

Agenda Item	5 (k)
Report No	PLA 04/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Places Committee

Date: 15 June 2017

Report Title: Highland LEADER 2014-2020 Programme

Report By: Director of Development and Infrastructure

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This paper reports the progress of the Highland LEADER 2014-2020 Programme. The LEADER Programme supports bottom-up community development and therefore is central to the Council's commitment to empower communities and to support associated community, business and infrastructural developments. The Programme has received an indicative allocation of funding from the Scottish Government of £8,805,388.
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to provide one nomination for an Elected member (and one nomination for a substitute) to take a voting place on the Highland Strategic Local Action Group (LAG), which has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Highland LEADER 2014-2020 Programme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- note progress of the Highland LEADER 2014-2020 Programme to date; and
 - nominate one voting member and one substitute to take a place on the Highland Strategic LAG.

3 Highland LEADER - Update

- 3.1 The Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020 is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP), aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. The Council is responsible for the administration of the Programme in Highland as defined in an SLA between Highland Council and the Scottish Government.
- 3.2 In line with the arrangements set out in the Programme Business Plan, the Highland LEADER team has established 7 Local Area Partnerships across Highland with accompanying Local Area Action Plans that set out the priorities for each area. Member representation at a local level on the Local Area Partnerships has been agreed through Ward Business Meetings as agreed by ward managers. This paper seeks a nomination for Highland Council representation at the Strategic LAG level - the body with the overall responsibility for implementation of the Programme.
- 3.3 The LAG is responsible for the day to day operations of the Programme, including animation and promotion, capacity building and co-operation between stakeholders both within Highland and across the EU. The LAG will consider project applications for pan Highland projects, co-operation projects and projects involving co-operation between areas in Highland. The LAG also oversees the implementation of the Programme at a local level to ensure that collectively the local plans deliver the aims of the programme.
- 3.4 The Programme began processing applications in 2016 and to date a total of eleven projects have received grant approval – this represents a total of £372,911 LEADER funds approved towards total project costs of £888,187. The slow start in the Programme can be attributed to uncertainties arising from the Brexit vote and complexities in the application process arising from the new Scottish Government IT system and the late issue of Programme Guidance.

4 Highland LAG membership

- 4.1 The LAG is made up of representatives from public, private and voluntary sector organisations that are responsible for project selection and general animation of the programme. The Committee is asked to confirm two nominations (one acting as substitute) to represent Highland Council on the LAG. The HC representative will be expected to attend meetings (usually every two months) and promote the work of the LAG around Highland. The programme will run to 31 December 2020.

5 Implications

- 5.1 Resource - There are no additional resource implications arising from this report
- 5.2 Legal - There are no additional legal implications.
- 5.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – The LEADER Programme is aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. It is a bottom up method of delivering support for rural development aimed primarily at small and medium sized community driven projects that are pilot, and innovative in nature. All parts of the Highland area are included in the Programme with the exception of the City of Inverness, and the Badenoch and Strathspey area which is included within the Cairngorm National Park LEADER Programme.

- 5.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever - There are no climate change or carbon clever implications attached to this report.
- 5.5 Risk – The Development and Infrastructure Service, together with the Highland LEADER team will continue to work closely with Internal Audit and The Scottish Government to ensure the Programme is delivered in accordance with the governing European and Scottish Regulations and that there is no disallowance of grant.
- 5.6 Gaelic - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

Designation: Director of Development & Infrastructure

Date: 31 May 2017

Author: Fiona Cameron