

SHETLAND LEADER 2014 - 2020 LAG

MINUTES OF LAG MEETING HELD IN EDU BOARDROOM AT 9.00AM ON WEDNESDAY 25th November 2015.

Present:

Mhari Pottinger, HIE
Thomas Coutts, Shetland College
Michael Duncan, SIC
Karen Eunson, CAB
Wendy Hand, Voluntary Action Shetland
Maree Hay, Northmavine Community Development Company
Graeme Howell, Shetland Arts
Bryan Leask, Hjaltland Housing Association
Mary Leask, Visit Scotland
Annie Nicolson, NFU
June Porter, SIC
Brian Spence, SIC (Global Classroom)
Sally Spence, SIC
Elizabeth Robinson, NHS Shetland

Sheila Tulloch, LAG LEADER Co-ordinator

1. Apologies and Introductions

Apologies were received from: Juan Brown, SNH; Ruth Henderson, Seafood Shetland; Ann Johnson, Shetland Food Producers; Kathleen Sinclair, NFU; Steve Mathieson who had sent a proxy from Visit Scotland, Mary Leask, and Sarah Taylor who had sent a proxy, Elizabeth Robinson, from NHS Shetland

Mhari Pottinger welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves for the benefit of new members Annie Nicolson from NFU and Elizabeth Robinson from NHS Shetland.

2. Membership Balance

Mhari noted that there were two more representatives present from the public sector than from the private/ voluntary sectors, but there were no projects to be approved and no vote would be required.

3. Minutes of 7th October 2015

The minutes were approved by Graeme Howell and seconded by Sally Spence.

4. Matters arising

Mhari went through the action points from the minutes of 7th October:

- i. Sheila was to enquire about arrangements for a meeting between Alistair Prior from the Scottish Government, Mhari as LAG Chair and Douglas as representative of the Accountable Body (SIC) to discuss the delivery of the new programme. Sheila had spoken to Alistair who said that a video conference would suffice but

neither Mhari nor Douglas had been available on the date he suggested and so far no date has been agreed.

- ii. Douglas was to contact Ian Brown regarding a new LAG representative from the Federation of Small Businesses. Sheila reported that Douglas had e-mailed Ian Brown but had not yet received a reply.
- iii. Kathleen was to invite Annie Nicolson to join the LAG as a representative of young crofters/farmers; Annie's presence at the meeting indicated that that action had been successfully accomplished.

5. LAG membership – member profiles

All LAG members had been asked to send profiles and photos to Sheila by 23rd October. Sheila reported that to date from 21 LAG members she had received 14 profiles and only 6 photos, several of those in the last few days. Mhari asked again for all those who had not yet done so to send their profiles and photos to Sheila and said that we would arrange for a photo to be taken at the next LAG meeting of any member who had failed to submit their own.

Action: LAG members

6. LEADER 2014-2020 update

Sheila informed the LAG that there wasn't a lot that she could update them on since the last meeting. The Scottish Government still hadn't provided application forms or guidance which were previously due to be issued by the end of October but were now due by the end of November. A LEADER Development Officer had been recruited to start work in January but Sheila was not at liberty to give the LAG their name until all the necessary checks had been completed.

Mhari said that the LAG did need to think about budgets and timescales. Sheila said that she was currently in the process of preparing a budget forecast for the whole programme which the Scottish Government wanted by the end of November. The LAG was permitted to use up to 25% of its funding allocation for administration but Sheila thought that she could keep administration costs within 20% thereby leaving another 5% available for projects. There was a requirement to spend a minimum of 10% of funds on each of farm diversification, business development and co-operation. Sheila reported that she had had a number of enquiries about farm diversification and she did not think that it would be difficult to spend the budget on good projects. So far she had only had a few enquiries about business development so some targeted promotion might be needed to encourage more businesses to come forward. As far as cooperation projects were concerned, she was less confident about hitting the target but she understood that cooperation was a topic to be discussed at the next LEADER Co-ordinators' meeting in Aviemore which was due to start this afternoon and continue the following morning (although Sheila would not be able to get there in time for the afternoon session).

