

Devon Rural Network Policy Steering Group Minutes

2pm - 4pm Monday 20th November, Ockment Centre, Okehampton

Present

Prof Ian Mercer CBE (IM)
David Incoll (DI)
Richard White (RW)
Philip Wagstaff (PW)
David Whitley
Paul Sadler
Sue Brownlow
Cllr Humphrey Temperley

South West Forest, Vice DRN Chair
Devon CEX's group
Culm Group
Churches Together in Devon
NW Devon Economic Partnership
Environment Agency
SWRDA
DCC

Phillip Collins
Pete Tansey
Dennis Brewer
Martyn Warren
Sheena Asthana
Sarah Streeter
Jennifer Anderton

English Nature
Devon Renaissance
NFU
Rural Futures Unit
Plymouth University
DRN
DRN

Also Present:

Heather Hillman
Lisa Henry

DCC
DRN

Apologies

Prof Michael Winter OBE
Peter Walmsley
Charlie Plowden
Martin Taylor
Tom Langdon-Davis

University of Exeter
Private Sector
East Devon DC
Devon Conservation Forum
Devon Towns Forum

Lynne Del Greco
Chris Woodruff
Jay Talbot
Steve Pitcher
Peter Harvey

SWRDA
East Devon AONB
CCD
North Devon DC
Business Link

Agenda

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting

1.1 Jen updated the PSG on the LAA and DRN involvement. After meeting with Ian Hutchcroft (DCC Sustainable Prosperity Manager) Ian urged the DRN to write a letter to the RDA and GOSW to make them fully aware of the network and how the DRN could help to facilitate the development of the 4th block of the LAA targeted at developing the Rural Economy. This letter is due to be sent before the end of the year.

1.2 The minutes of the meeting were deemed to be a true account of the last meeting and were signed off.

2. Matters to be brought forward at the Chairs Discretion

2.1 The Chair welcomed Paul Sadler from the Environment Agency who will subsequently be replacing Martin Weiler.

2.2 The Chair welcomed Jen Anderton as this was her first PSG meeting in charge.

2.3 The Chair was seeking an alternative member of the PSG to sit on the Devon Renaissance Management board as his replacement. No volunteers came forward. It was proposed that DI who is the vice chair of the DRN and of the DR Management board take on the 'DRN hat' at the management board meetings until a full replacement member can be identified. DI asked that IM and JA should still get the agenda for the meetings and advise on issues affecting DRN. PT as the DR board concurred. Everyone agreed.

2.4 This will be David Whitley's last PSG meeting as he is taking a Gap Year.

3. Devon Rural Strategy Presentation – Lisa Henry

3.1 The completed Rural Devon Profile and Strategy document were circulated to the PSG before the meeting to allow time for the document to be read and for members to form their own views for discussion. Lisa Henry presented the following on her work to complete the strategy:

Policy Steering Group

November 20th 2006
Devon Rural Strategy
Lisa Henry

The Devon Rural Strategy

- Outline the process of revision
- Development of the new Devon Rural Strategy
- Next steps

Revision process – criticism of April 2006 version

- 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 and be measurable**

Summary of Profile contents:

April 06

October 06

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population – density, growth, ageing • Economy – low wage, agriculture, productivity, un/ employment, businesses, earnings, skills, deprivation • Community – access to services and facilities, affordable homes • Environment – an opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population – density, growth, ageing, migration, households • Community - affordable homes, access to services and facilities, health, education, ICT availability and usage, transport, cohesion, crime • Environment – outstanding, biodiversity, agriculture, waste, forestry, tourism, energy, climate change • Economy – earnings, un/ employment, businesses, productivity, skills, agriculture, tourism, deprivation
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Strategy preparation

- Preparation of Rural Devon Profile
- PSG 5th September – proposed key themes
- SWOT event on September 11th
- Identify key gaps and research
- SWOT – analysis
- Factors grouped into contemporary priority issues
- MAG 11th October – agreed new layout
- Development of Strategy and indicators of progress

Priority Issues - Indicators

- Purpose – provide a format for monitoring progress and reviewing priority issues
- Indicator theme – directly related to profile and SWOT
- Intended outcome – designed to give animation to the issue
- Indicators - 3 levels:
 - Key indicators
 - Indicators
 - Information not yet available but important to monitor
- Examples of intervention currently taking place – assist development of new projects/ intervention

New layout

- Foreword
 - Vision
 - SWOT
 - Priority Issues
 - Indicators
- } Main Document
- Profile
 - Policy Context
 - Delivery – Partnerships
 - Delivery – Resources
 - Indicator data table
- } Appended supplementary information

Next steps

- PSG members to nominate areas where they want to be involved
- Suggest good examples of intervention
- Finalised by end November
- Published New Year

