

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

**TUESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2008 AT 10.00 AM
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

James Knowles	Aberdeenshire Council
Ewen Cameron	Scottish Natural Heritage
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Jamie Rankin	Scottish Enterprise
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Service
Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

James Knowles welcomed Jamie Rankin from Scottish Enterprise to his first PAC meeting and introductions were made round the table.

There were no apologies.

2. MINUTE OF LAST PAC MEETING

The minute of the last meeting was approved and will be uploaded onto the LEADER Website.

3. COMMUNICATION

3.1 Due to workload, no promotional roadshows have been held as yet. It is hoped to start promotion early 2009 in South Aberdeenshire.

3.2 A copy of a letter from Dumfries & Galloway LEADER Programme to Iain Matheson, Scottish Government, was circulated. In the letter, concerns were expressed at the statement in the Technical Guidance that 30% of the LEADER grant must be retained by the LAG until completion of all final claim information. Given that project work must be paid for in advance of receiving any payment, it is not viable for small voluntary/community groups to be unable to claim the final 30% of their grant. They do not have the reserves or cash flow to bank-roll projects.

Vicky indicated that following an EC amendment the grant retention rate has been reduced to 25%.

The PAC considered this to be a significant issue which is not only a disincentive, but makes application impossible for some projects. A 10% retention was considered to be sufficient.

It was agreed that a letter to this effect be sent to Iain Matheson on behalf of

the Aberdeenshire LAG, with copies to local MSPs.

Mention will also be made in the letter of the fact that the 7% advance payment from the Scottish Government to the LAG has still not been received. Expenditure is now being incurred and is being bank-rolled by the Lead Partner, Aberdeenshire Council.

A letter will be drafted for approval at the LAG meeting on 9 December.

- 3.3 Ewen Cameron was thanked for the SNH contribution towards LEADER Administration Costs.
- 3.4 Project monitoring guidance has now been received along with an updated version of the Technical Guidance Document which is aimed at LEADER staff and LAG Members. The Guidance Document will be uploaded on the Rural Aberdeenshire website in the Document Library.
- 3.5 The group were advised that Scottish Enterprise no longer holds a discretionary budget at local level. The budget is held centrally in Glasgow. A Rural Sub-Group with approximately 12 people on the panel has been established and is led by Julian Pace. The sub-group will administer a budget of just over £1m, spread over 5 years towards rural projects across Scottish Enterprise area. Strict criteria will be applied. Applications will require to fit with priority industries and must have regional impact, not just local impact.

It was pointed out that Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary, had indicated in a letter to Aberdeenshire Council that the indicative commitment from Scottish Enterprise towards projects as detailed in the Rural Aberdeenshire Business Plan would be honoured.

As the potential level of funding now available is less than projected in the Business Plan, it was agreed that James Knowles write to the Cabinet Secretary regarding this.

4. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

- 4.1 A LEADER Co-ordinators Meeting was held in Inverness on 11 November. A note of the main points of this meeting was circulated to members.
- 4.2 A briefing note on State Aid Guidance was also circulated. LEADER does not have state aid clearance as was originally thought.

There is a 5 point test to establish whether a project constitutes State Aid.

If it is considered a project would constitute a State Aid, exemptions could be explored either through The General Block Exemption Regulation or De Minimis Funding.

5. PROJECTS 011 to 026

5.1 Application 011 – Scolty Trails Enhancement Project (STEP)

Application by Banchory and District Initiative Ltd for upgrading paths on Scolty Hill. These paths are used by over 100,000 people per annum, as recorded by Forestry Commission Scotland. Path links to the Deeside Way will benefit tourism in the area. Project is community led and is community supported. This is a three phase project and funding is requested for phases two and three.

Linkeages to other local footpaths is very good. Signage is very important for tourism. PAC needs to be satisfied that the agreement with the landowner is reliable and runs for a reasonable amount of time. Applicant indicates that planning permission is not required – PAC would like this confirmed. Project is of economic benefit to the area. Deeside is a tourism corridor and this project enhances what is already there.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £63,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

5.2 Application 012 – Tullynessle Hall Cultural Arts Development

Tullynessle Hall has been upgraded into a modern rural resource. Applicants are keen to develop cultural arts. The project relates to the purchase of stage lighting and seating facilities to enable arts and drama events to be held.

There is a wide range of user groups for the hall and the community has been closely involved in fundraising activities.

With the installation of a biomass boiler, the hall upgrade is environmentally friendly and other hall committees are visiting to see what has been achieved.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £4,000 APPROVED BY PAC.

