

Devon LAG Meeting
Tuesday 4th August, 9.30 am
Coaver Club, County Hall, Exeter

Present

Phil Wagstaff (Chair)	Devon Rural Network Chair
Jenny Carey Wood	Leader 4 Torridge & North Devon
Katy Graham	Leader 4 Torridge & North Devon
Anita Lewington	Leader 4 Torridge & North Devon
Viv Gale	Leader 4 Torridge & North Devon
Liz Abell	South Devon Coastal LAG and Greater Dartmoor LEAF
Carol Trant	South Devon Coastal LAG
Tony Watson	South Devon Coastal LAG
Trevor Smale	Greater Dartmoor LEAF
Paul Baker	Greater Dartmoor LEAF
Jenny Archard	Making it Local
Paul Diviani	Making it Local
Mike Ellingham	Making it Local
Heather Stallard	Making it Local
Sarah Woollacott	RPDE Devon Project Development Officer
Nicole Stacey	DCC Regeneration Assistant
Paul Sander-Jackson	Wessex Reinvestment Trust
David Kinross	Community Council for Devon
Emily Farrell	SWRDA
Bruce Douglas	SWRDA
Leanne Crawford	Devon Rural Network

Apologies

Cathy Heath	South Devon Coastal LAG
Steve Hitch	Greater Dartmoor LEAF

1.0 a. Introductions

Introductions were given round the table.

b. Update from each LAG

Making it Local

The group had approved their first project in principle, COSMIC, based on digital mentors and part funded by DCC. A few projects had been deferred and were likely to be resubmitted once they have been developed further.

The appraisal system was working well and there was now a full complement of staff. The group had a presence at the Honiton Show and attracted a lot of interest.

Main topics received were community buildings, renewable energy, forestry, food, and market towns. Although there were no market towns within the Making it Local area, a strategy paper was being developed to link these in with the programme. Representatives from Somerset were also sitting on the Management Board.

South Devon Coastal LAG

The programme had been running since March and 6 projects had been approved, including a community shop (near completion), a permissive footpath, and wider projects such as Wheels2work and Women in Business (through Community Council for Devon).

A small grants fund had been approved by the RDA, with a ceiling of £15,000. There were three strands to this – community facilities, enablement fund (for larger projects), and business development funding, which had been ring fenced with a separate application process for staffing.

The first core claims had been made, with a few hiccups identified around the detail of eligibility of costs. Some initial baseline work had been done, but feedback was still awaited from the RDA.

It was highlighted that the process was very complicated and time consuming, which was counter productive due to costs involved and the time requirement.

Leader 4 Torridge & North Devon

Fifty project outlines had been received and these were very diverse. One project, to develop a food and drink network, had been approved. Other applications had been deferred or rejected. The appraisal system had been challenging and more appraisers were needed.

A business growth small grants scheme had been approved in principle, with grants of up to £7.5K available for micro businesses, to be launched in September. A lot of business support projects had been submitted and the group were looking at creating a business support strategy based on needs.

Research into community buildings was underway for the establishment of baselines and identification of appropriate places for support and funding.

Staff were now in place and publicity and PR was being sorted.

Greater Dartmoor LEAF

The programme had been running since March and 12 projects had been approved – Dartmoor Circle, Dartmoor Way (feasibility study), Moor Car, Princetown Community Centre, business support through the Business Information Point (financial training), a community shop, development of a community building (Moretonhampstead), festivals in Tavistock, a food and drink network, Women in Business, a community facility (Bere Alston), and Drake's Dartmoor. There was likely to be an under spend due to higher projections, and publicity needed to focus on priorities which had not yet been covered. There had been one appeal over a decision to reject a project and a process was in place to deal with this.

Some base line information was still needed.

General discussion highlighted a number of issues:

- The LAGs were operating on the level between the RDA, Defra and the EU and local community aspirations, which could be very difficult
- Private sector members were being lost due to the frequency of meetings
- There was a challenge of operational costs and capacity of community groups going through the application process
- A refresh would be held after September to give more clarity around strategy and innovation, and to re-attract representatives from the private sector.
- Locality and relationship building
- Innovation – projects had been deferred and rejected due to their 'traditional' nature, but the definition of innovation was subjective. Should projects focus more on making the best use of the most up to date methods of doing things?
- Lack of funding for community buildings was a huge issue

c. RPDE Axis 1 update (main programme)

Sarah Woollacott introduced herself as the RDPE Devon Project Development Officer, and Nicole Stacey, who was the Regeneration Assistant at DCC and would be supporting Sarah with her work.

There had been a slow start and a large number of projects were currently with the RDA for appraisal. There had been a lot of interest in Devon, with over 200 proposal forms submitted. A comparison for final submissions was given with other counties.

