

1. Welcome

- 1.1. HB welcomes members to first full round of application decisions for this group. Members are introduced to Joan Neilson who is in attendance as an observer at this time. Isobel Henkelmann has resigned membership due to a change in employment, the group thank her for her time and wish her luck in the future. Chair reminds members that as we are a small group there is added pressure to maintain attendance at meetings to ensure due process.
- 1.2. Declarations of Interest that have been made previously are indicated on agenda in Section 6. HEH states that she has been in conversation with the Annan Harbour Action Group but has specifically not offered any assistance in developing their application. Members agree that this is not a conflict unless member is involved in the application.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

CLM proposes minutes, JW seconds. Minutes are accepted.

3. Matters Arising

- 3.1. The new Rural Enterprise Project Officer, Ellen Grant, starts tomorrow (2nd June). The Day of the Region Project Officer post has been offered to a preferred candidate following interviews and we hope that they will be able start before the end of the month.
- 3.2. Recent meeting of Strategic Management Group was fairly routine. Staff reports will be circulated to all LAG members but will not be discussed formally at any meetings – if members have any issues with the staff report these should be raised with the relevant Chair. Approved minutes from all meetings will be circulated to all members. We also had a successful visit from Finnish LEADER representatives and there is a meeting of partners taking place on Monday to discuss possible cooperation projects as a result of that visit.

4. Update on Expressions of Interest

- 4.1. Summary attached to agenda. Column headings may be tweaked for clarity but currently “Progressing” indicates the number of applications on the table for the current meeting and “Pending” indicates an application that is ready but is not intended for any specific meeting date.

5. Overview of Scoring Process and Update on Applications

- 5.1. Individual scoring sheets completed by members should be used to inform discussion of a round 15-20 minutes per application. If during discussion your opinion of an application has changed significantly from your individual scoring please indicate this on your sheet for audit purposes. A group scoring sheet will be generated during the meeting with any score of 18 or more being considered eligible for approval unless a compelling argument is made against, and any score under 18 would not be eligible unless a compelling argument is made for. There is no specific guidance relating to the inclusion of Dumfries and Stranraer in this programme other than that the project must demonstrate wider rural benefits.
- 5.2. There were 15 draft applications submitted within the deadline for this meeting of which 12 have been brought to the table today. Two of the others have been deferred until September at the request of the applicant and the final one has withdrawn completely for now.
All applications have passed the initial technical checks carried out by the team so can be supported if members are happy that the projects meet the Local Development Strategy outcomes. It is not necessary to approve all applications simply due to technical eligibility – there must be a link to the LDS.
European Union regulation updates received recently state that generated income will affect the formal grant and it has been identified that there are 5 applications in this current round which may be affected by this. NH has spoken to Scottish Government this morning for clarification. Advice is to consider applications as they currently stand but to make applicants aware that generated income will be deducted from final draw down of grant. This is to be measured as net income and considered for the duration of the project, including any retention period. Affected applicants have been informed and this will be communicated at Expression of Interest stage from now on.

6. Consideration of Applications

All project decisions are based on Scottish Government issued guidance version 2.0

6.1. C003 – Community Reuse Centre (Internal) Construction

Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have attempted to address issues raised during the feedback stage.

It was felt that this project would potentially have a generated income but that this was not included in their application. Applicant has stated that there would be no income generated during the life of the project or its retention period.

It was initially felt that this project lacked innovation and was a continuation of an existing social enterprise. CHM pointed out that this would be a new way of working within Dumfries & Galloway but that was not communicated clearly on the application which led to him giving this a low score. JW noted that she had picked up on the 'new' approach during scoring and had scored higher as a result.

This led to some discussion about scoring an application based on its content or its presentation with the consensus being that LEADER should not be afraid to support a poorly written application if LAG members feel that the intent of the project was suitable.

Members agreed that applicants may lack the skills and capacity to generate a high standard of application but that the proposed project may be of significant benefit to the region and the LDS – this is an example of such an application.

