



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Opportunities for the National Rural Network in England

(Workshop 1: Improving RDP Implementation)

Presented by: David Wilford
Date: 2nd June 2014



About this presentation

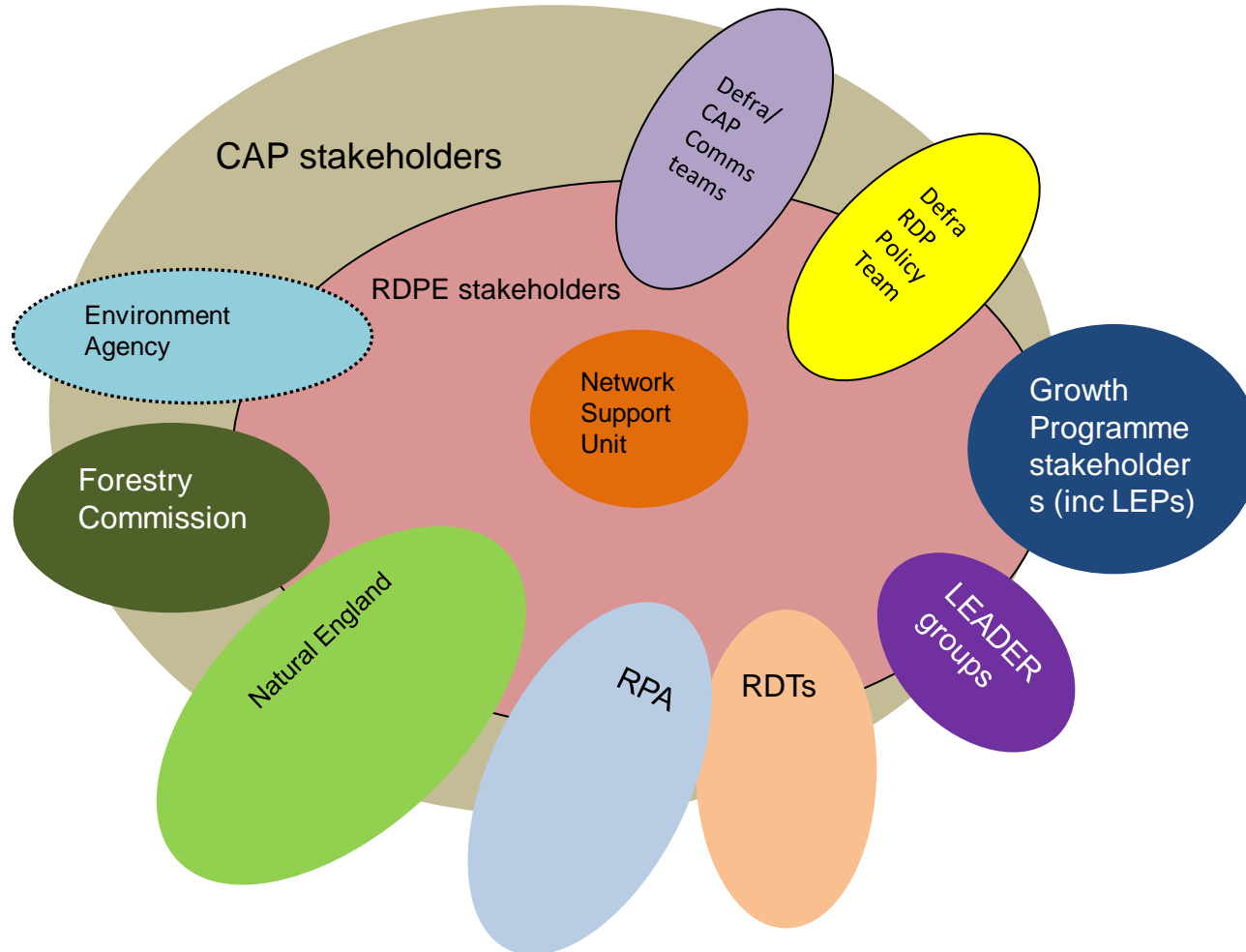
Use the example of collecting and sharing good practice, to address the question:

How will the England NRN contribute to improved RDP implementation in future?

- Set-up and use of the “good practice” database
- Assessment/evaluation
- Contribution to implementation?
- Reflection on future approach



What is the National Rural Network?



