**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014-2020 PROGRAMME**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 27 APRIL 2016**

**CR4 HQ**

**PRESENT:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Voting** |  |  |
| Frances Gunn(FG) | Third Sector Interface | Private |
| Ian Donald(ID) | Third Sector Interface | Private |
| Yvonne White(YW) | Scottish Crofting Federation | Private |
| Ian Wilson(IW) | NFU | Private |
| Stewart Sandison(SS) | SNH | Public |
| George Farlow(GF) | THC | Public |
| Debbie Gray(DG) | North Highland College, UHI | Public |
| Cathy Steer(CS) | NHS | Public |
|  |  |  |
| **Advisory** |  |  |
| Nicole Wallace(NW) | THC |  |
| Fiona Cameron(FC) | LEADER |  |
| Anne Sutherland (AS) | Sutherland LAP |  |
| Fiona Daschofsky(FD) | LEADER |  |
| Martin Culbertson(MC) | LEADER |  |
| Liz Whiteford(LW) | LEADER |  |
| Wendy Anderson(WA) | LEADER |  |
| Meg Gillies(MG) | Skye LAP |  |
| ~~Sarah Lamb(SL)~~ | ~~EMFF~~ |  |
| Joe MacMillan(JM) | LEADER |  |

**1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

FG chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Jon Hollingdale, Robert Muir, David Alston (George Farlow attended as deputy), Graeme Ambrose, Scott Armstrong, Sharon MacKay, David Richardson, Alistair Swanson, Richard Wallace, Catherine Bateson, Mhairi Wylie, Paula Betts, Judith Wainwright, Sarah Lamb and from LAP representatives Nail Smith, Pat Buchanan, Tom Davis & Amy MacDonald .

**The meeting was quorate.**

**2 MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

**3 MATTERS ARISING**

There were nine actions from the last meeting, seven for FC and two for NW. All actions have either been dealt with or have been included as an agenda item for this meeting.

**4 DO Updates**

Updates for IMFN, IMFS, Lochaber, Sutherland, Caithness, Skye, WRSL and a summary of Expressions of Interest for Strategic Projects, had been distributed ahead of the meeting.

No additional points were raised at the meeting.

MG requested clarification of the cashflow funding options that were discussed at the last meeting.

FC clarified that the two options for funding an administrative role:

* through a LEADER Strategic Project; eligibility of this needs to be determined by SG.
* through the LEADER Administration budget.

MG also requested that the concerns of the LAPs over the Loan Arrangement issue be recorded in the minutes.

**5 ERG Update (verbal update from FC)**

A meeting of the group was held on the 12/4. Attendance was very poor with only six members of the group attending plus FC & WA from LEADER. FC to issue an e-mail to all the members of the group to confirm that they still want to be a member of the group.

FC reminded the ERG that their function was to be an advisory role for the Highland LEADER Programme.

The Pre-Application form and Equality Assessment Form were discussed and changes updated. Equalities questions are now part of the Pre-Application Form.

A meeting of the ERG group to be arranged for w/c 2/5 or the 9/5 when they will propose how they would like to see the ERG working.

FC advised the LAG that the ERG would be looking at a summary of the Pre-Application form and not the full form. The LAG raised concerns over the impact to applicants of delays in the approval process, should the process for the ERG considering applications result in this. FC advised that it may be more practical to ask the ERG to undertake sampling of projects and that is an option that could be presented to them. The LAG indicated they would be supportive of this approach.

The LAG wanted their concerns about timeframes flagged to the ERG. **FC to action**

**6 EMFF Update (verbal update from NW)**

Communication on the areas of concerns recorded at the last meeting are still ongoing.

Areas of concern:

* The suggested inclusion of an indemnity clause in the Framework Agreement which places responsibility on the FLAG, when they don’t have financial resources.
* The exclusion of Nairn town as an eligible area for EMFF.

**7 RE/FD Update (verbal update from FC)**

Dates had been sent out to the Rural Enterprise subgroup, with the majority confirming the 10th May as a date for the next meeting. **FC to action**

**8 Risk Register**

FC handed out a spreadsheet which was a first stab at populating the risk register.

DG raised an issue with the control mechanism identified with the risk of THC not being able to provide loans to assist with cashflows. It was identified that a new risk to add would be if the applicant was unable to cashflow a project.

**9 Criteria for Strategic Projects**

FC presented the papers for discussion.

**Summary of decisions agreed by the LAG:**

* **Timescale for a review of programme outcomes to ascertain any requirements for targeting of strategic funds – reports to be submitted at LAG meetings with a full review to take place on an annual basis**
* **Agree a presumption that individual strategic projects will not exceed £100k LEADER grant – agreed**
* **Raise the minimum LEADER award – agreed to raise to £5k grant with a minimum project cost of £10k. LAPs retain the discretion to set a minimum grant level but must not go below £2k.**
* **Agree intervention rate for strategic and inter LAP funds – it was agreed to advterise normal intervention rates at 50% with the LAPs/LAG having the discretion to go higher. The LAG also agreed a 75% intervention rate for co-operation projects with an option of 100% for preparatory work on co-operation projects. It was also recognised that development work (feasibility studies) may require a higher intervention rate from LEADER as they can be difficult to attract match funding for.**
* **Agree amendments required to LAAPs as a result of the above – usual intervention rate to be 50% with LAPs having the discretion to go up to 90%.**

**10 Programme Launch**

The programme launch date was being delayed until the 9th May to allow for the above changes to be communicated to the LAPs, Elections and 2nd May Public Holiday. Changes to the guidance and Pre-Application form will be final by the end of this week. **FC to action**

MG to check with FC regarding their own launch proposed for Skye.

**AOB**

Co-operation Café – due to the success of the Café at the Scottish LEADER conference, FD has discussed with SRN for their help and support to run a similar Highland wide event.

Date and venue to be arranged.

Website – GF requested that updates to the website are easily identified.

**11 Date of next meeting**

The dates of the next four meetings were agreed:

* **Wednesday 29th June**
* **Wednesday 31st August**
* **Wednesday 26th October**
* **~~Wednesday 26~~~~th~~ ~~January 2017~~ should read Wednesday 25th January 2017**

It was agreed that all meetings should start at 10.30am.

**Papers Submitted in Advance to inform this meeting:**

Agenda

LAP Updates for Caithness, IMFN, IMFS, Lochaber, Skye, Sutherland & WRSL

EOI’s – Strategic Projects

Risk Register

Pre-Application Guidance

Pre- Application Form

Minutes of last meeting

**Papers presented at meeting:**

Criteria for Strategic Projects with two appendixes

**List of Acronyms**

**COSLA – Convention of Scottish Local Authorities**

**EMFF - European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**

**EoI – Expression of Interest**

**ERG – Equalities Reference Group**

**FD – Farm Diversification**

**FLAG – Fisheries Local Action Group**

**IMFN – Inner Moray Firth North**

**IMFS – Inner Moray Firth South**

**LAG – Local Action Group**

**LAP – Local Area Partnership**

**LAAP – Local Area Action Plan**

**LDS – Local Development Strategy**

**RE – Rural Enterprise**

**SLA – Service Level Agreement**

**SRN – Scottish Rural Network**

**WRS&L – Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh**