

Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland
Implementation Steering Group Meeting

Date	3rd December 2019
Time	11.30am – 2pm
Location	Station Hotel, Perth
Present	<p>Henry Graham (HG), Chair Andrea Glass (AG), Skills Development Scotland Katie Fox (KF), Skills Development Scotland Stephen Sheridan (SS), Skills Development Scotland Andrew Docherty (AD), Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Muriel McKenzie (MM), Scottish Government Jayne McCormack (JM), Scottish Government (SG) David Reid (DR), HIE George Jamieson (GJ), NFU Scotland Graeme Ligertwood (GL), SRUC Liz Barron-Majerik (LB-M), Lantra Scotland Tom Hall (TH), Colleges Scotland David Sulman (DS), CONFOR Klaus Meyer (KM), Education Scotland Jackie Brierton (JB), GrowBiz Ken Rutherford (KR), Scottish Funding Council</p>

		Action
1.	Apologies	
	<p>Chris Brodie, Skills Development Scotland David Richardson, Federation of Small Businesses Derek McDonald, Aberdeenshire Council Donna Fordyce, Seafood Scotland Iain Steele, SP Energy Network / DYW Dumfries & Galloway Julia Latto, SE Karen MacNee, SG Rob Dickson, SOSEP Marc Crothall, Scottish Tourism Alliance,</p> <p>Marc Crothall (STA) and Riddell Graham (Visit Scotland) were scheduled to dial in for the call, however, due to technical issues they were unable to hear those in the room. KF will follow up with both individuals to capture what was missed during the meeting.</p>	
2.	Welcome and Introduction	
	<p>HG opened the meeting by welcoming some new partners around the table and listed apologies.</p>	

	<p>HG welcomed KF in her new post, set out a bit about her role, and how she will lead the implementation of the Action Plan.</p>	
3.	Update on ISG membership and Governance	
	<p>As discussed at September's meeting, we are looking to widen membership of the ISG, and have already welcomed JB and Derek McDonald, whilst Donna Fordyce has replaced Patrick Hughes as Seafood Scotland's representative.</p> <p>The group is also working to secure representation from UHI and the Scottish Youth Parliament, and this is likely to be secured in 2020.</p> <p>ACTION: SDS and Lantra to continue exploring buy-in from these groups.</p> <p>MM advised that the Cabinet Secretary is meeting with the Enterprise & Skills Strategic Board on December 18th to discuss the governance structure and arrangements for the ISG.</p> <p>ACTION: MM will advise in due course as to the outcome of this meeting, and any implications for the ISG.</p>	<p>SDS and Lantra</p> <p>SG</p>
4.	Minutes of last meeting	
	<p>The minutes from the last meeting were agreed.</p> <p>HG again stressed the importance of rotating the meetings around the country and securing industry representation at each meeting (e.g. through use of 'Spotlight sessions').</p> <p>ACTION: All partners were invited to consider which locations and sectors should be considered for future meetings.</p> <p>TH suggested that the work of the ISG should seek to connect with the work being undertaken by the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland (ICS). It was agreed that SG would take this on board and seek appropriate connections.</p>	All
5.	Employer Reference Group	
	<p>SDS/SG/HG discussed the establishment of an Employer Reference Group (ERG). This session was to determine whether or not this would be useful, which sectors could be represented, and which individuals could sit on the ERG. Further, for those also sitting on Industry Leadership groups, Skills groups, etc. can the ISG feed into these groups with a rural angle?</p> <p>There have been a number of recent publications which have a lot of</p>	

	<p>the same groups and individuals feeding in and being asked the same questions (e.g. this Action Plan, revised H&I Skills Investment Plan, South of Scotland Regional SIP, aquaculture action plan, etc.). Is there a way in which the ERG could secure presentation in the implementation of all relevant groups and feed into their work instead of setting up another group?</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the concept of ‘land-based’ is so broad, and the sectors we need to consider are so broad. However, it was agreed that – as with the Action Plan itself – the focus of the ISG should go beyond simply land-based; the rural economy constitutes much more than this.</p> <p>GJ indicated some frustration on the part of employers – particularly in the agriculture sector – where some feel that the education and skills systems do not move quickly enough for their needs, and as such, they find it difficult to engage. He suggested employer representation or engagement with the ISG would be beneficial. It was suggested that industry engagement becomes a regular feature on future ISG agendas.</p> <p>We need to consider how we engage with industry (and indeed various audiences) – e.g. are they aware the Plan/ISG exists, what our plans are, who is on the group, etc.?</p> <p>ACTION: All group members should seek to publicise the ISG and Plan in relevant settings wherever possible.</p> <p>ACTION: LB-M indicated that she has undertaken a mapping exercise of Skills Plans and relevant stakeholders and lead contacts and offered to circulate this.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>LB-M</p>
6.	Skills Planning Manager (Rural Economy)	
	<p>KF delivered a presentation outlining her background and experience, key responsibilities in this post, proposed approach for delivering the implementation plan, and next steps in the short-term (to March 2020).</p> <p>KF will help drive the day-to-day activities in delivering the Action Plan, will manage the implementation and monitoring, and identify and report back on challenges and progress.</p> <p>A reporting and monitoring schedule will be developed and shared with partners, setting out progress and challenges. This will become a standing agenda item at future ISG meetings. Katie will also work to highlight areas which need more traction or focus than others and communicate these to the group.</p> <p>ACTION: KF will set up a series of calls and meetings with ISG partners to introduce herself and set ideas out fully. She will also</p>	<p>KF/All</p>

