



RDPE: Delivering success through local action 3rd and 4th February 2010 Dunchurch Park Hotel and Conference Centre

Introduction

This event was held, following consultation with Local Action Groups and the delivery organisations that work with them to deliver RDPE, in order to:

- Provide a structured national networking opportunity to exchange ideas, practice and information to practically assist the delivery of RDPE through Local Action Groups;
- Improve understanding about the role of the RDPE mid-term evaluation and share information on the different approaches and models that LAGs are developing to capture and assess the benefits of their activity to their rural areas; and
- To provide an update on the information, support and services available from the RDPE Network and offer an opportunity to shape and prioritise the activities of the Network in 2010-2011.

Together with feedback that the Network had received from LAGs and their delivery partners, a steering group of volunteers was set up to help shape and inform a relevant agenda for the event.

The following information reflects the discussion notes captured from each workshop. It has not been interpreted and has been transcribed as it appeared on the flipcharts on the day of the event. It should be read alongside the relevant workshop presentations.

Workshop Write-ups

Different ways to bring projects forward led by Ivan Hewitt

Morning workshop (1a)

- Where do projects come from?
 - Community groups – capacity issue sometimes
 - Organised bodies with capacity e.g. Plunkett Foundation
 - Public sector initiated – Local Authorities and Parish councils (often through partnerships)
 - LAG itself - commissioned projects / LDS

- Business sector (but not all LAGs are delivering business support)
- From sector–interest bodies / partnerships e.g. Waterways Trust
- The creation and assistance of new groups with new ideas
- Key Actions?
 - Use existing community support networks (RCCs, VACs etc)
 - Use examples – critical mass to encourage developing groups
 - Use of festivals and Local events
 - Get capacity to get the message out!
 - Develop ICT as backstop but personal messages from the LAG and successful projects are essential
- How we will do it:
 - LAG representative of target audience and LAs
LAG Commissioned projects
Individual LAG member projects
LAG to publicise – press releases etc.
 - Use of local corporations etc. (university / colleges, business sector, Local Authority)
 - RDPE Network (Rural Community Council / RDAs)
 - Other funders (HLF, Natural England, LANTRA)
 - Community groups
 - Awareness raising
 - Funding forums
 - Training/workshops
 - Press releases
 - Use of websites
 - Piggy backing on other organisations' training – voluntary sector
 - Local shows
 - Periodicals/newsletters
- Obstacles
 - Resources
 - Capacity 'v' revenue
 - Inconsistency (RDAs)
 - Bureaucracy
 - Focus
 - Flexibility
 - Development of LAG / groups etc.
- Key Actions
 - Press releases
 - Newsletters – Parish councils, village hall
 - Inventory of skills of LAG members
 - Network with the business community
 - Allocation of responsibility to LAG members

- Key Messages
 - Objectives in a readable form
 - Support for applicant
 - Monthly claims for grant

Afternoon workshop (1c)

- Who do you engage?
- How do you engage?
- How much will it cost?
- Is there already support out there?
- How will you do it?
 - Once you have LA or newspapers on side use them as you own advocates
 - Press release, promo literature, case studies, presentations etc.
- Are we trying to fund as many projects as we can or are we trying to help build capacity?
- Target Audience (depends on programme structure i.e. axis 1 and 3)
 - Community
 - Outreach activities – community events
 - Marketing – case studies
 - Engagement with community organisations – CVS, Community Woodfuel Operator Teams, RCCs
 - Farmers
 - Outreach – farmer events and shows
 - Farming organisations – NFU, CLA, land agents
 - Accountants
 - Tenant farmers
 - Word of mouth
 - Tourism
 - Tourism partnerships
 - Tourism officers
 - Public Sector
 - Not needed
 - Business
 - Accountants
 - Business Link
 - LAG Members – important that they understand the Leader approach
- What Support exists?
 - Tapping into existing resources if they are available i.e. Business Link, Local Authorities
 - Making use of the expertise within LAGs – cross boundary LAG support
 - Task and Finish Groups on key themes – to bring forward specific projects
 - Project “champions” – (funded) project networking events

- Key Messages
 - Awareness of funding opportunities – RDPE and sign posting (Rural)
 - Link to priorities – avoiding jargon
 - Encouraging ‘innovation’ and good ideas
 - Challenge of ‘big’ organisations vs. ‘micro’ organisations (capacity issue)
 - Business focus (farmers and forestry etc) vs. community
 - “Bottom up” – local decisions made
 - Degree of up-frontedness (process and bureaucracy – timescales)
 - ‘Critical friend’ hand holding role though process
 - Working together expectations (collaboration and competition ‘squaring’)
 - Matched funding expectation!

