**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014-2020 PROGRAMME**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 26th October 2016**

**ARCHIVE CENTRE**

**PRESENT:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Voting** |  |  |
| Jon Hollingdale (JH) | Community Woodlands Association | Private |
| Frances Gunn (FG) | Third Sector Interface | Private |
| Yvonne White (YW) | Scottish Crofting Federation | Private |
| Ian Wilson (IW) | National Farmers Union | Private |
| David Richardson (DR) | Federation of Small Businesses  | Private |
| Debbie Gray (DG) | North Highland College, UHI | Public |
| Cathy Steer (CS) | NHS | Public |
| **Advisory** |  |  |
| Nicole Wallace (NW) | Highland Council |  |
| Fiona Cameron (FC) | LEADER  |  |
| Wendy Anderson (WA) | LEADER |  |
| Joe MacMillan (JM) | LEADER (**Minute Taker**) |  |
| Sheena Baker (SB) | IMFS LAP |  |

**1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

JH chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone. A brief introduction was then provided by the meeting attendees.

Apologies were received from Sharon MacKay, Alistair Swanson, Robert Muir, Scott Armstrong, Stewart Sandison, Mhairi Wylie, Richard Wallace, and Sarah Lamb and from LAP reps., Pat Buchanan, Lachie MacDonald, Amy MacDonald, Anne Sutherland & Tom Davies.

**The meeting was quorate (5 x Private & 2 Public).**

**2 MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was agreed to remove the action point and the last sentence under item 6 of the 31st August meeting.

The revised minutes of the previous meeting were then agreed.

**3 MATTERS ARISING**

FLAG representation at LAG meetings was still outstanding and not straight forward as FLAG chair is from Moray.

NW to speak to Scott Armstrong, advisory member on both the FLAG and LAG, to see if he would be willing to represent the FLAG at future LAG meetings. **Action NW**

**4 Governance and Risk**

The current risk register was handed out at the meeting. It was agreed that WA would change the

format and issue prior to future LAG meetings. **Action WA**

**5 Declarations of Interest**

 None

**6 LDS update (FC)**

 A review of the proposed changes to the Business Plan was undertaken. The main changes

 proposed were as follows:-

* to allow for the removal of the pre-application phase of the approval proposal
* to reflect a joint FLAG between Highland and Moray and the agreed operating plan
* meetings of all decision making groups to be conducted in line with operating guidelines to be approved by the LAG
* page 11 – the appointment/reappointment of the LAG chair should take place every two years and not annually.

The LAG approved all the proposed changes to the Business Plan (changes identified on Business Plan sent electronically prior to the meeting and changes discussed at meeting).

Revised version of Business Plan had been previously submitted to Scottish Government for information. Revised Business Plan will now be submitted on LARCs as a formal change request.

**7 Programme update (FC)**

A degree of comfort could be taken from the statement issued by Westminster that all funds would be underwritten until the point the UK leaves the EU.

It was however noted that Highland LEADER was still working to the 23rd November deadline and that projects would not be approved beyond this date without formal approval from Scottish

 Government.

LAG indicated that the processing of applications should continue as normal so not to

 lose programme momentum and projects approved in-principle without actually awarding any

 funds. The wording of the in-principle approval award letter will need to be carefully worded so

that applicants do not proceed with the project until formal approval had been received from the SG.

FC advised the meeting that the expected response from the SG on the autumn statement should be made early December and that the implications for SRDP would be known early in the New Year.

JH attending Rural Development Operational Committee tomorrow, Thursday 27th October.

**8 DO Updates**

An update for all seven LAP areas and an update on Strategic/Co-operation Projects had been sent electronically prior to the meeting.

 Additional points/questions:-

Caithness

* low number of EOIs was noted
* look at publicity after Autumn Statement

Sutherland

* number of applicants unable to submit applications by deadline date so will now be submitted at a later stage

IMFN

A verbal update was provided by FC on the Fyrish Gymnastics Club application.

* application sent electronically to LAP for approval but only two people responded
* chair of LAP has written to the members of the IMFN LAP
* if still no decision then application will go to the LAP meeting on the 16/11

WRS&L

* one project submitted on LARCs but pulled by SG for checks

Skye and WRS&L

DO to revert back to the standard presentation format

Lochaber

* possible two projects going to the LAP for decision on the 16/11

Report of EOI’s for each area was requested.

