

Argyll and the Islands LEADER Local Action Group Meeting
HIE The Enterprise Centre, Kilmory Industrial Estate, Lochgilhead, PA31 8SH
Thursday 22nd June 2017 at 10.30 AM

MINUTE OF MEETING

LAG Attendance

David Adams McGilp (Vice Chair)	Visit Scotland (public)
Iain MacInness (Chair)	Cowal Area Network (private)
Lucy Sumsion (Via phone)	NFU Scotland (private)
Reeni Kennedy Boyle	Fyne Futures (private)
Iain Johnston	Kintyre Cultural Forum (private)
Arlene Cullum (teleconference)	Argyll & Bute Council (public)
Marina Curran Colthart	Argyll & Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership (public)

LAG Apologies

Hannah Robinson	LLTNP (public)
Alison McGrory	NHS (public)
Alastair Fleming	Scottish Islands Federation (non-public)
Stuart Shaw	Scottish Natural Heritage (public)
Stewart MacLennan	MacLennan Motors (non-public)
Glenn Heritage	Third Sector Interface (private)
Colin McLean	HIE (public)
Elaine Jamieson	Forestry Commission Scotland (public)

In Attendance

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



1) Sederunt and Apologies

1.1 Sederunt

Colin Fulcher welcomed all to the meeting, in particular thanking Iain MacInnes for attending after a period of illness. It was agreed that David Adams McGilp would Chair this meeting.

1.2 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.

2) Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest are noted at each application.

2.1 Quorum

7 LAG Members participated with 5 LAG members in attendance and 2 participating by teleconference, 4 non-public members and 3 public members, the meeting was quorate.

3) Minutes of previous meetings (16th March 2017)

Actions

No points were raised

Decision

Minutes were proposed by Reeni Kennedy Boyle

Minutes were seconded by Lucy Sumsion

Minutes were signed by David Adams McGilp

4) Matters arising

4.1 Press Releases

CF recapped what had been discussed at the last meeting. Information relating to any projects approved today will be issued to local press, the Council's communications team and Scottish Government, who publish this on the Scottish Rural Network website. A Pro Forma will be issued to approved projects for them to use with local press.

AC offered to add details of approved projects to the Funding Alert email that has a circulation of over 1000 groups, members agreed.

LAG members had a general discussion about methods of publicising the Programme and approved projects. CF advised that Twitter had been successfully used to promote the LEADER Information Sessions.

Action Point: CF to circulate details of the Twitter account to all LAG members.

LAG members recommended that applicants use Rural Network News to publicise projects – **All members agreed.**

4.2 Vice Chair

CF confirmed that as only 1 nomination had been received David Adams McGilp was now confirmed as Vice Chair.

4.3 Strategic LAG Meeting

Previously this had been a standalone meeting but the results of the recent Poll issued to LAG members showed a very low response for keeping that format. LAG members suggested that this should be incorporated into a decision making meeting. **All members agreed.**

5) Progress Reports

5.1 Co-ordinator's Report

5.1.1 Finances

	Budget	Committed	Remaining	App. Claim	No of Projects
Theme 1 & 2	£ 2,328,332	£ 495,335	£ 1,832,997	£ 9,000	11
Theme 3 - Enterprise	£ 488,613	£ 91,150	£ 397,463		2
Theme 3 - Farm Diversification	£ 488,613	£ 47,629	£ 440,985		1
Co-operation	£ 488,613	£ -	£ 488,613		0
Administration	£ 1,091,955	£ 153,338	£ 938,617		
Total	<u>£ 4,886,126</u>	<u>£ 787,451</u>	<u>£ 4,098,675</u>	<u>£ 9,000</u>	

Number of Projects	14
Rejected	1
Withdrawn	1

CF issued members with a finance report summarising the current financial position with the information that members had asked for. CF suggested that going forward this report could be emailed to LAG members with the Agenda, to allow members time to review the information before the meetings. **All members agreed.**

There was general discussion regarding the budgets and financial figures, members raised concerns about the relatively short period of time that remains to disperse the funds. The claims paid column has been added to the spreadsheet to allow members to see what has actually been paid to projects.

Decision

LAG members decided that all approved projects should be completed/have monies spent by end of August 2020. **All members agreed.**

CF provided members with an update on Expressions of Interest received for Co-operation projects and asked members to be aware of potential link ups. RKB asked if the LAG could make a "Call for Co-operation Projects" and use this a vehicle to create awareness. **All members agreed.**



5.1.2 Information Sessions

CF, KA and KM summarised the four sessions held so far providing details of locations, numbers and type of potential applicants attending. CF provided members with details of the upcoming sessions, confirming the information being captured relates to who attends and where they heard about the session. The most successful platform just now is social media. There was a general discussion regarding these sessions and IB shared how this information is spread through the Council.

5.1.3 Farm Diversification/Enterprise Scoring

Members have raised concerns that the scoring process seems more relevant/focused on Community Development and this has a potential impact on Farm Diversification and Enterprise applications. There was a general discussion regarding this.

Action points: CF to liaise with Lucy Sumsion and Business Gateway and circulate comments/bullet points to LAG members by end of July. LAG members to send feedback and comments to CF by end of August.

5.1.4 FLAG Update

CF confirmed that FLAG launched on 12th June and provided members a summary of this. There was a general discussion regarding themes, the initial types of enquiries that have been received so far. A further update will be provided at the next meeting.

5.2 Accountable Body Report

IB reported back on the Accountable Bodies and LARCS meetings and groups. She has asked Scottish Government to issue an Organisational Chart to show the various changes that have taken place. An update was provided to members regarding the issues raised by the groups, in particular discussing LARCS, Accountable Bodies issues and effect these are having on Programme delivery. There was a general discussion regarding these issues, dispute resolution and lack of cohesion across the various guidance documents and desk instructions.

IB informed members that work is underway to develop a Procurement Aide for applicants/projects. There was a general discussion regarding this.

Decision

Members asked to have the Procurement Aide information circulated by email with responses sent to CF to collate.

6) Consideration of Applications

LAG members had a discussion regarding the current Declaration of Interest Risk Register guidance. Currently there is no mention of "Family Members" but a member raised a question, what is the LAG view on whether this should be classed as potentially significant or influential.

Decision: All members agreed to add Family Members to the Risk Register as High/Red.

6.1 – 04/P00029 – David Sumsion T/A Ardkinglas Estate – Office Rental Unit

Lucy Sumsion noted a High level of interest. The phone call to her was ended with the agreement that she would be called back when the discussions for this application had ended. David Adams McGilp left the room to preserve the Quorum, with Iain MacInnes taking the Chair for this item.

5 members were present for discussing this application: Iain MacInnes (Chair; Private) ; Reeni Kennedy Boyle (Private) ; Iain Johnstone (Private) ; Arlene Cullum (Public) and Marina Curran-Colthart (Public)

LDS Theme
Theme 3: Farm Diversification and Small Business Support
Objective

Scoring submitted prior to meeting			
Average Score	Number Scoring	High	Low
33	10	38	23

Comments

There is a clear fit with the Economic Development policies for the area; good evidence of need and it would provide good links for the local area.

Location fits well with planning and other businesses in the area; good access to A83 and good access to markets.

Members present unanimously approved this project. As the applicant is providing their own match funding, some of which is by means of bank loan, a decision in principle will be issued subject to having the full match funding in place.

APPROVED – DECISION IN PRINCIPLE

DAM was asked back into the room, resuming Chair and asked that CF call Lucy Sumsion to bring her back to the meeting.

7 members back in participation.



6.2 – 04/P00055 – Community of Arran Seabed Trust - Arran's Community Marine Hub - Phase 2: Activity base and COAST / MPA HQ

No declarations of interest. Quorum requirements met.

DAM asked that it be noted for the absence of doubt, that the applicants made a statement that "the Arran Seabed Trust/Coast established a Marine Protection Area (MPA)" is incorrect. They have recommended an area for inclusion on the list of MPAs and the Scottish Government established it.

LDS Theme
Theme 1: Strengthening the rural economy by maximising the sustainable use of our natural, cultural and heritage resources as an economic driver.
Objective
Objective 2: To improve collaborative working to increase opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

Scoring submitted prior to meeting			
Average Score	Number Scoring	High	Low
32	11	39	20

Comments

The application does provide growth opportunities for marine tourism industry. Good evidence of need and local support. They are looking to purchase additional equipment.

The applicants themselves have traditionally been a lobbying group so this activity is a departure for them, this brings a long term sustainability issue. Although a Project Plan was provided, a business plan was not and it was felt that this made it more difficult to score certain areas including return on investment and sustainability.

The long term commitment from a private funder was encouraging.

DAM (Chair) asked members to vote: All members unanimously agreed to issue a decision in principle, subject to all match funding being in place.

APPROVED – DECISION IN PRINCIPLE

LAG members had a general discussion regarding the volume of attachments, finding information on LARCs and how applicants link these attachments/documents to the project plan. Members felt that for longer term or phased projects it would be useful for applicants to provide a business plan.



7) Strategic Items

CF gave introduction to this section. The main focus is to work towards bringing the LDS up to date. Although the Scottish Government have approved the LDS in its current format, it is a working document with gaps that could not be completed at time due to external factors. A key gap is the FLAG section and LARCS system, these were not known when developing the LDS. Only changes relating to these gaps and related processes can be amended. The Scottish Government will allow 2 change requests to be submitted for the LDS each year. There was general discussion with members agreeing that the necessary amendments be collated into 1 change request.

7.1 EMFF Themes

CF reminded members of previous discussions and would like to update this section to reflect that the FLAG is now a joint structure with Ayrshire. There was general discussion regarding FLAG membership and the differences in governance between FLAG/Marine Scotland and LAG/Scottish Government.

