

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

**TUESDAY, 30 AUGUST 2011 AT 10.00 AM  
CONFERENCE ROOM C, WOODHILL HOUSE**

**Present**

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

**Officers in Attendance**

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

**Apologies**

Martin Barry	Scottish Enterprise
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**

Belinda Miller welcomed those present and apologies were noted as above.

**2. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING**

- 2.1 The draft LAG minute of 7 June 2011 was noted and will be considered for approval by the LAG at the meeting on 12 September 2011.
- 2.2 An application for the Transnational Project with Finnish LAGs did not come forward in Round 13. Discussions are still ongoing.

**3. COMMUNICATION**

Alistair Prior, who has replaced Angela Wiseman as Head of Rural Communities and Rural Policy Team, has accepted the invitation to attend the next LAG meeting at Strichen Community Park Cafe on Monday, 12 September.

**4. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE**

- 4.1 The Chairperson informed the PAC about two recent bereavements involving LAG members.
- 4.2 The Chairperson is to arrange a meeting with David Thomson, the new LSB Chairman, to update him on LEADER in Aberdeenshire and also to discuss the administration of EFF Axis 4.

- 4.3 The first Aberdeenshire FLAG meeting is due to take place this afternoon. Four community consultation events have already taken place to assess support for and interest in the coastal fund. The strategy document and business plan will be submitted by 9 September.

## **5. LEADER CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE**

### **5.1 Financial Update**

Financial tables were circulated. The figures in Table 3 have been adjusted to take account of the recent de-commitment of the 2 Udney Wind Turbine Projects.

The Aberdeenshire LEADER intervention rate currently stands at 33% of eligible project costs.

### **5.2 Project Update**

The number of active projects now stands at 111 with 10 projects to be considered in Round 13.

### **5.3 Funding Update**

To be moved for discussion prior to projects being assessed.

### **5.4 Scottish Government Claims**

Following on from the most recent claim to Scottish Government, £1.7million has now been drawn down. This equates to 37% of the Aberdeenshire budget of £4.52 million.

### **5.5 Scottish Government Reports and Monitoring**

A Scottish Government request to carry out a backtrack exercise regarding project measure codes for the last 3 claims was completed.

The first audit by SG Rural Communities & Rural Policy Team took place on 20 July 2011. Anna Murray and Vicky Reynolds reviewed project files resulting in green light status for Aberdeenshire. Suggestions made by SG following last year's audit had been implemented.

Chairperson thanked the LEADER team on behalf of the PAC.

### **5.6 Rural Aberdeenshire Broadband Initiative**

First project claims for Boyndie and Kinmuck have been processed. Targets almost met for installation at Kinmuck. Additional consultation ongoing in Arbuthnott to achieve the minimum of 15 participants. Ballogie awaiting installation of equipment once BT staff have been trained.

### **5.7 LEADER Promotion**

Countryside Live event to showcase the role of agriculture and rural industries in the community was held at Dunecht Estates on 11 & 12 June 2011. The event was well organised with over 300 volunteers being in attendance. Shuttle buses were used to transport visitors between sections and over 4,000 attended over the two days.

Strichen Community Park Café was officially opened by Alex Salmond, First

Minister on 8 July 2011.

LEADER was promoted at the Turriff show on 31 July and 1 August.

Jamie attended the launch of the Mearns Heritage project on 24 August 2011. A broad section of the local community was represented at the launch. The newly appointed Mearns Heritage Project Officer gave an interesting overview of the project.

### **5.8 Programme Management & Administration**

Start up meetings continue to be held with new projects.

Project monitoring has commenced on completed projects.

The annual LEADER conference takes place tomorrow, 31 August, at the Drumossie Hotel in Inverness. Copies of the new Scotland wide publication showcasing LAG projects should be available for collection and these will be circulated at the LAG meeting.

## **6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Belinda Miller, Aberdeenshire Council, project 133 Haddo Country Park Regeneration Project.

### **5.3 Funding Update**

A spreadsheet detailing spend to date, project underspends to date and de-committed projects was circulated. The average project underspend to date on completed projects is 5%.

Scottish Government want to see funds committed and money spent and guidance to Co-ordinators suggests LAG's could over-commit by up to 30% as has been the case in other budgets within Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). The PAC considers over-commitment to that extent at this stage in the programme to be too great a risk.

The current indicative balance available to Round 13 applications will not be sufficient to cover total funding request.

PAC discussed the possibility of factoring in a figure relating to projected future underspend, however, this was considered as a low risk strategy. Discussion was held on whether the LAG was in a position to make such a decision. As lead partner, Aberdeenshire Council must be consulted. It was agreed that Vicky explore proposals with representatives from Aberdeenshire Council Finance in advance of the LAG meeting.

Equally, PAC agreed that to underspend is also a risk as this may lead to the funding allocation for the next LEADER programme being significantly reduced.

PAC asked if Vicky could seek clarification from Scottish Government on where extra funding would come from to cover a 30% over commitment. Vicky confirmed that SG would not be able to cover any over commitment by the LAG and as such any over commitment would require to be based on

the LAG's own good cash management.

Further budget planning will be discussed at the next PAC meeting on 23 November 2011.

## **7. PROJECTS 132 to 141**

### **7.1 141 – Barnardo's Works**

The proposal is for a 1 year pilot project in rural Aberdeenshire to help young people into the workplace through training and work experience.

Costs relate to £78k for salaries for 1 year, £15,300 for training and work experience costs, £6,400 travel costs and the balance for sundry costs. The part-time children's service manager post and the 1 FTE project officer post will be filled by existing staff members. These are not new posts and are considered by PAC to be direct core funding costs which may be ineligible. The employee liaison officer and 0.5 FTE project officer posts are new posts and would be considered eligible.

PAC considered the proposed concept to be very good. Young people in rural areas are disadvantaged when it comes to employment opportunities. There is evidence that a similar pilot project in Cairngorms resulted in employment opportunities following training given.

Barnardos has been successful in leveraging in ESF funding in other areas. However, there is no information provided regarding an application for ESF funding in Aberdeenshire.

PAC considered the application detail to be limited. There is insufficient information regarding evidence of demand. Concerns were expressed regarding possibility of core funding. No detail is available regarding sustainability of the 1 year pilot. As four projects have already been completed in other areas, it was felt that this is not a pilot project and the applicant should already know if proposals are going to work. There is no evidence of value for money from other areas. There is no written support from employers willing to offer placements. The business plan was considered to be weak. Various similar employability schemes are already running and it was considered that this proposal would be another layer of duplication rather than complementing other schemes.

PAC recommendation to the LAG is to decline this proposal due to the application being insufficient in detail. However the applicant would be able to submit a future application for LEADER funding with a more clearly defined proposal.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>0</b>

PROJECT FUNDING OF £48,938 DECLINED.

## 7.2 **135 – P.O.R.T. Scoping Study**

The project is for a scoping study to look at future potential uses for a derelict former boat shed on the harbour side in Portsoy. The study will be two pronged, firstly to look at the structural state of the building and draw up plans for a training centre offering a range of traditional skills including boat building. Secondly, the top floor of the building will become a bunk house offering accommodation.

The study will be a pre-cursor to implementing capital works to develop the building. Two consultants will be employed to consider planning requirements, determine likely costs and to draw up a business plan to demonstrate future sustainability of the complex being run as a social enterprise.

PAC considered the proposals to be a logical way forward to enable the applicant to access funding for the future capital works.

The capital works may come forward as a possible EFF Axis 4 project.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>0</b>

PROJECT FUNDING OF £5,000 APPROVED BY PAC.

## 7.3 **132 – Longside Community Hall Improvement Project**

The project is to upgrade and improve facilities at the Church of Scotland Hall in Longside, east of Mintlaw. Work will include improvements to energy efficiency, and accessibility.

Costs are based on QS estimates and a full tender brief will be issued to local tradesmen once funding has been confirmed.

Renewable energy was considered but the the size of plot excludes the possibilities for biomass. The applicant is considering UPVC replacement windows. However, PAC felt they should be encouraged to retain the multi-pane style of window in keeping with the style of this attractive building. Planning permission is not generally required for windows if replacing like with like.

Significant new housing developments are planned for the area and PAC suggested that the applicant submit an application for Planning Gain.

A community café currently operates from the Hall and it is well used by the local community. There is considerable of evidence of demand from user groups including numerous non-religious groups.

PAC discussed the match funding profile, acknowledging funds already confirmed. The applicant is making a significant contribution of £47k from their own funds. Outcome of SITA funding application will be known by end November and the Church of Scotland loan is yet to be confirmed.

PAC recommend the project for approval with the following conditions:

- the new windows are in keeping with the architectural style of the building.
- the applicant explore the possibility of Planning Gain.
- all match funding to be in place by 31 January 2012.
- assurance that there is an equal opportunities policy in place and the facilities will be available for use by external groups and organisations.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>0</b>

PROJECT FUNDING OF £63,641 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL SUBJECT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS.

