



**Scottish Rural
Development
Programme**

ANGUS COMMUNITY-LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Integrated Local Development Strategy

Wednesday 15 January 2020 at 14:00 to 16:00

Venue – Strathview Room, Eassie, Nevey Hall - Balkeerie, Eassie, Angus DD8 1SQ

Present: LAG MEMBERS

Private Sector:

Douglas Pond (DP) (Chair) – Friockheim Community Hub

Graham Hewitson – Individual

Hugh Campbell Adamson-Scottish Land & Estates

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

Lol Scragg (LS) – Dundee & Angus College (D&A)

Mark Cessford (MC) – General Manager, RIY Shipping (Scotland) Limited

Public Sector:

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

Mike Strachan (MS) - Forestry Commission Scotland

Angus Council:

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

Dave Tollick (DT) Angus LEADER/EMFF Co-ordinator

Kim Ritchie (KR) Angus LEADER/EMFF Assistant Co-ordinator

Karen Hamilton (KH) Angus LEADER/EMFF Clerical Officer

1. **Apologies:**

Public Sector:

Alison Smith (AS) (Vice Chair) – Service Manager (Economic Development) - Angus Council
Caroline Warburton (CW)-Visit Scotland

Private Sector:

Gill Lawrie (GL) (Vice-Chair) - Angus Countryside Initiative
Graham Galloway (GG) – DD8 Music/Kirrie Connections
Jenny Adamson (JA) – Individual

-David Valentine (DV) – Temporary leave of absence.

Welcome:

DP, The Chair, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming.

It was noted that the LAG attendance at today's meeting was quorate with six private and two public members present.

2. **Bruce Thomson**

Chairman's statement – "Bruce Thomson was our Finance Officer who unfortunately passed away in November 2019; this has been a terrible tragedy for the whole of Brechin and Angus, We as the LAG wish to express our thanks and condolences to Bruce's family but also to record in the minutes thanks for all the work he has contributed to the LEADER projects for many years."

"We also wish to especially thank the remaining LEADER team; Dave, Kim, Karen and Alison, Merlyn and Shelley from the Accountable Body for their support. We are very fortunate that our LEADER Team is able to cope along with the help of the Accountable Body"

3. **Minutes of last meeting and Matters Arising**

Minutes of the last meeting of 5 September 2019 were proposed by MC and seconded by MS.

There were no matters arising from the minutes that were not on the agenda.

AS has reported no update from the Tay Cities Deal project but will advise the LAG of any future update.

3. Budget

i. Administration Overall

DT gave an overview of the current position. Concerns were; losing a full-time member of staff. After pursuing various options it has been decided that Bruce's post will not be replaced at present.

It has been agreed after consultation with managers AS, Merlyn Dunn and SH. that BTs workload will be split between DT and KR. At the moment they are working on claims and don't appear to be having any issues in this area. The number of live projects at this time is around 30, but these are likely to drop to about 15 in a month's time. KH was previously working 3 days a week and was able to be contracted for an extra day a week, to cover administration tasks. This will continue until the end of March 2020, but DT suspects that this will also continue until the end of the contract (December 2020).

DT had considered applying to reduce to 4 days a week, but in view of the changed situation he is happy to continue on 5 days a week.

Chair asked how this will affect projects going forward. DT said that project monitoring and evaluation will be increased when time is freed up from the claim side, probably about the end of March.

MC asked if the reduced financial expertise within the staffing would give any issues with the overall accountability of the Programme especially in terms of the audit trail. DT said that there is no specification of the qualifications, abilities and experience of the staff, although the separation of duties is very clear. The revised separation is between DT and KR. Initially this could have been a concern but it has been examined and is continuing to be monitored carefully.

DT said that there had been a delay of two weeks of drawdown from the S.G. but this is now back on track. SH reassured the LAG that the AB has two funding officers Rhonda McFarlane and Victoria Gibbons who have worked on European funding before and are on hand if there is a need to draw on their support.

The Chair said that the Scottish Government has indicated that it would be prepared to support if any problems were to arise and if they are able, LAG members will help if they needed.

The Chair wanted it noted that the LAG through the AB has a 'Duty of Care' towards the LEADER staff and they will have growing concerns and anxiety as their contracts will end at the end of December 2020. (the LEADER team are only required to give 4 weeks' notice).

SH commented that at the end of the last programme the co-ordinator had been made redundant.

