



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



**Scottish Rural
Development
Programme**

ANGUS COMMUNITY-LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
Integrated Local Development Strategy
Angus LAG Meeting
7th December 2016
Committee Room The Cross Forfar
Draft Minute of Meeting

Present:

Private Sector:

Gill Lawrie (GL) (Acting Chair) – Rural Leadership Group & Angus LAG
Mark Cessford (MC) - Montrose Community Council
Graham Galloway (GG) - DD8 Music
Douglas Pond (DP) - Friockheim & District Community Council
Charles Goodall (CG) - Care about Angus
David Valentine (DV) - Dundee & Angus Chamber of Commerce
Jeremy Parker (JP) - NFU
Hugh Campbell Adamson (HCA) - Scottish Land & Estates
Jenny Adamson (JA) - Individual (previously Angus Glens Community
Broadband Cooperative
Veronica Lynch (VL) - Dundee & Angus College

Public Sector:

Jim Clarkson (JC) - Visit Scotland
Gina Ford (GF) - Scottish Enterprise
Mike Strachan (MS) - Forestry Commission Scotland

Attending:

Public Sector:

Shelley Hague (SH) Business Manager (Funding, Policy & Projects) – Angus
Council

In Attendance:

David Tollick (DT) Angus LEADER/EMFF Coordinator
Kim Ritchie (KR) Angus LEADER/EMFF
Angela McMillan (AMC) Angus LEADER/EMFF Clerical Officer
Bruce Thomson (BT) Angus LEADER/EMFF Financial Officer

Apologies:

Private Sector:

Bill Sturrock (BS) Brechin & Area Partnership
Bill McLeod (BMC) Federation of Small Businesses
Debbie Donald (DD) Health & Social Care

Public Sector:

Alison Smith, Service Manager (Economic Development) - Angus Council
Graham Hewitson (GH) Service Manager (Communities) - Angus Council

1. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies

Bill McLeod, Bill Sturrock, Graham Hewitson, Debbie Donald and Alison Smith

GL welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming

Angus LAG's quorum is a simple majority of the registered members – this is met since 13 of 19 are present. The public/private balance of members attending is 3/10, which is within the regulatory balance of a maximum of 49% public.

Matters Arising

DT Confirmed that Black Agri service had decided to rework their application and submit it later.

2. Appointment of Chair

As per previous email correspondence, GL was standing down as chair. MS took the chair thanked GL for the past year as chair, noting that her work has been invaluable to the LAG. Ballot papers were issued. One candidate nominated, unanimous decision. DP appointed. DP expressed thanks to GL and would like the LAG to continue to get support from GL. It was agreed that GL would continue as LAG member.

Vacancy for vice chair arose from Dougie's appointment, nominations requested. By show of hands CG was unanimously appointed as vice chair.

3. Minutes of last meeting and Matters Arising

VL should be recorded as a non-public member. Minutes agreed VL and GL.

In reviewing decisions made on applications in the minutes, DV requested a revised approach to assessing succession-planning issues in applications. He and one other assessor felt that there needs to be tighter policies in place when it comes to succession planning to ensure continuity of the public funds that were awarded. DT agreed DV comments were valid. The meeting agreed that succession was about sustainability, which could be achieved even where ownership changed. DT indicated that LEADER regulations already enforced an asset-lock for five years from project completion.

DT requested that the meeting discuss general business planning, following issues raised by the assessors of the Black Agri application (recently withdrawn). These assessors (HCA, GF, DP and JP) and other members (MC, MS, CG and DV) all raised queries about assessing applicants' business planning.

DT noted that the application process does not specify a business plan as such, but that assessors are required to assess the applicant's business planning using the application form, project plan and ANY other supporting documents. DT indicated that the staff team did not have the knowledge/experience to provide business support, and would prefer clearer guidance on the signposting of applicants to business advice and what the LAG would expect in a business plan, a form of which should always be included in an application.

The LAG agreed that a small sub group would be formed to look at business planning requirements for applications. Nominations asked for, DV, HCA, JA volunteered. This group will meet on the 21st December 2016 and email a policy paper to the LAG members by the end of January prior to next meeting.

4. Budget

No issues raised, Budget approved

5. Governance & Operational Issues

It was noted that Bill Sturrock had not attend the past three meetings reaching the absences threshold for members. It was acknowledged that Bill had significant and understandable issues in attending, but that he was a valuable member of the LAG and his place should be retained and reviewed again in due course. Bill hopes to become an active member again soon.

Debbie Donald was confirmed as a new LAG member with a health & Social care background.

Jenni Brown resignation was noted. It was agreed that there was no need to replace Jenni Brown.

DT noted the SG letter 4th November confirming that awards could be made right up to the point that UK leaves the EU. This looks likely to be 18 months after article 50 is invoked, perhaps October 2018. All awards would need to be contracted by this date.

LAG was circulated with details of national LEADER groups including RDOC who oversee the whole SRDP. DT noted that there might be an opportunity to contribute to these groups on the rural development programme post BREXIT. RDOC has representatives from Scottish Enterprise, SLE and Forestry Commission. SH attends the accountable bodies group. DT/KR attend the coordinators group. GL has been attending chairs group.

GL felt that the split in the groups was not necessary as she felt that the messages could be confused.

