

## MINUTES

### LEADER Local Action Group – SMG Group Meeting

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016, 2pm

Held at: Woodbank House, Dumfries

Present: **Peter Ross (Chair) (PR)** Cathy Agnew (CA)  
 Heather Brash (HB) David Rennie (DR)  
 Caroline Graham-Brown (CGB) Gillian Khosla (GK)  
 Alastair McNeill (AMcN)

Staff: Nicola Hill (NH) Gary Davidson (GD)  
 Derek Hextall (DH) Simone Tyrie (ST)  
 Ellen Grant (EG) Lesley Ross (LR)

Apologies: Colin Smyth (CS) Claire Thirlwall (CT)  
 Craig Peacock (CP) Karen Ward Boyd (KWB)  
 Barry Dunne (BD)

### Actions from this meeting:

Agenda Point:	Action:	Responsible:
Chair's Comments	Working group to re-evaluate LDS following referendum result – Gill Khosla and David Rennie volunteered. Details TBC.	NH/GK/DR/PR/CGB
Staff Report	NH called for volunteers to be part of a mentoring working group to help shape the direction of the mentoring concept. This will be discussed further and arranged with members via email.	NH/All members

## Welcome

PR welcomes members and introduces new team members Ellen Grant and Lesley Ross as Rural Enterprise Project Officer and Day of the Region Project Officer respectively.

## Minutes of Last Meeting

AMcN proposes minutes, CA seconds. Minutes are accepted.

## Matters Arising

Website development: due to delays in finalising the design of the website the original launch date of July 1<sup>st</sup> has been missed by mutual agreement. We are working toward a revised launch date of 1<sup>st</sup> August and progressing well towards this.

Procurement framework: the team received a 100% response rate from members via email since the last meeting and the consensus is to go ahead with proposed framework. This will be a single document to be used across the board by staff and applicants for consistency and accuracy.

## Chair's Comments

PR gave an update on the status of the LEADER programme following the EU referendum result. The chairs of all Scottish LAG areas met and were assured by Gillian McDonald of Scottish Government that we are operating under 'business as usual'. Chairs produced a letter to Mr Ewing to which a reply is expected. PR asked if we need to review our current plan of action now that we are faced with business as usual – John Grieve felt that contracts were binding until fully out of Europe so best to keep going.

Although nothing has changed fundamentally it was noted that the 'Brexit' result would ultimately result in changes so it would be best to be prepared for these. Policymakers must consider the totality of response and be flexible and agile to change. PR asked if we could take advantage of the current uncertainty to get ahead by raising the profile of our region in the wider world by making friends in Europe and providing evidence for a future CLLD programme (a LEADER legacy) in D&G.

DR provided input from a Scottish Enterprise (SE) point-of-view who are continuing to follow guidance set by Scottish Government but noted that inclusive growth perhaps most important to D&G as well as the Scottish Economy. SE members of Scotland Europa with contacts in Brussels suggest that all current European programmes will continue until the end of their programme. DR also offered his opinion that D&G LEADER are well regarded across Scotland and in Europe so we should aim to be continuous and would not recommend making changes to the Local Development Strategy in the wake of the 'Brexit' result. DR and GK agreed to assist in a re-evaluation of the LDS instead.

GK agreed that it would be necessary to be pro-active in pan-European co-operation to make people aware that we are still 'open for business'.

It was noted that there had been no specific requests for co-operation projects since the result and that we provide the leadership and encouragement to encourage these (extend the hand). It was also noted that Scotland's position is more ambiguous than in England as there are suggestions from Europe that there is a keenness to keep Scottish ties.

D&G LEADER can be the future of CLLD in Scotland by continuing to do what we do best.

NH noted that we are able to move forward and have good lines of communication to have conversations with the right people. Scottish Government expect to have the guidance documents for co-operation projects completed before the end of July and we should be entering into co-operation projects by the end of the year (Finland Youth Project).

## Staff Report

Staff report circulated for information. The Scottish Government 'inspection' will be of processes and checks and largely procedural – the team do not anticipate any problems or concerns to arise from this visit.

NH called for volunteers to be part of a mentoring working group to help shape the direction of the mentoring concept. This will be discussed further and arranged with members via email.

