

DRAFT MINUTES

Devon Rural Network Steering Group Meeting

2.00pm – 4.00pm on Monday 19th April 2004
At the WDBC Offices, Okehampton

Present:

MW	Michael Winter	University Of Exeter	DRN Chair
IM	Ian Mercer	South West Forest	DRN Vice Chair
HH	Heather Hillman	Devon County Council	DRN Co-ordinator
CT	Charlie Taylor	Devon County Council	DRN SFF Action Group Co-ordinator
SS	Sue Smith	Devon County Council	
TLD	Tom Langdon Davis	Devon MCTI Forum & Crediton MCTI	
DI	David Incoll	West Devon Borough Council	
GE	Gary Ensor	Devon & Cornwall Business Link	
DW	David Whiteley	N Devon Economic Partnership & N Devon & Exmoor Regeneration Company	
SP	Steve Pitcher	North Devon District Council	
LDG	Lynn Del Grecco	SWRDA Devon Area Team	
SB	Sue Brownlow	SWRDA Devon Area Team	
JT	Jay Talbot	Community Council of Devon	
ME	Michael Ellingham	National Farmers Union	
SM	Sarah Manning	Countryside Agency	

Apologies:

Geoff Bateman	Environment Agency
Chris Woodruff	East Devon AONB
Ian Tearle	South West Health Forum
Phil Collins	English Nature
Dominic Acland	Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust
Philip Wagstaff	The Church & Okehampton MCTI
Stephen Hill	Mid Devon District Council

1. Minutes of meeting held on 22.01.04.

- Funding for the DRN in 2004/05 was discussed. HH to set up a DRN account within DCC and invoice those who have agreed to contribute. HH to list those who have committed and chase those who haven't including DSP and LA's. **Action HH.**
- The minutes were agreed as a true record.

2. Presentation on the 'Land Between the Moors' initiative from the Countryside Agency

- Sarah Manning gave a presentation on the Land Between the Moors Strategy (LBMS). The link to the information on the countryside agency's website (www.countryside.gov.uk) is: <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/regions/southWest/activities/livingLandscapes/landmanagement/index.asp>
- DI suggested that although very interesting the strategy served to highlight the need for the DRN to act as a clearing house and for a mapping exercise to help reduce the confusion caused by too many strategies covering different areas. How do they all interrelate and what does LBMS mean for existing initiatives in the area such as the MCTI partnerships and Ruby Initiative?
- SM responded that the LBMS group feel that it has filled a real gap by focussing purely on specific culm land management issues.
- TLG asked how this top down approach could be made to join up successfully with bottom up projects, for example from the MCTI's.

- SP said what a well written document the strategy is and picked out some of the key questions, the most relevant one for DRN being the one asking who could deliver the strategy and take ownership. The suggestions in the strategy to set up another network and partnership is worrying because of the risk of further duplication and confusion. Could we wrap it up with other things which are going on in the area? CT to attend future meetings and investigate this possibility – SM agreed. **Action CT & SM.**
- DW indicated that this strategy is just part of a much bigger plan and ME said that while it was an excellent pilot he would be concerned at any suggestion to repeat the process in other, less distinctive, areas. Some AONBs (other than Tamar Valley and Blackdown Hills) are struggling to establish a separate identity.

3. Haskins Rural Delivery Review – the role of DRN – papers attached.

- Papers were tabled from JT and Pauline Warner (DCC Environment – part of the DRN core advisory group) which are attached.
- JT hoped that the RDR would lead to an enhanced role for quality town and parish councils, and that the potential rural delivery roles of the voluntary and community sector (for which a new Devon Forum was to be launched in June) would be realised. Also longevity of programmes is a problem for continuity of delivery.
- There is an opportunity for the DRN to become a key partnership in the new delivery arrangements and in order to take this up there is a need to answer the questions set out in Pauline's paper. It was decided that the core advisory group should work on this to plan how they could be answered. They also need to advise on how the DRN can prepare and position itself in order to become a coordination agency for local delivery. **Action DRN Core Advisory Group.**
- DI suggested that the DRN should work with the LGA and liaise with them concerning the potential of the DRN. DI to make contact with the LGA and appraise them of the potential for the DRN. **Action DI.**
- SB questioned the capacity of the DRN to provide a delivery role and it was agreed that the partners would deliver – the DRN would coordinate or step in where there are gaps. SWRDA are working on Haskins in terms of all the RDAs, however they are no longer the DEFRA lead RDA.
- DI asked whether they would welcome DRN working with them on this and SB indicated that Rob Hatt is the contact for this work.
- JT suggested that partners and the DRN collectively should respond to the DEFRA website consultation (details in the latest DRN newsletter) on rural funding delivery through the core advisory group. JT offered to forward his response from CCD and liaise with the Core group. **Action JT & HH.**

4. Core Advisory Group – progress.

- HH went through the minutes for the first Core Group meeting (attached) and the plan for developing the DRN Rural Strategy Action Plan a distinct identity and website for the DRN. It was agreed that there should definitely be a summer event based around the development of the action plan and that the autumn launch event should be in late November or early December so as not to clash with the SFF Action Plan launch event in early October. Ideas for summer event to be sent to HH. **Action All.**
- DI suggested that something is produced which partners can take to various shows – for example Okehampton and other local shows which NFU, districts and others attend. **Action HH.** Perhaps outlining the key players, the role and aims of the DRN (simplified) and some sort of interactive display. DW suggested a simple sentence to use which he offered to develop and forward to HH for use. **Action DW.**

5. Sustainable Farming and Food Action Group – progress.

- IM gave an overview of progress so far. A nucleus group has been formed and a date for the launch of the SFF action plan has been set for 12th October 2004.
- There has been some discussion and work undertaken by the RSPB on Haskins which CT could investigate. **Action CT.**
- MW was concerned that in developing the plan the group don't lose sight of the social sustainability of agriculture and land management.

6. Report on Rural Renaissance progress.

- CT updated the group on the last few meetings with the RDA. These had resulted in a request for 2 bids, one from Objective 2 area and one which combined non objective 2, SFF and part of Dartmoor. This was not considered ideal by the various partnerships.
- In a second meeting with the RDA (with Diana, Rob Hatt and John Barkham) regarding content of a potential SFF element of a bid, it was clear that the RDA would be unable to fund the themes and types of projects which the SFF group feel are needed under the emerging SFF action plan for Devon.
- CT recommended that the DRN withdraw its bid to RDA for RR and seek to assist the other two partnerships to include elements of SFF within their bids instead. All agreed.
- SB indicated that the Objective 2 bid was working on its delivery plan and is nearly there, but she saw no fundamental obstacle to the incorporation of the relevant SFF ambitions, however the non objective 2 area bid needs a lot more work. She stated that it did not immediately provide a good building block on which to base a RR bid.
- JT was concerned about the level of enthusiasm in the non objective 2 area for putting in a RR bid, in the light of the match funding issues. It was generally agreed though that the RDA needs to work with partners to get something off the ground in that area.
- SP said that in two years the objective 2 area would be gone anyway and was concerned about where that would leave the geographical split. SS suggested that we need to work together to establish clear priorities for the future and develop a single rural pot to deliver them.

7. Rationalising Partnerships

- DI produced a short paper on this subject. He suggested that it is difficult to rationalise or get rid of existing partnerships, any new ones which come along should go through existing arrangements. The only way to achieve this is if top down dictates how it will be done.
- The core group will be undertaking some mapping of existing partnerships, projects, strategies and initiatives as part of the RS action plan work.
- The DRN could act as a clearing house for future rural initiatives, strategies and partnerships to see where they fit with what is already out there. It could also have a mandate to propose rationalisation.
- These ideas including proposals for rationalisation and a clearing house for new initiative or groups could be tested with members at the summer event. **Action Core AG and HH.**

8. Community Strategy and role of DRN – Heather Hillman

- HH indicated that she had liaised with Eddie Farwell to indicate in several of the chapters what actions the DRN would be able to undertake. There were a number of comments around the Community strategy needing to be based on the local district and market town strategies and the original DSP task group work.

9. AOB

- SP indicated that parts of N Devon had achieved Neighbourhood Renewal status and there would be a seven year programme based around access to services. It was agreed that there would be a report and presentation to DRN on this once it gets established. **Action SP.**
- DW said there should be more liaison with the environment sector and was advised to talk to Environment Devon which is chaired by Phil Collins of English Nature.

10. The date of the Next Meeting is 8th July 2004 at 10.30am at WDBC offices in Okehampton.