



**RDPE Network and Rural Services Network  
Local Authority Seminar: Discussion on Integrated Delivery in RDPE**

**8<sup>th</sup> July, Birkbeck College, University of London**

**Seminar Record of Discussion**

## 1. Introduction

Prior to the seminar a discussion paper was circulated to participants. This paper was developed through joint discussions between officers of the RDPE Network and the Rural Services Network. The paper provided a brief introduction to the RDPE Network but was primarily focused on generating discussion around the perspective and experiences of Local Authorities, regarding the integrated delivery of RDPE and what practical role the RDPE Network could play in future to support Local Authorities in their interest and involvement in RDPE.

The seminar commenced with an introduction from Ivan Annibal (Rural Services Network) followed by a short presentation introducing the role and purpose of the RDPE Network from Rebecca Frost (RDPE Network, CRC). All papers, presentation and information from this seminar is available via the RDPE Network website – [www.rdpennetwork.org.uk](http://www.rdpennetwork.org.uk)

The seminar provided an opportunity for all participants to familiarise themselves with activity, approaches and contacts from Local Authorities around the country, for future discussion and information exchange (nine authorities were represented from six of the eight regions). Specific participant discussion focused around four main questions:

1. Local Authority interests in and/or role in RDPE delivery?
2. Examples and experience of integration in RDPE delivery?
3. Specific RDPE related themes to share information, experience and practice around in the future?
4. Future practical RDPE Network activity that would be of most value to support Local Authorities in their interest and role in RDPE?

The main points from this discussion are captured below, as agreed by participants and recorded on flipcharts.



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## 2. Common Themes Identified for Future Networking Activities

From the discussion, the following themes were identified as areas that local authorities would like to exchange ideas, experience and approaches. To take this forward, the RDPE Network will explore the options for future networking activities with local authorities;

- Links between RDPE strategy/delivery bodies and existing regional and sub-regional strategies, governance structures and mechanisms and funding opportunities (i.e. evolving Integrated Regional Strategies, Local Strategic Partnerships, Rural Forums, Local Area Agreements, Public Service Agreements, LAG Local Development Strategies, local authority economic development strategies etc) – To integrate and understand strategic opportunities and funding?
- Role of local authorities in supporting RDPE delivery and ensuring a positive impact, i.e. utilising local authorities overview of specific territories and thus helping to target funds and evaluate/understand the true impacts secured;
- The Leader approach – Its delivery, role of local authorities as accountable bodies, support that local authorities can offer LAGs etc;
- Cross-boundary programme delivery (designated + non-designated areas) – How are areas making this delivery work effectively?
- Understanding regional delivery mechanisms across England, e.g. how the Business Link delivery of RDPE works with/links to existing local authority driven business support;
- Rural Development Regulation post 2013 – Sustainability of projects / policy direction / funding priorities and practical delivery development;
- Attitudes to risk – Tackling the culture of being ‘risk-averse’ when developing/funding projects, to enable officers to better understand and manage different levels of risk;
- Links to market towns - How can market towns be funded through RDPE – their businesses, economies, general regeneration, links to the Leader approach etc.
- Specific sectoral themes – E.g. broadband provision and access to services through RDPE?

