

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

**TUESDAY, 28 AUGUST 2012 AT 10.00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM E1, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

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

Officers in Attendance

Vicky Thomson	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.
- 1.2 Vicky advised the PAC that Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) representative Scott Petrie is currently focusing on SLE priorities and is unable to attend Round 15 PAC & LAG meetings.

PAC commended the constructive contribution made by SLE to Aberdeenshire LAG and hoped that representation would continue in future, especially as discussions are now beginning relating to new LEADER 2014-2020.

2. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

- 2.1 The draft minute of the LAG meeting on 6 June 2012 was noted and will be considered for approval at the LAG meeting on 18 September 2012.

3. COMMUNICATION

- 3.1 Following the recent Scottish Government Accreditation visit, it was brought to Vicky's attention that, according to Audit Scotland's interpretation of the SLA, the LAG should not delegate decision making to other groups. Therefore, from Round 15 onwards, PAC will no longer have authority to approve small projects with grant application of under £5,000.

At the next LAG meeting on 18 September, a list of all projects with grant award of £5,000 or less which have previously been approved by the PAC, will be presented to the LAG to be ratified.

- 3.1 The fourth issue of the LEADER newsletter was circulated by e-mail. In this newsletter, Alistair Prior makes reference to the LEADER Working Group (LWG) report. The LWG, which is chaired by Bryan McGrath has considered the operation of the current programme and options for the future SRDP Programme. LWG recommendations will be fed back to SRDP Committees. Rural stakeholders were involved in the wide ranging discussions in drafting the LWG report. It was recommended the LWG report is used by all LAGs as a reference document which considering the 2014-2020 programme.
- 3.2 The 2012 LEADER Conference will take place in Glasgow on 22 November. There will be five places available per LAG.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE

- 4.1 Scott Petrie, SLE accompanied Belinda Miller to the LEADER Away Day for LAG Chairs and Lead Partners on 12 June 2012 to discuss future funds.
- 4.2 Belinda attended the LEADER Monitoring & Evaluation Group led by John Grieve, Rural Development Company on 15 June 2012 to look at outcomes of the current programme and consider what LEADER indicators could be adopted in the next programme to assist with meaningful programme evaluation.
- 4.3 Belinda met recently with representatives from Tayside, Moray and Cairngorms LAGs to determine the position of North East LAGs with regard to the current programme and greater co-operation when preparing for the next programme. PAC welcomed the opportunities to work across the boundaries of neighbouring LAG areas.
- 4.4 A mid-term review of the current Aberdeenshire LEADER programme will be undertaken by an external contractor. The current programme will be reviewed against the strategy document and the review will also look to the future programming period. It was agreed that the review will be impartial if carried out externally and the opportunity to share outcomes between LAGs was welcomed.

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:
- Alistair Henry, Scottish Government Accreditation Team, carried out an audit visit on 15 and 16 August 2012. Outcome was generally very positive in terms of file management and detail of processed grant claims. Concerns about resources were highlighted. In comparison to other LAG areas, it was noted that Aberdeenshire LAG staff complement is proportionally less than elsewhere. Admin costs are currently running at 11% of the budget. Up to 20% is possible.
 - As a result of the completion of the Economic Development Staff Review, the following changes have been confirmed:

- LEADER Co-ordinator title change to EU Rural & Fisheries Programme Team Leader. Post re-graded.
 - LEADER Project Officer post re-graded.
 - LEADER Administrator title change to EU Rural & Fisheries Assistant.
- Internal Audit is scheduled to commence end August. This audit is a requirement for the Annual Confirmation Certificate to Scottish Government, due at the end of October.
 - The first of two meetings for LAG members to discuss future funds was held on Friday 24 August. Alistair Prior, Head of Rural Communities Team, updated LAG members on current thoughts regarding future funds. Martin Brebner, European Services Executive, also attended the meeting to give an update from Aberdeenshire Council's perspective. A second meeting with Alistair Prior and Billy McKenzie from Scottish Government will be held on Friday, 12 October. Representatives from neighbouring LAGs will also be invited to attend.
 - Next LEADER Co-ordinator's meeting is scheduled in Aviemore on Friday, 31 August 2012. Vicky and Anne to attend.

6. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

6.1 Newmachar Community Centre

Garioch Area Manager has included the Newmachar Community facility in a bid for a share of the Aberdeenshire Council 100 Day Alliance Funding. Outcome will be known following the Policy Committee meeting on 20 September.

The £200,000 LEADER commitment to the Newmachar Centre is on the agenda for discussion at the LAG meeting on 18 September however, PAC felt it would be remiss of LEADER to make a decision on the project before the outcome of the Alliance Fund bid is known.

Stage 2 application to Sport Scotland has also been submitted.

Daviot Hall

Match funding, in particular a sum pledged in relation to a proposed wind turbine has yet to be confirmed for the construction of a new community hall. The applicants are currently trying to finalise the required match funding for the project which has a LEADER commitment of £90,000.

Both these projects will be discussed in more detail at the LAG meeting.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

7.1 There were no declarations of interest.

8. PROJECTS 154 to 164

7.1 154 – Dickson Hall Growth & Sustainability

This small project application is to support the employment of a caretaker

for the Hall on a part-time basis over an 18 month period which fits in with current Scottish Government guidance to incur spend by 31 March 2014.

Since 2010 the Hall has undergone considerable renovation and upgrade, including the installation of a biomass heating system. The Hall is currently being opened by volunteers and there is no defined cleaning or maintenance programme. A Hall manager is employed but the focus of this post is on marketing the facility.

The employment of a caretaker will help to make the hall lets more efficient with improved service provision for user groups, thereby creating additional income which will contribute to the facility's ongoing sustainability.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and Progressive Rural Economy and fits with the LAG's strategic priority Sustainable Communities.

PAC commended the applicant group on what has been achieved to date and considered this small application, on top of an already large capital investment, to be instrumental in securing long term financial sustainability for the facility.

PAC recommended a specific condition of grant be included that the applicant endeavours to source additional funding to maintain the employment of the caretaker for a further 18 months after LEADER funding ceases.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £2,937 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC CONDITION.**

7.2 155 – Ritchie Hall 2013

A previous application relating to Ritchie Hall was considered by the LAG in Round 13, however the project was unsuccessful at that point due mainly to a weak match funding profile at the time and the limited LEADER budget available.

The match funding profile is now much improved with several match funds now confirmed. The proposals to extend and improve the important community facility in the Buchan were welcomed by the PAC. The construction of an extension to the existing building will allow changing facilities for sports and football to be separate from facilities for Hall user groups. The kitchen area and equipment will be upgraded and the décor will be modernised to make the facility more inviting for income generating hires such as weddings, community meetings and private events.

Community consultation identified Ritchie Hall as a central hub for Strichen & the Buchan area. The management committee has been pro-active in maintaining the facility and recently installed biomass heating and solar panels. The proposed works will ensure that the Hall meets the wider needs of the community.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and fits

with the LAG's strategic priorities Sustainable Communities and Innovative Value Added Products and Markets.

If an application for wind turbines at Mormond Hill is successful, £100,000 will be forthcoming as significant match funding towards the project. The application is currently being considered by the Ministry of Defence.

PAC agreed that to enable the project to fit within LEADER programme spend deadlines, the outcome of the wind turbine application or equivalent match funding must be identified within the next few months, with an April 2013 start date.

PAC recommended a condition of grant offer be that all match funding must be in place by 31 January 2013 to enable the project to proceed.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £85,532 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS.**

7.3 156 – Ardallie Community Pavilion

The project is to construct a new multi-purpose pavilion at Ardallie Football Club with changing rooms, shower facilities, storage space and additional meeting facilities for local user groups. The current out-dated pavilion will be demolished.

Planning permission has been secured and building warrant will be applied for once all match funding is secured.

