

Issue Date: Tuesday, June 23, 2009

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Over £360,000 funded through LEADER programme in Aberdeenshire

Over £360,000 has been provided to 11 projects ranging from local hall improvements, renewable energy initiatives, food festivals to IT equipment for a school library.

The projects all received funding as part of Rural Aberdeenshire's LEADER programme, which has approved 46 projects in its first year, with a total of £1.3 million awarded towards total project costs of £6 million.

Sustainable Huntly received a grant of over £153,000. The project is linked to the Huntly Development Trust and will involve a two-year programme of sustainable development in the Huntly area.

Consultant to the Huntly Development Trust Donald Boyd said: "Huntly Development Trust is absolutely delighted to receive LEADER funding which is a crucial part of our business plan and a significant help to us as we get established.

"In practical terms, part of the LEADER funding will enable us to engage a Project Leader for projects to improve the tourism on offer in Huntly and District.

Hatton Public Hall in Buchan received a grant of over £9,000 towards improvements to windows and doors.

Saddiq Ahmed of Hatton Public Hall was grateful to be awarded LEADER funding towards the project that aims to encourage more people to use the hall as well as making it more sustainable.

"This project follows on from the installation of our new heating system and will help reduce our heating costs, increase our energy efficiency, and so reduce our carbon footprint. The LEADER funding will provide the initial momentum towards the hall achieving it's fund raising target for the project and will help towards our goal of project completion during 2009," he said.

Bracoden Parent Council received a grant of over £3,000 for the provision of community ICT facilities in Bracoden School Library and Nikki Bond of Bracoden Parent Council was delighted with the award.

"The community will enjoy this investment as it becomes accessible with the development of a cyber café to be run partly in conjunction with pupil enterprise and local computer tuition at the school premises."

Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group (LAG) Chairman James Knowles said:

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“Rural and coastal communities across Aberdeenshire are benefiting from projects brought forward by local groups and partnerships within the public and private sector.

“LEADER is contributing to the creation and development of community facilities within settlements, education, health and wellbeing projects, biodiversity enhancement, as well as feasibility studies which enable groups to take a valuable step in assessing the viability of larger projects.

“Other projects to receive LEADER funding include events and festivals, linked to Homecoming 2009, promoting local food and craft products and also initiatives that focus on the cultural heritage of local communities.”

Recent approvals include:

- Community Youth drop-in centre in Banff.
- Cultural heritage project focusing on traditional knitting in Moray Firth coastal communities from Fraserburgh to Inverness.
- Festivals linking to local food and craft products.
- Homecoming event which will focus on the connections of Robert Burns, Grassic Gibbon and Joan Eardley to local Mearns communities.
- Feasibility study to identify a suitable site and location for a mountain bike trails centre in north-east Scotland.
- Environmental projects which aim to enhance riparian habitats, promote river fishing in the north-east and undertake a comprehensive programme of environmental education and community awareness.

LEADER Co-ordinator Vicky Thomson, said: “Round 4 applications have resulted in funding towards a diverse range of projects.

“There is a real dynamism in communities across Aberdeenshire whereby local activators are prepared to roll up their sleeves and get involved in delivering projects which will benefit their communities and stimulate the local economy.

“New proposals for Round 5 are currently being worked on and a number of innovative projects are coming forward. The application deadline is 28th July 2009.”

Details of all approved projects to date can be found on the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER website: www.aberdeenshireleader.org which also gives advice about the programme including the application process and scheme guidance.

Ends

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Notes for Editors

LEADER stands for Liason Entre Actions pour le Developement 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.

LEADER is funded by the Scottish Government and the European Commission with match funding from public bodies and the project groups.

The Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Programme was launched in June 2008.

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

To date a total of 46 projects have been approved with total costs of around £6 million and LEADER grant of £1,368,000.

There will be two further funding rounds in 2009, the timetable for which is accessible on the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER website: www.aberdeenshireleader.org

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