3.2 The purpose of this meeting was not to go through the individual paragraphs of the strategy, but to identify any omissions and to agree a way forward for the document. There may yet be editing and polishing to do within the document, but the DRN Management Advisory Group have already agreed that they are happy with the presented document. The final layout of the strategy will be as above with the Rural Devon Profile, Policy Context, Delivery Partnerships and Resources attached as an appendix for reference. The Final Strategy will follow on from the SWOT, concluding with the priority issues and an intervention indicator table. This intervention table is designed to act as a monitoring tool to be revised and reviewed annually to produce a report to be posted on the DRN website; it is not an Action Plan. It is proposed that PSG members could nominate themselves to be involved in particular elements and to suggest good examples of current intervention that can be used to animate the indicator table.

The DRN have looked into the timetable for printing this document, and at a push it could be completed before Christmas. It was decided that this was too short a timescale to have a hardcopy document – and it would be more appropriate for it to be posted on the DRN website when it is completed, and consider hardcopy printing in the New Year.

3.3 The draft was opened up for discussion:

3.3.1 Jay Talbot had expressed via email that he felt there was a significant omission in relation to the importance of community buildings i.e. village halls, community organisations i.e. Parish Councils and community support. Philip Wagstaff offered to write a paragraph on the basis of Jay's email for inclusion into the strategy

ACTION: Philip Wagstaff to draft paragraph on Community Buildings for inclusion into the strategy, and send to Lisa.

3.3.2 HT felt that the importance of Tourism in the Rural Economy was a great omission from the strategy as it underpins a huge proportion of the Devon Economy. A specific long and medium term approach to the management of tourism should be a part of the strategy – and showing how tourism links to other sectors within rural Devon. While this was a valid point, Tourism within the profile is dealt with in both the Economy and the Environment section and more specifically in terms of the emerging Destination Management Organisation and the importance of take up of the Green Tourism Business Scheme in terms of sustainability. It was felt that Tourism is more of a cross cutting theme and should be treated as such within the strategy. JA highlighted that South West Tourism are in the process of producing their own framework for action for rural tourism of which DRN were consulted upon.

3.3.3 DI felt that it was important that this strategy doesn't duplicate the work of the DSP. It might be helpful to identify all the subject areas of rural Devon in a diagram, which shows who is already doing what and how the issues are already being dealt with. This will also help identify the gaps.

3.3.4 SB felt that the strategy document was not as sensitive as it possibly could be to issues of place. The stark differences between areas within rural Devon do not come across within the strategy, and the fact that different areas will need a different approach to the same issue. By showing data at a lower level within the profile the strategy could determine more of a guide for action to show the differences in areas and the differences in action needed. Alongside this it would also be helpful if more data was shown in comparison to national averages – this would highlight the differences between Devon and England more directly and show the real key issues.

3.3.5 DW believed that the focus should be on Rural Business and Productivity as it is the priority issue that underpins everything in rural Devon.

Whilst these were all valid points, the Chair brought the groups attention back to the matter in hand. What the group should be focusing on is the next stage beyond the document – we can't get all the detail into the strategy to satisfy everyone or we will not complete the task. The strategy should be able to pull together the specialists needed to take forward the activity highlighted in the document. We need to focus on where our

efforts are going to make the most difference and where funding is most needed. The strategy needs to add value so we can measure what has been achieved within a year of the strategy being launched.

3.3.6 There was much discussion over the use of the word 'strategy' as currently the document does not identify solutions to problems and who should be leading upon them - it is more of a document identifying areas for action. It is important that the priorities and vision statement of the document are correct to guide people, not telling them what to do. The group discussed calling the strategy a framework, an agenda, a policy or a set of strategic statements.

HT felt that there is currently not enough leadership covering rural Devon issues, that organisations do not have a clear idea of what they are trying to do and how. HT thought that the DRN should be acting as this leadership organisation and directly leading rural issues.

The chairman said that the DRN is a network for information exchange and the identification of rural issues, and while it provides a lobbying role for rural issues and a guide it cannot also attempt to be the leader without putting the network at risk. Devon County Council is the organisation with the power and the funds to act and was created to lead. The DRN acts in an advisory capacity – and therefore more of a watchdog – showing the situation and advising people on the need for action. The role of the DRN needs to be clear at the time of producing this document.

As a result of the 2003 strategy the DRN produced an action programme for Devon and it is proposed that this will also be a consequence of the 2006 strategy. The Action plan will be for rural Devon, stating the issues, priorities and solutions – an Action plan for the delivery of the strategy.

Therefore – the next step is to populate the last column of the priority areas for Intervention Table within the strategy to identify examples of intervention, who is already acting on the priority, what DRN is doing to influence this and what DRN would like to see other agencies doing. Some actions will be lobbying, others will be more proactive.

