

ANGUS COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE – 19 AUGUST 2014

ANGUS LEADER PROGRAMME - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2014-2020

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

ABSTRACT

This report updates the Committee on the process for bidding for European LEADER Funds and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) funding to support rural development activities and fishing communities in decline in the period to 2014 - 2020. The Committee is asked to note the current position on the Angus Local Development Strategy and the forthcoming submission of a Business Plan. The Report also seeks approval for the Council to continue its role as the Lead Partner on behalf of partners for the Programme and to recruit the appropriate staff required to deliver the Programme.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- i) continues to support the development of the draft Angus Local Development Strategy and agree the submission of the Business Plan and final Local Development Strategy as required by Scottish Government by 30 September;
- ii) agrees that Angus Council continues its role as Lead Partner for the Programme on behalf of partners i.e. the function carried out by Angus Council for the previous Rural Tayside LEADER Programme 2007-2013 and the Angus European Fisheries Fund (EFF 4) Programme 2007-2013; and
- iii) approves, subject to the bid being approved, to the recruitment/secondment of staff on a temporary basis as required to deliver the Programme, noting that all costs will be covered by any funding award.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/CORPORATE PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- We have a sustainable economy with good employment opportunities: LEADER and EMFF projects enable employment opportunities and support new development projects.
- Angus is a good place to live in, work in and visit: LEADER has supported regeneration and tourism projects.
- Our communities are safe, secure and vibrant: LEADER Programme is shaped by the community and is designed to empower local development.
- Individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services: additional services have been provided within rural communities through LEADER and EFF funding.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 European funding programmes operate on a 7 year cycle, the next of which will cover the period 2014 – 2020. The draft Scottish Programmes have been developed within the European framework of regulations on the Structural Funds, namely the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is a UK wide programme which will contain a Scottish chapter.
- 3.2 During the 2007-13 period, Angus Council was the Lead Partner for the Rural Tayside LEADER Programme 2007-2013 on behalf of partners across Rural Tayside and the Angus European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Axis 4 Programme. LEADER funding was delivered through a Local Action Group (LAG) and EFF funding through a Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG).
- 3.3 Within the new EU General Regulations, LEADER and the EMFF Fund must be delivered through a similar 'Community-led local development' model as before. In addition, the new guidance encourages a more integrated approach i.e. one strategy covering both the LEADER and EMFF Programmes albeit the funds will be accounted for as separate budgets. This will be delivered through an Angus Local Action Group (LAG) i.e. a partnership with representation of public, private and community sector representatives.
- 3.4 In July 2013 an expression of interest was submitted to Scottish Government to develop a Local Development Strategy (LDS) covering both Programmes.
- 3.5 The Cairngorms National Park also submitted a bid to continue as a Local Action Group, and the area of Angus which lies within the Park boundary will fall within its LAG boundary. No area can be part of two different LAGs, therefore the Angus LAG will exclude the National Park.
- 3.6 Approval was given in October 2013 to proceed to develop the Angus LDS and this work was led by Angus Council on behalf of the Angus Community Planning Partnership.
- 3.7 A draft Local Development Strategy was prepared through a programme of facilitated community and stakeholder engagement activities and a desk based review. This included three public engagement events in Arbroath, Brechin and Kirriemuir, four themed focus groups, interviews and an online survey.
- 3.8 An Angus Shadow Local Action Group was established to guide the process and comprises a range of interests from communities, businesses, third sector and public bodies. The Shadow LAG submitted the LDS to Scottish Government on 31 March 2014 and feedback has now been received.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Local Development Strategy and Business Plan

The development of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) is an iterative process. Following feedback from the Scottish Government, there will now be further consultation to develop a Business Plan and refine the LDS before final submission by 30 September 2014.

- 4.2 The final LDS will identify key rural and fisheries needs in the area and outline how these can be addressed through funding from the LEADER and the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund Programmes 2014 – 2020.
- 4.3 In the period 2007 – 13 the Rural Tayside LEADER programme had a grant budget of £2.9m to distribute. It is anticipated that Angus will bid for approx. £2m for the period 2014-2020.
- 4.4 The Angus EFF allocation for 2007-2013 was 2% of the overall programme i.e. £110,000. It is anticipated that the budget allocation will be similar in the 2014-2020 period.

- 4.5 Approval of the LDS and Business Plan is expected in October or November 2014 and it is anticipated that the first call for applications can be made in January 2015.
- 4.6 Membership of the Local Action Group will be finalised following approval of the Angus Local Development Strategy and Business Plan.
- 4.7 European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

Following submission of the Local Development Strategy, further guidance was received from Scottish Government regarding the EMFF funding and the proposed integration with LEADER including the delivery mechanism i.e. through a Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG).

During the 2007-2013 programming period the Angus Coastal FLAG focus and aim was to support projects that:

- Strengthened the competitiveness of the fisheries areas
- Add value to fisheries products
- Support small fisheries and tourism related infrastructure and services for the benefit of small fisheries communities
- Protecting the environment in fisheries areas to maintain its attractiveness, regeneration and developing coastal hamlets and villages with fisheries activities and protecting and enhancing the natural and architectural heritage.

The Angus FLAG through the LDS will continue to support projects that will revitalise Angus fisheries communities.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 In line with feedback received from Scottish Government, the LDS and Business Plan will be finalised and submitted no later than 30 September 2014.
- 5.2 As in the previous Rural Tayside LEADER and Angus EFF Axis 4 Programmes, a Lead Partner is required who can assume legal and financial responsibility for the delivery of the Programmes and employ staff. It is proposed that Angus Council continue in this role as before given their ability to assume these responsibilities but subject to agreement of the contents of a Service Level Agreement with Scottish Government. Responsibilities are expected to include:-
- Financial responsibility for payment of project claims
 - Monitoring and managing the programme budget
 - Reporting as required to Scottish Government
 - Annual accreditation checks, SLA audit and internal audit reporting

- 5.3 Subject to the bid being approved there will also be a requirement to recruit and/or second staff on a temporary basis to deliver the Programme. The exact staffing requirements will be agreed once further details on the Programmes are available. It is proposed that Angus Council employ the Programme staff and all salary costs will be met from the Programme budget. A further report will be brought forward on the staffing structure once details are available.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Business Plan is being developed which will identify the level of LEADER and EMFF funding to be bid for and will include a 7 year administration budget (including staff costs) required to deliver the 2014 – 2020 Programme. All administration costs associated with running the project, including the costs incurred employing temporary staff can be claimed from the approved funding award.

- 6.2 At this stage, the financial implications for Angus Council as a result of supporting the administration of the LAG mainly relate to in kind support. Should a financial contribution be required a further report setting out the full financial implications will be brought to Committee for consideration.

**RICHARD STIFF
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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