

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

**THURSDAY, 12 MARCH 2009 AT 10.00 AM
COMMITTEE ROOM 5, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Eleanor Anderson	Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships
Ewen Cameron	Scottish Natural Heritage
James Knowles	Aberdeenshire Council
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Jamie Rankin	Scottish Enterprise
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

Officers in Attendance

Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Service
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1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

James Knowles welcomed those present. Apologies were received from Maureen Stephen.

2. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

The minute of the last PAC meeting of 25 November 2008 was approved at the LAG meeting on 9 December 2008 and uploaded on the LEADER website. A copy was circulated.

3. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

- 3.1 A copy of the financial spreadsheet was issued, showing a breakdown of funding for Round 3 projects with overall running total of funds allocated to date. It is anticipated that following outcome of Round 3, Aberdeenshire LAG will have made a serious commitment over the first nine months of the programme. PAC members commended the example of partnership involved in projects.
- 3.2 The first LAG claim, relating to LAG administration costs, was submitted to the Scottish Government 10 March. A copy was circulated. The claim period covers 1 January 2008 to 31 January 2009. The next claim will cover February and March 2009 and claims will be quarterly thereafter.
- 3.3 Two successful LEADER Seminars were held in South Aberdeenshire. One in Johnshaven on Wednesday, 25 February and the second in Auchenblae on Friday, 6 March. Both events were well attended. Provost Howatson

was present at the Johnshaven event and Maureen Watt MSP at Auchenblae.

Presentations were given by representatives from the Scottish Government on SRDP and SCVO on Rural Direct.

These were followed by case study presentations. It was excellent to hear the stories of how participants developed their projects and how LEADER funding will help their respective communities. Case study power point presentations will be uploaded on the website.

The seminars have raised awareness of LEADER. It is expected this will result in applications coming forward from South Aberdeenshire.

3.4 Both Vicky and Anne attended the LEADER Co-ordinator's meeting in Edinburgh on Wednesday, 4 February.

- Discussion took place on Measure 341 - funding currently delivered through Rural Priorities for the preparation and development of local strategies. This is a budget of circa £5m available for groups who want to develop a local strategy. To date, there has been no funding approved under measure 341 and it is proposed that, to improve take up, this budget be transferred to LEADER.
- Unfortunately the speaker who was to give an update on EFF Axis 4 was unable to attend.
- Further discussion took place on State Aids.
- The Scottish Government is keen to establish a Scottish National Rural Network. A website is currently being prepared which will include information on LEADER. Promotional events are to be organised in the future.

Notes from this meeting will be circulated for the LAG.

3.5 Copies of three items of communication were circulated and discussed:

- Reply from Iain Matheson regarding the 25% retention – discussion took place on the cash flow issue for small community groups. Some LAGs are paying an advance of up to 30% to assist applicants who are severely challenged to find the finances to complete their project. This approach may be considered by Aberdeenshire LAG. PAC will make further comment to Scottish Government and the LEADER Management Team.
- Reply from Iain Matheson regarding Scottish Enterprise funding – parliamentary question was raised. The response was to encourage applicants to come up with exciting ideas which will fit the strict criteria applied by Scottish Enterprise.
- Letter from Dumfries & Galloway LEADER regarding the EU regulation on 25% retention and the impact this has on cash flow for smaller

community groups. PAC will raise the issue with Council Leader Anne Robertson asking for the issue to be raised at COSLA. Iain Matheson, LEADER Management Team will forward concerns to the SRDP PMC.

3.6 Peter Cook has been appointed to undertake a review of SRDP.

As Measure 321 (rural communities) is only being committed slowly through Rural Priorities it makes sense to transfer a proportion of the budget to LEADER, with which there is a wide range of match funding possibilities.

A stronger case could be made if all LEADER LAGs were to forward a similar opinion.

The SRDP Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) is due to meet in the 3rd week in April. PAC agreed comment to be made in advance of PMC.

4. PROJECTS 030 TO 042

4.1 030 – Sandend Harbour Revitalisation Project

The project is to restore and revitalise the small historic harbour at the small fishing village of Sandend. Restoration work will stabilise and protect the harbour and will help it to survive by improving strategic links with tourism.

