

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET : 17 SEPTEMBER 2008

LEADER PROGRAMME

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purposes of this report are to :

- (1) update Cabinet on the LEADER Programme;
- (2) seek Cabinet approval for the actions undertaken to secure East Ayrshire's inclusion in a pan-Ayrshire LEADER programme; and
- (3) note the proposals for the match funding programme and associated projects through delegated authority..

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 At its meeting on 11 October 2006, the former Development Services Committee considered a report which advised of the Scottish Executive consultation on the Rural Development Programme for Scotland 2007- 2013, including the LEADER Programme.

2.2 Liaisons Entre Actions de Development de L'Economie Rurale (LEADER) is a European Union (EU) funding initiative which aims to promote rural development and increase the capacity of local rural communities and business networks. Rural communities are defined within the LEADER Programme as settlements with a population of less than 10,000.

2.3 North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Council were actively encouraged by the Scottish Government to work together to prepare a pan-Ayrshire bid for the LEADER Programme which required:

- the establishment of a Local Action Group (LAG) comprising local government and non-government organisations that are active in the rural development process; and
- the development of a Local Rural Development Strategy and LEADER Business Plan.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEADER BID

3.1 In order to prepare the bid, a LEADER Steering Group was established in August 2007, comprising officers of the three Councils and the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Team. The Steering Group appointed consultants, Fraser Associates (funded by the Scottish Government), to prepare a Local Rural Development Strategy and Business Plan.

3.2 A detailed consultation process was carried out throughout the three Council areas and within East Ayrshire, involved the range of stakeholders detailed in Appendix 1. A draft strategy was produced which identified a range of issues including:

- The environmental assets of rural Ayrshire and their potential for tourism and recreational activities.
- Links between the rural environmental assets and the larger towns.
- Relatively narrow range of employment opportunities
- Dependence on being mobile – particularly in having access to private transport
- Sustainability of some settlements
- Capacity within the voluntary sector

3.3 Following further consideration by the Steering Group, it was agreed that a shadow Local Action Group (LAG), including officers of the three Ayrshire Councils, be established to oversee the development of the final Strategy and Business Plan. Membership of the shadow LAG, identified through the consultation process, is provided in Appendix 2.

3.4 The finalised Strategy identifies the whole of East Ayrshire, with the exception of the urban area of Kilmarnock as being eligible for LEADER

3.5 The finalised Strategy identifies two themes for action:

Theme 1: Rural Community Capacity with potential projects including:

- Training of members of community based organisations;
- Actions that help networking and exchange of good practice;
- Assistance with feasibility studies;
- Co-ordination of community-based organisations and raising their capacity to address the rural development needs of the area; and
- Promotional activities to raise awareness of LEADER etc.

Theme 2: Revitalising Communities with potential projects including:

- Conversion and refurbishment of premises for multiple uses;
- Small scale environmental improvements;
- Community management of environmental assets etc;
- Establishment costs and short-term revenue support associated with the development of local services that are not provided by the private sector; and
- Development of sports and social activities for young people etc.

3.6 The Strategy and Business Plan identifies a total LEADER Programme for Ayrshire for the 6 year period 2008 – 2013 of £7.5 million, incorporating a bid of £3.7m from LEADER. The Programme requires match funding to be identified against the bid and it is likely that the Ayrshire bid will draw on match funding from public, private and community resources. It is anticipated that East Ayrshire Council's match funding support will potentially be drawn from a number of sources such as Business Grants and community engagement support funding from the Fairer Scotland Fund allocation to the Community Planning Partnership, as part of the Single Outcome Agreement. A table detailing the indicative match funding as contained in the Business Plan is provided in Appendix 3.

3.7 The Ayrshire LEADER application was submitted to the Scottish Government on 30th May 2008 and informal feedback has been received which has advised that the bid has been successful. Formal confirmation of this is awaited from the Scottish Government together with the level of LEADER grant. A further report will be presented to Cabinet in due course providing details of the award.

4. THE DELIVERY PROCESS

4.1 The Business Plan identifies the LAG as the parent body of the Ayrshire LEADER Programme, with a Decision Making Body (a sub-group of the LAG) being responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the Programme. The membership of the Decision Making Body includes officers from the three Ayrshire Councils.

4.2 South Ayrshire Council has agreed to take lead responsibility for the administration and financial operation of the LAG. South Ayrshire Council will also support the recruitment and employment of associated staff.

