

Devon Local Action Group's Meeting
11 am, Monday 2nd February
Larkbeare House, Exeter

Present:

Phil Wagstaff	Devon Rural Network (Chair)
Liz Abell	Devon Renaissance
Chris Kirwin	Greater Dartmoor
Stewart Horne	Greater Dartmoor
Paul Baker	Greater Dartmoor
Jill Tomalin	Greater Dartmoor
Alan Stapleton	South Devon
Peter Sandover	South Devon
Jenny Archard	Blackdown Hills
Heather Stallard	Blackdown Hills
Bob Buxton	Blackdown Hills
Julie Harris	Blackdown Hills
Jenny Carey-Wood	Torrige and North Devon
Sarah Wragge-Morley	Torrige and North Devon
Peter Howard	Torrige and North Devon
Sally Macey-Watson	Torrige and North Devon
Leanne Crawford	Devon Rural Network (DRN)
Mel Sealey	Devon County Council – Renewable Energy for Devon (RE4D)
Kathryn Edwards	Devon County Council – Economic Development Officer (Food and Drink)
Mark Hodgson	Envision
Ian Hague	South West Regional Development Agency

1.0 Welcome and introductions

Phil opened the meeting and introductions were given round the table. The purpose of the meeting, to allow the Local Action Groups to meet and discuss issues and projects, was given.

2.0 Available support and cross border projects

Renewable Energy for Devon (RE4D)

Mel gave a brief summary of RE4D and distributed a list of current support, as of February 2009, including both financial and advisory. It was confirmed that the demand side of the offered support included mentoring, events, training courses, and advice. Those wishing to access this support can contact RE4D by telephone 01752 235185 or through the website www.re4d.org.

Capital grants were available at 25% grant rate for businesses, and 30-50% grant rate for communities, up to a maximum grant of £30,000. It was confirmed that there was currently a large amount of funding available for community renewable energy technologies. In terms of business support, only farms looking to diversify will be supported by RE4D, the rest will fall under Axis 1 of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

Peter stated that after discussion with RE4D, South Devon was currently developing a project that may potentially link with North Devon.

Food and Drink Projects

Kathryn circulated a sheet giving an overview of the key projects currently underway in Devon at County level, and stressed that although some of this work was being done there needed to be input from the local level and that value could be added to this work by the LAG's. Julie stated that ICT projects in particular needed a greater resource.

There is no financial support available through Devon County Council for these types of project, however Kathryn was able to offer support if necessary with marketing and project development. There was also a website under development, foodie Devon, which would act as a central information point for all food related events, as well as information on shops, markets and producers.

A number of considerations were put forward, including promotion of small producers to new markets, such as London, by forming cooperatives to reduce transportation costs; local food not always being green; more coordination is needed between the county and local level; LAGs need to look wider than just Devon – linkages to Somerset through the Blackdowns, and other counties needed to be made; projects needed coordination to add value.

It was agreed that locality should be linked with county and regional activity to ensure sustainability.

RDPE

Following interviews at the beginning of this year, Sarah Woollacott has been appointed to the post of RDPE Project Officer, hosted by DCC and starting on 23rd February.

Her role is County wide - part of a regional suite of support services for the land based sector to access funding from RDPE Axis 1, commissioned by SWRDA. She will be working closely with South West Rural Enterprise Gateway (SWREG) to provide advice and guidance to applicants referred to the County service and support them to make a quality application.

She will also be advising on land based issues relating to RDPE and developing projects with partners, which will be of benefit to Devon's rural economy, as well as promoting the RDPE programme where appropriate.

She will be based at County Hall however will be out in the field for most of her time, hot desking where possible.

Anyone interested in accessing Axis 1 should contact SWREG on 0845 600 9966. The SWREG will be acting as a single point of access and will refer people to the appropriate county support.

Projects over £5,000 for food and drink could go into the main Axis 1 programme, and there have been calls for more projects. There was no clear answer on who was eligible for support under Axis 1 and it was suggested that the application process needed to be made simpler.

Other Support

DRN were happy to continue to facilitate the joint LAG meetings as an independent body for as long as required by the groups.

Leanne also stated that for projects that may not fit into criteria set by the LAGs, there is a Devon wide network of funding advisors within District Councils and Council's for Voluntary Service who would be able to suggest alternative sources of funding for community groups and social enterprise projects.