5.3 Application 013 – Turra Coo Sculpture Project

The Turriff Tourism Action Group has a wide ranging membership. A variety of community consultation meetings have been held regarding provision of public art sculpture in Turriff and the community has close involvement in ongoing fundraising. Local schools have been involved in researching the story of the Turra Coo.

The project links culture, heritage and art. The sculpture will be a significant tourism attraction and will encourage people to think of their heritage. It is good for visitors to learn a local story. Artists will be commissioned for the sculpture through tender process.

Examples of other public art works throughout Aberdeenshire have generated lots of publicity.

PAC would like further information on the Education Package costs.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £37,369 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

5.4 014 – Woodhead & Windyhills Community Woodland Enhancement

The application relates to a number of elements to enhance the community woodland, and has strong environmental and educational aspects. The project will protect and enhance an important woodland/geological site which is SSSI.

A linked application for hedging and fencing has been approved by SRDP under Rural Priorities.

The project is community led and as the community is quite widely dispersed, the site gives a local focus for their activities.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £6,566 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

5.5 015 – Rothienorman Bowling & Community Facility

Rothienorman is an expanding settlement and the project is to construct a new community resource. There is clearly evidenced community support and local groups will all make use of the new Hall. Income will be generated from various user groups and private hire to cover running costs, making the project sustainable.

The Bowling Club, who are submitting the application, have a strong committee membership with a joiner, plumber and architect all willing to provide work in kind.

The committee have visited Tullynessle Hall and have chosen to install a Biomass heating system at the Rothienorman project.

The group's application to the Community Asset Fund was unsuccessful due to not having a strong economic bias. An application will now be submitted to Education, Learning & Leisure Capital Grant Scheme as this may be a more appropriate funding route.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £112,975 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

5.6 016 – Portsoy Salmon Bothy

The group secured major funding for the restoration of this listed building which was opened by the First Minister in June 2008.

The application relates to the employment of a Manager for the Salmon Bothy to promote the community asset as a visitor attraction and local community facility. The project will cover two phases over three years. It is

projected the resource will be self sustaining after three years.

The project has wide community and visitor interest, with an emphasis on tourism on the Banffshire Coast.

The cultural part of the project is very strong. Entrance to the building would be free but a charge would be made for any genealogical research carried out.

PAC requires confirmation that the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival will contribute funding and would be happy to receive a letter to this effect.

The project makes good use of the capital monies that went into the initial upgrading of the building.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £28,568 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

5.7 017 Aberdeenshire Conservation Recycle Store (ACReS)

This application has come in from the North East Scotland Preservation Trust. The project costs relate to the employment of a part-time Manager for a building materials and recycling store at Mintlaw.

The store will collect, assess and recycle building materials which would be otherwise destined for landfill. The aim is that the store will be financially sustainable within three years.

This is potentially a viable business with earning potential. PAC concerns about displacement were highlighted. Although these are niche products not directly in competition with local DIY stores, it was agreed that further clarification be sought with regard to competition with another salvage yard nearby.

PAC REQUESTED THAT FURTHER INFORMATION BE PROVIDED AT THE LAG MEETING SCHEDULED FOR 9 DECEMBER 2008 BEFORE REACHING A DECISION.

5.8 018 – The Town is the Venue

This application was considered by the PAC at Round 1 in August 2008 and, although broadly supported, the applicant was asked to re-submit with more precise details of the project aims, clearer explanation of eligible costs, and more supporting evidence of community support and engagement.

There is now clear evidence of strong support from a large number of groups. All match funding has also been confirmed.

The project has some novel, imaginative ideas and will look at sustainability issues, employment issues and youth issues. The PAC gave credit to the applicant for taking on board the advice provided and refreshing the

proposal. The measure of success will be seen in how people engage with the proposal.

Reporting was seen as very important through quarterly progress reports.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £72,586 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

5.9 **019 – St Ternan’s Church Enhancement**

Project is to build extension to the Church and replace electric heating with a biomass heating system to provide a community facility at St Ternan’s. The project is community led and driven.

The church has a robust congregation who have been fully involved in fundraising for the project.

The PAC would like clarification on the types and numbers of community groups and organisations that will make use of the improved facilities and whether it will encompass the whole community.

PAC REQUESTED THAT FURTHER INFORMATION BE PROVIDED AT THE LAG MEETING SCHEDULED FOR 9 DECEMBER 2008 BEFORE REACHING A DECISION.

5.10 **020 – The Enchanted Glen**

This project follows on from the very successful Enchanted Forest event in Perthshire. The Enchanted Glen is a two-day, three-evening event at Glen Tanar.

