



**Scottish Rural
Development
Programme**

ANGUS COMMUNITY-LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Integrated Local Development Strategy

Wednesday 3 June 2020 at 14:00 to 16:00

Venue – Microsoft Teams – hosted by Caroline Warburton on behalf of LEADER

Present: LAG MEMBERS

Private Sector:

Douglas Pond (DP) (Chair) – Individual

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

Caroline Warburton (CW) - Visit Scotland (*Host*)

Graham Galloway (GG) – DD8 Music/Kirrie Connections

Graham Hewitson (GH) – Individual

Jenny Adamson (JA) – Individual

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:

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

Karen Hamilton (KH) Angus LEADER/EMFF Clerical Officer

1. **Apologies:** Hugh Campbell Adamson-Scottish Land & Estates

Welcome

DP, The Chair, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending via Teams.

It was noted that the LAG attendance at today's meeting was quorate 3 public members and 9 private members present. (GG leaving at 3pm)

Chair thanked Dave and Karen as they have dealt with being understaffed with a lot of issues and pressure.

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

There were no issues with the last Minutes of the meeting of 3 March 2020 and so were proposed by Gill and seconded by Mike.

Letter

The Chair mentioned that at the March 20 Meeting, the LAG agreed to send a letter to SG on redundancy issues.

DT responded that there were related issues that Angus had to discuss at the Accountable Bodies meeting as obviously the impact of redundancies will affect all the LAGs in Scotland. *Rather than write a letter our accountable body will act collectively with other ABs rather than unilaterally as Angus, if in agreement with the LAG.*

GL asked for a timeline of Chairs and Accountable Bodies Meetings. (DP 16 June is next Chairs Meeting – 9th June online for ABs).

3. **Budget**

i. **Admin Budget**

The report shows costs till the end of May. Karen shows on 5 days a week until the end of 2020 and also includes the costs for Kim for only the first three months of 2020. The budget at March 2020 had of Kim's full year costs (an extra 9 months).

There is another £15,000 for contractor costs allocated in the budget to potentially cover workload of Kim's, but we are not recruiting a replacement for Kim.

The end of the programme is December 2020. There will be £27,413 underspend on the admin and animation side. Looking at the whole of the programme its £39,046, as we would add to that the £11,633 of the projects underspend on the grants that we have given out.

The Scottish Government are now also allowing us to have costs in the first 3 months of 2021. We have not yet shown any budget for those 3 months of 2021 but the £39,046 could be used for that. However we are waiting on Scottish Government to clarify

whether the staff costs should be from existing or new budget for that period, and also to clarify contractual issues (service level agreement ends 31 March 2021). Angus will bring this up at the next Accountable Bodies meeting. **DP** said he would mention this at the Chairs meeting as well.

AS Note: any extension to contracts involves further redundancy costs. The Accountable bodies may discuss redundancies at the meeting, but it is an Angus Council issue.

DT The likely commitment on the £39,000 for similar staff contracts for the first 3 months of 2021 would be around £17,200

GG said he had a discussion with a project in North Lanarkshire – they and their partners have just had confirmation that they can claim right up to December 2021 from the Scottish Government. Surely that is something our LAG would need to consider for next year – claims made up to December 2021.

DT said he was aware that some projects would have to be staffed after December, but that SG deadline of 31/03/2021 stands.

ii. **Project Budget**

The project commitments line shows an underspend of £11,633, which is not going to be spent. When we look at the projects affected by lockdown there is a risk that we will need to add to that.

With exception of the Legacy Project and the remainder of the South West Angus Project, all the projects which are still claiming are currently suspended, with some more severely affected with the lockdown. We have been in touch with them all by email and had conversations with them all about what they are doing and what the impacts might be and we do have a reasonable picture of where pain is likely to be felt with projects at the moment.

On top of that however, we have absolutely no idea if other aspects of the lockdown will overwhelm and impact on these organisations. Although we can say that the LEADER project looks okay and that we have enough time to complete it, etc. we are not privy to all the information in the background, which may well create instability to the whole enterprise. This cannot yet be known.

