

MINUTES

LEADER Local Action Group – SMG Group Meeting

Wednesday 12 April 2017, 10.00am

Held at: Solway House, Heathhall, Dumfries

Present

Peter Ross (PR)	Alastair McNeill (AMcN)
David Rennie (DR)	Claire Thirlwall (CT)
Heather Brash (HB)	Barry Dunne (BD)
Karen Ward Boyd (KWB)	

Staff

Nicola Hill (NH)	Lesley Ross (LR)
Jessie Mason (JM)	Simone Tyrie (ST)
Lewis Boddy (LB)	

Apologies

Craig Peacock (CP)	Gillian Khosla (GK)
Caroline Brown (CB)	Cathy Agnew (CA)
Colin Smyth (CS)	

Actions from this meeting:

Agenda Point:	Action:	Responsible:
Matters arising	KWB agreed to discuss Cultural Tourism with CA directly.	KWB
Previous matters arising	NH has a meeting already arranged with Ewan Green and David Gardner in May and will discuss Foresight Group with both of them.	NH
Strategic Projects	DR contact GK and work up some ideas for consideration on Food & Drink Strategic Projects.	DR
Budget	Move £100k into the Communities fund from Programme Operating Costs.	ST

Welcome

PR opened the meeting and welcomed Lewis Boddy, the new Project Officer for the Communities Group. All members then introduced themselves. A point was raised by DR – what were the terms of membership for the groups. There have been no elected members at recent meetings and he felt that SMG could benefit from direct Council presence.

NH confirmed that there was criteria agreed and would advise on the detail of minimum amount of meetings to be attended in an agreed timeframe.

PR is happy not only to have seen the first swallow of the Season, but also with progress of the Programme in general and level of committed funds, although he did agree there are a few foibles regarding LARCs, but he feels sure these will be overcome.

Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were discussed. DR fed back details on accuracy of detail recorded at January meeting. The minutes were then proposed by AMcN and seconded by BD.

Previous Matters Arising

- PR had to cancel a meeting which had been arranged to discuss the Foresight Group with Ewan Green. NH has a meeting already arranged with him and David Gardner in May and will discuss with both of them.
- BD had previously circulated contact details for SRDP

Matters Arising

- KWB highlighted that Cultural Tourism had been discussed at the last meeting and that CA had agreed to raise, but was not sure if it has been. KWB agreed to discuss with CA directly.

Staff Report

The staff report shows optimism at being able to progress through the programme. DR raised a point regarding circulation of projects over £50k. NH apologised that this had been an oversight.

Discussion took place to try and make best use of valuable expertise – appropriate to project. It was agreed that in future, SMG would be emailed to advise projects were available on LARCs when progressing to final application, and they could make themselves fully aware of them, feeding in comments where appropriate. A summary of these comments could then be taken to the application meetings and fed back by the Chair. SMG is always welcome to give feedback to projects in their areas of expertise. DR was happy for SMG feedback to be delivered in this way.

NH confirmed that all decisions taken are robust and audit proof. The Programme will have a Scottish Government Audit later in the year. If there are any areas highlighted, these will be adjusted as appropriate.

NH asked for SMG support in not carrying out a mid-term review or refresh of the LAG members in 2017. It was felt that momentum could be stymied if we change at this stage. There will be a refresh of elected member representation following the Council election in May 2017.

Our relationship with Business Gateway ensures the right projects come to us, we are constantly speaking to our Business Gateway colleagues in the Council. If they are unsure if the project fits LEADER, they have been asked to let us have the contact details and we will speak directly to the organisation/business and discuss.

Strategic Project

Day of the Region

LR, the Project Officer updated the meeting with the proposed 3 year Day of the Region Project Strategic Project, now we have the comfort of knowing that we will be funded until 2020. LR is currently working with the steering group to design the 3 year project. It is proposed to demonstrate the Social Return on Investment (SROI), using an online tool available; demographics, age, etc.

There was a transnational call for cooperative partners to work with us – presently we have interest from previous contacts; Germany, Poland and Ireland. New contacts have shown interest from Ireland and Romania. All of the countries work differently and elements can be taken from each other to adopt the best way to design their projects.

