

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

**TUESDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2012 AT 10.00 AM
COMMITTEE ROOM 4, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Belinda Miller	LAG Chairperson
Gavin Clark	Scottish Natural Heritage
Scott Petrie	Scottish Land & Estates

Officers in Attendance

Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Alasdair Cunningham	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

Jamie Bell	Scottish Enterprise
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Services
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Belinda welcomed Alasdair Cunningham, new LEADER Project Officer who took up post on Monday 19 November. Introductions were made round the table and apologies were noted as above.

2. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

- 2.1 The draft minute of the LAG meeting on 18 September 2012 was noted and will be considered for approval at the LAG meeting on 4 December 2012.
- 2.2 Vicky updated the PAC regarding the match funding situation for both Newmachar Community Facility and Daviot Hall.

Newmachar was successful in securing funding from both Sport Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council Priority funding. The remaining shortfall is small and this large capital project will now go ahead.

Daviot has been successful in securing funding from a number of trusts. Funding from a proposed local wind turbine is still outstanding as the application will not be considered until January 2013. However, it is hoped that an agreement can be reached with the wind turbine applicant to enable the project to proceed.

3. COMMUNICATION

- 3.1 A side letter was received from Alistair Prior, Rural Communities Team, regarding proposed amendments to the Service Level Agreement (SLA).

The changes relate to ensuring that a competent individual within the Lead Partner Organisation carries out a skilled financial assessment of capital projects ensuring a reasonableness of cost/value for money appraisal. This will have a cost and workload implication and LAGs expressed concerns that this was to be a retrospective exercise. However, it has been confirmed by e-mail that this will come into effect for future projects only.

PAC questioned what was meant by 'skilled financial assessment' and considered this to be a worrying trend, making the application process even more cumbersome for applicants. Vicky is alerting all new applicants to ensure they provide increased detail on value for money and reasonableness of cost when making application.

If Council QS cannot carry out the assessment within the timescale, then it will have to go out to an external consultant.

After discussion, it was agreed that the SLA will be signed off. The side letter will be circulated to the LAG.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE

- 4.1 Belinda Miller reported on the two communities put forward by Aberdeenshire Council to the Scottish Government Rural Broadband pilot scheme. These were Birse & Ballogie and Corgarff & Glenbuchat. Corgarff & Glenbuchat was also nominated by Cairngorms LAG, and has been selected to be part of the pilot.
- 4.2 Belinda will attend the next LEADER Monitoring & Evaluation Group meeting by video conferencing on Tuesday, 27 November.
- 4.3 The mid-term review of the current Aberdeenshire LEADER programme is still to be undertaken.

5. EU RURAL & FISHERIES TEAM LEADER UPDATE

- 5.1 A copy of the Team Leader's update was circulated and will be presented again at the LAG. Summary of the main points below:
 - If all round 16 projects are approved at the LAG meeting, there would be an adjusted budget shortfall of £92,000. However, ongoing savings on current projects is being closely monitored.
 - The annual confirmation certificate was signed off following internal audit. The executive summary was circulated for information. Any issues raised by Scottish Government would be highlighted within 10 days and as yet, no notification has been received.
 - Audit Scotland requested two further project files for inspection, Sustaining Huntly and Strategic Mink Control.
 - Alasdair Cunningham, new Project Officer, gave a brief summary of his background and working history.
 - The second future funds meeting was held at the MacRobert Hall in Tarland on 12 October 2012. Members from Cairngorms, Moray and Tayside LAGs attended the meeting along with Alistair Prior and

Lorna Gregson-MacLeod from Scottish Government. Mike Powell, MacRobert Hall Trust and Donald Boyd, Huntly Development Trust gave interesting project presentations. Discussion followed, focusing on transitional arrangements and LAG structure and looking towards the next Community Led Local Development (CLLD) strategy approach. Meeting note to follow.

