



**Scottish Rural  
Development  
Programme**

## Angus LAG Meeting

5 December, 2018 at Angus House, Room B at 2:00 pm

### Minute of Meeting

#### **Present: LAG MEMBERS**

##### **Private Sector:**

Douglas Pond (DP) (Chair) - Individual

Gill Lawrie (GL) (Vice Chair) – Rural Leadership Group & Angus LAG

Jeremy Parker (JP) – NFU, also member Dundee & Angus Chamber of Commerce

Hugh Campbell Adamson (HCA) - Scottish Land & Estates

Graham Hewitson (GH) - Individual

Jenny Adamson (JA) - Individual

##### **Public Sector:**

Alison Smith (AS) (Vice Chair) – Service Manager (Economic Development) - Angus Council

Gina Ford (GF) - Scottish Enterprise (by Skype)

Mike Strachan (MS) - Forestry Commission Scotland

##### **Angus Council:**

David Tollick (DT) Angus LEADER/EMFF Coordinator

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

Karen Hamilton (KH) Angus LEADER/EMFF Clerical Officer

## 1. Welcome & Apologies

DP, The Chair, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming and took the opportunity to wish all compliments of the season and thanked everyone for their hard work over the past 12 months.

It was noted that the meeting was quorate; Gina attending via Skype.

##### **Apologies:**

##### **LAG Members**

Mark Cessford (MC) - Montrose Community Council

Lol Scragg (LS) - Dundee & Angus College

Graham Galloway (GG) – DD8 Music

Caroline Warburton (CW) – Visit Scotland

David Valentine (DV) – Temporary leave of absence agreed between DV and the LAG for next 6 months – DT will maintain occasional contact. DV was previously a board member of Dundee Chamber of Commerce. JP (an ordinary member of DACC) could if required represent the LAG as a member of Dundee Chamber of Commerce. DT to check with DGAA.

### **Leader Team**

Kim Ritchie (KR) Angus LEADER/EMFF Assistant Coordinator  
Bruce Thomson (BT) Angus LEADER/EMFF Financial Officer

## **2. Minutes of last meeting and Matters Arising**

Minutes of the last meeting were proposed of 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2018. Proposal by Mike Strachan and seconded by Graham Galloway.

DT confirmed that there are no matters arising from the Minutes that are not on the Agenda.

## **3. Budget**

### **i. Administration Budget**

We are forecast to come in under budget for the year by approx. £5000. The LAG agreed to look again at the admin and project budgets in March 2019 to make sure that we are managing projected outturns ref max allocation of 25% to admin/animation and 100% allocation of grant funds.

Clarification was asked for on current national deadlines for making awards. DT reported that deadline changes since the September LAG had been summarised in the interim by email to the LAG, and that a Brexit related deadline, for final approval of all awards of 28 March 2019, is now changed back to 31 December 2019. Projects must then put in their final claims by 30 September 2020, in order that the LAG can pay them back before the programme ends 31 December 2020.

Because of the deadline shift, there is now a longer period of time across Scotland to spend money and less pressure on currently underspending areas to declare any of their funds as available to other LAGs. It is therefore unlikely that further funds will be available to LAGs looking for more money.

It was clarified that after December 2020 there is no way to carry unspent money over to help to wind everything up, even though this is expected to need staff resource for at least 3 months post 2020. SH confirmed that this has been raised at the Accountable Bodies meeting with Scottish government because after 31 December 2020 there will be no budget for any staff team. It has been flagged up as a Risk within Angus council's Internal Risk Register, and with our Auditors. LEADER development planning for post 2020 is now well underway within other member

states, including resource issues ref. closure/wind up of the current programme. The UK is now not involved in this way, as we prepare to leave the EU.

It was confirmed that we cannot ask the projects to finish early, to allow closure/wind-up before 31/12/2020. Awards contracted to projects contain the existing date-windows, and it would be very hard on projects to breach or revise these contracts.

There were no further questions on this item

## **ii. The Project Budget**

Mike raised a query about the security of the funds involved in The Ceteran Eco Museum cooperation project. DT reported that this is led by Perth & Kinross who must monitor and assure progress, and must keep all the partner LAGs informed. DT will provide a report to the LAG via Perth & Kinross

DT confirmed that Brechin Rugby Football Club accepted the reduced offer of grant which they were offered and seem to have managed to assure the remaining match that was then required by use of funds previously allocated for phase 2. GL said that she has had positive feedback.

## **iii. Drawdowns**

Internal Audit require us to have better evidence of monies coming in from Scottish Government. The attached report will therefore be updated for each LAG. It was agreed to have the report show dates on the drawdowns, so it is clear what is paid in/out.

## **iv. Application Development and Budget Pressures**

DT reviewed how we are now handing further Expressions of Interest (Eols), because the changes to the deadline for awards, since September 2018 LAG, have removed the likelihood of us needing so many projects to mop up any increased grant funds. Some projects in the pipeline at September are less valid now as we are now targeting the original budget and not a potentially extended one.

