

Renfrewshire LAG

Minutes of Meeting: 9th March 2010, 1pm

Castle Semple Visitor Centre, Lochwinnoch

1. Present

Jenny Gough (Chair)	Renfrewshire Council, Regeneration & Environment
Keren Ferguson (Project Co-ordinator)	Renfrewshire Council, Regeneration & Environment
David Robertson (Minutes)	Renfrewshire Council, Regeneration & Environment
Andrew Mackenzie (Minutes)	Renfrewshire Council, Regeneration & Environment
Charlie Woodward	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park
Donald Cochrane	National Farmers Union
Avril McLean	WRVS
Tom Fulton	Bridge of Weir Community Council
Jimmy Hyslop	Scottish Natural Heritage
Tommy McGrory	Forestry Commission Scotland
Andrew Eadie	Renfrewshire Local History Forum
Janis McDonald	Renfrewshire CVS
Aileen Monk	SRANI
Anne Phillips	Renfrewshire Council

2. Apologies

Robert Carruth, Toby Wilson, Theresa Correia

3. Minutes of previous meeting – 8th December 2009

Item 2 - AP added to list of apologies. Minutes of previous meeting otherwise approved.

4. Update on Applications and scoring

Five applications for funding have been received. These were discussed by the LAG, as follows:

i. Developing Lamont Farm

LAG Decision: Decision deferred.

Further information to be requested by LEADER Co-ordinator.

ii. Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve Redevelopment – Community Research Study

CW, A.Monk & AP declared an interest and temporarily left the room while this application was discussed.

LAG Decision: Decision deferred.

Further information to be requested by LEADER Co-ordinator.

iii. Lochwinnoch Community Response Team

CW, A.Monk, AP & DC declared an interest and temporarily left the room while this application was discussed.

LAG Decision: Decision deferred.

Further information to be requested by LEADER Co-ordinator.

iv. Discover Clyde Muirshiel Wildlife on Screen

CW and A.Monk declared an interest and temporarily left the room while this application was discussed.

LAG Decision: Project to be part approved

Applicant to be invited to amend application to include components considered by LAG to be eligible for LEADER funding. As project is due to start by end of March, amended application will be circulated to all LAG members with a time limit requested for feedback and recommendations.

v. Development of Semple Trail Heritage Project

CW, A.Monk & AP declared an interest and temporarily left the room while this application was discussed.

LAG Decision: Application approved.

Additional condition: That a neutral member of the LAG sit on the interview panel during the interview process for the employment of a project officer.

Application Scoring

To aid the discussions and assessment of the funding applications, each LAG member had scored the applications using the scoring matrix prior to today's meeting. JG advised that the scoring matrix and guidance notes had been commended by the Scottish Government.

TM pointed out that East Renfrewshire LAG submit their scores to their LEADER co-ordinator in advance of each LAG meeting. With respect to future LAG meetings, it was thereby agreed that scoring sheets should be submitted to the LAG co-ordinator no later than the Friday prior to each LAG meeting. It was also agreed that an earlier deadline is required for project submissions to allow the LEADER project team time to consider applications thoroughly and to ensure proper procedures are complied with.

As such, it was agreed that all applications should be submitted at least three weeks in advance of the LAG meeting at which the applicant wishes their project to be considered. All supporting information should also be submitted by this deadline.

5. Boundary map changes

At present the official LEADER map boundary is not very precise. It follows the boundary of Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics Datazones, as required by the Scottish Government. This however means that parts of Erskine are artificially included in the LAG area even though Erskine has a population of more than 10,000 people and is not therefore eligible for LEADER funding (unless it can be demonstrated that a project in Erskine will offer economic or community benefit to the wider rural area). It was agreed by the LAG that there is a need for a better quality map which identifies more clearly the areas which are eligible for LEADER funding.

Action – KF/DR to produce and distribute better quality map for approval by LAG.

6. Extending the LAG

It was agreed efforts need to be stepped up to extend membership of the LAG. In particular, there is a need to gain additional membership from the community, voluntary and business sectors as membership of the LAG remains heavily skewed towards the public sector.

JM and AMcL advised they have a database of community and voluntary contacts to draw from.

AP is retiring her role as Renfrewshire Council Tourism Officer. There are no plans for her post to be replaced at present and as such the LAG will have no tourism representation.

Other potential sources for LAG membership mentioned included rotary clubs, tenants residents associations, Scout and Guide groups and religious groups.

Action – All to provide details of potential LAG members to KF.

7. Scottish Government Audit – Verbal Report

JG reported on the recent audit undertaken by The Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspectors Directorate (SGRPID) of the Renfrewshire LEADER operations. The auditors were generally satisfied with our procedures so far although it was recognised that LEADER is still at an early stage. A number of recommendations made by the auditors (e.g. regarding filing, invoicing, etc.) will be taken on board by the Project Team.

