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**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014 – 2020 PROGRAMME
WESTER ROSS, STRATHPEFFER AND LOCHALSH (WRSL) LAP MEETING
1:00 – 3:30 PM, 23 FEBRUARY 2016, ACHNASHEEN HALL**

Public Voting Members Present: Isabelle (Biz) Campbell, Ian Cockburn, Ingrid Galbraith, Mary Gibson, Roddie MacKenzie

Private/Community Voting Members Present: Fran Cree, Tom Forrest, Kristine Mackenzie, Tristan Southall, Amy MacDonald, Norma Ross, Evie Strange, Siobhan Osborne

Advisory/Non-Voting Members Present: Robbie Bain

In Attendance:

Liz Whiteford (Highland LEADER Development Officer)
Lindsay Simpson (HIE)
Yvonne Boa (THC)

Apologies:

Audrey Sinclair, Richard Greene, Robynn Butler, Xander Teago

ELECTION OF WRSL LAP CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Amy MacDonald was proposed as Chair by Biz Campbell / seconded by Kristine Mackenzie. There were no other nominations and Amy accepted the Chair nomination.

Norma Ross was proposed as Vice Chair by Tom Forrest / seconded by Amy MacDonald. There were no other nominations and Norma accepted the Vice Chair nomination.

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND APOLOGIES

Evie Strange and Siobhan Osborne were introduced and welcomed to their first WRSL LAP meeting. Lindsay Simpson, who will shortly be returning to work and taking over from Ingrid Galbraith, was welcomed back.

Apologies were received from Audrey Sinclair, Richard Greene, Robynn Butler and Xander Teago. It was confirmed that Audrey Sinclair and Richard Greene were substitutes for Biz Campbell and Ian Cockburn and would normally only attend WRSL LAP meetings in their absence.

TRAINING PART 1 (EQUALITIES)

Liz Whiteford delivered an Equalities training presentation which included handouts - any follow up questions to be forwarded to Rosemary MacKinnon (Highland Council's Principle Policy Officer – Equalities) the author of the equalities training presentation.

NOTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Note of 5.11.15 LAP meeting (previously circulated) was accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by: Fran Cree / Seconded by: Biz Campbell

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER UPDATE

The WRSL LAAP was approved by the Highland LAG on 2.12.15. Paper copies distributed to WRSL LAP members. To avoid any confusion, members asked to destroy any earlier versions still in existence and not to circulate the latest approved version until formal approval letter and final LEADER guidance received just in case any further amendments are necessary. LAP members asked for a glossary of common acronyms to be added to the WRSL LAAP.

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It is hoped that the final LEADER guidance will be available from Scottish Government in March

Highland Council (Accountable Body) has now signed the Service Level Agreement (SLA) subject to some conditions. This now allows the Scottish Rural Network, which receives all LEADER Expressions of Interest (EOIs), to start to officially pass on the EOIs relevant to Highland. However, Highland can currently only acknowledge receipt of any EOIs as further feedback will not be possible until full guidance, etc has been received from Scottish Government and the Highland LEADER programme has officially launched.

Details about how to access a LEADER EOI form can be found on the Highland LEADER website (www.highlandleader.com)

WRSL LEADER budget of £506,688 is still an indicative allocation and could reduce

LAP members reminded of the opportunity to register a substitute from their organisation/sector to attend LAP meetings if/when they cannot attend

Any outstanding Register of Interest forms should be completed and emailed to LW before the end of February

Scottish LEADER conference to take place in Aviemore on 10th, 11th, 12th March. LAPs have been invited to nominate a delegate to attend and WRSL LAP members asked Amy MacDonald to attend and Amy agreed to attend on the 11th March. Liz Whiteford to ask for conference details to be sent direct to Amy.

