

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF
RURAL ABERDEENSHIRE LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUP**

**TUESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2008
BARN & BUSHEL, THAINSTONE CENTRE, INVERURIE**

Present

Eleanor Anderson	Aberdeenshire Rural Partnership Federation
Robin Blyth	Aberdeenshire Community Councils
Dan Cadle	Forestry Commission Scotland
Caroline Clark	National Health Service
Sabine Dey	Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
Moira Gordon	Scottish Women's Rural Institute
Reid Hutchison	Aberdeenshire Council
Stewart Johnston	Scottish Executive
James Knowles	Aberdeenshire Council
Bob Leonard	Aberdeenshire Council
George Noble	Scottish Enterprise
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Service
Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses
Erin Wood	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

Martin Brebner, Ewan Cameron, Liz Gordon, Morna Harper, Dennis McFarlane, Keith Newton and Susan Smith

1. WELCOME

1.1 James Knowles welcomed those present and introductions were made round the table. James also expressed sympathy at the news of the passing of Mike Pow, LEADER Policy Officer, Scottish Government.

2. PRESENTATION BY BARBARA LOVE, SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS (SCVO)

James Knowles welcomed Barbara Love, Development Officer from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO).

Barbara gave an interesting presentation on Rural Direct which is a service provided by the Crofters Commission in Highland area and SCVO in the rest of Scotland to help groups in rural communities to understand the range of funding opportunities available through the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP).

On receipt of an enquiry, a Development Officer will be assigned to a Community Group to assist them with the completion of forms, e.g. obtaining a Business Reference Number (BRN) and provide advice

regarding the pre-application, i.e. Statement of Intent (SOI) for Rural Priorities in SRDP. The Development Officer will give general reassurance throughout the process.

SCVO also work closely with the Councils for Voluntary Service and a Information DVD on Rural Direct will be issued shortly to rural CVS networks.

SCVO will undertake a series of road shows and meetings once some issues e.g. funding rates to rural Priorities have been confirmed.

Barbara's briefing notes and power point presentations will be circulated to LAG members electronically.

Barbara was thanked for her informative presentation and then left the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1 LAG Meeting of Friday, 27 June 2008

Approved as an accurate record. LAG minutes will be uploaded on the website.

3.2 Draft PAC Meeting of Tuesday, 19 August 2008

Approved as an accurate record. PAC minutes will be uploaded on the website once the approval and offer of grant has been accepted by applicants.

4. LEADER UPDATE

An update sheet was circulated.

4.1 Service Level Agreement and Monitoring Indicators

Service Level Agreements should be issued by mid September.

As there is no information available as yet on indicators, it can cause difficulties for applicants when completing certain sections of the application form. It is hoped to have indicators finalised by the end of September.

4.2 Promotion

Promotion of the LEADER programme has been undertaken at:

- Cairngorms SRDP/LEADER events in Strathdon and Ballater on 15 and 17 July.
- European Seminar organised by Aberdeenshire Council and the East of Scotland European Consortium on 21 July 2008.
- Turriff Show 3 and 4 August 2008 on the Forestry Commission Scotland Stand as part of the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) display.
- Formartine Partnership 20 August 2008.

A seminar for Agency Officers will be arranged in the autumn and it is planned to hold community promotional events in late autumn. Aberdeenshire South will be a key target area for promotion of the LEADER programme.

4.3 **Round 2 Enquiries**

To date, enquiries have been received from approximately 15 potential Round 2 Projects. These projects cover a wide geographical area.

It is proposed that a new system for small project applications will be implemented next year. A timetable for funding rounds in 2009 will be prepared and publicised on the website.

4.4 **Website**

The website is being updated regularly and there have been several new documents and articles uploaded. Vicky and Anne have both undergone training on Contribute.

A 'visitors overview sheet' for the LEADER website was circulated. From 21 July to present, there have been a total of 154 'unique visits'.

LAG Members were asked to remind their contacts to access the website for general information.

Andy Willox asked if he could receive a short article about LEADER for inclusion in the Federation of Small Businesses Newsletter. Lorna Paterson would also like to include this article in the NFUS Newsletter.

4.5 **LEADER Network Event, Battleby 17/18 September**

Vicky Thomson and Sabine Dey will attend the 2-day LEADER Network Event at Battleby in Perthshire. They will report on the event at the next LAG meeting. Reid Hutchison, Aberdeenshire Council will also attend to facilitate at the event's workshops funded by the Scottish Government.

