**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014-2020 PROGRAMME**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24th June 2015**

**Thistle Hotel, Inverness**

PRESENT:

|  |  |  |
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| Voting |  |  |
| Alastair Swanson | NFU Private |  |
| Yvonne White | Scottish Crofters Federation Private |  |
| Mhairi Wylie | Third Sector Interface Private  |  |
| Graeme Ambrose  | Visit Inverness Loch Ness Private |  |
| Jon Hollingdale  | Community Woodland Association Private  |  |
| Stewart Sandison | SNH Public |  |
| Debbie Gray | UHI Public  |  |
| David Alson | THC Public  |  |
| Cathy Steer | NHS Public  |  |
| AdvisorsScott Armstrong | Visit Scotland  |  |
| Andy McCann | THC |  |
| Nicole Wallace | THC  |  |
| Fiona Cameron | LEADER  |  |
| Wendy Anderson | LEADER  |  |
| Liz Whiteford | LEADER  |  |
| Martin Culbertson | LEADER  |  |
| Judith Wainwright | LEADER  |  |
| Joe MacMillan  | LEADER |  |

**1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Fiona welcomed everone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Shaun Finlayson, David Richardson, Frances Gunn and Robert Muir.

**2 MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes agreed.

All recommendations from previous meeting were agreed electronically.

**Actions**

Fiona spoke to Alistair Nicolson, from HIE, regarding the James Hutton Institute formula. It appeared the formula took in to account 20 indicators which Alistair said had the potential to dilute the information presented.

James Hutton Institute looked at over 20 indicators whereas HIE only look at 4 and identify fragile areas by 80% indicators and 20% local knowledge. HIE also don’t use their fragile areas work to allocate funding.

The James Hutton Institute were asked to give figures for the local allocation using the same methodology. Looking at the formula from the previous programme compared to James Hutton Institute formula, the majority of areas are comparable with the exception of Sutherland Rural Inverness South.

At a future meeting the LAG will need to consider a financial strategy which will also detail various options for the allocation of funds to local areas.

It was requested a letter be sent to the Scottish Government on the LAG’s behalf, stating they were disappointed with the allocation received. Fiona should also work with the Scottish Government to understand better how they have applied the information to the allocation methodology.

**3&4 ELECTION OF LAG CHAIR/VICE CHAIR**

It was decided, in Frances’ absence, as temp Chair, to nominate a LAG Chair prior to continuing the meeting.

Fiona confirmed to the meeting that for the new programme a representative from the Accountable Body could not be chair/vice-chair and the election of these positions would ideally be from the private sector.

Jon Hollingdale put his name forward but stated he would need to check with the Community Woodland Trust Board before confirming. It was the feeling of the meeting that in her absence Frances Gunn should also be considered for one of the positions. If Frances did not want to be considered then Mhairi Wylie would put her name forward as Vice Chair. Positions to be reviewed after two years.

Fiona to contact Frances to discuss.

Fiona handed over to Jon to chair the remainder of the meeting**:-**

**5 PRESENTATION BY NEIL ROSS - HIE**

Neil Ross presented a presentation on ‘Promoting social inclusion, combating Poverty and discrimination’. Presentation included in Appendix1.

**Summary of presentation:-**

**Big Lottery Fund – Financial Capacity**: H&I not included in current phase but it is hoped that they would be included in the next phase.

**Empowered Community – led inclusion:** £8m in total allocated with £4m coming from ESF and £4m from HIE.

**Growing the Social Economy:** £1.2m in total allocated with £600k from ESF and £600k from HIE.

Neil was looking for ideas on the mechanisms for the above interventions and agreed to contact Fiona for LEADER input. HIE was looking at an early start date with applications encouraged as soon as the final mechanisms have been put in place.

There were some concerns from the meeting that these two initiatives were overlapping with LEADER.

Fiona thanked Neil for the presentation. Neil left the meeting for official business to

take place.

Fiona to meet with Neil to discuss the workings of the projects from a LEADER perspective.

