

Community Led Local Development Funding Programme 2022/23

Planning for your Rural Community Led Vision

Please complete this template and send it to rural.communities@gov.scot no later than **the end of July 2022**. Please limit each response to a maximum of 500 words – if you wish to attach supplementary information, please limit this to a maximum of 12 pages in total and include it in this template.

Local Action Group Area	Outer Hebrides
Contact name	[REDACTED]
Role (LAG Chair, SCSG or LP)	[REDACTED]
Email Address	[REDACTED]
Phone Number	[REDACTED]

1. Please briefly summarise your proposed activity against your CLLD funding allocation for 2022/23.

The Outer Hebrides (OH) comprises of 119 islands, of which 14 are inhabited - each of these having varied economies. The Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) Local Action Group (LAG) includes members from Barra to Lewis, spanning a mix of skills and experience. The LEADER LAG enjoyed an effective working relationship with the local authority, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES) during all LEADER and Rural Communities Testing Change Funding (RCTCF) Programmes and therefore all parties have agreed that CnES will continue to act as Lead Partner for the CLLD funding to manage risk on behalf of the LAG.

The OH LAG utilised its RCTCF allocation to offer communities support to strengthen their mental health and wellbeing positively during and post-pandemic. This was done by providing opportunities to develop local activities to engage with other community members and groups and decrease levels of social isolation. This also supported the lesser-heard groups to engage in CLLD – where they did not previously - and create Action Plans for future projects and aspirations. Consequently, the LAG now proposes to use the CLLD funding to support the sustainability of communities and assist in furthering their Action Plans and developments.

The LAG proposes to commit the OH CLLD allocation as follows:

1. Rural Community Transport Scoping Study – to identify what support is required to reduce isolation and alleviate poverty.
2. Youth LAG Co-operation and Development – Further develop the YLAG, including managing grants, and Networking and Co-operation opportunities with other Scottish LAGs.
3. Community and Key Project Support Grant / Design Grant – To support communities in developing projects to ‘shovel-ready’ stage and assist key sectors to build capacity through improved networking and collaboration.
4. Reducing Emission Energy Trial - Increasing efficiency and reduced emissions in fuel usage by trialling innovative systems in land and marine based vehicles.
5. LAG Capacity Building – scoping study to look at building LAG capacity and a mentoring programme, expanding its representation and networking with Orkney and Shetland LAGs.
6. Administration and Animation of the OH CLLD Programme.

The findings of the 2020-21 ‘Identifying Funding Gaps in the Outer Hebrides’ study - commissioned by the outgoing OH LEADER LAG - has enabled the current CLLD LAG to agree these proposed new relevant community-led priorities. This recent study included extensive community engagement prior to, during and post-pandemic and subsequently its recommendations reflect the current shifting local needs and demands. As a result, the above stated aspirations of the OH CLLD LAG are based on these. A summary of the study can be found through the following link - [Identifying Funding Gaps in the Outer Hebrides \(cne-siar.gov.uk\)](https://cne-siar.gov.uk/identifying-funding-gaps-in-the-outer-hebrides).

The Outer Hebrides Visitor Infrastructure Plan, commissioned by CnES and VisitScotland, is also currently amidst engagement and early recommendations are also being used to influence the OH CLLD LAG’s proposed activity as these are real-time needs that can be addressed by this funding. This can be seen in the Rural Community Transport Scoping Study Proposal which highlighted the lack of such systems within some communities. The CLLD LAG will also work with the OH Shared Prosperity Fund Working Group to deliver on some priorities.

2. Outline the current or aspirational membership of your LAG, including your nominated Chair, the expectations of LAG members and how they are qualified to deliver your local vision?

The Outer Hebrides CLLD LAG will provide a platform for a variety of public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders to work together in partnership to deliver innovative, sustainable community-led projects. The LAG will have overall responsibility for the management and strategic direction of the LAG Vision documents and monitoring its outputs. The current membership of the LAG is shown in the table on Page 12 of this plan, and all were strategic members of the previous LEADER LAG. Once the new priorities are agreed, new members - including the YLAG Chair and Energy representatives - will be invited onto the LAG to ensure each sector is represented adequately, and to provide expert advice to members. New members will be sought through an open and transparent procedure ensuring their skillset will be beneficial to the CLLD programme.

The LAG will appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair on an annual basis by a process of nominating and then voting for candidates at meetings. If there is more than one nomination then voting for the Chair or Vice Chair will be conducted by written ballot. The appointment of the Chair or Vice-Chair requires involvement of at least 55% of the membership of the LAG. Should there be three or more candidates, and none achieve a majority then the candidate with the least votes is eliminated, and the LAG will proceed with voting until one candidate achieves a majority. With the exception of the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair, voting will be undertaken by either a show of hands or private ballot, one vote for each member. In the event of a tie, the current Chair has the right to cast a second vote.