Mhari said that the LAG needed to decide whether funds should be kept aside for projects that had received a positive response at the Expression of Interest stage or whether funds would only be allocated at the full approval stage. The LAG agreed that

funds should not be held back for projects that might never get off the ground and that applicants who received a positive response to their Expression of Interest should be encouraged to get their full application in as soon as possible and warned that the funding might no longer be available if there was a lengthy delay.

The LAG requested that Sheila provide regular updates on the stages that projects were at and Sheila said that she could send out copies of the spreadsheet records that she was keeping. They also asked for an annual review showing to what extent targets are being met.

Action: Sheila

7. Declarations of Interest in any Expression of Interest

Mhari asked LAG members for declarations of interest, financial or otherwise, in any of the Expressions of Interest to be considered at today's meeting. The following interests were declared:

- Sally – Promote Shetland
- Bryan – Tingwall Agricultural Museum and Trondra holiday cottages
- Tommy – Shetland College (through employment)
- Elizabeth – Quendale Kye (through Dunrossness School)

It was agreed that these declarations of interest should be noted but that there was no need for further discussion or for Sally, Bryan, Tommy or Elizabeth to leave the room as no vote would be required.

8. Expressions of Interest

008 Tingwall Agricultural Museum and Heritage Centre

This proposal is to construct a building to display and preserve two local collections relating to the Shetland's agricultural heritage.

Tommy noted that this project should build on the feasibility study for an agricultural museum in Tingwall that was funded under the LEADER 2007-2013 programme and that this should be demonstrated in the full application. Michael reported that the applicant had had a positive meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) during their recent visit to Shetland and that HLF could potentially provide the match funding that the project would need. Sheila noted that the applicant did not yet have a confirmed site for the Centre and the LAG agreed that they would need to show that they had full rights to build on their chosen site before the application could be considered. The LAG's opinion was that the project fitted with the Local Development Strategy for Shetland 2014-2020 (LDS) by serving to enhance the cultural heritage of Shetland and they recommended that it should proceed to the application stage.

009 Shetland Community Storytelling – Shetland Amenity Trust

This project is about enabling the people of Shetland to tell their own stories to the world by building broadcast skills in three Shetland communities (Sandwick, Baltasound and Brae) over two years.

Mhari commented that this project had a high cost (£150,000) and asked what the LAG would be paying for. Sheila explained that the Expression of Interest had been submitted immediately before the contact went on holiday and he was out of contact now until January so she had been unable to obtain any information beyond what was included in the Expression of Interest. Mhari said that the project idea fits the “Enhancing cultural heritage” theme of the LDS in principle but she was unsure about the cost. A discussion followed which focussed on the shortcomings of the Expression of Interest form and its failure to provide enough information or detail to make an informed decision regarding, in particular, the level of funding requested. Sally noted that the proposal came from the Promote Shetland unit within Shetland Amenity Trust and that the 2 year proposed timescale for the project would extend beyond the current Promote Shetland contract between SIC and Shetland Amenity Trust. Mhari proposed that the decision regarding the Expression of Interest be held over until the next LAG meeting in January, by which time Sheila would have been able to obtain more information, and the LAG agreed.

Action: Sheila

010 Holiday Accommodation (Trondra) – Kenny Pottinger

This project is to provide high quality holiday accommodation specifically for larger families comprising four three-bedroom chalets each with beds for six people.

Tommy noted that the SIC Economic Development Unit hadn’t funded any chalets under a previous scheme on the grounds that they were temporary structures. He suggested that the provision of self catering accommodation should only be supported in more remote areas where the justification would be that the lack of accommodation was holding back tourism development and noted that Trondra was not remote. Maree asked whether there was any evidence of particular demand in the area and June said that there are chalets at the Trondra Hall but they each only have one bedroom. Mary said that there is a general lack of bigger accommodation but more accommodation that is currently occupied by oil workers will shortly be freed up for tourists. Wendy noted that there was no mention of any employment opportunities and Mhari questioned whether it would result in any displacement. Sally asked whether this kind of project should be a priority for LEADER funding and suggested that bank borrowing would be more appropriate than grant funding. She suggested that funding this project might set a precedent that would make it difficult to turn down similar projects. Mhari observed that the project was not a strong fit to the LDS and suggested that the applicant should be told that, if they wished, they could resubmit the Expression of Interest with an explanation as to how it contributes to the LDS and the LAG agreed with this suggestion.