Action point: CF to circulate Themes and Objectives and other relevant documents to LAG members for information.

7.2 Update of LEADER Local Development Strategy

7.2.1 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

CF gave overview of information currently available, followed by a general discussion. The issue has been raised with Scottish Government that the current guidance requires clarification. There are no timescales yet but once this is available CF will circulate it to LAG members.

Members are concerned about the lack of Evaluation Indicators and the LAG/Chair offered to write a letter to Scottish Government to support request for clarification. IB confirmed that the Accountable Body are collating statistical information. This has given members confidence that the key information required to evaluate the programme is being gathered and will be made available to the LAG. Given these reassurances the LAG will wait until the response is received or new guidance becomes available. CF will circulate this when it becomes available.

7.2.2 Small Business Support Scheme and 7.2.3 Decision Making Process

CF gave overview of the current process as detailed in the LDS. As this does not reflect the LARCS process, CF is asking for permission to draft a proposed amendment which will follow the LARCS process. Given that LARCS is not fully operational yet and that Scottish Government are currently revising the current version of the desk instructions, it was difficult to put a timeframe on this. Members agreed that CF will circulate the proposed amendment for their consideration and comments once the relevant information becomes available.

8.2.4 Intervention Rate

CF advised that this item had been added to the agenda as some members were concerned about the lack of applications coming forward and that very little of the funds have been committed. As Chair, DAM said he would be inclined to until after the planned information sessions have taken place and would like to know how the number of inquiries translates into quality applications. His concern is that if you reduce/remove the need for applicants to provide match funding you potentially dilute the line fitting with our LAG priorities if you try to spend the money quickly. He

would like the LAG to demonstrate probity as our aim is to support quality projects that deliver our agreed objectives.

CF asked members to consider the potential impact on the current applications that have been approved, including those who have not made it as far as the LAG for technical reasons and the possibility that new applicants would potentially be given an advantage over these due to a change in criteria. He advised members that another LAG had raised the intervention rate and this had led to in excess of 50 applications being received for one round and the impact that this had on members and the LEADER team.

IB said that a key issue is reputational risk to the Council and the degree of fairness to applicants. Comments:

Given the current economic climate and the difficulty of applicants in getting match funding could we consider some different approaches, for example maybe introducing different intervention rates for Community/ Enterprise/Farm Diversification projects or maybe a more targeted approach where a higher intervention rate is given if projects can meet X, Y and Z ?

There are currently 60 applications on LARCs – members said this makes it difficult to know what the pipeline is.

Action points by the next meeting:

- 1) Looking at the applications currently on LARCs, numerical information to be provided on the status of these e.g. number likely to progress to application; number not being taken forward etc.
- 2) Pipeline information to be provided at all future meetings.
- 3) Feedback and agreed statistical information, to be provided on the outcome of the information sessions, to allow members to gauge the impact of these.
- 4) Bullet points to be provided on the types of barriers to progressing inquiries and Expressions of Interest to applications.

Decision:

Members agreed to delay the consideration of increasing the intervention rate offered once the requested information has been received and discussed.

8) AOCB & Date of Next Meeting

8.1 Question regarding Invasive species and potential training and skills development

This issue was raised at member's request. There was a general discussion regarding whether or not the Themes and Objectives agreed in the LDS could be opened up to include the issues surrounding invasive species, including training, awareness and skills development.

DAM (Chair), CF and IB confirmed that the Scottish Government have approved our Strategic Themes and Objectives and these cannot be amended now.

Some members wished to note their disappointment as in their opinion, during the development stages of the LDS the failure to fully explore some potential avenues and links to certain partner organisation's key documents/strategies were not as close as they could be.

No amendments would be made to the themes and objectives.



8.2 Procurement Procedures/Potential Barriers

The development of a Procurement aide for issuing to applicants was discussed during the Item 5.2 Accountable Body update. A member raised a concern about some remote communities having difficulty obtaining 3 quotes. There was a general discussion regarding the procurement and other potential barriers. Members agreed, as note within the other items, to wait for the Procurement Aide, the feedback from the information sessions and pipeline applications, before discussing this further.

8.3 LAG membership

IMCl raised concerns about the numbers of members attending meetings and the potential effect/impact that an increase in the number of applications submitted would have on have volunteer members and their requirements to deal with this. There was a general discussion regarding steps already taken, CF confirmed this has been raised at Scottish Government, and how to attract more/new members to attend meetings.

8.4 Change Requests

Members agreed that these could go to the Chair to review and consideration, change requests could be considered by email rather than waiting till the next LAG Meeting. This has been the understanding for all change requests in this programme. If the LAG Chair deemed it necessary, a request would be issued to the full LAG for consideration by email.

The next meeting will be held on 21st September 2017, hopefully in Oban, with the venue to be confirmed nearer the time.

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

Signed _____ date _____