



# OUTER HEBRIDES LEADER 2014-2020 PROGRAMME



**Note of the Meeting of the Outer Hebrides LEADER Local Action Group**  
Virtual Meeting, online via 'Microsoft Teams'

**on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October at 10.30am**

**Present:**

- Matt Bruce, Lewis and Harris Horticultural Producers (Private) Chairperson
- Duncan MacInnes, Western Isles Fishing Association (Private)
- Lorna Macaulay, Harris Tweed Authority (Private)
- Johanne Ferguson, Scottish Natural Heritage (Public)
- Colin Gilmour, Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (Private) Vice Chairperson
- Donald Mackinnon, Scottish Crofting Federation (Private)
- Donnie Macdonald, MG Alba (Public)
- Rob MacKinnon, Outer Hebrides Tourism (Private)

**In attendance:**

- Kathlene Morrison, Outer Hebrides LEADER Co-ordinator (KM)
- Charlene Macmillan, Outer Hebrides LEADER Project and Finance Officer (CM)
- Domhnall MacDonald, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Accountable Body Representative (DM)

**Apologies/ Absent:**

- Eoin MacNeil, Co-Cheangal Innse Gall (Private)
- Andrew Ross, North Uist Development Company (Private)
- Alison MacCorquodale, Tourism Outer Hebrides 2020 Leadership Group (Private)
- Cllr. Donald Crichton, Chair of Sustainable Communities Committee CnES (Public)
- Kathleen Stewart, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (Public)
- Calum Mackay, Community Land Scotland (Private)

	<i>Action for:</i>
<p><b>1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies.</p> <p>It was noted that Neil Campbell has formally stood down from his position on the Local Action Group after his involvement in LEADER over a 30-year period and the LAG have been extremely grateful for his knowledge and input.</p> <p>Apologies were received from the absent members.</p> <p><b><i>There were 6 private members and 2 public members in attendance.</i></b></p>	



<p><b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest. In accordance with Audit requirements LAG members were reminded to complete an updated Declaration of Interest form for 2021/2022.</p> <p><i>Action – circulate Declarations of Interest form to those not yet completed</i></p> <p><i>Action – LAG members to submit their updated Declarations of Interest for the 2021/2022 period to LEADER staff</i></p>	<p>CM</p> <p>LAG</p>
<p><b>3. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT NOTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS AND MATTERS ARISING THEREOF</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Note of Meeting on 14/04/21</b> – this was agreed to be a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Note of Meeting on 12/05/21</b> – this was agreed to be a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Note of Meeting on 02/06/21</b> – this was agreed to be a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Note of Meeting on 30/06/21</b> – this was agreed to be a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. CO-ORDINATORS REPORT</b></p> <p>The Co-ordinator provided an overview of her report highlighting that although staff were still working from home the Comhairle had recently indicated that a review of this will be undertaken during October.</p> <p>Work on ‘Programme Closure’ requirements will be undertaken with the Project &amp; Finance Officer, who is also providing support to Orkney LAG and the SG Finance team to assist with capacity and workload.</p> <p>An internal audit is currently underway, and the annual EU Audit Confirmation Certificate will be submitted early November 2021. An EC audit query into Project 15/P00026 from last September was also recently revisited with regards to the Article 61 regulation; SG were satisfied with the response provided but formal feedback from the EU has not yet been received.</p> <p>The SLSG meetings continue to meet on a monthly basis which is proving to be a useful method of up-to-date communication between LAGs and SG. It was noted that many LAG areas now have limited capacity or have no staff in post. The SLSG are formally writing to SG highlighting that some staff have not been retained by their AB’s due to the format of the ‘administrative funding confirmation’ provided by SG and are outlining what ABs require.</p>	

<p><b>5. PROGRAMME FINANCIAL AND PROJECT UPDATE</b></p> <p>An overview of the Programmes financial statement was provided, with an estimated £48k Programme underspend anticipated, with only 6 locally active projects and a further 2 being led by other LAG areas.</p> <p>It was noted that the LAG were successful in their applications to the Rural Communities Testing Change Fund (RCTC) and have received £50k from Stream 1 Tranche 1 and a further £75k from Stream 1 Tranche 2 to be delivered in co-operation with Orkney and Shetland LAGs.</p>	
<p><b>6. RURAL COMMUNITIES TESTING CHANGE FUND</b></p> <p><u>Stream 1, Tranche 1</u> – The Community Shout Out Project is being delivered in conjunction with NHS Western Isles and the Comhairle’s Community Learning and Development staff. Meetings between all parties have taken place and the first report is due at the end of October as prescribed by the RCTC Fund the project will ‘test’ various engagement techniques for communities to assess how communities want to spend money locally and provide the support that they need, whilst also enabling activities and events to take place.</p> <p>An outline guideline to the Community Shout Out Project has been provided to delivery Officers for information and an electronic form will be made available to apply and approve funding the community events and transfer of funds.</p> <p><u>Stream 1, Tranche 2</u> – The Youth LAG Development Project in co-operation with Orkney and Shetland has been approved, however the LAG is only just in receipt of the official Offer of Grant letter from the Scottish Government. It is currently going through the necessary signatory process; once complete a short tender for consultant coordinators and graduate placement posts will be advertised as per the brief that has been compiled and approved by the participating LAG areas.</p>	
<p><b>7. CHAIRS UPDATE</b></p> <p>It was noted that attendance by the SG team at the Chair’s meeting was a positive indication to SG’s commitment in the future development of LAGs in some format.</p> <p>It has been highlighted that details on UKSPF from UK Government and how it reconciles with SG is required to be forthcoming and anticipate more information in the Autumn budget. It was noted that this needs to be falling into place before April 2022 along with the need to clarify how to ensure best use in relation to capacity for delivery.</p>	