Anything up to £10,000 is still a fast track and there is no further reference to the LAG other than 'awards for noting'. As discussed at the September LAG (2. Of the report that the Brexit related deadline was lifted and therefore that means that it will be very unlikely that we will receive any extra funds.

For projects over £10,000 the coordinator makes a judgement based on the project scale if the projects are do-able and then will give the LAG an outline of the project to discuss further. Projects up to £40K should definitely still be considered carefully. As a general guide, the more expensive projects take longer and become out of range of remaining timescales – a few farm-based accommodation developments over £100K are therefore not being encouraged. Also, it is clear that minimum enterprise and farm-

diversification allocations are already reached for Angus. However all enquiries are kept on file, even if we let them know that they are not currently of priority to us.

The balance remaining is not considerably different from the pipeline of interest, and not enough resilience exists if interests do not develop fully. It was agreed that we continue to seek and encourage applications of do-able scale; some of the projects even from the last LAG meeting have already been withdrawn. A healthier percentage of over commitments would be good for us, and we would be better with £50K- £60K more of pipeline projects.

#### **4. Applications**

##### **i. EastHaven Environmental Improvements 03/P00049**

There was some debate as to the applicant group's adequate risk assessment, competences and insurance to operate the tractor, and the LAGs possible liability through making an award. It was agreed that the LAG's responsibilities had been discharged by requesting that liability insurance was in place to cover the group's actions.

The LAG has approved the recommendation to go ahead for this project for £13,578.50 to East Haven Environmental Improvements

#### **5. Awards updates**

##### **i. Ashbrook Update**

Ashbrook issues with septic waste are now resolved as per previous LAG meeting, but they have now requested that we consider an award increase in the light of unforeseen costs. Planning issues affected this project from the outset, including poor professional advice on design, which only transpired after the project was approved originally by the LAG. Several configurations of buildings and waste water arrangements have been proposed and refined to arrive at the currently approved version, but which now requires extra car parking adding about £7800 to the costs of the project. The applicant also has a budget overrun of £1800 creating an overall budget pressure of £9,690. They are asking us to consider further funding at the same intervention rate to cover these new costs.

Two proposals were suggested to the LAG

- i) That we don't wish to support them anymore and that the car park and the budget overruns are delivered at their own expense or
- ii) Give them an intervention rate on the £9,690 of 56.41% which is the current rate of the award they have just now.

The meeting considered whether the condition of planning is for the applicant to deal with. DT advised that there is an issue affecting LEADER, where new statutes requiring all owners/occupiers to upgrade property to meet compliance standards cannot be

LEADER funded. DDA legislation is a case in point. However, a project must be delivered by the applicant to standards approved by planners, but that in the Ashbrook case the issue is a budget estimation one, due to the original having to be changed to accommodate a new planning requirement after the original approval. It is within the LAG's discretion to consider approaches by applicants related to budget pressures.

The meeting considered the risks of non-delivery if no further award was made, and DT reported that other aspects of the budget might need trimmed, and this could be brought back for further consideration.

A number of LAG members suggested that the applicant be requested to fund the budget pressure themselves, since the issues appeared to be all down to shortcomings in their planning, organising and management of the project. Other LAG members considered the sum to be a reasonable request in light of the overall project size, and the underlying problems with initial professional advice which had dogged the project.

The Chair proposed that we go ahead with a further award to the project for £5,466.00 at the existing intervention rate of 56.41% related to the £9,690 with a proviso that they can't keep coming back and this was agreed without further discussion.

**ii. Fast Track**

**08/P00047 Promoting Scottish Gardens, Cooperation project with Fife.**

We have agreed to this but a considerable amount of money was to go to a paper based map. We have told Fife that the assessors have approved the project but have asked Fife to discuss again with the applicant the large format paper based maps to check that this is the best way to spend the money for that particular purpose.

**iii. Written procedure**

**08/P00048 ENGINE Young Persons Work Exchange – cooperation with Sweden**

We required a decision over £10,000 between this and the last LAG, to start working with the Swedish Young Persons work exchange project (grateful that the LAG assessed that – it has gone very well). The total budget cost at which the LAG approved the award was £47,966 and within that cost the amount, which was allocated against the contractor costs was £26,063. The contract was subsequently let on Public Contracts Scotland quick quotes portal and the award was let at £27,000. The LAG agreed to award an extra £937 to the project.

The Swedish part of the project visited us a week ago, we had a successful meeting to kick the whole project off. The contractor to deliver this on our behalf is Rural Skills Scotland.

## 6. Monitoring & Evaluation

### National programme statistics

Comparing the other programmes in Scotland shows how effective we are as a team and getting the projects this far. Scottish Government said that the cooperation projects should be minimum of 5% and we will probably spend between 7% and 10%.