- **Admin Budget /Programme Budget**

*(5.1 2019 admin budget calendar year end)

DT said Scottish Government operate on an admin budget for calendar year 2019 to date. Financial year 2019 out turn is also provided by Angus Council as well. The Budget Table 5.1 (top table) showed the full programme budget and also the spend of 96.9% for 2019. The lower table gave more detail on the 2019 spend, of which there were no issues.

The top table indicated a remaining budget, as at January 2020, covering the 12 month period to December 2020. The proposed budget for 2020 is based on previous figures. Staffing is based on Karen continuing to work 4 days a week for the 12 months of the year, (it may be increased to 5) which has been taken into account when giving a salaries out turn of £104,190.

Three items, Animation, Communications and Learning and Networking were highlighted for discussion. It was indicated that the LAG may want to vary these for 2020.

The discussion considered the costs for the conclusion of the previous programme. In the last year of the previous programme 'Rocket Science' had been commissioned to cover this area costing in the region of £20k with printing costs in-house.

For the current programme the LAG needs to consider producing video, monitoring & evaluation and a showcase for the 2014-2020 in relation to the Local Development Strategy, looking at all the projects. This will require preparing a brief and commissioning this work. Couple of other LAG areas have already put this work out for tender. For example: Forth Valley, at an estimated cost of £10,000

- **The LAG agreed to allocate £10,000 into Communication** to cover the costs, for the Monitoring and Evaluation contract with the Chair having leeway to agree a reasonable variation based on quotes received and budget available.

It was noted that the Legacy project was running in parallel to this looking how the delivery of the 2014-2020 LDS could be capitalised on, post 2020.

There will be no Interim transition budget as was the case for the last programme. This was able to fund staff continuation post programme to allow programme closure and planning for future.

- **Learning and networking** outturn for last year was £1,400 and the LAG considered mounting an event at the end of the Programme covering learning and networking; to which all applicants should be invited. LAG members were encouraged to attend events related to any possible future programme. The LAG assumed that the SG and UK government would like members engage in this area. **It was agreed to identify £3,000 for this**, under Learning and networking.
- **Animation** budget related to encouraging people to apply and is no longer significant and could be **reduced to zero**.

The net effect of these new A&A allocations of £13,000 is to change a projected outturn for non-salaries A&A of £7,241.83 credit onto outturn of -£5,758.17 debit. However with the salaries outturn projected £29,059.94 credit, this seems easily manageable, and would leave A&A headroom of £23,301.77 before considering further headroom, from known project underspend.

Scot. Gov. have asked for estimates of our staffing costs in the first three months of 2021. This is the first official request that we have had in this respect.

ii. **Project Budget**

The Chair commented on how many projects were completed, which was pleasing, although he indicated that the LAG should be careful about closing projects down – in case monies become available for add-ons. From December 31st 2019 there will be no new projects. KR reported that many completed projects were still 'live' on LARCs, and can still be further administered if required.

The Chair expressed anxiety about Denfind – reported in Project updates.*

Angus Alive have now completed but the reason this is not showing the spend as they have not processed the recent claim for the vehicle (around £100,000).

South West Angus Development Initiative underspend is mainly for staff costs. They do not submit monthly claims but tend to submit in big batches. There has also been a minor issue on one of their staff claims, which has still to be completed.

Dronley Woodland they are standing at £17,000. spend They are planning on doing a lot of work between now and March.

There were 3 confirmed underspends since the last meeting:

- ii.i Peel Farm - £9,6k
- ii.ii Scottish Honeyberries work in-house that is not eligible - £2,5k.
- ii.iii Greenhillock Glamping insufficient paperwork to claim - £2k.

This project underspend is accounted for already in the projected outturn 'project commitments' £2,114,546.07 in the A&A report 5.1. It shows project headroom of £12,039.93.

Combining headroom from both A&A and from Project underspend leaves total headroom £35,341.70, compared to £48,341.70 shown in report 5.1

The LAG delivery team will focus on the remaining projects spending, emphasising remaining budget rather than encouraging spend on additional items. No new projects can be approved, but existing projects will be encouraged to claim all their total entitlement.

MC commented that the LAG would want to be positive when reporting that the projects are completed, emphasising that they are delivering effectively even if under budget.

