



COMMUNITY LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2024-25

Report by Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to provide the Comhairle with an update on the 2024-25 Scottish Government Community Led Local Development (CLLD) Programme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 For 2024-25, the Outer Hebrides' Local Action Group (LAG) have been allocated an initial budget of £219,078 to administer. £120,545 of the allocation is revenue and £98,523 capital funding. Additional funding may once again become available through future tranches; however, the LAG have been given to understand that the recently announced spending freeze on all non-essential SG spending is likely to affect at least some of the additional funds earmarked for CLLD.
- 2.2 Earlier this year the Outer Hebrides CLLD LAG drew up their Community Led Vision (CLV; proposed programme) for 2024-25, which received SG approval in June 2024. The overarching ambition for 2024-25 is to increase collaboration and community empowerment. This will be achieved via four project strands: community engagement, grant scheme(s), the YLAG and strategy development.
- 2.3 Both LAG and YLAG have agreed an indicative programme of activities for the year and have started implementing these.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle agrees to:**
 - a) **note the progress of the Scottish Government Community Led Local Development (CLLD) Programme 2024-25; and**
 - b) **support increased collaboration between the Outer Hebrides Local Action Group (LAG) and the Comhairle, where reasonable.**

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Appendices: Outer Hebrides CLLD Strategy

Background Papers: Report to Sustainable Development Committee June 2024 – Community Led Local Development Programme 2023-24

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	The Outer Hebrides LAG area have been allocated an initial £219k from the Scottish Government CLLD fund for 2024-25. It may be possible to once again increase this during the course of the year.
Legal	The Comhairle continues to function as Accountable Body in the Outer Hebrides and undertake management and financial administration of the fund on behalf of the Local Action Group (LAG). The Comhairle's Legal, Audit and Finance services are involved in ensuring its compliance.
Staffing	Scottish Government has provided funding to retain existing staff for the duration of the 2024-25 CLLD Programme. Should it be deemed reasonable, efforts may also be made to recruit for a part-time project assistant, which will also be funded by the Scottish Government.
Assets and Property	None.
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	The report only provides an update of the programme.
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a sustainable and inclusive Council - Communities are empowered and continue to be at the heart of our decision making; • Support resilient communities and quality of life - The Gaelic language, natural heritage and culture of our communities is supported and promoted; and • Strengthen the local economy - Increased level of skills across our communities and workforce.
Environmental Impact	Under the terms of CLLD funding the Scottish Government has stipulated that all support must meet local and national key priorities, including environmental stability.
Consultation	Input from community groups and organisations, as well as individuals and national groups working locally, has been sought informally. LAG members represent a wide range of sectors and geographic areas across the islands.

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 With the UK's departure from the European Union, the previous EU-funded LEADER Programme ended. Since then, the Scottish Government (SG) has been investigating and testing new ways to support and deliver future Community-led Local Development (CLLD) in Scotland.
- 5.2 As was the case with the previous EU-funded LEADER Programme, each CLLD area is managed by a LAG made up of public, private and third-sector representatives. The annual Programme - set by the LAG in its CLV and agreed with SG - is administered by a CLLD Coordinator employed by the Comhairle. A part-time Project Assistant may also be employed in the current financial year, if this is deemed a necessary and reasonable use of resources by the LAG.
- 5.3 The Comhairle acts as Accountable Body to SG, ensuring finance is in place and that proper audit and legal processes are followed, whilst not having direct control over how CLLD funding is spent.

2024-25 CLLD PROGRAMME

- 6.1 For 2024-25, the Scottish Government (SG) allocated £12.2m to support CLLD across Scotland, of which £219,078 has been allocated to the Outer Hebrides' Local Action Group (LAG) to administer through Tranche 1. £120,545 of this allocation is revenue funding and £98,523 of capital. Additional funding may once again become available through further tranches; however, the LAG have been given to understand that the recently announced freeze on all non-essential SG spend is likely to affect at least some of the additional funds earmarked for CLLD.
- 6.2 For 2024-25, the LAG have set out the following priorities: Community Wealth Building; Supporting children and young people; and Dùthchas and Dualchas - with a focus on identifying new approaches that can lead to economic benefits. A lower set of (still very important) priorities are: Working Towards Net Zero; Transport; and Fair Work & Employability.
- 6.3 The 2024-25 CLV places less emphasis on specific grant schemes and instead sets out a more strategic approach for CLLD in the Outer Hebrides. 'Collaboration and Community Empowerment through inclusion, equality and diversity' has been put at the centre of all activity. The CLV sets out four activity strands, each of which will be taken forward by a dedicated subgroup:

1. **Community Engagement**

This strand aims at increased awareness of CLLD and ensuring that the LAG understand communities' priorities and how they can best support these. As part of this strand, the LAG are discussing the development of an effective multi-channel communications strategy, engaging with previous applicants or recipients of CLLD funding to gather feedback and evaluate impact, and undertaking a 'LAG roadshow' to spread the word about CLLD and enable organisations and individuals to engage with LAG members directly. The roadshow may be tied in with pre-existing events such as community council meetings, or involve a multi-funder approach, to increase relevance and footfall.

2. **Grant Scheme(s)**

Unless further funding becomes available, it is envisaged that there will be one CLLD Fund utilising the full capital amount awarded. It is hoped that the fund will launch in September, with funding awarded within a fairly tight timescale to give applicants sufficient time to complete their projects. Applicants will have to demonstrate that they effectively support at least one of the LAG priorities as set out under 6.2. As part of this project strand, LAG members will further review procedures relating to grant schemes, such as reviewing scoresheets and project evaluations.

3. **YLAG (Youth Local Action Group)**

Building on the success of previous years, the LAG have allocated £25,000 of revenue to the Outer Hebrides YLAG and set them the challenge to 'vision and develop our communities of the future'. The LAG's overarching aim for this strand is to develop a strong and effective youth voice. The YLAG, which is supported by the CLLD Coordinator, will operate fairly autonomously from the LAG, though will help inform LAG priorities and strategy. The YLAG have agreed their own provisional programme for the year which sets out three main actions:

- a) **YLAG Fund**

The YLAG have allocated an indicative budget of £10,000 to be made available as grant funding. Timelines and grant conditions will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

- b) **YLAG celebration event**

An event is planned, probably to take place in Stornoway Town Hall in November 2024, to celebrate the YLAG's achievements to date and help further raise their profile. This may be scheduled to coincide with the launch of the YLAG Fund.

c) Young Islanders' Parliament (current working-title)

Inspired by attending the Scottish Rural and Islands (Youth) Parliament in November 2023, the YLAG would like to organise a similar event specific to the islands. Young islanders will be invited to come together to discuss topics they feel passionate about and issues they face, before formulating demands to present to politicians and decision-makers who have the power to implement change. This event aligns well with both CLD and the Young Islanders Network (YIN) ambitions, and both groups have expressed a keen interest in being involved and supporting the event which would likely take place early in 2025.

A number of other potential activities have been discussed, which the YLAG may follow up on if time and budget allow. It may once again be possible to access additional budget to support YLAG activity and SG had set aside £250k for YLAGs nationally, although it is currently unclear how this might be affected by SG spending cuts.

4. Strategy Development

Following a focus on delivery in recent years, the LAG have recognised a need to review CLLD activity and develop a more long-term strategy to ensure that their work is effective and impactful, and to provide them with clarity on future priorities and how best to achieve these. As part of this strand the LAG will review internal processes - such as governance, capacity and membership - but will also try to identify other funding-streams to align with or leverage and means of engaging with policy and strategy development locally and nationally. Early discussions are taking place about whether CLLD could support Outer Hebrides Food & Drink Programme Food Hub projects contained within the Islands Growth Deal - part-funded via, or align more closely with, Crown Estate Funding administered by the Comhairle. It is anticipated that work undertaken as part of this strand will provide the LAG with a more long-term vision: to be adapted as required; help feed the community voice into local and national policy development; and ensure that funding allocated to/ dispersed by the LAG achieves the highest possible local impact.

6.5 All activity will have to be concluded, and finances rolled up by 31st March 2025.

CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 Implementation of the 2024-25 CLV has now commenced and both LAG and YLAG are clear about what actions they intend to undertake in the coming months.
- 7.2 The LAG intends to have a greater focus on community engagement and strategy development compared to previous years, which is expected to enable a more long-term strategic approach to CLLD activity going forward. The overarching ambition is for 'collaboration and community empowerment through inclusion, equality and diversity'.