

REPORT TO: POLICY COMMITTEE ON 5 MARCH 2008

SUBJECT: LEADER PROGRAMME

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Council on the closure of the Moray Action for Communities (MAC) a joint Community Planning project funded by the LEADER+ European funding programme and to inform committee of the Community Planning Partnerships efforts to prepare a bid for the new LEADER 2008-2013 programme.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section A(41) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to dealing with all matters relating to the exercise of the statutory functions of the Council under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to initiate, maintain and facilitate Community Planning, the process by which public services in Moray are provided and planned for.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Committee note the achievements made by the Moray Action for Communities (MAC) LEADER+ programme and also note that the Community Planning Partnership are currently preparing a business plan to seek funding for the next round of LEADER funding from Europe.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2002 the Moray Community Planning Partnership established a working group to establish the feasibility of a bid for LEADER funding and the development of the Moray Action for Communities project.
- 3.2 Following a successful bid the Moray Action for Communities (MAC) Project was established by the Moray Community Planning Partnership. Part funded under the LEADER + programme it ran initially until December 2006 and was extended to December 2007. Its theme was to improve the quality of life for Moray's rural communities.
- 3.3 The project was managed by the Moray Action for Communities Local Action Group which had representatives from the Moray Council, HIE, Moray College, Moray Youthstart, Moray Voluntary Services Organisation, Forres Groups Action, (Moray federation of Community Halls and Associations and the Lhanbryde Challenge.) At the Moray Council meeting on 10 July 2002, it was agreed to support the MAC project, contribute £15,000 till its closure in December 2006 and approve the temporary post of Project officer and Clerical Assistant

- 3.4 The project began operation with the appointment of the first Co-ordinator in November 2002. The actual Programme officially ends 30 June 2008. The final claim and evaluation report must to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 18 August 2008.
- 3.5 The need for the project was identified by a survey of the third sector in Moray that identified common needs of greater involvement management and IT training, more funding, equipment advice and information and greater organisational profile. MAC included the following activities:
- 3.5.1 The Gateway Resource was a user friendly web-based GIS mapping system which allowed services to be identified by geographical area. It was managed by the MAC Officer who maintained the system and provided users with systems support in case of difficulties, is responsible for placing information on the system and for promoting and demonstrating the system to community/voluntary groups. The strategy was to provide a Gateway Resource which:
- allowed community organisations, particularly those without the resources to invest in a community web, to have a web presence
 - contained information about, and acts as a gateway to, other resources and support services
 - allowed community/voluntary groups to increase their organisational profiles and informs potential users and volunteers about services and activities that are available in their area

The work of the Gateway resource has been incorporated into the Moray Community Planning Website. It has attracted 58,000 visitors in the course of its life, of whom 20,400 were 'unique visitors' with 21% of them returning to the site on at least one more occasion. 63 Community groups have entered their details on the site of which 48 have at some stage updated this information. The GIS has provided invaluable information for those looking for statistical evidence of need in their communities. It has acted as a 'news board' to highlight training opportunities, funding opportunities and general information.

- 3.5.2 The Training and Skills Transfer training programme was designed to deliver the skills and knowledge that community activists need to operate more efficiently and to access funding more successfully. A structured accredited modular training programme was delivered twice a year subject to demand. The MAC Training Programme has succeeded in its aim "to deliver the skills and knowledge which community activists need to operate more efficiently and to access funding more successfully " by providing 1236 training modules to 360 community activists This included 26 people who achieved ILM (Institute of Leadership Management) accreditation. This element of the Training Programme has proved successful, so successful that HIE Moray is now funding the next step in the ILM programme in conjunction with UHI Moray College.

- 3.5.3 A Grant Award Scheme was made available to community/voluntary sector organisations that could demonstrate that this financial assistance would enable them to provide new services within the community and help build capacity within their sector. In Moray a total of 54 organisations were funded. MAC has disbursed £170,254 to community organisations in Moray, this sum has been matched funded by the groups with £266,127 the majority coming from sources such as Awards for All, and a variety of Trusts.
- 3.6 The MAC project also carried out Trans- National project in 2006 with a LEADER+ Project in Southwest France (Pays Albigeois et Bastides). In July of 2006 a group of 18 young French people along with 3 youth workers came to Moray and met with 12 young people and 4 youth workers from Elgin & Keith for a week long exercise. Participants undertook training at Moray College and made a short film on rural issues for young people. The group from Moray then travelled to Carmaux where the young people experienced life in a different cultural setting to Moray. As part of the exercise young people from Moray participating spent time learning French and communicating with the French group over the Internet.
- 3.7 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 28 September 2005 it was agreed that the transfer of the line management of the Moray Action for Communities (MAC) project officer from the Environmental Services Department into the Chief Executives office.
- 3.8 In July 2007 the Scottish Executive launched proposals for the Scotland Rural Development Strategy and Programme (SRDP 2006) and invited expressions of interest from Local Action groups in the future LEADER programme.
- 3.9 The focus for LEADER bids will be based on community based approaches to rural development, ensuring that decisions taken by Local Action Groups contribute to all the SRDP axes. These include; improving competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector, improving the environment through land management and improving the quality of life through economic diversity.
- 3.10 The Moray Community Planning Partnership established a Rural Strategy task LEADER programme returned an expression of interest and for 2007-2013 and they are currently preparing a business plan as a bid for future LEADER funding.
- 3.11 The business plan will contribute to the development of a Community planning Partnership Rural Strategy for Moray. The business plan will be complete by early March 2008 for submission. The Scottish Government changed the original closing dates for applications to LEADER from February.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

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

The MAC programme contributed to the Corporate Development Plan priority of "listening, consulting and engaging with communities. It contributed to the Councils Social programme in supporting and encouraging measures that achieve social inclusion and enhance the quality of life and the educational programme by providing progressive lifelong learning, cultural and leisure opportunities. The project was initiated by the Community Planning Partnership and has contributed to building the capacity of the voluntary sector and community organisations to participate in local Community Planning. The Chief Executives Service Improvement Plan included a commitment to support the MAC programme.

(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. The MAC project reflected the aims and objectives of the Moray Councils Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

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

The MAC project was match funded by contributions from Grampian Police, NHS Grampian, Communities Scotland and Community groups who made application for Grants from the scheme. The project costs were £519,000 Moray Council contributed a total of £200,000 over the length of the project. The total LEADER + grant to Moray totalled £234,000 and the contribution from partners totalled £85,000. MAC funding levered £265,000 in matched funding from a variety of sources into projects. Funding of £17,000 was provided by the Government to prepare the business plan for the new LEADER project which will assist in the production of a Community Planning Partnership Rural Strategy.

(d) Consultations

The Principal Development Officer in Environmental Services and the Chief Financial Officer were consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The committee is asked to note the achievements of the Moray Action for Communities (MAC) project and that Moray Community Planning Partnership is currently preparing a business plan to seek funding for the next round of LEADER funding from Europe.**

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Background Papers:

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