

**LEADER+ PROGRAMME MONITORING COMMITTEE:
1st MEETING, COWAN HOUSE, INVERNESS, THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2002**

Present

Jim Millard (Convenor)	Scottish Executive
Frank Gaskell	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Jane Hamilton	Scottish Executive
Bryan McGrath	Scottish Borders Council
Richard Robinson	Scottish Natural Heritage

In attendance

John Grieve	UK Leader+ Network, Scottish contact
Tanja Viljannen	European Commission
Brian Wither	Scottish Executive

Apologies

Helen Betts-Brown	SCVO
Neil Ferguson	Scottish Enterprise
Tony Fitzpatrick	Dumfries & Galloway Council
Jane Thomas	Shetland Enterprise Company

1. Welcome and Introduction

1.1 The Convenor opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the 1st Leader+ PMC meeting and indicated that the core group had already convened to form the Mid Term Evaluation Steering Group. This group had been supplemented by Local Action Group (LAG) members to the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC). The meeting provided the opportunity for the PMC:

- to consider the emerging draft Programme Complement prior to the ex-ante evaluation that would be undertaken by the same consultants that undertook the SPD ex-ante evaluation; and
- to consider the final draft guidance and model application form.

1.2 From a Scottish Executive perspective the PMC need not be large as the real work would be undertaken by the Local Action Groups (LAGs). The PMC has a strategic role in considering regular reports from the LAGs, recommendations from the mid term evaluation and approving Annual Implementation Reports.

1.3 Membership of the PMC was drawn from representatives of key agencies involved in, or with an interest in Leader+. Membership would be augmented by two LAG members, Bryan McGrath and Jane Thomas had been invited today prior to LAGs finalising their nominations for the PMC. Mr McGrath queried whether two LAG members would be sufficient and that three regional representatives might be more appropriate. The Convenor indicated that there would be no problem with either two or three members. Mr Grieve stated that the agreement had been that there would be two representatives and two alternatives. It

was agreed that two members and alternatives be appointed and to review the position at a later date.

2. Apologies

2.1 Apologies were received from Helen Betts-Brown, Neil Ferguson, Tony Fitzpatrick and Jane Thomas.

3. Terms of Reference

3.1 The Convenor stated that the Terms Of Reference for the PMC was drawn from those for other Scottish committees and adapted for Leader+. Mrs Hamilton queried the target of issuing papers 15 days prior to any meetings. It was agreed that this would be an aspirational target because it was accepted that there would be circumstances where the target could not be achieved.

3.2 The committee agreed the Terms of Reference indicating that participation would also be acceptable by video-conference. The Guidance should also be amended to reflect at least two meetings per annum.

4. Programme Complement

4.1 The Convenor advised that the Community Initiative Programme (CIP) had been approved by the Commission and that regulations also require a more detailed Programme Complement to be developed.

4.2 In Scotland the approach had been to select groups, develop business plans and then prepare the Complement based on the agreed business plans. The business plans had all now been agreed and most groups were actively seeking applications. The ex-ante process would continue with an ex-ante evaluation of the Complement. The evaluation has to be completed by the end of the year. The Programme Complement will be circulated by written procedure when the evaluation has been completed and necessary adjustments made to the Complement. The Complement would then be forwarded to the Commission. This approach had been agreed with the Commission due to the way Leader+ had been developed in Scotland.

4.3 The Convenor welcomed general comments on the draft either today or e-mailed to Brian Wither. General comments arising included:

- Aims should be consistent with the CIP.
- Networking not restricted to UK Network or Leader+ Groups.
- Action 2 covers joint working including animation costs for working with non-Leader+ groups.
- Action 3 covers UK Network costs. Groups can approach LRDP for help.
- LRDP has resources for activity at the local level– if contract does not cover then the Executive will consider if extra work could be undertaken with additional payment.
- Programme Complement needs to expand information on UK Network and networking.
- Programme Complement and guidance needs to be clearer about expenditure in Action 2 and 3.

- Targets need figures and should reflect STAR working Group proposals.
- Technical Assistance and chapters 4&5 of the guidance should be reflected in the Programme Complement.

Action: The Programme Complement to be amended appropriately and circulated to LAGs to make them aware of current targets.

5. Mid Term Evaluation

5.1 The terms of reference for the Mid Term Evaluation had been agreed by the Steering Group, core PMC members, and circulated for approval by the Committee. Mr McGrath commented on the difficulties in undertaking an evaluation when projects were only just starting to come through. The Convener stated that the Steering Group had discussed this issue and were quite clear that the evaluation would follow a two part process:

1. Evaluation of the process; and
2. Consider evaluation of projects as late as possible in the process.

5.2 The Executive would continue to press the Commission on the timetable for the Mid Term Evaluation. There had been some interest in applying to undertake the evaluation and all who had notified interest would be invited to submit a bid.

5.3 The Committee approved the terms of reference, agreed that the evaluation should be co-financed with Technical Assistance and thanked the Steering Group for their efforts. 1 or 2 PMC members will be invited to participate in the sift with the Convener.

6. & 7. Reporting and Annual Implementation Report 2002

6.1 Items 6 & 7 were taken together as they were linked. LAGs will report to the Scottish Executive on a regular basis. Reports are required to establish progress in the implementation of LAG business plans and will form the basis of Annual Implementation Reports (AIR) for the Commission.

