'Taking Stock and Sharing Knowledge'
11th June 2010, Castle Green Hotel, Kendal

KEY MESSAGES

1. Introduction

The RDPE Network and Northern Rural Network worked together to jointly deliver this event. Its purpose was to:

- Provide an update on RDPE evaluation studies currently underway or nearing completion and enable participants to comment on the research methodologies and / or preliminary findings;
- Exchange information on project delivery and enable participants to discuss ways in which maximum value could be obtained from the available funds over the remainder of the RDPE programming period; and
- Consider how EU rural development funding programmes may evolve in the longer term.

2. Programme

The morning included a series of presentations which focused on the RDPE in practice, RDPE evaluations underway and a European perspective on the future of the CAP and Rural Development Regulation. These presentations were followed by an open discussion where participants were able to comment on and ask questions about the information provided by the speakers.

The emphasis for the afternoon was on active participation in smaller workshop groups. Each group heard from 3 RDPE project beneficiaries who provided an overview of their projects and how the process had worked for them. Participants were then able to share their own experiences of RDPE and suggest ways of how to make the most of the funding available for the remaining programming period.

View the complete programme for the day.

Find out more about the case studies on the RDPE Network's project database.

All speaker presentations and workshop discussions are available via the RDPE Network and NRN websites:

3. Next Steps

The key learning points from the morning's presentations and the smaller workshops in the afternoon were fed back in plenary during the closing session of the day. These points will be forwarded to Defra and the delivery bodies as part of the follow-up activity to this event and are included below.

3.1 Key Points:

a) Delivery
- Uncertainty about regional delivery structures
- Achieving integration across the axes is not easy – support is required
- We need to be innovative in our delivery – RDPE can address this
- There is a lack of communication amongst people working on RDPE at a local level – we don't know what each other are doing
- Use existing structures e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships, existing Leader networks for delivery; we lose capacity if we keep reinventing new delivery mechanisms

b) Process
- Communication between agencies is required; relevant partners need to work together to work "smarter" – timescales are often too lengthy
- There need to be a stable and trusting relationship between parties e.g. applicant and delivery bodies and that is achieved through continuity of delivery mechanisms
- We need to focus on quality projects rather than getting bogged down in the process
- Paperwork often has impenetrable language and terminology
- Bureaucracy and red tape need to be minimised; they stifle innovation, jeopardise projects, increase costs, affect morale and cause delays.

c) Making the most of time left and post-2013
- We need to look ahead and learn the lessons from this programme in order to shape the next; keeping what has worked well and only changing the aspects that haven't been so successful so that some continuity is maintained
- Have the post-2013 programme in place before it starts to ensure a seamless transition and focus on delivery from the outset
- The learning from the mid-term evaluation should be shared and applied
- Ensure structure and support mechanisms are in place to fine tune the programme as it progresses so that it can respond and be flexible
- There are currently few reliable instruments for measuring social and cultural benefits and goods; RDPE evaluation needs to account for these as well, as considering only economic objectives does not give the full picture
- Help delivery bodies to be less preoccupied with the audit process so that it fits with what is required – a lighter touch is needed.

3.2 Follow-up Action

In addition to the key issues and activity identified above, participants fed in their reflections and comments about the day via an electronic questionnaire, which was sent to them after the event.

100% said that they found the event either useful or very useful and participants noted that they would carry out the following actions as a result of being involved in this event:

- Discuss transformational actions in North West RDPE programme
- Get in touch with Defra and the Researcher to formulate policy direction on CAP and future EAFRD settlements
- Talk to the project manager for a proposed micro-hydro project in Northumberland and explore the option of RDPE funding with him
- Encourage LAGs in my area to share experiences
- Encourage my fellow business colleagues to use RDPE funding to make their businesses more efficient and productive
- Make contact with an interested party in Shropshire
- Contact RDPE Network and post CSA information on their website
- Follow up interesting leads made today
- Contact the RDPE Network re forestry steering group and feed back to Northumberland Upland LAG
- Become a member of a LAG
- Disseminate to staff and other organisations the learning points from today and what can be achieved with supported projects
- Follow up on reporting from Dr Dwyer and send her research information that we are producing
- Encourage projects to speak to County Durham's RDPE project officer
- Strive to understand more about the mid-term evaluation
- Brief North West region colleague re speakers and case studies
- Use the RDPE Network website and send link to partners
- Examine the use of RDPE funds to improve the competitiveness of the land based sector
- Engage with the RDPE Network and learn more about Leader / LAG action
- Follow CAP policy development
- Use some of the information presented by speakers at the event to provide information and context to my Local Action Group
- Be more aware of the practicalities of rural economic development.

4. Additional Information

Through the day a number of sources of information were identified as useful. Links to these documents are below:

Breakdown of RDPE measures
http://www.rdpenetwork.org.uk/assets/files/RDPE%20Axes%20+%20Measures%20New.pdf

LAG directory for England
http://www.rdpenetwork.org.uk/your-network/local-action-groups

LAG map
http://www.rdpenetwork.org.uk/assets/files/National%20Leader%20Map%20Oct%2009.pdf

RDPE Network projects database
http://www.rdpenetwork.org.uk/projects

5. Further information:

RDPE Network
www.rdpenetwork.org.uk
E-mail: rdpenetwork@ruralcommunities.gov.uk
Tel: 01242 521381
Twitter: www.twitter.com\RDPENetwork

Northern Rural Network
www.northernruralnetwork.co.uk
E-mail: northrn@ncl.ac.uk
Tel: 0191 222 6623

Commission for Rural Communities
Tackling rural disadvantage

defra
Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

LEADER

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas