

MINUTES

Local Action Group – Rural Enterprise Group Meeting

Tuesday 16th February 2016, 2pm

Held at: Woodbank House, Dumfries

Present: Gill Khosla (Chair) (GK) Chris Churms (CC)
Sharon Glendinning (SG) Paula McDonald (PM)
Eva Milroy (EM) Gill Dykes (GD)
Lesley Jackson (LJ) Judith Johnson (JJ)

Staff: Nicola Hill (NH) Gary Davidson (GD2)
Stephanie Carrick (SC)

Apologies: Teresa Dougall

Action points from this meeting

ALL – Confirm attendance at Mentoring and Guidance training on 18th March to Gary

ALL – Submit any requests for specific elements of mentoring or guidance to be covered in training to Nicola

Welcome

Gill welcomed everyone to the meeting and accepted apologies from missing members.

Matters arising

Monitoring and Evaluation: Thanks to all who gave input and feedback. This has now been finalised and is awaiting approval.

Scoring Template: Scottish Government have gone back to the drawing board with this and withdrawn the idea for a universal/generic scoring sheet. Approval has been given for us to generate our own local template. Nicola developing local guidance based on LDS requirements.

Members' List: For the benefit of members who missed previous meeting it was reaffirmed that we would keep the details of LAG members to a minimum.

Expression of Interest Summary Update: 97 total, 22 suitable for this group. Some that are not eligible are signposted to other possible funding streams. Deadline for Expressions of Interest is 9th March to have an application ready for decision at June LAG meetings. Application guidance should be ready in enough time to give training and meet these deadlines. Continuing to manage expectations for now, Project Officers are beginning to offer formal feedback.

Minutes of Last Meeting

Minutes were proposed and approved.

Mentoring and Coaching:

Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) are providing bespoke training to allow more hands-on engagement by LAG members. Training is being offered to allow a consistency of interaction between members and communities. A full day training session for the full LAG has been arranged on 18th March with Barbara Allen of SCDC. Please confirm attendance to Gary. Feedback would be welcomed after the session to determine suitability for repeat and future sessions.

Discussion took place regarding at what stage would a mentor get involved. It was felt that having a LAG member involved in any capacity prior to application approval could be viewed as poor governance. This led to a discussion about which groups would require a mentor and it was the opinion of the group that not every project would require a mentor and some may require more than one. The need for a LAG member to be assigned as a mentor could be either a condition of the grant or an informal suggestion based on the needs of the project as identified by members.

It was reminded that the training session will be bespoke and tailored to the needs of the group and that we could engage with the trainer prior to the session to ensure that needs were met. **Any specific topics which members would like to see covered should be submitted to Nicola.**

Introduction of Project Officer

Members introduced themselves to Stephanie Carrick the new Project Officer for Rural Enterprise and offered a brief background on their experience. Stephanie thanked members for their welcome and said she looked forward to getting to know them better as she settles into the role.

Application Process

LEADER co-ordinators met in Stirling recently in what was deemed to be a more successful meeting than past attempts. The IT system known as LARCS is still in development and has undergone significant directional changes. It was understood that the system would now focus on function rather than form and will continue to require some elements of offline working. It was also confirmed that if there was any slippage in the launch timeline there would be full support for an offline claims process.

Gillian McDonald is the new lead on LEADER within Scottish Government and seems to have brought much needed structure and direction to the team. There is an agreed timeline which has been circulated and committed to. Vicky Dunlop is now in charge of delivering the guidance documents and has committed to an end of February deadline. It was noted that some LAG areas have chosen to launch their programme with old draft versions of the guidance so members were advised that colleagues who claimed to have seen LEADER guidance at this stage were only working from draft documents.

The documents which will be necessary for an application to proceed are: an application form, project plan and a cash flow milestones forecast. Cash flow milestones will assist the members in assessing an applicant's capacity to deliver the project. Copies of the documents will be circulated once final versions are received and an application workshop will be held shortly thereafter. Members will receive training and a version of the workshop on 9th March to familiarise themselves with the processes.

Project Officers are in post to help guide applicants through the process and it was acknowledged that completing a LEADER application is a recognisable capacity building exercise. Members felt it necessary to promote and maintain this moving forward. Discussion then took place regarding creation of an 'alumni' of experienced applicants who could be referred to by new applicants. If the future of the LEADER programme may be uncertain then this could definitely be a legacy of LEADER in Dumfries and Galloway. This would also help to resolve governance issues as would allow LAG members to redirect potential applicants to the 'alumni' rather than becoming involved directly.

Expressions of Interest

The question was raised regarding when a member should declare an interest in a project. It was felt that for the sake of clarity or process, conflicts should be noted as soon as identified and members absent themselves as early as possible from the discussion of the Expression of Interest.

Judith declared an interest in EOI 079 and left the room.

079 – The Muckle Toon Adventure Strategy: Incomplete, no money asked for and not clear on what is being asked for. Concept was generally considered good but not enough information provided. Suggested that this needs guidance and may benefit from a start-up enquiry at Business Gateway. Has potential to be a unique adventure tourism hotspot but perhaps not ready for LEADER involvement at this stage. Should be encouraged to speak with Business Gateway, Glenmore Lodge (Aviemore), FirstPort to discuss social enterprise and Visit Scotland to define market.

Judith re-joined the meeting.

081 – Dumfries Equestrian and Rural Centre: Exciting concept but may need more advice than funding. Suggested that Business Gateway may be more suitable to help develop ideas. It was noted that this was one of a significant number of equestrian themed projects and felt that there was scope to encourage collaborative working for the greater good. This could be a fit for LEADER once assisted in developing a bigger project idea.

Some discussion took place about the possibility of using our overview of Expressions of Interest to suggest bigger collaboration projects. It was felt that LEADER was uniquely placed to provide this overview and could help to develop the region as a whole.

087 - Consolidation: Not a fit for LEADER. Information given suggests expansion and continuation of business. Redirect to Business Gateway.

089 – Creetown Enterprise Centre: Has been given feedback that scope of project fits with Rural Enterprise and would therefore be subject to a maximum intervention of £50,000. The project could be suitable for Communities fund with a different scope but it was agreed that it is not our role to define projects to applicants. Concerns were raised over the level of already secured funding as it was unclear what had been given by whom and for what purpose. We would need to be satisfied that our contribution was not displacing other businesses and that we were funding an eligible portion of the project rather than contributing to a larger 'pot' of money. Need more detail, but could be an opportunity.

095 – Sanquhar Knitting Project: Asking for a lot and unclear about sustainability. The group felt that this had the potential to be massive benefit to the region if handled correctly but suggested the connection with A' the Airts would need to be looked at in detail. There are likely to be legislation and agreements of funding which could cause conflict. Would need to define structure and relationships clearly and the onus would be on the applicant to be open and honest about existing funding and conditions. Suggested that this needs a detailed meeting with the team to help unpick.

AOCB

None.

Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting 9th March – Application Training Session (Full LAG)

Meeting closed at 15:50