**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014-2020 PROGRAMME**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 29th July 2015**

**Inverness Caledonian Stadium**

PRESENT:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Voting |  |  |
| Frances Gunn | Third Sector Interface Private |  |
| Yvonne White | Scottish Crofters Federation Private |  |
| Mhairi Wylie | Third Sector Interface Private |  |
| Alastair Swanson | NFU Private |  |
| Stewart Sandison | SNH Public |  |
| Debbie Gray | UHI Public |  |
| David Alston | THC Public |  |
| Robert Muir | HIE Public |  |
| Advisors  Scott Armstrong | Visit Scotland |  |
| Sarah Lamb – Fisheries | Highland Council |  |
| Fiona Cameron | LEADER |  |
| Wendy Anderson | LEADER |  |
| Liz Whiteford | LEADER |  |
| Martin Culbertson | LEADER |  |
| Judith Wainwright | LEADER |  |
| Fiona Daschofsky | LEADER |  |
| Joe MacMillan | LEADER |  |

**1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Frances Gunn chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Yvonne White was delayed and missed the first five agenda items.

Apologies were received from Jon Hollingdale, Cathy Steer, Nicole Wallace, Andy McCann, David Richardson and Ian Wilson.

**2 MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes agreed.

All recommendations from previous meeting were agreed electronically.

**Actions/Updates from previous meeting**

**Allocation** – Fiona C. has written to Scottish Government and has also had subsequent conversations with them on the subject. Fiona C. is scheduled to meet next Wednesday in Edinburgh to discuss the detail of how the allocation methodology was applied.

**Election of LAG Chair/Vice Chair** – Fiona C. contacted Frances and it was agreed that Jon Hollingdale would be chair with Frances Gunn being vice-chair.

**Presentation by Neil Ross(HIE) –** Fiona Cameron is due to meet with Neil Ross although he is currently on annual leave a meeting has been arranged for his return.

**Future Work**: **Rural Enterprise** - meeting to be scheduled by end of August.

**: Timescale for launch –** seen draft of Expression of Interest but won’t

golive until SLA is signed.

**Equalities Reference Group(ERG)** – Fiona Daschofsky advised that a meeting had taken place with Rosemary MacKinnon, Highland Council’s Equal Opportunities Officer. The remit of the CPP ERG will not meet the requirements of the LEADER Programme as it is only Public Sector Officers that sit on that group. Rosemary has provided the LEADER team with the Council’s list of contacts for local groups with an interest in Equality and Diversity issues. The LEADER team will write to the 85 contacts on the database with an invitation to an initial meeting to be held on the 13th October 2015. **(FD to action)**

**3 Register of Interests**

It is a Scottish Government requirement to keep a register of interests but to-date SG have given limited guidance. To ensure that we are audit compliant it has been

decided to adopt the Highland Council approach until further guidance has been received.

Wendy Anderson handed out a guidance paper on Registration of Interests and a form that all LAG/LAP members are required to complete.

David Alston had a query on LAG membership. Fiona C. updated on the process that was used for setting up the LAG.

**4 SLA – Accountable Body & Scottish Government**

Fiona C. circulated the LDS approval letter and SLA for information.

SLA has been run past COSLA. SLA is required to be signed by Highland Council as

the Accountable body.

Prior to the LAG meeting, Fiona C attended a cross service meeting to discuss the SLA. This involved Internal Audit, Finance, Legal, ICT services & Chief Executive’s office.

Internal Audit advised not to sign SLA on the 3rd August as we would have less leverage to try and obtain any outstanding information from Scottish Government Other points:-

1. There is no independent body who would resolve disputes over how disallowance or ineligible costs should be treated
2. advice from IA & Cosla was not to sign SLA until guidance had been received from Scottish Government.

**Bullet Points:**

* SLA & EU regulation for IT(ISO 27001) – Highland Council are currently working towards compliance but SLA and regulations state must be compliant. Council not going to be fully compliant until 2016 at earliest.
* FC to request extension to the 3rd August deadline for signing SLA. **(FC to action)**
* Awaiting update from COSLA.
* Letter from Accountable Body & LAG to SG requesting that further correspondence is addressed to Chair & Vice Chair and confirmation of the percentage required for co-operation projects. **(FC to action)**
* LAG agreed that the SLA should not be signed until guidance has been received and asked Fiona C to ascertain if this is a joint position of local authorities being co-ordinated by COSLA **(FC to action)**
* Scottish Rural Network has employed an officer to assist with co-operation projects.

