

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

**TUESDAY, 7 JUNE 2011 AT 10.00 AM
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Belinda Miller	LAG Chairperson
Charlie Adam	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Shona Anderson	Visit Scotland
Richard Burnett	Aberdeenshire Council – Finance
Gavin Clark	Scottish Natural Heritage
Reid Hutchison	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Economic Development
Bob Leonard	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Learning & Development
Scott Petrie	Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
Robert Phimister	Member of Scottish Youth Parliament
Ruth Sim	Aberdeenshire Community Councils
Maureen Stephen	Aberdeenshire Councils for Voluntary Services
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses
Matt Young	Forestry Commission Scotland

Officers in Attendance

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

Apologies

Jamie Bell	Scottish Enterprise
Moira Beverley	Aberdeenshire Council – Finance
Caroline Clark	NHS
Moira Gordon	SWRI
Jennifer Kinnaird	Scottish Government Rural Payments Inspection Directorate
John Lewis	Aberdeenshire Rural Partnership Federation
Alexander Macleod	Aberdeenshire Council – Community Planning
Keith Newton	Aberdeenshire Council - Community Planning
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Belinda Miller welcomed new members and introductions were made round the table. Apologies were noted as above.

2. POTENTIAL TRANSNATIONAL PROJECT WITH FINLAND

Strong links with Finland have been established. A party of delegates from Finland visited Scotland in January 2010 to view Aberdeenshire LEADER projects. This group formed links with Maud Development Trust and Huntly Development Trust. Following on from this visit, a group of representatives from Huntly received LEADER funding to travel to Juankoski in Finland in September 2010 with a view to investigating the potential for a collaboration project.

The potential collaboration project could involve various groups under Team Huntly

and 3 Finnish LAGs. Projects may include Cultural, Environmental and Community orientated elements.

A letter of intent to form an initial partnership agreement has been written. The Finns would fund activities for all in Finland and Aberdeenshire LEADER would fund activities for all in Aberdeenshire. Each will pay for their own travel.

Indicative costs are not available as yet. For transnational projects, Finland funds at 100%, Scotland funds at 70%.

It is hoped that an application for this transnational project will progress over the summer.

3. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

- 3.1 Draft LAG minute of 14 March 2011 and PAC minute of 24 May 2011 were approved. Both will be uploaded on the LEADER website.

4. COMMUNICATION

- 4.1 Communication will be covered under Co-ordinator's report.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE

- 5.1 Belinda met David Thomson, the new LEADER Strategic Board (LSB) Chairman, whilst attending another meeting.

5.2 EFF Axis 4

Expression of interest was submitted – awaiting outcome. The strategy document will be drawn up over summer for submission in late Autumn with programme launch thereafter.

A proposal will be put forward to SG that a percentage of Vicky and Anne's time may be proportioned to EFF in relation to programme management and administration. A dedicated Project Officer post will be created for EFF Axis 4.

A number of fishing representatives have indicated an interest in signing up to membership of the FLAG.

Challenges have been identified as:

- 50% of match funding to be found from other public funds
- Ambitious time frame
- Funding to be found within Aberdeenshire Council
- Limited information regarding intervention rate as yet.

EFF can consider applications from individual businesses, unlike LEADER.

Consultation seminars will take place shortly to highlight the fund to coastal communities.

It is anticipated that promotion of the fund will commence in late autumn.

6. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

6.1 Financial Update

Funding tables were discussed. To date approximately 14.5k of project underspends are to be factored in and, as a result of the two Udney projects being de-committed, another £100,000 approx will be recycled back into the LEADER fund.

SG has suggested that LAGs over commit their budget by up to 30%. LAG considered it a risk to over commit to that extent and will take a balanced view dependent on outcome of budget review balanced with project underspend.

It is anticipated that funds may be fully committed by the end of Round 13.

6.2 Project Update

There are currently 113 active projects with six applications received for Round 12.

The two Udney Community Wind Turbine Projects will be de-committed shortly.

6.3 Scottish Government Claims

It is estimated that the next claim to Scottish Government will be approximately £250,000.

In Aberdeenshire a total of 40% of grant committed to date has been paid out to projects. Spend is slower in some other LAG areas.

6.4 Scottish Government Reports

An audit visit by SG Rural Communities Empowerment Team will take place on 20 July 2011.

A copy of the End Year Review was circulated to the LAG.

6.5 Rural Aberdeenshire Broadband Initiative

Update on BET Technology:

Ballogie has had their first grant payment from LEADER.

Boyndie is on target to get compliment of 15 participants signed up.