6.2 Reports will be required on a quarterly basis although the first report will cover all LAG activity in 2002. This report will enable a top-up of advance payments already made and inform the first AIR for 2002. Ms Viljannen confirmed that the 2002 report will be the first required by the Commission.

6.3 The AIR will be accompanied by an Annual Review document and submitted to the Commission by June 2003. The Annual Review document will allow the Committee to review the programme and identify any changes that may be required, it will also allow the LAGs an opportunity to review their business plans and make any necessary changes. For LAGs a letter notifying changes will be required although significant changes will have to be agreed with the Executive.

6.4 Mr Grieve provided an update on the current position in LAGs advising that experience of Leader varied between the groups. It was proposed to carry out co-ordinator training prior to the Leader+ conference in Rothesay but given that some lags had still to appoint co-ordinators it would be too early. A Scotland level meeting was proposed in place

of training. Richard Robinson indicated that SNH would be running a training day for LAG co-ordinators in January 2003 and Executive staff would also be welcome.

- Argyll & Bute – staff now in post and project applications being considered.
- Cairngorm – Patricia Hamilton had been in post for some time now and projects already approved and being considered.
- Dumfries & Galloway – Roz Halley in post and projects currently being considered.
- East Fife – Barbara Solway in post and project applications being developed.
- East Lothian – Fiona Murray in post and applications under consideration.
- Moray – Barbara Gear in post and applications now being developed.
- North Highland – Veronica Mackay in post for Heritage element – council staff looking after youth element but project activity not clear.
- Northern Isles – Chessa Llewelyn-White (Orkney) and Jane Thomas (Shetland) acting as co-ordinators. Some projects already approved and underway.
- Rural Lomond and Stirling – Ann-Michelle Ketteridge in post and first LAG meeting to consider applications due on Monday 2 December.
- Rural Tayside – currently advertising for a co-ordinator.
- South Lanarkshire – Chris Parkin currently leading and staff being recruited. Part of the business plan included a mobile information centre which is now ready and further projects being developed.
- Scottish Borders – Sam Smith has been appointed and first decision-making meeting scheduled for 13 December.
- Western Isles – currently advertising for a co-ordinator.

8. Guidance and Application Form

Guidance

8.1 The draft guidance had already been circulated to LAGs and had been discussed at the meeting with LAGs in Inverness. The guidance had been amended in the light of comments from the LAGs and was offered to the Committee for approval.

8.2 General comments arising included:

- Preface required indicating target audience for guidance.
- Numbering of key points unnecessary.
- Clarification of eligible expenditure for joint activity with non-EU and non-Leader+ groups required.
- Definitive guidance on previous bullet for Scottish groups incorporating flexibility where guidance conflicts with other Member States rules.
- Expand section on Action 3.
- Expand section on Private Sector funding, including in-kind contributions for private and voluntary sectors.
- Layout of monitoring framework needs clarification.
- Section on outputs not clear, consider use of table.
- Additional indicators – qualitative indicators needs to be expanded and should reflect STAR proposals.
- Needs to include target groups.

8.3 The Committee agreed that the guidance be amended reflecting the above comments and any other subsequent comments from Committee members and issued to LAGs.

Application Form

8.4 The application form was provided for information. The information requested is the minimum information we would recommend LAGs to seek. It provides a baseline that the groups can adapt to suit their individual needs. The application form will be issued with a covering note stating that the form is the minimum recommended by the PMC and Scottish Executive as Managing Authority. Encouragement would also be given to LAGs to draw this level of information from schemes that they develop.

9. Network

9.1 Mr Grieve provided an update on the activities of the UK Leader+ Network. The first conference of the Network marking the launch was held in Rockingham in May. In June the first of four workshops was held in Dumfries. The final event of the year will be the Annual Conference in Rothesay on 28/29 November. The conference theme will be *Sustainable Rural Communities and New Approaches* and will also focus on networking. Speakers include Stephen Smith who has been prominent in the Rural Exchange.

9.2 An initial needs assessment of each LAG had been undertaken and this will inform the development of next year's programme. Instead of the 6 scheduled events held this year it is likely that there will only be one conference in 2003 with four workshops. The programme will be discussed during the steering group meeting prior to the conference.

10. Publicity

10.1 The Convenor advised that the item on publicity was an aide-memoire to the development of a Communications Strategy. LAGs were already aware of publicity requirements i.e. inclusion in grant conditions to publicise the use and availability of Leader+ funding, but a strategic plan approved by the committee outlining the pan-Scotland approach will also be required.

10.2 In Scotland two Ministers are responsible for Leader+, Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services, portfolio includes European Structural Funds and Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Affairs. For mainstream programmes it had been agreed that publicity be targeted thematically i.e. Natural and Cultural Heritage, and this will also feature in Leader+. It was agreed that this would be a good method of focusing LAGs in delivering the message about Leader+.

Action:

- **Consideration to be given to how Leader+ can be involved, and LAGs invited to, in the forthcoming Rural Conference planned for February 2003**
- **A Communication Action plan will be produced for consideration by the Committee.**

11. Arrangements for PMC Meetings in 2003

11.1 Two meetings will be held in 2003. The first in May and the second in October/November. Tyne/Esk LAG have offered to host the meeting in May and the covering minute has trawled for suitable dates.

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