

**MINUTE OF AFLAG MEETING
THURSDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2015 AT 13.30 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBER, ARBUTHNOT HOUSE, PETERHEAD**

Present

Panos Pliatsikas	Aberdeenshire Council
Zillah Jamieson	Banffshire Coast Tourism Partnership
Linda Hope	NESCOL
David Anderson	Aberdeen Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Ian Watson	Fraserburgh Development Trust
Darren Broadley	P&J Johnstone Ltd
John Cox	PFFPA
Michael Bates	Scottish Seafood Association
George Cameron	Aberdeenshire Council – Harbour Services
Jimmy Buchan	Scottish Fishermen’s Association
Robin Maddock	Banffshire Partnership Ltd
Derek McDonald	Industry Support Executive (Aberdeenshire Council)

Officers in Attendance

Martin Brebner	Team Manager – European Programmes & Policy
David John McRobbie	European Programmes Co-ordinator
June Jaffrey	European Programmes Claims Officer

Guests

Shelley Hague	Senior External Funding Officer (Angus Council)
Alison Smith	Head of Economic Development (Angus Council)
David Terry	Marine Scotland: Sea Fisheries Policy Division

Apologies

Margaret-Jane Cardno	Banff & Buchan Local Community Planning Group
Liz Scott	Buchan Development Partnership
James Bream	Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce
Roger Goodyear	Banffshire Coast Tourism Partnership
Ian Land	Seafood Scotland
Anne Birnie	North East Scotland Fishermens’ Association
Jamie Bell	Scottish Enterprise
Duncan Leece	Banffshire Partnership Ltd
Steve Murray	Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishing
Andy Willox	Federation of Small Business
Anne-Margaret Stewart	Scottish White Fish Producers Association Limited

1. Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 Martin welcomed those present and round the table introductions were made.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted as above.

2. Draft minute of AFLAG meeting on 29th September 2014

2.1 The draft FLAG minute of 29th September 2014 was approved and will be uploaded on the AEFF website.

3 Update on LDS/Business Plan preparations

3.1 Feedback from Scottish Govt.

Martin recapped on the discussions from the previous FLAG meeting and the changes which were to be put forward to the Scottish Govt. Feedback was received from them with a number of queries which were to be considered by the FLAG and subsequently the Strategies to be redrafted. Martin has gone over in detail regarding the North and South LDS feedback letters and advised he feels that we have covered most of the items they raised. The FLAG were reminded that consideration of the two Strategies had to be made but that we hope to final draft strategies completed by the end of March 2015. The group were asked if there were any comments the FLAG wished to raise; there were none.

3.2 Feedback from Marine Scotland

Martin referred to the letter received from Marine Scotland dated 20 January 2015 which outlined points for consideration. It was felt that Aberdeenshire had met many of the points raised. Work on the following is to be undertaken;

- FLAG membership - it was acknowledged that FLAG member recruitment would require elaboration and further information being provided to organisations in order for them to make an informed decision on membership.
- Targeted Funding – Martin and David John will continue to work on this over the next few weeks and will circulate a draft to members.

3.3 Martin highlighted the Angus FLAG staff who were in attendance observing today's meeting; this attendance would be useful to all should there be collaboration projects in the future with Angus FLAG.

4. Update on new EMFF Programme (David Terry; Marine Scotland representative)

4.1 David was introduced to the FLAG and gave an update on the LDS; advising that the draft LDS was heard at a panel in November 2014. FLAGs are currently reviewing their feedback prior to submission of their final strategies. It was advised that Scottish Govt. conditions outlined in the feedback letters should be met on re-submission. There is no firm timescale for the re-submissions.

4.2 David talked of the EMFF impact on Community Led Development advising that discussions on the country wide programme are lengthy and challenging. (Mark Nicoll is leading on this aspect). Particular issues were apparent however i.e. Fleet capacity and aquaculture. It was noted that fewer FLAG are to be formed and that the whole coastline will not be covered but rather settlements and ports. The decision to have fewer FLAGs is to ensure less duplication of resource etc.

4.3 It is hoped to hold a soft launch of the programme for FLAGs in March 2015. It will be quite general but will allow FLAGs to then formalise their

own process. The programme would be fully open in July 2015 – subject to progress for the operating programme. As the EMFF programme is linked to LEADER it is moving at a different pace.

