

APPROVED Minute of SALAG Meeting  
Tuesday, 22 March 2016 at 2.00pm  
Chamber, Gordon House, Inverurie

**Present**

Liam Smyth	Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (Chair) - Private
Joy Aiken	North East Scotland College - Public
Gerald Banks	National Farmers' Union Scotland - Private
Kyrsten Black	Scotland's Rural College - Public
Simon Blackett	Scottish Land and Estates - Private
Neil Christison	Visit Scotland - Public
Gavin Clark	Scottish Natural Heritage - Public
Ian Cowe	Forestry Commission Scotland - Public
Gina Ford	Scottish Enterprise - Public
Jean Henretty	Marr Rural Partnership - Private
Belinda Miller	Aberdeenshire Council - Public
David Nelson	Kincardineshire Development Partnership - Private
Anne Simpson	Garioch Rural Partnership - Private
Elaine Sinclair	Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action - Private
Dawn Tuckwood	NHS Grampian - Public
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Business - Private

**Officers in Attendance**

Martin Brebner	Team Manager – European Programmes & Policy
Alasdair Cunningham	European Programmes Co-ordinator
Anne MacLennan	European Programmes Claims Officer

**Apologies**

Jim Booth	SAOS - Private
Iain Cocker	North East Scotland College - Public
Catriona Dougherty	Garioch Community Councils - Private
Moira Gash	Visit Royal Deeside - Private

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

- 1.1 Belinda Miller opened the meeting as acting Chairperson due to Liam Smyth being slightly delayed.
- 1.2 Belinda welcomed those present and introductions were made around the table
- 1.3 Apologies were noted as above.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

- 2.2 Kyrsten Black declared an interest in project number SALAG/2016/R1/006 – Ringlink Internship. Kyrsten will withdraw from the meeting during the project discussion.
- 2.3 The following LAG members have a specific interest in, although are not directly involved with the following projects and as such will be permitted to take part in project discussions.

- Jean Henretty SALAG/2016/R1/003 – Nature Kindergarten
- Dawn Tuckwood SALAG/2016/R1/001 – Deveron Arts
- David Nelson SALAG/2016/R1/004 – NEAT  
SALAG/2016/R1/006 – Ringlink Internship  
SALAG/2016/R1/007 – A Day Out At Kintore  
SALAG/2016/R1/008 – Conversion to Operations
- Kyrsten Black SALAG/2016/R1/005 – Early Years in Nature  
SALAG/2016/R1/007 – A Day Out At Kintore
- Ian Cowe SALAG/2016/R1/001 – Deveron Arts  
SALAG/2016/R1/005 – Early Years in Nature  
SALAG/2016/R1/006 – Ringlink Internship
- Anne Simpson SALAG/2016/R1/010 – Indoor Riding & Driving Arena
- Gerald Banks SALAG/2016/R1/006 – Ringlink Internship  
SALAG/2016/R1/007 – A Day Out At Kintore

## **3. Minute of Meeting 20/01/16**

- 3.1 The minute of the LAG meeting held on 20 January 2016 was approved.

## **4. Expression of Interest (EOI) Update (as at 01/03/16)**

- 4.1 52 EOI's received to date.  
31 approved to date.  
17 awaiting approval.  
4 have been rejected.

Little has changed since the last meeting.

## **5. LEADER Conference Report**

- 5.1 Jean Henretty and Simon Blackett reported back on the LEADER Conference which was held over three days on 10/11/12 March 2016 in Aviemore.

One thing that was clear from the conference was how far ahead Aberdeenshire LAGs are in the process compared with other LAGs across Scotland. Some LAG's have spent part of their admin budget on branding including uniforms and up-market publicity material.

The organised workshops were considered to be informative and worthwhile.

Jean will circulate a copy of the Conference agenda to any interested members.

At this point, Liam Smyth arrived and took over as Chair from Belinda Miller.

## 6. Project Assessment Committee (PAC) Minutes 23/02/16

6.1 The minutes of the PAC meeting will be approved at the next PAC meeting. However, the draft minutes can be used to help guide LAG discussion about each project.

## 7. PROJECTS

### 7.1 SALAG/2016/R1/001 – Place/Work/Folk (Deveron Arts)

The application is for a substantial amount of grant for several proposed artist-led activities. The PAC was unclear about what the proposed project is actually going to achieve or what the outcomes of the project will be.

