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## **Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Programme forges ahead**

The Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group (LAG) met recently to consider Round 2 applications to the LEADER Programme.

A wide range of community led projects have been approved, demonstrating the positive impact that LEADER has in revitalising communities, stimulating the local economy and recognising the cultural heritage of rural communities throughout Aberdeenshire.

A total of 17 projects have been approved in Round 2 which have been awarded £413,171. This now brings total approvals for 2008 to 24 projects with capital costs of £2.1 million and a total LEADER commitment of £575,390.

Match funding towards approved projects has come from a range of organisations including public sector partners within the Local Action Group, Lottery and Trust funds and a significant private contribution from participants in the programme.

Rural Aberdeenshire's Local Action Group (LAG) partnership was launched in June 2008 following an award of £3.36 million which came from a successful rural development bid to the LEADER programme, funded by the Scottish Government and European Commission.

Complimenting the Round 2 approvals James Knowles, LAG Chairman said: "We have come a long way in six months in delivering LEADER in Rural Aberdeenshire.

"This is clearly demonstrated by the variety and calibre of applications submitted to Round 2.

"The applications also demonstrate a good mix of public/private partnership in the projects as well as support from a wide range of match-funders.

"Community groups are to be commended for their ability to bring forward well researched and well prepared projects which will benefit their local areas through creation or improvement to community facilities, organising events and initiatives involving the community and projects that recognise our cultural heritage and those that will enhance our renowned environment."

LAG member, Ewen Cameron from Scottish Natural Heritage, said: "The natural environment plays a crucial part in supporting the quality of life we all enjoy in north east Scotland.

"Many rural businesses, especially in tourism, food and outdoor recreation thrive where sensitive development goes hand in hand with good environmental management, understanding and appreciation.

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“SNH is delighted to invest staff time and money in actively supporting the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Programme, which has sustainable development at its heart.”

Approved projects from Round 2 include:

- Scolty Trails Enhancement Project will improve and enhance existing path networks on Scolty Hill, a major local and tourist attraction on South Deeside near Banchory.

Tony Brown, Banchory and District Initiative Director and Chair of the Scolty Trails Enhancement Project said: “It was marvellous news to learn that our application for LEADER funding had been successful – indeed, an early and much appreciated Christmas present!

“The award will allow the repair of the very badly damaged footpaths on Scolty Hill to proceed without delay whereas, without LEADER, it might have been some considerable time before this work could be done - with increasing impact on the pleasure visitors get from the hill.”

- The Portsoy Salmon Bothy will employ a Manager to run the facility as a visitor attraction and local community asset.

Robin Maddock, Director of the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival said: “The Portsoy Salmon Bothy, which is owned and run by the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival, was fully restored during 2008 and opened its doors to the public in November.

“The building houses a genealogical research centre, where people can delve into their family roots and an open space called ‘Upstairs at the Bothy’.

“This area can be used for business meetings, recitals, art and craft displays and tutorials.

“There is also a museum which is almost complete, showcasing the industrial history of Portsoy and the Scottish salmon net fishing industry which was very important to this part of the country.

“Securing LEADER funding allows us to purchase presentation equipment for use in the building, provide external signage and seating and pay 50 per cent of the bothy manager’s salary for the first 3 years of operations.

“The appointment of a manager will allow us to professionally promote and market the buildings facilities and optimise the use of this wonderful building. The opening of this building will also bring additional tourist revenue to Portsoy and the surrounding area.”

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- The Aberdeenshire Conservation Recycle Store (ACReS) will employ a part-time Manager to run a building materials store which will collect, assess and recycle architectural heritage materials otherwise destined for landfill.

Cllr Marcus Humphrey, Chairman North East Scotland Building Preservation Trust has welcomed the LEADER decision.

"This is great news for Aberdeenshire's Built & Cultural Heritage," he said. "The LEADER funding is the catalyst to providing the Aberdeenshire Conservation Recycle Store with a store manager who can grow the store enabling the retention and reuse of architectural granite stones, as well as slates, and cast iron goods for restoration projects.

"These materials are a non renewable resource which give the people of north east Scotland a direct link with earlier generations of tradesmen and an essential factor in providing a built heritage which draws tourists here from all over the world."

- The Old Deer Children's Play Area Improvement Project will develop the local playing field to provide recreational interest for all ages and support inter-community activities.

