

# Devon Rural Network Policy Steering Group Minutes

09.30am – 12pm Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September, Ockment Centre, Okehampton

## Present

Prof Ian Mercer CBE (IM)	South West Forest, Vice DRN Chair	Tom Langdon Davis (TLD)	Devon Towns Forum
David Incoll (DI)	Devon CEX's group	Mary Talbot Rosevear	Small Farms Ass
Richard White (RW)	Culm Group	Steve Pitcher	ND District Council
Jay Talbot (JT)	Community Council of Devon	Charlie Plowden	ED District Council
Philip Wagstaff (PW)	Churches Together in Devon	Martyn Warren	Rural Futures Unit
David Whitely	NW Devon Economic Partnership	Chris Woodruff	East Devon AONB
Martin Weiler	Environment Agency	Sarah Streeter	DRN
Peter Harvey	Business Link Devon & Cornwall	Jennifer Anderton	DRN

## Also Present:

Heather Hillman	DCC
Lisa Henry	DRN
Emily Farrell	SWRDA (Standing in for Lynne Del Greco & Sue Brownlow)

## Apologies

Prof Michael Winter OBE	University of Exeter	Lynne Del Greco	SWRDA
Peter Walmsley	Private Sector	Sue Brownlow	SWRDA
Philip Collins	English Nature	Sheena Asthana	Plymouth University
Pete Tansey	Devon Renaissance	Dennis Brewer	NFU
Martin Taylor	Devon Conservation Forum		

## Agenda:

### 1. Welcome new DRN Coordinator Jennifer Anderton

1.1 The Chair welcomed Jen who joins us from Surrey County Council. The group introduced themselves around the table for Jen's benefit.

1.2 Lisa Henry was welcomed back and thanked for coming to talk to the PSG

### 2. Minutes of the Last meeting and Matter's arising not covered by the agenda (paper circulated)

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed off.

2.2 Devon Towns Forum, DR and DRN Funding Workshops.

Devon Towns Forum has offered to organise and fund a series of Devon Renaissance Funding Workshops in Devon. The first of these workshops will be held in the Kingsbridge area on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October. Details of this workshop and others will be posted on the DRN website.

2.3 Community Planning Database.

The first meeting of this steering group has been organised for the 9<sup>th</sup> of October. The group felt that this was a very valuable tool for communities in Devon. JT raised the concern that for this database to really be an asset to Devon it needs to be well maintained.

2.4 LAA & DRN Involvement.

A meeting is being held on the 8<sup>th</sup> September between the DRN and DCC to discuss how the DRN can be involved in the 4<sup>th</sup> block, as discussed at the previous PSG meeting.

#### ***ACTION: SS to inform PSG of LAA decisions after the meeting***

2.5 DEFRA RSCP.

While there have been some delays in the payments of this programme the second quarter payments should now have been received. The monitoring and evaluation of the projects is going to change from previously

thought. Instead of using the online reporting system, the DRN are putting together a reporting form for the projects to complete quarterly. It is important that we get the quarterly reports right as at the end of Year 1 DEFRA need to see that the money has been spent wisely in order to see the value in the continuation of this fund.

JT noted that it would be useful to post the projects quarterly reports on the DRN website.

It was decided that 6 monthly reports – in particular highlighted issues should be brought to the PSG for review. The first 6monthly report is due on the 13<sup>th</sup> October.

**ACTION: SS to pull together the quarterly reports – and highlight any issues to be brought to the PSG**

### 3. Devon Rural Strategy Progress Presentation

Lisa Henry presented to the group her findings so far in her rewrite of the Rural Devon Profile, and her recommendations for the format and content of the profile. Below is a copy of her presentation:



**Policy Steering Group**  
Progress report on  
Rural Devon Profile  
Lisa Henry

**Plan of progress report:**

- Summary of April 06 consultation responses
- Identification of significant gaps
- Areas where all respondents broadly happy
- Re-organisation of the report
- Key findings to date
- Areas of work still to be done
- Discussion
- Plan for event 11<sup>th</sup> Sept looking at developing a SWOT