The project has strong community support and aims to progress further, involving the community in cultural heritage aspects.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £18,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

4.2 031 – St Ninian’s & Forglen Kirk Development

Eleanor Anderson noted an interest.

The project is a major restoration of the building, retaining its use as a Church whilst offering use of upgraded facilities to a wide range of user groups. Extensive community consultation has been carried out with a survey resulting in an overwhelming response from local groups who would be interested in making use of the improved facilities.

St Ninian’s will be selling assets to raise funds towards the renovation and the Church of Scotland will allow use of a redundant church hall whilst renovation work is going on.

There are currently limited meeting facilities in Turriff for local groups.

This project is very inclusive in its approach. PAC suggested that the Committee visit the Acorn Centre in Inverurie for further ideas on how to make an impact on the community.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £50,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

4.3 **032 – The Brander – A Cultural Hub**

Deveron Arts lease a small office from Aberdeenshire Council in the Brander Building. The project is to develop the existing office space and to expand another two rooms offered by the Council into a studio and workshop facility for visiting artists.

The draft proposal for the lease is not finalised as yet and the funding profile is unconfirmed.

PAC recommends making a provisional offer subject to:

- Other funding from Scottish Arts Council, Education Learning and Leisure and Community Asset Fund being confirmed in writing with submission of copies of award letters.
- Evidence of Lease Agreement being drawn up and finalised with Aberdeenshire Council, and a copy of the lease being submitted to LEADER

PROJECT FUNDING OF £5,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC SUBJECT TO THE ABOVE INFORMATION BEING CONFIRMED.

4.4 **033 – Cairngorms & Mid-Deeside/Rural Aberdeenshire Communities Path Network Project**

This is a joint project funded by both Cairngorms and Aberdeenshire LEADER. Cairngorms part of project has already been approved by Cairngorms LEADER.

The project is to upgrade and manage pathways and undertake health walks throughout the Cairngorms National Park and adjacent areas in Aberdeenshire. The Aberdeenshire element of the project is a major new path build between Tarland and Aboyne and an upgrade to the Fungal path, Forest of Birse.

The emphasis of this project is on walking for health and the paths will provide a major tourism attraction for the North East of Scotland, supporting local tourism businesses.

The project hinges on receiving funding confirmation through the Climate Challenge Fund.

A joint application with Cairngorms LEADER is welcomed as it will help to meet Action 2 targets for the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Programme .

PROJECT FUNDING OF £47,086 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

4.5 **034 – Scottish Sculpture Workshop Building Development**

This project is to redevelop the SSW premises in Lumsden and undertake a programme of cultural arts initiatives.

This is the 2nd submission from SSW and is much more robust with clear evidence of support from a wide range of community participants. There is a supportive SSW board behind the project and demand for the redeveloped facility is demonstrated.

Scottish Arts Council has increased the level of revenue funding to £100,000 which will enable a marketing manager be employed. This is encouraging and will lead to improved marketing of the facility.

The project is dependant on securing capital funding from the Scottish Arts Council.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £135,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

4.6 **035 – Crathes Hall Car Park**

The project will improve facilities at Crathes Hall by surfacing the extensive car park area and constructing two lean-to buildings for storage. Access to the Hall is difficult at the moment, especially for wheelchair users. The project proposes to use the car park as a park and ride facility, encouraging the use of public transport. Further research is required.

The Hall is currently used at weekends and in the evenings. Daytime use could be encouraged if Hall facilities were widely promoted to local user groups.

PAC felt that the applicant should:

- Undertake further research into the feasibility of the Park and Ride facility and make enquiries regarding a possible funding contribution through Aberdeenshire Council Transportation and Infrastructure or NESTRANS budget.
- Undertake a survey to identify the demand for such a service at Crathes Hall.
- Consider ways of promoting the Park & Ride facility.

PAC RECOMMENDATION – PROJECT TO RE-SUBMIT ROUND 4 PROVIDING MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

4.7 **036 – New Deer on the Up and Up**

The New Deer Community Association is undertaking an ongoing process of upgrading and refurbishment of the Public Hall. The proposal is for a further range of improvements to the Hall, including modernisation of small upstairs hall, installation of disabled access toilet on first floor and the purchase of flexible tiered seating system.

