

‘Devon Rural Voice’

The Newsletter of the Devon Rural Network

Issue 7 November 2005

DRN NEWS

Contents

DRN AUTUMN EVENT

Our Autumn event has been scheduled for **Wednesday the 30th of November** at Stoodleigh Court in Tiverton. The event is an opportunity to learn more about the Devon Rural Network and what we have achieved over the past year. In particular, the focus of the day will be on rural health issues in Devon. The Devon rural Strategy aims to bring about a good quality of life for all and health and well being is critical to the overall vitality of the rural county. The event has been designed to help everyone (including us) understand the health issues within Devon and hopefully discuss some valuable and innovative solutions.

The event will explore 3 main areas of rural health:

1. Access to the countryside for the purpose of rural health
2. The isolation issues related to health services
3. Healthy Local Food.

In the afternoon there is an opportunity to catch up on the rural delivery changes in Devon, including the Rural Renaissance bid, the DEFRA Rural, Social and Community Programme and the DRN & Devon Renaissance way forward.

The event will run from 09.30 – 4pm and includes a local Devon buffet lunch. The event is free to DRN members, but only 2 delegates per organisation have a free place. Additional delegates are required to pay a £30 fee for the day. Organisations that are not current members are also required to pay a £30 fee for the day, but for £25 you can become a member for the year.

We still have some places left so if you are interested in attending please contact the DRN Assistant Sarah Streeter by email (sarah.streeter@devon.gov.uk) or by phone (01392 383145) no later than **Thursday 24th November**

We look forward to seeing you on the day!



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AER CONFERENCE REPORT

The Assembly of the European Regions (AER) Conference on 'Promoting competitive Regions'.

Political representatives of 45 European Regions gathered in Exeter, Devon, on 19-21 October 2005. to discuss the role of rural areas in fulfilling the Lisbon Strategy.

The discussions over the two-day conference focused, in particular, upon the Single European Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the regulation adopted by the Council on 20 June 05, and upon the proposed EC strategic guidelines for rural development policy post - 2006; it also dealt with the EU financial perspectives and the rural dimension of other EU policies, notably cohesion policy.

From a pragmatic point of view, the Conference has enabled – through discussions in smaller groups – an in-depth exchange of views between the participants on specific problems faced by rural areas, be they social, economic or environmental, and on the way Regions could work to address these problems. Regions that have managed to successfully develop strategies allowing them to overcome these problems transferred their experiences to the other participants.

The group felt that the messages conveyed at an earlier conference on rural development still held true, the main thrust of this being that cohesion, competitiveness and sustainability are three inseparable goals for the EU's rural policy development.

Actions to regenerate rural regions can contribute decisively to all these goals. Rural areas have achieved an even greater significance in the new extended EU territory and are therefore a key factor of cohesion. The active participation of rural areas in the Lisbon process and their harmonious development with suburban and urban areas is an essential condition for the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe.

The European strategy for rural development cannot, therefore, be reduced to merely 'assisting' rural areas, or to conceiving them as residuals, i.e., the space that remains outside of urban areas. On the contrary, an integrated approach is necessary if we want to ensure complementarity and co-ordination between urban and rural policies.

In addition, even though multifunctional agricultural production represents a key element for a living countryside, the rural dimension cannot be reduced solely to its agricultural component, which is becoming less significant in many rural areas. Rural territories can also offer opportunities for the development of non-agricultural activities, which can help to enhance economic potential and social well-being. Rural development depends on several factors, all of which are necessary.

To round off the conference delegates were invited to attend a field visit on the Friday to see regeneration in a protected landscape environment in practice. The Devon Rural Network together with the Devon Reinvestment Service organised an informative morning of presentations and site visits to Princetown. To see and hear about the work taking place to build community capacity, regenerate housing stock and the plans for two new exciting development projects in the village.

RURAL HOUSING SEMINAR

There has recently been a lot of discussion in Devon around the lack of affordable housing in the region. As part of our Steering Group, the DRN held a rural housing seminar in October to discuss with various experts the issues around affordable housing in Devon. The purpose of the seminar was to clarify the housing issues within Devon and to understand the roles of the various housing organisations in the area. In addition, the seminar was an opportunity for the regional experts to voice and discuss the issues and help steer DRN's position on rural housing.

