

Devon Rural Network Policy Steering Group Minutes

Thursday 6th March 2008, 10 am to 12 pm, held at the Ockment Centre, Okehampton

Present:

Prof Ian Mercer	South West Forest, DRN Chair	Jay Talbot	Community Council for Devon
Jen Brogan	DRN	Pete Tansey	Devon Renaissance
Paul Gompertz	Devon Wildlife Trust	Tony Skeel	Learning Skills Council
Tom Langdon-Davis	Devon Towns Forum	Martyn Warren	Rural Futures Unit
Martin Taylor	Conservation	Philip Wagstaff	Churches Together in Devon
Patsy Temple	Devon PCT	Caroline Trevaskin	Environment Agency
Charlie Plowden	East Devon DC	Rob Hatt	SWRDA (presenting)
Michael Cozens	South Hams DC	Helen Chater	DCC (presenting)
Leanne Crawford	DRN (Scribe)		

Apologies:

Dr Matt Lobley	University of Exeter	David Incoll	Devon CEX's Group
Emily Farrell	SWRDA	Paul Sadler	Environment Agency
Prof Sheena Asthana	University of Plymouth		

1.0 Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and apologies recorded.

2.0/3.0 Matters arising/Matters brought forward at the chair's discretion

Communications

Leanne Crawford explained that she has been in discussion with a member of DCC's IT team with regards to redesigning the DRN website to make it more attractive and user friendly. An example of the proposed design was distributed for comment.

Action: Any comments on site design or desired features to be forwarded to Leanne by 14th March. A link will also be provided to members for example site navigation.

Additionally, Leanne had been working on the Communications Strategy for DRN. Copies were distributed to the group for comment. It was explained that although the Strategy was almost complete, **it requires input from the PSG on what they feel the key messages for DRN should be.** The Strategy is intended to be a guiding document for all DRN communications and as such needs to reflect the needs and views of its members.

Action: Members to feedback on strategy and provide suggestions for key messages to Leanne by 21st March

Community Council for Devon

Rural Housing – Jay Talbot reported that the situation is still unclear but it is believed that Defra may have funding available for rural housing enablers, not as a continuation fund but as a new programme to meet the increased government targets for affordable housing. This will start in December, with the currently programme ending in March. There is a risk of losing the whole rural enabler programme due to uncertainty of funding, with a narrow possibility for a financial rescue package.

Village Halls – Jay reported that CCD had just completed a survey of community buildings. Around 56% of halls have responded and a report is being finalised. Indications are that voluntary groups are running assets worth £200 million, and the support for these groups is shrinking.

Action: Presentation on this work to be given at the next PSG meeting

Devon PCT

Patsy Temple reported that from September 2007, a joint strategic review between the PCT and Social Care had been conducted on which services are needed and which services are provided in the county. This is the result of countywide consultation and the resulting document is now open for consultation, available from both the PCT and DCC website <http://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay>. Information on how to feedback is on the final page of the document, consultations will run to the end April.

Action: CRAG to respond to, and rural proof, consultation document.

Spring Event – Rural Futures Conference

A DRN session will be held during the afternoon of 1st April, before the main conference launch. The session will be a workshop, facilitated alongside the Cornwall College Group, on rural skills in the land based sector. This workshop will help to feed into a piece of work funded through the LSC and in partnership with West Devon AgriBiP. Details are to be finalised. DRN will have a display stand for the duration of the Conference (1st – 4th April)

Action: any members wishing to promote their organisation to forward information to Leanne or Jen before 1st April

Other

It was announced that Sheena Asthana has resigned from her position on the PSG, but will continue to remain as a consultant to the group.

4.0 Presentation on the Devon Brand – Helen Chater DCC (presentation attached)

Helen explained the concept of the brand, which was prompted by SWRDA research which highlighted falling economic performance in Devon.

The brand addresses a need for a consistent message for Devon, and been developed by 23red, who conducted a great deal of research into Devon and perceptions of Devon. This research was rigorous and accounted for both positive and negative feedback.

The brand is aimed initially at businesses and tourism services in Devon, but it is hoped that the brand will eventually be used by everyone in Devon, from community groups to private businesses.

A number of workshops are being held to both promote the brand and to provide guidance in its use.