7.4 **138 – Gallows Hill Community Pavilion, Newburgh**

The project is to construct a community changing room facility in Newburgh. The building will be situated between the football pitch and existing multi-purpose sports courts and will serve both. These facilities will be linked by a tarred car park.

As well as home and away changing rooms, toilet facilities and new kitchen, there will also be 2 meeting/educational/community rooms located within the facility. The local school has indicated an interest in using the facility for educational outdoor field trips. There is also demand for a local tennis club to be formed.

Solar panels will be installed in the roof for hot water. It was suggested that the applicant contact Aberdeenshire Council's Renewable Energy Development Co-ordinator for advice on possible income from the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI). If the project fits with the RHI then it may be that the cost of solar panels would become ineligible for LEADER funding.

The community is expanding quickly and £51k of Planning Gain has been secured. The applicant is contributing £10k in cash and £50k in-kind costs. Much of the work will be self-build by a group of qualified volunteers. There is evidence of support from many local user groups.

The lease of the site is currently under negotiation with Aberdeenshire Council.

SNH may also express an interest to make use of the facility. Gavin Clark will raise with the Community Council rep on the SNH Local Liaison Panel.

PAC recommend the project for approval subject to the following conditions:

- links to be established with SNH.
- applicant investigates potential of RHI.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>0</b>

PROJECT FUNDING OF £80,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL SUBJECT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS.

#### 7.5 **139 – New Daviot Village Hall**

The project is to build a new Hall in the car park of the existing run down Daviot Village Hall. The old building will then be demolished and a new car park laid on the site. The old hall will continue to be used until the new construction is complete allowing continuity for user groups. The new hall will be of a similar size but a modern, space and energy efficient facility fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century needs.

The active community group had previously submitted an application to SRDP for refurbishment of the existing building. However, this was declined as proposals did not increase employment opportunities.

Costs have been prepared by QS and an invitation will be issued to contractors once funding is confirmed. Planning Gain and the community group's own contribution are both confirmed. A recent fund raising event was held and the first £5k from the 'buy a brick' campaign was raised. A local business has confirmed that £86k may be available towards the project.

Discussion took place regarding potential displacement with other facilities. It was agreed that a commercial enterprise a few miles distant focussed on different activities and user groups from typical village hall user groups.

PAC considered Daviot to be a small community with a wide rural hinterland which will have a facility to be proud of for perpetuity. There is clear evidence of demand from user groups and this will increase as the community grows. This would be a LEADER project with a legacy.

PAC recommend the project for approval subject to the following conditions:

- funding profile to be in place by end January 2012.
- that there is evidence of full disabled access to the building.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>0</b>

PROJECT FUNDING OF £97,700 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL SUBJECT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS.

#### 7.6 **140 – Ritchie Hall 2012**

The project is to develop and upgrade the Ritchie Hall in Strichen to extend and improve the changing rooms, install a new kitchen, upgrade the toilet facilities and install new disabled toilets. The hall is situated close to the football ground and is currently sharing toilet facilities with the football

changing rooms. This is an unsatisfactory arrangement which can cause concerns for user groups.

The applicant is an innovative community group, being one of the first in Aberdeenshire to install a biomass system and solar panels in the Hall. The facility has higher than average usage figures for a village hall and there is clear evidence of community support for the improvements.

PAC was supportive of the proposal however, as no match funding is confirmed at the time of application apart from the group's own contribution, PAC considered the funding profile to be weak.

An application has been submitted to Sports Scotland and the Aberdeenshire Council's Education Learning & Leisure Capital Grant Scheme, the outcome of which is not known.

PAC acknowledge that where LEADER makes an provisional commitment it does go some way to encouraging other funders and therefore recommend that should LAG consider approval, a deadline of 31 March 2012 be set for the match funding profile to be confirmed.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>0</b>

**PROJECT FUNDING OF £78,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL SUBJECT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS.**

#### **7.7 133 – Haddo Country Park Regeneration Project**

The project relates to the strategic development and revitalisation of Haddo Country Park, a popular visitor attraction in Aberdeenshire. The aim is to increase visitor numbers to the facility by 15% by 2015. The proposed development programme will be over 5 years but the LEADER elements will be a 2 year programme of community focused works to the interpretation centre. Eligible costs for LEADER elements amount to £179k.

