

News Release



Issue Date: Monday, January 11, 2009

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New Year LEADER boost for Aberdeenshire projects

Close to £310,000 has been provided to twelve Aberdeenshire projects ranging from youth employment and environmental initiatives to village hall developments and building restoration works across the north-east.

The projects all received funding as part of Rural Aberdeenshire's LEADER programme, which has approved 66 projects, with a total of £1.9 million awarded towards total project costs of £7.5 million.

Since the launch of LEADER in June 2008, Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group (LAG) has considered a variety of projects reflecting its key aims to revitalise communities and encourage a progressive rural economy.

The projects that received a share of £309,853 from Round Six of LEADER funding are:

Project	LEADER Award
Pitsligo Castle Consolidation and Repair of Structure - Phase 1	£47,205
Aberchirder Square Environmental Improvements	£29,295
Glamourhaugh Allotments Creation	£25,690
Rothienorman Bowling and Community Facility - Phase 2	£11,881
Laurencekirk Memorial Park Project - Phase 2	£24,135
Aberdeenshire Life Education Centre (ALEC) Programme	£33,000
Young People's Employability Project	£70,050
Port Erroll Public Hall Improvement Programme	£36,161
Developing Opportunities Through Sport (Rugby)	£13,000
Food Access Rural Environment (FARE)	£9,452
Echt Showground and Community Access Improvement	£4,984
Strachan Village Hall Kitchen Enhancement	£5,000
Total	£309,853

LAG Chairman, James Knowles, said: "We have been running LEADER in Aberdeenshire for 18 months and can see the tangible benefits to communities as result of projects being delivered on the ground.

"The latest round of applications further consolidates the positive impact LEADER funds have in our rural communities.

News Release

“There are projects that relate to regenerating rural settlements, promoting sports development for young people, conserving sites of historical importance, health and wellbeing projects linked to provision of rural services and local food production.

“There is also an exciting project which will target employment opportunities for young people, a key strategic objective within Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership priorities.”

LEADER Co-ordinator Vicky Thomson, added: “Participants in the LEADER programme continue to bring forward innovative, well researched projects which are aimed at delivering community benefit. We expect this trend to continue in 2010.

“One of the most positive aspects of LEADER is the breadth of partnership match funding that is levered in towards the projects. It’s a win-win situation for the stakeholders involved in the projects.”

The Pitsligo Castle Trust received £47,205 for a new project to secure the historic structure.

Richard Leith, Project Manager for the trust, said: “The Pitsligo Castle Trust has persevered to secure the development of a project in and around the great courtyard Castle of Pitsligo, Rosehearty, which could play a significant role in revitalising the local community.

“The grant assistance awarded from LEADER for a first phase of works to secure the castle structure is a major show of faith in the Trust’s project proposals.”

Aberchirder and District Community Association, received £29,295 which, combined with other funding schemes, means work can now begin on upgrades to Aberchirder’s square.

Bob Peden, Chairman of the association, said: “For the last thirteen years the Community Association has worked to provide Aberchirder with improved facilities and a pleasant environment.

“Three years ago a community consultation produced a Community Plan which showed that the top issue for local people was still, as in 1997, the shabby state of the Square.

“Further consultations led to plans to return the area around the Auchinachie Fountain to its former role as an attractive meeting place, which hopefully

News Release

would act as a stimulus to owners of rundown private properties in the Square and elsewhere in village to improve their appearance.

“Of the total estimated cost of nearly £84,000 Aberdeenshire Council has pledged £50,000 and the Association just over £4,400.

“The LEADER award is the final piece of the jigsaw and means that, at long last, we can begin a project which will let us take pride in the Square as the centre-piece of our historic planned village. The award also shows that community-led planning can work.”

Raye Marcus from Huntly Rotary Club, said: “The Rotary Club of Huntly is delighted to have been awarded a grant from the LEADER fund.

“The £25,000 we have received constitutes half of the cost of returning the unused site at Glamourhaugh Huntly to a community allotment and orchard.

“At this time, when there is an increased interest in producing and growing your own food as close to home as possible, we feel that this will greatly benefit the groups and individuals who will take on the allotments.

“We are particularly pleased that the schools and other groups are taking allotments as this will spread the benefit, and the laying of a proper footpath around the site will improve the use of the area by the general public.

“Rotary has been active in Huntly for 55 years and our work to bring about this new community facility is our ‘green’ gift to the community.”

Ian Moir, President and Chairman of the Rothienorman Bowling and Community Facility Project Committee, said: “The Rothienorman Bowling Club and Community Facility Project Team are absolutely thrilled to have been awarded £11,881 in funding from the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Programme.

“It is with great pleasure and thanks that we acknowledge the support of Aberdeenshire LEADER in their investment and commitment to the development of our local community infrastructure.

“The award of this funding will allow our new building project to be fitted out and equipped with catering, seating and audio visual equipment capable of providing a wide range of functionality and usage.

