

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF
RURAL ABERDEENSHIRE LEADER
LOCAL ACTION GROUP**

**FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2009 AT 10.00 AM
COMMITTEE ROOM 4, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Eleanor Anderson	Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships
Dan Cadle	Forestry Commission Scotland
Caroline Clark	NHS
David Fyffe	Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
Moira Gordon	SWRI
Stewart Johnston	Scottish Government Rural Payments Inspection Directorate
James Knowles	Aberdeenshire Council
Bob Leonard	Aberdeenshire Council
Keith Newton	Aberdeenshire Council
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Services
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses

Officers in Attendance

Vicky Thomson	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne MacLennan	Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies

Ewen Cameron	Scottish Natural Heritage
Gordon Henderson	Aberdeenshire Council
Reid Hutchison	Aberdeenshire Council
Alexander Macleod	Aberdeenshire Council
Ken Massie	Visit Scotland
Tony Miller	Aberdeenshire Community Councils
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Jamie Rankin	Scottish Enterprise

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

James Knowles welcomed those present. Apologies were noted as above.

2. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

2.1 Draft LAG Minutes of Monday, 7 September 2009

Approved as an accurate record. Minutes will be uploaded on the LEADER website.

2.2 Draft PAC Minutes of Tuesday, 24 November 2009

Awaiting PAC approval prior to uploading on website.

3. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

3.1 Financial Update

Round 6 financial tables were circulated.

Table 3 totals are subject to change due to de-commitment of projects, the most recent being Horizons – Stage 2 and the joint project with Angus LAG which will now focus solely on a feasibility study for a mountain bike trail in the Angus area.

3.2 Scottish Government Claims

To date, 4 claims have been submitted to the Scottish Government covering the period to 30 September 2009. N+2 targets to the year end December 2010 will have been exceeded by Aberdeenshire LAG by the end of 2009 once claim 5 is submitted.

3.3 Scottish Government Service Level Agreement Monitor Visit

The Business Support Assurance Team from the Scottish Government visited on 14 October to assess Aberdeenshire Council's role as lead partner and whether the conditions of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) are met.

Awaiting feedback from the monitor visit.

3.4 LAG Annual Confirmation Certificate (ACC) and Annual Report

The Annual Confirmation Certificate and Annual Report was prepared in discussion with Aberdeenshire Council Internal Audit. The audit process was very thorough and the completed report was submitted to the Scottish Government by deadline of 6 November 2009.

3.5 Scottish National Rural Network (SNRN) Regional Event at Lochter

Vicky thanked LAG members who attended the Regional Event. An event report, photographs and presentations are uploaded on the SNRN and LEADER websites.

Thanks also go to LEADER project participants who hosted a range of colourful project displays at the event.

Anna Murray, Scottish Government, was delighted with the event which is the first of 20 regional events to be held.

3.6 Issues Outstanding

- LAG Admin Procedures and Terms of Reference for PAC/LAG are being drafted and will be available for the next LAG meeting in March.
- Currently exploring youth representation on the LAG through the Community Planning Partnership Youth Forum.
- Substitutes for attendance at PAC meetings were discussed. David Fyffe, SRPBA agreed to substitute for the Business Sector (FSB) or Land Based Sector (NFUS) as required. Tom Johnstone, NFU Regional

Board is to be approached as the main representative for NFUS with Lorna Paterson as reserve.

SE representation to be considered by James Knowles and SE. SNH/FCS substitution and CVS/Community Council/Local Rural Partnerships substitution are currently working well.

4. SRDP RURAL PRIORITIES AND LEADER

4.1 Scottish Government Communication

Information from the Scottish Government regarding the proposal to transfer Measure 321, Community Services and Facilities, to LEADER was circulated.

4.2 LEADER Strategic Board Meeting, 8 December 2009 – LAG Chair Update

James Knowles ran through the power point presentation he had presented at the LEADER Strategic Board (LSB). 20 LAGs were represented at the first meeting of the LSB.

The next meeting of the LSB is scheduled for 23 February 2010 at which James Knowles will present a paper on Transfer of Community Services & Facilities Funding to LEADER.

4.3 Revised Grant Rates

From January 2010 for a 12 month trial period, grant rates of up to 90% can be considered.

