

**South West Regional RDPE Implementation Group Meeting
22nd May – SWRDA Offices, Sterling House, Exeter**

Present:

Hilary Neal – Chair, SWRDA	Bruce Douglas – SWRDA
Steve Bone – GOSW	Ian Hague – SWRDA
Gerry Hamersley – Natural England	Tim de Winton – Environment Agency
Ian Piper – SWRDA	Matthew Woodcock – Forestry Commission
Phil McVey – SWRDA	Peter Hardaker – Cornwall Agricultural Council
Rob Hatt – SWRDA	David Hynd - SWREG
Tim Wheatley – SWRDA	Matthew Hill – Secretariat, GOSW

Apologies were received from John Lee, Pat Murray and Helen Thompson

Summary of Actions

Action	Detail	Who	When
1	Comments from RIG members on RDPE Skills framework required by 3 rd June. Comments to SW Regional Employment and Skills Partnership – Samantha Gates or Dawn Neale.	ALL	3 rd June
2	Gerry to e-mail farm advice supplement to RIG members.	GH	
3	RIG Secretariat to organise a Local Action Group spotlight for the September RIG	RIG SEC	
4	A note is required to outline what the group would do with <u>technical assistance</u> , how much it would cost and the value it would add. Note to come from SWRDA and copied to GOs and other RDAs. SWRDA will draft within 2 weeks and send to RIG for comments before sending to Defra.	SWRD A/ALL	12 th June
5	Task for the Comms group is to draw up a forward programme for strategy and delivery timetable for mid June. Ian Piper said Pat Murray will email the other agencies and set up a further Comms Group meeting.	COM MS GROU P	Mid June
6	Comms Group to invite a SWREG presence and a county based project development officer (rotating) on the Comms group.	COM MS GROU P (PM)	For next Comms Group meeting
7	10 working days for group to confirm nominees to RIG Secretariat. Secretariat to organise a Task and Finish Group meeting.	ALL	12 th June
8	Phil to send examples of evaluation/monitoring for previous programmes to Matt to circulate to RIG.	PM	asap
9	Matt Hill will resend email containing Sept/Dec date options and grateful if those that haven't responded with availability do so.	MH	29 th May

Approval of minutes from 30th January

1. Minutes of the 24th July 2008 meeting were approved with an amendment by Tim de Winton: the work on biomass is still underway and the finished report won't be circulated for a few months yet.
2. There was a brief discussion of skills picking up on issues raised at the last RIG (specifically high end skills to install renewable energy systems). Tim de Winton also raised the issues of skills associated with Anaerobic Digestion. Steve Bone recalled the Innovation Fund panel's comments (which have included several expressions of interest in AD and an array of expressions of interest in knowledge transfer from land based colleges and private trainers) and a request from panel to consider a workshop for these expressing an interest in knowledge transfer in order to bring a more coordinated approach. Publication of the RDPE skills framework is expected on 10th June and there is a final opportunity for RIG members to comment on the draft framework by 3rd June.

ACTION – Comments from RIG members on RDPE Skills framework required by 3rd June. Comments to SW Regional Employment and Skills Partnership – Samantha Gates or Dawn Neale.

Natural England Update

3. Gerry Hamersley presented the NE update.
4. Hilary Neal asked if any unspent Natural England budget in the South West returns to the larger Natural England pot or is it available to other South West agencies? Gerry confirmed that any surplus funds are returned to central Natural England. Matthew Woodcock confirmed it's the same case with the Forestry Commission.
5. Ian Piper asked if there was a similar take up throughout the country. Gerry said he didn't have any exact figures but, anecdotally, the South West does do better than most areas due to large concentration of farming in the area.
6. Peter Hardaker asked what are the main objections from farmers that aren't taking up HLS? Gerry said there are three main factors: an ever increasing level of multi-objective minimum standards; incentive payments aren't enough for dairy farmers; a shortage of promotion. Gerry also mentioned that he is still concerned that the advice isn't making sense to the customers.

ACTION: Gerry to e-mail the NE farm advice supplement to RIG.

Forestry Commission Update

7. Matthew Woodcock presented the Forestry Commission update.

8. Matthew outlined that there is resource available and open to applications now. FC is being very proactive in getting this message out there.

9. Peter Hardaker asked how are the Axis 1 synergies being developed? Matthew said that Steve Calderick at FC is taking forward this work. A period of awareness raising is underway.

10. Ian Piper asked Rob Hatt and Ian Hague to identify links with FC such as Sustainable Tourism or the Sustainable Woodland Programme. Rob said that a meeting has been arranged for the 16th June.

