

Orkney LAG is being part-financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community
LEADER 2014-2020 Programme



**Minutes: LEADER Programme 2014-2020
Local Action Group Meeting**

Thursday 3 December 2015 (11:00) at St Magnus Suite, Pickaquoy Centre.

Present: Francesca Couperwhite, Phyllis Harvey, Alister Brown, Edgar Balfour, Brian Cromarty, Fiona Matheson, Steve Ray, Keith Dobney, Paul Ross, Nic Thake, Sarah Sankey, Susan Pirie, Amy Esslemont, Julie Murphy (minutes)

1. Welcome

Francesca Couperwhite, Chair, welcomed members to the first official meeting of the Local Action Group, explaining that the meeting held on 17 August 2015 was a “shadow” LAG meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Barbara Foulkes, Issy Grieve, Bill Innes, Hannah Ker and Stewart Crichton.

Francesca advised the LAG that it was important to let the LEADER team know whether or not they were going to attend meetings; as LEADER requires all LAG meetings to respect the 49:51 rule for attendance.

3. Draft Minutes of the Meeting – 17 August 2015

Francesca offered members the opportunity to make any comments on the draft minutes for the “shadow” LAG meeting held on 17 August 2015. No comments were made and they were formally approved, being proposed by Fiona Matheson and seconded by Edgar Balfour.

Francesca pointed out the following as **matters arising** from these minutes:

Proxy Attendees at LAG Meetings – she advised that this would not be possible as there would need to be a full understanding of the rationale behind the scoring criteria for projects, and it was important to have consistency in the scoring procedure.

Register of Interest Forms – she advised that members should complete and return these forms as soon as possible, if they had not already done so.

Skype, Video Conferencing, Telephone Conferencing – there was some discussion on the difficulties of, and the possible solutions to, finding venues in Orkney which had the required facilities and could accommodate LAG meetings. Amy Esslemont, LEADER Development Officer, advised that the Pickaquoy Centre could provide facilities for Skype if required. She also explained that LEADER funds could not be used to fund the hire of any properties owned by the Council. Phyllis Harvey advised that members could forward their comments by e-mail to be considered at a meeting, or if adequate notice was received then Skype could be arranged.

Francesca asked if perhaps the college facilities could be used on an in-kind basis. Phyllis said she would ask the college if this was possible.

Brian Cromarty advised that Voluntary Action Orkney has a room, although smaller than the St Magnus Suite, which might be suitable.

4. Ratification of Decisions – 17 August 2015

Francesca explained that as the previous LAG meeting had been a “shadow” LAG meeting, it was necessary to ratify the decisions which had been made, ie:

- That Orkney Islands Council should continue to be the Accountable Body.
- That the existing staff from the 2007-2013 LEADER Programme should be transferred to the 2014-2020 LEADER Programme.
- That the location of the LEADER team’s office should remain the same - i.e. within the Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.

The LAG agreed to ratify these decisions.

5. Constitution and Memorandum of Understanding

Francesca explained that, before discussing this item, it would be necessary for the LAG to formally adopt the Orkney LEADER Business Plan and Local Development Strategy for 2014-2020 which had been presented at the previous LAG meeting.

Francesca proposed that it should be adopted, and the LAG members agreed.

The Chair asked the LAG if they had any questions or comments regarding the Constitution document. There were no comments or questions, and the LAG agreed that the document should be formally adopted and signed by the Chair, Francesca Couperwhite, and Phyllis Harvey, as the Accountable Body representative.

Francesca explained that the Memorandum of Understanding was not a formal undertaking. She added the document outlined the responsibilities of Orkney Islands Council and the role of the LAG, and their interaction with each other. Given there were no comments on its content she confirmed that the document would be signed by the Chair of the LAG and a representative of Orkney Islands Council.

6. Business Support

Amy summarised the Business Support briefing paper. Phyllis advised members that leaflets about available Council grants had been included with their agenda papers.

A discussion followed on the points raised in the briefing paper and how best to utilise the limited funds available.

Taking into consideration the support already available to individual businesses in Orkney, the LAG members agreed that the LAG should focus on sectorial support, such as Development Officers and individual businesses would be signposted to Business Gateway if appropriate

7. Farm Diversification

Amy summarised the Farm Diversification briefing paper. She advised that this area would involve funding of individual businesses, and pointed out that the majority of interest would most probably be for generic self-catering facilities.

A discussion followed on the points raised in the briefing paper and how best to utilise the limited funds available.

The issue of whether the LAG should have a policy on ethics was raised by Fiona Matheson, and a discussion followed.

Phyllis confirmed that all project applications had to be assessed using the LEADER selection criteria, and any ethical concerns, or issues, could be raised during this process.

The LAG agreed to primarily focus funds on targeted opportunities that met market demand for the area, rather than generic self-catering facilities.

8. Cooperation

Francesca advised that 10% of the LEADER funding was earmarked for cooperation projects which could involve working together with LAGs in other areas of Scotland, UK or Europe. She advised that the briefing paper was to stimulate discussion and that members should start thinking about ideas and bring them to the next meeting. She also suggested that the LAG should encourage any groups they work with to think about cooperation ideas.

A discussion followed in which the following points were raised:

Keith Dobney said it may be a struggle to get projects off the ground quickly as cooperation projects could be complex and time-consuming.

Amy confirmed that cooperation projects would also need to show a strong link to one of the core themes identified in the Local Development Strategy.