In response to the PAC queries, Deveron Arts supplied numerous materials generated from previous projects. However, the LAG was not satisfied that the applicant was able to evidence sufficient local community demand for this particular project. There was no clear identification of the vulnerable individuals to be targeted.

Deveron Arts is a specialist organisation and although the artist led projects were considered to be very interesting, the LAG considered that the application mainly covered the organisation's core running costs.

The LAG did not feel confident to support the project due to poor demonstration of demand. Proposals do not warrant the high level of grant requested with no evidence of tangible financial return on such a large investment being provided.

The project was put to vote and outcome recorded as follows:

Support	Reject	Abstain
	Joy Aiken - Public	Simon Blackett - Private
	Gerald Banks - Private	Dawn Tuckwood - Public <b>DOI</b>
	Kyrsten Black - Public	Liam Smyth - Private
	Neil Christison - Public	
	Gavin Clark - Public	
	Ian Cowe - Public	
	Gina Ford - Public	
	Jean Henretty - Private	
	Belinda Miller - Public	
	David Nelson - Private	
	Anne Simpson - Private	
	Elaine Sinclair - Private	
	Andy Willox - Private	

In line with Scottish Government guidelines, the applicant will be unable to re-submit the application in the same format to a future LEADER funding round.

**PROJECT REJECTED BY THE LAG.**

## **7.2 SALAG/2016/R1/002 – Green Travel (Huntly Development Trust)**

The application was withdrawn on the recommendation of the PAC. The applicant has taken on board the points raised by the PAC and will work up and re-submit a revised application to a future funding round.

## **7.3 SALAG/2016/R1/003 – Nature Kindergarten (Mucky Boots)**

PAC considered the proposal to be innovative and different. There is clear market demand for childcare across Aberdeenshire.

PAC raised concerns about the applicant not being set up as a limited company as yet, potentially leading to high personal liability.

Social Investment Scotland (SIS) has confirmed match funding of £100,000 in principle, subject to LEADER supporting the project. Official guidance from SG is that an applicant has 60 days from the date of project approval to confirm match funding and SIS is waiting for confirmation of LEADER grant before fully committing to funding the project.

An adjusted financial budget submitted by the applicant has ironed out earlier queries and projections now look reasonable. This is a business project which would have to fit within the £50,000 maximum grant set by SALAG. The co-ordinator confirmed that most business EoIs are being submitted in excess of the £50,000 limit. The LAG discussed the merits of removing this self-imposed limit or whether applications could be considered on a case by case basis as to whether they are worthy of grant exceeding the £50,000 limit.

In this case, the applicant re-submitted financial projections for both the original grant request of £77,491 and also for a reduced grant request of £50,000 to demonstrate the impact of the lower grant on the proposed project activities.

LAG considered it to be fairly ambitious to be out of doors on a full time basis and it may be viable for the applicant to have an indoor base for times of inclement weather.

Concerns were expressed about LEADER funding being used primarily to cover salaries rather than focusing on the development of the new business.

Evidence of market failure is required. This is a relatively new idea for this area and the LAG is slightly concerned about the business model.

LAG considered the proposal to be fairly difficult to evidence. The applicant has some more work to do and it was suggested this application be deferred to the next funding round in order for the LAG to have sufficient information to make a formal decision.

Belinda Miller suggested that it may help the applicant to use Economic Development resources and provided the offer of arranging discussions with the Business Development Executive who covers the area.

The Chairman summarised the possible options for the LAG and a vote was taken on whether members are minded to defer the decision to the next funding round or make a decision on the outcome of the application now.

<b>Agree to Defer</b>	<b>Against Deferral</b>
Joy Aiken - Public	Gerald Banks - Private
Neil Christison - Public	Kyrsten Black - Public
Gavin Clark - Public	Simon Blackett - Private
Gina Ford - Public	Ian Cowe - Public
Jean Henretty - Private	David Nelson - Private
Belinda Miller - Public	Anne Simpson - Private
Elaine Sinclair - Private	Liam Smyth - Private
Dawn Tuckwood - Public <b>DOI</b>	
Andy Willox - Private	

This was carried 9 votes to 6.

### **Action**

The Co-ordinator will request further information and the applicant will be asked to provide a more robust plan, ideally with an evidence base to demonstrate market need.

