

## Devon Rural Network Policy Steering Group Minutes

2.30pm - 4.30pm, Environment Agency, Exminster, 22.05.2007

### Present

Prof Ian Mercer CBE (IM)	South West Forest, Vice DRN Chair	Steve Pitcher (SP)	North Devon DC
Philip Wagstaff (PW)	Churches Together in Devon	Dennis Brewer (BD)	NFU
Jennifer Anderton (JA)	DRN	Richard White (RW)	DWT
Charlie Plowden (CP)	East Devon DC	Jay Talbot (JT)	CCD
Tom Langdon-Davis (TLD)	Devon Towns Forum	Phil Collins (PC)	Natural England
Peter Harvey (PH)	Business Link	Rob Hatt (RH)	SWRDA
Mike Cozens (MC)	SHDC	Sue Smith (SS)	DCC
Paul Sadler (PS)	Environment Agency	Chris France (CF)	Dartmoor NPA

### Apologies

Prof Michael Winter OBE	University of Exeter	Lynne Del Greco	SWRDA
Sue Brownlow	SWRDA	Pete Tansey	Devon Renaissance
Mary Talbot Rosevear	Small Farms Association	Martyn Warren	Rural Futures Unit
David Incoll	Devon CEX's group	Sheena Asthana	Plymouth University
Cllr Humphrey Temperley	DCC		

## Agenda

### 1. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Firstly IM welcomed new PSG members, Paul Sadler (who had already attended meetings), Mike Cozens standing in for Alan Robinson from SHDC and Chris France from Dartmoor NPA.

All agreed that the minutes were an accurate account of the last meeting. The minutes were signed off.

### 2. Election of Chairman

Ian Mercer was unanimously elected as chairman for the year 2007-08 by PSG members; IM said a search for a new chair for 2008-9 should be put in motion.

### 3. Matters to be brought forward at the Chairs Discretion.

IM sent a hand written letter to Cllr Greenslade with regard to the DRN support for a rural research post, DRN have agreed to be the rural policy advisor for DCC but agreed that a Rural Research person would be very useful. SS updated the group to say that she agreed there is currently a rural research gap but Heather Hillman is due to return from maternity leave in Sept and maybe able to perform some that role.

IM has asked the DSP about Rural representation on the board. It seems to be unobvious, IM was sent the latest membership which shows Jay Talbot as a representative, but Jay was unaware he was still on the membership? Further investigations may be required.

PW updated the group on Devon Brand. An agency 23RED has been appointed to develop the Brand with DCC as the Brand Managers, though very much involving multi partners and driven by the private sector. The launch is due to happen in July so the timescale is very tight. What is key is that there is little reinvention of the wheel, they have considered and are looking at current brands. The money for this work has come from the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive. PS commented that the Environment Agency had used 23RED for the past two years for World Environment day and had one awards for their communications.

TLD had to leave by 4.15pm and wanted to address the group about Rural Business Support Action Group. In MAG it was suggested that the current action groups have lost momentum and need refreshing and new direction, JA suggested that the groups are in an ideal position to champion each of the 'issues' of the Rural Strategy 2007.

**Action: JA to circulate paper on suggestions for Action Groups 07-08**

Tom Langdon-Davis has considered the Rural Business Support Action Group (as he is the Rural business issue champion on MAG) and circulated a paper prior to the meeting (paper attached). Tom introduced the paper and then a discussion was had.

The main discussion points included the need to consider the objectives of the group, the image and profile of the group to businesses. Aspiration was mentioned by PH and this is the area that needs work, that small businesses are not necessarily a bad thing.

SP highlighted that there is no shortage of business advice but more that the businesses are not taking up the advice, in North Devon they have recently developed North Devon + which has brought together the various agencies under one partnership. It has taken time but the local authority has supported and almost become the foundation for the partnership to lift off.

MC highlighted that opportunity can constrain aspiration, as there is a huge problem with location issues, land supply etc.

SS would encourage the RBSAG to challenge what the public sector is doing, to highlight the barriers e.g. land supply.