Francesca suggested it may be useful to invite LAG colleagues from other areas to Orkney to meet and discuss cooperation projects.

Amy advised that she had noticed whilst attending a meeting recently that there are a number of similarities with the aims and themes of the Orkney LAG and other LAG areas in Scotland.

Amy advised that she could provide the LAG with a link for a map showing all of the LAG areas within Scotland, and Francesca agreed this would be useful.

Phyllis confirmed that a cooperation project could involve collaboration between like-minded groups from LEADER areas or areas which had bottom-up approaches similar to LEADER, and didn't necessarily have to involve the LAG.

Nic Thake suggested that transnational cooperation could involve renewable energy projects.

Francesca said she felt sure that other LAG members would have cooperation ideas and it would be added to the agenda for the next meeting and she asked that LAG members not in attendance be advised of this by e-mail.

Amy confirmed that cooperation projects take time to develop, and that a LAG can deliver a project of this type. Phyllis added that such projects would need an appropriate group to take the project forward, with perhaps some LAG members on the board, as the LAG doesn't have a bank account and therefore couldn't be the applicant

9. Assessment Criteria

Amy advised that since discussing this item at the last LAG meeting in August, the situation had changed, and we are now waiting for the Scottish Government to provide the necessary assessment criteria. Amy confirmed that these criteria would be required before any decisions on potential projects could be made

10. Enquiries Received and Anticipated Projects

Francesca advised that all personal contact details had been removed from the document for this item, and reminded the LAG members that the remaining information was to be treated as confidential.

Amy summarised that up to and including 3 November 2015 there had been 32 enquiries made and 12 Expressions of Interest received. She advised that one applicant who had submitted an Expression of Interest had withdrawn due to timescale issues.

Amy then spoke about the projects which had potential to progress to the application stage.

Amy referred to the "Anticipated Projects" document and advised that at the present time the majority of these were sitting within the "Support for Orkney's community services and facilities" core theme.

Francesca suggested that perhaps future promotions should be focused on the other themes. Sarah Sankey said she thought promotion would be quite difficult without the eligibility criteria. Fiona Matheson commented that it was good that in the meantime people could be directed to other funding, where necessary.

Amy advised that training was most probably not going to be eligible for LEADER funding, but this was yet to be formally confirmed.

Edgar Balfour commented that the list supplied was not easy to read and Steve Ray agreed. Francesca asked that it be presented to future meetings in a different format.

11. AOCB

- **LEADER Co-coordinators' Meeting**

Amy explained that as part of her role she attended these meetings, and that they are hosted by different LAG areas in Scotland.

Amy informed the LAG that Orkney hosted a meeting in September this year, which was well attended. The meeting highlighted that all LAG areas were at differing stages e.g. with Local Development Strategy development. She advised that the first copy of the guidance was discussed at the meeting, and as a result the Scottish Government undertook to make amendments.

Amy said the meeting concluded with the LAG Coordinators being taken on a project visit to the Fossil Museum in Burray.

Amy confirmed that she attended a LEADER Coordinators' meeting in the Cairngorms the previous week and the guidance discussed at the Orkney meeting had not been finalised yet.

- **European Maritime & Fisheries Fund update**

Amy confirmed that she had attended a meeting the previous day about the EMFF and allocations had been nationally agreed with the national programmes due to be launched on 18 January 2016. She advised that there should be a press release from Marine Scotland next week on this and she was hopeful that Orkney would receive a healthy allocation. Amy advised the LAG that the local EMFF Programme would be launched sometime after 18 January once procedures were in place –

Francesca asked LAG members if there was any other business they wished to discuss.

- **Timescales, Milestones and Match Funding**

Steve asked for clarification on the programme timescales and Amy confirmed that all expenditure was to be claimed by December 2020 with all funds allocated by the end of 2019.

Edgar Balfour brought up the subject of milestones in relation to claims. Amy confirmed that there would be a milestone based approach, and these milestones would have to be demonstrated when making a claim.

Phyllis suggested that milestones should be kept to the minimum, be easily evidenced, and if preferred they could be arranged to be quarterly. She said it was important they were sensible and not overly bureaucratic. Phyllis also explained that if a milestone is not met on time, then the computer system would not allow the claim to be processed any further. She said that projects would need to contact the LEADER team as soon as they felt they were not going to make a milestone deadline, so that an alternative deadline date could be arranged.

Amy confirmed that the minimum number of milestones was likely to be one and the maximum milestone period would likely be six months. The applicant could have as many milestones as they want but it was necessary to try to get it right, from the very beginning.

Alister Brown suggested match funders would be important in assisting projects with their cash flow. He said that some inexperienced groups may find managing their cash flow quite difficult.

A couple of LAG members mentioned having already had experience of milestones.

Sarah Sankey asked if there was a deadline for Expressions of Interest.

Amy advised that there was no deadline, and Phyllis agreed and said receipt of Expressions of Interest would be an ongoing process.

Sarah asked if LEADER is to be the last fund to provide match funding. Amy confirmed that was correct, but people should complete Expression of Interests early to enable project ideas to be explored.

- **Date for Next Meeting**

Amy explained that it was difficult at present to set a definite date, as the Scottish Government guidance had not been received yet, but she suggested that the next meeting may be held in March 2016.

Francesca said a date should be suggested for March, and this could be changed to an earlier date if necessary.

Steve asked if LAG members could get any guidance, especially the scoring criteria, as soon as possible so that there would be ample time to digest it properly. It was confirmed that this would be done.

The meeting closed at 1230.