- How to ‘deliver’ messages?
 - Audience critical – different target approach
 - E.g. CLA / NFU newsletters, national Farmers Weekly, farm networks, NE, FWAG
 - Websites (links to partner organisations – Business Link, Local Authorities etc.)
 - Production of literature – fliers etc.
 - Agency links – Business Links, Enterprise Agencies, land agents, banks
 - Mail shots (distribution lists? / Data Protection Act!)
 - Press releases
 - Rapid ‘contacts’
 - Television? – shows, events
 - Case studies are a must – beneficiaries to act as ambassadors
 - Community newsletters, youth groups
 - Tourism ‘ sites’ info
 - Word of mouth / presentations to groups

 - How do we measure impacts?
 - Contacts details – a challenge?
 - Little or no piggy backing potential on RDA promotion which could be a win-win
 - National parks very good at support / promotion

Different ways to bring projects forward led by Paul Crompton

Morning workshop (1b)

- Capturing information
 - Secure pages on website that LAG members can access.
 - Keeping the LAG informed about the projects that are coming forward
 - Letting LAG members see Expressions of Interest forms that are received
 - Making LAG decision makers confident that they are doing the right thing
 - Informing the whole LAG what decision matching panel are deciding on
 - Being aware of conflicts of interest
 - LAG Decision Making Panel has been merged with wider LAG group
 - Depends on what the measures are allowed to delivered by different LAGs

- Confidentiality issues around different measures and also about projects
 - Making sure that the whole LAG group knows the sanctions for breaking confidentiality.
 - People who make up a LAG membership are volunteers

- Does/can the system of how the projects are brought to the LAG and approved
 - North Lincolnshire looking at their systems in order to tighten up process
 - Measures/axes delivery vary from region to region
 - North Lincolnshire is adapting the system of bringing projects to meet the needs of the grassroots level
 - Local Development Strategy (LDS) has to be fluid document – make a balance with the LDS and its priorities
 - Build links with Local Strategic Partners and others to avoid duplication. Representatives of LSP local government form part of LAG group

- Make process simple for applicants – staff help with form filling
 - The paper work is created by the LAG in agreement with the RDA (Yorkshire Forward) other LAGs had the paper work given to them by the RDA.
 - ‘A principle of LEADER is to take risk’
 - Being upfront about the tasks that have to be completed i.e. making sure that people are aware that even after the money has been released there is paperwork to complete this can be written into contracts. Work with people to make them understand
 - Be flexible with match funding point being strict can put some people off applying

- What sort of projects should be targeted
 - The difference between a focus on capital projects or revenue projects
 - The effectiveness of quick win projects
 - One project may open up other projects in the future that meet the LDS outcomes
 - Looking at the big picture when it comes to the outcomes in the LDS
 - There is a pressure to deliver outcomes when approving projects especially economic outputs
 - It is important to deliver the programme in your area
 - Use people from the LAG to go into communities and tell them about the funding, what can be funded and generate projects this way
 - Using the budget in relation to the community
 - Ask questions about the LDS and take the time to review the outcomes in the LDS
 - Listen to the needs of the local community
 - Using RDPE funds to support large projects – can this have a knock on effect to support smaller projects after the large project has been completed.
 - There is a longer timeframe when larger projects are funded
 - Using RDPE funds to support business
 - Strategic projects versus local needs. Any decision must be made with consideration to the needs of the local community
 - If the money has been spent then it is possible to go back and ask for more!

- Share claims forms on the RDPE Network website

Afternoon workshop (1d)

No notes from this workshop

Engaging LAG members in delivery Led by Bob Watters

Morning workshop (2a)

- Needs organic “bottom-up” roots (structure of LAG)
- Setting up the system = “topsy turvey”
- Engagement of community organisations
- Business model rather than community driven model
- Transition town is strong in Forest of D
- Complicated baselines
 - need to be streamlined
- Programme as accountancy exercise?
 - Fear to approve grass roots projects
- No follow on from Defra
- Representation from each area involved in the LAG
 - Quality control? (Northumberland)
- LAG member go out to parties where they have expressed an interest and then report back to the LAG at next meeting
 - Bottom-up – communications
- Anyone in local area can become a member and have voting rights on projects (Chalk and Cheese) – application process moves on from here
- Decision about suitability made by LAG. Robustness and delivery implications discussed by officers / Exec
 - Confidentiality?
- Confidentiality? Not possible - voting against projects because they want to deliver a project and want increased pot of money
 - Becoming a big problem
 - Causing big tensions
- Structure them as fun and inventive and inclusive as possible (project proposition process)
- Structured Q&A section
- Voting slips – tick boxes under headings e.g. strongly recommended etc (Chalk and Cheese – quorum of 30 members)
- Offer as much support as possible (admin)
- Members / LAGs need to be project focused – there is a lacking in how LAG members understand the contract (Leader contract / RDPE process)

