

Case Studies – Rural Community Led Local Development (RCLLD)

Aberdeenshire is a beautiful place to live. It offers mountains, beaches, forests, and many attractive villages and small towns. However, living in a rural area also brings challenges. These can include:

- Higher costs of living
- Limited public transport
- Social isolation
- Higher energy bills
- Poor digital connectivity
- Fewer local job opportunities
- Greater difficulty accessing healthcare and support services

The **Local Action Group (LAG)** is responsible for delivering the **Scottish Government’s Rural Community Led Local Development (RCLLD) Grant** in the Aberdeenshire Area (excludes Cairngorms National Park). The LAG understands the challenges of rural living and, over recent years, has supported many community organisations across Aberdeenshire. This support helps organisations continue to meet the needs of local people and build stronger, more resilient communities.

Types of RCLLD Funding

The RCLLD Grant is awarded **annually** to the Local Action Group (LAG) and is split into two types:

Revenue Expenditure

Revenue funding from this grant supports **specific projects**, but not an organisation’s every day running costs. This means it **cannot** be used for:

- Non project related Staff salaries
- Routine maintenance or repairs
- Day to day running costs e. Rent, rates, heating etc
- Retrospective project costs (costs paid for before the grant has been agreed)

Instead, this grant revenue funding supports:

- Feasibility studies
- Additional staff time for specific projects
- Specialist Professional services (e.g. planning advice, architects’ fees, financial planning, marketing, HR Specialist, Legal Specialist)
- Projects that build skills, knowledge, and community capacity

- New ideas that support long-term community sustainability
- Projects that support strategies and actions aimed at reducing or eliminating poverty to improve the quality of life for individuals and communities.
- Small items of equipment – must be less than £6000.
- Projects that reduce carbon output

Capital Expenditure

Capital funding supports the **purchase or improvement of long-lasting assets** that will be used for more than one year.

This funding **does not cover repairs, retrospective project costs or security measures** to existing assets.

Examples of capital items previously supported include:

- Community transport vehicles
- Solar panels
- New windows
- Walking paths
- Gym and play equipment
- Cinema screen and sound systems

Case Studies – Revenue Grants

Feasibility Study: Village to Village Path

A community organisation wanted to create a walking path linking two villages. Before applying to the LAG for grant support, the organisation had already:

- Received guidance from the local council
- Consulted the *Walking Scotland (Paths for All)* programme
- Obtained four contractor quotes who were asked to quote for the preparation of detailed information, including:
 - Topographical surveys
 - Design drawings
 - Soil surveys
 - Bridge abutment designs

In their application the organisation also produced a strong business case outlining the benefits the path would bring to the local community.

The community raised **10% of the project costs** themselves and was awarded the remaining **£20,000** from the RCLLD revenue grant to complete the feasibility study.

Poverty Alleviation

Several local foodbanks received **grants of £10,000 each** to support people experiencing severe hardship in rural areas. Specific projects which were additional to the normal activities were identified.

Foodbank volunteers worked closely with:

- Social Work teams
- Schools
- Health professionals

This joint approach helped identify households most in need. Funding was used to:

- Provide food and clothing
 - Purchase small cooking equipment
 - Offer financial support towards individual household energy bills
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Business Support for Community Organisations

Many community organisations are run by volunteers. While volunteers often know their communities well, they may lack the time or specialist skills needed to ensure long-term financial stability.

The LAG supported organisations by funding **bespoke professional support**, including:

- Business and financial planning
- Marketing advice
- Legal and HR guidance

This support was delivered by third-party specialists, with the work commissioned and paid for directly by the LAG.

Case Studies – Capital Grants

Energy Improvements to a Village Hall

A well used village hall located within a conservation area undertook an **Energy Retrofit Survey**, funded through RCLLD revenue funding. The survey identified ways to reduce energy costs and improve efficiency. Recommended measures included:

- Bespoke energy efficient windows
- Loft insulation
- Door replacements
- Solar panels and battery storage

The Hall Committee decided that they would undertake the retrofit in stages and consulted with two departments within the Local Council to ensure that the correct permissions were obtained.

- The Local Council Planning Department
- The Building Warrant Service (for battery storage)

Evidence of these consultations was included in the grant application.

The Hall Committee applied for capital funding to install **bespoke windows and doors** which had been agreed and discussed with planning department. Planning permission was granted, and the Committee successfully received a **£16,000 RCLLD Capital Grant**, alongside **£2,000 of match funding** raised locally. The groups next project is the solar panels and battery.

Heat from Waste Project

Established in 1997, Woodrecyclability Ltd is a charity that recycles waste wood and plastics. It:

- Employs 7 staff
- Supports 21 adults with additional support needs

The organisation:

- Produces garden furniture, wildlife habitats, and bespoke wooden items
- Chips unsuitable wood for use in the construction and biomass industries
- Produces approximately **30–45 tonnes of wood chips** annually

Manufacturing processes generate waste sawdust and wood shavings. The charity applied for a **capital grant** to purchase a **briquette machine**, allowing this waste to be turned into wood burning briquettes for sale.

This new activity:

- Creates a permanent annual income stream
- Improves the charity's long-term sustainability
- Supports future employment and service users

The application was successful, and a **£35,421.48 capital grant** was awarded. As a result:

- One additional job is expected to be created
- Annual sales are expected to increase by **£160,000**

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