

News Release

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Aberdeenshire community groups are leading the way!

A number of Aberdeenshire groups have secured funding from a development partnership which aims to revitalise rural communities throughout the north-east.

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

A total of eight applications to the LAG have now been approved, with LEADER funding contributing £167,219 towards total project costs of £949,587.

Match funding towards approved projects has come from a range of organisations including public sector partners within the Local Action Group such as Forestry Commission Scotland, National Health Service, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage.

In addition to this, some projects have sourced match-funding through other agencies including Heritage Lottery, charitable trusts and private contributors.

More than half of the LAG's 14 public and private sector members are part of the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership.

LAG chairman, James Knowles, said: "It is clear there has been strong interest in LEADER from rural groups throughout Aberdeenshire and it is particularly pleasing to see such a good range of well-prepared applications submitted in round one.

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

One of the first projects to be approved in rural Aberdeenshire is an innovative project from Birse Community Trust.

LEADER funding of £20,800 will contribute towards the purchase and management of Balfour Woods in south Deeside.

The trust developed the proposal and was successful in gaining approval through the National Forest Land Scheme to purchase Balfour Woods from the Forestry Commission.

Timber from the woods will be used for an innovative biomass heating project which will serve community buildings and Finzean Primary School.

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It is hoped the community regeneration project will contribute to the social and economic sustainability of the trust, which has supported proposals for the woodland management and biomass project.

On the east coast of Aberdeenshire, Collieston and Slains Community Trust (CASCT) has been awarded LEADER funding of £43,145 to undertake a full business proposal and feasibility study for a new community centre in the village.

The investment will help CASCT work towards a Big Lottery funding application while enabling the group to identify costs for the running and development of the centre.

Other projects approved in rural Aberdeenshire include:

- A north-east forest environment education initiative supported by Forestry Commission Scotland which will target young people and the under-employed throughout Aberdeen City and Shire
- A lifeskills, health and wellbeing community project at Banff led by Princess Royal Sports and Community Trust which will assist young people to adopt a proactive approach to self-development during their education years
- Development of a community asset through revitalising the small north-east fishing harbour of Cairnbulg to become a haven for small craft, servicing local needs
- Further development of Huntly Peregrine Wildwatch Centre, which has not only been a very popular visitor centre, but is also a valuable educational asset for environmental awareness
- A community tourism marketing project in the Banffshire coastal area through provision of banners promoting tourist sector businesses
- A community photographic competition in the Banff area which will develop into an innovative micro-business through sales of prints

Members of the LAG are keen to encourage applications for a second round of rural investment, which will be assessed before the end of the year.

For more information on the LAG and details of how to apply for funding please visit: www.aberdeenshireleader.org

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Notes for Editors

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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 LAG LEADER Programme was launched on 29 June 2008 at Lochter in Oldmeldrum.

The LAG has been awarded LEADER funds of £3.36 million to deliver its strategy.

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

The funds are aimed at stimulating the rural economy and building capacity in communities and business networks.

Other contributors to the LEADER Project include Big Lottery Investing in Ideas Fund and the Aberdeenshire Community Asset Fund.

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Endnotes