## Discussion 1 – Local Authority interest in and/or role in RDPE delivery?

Local Authority Area	Themes / Areas of Interest
North Yorkshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding from Europe – how this can be harnessed to deliver activities on the ground at local level;</li> <li>• Links between current RDPE regional strategies (Regional Implementation Plans) and LSP's/LAA's – there is more scope to more effectively and meaningfully engage local authorities in the current RDPE programme;</li> <li>• The Leader approach;</li> <li>• Partner support projects (potentially Axes1+3);</li> <li>• Post 2013 policy (policy direction, funding priorities and practical programme delivery development).</li> </ul>
Lincolnshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader approach (3 Leader programmes operating in Lincolnshire);</li> <li>• Cross- boundary working – e.g. Lincolnshire County Council working with North Lincolnshire Council;</li> <li>• Working with coastal farming areas;</li> <li>• The Leader approach;</li> <li>• Sustainability, post 2013, of activities/projects funded through the current RDPE;</li> <li>• Interpretation of guidelines e.g. eligibility in relation to towns;</li> <li>• Engagement with delivery bodies:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently, local authorities have to work hard to make the link</li> <li>- How can local authorities help? They would welcome a discussion with delivery bodies at national and regional levels?</li> <li>- Councils have a good ability to have an overview of RDPE delivery and impact over a territory/area, this should be of use to delivery bodies in targeting funds and understanding impacts.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Hampshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different teams within Hampshire County Council are involved in different aspects of RDPE delivery;</li> <li>• Linking existing economic development activity to RDPE delivery. E.g. the Council lead on a number of different food, agricultural and rural projects, so how can RDPE funding support these to help delivery the local economic development strategy?</li> <li>• Linked to this the Council own and manage a farm estate and manage their coastline. So, again how can RDPE support these management responsibilities?</li> <li>• The Council is also involved in a specific Leader bid on food distribution and village shops;</li> <li>• How can local authorities more effectively feed into and inform regional and national RDPE policy. For example through utilising their position in having a strategic overview for the development of their area, especially agriculture and the farming community;</li> <li>• Rural - Urban linkages and interdependencies and how these are supported through RDPE;</li> <li>• Hampshire Rural Forum is an advisory body for rural matters in Hampshire. It informs local authorities and public sector organisations about rural issues – How can this link better to prioritising and targeting RDPE funding?</li> <li>• Lead Council portfolio holders on rural board + Rural Affairs Forum + Hampshire Rural Forum, so how can RDPE link to these?</li> <li>• Links with AONB partnerships – How can RDPE support this?</li> <li>• Project examples include - The Council has worked with 'e-Hampshire' Partnership on broadband infrastructure and secured LAG funding for a wood-fuel scheme;</li> <li>• Amid public sector spending cuts, the challenges facing the development of economic prosperity in rural areas must be recognised. Thus, how can RDPE help address some of these issues affecting rural communities?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing information around the development of viable diversification and economic enterprise;</li> <li>• The Leader approach;</li> <li>• The development of quality of projects/schemes – sharing examples of these;</li> <li>• Axis 2 stewardship schemes – Ensuring quality management plans and ongoing visits and support from delivery bodies, to ensure quality rather than simply being driven by targets.</li> </ul>
Suffolk County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration to be given to initiatives that fall outside allocated 'RDPE zones' – how to facilitate the linkage of these to RDPE funded activity/projects;</li> <li>• How can RDPE be delivered in a way that enables the channelling of its benefit wider than the immediate funded projects?</li> <li>• How can RDPE delivery enable spin offs from RDPE funded activity?</li> <li>• The Leader approach;</li> <li>• Livestock initiatives;</li> <li>• Support for care farming through RDPE – there is a lot of energy behind this activity, how robust are their business plans and approaches and how can RDPE support this sector?</li> <li>• What similar projects are going on around the rest of England, how can they exchange information, practice and experience so as to avoid duplication of mistakes and utilise the experience and ideas of others? LAG projects include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Waverly LAG) Identity, tourism, employment, agricultural diversification, micro-brewery, tourism trails and food direct.</li> <li>- (Fens LAG) Anaerobic digestion and zero-waste.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Herefordshire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leader approach</li> <li>• Role of 'Rural Hubs' in RDPE delivery (on which the main agencies and funding bodies are represented, there is a network of Rural Hubs across the WM);</li> <li>• Role of accountable bodies in LAG delivery – Herefordshire council is the accountable body for the local LAG;</li> <li>• Sub-regional delivery mechanisms – Herefordshire Council runs the Rural Enterprise Grant scheme on behalf of the RDA. This operates alongside the WM Strategic Investment Grants Scheme, available for larger scale and collaborative projects, requiring a larger budget;</li> <li>• Integration of RDPE with existing strategic planning and funding opportunities – This is a challenge but can be addressed through strengthening existing linkages and creating and building new relationships. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The use of the WM Rural Hub delivery mechanism</li> <li>- The Forestry Commission – Natural England wood fuel strategy</li> </ul> Some barriers exist, such as shifting goalposts and funding criteria in how rural businesses are supported and this makes relationship building and integration increasingly difficult; </li> <li>• Regional Spatial Strategy review and how the Leader approach and delivery can be aligned with this;</li> <li>• Sharing of 'guidance of eligibility' for various grants</li> <li>• Progress on the spend of RDPE budgets, to ensure that the WM secures the most out of the RDPE opportunity.</li> </ul>
Cornwall County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional delivery mechanisms for Axes 1 and 3 - The SW Gateway appears to be short of capacity, thus it is difficult to get projects through;</li> <li>• Understanding risk - Tackling the developing culture of being 'risk adverse', to enable officers to better understand and manage different levels of risk, appropriate to varying circumstances and different business contexts (businesses often need more than 40-50% support to maintain the jobs that they offer);</li> <li>• More innovative use of RDPE funds – sharing ideas and projects;</li> <li>• The Leader approach;</li> <li>• Higher Entry Level Scheme/Stewardship under Axis 2 – the quality of management plans</li> </ul>