### **APPLICATION DEFERRED.**

#### **7.4 SALAG/2016/R1/004 – NEAT Flicks (North East Arts Touring)**

The application was for grant of less than the minimum of £5,000 limit set by SALAG. PAC agreed that no scoring would be undertaken. The application was subsequently withdrawn by the applicant

#### **7.5 SALAG/2016/R1/005 – Early Years In Nature (North East Scotland Outdoor Learning Group)**

PAC highlighted that the project location is Aberdeen city and, as such, rendered the application invalid. No PAC scoring was recorded.

Although the training venue is not rural being sited in Aberdeen City, the training is aimed at Aberdeenshire professionals. Each trainee will have a site visit to their local woodland in the Shire. LAG considered this application to have the potential to provide more impact in the South even though the venue is outwith the LAG area.

The applicant has tentatively provided an alternative location for the project within Aberdeenshire. LAG members considered it to be unfair to exclude the project purely on the basis of the question of eligibility of location when the applicant has in fact provided an alternative.

LAG agreed that there must be a guarantee given that the Camphill site will not be used. This could be incorporated as a specific condition of grant.

Martin Brebner highlighted that the PAC did not score this application. Conflicting information was recorded. In the minute it states that the application be rejected due to being located outwith the LAG area. The information detailed in the subsequent e-mail which was issued to the applicant implies that the application will be put forward for LAG consideration. Procedurally, without PAC scoring, it is not possible to decide on whether to award grant to this project.

LAG agreed that, due to this conflicting information, the application should be deferred.

This was unanimously agreed.

### **Action**

The Co-ordinator will go back to the applicant, giving them the opportunity to re-work the application to reflect a more positive commitment to the change of venue. The application will be re-submitted to the PAC at the next funding round for scoring.

### **APPLICATION DEFERRED.**

## **7.6 SALAG/2016/R1/006 – Ringlink Internship (Ringlink)**

DOI – Kyrsten Black. Kyrsten left the room for the duration of the project discussion.

The primary concern raised by the PAC regarding this project was that some of the activity was to take place out with the South area. Although the applicant cannot guarantee where the students come from, they will endeavour to place them in South Aberdeenshire. Any interns not placed in the South area will not be claimed. In response to this concern, the applicant has reduced the grant requested from £58,000 to £50,000 to reflect the subtle change in project activity taking place solely within South Aberdeenshire.

PAC queried the large sum of money in the applicant bank account and questioned the subsequent need for LEADER funding. The Co-ordinator confirmed that as the applicant trades in commodities on a daily basis, a large cash flow is required to manage this.

This project will widely benefit the agricultural economy not Ringlink specifically.

Ian Cowe highlighted an existing Ringlink project funded by Aberdeenshire Council and suggested that this application would fund a continuation of the same programme. The Co-ordinator confirmed that this application is a phase two project following on from a pilot which was funded by Ringlink and Aberdeenshire Council. Although the LAG considered this to be a beneficial programme, the question was raised as to whether LEADER can fund a continuation.

LAG raised the question of training being ineligible for LEADER funding. The Co-ordinator queried the issue of training with Scottish Government and was informed that due to the training to be provided not carrying a national certificate, this is permitted.

The applicant originally applied to the Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund (KTIF) but the project did not fit within the parameters of this SRDP scheme.

Martin Brebner highlighted that SG has advised that if an applicant is unsuccessful in applying to one SRDP scheme, then they cannot apply to another. The reasons for rejection by KTIF will be further investigated and clarification sought from SG about this before a decision can be reached by the LAG.

LAG considered the possibility of year two being a co-operation project once this option becomes available.

This application submitted is for a one year project however, Gavin Clark highlighted a discrepancy within the application form about the duration of the project. Start and end dates do not tally with figures set out in section six of the application form which clearly states this is a three-year project. This discrepancy is material because it affects the number of trainees being placed over the period of the project.

Due to difficulties with interpreting the figures relating to the number of interns and the conflicting details supplied regarding the duration of the project, the LAG considered that there are still too many unanswered questions. Further clarification needs to be provided by the applicant before LAG can make a decision about awarding LEADER grant. Approval will also be subject to further clarification from Scottish Government.

Members voted on whether to defer the decision until the applicant has provided further clarification on the points raised above.