The LAG Chair, who was appointed recently on 16/06/22, represents the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership - and also the views of many other island stakeholders. The Vice Chair is still to be appointed. The LAG will aim to have a diverse membership representing gender, location, age and interests. LAG member training will be planned throughout the Programme and will be included in the LAG Capacity Building workstream.

Though the position of Chair and Vice-Chair will be subject to annual re-election, the present post holder may be re-elected for no more than two consecutive years, however. Conversely, the Vice-Chair can be elected to post of Chairperson after two years in their previous post.

The minimum number of members that must be present to make a meeting quorate is 50% of the membership (or a minimum of five LAG members). If a quorum is not achieved within 20 minutes after the time set for the meeting, then it could be adjourned to another time and/or date (at the discretion of the Chair) or the meeting will proceed, with decisions being sought at the next quorate meeting or by email.

3. Please describe your local partnership structure, including your chosen approach to either nominating or becoming an accountable body.

The LAG reviewed its governance options against lessons learned from previous 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 LEADER and EFF Axis 4 Programmes and the RCTC Fund Programmes and timescales. It agreed to request that the Local Authority of the Outer Hebrides, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, continue its role as the LAGs Lead Partner - to which the Comhairle has formally agreed. This appointment will be under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and a copy of the draft MOU is available upon request. The Comhairle's local authority area, and also the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnerships coverage, is co-terminus with the area boundaries of the LAG and therefore the Comhairle is well appointed to continue to function as the nominated lead partner.

The Comhairle continuing as Lead Partner allows the new CLLD programme to launch seamlessly, as the authority can offer a wealth of prior experience in programme administration, audit procedures, legal issues and financial management. The LAG enjoyed an effective relationship with the Comhairle during previous Programmes - with each understanding their roles, responsibilities and duties. Systems and processes were developed previously that satisfied Scottish Government and European Union regulations - these can be updated and easily transferred to fulfil the requirements of the new CLLD programme. Thus, allowing the LAG to put in place adapted systems promptly, to allow the CLLD programmes new processes to be efficiently established and allowing communities to be able to take advantage of the support available quickly.

Due to early continued funding uncertainty and subsequent redundancy procedures being initiated the previous LEADER team were successfully redeployed within the Comhairle, though the Co-ordinator is still involved in the development of the CLLD Vision Plan. Due to the short delivery timescales of the CLLD programme the LAG will initially seek to appoint a Programme Manager/Officer internally from within the Comhairle - potentially through secondment - to ensure the position is filled quickly.

Initially, the LAG will allocate the maximum allowable allocation proportion of £57,142.86 to cover all administration and animation costs - taking into account salaries, management and on-costs, travel, subsistence, and marketing etc. Should the full amount not be required, it will be reallocated to support projects and LAG animation.

4. Please describe how your planned activity for this year will contribute to the overarching outcomes for CLLD funding this year?

As the OH LAG had continued to convene following LEADER and RCTCF to prepare for the CLLD Fund - they are in the position that they can develop actions that support the communities, whilst also building and developing their own capacity. Consequently, the LAG's proposals will support all of the overarching CLLD fund outcomes.

This will be achieved through developing a number of actions, including:

