

Minute

LAG Meeting – 6 August 2019

Findhorn Village Centre, Findhorn

Present	Alastair Kennedy (Chair), Bea Jefferson, Erica Beck, Jana Hutt, Fiona Robb, Fabio Villani, Alex Walker, Aileen Buchanan, Iain Findlay
Apologies	Gavin Clark, Laura Sutherland, Franziska Smith, Drew McFarlane-Slack, Jacqui Taylor, Tim Gordon-Roberts, Reni Milburn, Davina MacLennan
In attendance	Chris Muir (NT) and Michelle Gillibrand (LEADER Development Officers)
Private/Public Split	8 Private, 1 Public

Details

Welcome & Introductions

AK welcomed everyone to Findhorn Village Centre for the meeting.

Apologies were noted and it was agreed that the meeting was quorate and the public/private balance was observed.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were noted.

Minutes of LAG meeting 16 January 2019

AK referred to the minutes of the previous meeting and asked for any changes on the basis of accuracy. All matters arising from the meeting had been dealt with and accuracy of the minutes was moved by FR and seconded by JH.

MG circulated the report from the Energising Communities conference, which had been held on 3 May 2019 and confirmed she would also circulate via email. There was some discussion around proposals to take forward the opportunity for Moray communities from Force 9 Energy at Clash Gour Windfarm, with acknowledgement that a final decision on how this may be developed was yet to be finalised.

Matters Arising

MG to circulate Energising Communities Report to LAG Members via email.

Project Updates

Status of Projects

MG presented the updated Project Register with current project figures and statuses. The LEADER Team presented the Red, Amber, Green (RAG) process which had been implemented for assessing the performance of projects. The LAG were advised that as Moray Wastebusters had withdrawn their project, coupled with other project underspends, there was now a project budget of £107,320.24 available to allocate.

CM advised the LAG that there were concerns around the Action for Children project, as the project was not yet Live and the applicant had not yet provided the required information to meet the conditions of their Offer of Grant. The LAG requested that their concerns be raised to the applicant, alongside a request for an updated delivery plan accounting for the reduced time scale for project delivery.

Action: CM to liaise with Action for Children and circulate updated delivery plan to the LAG once received from applicant.

CM highlighted that Action Marine Park were still to receive confirmation of all of their match funding and as a result were yet to commence their project. The LAG were also advised that there may be a shortfall in the amount the applicant is likely to receive, which may mean they need to scale back project activity or request additional funds. The LAG requested to be kept informed of the situation as it becomes clearer.

AW and AK asked for clarification on the deadline for allocating funds to projects and the process for bidding for additional funds from the Scottish Government, which have been reallocated from other LAG areas. CM clarified that all projects must be Live on LARCs by the 31st December 2019, at the very latest. MG advised that Scottish Government were likely to request the current status of projects and budget allocation from all LAG areas in the coming weeks, from which the available budget, process, and timeline for any funding reallocation process would be devised. Any project seeking to bid for funds from this central fund would have to be 'shovel ready.'

AK requested that MG contact Cullen Ecomuseum for an update on their project and whether they had sourced alternative funding. AW advised that he would rather the LAG not support another tourism project if there are funds available. AW proposed that the LAG could animate a project on the basis of 100% intervention with any remaining funds, if feasible in the remaining programme timescale, to meet any under-allocated Moray LDS Objectives. IF suggested he had a project idea which would meet Objectives 2, 5, and 6 of the Moray LDS.

Action: MG to liaise with Cullen Ecomuseum to ask for an update on their funding position.

Moray Enterprising Third Sector Collaborative

CM tabled the monthly report from tsiMORAY, requested by the LAG as an update on the delivery of the project. FV left the room to allow the LAG to discuss the report. FR advised that HIE have been engaging with tsiMORAY about the project and that a meeting had been scheduled for the 18 Development Officers currently operating in Moray, from HIE, tsiMORAY, the LEADER project, Community Support Unit, and local Development Trusts. This would provide an opportunity to avoid duplication of work and identify any skills gaps. FR also advised that currently the Community Development Officers (CDO) employed through the project were largely in a phase of information gathering and that as of yet do not have an action plan, though it was encouraging that they had already engaged in Local Outcome Improvement Plan meetings in Elgin. EB asked about what information the CDO's were gathering and for information about the host organisations where the CDO's were embedded. CM to follow up with FV to request more specifics in future reports, including details of the host organisations housing the CDO's and benchmarking details about the current activity on the ground in the local areas and how the CDO's are building upon this.

Action: CM to liaise with Fabio Villani with feedback on the Moray Enterprising Third Sector Collaborative Monthly report.