LAG would like to adopt a reasoned approach and agreed to continue in the majority of applications with 50% intervention rate. For cases above 50% each will be considered on own merit including the funding requirement to enable the project to proceed.

Flexibility will be welcome for community projects who struggle to raise the match funding. However, LAG felt that the amount of effort involved in raising match funding links to the sustainability of the project and the commitment involved helps strengthen communities.

Vicky will draft text for uploading on the website regarding flexible grant rates.

5. OUTSTANDING PROJECTS (055 & 059) FROM ROUND 5

5.1 055 Crathes Hall Car Park

The Group was invited to provide further information regarding match funding and timescale of the project.

The applicants considered raising match funding to be too onerous in the current financial climate and have withdrawn the application. The group may consider a more modest proposal in the future.

5.2 059 Traditional Skills Training Centre

The applicant supplied additional information requested by the LAG.

Consultant fees have been withdrawn from the application. Reduced project costs and an increase in the applicant's own contribution have resulted in a drop in the intervention rate from 50% to 40%.

LAG agreed that the applicant had adequately answered the questions raised.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £60,973 APPROVED.

6. PROJECTS 066 TO 078

5.1 066 – Pitsligo Castle – Consolidation & Repair of Structure – Phase 1

The project is phase one of a five phase programme to consolidate the Castle structure.

The Trust aims to market and promote the Castle's important architectural and historical heritage.

The project has the support of Historic Scotland and support from the local community and schools.

LAG recommends approval of the project provided that Phase 1 is a stand alone project in its own right.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £47,205 APPROVED.

5.2 067 – Turriff Haughs Facilities – Economic Appraisal

The project relates to a feasibility study for a new build community facility at the Haughs, Turriff.

Although there is a need for community facilities in Turriff as there is no Village Hall, concern was expressed that the proposal may draw business away from other community venues.

There is scope for marketing the Haughs as an attraction for the area, but it was agreed that further investigation into flood risk would be welcomed. It may be advantageous for the applicant to investigate how the facility could be integrated with the Turriff Show as it is to be located in the showground.

LAG decision was to defer the project subject to clarification of the above points and pending further discussion in the community.

PROJECT DEFERRED FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

5.3 **068 – Aberchirder Square Environmental Improvements**

This is a partnership project between Aberchirder & District Community Association and the Local Authority to regenerate and enhance the Square in Aberchirder.

The Square is of historical significance. Work to enhance the Square will encourage economic activity in the area and lead to increased community pride.

Aberdeenshire Council will oversee the tendering process and management of works.

An Opening Event to launch the revitalised square is planned as part of the project.

LAG agreed that this was a worthwhile project which will involve all areas of the community and have potential to stem the tide of decline in the town centre.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £29,295 APPROVED.

5.4 **069 – Glamourhaugh Allotments Creation**

The project is to create an allotment site for the benefit of the Huntly community. The aim is to re-instate an area of land which was originally used for allotments.

A total of sixteen plots will be created with some allocated for use by schools and community groups.

Due to recent flooding in Huntly an amended layout for buildings on the site is proposed along with some additional drainage works. SNH is contributing to cost of hedging and pathwork.

The project will link to the community kitchen and local farmer's market. Community Learning & Development will also be involved with the project.

The Rotary Club of Huntly will oversee the project for the first 18 months.

LAG supportive of the project, especially its links to other community initiatives in Huntly, e.g. community kitchen and farmer's market.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £25,690 APPROVED.

070 – Rothienorman Bowling & Community Facility – Phase 2

Phase 2 is to furnish the new community facility with tables, chairs, industrial standard kitchen equipment and an IT/audio/visual system.

The applicants have successfully raised £6,000 towards fitting out the building. Education, Learning & Leisure have committed £3,000 and Keith

Newton confirmed that Planning Gain will contribute £3,000.

LAG felt this project was a natural progression to ensure the facility can be used by a wide range of community groups, ensuring long-term viability.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £11,881 APPROVED.

5.6 **071 – Laurencekirk Memorial Park Project – Phase 2**

The project is Phase 2 of a programme to install modern, innovative play equipment in the community park in Laurencekirk.

Phase 1 of the project has proved popular with the local community, users of the local Playbarn and visitors to the area.

