



TYNE ESK LAG MEETING MINUTES

11 March 2020, 9:30am – 12.30pm

Melville Castle Hotel, Gilmerton Road, Edinburgh, Lasswade EH18 1AP

LAG Members Present

Andrew McDonald, (AMcD), Edinburgh Butterfly & Insect World, Midlothian Tourism Forum, LAG Chair

Anne Hastie, (AH), Private Individual, LAG Vice Chair (joined meeting at 12.30)

Frank Beattie, (FB), Scottish Enterprise, LAG member

Sandra Duncan, (SD), Scottish Women's Rural Institute (SWRI), LAG member

Cllr Russell Imrie, (RI), Midlothian Council, LAG member

Cllr John McMillan, (JMCM), East Lothian Council, LAG member

Patrick Playfair, (PP) Edwin Thompson, LAG member

Simon Poole, (SP), Jerba Campervans, LAG member

Hilary Smith, (HS), North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership, LAG member

Yvonne Stoddart, (YS), STRIVE, LAG member

Cheryl Brown, (CB), Midlothian Sure Start, LAG member

Karen Calvert, (KC), Papermill Restaurant & Craigie Hotel, LAG member

LAG Observers Present

Ann Marie Macaskill, (AM), Midlothian Council Economic Development, LAG Observer and Accountable Body

Susan Smith, (SS), East Lothian Council Economic Development, LAG Observer

Other Attendees

Kevin Anderson, (KA), Midlothian Council, Director of Place

Staff Members Present

Joy Godfrey, (JG), LEADER Support Assistant, LEADER Team (notes)

Angela Lamont, (AL), LEADER Project Officer, LEADER Team

Barry Leslie, (BL), LEADER Finance Support Officer, LEADER Team

Apologies

Paolo Vestri, (PV), East Lothian Partnership, LAG Observer

Alasdair Mathers, (AMa), Midlothian Community Planning Partnership, LAG Observer

Welcome and Apologies

AMcD welcomed everyone to the meeting.

AMcD also welcomed new LEADER Finance Support Officer, BL, to the Programme.

Apologies were noted as above.

Quorum

The meeting was quorate with eleven members in attendance, eight from the non-public sector and three from the public sector.

Actions



1. Matters Arising From Minutes

The LAG reviewed the actions from the last meeting and noted that all had been actioned as far as possible.

1. AM asked for the development of revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be entered as an action of the December meeting. The LAG considered that this was not an agreed action from the last meeting. It was agreed to have a meeting with AM, KA, AMcD and AH to facilitate agreement and signing of the Memorandum of Understanding.
2. AMcD reported that AH had concluded there was no need to review the Communications Plan as the Programme focus is no longer on publicity and attracting new applicants. The LAG agreed that a Communication Plan for a replacement programme would be critical as would a scheduled review. The LAG agreed that learning from the LEADER approach should be transferred into a future programme. The LAG also saw the use of a Communications Plan to celebrate a programme's successes near the end.
3. A Governance Sub Group Meeting had been planned for January 2020 to compile a response to the Scottish Government consultation on Replacement of EU Structural Funds but had to be cancelled due to ill health. AL and SS had both put in responses, AL as an individual with a Tyne Esk LEADER focus and SS on behalf of Economic Development in East Lothian Council.
4. AL had circulated the link to Scottish Government consultation on the replacement of EU Structural Funds.
5. AL had sent AMcD and AH the programme closure letter from the Scottish Government.
6. AL had added a caveat to the Tyne Esk LEADER and Midlothian Council risk registers explaining that each scores differently.
7. AL had updated the Midlothian Council risk register Pentana with the most recent Tyne Esk register.
8. AL had included in the Tyne Esk LEADER monitoring and evaluation brief the question of how Expression of Interest enquirers had heard about the Programme.
9. AL had ensured all projects were checked for the issues found in the internal audit sample projects
10. AL resuming post-application Value for Money for applicable projects.
11. AL will ensure the LAG are consulted in preparation of the 2020 Annual Confirmation Certificate.
12. AL had issued Rosewell Nursery and Additional Needs Service Offer of Grant with the conditions decided at 15 October 2019 LAG meeting and the additional conditions decided at 3 December 2019 meeting.

