

**Argyll and the Islands LEADER Local Action Group Meeting**  
**The Corran Halls, No. 54, The Esplanade, Oban, PA34 5AB**  
**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 10.30 AM – 12:00PM**

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**MINUTE OF MEETING**

**LAG Attendance**

David Adams McGilp (A. Chair)	Visit Scotland (public)
Elaine Jamieson	Forestry Commission Scotland (public)
Stuart Shaw	Scottish Natural Heritage (public)
Iain Johnston	Kintyre Cultural Forum (non-public)
Alastair Fleming	Scottish Islands Federation (non-public)
Lucy Sumsion	NFU Scotland (non-public)
Reeni Kennedy Boyle (VC)	Fyne Futures (non-public)

**LAG Apologies**

Iain MacInness (Chair)	Cowal Area Network (non-public)
Arlene Cullum	Argyll & Bute Council (public)
Glenn Heritage	Third Sector Interface (non-public)
Colin McLean	HIE (public)
Hannah Robinson	LLTNP (public)
George Hunter	North Ayrshire Council
Marina Curran-Colthart	Argyll Biodiversity Partnership

**In Attendance**

Colin Fulcher	Strategic Co-ordinator
Ishabel Bremner	Argyll & Bute Council (Accountable Body)
Kirsty Moyes	Development Officer
Kwasi Addo	Development Officer (minutes)

## 1) Welcome and Introductions / Sederunt & Apologies

### 1.1 Welcome

In the absence of LAG Chair Ian MacInnes, David Adams McGilp stood in as Chair, and welcomed all to the March meeting.

LAG members were thanked for their attendance, and for their support and time to come together to discuss the project.

### 1.2 Sederunt and Apologies

Attendance and apologies were noted as above.

CF thanked everyone for their attendance and explained how crucial it was at a decision making meeting to obtain a quorum. LAG Members can participate in LAG Meetings via Voice Conference.

## 2) Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were declared for this application.

### 2.1 Quorum

As there were 7 LAG members in attendance, 4 of whom were non-public members and 3 public members; the meeting was quorum.

## 3) Minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016, HIE Offices, Lochgilphead

### **Action Points from Previous Minutes**

1.1 “November” should be amended to “December”

6.3 Comments – Amendment to be made to the following – “Makes perfect sense and **is a**”; and amend “anything to improve community buy in” to “**strengthen community buy in**”.

Lucy Sumsion – Highlighted that it would be good to evidence where multiple Themes / Objectives are highlighted, when Development Officers are presenting Projects to the LAG.

### 3.1 Proposer & Seconder

The Previous Minutes were proposed by Alastair Fleming, and seconded by Lucy Sumsion.

### 3.2 Signature of Previous Minute

The Minutes were signed by LAG Acting Chair David Adams McGilp.



#### 4) **Matters Arising**

CF confirmed that a press release had been issued and sent out to all local media outlets within the Argyll and the Islands LAG area, providing details of projects approved at the previous LAG meetings held in October, November and December. The Argyll and the Islands LEADER website has been updated; and the Scottish Rural Network website has been provided with up to date information in relation to Argyll and the Islands LEADER.

Elected members within Argyll & Bute Council have been emailed and provided with up to date information on Argyll and the Islands LEADER.

**Action Point 1** – LAG Members have requested that they be included in the distribution of press release.

Moving forward, it was discussed and agreed to undertake an Elected Members seminar on LEADER. The aim of this is to provide elected members with information on LEADER, and to explain the LEADER / LAG decision making process. A few dates were discussed and Member Services will be contacted to arrange dates at some point in August.

**Action Point 2** - LAG Members discussed that when a project accepts a LEADER Offer of Grant Award, a press pro-forma should be included for applicants to complete to send to their local paper, evidencing LEADER funding award.

CF informed the LAG Members that Gordon Gray Stephens has resigned from the LAG, and as a result, has freed up the position of Vice Chair. Gordon Gray Stephens has been thanked for his contribution. A new Vice Chair will be required and David Adams McGilp has expressed an interest in the role. This was proposed by Alastair Fleming, and seconded by Iain Johnston. As other LAG members were absent from the meeting, it was decided that a nomination process should be extended to the full LAG. The possibility of electing 2 LAG Vice Chairs was raised.

**Action Point 3** – A new LAG Vice Chair will be required – especially in the absence of the Chair. Clarification has been requested by LAG members to determine that the role of the Vice Chair does not automatically be promoted to Chair, in the absence of a Chair. CF to clarify with Scottish Government. CF will also send out an email to all LAG Members interested in nominating themselves for the role of Vice Chair.

LAG Communication – As per guidance, when the Strategic Co-ordinator sends out emails to LAG Members, email contact details are hidden from other members on the distribution list. LAG Members have requested an internal contact spreadsheet.

