

Devon Rural Network Consultation Response Action Group

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

To provide leadership for the Devon Rural Network on consultation documents with respect to rural issues. The DRN forms a united voice for rural Devon, with specific aims to counter the effects of external policy that are negative to Devon, and to lobby for change.

To influence National, Regional, and County wide policy effectively we need to have a clear system for making judgements on those documents and representing the views of the DRN. We need to have a clear basis on which to lobby for our vision of: 'a prosperous and vibrant rural Devon in a sustainably managed environment securing a good quality of life for all, and fully valuing the diversity and distinctiveness of the County'.

2. Accountability

The Consultation Response Action Group has been established by the Devon Rural Network with the authority of the Steering Group and will report both to it and to the DRN Membership as appropriate. Prior to undertaking any rural proofing exercise the CRAG will obtain a mandate from the Steering Group to operate within these terms of reference, utilising an agreed rural proofing criteria matrix.

3. Name

The Action Group will be known as Consultation Response Action Group (CRAG).

4. Aims

The Devon Rural Network Action Programme was published in December 2004 one of the key aims identified within this was the need for the network to **Speak with one voice for Rural Devon**. This was to be achieved by:

- Developing 'rural proofing' criteria matrix against which to assess the differential impacts of strategy and policy on different rural areas
- Utilising this information to lobby and comment where policies are judged to have adverse impacts on rural communities
- through drawing out members' views and articulating the consensus clearly and concisely

In order to carry more weight when responding to EU, National and Regional policy, strategy and programmes and to make our views and needs known outside of Devon.

5. Objectives

The Consultation Response Action Group will work to support the work of the DRN Objectives:

- Achieve a prosperous and economically vibrant rural Devon
- Promote sustainable management of the environment
- Bring about a good quality of life for all
- Maximise the value of Devon's diversity and distinctiveness
- Lead and co-ordinate partnership working and engagement

6. Key Tasks and how the CRAG will work

The key task of the CRAG is to 'rural proof' strategic documents that will impact upon rural Devon. Normally, documents will be considered if their geographical coverage is Devon-wide or greater. The DRN Secretariat will endeavour to develop a dialogue with policy makers in advance of consultation drafts being published to enable the greatest possible influence.

In addition the CRAG will from time to time 'proof' lobbying documents being developed by the DRN Secretariat on behalf of the network and by the DRN Action Groups to ensure adherence to a consistent approach and message. Also, the CRAG will be available to 'proof', on request, work of our partners and members which may not necessarily be Devon-wide or greater.

The DRN secretariat will prepare a calendar of forthcoming consultations to enable a time-table of work to be developed. The DRN secretariat will be responsible for obtaining a copy of the document to be proofed and circulate to the CRAG. The process for rural proofing can be seen at Appendix I.

Members of the CRAG will be expected to nominate themselves as specialist support in specific topic areas to enable the DRN secretariat to call upon their support for the initial rural proofing exercise. (Other specialist support may be required and the CRAG will approach specialists as necessary.) The rural proofing criteria matrix can be seen at Appendix II.

The CRAG may receive requests from partners and agencies to rural proof their work, this is an activity that we will undertake. If such requests become frequent we reserve the right to review our policy of offering this as a free service to partners and agencies.

7. Conflict Resolution

In the event of a disagreement within the initial rural proofing exercise group this will be taken to the meeting of the full CRAG before a response is agreed. If no resolution can be found the consultation response will be written acknowledging a difference of opinion.

8. Relationship to other bodies

The CRAG will recognise and value the role, operational style and priorities of all bodies with which it works. We recognise that in many instances our members may submit individual consultation responses based on their own organisations principle aims and objectives. These may not be wholly consistent with the message from the DRN CRAG as our response will endeavour to be an objective response looking at the overall document and it's impact across many rural issues.

9. Membership of CRAG

The CRAG will have a core membership (appendix III) who will contribute their personal skills and commitment as much as their organisational experience. The aim will be to settle upon a level of membership that can be effective and this will mean that it can not be representative of every interest in Devon. However, it will at all times try to take the full range of views into account. Current membership may change once the CRAG settles into its work programme.

Members of CRAG will be expected to identify subject matters for which they are prepared to act as specialist support to the Secretariat. In the event that we rural proof a document for which we have no specialist support the Secretariat will endeavour to solicit the assistance of non-CRAG members on an ad-hoc basis.

CRAG will establish a relationship with all other DRN Action Groups to offer support to their work.

A quorum will be if at least 50% of the core members are present.

A Chair of the CRAG will be nominated and agreed upon at the first meeting of the group. This position will be reviewed annually. There is no maximum time that any one person may serve on the CRAG or as the Chair.