County	Submitted	Approved	Rejected/Discont.	In Appraisal
Devon	10	1	3	6
Cornwall	15	3	3	9
Dorset	3	2	1	-
Gloucester	6	3	-	3
Somerset	2	1	-	1
Wiltshire	5	2	-	3

There had been no referral of projects to the LAGs. The proposals for the main fund were looked at each month and those ineligible under these schemes may be more suited to LAG funding. Similarly the LAGs could also refer projects to Sarah, although a full business plan was required under Axis 1 and this could take up to 3 months. There needed to be clarification over which projects could be referred, and a relationship needed to be developed.

A point was raised regarding intervention rates, which were not the same as state aid limits. Further guidance was needed on this.

It was suggested that a sub group of LAG Project Officers should be formed to look at operation and action to enable referral of applications.

Sarah was proposing to run a series of seminars on RDPE for farmers and suggested that the LAGs be involved.

d. Cross Devon projects

South Devon Coastal and Greater Dartmoor LEAF had been accepting some separate applications for the same projects with a view to linking these up later. A tentative yes had been given from the RDA, but further guidance was needed on how this link was now implemented. The detail of these projects needed to be looked at.

Action: Liz to forward details to Bruce Douglas

DCC also still had strategic funding available for cross LAG projects. Contact Heather Hillman for more information – heather.hillman@devon.gov.uk.

e. Issues

Discussed under Item 1b.

2.0 Workshop and Presentation – Community Building and Assets

(Copies of the PowerPoint presentations are attached separately)

a. Presentations

Community Buildings – David Kinross (CCD)

Additional points raised:

- There were 530 multi use community buildings in Devon
- Research on insurance value estimated a figure of £160 million
- 'Why community buildings matter' report was available and had been compiled from questionnaires and structured interviews (<http://www.devonrcc.org.uk/downloads/Main%20Report%20draft%20FINAL%20version%20110608smaller%20for%20web.pdf>)
- There was often an added pressure of being the last community venue available after the loss of the other services (shop, pub, etc)
- The strategic element of placement of village halls or community buildings needed to be picked up
- The issue of scout huts was raised – these were not owned by communities and there could often be difficulties around fundraising due to ownership

Local investment in communities – Paul Sander-Jackson (Wessex Reinvestment Trust WRT)

Additional points raised:

- WRT had a great deal of experience in asset transfer, including schools for community use
- WRT were 'lenders of last resort'
- Much of the work of WRT looked at sustainability of buildings and assets
- A toolkit for 'Developing Community Facilities' had been developed through the Devon Reinvestment Service <http://www.devon.gov.uk/drstoolkit.htm>

- The Ecos sustainable housing project in Somerset was to be replicated at 4 other sites. £160,000 was raised for this project.
- Torrs Hydro New Mill, Derbyshire - £100,000 of funds were raised, £97,000 of which through community shares
- Support would be needed to cascade the model out to communities
- There was a fixed price fee for registering with WRT, and a business model was being looked at in terms of taking a percentage of money raised. In the short term, WRT was a paid for service.

RDPE Community & Social Enterprise Fund – Bruce Douglas, SWRDA

The RDA had nominally set aside £7.5 million for the fund, and was currently looking at flexibility and definitions. The basic services measure and small and micro business measure were being used to create a programme to look at community enterprises to make them self sustaining.

This was being based on a previous Defra programme 'enterprise for inclusion', and was still being developed. There were 3 elements to the proposal:

- A pot of funding for projects
- Business support based on the SW REG model, with a voucher system
- Facilitation service – looking at either regional, sub regional or a mix.

Elements of the programme were to be in place by April 2010. More capacity was needed, but the RDA was happy to look at good projects already in development. Bruce was the starting point for this.

There needed to be work with the LAGS to look at the overlap in funding, and it was proposed that Mid Devon would be the focus for this fund. Public match would not be eligible.

Business support would be operated through Business Link, with the same structure as the main fund, but projects would not have to come through Business Link.

b. Workshops

Notes of the workshops are attached separately.

c. Feedback

The main points raised in the workshops:

Community Buildings – David

- Strategic investment in halls
- Purse strings
- Practical issues – gaps and building on what is already there
- Green agenda – climate change and hall auditing
- Funding and baseline information – CCD held information, as did Devon Renaissance. Figures could be disaggregated (with cost) – **contact David if interested**

Community Shares – Paul

- Question of how much the model could be applied to community buildings based on what sort of return – financial and social balance
- It may be better to adopt an alternative route if there was no return.
- Not a universal solution but had a potential to match fund
- Churches as community hubs – eligible for the same process

Any other business

More time for the Round Robin requested at the next meeting.

The next meeting would be held in February 2010.

Action: dates and topic to be canvassed

Meeting closed.