

**South West Regional RDPE Implementation Group Meeting  
4 December 2009 – SWRDA Offices, Sterling House, Exeter**

**Present:**

Andy Wilson – Chair, GOSW	Tim Wheatley - SWRDA
Steve Bone - GOSW	Alison Field – Forestry Commission
Tim de Winton – Environment Agency	John Lee
Ian Piper - SWRDA	Ian Hague - SWRDA
Rob Hatt - SWRDA	Gerry Hamersley – Natural England
Bruce Douglas - SWRDA	Heidi Bates – SWRDA (Secretariat)

Apologies were received from Sue Rees, Mark Durk, Janette Ward, Phil McVey, Carys Sanders, Pat Murray and Peter Hardaker.

**Summary of Actions:**

Action	Detail	Who	When
1	Gerry to e mail Farm Advice Supplement to RIG members	GH	ASAP
2	RIG Secretariat to organise a Local Action Group spotlight for next RIG	RIG SEC	By 4/3/10
3	Secretariat to discuss with Phil McVey continuing to send round examples of evaluation/monitoring from previous programmes	RIG SEC/PM	By 4/3/10
4	Steve Bone to talk to Bruce Douglas on DEFRA's recent announcement of Coastal Change Pathfinders	SB/BD	By 4/3/10
5	Tim de Winton and Rob Hatt to discuss changes to CSF funding	TdW/RH	By 4/3/10
6	GOSW to feed back to DEFRA the concerns raised re CSF funding	AW/SB	
7	Gerry Hamersley to consider performance indicators from RIP	GH	By 4/3/10
8	Terms of Reference to be circulated for review and amendment	RIG SEC	
9	SWRDA to provide resource to produce a consistent template for monitoring and reporting Programme progress and to convene a task and finish group to input	IP	
10	Draft discussion paper for Review Workshop to be re-drafted	IP	
11	New date for Review Workshop to be found	IP	
12	Possible Communications Group task and feed back to RIG. Include in terms of Reference?	IH/Coms Group	By 4/3/10
13	Make Communications Group feed back a regular Agenda item at end of meeting.	RIG SEC	By 4/3/10
14	Ian Hague to circulate the Devon RDPE chart to check detail.	IH	ASAP
15	RIG SEC to circulate 4 dates for 2010. 4 March, 14 June, 9 September & 10 December	RIG SEC	Done

**Approval of Minutes from 22 May 2009**

The Minutes were approved and Actions reported on as follows:-

1. Comments converted into a specification for contract.

2. Action possibly outstanding, Group not aware it had been carried out.
3. Not actioned yet, to be put on next Agenda.
4. Summary of potential Technical Assistance proposals passed round by Rob Hatt. Although the principle has been agreed by the RDPE Programme Board. Ministers need to agree the extension of TA prior to submission of a programme modification. DEFRA will manage the funds and delivery bodies will need to apply to them for approval. It was queried if SWRDA is a member of the Programme Management Group – all RDA's are represented by EEDA. The Forestry Commission is also lobbying for a Technical Assistance programme and would be interested to know the extent to which other partners are trying to access TA. Natural England confirmed they are not pursuing this.
5. The Communications Group has met several times – papers, inc Communications Plan, supplied to Group. They have agreed a timetable of joint activities.
6. Communications Group agreed they would invite partners to meetings to report on Axis 2 and vice versa.
7. Role of Secretariat to be discussed under point 4.
8. Confirmed examples of evaluation/monitoring for previous programmes had been circulated. The Group would like this to continue. Andy Wilson had spoken to Phil McVey who was happy to continue this.

#### **Natural England Update**

1. Gerry Hamersley presented his paper. Environmental Stewardship now has 3 times its previous budget. They have received 34 applications for Enhanced Advice with 7 taken forward. NE has taken on 20 more staff.
2. Within his paper the amber/red markers are measuring risk rather than progress. He commented that we need to be careful how this rating is perceived.
3. He is confident the EOIs will come through, but not necessarily in this financial year.
4. CSF is likely to be funded by RDPE next year. Referring to Agenda item 4 he commented that we need to report back on actual outcomes.

#### **Forestry Commission Update**

5. Alison Field passed her paper round. She felt the Region was responding and performing well. This message was different to that in circulation – this is being worked on. It may be due to early comments on slow uptake and/or strong promotion of schemes, or misleading information.

#### **SWRDA – Axis 1 & 3 Update**

6. Following earlier circulation of update, Rob Hatt reported that we were now 3 years into a 7 year programme (2<sup>nd</sup> year of delivery) and 50% of funds should be committed by the end of 2009/10 financial year.
7. A SWARM Innovation Fund application has been received from PPRE and is currently under appraisal. If approved, this will lead to the establishment of a comprehensive Knowledge Transfer programme, focussing on Resource Management in land based sectors.

8. SWRDA is forecasting spend of £10m this year against an initial target set at £30m. DEFRA has finally agreed to a rising budget profile, so figures are better than they appear. Ongoing management of the programme is demanding with RDA Single Pot funding used to supplement DEFRA's contribution to administration costs.

#### **SWRDA - Axis 4 Update**

9. Paper had been circulated previously. Bruce Douglas reported that special effort was being put into the two LAGs with no approved projects to date. (Forest of Dean and Western Somerset). Other LAGs were just starting to spend. LAGs are now starting to work together. Following a query, Bruce confirmed that funds can be vired between LAGs and they are aware of this.

ACTION Steve Bone to talk to Bruce on Coastal Change Pathfinders.

#### **Environment Agency Update**

10. Tim de Winton added a verbal update for the meeting. Catchment Sensitive Farming is currently funded by DEFRA GiA and managed by the Environment Agency and Natural England. He flagged up that in the next financial year DEFRA are proposing to fund CSG through a combination of GiA and RDPE funding, the latter from Axis 1. TdeW asked if this had yet been communicated to them. He did not yet know what the situation will be post 2010/11.
11. Rob Hatt replied, saying that RDAs had seen a paper re Catchment Sensitive Farming transferring to Axis 1, funds were to be vired from Axis 2 and not taken from Axis 1. CSF would continue to be run by Natural England and the Environment Agency with no new RDA involvement.
12. Discussion raised some concerns about differential grant availability under current CSF capital grant scheme and what can currently be funded under RDPE. Concern that this may cause confusion for projects staff and end users.

ACTION Tim de Winton and Rob Hatt to discuss further and circulate briefing note to the RIG.

ACTION Andy Wilson and Steve Bone to feed back to DEFRA any outstanding concerns.

#### **Role of RIG**

13. SW Region is the only Region with a Group like this. RIG needs to clarify why it exists and what it can do. The Chair will help navigate a way through the tasks we face and give a regional overview outside those of the delivery bodies.
14. The RIG needs to correct misinformation circulating on RDPE. Reporting to the Group needs to be better articulated/simpler and help us to decide what messages to share with wider stakeholders. What we say and what others hear can be very different. There is a perceived delay in spend as SW Region held out for a more strategic approach to delivering the programme.

This strategic approach should prove justified in the end. Group reports show plenty of red/amber status – is this successful communication? Present style is quite complicated but not really informing. There is no formal accountability for performance and spend to the Group, but the members are jointly accountable for the delivery of the RIP. Need sharp, clear management information for joint budget of £600m. What should the Group be doing? Members felt they should have the information to be able to respond on behalf of other members. Is the Programme pressing the right buttons? Case studies were considered a good idea. Spend is a major indicator of progress, but short/sharp summary required. Group needs to be aware of the risks of publishing minutes on the web. There is a lack of scrutiny of what is being delivered nationally, the RIP should be used as a measurement. DEFRA only monitors programme spend and outputs, it was felt they should hold more information – which could be provided by RIG. How does RIG come up with a monitoring programme?