A call for participating locations/groups in the region has shown a healthy response with 10 groups/communities of interest, rather than just towns for this years' Day of the Region. It is proposed also to work with Ward Workers Communities Directorate of Dumfries and Galloway Council to gather information to feed back to the SROI. Previous groups will also be encouraged to network and exchange with others taking part throughout the region.

It is important that each of the groups understand that they need to be innovative. LR will work to encourage them to adopt onto their groups different demographics, eg, intergenerational.

Budget

Spend is sitting at present at around £200k for 28 claims, and although there are problems with claims on LARCs which should be sorted out by May, at present claims are being processed in paper format.

After discussions between NH and ST, it was proposed to move £100k into the Communities fund. Once this is moved over, it cannot be moved back. We are confident that monies will be allocated on time, going on the rate of allocation at present, certainly for Communities Group.

A show of hands approved the movement of £100k – DR, HB, AMcN, BD, KWB and CT

Rural Enterprise Group allocation is slower, averaging £100k from Communities Costs, at each meeting. Meaning that Rural Enterprise monies would be allocated by 2019.

We are looking at media pushes to try to attract applicants. Ellen Grant is attending local agricultural shows in Wigtown and Stewartry during the summer. We are still trying to find the best method of engaging with Farmers and Fishermen. It appears they are reluctant to go through the process if there are no guarantees of success.

If media push does not result in applications coming forward, the LAG can support a Strategic Project.

EMFF applications are slower too, but the Oyster Festival is nearly ready to be submitted to Marine Scotland.

The team are currently being asked to provide monthly figures for budget spend, putting added pressure on the team. These figures are being used to drawdown from Europe, if we get it wrong, the money will not be available to us.

There is money in the budget for evaluation at both the mid-point and at the end of the programme.

There are also funds for LAG members and staff travel for events/conference attendance going forward.

Complaints Policy

It has been highlighted that the Council's policy does not cover LAG members. NH has written and proposed a Complaints Policy for adoption. AMcN made a few tracked changes and will forward. This along with HB's comment "to be open, easily accessible, well publicised and available in other formats as required."

A show of hands, subject to changes, approved the adoption - DR, HB, AMcN, BD, KWB and CT.

Strategic Project

Amaze me LEADER

This is a cooperation project which has been suggested by Finland. We received an email, which has been circulated. It is proposed that D&G LEADER, work with LEADER groups in Finland and Estonia.

In the first instance, we would recruit up to 15, 18-24 year olds to participate in an "Adventure Seminar" event in Finland on 13-20 August 2017.

NH would attend a Partner's meeting in Finland with two or three LAG members to discuss and agree the Project in more depth from 17-20 August, 2017.

Cost for these trips would be met from the Networking Budget in Operating Costs.



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The young people attending in August of this year would be required to report back to us on their experience and encouraged to support us in hosting our event in the Year of Young People in 2018.

This is a Strategic Project and an application will be brought forward to a future meeting of the Communities Group for approval. The intention would be for D&G to host up to 100 young people from all 3 partner regions in 2018 – in line with the Year of Young People. Estonia would host in 2019.

NH asked for agreement to take this forward. This was approved.

DR suggested creating a working group from across the LAG.

Strategic Projects

GK has previously emailed LAG members and suggested looking at a Food & Drink Project. DR had had discussions which suggested a Food Festival could be looked at. Other previous projects were discussed but it was suggested that DR contact GK and work up some ideas for consideration.

AOB

PR highlighted the difficulty in decision making groups being quorate. The contingency plan is that a Chair stands in to make the meeting quorate. In effect quorate for all of our decision making meetings means we need 5 members plus chair at the decision time of the meeting, taking into account any members who declare an interest.

We may look to amalgamate groups if we continue to experience difficulties, but if this was the case, we would have to take it to Scottish Government as this is a change to the LDS.

DR suggested we advertise for new members. NH will prepare a statement which will be put out on MailChimp and Facebook. NH asked that all members circulate it to their networks.

Date of Next Meeting

12 July 2017 at 10am – Woodbank.

Meeting closed at 12.20pm.