Members queried if the process of decision-making was working well. CA felt that she has an interest in application and subsequent decision so chose to leave the room during discussion of decision-making processes. GK felt that the scoring sheet was a useful checklist for individual scoring and informed good levels of discussion which noted that an application can score yet not fit the LDS. HB agreed that this was the intended process but that she was less content with the results due to confusion over terminology such as 'additionality' generating discrepancies in approach by individual members. HB also felt that the 'pass mark' was too low as it could be achieved by a project scoring all 2's and that there was an element of peer pressure during the show-of-hands voting process.

DH noted that the first meeting of the Communities group had a large number of applications to get through and re-assured members that all applications which hit the table were technically eligible. He suggested that the next meeting would be less intensive as only 5 applications had met the deadline. NH reminded members that they should not hold back any information that may impact an application – it would be better to reveal it early to allow time for solutions to be found.

CA re-joins the meeting.

NH noted that there are still less applicants to the Rural Enterprise group than the Communities group and suggested that the team would be looking to do more targeted promotion of this in coming months. There will be possibilities of attendance at agricultural shows though we will not be hosting a stand this year.

Members queried when the application process would switch to the digital platform (LARCS) and were advised that LARCS is now live with the team beginning to back-fill data and providing ongoing feedback and bug-testing. It is expected that the process will be wholly online in time for the December round of decisions.

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

LR now in post so has been getting up-to-speed on the project and has hit the ground running. She has arranged a number of meetings with participating groups and confirmed dates of events. Things are progressing well due to wealth of experience across participating communities but each have also shown some level of innovation.

Stranraer ARC have been confirmed as a participant this year in a trial for what is being referred to as a 'community of interest' which aims to help local disabled and those with additional support needs to feel more engaged with the wider community.

NH also commented that there are 6 other Scottish LAG areas planning to visit D&G during the Day of the Region celebrations in order to gain inspiration and knowledge with a view to implementation in their own areas.

### Strategic Projects

PR thanked the team for their updates and noted that the Staff Report would prove even more useful as workloads continued to grow. D&G LEADER is in the vanguard for Scottish LEADER and we have a responsibility to develop strategic and co-operation projects. The role of the SMG is to come up with solid ideas that the team can take forward. There is an opportunity to use the success of Day of the Region to co-operative links as well as regional coherence.

Using the example of the Finnish sub-group which had a productive meeting without a clear decision or consensus, NH reminded members that the SMG need to commit to projects and ideas. The Finnish LEADER colleagues are looking for a commitment in Oct 2016 so members would need to make these decisions soon. PR suggested that this project would help to secure the future of LEADER in Scotland through engagement with young people.

NH has also been contacted regarding the Capacity 4 Change (C4C) project which had some success in a previous LEADER programme. It was communicated that there was a new research period starting with a quantity of time set aside for D&G LEADER for a new or similar C4C project.

DR noted that the discussions seemed to indicate three types of project: strategic (without external input but for the benefit of the region as decided by the SMG); co-operative (with input from external Scottish partners like SUP, SRUC, etc.); transnational (with input from partners outside of the region/country. DR suggest that we pick contacts and generate ideas rather than vice versa to avoid entering into projects with difficult partners – choosing a path of least resistance on these ‘warm’ projects.

NH noted that the team are capable of generating a delivering strategic projects but are keen to have LAG members involved at all levels in order to help them feel engaged and involved. Discussion took place about what level of involvement LAG members should have. Members endorsed the co-operation paper and agreed that NH should actively investigate these; members would continue to generate ideas via email and other opportunities outside of regular meetings.

It was agreed that members are happy to be given tasks and to participate in smaller ‘action groups’.

PR encouraged members to participate in generating ‘wild ideas’ through ongoing email discussion with the reminder that LEADER is more than just a grant funder, it is a process which benefits the whole region.

### AOCB

Members agreed that discussion around strategic projects should form the bulk of these LAG meetings in order that ideas could be developed more. Use of technology between meetings is encouraged and additional meetings can be arranged on an ad hoc basis if needed.

### Date of Next Meeting

12<sup>th</sup> October 2016 – Woodbank House, Dumfries