

**Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Steering Group Meeting
3.00 –5.00pm, 10 August 2015, Achnasheen Hall**

Members Present:

Public - Isabelle (Biz) Campbell (temporary chair), Ian Cockburn, Robbie Bain, Mary Gibson, Stuart Macpherson (substitute for Ingrid Galbraith)

Private/Community – Norma Ross, Amy MacDonald, Fran Cree, Kristine Mackenzie, Tristan Southall, Roddie Mackenzie, Tom Forrest

Apologies: Audrey Sinclair, Richard Greene, Ingrid Galbraith, Peter Walling,

In Attendance – Liz Whiteford, Fiona Cameron

Welcome/Apologies/Minutes of last meeting:

Biz Campbell welcomed everyone, passed on apologies from those unable to attend and Amy Macdonald seconded by Norma Ross proposed the adoption of the minutes which was supported by all present.

Prioritisation of Themes/Outcomes, etc

Liz Whiteford, Highland LEADER Development Officer was then invited to lead the discussions relating to prioritisation of the themes/outcomes and the development of the Local Area Action Plan (LAAP), and future LAP Membership.

See attached for the results of the themes/outcomes prioritisation ranking exercise to which all 15 members of the steering group responded.

The collated responses relating to the ranking of the 4 Highland LEADER themes is as below although many steering group members revealed that this was a difficult exercise to complete with many considering that projects relating to all 4 themes were important for the area and should be included in the Local Area Action Plan which is what is happening:

1. A growing and diversified economy that promotes sustainability
2. Increased and sustained local services and activities
3. Stronger and more resilient communities
4. Enhanced cultural and natural assets

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In the knowledge that the initial LEADER budget devolved to this LAP area was likely to be in the region of £500,000 there was then lengthy discussion about which outcomes to initially include/exclude. Agreement was eventually reached that LEADER projects/applications should initially deliver against at least one of the following 5 prioritised outcomes:

1. Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/ development
2. Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities
3. People have better access to local services and activities
4. Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships)
5. Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets

It should however be noted that the steering group felt that project applications delivering against outcomes 1 and 4 above might be able to access funding through separate and additional LEADER budgets relating to Enterprise and Co-operation.

It was also noted that there was some overlap between outcome headings and eligible activity and that some of the eligible activity relating to the remaining 5 excluded outcomes could still be delivered against the 5 prioritised outcomes as detailed above.

It was felt that the 5 prioritised outcomes agreed on produced some clarity for potential applicants and would hopefully attract projects that would help to address some of the issues identified in the consultation process and help to deliver impact and legacy leading to stronger communities with an improved quality of life and the growth and diversification of the local economy.

LAP Membership:

15 steering group members completed and submitted a LAP member skills checklist which revealed a wide variety of skills/knowledge/experience and identified no initial obvious gaps in respect of the skills, knowledge or experience required to deal with the project applications expected to deliver the outcomes agreed in this LAP area.

Geographic coverage of LAP members was also discussed and it was noted from the LAP member checklists submitted that there was a good coverage across the geographic area although it was noted that there was no longer any private/community representation from the Ullapool/North area or the South

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Lochalsh area although several of those who had completed the LAP member checklists had a good knowledge of the whole LAP area which was felt satisfactory for current LAP purposes.

From the LAP member checklists received it was noted that 7 were from the public sector (of which the Ward Manager was likely to be solely advisory and non-voting) and 8 were from the community/private sector which gave a good public and community/private sector balance. It was noted that, whilst community councils were originally invited to nominate a steering group member (someone interested in community development but who did not need to be a member of a community council), such members were considered private/community members and did not represent a respective community councils.

Whilst those who completed the LAP member checklists included a good gender mix (7 male/8 female), and included both older and disabled people, it was noted that they did not include young people so more thought is to be given to how to attract the input of the 16-29 years age group which was considered essential. Efforts are currently being made by LEADER to try to engage with young people and or their representatives via the R&C Youth Forum and/or local Youth Development Officers to try to identify how best to involve young people in the LAP decision making process.