Arbuthnott still need to achieve the minimum number of 15 subscribers.

The Wireless System in Kinmuck has been trialled. The project manager is undertaking further research with the aim of reducing costs to households.

6.6 LEADER Promotion

- Vicky attended the time capsule ceremony at the Udney Community Wind Turbine. The turbine will be 100% community owned and in the future 100% of income generated will come back to the community.
- The LEADER Conference will be held on 31 August at the Drumrossie Hotel in Inverness. The conference is to promote the LEADER approach and look forward to the next programme.

Transport costs will be covered for private sector LAG members.

- SG is funding the production of a Scotland-wide LEADER promotional guide to showcase what the 20 LAGs have achieved. Each LAG will be allocated 2 pages to promote 3 of their successful projects. Aberdeenshire projects to be showcased are Banffshire Coast Tourism Programme, Strichen Community Café and Countryside Live.
- Copies of the 'Explore for a Day' leaflet were circulated.
- The Countryside Live 2-day event will be held on 11/12 June at Dunecht. The Sunday will be open to the general public and the Monday is targeted at secondary school pupils. The event will promote agriculture and food production and approximately 4,000 are expected to attend over the 2 days with proceeds going to cancer charities.

7. PROJECT MID-TERM REPORTS

As part of the conditions of grant a mid-term report has to be completed for projects which run for 3 years. Mid-term reports were circulated for the following projects:

Environmental Education Project – progressing as planned and delivering what it set out to do. LAG recommend funding to continue for year 3.

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels – Educational programme/working with landowners/training of volunteers to identify habitats and species all progressing as planned. Detailed report available to LAG members. LAG recommend funding to continue for year 3.

LIFT – Project has exceeded targets of young people attending for fitness training. LAG recommend supporting the project to completion.

8. APPROVED PROJECT AMENDMENTS

A table showing project amendments approved by the Co-ordinator and LAG Chairperson since the last LAG meeting was circulated.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (DOI)

Project 127, Mid Deeside Communities Access Network Project 2011/2013 – DOI Gavin Clark, SNH.

Project 129, Aboyne Centre Enhancement Scheme – DOI Shona Anderson, Visit Scotland.

10. PROJECTS 126 to 131

10.1 126 – Fairweather Community Leisure Area

The project is to purchase and install a range of play equipment for a children's play area in Mintlaw. Mintlaw is projected to expend and there is wide community support for the project, especially from young mums, as there are no play facilities currently available. The Trustees are working in partnership with Aberdeenshire

Council Landscape Services who will oversee the purchase, installation and maintenance of equipment as well as maintenance of the landscape areas.

Aberdeenshire funding is yet to be confirmed. Landscape Services funding will be viewed positively once other funding is in place. The project meets the Council's open spaces strategy.

LAG supportive of the community health and wellbeing aspects of the project. The site will have full disability access and play equipment will be suitable for all abilities. The suggestion that adult keep-fit equipment be included was supported. Existing facilities on site include a football pitch and pavilion with toilet facilities.

Summary of LAG Responses	In favour	12
	Not in favour	0
	DOI	0

PROJECT FUNDING OF £23,814 APPROVED.

10.2 **127 – Mid Deeside Communities Access Network Project 2011-2013**

This was originally a joint application with Cairngorms LEADER relating to path creation and roll out of the popular Health Walks in three communities in mid-Deeside, namely Tarland, Lumphanan and Torphins. The application is re-submitted from Round 11 as a single application to Aberdeenshire LEADER with COAT core costs and management costs removed. However, 10% for path specification management costs is included and these are considered as eligible costs.

PAC requested that the applicant provide evidence of engagement with NHS locally. There is total support from local GPs for the range of activities which are tailor made to all abilities. COAT adheres to the correct path gradient for disability access.

LAG considered the project to link well to core path planning and local community consultation. The outcomes from detailed analysis of previous health walks is very positive hence the request to roll out in Mid-Deeside. LAG appreciated the possibilities for path users to exercise, socialise and improve general health and wellbeing.

Discussion was held regarding level of intervention but LAG felt that rate of 45% was acceptable for this project.

Summary of LAG Responses	In favour	10
	Not in favour	1
	DOI	1

PROJECT FUNDING OF £52,500 APPROVED.

10.2 **128 – Development of Boyndie Visitor Centre**

The project relates to re-organising the layout of the popular Boyndie Visitor Centre. Capital works will reshape the internal workings of the building and proposed car park improvements will allow access for buses. An industrial

polytunnel will also be erected. Two members of staff will be employed to manage the retail and training activities for one year.