The Chair said that Finance would be a major element included in the March Agenda to allow the LAG to re-evaluate. At that point DT may be able to indicate spend demands and possibilities.

iii. **Drawdowns from Scottish Government.**

Drawdowns from Scottish Government. Since this tabled report was made, the position of the bottom six on the spreadsheet had improved. The one indicating 'prepayment check' is now moved to 'approved', and the ones reported as 'approved' have now 'completed'. They don't show a recovered date until showing in the Council's finance system.

SH has been liaising with Alison Robertson Accountant from AC finance Dept, who is monitoring the situation and liaising with DT with regard to the drawdowns.

4 Underspends and Reallocations

Scottish Government are not making further re-allocations to areas from other areas underspends.

5 Awards for Noting

No further awards have been made since September 2019. Brechin City Band are now getting funding advice from another team in Angus Council.

6 Project updates

- i. **Legacy project** - SH – This has been put out for tender and signed off just before Christmas. An inception meeting with the consultant has taken place.

The appointed consultant is a partnership between the Glamis and Five Glens consultancies. The tender was quite heavily focused on an evaluation of the projects and the LDS which was not what was required. They are now working on updating the brief just to base this on what the LAG actually wants. This should be available in the next week and a half.

The consultants were keen to undertake a stakeholder engagement and to speak to all the LAG members. They will present at the next LAG Meeting on the key elements, engage with Community Planning Partners and look at good practice across Scotland. There has now been a delay, because of the AB procurement processes delaying bids until December. The appointees have assured SH that they will be able to complete in 3 months.

The Chair said it would be helpful to see the proposal. Shelley to circulate.

Volunteers were requested for a Reference Group/Steering Group. Dougie, Graham Hewitson and Hughie agreed. LAG members are to be contacted by email to request further volunteers.

- ii. **Defind** report: Defind are sitting at 80-90% complete. The project will complete by the end of this month. The sheds are up and clad, drainage is in, internal concrete and electrics complete, along with the two of the three electric doors and they were pouring concrete on the external apron. Defind have presently not claimed but will put in one claim at the end of the project. This does cause less admin for us and we are confident that this will be complete soon.
- iii. **Friockhub** (verbal report on the day) - the Friockhub board were able to update us and we received a report in December. The Chair, now, Darren Hatton indicated that the Project has now secured substantial funding from the Lottery which covers the outstanding large amount of Capital debt. Projections for the revenue costs were expected to be at breakeven point (ex grant revenue) in the near future and the LAG were made aware that this Revenue assessment has been approved by an independent body.

DT has had sight of the independent report and confirmed it was positive. He was of the opinion that that there was no need to continue monitoring the Hub as the

financial position has been resolved. He recommended that the project is completely successful from the LAG's point of view.

This information was provided by the Friockheim Community Hub Board to the LAG's vice chairs AS, GL and also to DT. HCA indicated he was happy and emphasised that the LAG was not responsible for any of the problems. However, good practice would be to have a written report from the subgroup. DT indicated that the LAG team hold supporting documentation and have an email trail covering the situation.

- iv. **ENGINE** The Swedes visited at the end of November for a planning meeting. The project is going well. The outcomes for the previous year were that 15 young people were involved from a combination of Angus, P&K and Fife. At the planning meeting items discussed with the young people included –‘what does it actually mean and what are the benefits to the local area’.

For the next year the project is going to spend more time with the young people before they go out to Sweden discussing with them how they work and live in the local community and the engagement they have with local programmes involving Rural Development. The Swedes were positive about the programme. It is a difficult to deliver and some changes will be made for the forth coming programme. GH is involved in this programme and we are grateful for his input.

At present the programme is recruiting for the 2020 programme. There are 7 applicants from Fife, 5 from P&K and only 2 from Angus (both are being referred by Murton - a single contact). This is slightly disappointing for Angus, as previously we recruited six and sent five. The LAG were asked, if any members network with young people between the ages of 18-25, who want to work in the rural area and who would be interested in a similar area in Sweden, please steer them to the programme. Recruitment deadline – the end of March.

Follow up from DD8 Kirriemuir, a young person from Sweden (after placement at DD8) is now looking at developing further project work directly with DD8 and a most positive outcome would be to see approximate 10-15 youngsters from Kirriemuir going to Sweden this summer and then Swedish young persons coming to Kirriemuir. At present the programme is not funded by Angus LEADER, but it may be possible to add it as an arm of the existing Engine Project. This will be clarified in March. In four weeks' time 3 people are going out to Sweden to meet their representatives. GG asked if the LAG would agree to contribute £600 towards this.