The New Deer Community Association has been successful in attracting visiting theatre companies and holds approximately 10-12 performances per annum in the Public Hall. These events are well attended by the local community.

The project meets all LEADER objectives.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £10,366 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC

4.8 **037 – St Ternan’s Church Muchalls Enhancement**

This is the 2nd submission from St Ternan’s. The project will create new 30 person meeting room and install kitchen and toilet facilities. The funding request is less compared to previous application due to increased fundraising. The biomass part of the project is now classed as ineligible expenditure as work required to be undertaken in current financial year.

The applicants required to demonstrate community support and demand for the proposed facilities. The application is much more robust with evidence of support from a wider range of community participants.

The project is innovative due to the provision of accommodation for classes for the deaf.

St Ternan’s is part of a widely spread, sparse rural community and local groups will be welcome to apply to use the new facility.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £42,298 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

4.9 **038 – Glass Hall Window Work**

The proposal is to install new windows in the Glass Hall to improve energy efficiency, reduce ongoing running costs and making it more user friendly throughout the year. The Hall is structurally sound and is the only community facility in Glass. A large variety of user groups in this lively community make wide use of the Hall.

There is clear evidence of support and the community is involved in ongoing fundraising.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £6,512 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

4.10 **039 – Into The Wild**

This cultural project will undertake research with local residents into the history of Battlehill Woods and produce theatrical performances and film linked to Halloween events in Huntly. The woods are owned and managed by Aberdeenshire Council and the Dudendance arts project fits well with community aims for the woodlands.

The project is innovative and has a strong community focus, engaging young people in film production techniques and dance.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £8,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

4.11 **040 – Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels (North East)**

This is a 3 year action plan to improve the habitat for red squirrels which have declined due to increase in numbers of grey squirrels. Aberdeenshire’s thriving red squirrel population is now under threat.

A proportion of costs are eligible for the rural Aberdeenshire area and capital and staff costs are included. A project officer will engage the community and encourage volunteer involvement in surveying and habitat management.

The proposal is clearly linked to strategic environmental issues (protected species) and meets local community and tourist elements.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £45,545 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

4.12 **041 – Turriff Haughs Exhibition Hall and Facilities**

This project is to construct a new indoor exhibition hall plus a suite of permanent toilet facilities at the Turriff Haughs showground.

Turriff & District Agricultural Association have undertaken an evaluation of what is required to improve facilities at the Haughs to enable more community events throughout the year as well as benefiting trade stands at the Turriff Show, which is a major two day annual event for Aberdeenshire.

TDAAs are a forward thinking group who have created strong links with NESTOUR through the impact of events in the showground.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £66,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

4.13 **042 – Defining and Growing Strong Resilient & Supportive Communities**

Eligible costs of this project relate to identifying a rural community within the LAG area whereby a researcher is trained and employed to undertake research into what makes a community strong, sustainable and supportive.

Community capacity building is simply about helping people who are already engaged in community work to do what they do more effectively. Outcomes of such a scheme can be extremely beneficial to the community and can be quite empowering for a community that may not be quite so dynamic.

The underlying idea of the project is good but the PAC would like additional information for LAG meeting scheduled 27 March:

Further information/detail on the RESPECT Project 2006-2008 and its outcomes.

An indication and justification of the rural community or locality in Rural Aberdeenshire which may be targeted to run/host the LEADER project.

Detail of the how the LEADER project will complement and link to the activities currently undertaken by rural partnerships and community economic development.

Evidence to support the methodology to be used in the community capacity building research as proposed in the LEADER application.

PAC RECOMMENDATION – PROJECT TO PROVIDE MORE DETAILED INFORMATION FOR THE LAG MEETING.

5. AOCB

There was no further business.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

LAG meeting – Friday, 27 March 2009, Committee Room 1, Woodhill House.

PAC meeting – Tuesday, 26 May 2009, Committee Room 4, Woodhill House.