

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF
RURAL ABERDEENSHIRE LEADER PROJECT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2008 AT 10.00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM C, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Eleanor Anderson	Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships
Ewen Cameron	Scottish Natural Heritage
James Knowles	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

George Noble	Scottish Enterprise
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Service
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

1. WELCOME

James Knowles welcomed those present.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as detailed above.

3. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

The minute of the last PAC meeting had already been approved at the LAG meeting on 2 September 2008. A copy was available for reference if required.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

LEADER Award Letter – 17 September 2008

Local Action Groups were invited to submit a request for additional funding in the second round of LEADER bids. The Rural Aberdeenshire LAG has been successful in obtaining additional funding of £120,000. The revised grant awarded now stands at a total of £3.36 million. Approximately £250,000 of this figure is to go towards LEADER administration costs, equating to 7% of the budget.

Sixteen LAG areas applied for LEADER funding in Round 1 and four new LAG areas applied in Round 2. All LEADER monies have now been committed by the Scottish Government.

5. LEADER MANAGEMENT

5.1 Service Level Agreement

The draft Service Level Agreement has been issued to LAG Lead Partners for information. It is a lengthy document which defines the obligations and the duties of the Scottish Government, SGRPID as the managing authority and Aberdeenshire Council as the lead partner in the LAG. It covers areas such as possible fraud, monitoring requirements and EU regulations.

A copy has been passed to Aberdeenshire Council Finance Department for comment and it will then be checked by the Legal Team.

An annual confirmation certificate must be signed and returned to the EC along with an Annual Report on the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Programme to SGRPID in November.

As yet, the 5% advance has not been received and Aberdeenshire Council has picked up all bills for LEADER to date. The SLA and advance payment is due shortly.

5.2 Indicators

Indicators are pending.

5.3 Financial Profile

The Scottish Government has requested details of anticipated LEADER expenditure over the next six years. Vicky has completed a financial profile template, based on the new grant figure of £3.36 million. The profile broadly reflects the funding table detailed in the Business Plan.

Figures are provisional and, for the first and second quarter in 2008/2009, only administration costs are detailed, e.g. IT equipment purchased, website development and LEADER team administration costs.

Letters have been drafted to LAG strategic partners to ask if they would consider increasing their original contribution towards LEADER administration costs due to the current shortfall which has arisen.

It was also suggested that an enquiry should be made to Iain Matheson to ask if it is possible to adjust the intervention rate of LEADER towards administration costs, which is currently based at 50%. This would ease the situation for Aberdeenshire Council.

The provisional figures detailed for Action 2 (LEADER Co-operation) may change as it is difficult to envisage how much will be spent on trans-regional or trans-national projects.

The PAC approved the financial profile and it will be returned to Iain Matheson with an added sub-note regarding the fact that we are still awaiting the early advance.

5.4 **LEADER Timetable for 2009**

A draft timetable for 2009 was discussed. It is proposed that projects are submitted on a quarterly cycle.

Although small project application deadlines will not feature on the timetable, it will still be possible to fast track small projects either by arranging additional PAC meetings if there are several projects or by considering projects via e-mail if only one or two are received.

PAC members approved the timetable and it will be uploaded onto the website.

6. **PROJECTS 009 & 101**

6.1 **Application 009 – Banff Banners and Poles**

The project is to purchase banner poles and banners to promote tourism on the Banffshire coast to raise the profile and increase awareness of local attractions. Local businesses will sponsor the banners and they will be regularly rotated.

The area is an architectural gem with many National Heritage properties which would benefit greatly from increased publicity.

The Banffshire Coast Tourism Partnership consists of a wide range of skilled individuals.

The LEADER grant is for 25% of the total cost of the project. Banner poles must conform to an approved standard before Aberdeenshire Council will commit to their maintenance.

Project funding of £5,000 approved by PAC.

6.2 **Application 010 – Banffshire Coast in Pictures**

The project is to promote the Banffshire Coast area through the development of an annual photographic competition for locals of all ages and abilities.

Pictures will be mounted and displayed at various coastal events. The competition will be followed up with sales of prints of photographs and the production of notelets. These sales aim to generate funds to cover the event's cost in future years.

The project will encourage locals to look closely at and take pride in their own environment.

PAC members suggested that it might be worthwhile to print calendars or placemats with the winning pictures.

Project funding of £3,609 approved by PAC.

6.3 Small projects with grant applications up to £5,000 can go ahead on the approval of the PAC only.

6.4 Approval letters will be issued shortly.

There is a set of standard conditions contained in the approval letter, one of which is that match funding must be in place, prior to any LEADER grant payment being made.

Project start and end dates are detailed in the approval document.

Projects will be expected to submit quarterly claims, project updates and receipts, backed up with a transaction list detailing eligible expenditure.

A financial transaction list in the form of an excel spreadsheet is being drafted and will be issued to approved projects. The claim form/progress report must be completed and returned even if the project has not incurred expenditure at that time.

As receipted invoices are not now commonly issued by contractors, the transaction spreadsheet will include a column detailing the date cheques are cleared through the bank.

6.5 Every project will be visited by the LEADER team during the implementation stage.

A 5% sample of projects will be audited by SGRPID.

Iain Matheson and the LEADER Management Team intend to make an annual visit to each LAG.

7. AOCB

7.1 The Scottish Government has requested an update from all LAG LEADER Programmes to be included in a Scottish Government press release. This has been forwarded to Iain Matheson and details Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Round 1 approved projects.

There is an embargo on the publication of any local press release until the Scottish Government has issued theirs.

Once this embargo is lifted, it was agreed that LAG partners receive a copy of the Press Release to enable them to include it in their organisation's next Newsletter.

7.2 Once Round 1 projects are underway, it was suggested that STV or Landward may be interested in doing a slot on the progress of a selection of projects.

- 7.3 Information on Round 1 LEADER Grants approved will be uploaded on the website. This will be in the form of a table detailing each project, their contact details and the amount of LEADER funding awarded.
- 7.4 Eleanor Anderson and Lorna Paterson had both attended a recent Marr Area Partnership meeting at which Vicky had given a presentation on LEADER. Both were very impressed with Vicky's knowledge of and enthusiasm for the LEADER Programme.
- 7.5 There are 15 possible projects pending for the Round 2 application deadline.
- 7.6 Eleanor Anderson was thanked for substituting for Maureen Stephen.

8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 25 November 2008 at 10.00 am in Committee Room 1, Woodhill House.