Action: any members wishing to attend these workshops (13th March or 2nd April, 10 am to 1pm) to contact Helen Helen.chater@devon.gov.uk

It was questioned whether the brand should be incorporated into DRN's communications. It was reiterated that the main emphasis will be in economy initially with a later drive to communities, but it was agreed that DRN should do what it can, i.e. use of brand logo and colours.

It was explained that the brand will be monitored through website downloads, which will require registration details, and companies will be legally stopped from using the brand if they are seen as being detrimental to Devon's message.

It was suggested that leaflets are produced to explain the brand.

Action: Leanne to liaise with Helen Chater with regards to use of brand on website and publicity material

5.0 Presentation on RDPE updates – Rob Hatt, SWRDA (presentation attached)

Rob explained that there had been a 30% reduction in the RDA funding pot from Defra, but confirmed that the RDPE allocation for the South West is untouched. The RDA corporate plan is currently in production.

It was explained that the RDPE is a new EU funding stream, with money match funded by the Treasury/Defra. The South West has been allocated a quarter of the total England fund, and unlike the previous Objective 1 programme, there is now a greater opportunity to work cross border with Cornwall, where previous funding structures inhibited this e.g. Students sitting in the same class were previously funded by different funding and monitoring regimes, RDPE should help to resolve this.

It was stated that there will be a single gateway for information on the RDPE and funding process, both Business Link and SW Rural Enterprise Gateway are involved. It was cautioned that these will

need to be fully effective for the rural economy if they are to act as a gateway. It was affirmed that measures would need to be put in place to ensure that Business Link would not use this as a replacement for rural contacts.

The role of Local Action Groups (LAGs) was explained, with 35 Expressions of Interest submitted in the South West. It was stated that the RDA would aim to have a critical mass of 12-15 LAGs regionally. These will follow the principles of the previous LEADER programme. The funding for these will fall under Axis 4 of the RDPE and will be £28 million for the region.

Projects have to make a difference and deliver the objectives of the programme. It is a strategy led investment. No distinction between new project ideas and old projects that are working and can be maintained – funding will not be used as a subsidy for projects therefore they must be sustainable. The Local Area Agreement will be expected to fund projects providing statutory style services, e.g. transport initiatives.

There will be gaps and areas of Devon that will not be covered by a LAG. LAGs will have a different format to MCTi and different geography but it is hoped that MCTi capacity building can be built into the programme. The MCTi and RDPE do not sit comfortably, although some market towns will be covered by a LAG. Community needs will be considered over political and arbitrary boundaries.

[More information on LAGs can be found at <http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/eafrd/introduction.shtm>; www.sw-ruralgateway.info and <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/index.htm>]

It was confirmed that successful LAGs are likely to be identified at the end July, with feedback supplied to unsuccessful groups.

6.0 Regional Spatial Strategy panel report

It was agreed that the Consultation Response Action Group should respond to the report on behalf of DRN.

Action: Chair of CRAG to act as consultant

7.0 DRN AGM – PSG nominations

It was announced that Peter Harvey has also resigned from the PSG, and a replacement is being sought.

It was resolved to nominate existing members (less Prof Asthana and Peter Harvey) and the following:

Current Members

Mary Talbot-Rosevear	SFFRG Chair
Emily Farrell	SWRDA - Devon Area Team
David Incoll	Devon Chief Executives Group
Tom Langdon-Davies	Devon Towns Forum
Prof. Ian Mercer	South West Forest
Steve Pitcher	North Devon DC
Pete Tansey	Devon Renaissance
Jay Talbot	Community Council of Devon
Cllr Humphrey Temperley	Devon County Council
Philip Wagstaff	Churches Together in Devon
Martin Taylor	Devon Conservation Forum
Martyn Warren	Rural Futures, Uni. of Plymouth
Charlie Plowden	East Devon District Council
Paul Sadler	Environment Agency
Chris France	Dartmoor National Park Authority
Sheena Asthana	Plymouth University
Peter Harvey	Business Link
Dennis Brewer	NFU
Richard White	Culm Management Group

Phil Collins

Natural England

Nominations suggested at PSG meeting

Michael Cozens *[Michael will not replace David Incoll as suggested at the meeting as David represents the CEx group, not South Hams, on the PSG. therefore Michael will replace Alan Robinson as the SHDC rep]*

Matt Loble

Mary Ridgeway

Lynn Thornton

Action: Any other nominations should be forwarded to Jen by 18th March

8.0 Action Group Updates

These will be distributed electronically

9.0 Date of Next Meeting

30th April, morning. Exact time and venue tbc