The management committee is an enthusiastic group of ex-football players and within the management team there is available expertise from a joiner, electrician, plumber and site manager. The cost for the construction demonstrates good value for money due to the in-kind work which will be carried out by committee members and also some materials being provided at cost price. In-kind work will be evidenced by timesheets.

The facility will be available for the whole community, not just the football club and there is evidence of support from a variety of potential user groups.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and Progressive Rural Economy and fits with the LAG's strategic priority Sustainable Communities.

PAC considered the project to be good value for money in an area where rural community facilities are limited. SITA funding outcome should be known by November and PAC considered that approval from LEADER could go some way to help secure SITA funding.

PAC was supportive of the proposals and it was suggested that the applicant consider installing a cycle rack at the facility. A condition of offer of grant to be that all match funding must be in place by a certain date.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £33,687 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS.**

7.4 **157 – Forgue Kirk and its Past and Present**

The project consists of two elements. The first being internal works and refurbishment of the B Listed Forgue Kirk building which was designed by Archibald Simpson and is owned by the community. The second is the community involvement in capturing the social history of the area with verbal & photographic records of the Forgue community. Volunteers will work with local schools to undertake research.

The capital works will enhance the building, making it more attractive for small weddings, choral recitals and other musical events. Project works will be undertaken in the calendar year to October 2013, well within the current timescale as advised by Scottish Government. Works will be overseen by an architect who has a specific interest in the conservation and sustainability of the building.

The refurbished building could be used as a venue for those returning for Homecoming 2014 events.

LEADER costs relate to internal works, computer purchase and project management costs. Ineligible project costs relate to volunteer transport costs, conservation fees which have already been incurred and a contingency element which is not allowed in LEADER, but is an integral element in match funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The refurbished building, originally a church, will be open to all user groups within Forgue and surrounding area. Future income will come from continued fundraising and from letting the facility.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and fits with the LAG's strategic priorities Sustainable Communities, Innovative Value Added Products & Markets, Sustainable Tourism Development and Conservation of the Rural Environment.

PAC considered the valuable project to have a strong community element. Proposals will ensure that a building of important architectural heritage in a rural area is preserved for the future.

PAC raised the question of whether the applicant has applied for Homecoming 2014 funding. LEADER Co-ordinator will bring this to the applicant's attention as the deadline for Homecoming 2014 applications is early September.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £17,796 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.5 **158 – Junior Driving School**

The project will create a driving circuit simulating the real road situation complete with basic signage, junctions and road markings at the Grampian Transport Museum in Alford. Eight electric vehicles complete with safety regulators will be purchased. The aim of the project is to instil road safety knowledge and skills in young people up to early teens.

The project which is focusing on road safety will generate a modest income

as running costs will be fairly high. The transport museum is contributing 40% of the cost. Surfacing quotes were obtained from three companies. The preferred bidder with most cost effective quote will contribute £3,000 of in-kind contribution towards the cost of the track, this ensuring good value for money.

The project is aimed at 3-11 year olds. However as road safety initiatives in Aberdeenshire generally are targeted at an older age group, PAC considered it to be logical to target 13-15 year olds. PAC was interested to find out what activities the venue offers for the pre-driving age group.

PAC considered the proposals to offer an additional attraction at an already popular visitor centre, thereby contributing to the economic sustainability of the facility.

The bespoke track will be the only one of its kind in North East Scotland and PAC welcomed the genuine educational aspect of the proposals. From an economic perspective the project is good in terms of increased visitor numbers.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and Progressive Rural Economy and fits with the LAG's strategic priorities Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Energy, Innovative Value Added Products & Markets and Sustainable Tourism Development.

PAC would welcome more detail about the electric cars and any potential safety issues. It was also suggested that a letter of agreement confirming availability of the cars be drawn up between Grampian Transport Museum and the Swedish supplier.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £15,796 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS.

7.6 159 – Aboyne Wheelers (Skatepark)

The project is to construct a new skatepark facility in Aboyne which will be free of charge for users. The applicants, Aboyne Wheelers (Skatepark) who are a sub group of Mid Deeside Ltd, have carried out a huge amount of community consultation to identify demand for the skatepark. A very robust business plan was submitted with the application.

