

**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014 – 2020 PROGRAMME  
WESTER ROSS, STRATHPEFFER AND LOCHALSH (WRSL) LAP MEETING  
10:30AM – 12:30PM, 9<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2016, ACHNASHEEN HALL**

**Public Voting Members Present:** Lindsay Simpson, Mary Gibson, Ian Cockburn, Roddie MacKenzie,

**Private/Community Voting Members Present:** Fran Cree, Kristine Mackenzie, Amy MacDonald, Clara Hickey, Carla Lees

**Advisory/Non-Voting Members Present:** Robbie Bain,

**In Attendance:** Liz Whiteford (LEADER Development Officer); Fiona Cameron (LEADER Programme Manager), Yvonne Boa (Youth Support), Siobhan Osborne

**Apologies:** Tristan Southall, Biz Campbell, Richard Greene, Norma Ross

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:**

AM welcomed everyone

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / REGISTER OF INTEREST FORMS:**

● Kristine Mackenzie declared an interest in the Lochcarron Community Development Co (LCDC) Forest Access & Enterprise project – agreed to withdraw from any discussion on this project

**NOTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING and Matter Arising:**

● Note of 23.8.16 LAP meeting (previously circulated) was accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by: Fran Cree / Seconded by: Clara Hickey

● Agreed to consider the Project Assessment/Scoring agenda item before the DO update agenda item

**PROJECT ASSESSMENT/SCORING:**

● 11/P00006: Lochcarron Community Development Company (LCDC) Forest ACCESS & ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME APPLICATION - £33,529

Kristine Mackenzie, having declared an interest in the Lochcarron Community Development Co (LCDC) Forest Access & Enterprise project, withdrew from the room. This reduced the voting members present for this agenda item to 8 which was over the minimum 5 required to achieve a quorum but reduced the public/private voting member balance to 4 public / 4 private which was not an acceptable balance. However, following Operating Guidelines, and by implementing the second vote of the Chair for this agenda item, the voting membership of the meeting was restored to an acceptable 4 public / 5 private.

The Lochcarron Community Development Company's Forest Access and Enterprise project application was assessed/scored and, a LEADER grant request of £33,529 was approved by consensus subject to DO Technical Assessment conditions – see appendix for assessment/scoring.

● Feedback from those present on the assessment/scoring template provided/used was that it proved helpful when assessing/scoring this application.

- KM returned to the meeting at this stage which returned the voting member balance present to 4 public and 5 private

- Those present agreed that the LEADER application process is not for the faint hearted!

#### **DEVELOPMENT OFFICER UPDATE:**

- 25 EOIs received as at 4.11.16. 3 EOIs have been withdrawn. 5 are from private businesses and have been referred to RE/FD fund. 1 LEADER application form has been submitted and 5 other LEADER application forms are known to be being worked on by applicants (inc 1 relating to joint SKYE/WRS� area project). The estimated total LEADER grant requests associated with the 6 aforementioned projects is c£268,061. 5 other potential LEADER eligible projects are developing but have yet to secure match funding or might not fit with LEADER programme timescales, etc so application forms have not yet been released. The remaining 6 projects have received EOI feedback highlighting issues relating to LEADER eligibility etc but have failed to respond to queries highlighted or to provide project updates. See appendix for further details.

- Pre-application Forms have now been done away with and applicants, whose projects have been deemed LEADER eligible at EOI stage and with match funding in place, can now progress direct from EOI to a full LEADER application form.

- DOs complete an initial LEADER eligibility check of EOIs and a Technical Check of full applications when submitted.

- LAG/LAP members assess/score full applications in line with assessment/scoring template provided.

- Currently the deadline for receipt of Full Applications is 2 months prior to LAP/LAG meeting at which it will be considered.

- Following the result of the EU Referendum and impending BREXIT, Highland LEADER was initially working on information from the Scottish Government that LEADER grants issued/accepted before 23 November 2016 would be honoured by Scottish Government. Further information just released suggests that the Scottish Government will be passing on in full the guarantees on EU funding that the UK Government has provided to cover the period between now and the point that the UK proposes to leave the EU – full information awaited.

- Highland LAG has approved all the proposed changes to the Highland LEADER Business Plan which has now been submitted to Scottish Government for approval. Main change is to allow for the removal of the pre application phase of the approval process.

- Highland LAG has approved the finalised version of RE/FD paper which has been sent to SG for approval. If/when SG approve what is being proposed, this paper will be used to produce material that can be sent out in response to existing RE/FD enquiries and through other networks.

- In order to use LARCS (the new online LEADER application system) all LAG/LAP members would require training. Highland has requested approval of a workaround system which would allow LAG/LAP members to continue to consider/score paper applications rather than LAG/LAP members using LARCs. Scottish Government has confirmed that what has been proposed is acceptable with a number of caveats but overall we can take from this that the process we are currently using is acceptable (for the time being anyway).

- The Highland LEADER Programme Manager contributed to the above update.

- RM, CL, YB and SO left the meeting at this stage but the meeting remained quorate with 3 public and 4 private voting members still present.

**AOCB:**

- **WRSL LAP MEMBERSHIP:** Due to the ongoing risk of being unable to make quorate decisions due to unavoidable declarations of interest, LAP member absences, etc, which change the public/private voting member balance at meetings and which can cause decision making delays, the current public / private voting membership balance of the WRSL LAP was discussed. Given concern about the time that would be required to identify and train up new private members the option of reducing the public voting membership was proposed as a solution. LS intimated that she had previously held a non-voting advisory role and volunteered to revert to a non-voting advisory WRSL LAP member. This proposal was unanimously accepted – see attached for updated membership composition/status
- **LOAN FUNDING:** Members again discussed the need for loan funding to enable applicants to cashflow projects pending receipt of LEADER grant and asked whether the THC loan fund available previously was going to be restored. LW intimated that she had no news about this happening but agreed to again raise the problem with the Highland LAG furthermore intimating that Social Investment Scotland might be a loan funding option but that there would be a cost and agreed to again highlight the need
- **PUBLICITY:** It was suggested that the approval of projects should be publicised as a means of promoting the Programme

**FUTURE WRSL LAP MEETING DATES, VENUE AND TIMINGS:**

- Tuesday 21 February 2017 - 10:30 to 12:30 – Achnasheen
- Tuesday 23 May 2017 - 10:30 to 12:30 – Achnasheen
- Tuesday 29 August - 10:30 to 12:30 – Achnasheen
- Tuesday 28 November - 10:30 to 12:30 - Achnasheen

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