



## TYNE ESK LAG MEMBERS MEETING

2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

Meeting held via ZOOM

### LAG Members/Observers Present

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

Anne Hastie, (AH), Private Individual, LAG Vice Chair

Frank Beattie, (FB), Scottish Enterprise, LAG Member (attended by phone)

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

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

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

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

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

Patrick Playfair, (PP), Edwin-Thomson, LAG Member

Karen Calvert (KC), The Papermill, LAG Member

Derek Oliver, (DO), Midlothian Council Chief Officer, Place, Accountable Body Representative/LAG Observer

### LAG Staff Present

Angela Lamont, (AL), Acting Programme Co-ordinator, Tyne Esk LEADER

Barry Leslie, (BL), Finance Support Officer, Tyne Esk LEADER

### Apologies

John Cunningham, (JC), East Lothian Council Economic Development Department, LAG Observer

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

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

<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>AMcD welcomed everyone to the meeting and ran through the process of asking questions etc on the virtual platform.</p> <p>Apologies were noted.</p> <p><b>Quorum</b> The meeting was quorate.</p>	
<p><b>Action Points of 14<sup>th</sup> Oct 20 Meeting</b></p> <p><b>AL</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. AL to send invite for next Rural Policy Cross Party Group meeting.</b> This has been completed.</li> <li><b>2. AL to raise putting website forward on to SRN website after August 2021 and suggest this as a solution for all areas.</b> AL raised this at the staff group meeting.</li> </ol>	



**3. AL to send audit report to LAG.**

This has been completed.

**4. AL/AH/AMcD to draw up/send out scheduling/final claims letter for applicants**

This has been completed.

**AMcD**

**1. AMcD to continue to raise return of Tyne Esk underspend at Chairs meetings**

The Tyne Esk underspend is still being reported to SG and we are looking for a meeting to discuss this and reconciliation of figures.

**2. AL/AH/AMcD to draw up/send out scheduling/final claims letter for applicants**

This has been completed.

**JMcM**

**1. JMcM to check and circulate Cosla paper on replacement funding if required**

Not done as of yet – JMcM to send.

**2. JMcM &AH to work on local Infographic**

This has been completed. Discussed below.

JMcM will circulate COSLA paper to LAG

**AH**

**1. JMcM &AH to work on local Infographic**

This has been completed. Discussed below.

**2. AL/AH/AMcD to draw up/send out scheduling/final claims letter for applicants.**

This has been completed.

Minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020 agreed with no amendments.

**Declaration of Interests**

AMcD queried there were any declaration of interests. CB declared an interest in the Midlothian Sure Start project however, as it was only in relation to the budget update, It was agreed that here was no need for CB to leave the meeting.

**Register of Interest**

AL thanked those of the LAG she had received emails from and asked those who had not whether their Register of Interest Form 2019-20 was still valid. AMcD, JMcM, JC, Andrew Bayne-Jardine, AL and AMM still to do this. AMcD and JMcM will confirm by email.



<p><b>LAG Expenses</b></p> <p>AL requested these from the LAG no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020. This will allow time to check and final payment to be made no later than 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021.</p>	
<p><b>1. Staffing</b></p> <p>AL thanked Mason Frizzell from West Lothian for his support for assisting with claims and Barry Leslie for his hard work.</p>	
<p><b>2. Scottish Government/Wider Developments</b></p> <p>SG Budget/LEADER Spend 2021/22</p> <p>AL informed the LAG that the Scottish Government (SG) budget would not be as delayed as previously reported given that the UK government’s Spending Review was announced on 25th Nov 2020. She also reported that the SG Leader Development Team (LDT) had requested an update to the Covid projects risk register, to reflect those with recovery ideas/spend beyond end March 2021 as before but also any in danger of claims not completing by this time. She noted minor changes had been made to the recovery projects and the Church St/Winton Place project had been added as one which might not complete, for assurance.</p> <p><b>Scottish Shared Prosperity Funding</b></p> <p>AL referred to the Scottish Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) consultation document which had been circulated, summarising it as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The paper assumes full match of expected EU Structural Funds (£1.283bn UK wide) and full devolvement to proceed;</li> <li>• It sets out a structure for a Programme which would run 2021-27 and plans to press the UK Government for Scotland’s share of the Structural Funds;</li> <li>• It proposes governance via a tiered system: SG, to Regional Partnerships Highlands &amp; Islands Enterprise (H&amp;IE), South of Scotland Economic Partnership (SOSEP) and Regional Economic Partnerships for the areas outwith. Local Authorities would continue to be seen as central to delivery;</li> <li>• The underpinnings would be National Performance Framework outcomes Improving Places, Tackling Poverty, Skilled People and Business and Jobs Growth, with wellbeing (the wellbeing economy) and climate change as horizontal themes.</li> </ul> <p>The paper was launched before the UK Spending Review of 25th Nov 2020, which outlined different plans for the SPF - £220m is to be made available in</p>	