	<p>and ensuring that budgets are committed. Also, there is a need to avoid a gap in management plans in a couple of years;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of Axis 4 funds – There are 4 LAGs (uneven geographic spread) supported by the Cornwall Development Company, which bought together the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative and RDPE to work together – Has this happened elsewhere in England?</li> <li>• What is the link between RDPE and the marine &amp; fisheries agency and future programmes.</li> </ul>
Nottinghamshire County council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is RDPE funding available for rural transport schemes?</li> </ul>
Bradford Metropolitan District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding eligibility criteria - Postcode discrepancies exist that impact on eligibility of areas, i.e. postcodes that delivery bodies utilise for targeting do not correlate with the coding used by Defra;</li> <li>• Tackling the developing culture of being 'risk adverse' – understanding and managing different levels of risk, appropriate to different circumstances;</li> <li>• Challenges faced by LAGs with limited resources for delivering the overall management activities and outcomes required for successful Leader programmes to commit their funding to projects;</li> <li>• Cross boundary programme delivery - The council is the accountable body for the South Pennines LAG, this has involved working with 'Pennine Prospects', a company bringing together local authorities, water companies, Natural England and voluntary/community sector. This has resulted in a cross-boundary leader programme, covering parts of West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester and involving 2 RDAs;</li> <li>• Challenges of delivering at a regional level and how this affects the flow of funding to 'on-the-ground' delivery;</li> <li>• Links between RDPE strategies and delivery organisations and local authorities, e.g. perhaps through Sustainable Community Strategies?</li> <li>• Rural - Urban linkages and interdependencies and how these are supported through RDPE;</li> <li>• Recession proofing RDPE;</li> <li>• Linking RDPE business support and existing local authority driven business support;</li> <li>• RDPE delivery through Business Links – their approach, capacity and sub-regional targeting and approach/awareness;</li> <li>• How can Forestry Commission and Natural England schemes link to local authority work/delivery and priorities?</li> </ul>
<b>RSN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of local authorities in providing the right level of overview and the right level of funding flexibility to support the achievement of successful RDPE outcomes;</li> <li>• How can geographic areas (county, district, unitary) make most of RDPE funding opportunities?</li> <li>• Links between RDPE and the delivery of rural services – how can RDPE support these, can they?</li> <li>• Co-ordination to address issues that arise – how can the RSN help this, including to the Local Government Association and the All-party parliamentary group?</li> <li>• Share and disseminate information;</li> </ul>

