

PRESS RELEASE

Funding secured for Orkney LEADER Programme

Orkney has been allocated over £2.5million of funding to deliver the Orkney LEADER Programme until 2020.

The LEADER Programme is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme, funded by the Scottish Government and European Community.

The Programme will be used to develop small-scale, community driven, innovative projects which will support both the local economy and Orkney communities.

The Orkney Islands LEADER Local Action Group, which will administer the funding, has developed the strategy for the new Programme, in consultation with the local communities.

There are three main LEADER themes that the strategy sets out as priorities for the Programme. These are:

- Support for Orkney's tourism, cultural heritage, crafts, food and drink sectors.
- Support for Orkney's community services and facilities.
- Support for Orkney's natural environment and development of sustainable energy.

Although the Programme is not open for applications at this stage, groups are invited to enquire about project ideas that have linkages with the above core themes.

In addition, the 2014 to 2020 LEADER Programme will also deliver support for farm diversification and small business growth. This scheme is still under development with the Scottish Government and additional information will be provided when available.

The allocation follows the successful implementation of the 2007 to 2013 LEADER Programme which invested almost £2.1million in 75 projects. The LEADER investment was matched with public and private funding, resulting in a total investment of over £5.3million spread across the isles and mainland communities.

Previous projects included a new Heritage Centre on Sanday, a Development Officer for the craft, food and drink sectors, upgrades to community halls and a number of path developments and improvements, among many others.

Francesca Couperwhite, chair of the Orkney Local Action Group, said: "I am delighted with the announcement of the £2.5m allocation of LEADER funding for Orkney. The funding will provide a welcome boost during economically challenging times, and will assist projects which support the aims of the Orkney Islands LEADER Local Development Strategy.

"The 2007 to 2013 LEADER Programme supported a broad range of projects and has left a solid platform upon which to build and develop the new programme. There are already a number of potential projects in the pipeline and the Orkney LAG is looking forward to being able to accept applications in the near future. We are confident that the new programme will deliver real benefits for the Orkney community between now and 2020."

To discuss project ideas, contact the LEADER team at Orkney Islands Council on 01856 873535 ext 2811.

It is anticipated that the LEADER Programme will be open for applications later this year