

**ABERDEENSHIRE LEADER LAG PARTNERSHIP  
MEETING WITH SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT  
THURSDAY 20 MARCH 2008  
WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN**

**PRESENT**

Iain Matheson	Scottish Government
Lorraine McEwan	Scottish Government
James Knowles	Aberdeenshire Council
Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Morna Harper	Aberdeenshire Council
Reid Hutchison	Aberdeenshire Council
Liz Gordon	Aberdeenshire Council
Jeffery Kenyon	Aberdeenshire Council
Erin Wood	Aberdeenshire Council
Keith Newton	Aberdeenshire Council
Clair Wright	Scottish Enterprise Grampian
Stewart Johnston	SG Rural Payments Inspections Directorate
Robin Blyth	Aberdeenshire Community Councils
Eleanor Anderson	Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships
Moirra Gordon	Scottish Women's Rural Institute
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers Union Scotland
Jill Catto	Scottish Rural Property and Business Association

**APOLOGIES**

Fiona Malcolm	Communities Scotland
Dennis McFarlane	VisitScotland
John Risby	Forestry Commission
Ewan Cameron	Scottish Natural Heritage
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Service
Janelle Anderson	Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses
Bob Leonard	Aberdeenshire Council

**1.0 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

- 1.1 Morna Harper welcomed members of the Rural Aberdeenshire LAG Partnership and the Scottish Government and asked those present to introduce themselves.

**2.0 SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PRESENTATION**

- 2.1 Iain Matheson and Lorraine McEwan from the Scottish Government were in attendance to present information on how the LEADER funding would be managed:

- LEADER is about holistic rural development which aims to strengthen rural communities.

- LEADER approach is bottom up, ie: decisions being made at local level.
- It is based on local rural development strategies.
- It can link in with the Community Plan.

2.2     Iain Matheson explained that LEADER was a stand alone element within the £1.6 billion Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). SRDP was gradually moving rural development to a regional basis across Scotland.

2.3     There will be two main rounds for bids for LEADER funding – Aberdeenshire and 15 others were successful in the first round, and it is expected another 4 LAGs will be successful in the second round. It was intended to hold a third round with any surplus budget to ensure all monies were allocated appropriately.

2.4     The Scottish Government will establish annual profiles for each Local Action Group (LAG). The profile details the amount to be spent in the financial year and any under spends cannot be carried over.

2.5     It is proposed to set up a LEADER sub-network to allow areas to liaise with other LAGs in Scotland, and also European partners.

2.6     The role of the LAG lead partner (Aberdeenshire Council) is to manage the finances, employ any LAG staff, be a funding partner, be responsible to the LAG and the Scottish Government.

2.7     The LAG will be the decision-maker on which project bids are supported for funding. Guidance will be provided.

2.8     Iain Matheson referred to the Cross Compliance conditions that apply to land based projects. Such projects would require adhering to the Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) measures that are applied throughout the SRDP.

2.9     Iain Matheson confirmed that there would requirement for good communication channels between the LAG and the SRDP Case Officers who will be dealing with Rural Development Contract applications.

### **3.0     RURAL ABERDEENSHIRE LAG**

3.1     The LAG had recently been notified that it had been successful in its bid for LEADER funding and had been allocated £3.24 million (slightly less than the £3.4 million that had been bid for).

3.2     This amount was to be match-funded by the following funding partners – Scottish Enterprise Grampian, Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, Communities Scotland and Visit Scotland – and other public or

private contributions.

- 3.3 With recent changes there is now a challenge to meet this match-funding as Communities Scotland will no longer exist and be able to contribute funding. Match funding through Scottish Enterprise Grampian's contribution was also in doubt, due to the focus now placed by Scottish Enterprise on strategic national priorities.
- 3.4 The LAG consists of the funding partners mentioned above plus Aberdeenshire Community Councils, Aberdeenshire CVS network, Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships, Federation of Small Businesses, National Farmers Union Scotland, Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs, Scottish Rural Property and Business Association and the Scottish Women's Rural Institute.
- 3.5 Iain Matheson explained how the allocation of funds had been derived. Funds were allocated via population and the km<sup>2</sup> area of the LAG. The weighting was 66% in relation to population and 33% in relation to area.

A selection panel made up of 3 representatives from the Scottish Government, 1 representative from Scottish Enterprise, 1 from SCVO and 1 rural economist from Northern Ireland assessed the bids. The panel scored four elements:

- Alignment with SRDP, CPP and Structural Funds
- Details on the partnership
- Leverage (how much bringing in)
- Quality and realism.

#### **4.0 LEADER Project Assessment Committee (PAC)**

- 4.1 The LAG discussed the composition of the PAC which will consider the applications for LEADER funding in Aberdeenshire before forwarding supported bids to the LAG for approval. To facilitate decision making, it was agreed the PAC should be a small group with representatives from:
- Aberdeenshire Council (lead partner in LAG)
  - Environment (one from SNH/FCS)
  - Land Based (one from NFUS/SRPBA)
  - Community (one from ACCs/LRPs/CVS)
  - Business (one from FSB/VS)

- 4.2 It was agreed that a small grants scheme would also be set up for grants between £1 – 5000, and this would have a “fast track” application process.

#### **5.0 LAG ACTIONS**

The LAG discussed the actions that require to be completed prior to full launch of the programme in Aberdeenshire. These included:

- Recruitment of a LEADER Co-ordinator and Administrative Assistant.
- Identifying an office base in rural Aberdeenshire.
- Selecting and appointing a company to develop a dedicated LEADER website.
- Agreeing a schedule of application deadlines, PAC and LAG meetings.
- Agreeing project selection criteria etc. which would be determined once scheme guidance is available from the Scottish Government.

## **6.0 ADDITIONAL ACTION POINTS**

6.1 Other topics considered by the group include:

- It was agreed a discussion paper would be prepared for the next LAG Partnership meeting in relation to how the Small Grants Scheme might operate.
- Letters would be sent to Community and Business stakeholders requesting nominations for one representative (with a substitute) for Community and Business representation on the LEADER PAC.
- Following an enquiry from NHS to be represented on the LAG, it was agreed a response be sent asking NHS to identify what it could contribute to the programme in terms of resources.

6.2 James Knowles thanks all for attending the meeting and expressed thanks to the Scottish Government for providing the presentation on LEADER.

## **7.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next LAG meeting will take place on 27 May 2008 at 11.00am in Woodhill House.

Erin Wood/Vicky Thomson  
28 March 2008