Action: Leanne to circulate details and contacts

Cross Border Projects

Liz gave the details of several projects which had been received covering more than one LAG area. These were:

- Deliver the flavour – covering all four LAGs and aimed at creating a food distribution network
- Devon Wheels 2 Work – covering all four LAGs and looking to roll out current project to other areas
- Food and drink network development – Greater Dartmoor, Blackdown Hills and North Devon, to support business network building on a previous pilot project
- Moorcar – 3 LAGs but not specified, to develop the community car club network
- Marine presence at county show – South Devon. Greater Dartmoor and North Devon, to promote the local marine industry
- South Devon Area Tourism Partnership – South Hams and Greater Dartmoor, to promote South Devon as a year round destination
- The Ruby Way – North Devon and Greater Dartmoor, to promote rural regeneration through promotion of Ruby Way
- Business Management – Greater Dartmoor, Blackdown Hills and South Devon, to increase business competitiveness through training

Jenny Archard stated that some of the LAGs were not at the stage where they could accept responsibility of projects, and it was agreed that the decision on who should lead should be made by the LAG groups, not within this meeting. It was suggested that some LAGs may naturally be able to take the lead if a project predominantly covered on are with only slight overlap, but this needed to be looked at in terms of LAG priorities and outcomes.

Concern was expressed over the number of projects requesting funds for staffing, and the management of expectation.

It was agreed that the projects should be told that there may be a delay in decision making due to the disparity in LAG development across Devon.

Action: Liz to email project forms to each of the LAGs for discussion

Liz confirmed that Devon Renaissance had not promoted cross border projects, and it was suggested that the responsibility to reply lay with the LAG that had received the initial application.

Action: Liz to feed back to project applicants to those applications already received

Ian stated that any project requesting funds over £100,000 will need to be referred to the RDA.

It was agreed that the time scale needed to be discussed further by the LAG managers.

Action: Liz, Jenny and Jenny to organise meeting

3.0 Impact of the Programme

Liz suggested that the groups needed to discuss baseline targets for the future and that development of baselines could be shared across the region.

Jenny Carey-Wood stated that guidance on baselines was still being sought from the RDA, and it was suggested that guidance should be based on the priorities for each LAG. It was also questioned whether targets should be refined precisely at local level by the RDA or whether this should be done by the LAGs, with a common method of measurement devised.

Ian stated that environmental guidelines should tie in with development plans where possible, but this was not absolute.

A number of other points were raised:

- Economic, environmental, and access to service outcomes and measurements related out puts needed research as they have already been used elsewhere
- Should this be discussed by project leads and individual LAGs first
- Most baselines were at the macro level
- There were common threads of increased economic activity and business; sustainable communities through facilities and support; and harnessing the environment for economic advantage
- Baselines should be refined according to specific areas
- Some baselines have already been established though Market and Coastal town Initiative plans, these could be used as research
- Baselines could be based on previous experience, i.e. LEADER work
- Baselines should be simple and easily measurable – e.g. number of community owned employment spaces developed, or number of businesses supported, without going into further detail

Action: project managers to discuss – outcomes to be established by end 2009 for the 2010 Delivery Plans, with regional considerations

Ian stated that a matrix of common themes was most likely to be advised and it was requested whether the RDA could give an overview as a starting point.

4.0 Carbon Neutrality – Mark Hodgson, Envision

Mark stated that many projects will have an aspiration to reduce carbon with no specific outputs measuring this. It was agreed that not many projects will have carbon neutrality high on their agenda and that signposting to RDA indicators should be considered at an early stage.

Mark suggested that LAGs needed to look at mitigation of high carbon projects, and at what applicants were being asked to measure and when, i.e. at the procurement stage and/or during the downstream effects. There was a need to promote a message for both procurement and use of low carbon supplies to maximise a longer term benefit.

Environmental impact could be measured in terms of the number of projects adopting environmental measures and the number of those who have been influenced to use more environmentally friendly suppliers. LAGs could look to close the loop of manufacture, use and disposal by promoting the reuse throughout the lifetime of the project.

Action: copy of Mark's presentation to be circulated, along with copy of Devon Renaissance guidance to use as a template

5.0 Next Steps

It was agreed that the meeting should be more focussed by using the initial part of the meeting to highlight any issues (for example, issues raised at the individual LAG meetings and to discuss areas of common concern), and the remainder as an educational session on one topic per meeting.

Renewable energy was suggested for the next meeting; any other suggestions will be requested.

The next meeting would be held on 21st April, venue to be confirmed.

Action: Suggested agenda items and any feedback on this meeting to be forwarded to Leanne Leanne.crawford@devon.gov.uk