

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

**TUESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2010 AT 10.00 AM
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Fiona Alderson	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Planning
Sue Clark	Scottish Enterprise
Gordon Henderson	Aberdeenshire Council - Finance
Reid Hutchison	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Economic Development
Jennifer Kinnaird	Scottish Government Rural Payments Inspection Directorate
James Knowles	Aberdeenshire Council
Bob Leonard	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Learning & Development
John Lewis	Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Scott Petrie	Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Services
Paul Timms	Scottish Natural Heritage
Matt Young	Forestry Commission Scotland

Officers in Attendance

Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

Eleanor Anderson	Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships
Shona Anderson	Visit Scotland
Dan Cadle	Forestry Commission Scotland
Caroline Clark	NHS
Moira Gordon	SWRI
Alexander Macleod	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Planning
Keith Newton	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Planning
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted as above.

2. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

2.1 Draft LAG Minutes of Tuesday, 15 June 2010

Approved as an accurate record. Typing error (Tyaside) 3.1 of page 2 to be amended before minutes uploaded on the LEADER website.

2.2 **Draft PAC Minutes of Tuesday, 24 August 2010**

Approved as an accurate record. Typing error (SHN) paragraph 4 of 6.1 on page 3 to be amended before minutes uploaded on the LEADER website.

3. **COMMUNICATION**

3.1 Letter of 8 July 2010 from Bruce Beveridge, LSB Chair, intimating:

- Cabinet Secretary's announcement of funding to bring enhanced broadband to rural areas being delivered through LEADER.
- Early 2012 is the target for LAGs to have committed their indicative allocation. Table showing grant commitment to date up to 31 May 2010 for all LAGs was attached.
- The next LEADER Strategic Board to be held on Friday (10 September 2010).

3.2 Letter of 3 August 2010 from Angela Wiseman confirming the transfer of Rural Priorities money to LEADER including a table of distribution of funds over 20 LAGs.

3.3 Letter of 2 September 2010 from Bruce Beveridge regarding the European Co-operation Fair to be held at Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh on 23 and 24 September 2010. In his keynote speech, Cabinet Secretary will refer to 2 Aberdeenshire projects, Udney Wind Turbine and Deeside DMO.

4. **CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

James Knowles met with Bruce Beveridge to discuss the current situation regarding LEADER and where LEADER will be post 2013.

It was indicated that no additional advance will be forthcoming to LAGs.

The 90% grant rate pilot is to be extended and will be maintained for the remainder of the programme.

Axis 4 European Fisheries Fund – Bruce Beveridge is to investigate the progress of the proposed transfer of funds to LEADER.

LEADER will continue post 2013. Bruce Beveridge is committed to getting money into LEADER to help the rural economy.

5. **TRANSFER OF RURAL PRIORITIES MONEY TO LEADER**

There will be a transition process for the transfer of Rural Priorities funds to LEADER. No further projects under measures 321 and 341 will be considered under Rural Priorities. Outstanding projects from the last SRDP funding round may discuss with SCVO and decide whether to come forward to LEADER. SCVO has knowledge of only 2 or 3 projects in Aberdeenshire in this category and will confirm with the LEADER Co-ordinator when it is suitable to make contact with these projects.

A copy of the technical guidance regarding the transfer of funds will be circulated to LAG members.

In the light of the transfer of these funds to LEADER, Rural Aberdeenshire's Business Plan and Strategy will be reviewed.

6. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

6.1 Financial Update

Round 9 funding summary tables were circulated. There are currently 81 active projects with £2.7 million LEADER grant towards £8.8 million of eligible project costs.

Scottish Traditional Skills Training Centre project – applicant has confirmed that the offer of LEADER grant will not be taken up.

6.2 Scottish Government Claims

Seven claims have been submitted to Scottish Government up to 30 June 2010 totalling £797,000.

It is estimated that the next claim to Scottish Government will be approximately £200,000.