- 4.4 Confirmation of the funding figure will be confirmed prior to the launch in July. David advised that the approval of the LDS is to be done prior to the funding launch.
- 4.5 Match Funding it was confirmed will be met by Marine Scotland on a 25% maximum basis – this is new for this programme.
- 4.6 David advised of a 6% performance reserve being place on the whole programme. This figure will be kept back but potentially released at the end of the programme subject to a UK assessment level being met.
- 4.7 A key difference in the programme will be the role of Marine Scotland as project approvals will ultimately be approved by them after discussions at local level. Marine Scotland anticipate that applicants will have met Marine Scotland requirements at approval stage prior to their rubber stamping the application. Marine Scotland will issue the formal approval letter to applicants with monitoring and evaluation being carried out by Marine Scotland also as part of the audit process.
- 4.8 The application process has yet to be finalised – it was clear however that it will follow a UK wide electronic system. FLAGs may use a paper based system until the inception of an electronic package provided it fully meets Marine Scotland's requirements.
- 4.9 Martin thanked David for the update and information he provided then opened the floor for questions.
 - Is there likely to be duplication of features at UK level?
David advised that EMFF local development funds have been set up for diversification within and out with the fisheries. There is an opportunity to diversify in the nature of the projects. He also confirmed that wider funding will be used to employ co-ordinators who can animate and work at grass roots level gauging what is required and pointing applicants to the correct funding sources or assisting them with building their project application. Boundaries between the AXIS funds was discussed and it is expected that some small processors may now come forward to this fund now that match funding has been confirmed whereas the previous programme created difficulties in the securing public match funding. David is unsure at this stage as to the number of FLAG wide Co-ordinators but could confirm that the cost would not come from this fund.
 - Clarification was sought on Marine Scotland having the final approval on project applications.
It was confirmed that will be the case after the recommendation of the local FLAG; subject to applicants having met Scottish Govt. application criteria. As the FLAG will undertake facilitation/animation/advice on applications building these up for recommendation to Scottish Govt.,

meetings will be required to be held across the year for final approval. The criteria being that Scottish Govt. and local FLAG priorities are met by the applications.

- Soft launch date optimistic (as applicants would expect the fine detail to be set)?
David confirmed that the thinking for this date was to enable a smaller timeframe prior to the full launch in July. A realistic “real” launch would be quite soon afterwards. This was also to link within timelines to other Scottish Govt. business. It was confirmed that this was still very much work in progress and subject to the operational programme being near completion. It may be the case that the launch is delayed should this not be met.
- Was the launch for political purposes?
David re-iterated the objective is to highlight the application processes and the programme. The view from some FLAG members is that a draft application form for example may have been more appropriate in satisfying expectations from applicants.
- Aid Intensity rates; for Business will sit at 50% but there would be scope to increase this for Community projects; this is yet to be agreed but can be increased if there is a public benefit.
- Council led projects; will be permitted in the next programme subject to satisfactory procurement rules.
- Could there be generic application forms for FLAG and Leader LAG?
David advised that this had not been considered but he will take this point, for using a common form across LAG and FLAG, away for consideration.
- Claims procedure; a UK wide EMFF electronic system will be put in place for applicants to apply online. A two tier application for smaller scale or small value projects is also being considered. In all cases the minimum requirements have to be met and these are driven by the European Commission. For the Claims process; it is anticipated that the FLAG Claims Officers will continue to check claims but that Marine Scotland would review them then release the funds. David advised that this is still under discussion. It was confirmed however that claims will still be processed and paid retrospectively. Zillah asked if a percentage would still be held back until the completion of the project as it is currently. David doesn't know if this will remain the position but will clarify and respond to the FLAG.
- Clarification was sought on the emphasis on Ports.
David advised that for this Fisheries focus they are looking to assist both onshore and inshore projects. For example processing, marketing, storage, enhancement and preservation of stock value.

- Members of the FLAG felt that the criteria was more restrictive for projects and sought clarification as to whether Tourism projects were excluded.
David sought to reassure the FLAG that this was not the case but that diversification within and outwith fishing communities was expected. Projects would have to provide a benefit to the fishing community.
- Would FLAGs still undertake the monitoring of projects? And what other areas of work may move to the Scottish Govt.?
There is nothing further at the moment that will move to SG but the programme is still under development. David advised that FLAGs can still undertake additional things out with the EU statutory things.
- Have there been a change to the geography of the area in which applicants can apply?
David John confirmed that currently a ten mile radius applies but that each project has to confirm its fishery links. David John and Martin will make a proposal as to which towns will remain in the LDS with the FLAG then confirming agreement. It was re-iterated that the whole coastline doesn't need to be the focus for funding nor does it necessarily have to be the largest ports or town which benefit. David John confirmed that Inverbervie will be included in the new FLAG. Martin will let FLAG members know a list of potential settlements to be included.