4.6 **Communication**

There has been correspondence with the Scottish Government regarding match funding for the LAG Partnership through Scottish Enterprise. Assurance has been given that indicative commitment will be honoured on a project by project basis.

A bid has been made to the Scottish Government for a share of any residue of funding retained for 2nd round LEADER allocations.

Andy Willox attended the most recent meeting of ACSEF board and recommended that information on LEADER be provided to ACSEF at an agreed time.

4.7 **LEADER Administration Costs**

Letters will be drafted to the LAG's public sector partners regarding payment of their contribution towards administration costs for LEADER.

5. **PROJECT APPLICATIONS**

5.1 **001 Birse Community Assets Project**

Purchase and management of a woodland area and development of a woodchip project, providing fuel for biomass heating at local community centre and primary school.

This project has full community support.

There will be a significant long-term benefit from this project with considerable savings on heating costs.

It was noted that the Applicant Status box on the Project Assessment Report should show 'Voluntary' not 'Private'

Project Funding of £20,800 Approved.

5.2 **002 Forest Education Initiative Co-ordinator NE**

Employment of a Forest Education Initiative Co-ordinator to create sustainable woodland education projects in Aberdeenshire. This is a three year education project, split into two phases.

The question was raised as to whether there would be duplication of the work carried out by Aberdeenshire Council Rangers. It was felt that this skills based project would build on and enhance the work of the Rangers.

The valuable work carried out by Forestry Commission employees within the school environment was endorsed.

Project Funding of £15,000 approved.

5.3 **003 LIFT (Lifeskills, Involvement, Fitness, Transition)**

Employment of staff (1.5 FTE) to roll out fitness assessment and activities to encourage health and mobility.

This health, fitness and wellbeing awareness raising project is supported by the NHS and Aberdeenshire Council have made a commitment to supply fitness equipment.

Local schools are 100% behind the project. There is well documented evidence of demand.

There will be a minimal charge for summer holiday and out of school schemes, but not for programmes held in school term time. The service will be tailored to specific user groups. Visiting specialists will be utilised

to deliver specialised programmes relating to young people's issues.

It was noted that the Applicant Status box on the Project Assessment Report should show 'Voluntary' not 'Private'

Project Funding of £45,915 Approved.

5.4 004 Collieston Community Centre Project

Funding towards a feasibility study to develop design proposals up to detailed planning stage to build a Community Centre.

It was agreed that a project of this scale should undertake a feasibility study/development plan.

Working systematically towards this project for the past eight years, the group has demonstrated good organisation and commitment. The project has the full backing of the community.

Project Funding of £43,145 Approved.

5.5 005 Cairnbulg Harbour Development

To develop the harbour area in two phases, namely deepening of the harbour basin and the installation of pontoons to provide additional berthing capacity.

The local community will be heavily involved.

All match funding has now been confirmed for this project.

The development of this community asset will enable the Harbour to be financially sustainable.

This is a very worthwhile project.

Project Funding of £10,000 Approved.

5.6 Project 006 is to be invited to re-submit application for Round 2. The project was considered to be very interesting and worthwhile but the application needs clearer focus.

5.7 007 Huntly Peregrine Wildwatch

Project is to protect and enhance the site at the Peregrine Centre, to develop wildlife tourism, to develop community links and to provide an educational resource for lifelong learning.

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

The project has well documented evidence of support from the local community and the centre is recommended for a visit.

The question was raised as to whether the project would relocate if the Peregrines did not return to the area. However, the Centre is not solely dependant on the peregrines, it also utilises web-cam coverage of other species, and raises awareness of the forest environment.

Project Funding of £23,750 Approved.

- 5.8 Project 008 was ineligible due to the location being outwith the Aberdeenshire LAG area.

6. AOCB

- 6.1 It was noted that while the Rural Aberdeenshire website is user friendly and informative, the LEADER Officers have a key role in providing guidance to applicants.

A LAG member reported it had been noted that the application process was straightforward.

- 6.2 It was agreed LAG members will receive project summary reports only. Any supplementary information would be issued to PAC members with LAG members having the opportunity to request any further information on projects from Vicky or Anne if required.

- 6.3 Discussion took place on the timescale for issuing approval letters to applicants. Each letter will outline a set of standard conditions and any specific conditions applicable to the project. Approval letters will be issued as soon as possible.

- 6.4 James Knowles thanked LAG members for their contribution to the meeting and for their continued commitment to the programme.

James also thanked Vicky and Anne for all their work to date.

7 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 9 December 2008 (am) in Committee Room 1, Woodhill House.