**5. LAP Steering Group Updates**

**Martin Culbertson:**

**Lochaber -** have had two meetings to-date and the group has decided not to rule

outanyof the ten outcomes at this stage. The group are using the

Lochaber Community Development Plan, which has been in existence

for several years, to assist with determining what types of activities it

wants to support. Next meeting 24th August 2015.

**IMF South –** have only had one meeting to-date and opted to focus on five of the ten

LEADER outcomes. The group has decided not to meet again until it

had a clearer idea of it’s budget allocation. However, in the meantime,

the description and objectives of the Highland LEADER strategy

document has been re-circulated to the group to get them to start

thinking about the broad types of activity they would wish to support

under their chosen outcomes.

**Judith Wainwright:**

**Caithness -** have had two meetings to-date and the group has decided not to rule

outanyof the ten outcomes at this stage. Next meeting 15th August.

**Sutherland –** want to reduce to four outcomes. Next meeting tba.

**IMF North -** have had two meetings to-date and the group has decided not to rule

outanyof the ten outcomes at this stage but want to focus on three in

particular. Didn’t want another meeting until end of September.

Issue raised around the membership of the IMFN steering group

membership and how well it covered the geographic area. It was

agreed to provide a list of the current membership for LAG members

to consider whether any additional members could be identified.

Membership list e-mailed to LAG on the 30th July 2015.

**Liz Whiteford:**

**Skye -** have had two meetings to-date and the group have identified five outcomes

and have also given suggestions as to what projects they want to

see coming forward. Identified some geographic gaps in membership so

going to target village halls in relevant areas to nominate individuals.

Sub-group formed to develop initial draft of Local Area Action Plan. Next

meeting to be held on the 15th September when draft plan to be discussed.

Initial plan to be reviewed after one year.

**Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh –** have had one meetings to-date. So far

there has been little response to prioritising of themes /outcomes but

Development Officer to follow up on.

Next meeting on the 10th August 2015.

**6 Financial Strategy**

Fiona C. gave a presentation to the group.

**Main points:-**

* underpins method of implementing
* gives framework for local delivery
* requirement to provide commit & spend profiles to Scottish Government
* to be reviewed and reworked as required
* option 3 – would need strong justification not to use the same formula as the James Hutton Institute.
* lump sum option – not robust enough and would require justification.
* co-operation projects – formally request that the 10% allocated for co- operation projects be reduced to 5%. The other 5% to go towards inter-LAP projects.
* co-operation projects have the potential to benefit the area.
* review to be undertaken midway through programme.
* it was agreed to hold the Rural Enterprise pot centrally.
* full allocations to be awarded and regular reviews to take place throughout the programme.
* group was happy for LAPs to issue time limited ‘in principle’ offers.
* agreed to slice £500k for strategic projects.

**7 AOCB**

Fiona D and Wendy Anderson are part of a Working Group established to consider

communications across LEADER in Scotland. Group includes Scottish Rural

Network, Scottish Government LEADER team representatives and LEADER staff

from 5 LAGs.

The group will be working on a number of actions with Fiona D taking forward the

development of a guide on how LAGs can use social media to engage with

communities and indviduals in their area.

In terms of promoting the Highland LEADER Programme, Fiona D and Wendy will

begin work on developing the new website and setting up Twitter and facebook

accounts.

Press release issued last week circulated to the LAG for information.

Other business:-

* Yvonne White attended recent LAP meeting in Portree and wanted to record the quality of the hand outs and information presented at the meeting.
* Tabled papers to be e-mailed to group. **(FC to action)**
* **Fisheries update from Sarah Lamb:** operational approval expected August 2015 with anticipated launch during October 2015

**8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Meeting due Wednesday 26th August 2015, Venue and time TBC.

**Note: after lunch Rosemary MacKinnon carried out Equalities Training with all**

**attendees, with the exception of Stewart Sandison who was unable to attend**

**the afternoon session.**