

**MINUTE OF SALAG MEETING
MONDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 10.00 AM
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WOODHILL HOUSE**

Present

Belinda Miller	Aberdeenshire Council
Krysten Black	Scotland's Rural College
Simon Blakett	Scottish Land and Estates
Jim Booth	SAOS
Gavin Clark	Scottish Natural Heritage
Janelle Clark	Marr Local Community Planning Group
Iain Cocker	North East Scotland College
Gina Ford	Scottish Enterprise
Moira Gash	Deeside & The Cairngorms DMO
Jean Henretty	Marr Area Partnership
Emma Kidd	Kincardine & Mearns Local Community Planning Group
Lizzy Shepherd	Marr Area Partnership
Anne Simpson	Garioch Area Partnership
Liam Smyth	Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce
Dawn Tuckwood	NHS Grampian

Officers in Attendance

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

Apologies

Ian Cowe	Forestry Commission Scotland
David Fyffe	Scottish Land and Estates
Willie Munro	Kincardine & Mearns Local Community Planning Group
Lorna Paterson	National Farmers' Union Scotland
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Businesses
David Wood	Aberdeenshire Voluntary Association

1. Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 Belinda welcomed those present and introductions were made round the table.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted as above.

2. Update on LDS/Business Plan Preparations

- 2.1 Belinda invited the team to update those present on progress following on from the Community Engagement events which were held earlier in the year.

Martin reported that, following the initial Governance Meeting to discuss how the group would function, further meetings were held with

stakeholders regarding additional funding allocations for Farm Diversification and Rural Business.

The Fisheries Local Action Group, which has to have significant fisheries representation, also held a meeting with stakeholders.

The consultants incorporated comments and suggestions from all the above events in the strategy documents.

Final versions of both North and South strategies were received from the consultants but required further development to include SMART objectives and fisheries elements.

2.2 Alasdair reported that a small focus group attended the Farm Diversification meeting. The main areas highlighted were tourism and rural educational initiatives.

Jim Booth, SAOS, who attended the Farm Diversification meeting, informed those present that one suggestion was that funding could be used to look at different delivery models rather than just giving out grants. Another suggestion was for a dedicated officer post to assist potential applicants to come up with project ideas.

Martin responded that this issue required more in-depth discussion by the LAG, hence this element of the strategy was kept open.

2.3 The Rural Business meeting was not well attended. Alasdair acknowledged that awareness of the LEADER approach needs to be raised within the business sector. Support for green issues was the main point highlighted at this meeting.

David John reported that approximately forty stakeholders were invited to attend the Fisheries meeting. Approximately twenty organisations have signed up to be part of the FLAG with three organisations representing the interests of the South area.

David John and Martin met with Marine Scotland in September. The main points raised at this meeting were:

- Ministers have confirmed co-finance for the new programme.
- Aid intensity levels will be reduced slightly.
- A change to procedures means that although grant claims will continue to be checked by each LAG, grant payment will be made centrally by Marine Scotland.
- FLAG boundaries are up for discussion.
- The possibility of a 'super FLAG' incorporating Moray and Angus has also been suggested.

3. Election of Chair and Vice Chairs

3.1 Procedures for the election of a Chair and Vice Chairs were agreed at the governance meeting. A representative of the lead partner organisation

cannot be considered for the post of Chair. Belinda Miller has submitted a nomination for the position of Vice Chair. There have been no further nominations for Chair or for the second Vice position.

LAG membership from the public sector cannot exceed 49% of votes. Aberdeenshire opted for a one third public/private/community split. Therefore it is hoped that the positions of Chair and Vice Chair will represent each sector.

Members are concerned about the time commitment involved. The position of Chair carries the responsibility for governance as well as just chairing the meetings and this was seen as a fairly onerous amount of work.

It was suggested that the LAG might have to source an independent Chairperson outwith those already involved on the LAG. If this is the case, the posts will be openly advertised and followed by interview procedures.

