



**Scottish Rural
Development
Programme**

ANGUS COMMUNITY-LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Integrated Local Development Strategy

Wednesday 4 March 2020 at 14:00 to 16:00

Venue – Angus House Boardroom – Orchardbank Business Park

Draft minute of meeting

Present: LAG MEMBERS

Private Sector:

Douglas Pond (DP) (Chair) – Individual

Gill Lawrie (GL) (Vice Chair) – Angus Countryside initiative

Hugh Campbell Adamson-Scottish Land & Estates

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

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

Jenny Adamson (JA) – Individual

Graham Galloway (GG) – DD8 Music/Kirrie Connections

Public Sector:

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

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

Mike Strachan (MS) – Scottish Forestry

LEADER Staff:

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

- Apologies:** Graham Hewitson (GH) – Individual
Mark Cessford (MC) – General Manager, RIY Shipping (Scotland) Limited
Caroline Warburton (CW)-Visit Scotland

Welcome

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

It was noted that the LAG attendance at today's meeting was quorate 3 public members and six private members present.

Kim

The LAG would like to give our heartfelt thanks to Kim for all the work she has done for LEADER over the years and congratulate her on her new post.

Responsibilities

The Chair wishes to consider the '*Responsibilities*' of the LAG as we are coming to the end of the programme. The end of the programme is quite pressured and information needs supplied to the Scottish Government. It is also a period of risk for the accountable bodies, who are responsible for the major elements within the programme.

The LAG have responsibilities for decisions related to the projects and the project funding, however we make sure that the accountable bodies are involved, and they look at the risk element and advise us appropriately. The ultimate responsibility lies with Angus Council.

AS In particular as we move towards the closure of the programme and looking at previous experience, it is for Angus Council to identify the risks as an accountable body, with the responsibility to make sure that the money that has been allocated by SG to Angus LEADER has been accounted for, the project files meet monitoring and audit standards so that in terms of any monitoring or audit, we know that we are compliant with the terms of the SLA between SG and AC.

We have a Service Level Agreement with the Scottish Government that we are audited against. External monitoring is done by the Scottish Government and we also have an annual internal audit that is reported to Angus Council Scrutiny and Audit Committee. Staffing levels need to be looked at in managing financial risks. If there are compliance issues and penalties are incurred, the financial burden falls to Angus Council to pay back that money (not Angus LEADER Programme money). Therefore, the scrutiny by AB will increase towards the end of the programme.

Ref. staffing, AB reps are looking at the workload and staffing and have recommendations (later in agenda) as to how we would best manage that as a Council; happy to take advice but the decision will required to be taken by Angus Council.

The normal business of the meeting was suspended to allow a presentation - **LEADER Legacy** - carried out by Colin Smith and Scott Petrie from Glamis Consultancy and Five Glens Consultancy respectively.

Normal business then continued as follows:-

2. Minutes of last meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of the last meeting of 15 January 2020 were proposed by Hugh and seconded by Mike.

MS pointed out that he now worked for Scottish Forestry and Forestry Commission was no longer relevant (since April of last year). Karen to change detail. Otherwise there were no matters arising from the minutes and that are not on the agenda.

3. Staffing Issues

AS The management of workload has been discussed with Merlyn Dunn (Manager - Economic Development, SP&E, DT's line manager) and Dave and these are the options which we have:

- i. Looking at proceeding with Dave and Karen in post and appoint a contractor to looking at the M&E of the LDS (agreed at Jan 2020 LAG - £10k indicative allocation).
- ii. To try and recruit, internal or externally to replace Kim – difficulty with that is that it is a specialist post and the job is only for 7 months. Not many people able to come in and do that role quickly.
- iii. preferred option. We would be looking at additional contracting (beyond contracting for M&E of the LDS) to take on tasks e.g. end of project activities, some of the work developing case studies, the end of programme events that Kim would have been leading on)

AS We need to be compliant undertaking the claims process and using LARCS. This has to be the focus. It may be that some of the end of programme actions will be curtailed or simplified ('maybe we just cannot do it all'), but we need to make sure that we are compliant. We have sufficient funding for contracting in due to underspends related to Bruce's post.

