

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

**TUESDAY, 1 MARCH 2011 AT 10.00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM D, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Belinda Miller	LAG Chairperson
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
Jamie Wilkinson	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

Jamie Bell	Scottish Enterprise
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Belinda Miller, new LAG Chairman and Jamie Wilkinson, newly appointed LEADER Project Officer were welcomed to the PAC 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 20 January 2011 was noted and will be considered for approval by the LAG at the meeting on 14 March 2011.

Vicky confirmed that, as agreed by the LAG, a project amendment has been completed to roll over LEADER grant awarded to the Enchanted Castle project to 2011. This year's event may be extended but this will not affect the LEADER grant.

3. COMMUNICATION

Notification received regarding SNH contribution towards LAG administration costs for 2011/12. Thanks were expressed to Paul Timms of SNH. Formal grant offer letter to be issued.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE

Chairperson briefed PAC on background and involvement in LEADER in first few weeks.

5. LEADER STRATEGIC BOARD (LSB) MEETING

- 5.1 Belinda and Vicky took part in the LSB meeting via video conference. The LSB Chair, Bruce Beveridge is to move on and will be replaced by David Thomson. Meeting notes prepared by Chris Parkin, South Lanarkshire LAG were circulated.
- 5.2 Service Level Agreement (SLA) issues were discussed regarding the level of responsibility of Lead Partners. Aberdeenshire's SLA has been checked by Finance, Law & Admin and Internal Audit. The SLA was signed and returned in October 2010. Scottish Government will meet with LAGs who have not signed up as yet.
- 5.3 The Chair of Forth Valley LAG attended the CAP Stakeholders group. LEADER representation on the group was welcomed.
- 5.4 The outcomes of the mid-term evaluation of Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) carried out by John Grieve have been generally positive. Scottish Government requirement for commitment and spend was highlighted.

Commitment and spend per LAG area varies across Scotland. LAGs are uncomfortable about the possibility of re-distribution of funds.

- 5.5 Highland LAG may offer to host the next LEADER Conference.
- 5.6 A draft minute and a financial table showing spend have been received and will be circulated for the LAG meeting.

6. EFF AXIS 4

Members of the Scottish Government Inshore Fisheries Communities Team have met held with LAGs regarding the transfer of EFF Axis 4 funding to LEADER. A table showing estimated allocations per LAG was circulated. The net result will mean approximately £1.3 million for Aberdeenshire calculated on population, length of coastline, fishing dependency and historic fishing dependency.

LAGs will receive a template regarding Expression of Interest. A strategy document will then be prepared and submitted detailing indicative match funding.

The level of intervention is still to be confirmed.

A ministerial announcement about EFF is expected this week.

A Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) will be created to assess projects. The FLAG will be similar to the LAG with additional coastal representatives invited to join the second part of the LAG meeting. Representation will not be involved in assessing LEADER projects.

Up to 10% of the budget may be used for administration which was welcomed.

7. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

7.1 Financial Update

Financial tables were circulated

7.2 Project Update

Seven applications were received for Round 11 but St Fergus Playpark subsequently withdrew their application due to timeframe issues regarding other funding which has to be spent by the end of this financial year.

There are currently 102 active projects.

7.3 Scottish Government Claims

Nine claims have been submitted to SG up to 31 December 2010 with a total of 28% of the Aberdeenshire LEADER budget claimed.

7.4 LEADER Audits, Monitoring and Reporting

Aberdeenshire received a clean bill of health from Audit Scotland following the assessment of two projects.

Monthly reporting and forecasting continues.

7.5 Rural Aberdeenshire Broadband Initiative

An article is to appear in the local press about the high speed broadband project in Kinmuck.

A meeting is due to be held between Scotnet and the Broadband Enabling Technology applicants to discuss issues such as grant claim procedures etc.

7.6 European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD)

LAGs were invited to submit a bid to the Scottish Government for reimbursement of the €500 registration fee for ELARD membership. Aberdeenshire's bid was successful and registration has been completed.

7.7 LEADER Promotion

The Deveron Fish Festival will be launched shortly by the Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Trust. There will be potential to promote Aberdeenshire LEADER support at this event.

7.8 LAG Administration Team

Jamie Wilkinson, Project Officer, commenced post on Monday 21 February 2011. The LEADER team is in the process of relocating to a larger office within Gordon House.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

8.1 Paul Timms, SNH declared an interest in project 124.

9. PROJECTS 119 to 125

9.1 119 – Newmachar Community Centre Project

The existing community centre in Newmachar is too small and unfit for purpose and the project is to construct a new multi-purpose community hall. Renewable technology will be integrated into the well-researched design. Extensive community consultation has been carried out and there is clear community support for the proposals.

The new facility will have to be sustainable and the applicants are confident that the hall will be economically viable to run with income generated covering running costs.

Planning permission has been submitted but is not approved as yet. The applicant has a 75 year site lease agreement with Aberdeenshire Council.

This project fits perfectly under measure 321, Community Facilities and Services.

The community has carried out an admirable amount of fundraising, and has secured a significant amount from Planning Gain.

LEADER is the first major funding application going forward and LAG commitment would enhance the group's chances of securing other match funding. However, PAC recommends provisional approval subject to other match funding being secured.

The applicant is a constituted group with charitable status and it was suggested that they consider a change of structure if they are going to employ staff. A new scheme called Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation may be worth considering.

