

Devon Rural Network DRAFT Steering Group Minutes

6th April 2005, WDBC offices, Okehampton

Present

Prof Michael Winter – University of Exeter, Chair of DRN	Dominic Acland – Torbay Coast & Countryside Trust
Prof Ian Mercer – South West Forest - Vice Chair DRN	Mike Ellingham – National Farmers Union
Sue Smith – Economy and Regeneration DCC	Chris Woodruff - East Devon AONB Partnership
David Whitely – NW Devon Economic Partnership / Regen Co	Jim Skelton – Manager SW Forest - speaker
Philip Wagstaff – Okehampton MCTi Partnership / Faith Groups	Heather Hillman – DRN Manager
Steve Pitcher – North Devon District Council	Chris May – DRN
David Incoll – LA Chief Executives Group	

Apologies

Dr Sue Brownlow	– SW RDA
Lynne del Greco	– SW RDA
Gordon Cleaver	– Mid-Devon District Council
Jay Talbot	– Community Council of Devon
Phil Collins	– English Nature
Geoff Batman	– Environment Agency

1. Minutes of last meeting.

Previous action: Develop the RPAG, and report to next DRN Steering Group meeting. Work on first meeting still underway.

Previous action: Consider District representation on the RR Working Group, while remaining aware of the 50/50 split of public/private representation requested by the SWERDA. Action complete, Graham Walker of EHOD sits on the RR Working Group.

Previous action: Develop alternative titles for the bid to more accurately represent both the focus of the bid and future developments, such as Sustainable Economies for Rural Communities. Action complete – DRN Rural Renaissance bid now called Sustainable Economies for Rural Communities.

Previous action: Complete drafting changes and produce final SFF Action Plan document. Action complete.

Previous action: Ian Mercer to be nominated to the DSP. OBE – DSP governance arrangements are changing. When that's complete Ian M will be nominated and Andrew L will brief him on DSP matters.

Previous action: The staffing paper to be revised to reflect new budget details, and to reflect the tone of the discussions on this issue, and to be resubmitted to the SWERDA. Action complete.

Previous action: David Incoll to discuss contributions to the budget from Districts. Good response from National Parks, and Districts will be invoiced for their contributions.

Minutes of the last meeting were accepted without amendment.

2. Rural Delivery Framework.

a) Rural Delivery Framework

Michael W provided feedback on the 10th March 05 event. While authorities are generally looking for a good lead from the GOSW, it was mainly an update meeting with an action prioritisation session. Complexities of the process have meant that the mechanics of developing the RDF have not progressed as desired. The participants generally agreed that there are possible problems from things being held in abeyance while the RDF is being developed.

Action: Michael W to invite Tim Render to the next DRN SG meeting to talk about the RDF and the Dorset LAA.

Others present at the 10 March event felt that it is clear that what's happening is disruptive for organisations trying to plan activities or to apply for funding and is an inefficient way of dealing with the RDF. This view is especially important in light of Government documents referring to renewal and the need to do something – but nothing concrete is happening. They also thought that the presentations at the event, and the work being described focussed too much on the organisation, and not enough on the LAA and getting things done.

Action: Ask Lord Haskins to present at the next DRN conference, particularly on the RDF to give his views on how his review is actually being implemented.

b) Rural Delivery Strategy

The governance arrangements discussed at a recent DEFRA Project Group meeting indicated that work is still only happening at higher levels with continuing co-ordination and liaison between DTi, ODPM, and DEFRA. For seamless operation at the operating end of the DRS there should be corresponding seamless cooperation at the policy end, or the opportunity given by the Haskins review of rural delivery will be lost.

Action: Michael W to talk to Colin Molton about offering the DRN as a vehicle for co-ordinating the measures and organisations involved in the development and implementation of the Rural Delivery Strategy.

3. Rural Renaissance.

There has been a lot of progress on the construction of the POP over the last few weeks, with a great deal of input from partners. The SWRDA has given some good feedback.

The SG noted that several DRN SG members are also Devon Renaissance Board members, and that there are several opportunities for links with Devon Renaissance and Woodland Renaissance.

The activities matrix included indicative projects totalling about 2 million pounds, and considerable match funding has been identified and will be finalised at the Delivery Plan stage.

Michael W said that the SG is very grateful to Heather and others for the enormous amount of work that has been done so far, and noted that this has been as inclusive a process as it possibly could be.

David I asked that the discussion of brownfield sites on p4 be clarified a little more and the wording changed as in planning terms brownfield cannot apply to redundant agricultural buildings.