Application groups score: 30/36

Approve: 7 Reject: 0 Defer: 0 Abstain: 0

Project is APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £60,000 Intervention Rate: 48.92%

Additional comments or suggestions: none.

6.2. C010 – Whithorn Roundhouse: Iron Age “Grand Design”

Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have addressed issues raised during the feedback stage. Project has generated income included in application. Senior applicant has changed from Julia to Alex Currie.

Members felt that this was not a community driven project but recognised that it was quite a specific project that would likely be overlooked by a typical community group. Although members felt that this project wasn't necessarily required they recognised the benefits of it as largely positive.

Questions arose regarding the accessibility of the project including wheelchair access and engagement with, for example, the visually impaired, hearing impaired and other mobility issues. It was noted that match funding in this case had been secured through Heritage Lottery Fund and Holywood Trust both of whom are likely to have required more detail regarding accessibility and also that it would not always be possible to adapt a project to a suitable level.

Application group score: 31/36

Approve: 7 Reject: 0 Defer: 0 Abstain: 0

Project is APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £54,300

Intervention Rate: 29.55%

Additional comments or suggestions: would like additional information on overcoming participation barriers.

6.3. C015 – Solway Coastwise

CLM has declared an interest and leaves the room. Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have addressed issues raised during the feedback stage.

There was some discussion to determine if this was a continuation of Making the Most of the Coast (a project supported in a previous LEADER programme) or if it was something new. It was also felt that this project had been generated by a professional awareness of need rather than a community demand however this was not a reason for rejection as the community benefit was still evidenced.

Some members felt that there were elements of the project that were too expensive however it was agreed to be value for money.

Application group score: 25/36

Approve: 6 Reject: 0 Defer: 0 Abstain: 0

Project is APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £83,448

Intervention Rate: 47.81%

Additional comments or suggestions: projects should get actively involved with fisherman/yachtsmen.

CLM returns to the meeting.

6.4. C017 – Speddoch Hall Rebuild

Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have addressed issues raised during the feedback stage by working closely with the team.

The Local Action Group members discussed the rounded figures in the budget, and where the match funding was coming from. The project had not gone out to full tender yet so had only received rounded estimates and it was noted that most of their own funds was the insurance money.

It was initially felt that this project lacked innovation and was simply a rebuild of a generic village hall with hypothetical usage projections. Application of local knowledge from Local Action Group members suggests that the similar local facilities are poorly equipped and that geographically this could be a decent shared venue for surrounding area. Applicants had been involved in a trip to Ireland through LEADER in the past and it was felt that there could have been more innovation included but this maybe a later development (example such as outdoor gym equipment as commonly seen in Ireland).

Application groups score: 24/36

Approve: 4 Reject: 0 Defer: 0 Abstain: 3

Project is APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £130,000

Intervention Rate: 50%

Additional comments or suggestions: none.

6.5. C023 – Developing Annan Harbour

Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have addressed issues raised during the feedback stage. Applicant needed to provide evidence of harbour ownership for infrastructure development but was unable to do so, project scope needed to be reduced as result. **A change was approved to deduct £10k from requested amount and remove the slipway element from the application.**

Specialist and personal knowledge amongst members suggested that this harbour was difficult to access without experience and that a pilot craft would likely be needed to make best use of this tidal harbour for larger craft; smaller boats would continue to have full access unaided.

It was recognised that it maybe difficult to evidence need and demand for this project but the feeling was that it was a good project. Some members noted that the costs seemed high and the salaries low however it was agreed that the overall project provided value for money.

Application groups score: 26/36

Approve: 7 Reject: 0 Defer: 0 Abstain: 0

Project is APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £43,900

Intervention Rate: 41.81%

Additional comments or suggestions: comment on low salaries. Contact Marine Scotland regarding a possible fund for infrastructure development.

6.6. C025 – Dumfries and Galloway Sensory Project

Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have addressed issues raised during the feedback stage.

