

Rural VCS (voluntary and community sector) Action Group

DRAFT Terms of Reference

Background Devon Rural Network:

The Devon Rural Network (DRN) was set up by a Devon Rural Task Group under the auspices of the Devon Strategic Partnership (DSP). It was launched by Lord Haskins in July 2003 in parallel with the publication of the Devon Rural Strategy. The DRN reports back annually to the DSP through its Vice-Chair.

The main guiding policy document for the DRN is the Devon Rural Strategy. Its day to day work is guided by the DRN Action Programme. The DRN takes account of other local and regional policy documents and strategies, where relevant.

Background Rural VCS Action Group

The Rural VCS action group (RVAG) is a sectoral Action Group under the DRN. It has been set up following a well supported workshop in February 2006 supported by Devon Forum in association with Devon Consortium and the ChangeUp programme.

Objectives

The Rural VCS Action Group will work to support the work of the DRN Objectives:

- Achieve a prosperous and economically vibrant rural Devon
- Promote sustainable management of the environment
- Bring about a good quality of life for all
- Maximise the value of Devon's diversity and distinctiveness
- Lead and co-ordinate partnership working and engagement

1. Purpose/Objectives

- To add value to the work that is already being done in rural Devon by the VCS **and by communities working on a voluntary basis** (for example by sharing good practice or encouraging collaboration)
- To represent the interests, as far as possible, of rural VCS organisations on the ground within Devon Rural Network (DRN)
- To act as communicators to the organisations on the ground and lobby more strategic bodies on the interests/ needs of the rural VCS

2. Name

The Action Group will be known as Rural VCS Action Group (RVAG).

3. Aims

The RVAG has the following aims in relation to the DRN:

- Identify and make widely available good rural VCS practice
- Establish communications mechanisms to enable engagement by grass-roots VCS groups
- Communicate the frameworks and partnerships relevant to the rural VCS and seek to clarify where appropriate.

- Work with partners to promote the work of the rural VCS in Devon locally and more widely
- Enable effective representation for the rural VCS on Devon Rural Network, raising matters of concern
- Recognise and support representation processes for rural VCS established by other bodies
- Encourage and support partnership working within the VCS and with other partners

4. Accountability

The Rural VCS Action Group (RVAG) has been established by the Devon Rural Network with the authority of the Steering Group and will report to it, the DRN Membership, and to existing and emerging VCS representation structures.

5. Membership of RVAG

- The RVAG has an initial membership (appendix x) who will contribute their personal skills and commitment together with their organisational experience.
- Current membership may change once the RVAG settles into its work programme.
- The RVAG will recognise and value the role, operational style and priorities of all bodies with which it works. We wish to include the public sector and funding partners within RVAG recognising the importance of such relationships.
- RVAG will establish a relationship with other DRN Action Groups to offer support to their work, especially the Consultation Response Action Group.
- RVAG will establish a relationship with the Voluntary and community Sector infrastructure bodies to ensure support for the aims in (4) above
- A quorum will be if at least 50% of the core members are present.
- A Chair of the RVAG will be nominated and agreed upon and reviewed annually. There is no maximum time that any one person may serve on the RVAG or as the Chair.

6. Resources

The DRN staff will perform the role of secretariat to RVAG

The Group will also have the resource of the DRN Newsletter and website.

7. Frequency of Meetings

The frequency of meetings will be a minimum 2 per year. Working groups will be established, normally on a task and finish basis, involving where appropriate non-members for their expertise and experience.