	<p>attend key events, and all partners are asked to identify any forthcoming events which would benefit from ISG representation.</p> <p>ACTION: SDS will map existing research and case studies, starting with SDS' own material, before reaching out to partners to determine what else exists and how can these materials be brought together in one central repository and promoted.</p>	<p>SDS</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Developing a Communications Strategy</p>	
	<p>KF and JB delivered a presentation on the importance of developing a communications strategy to help deliver the Action Plan, setting out their experience and key messages, with KF opening the discussion up round the group to identify key considerations. (The slides will be circulated alongside this note).</p> <p>Communications featured heavily in the Action Plan and the first ISG meeting, and the early key considerations are to promote that the group exists, who is on the group, and the work which is being delivered.</p> <p>ACTION: SDS to work on developing key messages for the plan through the comms sub group and ISG members were encouraged to promote this via their official corporate and professional social media platforms.</p> <p>It was agreed that it is crucial to quickly identify the key messages the ISG would like to convey, the sectoral and geographic definitions we have used for the rural economy, and that we can actively communicate the actions already achieved or in place. With assistance from JB, and SDS and SG marketing teams, KF will establish a formal communications plan, and present at the next ISG meeting in March 2020. She will engage with all partners to discuss their thoughts on a communications plan. The Plan should be written in Plain English and be accessible to a range of audiences including partners, industry, SMEs and those in rural communities.</p> <p>ACTION: KF to lead on the development of a Communications Plan, supported by JB and marketing colleagues.</p> <p>The importance of social media channels was identified, and we discussed whether a uniform rural hashtag could be created and used across all ISG promotional materials It was acknowledged that whilst digital communication is increasingly important, traditional analogue channels are still effective means of communication and should also be considered in developing the communications plan.</p> <p>Partners should also seek to influence wider networks and media contacts, to show that rural is more than simply land-based or agriculture; these perceptions still exist and there is work to be done to help change these. The plan should reflect listening as well as talking;</p>	<p>All</p> <p>SDS/SG / JB</p>

<p>businesses and rural communities may themselves not recognise the breadth of the rural economy and that they are involved; it is important to engage them early to help change this approach.</p> <p>KF will also explore the options for a dedicated space online to host the various resources and update with ISG activity – e.g. a website, a blog, etc. The NCRA website exists but is largely static; HG and JB will explore whether or not this can be used for Action Plan activity. A wealth of resources and content already exists, and there is a need to ensure that this material can be shared, or if any copy-right issues exist.</p> <p>ACTION: Partners to determine what rural promotional materials they hold, and which they can share and communicate this to KF.</p> <p>ACTION: HG/JB to explore whether the NCRA website can be re-used for this Action Plan and to seek advice on some of the benefits/challenges in doing so.</p> <p>ACTION: KF to explore the best online solution, taking advice from colleagues in comms.</p> <p>ISG members need to remain engaged and aware of the broader political and strategic context to help understand and shape what ISG priorities should be. This includes an awareness of Government funding plans, policy objectives, key levers, private funding etc. – what are the key areas for focus, and how will they impact the rural economy?</p> <p>The key messaging of the Communications Plan was discussed; it was agreed there should be a focus on upskilling and reskilling, the Apprenticeship Family, improving access to education and training, an understanding of what the rural economy is, demonstrating the value of skills, and how employers can access skills.</p> <p>Partners should explore whether or not there is a way to influence education funding for those in rural areas. For instance, people may complete a degree in a subject where there is not demand for employment in their area, and therefore cannot access further free education. This means their degree is not suited to the local market, whilst local employers cannot access suitably qualified people.</p> <p>ACTION: KF will develop a meeting and events calendar, a diary of key publication dates over the coming 12 months, and a list of key contacts. Partners should provide Katie with the details of their communications colleagues to allow for this.</p> <p>KF then showed the promotional video which SDS have created, setting out key actions of the Plan and activity undertaken. It was agreed that this video could be enhanced, with a voice-over, rural</p>	<p>All</p> <p>HG / JB</p> <p>KF</p> <p>KF / All</p>
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	<p>feedback on these programmes at the next ISG meeting in March.</p> <p>ACTION: SG to feedback on progress and early evaluation findings.</p> <p>ACTION: SDS will contact partners to source case study material.</p> <p>GL advised that SRUC are currently undergoing a process of restructuring and this is likely to last a number of months. After this, their long-term vision is likely to become clear and he will be in a position to provide a fuller update of their aims and aspirations then.</p>	<p>SG</p> <p>AD</p>
10.	Schedule of meetings	
	<p>It was suggested that the next ISG meeting in March takes place in the south of Scotland, with the Bridge in Dumfries identified as a possible location.</p> <p>For the June meeting, Aberdeen City/Shire was suggested as a suitable venue.</p> <p>ACTION: SDS will find suitable venues and inform delivery partners.</p> <p>ACTION: All to consider which sectors they would like to present a spotlight session at future meetings and feed back to SDS to arrange.</p> <p>ACTION: SDS to issue a Doodle poll to find dates for ISG meetings in September and December of 2020.</p>	<p>AD</p> <p>SDS/All</p> <p>AD</p>
11.	Any Other Business	
	<p>HG emphasised the range of skills, knowledge and experience across ISG members, and called on everyone to use these to support KF and the ISG to implement the Plan.</p> <p>The meeting was closed.</p>	