. Meetings will be arranged with a minimum of one month's notice where possible to avoid conflict with other commitments.

All meetings will be minuted (by the Secretariat) and approved minutes will be freely available and posted on the Highland LEADER website.

8.2 Chair

The Strategic LAG will appoint a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. At all meetings of the LAG, the elected Chairperson, or in their absence, the Vice-Chairperson shall preside over the meeting. The Accountable Body will not be appointed to the Chair or Vice Chair position.
If both are absent, partners will choose a member to preside. Members should respect the authority of the (acting) Chairperson who will decide matters of order, competency, relevancy and urgency.
The Chairperson's duty is to preserve order and ensure that all members/partners are given a fair hearing. Appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair will be reviewed every two years.

8.3 Quorum

The Strategic LAG will be quorate when there are at least 5 voting members present – 3 of which must be either community or private/third sector.
If more than 5 members are present, the required 51%/49% split between community/ business/third sector and public sector voting members must be achieved.
Where the meeting is inquorate due to the balance of public/private representation, but the requirement of 5 voting members has been met, the second vote of the Chair/Vice Chair may be used to count towards the quorum.
If members of the Strategic LAG are unable to attend a meeting, their named substitute should attend.
For purposes of the quorum, participation of partners by video-conferencing links will be considered as present.
Where a large number of LAG members declare an interest in an item, leaving the meeting inquorate for that item, the remaining members of the LAG shall be competent to debate and decide that item at the earliest opportunity, using whichever procedure is expedient.
If the meeting is not quorate no decision can be taken but at the discretion of the Chair/Vice Chair, the meeting can discuss and make recommendations which in turn can be circulated to the wider membership for a decision to be taken by written/electronic procedure.
Where a quorate response cannot be achieved (either at a meeting or by written procedure) then the LAG/LAP can continue to discuss the item and put forward their recommendation to the Chair and Vice Chair to determine. This approach will only be acceptable if the Chair and Vice Chair positions are not dominated by the Public sector, i.e. as a minimum there must be a 50:50 split between public and community/private representation.
Use of video conference/skype/telecommunications will be encouraged to overcome distance/travel barriers and aid discussions/decision-making by the strategic LAG, LAP's and Fisheries and Enterprise Groups.
The preference will always be to have meetings – be they in person and/or via video conference/skype/telecommunications to encourage dialogue and debate rather than taking decisions by written/electronic procedure; however, decisions taken by written/electronic procedure will be valid.

8.4 Declarations of Interest

REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS GUIDANCE

Conflict of interest is commonly defined as a situation that has the potential to undermine impartiality due to the possibility of conflict between individual or collective self-interest, professional interest or public interest.

The Local Action Group must therefore ensure the following requirements have been met:

The LAG must hold an up-to-date register of interests of LAG members

The LAG must make sure that no close relative of an individual applicant or an employee or representative of an organisation applying for funding can:

(i) participate in the LAG decision making process
(ii) score an application from that applicant (which, for the avoidance of doubt, may include the accountable body)
(iii) be involved in any monitoring activities relating to the applicant

The following paragraphs set out the categories of interests, financial and otherwise, which you have to register. These are "Registrable Interests", and you must ensure that they are registered, when you are elected and whenever your circumstances change. **The register should cover the period commencing from 12 months prior to and including your current term of office**.

It is your personal responsibility to comply with these regulations and you should review regularly and at least once a year your personal circumstances. Annex A contains key definitions and explanatory notes to help you decide what is required when registering your interests under any particular category. The interests which require to be registered are those set out in the following paragraphs and relate to you.

Remuneration – to be completed IF you fall into one of the categories listed below and you may apply for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

1 You have a registrable interest where you receive remuneration by virtue of being:-

(i) employed;
(ii) self-employed;
(iii) the holder of an office;
(iv) a director of an undertaking;
(v) a partner in a firm; or
(vi) undertaking a trade, profession or vocation, or any other work.

2 You do not have a registrable interest simply because you are a Strategic LAG/LAP member.

3 If a position is not remunerated it does not need to be registered under this category. However, unremunerated directorships may need to be registered under category two "Related Undertakings".

4 If you receive any allowances in relation to membership of any organisation the fact that you receive such an allowance must be registered.

5 When registering employment, you must give the name of the employer, the nature of its business and the nature of the post held in the organisation.

6 When registering self-employment, you must provide the name and give details of the nature of the business. When registering an interest in a partnership, you must give the name of the partnership and the nature of its business.

7 Where you otherwise undertake a trade, profession or vocation, or any other work, the detail to be given is the nature of the work and its regularity. For example, if you write for a

newspaper, you must give the name of the publication and the frequency of articles for which you are paid.

8 When registering a directorship, it is necessary to provide the registered name of the undertaking in which the directorship is held and detail the nature of its business.

9 Registration of a pension is not required as this falls outside the scope of the category.

Related Undertakings to be completed IF you fall into one of the categories below and the organisation may apply for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

10 You must register any directorships held which are themselves not remunerated but where the company (or other undertaking) in question is a subsidiary of, or a parent of, a company (or other undertaking) in which you hold a remunerated directorship.

11 You must register the name of the subsidiary or parent company or other undertaking and the nature of its business, and its relationship to the company or other undertaking in which you are a director and from which you receive remuneration.

12 The situations to which the above paragraphs apply are as follows:-

(i) you are a director of a board of an undertaking and receive remuneration - declared under Category one; and

(ii) you are a director of a parent or subsidiary undertaking but do not receive remuneration in that capacity.

