

## SHETLAND LEADER 2014 - 2020 LAG

### MINUTES OF LAG MEETING HELD IN EDU BOARDROOM AT 9.00AM ON WEDNESDAY 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015.

Present:

Douglas Irvine, SIC  
Fiona Stirling, HIE  
Mhari Pottinger, HIE  
Tommy Coutts, Shetland College  
Wendy Hand, Voluntary Action Shetland  
Sally Spence, SIC  
Karen Eunson, Citizens Advice Bureau  
Michael Duncan, SIC  
Juan Brown SNH  
Bryan Leask, Hjaltland Housing Association  
Jeemie Smith, Federation of Small Businesses  
Diana Abernethy, AB Associates Ltd  
Ruth Henderson, Seafood Shetland

Sheila Tulloch, LAG LEADER Co-ordinator

#### **1. Apologies and Introductions**

Apologies were received from: June Porter, SIC; Kathleen Sinclair, NFU; Ann Johnson, Shetland Food Producers; and Sarah Taylor, NHS Shetland

Douglas Irvine welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was confirmed that no introductions were required as all those present were already acquainted.

#### **2. Membership Balance**

The LAG members present were equally balanced between the public and private/voluntary sectors with HIE counted as having just one representative, but it was noted there were no projects to be approved and no vote would be required.

#### **3. Minutes of 13<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

The minutes were approved by Wendy Hand and seconded by Diana Abernethy.

#### **4. Matters arising**

Sally questioned the decision made at the previous meeting to not press forward with recruiting a tourism representative onto the LAG. This was discussed and it was agreed that the best person would be Steve Mathieson from Visit Shetland and that he should be invited to join the LAG. It was noted that Visit Shetland is public sector.

**Action: Douglas**

#### **5. Financial summaries for the LEADER 2007-13 programme**

Sheila presented the spreadsheets that had been sent out to LAG members: the 2007-13 programme was now complete and the summary showed the final picture

for the programme. All final claims had now been paid and the final claim had been submitted to the Scottish Government on 30<sup>th</sup> June (the final date for submission).

There was some discussion regarding the overall underspend on the Shetland programme. This was mainly due to several large projects which had grossly overestimated their projected spend (SIC applications were particularly at fault here) and several projects for which funding had been approved but which had then failed to proceed. At one point the budget had been significantly overcommitted and the programme was closed to new applications but by the time it became apparent that there was still funding available it was too late to make full use of it. Sheila assured the LAG that lessons had been learned from this and the intention was that under the new programme staff would work much more closely with applicants in the early stages of the application process to build more robust applications. The LAG also acknowledged that it is far harder to accurately cost revenue projects than capital ones. Suggestions were made that the LAG should aim to commit the budget in the early years of the programme so that there would be time left to mop up any underspend on projects.

## **6. Election of Chair**

Fiona had been nominated for the position of Chair at the last LAG meeting. She stated that she had since discussed this with Mhari, who is the official representative for HIE but currently on maternity leave and for whom she is the proxy, and they had agreed that HIE would be willing to take the chair. There were no other nominations so Mhari/Fiona was duly elected as Chair, proposed by Wendy and seconded by Diana with unanimous agreement from the other LAG members. Douglas then offered Mhari the chair but she suggested that it would be better if he continued to chair the remainder of the meeting.

## **7. LAG Membership**

Douglas observed that there were still perceived gaps in the representation of particular interest groups on the LAG and also that NAFC had requested that they have a representative on the LAG.

- i) **NAFC:** The approach from NAFC was discussed. The Shetland College is represented on the LAG and there is a strong likelihood that NAFC and Shetland College will amalgamate in the not too distant future which would create a problem if they both had representatives on the LAG. Ruth already represents fishing interests and can filter information between the LAG and NAFC on fishing related matters. The LAG agreed that it was not necessary or appropriate for NAFC to have its own representative on the LAG, however, it may be more appropriate for the NAFC to be invited to join the FLAG.
- ii) **Agriculture:** Currently there is only one agricultural representative on the LAG, Kathleen for NFUS, and, with the new responsibility to support agricultural diversification projects, it was agreed at the last meeting that it would be appropriate to have a second representative from the agricultural sector. Sheila attended a meeting of the local NFU branch on 28<sup>th</sup> May and asked whether those present had any suggestions for an additional agricultural representative on the LAG; to date she has not received any suggestions. Graham Fraser from

Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) was suggested as a possible LAG member but that would be another public sector organisation and the LAG agreed that it would be better to have someone from the industry on the LAG. Douglas said that he would be attending a meeting of the agricultural group next week and would raise the question there.