There is evidence of overwhelming support from all ages of the local community and the committee is continually fund raising. The site was chosen based on detailed community consultation. Negotiations have started with regard to establishing a lease with Aberdeenshire Council.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and fits with the LAG's strategic priorities Sustainable Communities, Innovative Value Added Products & Markets and Sustainable Tourism Development.

Indicative costs have been provided by a skatepark company but the applicant will have to follow procurement guidance and put the project out to tender.

Mid Deeside Ltd have committed £31,000 of legacy funding raised from previous attempts several years ago to set up a skatepark. The Marr Area Committee is willing to back the project and the Area Manager has confirmed that £25,000 of Aberdeenshire Alliance Funding for the skatepark has been put forward for consideration by Policy & Resources Committee.

PAC was supportive of the proposals and would welcome assurances that the skatepark has been designed to be accessible for disabled users – not just disabled access to the site.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £44,500 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.7 **160 – Logie Coldstone Hall ‘ A New Lease of Life’**

The project is to completely refurbish Logie Coldstone Hall and increase energy efficiency with the installation of an air source heat pump, new double glazed windows and improved insulation. External landscaping will be carried out and accessibility is also to be improved.

A feasibility study funded by Awards for All was carried out in 2009 and results came back with an over ambitious plan which was beyond the capabilities of the applicant group. The reduced proposals are of a more manageable scale in terms of raising match funding and value for money. Planning permission has been approved and building warrant will be required.

The application is through stage one of the Climate Challenge Fund. An energy audit was carried out to calculate the CO² savings. This is an important requirement for Climate Challenge funding and the applicants are optimistic about securing funding. The Robertson Trust may support the application but are awaiting outcome from LEADER before making a commitment.

There is strong community support for the proposals and Community Planning has been involved. Match funding towards the project is recommended for approval through the Aberdeenshire Alliance funding. This will be considered by Scrutiny & Audit Committee 20 September.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and fits with the LAG’s strategic priorities Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Energy, and Conservation of the Rural Environment.

Discussion took place regarding the air source heat pump. However, the applicant had confirmed that biomass was not considered an appropriate fit for this project.

PAC considered proposals would consolidate the Hall and make the facility more user friendly. Additional housing near the hall features in the Development Plan and PAC considered the refurbishment to be money well spent in a rural area where community facilities are limited.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £82,834 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.8 **161 – Aberdeenshire Fuel Management**

The applicant is Ringlink (Scotland) Ltd, a co-operative which provides services and goods for agricultural and rural businesses in Aberdeenshire. The project aims to provide a cost effective solution for fuel delivery to farms, rural businesses and household in terms of fuel efficiency and continuity of supply of heating oil and machinery fuel. Fuel tank monitoring technology will be installed on the fuel tanks of all participating members. Results will be relayed to Ringlink using GSM mobile signals. Fuel consumption will be monitored and analysed. Software will enable staff to manage fuel purchase and distribution and, through bulk purchasing, will ensure efficient delivery and best available price for participants.

A total of 400 Aberdeenshire members were surveyed regarding interest in taking up the service in Aberdeenshire, responses to which have demonstrated keen interest to use the cost saving service. PAC welcomed the innovative proposals which could have the benefit of improved business performance through collaborative activities and purchasing. If successful, this Aberdeenshire pilot project could be rolled out in Moray in the future.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Progressive Rural Economy and fits with the LAG's strategic priorities Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Energy and Innovative Value Added Products & Markets.

Although proposals have potential to provide cost effective service, PAC would welcome clarification about possible barriers to entry to the scheme and membership of Ringlink. Further information also required on how the scheme can work without GSM and what happens in non-spots.

The issue of displacement was raised. This project would be a state aid issue subject to de-minimis regulations.