Liz Whiteford indicated that she was going to try to liaise with young people via the R&C Youth Forum and/or Youth Development Officers to try to raise awareness of the new programme and to try to identify how best to involve young people in the decision making process.

TARGET GROUPS:

Of the steering group responses received regarding target groups, one highlighted that 'hard to reach learners' might benefit from removing/minimising barriers or disadvantage and where under-representation or prejudice could be tackled or understanding could be promoted. Two other responses suggested 'more isolated residents', and 'working people/young families' were other potential target groups but no decision was taken by the steering group as to whether to add to the 3 target groups already identified namely:

- Young people
- Older people
- Disabled people.

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MISCELLANEOUS:

Whilst there was some initial discussion about LEADER grant intervention rates, scoring criteria and weighting of applications, 'in principle' offer, other funding sources, etc, it was agreed that this could be progressed at a later date once the LAP's budget allocation had been confirmed and more guidance has been received from the Scottish Government and Highland LAG.

Whilst LEADER Expressions of Interest forms are now available on the Scottish Rural Network website, Highland has not yet signed its Service Level Agreement and Local Area Action Plans in Highland are still at an early stage of development, so it will be impossible to provide any meaningful feedback to Expressions of Interest until these are completed and the Local Area Partnerships are established and operational which might be later this year or early next year.

FUTURE WORK:

It was felt that the information included in the toolkit previously provided coupled with the lengthy discussions to date now provided enough information and agreement to produce a first draft of a Local Area Action Plan.

Date of Next Meeting:

It was agreed to hold the next steering group meeting in Achnasheen Hall on Wednesday 23rd September from 2-4pm when it was hoped that a first draft of the Local Area Action Plan would be available for discussion.

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STEERING GROUP MEMBER:	Public or Private/Community	Attendance
Robbie Bain	Public/Ward Manager	Present
Isabelle Campbell	Public/Highland Councillor	Present
Mary Gibson	Public/SNH	Present
Ian Cockburn	Public/Highland Councillor	Present
Tom Forrest	Private/Community (Kinlochewe area)	Present
Kristine Mackenzie	Private/Community (Lochcarron/Strathcarron/Kishorn area)	Present
Norma Ross	Private/Community (Contin/Jamestown/Tarviearea)	Present
Fran Cree	Private/Community (Gairloch area)	Present
Amy MacDonald	Private/Community (Wester Lochewe area)	Present
Tristan Southall	Private/Community (Plockton area)	Present
Roddie Mackenzie	Private/Community	Present
IN ATTENDANCE:		
Liz Whiteford	Highland LEADER Development Officer	In attendance
Fiona Cameron	Highland LEADER Programme Manager	In attendance
APOLOGIES:		
Audrey Sinclair	Public/ Highland Councillor	Apologies
Richard Greene	Public/ Highland Councillor	Apologies
Peter Walling	Private/Community (Strathpeffer area)	Apologies
Ingrid Galbraith	Public/HIE	Apologies but substituted by Stuart Macpherson

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LEADER OUTCOMES	TOTAL	RANKING
Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/development	36	1st
Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities	56	2nd
People have better access to local services and activities	67	3rd
Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships)	77	4th
Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets	81	5th
Increased income from local produce through adding value	88.5	6th
Impact of funded projects can be better demonstrated leading to increased capacity to secure future funds	93	7th
Improved management/conservation/sustainability of cultural, natural and heritage assets	102	8th
People feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities	104	9th
Improvements in the visitor experience	118	10th

LEADER THEMES	TOTAL	RANKING
A Growing and Diversified Economy that Promotes Sustainability	19	1st
Increased and Sustained Local Services and Activities	37.5	2nd
Stronger and More Resilient Communities	38	3rd
Enhanced Cultural and Natural Assets	55.5	4th