PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

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Community seminars promote access to rural funding

Johnshaven and Auchenblae will play host to events that will introduce people to European and Scottish Government funding to support rural community activities such as improvements to community facilities and provision of rural services.

On Wednesday, February 25 at Johnshaven Village Hall and Friday, March 6 at Auchenblae Community Hall members of the public involved in community activities can find out about LEADER and Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) funding.

Experts from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) will also provide information on the help available to community groups in accessing funding.

Aberdeenshire Council Leader Anne Robertson said: "Accessing funding for community projects can be a minefield and these events aim to provide real examples of people who have successfully received funding as well as explaining the process as simply as possible.

"Communities in Aberdeenshire can benefit greatly from Scottish Government policy focusing on rural areas as well as European funds set aside for improvement opportunities.

"Sharing the knowledge with community groups benefits us all.

"We have already seen a number of community projects in Aberdeenshire successfully attract LEADER funding and wish to instigate many more to make our area one of the best places in Scotland to visit, live and work."

LEADER is funded by the Scottish Government and the European Commission, and is delivered by the Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group (LAG) to rural areas and communities with populations of less than 5,000.

The two overarching LEADER themes chosen by the Rural Aberdeenshire LAG are 'Revitalising Communities' and 'Progressive Rural Economy'.

The scheme has been in operation in Aberdeenshire since June 2008 and to date the rural Aberdeenshire LAG has approved 24 projects and awarded a total of £575,000.

Past projects have included improvements to local paths and tourist centres as well as the provision of play areas and community drop-in centres.

Councillor Peter Argyle, chairman of Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee said: "It's encouraging to learn about projects that have successfully been funded through LEADER.

"Local projects funded externally can be supplemented and bring a wide range of benefits to Aberdeenshire by of boosting the economy, communities and the environment and these events will help many more community groups."

As part of the seminar series people who have already benefited from the LEADER programme will provide short presentations on their specific projects and how the proposal was brought forward.

The programme is an integral element within the Scotland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and aims to improve the quality of life and economic prosperity in Aberdeenshire.

Participants in the programme are required to identify match funding which may come from a variety of sources, for example, public agencies and private contributions.

Those interested in attending the event or finding out more about rural funding schemes can contact Vicky Thomson LEADER coordinator at Aberdeenshire Council on 01467 628383 or by email at vicky.thomson@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Scheme Guidance, Application Forms, Timetable and details of the LAG Partnership are available on the LEADER website at www.aberdeenshireleader.org.

-ENDS-

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<u>Notes to editors</u>

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

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES
Please send a photographer or reporter to any of the seminars from 10.30am until 2.00pm on Wednesday, February 25 at Johnshaven Village Hall and Friday, March 6 at Auchenblae Community Hall.

endsnotes