“It will further enhance our objective of making this building available and attractive to a wide range of local sports, social and community clubs and in

News Release

addition allows us to accommodate private parties and commercial organisations.

“Ongoing viability is one of the major features of our project and we believe that this investment from Aberdeenshire LEADER will be a significant and contributory factor in ensuring its long term sustainability and success.”

The Laurencekirk Play Park Group received £24,135 to complete funding for the latest phase of upgrades to the facility.

Amy Stuart, Chairperson of Laurencekirk Play Park Group, said: “The Laurencekirk Play Park Group are absolutely delighted to hear that the Memorial Park Project has been awarded LEADER funding.

“This award means that Phase 2 of the project, costing £48,260 in total, can commence in January 2010 and will see the installation of the final five pieces of play equipment in the Memorial Park, Laurencekirk.

“Along with Phase 1, which was completed in May 2009, the completion of Phase 2 will see a ‘state of the art’ play park facility brought to fruition after two-and-a-half years of hard work by the play park committee.

“The committee have had tremendous support from the local community throughout their campaign and would like to thank those individuals and groups for their generosity in particular Laurencekirk Primary School, Dizzy Rascals Play Centre and The Crown Inn for their support on many occasions.”

Aberdeenshire Life Education Centre (ALEC) received £33,000 to provide continued support to pupils about health and well-being education.

Steve Mackison, chairman of ALEC, said: “The award of this substantial LEADER grant will enable ALEC’s programme of holistic health and well-being education to be delivered to nursery and primary school children in Aberdeenshire on an annual basis.

“The LEADER award will also contribute to the resources needed to develop and deliver programmes to engage parents, and S1 and S2 pupils, helping to provide a cohesive and progressive approach to health and well-being education.”

A total of £70,050 was awarded towards an innovative programme to support young people as they make the transition from education and training to employment.

News Release

The programme will be delivered by the Employment Strategy Group which is a multi-agency partnership including representatives from: Aberdeenshire Council, NHS Grampian, Alcohol and Drugs Action Team, JobCentre Plus, Aberdeen Foyer and Skills Development Scotland and focuses on improving employability for young people.

Ken Milroy, Chief Executive of Aberdeen Foyer, said: “The transition from school into further education, training and work can for some young people be a real challenge.

“In the midst of a recession it is widely recognised that young people are often the first group to be hit with fewer jobs available.

“Aberdeen Foyer is one of a number of agencies working together in Aberdeenshire to support and develop initiatives to take up available employment opportunities.

“We are therefore delighted that the LEADER Programme has agreed to support the partnership to take forward a new initiative involving Aberdeenshire Council, the Department of Work and Pensions/Job Centre Plus, Skills Development Scotland and other third sector organisations, which will provide a clear pathway for young people successfully make that transition into employment.

“Funding to support the initiative has also been secured from the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership’s Fairer Scotland Fund and the Department of Work and Pension’s Future Jobs Fund. It shows what good partnership working can be about.”

Fiona Abenheimer, Treasurer of Port Erroll Hall Management Committee, was delighted with the award of £36,161 for an improvement programme.

She said: “The Committee was absolutely delighted to have secured LEADER funding.

“It is an invaluable source of support for community halls such as ours and we are very grateful that our project was considered to be suitable for funding. Quite frankly, it would be almost impossible for us to proceed with the work on our hall without the support from LEADER.”

Moray Media Promotions Group Ltd received £13,000 to fund an initiative which aims to support young rugby players through their school education.

News Release

Steven Rattray, Director of Moray Media Promotions Group Ltd, said: "We are delighted that we will have the chance to try and develop the links between a growing sport like rugby and education.

"We know we have a lot of work to do to support the current efforts of a number of key figures who have worked tirelessly to enhance the opportunities for youngsters to participate in rugby in Aberdeenshire and to lay the foundations for a long term approach through the unique dual pathway system.

"However none of this would have been possible without the funding from LEADER and so we are extremely grateful for that and hope this contribution will go on to benefit generations of young rugby players in the region."

Food Access Rural Environment (FARE) was awarded £9,452 to increase access to fresh produce for those in rural communities in the Mearns area.

Susie Brown, Chairperson of Mearns Area Partnership, said: "This award from LEADER will allow Mearns Area Partnership to pilot a project which will identify the need for, and enable delivery of, improved food access in rural communities.

"It will provide a practical outcome to a problem that affects many people living in rural isolation in the Mearns area."

Strachan Village Hall has been awarded £5,000 to fund an upgrade to kitchen facilities in the building.

Stirling Johnson-Marshall of Strachan Village Hall Committee, said: "The hall did not have sufficient funds to start work on developing our hall kitchen facilities.

"LEADER funding has allowed us to move forward with the kitchen enhancement project and to develop and improve the hall for increased community use in the future."

New proposals for are currently being worked on and the closing date for Round 7 applications is Friday, 5 February 2010.

Details of all approved projects to date and information on the application process can be found on the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER website:

www.aberdeenshireleader.org

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News Release

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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.
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endnotes