

**South West Regional RDPE Implementation Group Meeting  
4 March 2010 – SWRDA Offices, Sterling House, Exeter**

**Present:**

Andy Wilson – Chair, GOSW	Peter Hardaker - CAC
Steve Bone - GOSW	Alison Field – Forestry Commission
Tim de Winton – Environment Agency	Phil McVey - SWRDA
Rob Hatt - SWRDA	Ian Piper - SWRDA
Ian Hague - SWRDA	John Lee
James Hasset – External Consultant	Heidi Bates – Secretariat, SWRDA
Mat Carter - NE	

Apologies were received from Pat Murray, Bruce Douglas, Tim Wheatley, Sue Rees, Mark Durk.

**Summary of Actions:**

Action	Detail	Who	When
1	Local Action spotlight on agenda for next meeting	BD	14/6/10
2	CSF update and monitoring on agenda for next meeting		14/6/10
3	Provide details of renewal figures for agreements.	MC	14/6/10
4	Advise on updated criteria for SWARM	RH	14/6/10
5	Issue of technical assistance funding to be pursued.	RH	14/6/10
6	Contact Michelle James re ERDF reporting format and South West Observatory re baseline information to feed in to reporting framework.	JH	1/5/10
7	Common performance reporting framework – revised version to be produced in time for use at next RIG.	JH	1/5/10
8	Workshop – agree agenda, project contributions with AW and PH before circulating to delegates	IH	15/3/10
9	Terms of Reference – send in comments on draft final version.	All	31/3/10

**Approval of Minutes from 4 December 2009**

The Minutes were approved with one amendment to EA update – funds are drawn directly from Axis 1 – not vired, and Actions reported on as follows:-

1. Completed.
2. Local Action Group spotlight postponed to next meeting.
3. Agreed.
4. Completed.
- 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10. All items on Agenda for this meeting.
11. New date confirmed as 20 April 2010.
- 12 & 13. On Agenda for this meeting.
14. Ian Hague is waiting to conclude the discussion on reporting, but will not be circulating the Devon “spider diagram” so that matters do not become more confused.
15. Completed.

### **Natural England Update**

Mat Carter tabled a paper. The Rural Land Use Register refresh has slowed progress, but agreements are expected to be over committed next year. Work with the Forestry Commission on Sudden Oak Death would be a major task.

TdW queried the lack of resource protection data provided, and Mat replied it was difficult to obtain accurate figures.

John Lee requested information on renewal figures for agreements as he would like to see if there are any trends. Mat confirmed he could provide this.

The Group was pleased with the information supplied. Steve Bone suggested the Communications Group should pick up on information provided re renewals.

### **Catchment Sensitive Farming Update**

TdW advised that he and Rob Hatt had met Bob Middleton and Christine Goodall from Natural England to discuss CSF. An update and briefing paper was tabled. In future, CSF will be part funded through RDPE Axis 1 and Defra GiA, rather than entirely from national government GiA. The paper highlighted some emerging issues, and actions underway to explain or follow up on these.

RH reported that the RDA Board met with Defra this week. Defra acknowledged the lateness of communication and need for demarcation between CSF and other related RDA activities funded under RDPE. CSF has environmental rather than economic objectives, and so does not need to work with Solutions for Business branding. Work within the South West between the RDA, NE and EA (and CSF staff) has allowed the programmes to run in parallel without clashes.

IP queried if differing intervention rates were self imposed. TdW confirmed CSF rates were set nationally, while RH reported that the RDA had taken the SWARM rates from EU guidance. IH mentioned that the message at the coal face risked become confusing due to the potential overlap between schemes.

It was asked if further RDPE funding might be used in this way to relieve pressures on exchequer funding. PMcV commented he expected to see further pressure on all EU funds in future years.

### **Forestry Commission Update**

Alison Field tabled her report, commenting that extending the area eligible for WIG (Woodland Improvement Grant) had greatly increased interest and applications. FC was trying to extend work with traditional woodland owners.

AF said the FC were looking at target areas where new woodland would produce greatest gain. 95% of their funds were geared to broadleaf planting, however conifers were far more efficient at CO2 offsetting. PMcV mentioned ERDF was aiming for more woodfuel use so encouraged planting.

### **SWRDA Axis 1 & 3 Update**

(circulated in advance)

IH confirmed that the spend target of £10m for the year was obtainable but claims needed to be processed by June.

Spend in subsequent years will increase significantly – the allocation for 2010-11 is £27m. All RDA's were attempting to contract RDPE funds to confirmed projects – subject to available budget. It is possible that Axis 1 & 3 budget may be pegged back to 10% of the overall budget for each axis – the minimum requirement of the programme. This could lead to a reduction in RDPE funding available through RDAs.

The spend allocations to each measure in the RIP have varied considerably in practice since the programme went live. A further paper proposing rebalancing spend allocations to each measure will be brought to a future RIG meeting, prior to submission to Defra to update the national picture. For this reason, spend per measure or spend per investment theme had not been included in the report.

SWARM has had some teething problems which are being managed as follows:-

1. Working with advice providers – projects must be fit for purpose and timely.
2. A telephone survey of farmers who had received their action plan but not yet applied for a capital grant
3. The one application only limit has been removed as the Action Plan generally has multiple projects. Maximum grant limit per a holding is still the same.
4. A review of the list of eligible items, it is hoped these changes will be in place at the end of March.
5. A round table workshop with regional partners will be chaired by John Lee – date to be set.