The regional experts that attended were:

Sue Southwell: Rural Housing Enabler

John Cottingham: Affordable Housing UK

Mary Ridgeway: Devon Strategic Housing Group

Teresa Butchers: Devon and Cornwall Housing Assoc.

Ruth Bagley: South Hams District Council

The seminar discussed the major issues for Devon, such as second/holiday homes, ageing population, urban spread, high land costs, government barriers etc. Unfortunately the solutions to these problems are unlikely to be resolved in the short term. The solutions we need to aim for are medium to short term, and most importantly need to be sustainable.

It was concluded from the day that one of DRN's key roles is to assist in the fight against Nimbyism. Communities are often in favour of affordable housing schemes, until they come to be implemented in their area.

There is also a need to combat the problem at the grass roots and to start with Parish Planning. It is important that planning bodies look at communities as individuals and focus on the individual problems within that area. Included in this is the need for government change in its housing policies—what works for urban areas will not apply in rural communities.

The day was a great success but the full details are too vast to publish in this newsletter. If anyone would like the report from the day then please contact Sarah Streeter on 01392 382145 or via email sarah.streeter@devon.gov.uk and she will be happy to send you the full details of the day.

DRN ACTION GROUP NEWS

CONSULTATION RESPONSE ACTION GROUP

The Devon Rural Network's Consultation Response Action Group (CRAG) is the forum through which the DRN will make formal representation on consultation responses, lobbying and through which it will undertake Rural Proofing. The group, chaired by Ian Mercer, has agreed Terms of Reference and a process map. The first key task of the CRAG was to develop a set of rural proofing criteria, this has been achieved and copies of these are available on request.

Since preparing these criteria the DRN have had a number of discussions with partners interested in our work and its potential applications. These include meetings with representatives from Devon County Council with regards to rural proofing key documents, namely, the Local Area Agreement delivery plans, and the Strategic Corporate Plan. In addition we are keeping the Commission for Rural Communities briefed on our work as the National body with responsibility for rural proofing.

The CRAG have requested Devon Strategic Partnership endorsement of the rural proofing process and a desire to see it embedded within the future work of the themed groups which sit under the Devon Strategic Partnership. This met with approval at the last DSP meeting in September.

Currently the CRAG is in the process of rural proofing the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy and the Local Area Agreement.

For more information about the Consultation Response Action Group please contact Lisa Henry: lisa.henry@devon.gov.uk or call 01392 382831

RURAL BUSINESS SUPPORT ACTION GROUP

The Rural Business Support Action Group (RBSAG) met recently to discuss the potential impact for the group of the proposed merger of the action groups of the Devon Rural Network and Devon Renaissance, as part of the wider negotiations about rural delivery in Devon.

The RBSAG are broadly happy with the proposals and are very keen to begin the important work of developing and assisting in project development under the rural renaissance funding stream. To assist the understanding of the group with relation to the processes and systems in place the facilitator has been asked to invite the Devon Renaissance manager to attend the next meeting of the group.

For more information on the Rural Business Support Action Group please contact lisa.henry@devon.gov.uk or telephone 01392 382831

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ACTION GROUP

The Sustainable Tourism Action Group (STAG) met in October to look at the role of the group in relation to completing the Rural Renaissance funding application. This will involve agreeing a working definition of Sustainable Tourism and the key priorities for action within the sector.

The group has agreed the following working definition:

'Tourism which develops, respects and positively enhances the natural and built environment, contributes to the local economy, providing quality employment and other benefits which is welcomed by and enhances the quality of life of the host community.'

If anyone would like more information about the STAG please contact Lisa Henry lisa.henry@devon.gov.uk or call 01392 382831

All articles represent the view of the authors and are not necessarily those held by the Devon Rural Network



SUSTAINABLE FARMING AND FOOD ACTION GROUP

At the last action group meeting a new terms of reference was agreed and a new way of working for the group was developed. Future work of the group will be by way of focus groups, acting as task and finish groups, to utilise the expertise of the groups members and ensure delivery of the key actions.