- **Murton** – they had planned to spend all their money by September this year and because they are now allowed to spend the money until March 21, they hope to spend the money late autumn to early spring next year. Staffing and costs and presentations on Rural Skills.
- **Crickety** – much the same as Murton, although they may get a little more money for staff. £5,900 they have been paid off Larcs they have been paid a little bit more, something like £2000 still to claim but they would have to open the place to use that money.
- **SW Communities (community council section), Angus Council** - the workers are still working and producing materials relating to the Corona Virus. 'How people in the Community can adapt'. They think they can run the project out by August which will use up all the money.

- **Brechin Rugby Club** - Happy news, water connection issue appears to be being resolved. Robin Leslie Melville is pretty hopeful it will all be sorted out soon which will allow the remaining grant to be drawn down and sent.
- **Dronley** - just delay things, they probably have a couple of months work to do. No issues working to the remaining window.
- **ADHD Support** - still plenty of months left in the programme to get things up and running to spend their budget.
- **LEADER Legacy project** – is underway and there are 3 invoices at least for that and another one due yet for project completion.

All those following are all in known danger of underspending:

- **Flourishing Destinations** – probably £8,000 at stake. Might want to put £8000 in the underspend.
- **Engine Young Persons** - £7,000 at stake
- **Our Rivers** - £1-2000 at stake

Taking us to a maximum of **£28,000** for these projects is more or less undeliverable unless the Scottish Government agree that some actions could be completed after the 31st of March next year.

iii. **Drawdowns from Scottish Government**

AS We looked at that in depth over the past few weeks and worked on that with DT and we are happy with it. Approx. £160,000 recently submitted on drawdown 30.

4. **Project updates including CV19 Issues**

We have highlighted the 3 projects of ours above that we are not going to be able to complete because of the time scale. In our case, it is principally these are summer seasonal activities – not able to do in the winter instead (all transnational cooperation projects). Luckily, we are not in such a bad position as some LAGS in Scotland who may have half-built properties who will run out of time. The current extension to the end of March does not really help – they will need an extension to October 2021. There are a number of LAGS going to ask to be able to spend their monies next summer otherwise there will be a lot of half-finished projects left. (This will probably be brought up at the accountable bodies meeting).

Currently those 3 projects should just be held in the background. We need to work out more clarity from the Scottish Government what they are going to do in the next few weeks. If they were underspends – the whole of the programme would have another £17,000 underspend.

- **The Cooperation Projects** that are held by other LAGS are looking to spend. **AS** if programmes are to be extended that impacts on staffing costs too (especially Angus Council projects), impacting on budgets, which in turn affects each council – so there is a bigger issue.

- **Auchlishie** are right up to their retention now, they are at the stage that they cannot get another claim payment until the building can be opened. They are affected by lockdown and the ability for tradesmen and services to get up there and do the work.
- **Newton Farm toilets** – have been advised to be cautious and perhaps not to start that project yet, small contract for £10,000. Newton are paying 50% of the project, not sure whether they can afford to start that project. Need to see if it will be viable after CV.
- **Ashbrook** are open again – queuing out onto the road. Garden centres seem to be having a bonanza. Ashbrook are not reporting any issues with the delivery to us. They are asking for an extension to the development post, at present suspended while they are not in contact with other people.
- **Lintrathen Cycles** A sole trader relies on tourist trade coming in for cycle hire and has been very badly hit. He has adapted some of the spend to produce promotional videos to encourage tourists to come once the lockdown has been lifted.
- **Denfind Stone** have spent all the money and is now complete (just tying up loose ends). Have not been able to visit but they have been sending plenty of photographic evidence.
- **ABC Project** – completed now (also known as Community First on the list). GL asked about whether they were given an extension that they had requested?

DT The Scottish Government guidelines said at the time that there wasn't to be any project extension. The project is now complete and the window of opportunity to feed them some more money and benefit, has now gone. Subsequently the guidance has been queried and reconsidered and will be reviewed at next AB meeting.

- **Rural Youth Project** as you know, is a £38,000 award for Angus and is the same for four other areas and is run by Perth & Kinross. P&K do most of the work with the Rural Youth Project team and about 3 months ago we started to get reports that the project was not having local impact in any of the five LAG areas and it was being created more as a platform at a higher national level to highlight issues to do with young people.

