

MINUTES

LEADER Local Action Group – SMG Group Meeting

Wednesday 13th April 2016, 2pm

Held at: Woodbank House, Dumfries

Present: **Peter Ross (Chair) (PR)** Cathy Agnew (CA)
 Heather Brash (HB) Barry Dunne (BD)
 Caroline Graham-Brown (CGB) Karen Ward Boyd (KWB)
 Alastair McNeill (AMcN) David Rennie (DR)
 Claire Thirwall (CT) Craig Peacock (CP)

Staff: Nicola Hill (NH) Gary Davidson (GD)
 Derek Hextall (DH) Simone Tyrie (ST)

Apologies: Colin Smyth (CS) Gillian Khosla (GK)

Actions from this meeting:

Agenda Point:	Action:	Responsible:
AOCB	Confirm attendance at scoring workshop on 28 th April	All

Welcome

PR welcomes members to the Spring meeting with an note of optimism. Reminds members that the team are under a number of time pressures and asks that we are helpful and supportive where possible. Also welcomes Cllr. Peacock in place of Cllr. Smyth and offers brief introductions round the table.

Minutes of Last Meeting

DR proposes minutes, CA seconds. Minutes are accepted.

Matters Arising

Website steering group: GD has uploaded tender document to Public Contract Scotland (PCS) with a deadline of 22nd April for quote submissions. PCS requires agencies to register an interest in order to view complete tender and currently there are 97 agencies with a registered interest. GD notes that some others have already dropped out due to small scale of the project and that only 1 of the 97 has submitted a quote to date. Steering group to meet again on Wednesday 27th April to review submissions.

Chair's Comments

PR noted that he had no formal report to offer as he is part of the wider team with whom he has regular contact. The activity of the team is better covered by the Staff Report. PR mentioned that in addition to the Staff Report he had attended the LEADER conference in Aviemore which was stimulating and positive and we should look forward to the papers from those days, also offering congratulations to Making the Most of Coast who featured in an inspirational film at the event. Additionally in accordance with Scottish Government's Business Plan Guidance on Governance there is a 'Chair's Committee' in the process of being set up for which PR has been appointed as 'Convener'.

Staff Report

Staff Report had been circulated prior to meeting for review so NH opened up to questions and comments. HB commented on volume of Expressions of Interest received and congratulated team on hard work so far. CA noted that the report was very helpful and useful and alleviated the concerns she raised at a previous meeting.

DR asked about recruitment status of various posts. Rural Enterprise Project Officer did not wish to stay so worked her notice and has now departed. Recruitment for that post is currently open with a closing date of Friday 22nd April and expected interview date of Wednesday 4th May with a start date as soon as possible thereafter. Fisheries Project Officer recruitment currently pending a letter from Scottish Government confirming the allocation. It is expected that recruitment for this post will open in mid-May and looking for a July start date. Day of the Region Project Officer is delayed awaiting approval and matching of non-generic job description. Council department responsible for this is currently under heavy load but our urgency is being communicated to them.

DR noted that the SMG has sight of applications over £50k but that all current ones are for Communities only. NH reminded that Rural Enterprise set an upper limit of £50k so none of those applications should reach SMG but Rural Enterprise is open and had its first deadline today with 6 draft applications submitted for the decision meeting on 8th June. NH also noted a change in membership on Rural Enterprise group seeing the departure of Chris Churms of Dumfries and Galloway Council Business & Enterprise team in favour of David Gardiner of Business Gateway which is also now part of the Business & Enterprise wider team.

DR asked for a reminder of deadline dates for the various stages. Final applications are due on the 18th and 25th May for Communities and Rural Enterprise respectively, with decision-making meetings taking place on 1st June and 8th June. There was a reminder that the SMG is not required to score applications only to offer feedback as this frees them from the process and allows members to have direct engagement with applicants at all stages.

The Staff Report will be produced quarterly following the decision-making meetings for both Communities and Rural Enterprise groups. NH reminded members that they do not need to wait for the Staff Report if they have any specific questions the team are always available.

Day of the Region

Following the Communities group meeting on 15th March the Day of the Region 2016 project has been approved for funding. The steering group which includes LAG and community group members met on 5th April to outline the next steps. There has been a call for entrants issued with a deadline of 29th April to be followed by a steering group meeting which will decide which communities will be included. No more than 10 communities will be supported to allow best use of the Project Officer's time and resources. Aforementioned delay in recruitment means that all enquiries will be handled by NH in the meantime.

Day of the Region will be held over the four weekends in September with a networking opportunity for participating groups taking place beforehand and a review meeting taking place in early October. Once communities have been confirmed there will be a 'save the date' flyer issued with a more detailed programme to be produced. It is expected that the Project Officer will look for ways to expand the project during their post, including potential national and transnational co-operation opportunities.

Guidance from Scottish Government stated that all applicants, including the LAG, must be fully constituted with their own bank account in order to be eligible as lead applicant. Members agreed via email that the Accountable Body, Dumfries and Galloway Council, would be the named applicant for Day of the Region but that the project would be delivered by the LAG. PR thanked Dumfries and Galloway Council for their good relationship in partnership and acknowledged that there would be no additional risk to them in this situation due to the Memorandum of Understanding and functional working relationship.

PR noted that Dumfries and Galloway LEADER has always been pragmatic and on the cutting edge of what LEADER can do for rural communities. Some concern was raised about being too far ahead of the curve as changes may be implemented to guidance documents after decisions have been made. NH assured members that any decisions made will be documented in reference to a version number of the guidance to provide an accurate audit trail. It was agreed that this is good governance practice and that it is better to proceed with what exists rather than await any further changes.

Youth LAG and Finnish visit

Following on from a 2011 project known as Amaze Me LEADER in which youth workers from across Europe, including Dumfries and Galloway, took part in a transnational project Marita Mattila from Finland will be visiting to discuss potential future co-operation projects. Members are advised that a number of opportunities to engage with the visitors are available from 18th-20th April and a full itinerary can be provided on request. Please inform the team if you wish to attend any of the events in order to allow for catering.

KWB asked if it would be possible for the past participants to be involved in these events to link their experience to the new possibilities. NH still has contact details for those individuals and would ask the question. It was agreed that this was an excellent opportunity with good prospects for, but not limited to, the Youth Parliament.

Strategic Projects

PR is keen to have a dialogue between members outside of formal meetings to allow for detailed discussion and development of ideas that can be brought to the table. It was agreed that this would allow for more effective use of time during meetings and allow those members with more interest in a concept to be more involved in its

development. NH stated that although the team can come up with ideas she would prefer the LAG to generate projects and would encourage these discussions to take place.

DR queried the process of application for co-operation projects. Scottish Government are still working out the details for this but current thinking is that applicants would need to apply separately to each LAG area they would be involved with. If a number of LAG areas agree to funding then a 'lead LAG' would be appointed and all claims would be processed through that single area.

There was some discussion of partnership projects with the question of having the LAG partner with groups that are represented around the table. It was agreed that such partnerships would be welcomed as the Local Development Strategy allows for a large degree of flexibility and the separation of the SMG from the scoring process protects these members from conflicts of interest. PR suggests that members revisit the Local Development Strategy to help with strategic thinking.

AOCB

NH offers apologies for lack of briefing note from the mentoring session held at Dumfries and Galloway College on 18th March. This was a useful session with lots of discussion and idea generation. Notes from the session are being collated and a summary will be issued as soon as possible.

There is an application scoring workshop scheduled for Thursday 28th April in Castle Douglas Town Hall which will provide a walkthrough of the scoring process for those members not already familiar with it.

Action all: Please confirm your attendance to the team if you have not done so already.

PR stated that he has been sitting on the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Management Board and is happy to continue to doing so however he felt it necessary to inform members for personal ethical reasons. It was agreed that this would be acceptable if declared on the register of interest. BD questioned the register of interest regarding his position as a match funder for projects such as the Biosphere. NH reaffirmed that the SMG is not part of the scoring process and noted that historically match funders are not considered a conflict – only those groups that were involved in the development of the application. Register of Interest will be added as an agenda point for the next meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

13th July 2016 – Woodbank House, Dumfries

Meeting closed at 15:55