2021/22 for UK pilots and this figure upped to approximately £1.5bn in 2022/23. This causes concern because one year of SG's proposal would be lost and it is intended the SPF to go through the Internal Market Bill which denounces some of powers given to the devolved nations.

AH queried whether it would be worthwhile having a Local Development Strategy (LDS) ready for the potential new Programme and AL thought this may be hard to get done by the end of this Programme but reported SG were to advise on accruing Administration and Animation (A&A) spend, so thought it may be possible. AL agreed that she would look into this with Ekos

**AL to speak to Ekos about potential LDS for future Prog**

**1. Programme/Governance Matters**

**LAG Member Changes**

AL announced it was with regret they had received Sandra Duncan's resignation from the LAG but suggested they again do not seek a replacement with the Programme being so close to its end, unless anyone had any objections. No objections were made to this.

**Ekos Progress – Monitoring & Evaluation**

AH advised that the steering group met (on 10th Nov 2020) with Ekos who confirmed that the project and LAG evaluations were on track. Primary research was completed at the end of Nov 2020 and the draft report will be completed by 8th Dec 2020. This will be sent to the steering group (AH, HS & AL) first who will be invited to make comments before wider LAG circulation. Ekos will be holding the Validation Workshop on 27th Jan 2021 with the final report to be presented in Feb 2021.

JMcM asked if they had had any feedback on Ekos's work with applicants and AL advised she had been informed that it was very professionally done. JMcM reiterated this through his experience with them.

**Internal Audit**

AL reported Midlothian Council's internal audit had completed in Oct 2020 and the report had been circulated to the LAG. She noted it had given 2 assurance ratings:

- Substantial (1 from top) for governance/application processes;
- Limited (1 from bottom) for claims processes due to limited staff resource to close Programme, addressed in the recommendations.

and two recommendations:

- All projects to be checked against the criteria used in the audit, AL to action;
- Sufficient staff resource should be provided to ensure the Programme can close on time, DO's action. A member of staff from Economic Development (AR) has been assigned but had not had to be called upon due to the support from West Lothian. This support will stop at the end of Jan 2021 so AR's assistance may be needed then.



On other points, the report noted the Memorandum of Understanding had now been signed and the Group Protocol was signed by all LAG Members and is up to date.

AL gave some detail on the project work to be done and AH queried the ‘fully audited/signed accounts’ required, whether this would be up to present time? AL advised that this was not the case, it was the same years of accounts provided at the time of application.

JMcM commented he was surprised the LAG Chair and Vice Chair did not have more to do with the internal audits when they ran. AH advised that this year she had been in close contact with the auditor whom she had helped on governance matters. It was only the previous year when the Exec had not been involved.

### **Annual Confirmation Certificate (ACC)**

AL reported this is a follow on from the Internal Audit report and is an annual return to SG LDT on the functioning of the Programme Oct – Oct. Points which were highlighted were:

- Staff resilience - the Internal Audit action on staffing not withstanding, absence of either of the two dedicated LEADER staff would put stress on the Programme because of loss of dedicated knowledge. It was also noted that this was not unique to Tyne Esk LEADER at this stage in the Programme;
- Programme close – employment of a member of staff until end April 2021 is still sought for clear up of Drawdown queries;
- Reconciliation of figures between SG DT/LARCs/internal figures required – meeting requested via the ACC and other means.

### **Tyne Esk Infographic**

AH presented the Tyne Esk Infographic, an amended version of the Scottish LEADER infographic suggested by JMcM at the last meeting.

AH completed this for Tyne Esk and had broken it down into East Lothian and Midlothian areas. We have committed £2.5 million of funding, approved 42 projects across the two areas and created 62 new jobs by Apr 2020, 39 in East Lothian and 23 in Midlothian. Discussion arose on Midlothian receiving less funding than East Lothian, but this would be explained by a number of factors, not least the halt of big projects such as Track 2 Train.

