

**Sustainable Farming and Food Reference Group**  
**Fri 9<sup>th</sup> November 07**  
**Taw Room, Larkbeare House, Exeter**

**Present:**

Mary Talbot Rosevear (Chair) – Small Farms Association  
Julia Proctor – National Trust  
Carol Trant – South Hams District Council  
Matt Parkins – Devon Renaissance  
Helen Merchant – Natural England  
Liz Bowles – English Farming and Food Partnership  
Jonathan Smye – GOSW  
Jen Brogan (secretary) – Devon Rural Network

**1. Minutes of last meeting**

Minutes of last meeting all agreed. Introductions around the table. MTR gave a quick synopsis of the last meeting and the reason for the name change. Group structure was discussed and LB mentioned about how the Cornwall Agricultural Council function, with paying members. It is worth looking at other models around the country to see if there are any similar structures or best practise to look at. It was suggested by LB and JP that it can be confusing when receiving emails as to which farming and food group it is, especially for those who work regionally. JB suggested adding 'Devon' to the group name. There become the Devon Sustainable Farming and Food Reference Group.

**Action: JB to investigate other models, to start with Cornwall and West Midlands Rural Hubs.**

**2. Update on appointment of consultants for SERC Farming and Food**

MP updated the group on the appointment of consultants working on the sustainable Farming and Food elements of the SERC (Sustainable Economies for Rural Communities) under spend. Two consultants were hired to cover the whole of Devon. North Devon Reg co (North Devon, Torridge, West Devon) and Moira Clark (East Devon, Mid Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge). CT attended a meeting earlier in the week at Devon Renaissance with the consultants to hear about the initial trawl for project ideas. CT took the Sustainable Farming and Food Action Plan for reference. The types of projects being supported are:

- Devon CC Food and Drink sector ICT support
- West Devon Food & Drink network (perhaps as a pilot looking to roll out across Devon)
- Sustainable Management of Farm Waste (in Torridge – it is likely that capacity building money would be used to research this project before going on to access SERC money)

**Action: HM to forward on Sarah Colquohan (?) details to Matt for Torridge project**

- Benchmarking – collaborative working and knowledge sharing
- Deer Management and Venison Supply (training)
- Linked to the above, Game for Business (Game in its broadest sense)

**Action: MTR to forward on RELU (?) Deer information to Matt**

- Hemp Market Development – feasibility study (has this work been done already)
- DCC Public Procurement Project
- Greening the Supply Chain – South Hams, South Devon and Dartmoor based on the Green Tourism Business Scheme. A Green Producer Scheme
- Organic Beef and Lamb Co-operative. Agribip project, promoting co-operative marketing.

MTR – should this group take the lead on the beef/sheep sector as no-one is taking the lead?

- Fish project at Appledore around branding and marketing

- 3 ideas combined – Ilfracombe Local Foods project, South Molton Food and Drink festival, North Devon Summer of Food.

Three projects have proceeded to full application stage, including:

Field to Plate – Small Farms Association  
 Advice at Livestock Markets – Rural Stress South West  
 East Devon/Blackdowns Conservation Management – FWAG

All projects are likely to be under £20,000

Only project to have received funding under the SERC Farming and Food heading is 'Combing & Spinning the Hills' in the Blackdowns

The other change to the process is that individual businesses will be able to apply; an application process is being developed. Money from 5k – 30k maximum.

**Action: MP to check where decision about this process lies, DR board or SWRDA**

JP mentioned about the National Trust taking on a 600 acre low productivity farm in the South Hams to manage in hand. They are looking to make agriculture the bi-product of Conservation. It is in an SSSI area and will benefit from HLS funding.

As conversation around agenda point 2 has taken up a lot of time, it was decided that agenda items 3 and 5 should be tackled in a dedicated half day workshop to take place in the first week of February.

**Action: JA to liaise with JP re. holding workshop at Killerton House.**

**Action: JA to liaise with LB re EFP facilitation of the workshop**

The workshop will be a 'strategic review' and attendees will be by invitation only.

#### **4. Year of Farming and Food**

MTR asked the group whether there was any mileage in revisiting the posters that were developed when Kate was in post, all about seasonality. All agreed it was worth revisiting the posters and perhaps to develop a pack for schools including posters and a list of farms registered for school visits.

**Action: JB to find poster and send as PDF to group for comment**

**Action: MTR and JB to write letter to schools**

**Action: JS/HM to pull together list of registered farms**

**Action: JB to contact SWCORE out of courtesy**

**Action: CT to write press release for JB to send from County Hall**

**Action: LB to ask Don Curry for statement for press release**

**Action: MTR to talk to Mel Hall at NFU about what they are doing?**

**All actions to be completed by Thurs 22<sup>nd</sup> November.**

JS wanted to draw attention to the work done in Wiltshire to promote farming and food in schools, brochure and website developed full of useful info

CT flagged up the success of the Dartmouth Food Festival and how schools participated, this type of thing should be encouraged!!

#### **6. Disease Status of England**

Recent press releases from DEFRA have highlighted the redefinition of protection and exclusion zones for FMD and Blue Tongue. The protection zone is to become larger. Tenders for developing a blue tongue vaccine have begun, and it is expected that limited supplies will be available next spring/summer.

DCC Cllr Brian Greenslade is hosting a meeting on 21/11/07 about updating the FMD strategy for Devon and to include Blue Tongue.

JP mentioned that during the recent FMD worries, the National Trust were rung by farmers wanting the NT to shut footpaths, this was unusual!

The recent report from David King on TB has admitted that there may be a need to cull badgers.

The Secretary of State promised a conference on the future of farming, this conference is taking place on 19<sup>th</sup> November at the Oval; MTR is attending and will feed back.

## **7. AOB**

National Trust has funding for a local food co-ordinator for Devon & Cornwall. It is a 2 year project and more funding will be investigated to extend the project. This project will be considering the language barriers, internal working.

LB was contacted by the BBC with regards to doing a series on Farmers, similar to the Coast programme but on farming! Are there any suggestions from the group on Farmers who could appear, do not necessarily have to be selling food, but traditional farming practise would be welcomed.

## **8. Date of next meeting**

To be arranged after the workshop takes place in February.