Land and Buildings to be completed IF you own any buildings/land which may be used by an applicant applying for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

13 You have a registrable interest where you own or have any other right or interest in land and buildings, such as being an owner or a tenant, including Council tenant.

14 You are required to give the address of the property, or otherwise give a description sufficient to identify it.

Interest in Shares and Securities - to be completed IF the company or other body you have a registrable interest may apply for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

15 You have a registrable interest where you have an interest in shares comprised in the share capital of a company or other body and the nominal value of the shares is:-

(i) greater than 1% of the issued share capital of the company or other body; or

(ii) greater than £25,000.

Gifts and Hospitality

No LAG member (including representatives or employees of the accountable body) may accept or offer gifts, hospitality or benefits to or from a third party that might be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity in carrying out their functions under the LEADER programme.

16 You must register the details of any gifts or hospitality received, however it is not necessary to record any gifts or hospitality as described below:

You are personally responsible for all decisions connected with the acceptance of gifts or hospitality offered to you and for avoiding the risk of damage to public confidence in the LAG/LAP. As a general guide, it is usually appropriate to refuse offers except:-

(i) isolated gifts of a trivial character, the value of which must not exceed £50;

(ii) normal hospitality associated with your duties and which would reasonably be regarded as appropriate

Non-Financial Interests to be completed IF you are a member of any categories as listed below and may apply for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

17 LAG/LAP members may also have significant non-financial interests and it is equally important that relevant interests such as membership or holding office in:

- public bodies,
- companies,
- clubs,
- societies
- organisations such as trades unions and voluntary organisations, are registered and described.

In this context, non-financial interests are those which members of the public might reasonably think could influence your actions on the LAG/LAP which could include any project approvals for other organisations.

Contracts

18 You have a registrable interest if any of the above apply to you and you have made a contract with the Highland LEADER Programme or any projects funded by the Highland LEADER Programme under which goods or services are to be provided, or works are to be executed

19 You must register a description of the contract, including its duration, but excluding the consideration.

ANNEX A
DEFINITIONS

1. **"Remuneration"** includes any salary, wage, share of profits, fee, expenses, other monetary benefit or benefit in kind. This would include, for example, the provision of a company car or travelling expenses by an employer.
2. **"Undertaking"** means: (i) a body corporate or partnership; or (ii) an unincorporated association carrying on a trade or business, with or without a view to a profit.
3. **"Related Undertaking"** is a parent or subsidiary company of a principal undertaking of which you are also a director. You will receive remuneration for the principal undertaking though you will not receive remuneration as director of the related undertaking.
4. **"Parent Undertaking"** is an undertaking in relation to another undertaking, a subsidiary undertaking, if (i) it holds a majority of the voting rights in the undertaking; or (ii) it is a member of the undertaking and has the right to appoint or remove a majority of its board of directors; or (iii) it has the right to exercise a dominant influence over the undertaking (a) by virtue of provisions contained in the undertaking's memorandum or articles or (b) by virtue of a control contract; or (iv) it is a councillor of the undertaking and controls alone, pursuant to an agreement with other shareholders or councillors, a majority of the voting rights in the undertaking **.**
5. **"A person"** means a single individual or legal person and includes a group of companies.
6. **"Group of companies"** has the same meaning as "group" in Section 262(1) of the Companies Act 1985. A "group", within s262(1) of the Companies Act 1985, means a parent undertaking and its subsidiary undertakings.
7. **"Any person"** includes individuals, incorporated and unincorporated bodies, trade unions, charities and voluntary organisations.
8. **"Spouse"** does not include a former spouse or a spouse who is living separately and apart from you.
9. **"Cohabitee"** includes a person, whether of the opposite sex or not, who is living with you in a relationship similar to that of husband and wife.

10. **"Chair"** includes Committee Convener or any person discharging similar functions under alternative decision making structures.

8.5 Order of Business

The main business of meetings will be to consider the progress of the LEADER Programme and strategic issues and, if required, to consider grant applications.
Notwithstanding this, the items of business will be considered in the following order:

- Those members present and apologies
- Declarations of interest by members
- Minutes of previous meetings will be considered as a correct record
- Matters arising
- Progress Reports
- Consideration of grant applications, as required
- Urgent business intimated at the start of the meeting
- Any other competent business included on the agenda
- Date, Time and Location of next meeting

8.6 Decision Making and Voting

Subject to compliance with the LEADER guidelines as laid down by the European Commission and the Scottish Government as the Managing Authority, all questions coming or arising before the meeting will be decided on a consensus basis or failing this by a majority of the members present.

Views from LAG members submitted in writing or by e-mail prior to the meeting will be accepted and included as part of the discussion.

While efforts will be made to seek a consensus decision, where this proves not possible a vote may be taken by a show of hands. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson will have a second or casting vote. In the case of subsidiary groups to the LAG, the Chair will also have the discretion to refer the matter to the LAG for a final decision.

In terms of scoring stage one and stage two applications for funding, voting members of the LAG present at the meeting will agree an overall score for each of the criteria laid down in the scoring template and this score will be minuted. Where a consensus score cannot be reached the paragraph above applies.

LAG members will be expected to individually score applications in advance of meetings. Where there are a high number of applications to be considered then scoring members will be paired up and will take the lead on scoring of allocated projects.

The presumption is that decisions on funding applications will be made following discussion at a meeting; however, in exceptional cases decisions on applications can be made by written procedure. In this case, two LAG members (at least one of whom will be will be from the private sector) will work together to agree scores for the application which will then be circulated to the LAG as a recommendation for a decision by written procedure.

8.7 Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called at any time if the strategic LAG or Secretariat receives a request from partners setting out the purpose of the business to be considered at that meeting.