6.3 LEADER Conference

The LEADER Conference held on Friday, 18 June 2010 was well received by delegates. The pre-conference dinner was a particular highlight of the event with presentations from 2 Aberdeenshire projects. Conference papers were circulated to the LAG for noting.

6.4 Rural Broadband Challenge Fund (RBCF)

An ICT Consultant has been appointed to work with Aberdeenshire applicants to the Rural Broadband Challenge Fund. Approximately 30 enquiries have been received but it is expected that only 5-6 applications will come forward.

A Scottish Government template to assist with completion of the bid will be issued.

Discussion took place at the PAC meeting regarding the possibility of Aberdeenshire RBCF projects being rejected in the likelihood of the Challenge Fund being heavily oversubscribed. Considering the amount of work community groups have put in to working up an application, LAG agreed to consider projects which are not supported by Scottish Government, being re-routed back to LEADER through the normal LAG process.

6.5 LEADER Co-ordinator's Meeting – Tuesday 31 August

The meeting included presentations from Scottish Government Audit and Finance regarding the completion of their Matrix.

RCET held a question and answer session regarding the completion of the LEADER claim template.

6.6 Scottish Government Service Level Agreement Monitor Visit

Alistair Henry from the Scottish Government met with the LEADER team on

Wednesday 1 September for the annual Service Level Agreement Audit. Aberdeenshire Council Internal Audit and Finance departments were represented at the meeting.

Aberdeenshire Internal Audit will visit within the next 3 weeks. The Annual Confirmation Certificate will then be completed in advance of the October deadline.

6.7 **LEADER Promotion**

- LEADER was represented at the Turriff Show on 1 and 2 August 2010. The LEADER stand was located in the new Exhibition Hall which was officially opened by the First Minister.
- Vicky attended the Aboyne Twinning Ceremony on 5 August 2010.
- A LEADER Seminar was held in Kincardine & Mearns on Friday, 3 September. Programme participants gave presentations to delegates about their experience of LEADER and how it has helped their projects.
- The Scottish Government and European Network for Rural Development are holding an EU Co-operation Fair in Edinburgh on 23 and 24 September 2010. Aberdeenshire LAG will be represented.
- LEADER received excellent coverage in the latest edition of the Network which was circulated to LAG members. Copies will be forwarded to the Scottish Government.

7. **PROJECTS 096 TO 105**

7.1 **096 – Sandhaven Harbour Middle Jetty Repair**

The project is to undertake improvement works to the middle jetty of Sandhaven Harbour. This will increase the number of mooring berths available, thereby encouraging increased use of the harbour for leisure and recreation activities. The Harbour was gifted to the community and has a rich history of the herring industry. The Trust is keen to reinstate the harbour to ensure a viable future.

The match funding profile is complete and the application requests 53% of total project costs from LEADER.

PAC viewed the project favourably. LAG were impressed with the strong input from the local community and their plans undertake work to make the harbour economically viable. The involvement of young people, especially the youth cadet training corps was considered valuable for the project.

LAG agreed to approve.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £13,750 APPROVED.

7.2 **097 – The Revitalisation & Enhancement of Oldmeldrum Pleasure Park**

This is a 2 phase project to expand and improve play equipment for under 12s at the Oldmeldrum Pleasure Park and to provide dedicated green space for other park users.

Oldmeldrum has grown considerably in recent years and the facilities for a rapidly increasing community are simply not available. Meldrum Play comprises a group of dedicated young mum's who are working closely with Aberdeenshire Council Landscape Services to bring project forward.

The group were interested in the PAC suggestion to include adult outdoor gym equipment to promote the outdoor fitness aspect of the project for all members of the community and this will be considered in the future.

The funding profile for the project is positive, however the outcome of Awards for All application is currently unconfirmed.

LAG considered the community to be self sufficient, having previously created a local skate park through their own resources. The community will take ownership of this project, taking it forward and making it sustainable.

Should a portion of the match funding applied for be unsuccessful, LAG may consider additional LEADER funding to make up the shortfall, allowing the project to proceed.