Six initial focus groups have been set up covering the following:

- Raising awareness of sustainably produced Devon food and increasing its consumption.
- Increasing the competitiveness of Devon's producers and producing for the market
- Ensuring and sustainable future for upland farming
- Farm waste management and opportunities for renewables
- The role of women in farming and rural businesses and their communities and the types of support available to them
- Integrated advice and support for farming and land based businesses and the role of farmers forums

To date plans have begun on developing an awareness raising campaign to promote Devon food and drink focusing on influencing businesses and the publics long term purchasing habits.

The research methodology has been agreed for the piece of work being carried out by the Centre for Rural Research on integrated advice and support and the use of farmers forums. Members of the SFFAG will assist with collating primary research and it is hoped that an interim update report will be given at the Culm Conference on 25th February.

Work has also begun on mapping the types of support available to women in rural areas in Devon including business, enterprise, social and skills development support. Any information on projects, initiatives, events or research on this subject would be gratefully received.

For further information please contact Kate Harris – Farming and Food Coordinator at kate.harris@devon.gov.uk or 01392 383205.

RURAL RENAISSANCE ACTION GROUP

Sustainable Economies for Rural Communities Rural Renaissance Programme

The submission of the SERC Rural Renaissance Project Proposal to the SWRDA has been delayed by to need to hold discussions between DRN and Devon Renaissance about integrating the SERC bid with their existing programme, covering the Objective 2 districts of Devon. We need to include detailed information in the bid which describes the operational process of how the programme will be managed and run and this will be subject to the outcome of the discussions around the relationship between DRN and DR.

These discussions are now nearing conclusion and we are aiming to submit the bid before the 16th December 2005. The good news is that the SWRDA have already largely agreed the content of the bid in terms of the themes and types of projects and initiatives which we would like to fund.

Once the SERC proposal has been agreed in principle by the RDA, the relevant DRN Action Groups will have a lot of work to do to develop a detailed delivery plan.

There will be more information on rural funding in Devon at the DRN Autumn event on 30th November 2005.

DEVON FORUM

It was suggested in 2004 that Devon Forum would be the appropriate body to inform the DRN around voluntary and community sector issues in the same way as the DRN Action Groups do about their specific areas of interest. However, although the Community Council of Devon are an active member of the DRN Steering Group, it is felt by both partners that links to date have not really been strong enough between the two partnerships. In order for DRN to engage with this sector more successfully and incorporate their work fully into the refreshed Devon Rural Strategy, a joint workshop has been organised for the 3rd of February 2006 to discuss opportunities for improving links and develop closer partnership working between DRN and Devon Forum in the future.

For more information please contact Jay Talbot on 01392 383443 or email: Jay@devonrcc.org.uk

STRATEGIC NEWS

FARM BUSINESS ADVICE SERVICE LAUNCH

The new Farm Business Advice Service (FBAS), which is being funded by Defra, was launched on 21st October. The new service will provide advice to farmers in England, to help them consider their business options now that the Single Payment has come into effect.

In the South West, Business Link Devon and Cornwall will be organising a range of activities over the coming 18 months including meetings, workshops, clinics and one to one on farm advice visits. The advice will help farmers to consider their business options for the future, which might include restructuring the farm business, adding value to primary products, diversifying into non-farming activities, cooperation with other farmers or, for some, leaving the industry. The service will also signpost customers on to other sources of advice and help. To access the service please call your local [Business Link](#) office. Details of the forthcoming FBAS events are available from the [South West Rural Enterprise Gateway – Events Page](#).

BEEF SUMMIT - PLEDGE OF SUPPORT FROM LORD BACH

A meeting of industry leaders was held on 14th October to discuss the state of the beef sector in the UK. DEFRA Minister Lord Bach called the summit in light of increasing concerns over the future of the industry due to falling market prices, an increase in imported beef and continuing uncertainty over the TB crisis.

A joint statement was produced which outlined the need for greater support for English Beef, stronger connections between producers and consumers and greater efficiency within the supply chain. There has been particular concern about the dominance of the major retailers and the reliance on beef from overseas.

