

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

**TUESDAY, 29 MAY 2012 AT 10.00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM G, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Belinda Miller	LAG Chairperson
Jamie Bell	Scottish Enterprise
Gavin Clark	Scottish Natural Heritage
Moira Gordon	SWRI

Officers in Attendance

Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Jamie Wilkinson	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Scott Petrie	Scottish Land & Estates
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Services
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

1.1 Belinda welcomed those present. Apologies were noted as above.

2. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

2.1 The draft minute of the LAG meeting on 20 March 2012 was noted and will be approved at the LAG meeting on 6 June 2012.

3. COMMUNICATION

3.1 A copy of the letter from Scottish Government which confirms the additional 15% budget allowance for Aberdeenshire LAG was circulated. PAC welcomed the additional funding and Belinda thanked the LEADER team for their excellent programme management.

There will be pressure to commit funds and ensure spend by the end of March 2014.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE

4.1 Belinda will be attending the next LSB meeting on Monday, 11 June followed by an 'away-day' organised for LAG Chairs and Lead Partners on Tuesday, 12 June. Scot Petrie will accompany Belinda on the 'away day'. The LEADER Monitoring & Evaluation Group meeting, led by John Grieve, will be held on Friday 15 June to discuss how the programme is progressing, Belinda is to attend.

Vicky or Jamie will attend the next LEADER Co-ordinator's meeting in Edinburgh on Wednesday, 13 June.

5. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

- 5.1 A copy of the Co-ordinator's update was circulated and will be presented again at the LAG. Summary of the main points below:
- Vicky was part of a Scottish Government Working Group that met to discuss the current SRDP programme and to consider how it might be developed in the future. The group has been tasked to produce reports for the CAP strategic and stakeholder groups. Billy McKenzie from Scottish Government will pull together the Development Consultation and is open to suggestions. Vicky will prepare a paper for the LAG meeting to enable LAG to consider what may be delivered through the LEADER approach in the future programme period.
 - A copy of the Annual Report which was submitted to Scottish Government will be copied for the LAG and uploaded on the website.
 - The £200k funding package for the Newmachar Hall project will require to be considered by the LAG by September. Options are for the project to be de-committed, scaled down or hopefully, if the match funding profile can be achieved, the project can proceed.
 - The Aberdeenshire CCF bid for approximately £400k was submitted on behalf of two potential projects in Portsoy. Both sit well with Axis 4. In addition, bids have been submitted from three individual community groups in Aberdeenshire. The fund will be highly competitive and there will be only one funding round per year. However, unsuccessful projects can apply again in the following year.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 6.1 There were no declarations of interest.

7. PROJECTS 142 to 153

- 7.1 **142 – Sandhaven & Pitullie Community Hall Development Phase**
The project is a follow on from the feasibility study for the refurbishment and re-development of Sandhaven & Pitullie Hall which was supported by the LAG in June 2011. The study, which was managed by North East Scotland Preservation Trust (NESPT) on behalf of the Hall Committee and carried out by LDN Architects in Forres, considered the structure, potential for future use and options for renewable energy. This project will be 'phase 2' which will employ a consultant to write a business plan, produce detailed plans for submission to secure full planning permission and make application to various funders, thereby securing a full funding profile for the project.

Sandhaven currently lacks community facilities and PAC considered the building to have the potential to be a successful community centre/social hub for the area.

PAC questioned the need for the partnership agreement between NESPT and the Hall Committee. Although there is clear enthusiasm within the community and the group managing the hall, there is currently limited capacity within the Committee to take the project forward.

PAC considered a key element of the project to be the business plan which will consider additionality and look at any displacement issues.

PAC would like a key condition of any offer of grant to be that the Committee carry out a consultation on usage to clearly evidence demand and support from the wider community. It was considered to be important to attract more skills onto the committee. PAC would also like assurances that the Committee will commit their time and effort to the project.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £6,075 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.2 **143 – Aboyne Mountain Bike Park**

The project is to create a mountain bike track within the Bellwood in Aboyne. The track has been designed by a qualified mountain bike trail designer to incorporate tracks into a slope. The course will comprise of a challenging trail for intermediate and advanced users as well as a beginners area and a jumps area suitable for all users.

Aboyne Bike Park Association is a sub-group of Mid Deeside Ltd who will act as project managers. The proposals have moved forward very quickly over the last few months and the match funding profile is complete due to securing £15k from a fund for a former skate park project in the area which was never built.

Planning permission is to be submitted this month.

There is wide community support from adults and young people in the area and a need for such a facility has been identified in the community plan.

The issue of maintenance of the track was raised but PAC considered that, if properly designed and constructed, maintenance would be minimal, enabling upkeep by volunteers.

The PAC welcomed the opportunity for mountain biking events to be held and considered proposals to have obvious benefits for tourism in the area even though the main market will be locals. There will be scope for promotional work linking to the hospitality sector in the area.