4. LAG Membership Skills Matrix

- 4.1 Data on the skills matrix which was circulated in advance of the meeting, was collated from the completed membership application forms which have been received to date.

Recent information from the Scottish Government means uncertainty about whether Community Planning groups can be used as a vehicle to engage with Community Councils. However, it is proposed that a seat on the LAG be allocated to a Community representative for each admin area.

The proposed format of the LAG is for twenty four members, with eight seats being allocated to each sector.

After taking account of those organisations who have committed so far, there are still some vacant positions. These vacancies may have to be openly advertised.

- 4.2 Jean Henretty raised the issue of Community Council reps being volunteers and as such, not being reimbursed for time or travel to meetings. The possibility of a crèche facility for those attending meetings was also raised.

Belinda confirmed that volunteers can claim travel expenses but will not be reimbursed for time away from work. The cost of child care cannot be covered under regulations.

Discussion took place regarding the timing and venues of meetings. The possibility of evening or Saturday morning meetings was suggested. As the South Aberdeenshire area stretches from Huntly to St Cyrus, any chosen meeting venue will not suit every member. Video conferencing could be a possibility for those who have furthest to travel.

It was suggested that a survey be circulated as soon as possible to establish members' preference for meeting times and venues.

- 4.3 From those already signed up to the LAG, it was highlighted that neither older/younger generations nor ethnic minorities are represented.

The problem in the current programme with youth representation was regular turnover due to school age youths being unable to commit to the full seven years.

In this case, the LAG may have to adapt to a regular changeover of members. It was agreed that a clause be added to the business plan to allow the membership of the LAG to be changed.

All named representatives who have already agreed to be part of the LAG have provided details of a substitute.

5. Local Development Strategy and Business Plan

- 5.1 It was agreed that Martin would start by highlighting the comments and suggested changes received in advance of the meeting.

5.2 Page 27 – Theme 1: Connecting people and places

Priority 1.2: Community facilities for a digital age

Multi-purpose and sustainable community hubs (e.g. for service provision, leisure and business) which incorporate broadband and ICT provision and have realistic business plans will be supported.

It was proposed that the requirement for incorporation of ICT/broadband provision be deleted.

Communities must be innovative but there could be alternative ways of addressing digital connectivity.

Following discussion it was agreed that broadband and ICT provision should not be a set requirement for funding as this could prove to be a barrier to projects. Priority 1.2 to be changed to read "could incorporate broadband and ICT provision".

A business plan will be key for applicants.

5.3 Page 28 - Theme 2: Developing Key Economic Sectors

Discussion took place about whether or not Social Enterprise should be specifically mentioned under Theme 2.

It was agreed that the text be changed to read (including Social Enterprise) in brackets in paragraph 2.

5.4 Page 28 - Theme 2: Developing Key Economic Sectors

It was agreed to expand the tourism aspect to include Food and Drink.

5.5 *Page 29 - Theme 3: Promoting and protecting the environment*

Priority 3.1: Promoting low carbon futures

Reference to low carbon to include low carbon transport, car sharing and promoting homeworking.

This is touched on in priority 1.1 but it could also feature in 3.1.

Change to wording approved.

It was clarified that although budget is allocated to particular themes in the business plan, the LAG will be able to set milestones which can be changed as long as there is a strong business case to do so. It will be inevitable that budget virement between themes will occur.

5.6 *Page 29 - Theme 4: Enriching and positive activities for all*

Priority 4.1: Leisure & recreation for wellbeing

Choice of wording to be changed from leisure and recreation “facilities” to “opportunities”.

5.7 *Page 29 - Theme 4: Enriching and positive activities for all*

Horizontal themes to include community empowerment and capacity building.

Discussion took place on whether there is sufficient capacity in certain areas to enable that community to apply for funding. Should the LAG be the instigators to get a project moving when there are already numerous agencies well equipped to do this on behalf of the LAG?