8. Update on Scottish Government – Verbal Report

There is no further progress regarding the Scottish Government's proposals, discussed at the last LAG meeting, to transfer activity from Rural Priorities to LEADER. This would include community facilities projects such as upgrading of village or sports halls, for instance, becoming eligible under LEADER. As per the previous meeting, doubts were

expressed regarding the viability of such projects being eligible under LEADER, particularly as regards their expense. As yet, there is no confirmation from the Scottish Government on this.

9. Paper on Grant Rates

A paper regarding grant rates was prepared by KF/JG and circulated in advance of the meeting. This discussed the decision by the Scottish Government Rural Directorate's Rural Community Empowerment Team (RCET) to increase the intervention rate under LEADER from 50% to 90%. The Scottish Government have now approved this proposal. The paper tabled proposes that the rate of 50% intervention be retained as the standard rate, however projects seeking increased intervention could be considered on a case by case basis. Projects seeking more than 50% grant aid would have to demonstrate a need for the increased intervention and also demonstrate particularly high value in terms of their overall benefit to the LAG area and LEADER target groups.

The LAG approved this approach. Further to the criteria outlined in the paper, TM also commented that sustainability and additional community benefit both need to be key requirements for allowing higher rates of intervention. This was agreed.

10. Progress on Guidance (LAG Handbook)

No comments have been received on the LAG handbook previously circulated by JG. LAG members were asked that any comments they do have be submitted to JG no later than Friday 19th March.

Action – All to submit comments on LAG handbook no later than 19th March.

11. Delegated funding

Following a suggestion at the previous LAG meeting, KF/JG prepared and circulated in advance of the meeting a paper discussing the possibility of delegated funding. The paper proposes that all projects seeking funding of between £1,000 and £3,000 should be decided by a delegated three person panel comprising the LAG Chair, LEADER Project Co-ordinator and one LAG member. This would avoid the need for the very smallest projects to have to wait until the meeting of the next LAG before they receive a LAG decision. JH pointed out that in any case, applications of these amounts are rare.

While the LAG generally agreed with the idea of a panel deciding grants of between £1,000 and £3,000, it was pointed out by JM that if the LAG member in the three person panel was from the public sector, the panel as things stand at present would be entirely made up of public sector representatives. JM also suggested the panel should be larger. This would not be too onerous an undertaking if those sitting on the panel were in contact with each other electronically.

It was agreed by the LAG that such a panel should therefore comprise at least three LAG members and contain representation from the community sector. The paper on this will therefore be amended and circulated again prior to the next LAG meeting.

Action – KF/AMack to amend paper on delegated funding in time for next LAG meeting.

12. Update on Rural Gathering Event

KF reminded the group of this event which is being organised by the SCVO and is scheduled to take place at the Cargill Hall, Bridge of Weir on 28th April. This is not a LEADER event as such, however it was agreed this event offers an excellent opportunity to network and to promote LEADER.

It was suggested that the LAG could have a stall/display at this event and possibly consider promotional 'freebies' (e.g. pens and stickers).

LAG members were asked to consider and forward names of other potentially interested parties to be invited to the event.

Action – All to consider other potentially interested parties that may wish to attend the gathering. Names of those to be invited to the Rural Gathering should be forwarded to KF/DR.

Action – KF/AMack/DR to investigate possibility of a LEADER stall and potential for promotional 'freebies'.

Action – KF/AMack/DR to send out reminders to LAG members in advance of the Gathering.

13. Election of new chair

JG notified the group that she is due to retire from Renfrewshire Council on 26th March. As such, she will no longer be able to chair the LAG. CW agreed to act as temporary chair for the purpose of the next LAG meeting. It was agreed that nominations should be made for a new chair in advance of the next LAG meeting. In the meantime, JG agreed to prepare and circulate an abstract outlining the duties of the LAG chair. It should be noted that these duties would include attendance at a strategic LAG Chairs Group which meets four times a year.

Action – JG to circulate abstract outlining duties of LAG Chair.

Action – All to consider nominations for the new chair in advance of next LAG meeting.

14. A.O.B.

AP notified the group that she is retiring and will no longer sit on the LAG.

Various options were discussed regarding publicity of LEADER. Following the last LAG meeting, an advert on LEADER was published in the Kilmacolm Advertiser. It was agreed that a further advert should be placed with the newspaper. It was also suggested that information could be placed with Chatterbox (a Lochwinnoch Community newsletter) and on Howwood Community Website. It should also be noted that the Local Development Strategy contains a section on publicity and awareness raising.

Action – KF/AMack/DR to consider publicity/awareness raising for LEADER.

15. Date of next meeting

It was agreed this would be an evening meeting and that meetings would alternate to encourage maximum attendance.

The time of 6pm on Tuesday 8th June at the Castle Semple Centre, Lochwinnoch, was agreed.