

**Devon Rural Network
Rural Voluntary and Community Sector Action Group Minutes**

6th March 2008, 1 – 3pm, Okehampton Fire Station, Okehampton

Present

Jay Talbot (Chair)	CCD
Debbie Williams	Devon Fire & Rescue Service
Karen Nolan	Devon Assoc of CVS
Lynn Thornton	Devon Rural Transport Partnership
Ewan Rae	Devon Heartlands Community Partnership
Leanne Crawford (secretariat)	Devon Rural Network
Janis Blacklaw	

Apologies

Sue Tucker	Diocese of Exeter
Sue Rees	GOSW
Melanie McLoughlin	Devon Community Foundation
Paul Delahoy	Devon Towns Forum
Duncan Wood	Involve Mid Devon

1.0 Arising from last meeting

Membership and involvement

Nick Creasy is on the circulation list but has shown no interest in attending the meeting. Age Concern has also been contacted and showed some interest but has not responded to this invite. It was suggested that representation for these sectors could be addressed by the Devon Consortium.

Local Action

A presentation by Rob Hatt at the DRN Policy Steering Group meeting suggested that the RDPE programme has been over subscribed, with 35 Expressions of Interest submitted for the South West region. It was indicated in the presentation that only 13-15 are anticipated to be successful.

Rural Social and Community Programme

This programme has now ended. It was reported that Defra have just completed their consultation on its relationship with the voluntary and community sector. Jay has suggested to Robin Mortimer (Defra) that one of his policy officers spends a week in an RCC office and vice versa – Tony Williamson will be spending 4 weeks from the end March with CCD.

It was questioned whether the Consortium project could pick up some of the RSCP work, and reiterated that some work could continue but funding would not be at the same level.

Community-led planning and Market Towns programme

It was reported that the Local Towns Forum will form a new structure from May. The Devon Towns Forum has been set up as the Chair of MTCi and has expanded the programme, with funding from Devon County Council and RDA to continue work.

It was reported that a Quirk report and community engagement event will be held on 9th April at Okehampton.

It was stated that the MTCA continues with resourcing for existing forums but not with the structure that did exist. There will also be some funding for rural coordination. It is agreed that this will be an opportunity for a more coordinated approach in community led planning.

Boundary Commission review for Devon

Meetings have started already, with districts to hold public consultations by June 2008. Public consultations on ideas submitted have been scheduled for July to September. A recommendation will be

submitted to the Secretary of State by 31st December 2008, for implementation by 2010. It was stated that there will be more opportunity to feed into this and agreed that the rural dimension needs to be accounted for.

Action: Group to promote community/rural cause

Other

Village Halls – CCD survey had a 56% response, with the report to come out at end March. It will include figures on voluntary group and the amount of asset management. Early indications are that this amounts to £200 million.

Engagement and inclusion work for Carnegie Trust – Paul Delahoy has been working regionally and countywide, with work anticipated to end mid-2009. The next meeting is in April. Current work involves inputting and giving evidence on the impact of last years charter.

2. Action Groups

Rural Funding

It was suggested and agreed that the rural funding groups original purpose of analysing upcoming funding pressures has already passed, making this groups function obsolete at present.

Accessibility and transport

The group has met twice. There is an issue in the Devon Rural Transport Partnership ending March 2008 and Lynn's role will be reabsorbed into the DCC transport team. The group have looked at starting a pilot in West Devon for transport and access guides.

Action: Janis to forward copies of draft guide to group members

Similar guides have been produced for other areas. Work is also ongoing to involve West Devon surgeries via the access to services group.

Information from the CCD community building survey will help feed into this work.

It was agreed that all services need to be looked at, and greater representation is needed at meetings. The Community Planning Database could be used to pull out access issues and should be live and launched at the start of April. The database will hold details of all local plans – www.communitiesinaction.org.uk.

It was suggested that the Access and Awareness project could also feed into the access working group as the level of services has already been identified for some areas. A website has also been developed for village halls.

It was agreed that there needs to be more direction for the access group's work, as there is already a large amount of work being done. Two suggestions were made:

- To be more assertive about the voluntary role in access and transport for better resourcing
- Integrate agendas around access and transport

These will provide hooks for embedding access and transport into the Local Area Agreement.

