

**MINUTE OF JOINT NALAG/SALAG MEETING
FRIDAY 16 JANUARY 2015 AT 2.00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBER, GORDON HOUSE, INVERURIE**

Present

Duncan Abernethy	North East Scotland College
Martin Auld	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland
Kyrsten Black	Scotland's Rural College
Simon Blackett	Scottish Land and Estates
James Bream	Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce
Gavin Clark	Scottish Natural Heritage
Gina Ford	Scottish Enterprise
Jean Henretty	Marr Rural Partnership
Zillah Jamieson	Banffshire Coast Tourism Partnership
Duncan Leece	Banffshire Rural Partnership
Calvin Little	NHS Grampian
John Loder	Formartine Partnership
Joyce Lovie	Marr Community Councils
Belinda Miller	Aberdeenshire Council
Eleanor Morris	Udny Community Trust
Willie Munro	Kincardine & Mearns Community Councils
Irene Rowe	Buchan Community Councils
Anne Simpson	Garioch Rural Partnership
Dawn Tuckwood	NHS Grampian
Chris White	Buchan Local Community Planning Group
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Business

Officers in Attendance

Martin Brebner	Team Manager – European Programmes & Policy
June Jaffrey	European Programmes Claims Officer
Anne MacLennan	European Programmes Claims Officer

Apologies

Jim Booth	SAOS
Elaine Brown	Formartine Community Councils
Iain Cocker	North East Scotland College
David Fyffe	Scottish Land and Estates
Moira Gash	Visit Royal Deeside
David Hay	Forestry Commission Scotland
Doug Milne	Garioch Community Councils
Liz Scott	Buchan Development Partnership
Liam Smyth	Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce
David Wood	Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action

1. Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 Duncan Leece, NALAG Chairperson, welcomed those present and introductions were made round the table.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted as above.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

- 2.1 The minute of the joint Governance meeting held on 17 July 2014 was approved.
- 2.2 In the minute of the North LAG meeting held on 29 September 2014, it was highlighted that RSPB should read RSPB Scotland. The minute was approved with this amendment.
- 2.3 In the minute of the South LAG meeting held on 29 September 2014, it was highlighted that Aberdeenshire Voluntary Association should read Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action. The minute was approved with this amendment.

3. Update on LDS/Business Plan Preparations (Martin Brebner)

- 3.1 Following various meetings and taking feedback about the strategy documents into account, the draft strategies were submitted to Scottish Government in September 2014.
- 3.2 Scottish Government issued feedback on the draft documents in December 2014.
- 3.3 Difficulties with the overarching SRDP programme have resulted in further delays being anticipated for the start of the new programme. There is no official launch date as yet but it could potentially be as late as September 2015.
- 3.4 Alasdair Cunningham has been seconded to Scottish Government for a period of three months to assist with drafting guidance for the new programme.
- 3.5 A meeting has been arranged with Alasdair Prior from Scottish Government in the first week of February to discuss the strategy feedback and other issues including programme launch dates. LAG chairs and vice-chairs will be invited to attend this meeting.
- 3.6 The general feeling amongst those present was one of frustration that the programme is delayed further. It will be up to LAG members to help manage expectations of potential applicant groups. It is hoped that more definitive answers can be obtained at the meeting with Alasdair Prior.

The question was raised about the likelihood of obtaining any pre-decision guidance which would enable LAGs to be in a better position to start as soon the go ahead is given. Members want to be in the best position to be able to hit the ground running. Although applicant groups may have to wait longer, the last thing LAGs want to do is to raise expectation and advertise the wrong information. It was suggested that a press release could be issued to clarify the current state of play.

- 3.7 Martin confirmed that funding has been made available to support current staff costs but, until the LDS is approved, it is not clear if this funding can

also be used for promotional events, website etc.

- 3.8 Belinda confirmed that a third Co-ordinator post in addition to Alasdair Cunningham and David John McRobbie has now been approved. The position will be advertised as soon as there is sufficient workload for the post holder.

4. Workshop Groups – LDS Feedback

- 4.1 In order to discuss the feedback received from Scottish Government regarding Aberdeenshire's LDS documents and Business Plans, it was agreed that the meeting be split into three workshops. Each group will have a facilitator to aid discussion and obtain opinions and ideas in response to the following five questions:

1. The LDS' need to focus on particular target groups. Which groups should be targeted and why?
2. How will the LDS support capacity building/animation?
3. How will social innovation be nurtured through the delivery of the LDS?
4. What should be the priority themes for co-operation projects?
5. What is the justification for including settlements with populations above 10,000 people?