- Increase in understanding of members surrounding Leader process, paperwork, output definitions etc.
- Bureaucracy - problem in allowing members to fully understand and engage.
 - Project appraisers must be fully trained – can be grass roots – farmers, members etc
- Reengagement with wider LAG – getting it working and keeping it on track
 - Open meetings, twice a year at least, call forum meetings (Warwickshire CC)
 - Project fair, stimulate ideas from members and public
- Engage members – give them power (not too much / share it)
- Not just circulating engagement around money and projects
- Engage members in full RDPE process
- Some LAGs are project-focused rather than LDS-focused
- Different strategies work for different areas – ways of engaging LAG members differently
- Training sessions to members (at beginning) as part of the meetings (as they want to be there to make decisions). They will attend (South Devon)
- New LAGs / members = new and fresh ideas
- Training on the new programme
 - How do you train members? – appraisal subjects and groups
 - Not RDA – from some experiences
 - Get officers to train in- house - you know your LAG
- Presentations of projects can cause problems – those with stronger skills (e.g. for public speaking), pretty and clever often get accepted
 - LAG members go out to projects and look at them instead of presenting. Members report back. Guidance is given beforehand.
- Different rules for different regions! – Defra should be stipulating the rules
 - Should be social community impact rather than economic impact
- LAG members as champions?
 - Champions not doing their jobs
 - Champions need to have support
 - Need to be careful as they are volunteers
 - With power comes responsibility
 - Need to give members / champions tools to deliver (Chalk and Cheese – road show)
 - Dorset – cross-sector networking
- Reporting to parish councils is a good idea. Communications = coverage of local area
- Key in to existing systems rather than duplicating communication lines.

Afternoon workshop (2c)

- LAG structure
 - No prescribed model – rotating chair / fixed chair
 - Focused on local needs
 - Organised and managed locally
 - Involves the whole community
 - Utilises local knowledge

- LAG roles and responsibilities
 - How many on LAG? - up to 200 / 25 etc
 - Open for everyone

- Roles
 - Aligned to structure
 - Open to all
 - Cross representation of sectors
 - Joint ownership of LDS
 - Actively included in decision making process

- Involving the LAG
 - Why do people volunteer? – passionate about the community, it benefits them!
 - Communication - welcome packs
 - Engaging wider community groups – Young Farmers, County Council youth groups
 - Innovative and experimentation
 - Provide admin support

Engaging LAG members in delivery led by Judy Bell

Morning workshop (2b)

- What factors characterise a healthy LAG?
 - Direct project involvement
 - Delegation
 - Engagement with people
 - Regular publicity (local media)
 - Enthusiasm
 - Broad spectrum of talent and experience
 - Exchange of best practice
 - Good Relationships
 - “Finger on the pulse” and local knowledge
 - Workable structure
 - Training
 - Debate
 - Respect
 - Laughter

- Tips for improving / retaining a healthy LAG
 - Carrots! (i.e. teasers to maintain interest)
 - Best allocation of skills/strengths
 - Cross regional / national LAG communication
 - Consideration for individual circumstances – i.e. travel time, health

- What factors weaken the LAG?
 - Poor personal relationships
 - Lack of shared vision
 - Poor communication
 - Opinionated members
 - Ego!
 - Not relating personal experience to project approval
 - Party politics
 - Vested interests
 - Too much bureaucracy
 - Non commitment / attendance
 - Tight budget

- Tips for addressing the factors that weaken the LAG
 - Mince pies and mulled wine – i.e. the social side of building relationships
 - Keep the vision alive
 - Move meetings within the area
 - Share examples of overcoming bureaucracy (shortened application)
 - Accept, recognise, empathise, collaborate e.g. farmers v wildlife (1989)

- What techniques of engagement have you successfully used?
 - “Concept” approval by email
 - One-on-one consultation prior to LAG panel meeting
 - Road show to public
 - Presentations
 - Consultation event (invited rural stakeholders) to identify and share needs, strengths and priorities / online rather than face-to-face is also possible
 - Good communication between coordinator and applicant at an early stage
 - Directly approaching “the best” people (to be on the LAG)
 - Don’t let distance / cost get in the way of interaction – Teleconferencing / video conferencing
 - E-engagement
 - Coach trips

- Could you improve on these techniques of engagement and if so, how?
 - Training for communication techniques and skills – particularly teleconference and video conferencing training
 - Training for community engagement techniques and skills
 - Investment in broadband width
 - Budget for (expensive) videoconferencing

- What techniques of engagement did not work well?
 - Formal public meetings
 - Video conferencing (at first)
 - EOI without coordinator involvement
 - Original LAG consultation – did we get the right people?

