

Local Action Group Meeting

Wednesday 29 November 2017

1:00pm – 4:30pm – Slamannan Community Centre

Present:

Ellen Archibald	N Lanarkshire Council	Public
Paul Bishop	Baldernock Local History Group	Non Public
Liz Buchanan (Vice Chair)	Visit Scotland	Public
Lynne Cooper	Scottish Enterprise	Public
Mike Ewart	Central Scotland Green Network Trust	Non Public
Ian Howarth (Chair)	Falkirk Community Representative	Non Public
Karen Herbert	Falkirk CVS	Non Public
Maureen Hill	Scottish Waterways Trust	Non Public
Ian Jarvis	N Lanarkshire Community Representative	Non Public
Pete Reid	Falkirk Council	Public

Apologies:

Robert Hunter	Falkirk Community Representative	Non Public
Jimmy Hyslop	Scottish Natural Heritage	Public
Sandra Sutton	Twechar HLEC	Non Public
Frances Tonner	East Dunbartonshire Council	Public

Attending:

Tom Rutherford	Programme Manager
Amparo Echenique	Development Officer
Irene Watterson	Claims & Compliance Officer & Minute Taker

Guidance Under Which LAG Meeting Operates:

- LEADER - LAG Project Assessment Guidance 2014-2020 Version 3 dated 05 January 2017
- LEADER - General Guidance for Applicants 2014-2020 Version 4 dated 05 January 2017
- Operating Your LEADER Local Action Group User Document 4 Applicant Users - LARCs Version 2.0 dated 01 February 2017
- Operating Your LEADER Local Action Group LARCs User Document 2 - Processing Applications - Part 2 Version 3 dated 01 February 2017

1. Welcome and apologies and assessment of quorum

After a short working lunch and the AGM, IH welcomed everyone to the LAG meeting noting the same apologies as the AGM which were RH, JH, SS and KO'D, however MH was attending this meeting for Scottish Waterways Trust. IH also confirmed that the meeting was quorate. IH welcomed Paul Bishop our newest non-public member. TR confirmed that there were no conflicts of interest for the Ancillary Accommodation due to Public Demand Project (The Three Kings). TR confirmed there were three conflicts of interest for the John Muir Way Marketing and Business Engagement (Co-Operation) Project, ME, EA and PR.

2. Previous minutes and matters arising

IH asked the Members to go through page by page of the draft Minutes from the previous LAG Meeting in August. MH pointed out that there was an error on the first page where she was listed as a Member from Scottish Canals where this should have been Scottish Waterways Trust. AE also pointed out that there was an error on page 8 where the scores for the Mental Health Project were wrong. She confirmed that the error would not have made any difference to the decision made that day. The scores should have been Standard Conditions - 1, Defer - 2 and Reject 10. IW will amend the errors. EA proposed the Minutes and seconded by ME.

Proposed by EA
Seconded by ME
IW to amend
Minutes

3. Programme budget

TR informed the Members that the LEADER Support Team is now fully staffed. He informed the Members that one claim has been submitted to Scot Govt prior to his and IW's start dates (4/9/17 and 25/9/17 respectively) and Claim 2 is now being worked on. He advised that from 2018, claims to Scot Govt would be submitted quarterly to lessen the load of doing annual claims. He informed the Members that himself and IW will begin training soon on Falkirk Council financial systems to enable the gathering of financial information for the claims easier.

4. Scottish Government update: Co-ordinators meeting, Accountable Bodies meeting

TR informed the Members that he attended his first **Co-ordinators meeting**. The meeting was prior to TR attending his LARCs training and now that he has been trained, appreciated the lengthy discussion on LARCs at the meeting. AE said that it was a very positive meeting (as the last one was very negative). The Minutes of the meeting have not been circulated as yet.

AE explained that new guidance from Scot Govt was announced at the Coordinators Meeting advising that approved EOIs that already have milestones with costs will be accepted into projected budget spends providing these costs are added to LARCs.

AE advised that this is very good news as EOIs have generally arrived at the LEADER office without Milestone costs, being the first stage of applying for a LEADER grant, however as Scot Govt are now taking these costs into

consideration of our projected budget spends, AE is now encouraging new applicants to have costs added to LARCs at an early stage in project development.

TR informed the Members that the next Co-Ordinator's meeting is being held in January 18.

PR informed the Members that he attended the **Accountable Bodies Meeting** on 21 September at Scot Govt in Edinburgh. PR advised that there has been a lot of discussion with regard to Service Level Agreements with a lot of angst between Accountable Bodies and Scot Govt and Coordinators with Scot Govt. He said that Scot Govt historically were felt not to be progressing issues flagged up by Accountable Bodies, which was causing frustration but he is happy to report that Scot Govt now seem to be listening and matters are being resolved to satisfaction of the Accountable Bodies.