**Summary of responses re Profile**

- Emphasis on **issues** not networks and partnerships
- Need to have a **causal link** between profile and SWOT not a casual one
- **Environment** needs to be a more central theme and not just seen as an economic opportunity
- If to be used for agreeing funding priorities needs to be factual but also look at **future trends**

**From an initial critique and consultation responses – ID gaps**

- Introduction needs to give the scope and purpose of developing a detailed profile
- Cross referencing to strategic context and key documentation
- Don't overplay the importance of market towns
- Non-VAT registered businesses (available from Devon Renaissance survey of Ob2 Districts)
- Drivers of productivity
- Impact of growth of Exeter as RDA centre and RSS Principal Urban Area

## ID gaps...cont....

- Emerging industries – importance and relevance of RDA sector support
- What are agencies doing to support/help?
- Affordable housing
- Public Rights of Way
- Minority populations
- Environmental importance – management, biodiversity
- Waste and waste management
- Climate Change
- Out-migration of youth
- Spatial variations

## Areas where broad support

- In general support for the content of the profile and most respondents felt that it was very helpful and comprehensive within the context of the document.
- Recognition that it is very difficult to get comparable data for

## Re-organisation of report

- Suggestion that the profile should follow the layout of the State of the Countryside report:
  - Living in the Countryside
  - Economic Health
  - Land and environment

Discuss?

## Key findings to date..1

- Centre for Rural Research – changes to agriculture – leaving or planning to leave the industry
- Impact of directive for agricultural waste – business opportunities
- Energy crops
- Linking much of this is climate change and future mitigation

## Key findings to date ..2

- Disparity in wages:
    - North Devon females earned in 2005 74.7% of their male counterparts
    - District earnings range between 106.3% (West Devon) and 77.7% (North Devon) of the South West
  - Devon Renaissance Business survey:
    - Brilliant but covers Objective 2 areas only until Nov or Dec – how much evidence to use?
- Discuss?

## Key findings to date..3

- Business productivity: - If we accept that distance from London and relative distance to other large urban areas can statistically account for the productivity gap between south west and south east – what can we do:
  - Skills – high level and basic
  - Support for business capital investment
  - Better infrastructure and premises
  - Take-up of innovation – be early adopters
  - Targeted business support
- Must apply to rural and urban businesses!

#### Key findings to date ..4

- Out-migration of youth: figures used are based on GP registrations so will include movement within Devon
  - Aged 20-24 out migration of approximately 0.6% of the total Devon population
- Almost 60% live in 1 and 2 person households yet over period 1991 – 2005 only approx 40 % of new build are 1 and 2 bed houses
- Housing reports – majority of findings support better use of existing powers

#### Key findings to date ..5

- Health – poverty index very interesting
  - Generally good access and effective care despite very poor resourcing
  - Picks out North Devon and Torrington – 18 and 13 indicators respectively in the bottom two quintiles nationally
  - Rural PCT's get unfair resources due to formula funding which weighs more heavily for deprivation than it does for age of population despite age being a higher determinant of morbidity

#### Key findings to date ..6

- Transport:
  - With over 80% of households having 1 or more cars – demand for public transport very low – but for those with none, approx 15%, essential
  - Changes to funding of rural transport partnerships – will they survive
  - Good examples of communities coping through mutual support – should they have to?

#### Areas of work still to be completed

- Pull together evidence on environment
- Climate change – picking the relevant elements
- Affordable housing - picking the relevant elements
- Marrying up with community strategy development
- Marrying up with timetable for RDP for E

#### Discussion

- Layout? (State of the Countryside SoTC)
- Where local data not available – reference SoTC or replicate information?
- Use of DR Business Survey (Ob 2 only)?
- Gaps – not identified? (Coastal specific)
- How much do you want?

#### Thoughts on SWOT event

- What to focus on for presentation to group?
- Is what they produce final?
- Further discussion necessary?
- MAG or PSG?

**3.1** LH proposed that the Rural Devon Profile should follow the same format as the layout of the State of the Countryside Report produced by the Commission for Rural Communities. This was discussed by the group and it was decided that this was an appropriate format to follow.