## Discussion 2 – Examples and experience of integration in RDPE delivery?

Local Authority Area	Examples and Experience
North Yorkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good co-ordination of LAG networking at regional level by the RDA, e.g:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bringing members together</li> <li>- Capacity building 'old helping new'</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Experience from others is welcomed around how RDPE fits into existing governance structures, e.g. with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing Integrated Regional Strategies</li> <li>- Links to LAAs, LSPs, Community Strategies, LAG Local Development Strategies</li> <li>- How do the RIPs take into account the CAP Healthcheck?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Experience from others is welcomed around the integration of EU fisheries with Leader approach, apparently there are some good examples in Scotland;</li> </ul>
Lincolnshire / RSN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation of Business Link and their link to farm advisors – model of land based advisors &amp; rural advisors, enabling businesses to how tap into range of funding opportunities;</li> <li>• Other Business Links could learn from each other between the regions – This is a challenge due to the creation of regional 'Business Link franchises', contracted out to third party delivery, thus there is little incentive for private companies delivering this work to co-ordinate their activities with organisations delivering Business Links in adjoining regions (who they may see as their competitors);</li> <li>• Must ensure links between RDPE delivery and local authorities and LAAs and not just focus on committing budget – otherwise strategic opportunities will be missed;</li> <li>• Guidance on the links between different axes and how this works in practice is required, e.g. an abattoir in Lincolnshire has obtained funding from one RDPE axis but now wants to secure further funding to develop/offer new routes to markets – is this possible via RDPE?</li> </ul>
Bradford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to link Business Link activity and advice to local authority led business advice to deliver integrated business support;</li> <li>• The South Pennines LAG is a good example of integrated Leader delivery engaging 2 RDAs and 6 local authorities across a non designate area;</li> <li>• Examples of and RDPE funded project supporting urban – rural linkages/connectivity/interdependence - Urban based businesses creating new opportunities for rural businesses to supply good in the urban areas.</li> </ul>
Hampshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hampshire is trying to take a longer term view to rural development and the use/application of RDPE funding (beyond the current round to 2013). This is based on recognising the drivers of change in rural areas, e.g. localism, migration etc. They would like to use this approach to influence post 2013 policy debate.</li> </ul>
Suffolk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good integration of the Leader approach in Norfolk and Suffolk. Local authorities act as the 'exchange of ideas' around RDPE, which can be difficult at a regional level;</li> <li>• Future challenges facing RDPE and rural communities include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public sector cuts</li> <li>- Implications of a change of government</li> <li>- Officers on fixed term contracts</li> <li>- Local Government Review</li> <li>- Uncertain funding of RDPE projects/activities beyond 2013.</li> </ul>               This could all lead to a potential loss of expertise and experience and the resulting hiatus – so how can local authorities work together to avoid this and to deliver a gradual phase out of RDPE?             </li> </ul>

East of England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Wood fuel East' – This is a cross axes project and will shortly be available via the RDPE Network project database.</li> </ul>
Smith Gore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation mechanisms for European funding – if the European baseline for such calculation changes, England could see an increase in funding for rural areas.</li> </ul>
RDPE Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 3 thematic groups operating at a European level, co-ordinated by the European Network for Rural Development. These consist of experts from across different member states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Targeting territorial specificities and needs</li> <li>- Links between agriculture and the wider rural economy</li> <li>- Public goods and public intervention.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Further information about these is available via the RDPE Network website, via UK National Rural Network website</p>

### Discussion 3 – Specific RDPE related themes to share information, experience and practice around in the future?

Theme	Issues
Broadband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can the existing infrastructure be opened up for broader use/application? E.g. The broadband network in Hampshire schools has been extended to communities and businesses;</li> <li>• Connectivity to rural areas;</li> <li>• State aid rules.</li> </ul>
Progress/Performance of RDPE delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How and who is committing the budget and thus what opportunities exist to maximise the use of available funds?</li> </ul>
Exchange of ideas to support delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewed by participants as a key role for RDPE Network;</li> <li>• Possible links to IdEA and organisations with rural local authority focus.</li> </ul>
Transnational experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What opportunities exist for sharing transnational experience.</li> </ul>
RDPE Network Projects Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants considered the RDPE Network projects database a key tool for supporting this activity and participants should encourage and actively contribute to its population. Further information was requested on this - <a href="http://www.rdpnetwork.org.uk/projects">http://www.rdpnetwork.org.uk/projects</a></li> <li>• Do other Member States have a project database? If so, is it possible to co-ordinate and provide links to them through the RDPE Network? - A European level database is currently being explored by the European Network for Rural Development. Within the UK, all projects can be search via the UK National Rural Network website - <a href="http://www.uknationalruralnetwork.org.uk/projects">http://www.uknationalruralnetwork.org.uk/projects</a></li> </ul>
Access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Especially for Herefordshire Council.</li> </ul>
RDPE delivery across England – approach and integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could the RDPE Network capture how RDPE is being rolled out differently across the regions?</li> <li>• How are rural funds being integrated? E.g. RDPE, Market Town regeneration,</li> </ul>