PR went on to say that LEADER will be permitted to make offers of grant up until March 2019 with grant claims paid by December 2020. Accountable Bodies have until 31 March 2021 to drawdown their final claim. As far as it is known, there has been no change to allocations to LEADER areas and confirms that any reductions in SRDP funds will not affect LEADER funding. PR confirms that admin costs should not exceed 25% of the whole budget and confirms that due to being understaffed from the beginning of the Programme until September 2017, this will not pose any problem for KVF.

PR advised that the Service Level Agreement sets out the Local Development Strategy and a discussion to review targets should be had prior to March 2019.

PR also confirmed that LARCs is effectively starting to work. Scot Govt is to take issues raised forward, with anything outstanding to be resolved by 30.11.17 as this is when the contract ends with the Programmers. Definitive guidance should then be issued by Scot Govt. PR stressed that as Applicants can incur penalties (of 10%-20%) for not uploading correct information or making errors, PR advised that Applicants should be made aware of this so as not to impact on their projects with extra care taken by Applicants when using LARCs.

EA strongly responded saying that the threat of penalties impacts greatly on projects as this would be terrible for community groups missing out on money over an error, or indeed getting into debt.

IH thanked PR for the amount of work he has done with the LEADER Team.

5. LEADER staffing update

As noted earlier in the meeting, the LEADER Team is now fully staffed. PR wished to personally welcome TR and IW and asked the LAG for their patience for the transition saying that LARCs and Falkirk Council have their idiosyncrasies and procedures, both of which take time adapt to. PR advised that he is supporting TR with the transition and said that IW came to KVF with a strong level of experience. Both TR and IW are going to be training on Integra - Falkirk Council's finance system in the near future.

PR informed the Members that the last Audit, held in September 17, was a good audit which was testament to Emma and AE and prior to Emma leaving our audit processes changed from orange to green.

Code of Conduct

PR advised that although the result of the audit was very good, the Auditors highlighted that signed copies of the Code of Conduct should be held in the LEADER files and as this is not the case, each LAG Member will be sent a copy to read, sign and return.

Approved projects update

TR informed the Members that The Banks Road to Tintock Tunnel Cycle Route Project will hopefully be coming back to the next LAG meeting. To remind the Members, AE advised that this project has incurred problems with ascertaining and providing evidence of who owns the land along this route and how many landowners there may be. It is imperative the LAG has this information before progressing this Project, AE informed the Members there seems to be several land owners along the stretch of path.

TR is working with the Applicant and advised that we need to have evidence from their solicitor along with a (minimum) 5 year Land Owner Agreement from the Applicant and the other land owners for the path to be constructed and used. AE also advised that Planning Permission is still pending.

6. Current EOIs and applications for LAG notification

The Heart of Scotland Glamping Project - PR informed the LAG that Planning Permission has now been granted. PR advised that FC is driving this project on and it is incumbent that this project comes to the LAG as quickly as possible. It was agreed that this project would be good for the local area and local tourism and that a lot of work with Planning and Councillors had been done to date.

ME informed the Members that SUSTRANS is the match funder who is also eager for this project to be approved due to their funding offer running out of time. It was also confirmed that an architect has been working on the tender package which is now ready to go however the tender cannot be sent until the legalities are approved by the LAG.

As time is of the essence, PR asked the Members that if all the information is submitted before the next LAG meeting, could an extraordinary LAG meeting be arranged to discuss and score this project?

MH pointed out that the LAG had agreed at a previous meeting that deadlines for applications to be submitted were to be adhered to and pointed out that there should not be special dispensation to any projects.

ME pointed out to the Members that it was critical to find out where SUSTRANS stood on this, and so the LAG agreed that it would look at it in between meetings if necessary because of the time sensitivity.

7. Projects for Assessment

Ancillary Accommodation due to Public Demand (The Three Kings)

Before TR presented this project to the Members, he advised that he missed out two pages of the Technical Check when it was uploaded. He later rectified this error but asked the Members if they were happy to continue their assessment. The LAG agreed to continue.