AM, KA, AMcD and AH to meet to facilitate agreement and signing of Memorandum of Understanding

AL to include Communications Plan in tender brief for Monitoring and Evaluation



13. AL had informed the LAG that the Midlothian and Borders Tourism Action Group Marketing Project applicant intended to spend their £3,250 underspend on PR work (this was later corrected to £3,407 in an email to the LAG). AL reported that a contractor had been appointed for this.
14. AL had forwarded AH & AMcD NB Gin project end dates and AL and AMcD met in January 2020 regarding this and other project end dates. It was noted that the NB Gin project would be discussed at this meeting.
15. AL had investigated the Crowdfund Scotland project 'The Cat's Pyjamas' falling through and fed back to JMCM. JMCM reported that the project had failed due to fire risks and the inability of the 'applicant' to secure the necessary licences. The LAG noted that projects should be subject to all necessary regulatory approvals.
16. AL had forwarded a link to the Whiteadder co-operation project website.
17. AL had contacted her Stow contact and asked for an update on work to come out of the Access Phase 1 project. They said they were promoting the heritage walk around Stow and were in talks with Scottish Borders Council to create some circular walks including to St Mary's Well, an Access Project output. It was unclear to her which of the other walks stemmed from the project. AL to keep the LAG updated.
18. AL had updated the budget spreadsheet for this LAG meeting.

2. Staffing News

- AM welcomed new LEADER Finance Support Officer, BL, to the Programme.
- AM thanked LEADER Programme Support Assistant JG for her contribution to the Programme. Her contract ends on 31 March 2020.
- AM stated that the LEADER Programme Co-Ordinator post has not yet been filled. AM also advised that staff stability as the Programme draws towards an end is being raised at Accountable Body meetings.
- JMCM suggested discussion of future partnerships and any review of the geographical spread of the Programme would be useful when planning a future programme. AMcD reported that the Chairs, Coordinators and Accountable Bodies had all discussed this but needed to know what funds would be available and how they would be distributed. He said the Chairs, Coordinators and Accountable Bodies were pushing for news on roles.

AL to keep the LAG updated on work to come out of the Access Phase 1 project.



- The LAG recognised that if a future programme ran in the same geographical area as the 2014-2020 one, either council could act as the Accountable Body for any new Programme or it could be run independently by the LAG as the LAG’s role already incorporates governance and ultimate accountability for the Programme budget. It was noted that Cairngorm’s LEADER run the Programme as a separate agency and received a cash advance from the Scottish Government to facilitate draw downs.
It was also noted that the Tyne Esk LEADER 2014-2020 Programme actually started operating in 2016 and the LAG wished to avoid such delays in future stating this was wasted time.
- SS stated that East Lothian Council required to be involved in the discussions of a future programme.
- The LAG wanted to know whether claims for the current Programme would be completed on time by 31 December 2020, voicing concern over this in light of the recent reduction in staffing. AM stated she felt confident this would be done and that the current staff compliment was sufficient despite the risk that losing staff at this stage of the Programme is to be expected with the lack of permanency in contracts and a risk for any programme winding down.
- KA asked for a meeting with AMcD regarding staffing and other Programme issues.

KA to meet with AMcD regarding staffing and other Programme issues

3. Scottish Governance/Wider Developments

3.1 End of Allocation Date

AL stated that the final end date for money to be allocated to new projects was 31 December 2019, the date from the Service Level Agreement (SLA).

3.2 Future of Programme, Chairs Letter

- AMcD reported on a letter which had been drafted from the Scottish LEADER Chairs to Fergus Ewing MSP, about the work LEADER has accomplished and the necessity for a replacement Programme. A positive response had been received from Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing, and although he agreed with the contents of the letter, it stated the Scottish Government were not the decision makers and their concerns should be raised with Westminster.
- AL to circulate the Chairs’ letter and Fergus Ewing’s response.