<b>Agree to Defer</b>	<b>Against Deferral</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Joy Aiken - Public	Gerald Banks - Private <b>DOI</b>	Kyrsten Black - Public <b>DOI</b>
Neil Christison - Public		David Nelson - Private
Gavin Clark - Public		Liam Smyth - Private
Ian Cowe - Public		
Gina Ford - Public		
Jean Henretty - Private		
Belinda Miller - Public		
Anne Simpson - Private		
Elaine Sinclair - Private		
Dawn Tuckwood - Public		
Andy Willox - Private		
Simon Blackett - Private		

Project deferred due to inconsistencies in the application form. The applicant will have the opportunity to resubmit the application once the discrepancies about the duration of the project and number of trainees targeted have been clarified.

### **Action**

The Co-ordinator will request clarification from SG regarding the KITF funding application and also highlight the opportunity for the applicant to put the application on hold at the moment and re-apply for a co-operation project once this facility becomes available.

## **APPLICATION DEFERRED.**

### **7.7 SALAG/2016/R1/007 – A Day Out In Kintore (Royal Northern Agricultural Society)**

The PAC recommendation was that this application be withdrawn. However, the applicant chose proceed with submitting the application to the LAG for consideration.

Belinda Miller reported that although the PAC agreed that this was an excellent event, it was considered that LEADER was not the correct fund for this application. PAC was of the opinion that this project will go ahead regardless of whether LEADER funding is granted.

Ian Cowe highlighted that a launch event for A Day Out in Kintore had taken place in January and an advertisement article was published in an earlier copy of the Scottish Farmer. There is no doubt that the event will go ahead regardless.

The demonstration of financial need is not evidenced and the applicant is looking to generate income from ticket sales and stand ticket sales for approximately 6,000 visitors to the event.

The project was put to vote and outcome recorded as follows:

<b>Support</b>	<b>Reject</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
	Joy Aiken - Public	Gerald Banks - Private <b>DOI</b>
	Kyrsten Black - Public	David Nelson - Private <b>DOI</b>
	Simon Blackett - Private	Liam Smyth - Private
	Neil Christison - Public	
	Gavin Clark - Public	
	Ian Cowe - Public	
	Gina Ford - Public	
	Jean Henretty - Private	
	Belinda Miller - Public	
	Anne Simpson - Private	
	Elaine Sinclair - Private	
	Dawn Tuckwood - Public	
	Andy Willox - Private	

## **PROJECT REJECTED BY THE LAG.**

### **7.8 SALAG/2016/R1/008 – Conversion To Operations (Stonehaven Town Partnership)**

The application was withdrawn on the recommendation of the PAC. The applicant will work up and re-submit a revised application in the future.

### **7.9 SALAG/2016/R1/009 – St James Church (Stonehaven Town Partnership)**



The application was withdrawn on the recommendation of the PAC. The applicant will work up and re-submit a revised application in the future.

## 7.10 SALAG/2016/R1/010 – Indoor Riding and Driving Arena (Strathorn Farm)

This was considered by the PAC to be a professionally presented and very well received application. The only question raised was regarding additionality.

Further information requested by the PAC has been provided along with an additional power point presentation which was considered to be informative. The applicant has carried out public engagement and has received Shire-wide buy in as well as local support. There is real evidence of demand for this type of project.

LAG considered this project to provide a good return on investment. The applicant is investing £100,000 of their own capital resulting in no bank loan being required.

There is a strong business ethos and future longevity is clearly evidenced.

The project is aspirational and will deliver support to many disadvantaged groups.

This is also a business application which is limited to the £50,000 cap set by the LAG. The applicant has submitted projections at both £50,000 and £100,000 of LEADER grant. LAG agreed that the original request for £100,000 will provide much more, including classrooms, toilets etc. The project will have an impact on employment in the rural area and LAG considered this project to have the potential to be a flagship project for LEADER in the wider community.

LAG considered whether the project be awarded the £100,000 requested rather than being restricted to £50,000. It was agreed that the additional funding will make much more happen.

Martin Brebner reported that the higher award fits within State Aid exemptions.

LAG discussed whether this project is worthy of making an exception to the £50,000 limit rule.

There is a two-tier vote in this case:

1. Is the LAG in favour of the project and
2. Should the project be awarded the original request for £100,000

LAG was unanimously in favour of supporting the project.