**3.2** DI suggested that it would be useful to map the data used within the rewrite of the profile to determine what is missing and what needs to be captured. LH was asked to send SS the evidence gathered so far to be circulated to the PSG with the minutes of the meeting.

**ACTION: LH to send SS profile evidence to circulate with PSG minutes**

**3.3** In terms of wages indicators the PSG decided that GVA would give a better indication of area wealth – as salaries earned are not always within the area.

**3.4** It was decided that the Devon Renaissance Rural Business Survey findings should be included in the profile, but they were not to be used as representative of the whole of Devon.

**3.5** The discussion initially focused on the need and purpose for a Devon Rural Strategy. As a general overview, this strategy would aim to improve the life for people living in rural Devon. The strategy is an opportunity to show the rural community that they are important and their needs are being considered. This purpose and need needs to be defined at the very start of the strategy.

It is essential that there is a definite link between the rural Devon profile and the SWOT to ensure that the priorities focus on the real needs of rural Devon. The need for the strategy is clear – the document will form the basis of work for other rural organisations such as Devon Renaissance and the Devon LAA. Therefore it is important that we highlight the real issues in rural Devon in order to not only guide the work of the DRN but the work of other fundamental rural organisations. For this reason it is also important that the strategy is put together as soon as possible.

Two options for the strategy were proposed:

1. The Strategy tries to cover every aspect of rural Devon life
2. Out of the data and profile the strategy focuses on 4-6 key target issues

The consensus of the group was that the strategy should focus on key target areas of intervention. The Rural Devon Profile should be a snapshot of the current situation, which highlights the areas of need in rural Devon. The profile and data itself could be a separate document which gets refreshed every few years to show how the outcomes of the strategy have been achieved, and how the needs of rural communities have changed.

The group identified 6 key areas that they felt the strategy should focus on. Each one of these issues should be presented in the strategy as a succinct page of information, covering the situation, the issue and the possible solutions. The 6 below were initially identified:

1. Housing, including affordability and cost fair situations
2. Accessibility - of and to services
3. Environment including Climate Change, landscape and its management
4. Funding and the Rural Economy
5. Enabling Active and Inclusive Communities
6. Health, or is it a service in DRN's terms?

#### **4. SWOT Event 11<sup>th</sup> September**

The details of the SWOT workshop programme were left to the decision of the DRN Management Advisory Group

#### **5. Short updates on Practical Issues**

##### **5.1 Rural Renaissance Update**

The delivery plan for the SERC bid is almost completed and it is hoped will be signed off on the 5<sup>th</sup> September joint SERC meeting. The 3 themed action groups have all been working really hard to get the delivery plan done along with the projected outputs. It is hoped that the first call for projects will be in early October.

##### **5.2 Action Group Updates**

STAG – The sustainable tourism action group have been focusing their activities on the writing of the Rural Renaissance SERC delivery plan. It is possible that when the Devon Destination Management Organisation is up and running, that this group will become the DMO sustainable tourism group.

RBSAG – This rural business support group have been focusing on writing the Rural Renaissance SERC delivery plan

SFFAG – As well as writing the SERC delivery plan the SFFAG have been involved in a number of other activities. The group have a newsletter which is produced bi-monthly and can be found on the DRN SFFAG website pages.

### **5.3 Consultation Response Action Group Calendar**

The CRAG submitted their Rural Proofing consultation response for the RSS at the end of August. Jennifer Anderton will now take over the Consultation Response Group – and will produce a calendar of future consultations for the group

***ACTION: JA to pull together a consultation response calendar for the next PSG meeting***

### **5.4 Rural CVS Action Group first meeting**

The first meeting of this group has been organised for the 29<sup>th</sup> September. The group came out of the joint event held with the DRN and Devon Forum back in February. The group will pull together all rural CVS organisation in Devon to promote improved joint working.

## **6. AOB**

**6.1** In the future AOB should become 'Matters brought forward at the chair's discretion' and be on the agenda after Minutes of the last Meeting.

**6.2** Apologies had not been presented, but would be recorded

## **7. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

**The next PSG meeting is scheduled for the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2pm at West Devon Borough Council Offices**