A major project review was undertaken recently by Perth & Kinross on behalf of all the LAGS who were involved. Angus were recently involved in a conference call regarding this. Corona Virus has severely impacted on RYP's ability to run face to face events, group gatherings, festivals, workshops, etc.

One of the arms of this project was weekend workshops (for Angus, in the Hub at Friockheim in March, which was cancelled). The project has been impacted badly by the Corona Virus, but we believe it has also been impacted by relating to only minor numbers of young people on the ground.

They now plan to change around to work more locally, to start discussing more directly with the five local areas and to start a new process called 'Smart Villages'.

Not everything has gone as hoped with the youth project. Although it has very high levels of engagement at a senior levels - both in SG Officer Level and political level among the MPs and MSPs - it needs to make more impact in the LEADER areas, a view held by the other four LEADER areas that are funding it. The 'Smart Villages' initiative needs to make an impact.

DP Gannochy Trust want to put more money into young people in Perth & Kinross and Angus, so looks like there is going to be a flood of people wanting to get into those areas.

GF Growbiz initiative – Smart Villages, current programme is supported by Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Government and it is hoped that the COVID situation is actually a good example of having that kind of connectivity is really important, making sure that no-one gets left behind when communication is everything.

[Smart Villages Scotland is able to be accessed online.](#)

AS Scottish Government are looking at Smart Villages, it is an EU wide initiative. ENRD have a group looking at the Smart Village concept. We have looked at different elements of that, as a Council, (last year) and what it might mean and are looking at the 'Smart Village' model; it is quite a broad concept.

GL I am not hugely surprised about the RYP, as Dave says, they are extremely good at the top-level stuff and maybe not quite so confident at actually contacting the Rural Youth. I am not absolutely certain but unless there is a huge input from the Smart Villages and the publicity around that, I am not terribly convinced it will manage to achieve what it will be set out to achieve because of the nature of things and trying to get hold of young rural youth people to take part. Maybe GG can say a bit more about that.

GH I think from the start there has been some concern of the RYP and its ability to connect with young people at a local level and that obviously remains a concern. In my opinion, another high-level initiative is not going to deliver that, that's about connecting directly with people and that is very difficult at the moment. They are very good at their social media and PR stuff and if they are not connecting through those routes, they are not going to connect anyway. They need to get on the ground or get partners on the ground and get in touch with young people and bridge that.

I also think they are looking at getting to a high level of involvement and commitment from young people with whom they are not engaged, and that is quite a big jump for young people who are not confident and not involved. There is a mismatch there and there will continue to have mismatch there until there are much more connected with local networks and can get on the ground with young people.

JP Smart Villages may become a bit more of a project area where they are looking for changes that may arise from COVID. It could become very interesting particularly the way we have set ourselves up through LEADER with the LEADER Legacy project – this could be something else to keep our eye on as a sort of pilot area. It could support food sustainability, connectivity, health engagement etc.

DT One of the things that persuaded me not to be so hard on the Rural Youth Project when I met them online yesterday was the fact that Smart Villages was introduced as an aspect of the project. At least it is fairly new and interesting and might be worth

gambling on. At the point where we are at now, RYP has not succeeded in Angus and it really will have to pick up the game in the next few months. I think Smart Villages is an interesting thing to try but I agree with GH's on-going reservations.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Legacy Project

DT At the moment the consultants have spoken to various projects, plenty of stake holders, all the LAG members and then they were going to develop the next stage, of 'modelling' – showing 'here's a way that things might work' - if we ever had another Local Development Strategy. I think that they will want to make that presentation to the LAG.

Colin will invite the whole LAG to a half hour presentation in the future.

SH The initial meeting that we had a couple of weeks ago, when Colin and Scott talked about the results, was really useful for us when we look at the partnerships, collaborations and the direction they are travelling.

Note to Chair: 17 or 18 out of 40 Projects gave some feedback to the consultants, which was considered to be a really good return rate.