If, over the period of the programme, gaps in priorities are identified, then it would make sense to include capacity building.

It was agreed that an additional theme number 4.3 be added to encompass capacity building.

5.8 *Page 30 - Theme 5: Co-operating with other countries and areas*

Priority 5.1: Transnational cooperation

Priority 5.2: Inter-territorial cooperation

It was proposed that the stated number of projects (10) be deleted.

It was also suggested that co-operation should be between community groups rather than LAGs.

Co-operation projects between the North and South LAGs can be

considered as inter-territorial.

The text under heading 5.1 and 5.2 for Transnational and Inter-territorial Co-operation is the wrong way round and will be swapped.

5.9 *Page 31 - Smart Objectives*

- Tourism is only briefly mentioned under Theme 2. It was agreed that the wording under priority 2.1 be changed to ensure Tourism and Food & Drink are included.
- It was considered to be inevitable that some projects will be multi-themed. The question was raised as to whether the Scottish Government will be open to the LAG allocating a project to more than one theme?
- Specific text under theme 2.2 is ring fenced for farm diversification.
- The smart objective measures are based on historic information from current LEADER projects and/or estimates of the number of projects and their outputs.
- The allocation for capital projects is based on an average of £50,000 per capital build.
- It is estimated that carbon emissions can be substantially reduced but it proved difficult to find any baseline figures. This objective may need to be removed,

5.10 *Any Other Comments*

Page 55 & 56

- Clarification was sought regarding 'animation' and the possibility of using existing networks such as Rural Partnerships to reach more community stakeholders.

It is proposed that additional text be added to elaborate on the role of the Rural Partnerships, to make use of their existing expertise and local knowledge to support the delivery of projects initiated by the LAG.

- It is imperative that EU procurement rules are followed. Procurement must be via Public Contracts Scotland.
- The wording under "community empowerment" was considered to be in-correct. Anne Simpson will provide suggested form of updated wording to Martin.
- It was suggested that some changes be made to the wellbeing targets. Dawn Tuckwood will make further suggested amendments directly to Martin.

5.11 *Business Plan*

Page 6 – Decision Making Process

Need to finalise exactly how the decision making process is carried out.

LAG Chair/Vice Chairs will stand for a period of two years. This gives an opportunity to refresh on a regular basis. Incumbent Chairs will be eligible to stand for re-election.

One Strategy and one LAG has become two strategies and three LAGs with the Fisheries LAG adopting both strategy documents.

Page 10 – Conflicts of Interest

It will be the role of the LAG Chair to make a decision where a member is unsure if their interest in an application requires them to make a declaration and remove themselves from the meeting.

Page 20 – Expenditure Profile

Martin explained how indicative budget figures were reached.

Figures in the Business Plan will be revised to reflect the changes made in the Strategy Document.

Figures are based on the assumption that the South Aberdeenshire area will receive a similar allocation in percentage terms to the 2007-2013 LEADER and EFF programmes.

These figures are not set in stone and much will be based on previous history. Aberdeenshire is currently one of the top four performing LAGs in Scotland and is therefore considered to be 'low risk' by Scottish Government.

Allocations should be known by mid to late December.

Page 21 – Indicative Expenditure Profile

Discussion followed regarding the proposed allocation of 24% of the budget for community facilities. This was considered to be a large proportion of the budget taking account of the high percentage of budget which was spent in this area in the current programme.

It was unanimously agreed that each priority should have a minimum allocation of 10%. This adjustment will mean that the allocation for community facilities will reduce slightly.

6. **AOCB**

- 6.1 The Strategy and Business Plan is due to be submitted to Scottish Government by close of play tomorrow, Tuesday, 30 September. Martin

will capture recommendations from today's meeting and make the required amendments. Updated versions will then be circulated to members.

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

7.1 It was agreed that another meeting should be scheduled within the next six weeks.

Due to members' diaries filling up fairly quickly, a Doodle Poll will be circulated to ascertain suitable dates.