**Action: Douglas**

**iii) Youth:** Sheila reported that she had had a meeting with Martin Summers from SIC Youth Services and that they had discussed youth representation on the LAG and also other ways in which young people could be involved with LEADER such as helping them to develop projects to benefit young people. Martin thought it was possible that membership of the LAG could be linked in with a school project. He was less confident that any young working person would be able to take the time off to attend LAG meetings. LAG members suggested various other approaches for recruiting a young person as a LAG member through existing groups or structures: MSYPs are locally elected representatives of young people; the Shetland Arts Young Ambassadors project; advertising through the Youth Volunteering service or linking into the Global Classroom. Another suggestion was that Martin Summers or one of the Global Classroom organisers (Brian Spence or Lewie Peterson) could be the nominated LAG member but that they would support suitable young people to attend LAG meetings. Michael Duncan volunteered to speak to the relevant line managers within the SIC to see what they thought of that idea.

**Action: Michael**

**iv) Renewables and Carbon Reduction:** the question was raised as to whether the LAG should seek to recruit a LAG member with experience in this area. Juan Brown said that he chairs the Shetland Environment Partnership and Bryan Leask said he was a member of the Shetland Renewable Energy Forum so both can contribute their knowledge and experience to discussion on any projects that come before the LAG. This led to the observation that other LAG members aren't fully aware of all the areas that existing LAG members are involved in or have experience or knowledge of. It was agreed that profiles of LAG members need to be revised and new ones added for the new programme and Douglas asked for that to be put on the agenda for the next LAG meeting.

**Action: Sheila/Fiona**

## **8. Staffing and Recruitment**

Douglas informed the LAG that he had been investigating the staffing arrangements that other LAGs have in place to deliver LEADER and he had found that most LAGs have a core staff of several people usually including a project /development officer, finance officer and admin support in addition to the co-ordinator. It had become increasingly apparent that the current arrangement of using SIC development managers to do the casework for LEADER projects was not always working efficiently. It is his intention to have a dedicated LEADER team in place for the new programme. SIC have agreed the recruitment of a LEADER casework officer on a full time 2 year contract and he is currently putting together a job profile. This post would be fully funded out of the LEADER budget. Existing SIC staff will be used to cover the admin and finance functions but any reallocation will have to wait until the current service review is completed.

Sheila explained that up to 25% of the budget can be used for administration and animation and in the last programme Shetland was one of the lowest spenders among the Scottish LAGs with less than 8% of the budget used for admin. She said that, in addition to having to do some of the casework herself, a lot of her time had been taken up with routine finance and admin and particularly preparing reports for the Scottish Government. This meant that she had not been able to spend as much time as she would have liked on promotion and development. Under the new programme “animation” will have higher profile and that will require more staff input. Once the new LEADER IT system comes on stream it should significantly reduce the time taken up with preparing reports as SG will be able to draw the reports they require directly from the system.

Sally noted that admin support for the FLAG also has to come out of the LEADER budget.

Sheila has been informally advised that the LAG has to be involved in the interview process/appointment of a staff member but as yet we have no details as to what form this involvement should take. Douglas suggested that the LAG Chair should sit on the interview panel and the LAG agreed that that seemed appropriate.

#### **9. LEADER 2014-2020 update**

Douglas stated that there has not been any visible progress since the last LAG meeting. The LDS and related Business Plan have still to be approved.

Sheila said that she had attended a LEADER Co-ordinators’ meeting in Ayr at the beginning of June at which Alistair Prior, who heads up the LEADER team in the Scottish Government, had provided an update. He said that the LDSs had now been approved and a formal letter including the LDS approval, SLA and other details would be issued the following week (now 3 weeks overdue). The revised timescale is that the new IT system will not be ready for applications until April next year but SG proposes that LAGs should be able to consider Expressions of Interest from potential applicants from July onwards and manual application forms will be available from September. This is all dependent on the SLA between SG and SIC being signed and Douglas pointed out that SIC, like other Accountable Bodies elsewhere in Scotland, is reluctant to sign until it is clear exactly what they will be committing to.

#### **10. Promoting the new programme**

The LAG approved the summary of the new programme that Sheila had prepared for handing out to any interested parties or potential applicants.

#### **11. AOB**

Tommy said that Shetland College was investigating using the Community Learning Centres to provide access for benefits claimants to the online claims system.

#### **12. Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 26th August, 9.00 a.m. at Solarhus.

Meeting closed at 10.30 am.