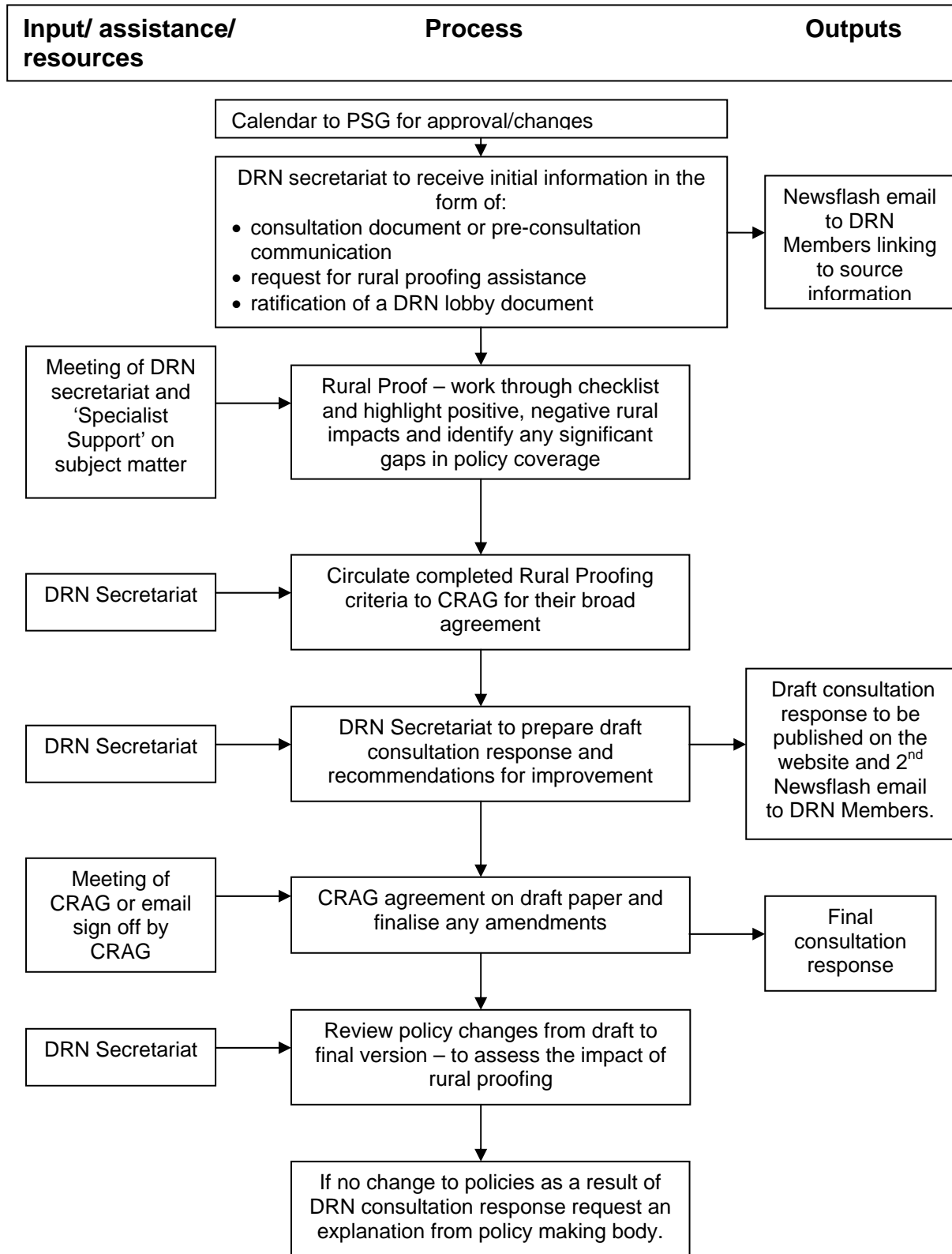
10. Resources

The DRN staff will perform the role of secretariat to the CRAG. We reserve the right to review the resources requirement as the process develops in light of the potential for other agencies to request the DRN to 'rural proof' their work.

11. Frequency of Meetings

The frequency of meetings will be determined by the calendar of forthcoming consultations.

Devon Rural Network Consultation Response Process



Appendix II

Rural Proofing Criteria

Appendix III

Membership

Name	Organisation
Pauline Warner Heather Hillman	Devon CC
Denise Ramsay	Natural England
Martin Weiler	Environment Agency
Philip Wagstaff (chair)	Churches Together in Devon (CTD)
Steve Pitcher	North Devon DC
Martyn Warren	Plymouth University
David Kinross	Rural Community Council of Devon
Mary Talbot-Rosevear	Small Farms Association
Ian Mercer	South West Forest
Lynne del Greco	SW Regional Development Agency
Paul Delahoy	Devon Towns Forum
Secretariat:	
Jen Brogan	Devon Rural Network