**6 LAG SET UP – NEXT STEPS**

**Strategic LAG 24th June 2015 - LAG Membership**

As part of the process of establishing the membership of the LAG it was agreed that members would complete skills matrices to compare against a list of essential skills that the LAG would require to cover. The results of this have been analysed and are presented to the Strategic LAG for discussion and a decision on how any gaps in skills should be covered.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Essential areas to cover** | **Number of LAG members** |
| Farming | 3 (+ 2 substitutes) |
| Forestry | 3 (+1 substitute) |
| Fisheries | 1 |
| Tourism | 5 (+2 substitutes) |
| Education | 1 |
| Healthcare | 1 |
| Socialcare | 1 |
| Youth | 2 |
| Older people | 0 |
| People with disabilities | 0 |
| Equalities | 0 (+1 substitute) |
| Natural heritage | 6 (+2 substitutes) |
| Cultural heritage | 8 (+1 substitute) |
| Business start up/development | 2 |
| Voluntary sector | 4 |
| Community representative | 6 (+1 substitute) |
| Project assessment | 6 (+1 substitute) |
| Project monitoring/evaluation | 5 (+1 substitute) |

The most significant area that is not covered by existing LAG members is that of equalities issues and in particular issues faced by elderly people and those with disabilities. The LAG has a number of options on how to address this:

* Membership of the LAG is not changed but advisors are asked to attend as required
* LAG actively approach a specific organisation to join the membership who would be able to cover this gap
* LAG advertise openly using the criteria that ensures the skills gap is covered

Although the work of the LAG will be supported by the Equalities Reference Group, it is felt that around the table on the LAG there is still an obligation to have a good handle on equalities issues. Equalities is central to the delivery of the Programme in Highland and as such it is considered that a fourth option should be considered by LAG members, which would be for the existing membership of the group to undertake specific training to improve their knowledge and understanding of equalities issues with particular regard to the target groups in the LDS of young people, older people and people with disabilities.

The LAG should also consider if there are any of the other essential areas identified above where they feel there is a gap in knowledge of existing membership and how this could be addressed using one of the previously mentioned options.

The group were satisfied that there was sufficient coverage for the remaining sectors already on the Strategic LAG.

 **7 LAP SET UP – UPDATE**

Process has started with two meetings being held to-date, IMFS and IMFN. Liz/Judith gave an update on the IMFN meeting and Martin gave an update on the IMFS meeting. The remaining meetings to take place over the next week.

All Strategic LAG members were encouraged to attend any meetings in their own areas.

**8 FUTURE WORK**

 Fiona presented a paper to the meeting covering Future Work.

**Rural Enterprise:-**

To be developed into the Rural Enterprise Partnership with a representative from SNH andthe Third Sector Interface added to the suggested sub-group.

**Timescale for Launch:-**

Scottish Government are intending to make the Expression of Interest (EOI) form available on the Scottish Rural Network (SRN) website during July 2015. Some LAGs will be in a position to launch and work on equiries with applicants.

Highland will be issuing a formal reponse to applicants once the EOI form has been seen. The response will need to ensure applicants are aware the programme will be accepting EOI’s but will not be in a position to approve projects and award grant.

Current enquiries are given a general response and emails added to a circulation list.

It is envisaged the EOI form would be a preform to be completed prior to phase 1 application form but as the EOI form has not been released, it is difficult to know at the moment. It is hoped Highland will be in a position to receive Phase 1 applications in Autumn 2015.

It was agreed to formally accept Expressions of Interest in July 2015 providing the information requested is not too onerous.

**9 Monitoring & Evaluation Group Terms of Reference**

Martin gave a brief overview of the paper that was presented to the meeting and requested any comments are emailed to himself (martin.culbertson@highland.gov.uk) after the meeting.

Confirmation is still needed on outputs from the Scottish Government.

Fiona to speak with Mhairi and Cathy following the meeting re involvement.

**9 Equalities Reference Group Terms of Reference**

Liz gave a brief overview of the paper that was presented to the meeting and requested any comments are emailed to herself (liz.whiteford@highland.gov.uk) after the meeting.

Mhairi requested that the word ‘violence’ be changed to ‘abuse’ in the 2ndparagraph of the membership section.

It was requested that eligible applicants are factored into the Terms of Reference. Liz to discuss with Martin from previous experience.

It is hoped the ERG will develop a checklist to be used by development officers to sift out applications so not every project is going to the ERG for comments.

The CPP already has an Equalities Reference Group. Fiona to contact Rosemary MacKinnon to enquire as to whether the CPP Equalities Reference Group’s remit would fit with the requirements of the LEADER Programme.

**10 AOCB**

 No other business discussed.

**11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

 Meeting due Wednesday 29th July 2015, Venue and time TBC.

As next meeting is during the holiday period, members are aksed to confirm attendance. If the meeting is looking as if it will not be quorate, it may possibly shift into the first 2 weeks in August.