011 Quendale Kye an Blyde Bairns – Quendale Farm Ltd.

This project proposes to restore a grade A listed old byre and convert it into an on farm classroom to provide an indoor teaching area and essential hand and boot washing facilities for school and group visits to a sheep and dairy farm.

Mhari commented that this is a very good project which fits with the LDS in lots of ways. Sally said she would like to see the project resulting in wider community

access and use of the facility by more schools. Michael reported that the applicant had met with HLF who were a potential match funder. Mhari queried the timescale of the project as the applicant did not anticipate starting before Spring 2017 but Bryan considered that that was realistic as listed building consent would be required in addition to the usual consents. Questions were raised regarding the long term sustainability of the project and succession planning for the farm but it was explained that the farmers were planning for the long term and were not of an age that they needed to consider succession planning just yet. The LAG agreed that the project should proceed to the application stage.

Tommy Coutts left the meeting.

012 Shetland College – Enabling ICT and Internet Access to Socially and Digitally Excluded Individuals and Groups

This proposal is to purchase and promote the use of ICT tablet devices for the network of learning centres located throughout Shetland. These would be for use by individuals who currently do not have access to ICT or the skills, confidence or financial resources to access the internet themselves.

Sheila explained that Shetland College had initially enquired about ongoing funding for their rural learning centres but she had told them that most of those costs, relating to existing staff and to the delivery of certificated courses, would be ineligible for LEADER funding. This Expression of Interest just relates to the purchase of equipment for the use of socially and digitally excluded individuals. Sally suggested that LEADER was not the best source of funding for this project and recommended that Shetland College should try Skills Development Scotland who work with ESF funding.

Mhari and Wendy both emphasised that learning digital skills is not just about the hardware and that support is essential. June noted that SIC Adult Learning provides courses and works in partnership with the college. Karen pointed out that it is very difficult to find funding for staff and observed that it is all about joining up people to computers. She said that the unemployed in Shetland are vulnerable and while lack of or unfamiliarity with ICT hardware may be a barrier it is not the only one. She added that LEADER may be the only possible source of funding for such projects. Elizabeth observed that people with mental health issues can also have problems accessing support online. Maree pointed out that there are other things that need to happen first, access to a transport being a particular barrier; learning centres may be in local areas but they are a single location in what may be a widely dispersed community. She also questioned whether the tablets were simply replacements of existing assets. June suggested that a package of measures is needed to link excluded individuals to technology. Bryan said that in response to welfare reform Hjaltland housing officers take tablets out to applicants to help them fill out forms but added that filling out claims on a pad is a nightmare. Brian asked whether tablets are the best solution given that many people find them fiddly to use. Wendy said that the Carers Group have bought similar equipment and handed it out for people to try in their own homes.

Mhari said that this proposal is clearly part of a bigger project and the LAG need to be assured that the rest of the project is going to go ahead and is fully funded before they agree to support this part of it. It would be a very small project for LEADER and it would make more sense if the equipment was funded alongside other things. The LAG agreed that the project does clearly fit with the LDS theme of addressing issues of poverty, disadvantage and equality but there would need to be evidence to show that the rest of the funding is in place before they could consider an application. With that condition they agreed that the project should proceed to the application stage.

Elizabeth Robinson left the meeting.

Graeme Howell left the meeting

9. Promoting the new programme

Discussion was limited by the time. Sheila informed the LAG that NB Communications were working on an updated website but the LAG requested that in the meantime the existing website be updated to include the LDS and basic information regarding the new programme.

Action: Sheila

10. AOB

There was no other business.

11. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 20th January, 9.15 a.m. at Solarhus.

Meeting closed at 10.55 am.