The all-ability equipment has been installed and will be maintained by the Council.

LAG reported that visitors come from a wide area to use the local Playbarn, but there are no outdoor facilities which will now be provided at Laurencekirk Memorial Park. The project could generate economic spin-off for local retailers from increased visitor numbers to the Memorial Park.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £24,135 APPROVED.

072 – Transition & Parental/Carer Engagement Development Programme and Extension of Existing Service Delivery

Aberdeenshire Life Education Centre (ALEC) provides a valuable service travelling around the Shire in a mobile classroom to guide primary 1-7 pupils in making informed choices regarding health, wellbeing and lifestyle.

ALEC has a strong partnership with the Council and is supported by the Director of Education. The applicant provided detailed analysis in the form of evaluations completed by head teachers, teachers and pupils, demonstrating support for the project.

The proposal is to expand the existing provision through an additional mobile classroom and additional member of staff to deliver the programme to an increased target audience which will include S1/S2 pupils and parents.

NHS commits resources to anti-smoking and the Aberdeenshire Local Tobacco Alliance (ALTA) has made a large financial contribution towards the project.

LAG support the expansion of this successful service.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £33,000 APPROVED.

5.8 **073 – Young People’s Employability Project**

This is an innovative project to help disadvantaged young people from rural Aberdeenshire to get into the workplace.

LEADER funding will extend the length of provision of a Government initiative to get youngsters into employment from 6 to 12 months.

Project costs will cover the youngsters' salary for 25 hours per week, transport costs, equipment costs and a training element, along with on-costs of protective clothing where appropriate.

LAG considered the concept to be a fantastic opportunity for young people who have difficulty in securing employment and stressed the importance of determining if youngsters are staying in post at the end of the project.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £70,050 APPROVED.

5.9 **074 – Port Erroll Public Hall Improvement Programme**

The Hall Committee has undertaken extensive community consultation and has worked closely with Buchan Development Partnership to identify actions to bring the Hall up to standard.

Work to upgrade the Hall and make it more energy efficient will include installation of an efficient heating system, improved insulation and installation of solar panels for hot water supply.

LAG considered the proposals to be innovative and well researched and costs represent good value for money.

Forestry Commission Scotland will make contact with the group to investigate biomass as an option for the heating system.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £36,161 APPROVED.

5.10 **075 – Developing Opportunities Through Sport (Rugby)**

The project is to appoint and train a Rugby Development Officer to establish a school Rugby League. The proposal has 2 main aspects – to get a league up and running and to include pupils not involved in playing through the media aspect of league reporting and website updates thus helping to improve pupil confidence and social skills. Parental involvement will also be encouraged. Mintlaw and Laurencekirk secondary schools are to be targeted.

There is clear evidence of support from schools and a letter of support for the project from the Scottish Rugby Union.

LAG considered the project to be a positive initiative with the potential to have a constructive impact on rugby in the area whilst encouraging other pupils to become involved in reporting aspects of the project.

LAG recommend applicant investigates the roll of the Sports Council for future initiatives.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £13,000 APPROVED.

5.11 076 – Food Access Rural Environment (FARE)

Mearns Area Partnership has undertaken research into decline of rural services in south Aberdeenshire. The project, based on a social enterprise model, will set up a rural delivery service supplying fresh fruit and vegetables to identified areas. Project costs will cover vehicle and driver costs.

The proposal will address the real issue of accessing fresh produce in rural areas and will focus on areas where displacement is not an issue. Produce will be sourced locally.

The project has significant support from the local community and local Councillors.

LAG considered the project to be of great benefit to the area with the potential to be rolled out to other areas. There may be a possibility of offering an increased range of goods in the future.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £9,452 APPROVED.

5.12 077 – Echt Showground & Community Access Improvement

£4,984 approved by PAC to improve accessibility to the Echt showground by upgrading the road surfaces, paths and carrying out drainage work.

5.13 078 – Strachan Village Hall Kitchen Enhancement

£5,000 approved by PAC to improve and modernise kitchen facilities at Strachan Hall.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

PAC meeting – Tuesday, 2 March 2010, Conference Room D, Woodhill House.

LAG meeting – Tuesday, 16 March 2010, Committee Room 1, Woodhill House.