TdW asked for clarification re the reference in the briefing on customer dissatisfaction. RH confirmed there was a backlog of enquiries and visits. PH said farmers need hand holding, other wise they say the programme is not delivering – forestry has the same problem. There are also constraints on eligibility on SWARM which had led to comments from other member organisations. Also SW grant conditions were not the same as other regions. A lot of the visits were not being converted into applications. This is being explored through some follow up contact with farmers that have had initial visits.

IH mentioned the recent issues of broadband funding and feed in tariffs remained unresolved, which presented some difficulties in communicating with potential applicants.

PMcV mentioned there were some problems with joint communication about EU funds in Cornwall, since there was as yet no Technical Assistance funding to enable RDPE to contribute. A Defra report on TA is still to be submitted to Ministers. This needs to be flagged up and moved up a level.

JL queried how much was required for TA and which regions were requesting assistance. The FC, NE and all 8 RDA regions were requesting funds. The suggested allocation is £125k pa per RDA with additional funds for Cornwall. TA will come from RDPE and will need to be matched.

### **SWRDA Axis 4 Update**

Some staff changes in the leading LAGs were causing some difficulties. Extra staff support (from single pot) is being given to lagging LAGs, and to the LAG network generally.

Harry Studholme had met all the LAG chairs during a productive day.

### **Progress on Common Performance Reporting Framework**

James Hassett tabled a report which was presently in draft and can be amended. The thought process behind the report was discussed.

TdW said we must not lose sight of outcome measures, in our effort to measure and report on activity and output measures. IP commented the reporting framework was for programme monitoring rather than impact evaluation. Members agreed they couldn't complete a quarterly report for all measures and would struggle to report outcomes against measures. There would need to be a 'best fit' between measures and themes.

PH commented that we do need accurate outputs. Spend details were rather generic – could they be split down to counties? (Cornwall figures already known). He felt we needed to deliver more. IH pointed out that for axis 1,3 and 4 outputs were only reported when a project ended, so were always in arrears of delivery.

AF commented that the glossary idea of common definitions for terms such as committed and pipeline was great, but our systems probably don't all fit. What does all this really mean? All results relate to EU policy. She did like the case studies idea – it made figures 'real'.

PMcV suggested JH contacts Michelle James on ERDF as she is tackling a similar problem.

TdW felt we should try and find a way of including reference to some 'contextual indicators' – environment, social and economic – to try and put the output measures in context of 'how are we doing as a region'. Regional Observatory activity and products might be helpful here. JH agreed with Tim and felt it would be useful to discuss with SWO.

IH commented that the purpose of the reporting framework is for the RIG to manage progress. Present information is based on mainly on inputs, ie number of projects approved, number of agreements signed, and spend. This will show activity is happening. High level evaluation should be reported at a later date. Whether or not we are achieving aims is not measurable at present.

IP felt we needed to finish this exercise and use the new format for the next RIG. Need to agree the longer-term evaluation framework and need some sort of output report. Was it possible to forecast outputs And include some milestones? Refer back to RIP indicators.

AW We would try to use the new layout by June – even if it was basic information. James will come back with more user friendly version.

### **RDPE Mid Term Evaluation**

Mid term evaluation happening at national level, not regional. RH not sure how info would be gleaned from regions. Defra invitation to tender passed round re mid term evaluation - 4 pieces of work were involved. Final application date was 3 March.

### **Broadband**

Recent CRC report highlighted broadband as the top rural issue – slow speeds were the main factor in losing young people from the countryside. There was a huge and unrealistic expectation RDPE would cover this. SWRDA has £700K for pilots on broadband (not Cornwall) from EERP but as yet no allocation for broadband within the RIP itself. RH Defra needs to agree a programme modification with EU commission to allow RDPE spend on broadband. There were also state aid issues with this.

Low carbon economy – government expecting much of our work to cover this – which we are doing.

### **Workshop on 20 April**

IH said approximately 80 were being invited. A draft programme was tabled and a discussion paper had been circulated prior to meeting. PH has agreed to chair. Need facilitators and brief input from 3 delivery bodies on present situation. We will set up dedicated e mail address to collate wider comments on the discussion paper from those not attending and feed back on day.

Discussion on content & running of the day. May be negative comments – need to keep the day upbeat. There was the suggestion of a preparatory meeting so all facilitators were speaking with a single voice. Need to agree agenda, project contribution and consistent thought on key messages. IH to agree a revised agenda, taking into account the RIGs comments, with AW and PH before circulating to delegates.

### **Communications Group Feedback**

IH said most points had already been covered in Axis 1, 2 & 3 reports. He confirmed SWRDA were attending the Royal Cornwall Show on a shared stand. Probably also attending Devon County Show. The stands will have RDPE branding but there is no SWRDA budget for this. To be discussed at the next communications group meeting.

### **Agreed Top Level Messages**

Delivery reports from partners had shown there was significant progress despite rumours to the contrary. Activity and expenditure are running at an acceptable level.

Format and timing of stakeholders telephone conference should be revisited to ensure that it still met the needs of stakeholders.

Communications on CSF would need careful handling. Agenda item at next RIG – should CSF be monitored under the RIG radar if it was now being funded through RDPE?

### **AOB**

Terms of Reference – send in comments on draft final version by 31/3/10.

PMcV Is Axis 2 promoting Lisbon Agenda? Ends in a few months time.

TdW had previously circulated a note regarding some recent concerns expressed externally about the way in which AD and composting are regulated.