The Aberdeenshire LEADER element of the proposal relates to entertainment and displays on Aboyne Green. The light show at Glen Tanar woodland is located in the Cairngorms National Park.

This is a very innovative project with the potential to stimulate economic activity in the area.

If the event is successful, the CNPA, Cairngorms LEADER and Aberdeenshire LEADER may consider a proposal to take the initiative forward to future years.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £5,000 APPROVED BY PAC

5.11 **021 – Scottish Sculpture Workshop Building Development**

The project relates to the re-development of a centre for the production of visual arts. The site is on long-term lease from private owners. SSW is the only venue of its type in Aberdeenshire and it has developed a valuable education programme with local schools. The application has support from a number of user groups.

Although the general idea of the project was commendable, the PAC gave

consideration to the current funding profile of the project. PAC also noted the level of funding requested in relation to the number of community groups and individuals that would benefit from the new facilities.

PAC considered the applicant should demonstrate how the facility can attract a wider audience. PAC agreed that the applicant should be invited to re-submit in Round 3 with clearer financial profile and evidence of community engagement.

5.12 022 – Portrait of Our Time

This is a small project to capture and document the heritage of the local area in and around Finzean and is closely linked to Homecoming 2009.

The project has received wide support from the four communities involved and, to date, 200 out of 480 families have confirmed willingness to take part. The project will be of great interest to the local community.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £4,800 APPROVED BY PAC

5.13 023 – Planning Proposal – Udney Community Wind Turbine

Udney Community Wind Turbine Group is a highly focused group putting forward a planning proposal for a community owned wind turbine.

The group has worked closely with Planning and has carried out site wind speed tests.

To date a significant level of community consultation has been undertaken. If funding and planning is obtained, income from the community owned turbine will be recycled back into the community.

The LEADER project relates to a feasibility study to take the proposal up to planning stage. Funding for the actual turbine is being sourced through the Big Lottery.

Focusing on planning and how to submit a robust proposal was considered a valuable exercise. It will be essential that surveys are carried out in the correct manner and SNH would be willing to assist the group with this.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £19,750 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

5.14 024 – Old Deer Children’s Play Area Improvement Project

With the population expanding in Old Deer, the proposal is to improve the local play area in partnership with Landscape Services, Aberdeenshire Council. The park is currently on long-term lease from the Church of Scotland.

There is wide community backing for project with views of youngsters being taken into consideration when choosing play equipment. The park will provide recreational interest and support inter-community activities.

The Council will maintain the park in the long-term.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £10,677 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

5.15 025 – The Local Hub – Kintore Phase 1

The project is to open a drop-in centre, meeting place and coffee shop for the community of Kintore. The coffee shop will be run under management guidance of Starbucks although it is not a franchise.

The Local Hub is a Community Interest Company which will employ a manager and 7 part-time staff. The group has been gifted various items of furniture and flooring and the venue will have internet connection and plasma screen TV.

The facility will be open from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm. PAC considered it may be financially viable for the Local Hub to open in the evenings – on the basis the local community supported this.

PAC members agreed that Kintore would benefit from a greater community spirit and, provided there was no direct competition with other similar businesses already established, saw the project as a benefit to groups and individuals in the rapidly expanding community of Kintore.

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

5.16 026 – Tarland Community Path Network

The project is to upgrade the community path network around Tarland, following on from recommendations from community consultation during the Core Path Planning Process. Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust, formerly the Upper Deeside Access Trust, has identified upgrade to the 2km path network and 1.5km all abilities path which will improve outdoor access for the local community.

Visitors and locals will benefit from the proposal and extensive community consultation has been undertaken.

The PAC questioned the Management costs relating to the project and request more detailed explanation of costs involved.

PAC REQUESTED THAT FURTHER INFORMATION BE PROVIDED AT THE LAG MEETING SCHEDULED FOR 9 DECEMBER 2008 BEFORE REACHING A DECISION.

6. AOCB

- 6.1 The closing date for Round 2A applications is 26 November 2008. Three applications will be coming forward. Summary reports on these projects will be e-mailed to PAC members in advance of the meeting on 9 December 2008.
- 6.2 It was considered important to publish information on approved projects after each application round. Another press release will be issued following approvals at the LAG meeting on 9 December.

It was also suggested that Visit Scotland be provided with details of all approved projects with a view to promoting those linking to tourism activity.

- 6.3 Finance sheets were issued to members showing a breakdown of funding for Round 2 Projects and an overall running total of monies allocated to date.

8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next LAG meeting will be held on Tuesday, 9 December 2008 at 10.00 am in Committee Room 1, Woodhill House.