Initial comments were that this felt like a ‘parachute’ project by a national organisation. HEH had previous experience in dealing with the organisation and stated that although a national group all projects are delivered by local people who have access to the national support network. The organisation is well received and does good work.

Some concern over reliance on volunteers and how to prevent ‘volunteer fatigue’ but applicant has indicated to team that they are working time banking to help combat this.

Application group score: 29/36

Approve: 6 Reject: 0 Defer: 0 Abstain: 1

Project is APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £63,681 Intervention Rate: 50%

Additional comments or suggestions: none.

6.7. C026 – Moat Brae – National Centre for Children’s Literature & Storytelling

Discrete phase of a larger project which is over the suggested threshold of £150k for the Communities group but has made a case for being ‘unusual’. Will be affected by EU regulations relating to income generated.

Discussion of this project related to displacement and the business aspect of the project. Some members were concerned that the inclusion of a café in the facility would displace other cafes in the area however it was also noted that a facility of this type would require refreshments to be available for long-term sustainability. It was also noted that the facility could be encouraged to work with others, such as The Usual Place, to be an employment destination for trainees.

Additional concerns were raised that this project would be based in Dumfries with little evidence of wider rural benefit. Through discussion it was believed that attracting rural schools as well as external visitors would be necessary to meet projected visitor numbers though if delivered well, this should not prove difficult. Other Peter Pan projects that have opened recently will not be in direct competition.

The members liked the project but didn’t feel that the applicant had justified going over the guideline limit of £150,000.

Application group score: 26/36

Approve: 0 Reject: 5 Defer: 1 Abstain: 1

Project is NOT APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £200,000 Intervention Rate: 3.45%

Additional comments or suggestions: it was felt that the LEADER funded aspect of this project was poor value for money and that there was no clear fit with the LDS in terms of offering rural additionality.

6.8. C029 – Growing the Club and Community

Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have addressed issues raised during the feedback stage.

Another example of a poorly written application with a good project behind it. It was noted that the football club are semi-professional with players drawing a wage and some concerns were raised about funding an organisation of this nature.

It was agreed that the applicant would need to provide evidence of the facility being utilised by others in order to meet wider community benefit.

Application group score: 21/36

Approve: 5 Reject: 2 Defer: 0 Abstain: 0

Project was APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £5,000 Intervention Rate: 9.09%

Additional comments or suggestions: none.

Condition of Grant: evidence of improved facility being used by groups other than the football club without exception or limitation to be gathered during monitoring phase.

Addendum - directly following the meeting the Local Action Group staff realised that the innovation and links to relevant strategies scores were 1 which should have led to a discussion taking place. A 1 in the scoring sheet relates to 'insufficient evidence provided'. The Project Officer emailed all Local Action Group members who had been present at the meeting and they voted again; 4 Members Rejected, 1 Member Approved and 2 Members Abstained. The results led to the project being rejected.

6.9. C043 – Absolute Classics – Concerts and Education & Outreach Programmes

Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have addressed issues raised during the feedback stage. The scope of this project has been increased from the original expression of interest following discussion with team who encouraged the applicant to aim higher. Will be affected by generated income.

Organisation is known to some members as working alongside small scale bodies to deliver music across the region. They display innovation in working with learners to raise ability with a focus on improving the best rather than basic education – this project is essentially to increase attendance at these ‘masterclasses’.

There was a concern that some advertising has been done for this project already which suggests that it will go ahead without LEADER funding. The applicant has assured the team that the project cannot proceed without LEADER and members can be satisfied that team have confirmed this. It was noted that often artists will advertise even before a performance has been booked to let audiences know, if funding then failed to be found the event would be cancelled.

Other match funders have identified conditions of grant and these could be used here to ensure meets LDS criteria.

Application group score: 22/36

Approve: 4 Reject: 3 Defer: 0 Abstain: 0

Project is APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £40,000

Intervention Rate: 50%

Additional comments or suggestions: suggest applicant strengthens links with regional schools. LAG would like to see evidence of free tickets.