**Action Point 4** – Lucy Sumsion has agreed to provide LAG Members with an internal contact spreadsheet.

SharePoint – At the previous LAG Meeting, members agreed that a possible solution to some of the issues on LARCs, could be the use of SharePoint to upload key documents. CF advised that he is still having ongoing discussions with IT, as non-council employees will need to complete and sign Argyll & Bute Council ICT paperwork. CF will provide update at the next LAG meeting.



General discussion regarding the current structure of the minutes. As the LDS is the key document members decided that the Theme and Objective met for each project should be noted in the minutes in addition to the scoring details already provided. All members agreed.

## 5) Progress Reports

### 5.1 Strategic Co-ordinator's Report

#### 5.1.1 Finances

	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>COMMITMENT</u>	<u>REMAINING</u>
<u>Theme 1 &amp; 2</u>	£2,198,756.70	<b>£472,963.72</b>	<b>£1,725,792.98</b>
<u>Theme 3 - Enterprise</u>	£488,612.60	<b>£23,150.00</b>	<b>£465,462.60</b>
<u>Theme 3 - FD</u>	£488,612.60	<b>£47,628.50</b>	<b>£440,984.10</b>
<u>Co-operation</u>	£488,612.60	<b>£-</b>	<b>£488,612.60</b>

CF provided a breakdown on the Project Spend to date. Administration Costs (25% of budget including staff / on costs & Travel Subsistence / LAG Members T&S) have not been included, but will be included for future meetings following a request by the LAG.

**Action Point 5** – CF to amend financial table with additional information as requested by LAG members.

To date 13 projects have been approved, with 1 project rejected.

#### 5.1.2 Co-operation

New Co-operation Guidance was released by the Scottish Government in January and this has been uploaded to LARCS.

CF advised that there is potential co-operation project relating to the John Muir Way between Helensburgh & Dunbar. CF will be attending a meeting to discuss this. It is unlikely that Argyll and the Islands LEADER will be the lead partner in this Co-operation project as the bulk of project activity and delivery will take place out with Argyll and the Islands. CF will provide the LAG with updates.

#### 5.1.3 Strategic LAG Meeting

General discussion around Strategic LAG Meetings and how frequently these should be taking place. The meetings are usually annually, but following the introduction of LARCs and newly released Change Request Guidance relating to Local Development Strategies from the Scottish Government; a Strategic Lag Meeting will be called. The aim of the Strategic LAG Meeting will be to review the Argyll and the Islands Local Development Strategy and Business Plan, and to determine what changes will need to be made to these following the introduction of LARCs. The new Change Request guidance stipulates that a maximum of 2 Change Requests will be allowed per year.



**Action Point 6** – CF will send out a Doodle Poll to LAG members for a Strategic LAG Meeting date in May, for LAG Members to review the LDS.

#### **5.1.4 Change Requests**

##### **04/P0004 – ACT Hubs**

LAG Members were asked to consider a significant change to the delivery of the ACT Hubs project:

<b>Description of Change</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>	<b>LAG Decision</b>
The Project would like to share the responsibilities of the ACT hubs Finance Officer (14 hours per week at £25K p.a. pro rata) between two posts (each for 7 hours per week at £21K p.a. pro rata).	In order to achieve the range of skills that the project needs, we considered the marketing elements were not likely to be compatible with finance expertise, so felt we had a better chance of securing the skills required by offering 2 separate positions. We have reduced the salary slightly for each post to accommodate any additional on costs of employment	<b>Approved</b> – LAG Members felt that the project were actually trying to do more for less money. As a result of this Change Request, project delivery will be extended by 6 months; and there will be a slight reduction in the LEADER grant award.

**Action Point 7** – To ensure that any Change Requests requiring LAG input are dealt with in a timeous manner, CF will send a “Change Request - Decision Required” email to LAG Members marked as urgent.

#### **5.2 Accountable Body Report**

IB provided an update on the forthcoming Accountable Bodies meeting which will take place on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April. Key topics for discussion will be:

- Ongoing issues - LARCs
- Clarity on Guidance for delivery staff, applicants and LAG
- Issues relating to the LEADER Offer of Grant Award Letter

IB gave further update on issues raised by Accountable Body representatives through HIEP.

Lucy Sumsion advised that the NFU sits on various lobbying groups, and this could also be another avenues for LAG Members to raise awareness of LEADER delivery issues with Scottish Government.

**Action Point 8** - LAG Members were invited to submit any issues they would like raised by IB at the Accountable Bodies meeting in April. Submissions to be sent to CF/IB.



## 6) Consideration of Applications

### 6.1 – 04/P00032 – Tarbert Holiday Park (Applicant: West Loch Shores).

No declarations of interest.

