



RDPE: Delivering Success through Local Action 3rd and 4th February 2010

Speaker and Facilitator Biographies

Amanda Desmond

Amanda's current work within Defra focuses on Axis 1, 3 and 4 of the Rural Development Programme for England. Her previous experience includes programme delivery, working with stakeholders and local strategic partnerships, and in the learning and skills arena.

Bob Watters

Bob Watters is a retired civil servant who moved from North London to Gloucestershire in 1996. He was elected to his Parish Council in May 2003. He is Chairman of the Awre Parish Plan Steering Committee, author of the Parish Plan and member of the Parish Plan Forum in the Forest of Dean. He is Treasurer of Lydney Area in Partnership, Board Member for Forest of Dean Local Strategic Partnership, Vice Chairman of the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum and Board Member of the South West Market and Coastal Towns Network. In March 2009 he was appointed Chair of the Forest of Dean Local Action Group leading an executive of 23 members.

Cath John

As manager of adventa, Monmouthshire's Axis 4/Leader Programme since its inception in July 2002, Cath works with adventa's key sectors of tourism, food, timber and festivals and events.

Initially, starting her career as Assistant Tourist Information Centre Manager in her home county of Pembrokeshire, Cath relocated to North West England in 1999. There, she took up the post of Development and Policy Officer with the North West Tourist Board, managing various European funded projects, before moving to Farm Stay UK as the North of England Farm Tourism Co-ordinator. Cath has recently completed an MSc in European Rural Development.

Ivan Hewitt

Ivan has worked with a wide range of business, community and voluntary groups.

From the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers in North Wales organising practical work for volunteers and contractors, through self employment running a dry stone walling business, Ivan developed skills in engaging communities and delivering practical projects before moving to Northumberland and Greening for Growth in Wansbeck delivering community/environmental projects.

From Greening for Growth, Ivan transferred to Groundwork Northumberland as Community and Employment Programmes Manager before spending time as Shotton Partnership Community Economic



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Development Initiative Co-ordinator, where he worked on projects such as development of the community centre, setting up social enterprises, business start ups, and skills training for residents and business.

Currently Ivan is employed as the Northumberland Coast and Lowlands Leader – coordinating the LEADER grant programme, project development, monitoring and evaluation.

Jenny Archard

Jenny is the Manager for Making it Local, the Local Action for Rural Communities Programme in the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs. She previously managed the Blackdown Hills LEADER+ scheme in its final year and half, and worked with LAG members to develop the successful Local Development Strategy for the new programme.

Other current roles include leading Forest School sessions with disadvantaged young people in the Blackdowns, Chairing the local Forest Education Initiative Cluster, running family bushcraft sessions and freelancing as a group facilitator and trainer.

Previous roles include working for the Community Council of Devon in community enterprise development, helping develop credit unions in Plymouth with Co-active and being a voluntary Director of Cosmic, a social enterprise in rural Devon.

Judy Bell

Judy Bell has a degree in environmental archaeology. Having worked through more than one recession on short term contracts in archaeology, she decided to get a 'proper' job and applied for a post in the world of funding and grant management. She started with the Heritage Lottery Fund before moving on to the Wildlife Trust's Landfill Tax Scheme and English Nature's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund.

She moved back to her home county of Lincolnshire for family reasons to work on Defra's Sustainable Development Fund in the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB. She has been working on the Lindsey Action Zone LEADER project in Lincolnshire since July 2008.

Kate Forrest

Kate started her career at Gloucestershire Rural Community Council as a Rural Advisor. The role involved supporting communities to undertake community need assessments, market town health checks and village design statements. She also advised communities on other initiatives such as setting up new community transport schemes, community shops and village hall projects.

Kate moved from this post to work for the Gloucestershire County Council as Project Officer for the Rural Renaissance Initiative; a rural economic development programme funded through the South West Regional Development Agency. During her time at Gloucestershire County Council Kate was given the opportunity to provide maternity cover for the Initiative's Programme Manager, and enjoyed a secondment opportunity to oversee the delivery of the Dorset Rural Renaissance Initiative on a part-time basis.



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Kate took up her current role as Manager for the Southern Oxfordshire LEADER programme in February 2009. Alongside enjoying her employment opportunities in the world of rural development, Kate has completed a MA in Countryside Policy and Research Methods on a part-time basis at the Countryside and Community Research Institute at the University of Gloucestershire.