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £27,300 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL
SUBJECT TO FURTHER INFORMATION BEING PROVIDED.**

7.9 **162 – Walks of Life**

The project relates to the employment of a Project Manager for an 18 month period to develop a 'walking institute' for Huntly. This period is in line with current Scottish Government guidance regarding dates for completion of projects. The institute will aim to promote Huntly as a walking destination and deliver a programme of cultural, social and artistic walking related elements through a series of events. The LEADER element will also fund temporary contracts for writers in residence and internships as well as the development of a website and the creation of a walking section within the Brander Library.

The applicant, Deveron Arts, is a highly respected community arts based organisation which has secured £30,000 of funding through Creative Scotland. Securing this funding was the catalyst to the walking institute concept.

There is strong evidence of support for proposals from the local community,

public & private sector organisations and it was considered the project did demonstrate good links to regional strategies and priorities in relation to tourism and health & wellbeing.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and Progressive Rural Economy and fits with the LAG's strategic priorities Sustainable Communities, Innovative Value Added Products & Markets and Sustainable Tourism Development.

PAC considered the proposals to be novel and innovative. Deveron Arts deliver by increasing public appreciation of the arts & cultural heritage while activities undertaken through projects are open to all members of the community.

PAC recommended a condition of grant be that Deveron Arts continue to fund the post of Project Manager for a further 18 month period after LEADER funding ceases to increase the impact of the initiative. PAC also requires assurance that the proposals fits with the Council's cultural portfolio.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £30,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.10 **163 – Lonmay Hall Modernisation Project**

The project is to carry out a series of modest modernisation improvements at the public Hall in Lonmay to make it a more attractive and more accessible facility for the local community.

Proposed works will include kitchen improvements, disabled toilet facilities, double glazing, replacing the heating system, access ramps, new flooring and new tables and chairs.

Costs are based on quotes received and all match funding has been confirmed.

There is genuine enthusiasm for the proposals from the local community and the applicant has visited the Tin Hut in Gartly which is a good example of a social interest venue being run at a low cost. The applicant group hope to introduce a cultural element through musical events involving local youngsters.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and fits with the LAG's strategic priorities Sustainable Communities and Sustainable Energy.

PAC considered why costs were lower than other hall improvement projects. It was agreed that proposals are more of a superficial upgrade than a major upgrade. The applicant group is capable of managing this scale of development and a variety of donated materials and equipment have already been secured thus demonstrating good value for money.

PAC recommended that the applicant make contact with Aberdeenshire Council's Sustainable Development Officer -Climate Change regarding

insulation improvements.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £10,455 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.1 **164 – Mid Deeside Walking to Health Development Project**

The project is to appoint a subcontractor to ensure the continuation of the current Walking to Health Programme from April 2013 onwards. Aberdeenshire LEADER is currently funding three community paths as well as the Mid Deeside Health Walks for the period to March 2013 in project Ref: RAL/R12/Jun 11/127.

For the current application the applicant has secured support from NHS and is awaiting written confirmation of this. A sum of £4,500 has been approved by SNH.

This project will encompass transport and training. LEADER cannot fund admin time for the completion of LEADER claims, therefore this would have to be considered an ineligible cost. The works will be in the same geographical area as the current project. From information provided, the only new part is a diabetes health walk element.

The project aligns with LEADER theme/s Revitalising Communities and fits with the LAG's strategic priority Sustainable Communities.

PAC was of the opinion that the proposal is not new or original. PAC would like to see continued support from NHS for the health walks. It was agreed that there was insufficient detail in the application about what the funding will be used for. PAC also considered there to be a risk of some overlap with Cairngorms LEADER in relation to some of the planned walks.

Although PAC considered the concept to be worthwhile, proposals were seen as an extension of previous project with little change to the current project being supported by LEADER. It was agreed that the project could not be recommended unless substantially more information is provided regarding what is different about this proposal.

PROJECT FUNDING OF £5,520 DEFERRED TO LAG.

8. **AOCB**

There was no other business.

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

LAG meeting – Tuesday, 18 September 2012, Banff Castle at 10.30 am

PAC meeting – Tuesday, 20 November 2012, Committee Room 4,
Woodhill House at 10.00 am