A package of support was announced which includes a £5.5m Beef Restoration Programme following the planned lifting of the OTM rule and associated export ban, £1m on a Beef Better Returns Scheme and a contribution to the Red Meat Industry Forum.

Devon County Council members have supported these proposals in a letter to Lord Bach and request urgent action to save one of Devon's most important agricultural sectors.

RAFAEL PROJECT – FIRST TECHNICAL EXCHANGE

As part of this European funded project to promote 'authentic food' a series of technical exchanges are to take place over the 3 years of the project. The first of these exchanges took place in September and three producers from Devon travelled to the Alentejo region of Portugal to learn about the areas farming practices, traditional methods of production and more modern methods of co operative working.

The region has been plagued by drought with no rain fall for almost 12 months, the barren landscape and the sight of shepherds cutting down trees to feed livestock were a real eye opener and a long way removed from the green lushness of Devon.

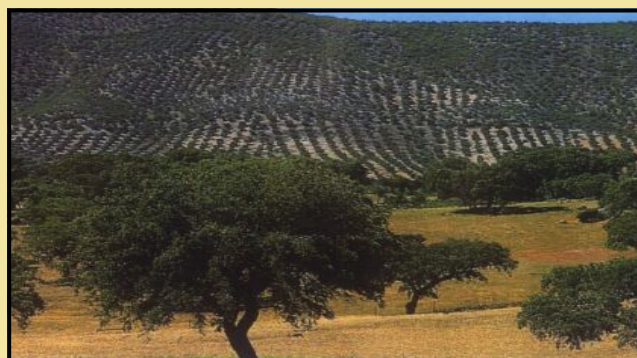
Visits included a tour of an olive oil processing plant which is owned and operated by a co operative of 4000 farmers. Whilst their main activity is based around olive production and olive oil processing, they also collectively market cereals, oil seeds, fruit and vegetables and livestock as well as purchasing equipment and supplies.

Another producer in the region is in the process of developing a new business venture to add value to locally produced olives by making olive oil pâté. The product will be marketed through tourism outlets using traditional methods as a selling point.

Both traditional and modern wine production methods were experienced using local grapes. Markets have been established in countries across Europe and the rest of the world with a strong emphasis on promoting the region.

The next technical exchange will be in Northern Ireland in the spring and is expected to focus on public procurement of local food within the health sector.

For further information on the RAFAEL project contact Kathryn Edwards on 01392 382949 or kathryn.j.edwards@devon.gov.uk



DEFRA RURAL SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FUND

The RSCP consultation document was published by Jim Knight, DEFRA Minister in July 2005 as a result of DEFRA's Rural Strategy in 2004. The key message from DEFRA's rural strategy was the need to decentralise delivery mechanisms for rural policy delivery, and to make more key decisions at a local level.

The RSCP is a result of a plan to bring together DEFRA and the former Countryside Agency rural social and community programmes into one simple and easy funding stream. This fund aims to deliver DEFRA's objectives of tackling rural social exclusion and community capacity building, through locally determined projects that will more accurately reflect local needs.

It will: *'empower and enable voluntary and community sector organisations'* and *'complement and reinforce the good work that is already being done'*.

The programme is worth £27 million over 2 years split into 3 strands:

1. Funding for Rural Community Councils
2. Support for activity at a sub-regional or local level

Funding for Nationally important projects

The allocation to sub-regional or local level will be approximately £9million a year.

Devon is likely to receive around £400,000 per year for 2 years as part of this fund.

The implementation of the RSCP will be through the integration of existing local strategies - mainly Local Area Agreements where they are in place but in Devon will also reflect priorities for delivery in the Devon Rural Strategy.

The money will not be delivered through a delegated grant fund, instead GOSW are requesting that a proposal be put to them outlining eligible projects by 30th November 2005. To this end the Devon Rural Network facilitated a consultation event held on the 7th November to engage and discuss how best to utilise this fund. This included consideration of a number of projects which are already receiving funding from this source, run by the Community Council of Devon. Due to the very short timescale, a working group has been set up which will put together a proposal reflecting the views at the event. It is hoped that in the future when the fund is better established, there will be more opportunity for thorough consultation.