	<p>Public Service Agreements, LAAs etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links between RDPE strategy/delivery bodies and existing regional and sub-regional strategies, governance structures and mechanisms and funding opportunities (i.e. evolving Integrated Regional Strategies, Local Strategic Partnerships, Rural Forums, Local Area Agreements, Public Service Agreements, LAG Local Development Strategies, local authority economic development strategies etc) – To integrate and understand strategic opportunities and funding?</li> <li>• How are European funds being integrated?</li> <li>• How the Business Link delivery of RDPE works with/links to existing local authority driven business support?</li> </ul>
Attitude to risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding risk - Tackling the developing culture of being 'risk adverse', to enable officers to better understand and manage different levels of risk, appropriate to varying circumstances and different business contexts.</li> </ul>
Role of local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of local authorities in supporting RDPE delivery and ensuring a positive impact, i.e. utilising local authorities' overview of specific territories and thus helping to target funds and evaluate/understand the true impacts secured.</li> </ul>
Link between Market Towns and RDPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can market towns be funded through RDPE – their businesses, economies, general regeneration, links to the Leader approach etc.</li> </ul>
The Leader approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its delivery, role of local authorities as accountable bodies, support that local authorities can offer LAGs etc.</li> </ul>
Cross-boundary working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-boundary programme delivery (designated + non-designated areas) – How are areas making this delivery work effectively?</li> </ul>
Post 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability of projects / policy direction / funding priorities and practical delivery development.</li> </ul>

#### **Discussion 4 – Future practical RDPE Network activity that would be of most value to support Local Authorities in their interest and role in RDPE?**

The following actions for the RDPE Network were identified, to support local authorities in their interest and role in RDPE. In addition to these, it was agreed to work with the local authorities, to explore options for exchanging ideas, experience and approaches around the themes identified in discussion 3 above:

1. Further discussion with Dave Melling, (Bradford Metropolitan District Council) regarding how he can use the RDPE Network website as a tool to post discussion items and receive feedback on topics, in order to develop a 'Local Authority' perspective to feed into the national RDPE Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC). (Note: Dave Melling is a member of the RDPE PMC on behalf of the Local Government Association, the Yorkshire and Humber Rural Affairs Forum, the regional Rural Practice Group and the South Pennines LAG. In a local authority context responsibilities include the development and implementation of Bradford's rural policy).



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2. Continued development of the RDPE Network projects database, to support the sharing of ideas and approaches - <http://www.rdpnetwork.org.uk/projects>
3. Produce a summary document to show different regional delivery mechanisms and activities;
4. Circulate participant list and e-mail contact details – all participants agreed to this.

### Additional Information

Additional factual information about RDPE was distributed in the seminar, this is available via the RDPE Network website:

- Axes and Measures of RDPE – Please note that not all measures are being delivered in every region;
- Regional RDPE Thematic Priorities – These are the cross-cutting themes and investment priorities identified in each RDPE Regional Implementation Plan;
- Local Action Groups (LAGs) within each region – Please note that a LAG directory is available via the RDPE Network website, this provides summary information and contact details for each LAG – <http://www.rdpnetwork.org.uk/your-network/local-action-groups>
- RDPE network projects database: UK - <http://www.uknationalruralnetwork.org.uk/projects>  
England only - <http://www.rdpnetwork.org.uk/projects>
- LAG directory - <http://www.rdpnetwork.org.uk/your-network/local-action-groups>