

## **The LEADER Programme**

LEADER is an EU Fund aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. LEADER is community led with decision making on local development priorities taken by local groups. Since LEADER was launched in 1991, there have been four previous programmes, LEADER 1, LEADER 2, LEADER + and LEADER 2007-2013.

## **LEADER in the Highlands**

The Highland LEADER Programme is structured around a Highland Strategic Local Action Group (LAG) and a number of Local Area Partnerships. The aim of adopting this structure is to reflect the scale and diversity of Highland and to involve local people in the decision making process.

The Highland LAG is responsible for delivering the Local Development Strategy for Highland and for overall management and delivery of the Highland LEADER Programme. The Strategy, which outlines the aims and objectives of the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020, was developed through a process of extensive community engagement and was submitted to the Scottish Government as part of the LAG's bid to secure EU funds.

The new Programme will be delivered at a local level through the seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) across Highland:

- Caithness
- Sutherland
- Skye
- Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh
- Lochaber
- Inner Moray Firth North
- Inner Moray Firth South

## **Local Area Partnership (LAP) Development**

Part of the development of the new Highland LEADER Programme, which is expected to launch in early 2016, includes the setting up of the LAPs. The LAPs will comprise individuals interested in community development, and those representing community groups and/or key business sectors, who can bring local knowledge and expertise to facilitate delivery of the Programme.

Each LAP will develop a Local Area Action Plan outlining local development priorities which will guide funding decisions made by the LAP.

Once Local Area Actions Plans have been drafted, these will be reviewed to ensure they will support the delivery of the Local Development Strategy for Highland and presented to the Strategic LAG for approval.

### **Inner Moray Firth North (IMFN)**

A Steering Group was formed in IMFN in June 2015. This included members of the LAPs covering the IMFN area in the last LEADER Programme, Elected Members, Ward Managers and people nominated by Community Councils. The remit of this Group has been to:

- consider local priorities for LEADER funding, and
- requirements for the membership of the LAP.

The Steering Group is a short term arrangement which will be dissolved once the LAP has been formed.

So far the IMFN Steering Group has considered local priorities for LEADER funding which have been set out in an early draft of the Local Area Action Plan. The LAP will have responsibility for reviewing, and either endorsing or amending the Plan, prior to its submission to the Strategic LAG for approval.

Once the Local Area Action Plan has been approved, it will be made available publicly to provide potential applicants with information regarding the priorities of the IMFN LAP and the types of projects that would be eligible for consideration. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how their proposed project fits with the priorities outlined in the Local Area Action Plan.

The Plan will be used to guide LEADER funding decisions with the LAP reviewing and making decisions on funding applications, based on the extent to which they will deliver the local priorities set out in the Plan.

### **Timescale for Inner Moray Firth North LAP**

Applications for membership advertised in Ross-shire Journal – 30/10/2015

Closing date for applications – 13/11/2015

Applications assessed and applicants contacted – 20/11/2015

Initial LAP meeting held by 11/12/2015