For more information please contact Lisa Henry – DRN Officer. Lisa.henry@devon.gov.uk

WORKING WITH FARMERS- THE TORRIDGE, AXE & KEN PROJECTS

The landscape of Devon has been defined by agriculture and farmers play an essential role in managing the fabric of the countryside. However, changes in agricultural practice in the latter part of the 20th century have been linked to a number of environmental effects including increases in sediment in rivers, farm related pollution and decreases in fish numbers. We have been working with farmers and others in three areas to reduce the impact that farming activities have on the environment.

The Environment Agency have been working in partnerships with other organisations including Devon FWAG, English Nature, East Devon District Council, Westcountry Rivers Trust, Dorset County Council, helping farmers and others to reduce soil runoff and improve water quality in Devon.

In North Devon, we have been working through the Upper Torridge project to reduce the levels of sedimentation and poor water quality. The upper reaches of the River Torridge and its tributaries are important spawning ground for salmon and the last habitat in Devon for freshwater pearl mussel. Advice is being given to farmers on reducing runoff from fields and yards, and providing help with bank-side fencing and erosion prevention.

In the catchments of the River Ken, a tributary of the River Exe, we have been working with farms through soil workshops to highlight the potential problems of soil erosion and ways it can be combated. On farm demonstration events have been held to bring farmers and soil experts together.

The Axe-Char Project sits within the umbrella Cycleau Project, a 3 year European Commission funded programme designed to offer sustainable management of rivers, estuaries and coastlines in a number of areas of Devon, Cornwall, Ireland and France. The poor habitat and water quality of the Rivers Axe and River Char have become issues of increasing concern in recent years. Major problems have been identified with point source and diffuse pollution from nutrients; unrestricted livestock access to the river; increased cultivation of maize; soil erosion; bank-side erosion and waste management.

A partnership approach to the management of the catchments has enabled a wide variety of improvements to be carried out. These include reducing the amount of water in the farmyard - roofing slurry stores, adding guttering to separate clean water from dirty water, cattle tracks to reduce run-off; cattle-drinking schemes, which put an end to erosion caused by cows drinking direct from rivers, riverbank works such as planting trees and fencing to reduce erosion.

For more information please contact the Environment Agency on 08708 506 506 or www.environment-agency.gov.uk

MEMBERS NEWS

RUBY COUNTRY INITIATIVE, ALIVE AND RARING TO GO!

Ruby Country Initiative – the highly successful 'green' tourism brand for the area of north west Devon named after its indigenous red ruby cattle - reached the end of its current funding phase this summer and is now eager to move onto the next phase once new funding has been secured.

Over the past few years the project has brought farmers, food producers and retail outlets, accommodation providers, local attractions and market towns together in creating events and promoting the area to local people and tourists alike. Events such as Food Safaris, walking and cycling trails – and of course the increasingly popular half-marathon, The Ruby Run, have led people to expect a top quality programme from Ruby.

This year, the Colours of the Culm Festival featured 16 events over 8 days, including a wide range of activities for everyone such as a Star Gazing evening and a talk from AstroAdventures, supper with folk music at the Torridge Inn, the Workshop under the Sky with local artist Jennie Hale and the Strictly Culm Dancing ceilidh run by Beaford Arts.

While the project is waiting for funding, organisers are anxious to allay concerns that the project has reached an end. Steering Group member Emma Davis of Devon Wildlife Trust (one of the project partners) said: "We really want people to stay involved with Ruby – they just need to bear with us while we get the funds in place to recruit the new staff team. We are optimistic that we shall soon be able to go ahead and expand the project over the next 3 years."

Devon County Council also has invested substantially in this initiative. Executive Member, Councillor Humphrey Temperley, said: "This is a terrific project which is invaluable not only to the local area but also as an inspiration to other rural localities; it really is a model of good practice and we shall be a strong advocate for the project with regard to EU Objective 2 funding and I am recommending that the County Council contributes £90,000."