Dr John Ollason, Chairman of Old Deer Community Association, said: "Old Deer Community Association is undertaking an ambitious project through the complete redesign and rebuilding of the children's play park in Old Deer.

"The recently awarded funds of £10,677 through LEADER, matches funds already gathered from other sources, and leaves the association in sight of completing funding of the project.

"Without the support of LEADER our project would have been severely delayed or only partially completed, so we are most grateful for the support that LEADER has provided."

- Fyvie Homecoming Festival will run a series of events over a three day period and will link to Homecoming 2009.

Anne Iravani, Chair of the Fyvie Homecoming Festival Organising Committee, said: "I am thrilled and delighted to hear of the recent success of the Fyvie Amenities Committee in securing LEADER funding of £4,800 towards the Fyvie Homecoming Festival.

"The grant means we are now able to go ahead with promoting the wide range of events which are scheduled for the three day festival in August 2009."

- The Tarland Community Path Network project will upgrade a 2km path network around Tarland community, plus 1.5km of an all abilities path within Alastrean Woods

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Dougie Baird, Manager of Cairngorms Outdoors Access Trust, said: “This is tremendous support from the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER programme and enables us to further our work on Community Path Networks at Tarland.

“The grant will be used to construct the first all-abilities path in the Tarland network at Alastrean Woods, providing much needed access for locals and visitors alike, as well as to improve access on the Drummy path.

“We intend to start construction early in the New Year and to complete the work before the end of March.”

- The Local Hub, Kintore will be established as a drop-in centre, meeting place and coffee shop open to all groups and individuals in the growing community of Kintore.

Alison McDonald, Manager of the Local Hub, said: “The community of Kintore is one of the fastest growing communities in Scotland, and in an attempt to protect and strengthen its community spirit, the Local Hub aims to provide a central focal point for the communication of information for both new and existing residents, as well as visitors exploring the rich history of the area.

“To ensure that this community facility will be sustainable in the long term, the Local Hub will operate a small coffee shop within the facility providing an array of products to suit different budgets and tastes.

“Any surplus profits made after the sale of goods will be reinvested back into local community projects and voluntary groups that benefit the community as a whole.

Over the last two years, a small team of people have been working in conjunction with Kintore Community Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Langstane Housing to develop the concept of ‘The Local Hub’ and raise the start up funds required to implement this facility within Kintore.

“Raising these funds has been a time consuming task and in addition to other funding support already received, the Local Hub is enormously grateful for the assistance received from the LEADER group.

“LEADER funding has helped make this vitally important community facility become a reality for the residents of Kintore.

“The Local Hub looks forward to being able to demonstrate the benefits that its concept will bring to the people in the Kintore area during 2009.”

LEADER Co-ordinator Vicky Thomson said: “We are delighted with the progress of the first six months of the LEADER programme in Rural Aberdeenshire.

“New enquiries are received on a regular basis, so we expect 2009 to be busy with a number of innovative projects coming forward.

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“Details of approvals to date can be found on the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER website which also provides information on the programme and how to apply for funding.”

For information please visit: [www.aberdeenshireleader.org](http://www.aberdeenshireleader.org)

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## *Notes to Editor*

LEADER stands for Liason Entre Actions pour le Developpement de L'Economie Rurale (links between actions for the development of the rural economy).

LEADER is an innovative rural development programme which aims to improve the quality of life and economic prosperity in rural communities through locally driven rural development initiatives and projects.

The initiative is funded by the Scottish Government and the European Commission with matched funding from public bodies and the project groups.

The Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Programme was launched on 29 June 2008 at Lochter Activity Centre, Oldmeldrum.

The Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group (LAG) has been awarded LEADER funds of £3.36 million to deliver its strategy.

LEADER is being delivered by the Rural Aberdeenshire LAG to rural areas and communities with populations of less than 5,000.

The LAG has a membership of 14 partner organisations, 50% from the public sector and 50% from the private sector. More than 50% of the organisations represented on the LAG are also members of Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership.

LEADER funds are aimed at stimulating the rural economy and building capacity in communities and business networks through innovative approaches to rural development.

To date a total of 24 projects have been approved with total costs of £2.1 million and LEADER grant of £575,390.

There will be four funding rounds in 2009, the timetable of which is accessible on the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER website: [www.aberdeenshireleader.org](http://www.aberdeenshireleader.org)

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