Cooperation Projects and Attendance at Cooperation Visits

CM provided the LAG with a summary report of the recent visit to Moray from a delegation from GAL Burdinale-Mehaigne in Belgium as part Windswept Brewing's From the Field to the Firkin project. The reciprocal visit to Belgium to take place from the 15th – 20th September 2019. The LAG approved that Erica Beck, Aileen Buchanan and Jana Hutt would attend the visit as representatives of the LAG due to their diverse expertise, along with CM as project manager.

Action: CM to coordinate the travel logistics with LAG members attending the visit.

FV raised the LAG's awareness of the challenges currently being experienced by the Global Ecovillage Network in engaging with communities from the South and East of Moray as part of their transnational cooperation project, asking for any suggestions from LAG members of groups or organisations who could be

contacted. EB suggested contacting local councillors. FV will discuss further with CM to ensure project has the maximum possible impact.

Complaints

MG provided the LAG with an update on the complaint received from the Speyside Area Forum. Laura Sutherland conducted an independent review investigating the grounds on which the complaint had been made. Laura concurred with the decision made by the LAG and their assessment of the application as lacking in information and evidence. Laura also acknowledged the support offered to the applicant by the Moray LEADER team and their adherence to the LEADER General Guidance for Applicants and Technical Assessment criteria.

Finance Report

MG circulated the Finance Report, prepared by DM prior to the meeting. Clarification was provided that sufficient budget had been forecast to cover LAG travel for cooperation projects. MG confirmed to the LAG that the final claim had now been submitted for the Elgin Museum project.

Accountable Body Update, including pilot staffing model

FV provided an update on the Moray LEADER pilot staffing model and advised that the Scottish Government had devised a series of evaluation questions by which to assess the success of the model and the 6-month pilot period. FV and the LEADER Team are attending a meeting with the Scottish Government in Edinburgh on 3rd September 2019 to finalise the evaluation. CM and MG left the room to allow the LAG to discuss the questions.

The LAG answers to the framework questions were as follows:

1. To what extent has the new structure enabled the Moray LEADER Team to:
 - a. support the Moray LAG to co-ordinate and manage the successful implementation and delivery of LDS and Business Plan
LAG answer: it has been 'business as usual'
 - b. manage the Team's resources
LAG answer: it has been 'business as usual'
 - c. ensure compliance of the Moray LDS and supported activities with all relevant EU, Scottish Government, Marine Scotland, Audit Scotland and tsiMORAY legislative, regulatory and policy requirements
LAG answer: no change detected
 - d. maintain and continue to develop effective relationships and communication with:
 - i. each other
 - ii. the Accountable Body
 - iii. the Moray LAG
 - iv. the Scottish Government LEADER Team
 - v. other local LEADER Teams**LAG answer:** absolutely fine
2. How has the Accountable Body ensured that:
 - a. all the relevant functions of the Programme Manager role have continued to be met
 - b. clear distinction has been maintained between the focus and role of each member of the Moray LEADER Team, and that the load is shared fairly between them
 - c. the Team has continued to enjoy the appropriate level and quality of management support
 - d. appropriate separation of duties has continued to be in place, in relation to the Accountable Body and line management functions performed by tsiMORAY
3. What impact, if any, have the changes had on budgets and financial forecasts
4. In light of the answers to the questions above: how confident are the key stakeholders (Moray LEADER Team, Moray Local Action Group, tsiMORAY as the accountable Body, and the Scottish Government LEADER Team) that the new structure piloted since 1 April 2019 can be adopted and maintained until the end of the current LEADER Programme?

LAG answer: absolutely 100% confident

In addition to the answers above, LAG members also noted that LEADER Team members seem to have grown in confidence and risen to the challenge, and that their performance was a credit to both themselves and the work done by them and the Programme Manager in developing a team approach.

Application Assessment and Decision

Two applications were tabled to the LAG for decision.

Project Title	Applicant	Total cost	LEADER	Intervention Rate	PAC recommends
13/P00015 – Marcassie Farm Lodges	Marcassie Farm Partnership	£334,402.00+ <u>£50,000.00</u> £384,402.00	£174,351.00+ <u>£50,000.00</u> £224,351.00	52.13814511% NEW 58.353695%	
13/P00042 - Hillhead Farm Experience Breaks	The Scottish Goat Meat Company	£160,102.50	£96,062.00	60.00031230%	No recommendation – LAG to decide on Strategic Fit 27/3/19

1. Marcassie Farm Lodges 13/P00015

No declarations of interest were noted.

MG provided an overview of the current status of the project and their request for additional funds due to increased costs resulting from the works associated with Building Warrant compliance and challenges with their appointed contractor. A report was tabled detailing the situation and requesting Moray LAG to consider awarding Marcassie Farm Partnership an additional sum of £50,000.00 towards the increased costs. This would result in reducing project activity and appointing a new contractor to complete the works.