**ACTION** Gerry Hamersley suggested looking at a working version of the RIP to agree what performance indicators should be. Possibly more outcomes as well as outputs. Key risks to be looked at and used to challenge the RIG.

**ACTION** RIG SEC Terms of Reference to be circulated for amendment with these minutes. Chairman happy with main aims.

**ACTION** Ian Piper A task and finish group required to produce a template for reporting on headroom, spend, measures achieved etc. IP has some spare resource. Partners need to meet to map out. Suggested copy monitoring and reporting framework from another area e.g Competitiveness, and using SW Observatory to provide the baseline data? If an existing framework is used, it was thought 80% of the work could be achieved in one meeting. Group to be convened asap.

### **RDPE Review Workshop 2010 Draft Discussion Paper**

15. Short time scale to arrange by 4 February. Again Group to look at how it reports, consistency required, risks identified and progress measured against RIP. Felt workshop a stock take of delivery achieved against RIP. Aiming for 2 small facilitated groups consisting of the usual suspects. 8 page prospectus document stating purpose to go out beforehand stating progress and outlining workshops. Try to avoid presentations. Is purpose of the event clear? Who is it being sold to? Will this be an annual event? General consensus was to keep it tight. Maybe produce an annual report with case studies. January – March is a very busy delivery time for some partners, date change discussed. Question 5 of the draft may be difficult to achieve. Should the number of questions be reduced/made more open?

**ACTION** Ian Piper draft paper needs to go back out.

**ACTION** Ian Piper Suggest date change (care – check if within purdah period and if this has any effect)

### **RDPE Mid Term Evaluation**

16. DEFRA has to carry out a mid term evaluation, this is presently out to tender but the specification has not been seen. It will probably focus on 'how much & how many'. It was felt the SW should do its own evaluation to address the

RIP and test whether it is still valid. DEFRA would see this as a valid use of Technical Assistance (if approved). If we do this in the Region who would carry out the task, how and when would it be done? 2010 is the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the programme – mid way, should we review and refresh the RIP - should these questions be asked at the workshop? Would we have much idea of impact by 2010? Should this be put to the workshop and therefore the date moved? If not obliged to do this should we carry out a regional evaluation? Alternatively, we would be ready for DEFRA review and have information to feed back.

17. At the time the RIP was written the Group was unaware there would be so much new emphasis on livestock, climate change, low carbon and broadband. With previous schemes mid term evaluations have been quite light touch and little has come from them. It was commented that outputs were not logged until projects complete. Also it was not mid term for spend. Light touch or heavy touch required? Substantial evidence is needed to re-write the RIP, it was felt more in need of tweaking/re-emphasising with a suggestion the impact of the present economic climate is considered.

18. The 'workshop event could be timed so as to be part of the mid term review process.

### **Communication**

19. SW Rural Gateway web site is being updated and will be on line at the end of next week. There was plenty of positive feedback on sharing stands at shows – acting as a one stop shop. There was a plea for updates and case studies for the revised website. It was felt there was a need for a RIG Q&A to respond to RDPE comments. The SWRDA internal review has found plenty of issues re Q&A and notes from the review will be appearing on the web. ARM small grants are aiming for a lighter touch. Queried how do we generate key messages?

20. How do we equip front line staff with useful tools and information from across all the Agencies? Members of RIG have worked at cross referencing different staff, some have RDPE network charts in use. SWRDA is using a Devon network chart.

ACTION Ian Hague Possible Communications Group task and feed back to RIG. Should this be included in the Terms of Reference?

ACTION RIG SEC Make Communications Group feedback a regular Agenda item at end of meeting.

ACTION Ian Hague to circulate the Devon organisation chart to check detail.

### **Meeting Dates for 2010**

ACTION RIG SEC to circulate 4 dates for 2010.

NOW CONFIRMED as 4 March, 14 June, 9 September and 10 December – all at SWRDA 10am – 1.30pm.

### **Any Other Business**

21. Gerry Hamersley is standing down and Matt Carter taking his place.