The application is submitted by Aberdeenshire Council on behalf of a range of stakeholders comprising National Trust for Scotland, Haddo Estate & Historic Scotland, and is very much a partnership approach on behalf of Haddo Country Park Forum. Lottery funding was used for the feasibility phase 1 to bring the capital application to its current state.

The identifiable aspects of the project which fit with LEADER include improvements to the visitor arrival area, new access paths to the stables, creation of an interpretation centre and new toilet facilities at the stables. There is clear demarcation between LEADER elements and any elements which may be funded through SRDP.

The match funding profile is strong with funding of £410k confirmed through Aberdeenshire Council's capital grant budget. Haddo Estate and National Trust for Scotland have also confirmed. Maintenance funding is confirmed

through Aberdeenshire Council's Landscape Services budget. A statement of intent has been submitted to SRDP. However, a funding gap in the region of £70,000 towards the overall £1.8m project had been identified, resulting in the application to LEADER.

PAC considered the project to be of strategic significance with marketing playing a key element in its success. The beneficiaries will be the visitors who use the park and the majority of users are currently from Rural Aberdeenshire. There is potential for economic spin off in the area if the project is marketed correctly.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>1</b>

PROJECT FUNDING OF £70,691 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

At this point, Scott Petrie had to leave to attend another meeting. He gave his approval for those projects still to be considered. The question of quorum was raised and after referring to the Terms of Reference which state that: "If a quorum is not present, at the Chairperson's or acting Chair's discretion, the meeting shall proceed and any decisions will be agreed through written procedure with the PAC or LAG as appropriate", the Chairperson took the decision to continue to make recommendations to the LAG.

#### 7.8 **134 – Short Breaks for Carers**

The application is submitted by Kincardine & Deeside Befriending. The project is a pilot to run over 2 years to recruit volunteer befrienders to support carers in need of relief from round the clock caring for loved ones. A new part-time co-ordinator will be employed to manage the project.

Sixty per cent of costs are eligible for the rural component and forty per cent is ineligible being for larger settlements. Eligible project costs include staff costs and recruitment costs. It is hoped to recruit 15 volunteers in the first year and 25 in the second year of the project.

Outcome of Scottish Government funding application should be known by end of October and as the applicants are well respected in their field of work, a positive outcome is anticipated.

PAC considered this to be an innovative project and valued the work of care in the community to allow the elderly and infirm to stay on in their own homes. The applicant has a good track record of work with elderly people living isolated lives. An element of the cost is to cover a full evaluation of the pilot.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>0</b>

PROJECT FUNDING OF £20,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

7.9 **135 – Crathes Public Hall Feasibility & Development Study**

The project is to carry out a feasibility study on the viability of the existing Crathes Hall. The study will look at restoration and development of the hall and the development of a supporting business plan to ensure future sustainability of the hall.

LEADER funding of £8k towards total feasibility cost of £24 is requested.

PAC considered costs of £24k to be high for a feasibility study and limited detail on how this money will be utilised was available. It was agreed that sight of the draft invitation to tender document will be required to establish if proposals represent value for money. The study will be dependent on the outcome of Awards for All funding.

PAC recommend the concept of the proposals for the study but further detail will be required in advance of the LAG in order to justify the costs.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>0</b>

PROJECT FUNDING OF £8,400 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BEING PROVIDED.

7.10 **137 – Mill of Benholm Feasibility Study**

Mill of Benholm is run as a social enterprise where people with learning disabilities can attend training and work placement. The project is for a feasibility study to be carried out to investigate the strategic direction and future sustainability of the facility. The study will follow a three pronged approach which will include looking at the infrastructure and possible design of a new building, a social audit to identify ways to develop employment opportunities for the community and a business support service to get the trust onto a more sustainable footing.

The draft invitation to tender is clearly focused. A lease is to be formalised before any capital works are carried out.

PAC considered the costs to be reasonable for the broad range of the study. Proposals fit with the strategic links in the Kincardine & Mearns community plan. PAC felt the project has the potential to promote the area and increase the offering for the benefit of locals and visitors alike.

<b>Summary of Responses</b>	<b>In favour</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>DOI</b>	<b>0</b>

PROJECT FUNDING OF £10,000 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

8. **AOCB**

There was no AOCB.

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

LAG – Monday, 12 Sept 2011, Strichen Community Park Café, 10.30 am.

PAC – Wednesday, 23 Nov 2011, Committee Room 4, Woodhill, 10.00 am.