- 1. Community and Key Project Support Programme/ Design Grant** - Support communities to develop strategic projects to 'shovel-ready' to attract capital funding and assist key sectors to build capacity through improved networking and collaboration.
Feedback has shown that community projects and local organisations requiring professional fees/studies, capacity building and mentoring etc have suspended their plans due to a lack of funding and resources at crucial stages leading to delays and unable to drawdown inward investment due to tight funding deadlines etc. The creation of this fund would ensure that crucial local capacity building and project elements are developed as Phase 1 of the projects.
- 2. Rural Community Transport Scoping Study** - Community Transport, which is provided by the local community in response to specific local transport needs, is quite limited in the Outer Hebrides - and whilst what is available is invaluable, there are some gaps. Consequently, it is important to assess community transport needs within the islands and develop an appropriate solution. To do this it is vital to get the views of the community and assess what they require from a community transport system. This will result in establishing an integrated community transport service that meets the needs of communities in the Outer Hebrides. The 2022 Visitor Infrastructure Plan has also identified a need to identify rural transport solutions to tourism congestion issues within communities and this will also be included as part of the study. Funding would be sought to commission community engagement to provide recommendations and outcomes of the findings.
- 3. Co-operation Project - Youth LAG** - The LAG developed the Youth LAG in the LEADER and RCTCF Programmes and previous evaluations recommended further exploration. Therefore, the LAG now proposes to build and embed it within their structure as a stable subgroup. An external facilitator would be contracted to manage the YLAG's development - which will include ensuring the YLAG is sustainable, engaged and prepared to animate and award funding to local projects. A crucial element of the project will involve the OH YLAG learning from other Scottish YLAGs including Orkney, Shetland, Cairngorms, Forth Valley & Lomond, and Fife YLAGs. They will work together to network, build capacity and share member learning/experiences. LAG staff, members and Lead Partners representatives will also network by attending two outreach long weekends in the Cairngorms and in the Orkney Islands.
- 4. Reducing Emission Energy Trial** – This will trial innovative energy reducing and saving technology in various island-based transportation vehicles including buses, lorries and also on fishing vessels, to see if costs and emissions are reduced. The pilot will aim to reduce fuel poverty in various modes frequently used in the islands whilst also potentially saving money and contributing to Net Zero aims.
- 5. LAG Capacity Building** - The LAG will commission an external facilitator to undertake a scoping study to build LAG capacity - including expanding its representation, reviewing its structure, building a mentoring and networking programme for community groups/ projects/ LAGs on CLLD working with Orkney and Shetland LAGs. The facilitator will also ensure they work with other local Working Groups, forums and stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to future policy change and avoid duplication.

5. Please describe how your planned activity for this year will advance inclusion, equality and diversity?

The OH CLLD LAG will continuously ensure that all planned activity will advance inclusion, equality and diversity and this incorporates project delivery, LAG development and animation.

Historically, it is those aged 40+ that participate in the decision-making element of CLLD and therefore the YLAG actions will support inclusion, equality and diversity through encouraging young people to become involved in the decision-making process of CLLD, instead of just being involved in project delivery. The initiative will provide them with the knowledge and tools to not only continue to be involved in LAG delivery, but may also inspire them in their future personal and career aspirations and direction.

The OH LEADER 2014-2020 Programme Evaluation highlighted that lesser developed/ heard groups were less likely to apply for LEADER funding due to lack of capacity. Therefore, the Community and Key Project Support Programme will support advancement by enabling all groups to apply for funding to develop this element of their projects. This would act as a Phase 1 to allow the groups to apply for future funding rounds.

The LAG Staffing, Animation and also the Capacity Building element of the proposals will also include the examination of ensuring inclusion, equality and diversity is considered on the LAG and how processes should be adapted to advance this in future programmes.

The main aim of the Rural Community Transport Study is to advance this issue through identifying which rural areas are not catered for - and where solutions can then be implemented to ensure all communities have access to services, facilities, events and activities thus improving mental health and wellbeing.

6. Please describe how your aspirations for this year will contribute to Scottish Governments top 3 priorities for 2022/23 of Rural Poverty – especially child and fuel poverty, Net Zero and Climate Emergency and Covid recovery?

Each of the LAG's aspirations will contribute collectively to the Scottish Government's top three priorities - especially Covid recovery to support the islands future sustainability and development.

Like other places, Covid had a profound impact on the development and progress of the islands wellbeing - through lockdowns, prices rising in all aspects of life and resulting in negative impacts on social interaction and inclusion. In the RCTC fund the LAG developed projects to support communities' mental health - and in the CLLD programme they would now like to support the sustainability of communities.

This will be done in a number of ways, including through the Design and Key Project Support Grant which will support communities to develop their projects to a stage to seek funding that enables capacity and capital build. These developments seek to fill a gap in the local area which will provide new facilities and activities in localities and therefore positively contributing Covid Recovery. Each project will also include Net Zero aspirations, and these will be built into design plans through whole life carbon management in alignment to PAS 2080 guidance.

Rural Fuel Poverty is high in the islands, which does put a strain on Covid Recovery. Costs have increased in all aspects of daily life including transportation, construction and materials. Community groups are often reporting that construction-contract bids are being returned quoting costs of at least 40% higher than forecasted – and on occasion 100% higher. Therefore, ensuring that groups have accurate plans and costings will be imperative to secure the maximum funding they require.

The Rural Community Transport Scoping Study will not only tackle Rural Fuel Poverty through identifying the issues with the current system, it will also support Net Zero through limiting car usage as they will have access to services. Consequently, this important study will provide the evidence required to policy makers and funders to encourage them to develop optimum sustainable and inclusive solutions that are required to fill the gaps.