5. Vacant Positions (Chair and Vice Chair(s) AFLAG & Project assessment Committee - Appointment

- 5.1 Martin again advised of the requirement to nominate and elect a Chair and two Vice Chairs. David John met with some FLAG members at the end of last year to ascertain if they wished to put themselves forward for Chair positions. It was confirmed that the only nomination received for the AFLAG Chair was Linda Hope. After asking for proposals, John Cox suggested co-Chairs be appointed. This was met with approval from the group and Jimmy Buchan was appointed co-Chair along with Linda. Vice Chair positions will be discussed at a later stage when it is clear if there is to be a joint FLAG with either Moray or Angus FLAGS - to give those FLAGS the opportunity to nominate members.
- 5.2 The Project Assessment Group is responsible for looking at the applications before they go to the FLAG. David John has received some names for this group. However, all members will have the opportunity to bid for this. He could advise that a South Aberdeenshire member has been confirmed but that it was too early to confirm all members just yet.

6. FLAG Membership Review

- 6.1 Martin advised that the Kincardine development Partnership had returned an application but that further fisheries bodies were required. David John asked the FLAG for further suggestions for organisation to approach. Martin will put out invitations to join. John Cox suggested Community

Planning Groups be approached; Martin advised that this had been done by means of contacting the Area Managers.

- 6.2 It was confirmed that Aberdeenshire Finance Service staff will be invited to join to ensure that applicant Business Plans are robust.
- 6.3 Angus would be required to nominate a certain number of representatives to sit on the FLAG.
- 6.4 It was noted that there is an error with the organisation name for David Anderson – this will be rectified.

7. AOCB

7.1 Expression of Interest (Project Ideas)

David John has received a number of EOIs. He will forward the EOI forms to the group for circulating to potential applicants. It is expected that there will be some EOIs for discussion at the next FLAG meeting.

7.2 Collaboration with other FLAGS (Angus)

Martin advised that as the European Commission would like FLAGS to merge there has been some discussion with Angus FLAG on this. Efforts have been made to engage with Moray FLAG but with no success; they are at the end of their programme and staff have left etc. resulting in difficulties in opening discussions on merging. Martin indicated the advantages and disadvantages of merging. For example FLAG members would need to be familiar with all the Local Development Strategies, the Admin budget may be improved, animation in the South of Aberdeenshire could be improved. Martin asked the FLAG for their view on collaboration projects advising that currently inter regional projects are difficult but it is hoped this will be improved. Martin invited Alison Smith from Angus FLAG to speak to the group.

- 7.3 Alison advised that the Angus programme is now closed. They had a fund of £100k whereby three projects were undertaken; two Maritime skills, and investment at Arbroath harbour. The admin budget was small with two days per week required for Admin. Animation was done within their existing resources. Collaboration projects with Aberdeenshire previously have been cultural tourism and renewables. With Angus willing to look at future opportunities for collaboration.

- 7.4 David will find out the current situation with Moray FLAG and clarify if the Moray LAG is co-ordinating with the Council.

- 7.5 Martin advised that Moray and Angus FLAGS are not yet established. He confirmed that future FLAG meetings would be in Peterhead. Angus LAG members would be part of the FLAG therefore the membership was almost complete. He will look at future options and report back to the FLAG.

7.6 Promotional events

David John asked the FLAG for their views on promotion events. It was

confirmed that traditional methods i.e. press releases etc. would still be done. Community events are seen as a good start and it may be viable to join with other funding bodies i.e. SAB to allow prospective applicants to see the range of funds available. David John suggested that once the finer points of the programme have been confirmed then events could be held. It was agreed to identify appropriate locations for the community events to maximise turnout.

7.7 Jimmy wished to re-iterate to Marine Scotland the complexities and difficulties that both applicants and FLAGs faced in the previous programme. It is felt that rules across Europe and within the UK areas are conflicting and seen as a barrier. David Terry advised it is the wish to make the process simple and accessible and that he will feed these concerns back.

7.8 Martin advised that an evaluation of the last programme will be undertaken.

8. Date of Next Meeting

8.1 The proposed meeting date of 11th June 2015 is to be changed. David John will co-ordinate an appropriate date and venue with Linda and Jimmy.