

Devon Rural Network Sustainable Farming and Food Reference Reference Group

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

To provide lead action for the Devon Rural Network on issues concerning Sustainable Farming and Food.

Sustainable Farming and Food is one of the key priority work areas for Devon Rural Network and the reference group leads on this area on behalf of DRN members.

Since the conception of the SFFRG a separate detailed Sustainable Farming and Food Action Plan for Devon has been developed, this forms the basis for the future work of the group.

The aim of the plan and the reference group is to work together towards achieving a sustainable future for Devon's Farming and Food businesses.

2. Accountability

The Sustainable Farming and Food Reference Group have been established to support the Devon Rural Network with the authority of the Steering Group and will report to it on a quarterly basis following each SFFRG meeting. Reporting to the wider DRN membership will be carried out via the quarterly DRN newsletter and the DRN web site.

3. Name

The Reference Group will be known as the Sustainable Farming and Food Reference Group (SFFRG).

4. Aims

The first Devon Rural Strategy was published in July 2003 with a number of key aims including the following:

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

These aims still stand, however a new Strategy has been written – Devon Rural Strategy 2007, and the priority issues identified in this were:

1. Accessibility
2. Rural Housing
3. Environment & Climate Change
4. Community Self-Confidence
5. Rural Business & Productivity

The SFFRG will help to accomplish these aims through advice and guidance to the DRN Steering Group and DRN members and through overseeing and coordinating activities developed out of the DRN delivery programme and Sustainable Farming and Food Action Plan for Devon.

5. Objectives

The Sustainable Farming and Food Reference Group will work towards the following of the Rural Strategy 2007 Actions:

C3.6 Encourage the development of opportunities for full time employment in land based industries

D2.2 Support the on-going diversification of farms

D2.5 Improve communication and understanding between farmers and planners, so that the former gain a better understanding of the planning process and the latter understand the farming sector

D5.2 Work with RSPB, DWT to develop strategies for marginal land management and hedgerow management to encourage and sustain bird populations

D5.4 Satisfactory resolution of Government policy on control of badgers and eradication of TB

6. Key Tasks and how the SFFAG will work

The key tasks of the SFFAG are as follows:

- To develop the programme of activities which make up the SFF action plan in line with the above objectives - the reference group to work as a facilitator and partnership developer to ensure delivery of key actions.
- Be the main source of advice and guidance to the DRN steering group, Devon County Council and its members and partners on matters relating to Sustainable Farming and Food.
- Provide up to date information and networking via the DRN website and newsletters
- Monitor activities within the farming and food industry locally, regional and nationally and act upon these in the interest of farming and food businesses in Devon.
- Work closely with partners delivering Rural Renaissance for e.g. to ensure appropriate and successful projects secure funding.
- Encourage joint working and sharing of good practice
- All lobbying from the SFFRG to go through the Consultation Response Action Group (CRAG).
- Work closely with the Regional SFF delivery group(s) to ensure all identified activities are carried out in Devon.

7. Meetings:

- The purpose of SFFRG meetings will be to update on and progress activities from the action plan.
- Any other business must be submitted prior to the meeting in agreement with the chair.
- All discussions to be in the context of sustainable farming and food work
- Any updates from members organisations to be submitted to DRN co-ordinator by paper/e mail to be distributed.
- Agenda to be agreed between SFFRG Chair and DRN co-ordinator
- Communication outside SFFRG meetings to be via e mail, either sent '*for action*' if a response is required or '*for information*' if no action is required. Alternatively communication via telephone between individuals as necessary.

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8. Conflict Resolution

In the event of a disagreement within the SFFRG a vote will be taken with the Chair casting the deciding vote. The SFFRG Chair has the right to request assistance from the DRN Steering Group on a policy position to assist decision making.

9. Relationship to other bodies

The SFFRG will recognise and value the role, operational style and priorities of its members and all the bodies with which it works. We recognise that in some instances the members may suffer a conflict of interest between the aims of their organisation and the Devon Rural Network. We recognise that in such circumstances their own organisations principle aims and objectives will take precedence.

SFFRG will establish a relationship with all other DRN Action Groups to offer support to their work, communication will be through the DRN Co-ordinator and the Chair of the SFFRG (who will have a seat on the DRN Steering Group.)

10. Membership of SFFRG

The SFFRG has a core membership (appendix I) who will contribute their personal skills and commitment as much as their organisational experience. The aim will be to settle upon a level of membership that can be effective and this will mean that it can not be representative of all farming and food related sectors in Devon. However, it will at all times try to take the full range of views into account. Current membership may change as the SFFRG work programme develops.

A quorum will be if at least 50% of the core members are present.

A Chair of the SFFRG has been agreed. Term of office for the chair to be 3 years with an opportunity to serve a further full term on agreement of the action group members and DRN steering group. Term of office for action group members to be 3 years with a recommendation that at least 2 meetings per annum are attended.

10. Resources

The DRN Co-ordinator will perform the role of facilitator and secretariat to the SFFRG. We reserve the right to review the resources requirement as the process develops.

11. Frequency of Meetings

Full reference group meetings will take place approximately every quarter, focus groups will meet on a more regular basis as required and report back to full group meetings.

Appendix I

Membership

The following membership table is current as at 1st September 2005.

Name	Organisation
Carol Trant	South Hams District Council
Charlotte Reynolds?	Land Heritage
Jim White	South West Forest
Jonathan Smye	Schools Fruit and Veg Scheme
Julia Proctor	National Trust
Liz Bowles?	English Farming and Food Partnership
Lynne Kenderdine	Devon Wildlife Trust
Mark Hodgson?	Global Action Plan
Mary Rosevear (Chair)	Small Farms Association
Mel Hall	National Farmers Union
Sarah Colquhoun?	Devon FWAG
Stewart Horne	AgriBIP
	Private sector