AL to circulate Chairs’ letter to Fergus Ewing MSP and response



<p>3.3 Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) LEADER Evaluation AL spoke about the SRUC evaluation of the Scottish LEADER Programme stating the results were still not out on this but should be by the end of March 2020. AL to circulate.</p>	<p>AL to circulate results of the SRUC LEADER evaluation when released</p>
<p>4 Governance / Programme Updates</p> <p>4.1 Audits</p> <p>4.1 Audit Scotland 'Re-performance' / Scottish Government Audits AL stated that Tyne Esk LEADER has been audited twice in 2019-20, by Audit Scotland and the Scottish Government respectively. The Audit Scotland audit was a 'Re-performance Audit' on the way the Scottish Government had conducted previous monitoring visits. It looked at Newhall Exclusive Use Wedding Venue and all was positive. One minor issue concerned the applicant not displaying their plaque acknowledging LEADER funding.</p> <p>The Scottish Government audit looked at the selected projects of The Fraser Centre, Fishing Around the Forth, Dalkeith Agricultural Show and Redhouse Nursery. AL had answered queries on the projects and AL & AM were to attend a wash-up meeting on 16 March 2020. AL to circulate the full audit report to the LAG upon its completion. The LAG sought involvement in the report as they felt they were being audited as much as the projects.</p> <p>Audit Scotland will attend the next Accountable Body meeting and it was hoped they would share their schedule for 2020.</p> <p>The LAG were pleased that the audits had turned out very favourably so far and noted thanks to the LEADER staff.</p> <p>4.2 LAG Membership AL informed the LAG that Claire Gillies had moved geographical region and stated she had therefore been removed from the LAG membership. She also reported that AMcD and AH felt there should be no need for new LAG members to be appointed at this stage as there are no new projects to approve and unless the LAG felt otherwise they would keep to that decision. No objections were noted.</p>	<p>AL and AM to attend SG audit wash-up meeting on 16 March 2020</p> <p>AL to circulate the full SG audit report to LAG upon completion</p>



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4.3 Monitoring & Evaluation Work

- HS reported on the tender brief for monitoring and evaluation work to be undertaken, drawing attention to the paper AL had circulated on this for the meeting. HS queried the scoring method. AL, HS, SS and AM to go over this.
- HS reported that the evaluation would focus on three main areas:
 - Performance in comparison to the Local Development Strategy
 - Performance in comparison with set Scottish Government questions for all LEADER areas and the current Scottish Government priorities.
 - Processes, procedures and lessons learned.
- The LAG asked if the evaluation would quantify benefits of the Programme in monetary terms, and AMcD reported that this had been done in Dumfries and Galloway and had worked well. They also wanted to ensure the evaluation would extend to the LAG and their experience of the Programme.

It was considered that it should look at:

- The partnerships built up in the LAG
- The decision making processes
- Capacity building
- Lessons learned
- A wide view on the benefits of the program, including intangible elements and added value e.g. increased footfall to attractions around LEADER projects as a result.
- The costs of monitoring and evaluation work were discussed. An upper limit of £15,000 excl. VAT had originally been set but AL thought this might warrant being higher, at £20,000 excl. VAT. SS agreed stating better value for money would be achieved at this. PP and AMcD questioned the need to set an upper limit at all, stating consultants would likely work to this and true value for money would not be delivered. AL and AM to take a steer from Midlothian Council Procurement on this.
- The LAG agreed that monitoring and evaluation tenders should be scored on quality and price. AL confirmed this as the case in the brief.

4.4 Projects End Date Agreement

- The LAG agreed that 25 September 2020 will be the absolute end date for projects to run to give sufficient time for the 31 December 2020 end date for claims to be met.
- AM reiterated Midlothian Council's duty of care to the staff team and to ensure that workloads are manageable.

AL, HS, SS and HS to go over scoring method for monitoring and evaluation work

AL to ensure items requested by LAG are included in monitoring and evaluation tender

AL and AM to seek steer from Midlothian Council Procurement on pricing for monitoring & evaluation work



5 Project Requiring Attention

5.1 Track 2 Train

AM reported that this project was still closed due to the infrastructure/flooding issue A dialogue is underway with building owners Network Rail and the applicant, Apex. It is believed that the issue concerning flooding has been resolved.