- Initial set-up difficult – press ganged
 - It all works!
 - Wider LAG meetings strained – lack of information could be shared
- Can these techniques that didn't work so well be addressed and if so, how?
 - Workshop and drop-in events, road shows
 - Use parish plans linked to LSP
 - Make the event fun
 - Simplicity EOI!
 - Evolve with time / drop dead wood

In summary:-

- What does engaged LAG look like
 - Fair proportion of business / voluntary sectors
 - Fair mix of organisations / sexes etc
 - Good cross-section of representation
 - Utilisation of life skills
 - Ought to reflect the programme it delivers
 - Buy in by members to shared vision and strategy
 - Members committed to attend
 - Good local knowledge (finger on pulse on what's going on)
 - Has the whole area at heart
- The most important features of a healthy engaged LAG
 - Fair mix of membership (business/voluntary)
 - Fair spend across the whole LAG area
 - Wider LAG need to feel involved in the action of the LAG (need to communicate more frequently with them / communicate well with them during the meetings they attend)
 - "Vision" above self-interest
 - Good age range
 - Positive personalities

Afternoon workshop (2d)

- What factors characterise a healthy LAG?
 - Good projects
 - Good Chair – manages meetings well
 - Range and quality of members / skills
 - Flow of information around the LAG – simple and clear
 - Regular attendance / commitment
 - People *enjoy* meetings and stay talking afterwards
 - Nice venue and cake / biscuits
 - Good "adult" discussions and debate
 - Spatial attitude – members look beyond their own needs

- Tips for improving / retaining a healthy LAG
 - Development worker / support
 - Sense of ownership
 - Publicity
 - Make sure members are involved in the grant / application decision process
 - Learn and grow

- What factors weaken the LAG?
 - Lack of control
 - Constructive involvement of local authority
 - Insular
 - Not sharing with other stakeholders
 - Dominant members – alienate others, express personal views/agenda
 - Parochial attitudes – people pushing their own agendas
 - Lack of good projects
 - No payment of attendees travel
 - Staffing / resources / processes
 - Delay decision making process

- Tips for addressing the factors that weaken the LAG
 - Increased budget!
 - Training in facilitation and group dynamics
 - Maintaining local action group control
 - Strong team (chairman and office staff)
 - Support chair
 - Development worker support

- What techniques of engagement have you successfully used?
 - Identified and contacted wide partnership – networking / email, communications – leaflets etc
 - Broad base for community action group from which management group is drawn
 - Identified skills of group to deliver
 - Website with members secure page with downloads of EOI, technical appraisal, full application
 - Word of mouth
 - Local media
 - Shows/events
 - Holding meetings / events in unusual places (e.g. a military court centre)

- Could you improve on these techniques of engagement and if so, how?
 - They all take time and effort after a bit it is clear you can deliver the programme so can't improve engagement forever and ever
 - Use partners skills

- What techniques of engagement did not work well?
 - Electronic panel – did not work well initially
 - Providers forum / extranet
 - Big group endorsement of Steering Group decisions
 - Email is a mixed blessing
 - Clarity of message from LAG members (need to spread the word)
- Can these techniques that didn't work so well be addressed and if so, how?
 - Move to electronic panel later on when members have developed their views and learnt off one another
 - Manage communications i.e. one regular hit, not 10 one after another
 - Refresh programme info – support members to take ownership

In summary:-

- The most important features of a healthy engaged LAG
 - Genuine engagement by LAG members
 - When LAG members first come on board make sure they know why they are there and their role
 - LAG members to be chosen carefully
 - Effective “core” management group – of officers, key LAG members and chair
 - An able, effective chairman / person

Practical methods of capturing and assessing delivery of RDPE opportunities through LAGs led by Kate Forrest and Liz Byrne

- Expectations of Session
 - Listen – Mid-term evaluation, L/T – pillar 2
 - Tips ‘n’ hints
 - Practical advice
 - Honesty / moral dilemma
 - Recession impact
 - Focus: Axis 3
 - Wellbeing evaluation toolkit
 - “Fit” with monitoring and evaluation
 - Social benefits
 - Community measures
- What will success look like?
 - 70% of programme going to agricultural sector
 - LAs looking for geographical spread
 - Needs driven? – economic climate means farmers with leverage succeed, difference across regions
 - Increased well being e.g. community viability, happiness, sustainability, environmental social economic, commercial capacity

- Step change in forestry e.g. better woodland management, more viable forestry / woodland businesses. Build capacity - viable businesses / communities
- Projects to obtain a broader view – cooperation / collaborations opportunities
- How will you know / what will you do?
 - Example – Shropshire hills
 - Well being – new economic foundation, recent research
 - 5 objectives / attributes
 - how to measure / capture
 - Developing tool kit
 - Involvement of LAG
 - Case studies – PR
 - Importance of dissemination
 - Making time to reflect
 - Empowering projects to measure their own impact
- Is it worth it?
 - Claims / irregularities – could deter applicants
 - A big YES!

