

Devon Rural Network Policy Steering Group Minutes

2pm – 4pm Monday 3rd July, Council Chamber, West Devon BC Offices, Okehampton

Present

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| Prof Ian Mercer CBE (IM) | South West Forest, Vice DRN Chair | Lynne Del Greco (LDG) | South West RDA |
| Tom Langdon Davis (TLD) | Devon Towns Forum | Richard White (RW) | Culm Group |
| Martin Taylor (MT) | Devon Conservation Forum | Dennis Brewer (DB) | NFU |
| Jay Talbot (JT) | Community Council of Devon | Sheena Asthana (SA) | Plymouth University |
| David Incoll (DI) | Devon CEX's group | Lisa Henry (LH) | DRN Co-ordinator |
| Philip Wagstaff (PW) | Churches Together in Devon | Sarah Streeter (SS) | DRN Project Worker |
| Peter Tansey (PT) | Devon Renaissance | | |

Apologies

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| Prof Michael Winter OBE | University of Exeter | Martyn Warren | Rural Futures Unit |
| Peter Harvey | Business Link Devon & Cornwall | Charlie Plowden | ED District Council |
| Peter Walmsley | Private Sector | Philip Collins | English Nature |
| Chris Woodruff | East Devon AONB | Steve Pitcher | ND District Council |
| Martin Weiler | Environment Agency | Mary Talbot Rosevear | Small Farms Assoc |
| David Whitely | NW Devon Economic Partnership | | |

1. Welcome New Member – Professor Sheena Asthana

1.1 The Chairman welcomed Sheena to the PSG and thanked her for agreeing to join this group.

1.2 This was Lisa Henry's last PSG meeting before she leaves the DRN at the end of July. The Chairman thanked Lisa for all that she has done for the Network over the past 15 months and wished her well for the future.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters arising not Covered by the Agenda

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2.2 Matters arising (*paper attached*)

2.2.1 Future event with Devon Towns Forum – The DRN and DTF are organising a joint event for September around the topic of MCT's and their hinterlands. JT suggested that the Devon Association of Parish Councils be brought into this event.

2.2.2 DEFRA RSCP. JT raised his concerns over the delays in first quarter payments of this fund. LH has met with Richard Hayman, the DCC finance contact for this programme and the first quarter payments should go out by the 10th July. The second quarter payment will go out at the end of July. Because of the delays in payments, projects will not be required to submit a first quarters report and instead will only be asked for a 6 month report. DEFRA will be deciding upon the continuation of this fund based on the 1st years activity, therefore the late payments of this money is a concern to be noted.

It is disappointing that there have been these delays with the programme – as it so far does not meet the terms of the Devon Compact which aims to improve and develop the relationship between the voluntary & community and statutory sectors in Devon (i.e. the VCS get paid in advance). JT Suggested that Richard Hayman be made aware of the Compact for future reference.

<http://www.dacvs.org.uk/devoncompact.htm>

3. Devon Rural Strategy Consultation –Summary of Responses

The deadline for the consultation was the 30th of June. The responses have been pulled together and Heather Hillman is now in the process of analysing the comments and putting together an option paper for the DRN MAG meeting on the 10th July. The MAG will be responsible for making a decision based on this option paper for the next steps of the strategy.

LH thanked everyone who took the time to respond and highlighted some initial general feedback comments:

- The strategy was useful and comprehensive but there were a number of gaps
- The projects/aims/objectives needed to be further linked to the SWOT.
- The SWOT was subjective rather than highlighting the key issues to come out of the rural Devon context statistics.
- The environment as an underpinning theme was missing
- Many respondents were leading to a complete rewrite of the strategy

DI suggested that there were two possible next steps:

1 - A Refresh of the strategy on the grounds of the original one

2 - A complete rewrite

The Chairman asked if the PSG would like to make any recommendations for the next steps to be presented to the MAG. A discussion ensued within the group; the following is a brief summary:

RW was concerned that the environment wasn't represented strongly enough throughout the strategy. The environment underpins the economy of rural Devon and should be represented as an equal within this strategy, and the importance of the balance between the environment, economy and social aspects of Devon needs to be strengthened.

MT noted that some rewording and reordering of the objectives needs to be considered so as not to implicate a hierarchy of importance. Using the word 'promote' in the objectives suggests less activity and importance than 'achieve'.