DP External consultant may be difficult to obtain. Our priority is making sure projects get what they need, we are compliant, and we have the funding to cover this eventuality. There really is no possibility of obtaining further external funding from the Scottish LEADER programme, even if we needed it. Some LAG members have offered their services, but this would probably not be needed.

AS - We are hoping to have a spec for what requires to be done with an external contractor ready for the start of April.

The LAG agreed with Angus Council on option iii. and support their development of contractor support for remaining workload and noted that a commitment of £15K would be well within our budget capacity.

LS noted that using the same contractor to do the M&E of the LDS and to deliver some of the project closure work previously in Kim's remit looked like a conflict of interests. The LAG agreed and agreed that project closure would need to be a separate contractor from the M&E of the LDS.

4. Budget

i. Administration for calendar year 2019 to date

£36,943 end of programme variance, those figures take into account that we have already allocated, at the January LAG meeting, £10,000 to a contractor to do the monitoring and evaluation of the LDS, and also £3,000 moved into networking.

The report doesn't yet include a calculation of impacts from Kim's resignation or replacement. We should now save at least a month's of Kim's wages, as there will be at least this period between Kim leaving us and engaging some cover for her.

So no particular issue with the Admin Budget at the moment.

Further Discussion took place re: staffing.

The SG recently announced a programme extension from 31/12/2020 to 31/03/2021 however state that there is no additional money for staff costs. Query whether they expect the Accountable Bodies to find monies to pay staff until the end of March 2021. This is highly unlikely. We are discussing this situation with the Scottish Government.

DP mentioned that at attending the Chairs meeting, SG reported that there were no further monies being given to cover the period after the 31 December 2020.

HCA asked about Redundancy. It was noted that if you are contracted by Angus Council, and that runs beyond two years, you would be entitled to redundancy, but that this falls to the council since redundancy pay is ineligible for recovery from LEADER funds.

HCA requests a letter should be sent to Scottish Government/ MP or MSP about this to put pressure on. This is a problem for Accountable Bodies and unreasonable to put this on them.

DP happy to write a letter with Dave sending it to our local MSPs and Minister.

AS asked if Accountable Body could be informed when it is sent. DP and DT to prepare with AS.

ii. **Project Budget**

Projects are forecast to come in around £14,000 underspent. We can redirect this to address cost increases on other projects if appropriate. The LAG agreed to delegate to the Chair and two Vice Chairs the approval of such decisions, up to a value of £5000 without reference to other LAG members. DT, after consulting further with SG, to advise Chair/Vice-chairs on any further regulatory/guidelines restrictions on this process.

Overall the Projects are generally in a good position. Some of the projects will run into September/October 2020.

- **The Legacy Project** has now started – there have not been any claims yet.
- **Dronley** has not made a claim yet. They were the subject of an award uplift – they have another £5000 reward.
- **Brechin Buccaneers** is a staffing cost only from now.
- Number of **Cooperation projects** – no concerns at the moment.
- **Angus Business Connections** funded by us to support small micro businesses is just about to come to an end. They due to end at the end of February but have an extension to the end of March to roll out a subscription membership scheme which will be the basis on which they will go forward with their work and hopefully will give them a bit of resilience in the future.
- **Ashbrook** have now appointed a Chef. They are pretty much ready to go, just waiting on a completion certificate. It will be well worth seeing. It rolls on until September 2020 this year paying for development roles.
- **The Brechin Rugby Club** are having terrible trouble getting a water supply connected through Scottish Water. **AS** said that the MSP has called a

meeting with Scottish Water re several businesses in Brechin on Monday and **AS** will be attending.

DP we will be comfortable that underspend on projects which we can't re-align elsewhere will go back to Scottish Government. No major issue with that.