WRSL EOIs received to date x 7:

Some of the above EOIs might have to be amended to get through the initial Highland LEADER technical check eg LEADER grant funding requests can initially only be considered for a maximum of 2 years

Liz Whiteford explained the 3-phase Highland LEADER application process which included an Expression of Interest (EOI) form, a Pre-Application form, and a full application form. The EOI form asks for very basic applicant/project information to try to establish whether the proposed project might be technically LEADER eligible, the Pre-application form asks for additional information which will enable the LAP (and possibly the Equalities Reference Group) to provide feedback which will hopefully help applicants to decide whether to progress to a full application form. Given that Pre-application forms and full application forms will have to be considered at LAP meetings (for which cut-off dates will be set), Highland LEADER applicants should factor in sufficient time for the phased application process to fully complete.

Liz Whiteford asked for further guidance on the minimum grant amount of £10K set by WRSL LAP members and whether the discretion retained by the WRSL LAP to consider grant requests for less than £10K would apply to joint LAP applications where the total grant amount request was over £10K but the individual LAP requests might be less than £10K. The WRSL LAP confirmed that, for joint LAP applications, the WRSL would consider grant requests for less than £10K as long as the total LEADER grant amount requested from both LAPs (rather than the individual amounts) met their £10K minimum.

TRAINING PART 2 (OPERATING GUIDELINES / CODE OF CONDUCT)

LW delivered the Operating Guidelines and Code of Conduct training.

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Whilst general Highland LEADER Programme information which is not considered confidential can be shared by LAP members with the wider public, it was agreed by WRSL LAP members that discussions about LEADER applications (including Expressions of Interest, pre-applications and full applications) be restricted to LAP members/meetings and to leave notification of any LEADER application decisions taken by the WRSL LAP (whether relating to successful, deferred or rejected EOIs, pre-applications and full applications) to Highland Council (Accountable Body) who would include any grant award conditions, reasons for deferral or rejection, etc. LEADER emails and paperwork no longer required by LAP members should be appropriately destroyed or, in the case of paperwork, can be returned to the Development Officer for appropriate disposal.

WRSL LAP Members are asked to particularly note the sections of the operating guidelines (included as an appendix to the WRSL LAAP) relating to declarations of interest, attendance at meetings, and quorums and to consider registering a substitute especially if they feel that they are likely to miss more than one LAP meeting a year.

AOCB

On behalf of the WRSL LAP, Amy MacDonald thanked Liz Whiteford for all her work and the support provided to WRSL LAP members.

The resignation of Peter Walling as a WRSL LAP member and the absence of a Strathpeffer community council to seek a replacement nomination led to discussion about how to seek replacement LAP members. Liz Whiteford informed that a recent public advert for Inner Moray Firth North LAP members resulted in a written application from Clara Hickey, Strathpeffer Community Centre and Learning Manager which could not be considered as Strathpeffer is in the WRSL LAP area. As this was a written application to a public advert, the WRSL LAP agreed that LW should contact Clara to ask her whether she would be willing to join the WRSL LAP to fill the Strathpeffer vacancy.

There was some discussion about the venue and timing of WRSL LAP meetings. Members agreed that the Achnasheen hall was the most central venue but to trial morning meetings with a 10:30am start.

Prior to the next WRSL LAP meeting LW agreed to meet up with Ullapool Youth members and Youth Development Officer to discuss youth member succession planning and how WRSL LAP youth members can best engage in the LEADER decision making process

There was a request for an update on whether the Highland Council interest-free loan service, so critical to the cashflow/successful completion of LEADER projects in the last Highland LEADER programme, was to continue. LW responded that the need for this service has been discussed at Highland LAG/Council level but due to the current financial situation within the Council, it is unlikely that decisions will be taken on this until the current uncertainty over budgets was addressed when it is hoped that discussion on the loan scheme can be progressed.

FUTURE WRSL LAP MEETING DATES, VENUE AND TIMINGS

	2016	2016	2016	2017
DATE	Tues 24 MAY	Tues 23 AUG	Tues 22 NOV	Tues 21 FEB
VENUE	Achnasheen Hall	Achnasheen Hall	Achnasheen Hall	Achnasheen Hall
TIME	10:30-12:30	10:30-12:30	10:30-12:30	10:30-12:30

If additional WRSL LAP meetings are required these will be notified separately.

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