

Introduction – Included for context, will be amended/moved when inserted into the LDS

The majority of the National Park area is split between two LEADER programme areas: Argyll and the Islands LEADER to the west and Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER to the east. Strategic National Park initiatives often necessitate cooperative working between these neighbouring areas and communities developing Park-wide projects have requested aligned strategies and consistent grant conditions supported by a simplified process for delivering projects across the two programmes.

The Argyll & the Islands (A&I) and Forth Valley & Lomond (FVL) LEADER LAGs are committed to ensuring that their respective Local Development Strategies (LDS) and subsequent administrative arrangements recognise the priorities and needs of National Park community interests, as the National Park presents a key strategic landscape asset in both areas and has resulted in some very innovative and robust projects coming forward for LEADER funding in the past. Based on collaborative working between A&I, FVL and the National Park Authority during LDS development, a 'National Park Joint sub-LAG' is proposed for Park area for the 2014-20 LEADER Programme. This paper outlines the remit, composition and processes of the National Park Joint sub-LAG.

Note: The arrangements proposed for the National Park area are an important pilot for the interregional cooperation activities of A&I and FVL and may be transferrable to other areas.

Note: The context for these arrangements is outlined in the Co-operation section of the respective draft LDS of both programmes, therefore this paper focuses on the detail of the arrangements themselves. In due course these will be captured in a Terms of Reference for the National Park Assessment Team.

Remit of the National Park Joint sub-LAG

The Joint sub-LAG will oversee an initial assessment process that will assess projects for delivery against the A&I LDS, the FVL LDS and NP area priorities. It will also ensure that the potential clarifications or information requirements of both LAGs are co-ordinated and addressed upfront, thereby minimising complexities for the applicant and reducing the risk of conflicting decisions being reached once referred to both LAGs for final decision. The Joint sub-LAG will be:

- Concerned with cooperation projects within the National Park Area
- Empowered by the A&I and FVL LAGs to consider, discuss and make recommendations on National Park projects
- Supported by joint-work of the A&I and FVL Development Officers
- Employed on a case-by-case basis and as prompted by the receipt of an Initial Enquiry to either LEADER programme

Composition of the National Park Joint sub-LAG

The Joint sub-LAG will have a standing membership comprised of representatives from the A&I and FVL LAGs. Should a member be unable to participate an alternate will be provided. Individuals will be appointed at the commencement of the new LEADER programme and will comprise the following:

- Chair – Alternate between an A&I or FVL representative from the community sector
- 1 A&I representative from the public sector
- 1 A&I representative from the community sector
- 1 FVL representative from the public sector
- 1 FVL representative from the community sector
- 2 optional representatives – up to 1 additional volunteer from each LAG

As the group will have an assessment role, conflicts of interest will need to be avoided, and where possible will be anticipated in advance. It is worth noting that the National Park Authority is likely to have an interest in most of the projects coming forward as either a project lead, a project facilitator or as a match funder.

Process for National Park Cooperation Projects – Pre Award: Application and Decision

1. Initial Enquiry

The Development Officer will contact their counterpart(s) upon receipt of a relevant Enquiry. Based on technical guidance and fit with the LDS, the Development Officers will check if the project should proceed as a LEADER project. If so, the Development Officers will follow up with any additional information that they would expect the NP Joint sub-LAG to require (e.g. business plans or background reports). The Development Officer(s) will convene a meeting of the NP Joint sub-LAG and will circulate all available information. Members of the respective LAGs will also be contacted with a view to any additional expertise being added to the NP Joint sub-LAG. The NP Joint sub-LAG will discuss the initial information and either proceed with particular points for development or decline the project. The outcome of this discussion will be noted by the Development Officer(s).

2. Development

The Development Officer(s) will work with the applicant to complete a single application, including all necessary associated paperwork and technical compliance.

3. Recommendation by NP Joint sub-LAG

Once the application is ready the Development Officer(s) will re-convene the NP Joint sub-LAG to consider the full application and agree a recommendation for consideration by both LAGs. This will include a common set of requirements for the applicant should the project be successful. The outcome of this discussion will be noted by the Development Officer(s).

4. LAG Decision

Either by email or at the respective next LAG meetings (determined by the size or complexity of the project) the Development Officer(s) will present the project and the recommendation to both LAGs. Members of the LAG will be asked to accept the recommendation of the NP Joint sub-LAG, or reject it. If rejected, a good reason will need to be given. As with all LAG decisions, a vote will be taken should a consensus not be reached. The decision will be minuted.

Conflict of Interest

These arrangements must comply with the governance requirements of the LEADER 2014-20 programme. It is recognised that potential conflicts will need to be carefully monitored and managed. For example, should a standing member of the Joint sub-LAG submit an initial enquiry for a cooperation project they would step down from the Joint sub-LAG and an appropriate alternate would be appointed

Process for National Park Cooperation Projects – Post Award: Administration and Claiming

The process for processing Cooperation Project claims is being developed at a National Level, with an aim to simplify multi-LEADER programme claiming and administration. We expect these new processes to be in place for the start of the 2014-20 programme. Should there be a delay in implementation a 'Lead LAG' will be agreed as the main point of contact for the applicant and the following process will be used in the interim.

1. Paperwork

- a. Programme staff of the Lead LAG to stamp and copy paperwork, pass to programme staff of partner LAG
- b. Partner LAG programme staff to stamp and copy paperwork, return originals to applicant.

2. Questions

- a. Lead LAG programme staff compile a list of questions and send to applicant to respond to, cc Partner LAG programme staff
- b. Partner LAG programme staff add to the list of questions, and send back to Lead LAG programme staff

- c. Lead LAG programme staff forward second list of questions to applicant and follows up responses/any additional paperwork received from applicant
- 3. Main Contact
 - a. Lead LAG programme staff become main point of contact for discussion of any claiming issues, but cc Partner LAG programme staff in emails
- 4. Payment
 - a. Lead LAG programme staff pay their proportion of claim, and recommend to Partner LAG programme staff likewise
 - b. Partner LAG programme staff review paperwork is still to their satisfaction and make payment.

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Potential National Park area Projects – Included for context, will be amended/moved when inserted into the LDS Business Plans

In recognition of the distinct strategic opportunities arising in the Park (as highlighted in Community Action Plans and the National Park Partnership Plan) that will deliver against the outcomes of the emerging Local Development Strategies of A&I and FVL, the following priority areas have been identified as likely to come forward under the National Park arrangements.

- Food and Drink - Maximising opportunities for cross-sector food and drink initiatives that promote and enhance local food and drink offerings, encourage use of local suppliers, grow economic benefit through higher value tourism and link strongly to training and employment opportunities.*
- Access Routes and Outdoor Recreation – Realisation of community-led facilities and initiatives that promote access and health for residents and visitors.*
- Renewable Energy - Realisation of community-led renewable energy generation initiatives that yield significant community resilience benefits, including decreased reliance on energy providers and opportunities for income generation.*
- Sustainable Transport – Projects of National Park communities that seek to address the challenges of poor public transport provision through innovative, community-based programmes.*
- Broadband – Adequate broadband provision and take-up is fundamental for our communities, both in order to access essential services and to realise enterprising opportunities. Communities have an important role to play in informing planned public sector provision and identifying opportunities for community delivery.*