

# Devon Rural Network Steering Group Minutes

09.30am Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> October, Council Chamber, West Devon BC Offices, Okehampton

## Present

Prof Michael Winter	University of Exeter, Chair of DRN	Peter Walmsley	Private Sector
Prof Ian Mercer	South West Forest, Vice DRN Chair	Peter Tansey	Devon Renaissance
Philip Collins	English Nature	Sue Smith	Devon County Council
Jim Skelton	(Substituting Richard White)	Heather Hillman	DRN Manager
Tom Langdon Davis	Devon Towns Forum	Lisa Henry	DRN Officer
Mary Talbot-Rosevear	(Substituting Dominic Acland) SFFAG	Sarah Streeter	DRN Assistant
Jay Talbot	Community Council of Devon		
David Incoll	Devon CEX's group		
Philip Wagstaff	Churches Together in Devon		

## Apologies

Chris Woodruff	East Devon AONB
Martin Weiler	Environment Agency
Dennis Brewer	National Farmers Union (replacing Mike Ellingham)
David Whitely	North West Devon Economic Partnership
Steve Pitcher	North Devon Council
Dominic Acland	Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust
Peter Harvey	Business Link Devon & Cornwall
Lynne del Greco	South West RDA
Sue Brownlow	South West RDA
Martyn Warren	Rural Futures Unit

Introduction and Welcome by the chairman. Apologies given for absent members. Introductions around the table.

## 1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising:

No corrections or amendments to be made.

Comments:

- **Previous Action** – *to email finalised POP to all Steering Group Members prior to submission to SWRDA* – Currently pending
- **Previous Action** – *Next SG meeting to focus on rural housing* – Rural Housing Seminar is being held after the SG meeting. Very grateful to David Incoll for all his help with the seminar preparations.
- **Previous Action** – *HH to invite Martyn Warren to sit on the SG* – MW has accepted but sends his apologies for this first meeting.
- **Previous Action** – *MW and DI to ask possible speakers for Winter Event Dates* – MW said that Jim Knight would be too difficult to get and that it would be best to keep him in mind for future events.

**ACTION:** *Lisa to liaise with Martyn Warren to be asked to give a short presentation on his job role when he attends the next SG meeting*

## 2. Devon Rural Delivery Road Map

- Appreciation was shown to HH and RM-J for all their hard work on this matter.
- A breakfast meeting took place earlier to discuss the paper and the options available for the delivery of Rural Renaissance. It was agreed by all that option 1 was the favoured delivery mechanism, though a few amendments to the diagram are needed.
- Peter Tansey shared his view on this delivery and opinions from the breakfast meeting: Devon Renaissance is performing well with respect to other rural renaissance programmes in the South West and is keen to work with the Devon Rural Network to finalise the SERC RR programme. Because DR is so effective there little point in the DRN setting up something in that will run in parallel. Therefore DRN and DR need to match their strategies and ensure that they work together under an overarching strategy for Devon. It is important that the RDA see that DR and DRN are working efficiently together and receive a single voice from the two organisations in order to ensure RR goes ahead. In conjunction, the RDA must see that DR and DRN have a solid operational set up to secure the funding, and that it is fit for purpose.

- For the interim period, the two organisations will work separately in their own areas of expertise, but eventually the two will integrate. It is important that both organisations use their strengths in order to ensure this delivery runs as smoothly as possible. For example the voluntary sector is an areas where the DRN has greater strength.
- It was felt important to keep the brand name 'Devon Renaissance' within this delivery structure as it is a recognised name. DRN will be the strategic body guiding both policy and action priorities.
- There has been some concern expressed by the District Councils about the complexity and transition period for DR and DRN. It is very important that local communities are still able to work for themselves, and are assisted to develop and prepare project proposals.

***ACTION: All to get in touch with HH and RM-J regarding any concerns or comments o the paper. RMJ & HH to develop the details of the integration and circulate a more detailed paper.***

- The purpose of this meeting was for the SG to give the final stamp of approval to the proposed delivery arrangements and the decision was taken for option 1 to be developed, therefore today's meeting was felt to be a major step forward for the RR programme.
- In light of this it was considered very important to let the RDA know of these discussions and decisions in order to demonstrate that DRN and DR are working together and speaking with one voice. If the letter is drafted from both organisations, the RDA cannot deny that the two are working together, and this may exert some pressure on them to speed up the delivery process.

***ACTION:RMJ /HH to draft letter to RDA letting them know of the decisions that have been made regarding the merger of DRN and DR.***

### **3. Rural Renaissance Update**

Tom Langdon-Davis gave an update on the RR bid:

- At the last meeting of the RRAG there was a lot of impatience voiced by the members as to the slow progression of the SERC bid. However the Rural Delivery Road Map has given RRAG more optimism that the bid is moving forward. It is hoped that the RDA will realise that the pressure is on them to spend the money and that they will respond to HH's letter quickly.