- Vicky attended the SRUC Conference in Edinburgh on 1 November. Useful updates on the future of SRDP were presented.
- The Scottish LEADER Conference will be held in Glasgow on 22 November. Five representatives will attend on behalf of Aberdeenshire LAG. Sarah Skerratt, SRUC will deliver workshops.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 6.1 Scott Petrie declared an interest in project 170, Imbewu Scotland. Scott will take part in discussion but will not take part in the vote.
- 6.2 Belinda Miller declared an interest in project 173, Aberdeenshire Whitespace Trial. An acting Chair will be appointed for the project discussion. Belinda will not take part in the vote.

7. PROJECTS 154 to 164

7.1 165 – Baden Powell Centre New Build

The project is to construct a new multi-functional community hall on a site which was gifted to the community by a local farmer. The new facility will have a large hall with meeting rooms, kitchen, stores, toilets and showers and will be built next to the existing building which is at capacity. The large hall will be suitable for private hires and functions.

The applicants have carried out extensive research into demand. Displacement is not an issue as there is a serious lack of community facilities in the area, evidenced by the current long waiting list for youngsters to join the Guides and Scouts in the area. Local businesses are behind the proposals and there has been a pledge of £25,000 from a local benefactor.

Proposals link well with the Formartine community plan.

Costs are based on QS estimates and works will go out to tender once funding is confirmed. A significant amount of labour and materials will be provided in-kind.

To ensure compliance with Health & safety, a Construction and Design Manager is to be appointed.

The delivery timescale of 6-7 months was considered quite tight. Planning was submitted in July 2012.

PAC considered the multi-functional facility to represent long-term benefit to the community. The cash flow shows the facility to be economically sustainable in the long term. Proposals represent good value for money

and the group can demonstrate reasonableness of cost.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £160,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.2 **166 – Balmedie Leisure Centre Café & Provision of New Entrance**

The project is to expand the Balmedie Leisure Centre by creating a new café and the construction of a new entrance area, making the centre more welcoming and accessible.

The original proposal included new sports equipment. Costs were based on QS estimates and the group thought they could source contractors who could carry out the work for less. However, following discussion with a consultant who specialises in leisure facilities, it was established that estimated costs were correct for the three elements. With limited financial resources, the applicants were advised to apply to Sport Scotland specifically for the equipment, thus focusing on the café and new entrance for the LEADER application.

Wide community consultation has been carried out and PAC welcomed the idea of creating a social focus in an area where there are currently no facilities for a community meeting place. There are no displacement issues.

With dedicated time set aside for young helpers in the café, the applicant has demonstrated that the organisation wants to do something to help local young people who have nowhere go.

PAC was impressed with the fact that the applicant had sought professional advice before taking the decision to split the project.

PAC considered adequate signage and marketing to be important in order to target beach visitors.

PAC expressed concerns about economic viability of the café's operation. Figures presented for spend per visit and the break even figures were considered to be optimistic.

Questions were raised with regard to how the café will be operated. Clarification will be sought on whether it will be staffed within the group's own management. The applicant anticipates opening six days a week but PAC considered it would be difficult to get footfall on a Sunday. It was agreed that footfall will increase over the summer months.

PAC was supportive of the project in principle, but would like the applicant to revisit the projected café operating costs and come back to the LAG with a more realistic projection of running costs.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £119,600 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO FURTHER INFORMATION BEING PROVIDED.

7.3 **167 – Phase 2 – Revival of Methlick Play Park**

The project is to install new play park equipment at the play park in Methlick. The play park is designed to reflect the community with

equipment taking the form of replica features relating to the village. This is phase 2 of a three phase capital works programme. Phase 1 related to the football pitch and plans for phase 3 include an all-weather pitch.

Methlick is an expanding village and the school roll has increased rapidly.

The applicants have carried out wide community consultation. The funding profile is strong and there has been a large amount of fundraising undertaken by the community.

PAC welcomed the three phase approach and considered the proposals to be innovative in terms of the style of the playpark. This is a community led project which demonstrates good value for money.