Council audit wished that the revoked projects should be shown on the spreadsheet so that the LAG members were aware of the situation.

iii. **Drawdowns from Scottish Government**

MS Why is the 26th July outstanding? **DT** They and don't often pay us them in the order they are presented. SG can be way over the 90-day threshold in the Service Level Agreement for paying us drawdown requests. The Accountable Bodies team have raised the issue.

5. **Project updates**

i. **Denfind**

Project is completed and DT contacted. Applicant is at present in liaison with the contractor to try and reduce the amount of the overall bill total.

ii. **ENGINE**

We are lucky to have had 6 expressions of interest from Angus, 7 from Fife and 6 from P&K, but we can only send 15 and fortunately we have a couple of people that have withdrawn. The Swedes cannot cope with any more than 15. We should get some good outputs from that. The young people that have been involved in 2019 have stayed engaged with the project delivery agent.

Recently we had a successful outcome from one of the Swedes placed in the DD8 project; on the back of that, she has returned to Sweden and is in contact with some of the DD8 project. **GG** -We went out on a project visit about a month ago and we are planning on going back in September with a group of about 20.

iii. **Rural Youth Project**

Still waiting on an update report from the Rural Youth Project from P&K. We met with the RYP to develop 'A big ideas workshop' they are using the Hub at Friockheim. At present they are recruiting people for the Hub (to be carried out end of March).

6. Awards for Noting

Note that the £5000 uplift for Dronley has been reported to the LAG.

7. Monitoring & Evaluation

DP The LAG already had decided at the last LAG meeting to put in £10,000 towards this. Can we increase the amount we are going to need for this to £15,000 in view of the possible staffing changes and the possibility that we will have to go out to outside consultants?

DT noted that the M&E contractor may not be the right person to also cover some of the staffing work for project closure. We discussed earlier in the meeting to give Angus Council leeway to use budget headroom (which we have a lot of at the moment) to address the staffing issues.

DP proposed to agree that the £10,000 stands in this case, however if there is a need, as a result of all the decisions to be made, the LAG could agree an extra £5000 if needed in the future from the headroom. This was supported by Mike Strachan, seconded by Hugh.

DT had circulated a paper on Monitoring and Evaluation of the LDS, which will have to be brought together as a specification for tender. We have made a clear distinction between the Legacy project and Monitoring and Evaluation of the Local Development Strategy, the latter which is aggregating each of our 50 project outputs to address the question 'how did LEADER Angus contribute towards what we said we were going to do in the Local Development Strategy'.

8. Governance & Operational Issues

Nothing to report

9. Animation, Networking and Communication

i. Accountable Bodies Meeting

SH - We have flagged up to the SG that after the programme finishes in December if SG are not going to be able to support us it may be untenable. Our financial position is very good, and it is now about getting the review and monitoring work done to show how good this programme has been.

We were currently involved in SG routine monitoring of a selection of projects, and staff were busy responding to the queries from the monitoring team at SG. This was the third such monitoring event since 2015. We have been able to answer the

questions so far, and are focussed on this work, because of the implications for compliance and penalties.

ii. **The Chairs Meeting**

DP - It appears that most of the LAGS will be underspent. The representative from the SG who is dealing with the review in relation to the UK Shared Prosperity fund is expecting to report soon. The Chairs have written two or three letters to the Secretary of State with regard to project completion. There is a lot of anxiety about staffing and in one area I believe they have no staff.

10. NESFLAG

SH report – We have nearly spent all the money on the three areas that NESFLAG covers. Also looking for a further evaluation report and an EMFF celebration which we will all be invited to. We had a visit from NESFLAG down at Arbroath Harbour and some press were there, which was good.

There are a lot of discussions now within the funding post 2020. It looks like the Marine Scotland is going to launch some sort of transition programme but it looks as if it will be a Maritime type project and local authorities will not be approached, although SH had said that we would like to be involved. General feedback is that the system in place through FLAG, in comparison to LARCS, has made management of the projects relatively easy.

11. Any other business

Projects Visit

Chair said we should hold that to the next meeting.

12. Date of next Meeting

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