<b>Agree to Grant of £100,000</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Joy Aiken - Public	Dawn Tuckwood - Public
Gerald Banks - Private	Liam Smyth - Private
Kyrsten Black - Public	
Simon Blackett - Private	
Neil Christison - Public	
Gavin Clark - Public	

Ian Cowe - Public	
Gina Ford - Public	
Jean Henretty - Private	
Belinda Miller - Public	
David Nelson - Private	
Anne Simpson - Private	
Elaine Sinclair - Private	
Andy Willox - Private	

All members with the exception of Dawn Tuckwood who chose to abstain, were in favour of making an exception to the £50,000 limit for this project. An offer of £100,000 of LEADER funding will be made with the caveat that the applicant engages with hard to reach community groups including vulnerable users and the disabled.

### **PROJECT APPROVED BY LAG - £100,000 OF LEADER GRANT AWARDED**

#### **8 AOCB**

- 8.1 Following on from points raised above and at item 7.3, further discussion took place with regard to the option of reversing the self-imposed SALAG decision to restrict business grants to £50,000 or whether the LAG should consider each application on a case by case basis. It was agreed that flexibility is very important. At the time the decision to restrict grant to £50,000 was made, LAG had no idea about the amount of grant request that would be presented in the EOI's. The majority of business EOI's received to date have been submitted in excess of the £50,000 limit.

The LAG should be open to bold projects and as such this limit was considered to be restrictive. It was suggested that the LAG should be flexible in terms of £ sterling but that an intervention rate with an upper limit of 50% be retained.

Ian Cowe proposed that the £50,000 limit be removed for the Enterprise category. This will be replaced by a maximum 50% intervention rate. This was unanimously supported by the LAG.

- 8.2 Simon Blackett raised the issue of difficulties experienced with accessing papers via the secure site on the SALAG website. Also, it is a struggle to make sense of the way in which the information is presented on the website. It was requested that the documents are uploaded in the same order for each project, with the first document being the project assessment. This will allow members to make an informed judgement about how much of the additional information supplied has to be read. It is irritating for members to have to return to the start of a document every time you look at a certain page. The whole process of accessing and reading the meeting papers was considered to be unworkable.

The Co-ordinator had issued a project presentation as an attachment to an e-mail and this was much easier for LAG members to access.

It was suggested that documents be issued as a zip file and attached to an e-mail. However, due to IT constraints within some organisations, this is not always a workable option either.

The team will take LAG concerns on board and will investigate a means of simplifying the process for ease of access to the documentation.

- 8.3 With regard to the presentation from (SALAG/2016/R1/010) Indoor Riding and Driving Arena (Strathorn Farm) circulated by e-mail by the Co-ordinator, Elaine Sinclair highlighted that although this particular project application stood up on its own merit, it will be important in future to maintain a level playing field for all applicants.
- 8.4 Belinda Miller reminded LAG members that everything discussed at the meeting must be treated as confidential. The decisions reached are not for individual LAG members to disclose to applicants or anyone else. Outcome letters will be issued to applicants as soon as possible. The team are waiting for template letters to be issued from Scottish Government. Martin Brebner advised that these should be received in April. This will result in a slight delay with issuing outcome letters.
- 8.5 Dawn Tuckwood has been working with Jason Schroeder and Hazel McLaren with regard to several anticipated funding applications from men's shed organisations across Aberdeenshire. Following a meeting with Alasdair Cunningham, it was suggested that these organisations could consider submitting a joint application to LEADER to support them in their development.

Dawn explained the background of the Men's Shed initiatives.

Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action has also offered support to men's shed groups.

Men's Shed applications are going to come forward, it is just a question of whether several individual applications come forward or if a LAG led project could be a way forward. Following lengthy discussion, LAG considered that a LAG led project could possibly make a much stronger collective application. However, it is for the individual Men's Shed organisations to decide on a way forward which will work best for them. Dawn will continue to work with Jason Schroeder.

- 8.6 The Chairman thanked members for their time and valuable input.

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
Request further information; applicant will be asked to provide a more robust plan with an evidence base to demonstrate market need.	AC
Applicant to re-work the application to reflect a more positive commitment to the change of venue.	AC
Clarification required from SG regarding the KITF funding application.	AC



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: **Europe investing in rural areas**