

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF  
RURAL ABERDEENSHIRE LEADER  
LOCAL ACTION GROUP  
RURAL BROADBAND CHALLENGE FUND**

**TUESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2010 AT 10.00 AM  
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, WOODHILL HOUSE**

**Present**

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 Rural Partnership Federation
Keith Newton	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Planning
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Scott Petrie	Scottish Rural Property and Business Association

**Officers in Attendance**

Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council

**Apologies**

Shona Anderson	Visit Scotland
Jamie Bell	Scottish Enterprise
Dan Cadle	Forestry Commission Scotland
Caroline Clark	NHS
Moira Gordon	SWRI
Alexander Macleod	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Planning
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Services
Paul Timms	Scottish Natural Heritage
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

**1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

Chairman welcomed Jim McCurrach, ICT Consultant, to the meeting. Apologies were noted as above.

**2. DRAFT LAG MINUTE OF TUESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2010**

Approved as an accurate record. Two typing errors, Scott Petrie recorded as present twice and item 3.3 on page 2 Falr should read Fair, are to be amended before minutes uploaded on the LEADER website.

**3. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE**

**3.1 Financial Update**

Total value of 135 grant claims processed to date is £860,518. In terms of LEADER spend, Aberdeenshire LAG is in the top quartile for Lowland Scotland.

### 3.2 Correspondence

- Jennifer Kinnaird and Sue Clark were thanked for co-ordinating the letter to Director of Transportation & Infrastructure regarding the LAG Chair continuing following his retirement from Aberdeenshire Council. The Director was pleased to endorse this arrangement in the interim.
- Consultation regarding the revised SLA is ongoing with Aberdeenshire Council Finance, Internal Audit and Law and Admin.
- Confirmation of receipt of 7% advance on the additional allocation of £1.16m was welcomed.

### 3.3 LEADER Programme Management

- Internal Audit Report to be finalised and the Annual Confirmation Certificate to be signed off by 29 October 2010.
- Scottish Government Rural Communities Empowerment Team audit is scheduled for 22 October 2010. This will include a visit to Maud Village Trust.
- Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER has been selected to be part of the SRDP and LEADER Mid Term Review in November. LAG member(s) may be required to meet the review team.
- The next quarterly claim to Scottish Government is due for submission by end October 2010.

## 4. PRESENTATION

### TECHNICAL APPRAISAL BY JIM McCURRACH, JM ICT Ltd

Jim McCurrach, ICT Consultant was thanked for his work with RBCF Applicants in working up their applications and for preparing the Technical Appraisal documents which will be forwarded to the Scottish Government along with the Rural Aberdeenshire Bid.

JM ICT gave an informative presentation to LAG members regarding the BET Solution chosen by Boyndie, Ballogie and Arbuthnott and the Wireless Solution chosen by Kinmuck.

## 5. PROJECTS 106 TO 109

### 5.1 BET Solution

**107 – Boyndie Broadband Service for £72,401**

**108 – Broadband – Ballogie Community for £32,376**

**109 – Arbuthnott Community Broadband Challenge for £49,932**

BET extends the reach of Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) broadband by boosting the signal at a point mid way between the exchange and the customer. ADSL service cannot be provided over a distance of 6km, however, BET extends this distance to 12km.

Existing BT Openreach cabling is used with an additional Network Terminating Unit being fitted in the customer premises. The download speed will be 2mb/s and upload speed will be 1mb/s. Customers will still need a modem and router as with ADSL.

Following recent trials by internet service providers Scotnet, BET has become a commercially available solution. A full description from Scotnet was circulated to LAG members.

The only possible limitation to this solution is that the exchange cabinet may be full. Scotnet carry out deskpace technology before an engineer goes out to check cabinet capacity.

Fifteen signed up customers are required before the BET solution will be considered. Each of the three applicants have more than 15 interested parties.

JM ICT endorses the BET solution for the three applicants. It is an affordable solution for broadband with download speed of 2mb/s. Customers will deal directly with Scotnet.

LAG enquired about the possibility of customers being left behind with BET solution. However, JM ICT confirmed that BET will be continually enhanced. Although there were still concerns for people living in very rural areas, LAG considered BET to be a viable solution for the three applicants.

## 5.2 **Wireless Solution**

### **106 – Broadband – Kinmuck Area Broadband Project for £51,661**

The Kinmuck area is served by three different telephone exchanges and a large number of customers are situated more than 12km from the exchange, making the BET solution unsuitable for the Kinmuck area.

The applicant has carried out extensive research into wireless options and the proposal is based on costs provided by Alffino although the applicant does intend to go to tender again.

This wireless solution is similar to that used on offshore facilities. The initial provision will be 20mb per second with the capacity of 80 to 100mb in the future.

The proposal is to provide a line of sight microwave link from Northfield in Aberdeen to a field above Kinmuck. Planning permission will be required for a transmission mast to be erected in Kinmuck. The mast must be located in the line of sight of all properties wanting to use the service. It is possible to install a repeater mast which will enable the signal to be 'bounced' around a particular problem line of trees.

The service may be adversely affected by heavy rain, snow or fog. The signal will be blocked if trees grow or new buildings are erected in the line of sight. However, at present, 90% of the buildings can see the mast.

Calycom has indicated that any surplus income generated from this initiative will go into a community trust for community benefit and LAG members would like this to be noted as a specific condition of any offer made.

LAG considered Kinmuck to be a good testing site for the wireless solution which could then be extended to increased numbers of users in the area or be replicated in other areas.

- 5.3 LAG agreed that Aberdeenshire LEADER prepare the RBCF Bid to Scottish Government for £206,370 on behalf of the four applicants.

Note: The bid submitted was updated to £241,406 due to BT cost revision for BET technology.

LAG was impressed by the quality of applications submitted. Applicants have put in a tremendous amount of work in a short period of time and discussion took place regarding the possibility of Aberdeenshire RBCF projects being rejected in the likelihood of the Challenge Fund being heavily oversubscribed.

It is unknown whether it is possible that only part of a bid may be approved or whether a whole bid per LAG area could be rejected.

LAG endorsed the proposal that if the LAG bid to RBCF is unsuccessful, the projects are then re-routed back through LEADER. Applicants would require to be made aware of the requirement for a minimum of 5% own contribution.

## **6. APPLICATION TIMETABLE FOR 2011**

LAG agreed to continue with the current pattern of 4 quarterly assessment rounds.

A budget balance of approximately £1m will be available for next year. Scottish Government advise budgets to be fully committed as early as possible and hopefully by 2012. Aberdeenshire LEADER has some fairly substantial projects in the pipeline. It is considered the budget will be fully committed by or during 2012.

The 2011 timetable will be circulated to the LAG once finalised.

## **7. AOCB**

- 7.1 The Business Case for an additional member of staff has been prepared and is being submitted for approval. Further documentation has to be completed before progressing to advertise the post.

## **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

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.)