- 4.3 Individual project applications will be sought from community groups to the LEADER Programme and will be appraised and awarded through a process set out in the Business Plan. The Decision Making Body will determine grant awards up to a threshold of £20,000 with the full LAG considering awards above this level.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Once the details of the Ayrshire LEADER bid have been awarded, recruitment will commence for two officers; Programme Co-ordinator and Programme Officer. These posts will be fully funded by the LEADER Programme and will be based at the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Offices in Prestwick.
- 5.2 Following this exercise, it is anticipated that the Programme will be formally launched in October 2008 with a series of public meetings (one to be held in each of the Council areas) to which rural community groups will be invited.
- 5.3 Grant application forms and guidance notes are currently being prepared and will also be available in due course. It is proposed that the closing date for the first round of applications will be end January 2009.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The LEADER Programme requires match funding from public, private and community resources. It is anticipated that the Council's contribution will be approximately £5,000 in 2008 increasing to £30,000 each year until 2013. This funding can be drawn from existing budgets including Business Grants for the 2008 contribution and community engagement support funding from the Fairer Scotland Fund allocation to the Community Planning Partnership, as part of the Single Outcome Agreement.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The LEADER Programme will contribute to the achievement of the objectives and thematic Actions Plans of the East Ayrshire Community Plan.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Cabinet is asked to:
- i) note the position regarding the Ayrshire LEADER Programme;

- ii) approve the actions undertaken to secure East Ayrshire's inclusion in the Ayrshire LEADER Programme; and
- iii) note the proposals for match funding of the Programme and associated projects and remit to the Head of Planning and Economic Development to report back to a future Cabinet regarding operational governance and scrutiny arrangements

Elizabeth Morton

Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

10 September 2008

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Ayrshire LEADER Local Action Group - Local Development Strategy and Business Plan – May 2008

European Union Regional and State Aids - Development Services Committee - 11 October 2006

Members wishing further information should contact Alison Brown, Developer Contributions Officer (01563 576573) or David Hewet, Senior Policy Officer (01563 574608)

Implementation Officer – John Spooner, Business Development and Tourism Manager

STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN EAST AYRSHIRE

Attendees at Meetings held on 27 November 2007

East Ayrshire Community Planning Unit
East Ayrshire Woodlands
East Ayrshire Outdoor Access
East Ayrshire External Funding
Conduit
East Ayrshire Strategy for Youth
East Ayrshire Access Panel
Community Learning & Development
Cumnock & Doon Valley Minerals Trust
Coalfield Community Transport Project
Coalfield Regeneration Trust
Sustrans Scotland
Princes Foundation
National Trust for Scotland
Federation of Community Councils
Energy Agency Renewables
yipworld.com
East Ayrshire Coalfield Environmental Initiative
Auchinleck Community Development Initiative
Catrine Environment Group
Woodroad Regeneration Forum
Dalmellington Partnership
Darvel Improvement Group
Irvine Valley Regeneration Partnership
New Cumnock Environmental Volunteers
Regeneration of Sorn Environment
Muirkirk Enterprise Group
Catrine Community Trust
Stewarton Woodlands Action Trust
Drongan Community Tenants & Residents Association
Glaisnock Trust
Cumnock & District Leisure Group
National Farmers Union Scotland

ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERSHIP OF THE AYRSHIRE LOCAL ACTION GROUP

North Ayrshire Council
South Ayrshire Council
East Ayrshire Council
Ayrshire Structure Plan Team
South Ayrshire Association of Community Councils
Forestry Commission
Scottish Natural Heritage
VisitScotland
Ayrshire & Arran Farming and Wildlife Group (FWAG)
RSPB
Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA)
West Kilbride Community Initiative
Scottish Power Renewables
Council for Voluntary Organisations (South Ayrshire)
Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
East Ayrshire Woodlands
Dalmellington Partnership
Garnock Valley Community Transport
Coalfield Communities Federation
East Ayrshire Northern Communities Federation
North Ayrshire CVS
National Farmers Union
Young Farmers Ayrshire
Dalry Business Group
Womans Royal Voluntary Services (WRVS)

INDICATIVE FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN

Funding Profile	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
LEADER	186,000	561,000	666,000	786,000	796,000	786,000	3,781,000
Public Sector Match Funding	106,000	381,000	386,000	406,000	416,000	406,000	2,101,000
Private Sector Match Funding	80,000	180,000	280,000	380,000	380,000	380,000	1,680,000
Total	372,000	1,122,000	1,332,000	1,572,000	1,592,000	1,572,000	7,562,000
East Ayrshire contribution	5,333	30,333	30,334	30,334	30,333	30,333	157,000