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## **Over £400,000 of LEADER funding awarded to rural projects in Aberdeenshire**

The Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group (LAG) has approved over £400,000 of funding for 11 new projects from paths to theatre groups and new homes for red squirrels.

Projects across Aberdeenshire will benefit from LEADER funding and mark a busy first quarter in 2009 for the programme which aims to stimulate the rural economy of Aberdeenshire.

35 projects have been approved since the launch of the programme in June 2008 and over one million pounds has now been committed towards total project costs of £4,748,017.

LAG chairman James Knowles, said: "The Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group has made a serious financial commitment over the first nine months of the programme.

"This combines with the range of match funding the community led projects have secured and clearly demonstrates the contribution that partnership working can make in delivering rural development support through a local decision making process."

Projects that have received a share of over £400,000 include:

- Restoration of the historic Sandend harbour on the Banff coast
- A comprehensive programme of path networks including a series of structured Health Walks to be undertaken in Deeside and Donside with links to a joint initiative within the Cairngorms National Park
- The re-development and expansion of an arts venue in Lumsden, including a comprehensive programme of cultural arts activities.
- A cultural and visual arts research project which will focus on the history of a community woodland at Huntly while engaging local people in theatre performances and film making techniques.
- A conservation plan to improve conditions and habitat for red squirrels.
- Creation of additional indoor exhibition space and facilities at the Turriff Haughs showground.

The Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group has received many positive comments from successful applicants who have appreciated the support they have received for their projects.

# News Release

LEADER Co-ordinator Vicky Thomson, said: "Round 3 applications have resulted in funding towards a diverse range of projects.

"It is patently clear that there are some real activators within the groups that have secured funding who are prepared to contribute their skills and energy towards projects that will benefit local communities.

"New proposals for Round 4 are currently being worked on and a number of innovative projects are coming forward. The application deadline for Round 4 is 28th April 2009."

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

## Notes for Editors

Please use any of the comments below from organisations across Aberdeenshire that have received funding.

Raymond Murray, Honorary Secretary, The Sandend Harbour Trust Company Limited, Banff:

"The award of £18,000 from the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER Programme has delighted members of The Sandend Harbour Trust Company and residents of Sandend. This positive statement of support from LEADER will enable restoration of the historic harbour to go ahead and be completed in 2009. Our community based company, of 76 members with wider support from villagers, initiated a strategy to acquire legal ownership of the harbour, determine the extent of works required, and raise funds to achieve these ends. LEADER support is the final link in the external funding chain and the tendering process can now begin."

Dougie Baird, Trust Manager, Cairngorms Outdoors Access Trust, Deeside:

"This shows terrific support from the Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group for the local community outdoor access aspirations. The LEADER grant will contribute to a project that will provide improvements to access infrastructure and support health walks for Tarland, Aboyne, Logie Coldstone and Alford, and will represent a significant step forwards in providing opportunities for improved health and higher quality outdoor access infrastructure in the area."

# News Release

Professor Stuart MacDonald, OBE, Chairman, Scottish Sculpture Workshop, Lumsden:

"The award of LEADER Funding will be of enormous support to SSW in achieving its ambitious plans for the future. By helping to make SSW more sustainable in its Aberdeenshire base, the funding not only connects it further to its community but will also increase the value it brings to the local economy and culture."

Bruce Ferguson, Turriff Show Secretary:

"The LEADER funding will enable the highly successful Turriff Show to expand with the addition of a much sought after indoor exhibition hall and associated toilet facilities in a prime area of the Showfield. In addition, the building will be multi purpose and it is anticipated that various community groups will be able to make use of the facility throughout the year."

## Background

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

In addition to significant levels of fundraising generated by project participants, match funding in Round 3 comes from a range of public and private sector organisations such as the Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Community and Householder Renewables Initiative, LAG partner organisations and charitable trusts.

There will be three further funding rounds in 2009, the timetable for which is accessible on the Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER website:

[www.aberdeenshireleader.org](http://www.aberdeenshireleader.org)

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