Condition of Grant:

- 1. You will be required to attend a Claims Workshop. You will be contacted by Simone Tyrie with details of the workshop.**
- 2. Evidence must be provided of the following:**
 - a. Region-wide promotion of the events.**
 - b. The free tickets being promoted and provided to young people aged 26 and under.**
- 3. The three young people from Dumfries and Galloway participating in the concerts, as detailed in the Holywood Trust conditions must be from rural communities out with Dumfries and Stranraer.**

6.10.C084 – Wild Film Festival

EF has declared an interest and leaves the room. Project is technically eligible and has addressed issues raised during the feedback stage. Team have queried the cost of project management. Match funding is agreed but awaiting letter of comfort from Holywood Trust to confirm.

Concern that this has reached the table without confirmed match funding. Options to approve via email following meeting subject to Holywood Trust funding confirmation.

Members also noted that there was no evaluation of pilot activity built into the application.

Application group score: 29/36

Approve: 0 Reject: 0 Defer: 6 Abstain: 0

Project is DEFERRED until match funding is in place – approval to be given via email once confirmation received by team. As the full costs recovery methods used to calculate the project management includes ineligible costs the team will work with the applicant in getting these amended.

Grant amount: £27,650 Intervention Rate: 47.96%

Additional comments or suggestions: suggest contact with A' the 'airts, Wigtown Book Festival and Visit Scotland

Condition of Grant: evaluation of pilot activity.

EF returns to the meeting.

6.11.C089 – Cultural Tourism Development

Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have addressed issues raised during the feedback stage. Team have identified some issues with project milestones which are to be clarified.

Members were surprised that this project was so long in development given the success of other projects by this group. It was generally felt that the ethos of the project was in line with LEADER ethos and there was good innovation.

It was recognised that there would be some risk involved in supporting this project but acknowledged that LEADER is not risk averse and that this project would be worth it. Some concern was raised about activity that has already taken place but this was acknowledged as pilot or test activity and was free-to-use however the main project would move towards a more commercial model which could be affected by income regulations.

Project plan includes a budget for prizes which would not be eligible but it was agreed that this value could be re-distributed into additional marketing for the project.

Application group score: 27/36

Approve: 7 Reject: 0 Defer: 0 Abstain: 0

Project is APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £60,000 Intervention Rate: 50%

Additional comments or suggestions: outputs from project (evaluation) should be shared widely – including with LAG.

6.12.E001 – NIR Lifeboat Station Extension

RW has declared an interest and leaves the room. Project is technically eligible, they have match funding in place and have addressed issues raised during the feedback stage.

Members recognised that this project was more than just an extension to lifeboat facilities and generally liked the direction and plan. It was felt that perhaps the applicant was aiming too low and there was scope for further development.

Application group score: 29/36

Approve: 6 Reject: 0 Defer: 0 Abstain: 0

Project is APPROVED for funding.

Grant amount: £41,907.44

Intervention Rate: 31.77%

Additional comments or suggestions: none.

RW returns to the meeting.

7. AOCB

During discussion about match funders it was suggested that there is a need for funding similar to the Hollywood Trust but aimed at an older demographic. This was an observation without any specific action at this time.

Members expressed some difficulty understanding 'additionality' when evaluating applications. Generally it was considered that additionality meant the ability for a project to proceed without LEADER funding but it was felt that a better definition could be made.

The team and members discussed the scoring process and it was felt that some tweaking may be necessary. Applications could score highly but not be 'liked' by members so the possibility of a higher threshold for eligibility should be considered. It was noted that some of the comments about applications might have had a significant impact on the number of applications reaching the table if those comments had been offered at the initial feedback stage.

Members were reminded that although every application that reaches the table is technically eligible it does not mean it needs to be supported. Members are encouraged to offer funding only if a project makes suitable progress to achieving LDS outcomes in Dumfries and Galloway.

Chair thanked members for their time spent scoring the large numbers of applications individually and for the engaged discussion during the meeting.

8. Date of Next Meeting

7th September 2016 – Newton Stewart, venue TBC

Meeting closed at 15:05