PAC considered the park to be open to all and welcomed the design which does not compromise other woodland user groups.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £28,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.3 **144 – Aden's Growing Places**

The project is a follow up to the development strategy for Aden Country Park which was funded by LEADER in 2010. This phase is to employ a

project officer over an 18 month period to organise a programme of events, activities and workshops relating to farming and horticulture.

A community garden will be created in the former nursery and the model 1950s farm will be used for agricultural activities. Part-time farming and gardening mentors will also be employed. Volunteers from the community and local schools will participate in the maintenance of the garden. The facilities will be used for educating disadvantaged children and there will be raised beds to aid disability access.

The outcome of the project is dependent on the applicant securing funding from the Prince's Countryside Fund. Decision should be known sometime in June.

PAC considered the project to be well thought out with good links to education, community and farming. However concern was expressed regarding the long term viability of the project. It was felt that the links with schools & farming sector may be difficult to sustain once the employment of the project co-ordinator ceases. If approved, Buchan Development Partnership must pro-actively look for future funding to keep the project running. It may be difficult to develop an income stream in the timescale of the project but the applicant was working within the parameters set by LEADER.

PAC had concerns about the balance between the amount of funding requested and what is to be achieved. It may be possible to reduce the management fee of £6,000. PAC also considered the equipment costs to be excessively high and suggested it might be possible to source donated equipment and time. There are no demonstrated links to local gardening clubs and although PAC agreed with the concept and some of the ideas proposed, it was considered that there was a risk of the project reducing in activity at the end of the 18 month period.

While generally supportive, PAC agreed to defer the project to the LAG pending further information from the applicant regarding greater community involvement and the sustainability issues.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £42,033 DEFERRED TO LAG.

7.4 **145 – Rural Schools & Community Coaching Project**

The project is to employ 2 part-time officers to provide a programme of rugby coaching sessions in rural schools over the 2012/13 school session.

Training sessions will take place during the school day for primary pupils and will be extra-curricular for secondary pupils. The coaching is in addition to statutory PE lessons and will be available to all pupils from schools in the Alford, Kemnay and Meldrum academy catchment areas. Each school will receive one term of coaching and it is hoped to stimulate interest leading to pupils going on to join the rugby club. The applicant has provided letters of support from teaching staff.

PAC questioned the links of rugby coaching with regard to rural

development and felt the project did not fit particularly well with LEADER. The question of displacement was raised with regard to the rugby club recruiting members.

PAC considered a more sustainable way forward for the project would be through the involvement of Active Schools. Questions were raised as to why the core funders of rugby such as Sport Scotland had not been approached for funding.

PAC considered it essential to have written confirmation from Aberdeenshire Council Education Learning and Leisure Head of Service to confirm that the proposals are not a statutory element within Curriculum for Excellence.

While generally supportive, PAC agreed to defer the project to the LAG pending further information from the applicant.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £11,950 DEFERRED TO LAG.

7.5 **146 – Macduff Pensioners Hall Car Park Improvements**

The project is to improve access to the Macduff Pensioners Hall through the construction of a new car park area. The Hall is regarded as a key hub in the community and the applicants have secured land behind the hall through Community Asset Transfer from Aberdeenshire Council. Proposals will greatly enhance safe access to the hall for all users, especially the elderly and disabled.

The group is proactive in fundraising and the accounts are robust. Match funding profile is strong and fundraising can be achieved within the required period. Three estimates have been provided for the works to be undertaken.

PAC considered the project to score highly on the community services aspect if not on the innovation aspect. The Hall is run on a sound and sustainable economic basis because it is a very well used facility.

PAC suggested that the applicant include cycle parking to make the proposals more sustainable, as well as designated disabled parking spaces near the ramp as a condition of grant.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £10,560 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.6 **147 – The Harvest Folk Festival**

The project, delivered by Birseland Media working in partnership with the community, is to deliver a weekend music event at the Potarch Hotel in late September 2012. A trial pilot event was held at the Potarch last year which focused on traditional North East music. The relatively small pilot which was well received, encouraged the applicants to bring forward a larger scale event this year with clear links to local food production and cookery. The owner of the Three Chimneys Restaurant will attend the festival to promote Scottish produce and there will be an opportunity for local youngsters to be involved in filming the event for the production of DVD to promote the

festival and the area to a wider audience.

The partnership agreement states that any net profit resulting from the event will be ring fenced and retained for future events.

PAC agreed that the event will have the potential to draw a large number of visitors to the area. PAC felt that the project, which will focus on the cultural heritage of the North East, was novel with the added links to local food.

PAC considered the eligibility of Birseland to apply to LEADER. However, the signed partnership agreement with the festival team, a group of volunteers and stakeholders clearly overcomes this issue as any benefit arising from the event will be targeted to running future events.

The project is targeted at the local community and visitors alike and PAC considered the proposals to have the potential for economic development in the area.

PAC would like a key condition of any offer of grant to be that the applicant is aware that LEADER and Economic Development funding will be available for a 1-off event only.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £6,105 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.7 148 – The Bothie Youth & Volunter Co-ordinator

The project is to employ a youth worker to co-ordinate activities at the Bothie youth centre during the first 18 months of operation. The co-ordinator will recruit adult volunteers who will form a management committee for the long term sustainability of the Bothie.