The LAG raised concerns about the potential risks associated with breaking the contract with the existing contractor. MG offered assurance that the applicant had sought legal advice, which suggested this would not be an issue.

There was discussion of the limited time frame remaining in the programme, which meant that the applicant would not have time to proceed with a full tendering exercise to select a new contractor. This would present a departure from the standard Moray LEADER processes.

FV asked for clarification on the whether the proposed course of action would propose any audit / financial risk to the Accountable Body and whether Scottish Government had been made aware of the situation. MG agreed to submit a query to Scottish Government to ensure the proposed amendments to the project and cost comparison exercise for selecting the new contractor were acceptable.

Action: MG to submit query to Scottish Government in relation to the proposed changes to the Marcassie Farm Lodges project.

The LAG were in agreement that avoiding any financial risk to the applicant organisation was of primary concern.

The LAG agreed to APPROVE the increased LEADER intervention of £50,000.00 subject to the acceptance of the Scottish Government, noting the exceptional circumstances which require a departure from usual local processes.

Project	LAG Decision	Quorum	Additional Costs	Project Total	LEADER Intervention	Award requested
13/P00015 – Marcassie Farm Lodges	APPROVE	8 private 1 public	£50,000.00	£384,402.00	58.353695%	£224,351.00

2. Hillhead Farm Experience Breaks 13/P00042

No declarations of interest were noted.

AK stated the PAC score and highlighted that on the meeting on 17th April 2019 the LAG had been content to DEFER the application and consider it further if additional funding could be secured from Scottish Government.

There was agreement among LAG members that it was a good project to stimulate tourism in the east side of Moray. The LAG were impressed by the quality of the application, including the detailed research that had been conducted. FR also commended the applicant's commitment to the project by securing a mortgage to provide the required match funding.

The LAG agreed that it was a positive position for Moray to be in, having allocated the full project budget, and now being in a position to bid for additional funds from the national reallocation process.

The LAG agreed to APPROVE the project, subject to the condition of sufficient funds being available from the national funding reallocation process.

Project	LAG Decision	Quorum	PAC Score	Project Total	LEADER Intervention	Award requested
13/P00042 - Hillhead Farm Experience Breaks	APPROVE	8 private 1 public	84%	£160,102.50	60.00031230%	£96,062.00

Monitoring and Evaluation

BJ provided an update on monitoring and evaluation. Following a recent meeting of the LAG Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-Group, all local targets look to be on track, as long as projects deliver against their stated objectives. The only slight concern was on whether projects would successfully deliver against the target 50 'Number of participants becoming engaged (or re-engaged) in working with social enterprises'.

MG highlighted recent discussions with Sarah Lamb, Highland & Moray FLAG Co-ordinator, who had advised that the FLAG have their own monitoring system which will be used to evaluate the programme.

FV asked for an update on the national monitoring and evaluation process being led by Scottish Government especially with regard to the commissioned research. BJ advised that progress had been slow nationally in terms of a co-ordinated approach to monitoring and evaluation however there seems to be some momentum with regard to the SRUC commissioned research by the Scottish Government. BJ had been contacted by Rob McMorran of SRUC to conduct an interview over the phone and MG has arranged to do the same later that week. BJ also suggested that Rob should also conduct an interview with FV to get an Accountable Body perspective on the Moray LEADER Programme. The LAG Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-Group intended to progress with evaluating the programme at a local level which will be conducted by an independent consultant in addition to participating in the national research.

Communications

CM provided a brief update on communications and advised that he and MG would be meeting in the coming weeks to update the Communications Strategy, as the programme transitioned towards a focus on evaluation and promoting awareness of successful projects.

FLAG Update

A FLAG update provided by Fiona Hepburn, Highland & Moray FLAG Development Officer, was circulated to all LAG members. The next FLAG meeting is to be held on the 27th August 2019.

Future of Community Led Local Development in Moray

FV suggested that Moray was in the unique position of having a truly community focussed Community Led Local Development (CLLD) approach, due to the commitment of Moray LAG members and the programme being administered by tsiMORAY. As a result, FV proposed that he contact Gillian MacDonald at the Scottish Government LEADER Team to discuss whether tsiMORAY could serve as Accountable Body for a pilot CLLD

programme, following Brexit. The LAG agreed to this and AK suggested he would also raise this point for discussion at the upcoming LAG Chairs meeting.

Date of Next Meeting and AOCB

The LAG agreed that 1st October at 10am was to be the next meeting date. The LAG requested that a project visit was to be included in the next meeting and suggested a visit to Macbeth's Hillock.

Action: CM to look into possible venue options and arrange project visit.

Meeting Closed

AK thanked all for attending and closed the meeting and invited all to attend the project visits to:

- Findhorn Hive
- Moray Carshare
- Green Bridge Coffee Company