LAG agreed to approve on this basis.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £21,000 APPROVED.

7.3 **098 – AFCMA Marketing & Development Programme**

Aberdeenshire has a large number of small markets and stall holders do not have the time or relevant skills to promote and uplift the markets due to focusing their time on producing their products.

The project is a 2 year pilot for a part-time Marketing Manager to promote and raise awareness of local Farmers Markets and to increase the product range and the number of producers.

The Aberdeenshire Farmers and Community Markets Association (ACFMA) has been formed and the Association is receiving promotional support from the Scottish Agricultural College and the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society.

LAG considered the project to have a strong link to 'innovative products and markets' which in one of the LEADER priorities. Increased footfall will benefit local businesses in all towns.

LAG agreed to approve.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £26,000 APPROVED.

7.4 **099 – Pitcaple Environmental Project**

The project relates to the construction of a log cabin Interpretation Centre which will also be used as demonstrator for renewable energy.

PEP provides training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities and special needs and works closely with Social Work. The

proposal will enable more trainees to progress through the system and more volunteer helpers will be employed.

PEP will sell products from the facility and will be promoted as a visitor destination through Visit Scotland.

Planning application will be submitted once all match funding is in place.

While the LAG was broadly supportive of the project, it was considered that further information was required to enable a final decision to be reached, namely:

- Confirmation that floor area of the cabin will be 40m² as estimated and confirmation that this is sufficient for visitor/demonstrator centre.
- Confirmation of the demonstrator wood burning stove being provided free of charge as it is not budgeted for in the build estimate.
- Provide further information regarding biomass for the stove.
- Confirmation that all renewable technologies will be accredited through and meet the criteria of the Microgeneration Certification Scheme
- Explanation of how all proposed renewable technologies will be included in a small building and how they will be used for demonstration purposes.
- Additional information regarding the use of the building in relation to existing activities undertaken and how the building will relate to training services provided at PEP.

Once the applicant has provided answers to the above questions, LAG will reconsider through written procedures.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £20,800 DEFERRED - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED.

Note: On receipt of information deferral report circulated to LAG.
LAG votes received = 13 in support and 0 not in support
Project subsequently approved.

7.5 **100 – Resurfacing Multi Purpose Sports Area**

The project is to revitalise 2 tennis courts by replacing the existing court surface with a tarmac based hard court surface, erecting new fencing and installing floodlighting, making the courts suitable for multi-sports use. Residents are fortunate to have had James Tennant Playing Field, a large green space, bequeathed to the community and are keen to make the court facility available for all ages, abilities and sports groups.

Local schools and sports groups support the proposals. The Applicants, a constituted group with 2 trustees, the school and the church, are undertaking significant fundraising.

Awards for All application will not be submitted until planning permission is approved. Local wind farms have indicated support should other funding be secured.

LAG considered the proposals to be valuable for the growing community to focus on the development of social cohesion and outdoor activity. LAG acknowledged the challenge faced with gaps in the funding profile but was supportive of the project. LAG also considered LEADER may review overall award should funding shortfall arise.

LAG agreed to approve.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £36,285 APPROVED SUBJECT TO OTHER FUNDING BEING IN PLACE.

7.6 **101 – Banff Castle West Pavilion Development**

The project is to convert the West Pavilion complex of Banff Castle into a meeting space for arts, crafts, heritage and folklore on the top floor and a café on the ground floor. A centre manager will be employed to create a programme of events and oversee activities.

PAC had considered profit margins for the café as optimistic. Investment in the café is relatively low, and LAG felt that due to there being a limited number of meeting rooms available for hire in Banff, if the café was to be converted to a meeting room, that would still be sustainable.

Another café has recently been opened in the vicinity but the new café is supportive of the Banff Castle café. The main customers for the Banff Castle café will be users of the folklore centre.

VAT will be zero rated due to the project being an A listed building run by a Community Association. The VAT element of the project is relatively small.