<p><b>8. ACCOUNTABLE BODY UPDATE</b></p> <p>DMD attended a meeting with Alistair Hendry, Head of the LEADER Delivery Team in SG, on 23 September, to reconfirm Programme closure requirements and ensuring work is on course to complete this.</p> <p>It was noted that during the recent AB Meeting on 27 September there continued to be a lot of uncertainty about future funding and tensions between UK and Scottish Government, particularly the potential role of SG, if any, going forward being raised by SG at UK level.</p> <p>The Comhairle are also happy to continue supporting the LAGs administration and the current delivery model.</p> <p>Next AB Meeting scheduled to take place after OH LAG meeting in December.</p>	
<p><b>9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS - POST MARCH 2022</b></p> <p>In relation to a recent paper presented at Chair’s Meeting with regards to the LAGs future development and role, going forward, the LAG discussed the proposals outlined by SG, taking into consideration their merits based on the local landscape, discussing and considering where efforts are currently being made and where there are gaps, and where they envisage the future direction of the LAG and their own remit as part of it.</p> <p>Matt Bruce commented that the existing LAG and AB organisation had worked well for the Outer Hebrides and he hoped a similar type of delivery system could be used in future, which as agreed by those present.</p> <p>The LAG were informed of the potential funding routes which may be presented to them following March 2022 and this included being involved in Participatory Budgeting, delivering the Rural Entrepreneurship Fund, Climate Action Hubs, 20 minutes Neighbourhoods and supporting Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs). The LAG agreed that they are open to investigating what input they would have in delivering any of these priorities and funds.</p> <p>It was noted that further investigation as to what is being undertaken locally in relation to climate action is required, with caution to be given to ensure there is no duplication of work. Engagement with the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (CPP’s) Climate Change subgroup is required along with their graduate placement staff member; for which it was noted there is limited funding for.</p> <p>Consideration was asked to be given as to whether it is the LAG or the CPP’s Flood Prevention Group may be better placed to tackle the climate change agenda as they have relevant stakeholders as well.</p> <p>Members highlighted that the LAG works well in its current format, and thought should be given to the possible additional time Members may be required to input into any future roles, with the potential of Participatory Budgeting for example could require significant additional members hours in reading, assessing and approving funding.</p>	

The proposal of LAGs taking on a Rural Land Use Partnership role was queried given the importance of crofting locally, and whether this could be catered for locally elsewhere by a more specialised group. It was noted however that this was not necessarily the case and that crofting forums were often too narrowly focused and would benefit from a wider range of stakeholders, such as a LAG-type format.

It was noted that whilst crofting diversification was an important issue, it was also appropriate to maintain a balance between tourism and natural land-use and consider more established agritourism options that are successful throughout the world.

Conversation turned to the importance of economic consideration, with the LAG feeling that they should not lose this element given its importance in the Islands. The various issues facing the de/re-population of the OH was mentioned by LAG members, the need for jobs, accommodation, schools etc. to provide a more tangible and harmonious strategic link, locally instead of high level.

***Donald Mackinnon left the meeting. The LAG meeting continued without a quorum present, though no further decisions were required.***

The increasing demand for net zero requirements to be addressed as part of funding schemes was highlighted in the fishing sector, which various issues coming to light such as the need for expensive engines to satisfy the requirements, but no skilled labour force available to maintain and fix these motors. Similar issues are becoming apparent in various sectors such as housing grants and the requirements to ensure renewable fuel sources, however access to labour in these markets is crucial going forward to support the demands of these.

It was suggested that a potential gap could be the role to facilitate these various sectors in transitioning to becoming carbon zero as it is difficult to obtain knowledgeable advice on how to move across and what the best option for this is. It was noted that if the LAG participates in a Climate Action Hub role then it may result in accessing additional revenue funding therefore a case should be made for the LAG to support sectors to move across to being carbon neutral/net zero.

It has also been noted that the local tv media sector is growing significantly with now far more opportunities for lots of local businesses to grow, with good computer connectivity being a major game-changer in the industry locally.

Members agreed that should they be involved in the Green Agenda in any way then they could support local sectors transition from an economic stance.

The Chair concluded the discussion that the ABs role and the skills of the LAG are to be retained and in relation to the SG's query regarding LAGs linking with community climate action hubs, that a formal response will be compiled signalling interest but also highlighting the importance of timescales and proposals and relevant framework to be made available as soon as possible.

***Action – Chair to compile response to SG's Climate Action Hub proposal***

**MB**

<b>Action – Discussion paper for next LAG with regards to LAGs future remit</b>	<b>MB/KM</b>
<p><b>10. AOCB</b></p> <p>Only two more LAG meetings are scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 and 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022. The last meeting is likely to involve ‘signing off’ on the financial aspects of the LEADER programme and potentially forming a new LAG committee for future plans and how AB can support this.</p>	
<p><b>11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>The date of the next meeting is scheduled for <b><u>Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December at 10.30am</u></b></p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the Meeting.</p>	

CONFIRMATION OF APPROVAL OF MINUTES	
<b>LAG MEMBER</b>	
<b>SIGNATURE</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	