A letter has been sent from the Council to Apex Scotland to seek clarity on a number of details and AM will keep the Executive Team posted on details.

At this point AM and KA left the meeting, which did not affect the numbers being quorate.

5.2 Budget Spread Sheet

AL presented the budget spreadsheet.

- £2.516 million is allocated to projects.
- £2.482 million is the actual predicted project spend, costs changes through change requests considered.

AL explained that there is a current underspend of the Administration and Animation budget of approximately £124,000. AL advised that any underspend on this or projects would be returned to the Scottish Government.

All Tyne Esk LEADER projects are listed on the spreadsheet and AL went through these one by one fielding questions from the LAG.

5.3 Update on Projects Requiring Attention

5.3.1 Drift (Seabuckthorn Coffee House)

- A letter had been sent to this applicant, in early January, asking them for more information on their pending planning extension to ensure the project is compliant with the control of asset LEADER requirement and their claim to be made.

Despite being required to reply by 14 February 2020, the applicant had phoned on 21 February 2020 stating that the required planning permission had now been applied for.

Concerned about further delays to the project and how that would impact staff workload, AL and AMcD had sent out a second letter which AL circulated at the meeting.

AM to keep the Executive Team posted on updates of the Track 2 Train project



It stated:

- The applicant must have all the paperwork in place for their claim with a deadline of 30 June 2020.
- There must be monthly contact made with the LEADER staff team to facilitate this and an update on progress of the outstanding planning permission given at the same time. Sections 11 and 12 of the Offer of Grant letter were cited in the letter, which gives the LAG the right to withdraw funding if insufficient progress is made.

5.3.2 Wheatrig Business Hub

- AL reported that this project had also been written to, expressing concern over delays, and Sections 11 and 12 of the Offer of Grant were also cited. AL circulated this letter.
- The project end date had already been extended and would have to be extended again. The new start date would be 30 March 2020 and end date 11 September 2020, perilously close to the Tyne Esk LEADER projects end date of 25 September 2020. The applicant has offered assurance and said a penalty clause would be inserted into the contractor's contract for each week the deadline for completion was missed but AL still voiced concern and recommended a risk averse approach to the LAG. This would be that only one claim be made on the project, at completion, so that if it did not complete on time no losses would be incurred by the Accountable Body.
- AMcD asked if Wheatrig had the capacity to finance the project themselves.
AL stated that this most likely would not be the case.
- The LAG discussed how the completion of the project would be evidenced in practical terms, and AMcD asked what the terms would be for the final claim. AL stated this would be on provision of the final evaluation showing all items on the original schedule being complete.
- The LAG agreed for the new letter to be sent to the applicant stating:
 - The finalised tender documents and contractor's schedule should be shared with the staff team asap.
 - The staff team be updated on milestones from this at regular intervals.
 - The condition of one claim be imposed.

The LAG asked AL to update them of progress at the interim LAG meetings between now and the proposed end date.

AL/AMcD to send second letter to Wheatrig Business Hub applicant asking for information / updates on building schedule and informing of one claim

AL to update LAG on progress by Wheatrig Business Hub at the LAG meetings



5.2.1 NB Gin

AL reminded the LAG that NB Gin need to make a final claim otherwise they will be in a positon of owing Tyne Esk LEADER monies. The end date of the 25 September 2020 and financial end date of 31 December 2020 had been previously agreed with the applicant and AL and AMcD had sent a letter reminding them of this, requesting acknowledgement of receipt of the letter, quarterly contact until the end date and continual completion of the claim as items are purchased.

5.2 Melville Castle Bridge Restoration

- AL raised concerns over this project because the end date had been extended from 31 October 2019 to 31 March 2020, communication with the applicant had been slow in the past and the date of early February 2020 to give a final update on costs had been missed by the applicant.
- Repeated attempts had been made by BL to contact the applicant which finally resulted in successful contact at the start of March 2020. They have now been made aware that communication is essential in order to progress the claim. AL had not felt it necessary to issue a letter yet. She wished to flag it to the LAG in case a subsequent letter was required.