Although predominantly targeted at young people, PAC considered the proposals to be inclusive.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £22,200 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.4 168 – Loons ‘n’ Quines Loos Project

The project is to remove the existing toilets in the Milne Hall and install new, more space efficient toilet facilities in the building in order to free up wasted space within the Hall for other activities. The renewal of male and female toilet facilities will enable another room of approximately 20m² to be available for community use.

The increased floor space will create a more usable space, thus making the facility more user friendly and cost effective.

The community of Skene is expanding and, with this being the only community facility available in the area, there will be increased pressure on use once the proposed new houses are built.

Quotes have been received from various companies and the most cost effective quote is the one on which the project costs have been based.

The community group currently manage the Hall and are in the process of formalising the lease with the Council.

The applicants have raised a significant sum of money and the facility is economically sustainable.

PAC agreed that there is likely to be increased demand for use once the facility is refurbished.

PAC recommended the applicant explore the possibility of Panning Gain money and suggest they investigate the possibility of this with their Area Manager or Planning Gain Team.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £21,900 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.5 **169 – ISDS Scottish National Trials 2013**

The Aberdeenshire branch of the International Sheepdog Society aims to deliver a three day national sheepdog trials event in August 2013 on farmland near Kintore.

The event, which will demonstrate rural skills, will be promoted to the wider general public.

There will be a maximum of 150 trailists plus judges who will stay in the area over 4 nights providing potential economic benefit for local accommodation providers.

It is anticipated that an average of 500 members of the general public will attend per day. Proposals include grandstand seating and running a shuttle bus service from Kingswells/Inverurie/Kintore. Local food and produce will be showcased and farmers market stallholders will be invited to attend.

Grant application of £3,000 was made to Aberdeenshire Council's SAB grant scheme. Only £1,500 was awarded but the ISDS parent body will underwrite the balance. Hospitality costs of £300 for providing meals for officials and landowners are ineligible for LEADER funding and will be covered by ISDS parent body.

PAC considered the event to have the potential to attract a good turnout of visitors and it was agreed that publicity and marketing will be key to the success of the event. The event will be supported by and promoted in the local press. There has also been an indication that BBC Alba will cover the event. It was suggested that the Provost also be invited to attend.

PAC considered the £5 admission charge plus parking to be slightly high and would like the applicant to consider the possibility of a family ticket deal. Admission fees will be used to cover the cost of publishing the programme.

PAC considered the project to be innovative, bringing a new audience to the event, following on from the recent resurgence of interest in country skills.

PAC agreed that the event has the potential for positive economic impact in the local area.

PAC recommended contact is made with LBAP Officer regarding attendance at the event.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £7,765 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.6 **170 – Imbewu Scotland – Growing Natural Leaders Phase 1**

The Wilderness Foundation, working in partnership with Scottish Land & Estates, will run a series of developmental training for young people across Scotland. This project, relating to activities in Aberdeenshire, will form part of the wider initiative.

Proposed activities will target young people from rural & urban

backgrounds, encouraging them to connect with nature and develop an interest in the countryside whilst being guided to consider the ecological heritage and be more caring about the rural community. Youngsters will gain work experience and will have the opportunity to make connections with employers and rural stakeholders, enabling employment opportunities.

There is no cost implication to the estate other than staff time.

The geographical area and percentage of time the project will operate in Aberdeenshire is yet to be clarified and eligible costs may be reduced following discussion with the Wilderness Foundation.

PAC agreed that applicant be asked to justify the extensive list of costs to ensure that LEADER or the eligible cost applicable to LEADER relates solely to the Aberdeenshire project.

PAC liked the concept of the proposals but clarification is required on the number of youngsters taking part and length of placements offered. Clarification also required on costs to enable the LAG to decide if the proposals demonstrate good value for money.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £27,995 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO FURTHER INFORMATION BEING PROVIDED.**

7.7 171 – YesCommAct – Team Huntly

This transnational project has been in the planning stage for a long time. The proposals will involve a range of Huntly based organisations working with organisations in Finland and Italy on a number of initiatives.