The Reducing Energy Emissions Trial will also support the Net Zero and Climate Emergency priority directly, as the main aim of the project is to identify and trial innovative technologies to reduce emissions whilst also considering the rural and remote rural aspect of island living.

Both the YLAG and the LAG Capacity Building projects will support the CLLD movement, as young leaders and policy makers are discovered and their interest peaked in the sector. Volunteer burnout and the emergence of new delivery groups was high during and post pandemic - therefore new leaders and volunteers need to be encouraged to participate in CLLD within communities. These projects will aim to increase their interest in their local communities and how they are developed and sustained.

Both the transport related projects aspirations and the Design grants aims will also support the Islands Growth Deal infrastructure project, which in turn also supports SG themes.

7. If applicable, please describe how your aspirations for this year will contribute to any other Scottish government's key priorities for 2022/23?

The LAGs aspirations will also support many of the other priorities including:

- **Young Person's Guarantee, Green Skills & Fair Work** - Young People will be encouraged to participate in projects especially the YLAG development to stimulate their interest in CLLD.
- **Community Wealth Building** - The Scottish Government identified the OH as one of six areas to trial the development of a CWB strategy and consequently appointed the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to develop an Action Plan in the areas. This project would support the development of some of the recommendations including supporting community capacity building and cultivating the next generation of young leaders.
- **Local democracy and governance, community empowerment** - LAG Capacity Building and YLAG development will support member development, LAG governance and knowledge transfer with other LAGs. Design grants will also support Community Empowerment by aiding the development of their plans.
- **Inclusive growth** (includes Community-Led Tourism) – As Covid Recovery runs through all the aspirations of the LAG then this will also contribute to inclusive growth, ensuring that all communities are supported. The CLLD Programme will build upon the previous programmes work to build capacity, support community development and growth. Design Grants may also be supporting Community-Led Tourism developments which will also support this priority.
- **Wellbeing Economy** – All the projects will encourage the development and sustainability of the wellbeing of Outer Hebridean communities. The LAG will support communities to thrive and develop economic, social and environmental projects which will positively impact the islands communities and the mental health and wellbeing of those within them.
- **The National Islands Plan**– The project will support several of its Strategic Objectives including:
 - Strategic Objective (SO) 2- *To improve and promote sustainable economic development* – the LAGs aspirations aim to directly support this objective through providing opportunities to both support communities development plans and also build local capacity and confidence to foster relationships, develop activities and encourage young people to not move/ leave.
 - SO 3 - *To improve transport services* – The Rural Transport Scoping Study will seek to identify where the issues and challenges lie and where support is required.
 - SO 5 - *To reduce levels of fuel poverty* – As above, the study will also seek to provide services which will reduce car usage and unnecessary travel. The Reducing Emissions Pilot will also support this SO.
 - SO 7 - *Health, Social Care and Well-being* - to provide communities with the opportunity to develop their projects, build capacity and have their say in future rural transport which will impact upon their daily lives.
 - SO 10 - *To empower diverse communities and different places* - through having the communities at the heart and driving projects. The LAG will also support them to build their confidence and capacity to undertake CLLD.
- **Rural Entrepreneurial activity** – The Design Grant will support this priority by providing the means to develop community projects to 'shovel-ready' stage.
- **National Strategy for Economic Transformation** – All of the LAG's aims, and aspiration will support the NSET as it will aim to support communities economic sustainability and their wellbeing.

8. If applicable, please outline the project selection and decision-making process that your LAG will employ when allocating funding, including selection criteria, procedures for projects led by the LAG itself and how you will set the process for any delegated decision making?

The LAG will aim to achieve the VP's objectives through ring-fencing funding to specifically target needs. This allows communities to develop the tools they lack to assist in becoming sustainable amidst Covid Recovery, whilst also providing the LAG with the opportunity to provide an innovative short programme of actions.

Due to the limited delivery timescale the LAG will monitor their achievements against a particular action closely - and reallocate any underspend, as necessary. They may also involve third parties, including community officers, to collaborate with them on developing local or co-operation projects and applications.

The Project Appraisal process will include completion of an Enquiry Form/ summary email to quickly check the eligibility of the project against the aims of the OH CLLD VP before progressing to full application. If eligible they will then be directed to complete an online application form which will be developed in-house in conjunction with SG CLLD Monitoring and Audit requirements.

When officers are satisfied that application forms have been fully completed and any supplementary evidence provided, they will undertake due diligence by reviewing the information, community engagement, subsidy control issues, business or development plans, value for money etc. To ensure eligibility, advice will also be sought from industry experts to ensure that the project will abide by certain regulations and are not displacing other activity – to save time this can be obtained from within the LAG. This was undertaken in the previous LEADER programmes and the LAG found it extremely useful and ensured transparency.