As an outsider SA was concerned that there were a lot of issues missing that deserved an equal weighting throughout the strategy such as Housing, Rural Health, Diversity.

The Chairman noted that the strategy does need reviewing in light of recent progress and new strategies and is currently not valid as a long term strategy. Yet there is a need for a strategic document that is in place quickly to help influence decisions and processes up and coming such as: the ERDP Regional Implementation Plan; LAA 4th Block etc.

The Devon Rural Context needs updating to cover some of the gaps highlighted. Sections 4 & 5 need to be rewritten completely in order to ensure that the objectives all relate to one another and are relevant to the rural Devon context.

The Chair suggested that a third option be considered – A quick refresh of the document to be completed now but with the proviso that a more comprehensive rewrite was planned and timetabled for the future.

The PSG decided that they would support a revision of the DRS based on the comments received to date. Appended to this refresh should be a process and timetable for a structured comprehensive re-write, probably alongside the Community Strategy timetable. This will ensure that some additional information will have been gained on the DSP and LAA governance arrangements, amongst others, and this two pronged approach can be fully explained in the foreword.

JT suggested it might be useful to look at the list of who the consultation was sent to, to see who didn't respond – and maybe ask why?

ACTION: LH & IM to take this approach to the MAG on the 10th July for discussion

ACTION: SS to pull together list of those who didn't respond to the Consultation

4. Devon Local Area Agreement – DRN involvement with regards to C4 – Develop the rural environmental economy

The Devon LAA 4th Block Economy and Enterprise was submitted to Government on the 7th July.

Section C4 of this block requires DRN involvement and it is important that the PSG agree to take this forward. The Section requires that to "Develop the rural environmental economy – EAFRD monies are channelled through DRN to the agreed Devon Rural Strategy and Delivery Plan".

The PSG agreed that DRN are not a delivery body for funds and therefore the wording in this document needs revising. The DRN could act in an advocacy role for this part of the LAA if required.

The paper circulated at the meeting was the latest version to hand. The document that was submitted to Government is attached to the minutes. *(With suggested changes from the PSG meeting included)*

ACTION: LH to talk to Ian Hutchcroft regarding DRN role in this block of the LAA.

5. Short Updates on Practical Issues

5.1 Rural Renaissance:

The 3 themed groups are now all at the stage of going forward to write the delivery plan. The priority actions of each individual group have all been formulated and a meeting between all three groups is due to take place on the 20th July. This meeting will be to discuss how the money is divided across the 3 groups. The program is predicted to be open for bids from the 1st October 2006.

5.2 CRAG Calendar:

There are 3 consultations coming up which have to be considered in light of LH leaving.

5.2.1- RSS – LH has already looked through and picked out some policies most relevant to Devon. The next CRAG meeting is organised for the **14th July, 10-12 at County Hall.**

ACTION: LH to circulate round highlighted priorities for comment to CRAG.

5.2.2- The England's Trees, woods and forests Consultation. South West Forest will be responding to this. IM offered as Chair of South West Forest that DRN provide support to their response in light of time commitment by Lisa replacement.

5.2.3- the Outdoors for all Diversity Action Plan

It was suggested that the consultation calendar needs to be made a bit clearer in future so as to highlight those consultations that have been responded to and those that are yet to be completed.

5.3 Rural Issues VCS.

SS recently circulated an email asking all members if they would like to be a part of this group. A number of people have already been identified from the event back in February. It is aimed that the first Steering group meeting be organised in September.

5.4 Next DRN Newsletter

Deadline for articles for the summer edition of the DRN Newsletter is Friday 18th August. All articles are to be sent to Sarah Streeter.

5.5 Rural Innova – Component 3 Seminar

Jim Skelton from South West Forest will be attending the 3rd seminar for component 3 in Portugal on the 11th and 12th of July. The seminar is entitled "the Valorisation of Forest Resources" and aims to look at the government support given to woodlands for regeneration and sustainable projects. This is an opportunity to learn about other forestry activity in Europe.

6. AOB

All AOB in future will be brought to the chairman's attention before the start of the meeting.

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the **5th September, 2pm at West Devon Borough Council Offices** in Okehampton