11. Matthew Woodcock suggested that each LAG should have a woodland officer attached. They may not attend every meeting.

South West Regional Development Agency Axis 1 and Axis 3 update

12. Rob Hatt presented the above and reported that there is £30m to spend in 2009/10 of which £12m is dedicated to Cornwall. He said there is a growing confidence that work is paying off and anticipates a significant increase in the volume of applications, as pipeline projects come to fruition. However there are still concerns about identifying sufficient projects in Cornwall to achieve the level of spend required in 2009/10. This confidence from businesses to apply should be offset against the continued lack of optimism from banks and business' caution about investments.

13. There was discussion about the suitability of the 'Solutions for Business' branding, one of Rob's team is attending a BERR branding event in London on the 16th June (with a marketing rep from the RDA).

Commissioned Activity

14. Bruce Douglas presented the Axis 4 Local Action Groups update.

15. Peter Hardaker asked the locations of the unapproved LAG projects? Bruce said that he expects them to be approved in the next few weeks and doesn't foresee any problems.

ACTION – RIG Secretariat to organise a Local Action Group spotlight for the September RIG

Strategic Issues

16. Defra recently visited SWRDA at which technical assistance was discussed together with concerns about the flat line spending profile. Defra require a robust case for TA in order to put a case to ministers. The issue isn't just a South West one. Phil McVey said that in previous programmes CLG had encouraged take up of TA and was able to provide evidence. Ian Piper said that the case needs to show that lack of TA is hampering delivery.

ACTION – A note is required to outline what the group would do with

technical assistance, how much it would cost and the value it would add. This note to come from SWRDA and to be copied to GOs and other RDAs. SWRDA will prepare a note within 2 weeks then send to the RIG for comments before sending to Defra.

Communications

17. Matthew is looking to get joint funding for website development. The RDPE update is going to CLA/NFU members. Gerry Hamersley felt that the Comms group might work up a clear programme that will help the NE Comms funding (which is run nationally) ahead of the autumn planning stage. Matthew expressed the same hope regarding FC.

ACTION – Task for the Comms group is to draw up a forward programme for strategy and delivery timetable for mid June. Ian Piper said Pat Murray will email the other agencies and set up a further Comms Group meeting.

SWREG Presentation

18. David Hynd joined the meeting and presented an overview of SWREG work. He said that, due to its complexity, RDPE is resource hungry. With regard to Cornwall David said that applications are on a par with the rest of the South West but what they are seeing is smaller scale rather than big strategic proposals. Peter Hardaker said there is still much to be done in the way of communication and farmers still don't understand what is on offer. Steve suggested that more simple information on the website would help and Tim de Winton felt case studies would also get the message across to farmers.

19. Hilary asked if a REG rep should attend RDPE Comms group meetings?

20. Tim asked if a county based project development officer (rotating) should attend each meeting.

ACTION – COMMS GROUP to invite a SWREG presence and a county based project development officer (rotating) on the Comms group.

AOB

21. Hilary raised the idea of a Task and Finish Group that would propose how best to structure content and objectives of RIG meetings; refine thinking about what the RIG should be doing and look at monitoring and evaluation. Suggestions were Steve Colderick (FC); Phil Tolerton (NE) ; Ian Hague (SWRDA); Tim de Winton (EA) and Steve Bone (GOSW). Tim de Winton suggested this thinking entails a step back from detail and a more macro level view of how the programme is working and taking us forward as a region. Rob Hatt suggested maybe someone from Michael Winter's team at Exeter, possibly Matthew Lobley, keeps an ongoing eye on direction of travel,

contributing to the evaluation and ongoing monitoring. Or maybe this is something the Observatory can get involved in?

ACTION – 10 working days for group to confirm nominees to RIG Secretariat. Secretariat to organise a Task and Finish Group meeting.

ACTION – Phil to send examples of evaluation/monitoring for previous programmes to Matt to circulate to RIG.

22. Hilary reminded the group that sharing and servicing the RIG and other RIG support groups is not in the Defra Tasking Framework and that with GOSW experiencing resource and capacity pressures the group would need to consider alternatives to GOSW providing the secretariat.

23. Hilary offered to continue to chair the RIG for the time being but emphasised the importance of joining up between meetings to maintain momentum and to ensure follow through on agreed actions ahead of subsequent meetings.

24. Date of next meetings in September and December.

ACTION – Matt Hill will resend email containing Sept/Dec date options and grateful if those that haven't responded with availability do so.