People wishing to find out the latest news and information can call the Ruby Country office which is manned on Mondays. Telephone 01409 220036 or email enquiries@therubycountry.com and for more information about what the project has achieved so far visit: www.therubycountry.com.

THE DEVON TOWNS FORUM

The Devon Towns Forum exists to provide all community partnerships within the County working at Market Town level, with a range of complimentary support and networking services. This includes opportunities to share experiences, promote good practice and joined-up working.

Also, the Devon Towns Forum, with the active support of its principal partners the MCTi Association & DCC, provide regular free specialist-subject seminars, conferences and training designed to help communities develop and engage directly with the experts and the supporting agencies.

Our Key Objectives Are:

- To provide an inclusive forum for towns & their hinterland undertaking community planning exercises within the county of Devon and act as a communication channel to regional and sub-regional bodies;
- To provide opportunities for the exchange of information between towns and their hinterland, to meet, share good practice and learn for future planning and development;
- To provide supportive events such as training seminars and conferences, which are free to members and offer unique opportunities to engage with subject experts and the supporting agencies to promote successful community partnerships.
- To offer a representative voice for advice, guidance and sign posting where appropriate;
- To identify issues common to communities undertaking community planning exercises to share and promote learning and where appropriate, facilitate a framework for influencing and lobbying at a county or sub-county level;
- To develop the capacity of the Forum and its members to support the process of regeneration.
- To support co-ordinated, or joint approaches to projects and project funding wherever there is an appropriate opportunity to achieve an economic, or strategic advantage.

Membership of the Forum is free and open to groups, or persons representing Community Partnerships involved in recognised Community Planning i.e. recognised by the MCTi Association, SWRDA, or Devon County Council. We also welcome local authority, agency and elected representatives who wish to be involved and be kept informed.

If you would like to know more, or be added to the Forums contact list for future news and events please contact the Devon Towns Forum Facilitator Paul Delahoy at info@devontownsforum.org.uk or by telephone on: 01805 624874

WEST DEVON PROJECT SUPPORT NETWORK

Undoubtedly one of the outcomes of community planning has been to draw attention to the many community groups requiring help with delivery of their projects. Whilst the good news is that there are more organisations than ever responding to that need, the downside is that this support is often offered with little or no communication between those involved. In turn this can lead to sporadic support or delays as community groups hawk their projects from organisation to organisation for each stage of the work. Inevitably project tasks are not always targeted at the most appropriate organisation or in many instances effort is unknowingly being duplicated.

In West Devon, which is covered by 4 MCTi Partnerships, a scheme is currently being piloted to try and improve this scenario. An online forum now provides support organisations with a means of communicating with each other about projects either being supported, seeking support or in need of support. Where appropriate, such as a complex project, a lead worker is allocated as the one point of contact for the community group. In the future the DRN projects database will help new and existing members to track projects or identify those receiving little or no support. In addition a profile of member organisations will enable better targeting of resources to groups and easier access to a network of expertise by any one worker. It is early days, but if the Project Support Network proves its worth it should enable the community to more easily access appropriate professional support for its projects.

If you would like to find out more then please contact Jane Osborne, West Devon Locality Plans Officer, josborne@westdevon.gov.uk, (01822) 813659.

THE FUTURE OF DEVON'S TOURSIM TODAY

Meeting Customer Expectations

In tourism more than any other sector, customer's expectations directly shape their choices. They expect to find sustainable businesses, especially in beautiful and protected places. If they find them – they'll come back, and they'll tell their friends.

You can help to preserve the beautiful environment around you, and improve the profitability of your business at the same time.

Saving you money, saving the environment

Protecting the environment doesn't need to cost the earth. It can actually bring significant savings to your business.

There are proven connections between good environmental practices and increased sales and profitability.

You can;

- Enhance your image and reputation,
- Attract new customers,
- Improve your bottom line,
- Develop exciting new opportunities,
- Become more competitive.

These seminars are all about how to do it for real and put ideas into practice.

Cutting costs now

- Save 10 – 25% through utilities efficiencies alone
- Heating – 1 degree of overheating can cause your costs to rise by 8%

Making a Difference

A 2 day programme to demonstrate how taking care of the environment can help your business to prosper:

Day One

- What is Sustainability?
- Recycling and local purchasing
- Local Wildlife
- Marketing

Day Two

- Energy & Water – Reduce the Use!
- Transport
- The Green Tourism Business Scheme
- Turning new ideas and thoughts into new business

Both days will involve interactive sessions, practical tips, opportunities to devise your own plans, case studies and guest speakers.

Seminar Dates and Venues

16 th and 23 rd November	Bicton College
17 th and 24 th November	Dower House, Rousdon
22 nd and 29 th November	Westward Ho!
1 st and 8 th December	Barnstaple

Cost

Accommodation providers 1- 3 bedrooms	£15
Accommodation providers 3 – 10 bedrooms	£30
Accommodation providers 10 + bedrooms	£50
Attractions / Holiday Parks / Activity Providers	£50

These seminars are being substantially subsidised by the Discover Devon Naturally project run by DCC, and the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

For more information please contact **Rosie Bates**,

Tourism Skills Network 01392 383144

NEW AONB SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND SUPPORTS MORE LOCAL PROJECTS

The North Devon AONB Partnership has released further details of local projects that will benefit from its £100,000 Sustainable Development Fund.

Welcombe Village Hall have been given a £7500 grant towards the cost of an appraisal and design for the village hall and site to be transformed in to a Community Centre.

Mortehoe Parish Council have been awarded a £4900 grant to produce information boards and off-road walking paths and signage and the **Green Gym Beginners Fitness Classes** organisation has been awarded a £1150 grant to deliver a series of sustainable tourism seminars to encourage businesses to adopt responsible business practices that minimise the impact on their local environment, improve their profitability and improve the quality of the visitors' experience. The proposed training will equip businesses with the skills, advice and motivation to work towards becoming accredited through the Green Tourism Business Scheme.

Also, **Devon Wildlife Trust** has been awarded AONB grant funds totaling £12,127 for two projects, one being a research based project investigating the need for grazing on land of high wildlife value. This project will be working closely with the landowning community of the Hartland Peninsula and wider North Devon District Council area, and two for a project entitled '*DWT Natural Assets in the North Devon AONB*', which is a pilot responsible tourism project that will encourage/facilitate small landowners and tourism operators to optimise economic, social and cultural benefits whilst also enhancing the biodiversity value of area.

James Morrish, Chairman of the AONB Partnership, said:

"As with previous grants given out, it is hoped that these recent awards will continue to benefit communities within the North Devon AONB. To qualify for grant funding these projects have all shown how they will benefit the AONB, further its purposes, that they can be sustained and also have the support of their local communities."

For further information about the North Devon AONB Sustainable Development Grant Fund, please contact the Tarka Country Trust, who are administering the fund on behalf of the AONB, by emailing aonbsdf@tarka.org.uk, contacting the help line 01237 477820, or visiting the AONB website www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk

ACCESS AND AWARENESS LAUNCH

The Community Council of Devon has received a 3 year grant from the Big Lottery Fund to work with and support the management committees of rural community buildings to address issues around 'access' and 'barriers' to their goods and services.

The focus of the 'Access & Awareness' project is to improve the range, quality and take-up of services (activities, events) and goods with particular responsibility to address the needs of the elderly and disabled whilst ensuring management committees don't leave themselves open to challenges under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Management committees must be aware of their responsibilities and take planned and documented action to address the barriers faced by disabled people. It is not only about wheelchair access and accessible toilets! It includes meeting the needs of a wide range of people – e.g. those with sensory impairment, mental impairment and those with progressive conditions and recurring effects. Some people are surprised to learn that the latter includes people with HIV, degenerative conditions like multiple sclerosis and disfigurements. It is estimated that at the present time 20% of the adult population (approx 10 million people) are covered by the provisions of this Act.

There are lots of changes that can be made at very little extra cost. People working on behalf of the management committee, including committee members, should understand their responsibilities and be aware of the way they relate to and interact with disabled people. Other practical solutions include ensuring publicity materials like posters are in the recommended type size (16 pt), features like steps and rails are in contrasting colours to their background (i.e. white line on the edge of steps) and a note pad and paper at a reception desk.

