

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

**TUESDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2010 AT 10.00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM D, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Jamie Bell	Scottish Enterprise
James Knowles	LAG Chairman
Scott Petrie	Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Services
Paul Timms	Scottish Natural Heritage

Officers in Attendance

Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

James Knowles welcomed Jamie Bell, Scottish Enterprise to the meeting and introductions were made round the table. Apologies were noted as above.

2. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

- 2.1 The draft LAG Broadband minute of 19 October 2010 was noted and will be considered for approval by the LAG at the meeting on 7 December 2010.

3. COMMUNICATION

There were no items of communication.

4. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

4.1 Financial Update

Round 10 financial summary sheets were circulated. The average intervention rate for Aberdeenshire projects is currently below 35%. LAG may have to consider more flexible approach to individual project intervention rates as it becomes increasingly difficult for community groups to source match funding.

4.2 Project Update

Application received from Cornhill Hall was withheld as 90% LEADER grant requested. Applicant will re-visit match funding and re-submit next round.

A table detailing project amendments approved to date was circulated as recommended by Internal Audit. The majority of amendments relate to changes in match funding profile. All grant sums awarded remain the same as the original award approved by the LAG.

Advance grant payments are considered on a case by case basis and if granted, the applicant undertakes to submit the bank statement evidencing the payment as soon as available.

It has been established that the project approval date must be the date of receipt of the signed approval document in the LEADER office. No project spend is allowed until the signed approval is received, with the exception of eligible professional fees incurred prior application.

4.3 **Scottish Government Claims**

Eight claims have now been submitted to Scottish Government with total drawdown of £988,394.

A total 142 project claims have been processed to date, totalling £956,154.

4.4 **LEADER Audits, Monitoring and Reporting**

Awaiting feedback from the Scottish Government SLA Monitoring Visit in September.

Aberdeenshire Council Internal Audit was carried out in September/October. The Annual Confirmation Certificate was submitted to Scottish Government within the deadline.

Scottish Government RCET Audit visit in October included a site visit to Maud Village Trust.

Mid-Term Evaluation was carried out by John Grieve who interviewed LEADER Co-ordinator, LAG Chairman, LAG representatives and four project managers.

Reporting to Scottish Government now includes monthly reporting on projected spend forecast as well as the monthly reporting on actual commitment and spend.

4.5 **Rural Broadband Challenge Fund**

RBCF Bid was submitted to Scottish Government on 29 October. No feedback received as yet.

4.6 **Forthcoming LEADER Events**

Anne to attend a LEADER training event on State Aids and Financial Forecasting on 26 November.

Vicky to attend next LEADER Co-ordinator's meeting scheduled for Friday, 3 December.

4.7 **LEADER Promotion**

LEADER represented at the EU Co-operation Fair Edinburgh 23-24 Sept.

Presentation at SAC Craibstone to rural group from Estonia on 21 October.
Presentation at Marr Area Forum at Lumsden on 10 November.
Project launch of Aberdeenshire Life Education Centre mobile classroom at Hill of Banchory Primary School on 11 November.
Turra Coo Sculpture unveiling ceremony at Turriff on 20 November.

4.8 **Staffing**

New Project Officer post has been approved. It is hoped that appointment will be made Feb/March next year.

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 5.1 Scott Petrie, SRPBA and Paul Timms, SNH declared an interest in project 110 and while both were able to provide information, neither made recommendations for the LAG.

6. **PROJECTS 110 TO 118**

6.1 **110 – Strategic Mink Control in Northern Scotland**

This is a complicated, geographically wide Action 2 project with Cairngorms, Highland, Moray Aberdeenshire and Tayside LEADER. The 2 ½ year project will put Officers in post across the 5 LAG areas to implement a strategic programme of mink control. A network of informed volunteers will also be recruited. The Aberdeenshire element covers a large geographic area and £63,000 is requested from LEADER.

Mink is an invasive, non-native species, creating an imbalance in the ecosystem and causing increasing problems for gamekeepers, landowners and the wider natural heritage. Mink numbers are having a major effect on ground nesting birds and fish stocks.

The project is complementary to, and is supported by, the Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Trust project which also received LEADER funding.

PAC liked the economic and biodiversity aspects of the project. The volunteering opportunities offered are impressive and LAG considered the project to be sustainable.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £63,029 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

6.2 **112 – Revitalisation of Millbank Hall (Phase 1)**

The project aims to make the Hall more accessible and user friendly for the wider community. The proposed works include improved access for wheelchair users and baby buggies, new toilet facilities including disabled toilet, new kitchen and serving area, new storage area, improvements to energy efficiency and re-decoration.

The Hall Cttee has worked hard in fundraising over the years. The funding profile is firming up with both Planning Gain and Area Top-Up confirmed.

The Hall is already financially viable but it is hoped that the improvements will attract a wide range of new groups leading to increased usage and enhanced sustainability of the Hall.

PAC considered Millbank Hall to be an important community facility serving a wide-spread but expanding scattered rural community.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £35,149 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

6.3 **113 – Inverbervie Community Caravan Park Improvements**

The project is to improve facilities at the Inverbervie Caravan Park through the construction of a new shower and toilet block, laundry and office. Proposed work will be carried out in the low season. The community group has taken over the running of the Caravan Park from Aberdeenshire Council and there is a 10 year lease agreement.