PAC considered this to be an innovative, well researched project which can deliver real community benefit over a long period of time.

It was suggested that a time condition be included with the LEADER offer being on the table until a significant proportion of the funding has been confirmed.

PAC would also welcome further information regarding the environmental aspects of the build.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £200,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO MATCH FUNDING BEING SECURED.**

9.2 120 – Skill Force Scotland

The project is to employ instructors over a two year programme to work with three Aberdeenshire secondary schools in Banff, Turriff and Huntly, to provide support for pupils who are identified as underachieving.

Participants in the scheme will undertake a programme of confidence

building, motivation, vocational and lifeskills training, enabling them to fulfil their potential, make a positive contribution to the community and improve their employability skills.

Pilot projects already running in Moray have been very successful and the applicant group's record of working with young people is good. Evaluation reports are very positive.

Written confirmation of match funding has been received from the three schools for the first year. Schools are unable to commit to year 2 as yet.

PAC raised the question of LEADER contributing towards something which may be considered a statutory requirement and would welcome clarification on how this programme fits with Curriculum for Excellence.

PAC was generally supportive of the innovative programme but would like assurance that it is complimentary rather than an overlap of statutory provision. It was agreed that confirmation be sought from Aberdeenshire Council Education Department and the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Group regarding this.

Confirmation of the qualifications held by instructors was also requested and PAC would like to know whether project participants will achieve a recognised qualification on successful completion of the programme.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £69,900 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.**

9.3 **121 – Stirling Hill Access Network**

The project is to create and restore a network of core paths at Stirling Hill in Boddam. Work will include upgrading paths, safety improvements, installation of signage and benches and promotion of the paths.

Community consultation has been undertaken regarding the proposals. A project to encourage access and outdoor recreation in the growing community of Boddam was welcomed by the community and potential user groups.

Costs include an element of project management which will be undertaken by an independent consultant who will oversee the tendering process.

The Local Authority may support the paths through the Core Paths Plan and local volunteers will be involved with keeping vegetation down.

PAC was supportive of the project but would welcome further information from the applicant regarding on-going maintenance and future repair costs, how they anticipate attracting tourism to the area, how they plan to discourage inappropriate use of the paths.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £10,202 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.**

9.4 **122 – Royal Northern Countryside Live**

The project is to deliver a two day event showcasing land management practice, food production, forestry, environmental and countryside conservation. A range of agricultural activities will be demonstrated, local food producers will showcase their products and cooking demonstrations will be held.

The applicant, Royal Northern Agricultural Society (RNAS) will work closely with Royal Northern Countryside Initiative (RNCI) to deliver the two day event and RNCI will be working with schools on the second day to promote the concept of how food is produced etc. Both organisations have an excellent record of success in delivering previous events.

This is a high profile event providing information on rural issues to the general public and meets the LEADER theme, Revitalising Communities. Target numbers are 4,000 attending the event over the two days. The syllabus is excellent and the event is good value for money.

PAC supportive of the project but would welcome additional information regarding RNAS administration costs as detailed in the application and a breakdown of advertising costs.

RNAS have event insurance in hand but PAC would like information about cancellation insurance. Clarification is also sought about admission charges for the event.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £20,392 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

9.5 **124 – Cairngorms and Mid Deeside Communities Access Network Project 2011-2013**

The project is an Action 2 co-operation project with Cairngorms LAG relating to specific path creation and upgrade in both LAG areas and the expansion of the popular Health Walks.

Four paths have been identified in Aberdeenshire within the Core Path Plan.

The project is similar to an earlier project submitted by Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) which included pathworks around Tarland and contribution towards COAT's core running costs. COAT has had considerable success in levering in match funding.

PAC considered new path work to be innovative and beneficial for the community but felt that LEADER is not a vehicle to contribute towards core costs in perpetuity. The principal of the proposal is good but PAC was unable to make a recommendation based on elements within the current application being unclear.

PAC suggested that the applicant be invited to re-submit in Round 12 with Aberdeenshire elements and costs being clearly identified and routine office running costs removed from the application. It was also suggested that two separate applications be re-submitted to Aberdeenshire and Cairngorms

LAGs.

PAC UNABLE TO MAKE RECOMMENDATION BASED ON CURRENT APPLICATION.

9.6 **125 – Duff House Vinery Project**

The project is for the development phase of a three phase project to restore the category B-listed Duff House Vinery in Banff. Phase 1 is to work up, prepare and submit detailed planning application, produce detailed architectural drawings and costings and prepare tenders for the restoration of the greenhouse buildings.

The project is being delivered in partnership between the North East Scotland Preservation Trust (NESPT) and the Banff & Macduff Community Trust (BMCT).

There is strong community support for the proposals to regenerate the vinery for use as a community resource.

PAC supportive of project and recognise the work of BMCT to get proposals to this stage. PAC request that the applicant is made aware that LEADER funding for phase one does not guarantee LEADER funding for the next phase of the project.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £2,342 APPROVED BY PAC.

10. **AOCB**

As this was the last meeting for Paul Timms from SNH, the issue of quorum at PAC meetings was raised. The importance of substitutes being available for each interest group was discussed and this is to be re-visited.

Paul was thanked for his valued contribution to the PAC.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

LAG meeting – Monday, 14 March 2011, Committee Room 4, Woodhill House, 10.00 am.

PAC meeting – Tuesday, 24 May 2011, Conference Room D, Woodhill House, 10.00 am.