

**HIGHLAND LEADER 2014 – 2020 PROGRAMME  
WESTER ROSS, STRATHPEFFER AND LOCHALSH (WRSL) STEERING GROUP/LAP MEETING  
1:00 – 3:00 PM, 5 NOVEMBER 2015, ACHNASHEEN HALL**

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

**Private/Community Voting Members Present:** Fran Cree, Amy MacDonald, Robynn Butler, Xander Teago

**Advisory/Non-Voting Members Present:** Robbie Bain

**In Attendance:**

Liz Whiteford (Highland LEADER Development Officer)

**Apologies:**

Audrey Sinclair, Richard Greene, Peter Walling, Tom Forrest, Kristine Mackenzie, Tristan Southall, Norma Ross

**NOTE:** Thanks to early notification of LAP member apologies, it was known in advance that, whilst the meeting would be quorate, the required public/private split of members present would not be met. A copy of the draft LAAP was circulated in advance of the meeting and members who could not attend were invited to submit any comments prior to the meeting. All members who could not attend indicated that they wished the meeting to proceed in their absence and indicated that they were happy for the WRSL LAAP to be finalised, and for the steering group be disbanded and re-formed as the WRSL Local Area Partnership.

**WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS/APOLOGIES:**

Biz Campbell (steering group chair) welcomed everyone including the new youth members (Robynn Butler and Xander Teago) and invited everyone present to introduce themselves. Apologies as above.

**NOTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING:**

Proposed as an accurate record by Ian Cockburn and seconded by Roddie MacKenzie

**WRSL Local Area Action Plan (LAAP) and Local Area Partnership (LAP) Update**

All present considered/agreed the latest draft of the Local Area Action Plan (LAAP). To avoid confusion, it was agreed that members destroy earlier drafts of the LAAP and agreed that the final version of the WRSL LAAP would not be publicly circulated until it was formally approved by the Highland LAG and met Scottish Government requirements.

With the addition of 2 new youth members, Robynn Butler and Xander Teago, the WRSL LAP membership is now considered to have an acceptable geographic/demographic mix, a wide variety of skills/experience and, with 9 private/community members, 5 public members, and 3 public/advisory members it meets EU public/private membership requirements. Further youth nominations might also be received.

**DISBANDING OF WRSL STEERING GROUP AND FORMATION OF WRSL LAP:**

Satisfied with the drafting of the WRSL Local Area Action Plan and that the WRSL LAP membership was now fit for purpose, the WRSL steering group disbanded and re-formed as the WRSL LAP.

Given that so many members were absent from this meeting, it was decided not to elect a LAP chair and vice-chair until the next LAP meeting but Amy MacDonald was invited by those present to act as temporary WRS LAP chair for the current meeting.

The WRSL LAP agreed that the WRSL LAAP could now be submitted to the Highland LAG for their consideration/approval. LW to also circulate final version of LAAP to members in PDF format.

**AOB:**

The Youth members present were asked whether their preference was to attend WRSL LAP meetings or to input to the decision making process by email and they agreed that they would prefer to decide on a meeting by meeting basis. They also indicated that they had plans to either begin an apprenticeship or attend further education outwith of the area later next year but the remaining LAP members felt that this need not affect their LAP membership and input if they wished to continue.

LW stressed that the LEADER budget allocation of £506,688 for the WRSL was currently indicative and could change.

The Highland Council (as the accountable body) has not yet signed up to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Scottish Government for delivery of the LEADER Programme in Highland but it remains hopeful that it will be able to do so shortly. Until the SLA is signed and full LEADER Programme Guidance has been received, the Highland LAG is not in a position to launch its 2014-2020 LEADER Programme.

All LAP members have the opportunity of providing the name of a substitute from their organisation or sector who can attend LAP meetings and make decisions in their absence.

All LAP members (including any named substitutes) are required to complete a register of interest form. LW to email the form/guidance to LAP members who should also forward to their substitute for completion if applicable. Declarations of interest are intended to produce transparency in regard to interests which might influence, or be perceived to influence, any actions/decisions taken. Where an interest has been declared at a meeting, and that interest is considered a conflict of interest, then that person should withdraw from the meeting while the relevant agenda item is being discussed and any decision taken. See Highland Operating Guidelines and Register of Interest guidance for further information.

AM enquired about whether the interest free THC loan service provided for LEADER projects in the last programme (which was acknowledged as essential for many projects' cashflow) would continue. LW indicated that a similar question had been raised at a recent LAG meeting but with THC finances under increasing pressure it was not yet known whether this service would continue to be made available. Highland Councillors present were made fully aware of the need for such a loan service to enable the delivery of community projects pending receipt of LEADER grant payments.

**NEXT WRSL LAP MEETING:**

The next meeting of the WRSL LAP is to be held on Tuesday 23 February 2016 from 1-3pm at Achnasheen Hall. This meeting will hopefully include LAP member training.