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Scottish Rural
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Minutes: LEADER Programme 2014-2020.

Local Action Group Meeting.

Wednesday 15 March 2017 (11:00) – Education Meeting Room, Orkney Islands Council

Present: LAG Members (Public) – Phyllis Harvey (Vice Chair), Issy Grieve, Barbara Foulkes, Morag Robertson.

LAG Members (Private) - Edgar Balfour, Brian Cromarty, Hannah Ker, Susan Pirie, Nic Thake, Mark Hull.

LEADER Team: Amy Esslemont (LEADER Development Officer), Julie Murphy (Assistant Project Officer) – minutes.

Phyllis Harvey checked that the meeting was quorate, per the LAG's Constitution formally adopted at the LAG Meeting held on 3 December 2015. Phyllis also checked and confirmed that the public/private minimum 49/50 split was met.

1. Welcome and Apologies

Phyllis Harvey took the Chair, in the absence of Francesca Couperwhite. Phyllis welcomed the LAG members to the meeting and noted Susan Pirie's return to LAG meetings, after a break. Phyllis suggested that everybody introduce themselves to Susan.

The LAG noted that apologies had been received from, Steve Ray, Kerry Spence, Dawn Flett, David Scarth and also from Francesca Couperwhite and Sarah Sankey due to their interest in the project to be discussed (Amy Thomson was not in attendance).

2. Re-assessment of Round 4 project - Farming for Wildlife (14/P00015)

The project application was assessed using the scoring criteria previously agreed by the LAG (13 criteria with a total of 39 marks available, and a pass rate of 26), and against the following, current LAG and Applicant Guidance versions:

- LEADER General Guidance for Applicants, Version 4, dated 5 January 2017.
- LAG Project Assessment Guidance, Version 3, dated 5 January 2017.

The Chair advised the LAG that the project being assessed had been considered at the LAG meeting held on 8 February 2017 and had provisionally scored 29 points in the assessment process; the pass mark being 26. She added that at the meeting on 8 February the LAG had decided to defer the project and request that the applicant address some issues that had been raised during the project assessment. Phyllis confirmed that the applicant had been asked to consider:

- Significantly increasing the project outputs.
- Reducing the project costs.
- Increasing their funding contribution to the project.

Phyllis explained that originally the intention had been for the project to be re-assessed at the next scheduled LAG meeting, on 17 May 2017; however, this date was going to be too late for the applicant's match funding.

The Chair confirmed that Special Meetings could be called by the Chair, and this was covered by paragraph 4.3 of the LAG's Constitution. Phyllis said that, as the Chair for this project assessment, she had decided to convene a Special Meeting on 15 March 2017.

The Chair advised that, as part of the assessment of the project, the LAG members would be required to re-visit the scoring and comments of 8 February 2017, in light of the amendments to the project. Phyllis explained that this was the procedure which had been adopted by the LAG previously.

The Chair asked Amy Esslemont to advise the LAG of the changes which had been made to the project application.

Amy explained the amendments which had been made since the original application. Amy advised that the main change related to staffing; the post of Site Manager had been replaced by a Farm/Livestock Manager. She advised that the job description for the Farm/Livestock Manager is generic and does not specifically cite the activities of the project. The LAG agreed that if the project was approved then a condition of grant would be added, requesting that the job description be appended with a document that outlines the roles and responsibilities which are specifically associated with the project and that this document be signed by the successful candidate.

Amy also explained that the applicant had not amended the project targets on LARCs (the online LEADER system), but had increased them on the project plan. The LAG agreed that as a condition of grant the applicant would be required to monitor, and report against, the achievement of the targets as set out in the project plan.

At this point Mark Hull joined the meeting.

Amy advised that:

The costs had been reduced, due mainly to the cost of the new barn having been removed. She explained that the new barn would be financed by other means.

The funding being requested had been reduced, whilst the percentage being requested had increased slightly.

The Chair asked the LAG to discuss the project, and ask questions.

A LAG member asked if the posts had already been advertised.

Amy confirmed that two posts had been advertised but had been “subject to securing external funding”. The Chair added that this action was deemed necessary in order to meet project timeframes.

A LAG member queried the applicant’s figures given for - estimated value per year of visitor spend to the reserve and jobs supported within Orkney and wanted to know why this figure was so broad, and how it had been calculated.

Amy explained that the applicant had advised that figures were taken from an Economic Impact Assessment, and no further explanation had been made.

The LAG agreed to commence the scoring process, and the Chair advised at each criterion the scores and comments which had been recorded previously.

A LAG member questioned whether the project outcomes had been changed and the Chair confirmed that they had been increased. The LAG agreed that this made the contribution to outputs proportionate to the funding being requested. The LAG agreed that as a condition of grant the applicant will provide the Local Action Group with a copy of the Economic Impact Assessment carried out as part of the application and will continue to report on the full time equivalent jobs supported and value per year of visitor spend during, and at completion of the project activity. The LAG agreed that the project costs had been addressed sufficiently, and that the project plan now appeared to be viable, with appropriate delivery mechanisms, realistic costs and timeframes.

The LAG decided that the project was innovative to the local area of Egilsay but was not innovative to the applicant.

A LAG member stated that as corncrake numbers were in decline and the applicant would need to be mindful of any claims made regarding the increasing of their numbers.

The Chair reiterated that the Farm/Livestock Manager’s job description, which is currently generic, would need to be appended to include the specific roles associated with the project.

With a total score of 31, the project was **approved** subject to confirmation of match funding. On confirmation of match funding the grant to be awarded would be up to £86,793.23 (34.5578% of the approved eligible costs exclusive of VAT).

The Chair asked LAG members if they had any other business they wished to discuss; no items were put forward for discussion.

The meeting closed at 11:37.