Once projects are ready to be appraised for a funding decision the appraisal documents will be forwarded to LAG members to review and score individually. LAG decisions will either be made electronically or at a LAG meeting. If applications are set on a rolling basis, then the documents will be emailed to the LAG and they will have 10 days to review the projects, seek answers to any queries and revert with a decision. If a decision cannot be made then further information will be sought as per the LAGs request and the decision will revert to the full LAG at their next meeting. However, should uncommitted funding be limited, or many queries then members will discuss and ratify the decision at a LAG meeting to agree by a majority decision. LAG member appraisal score sheets will be completed for each project.

The LAG may decide that projects seeking funding of less than £10k could be fast-tracked - with the LAG scoring on a more regular basis (weekly or fortnightly) to enable decisions to be delivered quickly. Changes to the decision-making process and the limits will be at the discretion of the LAG and subject to LAG approval.

Projects will be scored against criteria including Additionality, Community Benefit and Value for Money. The scoring system may also require to be amended in accordance to arising SG requirements but will be based upon achieving a minimal score to achieve a pass mark.

All project documentation will be submitted and retained electronically to follow a robust and transparent audit trail. **Appendix i** provides Project Lifecycle Flowchart to view the process from enquiry to project completion. **Appendix ii** is a draft Project Scoring Sheet.

9. Please outline the appeals process you will use as part of your project selection procedure

The LAG has agreed that the OH CLLD Appeals process will be based on the process previously adopted by the OH LEADER LAG as this proved dependable and transparent.

Consequently, an applicant can appeal against decisions made by the LAG regarding claims, including refusal of payment, reduction or recovery of payments.

In the first instance, any initial appeal requests will be dealt with by the Programme Officer/ Manager and if the client is not satisfied with the response then the LAG, with support and advice from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (if required), will then take a decision on the issue. If a conclusion can still not be reached then it will be escalated to the Scottish Government.

Additionally, the LAG will follow a standard Complaints process where a complaint has to be submitted within 60 days of the decision letter being issued. Complaints would be classed as such when an expression of dissatisfaction with the standard of service, procedures, or processes at the application stage, which they feel requires a response or explanation.

The applicant/representative can complain in person, by phone, by email or in writing. All complaints will be treated seriously, and the applicant will receive a full response.

Types of Complaint

There are three types of complaint under this scheme. An applicant can complain:

1. against general standard of service;
2. the decision to reject your application;
3. The decision to lower the percentage grant rate awarded to your successful application.

10. Please describe the process by which you will record conflicts of interest?

In accordance with the 'Planning for your Community Led Vision Guidance for LAGs' document the general rule will be that all partners should declare their interest in projects and should not participate in decisions that concern them directly. Conflict of Interest Declarations (copy in **Appendix iii**) will be recorded and submitted to Scottish Government along with the LAGs final grant claim form.

Consequently, all LAG members will be required to complete and declare any known conflicts of interest on a standard Declaration Form and a register of these will be completed and updated annually.

Declarations of Interest will also be a standing item on the LAG agenda and therefore members will also be asked to declare any interests at all meetings. If an interest is declared, the LAG member will be asked to step out of the meeting/ not contribute at the point of the discussion involving the conflicted project. A copy of the declarations of interest can be provided upon request.

As member organisations/ groups may also be project applicants or involved in a particular projects development then they will not participate in any decision-making regarding projects they are involved in.

****PLEASE INSERT ANY SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON A NEW PAGE BELOW****

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PER QUESTIONS

Question 2 - Outline the current or aspirational membership of your LAG, including your nominated Chair, the expectations of LAG members and how they are qualified to deliver your local vision?

Current LAG Membership:

Organisation	Public	Private	3 rd sector	LAG
Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership		1		1
Outer Hebrides Tourism		1		1
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	1			1
North Uist Development Company		1		1
Western Isles Fishing Association		1		1
Co-Cheangal Innse Gall / Third Sector Interface			1	1
Harris Tweed Authority		1		1
Lewis and Harris Horticultural Producers		1		1
Community Land Scotland			1	1
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	1			1
Nature Scot	1			1
Scottish Crofting Federation			1	1
Totals	3	6	3	12

APPENDICES BELOW

i. Question 8 - Project Lifecycle Flowchart



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Appendix I - Process Flowchart

ii. Question 8 - LAG Project Scoring Document



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Appendix ii - LAG Project Scoring Document

iii. Question 10 - Conflicts of Interest Declaration Form.



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Document

Appendix iii - Conflicts of Interest Declaration Form