4.2 Group 1 – Facilitated by Duncan Leece

1. Reluctant to target groups by social deprivation. Need to target new applicant groups but also important to get message across to previous beneficiaries that they are not precluded from applying.
2. Not of a mind to employ a fleet of community animators. Aberdeenshire Council has an established network such as the Rural Partnerships and Development Trusts. Keen to use this existing network.
3. LAG members will be involved in identifying groups who have not previously participated in LEADER. One of the few benefits of this delay is that we have more time to target those who don't know anything about LEADER.
4. Priority themes for co-operation projects should include tourism, active health, farm diversification and apprenticeships & training.
5. Incomprehensible to separate the economy of the main market hubs of Fraserburgh and Peterhead from the surrounding rural community. None of the larger settlements in Aberdeenshire, with the exception of Aberdeen itself, are large enough to be self-sustaining and should not be left out.

4.3 Group 2 – Facilitated by Belinda Miller

1. Mixed feelings about identifying target groups. Prefer to seek under-represented groups geographically & demographically.
2. By using existing groups such as Rural Partnerships and Development Trusts. Rural retail – barely exists so may need to consider a new approach.
3. How can applications be scored as innovative? Learn from others,

use capacity building & best practices.

4. Not clear – could be based on themes 1-4 of existing LDS.
5. In fishing terms, Fraserburgh and Peterhead cannot be excluded. Applications from larger towns would need to show significant rural impact for the surrounding rural community.

4.4 **Group 3 – Facilitated by Chris White and John Loder**

1. Youth unemployment, deprivation and rural isolation, particularly amongst elderly people.
2. Need for communication plan. Scattered approach to business links. Gaps in tourism – how do we reach those not already involved? Make use of strong existing networks such as Rural Partnerships and Voluntary Action Groups.
3. What exactly is social innovation? How do we reach those who have not been previously involved? Must balance risk with sustainability/innovation and must ensure legacy. Use of ICT (issue of broadband capacity).
4. Health improvement internationally and ICT more locally. Links between public/private/voluntary sectors. Help communities to help themselves.
5. No valid reason for not including larger settlements. Look at carbon targets – the resident community in larger settlements is much less than the commuting community.

- 4.5 Martin will now collate these responses and incorporate into a revised strategy which will be circulated to chairs and vice-chairs initially for comment.

5. **LAG Membership Review**

- 5.1 Although there is a common theme between North and South LAGs, there are several differences.

Aberdeenshire's aspiration for LAG membership was for an equal three way split between Community, Public and Private sectors. Although this split is not a rigidly imposed guideline by Scottish Government, it is a rule that LAGs are not dominated by the public sector, therefore a maximum 49% public membership is imposed.

Members were not overly concerned about the three way split at this stage and considered the skills matrix to be a more important tool to ensure a competent spread of skills, ability and experience across the two LAGs.

Once gaps are identified, it may be possible to advertise remaining vacancies. However, it was agreed that individuals will not be invited to join. Applicants must represent an organisation and must go through the same application process as current members.

- 5.2 If members have any suggestions about other organisations from the community sector who could bring something to the table, they are asked to inform Martin. These nominated organisations will be approached to

establish if they are interested in joining and, if so, the function of the LAGs will be fully explained. Hopefully the gaps in the skills matrix can be filled and a few more groups can be encouraged to get involved, ensuring that a sufficient number of representatives are available to attend the meetings.

- 5.3 Now that the Kincardineshire Partnership is up and running it was agreed that a representative from this organisation would be an asset. National Farmers' Union Scotland has also named a representative to join the LAGs.
- 5.4 Members were not of a mind to progress with an open application process at the moment and, apart from accepting the representatives from the above organisations, it was agreed that membership would not be progressed further at this stage.

6. LAG Constitution and Memorandum of Understanding

- 6.1 Discussion will take place with Alistair Prior at the February meeting regarding the content of the constitution and memorandum of understanding between the LAGs and the Council as the accountable body.
- 6.2 Belinda has a copy of the draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Scottish Government and the Council but there is nothing drafted as yet between the Council and the LAGs. As the Council is taking the risk, it will be essential to have some form of documented procedure.
- 6.3 Once guidance has been received, Belinda and Martin will work on producing the constitution and memorandum of understanding.

7. Vacant Positions

- 7.1 No chairperson has yet been identified for SALAG. As Belinda cannot lead, she has taken up one of the vice-chair positions.

The NALAG chair and vice-chair positions are split by geographic area ensuring one representative from Buchan, Banff & Buchan and Formartine.

It was agreed that availability to attend meetings and being able to make the required commitment are more important qualities for the chair and vice-chair posts than achieving a three-way split.

- 7.2 Jean Henretty indicated that she is prepared to take on the second vice-chair position.
- 7.3 It was agreed that the position of chairperson must be filled by the time the programme opens for applications.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

- 8.1 It was agreed that the next meeting will not be arranged until after the meeting with Alasdair Prior has taken place in February. Members agreed that joint NALAG/SALAG meetings are preferable at this stage.