It was suggested that a new table be produced consequent on the Priority Issues table, detailing the issue, what is being done currently (identifying gaps), what needs to be done, who should be doing it and what funding streams could be targeted to solve the issue.

HT suggested the table have three headings.

1. Actions where we need changes
2. Actions where we are currently succeeding
3. Actions where we are not making progress, where we need to involve others.

The Chair suggested that once the document is published that a draft action plan is circulated to DRN members with proposed actors for delivery and invite their comment. It was felt that to create an 'opt out' process may be timelier than asking for agencies to nominate themselves.

3.3.7 In conclusion, the group decided that there needs to be an explanation under the Priority issues and Indicators section which states that there is a table to follow this section which will start to identify what is being done, bodies within the agenda and identifying those who should be targeting the priorities. This will be the next stage after the publication of the strategy document.

The group also decided that the word strategy was not a sufficient title for this document as it stands. After the meeting it was agreed by MAG members that the new title for the document will be:

DEVON
“Towards a Rural Strategy
An agenda for 2007”

The document will be available on the DRN website before it is available in hardcopy. The document will be web based which will make it a more vibrant document and allow for easy access, monitoring and annual change. It is hoped that the document will be on the DRN website by the end of December.

ACTION: ALL PSG members to send comments to Jen/Lisa by the 24th November

4. DRN Winter Seminar

4.1 The DRN have organised the winter seminar for the 8th December at Roadford Lake. The event is entitled "Rural Business and Productivity – the Opportunities". The speakers at the event will be:

- Innovation - Renewable Energy for Devon, Melanie Sealey
- Skills - Devon & Cornwall LSC, Tony Skeel
- Funding - Devon Renaissance, Robin Makeig Jones
- ICT Usage and Marketing - AgriBIP, Stewart Horne

The afternoons session will be focusing in Food and Drink in Devon with John Lee the Chair of the Farming and Food Futures Group as the Guest Speaker.

5. Short Updates on Practical Issues

5.1 DEFRA RSCP

All of the funded projects have now sent in their 6month report which has been collated into a report for the LAA. SS met with Sue Rees from GOSW last week to discuss the report and the projects progress. It has now come to light that there can be 1/12th of the Year 1 fund rolled over into Year 2. Currently there are a number of projects that are showing an under spend. SS is meeting with project leads to discuss this under spend, and whether they feel that this will be recovered by the end of Year 1. If there is a significant amount of under spend predicted above the 1/12th allowed then there is the possibility of looking into funding another project – such as the Community Planning Database.

SS will be reporting to GOSW at the end of November and will know at this point whether there will be scope to fund another project.

5.2 Community Planning Database

The paper attached sets out details of the project progress of the database. The DRN feel that this is a worthwhile project and while there are still issues to be worked out we should support its development as much as possible. If anyone would like to see the presentation electronically please contact Sarah Streeter and she will be happy to forward it on.

5.3 Rural Renaissance Update

The SLA between Devon Renaissance and DCC is almost now complete. Devon Renaissance have called for Expressions of Interest for this fund ready for the launch of the programme in the New Year.

5.4 Action Group Updates

5.4.1 SFFAG – Mary TR was not present at the meeting so a full update was not available. The majority of the groups work has been on putting together the delivery plan for the SERC bid. Kate Harris has been producing a monthly Farming and Food Newsletter circulated to all DRN members and other interested parties – it is also available on the DRN website. The next newsletter is due out at the end of the month. The outcomes from the DRN Winter seminar, afternoon on Farming and Foods will help to inform the group's action plan for the next year.

5.4.2. STAG – The Sustainable Tourism Group has been working on the SERC delivery plan and has not met since the documents were submitted to Devon Renaissance. It is hoped that the group will become part of the sustainable tourism group for the emerging Destination Management Organisation once it is launched.

5.4.3 RBSAG – The Rural Business group have again been concentrating on the delivery plan for the SERC. The group will be meeting again in the New Year to discuss the dynamics of the group for the future.

5.4.4 Rural VCS – The new VCS group met for the first time at the end of September. The group decided that its first point of action was to try and map the VCS work that is currently operating in Devon. A number of pro formas were sent to organisations which will be collated upon receipt. The Action Group now has a website page on the DRN website with all the group details – including the minutes of the meetings. These pages will be developed as the group goes along. The next meeting is the 5th December.

5.4.5 CRAG – There are a number of consultations up and coming that the group might want to focus on:

- Farming Incomes Consultation
- Waste Management Regulations
- Strategic Guidance for Natural England

The rural proofing criteria is also due to be refreshed soon. A meeting of the group is being planned soon.

6. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next PSG meeting is scheduled for the 7th February, 2.00pm at the Ockment Centre, Okehampton