Kirsty Moyes (Development Officer) delivered the project summary:

<b>LDS Theme</b>
<b>Theme 3: Small Business Support and Farm Diversification</b>  <i>(Additional) Theme 2: Enhancing the services and facilities in the Argyll and the Islands area to attract individuals, families, visitors and investors to grow and maintain economically viable communities.</i>
<b>Objective</b>
<b>Enterprise – Small Business Support</b>

<b>Scoring submitted prior to meeting</b>			
<b>Average Score</b>	<b>Number Scoring</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>
28	11	39	15

#### Comments

- Discussion by the LAG Members over the range in scoring.
- Fits well with Theme 3 - SME tourism growth/diversification in offer to visitors. Meets strategic priorities of Tarbert and Skipness Community Trust.
- Provision of additional accommodation is to be welcomed.
- LAG members agreed to approve.

**Approved**

## 7) AOCB & Date of Next meeting

### **AOCB - Claims Process**

The current LEADER programme is strict on penalties, due to the inflexibility of LARCs and the lack of guidance. LEADER delivery staff are doing their best to minimise penalties on both projects and the accountable body, by checking claims “off line”, before submission of claims on LARCs. This is a timely process that is unfair – especially as there is a lack of up to date guidance in relation to LARCs for both applicants and project delivery staff.

### **AOCB - LEADER Animation and Promotion**

LAG Members discussed the current level of applications coming to the LAG. CF raised with the LAG members that there are a stable level of Expressions of Interest being submitted and Draft Applications created; but that there are a high number of applications not being submitted to the LAG for scoring due to being Technical Ineligible.

LAG Members discussed LEADER animation and promotion, by staff attending various events/meetings. CF asked the LAG members to circulate information of any events/meetings to him, and where possible there would be a LEADER presence.

LAG Members discussed anecdotal evidence of the current LEADER (LARCS) application process being off putting to many potential applicants. It was suggested that LEADER Delivery Staff provide technical expertise through LEADER Application Process workshops – including delivery of training in how to use LARCs for applications. As there is no LARCs Test System – this will not be an option, as test applications cannot be created on the live applications system. LAG members advised using the LEADER website as a resource for applicants to see the steps involved in submitting a successful application – e.g. key documents required; and to highlight potential issues in relation to Technical Ineligibility.

### **AOCB - Theme 3 Project Scoring**

LAG Members discussed the current scoring process for projects. It was noted that the current process appears weighted towards Community Projects as Farm Diversification and Small Business Support scores tend to be lower for some of the scoring criteria than projects that fall within Themes 1 and 2.

It was suggested that a separate scoring process for Theme 3 be considered by the LAG; or that scoring sheets include sections marked as “applicable / not applicable” for Theme 3 projects.

**Action Point 9** - LAG members were asked to consider the setting up of a small sub group to consider the overall scoring process for Small Business Support / Farm Diversification, and to bring their findings to the Strategic LAG Meeting in May, before scoring for the next round in June.

LS – To provide Farming Feedback on farming side



## **AOCB - Withdrawn Project – Developing and Growing the Argyll Food Economy – 04/P00010**

LAG Members requested an update on the above withdrawn project. Kwasi Addo (Development Officer) advised the LAG that an issue with how the Match Funding had been awarded was only picked up after project approval; and that the reason this information was not picked up sooner was because it was not detailed in any documentation presented as per the application process.

**Action Point 10** – LAG members to consider Scottish Enterprise representation on the LAG (in addition to HIE representation), for the purposes of technical expertise (e.g. highlight any match funding issues); and scoring projects in the Helensburgh & Lomond area, within Argyll & the Islands.

## **AOCB - Agenda for Strategic LAG**

The LAG discussed increasing LAG intervention rate from 50% - 90% to encourage applications. CF advised of other LAG areas that had taken this approach; and the number of applications as a result (55) that had overwhelmed LEADER delivery staff and LAG members. The LAG can decide to vary the intervention, but clear guidance on this will need to be developed for audit purposes.

Discussion around amending the LDS to include collaborative control from native / non-native invasive species (NNIS) following an expression of interest that was received. It was noted that the LDS has been approved by the Scottish Government and that changing themes at this stage to suit potential projects would put previous projects at a disadvantage.

Discussion by LAG members around Skills Development & Training – and how this was included in previous programme. Further clarification needs to be sought on guidance, and what kind of training support can be funded through LEADER (if not delivered through school, college or university).

Expressions of Interest – LAG Members discussed a process that needs to be included within the LDS, detailing what should happen if a project challenges the decision made by Development Officers not to proceed with expressions of interest through to application.

## **AOCB – EMFF / FLAG**

CF provided an update on FLAG and how the joint strategy has been developed and presented to Marine Scotland. CF discussed the FLAG application system, and that there is also a test system which FLAG delivery staff will be able to access. CF is currently working on an EMFF timeline which will be launching soon and hopefully complement that of LEADER.





### **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2017 with the time and venue still to be confirmed.

D Adams McGilp thanked everyone for their attendance and input to the meeting and closed the meeting.

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

