

Outer Hebrides Community Led Local Development

Youth Local Action Group



OUTER HEBRIDES

YOUTH LOCAL ACTION GROUP

**REVIEW OF THE OH CLLD YLAG PROGRAMME
2023-24**

OVERVIEW

Youth Local Action Groups (YLAGs) are part of the Scottish Government's (SG) Community Led Local Development (CLLD) programme which is directed and administered by Local Action Groups (LAGs).

In its 2023-24 Guidance for Local Action Groups, SG stipulated that LAGs should “*as a minimum [consider] greater gender diversity and evidence of inclusion and change (e.g. greater representation of young people or a separate youth LAG)*”. The Outer Hebrides CLLD LAG in its Community Led Vision (CLV) for 2023-24 stated that it was “*committed to continuing its support for a YLAG*” and intended to “*build on work undertaken by the YLAG Facilitator*” during the 2022-23 programme. To this end, support for a YLAG was identified as one of the project strands in the LAG's CLV and a suitable budget allocated to it. By participating in a collaboration project with five other CLLD areas, the OH CLLD LAG in November 2023 were able to increase its YLAG's operating budget while also reallocating some of the budget previously allocated to the YLAG to its other project strands.

The 2023-24 YLAG programme encountered numerous challenges, in particular due to collaboration funding becoming available much later than expected, resulting in a very condensed delivery period. Despite this, the initiative's success exceeded all expectations and caught the attention of high-ranking decision makers. SG have indicated that going forward funding for YLAGs could be allocated separately from regular CLLD funding, meaning that LAGs it would no longer have to make part of their allocation available and/or apply for collaboration funding. Several other CLLD areas have expressed an interest in setting up YLAGs and initial discussions have taken place with Scottish Rural Action (SRA) and SG about how best to resource and support the movement going forward.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Due to challenges in recruiting to the post of YLAG Facilitator in 2021-22, the LAG decided to take a different approach in 2022-23. The CLLD Coordinator was tasked with the coordination and implementation of this project strand, however, to provide some assistance with the initial animation of the project, a student was employed for a 12-week summer placement. The student worked closely with the CLLD Coordinator and was tasked with growing YLAG membership and developing a draft YLAG programme for the year.

Overall this approach proved successful and YLAG membership and diversity have increased significantly. Having the CLLD Coordinator directly involved in implementing both the LAG and YLAG programme ensured a direct link between the two groups and alignment between their programmes to the extent that this made sense. It did create some capacity issues though especially during the final weeks of the programme when some of the YLAGs plans had to be put on hold or scaled back to allow enough capacity for the overall CLLD programme to be rolled up on time.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership to the Outer Hebrides YLAG is open to anyone aged 16-30 who lives in the Outer Hebrides or is from the Outer Hebrides but currently studying elsewhere. Due to the additional administrative and legislative burden involved in activity involving under-18s, some activities were limited to over-18s only; the upper age limit of 30 was indicative rather than strictly binding.

The report prepared at the close of the 2022-23 programme listed a YLAG membership of six. Of those, three continued to engage. The YLAG Facilitator decided to join the YLAG as a member. By the end of the 2023-24 programme, the OH CLLD YLAG had ten members, nine of whom were full members and one was attending meetings to decide whether to join. The ten members are:

- Aged 18-30+;
- 7 male, 3 female;
- 8 from various areas of Lewis, 2 from Harris;
- Interest in a variety of areas such as: community development & empowerment, culture & heritage, Gaelic, music, mental health, climate action, education & skills.

Repeated efforts were made to engage with relevant organisations and individuals in the Uists and Barra with the aim of identifying and attracting potential members from the southern isles. To date, however, these attempts have proven unsuccessful. YLAG members are considering a visit to the southern isles in 2024-25 in the hope that personal interactions and the opportunity to ask questions up-front might encourage new members. It should be noted, however, that while Uist and Barra are not currently represented in the YLAG membership, several projects from the southern isles applied to the YLAG Fund and were awarded funding.