TR to contact Applicant to ascertain their position

<p>TR presented this Project advising the Members that it was highlighted as a recommended action in the Local Development Strategy. TR went on to say that the Applicant is wanting to develop a 10 en-suite bedroomed hotel adjacent to The Three Kings restaurant and wedding venue in Shieldhill. The new building will be approximately 20-30m from the original building. This will provide additional capacity to support their goal of increasing visitors to the KVF area and increase the tourist spend to boost the local economy. The Applicant also wishes to augment their current service offering to increase the number of weddings from 150 to 180 per annum with the option of extending wedding guests' stay in the new hotel. TR displayed architectural plans on screen and explained that the total eligible cost is £417,074. TR informed the Members that the Applicant has secured a bank loan of £227,500 and is looking to LEADER for £99,574.76 which is an intervention rate of 23.874%.</p> <p>IH thanks TR and asked the LAG to discuss.</p> <p>The Members discussed this Application. PB asked if building this 10 bedroomed hotel could take business away from other nearby hoteliers. AE advised that there is no other nearby hotels in this area and when weddings are held at The Three Kings, the Applicant ferries the guests to hotels and other accommodation in Falkirk.</p> <p>ME said there are wider outcomes with this project - more employment for people from the village, the carbon footprint being reduced as no ferrying of wedding guests to other abodes. There is an equestrian centre across the road from The Three Kings which could benefit both if events were being held.</p> <p>AE informed the Members that the Applicant received 3 days from Expert Help organised by Business Gateway who assisted with their business plan, and Visit Scotland and Visit Falkirk had visited the premises and were positive about the project..</p> <p>PR wished to clarify with the Members prior to moving to a vote that they were happy that the Technical Check was incomplete. The Members individually answered that they were happy to vote knowing that the Technical Check was incomplete. EA announced that she did not score prior to the meeting but has no issues with casting a vote today.</p> <p>LAG Vote at Meeting:</p> <p>Approve with standard conditions: 10 Approve with specific conditions: 0 Defer: 0 Reject: 0</p> <p>The LAG voted unanimously for this project to be Approved with Standard Conditions.</p>	<p>All LAG Members agreed that they wished to vote regardless of missing pages of Technical Assessment</p> <p>Project Approved with Standard Conditions</p>
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John Muir Way Marketing and Business Engagement (Co-operation) Project)

Due to conflict of interest, ME, EA and PR left the room.

With these Members leaving the room, TR confirmed that the meeting was still quorate with 5 community members and 2 public members present.

AE presented this Project explaining that it is a Co-operation Project with the Tyne & Esk, Forth Valley & Lomond, West Lothian and Argyll and the Islands LEADER Programmes. Tyne & Esk would be leading on this Project due to the changing of staff in KVF.

The Applicant is Central Scotland Green Network Trust and although they don't have any core funding, the Trust has development staff to work on this project. On screen, AE displayed the costs explaining that the £18,938 ineligible costs were due to costs being incurred outside any of the LEADER areas. AE confirmed that the Applicant is looking for 100% funding from LEADER which is for the creation of a 2 year post to engage with businesses and to market the John Muir Way.

On another screen, AE explained that the John Muir Way stretched from Helensburgh to Dunbar and was split into 10 sections amounting to 134 miles. She explained that the John Muir Way is 40 miles inside the KVF area and is a very good fit with the LDS - Themes 1, 2 and 3. Established in 2014 numbers of users is not realised as yet as it hasn't been marketed, however being a new route, it would join the North Coast 500 and the West Highland Way adding to visitor experiences.

AE said that this Project has received a letter of support from Visit Scotland and the Applicant has met with Visit Scotland's Growth Team.

IH thanked AE and invited the Members to discuss this Application.

The LAG liked this Application. They agreed that getting the partners together would prove difficult but also agreed that there should be a positive impact on local businesses and services along the route. KH said that the John Muir Way has the extra benefit of visitors as it is more accessible to short-time walkers who perhaps don't want to or are unable to cope with the more strenuous routes.

The Members approved this Project unanimously with Standard Conditions.

LAG Vote at Meeting

Approve with Standard Conditions	7
Approve with Specific Conditions	0
Deferred	0
Rejected	0

ME, EA and PR returned to the room.

Project Approved with Standard Conditions

AOCB

AE informed the LAG that there are quite a few Applications that are sitting on LARCs which have had no movement for 12 months or more and asked the LAG what they wanted to do with them.

The Members agreed that these Applicants should be contacted to see if they wish to proceed with the Applications and if there was no answer from the applicant, the application should be withdrawn by the Team. The LAG also agreed that any Applications requiring Planning Permission should have this prior to any project being invited for stage two.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is due on 28 February 2018 in the East Dunbartonshire area. TR to ask FT if she can organise a venue.

Minutes Approved by (at subsequent LAG meeting):

Name:

Paul Bishop

Signature:



Date:

29/5/2018

Minutes Seconded by (at subsequent LAG meeting):

Name:

Ian Jarvis

Signature:

Date:

29/5/2018