Practical methods of capturing and assessing delivery of RDPE opportunities through LAGs led by Cath John

Morning Workshop 3b

No notes from this workshop

Afternoon workshop (3d)

- Elements of keeping in touch with people who have got grants
 - Inspections and follow up with LAG member
- Feeding into the LDS
- Problems of wider LAG engagement
- Stats are only a snapshot!
- Capacity to manage the process as more projects are approved
- Presentations to local councils and surveys, encourage to visit the Kent Downs website via NFU
- We know what we want to do, it is sometimes the delivery!
- Strike a balance between output and outcomes
- Value in learning from others who have different view points
- Quantative vs. qualative data
- Learning across the countries / the regions
- Legacy of the programme
 - Building links to wider funding streams. How can this be measured?
- Quality of the project not quantity

- The information must be used honestly. Just because things are going badly doesn't mean learning cannot take place
- Capture more than just outputs
- Let people express their opinion – but this is harder to quantify
- How is socio information captured? How to make it simple for people to feedback?
- We need to see the value of what is being done
- Ongoing process to capture feedback
- Localised to the needs of a community
- It is okay to fail

Practical methods of capturing and assessing delivery of RDPE opportunities through LAGs led by Jenny Archard

Afternoon workshop (3c)

Exchange experience and ideas on finding out about the value that our programmes add – not the mainstream stuff!

Step 1: Key questions

- What are we already measuring/monitoring?
- How are we doing it?
- How effective is it?

Step 2: Key questions

- What other differences are we trying to make?
- How can we capture information, monitor, and measure?
- What can we do with that knowledge

Main workshop discussion

- Database of enquiries
 - What measures they fit?
 - How well developed is the project?
 - Where did you hear about us?
- Baseline analysis of target areas
- Use existing evaluations
- Fit with strategies
- Tourism visits
- Record it – add information to project case studies on the RDPE Network website
- Monitor long-term impact
 - Looking backwards to look forwards

- Using “indicators” e.g. confidence
- Takes up to 3 Leader iterations to make a difference
- Attributing
- Monitoring long-term impact / issues
 - Having a body in place
 - Having the support
 - To be missed when you are gone
 - Adding value to local economy

Trans-national and inter-territorial cooperation led by Thomas Mueller

Morning workshop (4a)

- What skills do you need / have for cooperation?
 - English language – big benefit
 - Look beyond our “island background”
 - Clarification on what budget can be used for to develop co-operation. Travel / hosting / the actual project
 - It is about doing a *project in common* not just exchange
 - Get *real* people together not just the “top people” but top down to drive process i.e. LAGs support the “real people” to meet
 - Meet to talk and listen i.e. things can get lost in translation so listen carefully about what people want. You need a good Communications plan, you need to be clear about what you as a LAG want out of it.

Top 3 Points:

- i. Thomas took ideas to ‘real people’ then helped them develop their confidence to take the projects forward themselves
- ii. Cooperation takes time – development time and delivery time (this is the end point)
- iii. Value of developing local pride in local place, products, people – local distinctiveness (this brings economic / social benefits). Identify what makes us distinctive about our area.

*** Read Thomas’ presentation – lots of practical ideas and useful examples**

Afternoon workshop (4b)

- What RDPE measure would the marketing for transnational cooperation projects fall under? e.g. Sawauld food and drink fairs
- Face-to-face meetings are often where project ideas are shared, created and developed
- LAG management is key
- 15-17 March LINC LAG event

- Sauwald initially concentrated on its neighbours and on establishing national identity before looking further afield for TNC
- Be brave – don't be afraid to try!
- Bring the action into the picture at an early stage – you need more than just an exchange of information
- Usually a region needs 1 programming period to learn the approach
- Don't forget intra territorial co-operation i.e. within England
- A common interest is required for a project
- It should not be an exchange between Leader leaders but *real people* e.g. farmers, local entrepreneurs etc.
- Where a trail, for example, runs through an entire region this offers a good opportunity to cooperate with neighbours.