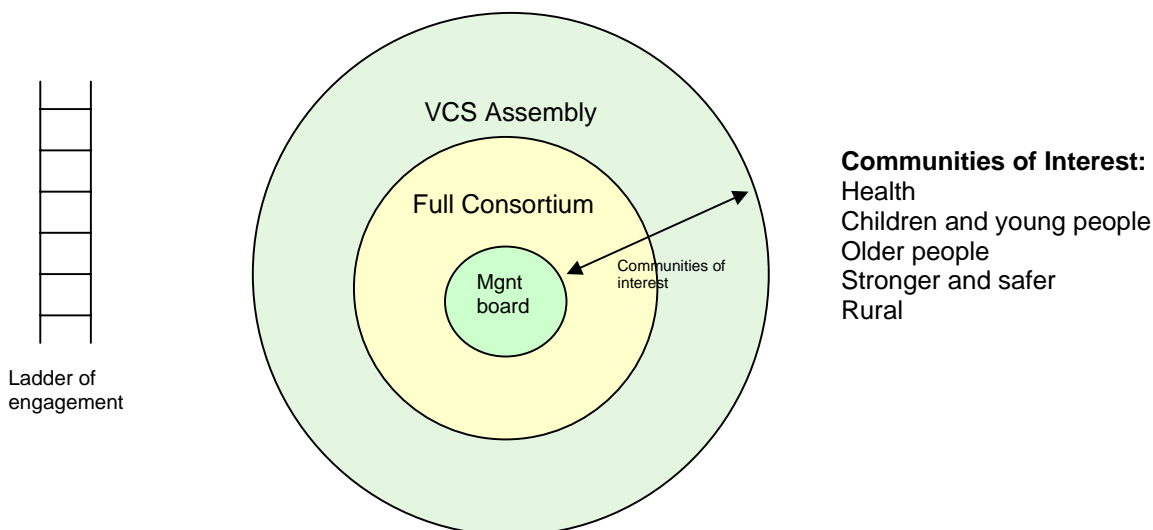
Action: Access and transport group to meet before the next Rural VCS group meeting. Jay or Penny Thame to be involved.

3.0 Updates

Devon Consortium (restructure/Communities of Interest/2008-2011 Business Plan)

It was reported that the group will be restructuring in April. The Consortium started as 22 organisations, but the group will now be made more manageable by having a management board of 8 members, a full

consortium outside of this, for which members have to be delivering a front line service, and a CVS assembly to sit outside of this. Anyone can be a member of this latter group. A member of the DSP has been invited to join the management board to ensure there is a strategic link.



There are six communities of interest and there have been mechanisms for organisations to register and interest in one or more of these. These communities will be an engagement mechanism.

The Consortium has been funded through the Capacity Builders programme and has developed a business plan and website www.devonconsortium.net.

It was reported that a proposal has been put forward for 3 pieces of work for 2008-11:

- Services to grass roots
- Volunteering
- Collaboration, partnership and representation

There will also be some funding from other sources. The consortium will know if the funding bid was successful by end April.

The Full Consortium will agree the strategy and business plan of the Management Board. The first management meeting was held on Monday 10th March 2008, and the Consortium will be conducting a sector survey.

The Consortium needs to combine and collaborate the VCS post and pre-existing groups. Devon Consortium is aiming to become the voice of the voluntary sector, and has to be able to demonstrate that it is making a difference to front line organisations to be deemed fit for purpose. The Consortium also supports the Diversity Steering Group.

Devon Rural Network

The RDA funding for DRN has come to an end and has not been fully replaced, therefore both Leanne and Jen will be part time. Leanne will be 3 days DRN, 1 day Devon Economic Partnership, 1 day Funding Advice per week, whilst Jen will be 2.5 days DRN and 2.5 days regeneration work. Post March 2009 is unclear.

The strategy is currently undergoing an evaluation and monitoring review, the results of which should be available both at the AGM and on the website.

DRN are also looking at reinvigorating its Action Groups, with the Sustainable Tourism Action Group becoming the sustainability arm of the Devon Destination Management Organisation, which will be the new tourism company for Devon. They have been working on producing an Action Plan for presentation to the DMO management board on 17th March to be signed off and prioritised in alignment with the DMO's own action plan. The Rural Business group is currently still on hold. The Sustainable Farming and Food Response Group have held a strategic review and will now be formulating actions to move this group forward. The Consultation Response Action Group has been rural proofing the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA, whilst Environment Devon now has a new Chair, Paul Gompertz of the Wildlife Trust, and are looking to embed themselves more fully in the DEP and LAA.

DRN will continue to perform the secretariat role for the Rural VCS group.

The Future of the Rural VCS Group

It was agreed that the Rural VCS group provides a Devon wide perspective. This group isn't duplicating the work of any other group and can bring in partnership working. It was agreed that the main issue of the group was the lack of engagement with no way of letting local groups know what the Rural VCS group is discussing. This can be addressed by the Consortium and linking in with groups of interest.

It was agreed that there should be a link to the Rural VCS minutes on the Consortium website.

It was agreed that the group should be continued and the regularity of meetings was to be discussed. It was agreed that this should remain as six monthly, to be held prior to full consortium meetings, with feedback from the consortium to be fed back virtually. The next consortium meeting will be held 19th June.

It was suggested that the level of community involvement needs to be steepened, with a more open structure and greater dissemination of info. It was agreed that the group should continue to focus on key issues, with progress reported back to statutory providers. It was questioned whether there should also be a representative from each of the LAA and DSP groups. Some feedback is provided through DRN.

It was proposed that the group focuses on 5 areas:

- Rural transport
- Representation – Devon Consortium to progress
- Health and Social care – no representation. PCT consultation results will be published in June
- Health and Social care provided by voluntary groups, suggested over a pilot area.
- Rural funding will be put on the back burner
- Social Enterprise – RDA is setting up a regional body RiSE but delivery will need to be through another body

Action: new groups to be discussed further at next meeting

4.0 Date & Time Next Meeting

18th July 2008, 10 am to 12 pm Okehampton Fire Station