

DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP RURAL ENTERPRISE GROUP COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES

17th March 2022 11:00 – 12:30

MS Teams Meeting

Attendees:

Luke Rake (LR) Chair	Dorset LEP and Kingston Maurward College (KMC)
Jon Bird (JB)	Dorset Council (DC)
Laura Zisa-Swann (LZS)	Dorset LEP
Will Bond (WB)	Alaska Ecological Contracting Ltd (AEC)
Louise Stratton (LS)	National Farmers Union (NFU)
Neil Wedge (NW)	Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC)
Imogen Davenport (ID)	Dorset Local Nature Partnership (LNP)
Tom Munro (TM)	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Dorset AONB)
Ian Alexander (IA)	Natural England (NE)
Nicola Kildunne (NK)	Federation of Small Business (FSB)

Apologies:

Elliott Hunt (EH)	Country Land and Business Association Limited (CLA)
Martin Sutcliffe (MS)	Dorset Coast Forum (DCF)

Item	Subject/Title	Action owner
1.	Welcome and Apologies Apologies noted.	
2.	Declarations of Interest None declared.	
3.	Minutes of Last Meeting (16th December 2021) The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.	
4.	Keeping Benefits from Renewable Farming within Dorset WB led discussion and presented the potential renewable farming has to significantly benefit Dorset's economy. Focus was on solar and figures presented were illustrative to highlight potential. Points to note: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solar can really boost Dorset's economic growth significantly increasing farmers return on income (currently approximately 3%).• Main barriers identified were access to finance and lack of skills and experience leading to discussions on risk reduction for banks, high grid connection costs and visibility and location factors.• Possible solutions included risk reduction for banks ie: starting with less hectors but this sees grid connection costs rise so would need network providers to get on board and potentially allow connection to overhead lines. Substantial money savings can be made when	

	<p>steering away from logical grid connections/mass connections and instead developing stand-alone schemes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility and location are key factors in whether proposals will be supported or not. The group highlighted the importance of publicising the benefits and their connections with communities to make solar more relevant and understandable. The possibility of presenting solar as biodiversity enhancements was discussed to gain support when developments are purposed in right locations. • The question of how stable solar income would be was put to the group for consideration. • The right structure and business model is needed for Dorset to maximise its renewable benefit. • IA and LR suggested a Dorset Renewable Group may be useful to help people gain experience and establish creditability in the field. <p><i>11:45 - NK is welcomed into the meeting</i></p>	
5.	<p>Members update</p> <p>IA: Working on potential landscape recovery pilot.</p> <p>ID: LMP had annual forum focused on farming and opportunities for nature and farmed environment. Latest natural value report replacing 2014's version is now available looking at Dorset's environment state and 6 LMP priority areas. Dorset Wildlife Trust is looking at redundant farm buildings and meeting with local community/MPs to discuss ideas/business opportunities.</p> <p>NW: Waiting on direction and impact of both the Local Plan and Levelling Up to be clear. Community governance review underway looking at parish boundaries and potential merger of parishes. Final consultation phase happening now with final recommendations expected in the summer.</p> <p>JB: Covid grant work complete. Economic Growth now falls under Assets and Property and Nick Webster is new Head of Service and Economic Growth and Regeneration.</p> <p>NK: Biggest issue working on is rising costs and gathering intelligence from members on where these costs are and how they can offer support. Costs have doubled and, in some cases, risen by up to 75%.</p> <p>Action: NK to share case studies with LR</p> <p>LS: Pilot study on Poole Harbour Catchment completed last year and now hoping to start larger landscape catchment pilot this year. Supply chain dominated by Russia/Ukraine events affecting fertiliser/energy/grain demands expected this year. Potential milk shortage May/June if prices are increased. BPS agricultural transition opened 15th March with 2-month window to submit applications. Farming Transformation Fund now closed and proved popular. Animal Health and Welfare Pathway set to launch this year and grants starting to roll out under Farming Investment Fund.</p> <p>LR: Dorset LEP still awaiting clarity on following LEP review on role and funding. Capital funding will now be allocated via Local Authorities. LEP supported Farming Resilience Fund bid aimed to mitigate transition</p>	NK

	challenges. If successful, this will provide revenue funding support to farmers with ambition to diversify in terms of advice and guidance.	
6.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>IA: Local Nature Recovery Strategies due later this year aiming to be a wide public consultation on what future of the countryside should look like.</p> <p>TM: Preparing response to governments landscape review response.</p> <p>Action: LR to confirm venue for REG first F-2-F meeting post COVID in June</p>	LR

Note: Date of Next Meeting – 16th June 2022 11:00 -12:30