Given that some of the indicated activities involve Business Link, and also given that Business Link may now be part of the RDA – it was asked if the RDA would now be funding themselves.

Some other discussion of specific drafting points followed.

Action: Sue S to ask Bob Dow (BusinessLink Devon and Cornwall) if BusinessLink are now part of the RDA, and how this may affect funding through the DRN RR SERC money.

Action: On p13 add "link with District and National Parks" and in diagram to reinforce the part these bodies have to play in development and delivery of projects.

Action: Heather to ask Martin of N Devon Marketing Bureau at about Group representation on the Tourism Officer.

Action: Find co-ordinators/ leads for the Sustainable Tourism and Rural Proofing Action Groups.

Action: Offer membership of the STAG to Cartwheel and the Devon Farms Association.

Action: change matrix heading from "Project leader" to 'Project leaders'.

The DRN Steering Group formally commended the POP for submission to the SW RDA.

Action: Heather to make suggested changes and to submit POP to SWRDA with the unanimous support of the DRN SG.

4. South West Forest presentation.

Jim Skelton of SW Forest gave an interesting presentation of the status of the SW Forest Delivery plan, and an outline of five proposed new programmes.

The presentation also included a plea for funds, as well as guidance from the DRN SG on dealing with an uncertain future.

Steve Pitcher thought that District Cs ought to up their contributions to SWF.

Action: Michael W to contact Colin Molton to say how important these programmes are.

Action: Michael W to contact Ronaldo ??????? of DEFRA about where additional funding could be found for the new and existing SW Forest programmes.

Michael W thanked Jim on behalf of the DRN SG for his presentation.

[Get an electronic copy of Jim's notes]

5. The DSP and Subsidiarity.

DSP governance arrangements are changing. When that's complete Ian M will be nominated to represent DRN and Andrew Lightfoot will brief him on DSP matters.

6. Short updates on practical matters.

a) Membership

Including the National Parks and Districts as if they've all paid their dues, the DRN has only 45 members. Apart from not appealing to previous members who didn't have to pay to join, this low number of members is a problem in that in the POP we claim over 100 organisational members. The DRN SG suggested an associate membership with no fee charged, but with reduced benefits.

Action: Develop and publicise a new membership structure based on full and associate memberships, with no concessions to those organisations with paid staff.

b) DRN staff

Heather is now officially the full-time DRN Manager. The interviews for the DRN Officer to be held on 12 April, Ian M offered to help interview the candidates.

Action: Heather to arrange interview times around Ian M's schedule. (NB Complete – Lisa Henry appointed)

c) Website.

Work on the website is continuing. Most content has been delivered to the person constructing the site, and it will be ready enough to go live within a month.

Action: Picture files suitable for banner headers on different pages of the site need to be found.

7. Any other business.

a) Economic concordat – Is chaired by Edward Chorlton, and includes Michael Winter, David Incoll, Sue Smith, and others. It is not a new partnership, but an agreement between parties dealing with cohesion, and its remit is wider than just rural issues. It is an economic voice for Devon, and the DRN is involved. Tim Jones, of the Devon & Cornwall Business Council is the economic concordat's private sector champion and will eventually Chair the concordat – and will therefore add a link to the DSP. When Plymouth and Torbay become involved, their Strategic Partnerships will also be involved.

- b) Potential DRN Steering Group members – Michael proposed Mark Blacksell, an ex-Professor of Plymouth Uni and has worked before for both Dartmoor and Exmoor. He may not accept, but agreement was asked to approach him. Ian M seconded.

Action: Michael W to approach Mark Blacksell about membership of the DRN SG.

- c) For information – Leicestershire Rural Partnership may be holding a conference in the summer looking at the running of different partnerships. Looking for an attendee other than Heather as DRN co-ordinator.

Action: Heather to confirm proposed date, and to find a co-attendee. (Date is 14th July 2005)

- d) Inaugural meeting of the Culm Care Group – Jim Skelton asked for cross membership with this group.

Action: The Culm Group be invited to become a member of the DRN SG – possibly through Jim?

- e) Proposed agenda items for next meeting – partnerships, including how effectively the DRN's representation is captured elsewhere.

8. Date and time of next meeting.

Next meeting to accommodate Tim Render, but propose the morning on 6th June, probably in Exeter.

(Michael can no longer make the 6th June so we will find out dates which Tim can make if he is willing and then cross check them with the rest of the group.)