

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF
RURAL ABERDEENSHIRE LEADER PROJECT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 19 AUGUST 2008 AT 2.00 PM
COMMITTEE ROOM 4, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Ewen Cameron	Scottish Natural Heritage
James Knowles	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council
George Noble	Scottish Enterprise
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Service
Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses
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1. WELCOME

- 1.1 James Knowles welcomed those present to the first meeting of the PAC and introductions were made round the table.

2. LEADER UPDATE

2.1 Service Level Agreement

Vicky Thomson reported that she had written to the Scottish Government regarding the timescale for receiving the Service Level Agreement and the 5% advance as expenditure is now being incurred.

2.2 Monitoring Indicators

Monitoring Indicators, against which the impact of the programme can be measured, are currently being drafted by the Scottish Government.

2.3 Leader Office Activities – Update

Vicky Thomson gave a presentation on the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Programme at Cairngorms LEADER Promotional Events held in Strathdon and Ballater.

LEADER attended an EU Funding Seminar in Woodhill House, organised by Aberdeenshire Council. Presentations were given by:

- Scottish Government Rural Payments Inspections Directorate on SRDP funding,
- European Unit, Scottish Government on European funding
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, on Rural Direct and
- Scottish Government on LEADER.

Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER was represented on the Forestry Commission Scotland trade stand at the Turriff Show on 3 and 4 August.

A seminar for Aberdeenshire Officers will be arranged in the autumn and it is planned to hold community promotional events during late autumn.

Discussion took place on the timetable for small applications. It was agreed a new system would be introduced in 2009.

Vicky gave examples of prospective Round 2 projects which covered a wide geographical spread. It was noted that there was a shortage of enquiries from Aberdeenshire South. This would be a key target area for promotion of the Programme.

2.4 Website Update

Vicky and Anne have both undergone training on Contribute to enable updating of the website. Anne is updating the website as required.

James Knowles requested that information is available at the next LAG meeting on the number of 'unique visitors' on the LEADER website.

2.5 LEADER Network Event – Battleby

Information on a forthcoming LEADER Network Event at Battleby was circulated along with a draft programme. This will be issued to LAG members by e-mail. A maximum of 4 representatives from the LAG will be able to attend.

It was agreed that LEADER would fund 50% of accommodation costs with Aberdeenshire Council, as lead partner, covering the remaining 50%.

2.6 SCVO Rural Direct

Rural Direct has been established to work across Scotland to help with locating and applying for funding for local communities. The contact for Aberdeenshire is Barbara Love of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO).

It was noted that while Councils for Voluntary Service advice does not specifically cover SRDP funding, it can give advice to rural groups or communities in the whole of Aberdeenshire on other funding schemes.

It was agreed that Barbara Love be invited to give a short presentation on Rural Direct at the start of the LAG meeting on 2 September.

3. COMMUNICATION

- 3.1 Copies of the following letters were circulated to members:
- Letter to Cabinet Secretary regarding indicative match funding for the Rural Aberdeenshire LAG Partnership through Scottish Enterprise.
 - Response from Cabinet Secretary giving assurance that LEADER will be adequately resourced and that assistance will continue as indicated by Scottish Enterprise.
 - Letter to the Scottish Government bidding for a share any residue of funding retained for 2nd Round LEADER allocations.
- 3.2 Ewen Cameron offered to contribute the SNH share of financial support now if necessary to assist with administration costs.

4. PROJECT APPLICATIONS

It was agreed that LAG members would be issued with the summary sheets for each project.

Vicky confirmed that once a project is approved, it has two years to claim the grant, subject to all other match funding being in place.

Each project was summarised in turn and discussion followed:

4.1 **Application 001 – Birse Community Assets Project**

This funding request is for the acquisition of a capital asset which offers potential scope for further micro-businesses. Project success is not dependant on the wood-fuel part of the proposal.

The group has a very good record of longer term viability and stability. The group consists of many skilled, able people and is not solely dependant on one key member.

The project also has an impressive leverage ratio.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £20,800 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

4.2 **Application 002 – Forest Education Initiative Co-ordinator NE**

This is a skills based project and the question of skills development being funded through Rural Pirorities rather than LEADER was raised.

The PAC must ensure that there is no duplicate funding of a project.

Vicky has attended a meeting with Stewart Johnston of the Scottish Executive and Case Officers to discuss the complex rules and potential for funding overlap.

Match funding for this project to be clarified in advance of the LAG meeting.

Similar projects running in other geographical areas have a history of success. The project will develop skills enabling participants to look at downstream development of Agriculture and Forestry.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £15,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

4.3 Application 003- LIFT (Lifeskills, Involvement, Fitness, Transition)

The PAC considered this to be a very favourable project.

The question was raised as to whether there would be duplication of what is already on offer at Banff & Buchan College.

This is an awareness raising project which, if executed well, will highlight options available to participants for progression.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £45,915 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

4.4 Application 004 – Collieston Community Centre Project

Time and money spent on a feasibility study for such a large project is a very practical idea.

This project demonstrates excellent organisation and commitment from the group and it has the absolute backing of the community.

This is a very well presented application and represents a 50% funding request from LEADER.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £43,145 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

4.5 Application 005 – Cairnbulg Harbour Development

The harbour is privately owned and is close to a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

This project will be a positive asset to a fairly fragile community.

The local community will play a large part in the project through in-kind contributions.

There is a clearly demonstrated demand for the project.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £10,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

4.6 Application 006 – The Town is the Venue

The PAC found the general ideas of the project exciting and interesting. However, although the application was very detailed as regards background and theory, it was felt that it needed clearer focus and explanation of eligible costs.

The PAC felt that it was difficult to make judgement on the application as it stands. It was agreed that the applicant be invited to re-submit for Round 2 presenting more definite details of the aims of the project, the actual costs, and providing more supporting evidence of partnership working.

4.7 Application 007 – Huntly Peregrine Wildwatch

This facility is very innovative being the only one of its kind in the North East of Scotland.

The project is a proposed expansion to a very valuable existing community asset for people of all ages.

This is a real value for money proposal with the potential to inject income into the local community.

This resource is also a designated SSSI which will be unaffected by this proposal.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £23,750 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

5. AOCB

5.1 Maureen Stephen requested that she receive information by e-mail rather than hard copy for future meetings. Other members were happy to continue to receive hard copies.

5.2 It was agreed that the Summary Sheets be issued to LAG members with the advice that they have the option of receiving further information if required from Vicky or Anne.

6. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 30 September 2008 (am) in Committee Room C, Woodhill House.