NRN delivery structures = blueprint

NRN governance

Comms strategy/plans

Websites, social media

National and local support/advice

Guidance

Helpline/s

Stakeholder groups

Project databases

Face to face and online opportunities for knowledge exchange

NRN benefits

- Stakeholders experience a coherent and consistent RDP, and can easily access the most appropriate funding opportunities and advice.
- Better targeted investments and higher quality implementation – allowing RDP to meet its policy objectives. This includes specific NRN support for the Growth Programme, knowledge transfer and innovation.
- RDP responds to needs of stakeholders via national level and local level engagement.
- Awareness and appreciation of RDP – reputation and trust among stakeholders.
- Better value for money from comms/engagement across the programme.

RDPE Network project database

- Voluntary and user-generated – projects themselves upload information via an online form.
- Basic information on location, funding, purpose of project and contact details.
- Promoted via the RDPE Network monthly newsletter (circulation around 1,330, mainly Axis 3 and 4 interests).
- Now over 2,000 projects from across England, mainly LEADER, including some transnational.



The Database

www.rdpnetwork.defra.gov.uk/projects

Submit a project

[East of England](#)

[East Midlands](#)

[North East](#)

[North West](#)

[South East](#)

[South West](#)

[West Midlands](#)

[Yorkshire and the Humber](#)

[Transnational](#)

Projects

Interested in finding out how others are carrying out RDPE funded projects across England? Use our directory to search for projects in your area or for projects across the English regions. You can also search for projects across the UK and other European Member States via the UK National Rural Network website.

Find out what worked for others, what they struggled with and how they overcame the challenges they faced. Each region has different funding priorities and guidelines but people have found it useful to learn from the experiences of others and you may be able to apply this information to your own project.

Help others benefit from your practice, experience and lessons learnt. Take a few moments to fill in our simple project submission form and add details of your project to our database.

Looking for a project?

All areas

[Local food outdoor catering \(Farm Shop expansion\)](#)

[South East](#) RDPE 50% Private investment 50% RDPE £3058 [0 user notes](#) 2 days ago by Ken Brown

[Fruit Juice Production](#)

[South East](#) RDPE 40%, private investment 60% RDPE £48,000 [0 user notes](#) 2 days ago by Ken Brown

[Seasoned Firewood](#)

[South East](#) RDPE 74%, private investment 26% RDPE £26,000 [0 user notes](#) 2 days ago by Ken Brown

[Bluebell Dairy](#)

[East Midlands](#) RDPE / NTI (New Technology Initiative) for equipment Approx. £143,000 (RDPE) / £10,000 (NTI) [0 user notes](#)

8 days ago by Rosemary Brown

[Full project archive](#)

Assessment/evaluation

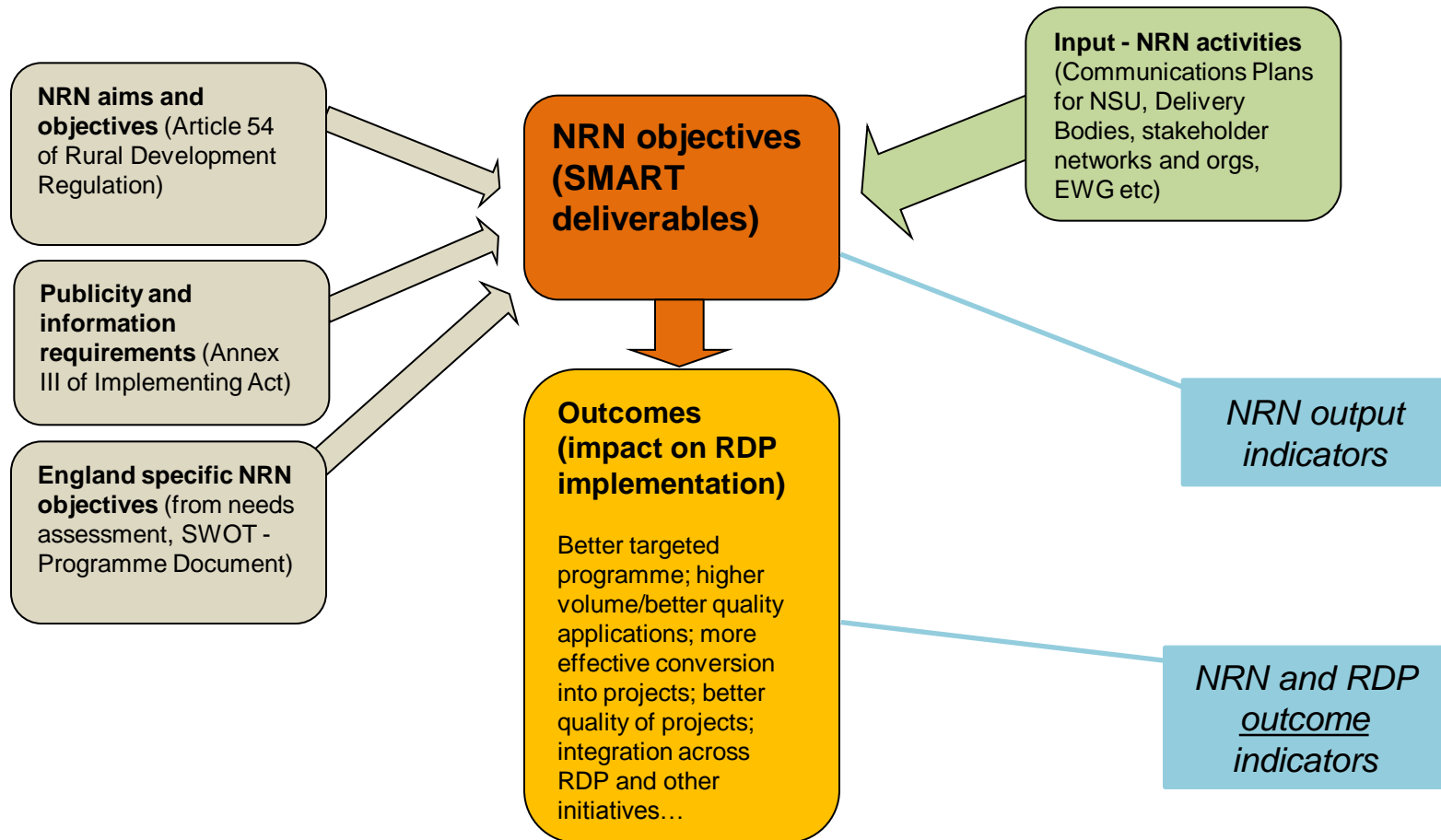
Independent evaluation, and discussions with stakeholders:

- Database is valuable but needs to be improved in terms of coverage of programme and searchable by theme/type of beneficiary.
- Exchange of knowledge and good practice is a key area where the NRN can add value:
 - analyse and transfer learning from case studies
 - capture and promote the benefits of the programme
- The database is one (important) tool to support this.

Contribution to implementation?

- Hard to measure: database has been useful but we need to strengthen its place in the intervention logic.
- This is true for many networking interventions – we need to be clear about the outcomes we want, and how we contribute to them.
- For greater impact, the database needs to be more integrated with other knowledge transfer activities:
 - Stimulus for co-operation, innovation...
 - More information on project development and delivery?

Intervention Logic



Lessons learned (summary)

Work in partnership with interested parties	“communications” is more than the dissemination of information – the focus should be on engagement and partnership with stakeholders to ensure successful delivery (high quality delivery that meets policy outcomes) – this means being responsive and flexible in working with stakeholders to address issues.
Open and regular dialogue	Open and regular dialogue works very well – people need and appreciate “live” information – often better than a “vacuum” which can generate speculation.
Build on successful networks and good practice	E.g. RDP External Working Group – close and constructive dialogue that keeps stakeholder networks informed as policies develop, and provides a valuable sounding board. LEADER Exchange Group – a valuable forum for dialogue between Defra and the LEADER community. Dialogue with interested parties through local events. Thematic working groups to help develop specific schemes.
A broader role for the National Rural Network	Awareness of the RDPE Network is low. Networking using the NRN needs to be better resourced and embedded in the Rural Development Programme. To support the NRN, we need a comprehensive plan for the activities of the Network Support Unit and the Defra delivery bodies. The NRN will need a distinct role – defined by a clear intervention logic, priorities and objectives. Stakeholders should have more involvement in its governance. New RDR = comprehensive range of duties for the NRN – including links with measures on innovation, advice, co-operation and Leader.
More joined up approach across the RDP	Consistent messaging, “a single RDP” to tie schemes together. Closer working between programme management and delivery. Streamlined engagement with stakeholders.
Tailored support to beneficiaries	Access to reliable local support to ensure high quality applications and implementation. Peer-to-peer learning and knowledge/best practice transfer has a role to play here.
Capture the benefits of the programme	Do more to promote the good work that beneficiaries of the RDPE do. This would help to promote the Programme but also support transfer of knowledge and best practice – an important driver of innovation. NRN has a key role.

A future approach for England NRN...

- NRN covers whole Programme
- Single Communications / Stakeholder Strategy
- Network Support Unit, MA and delivery bodies work alongside each other, also role for stakeholder orgs.
- Stakeholder steering group/sounding board
- NRN has increased, still modest, TA budget - but significant contribution by delivery bodies
- Interaction with Europe – we can learn from each other to improve our NRN
- More ‘intelligent’ project database





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