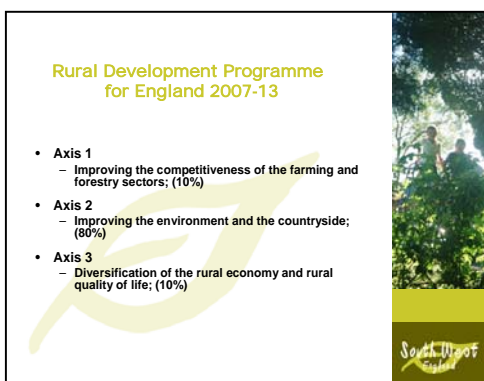
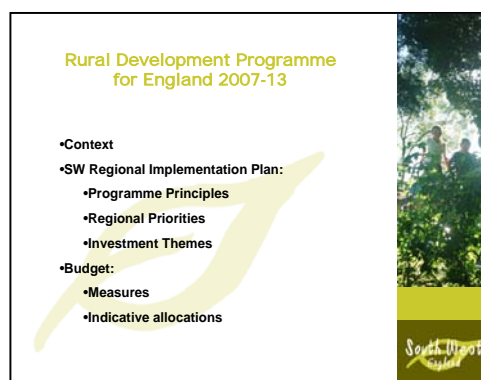
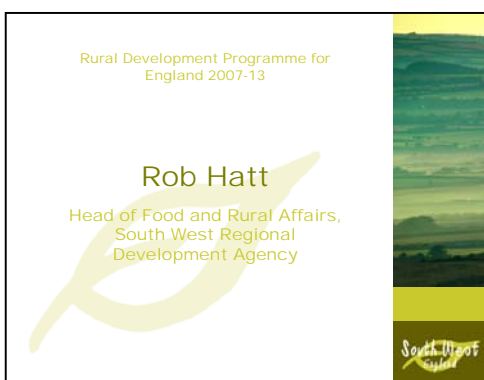
**Action: JA and TLD to liaise and get a meeting of the group together, PH would like to be involved.**

**4. RDPE update and questions – Rob Hatt, SWRDA**

IM began by welcoming Rob to the meeting. Rob circulated an information booklet produced for the County Show.

Before Rob began the presentation he highlighted the fact that there is still a great deal of information to go in to the consultation which is due to end in 6 months time.

Rob then proceeded with the presentation:



## Priorities for the South West

- Improving business efficiency and enabling business transformation
- Developing the supply chain and adding value
- Managing resources efficiently
- Making the most of our rural environment
- Enhancing landscapes and biodiversity
- Maintaining strong and inclusive rural communities



## Investment Themes

- Skills Development
- Business Support
- Supply Chain and Adding Value
- Resource Management
- Sustainable Rural Tourism
- Social Enterprise
- Community-led Development
- Biodiversity and Landscape



## Investment Theme Summary 2007-2013

	SW (incl. C/IOS)	
	£m	£m
Skills	8.56	4.01
Business Support	43.70	19.24
Supply Chain	22.39	13.92
Resource Management	7.06	4.40
Sustainable Tourism	13.49	7.17
Social Enterprise	6.51	3.50
Local Action	28.09	2.75
	<b>129.80</b>	<b>54.99</b>



## Skills Development

Regional Budget - £8.56M  
(incl. Convergence - £4.01M)

- **Measure 111**  
Vocational training and information actions (Axis 1)
- **Measure 331**  
A training and information Measure for economic actors operating in the fields covered by (Axis 3)



## Business Support

Regional Budget - £43.7M  
(Incl. Convergence - £19.24M)

- **Measure 111**  
Vocational training and information actions (Axis 1)
- **Measure 124**  
Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture and food sector and the forestry sector (Axis 1)
- **Measure 311**  
Diversification into non agricultural activities (Axis 3)
- **Measure 312**  
Support for business creation and development (Axis 3)



## Supply Chain and Adding Value

Regional Budget - £22.39M  
(incl. Convergence - £13.92M)

- **Measure 122**  
Improvement of the economic value of forests (Axis 1)
- **Measure 123**  
Adding value to agricultural & forestry products (Axis 1)
- **Measure 124**  
Cooperation for the development of new products, processes and technology in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors (Axis 1)
- **Measure 125**  
Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry (Axis 1)



## Resource Management

Regional budget - £7.06M  
(incl. Convergence - £4.40M)

- **Measure 111**  
Vocational training and information actions (Axis 1)
- **Measure 121**  
Modernisation of agricultural holdings (Axis 1)

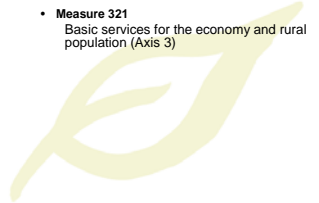


## Sustainable Rural Tourism

Regional budget - £13.49M  
(incl. Convergence - £7.17M)

- **Measure 313**  
Encouragement of tourism activities (Axis 3)
- **Measure 323**  
Conservation and the upgrading of rural heritage (Axis 3)

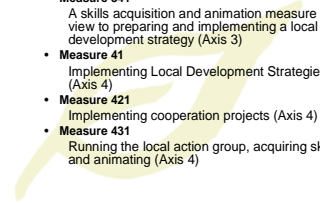




**Social Enterprise**

Regional budget - £6.51M  
(Incl. Convergence - £3.50M)

