

HIGHLAND LEADER 2014 – 2020 PROGRAMME

SKYE LAP MEETING: 4:00 – 6:00PM, 15 FEBRUARY 2017, TIGH NA SGIRE, PORTREE

Public Voting Members Present: Sarah McGrory, Annie Davidson,

Private/Community Voting Members Present: Stephen Varwell, Donald Macdonald, Nick Duffill, Aonghas Mehan, Roger Liley

Advisory/Non-Voting Members Present: Willie Mackinnon

In Attendance: Liz Whiteford (Highland LEADER Development Officer)

Apologies: Lachie Macdonald, Jo Ford, Jennifer Macpherson, Roddy Murray, Beth Kennedy, John Gordon

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES: Stephen Varwell, as deputy vice chair welcomed everybody and the above apologies were intimated.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / REGISTER OF INTEREST FORMS: No declarations of interest notified but members were reminded that they should declare an interest as soon as one became apparent whether this is at the outset of a meeting or during it.

NOTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING: Note of 23 November 2016 meeting (previously circulated) was accepted as an accurate record. Proposed by: Donald Macdonald / Seconded by: Stephen Varwell

MATTERS ARISING and not arising elsewhere: discussed under other agenda items

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER UPDATE:

- EOI's received to date x 19 (see list)
- Full applications approved to date x 0
- Full applications submitted/decision pending x 0
- Full applications released/in progress x 2 (see list)
- Potentially eligible LEADER projects but not yet at application stage x 4
- Community projects with outstanding LEADER eligibility queries and/or no recent contact following EOI feedback x 3
- EOIs forwarded to EMFF x 2
- EOIs withdrawn x 1 (intending to re-submit for a new project)
- EOIs referred to Rural Enterprise x 7 (no update on the delivery of this)

- Because Highland LEADER grants are released on bank statement evidence of payment of project expenditure the Highland Council has recently agreed to make £250k available in cashflow finance to help support delivery of LEADER funded projects although it is expected that demand for this cashflow facility will be oversubscribed and that not all applicants who require cashflow support will be successful in securing it from this fund. It is envisaged that finance will be available to successful applicants for certain "crunch" points in the project rather than being used to cashflow a whole project from start to finish.

- BREXIT will result in the Highland LEADER Programme coming to an end following the UK's exit from the EU and the current best guess for the date of BREXIT is March 2019.

- LEADER applicants should therefore be aware that all Highland LEADER funded project activities should be completed by March 2019.
- Applicants intending to apply to the Highland LEADER Programme for grant funding should therefore do so as soon as possible.
- Prior to submitting a LEADER application, an Expression of Interest form detailing an outline of the project and its estimated project costs, LEADER grant request, etc must be completed/submitted to enable the LEADER eligibility of the project to be assessed.
(<http://www.ruralnetwork.scot/funding/leader/expression-interest-form>).
- If LEADER eligibility is confirmed at Expression of Interest stage, an applicant would be invited to progress to a full application as soon as clearly defined project costs, project match funding and any required permissions/consents and security of tenure, etc, are in place.
- LEADER applicants should be aware that evidence of clearly defined project costs and match funding and, for capital projects, evidence of any required project permissions/consents and security of tenure should be in place **before** any LEADER application can be considered.
- The SKYE LAP are currently considering LEADER applications every 3 months with the deadline for receipt of applications currently set at 2 months before the relevant meeting date at which an application will be considered. Full details of SKYE LAP meeting and application deadline dates can be obtained from the local LEADER Development Officer.

APPLICATION ASSESSMENT/SCORING: No applications for assessment/scoring

AOCB:

- Given the concern expressed previously by SKYE LAP members about the lack of LEADER project applications coming forward, members further discussed the possible reasons for this which included the difficulty in securing match funding, concerns about the ability to cash flow projects pending receipt of project funding, the requirements and complexity of the LEADER application process, etc, etc.
- It was revealed that there were definitely projects being actively developed on SKYE, some of which might, and some of which might not, fit with LEADER's timescale and requirements. Members agreed that the differing requirements of funders was confusing and not helpful to applicants but also agreed that some of the information requested by LEADER would be expected of many public and private funders nowadays eg evidence of need, evidence of consents/security of tenure, evidence of future sustainability, evidence of reasonableness of costs, evidence of a business plan, etc, etc.
- A proposal from a LAP member who was unable to attend the meeting was read out and, after lengthy discussion, it was agreed that, whilst LEADER applicants should continue to try to secure as much project match funding as possible before applying to LEADER, the SKYE LAP would now consider LEADER grant requests for up to 75% of total LEADER eligible project costs, particularly for capital projects which align with the SKYE Local Area Action Plan and the Highland Local Development Strategy, are responding to clear evidence of need or a gap in provision, which will deliver sustainable and lasting impact/benefit, and which can be delivered successfully within the remaining Highland LEADER timescale.
- It was agreed that LEADER applications will continue to be considered by the SKYE LAP on a first come first served basis until the £313,745 budget has been fully allocated.

- It was agreed that notification of the above change in policy would be circulated to SKYE Community Councils and Trusts (contact details to be provided to LW by WM and JM) to try to encourage organisations with community projects at an advanced stage whose delivery might fit with the remaining LEADER timescale to consider completing a LEADER Expression of Interest or contacting the local LEADER Development Officer to check out whether LEADER might be a potential final source of funding.
- Sarah McGrory indicated that she would be changing her work base shortly which would mean her not being able to attend all future SKYE LAP meetings but that she was willing to remain as the SNH representative on the SKYE LAP and, if/when necessary and acceptable to the LAP, to provide advice by email if she could not attend the meeting.. SKYE LAP members agreed that this would be acceptable and useful given that it would be difficult at this late stage of the programme to introduce new LAP members to the decision making process.

FUTURE SKYE LAP MEETINGS

Thursday 25 May 2017 4-6pm – Council Chamber, Portree

Thursday 31 August 2017 4-6pm – Council Chamber, Portree

Thursday 30 November 2017 4-6pm – Council Chamber, Portree