LAG liked the concept of the proposal to expand the use of the Castle building to make it a more multi-functional facility. The folklore outlet on the upper floor will help local craft groups and users to promote their produce and will increase the number of visitors to the facility.

LAG agreed to approve.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £94,790 APPROVED SUBJECT TO OTHER FUNDING BEING IN PLACE.

7.7 **102 – Edzell Woods Excess Water Study**

Edzell Woods is a former military base which was sold into private ownership. A private owners group now manages the estate.

The project is to undertake a feasibility study to identify the source of fresh water which enters the sewage system and causes flooding. A hydrologist will be employed to identify the problem and suggest solutions.

The owners group have to take emergency action to prevent flooding and are managing the sewage system. Their work has been commended by SEPA.

Lengthy discussion took place regarding responsibility. Without a solution to the fresh water ingress being identified and costed, Edzell Woods is considered a community at risk. Feasibility studies are acceptable for LEADER funding.

LAG agreed that the Chairman contact LSB Chair and the Scottish Government Managing Authority for the LEADER Programme, to ensure that the Edzell Woods Project fits LEADER eligibility criteria. LAG also agreed that should a feasibility study be undertaken, LEADER would not consider an application to fund any remedial work on the private estate infrastructure.

Once a response is received, LAG will reconsider the project by written procedures.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £7,205 DEFERRED.

Note: Scottish Government declined to comment specifically on individual project. Following communication from LAG Chair, project reconsidered by LAG by written procedure.
LAG votes received = 9 in support and 5 not in support
Project subsequently approved.

7.8 **103 – MacRobert Hall Development Project**

The project is to upgrade the aesthetic appearance and modernise the MacRobert Hall in Tarland including energy efficiency improvements. The Hall is a key building in the area but, in its current state, is not fit for use.

Awards for all funding has been confirmed. Planning Gain support is dependent on housing development.

LAG considered the proposals essential to bring the Hall up to modern day standards. Improvements made will increase the potential uses and attract more users to the Hall leading to the sustainability of the facility.

LAG agreed to approve.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £100,000 APPROVED.

7.9 **104 – Linking with Finland**

£4,950 approved by PAC for a learning journey for representatives from a number of groups in Huntly to travel to Juankoski in Finland to investigate the potential for collaboration projects. Intervention rate of 75% approved for small project.

7.10 **105 – Explore for a Day – Aberdeen & Grampian**

£2,488 approved by PAC to design, print and distribute 20,000 promotional leaflets to provide visitors to Aberdeenshire and the North East with information about natural and cultural heritage attractions on a daily itinerary basis.

8. AOCB

- 8.1 LEADER team resources are being stretched. The team is receiving additional support from 2 members of staff from Economic Development. A Business Case for an additional member of staff will be prepared.
- 8.2 James Knowles is to retire from Aberdeenshire Council at the end of October and will therefore give up LAG Chairmanship. The Broadband meeting on Tuesday, 19 October will be his last meeting. James Knowles left the room to allow LAG members to discuss future chairmanship.

Maureen Stephen proposed that James Knowles be asked to stay on as LAG Chair in a voluntary capacity to maintain continuity for an interim period. It was agreed that Jenny Kinnaird and Sue Clark draft a letter to this effect for the attention of Iain Gabriel, Director of T&I.

LAG wants to see consistency and fully supports James Knowles continuing as Chair of the group in the interim if it is supported by Aberdeenshire Council.

LAG considered it may also be prudent to appoint a Vice Chair.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

LAG Broadband meeting – Tuesday, 19 October 2010, Committee Room 2, Woodhill House. (Afternoon meeting – 2.00 pm start).

PAC meeting – Tuesday, 23 November 2010, Conference Room D, Woodhill House at 10.00 am.

LAG meeting – Tuesday, 7 December 2010, Committee Room 4, Woodhill House. (Following a request from John Lewis, it was agreed that this meeting be moved to afternoon - 2.00 pm start.)