LAG is aware of the numerous issues around LARCs and that the system was cumbersome resulting in additional resources and frustrations for both DO’s and applicants.

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

 The first 2 x projects for consideration by the Highland/Moray Flag will be discussed at the FLAG

 meeting on Monday 7th November.

It was not clear if the 23rd November approval deadline for projects applied to EMFF. NW to

 seek clarification from Marine Scotland. **Action NW**

The meeting was advised that the Highland/Moray FLAG chair was in place, new website in place (link below), 2 x projects ready to be submitted for consideration & new post in Moray approved.

 <http://www.highlandmorayflag.co.uk/>

**10 RE/FD Update (FC)**

The finalised version of the Rural Enterprise/Farm Diversification paper had been sent to Scottish Government for formal approval and adding to LDS.

The issue around displacement was discussed and it was suggested that the RE/FD sub-group could provide a list of FAQ’s and best practice examples on how to deal with RE/FD applications. DR noted that the usual principle for displacement would be the “no detriment” principle – i.e. if there is any detriment to an existing operation as a result of awarding public funding then the award should not be made.

Broadband – it was noted that there was not a lot of progress with local broadband solutions.

**11 Hungary event update**

FG attended LINC event in Hungary on behalf of LAG. This was the first time Scotland was represented and the event was a good reminder of the ethos of LEADER. There were a number of projects identified and a number of countries had indicated a willingness to work with Highland LEADER.

 FG was thanked for attending event and reporting back to the LAG.

**12** **LARCs Demo**

FC presented a demonstration of the LARCs IT system and highlighted the issues and workarounds that DO’s were encountering when processing applications with applicants. LAG was advised that the Programme Manager had sent a letter to SG requesting approval of these workarounds. Gillian McDonald from Scottish Government had replied confirming that what was being proposed was acceptable with a number of caveats. FC to clarify the caveats with Gillian. **Action FC**

**NOTE: Both DG (public) + CS (public) left the meeting at this point. Meeting remained quorate.**

**13 Monitoring & Evaluation Framework**

M+E to be an appendix to the Business Plan and sent to SG with LDS. Aim was to produce a simple and meaningful M+E framework to support applicants collect information.

Papers approved as circulated.

**14 Update from Co-ordinators meeting**

LAG was advised that the meeting was generally well received by the co-ordinators in attendance.

FC handed out a letter that was written on behalf of the co-ordinators and sent to Gillian McDonald from the Scottish Government. The letter was also circulated by JH to all the LAGs in Scotland and by NW to all Accountable Bodies in Scotland. Gillian has contacted FC by telephone and indicated that she found the letter to be very helpful. It was then suggested that a sub-group be set-up consisting of a few co-ordinators, Gillian & Vicki from SG and representation from the developers of LARCs to go through all the issues identified in detail.

LARCs issues to be discussed at Accountable Bodies meeting on the 8th November.

**15** **AOB**

LAG members were asked to think about what they can do to promote the future of Community Led Development (CLD) and Rural Development post EU funding. Highland LEADER team is organising a cross Scotland meeting to look at evidencing the benefits of a CLD approach and LAG members were asked to be mindful of this within their own areas of work.

The LAG delegated authority to FC to make further amendments to M&E paperwork as required.

**16 Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was set for the 25th January 2017. Venue TBA.

**Meeting closed at 12.45pm**.

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

Agenda

 Draft minutes of previous LAG meeting

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

 Strategic/Cooperation projects

 Subsequent papers: Business Plan section 6 mark-up draft

 Business Plan appendix F mark-up draft

 **Papers/letters presented at meeting:**

 Risk register

Scoring of Projects

M+E paperwork: Highland Indicators, Participant Forms, Guidance, Project Evaluation Framework & Project Milestones

Letter from Fiona Cameron to Gillian MacDonald – workaround approval

Response letter from Gillian MacDonald

Letter from Fiona Cameron to Gillian MacDonald – issues from co-ordinators meeting

**List of Acronyms**

**BE – Business Enterprise**

**COSLA – Convention of Scottish Local Authorities**

**EMFF - European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**

**EoI – Expression of Interest**

**ERG – Equalities Reference Group**

**EU – European Union**

**FD – Farm Diversification**

**FLAG – Fisheries Local Action Group**

**FPMC – Food Processing Marketing & Co-Operation**

**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**

**TSI – Third Sector Interface**

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