

**REPORT TO: THE MORAY COUNCIL ON 14 MAY 2008**

**SUBJECT: RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek the approval of the Council to support the submission by the Moray Community Planning Partnership for the Scotland Rural development programme 2007-2013 LEADER funding by the 30 May 2008
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section E48 of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to oversee the application for, co-ordination and monitoring of Council funding from European programmes.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **That the Council gives approval for the submission of a bid to the Scottish Rural Development Programme and agrees an allocation of £100,000 each year over the life of the LEADER Programme as a contribution from the Moray Council.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At the Policy Committee on 5 March 2008 (paragraph 59 refers) it was noted that Moray Community Planning Partnership is currently preparing a business plan to seek funding for the next round of LEADER funding from Europe Programme (SRDP) 2007-2013.
- 3.2 The European Union recently approved the Scotland Rural Development Programme. This sets out the Governments plans for Rural Development and the desired outcomes for the period to 2013. LEADER was previously a stand alone European programme but has been integrated into the SRDP. LEADER is a 'bottom up' form of engagement driven by Rural Communities, for the wide benefit of rural communities.
- 3.3 The Community Planning Partnerships Rural Development Task group was given Government funding to assist develop a Rural Development Strategy and business plan as their bid for the new LEADER 2008 -2013 Rural Development programme. Consultants were commissioned to undertake the study and carry out community consultation.
- 3.4 The Partnership agreed to bid in the second round to allow time to prepare a stronger bid. The Government made a formal call for bids for the second round on 26 March 2008. An expression of interest has to be submitted by 18 April 2008. The closing date for final bids is 30 May 2008. A formal submission of interest has been submitted.

- 3.5 The draft Rural Development Strategy and Business plan will be finalised and will be available to members from 9 May 2008 and a further paper giving more detail on the programme bid will be presented to the next Environmental Services Committee.
- 3.6 The Partnership has to select relevant themes and these are themes of “revitalising communities” and a “progressive rural economy”. Although there was strong support for these themes there was also clear recognition of valuable and complementary elements within the other themes which could influence activity under the chosen themes.
- 3.7 The proposed Local Action group (LAG) area falls within and is defined by the boundaries of the Moray Council. The proposed area excludes all the SNS Data Zones covering Elgin (which is ineligible on the basis of its population of 21,000) and a single data zone of 383km<sup>2</sup> which falls within the boundary of the Cairngorm National Park (population 725 including Tomintoul village, population 322). The Cairngorm National Park Authority (CNPA) led the preparation of the successful LEADER bid for the Park area. This followed consultations between the Moray Rural Development Task Group, the CNPA, community associations in the affected area and local elected Council Members who agreed to the inclusion of this data zone within the Cairngorm LEADER programme area.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan**

The completion of the Rural Development Strategy and the development of the rural bid to support development of the rural Development Strategy are listed in the Single Outcome Agreement. The themes selected will allow the programme to support a number of key outcomes highlighted in the Single Outcome Agreement particularly National Outcome 1 “We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place in Scotland for doing business” by supporting increasing the level of economic activity and assist support Tourism. It will also assist the Council and it’s partners to contribute to National Outcome 11 “We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.”

**(b) Policy and Legal**

The introduction of a ‘Duty of Community Planning’ through the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 emphasises the importance of

Community Engagement and Social Inclusion in the Community Planning process.

**(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

The Moray Council has allocated a proposed sum of £100,000 from the economic development budget over the life of the LEADER programme for match funding. Partners are being asked to make contributions to the match-funding element of the business plan. Scottish Natural Heritage have indicated an amount of up to £50,000 per annum, HIE Moray have indicated that they will give support to match fund relevant projects but have not indicated any contribution to the overall project. Other Partners will be approached for funding.

LEADER funding to the LAGS from the Scottish Government will match monies committed by LAG partners. Specific projects can attract additional funding either through cash from a range of sources and in kind contributions. There is an indication that over £3 million could be made available to Moray.

**(d) Consultations**

The process of developing the strategy and business plan has involved the Community planning Partners and a number of other external organisations, including Scottish Natural Heritage, National Farmers Union of Scotland, Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA). Rural Environmental Action Project (REAP), Moray Federation of Community halls and Associations, The Neighbouring Action groups in The Cairngorm National Park and Aberdeenshire LAG's have been consulted. Three community workshops were carried out in February in Forres, Fochabers and Rothes. The Principal Development officer has been consulted and agrees with the content of the paper. The Chief Financial officer has been consulted and agrees with the financial elements of this report.

**5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 That Members support the submission of a Moray LEADER bid and agree a match funding contribution of £100,000 each year over the life of the LEADER Programme as a contribution from the Moray Council.**

Author of Report: John Ferguson Community Planning & Development Officer  
Background Papers:  
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