Huntly Development Trust will co-ordinate the project on behalf of the Huntly Mental Health Group, the Nordic Ski Club and Huntly Community Learning & Development. The various elements within the project include development of rural skills (building of a timber ski hut in the Clashindarroch forest using Finnish methods), diverse music making (Finnish heavy metal music meeting Scottish fiddle music) and community gardening including cultural and archaeological links.

All three LAGs have signed up to a partnership agreement.

A transnational project was included in the original Business Plan for Aberdeenshire LEADER.

PAC would recommend that the budget is matched to the list of activities in order to establish if the proposals represent good value for money and to make it easier to understand what the project will deliver.

PAC welcomed the proposals but, with so many elements to the project, found it difficult to quantify what the applicant is actually planning to do. It was agreed that the applicant be asked to provide a more definitive list of proposals and more detail about who will be involved for the LAG meeting.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £37,100 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

SUBJECT TO FURTHER INFORMATION BEING PROVIDED.

7.8 172 – St Combs Hall “A New Start”

The project is to rebuild St Combs Hall which was destroyed by fire in 2009. The rebuild will include a function suite, community meeting rooms, office space, storage facilities, new kitchen and sports unit with shower facilities and changing rooms

A separate funding application will install a ground source heat pump and solar panels and as these renewable energy elements will be registered for Feed in Tarriff, this part of the project is outwith the LEADER application.

The applicant issued tender documents to four companies but only one quote was received. Of the four companies approached, three came back saying they were unable to undertake such a large job. However, the applicant will be required to produce three quotes nonetheless.

The funding profile is strong and includes Aberdeenshire Council Towns & Villages Priority funding as well as a bequest to the project by a local resident from the sale of a house. The applicant group has carried out a large amount of fundraising and that, along with the insurance money, makes up the considerable ‘own contribution’.

There are numerous letters of support from potential user groups.

PAC considered the 18% intervention rate to be good value for money and LEADER has the potential to make this project happen. Proposals will increase the footprint of the hall and provide a modernised facility for Hall users.

It was agreed that the LEADER contribution should enhance what is being covered by the insurance money.

In order to establish what makes this proposal different from the old Hall PAC would welcome clarification from the applicant about what the insurance money will replace and what the LEADER enhancement will include.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £124,500 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO FURTHER INFORMATION BEING PROVIDED.**

7.9 173 – Aberdeenshire Whitespace Trial

As Belinda Miller declared an interest in this project, Scott Petrie chaired discussions.

The project is a pilot study to upgrade broadband infrastructure using whitespace technology to deliver broadband services within a 10k radius of Kinmuck. The initial pilot is restricted to 10 homes.

Whitespace technology uses the existing television analogue frequencies freed up by the move to digital. The signal can travel through obstacles and will provide acceptable levels of broadband speeds to areas currently

unable to receive an acceptable download speed for broadband.

Aberdeenshire Council is keen to identify if whitespace technology will work and, if so, the pilot could be rolled out in other areas of Aberdeenshire and Scotland where broadband signal is poor.

Achievable broadband speeds are unknown as yet but it is anticipated that well over 5mb per second can be reached.

This pilot to trial and test the whitespace solution will help the Council to learn how best to spend its funding earmarked for rural broadband.

PAC considered the proposals to push the barriers of technology by being innovative and transferrable, helping to save rural communities from being disadvantaged. Broadband is a necessity and the divide between households with good broadband speed and those with poor broadband speed will only grow.

PAC suggested the possibility of a technical expert being invited to attend the LAG meeting to explain the technology in more detail.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £11,938 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

8. AOCB

There was no other business.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

LAG meeting – Tuesday, 4 December 2012, 10.00 am in Committee Room 4, Woodhill House.

PAC meeting – 2013 Timetable to be confirmed.