YLAG PRIORITIES

All YLAG activity has a specific focus on the lived experience of young people and for 2023-24 the YLAG identified the following priorities for their activity:

- Equity with the mainland;
- Dùthchas & dualchas;
- Economic autonomy;
- Mental health; and
- Acquiring skills.

YLAG COLLABORATION PROJECT

Towards the end of August 2023, SG sought Expressions of Interest for potential collaboration projects and, based on a similar initiative in 2022-23, six CLLD areas – Borders, Cairngorms, Fife, Forth Valley & Lomond, Outer Hebrides and Orkney – submitted a proposal for a YLAG collaboration project worth £97,500.00 with *“the aim [...] to encourage [young people] to become more involved in decision-making and action taken to bring about positive change locally that will benefit all young people”*. SG approved the proposal in November

2023, resulting in an increased operating budget for the OH CLLD YLAG while enabling the LAG to reallocate some of its budget initially allocated to its YLAG.

The Collaboration project focused on three distinct activities:

- Attending the Scottish Rural and Islands (Youth) Parliament;
- Producing a film recording the experience and activity of the six YLAGs; and
- Commissioning a report on a YLAG residential held in Orkney in February 2023.

Further to the above, budget was requested to allow for development work, promotional activities and materials.

Fife Council acted as Lead Partner, submitting the Expression of Interest and commissioning the work for the latter two project strands. The additional workload involved in leading on collaboration projects had previously been identified as potentially prohibitive of the project going ahead though and so, in order to ease the administrative burden on Fife's CLLD Coordinator, each area was allocated an indicative budget of £16k from the overall budget which they managed and claimed for from SG directly. This approach seemed to work well and could be considered for future collaboration projects of a similar nature.

PROJECT STRANDS

The YLAG decided to focus its 2023-24 activity on four distinct project strands:

a) Development & Capacity building (Networking, capacity-building and lobbying)

As a fairly new group with several new members, learning from others, networking and capacity-building were identified as essential aspects in ensuring the YLAGs development. YLAG members attended a range of events for this purpose, such as a Youth Climate Camp, the Scottish Rural and Islands Parliament and a ministerial debate in Holyrood. Learning quickly progressed to lobbying as they had the opportunity to present their thoughts and demands to several high-ranking officials, in particular the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Land Reform and the First Minister.

Efforts were also made to establish closer links with other relevant groups, such as the Young Islanders Network (YIN) and local Community Learning and Development (CLD) staff.

b) YLAG Fund

The YLAG decided to allocate the majority of its budget to a YLAG Fund which local organisations could apply to. Eligible projects had to be aimed at young people in the Outer Hebrides and supported at least one of the YLAG's five priorities for 2023-24. Ten applications were received, six of which were successful, and the total award was almost £9,000.

c) YLAG Film & Professional Development project (inc. contributing to a national YLAG Film)

The Youth LAG were keen to fund a young local artist to develop their skills and portfolio. To achieve this and in order to contribute to the National YLAG Film produced as part of the collaboration project, the YLAG developed the 'Youth LAG Film & Professional Development' project which sponsored a young film maker to develop their professional

skills while also shooting footage for the national YLAG Film. The successful candidate was Ruairaidh Urpeth of Quay Digital Media – who used the opportunity to develop his documentary film-making skills, as he had been specialising in commercial films previously.

d) Profile raising (Merchandise to help raise the YLAG's profile and strengthen its group identity)

The YLAG developed and purchased a range of promotional materials such as: flyers; pop-up banners; and a branded tablecloth. It also bought branded clothing to be worn when representing the YLAG and to establish a group identity when attending events.

BUDGET

The OH CLLD LAG in its 2023-24 CLV set aside a budget of just over £20k for YLAG activity. Once additional funding for the YLAG became available from the collaboration fund, the LAG reallocated any still uncommitted funding from the YLAG to other LAG project strands.