Penny Thame, Access & Awareness Project Officer for CCD said 'Firstly, we want to inform management committees of their responsibilities by running awareness raising workshops throughout the county. We will then work with 'receptive' committees to audit their goods and develop their services.

The Big Lottery Fund, also announced the new Community Buildings programme of £50 million which will be available over 3 years from the summer of 2006. This has come at just the right time for community buildings to plan improvements and undertake access audits for any work requiring planning permission.

CCD have a village hall helpline, for general enquiries on Thursday or Friday between 2pm and 5pm (01392 383 681). Alternatively, if you are part of a hall management committee, or an interested individual requiring more information about the DDA you can contact Penny Thame on 01329 383 681 or penny@devonrcc.org.uk

EVENTS

DRN AUTUMN EVENT

Wednesday 30th November 09.30—4pm at Stoodleigh Court near Tiverton.

The event is an opportunity to learn more about the Devon Rural Network and what we have achieved over the past year. In particular, the focus of the day will be on rural health issues in Devon. The Devon rural Strategy aims to bring about a good quality of life for all and health and well being is critical to the overall vitality of the rural county. The event has been designed to help everyone (including us) understand the health issues within Devon and hopefully discuss some valuable and innovative solutions.

If you are a member and would like to attend please contact a member of the DRN team for more details. Non members are required to pay a £30 fee, yet why not join the DRN for £25 annually?

Please contact a member of the DRN team for more details

Devon Affordable Warmth Action Day

Friday, 2nd December 2005, 10 am – 3.45 pm @ Newton Abbot Race Course

Two years since the launch of the Devon Affordable Warmth Strategy, this event will provide an opportunity to review progress so far, as well as to refocus attention on the tasks in the action plan. Inspirational speakers will demonstrate how affordable warmth works across all the sectors, and the extensive exhibition will provide an opportunity to see all the projects and partners working towards affordable warmth in Devon.

Linda Gilroy MP will open the event, and the workshops will be a chance to bring fresh ideas to the debate, and ensure affordable warmth is delivered to all fuel poor households in Devon, followed by a unique opportunity to 'do your bit' when we will launch the Devon Affordable Warmth Task Force Scheme.

This day is your chance to **take action** and really make a difference.

This free event has been organised by the Devon Local Energy Support Team and the Devon Affordable Warmth Officer in association with the NEA Warm Homes Campaign. For more information contact Jo Nicholson or Martin Eibl on 01752 235 -185 or -183.

TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT SEMINARS

In tourism more than any other sector, customer's expectations directly shape their choices. They expect to find sustainable businesses, especially in beautiful and protected places.

You can help to preserve the beautiful environment around you, and improve the profitability of your business at the same time.

A 2 day programme to demonstrate how taking care of the environment can help your business to prosper.

16th and 23rd November	Bicton College
17th and 24th November	Dower House, Rousdon
22nd and 29th November	Westward Ho!
1st and 8th December	Barnstaple

For more information please contact Rosie Bates,
Tourism Skills Network 01392 383144

FBAS / KITE MEETING

Wednesday 30th November

Professor David Colman was commissioned by the Dairy Supply Chain Forum to produce the now famous report: 'UK Milk Production following the 2003 Reform'. Kite Consulting and Professor Colman invite you to join them to discuss the most recent trends in the dairy industry restructuring and to look at the opportunities which are developing for farmers following the MTR reforms.

To book your place please contact Sue Spillard on 01785 713166 by 24th Nov.

SOUTH WEST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Wednesday 30th November

Environmental Stewardship (ES) was launched in England on 3 March 2005 to replace the existing agri-environment schemes (Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Countryside Stewardship and Organic Farming Schemes). ES has been developed with a high level of public consultation and a significant and much appreciated contribution from stakeholder organisations.

Defra have arranged a series of meetings across the South West to provide information and assistance with Environmental Stewardship. For further information including contact details please email

ESMeetings.southwest@defra.gsi.gov.uk with your name, CPH number, address and contact number