AH recommended that we should distribute this to the local media and also put it on the website, highlighting that we are waiting to see what happens next, with regards to future funding. RI suggested increasing the media scope to the Scotsman and Evening News, for example, and AL said she would speak to Midlothian and East Lothian Councils’ communications departments to further this. AL stated the staff team would not have a lot of time to devote to distribution but encouraged the LAG to do so, particularly with local Councillors, MSPs etc.

**Tyne Esk Infographic distributed by LAG.**

**AL to speak to Midlothian and East Lothian Councils’**



AH also felt that local economy groups could be influential if given the information and said she would circulate it with the East Lothian Council Covid19 Response, Recovery and Renewal Rural Group of which she is Chair. The National Farmers Union of Scotland is a member of the group and may be able to send to farming press contacts. SP also said that he will talk to his PR Agency as they managed to secure his company a number of articles in the Scotsman. It was thought this may be the most successful route to the national press.

**communication teams to run articles on infographic in local and national press. AH to share infographic with East Lothian Council Covid19 Response, Recovery and Renewal Rural Group . SP to speak to his PR agency to progress publishing of infographic in Scotsman.**

## 1. Project Updates

### Projects Budget

AL shared the Tyne Esk Budget Spread Sheet with the LAG and ran through the projects still to complete. She reported that four projects had closed since the last meeting and although there will be some overspill into January there were now no concerns over claims.

Discussion arose around the Track 2 Train project and AL reported that there had been no further progress that she was aware of so this may be a sunk cost to the Accountable Body. She asked DO about recovering the cost through legal means and DO advised they were still looking at options for the building, seeking to utilise it to best effect.

### Successes

AL ran through successes for various completed projects:

- **Drift**

This project had completed since last meeting after its claim had been in the system for two plus years. AL drew attention to the project's evaluation, noting:

- Job creation: 17 in total, of the prediction of two full time jobs safeguarded;
- Visitor numbers: 80,000/year in first year, approx. 40,000 'tourists', from outwith East Lothian;
- Projects benefitting young people: eight young members of staff had accepted being put through a food related SQA while in employment with the aim of furthering careers within and outwith Drift;
- Applicant Firm of WT McNicol is also an Agri-tourism Farm, specialising in food and drink, quoted by Fergus Ewing as an example of best practice in many of his talks. AH reiterated this, noting he named it as one of only two projects at the recent Agri-Tourism Conference.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Team East Lothian (Meadowmill)</b></li> </ul> <p>AL highlighted some results of this project’s evaluation, particularly that the stadium had been chosen for three of only four Scottish Athletics events in summer of 2020 because of the improved facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fishing Around the Forth</b></li> </ul> <p>AL had reported previously the applicant’s optimisation of the Covid local message, targeting promotions to people in the Forth area. This has resulted in almost 900 permit sales Jan – Oct 2020, equating to approximately £30,000 sales and although this cannot be compared with 2019 sales as yet, the applicant and participant fisheries believe it is a significant increase. The applicant stated many small fisheries would have gone under without the FishForth hub.</p>	
<p><b>5. AOCB</b></p> <p>DO asked if the Audit Committee were to ask about claims being completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 what would our answer be. AL replied she was confident they would now be completed.</p> <p>AH advised that flowers had been sent to thank SD and wondered whether the same could be done for SS who had been off for some time however, JMCM stated that he had been advised that neither flowers nor food were appropriate. AH has SS personal email so will send good wishes from the LAG.</p> <p>AH also thanked DO for all his assistance, particularly in resolving the MoU and staffing issues.</p> <p><b>Dates for 2021</b>          Ekos Validation Workshop – 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021          Ekos Final Report Presentation – 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021          Next (final) LAG Meeting – 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021</p>	

**Actions**

**JMCM**

- JMCM to circulate COSLA paper to LAG

**AL**

- AL to speak to Ekos about potential LDS for future Prog
- AL to speak to Midlothian and East Lothian Councils’ communication teams to run articles on infographic in local and national press.

**AH**

- AH to share infographic with East Lothian Council Covid19 Response, Recovery and Renewal Rural Group.

**SP**

- SP to speak to his PR agency to progress publishing of infographic in Scotsman.



Scottish Rural  
Development  
Programme



LAG

- Tyne Esk Infographic distributed by LAG.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Andrew McDonald', with a long horizontal line underneath.

Andrew McDonald, Tyne Esk LEADER LAG Chair

24/03/2021