### Quarterly monitoring

- I. We made a substantial award to the **Crickety Project** in Brechin and they have reported a phenomenal interest for the bookings for the premises, attracting a lot of community groups. They hope to be opening next year. Through social media they have had an amazing response to their 'in memories' photo-wall. This will be a feature in their new premises.
- II. **Friockheim Hub** – newsletter tabled, and noted that they have had about 45,000 hits on the social media. The Friockheim Hub will be opening on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2019.
- III. **The Ogilvy Project** is now completed. The opening will be in the middle of January.
- IV. **Airdale World War 1 Monument** has had a delay as the sculptor has been unwell. They were not able to complete in time for the Armistice date, so now they are going to wait until the better weather in spring 2019.
- V. **Angus Business Connections** which has a considerable award for provision of support for micro and small businesses. They seem to be going well. We have had a six month review with them and they are pulling in a number of very successful contacts and interest in the services they provide.
- VI. **Caledonian Railway** their Architect submitted the wrong drawings which resulted in them getting a building warrant for a building that they hadn't actually planned to erect. At their own costs they have done remediation work with that; working with building control and got a new Building Warrant. However, the timber kit building bought some time ago and has had to be re-inspected by the technical specialist and supplier, as it has been sitting for some time. Any prices put on replacements for this Caledonian Railway will fund themselves.
- VII. **Peel Farm** has had issues with completing their paper work causing a delay to progress; this is being monitored.

## 7. Governance & Operational Issues

**Annual (October) Internal Audit and Confirmation Certificate was submitted on time to Scottish Government by the accountable body.** We scored an Amber status (LAGs can't get Green unless you get nothing wrong) and the five following areas identified for Improvements are now being managed by the staff team and the accountable body.

- I. **Assessors forms need to be signed** (a signature, not an electronic signature – a scanned signature is fine).

- II. **Brechin Cinema award's** intervention rate went up during the initial process from being a project under £10,000 and then they were awarded around £13,000. This should have been taken back as a Fast Track and redone as a full award. Still has 5 assessors and we were not penalised for that.
- III. **One of the X-LAG Members was still on the LARCs system** – that was amended on LARCs.
- IV. We need to complete a **check list** for everything on hand. Dave, Kim and Karen have been working on that.
- V. **Drawdowns from the Scottish Government** –making sure that someone is checking that the money is coming back in from the Scottish Government.

### **Assessor availability**

Just to remind assessors, that as well as the Fast Track Assessors (a group of five) who have recently done a lot, those that are not on the fast track panel will still be picked to do the other assessments coming out. We appeal to you if you could please let Kim know if you are available for assessments.

## **8. Animation, Networking and Communication**

### **SRP Stranraer**

Attended by Dave, Gill, Graham Galloway and Dougie. GL reported that it went very well and was happy with the general atmosphere this time. It wasn't so Party political motivated as it has been in the past. Only criticism was that there was just too many things to discuss. Perhaps SRP could have a more refined procedural process to put forward motions for approval, as it did seem a bit muddled on occasion.

**Kirrie Connections** (which has a LEADER grant) received a **Rural Innovator Award** at the SRP. Graham Galloway accepted the award at the event, and thought that it was a great networking opportunity. DP proposed that we should formally write to KK and congratulate them on the award. Also noted that another of the five awards made was given to an Angus project at Brechin High School, a health project lead by senior pupils and two GP's.

**ENRD** (European Network for Rural Development) have also requested award nominees for an EU wide category of LEADER projects. Angus LAG proposed Artisan Tea and EastHaven and Kirrie Connections was proposed via Scottish Rural Network. Any project made an award will be invited to Brussels in March 2019.

**Holyrood reception** has been organised on the 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 which will be a ministerial reception to do with 25 years of LEADER. Attendance has been limited to 60 because of the size of the room. It has now been confirmed to Peter Ross, who is chair of the LAGS Chairs Group. Hopefully there should be an invite going out for each LAG to send person/persons to attend. It is going to be a mingling 'Soiree'.

## **9. NESFLAG**

No Angus Projects were being considered at the last FLAG at Inverurie. The FLAG have currently £10,000 sitting in the budget for Angus and Bruce Fleming at Arbroath Harbour is currently working on an application on behalf of the Fishermen's Association. Hopefully that will be signed of at the next Flag.

## **10. Any Other Competent Business**

It was noted that some other LAGs are considering refreshing their LDS, in light of the likely vacuum for community led local development that will arise post-BREXIT. It was agreed that a sub-group would meet before next LAG to consider Angus' position – DP; AS; SH; GL; DT.

DT reported that there has been interest from one or two applicants to have some kind of collective LEADER event for all of the Angus projects involved. Perth & Kinross have done this. The LAG agreed to consider this further in March for early summer 2019 (Event: to share, celebrate, and learn from each other and connections – for further discussion). Perhaps a sub group could be formed by the LAG and a member of the LEADER team.

For noting - there is a meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January for the LAG Chairs.

## **11. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2018. We will confirm the venue nearer the time, although Dougie has offered the Friockheim Hub as an alternative to Angus House.

Gill Lawrie may be taking the Chair at the next couple of meetings as Dougie is getting a cataract operation.