The Bothie eco-build project which was approved by the LAG in June 2010 is back on track and due for completion in summer 2012 following activities to raise volunteer interest. The building warrant is now in the final stage of approval following delays due to difficulties with the straw bale construction and available building expertise.

PAC is aware of the difficulties associated with creating a cohesive community in a such a rapidly expanding settlement and agreed that there is a lack of youth facilities in Kintore.

PAC considered it to be important to have the co-ordinator in post in advance of the completion of the building works.

PAC willing to recommend for approval with funds being provisionally offered dependant on the build project going ahead.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £13,320 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
DEPENDANT ON THE BUILD PROJECT GOING AHEAD.**

7.8 150 – “Children’s Community Voice” – Community Engagement & Delivery

The project relates to the part-time employment of an officer over an 18

month period to deliver a series of events to upper primary school pupils in the Garioch area which relate to young people's issues and activities.

The events will involve community leaders such as police officers, firemen and councillors being involved in educating the children about issues affecting young people, whilst building self confidence and learning about society.

Another element of the project is the production of a DVD to showcase the concept to allow other organisations to consider a similar project.

Whilst the PAC was broadly supportive of Garioch Area Partnership's (gAp) unique proposals and the strong community focus of the project, the question of it being complementary to Curriculum was raised.

It was agreed that the project be recommended for approval by the LAG with the condition that the applicant requests confirmation from Aberdeenshire Council Education, Learning & Leisure Head of Service in support of the project.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £7,222 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL ON THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

7.9 **151 – Tullynessle Hall Exterior Improvements**

The project is to upgrade and enhance the exterior areas around the Hall to include resurfacing of the car park, neatening up of the landscaped areas and boundary edges and improvements to the area at the main door.

The Hall, which was recently renovated, is a modern, attractive community facility which is used regularly for community events and activities. These proposals will be part of the ongoing plan for improvements to make the venue more attractive for business meetings and social events such as weddings.

PAC was impressed by the transformation of the building which has increased user numbers three fold since the renovations. It was considered that upgrading the exterior and car parking area would make this exceptional example of a Hall redevelopment project even more accessible for all users.

PAC recommended that the applicant include cycle parking and designated disabled parking for the facility and would welcome confirmation regarding access and right of way issues to the neighbouring property.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £3,075 APPROVED BY PAC.

7.10 **152 – Aberdeen Angus 2012 Ruby Anniversary Tour**

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society, a 5-day tour of Aberdeen Angus herds in North East Scotland will be held in October 2012 for up to 250 paying delegates.

The LEADER element of the project is the production and publication of a

high quality hard-backed book to publicise and market the heritage of the Aberdeen Angus breed in the North East and promote the strong agricultural importance from livestock production in rural Aberdeenshire to key stakeholders such as the food and drink industry and processing sector, overseas breed societies and other industry visitors to the area. The text will be written by Eddie Gillanders and the book will be professionally designed and published. The project will also include the production of a sales catalogue for the inaugural sale of Aberdeen Angus cattle to be held on the final day of the tour at Thainstone.

PAC raised the question of whether the book is to be sold or given away. It was confirmed that the book will form part of the welcome pack for delegates. However, PAC was of the opinion that the publication could be devalued if it is given away and would welcome confirmation about what is proposed for the remainder of the 500 print run. PAC felt that such a high quality publication could be sold to the tour delegates to generate some income, or utilised in other initiatives, e.g. trade delegations to the Aberdeenshire area.

PAC would also like further confirmation about whether the applicant has approached NFU, Grampian Food Forum or Aberdeen Northern Marts for possible funding.

It was agreed to defer the project to the LAG pending further information from the applicant.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £4,925 DEFERRED TO THE LAG.

7.1 **153 – Kinmuck Community Broadband Extension Project**

This project relates to the expansion of the innovative Kinmuck Broadband Project approved by the LAG in January 2011. The original project is up and running using wireless technology and users are very pleased with the service being provided.

With additional funding, the Broadband Extension project aims to provide a more efficient bandwidth and service to a much wider range of users. This will be possible by upgrading the backhaul capacity of the Kinmuck Broadband wireless network service.

The applicant is also undertaking pilot research testing whitespace technology with a view to identifying if a service can be rolled out to other communities.

A better, more rounded, sustainable service will be provided. And any profit eventually generated will be recycled back into the community.

The applicant has secured match funding through Economic Development, Aberdeenshire Council.

PAC supportive of the project which will enable private households, businesses and lower income families to sign up at a rate appropriate to them. The community will be the end beneficiaries.

PAC approved the project and would like to hear more about the end beneficiaries and it was suggested that the project manager be invited to attend a future LAG meeting.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £4,750 APPROVED BY PAC.

8. AOCB

There was no other business.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

LAG meeting – Wednesday, 6 June 2012,
Port Erroll Public Hall, 10.00 am

PAC meeting – Tuesday, 28 August 2012,
Conference Room E1, Woodhill House, 10.00 am