Liz Byrne

Liz Byrne established EMB Consulting in 2006 having had over 20 years experience in the economic development field. Prior to establishing her company she worked in the private sector as Associate Director of EKOS Consulting, the voluntary sector as Deputy Director of Development of The Prince's Trust and the public sector in local government, in a variety of development posts.

Liz's core skills and experience are in strategy development, business/project planning, project management, evaluation and funding/resourcing. Some of her company's recent rural experience and clients include Gloucestershire First (being a 'critical friend' on the planning, delivery and evaluation of its rural economic programmes), South West Regional Employment and Skills Partnership (drafting the Framework for Investment for Skills as part of the South West plans for the RDPE) and Somerset County Council – Working with the Council and partners to prepare the business plans and secure funding for the c. £7m Minehead Enterprise Centre in West Somerset.

Liz has a BA (Social Sciences), an MBA and an MSc in Local Economic Development.

Michael Dower

Michael Dower is Visiting Professor of European Rural Development at the University of Gloucestershire. He previously worked full-time at the Countryside and Community Research Unit at that University, following his periods as National Park Officer of the Peak District and as Director General of the Countryside Commission. He has 25 years of experience as a non-government leader in European rural affairs, through the European Council for the Village and Small Town (ECOVAST) and the PREPARE and CURE networks. He is currently lead expert to the Thematic Working Group of the European Network for Rural Development that is focused on 'Targeting Territorial Specificities and Needs'. He was consultant to the Romanian, and the Croatian, Ministries of Agriculture on the setting up of National Rural Networks in those two countries.

Paul Crompton

Paul has spent time working in both the public and private sector. After working in the manufacturing industry for three years he made the move into local government, working initially at Darlington Borough Council before moving onto North Lincolnshire Council 4 years ago. Having worked across a variety of services including environment, leisure and community development he made the move into the LEADER and LAG arena in June of last year to support the work of Northern Lincolnshire's newly established Local Action Group and help ensure his passion for supporting community is fulfilled.

Rebecca Frost



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Working within the Commission for Rural Communities, Rebecca is responsible for the development and co-ordination of the RDPE Network and UK National Rural Network.

Rebecca has worked in the rural and community development field for the past ten years, including roles at local, regional and national levels within the voluntary/community and public sectors. Over the past two years, Rebecca has focused on European rural development and the opportunities and potential for building understanding and sharing solutions within different national and local contexts. Rebecca is currently completing an MSc in European Rural Development, on a part-time basis at the Countryside and Community Research Institute at the University of Gloucestershire.

Sarah McAdam

Sarah began her career in local government in the 1980s, providing advice and support to homeless people, private tenants and owner-occupiers. In 1996, Sarah entered the civil service as an inspector of magistrates' courts committees, assessing and reporting on such issues as leadership, strategic planning, quality of service and resource management. She was also responsible for the development and distribution of national good practice in relation to corporate governance.

In August 2000, Sarah was seconded to the multi-agency team which supported Lord Justice Auld in his independent review of the criminal courts of England & Wales. When the Auld report was published in 2001, Sarah joined the policy team responsible for implementation of one of its key recommendations – the creation of a single agency with responsibility for all courts within England and Wales. Having been appointed as Private Secretary to the Lord Chief Justice in 2001, Sarah managed the team which provided strategic, policy and operational support to Lord Woolf and the senior judiciary during a period of significant constitutional reform.

Then in 2005, when HM Courts Service was created, Sarah became one of the new agency's Area Directors. She was responsible for the Crown and Magistrates' Courts of Central and South London, managing a £31 million budget and a staff charge of over 700. She played an active role on the London Criminal Justice Board, working with other agencies to develop and implement strategies designed to improve performance, quality of service and public confidence in the criminal justice system.

In August 2009, Sarah joined the Commission for Rural Communities as its Chief Executive.

Thomas Mueller

Having grown up on a farm in Austria, Thomas Muller has had an interest in rural development throughout his life. Thomas has been the developer and leader on a number of cultural and tourism projects including, the concept of "Theater am Hausruck", winner of two "Nestroy"-awards the most important theatre-award of Austria; Tree-Top-Walking, one of the most successful LEADER-projects of Europe with now 200,000 visitors a year and a practical advisor on rural development for new member states.

In 2001, Thomas established and operated his own business as a consultant for regional and project development. Since 2003, Thomas has been the Leader manager of the region "Sauwald", Austria.



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