- **Measure 321**  
Basic services for the economy and rural population (Axis 3)



**Community-led Development**

Regional budget - £28.09M  
(Incl. Convergence - £2.75M)

- **Measure 341**  
A skills acquisition and animation measure with a view to preparing and implementing a local development strategy (Axis 3)
- **Measure 41**  
Implementing Local Development Strategies (Axis 4)
- **Measure 421**  
Implementing cooperation projects (Axis 4)
- **Measure 431**  
Running the local action group, acquiring skills and animating (Axis 4)



The Regional Implementation Plan for South West England is a joint piece of work, between:




Comments from Rob:

- The RDPE is starting from a disaggregated position, with the RDA responsible for Axis 1&3 and Natural England responsible for Axis 2, also with removal of VM from Agricultural industry, however most VM being invested via the Agri environmental Schemes.
- There is a triple bottom line with every £1 spent there must be an environmental, social and economic gain.
- There are very tight constraints on the measures.
- Investment themes released with the SW Regional Implementation Plan concentrate mainly on Axis 1 & 3
- There are opportunities to support Rural Tourism by enhancing the environmental/heritage assets to provide tourism opportunities and therefore provide jobs
- There is likely to be investment on social enterprise and multi use community centres and community shops
- It is envisaged that there maybe 6 LAG's in the South West region. The criteria is to be developed but is likely to include economic performance, low wage levels, access to services and other environmental, economic and social factors
- The make up of the LAG should be no more than 50% Public Sector. Between £1-£5 will be for the running of the programme. Currently 'FIT' criteria are being developed for the region. The process for LAG selection will be competitive with and EOI (Expression of Interest) phase (launching Autumn 08) and if successful applicants will be invited to Full Application.

DB commented that after money for Cornwall is removed and resources management that approx £300,000 is left which is not much, the measures are very tight but constructing measures together may help release more money. **\* need clarification from Dennis on this comment please.**

CP asked how the money will help to support those staff who are there to maintain the assets. PC responded by saying that there will be opportunities to join up agendas and get multiple wins. There are some support structures that are currently under threat; the idea is not to invest in individual businesses. SS commented that she was worried that less funding in support systems means those projects/areas may fail without the foundations in place.

SP wondered how Axis 2 was going to integrate with 1 & 3? PC responded by saying that Natural England is reviewing how the Agri Environment Scheme operates, and considering how Axis 2 will work with 1&3. **\*further thoughts are going to be gathered from Phil shortly!**

## 5. DEFRA RSCP end of year 1 and future of fund post March 08 – JT

JT circulated a document before the meeting with current RSCP project information (attached with minutes) and proceeded to give a presentation (attached with minutes) on the achievements of some of the projects so far:

The main concerns for the loss of funding are that there will be jobs that will have to be made redundant and communities will suffer. JT has asked the DRN to write letters to Rt Hon David Milliband, Barry Gardiner MP, John Mills (DEFRA) and Andrew Slade (GosW).

**Action: JA to work with CCD to get info together to go with a letter to above named persons, lan to sign**  
**Action: All PSG members to write a letter voicing concerns about loss of RSCP funding, JA to provide template if requested.**

## 6. Devon Rural Strategy 2007 – IM/JA

It was decided that this item would be updated at the next meeting.

## 7. Short updates on practical issues:

**a. DRN budget** – in place for 2007/08 with 15k more than anticipated, carried over from 2006/07. The future post March 08 is uncertain as the SWRDA funding is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year. Thoughts and plans need to be developed.

**b. DRN Staff (replacement for Sarah Streeter)**– Jen and Ian with a DCC HR rep successfully appointed Leanne Crawford, who currently works at Groundwork Wales, as the new DRN Development Worker. Leanne is originally from Devon. She was very strong on paper and did not disappoint in interview! It was a unanimous decision. Leanne starts on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June.

**c. Action Groups** – the subject was touched on earlier in the meeting, but the suggestion for the action groups is to perform 2 main functions. 1. To facilitate a priority issue in the action table of the strategy. 2. To put forward project ideas with best strategic fit for SERC money. JA will put together a paper on this and next steps

**Action: JA to circulate paper on action groups**

**D. DRN Work plan** – the work plan for the DRN for 07/08 is currently with the MAG for comments, it will be circulated shortly.

## 8. Date and Time of next meeting

Weds 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2.00pm – 4.00pm, venue tbc

Mon 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1.00pm – 3.00pm (starting with lunch 12.30ish), Ockment Centre, Okehampton