Initial budget submitted as part of OH CLLD LAG's 2023-24 CLV

Youth LAG (excl. student placement)	£14,000.00
Summer student for YLAG	£6,169.00
Total:	£20,169.00

Funding claimed in 2023-24

OH CLLD LAG allocation

Youth LAG activity	£440.22
Summer student for YLAG	£6,935.47
Total:	£7,375.69

YLAG Collaboration project budget

Development & capacity building	£1,346.63
Profile raising	£1,275.21
YLAG Fund	£8,996.95
YLAG Film & Professional Development project	£4,000.00
Total:	£15,618.79

TOTAL BUDGET CLAIMED IN 2023-24:	£22,994.48
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FORWARD PLANNING

OH YLAG plans

Depending on budget becoming available, the YLAG are intending to hold a residential workshop in the Outer Hebrides during the summer for forward planning and strategising. This will also provide an opportunity for members to meet as not all have managed to meet in person

at previous events. There was some discussion about holding the residential in Uist to try to raise the profile among potential YLAG members and to give current YLAG members a better understanding of the southern isles, however, it seems unlikely that that will be possible now due to the delay in securing funding and as discussions with representatives in Uist have indicated that it would likely be challenging to engage with young Uibhistich during the summer months as regular club activity etc tends to stop then.

Topics to be discussed at the workshop are:

- Agreeing a programme for 2024-25;
- YLAG promotion/social media campaign;
- Engagement with local politicians and decision-makers (including attendance at Comhairle committees);
- Setting up suitable sub-groups, e.g. for mental health; and
- Investigate collaborating with DYW.

The YLAG have agreed the following priorities for 2024-25:

- Empowering Young People
- Dùthchas & Dualchas
- Entrepreneurship
- Mental Health
- Personal & Professional Development

National plans

Support for a national YLAG – and wider youth – network is growing and has significant political support, in particular from Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands. SG representatives have indicated a desire to put YLAG funding on a more secure footing by setting aside a specific allocation so that activity would no longer depend on LAGs allocating part of their own budget and/or participating in a collaboration project. Conversations have taken place between SG, current YLAG areas SRA and SRN about how such a network might be supported. While talks have been productive, no concrete decisions have been made however. There is some concern about current YLAG areas that if SG continues to encourage other LAGs to establish YLAGs without properly resourcing a wider network, the burden of providing advice and assistance will fall on existing YLAG areas whose capacity is already stretched.

The six YLAG areas that collaborated in 2023-24 remain committed to supporting their YLAGs and, regardless of the outcome of talks regarding a national YLAG network, hope to once again participate in a collaboration project. Coordinators met in February 2023 to put together a draft timetable to ensure that YLAGs will have an attractive calendar of events to attend and contribute to while also having sufficient time to focus on activity in their own area.

APPENDICES

YLAG summer placement student attending careers event in Stornoway



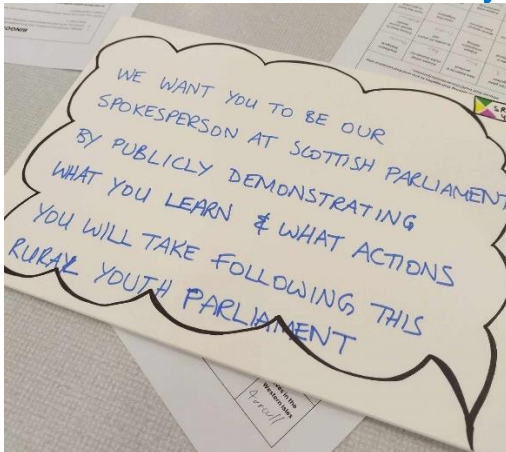
Graphic of topics discussed at the inaugural Scottish Rural & Islands Youth Parliament



Delegates at the Scottish Rural and Islands Youth Parliament



Demand made to the Cabinet Secretary by SRIP youth delegates



OH YLAG members and CLLD Coordinator at the SRIP



Youth members, including OH YLAG members, meet Scottish ministers at Holyrood



OH YLAG members meet the First Minister