The business plan and projected cash flow show turnover increasing by 50% following renovations. The Centre is a not for profit organisation and any profit made will be recycled to further develop the centre. The project will allow Aberdeenshire Council Social Work to offer increased placements for trainees with disabilities or learning difficulties.

The applicant is contributing 47% of funding required.

LAG considered that improvements to the popular 4 star visitor centre would increase tourist footfall and attract families thus linking well with other businesses in the area. Displacement is not considered an issue as the centre will encourage visitors to continue on along the Banffshire coast.

LAG approved the project with the condition that the appropriate number of disabled parking spaces are provided according to standard BS8300.

Summary of LAG Responses	In favour	12
	Not in favour	0
	DOI	0

PROJECT FUNDING OF £69,660 APPROVED.

10.3 **129 – Aboyne Centre Enhancement Scheme**

Scottish Enterprise commissioned an Architect's firm to undertake an overview of the physical appearance of the frontages of business premises in Aboyne. Mid Deeside Ltd (MDL) has been contracted to manage the project on behalf of the Aboyne businesses.

Twenty five businesses have expressed an interest with a range of proposals and costs.

In-eligible costs relate to the investment made by SE in commissioning the Architect's report. Work will be completed by April 2013. The businesses will pay in full and provide MDL with evidence of expenditure. MDL will disburse funds back to businesses on a pro rata basis. Participating businesses will require to sign a contract to this effect.

LAG considered the proposals to be more than just enhancing shop frontages, Aboyne will be uplifted as a visitor destination and there will be wider economic impact to this project. LAG felt displacement was not an issue, on the contrary, the project will encourage visitors to stay longer in the area.

The marketing plan is in the early stages of development and LAG considered marketing to be critical to the success of the project.

Due to the spread out nature of shops, adequate signage visible at the entrance to Aboyne will be essential to attract visitors to stop.

LAG felt the proposals will uplift the community from an economic and lifestyle point of view and approve the project with the condition that the marketing plan looks at signage/parking/landscaping/promotion & publicity. LAG request to be updated on the number of businesses participating in the enhancement scheme.

Summary of LAG Responses	In favour	10
	Not in favour	1
	DOI	1

PROJECT FUNDING OF £87,038 APPROVED.

10.4 **130 – Renovation of Hay Memorial Hall – Phase 2**

The historic Hay Memorial Hall in Cornhill, built in the late 19th century, is an unusual example of North East Hall and is of spectacular design. The Community Trust successfully obtained £50,000 from the People’s Millions and these funds have been used to install secondary glazing and a new air source heating system.

The LEADER project is for Phase 2 of the renovations which include new flooring, re-pointing the exterior walls and repairs to external railings. Historic Scotland consent has been received.

Existing user groups from the wider community are keen to return to the Hall and improvements will encourage new user groups to use the modernised facility which is considered to be the hub of the small community.

The Hall Committee is continually raising funds and is sending out multiple applications for match funding. The project cannot proceed until the funding profile is complete. However, LAG felt that, as in other projects where LEADER funding is granted, approval may encourage other funders to support the project. It was also suggested that the applicant apply for Planning Gain.

LAG was supportive of the proposals with the condition that the offer of grant be time limited for securing the match funding. Applicants must also ensure that disabled access meets standard BS8300.

Summary of LAG Responses	In favour	12
	Not in favour	0
	DOI	0

PROJECT FUNDING OF £28,000 APPROVED.

10.5 131 – Sandhaven & Pitullie Community Hall Feasibility Study

The small project application to undertake a full feasibility study to prioritise what needs to be done to bring the Sandhaven & Pitullie Community Hall up to modern day standards was approved by the PAC at their meeting on 24 May 2011. LAG considered the study to be worthwhile and the partnership with NESPT will greatly assist the small community group. The study may lead to a future EFF Axis 4 funding application for the capital works.

Summary of PAC Responses	In favour	4
	Not in favour	0
	DOI	0

PROJECT FUNDING OF £5,000 APPROVED BY PAC.

11. AOCB

11.1 The date of the next LAG meeting has been changed to Monday, 12 September 2011 and the venue will be the new café at Strichen Community Park. It is hoped that we can have a project presentation by one of our current projects followed by a tour of the newly completed café and Strichen Community Park.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 PAC meeting – Tuesday, 30 August 2011, Conference Room C, Woodhill House, 10.00 am.

12.2 LAG meeting – Monday, 12 September 2011, Strichen Community Park Café, 10.30 am.