6 Project Updates

6.1 Fishing In The Forth

Jonathan Louis (JL) of the Forth Rivers Trust presented on the Fishing Around the Forth co-operation project.

At this point AH arrived and the meeting remained quorate with twelve members in attendance, nine from the non-public sector and three from the public sector.

JL detailed:

- How the website was externally designed but built in-house to keep costs down.
- The development of the new Fishing Around the Forth logo and the use of the website to buy permits.
- The fact that the website booking fee will pay for the ongoing maintenance of the website.
- The best mode to generate email sign-ups.
- A future-proof leaflet that could be used in line with the website branding.



<p>The LAG asked for details of the engagement in the Tyne Esk LEADER area. JL did not have a breakdown of the statistics but said he would provide them when he got them.</p> <p>JL described staff time as being the biggest cost to maintain the project but noted that the overseeing body, The Forth District Salmon Fishery Board, see the benefit of the project and may consider picking up staff costs going forward. The website may, in future, also feature advertising to generate revenue.</p> <p>Of the 429 permits processed through the website, 378 were free but the 51 sold had brought in £1,379. There had been 3,700 individual users of the website since 20th January 2020, with 300-400 users per week, 909 Facebook likes and a mailing list of 980.</p> <p>JL reported that the Forth Rivers Trust has a good digital skill set which many small fishing clubs do not. By having the website that is the focus of a Tyne Esk LEADER project it means that the small clubs do not need to have digital where-with-all to benefit from an online presence.</p> <p>JL played the LAG the River Esk promotional video.</p> <p>The LAG thanked Jonathan for his presentation.</p>	<p>JL to provide a breakdown of statistics of engagement in Tyne Esk area with Fishing Around the Forth website.</p>
<p>7 Change Requests Introduction There was no time to cover this item.</p>	
<p>8 Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMcD thanked JG for her work with Tyne Esk LEADER and wished her well with her future endeavours. JG thanked the LAG for the opportunity to work with them and stated the many benefits she had gained by working in community-led local development on behalf of a funder. • AMcD requested that the first draft of the minutes be sent to the Executive Team. 	<p>BL to send first draft of minutes to Executive Team</p>
<p>9 Finish – Date of next meeting The next meeting will be in The Fraser Centre in June, exact date TBC.</p>	

W. [Signature]
29/7/20.



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Actions

AL

- 1 AL to include Communications Plan in tender brief for monitoring and evaluation work.
- 2 AL to keep LAG updated on work to come out of the Access Phase 1 project.
- 3 AL to circulate Chairs' letter to Fergus Ewing MSP and response.
- 4 AL to circulate results of SRUC LEADER evaluation when released.
- 5 AL and AM to attend SG audit wash-up meeting on 16 March 2020.
- 6 AL to circulate the full SG audit report to LAG upon completion.
- 7 AL, HS, SS and AM to go over scoring method for monitoring and evaluation work.
- 8 AL to ensure items requested by LAG are included in monitoring and evaluation tender.
- 9 AL and AM to seek steer from Midlothian Council Procurement on pricing for monitoring & evaluation work.
- 10 AL/AMcD to send second letter to Wheatrig Business Hub applicant asking for information/updates on building schedule and informing of one claim.
- 11 AL to update LAG on progress by Wheatrig Business Hub at the LAG meetings.

AM

- 12 AM to keep the Executive Team posted on updates of the Track 2 Train project.

AMcD

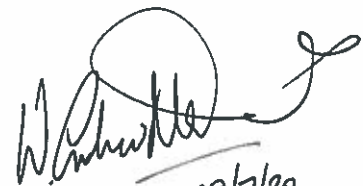
- 13 AM, KA, AMcD and AH to meet to facilitate agreement and signing of Memorandum of Understanding.
- 14 KA to meet with AMcD regarding staffing and other Programme issues.

JL

- 15 JL to provide a breakdown of the statistics of engagement in Tyne Esk area with Fishing Around the Forth website.

BL

- 16 BL to send first draft of minutes to Executive Team


29/7/20