It was agreed to contribute £600 to the Engine Project on the proviso that the group develop a plan for a further visit to include the 10-15 youngsters.

- v. **Flourishing Destinations** – This Project is going successfully. It is a major cooperation project between Angus LAG, Romania and Belgium. The next event will see a party from Angus going to Belgium as part of a learning project. A party of 10 is going from Angus, recruited by the Project Agents. One of the LAG Members GG is attending. As the project has its own budget and was oversubscribed the Chair

and Vice Chair have approved that GG can be funded from the Admin and Animation budget, (members expenses). This Project will finish September 2020.

- vi. **Rural Youth Project** - It is hoped that LAG members will get involved in this. The Project had its first major event at Wiston Lodge, near Biggar, that attracted about 60 young delegates between the ages of 18 and 30 from all over Scotland and 2/3 from abroad. 3 or 4 from Angus attended. It is similar to the ENGINE Project targeted at a similar group of people. The Rural Youth Project includes five LAGS: the Western Isles, Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, Perth & Kinross and ourselves. The Project is contacting each of these areas to run local Big Ideas Workshops before the summer of 2020 to try and attract people in that area and arrange facilitated workshops targeting young people who want to take enterprise or community involvement ideas forward.

There is a need to constitute a small group to support what the Rural Youth Project might do in Angus as we are one of the funders with a view to giving steers and ideas.

JP indicated that these Projects have been very good when reported in newspapers and magazines the articles have always gone out of their way to credit LEADER and name the individual areas that are supporting them. DT Agreed but they do not have an actual impact in the LEADER local area even though it's a national project and there has been concern that the local money that the five LAGS are putting in is diluted across Scotland

GH indicated that there is a need to know how these Projects connect to other strands of our work. As a national project that filters down he thinks that moving forward it should link in with any other work we are doing.

Information on the Project will be circulated and a short meeting will be arranged in the next 3 to 4 weeks.

9. **Monitoring & Evaluation.**

- i. **SG national programme questions.** The Scottish Government has been trying to establish national programme questions through consultation with staff groups throughout Scotland, consulting DT & KR and other people in the 21 programmes. This is important for us to know for the Programme monitoring and evaluation, to help in answering questions. SG are wanting to administer this, but at the moment the details are not known. This will be raised at the next A.B. meeting on 12 February to be attended by SH.
- ii. **Angus project-specific arrangements/progress SG National programme statistics**
LAG to note that since DT & KR are covering for BT, KR's work on project outcomes will put on the back burner until after March this year. The Chair asked if we are due an Audit. DT indicated no audit; the question was asked of the SG with regard to a timetable but the SG have not been able to provide one.

10. Governance & Operational Issues

- i. Dates for future meetings were discussed.

11. Animation, Networking and Communication

- i. **FARNET conference in Brussels** GL went to this conference on behalf of the Angus LAG and was the only Scottish representative at the conference. The Chair expressed thanks to GL. GL has given a report, circulated to the LAG. GL was very enthusiastic about it.
DT indicated that this has been good for us as we will receive all the reports and links relating to the conference and from the report, he has been able to pass on links to some of our Projects.
- ii. **Accountable Bodies Meeting** SH 12 February 2020. She indicated that it will be interesting to see what the future planning is, as nothing much has been heard. She is worried about the staffing situation and wants to make sure that there are plans being drawn up.
- iii. **The Chairs Meeting** It appears that many of the LAGS will be underspent. 40% may not be performing to maximum capacity. The Chairs have written two or three letters to the Cabinet Secretary.
- iv. **Legacy and reporting** This has been covered in the project update (i).

10. NESFLAG

SH report – NESFLAG has fully spent £114,960.00 on four projects that have covered our priorities from our local development strategy very well. NESFLAG are producing an end of spend report and this will be brought to the next LAG meeting.

Everyone from the LAG was invited to the launch of **Arbroath Signal Tower Museum** project on 21 January, starting at 1.00pm (they received some investment from the LAG to expand on their archiving and teaching & learning for fishing industries).

NESFLAG are having their next meeting in Angus, and looking to tour all the Angus Projects. SH will give details of dates which will be circulated.

11. Any other business

Projects Visit – this was cancelled in August – to be rearranged for springtime (April, May, and June). Karen will send out another Doodle Poll get a date.

12. Date of next Meeting

Wednesday, 4 March, 2020, Time and location to be arranged.