### **4. DEFRA's Rural Social and Community Programme.**

David Incoll gave an overview:

- DEFRA's RSCP has come out of the Haskins Report. The fund will probably be around £150,000 per year for 2 years across Devon. There are existing projects such as the housing enabler which this money is currently being spent on, however there are opportunities for new additional projects to be funded with this money. The actual amount of investment from this fund is a bit disappointing; however there is a possibility that this fund could be increased in the future. It is essential therefore that DEFRA sees that this money is used to the best advantage for the chance of future funding.
- A Devon consultation event, to which all DRN Steering Group are invited, is to be held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November to decide the spending priorities for Devon. The DRN are working with the GOSW, CCD, Devon County Council and David Incoll (representing the District Council's) to organise the event and manage the consultation process.

*NB: The amount indicated for Devon is now £400,000!*

### **5. Rural Proofing (CRAG)**

Lisa Henry circulated a progress report paper before the meeting. The paper sets out the current position of the CRAG and requests delegated responsibility from the Steering Group to prepare and submit consultation responses on key strategic documents.

The resultant discussion gave CRAG the responsibility of the day to day consultation responses, yet if issues arose that needed to be discussed by the Steering Group then they would be contacted accordingly. However there were 2 provisos to this decision:

1. That all Steering Group members can reply to comments via email. All members must send a response, even if it is to say that they do not have the time to respond or to submit a nil response.
2. That the Steering Group have the facility to put forward items for the CRAG agenda.

**ACTION: LH to provide next Steering Group meeting with a full list of documents for CRAG to rural proof for prioritisation.**

**ACTION: LH to circulate the full set of rural proofing criteria with these minutes. (attached)**

## **6. Short Updates on Practical Issues**

### DRN Team Planning

- The DRN team had a work planning day at the end of August in which the core areas of DRN work were outlined and prioritised. It was also an opportunity to discuss individual targets, future work load and management within the team.
- It was decided that a core management group will be set up to meet on a bi-monthly basis as a priority steer to the DRN. All DRN processes will be audited for the RDA and it is essential that this group can help show that DRN is fit for purpose to handle the RR bid.
- An area of core DRN work at the moment is the refreshing of the Rural Strategy. HH is currently working to have the strategy refreshed by the end of March 2006. The aims and objectives of the strategy may need adding to, but not substantially altered but the priorities for action will need reviewing.

**ACTION: HH will circulate a table of delivery priorities currently in the strategy for the Steering Group members and others to update on activity and review priorities for delivery where appropriate. The action groups will also look at relevant objectives for a wider review.**

**ACTION: ALL – Respond to table asap!**

### DRN Communication Strategy

- Lisa circulated a summary of the DRN Communication Strategy, which highlights our key audiences and the most appropriate medium with which to reach them. It has been recognised that to date the profile of the DRN has been quite low key, but now with the addition of staff, but it is now considered appropriate to try to broaden the message and awareness of the DRN and activities. Any assistance or comments will gratefully received.

**ACTION: LH - Communication strategy to be attached to these minutes for information. (attached)**

### Terms of Reference for the Action Groups

- All Action Groups are going through the process of agreeing Terms of Reference, they have been drafted to a standard format, but include Action Group specific information.

### Autumn Event 30<sup>th</sup> November

- The Autumn Event will be held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November at Stoodleigh Court, near Tiverton, with an emphasis on Rural Health Issues. This topic was chosen as it is an area that the DRN has not been fully engaged with and recognises this as a weakness. The day will also be used to update members on the Action Group activities, the refreshing of the Rural Strategy and the changes to Rural Delivery in Devon.
- Invitations will be sent out by 4<sup>th</sup> November and we will be contacting speakers and workshop facilitators in early November to finalise the programme.

### Sustainable Farming and Food Group

- The last meeting of the SFFAG was on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September, chaired by Mary Talbot Rosevear who is acting as deputy chair in the absence of Dominic Acland. The Terms of Reference have now been approved for the group. To take the Action Plan forward the SFFAG is now putting together focus groups, of which the 12 October was the first, to discuss the issues in more depth and to agree detailed priorities for action.

#### Rural Business Support Action Group

- The last meeting was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> September where the Terms of Reference were discussed. The key role of the group is to advise rural business start up – working both with RR and outside. There was a need though to expand the group to include more private sector organisations.

***Action: LH - Devon Renaissance to attend the next meeting of the RBSAG to help the understanding of Rural Renaissance delivery and support.***

#### Rural Futures Conference 2006

- Heather met with Martyn Warren earlier in October to discuss the potential involvement of the DRN in the Rural Futures Conference, to take place 5-7<sup>th</sup> April. The conference is aimed at a wide audience and seems to be quite academic at the moment. One idea that has been suggested would be to hold a workshop to look at putting theory into practice.

***Action: HH and Martyn Warren to meet to discuss the conference further***

#### AER Conference

- 19/20/21<sup>st</sup> October 130 delegates coming from over Europe, the conference will be web cast on the DCC website for any body wanting to watch!

#### Next Newsletter

- Autumn newsletter is going to be published on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, so if anyone has any news items, events or pictures can you send them ASAP to Sarah Streeter

**Date of Next meeting - to be agreed - but will be after Christmas.**