CG asked about the possibility of sub group to look at the future of rural development. MC feels that this it is too soon to do this, as the situation is unclear; the LAG agreed not to pursue this at this point. SH told the group that

Angus Council are working hard to ensure that the commitments that they have to date are upheld and moving forward. The East of Scotland European Consortium, also hosted by Angus Council, has looked at this in great detail. SH can circulate papers to the LAG members in order that they may add any comments.

DP asked the public reps to involve the LAG in their representations to other forums regarding the future of LEADER and of Rural Development.

LARC's

System is now live for applications. Staff will be attending training next week for the claims process; claims will hopefully be processed through LARC's by end of January. No LAG members had questions on their use of LARCS to date

6. Monitoring & Evaluation AWARDS MADE REPORT

Friockheim Community Hub

Still not got the asset transfer completed. Some confusion over areas of land being transferred. Hope to have this confirmed by end of December. MC asked for implications. Project has already been delayed 6 months. SH reported that Community Asset Transfer is new to Angus Council and that we should chase it up. DP expressed concern around the time these CATs are taking. DV asked that the group write to Angus Council Chief Executive asking for explanation for the delay and enquiring whether future CAT are also likely to take a considerable time as this will have knock-on effects for the LAG spending commitments. The letter to be signed off by LAG vice-chair, given the chair's declared interest in the Friockheim situation.

Youth Cooperation Project

There is a delay with guidance for cooperation causing problems for the second stage of project. DD8 have secured partners from the Estonia visit and applied for funds through Erasmus to get a project approved.

Alinco

Relevant staff on leave soon after the award was made. Hope to have conditions lifted in the next couple of months. Email received today outlining plans to convene the community liaison group

Ashbrook

Team met with Ashbrook yesterday. Hoping to have building warrants by end of December.

Scottish Artisan Tea

Fife will not commit to projects beyond two years. Partners in Fife would need to find a possible work around.

DT stated that the guidance around state aid is not sufficient and work continues with SG. DT feels this project is not state aid but the guidance is not clear. MC asked if clarity could be provided by Angus Council – SH stated that the council has been looked at this in detail and that they agreed that it was not state aid. SH stated that state aid is being discussed at AB meetings.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Feasibility study. Monitoring visit arranged for next week

EOI/INTEREST

DT gave overview of this report. VL asked about Angus Engineers and the likelihood of the application going ahead and its relation to the school curriculum. DT is keen to support, beneficiaries will come from rural schools in Angus.

MS asked about Biomass. CE is known to him through FSB, highly skilled engineers but not so effective on marketing and business planning. MS/MC expressed concern about the oversupply in this area. The company were successful in the Think Big competition last year.

CG – met with mobile libraries staff who are considering using smaller vans to access more rural areas. This would be additional to the service they already provide.

GL – Honey berries may fall foul of state aid.

MC with October 2018 being the deadline for applications, and the LAG already being a third of the way through the funding round with no significant spend to date, would there be a likely scenario that funds will not be fully used. MS said that the projects always need development time before getting to the spending stages. Chair asked if an indication could be given regarding levels of interest and budget spend. A table that would indicate, the total grant budget, the total commitment to date, the total spend to date, and the total balance remaining. It was agreed to produce such a table at each meeting.

VL thought that the fast track process would have had more applications. Chair asked if there should be a review the threshold for fast track applications. It was agreed to consider increasing the threshold to £10,000. This would need the LAG business plan to be amended.

7. Animation/Communication

Rural Skills

There is interest in developing the outcomes of the Tayside LAG rural skills audit. Group attended Fife Rural Skills Partnership to look at a similar project. Angus group is looking to the possibility of making applications to the LEADER

Growbiz

Community led Business support. Angus is keen to develop something similar, in liaison with VAA and Elevator UK (contractor to Business Gateway). This could lead to an application to LEADER.

Website

JC raised the issue of search engine optimisation – this will be checked with contractor. GG raised the possibility of using social media to access potential applicants and promote the LAG activities; contractor will be reviewing this within the development of the website

Newsletter

Issued – another will be issued early New Year.

Funding

An event planned for mid February. Will also involve NESFLAG

Broadband project

Chair asked for update from council on timeframes/potential projects. There followed a lengthy discussion around broadband and connectivity. MS stated that P&K might have useful info to tap into. Representative from P&K to be invited to the next meeting, CG will invite him.

SRP Update

LEADER Team attended, along with some LAG members. GL stated that Saturday was a disaster and GG seconded that. Visits were very poorly attended. Feedback from the LAG will be provided to SRP through GL. Scottish Rural Action needs to be more proactive at promoting. Angus Council should be congratulated on their contribution to the event.

NESFLAG

Just over £300,000 spend to date. Angus has an allocation of £114,900 Aberdeenshire have agreed that additional budget can be drawn down from their large pot of money. Eol's in from Angus but no applications through yet. An event will be planned for next year in Angus to promote the funds. Next application deadline is April 2017. NESFLAG Contact details will be circulated to group. MC has been recruited as a new NESFLAG member

8. Any Other Business

21st February 2017 ESEC Meeting, reception event at Scottish Parliament, Holyrood. Angus is leading on the Rural Development area. LAG will be invited. CG will look at possibility of bus to transport LAG.

Future LAG meeting dates

1st March 2017

7th June 2017

6th September 2017

6th December 2017