Monitoring by Scottish Government

DT At the last LAG SG monitoring activity was underway with LEADER Angus for 4 projects. Very many people contributed to make that a success. We have some learning points, about the completion of documentation.

Auchlishie was one of the projects sampled; then we heard that the SG had also selected it for an on-the-spot (OTS) inspection. The first would be a documentation check, which luckily, they had had that through the monitoring, followed by RPID site visit. At present RPID cannot go out and inspect the project anyway because of the Lockdown, but this is to be completed by December 2020.

Monitoring & Evaluation Contract

DT we are hoping to get a contract in place for September 2020, bearing in mind we need to be in a position where most of the projects are finished and still have a sufficient window to complete the work for the end of March 2021.

The contractors for LEGACY project have already done some really good monitoring which can cover some of what is required. It would be really useful to see at least a draft before we completely get the spec bolted down for the further valuation and monitoring contract.

AS & SH We have been having regular meetings, weekly, going through all of this and am comfortable with the situation.

6. Governance and Operation issues

SH Angus Leader update that went out to Scottish Government, a month in advance of the accountable bodies meeting. DP thought that this was impressive and put Angus in a favourable light.

DP was unable to access the Chairs Meeting. Some next steps agreed, one being that All the LAGS would send a letter to their local MSPs and MEPs, indicating what the implications of COVID 19 and how the LAG programme will come forward. If anyone wants to see them Dave can provide them. Copies of the letters are from Dumfries and Galloway, Orkney, Forth Valley, Western Isles. Angus are going to send a letter to our two MSPs in the same vein.

GL It would be wise that we should try and put in a little bit from our side even though our situation it is not as severe as other areas. I do think that recovery for the whole of Scotland is quite important. Dave has mocked up a version – but this should go through the LAG chair and be a letter from the LAG. AS asked if there is a letter to be drafted could it be shared with the LAG before it is sent. Dave to prioritise that.

DP noted other areas' responses to the advisory group for economic recovery. There was not much time for angus to respond to that; both it was very tight, and it was saying exactly what we have been saying. 'What is going to happen in the future?', 'How's local CLLD going to be delivered?', 'Is the model going to be taken any notice of etcetera, etcetera.?'

DT heard only last Monday (25 May 2020) and we were supposed to have consultation with the Scottish Government by the Sunday – it was all on-line.

GF It was not a very well conducted piece of consultation but believed that Aberdeenshire Council managed to put forward a reply.

AS commented that a response had been sent from a four-partner council response, through the ministerial of cooperate evidence and we are working on the cooperate evidence around rural connectivity at the moment from a local authority's point of view.

DT Jackie Brierton is looking at a project for small rural businesses that have been badly affected by COVID 19 and she is asking for the support of all the LAGS.

AS enquiring how this is to connect this up with other channels and would like this information before we endorse information moving forward so as we are not duplicating work.

DP says that he will send the document onto Alison

Chair and vice chairs delegation on virements between projects was discussed earlier on with GL's query with ABC.

7. **Additional Network and Animation**

DT Using the online forums has been really successfully for the staff group meetings which generally speaking had never happened before without us all going to the one venue and spending a night and a couple of days talking to each other. We have had 3 meetings in the last six weeks which were easily organised and have been using Zoom or Teams. This has been important, and it has certainly allowed us to get comprehensive feedback to our own areas and Accountable Bodies about some of the issues faced in other areas.

AB meeting next Tuesday 9 June 2020

Next Chairs meeting is the 16 June 2020.

8. **NESFLAG**

SH Not a huge amount to report, we've had the PAC meeting a couple of weeks ago and the assessment catch up yesterday. There is only one application going forward to the meeting next week, it's for South Aberdeenshire. The FLAG will be held via Teams, I'll probably have more of an update on the current position after that.

Angus' allocation is fully committed, North Aberdeenshire almost committed but there is a still remaining budget for South Aberdeenshire.

October will be the final round for projects to ensure that they are fully spent within the EMFF timeframes.

9. **Any other Business**

No other business to discuss.

10. **Date of next Meeting**

AS If we get any critical decisions from the Scottish Government through the AB's meeting then we should organise a meeting.

The next programmed meeting will be the 2 September 2020.