The popular Caravan Park is situated on the beach and is already well used. Improvements to the facility should increase the number of visitors to the site, thereby increasing economic activity in Inverbervie and environs.

The applicant's own contribution to the funding profile comes from income generated from the successful management of the Caravan Park. All profit made will be re-invested in the site.

PAC commended the enthusiasm of the community group and considered the project to be innovative in its low carbon aspect through the use of solar panels. As there are only 4.5 years remaining of the 10 year lease, it was suggested that a condition be included in the approval letter to ensure that the lease is extended.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £83,195 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC.

6.4 **114 – Turriff Motorfest 2011**

The proposal is to organise a one-day Motorfest event in Turriff which will offer a range of displays of vintage and modern cars and motorcycles as well as demonstrations of motor skills and road safety. A series of local workshops on road safety will be offered to young people in advance of the main event. This new, innovative, one-off event will be a first for Scotland.

Project costs relate to revenue costs of running the event. Event Management costs although documented are not included as eligible costs. Prize money is also outwith eligible costs.

Aberdeenshire's young drivers are noted for having a poor road safety record and PAC was impressed by the fact that over 50 young people from the community attended the consultation meeting. It was felt that although the target of 5,000 attendees may be a little ambitious, the safety aspect of the niche event will be very worthwhile even if only half that target is achieved. The range of attractions proposed for the event has the potential to attract a high number of visitors while delivering a serious message on

road safety.

PAC request confirmation that the applicant group is involved with/working in partnership with Fire, Police and Community Safety units.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £16,232 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC SUBJECT TO FURTHER INFORMATION.

6.5 **115 – Monymusk Village Hall Development**

The applicant has employed a staged approach and, following an earlier application to LEADER for a feasibility study to identify improvements to Monymusk Hall, a detailed specification has been drawn up by W Lippe Architects.

Following community consultation, the following works are to be undertaken: improved energy efficiency through secondary glazing, improved storage facilities, renewed flooring in the main hall, provision of well lit, car parking facilities to improve access for user groups and the provision of a disabled toilet.

PAC considered the phased approach to be a sensible way forward and welcomed the involvement of the community in the decision making process. The proposed works have community backing and will return the Hall to the focal point of the community through increased usage.

Clarification is sought on the 'energy' funding package of £3,000.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £97,511 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC SUBJECT TO FURTHER INFORMATION.

6.6 **116 – A Mearns Heritage: 1980-2013 (Forest View Centre)**

The project will focus on looking at the history of the Mearns area and links with key local, national and international events which have shaped the development of the area.

A project officer will be employed over 2 years to engage adults with learning disabilities in a series of initiatives to increase skills development and confidence building. This will include working with schools, libraries and linking with other communities, and will result in a series of events such as exhibitions and fashion shows.

As 20% of the activities relate to the Stonehaven area, only 80% of the total project costs will be eligible for LEADER funding. Aberdeenshire Council is contributing to office costs and on-costs. Heritage Lottery funding of £40,000 is sought and the outcome of this will be crucial to the project proceeding.

PAC sought further clarification on whether the disadvantaged people will be involved with research. Following general discussion, PAC was supportive of the application but request that some further background information be made available for the LAG meeting.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £20,961 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY PAC SUBJECT TO FURTHER INFORMATION.

6.7 117 – STBF Bothy & Shore Street Development Feasibility Study

The project is for a feasibility study to be carried out to determine the potential for future projects to consolidate and expand the activities of the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival.

Proposals include the construction of a new eco-friendly, potentially turf roofed building to provide catering facilities at the Salmon Bothy and the renovation of the Shore Street Buildings to include a workshop area to recreate traditional boatbuilding skills for all ages.

PAC considered the area to be of great importance in terms of tourism and cultural heritage and welcomed the strategic approach taken by the applicants to increase and improve tourism offering in the area. The outcome of the feasibility study will lead to improve opportunities in Portsoy for locals and visitors.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £5,000 APPROVED BY PAC.

6.8 118 – Gartly School Wildlife Garden

The project is to create a wildlife garden for the benefit of pupils attending Gartly primary and the wider community. Works will include decking area, seating, hedging and planting and a gated entrance and exit to the pond area.

Parents are working in partnership with the school to develop opportunities for the children to learn about the natural environment. The area can be used as an outdoor classroom.

PAC considered the proposals to be worthwhile but raised the question of legacy and longer term plans for the pond. Parent and staff volunteers will allocate time for on-going maintenance of the area.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £4,500 APPROVED BY PAC.

7. AOCB

The question was raised about applicants being aware of the implications of the VAT rate increasing to 20% in January. There is guidance in the Technical Document regarding the possibility of LEADER funding a pro-rata increase. Applicants who are not VAT registered can include VAT as eligible project costs. This issue will be addressed on a case by case basis.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

LAG meeting – Tuesday, 7 December 2010, Committee Room 4, Woodhill House, 2.00 pm.

PAC meeting – Tuesday, 1 March 2011, Conference Room D, Woodhill House, 10.00 am.