

THE DEVON RURAL HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

1. Introduction

The Housing Corporation, the Devon Local Authorities and the Dartmoor National Park Authority, together with the RSLs involved in rural housing across Devon, have formed a Partnership to enable the provision of rural social housing (both for rent and shared ownership) on a more strategic and co-ordinated basis. This will be known as the Devon Rural Housing Partnership.

The aim of the partnership will be to help improve the delivery of rural housing by the RSLs working in Devon through:

- better strategic co-operation and longer-term, county-wide planning;
- better co-ordination of rural housing priorities and investment opportunities
- improved identification of rural housing needs and demands
- improved identification of sites for development
- more consistent interpretation and implementation of planning guidance and policy
- improved design, procurement and delivery of housing by partner RSLs.
- raising the profile of rural social housing across the County
- establishing a consistent approach to Egan compliance and the use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)
- providing a county-wide forum for co-ordinated responses to and dialogue with the South West Regional Housing Body (SWRHB) in regard to rural housing issues and the Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) in Devon

2. The Partnership process

The DRHP aims to develop a shared housing strategy and jointly using resources and expertise to secure the outcome of that strategy. It involves closer working between the Housing Corporation, Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords to agree and deliver a longer-term investment programme.

The Partnership will seek to achieve the aims listed above principally through the establishment of a 'rolling three years' programme for the identification, planning and grant-funding of sites and properties for development, and will pursue a collaborative approach to:

- further develop individual district strategies for rural housing provision
- evolve a framework strategy for Devon within which the individual strategies will fit
- develop an action plan for the partnership
- agreed jointly a 3 year investment programme
- agree an accountable method for allocating sites/schemes to individual RSLs and for prioritisation and selection of schemes for funding
- provide a "control and direction" management group for the social housing related work of a Rural Housing Enabler in Devon.

3. Devon Rural Development Programme

The process for agreeing a county-wide three year rural housing programme will be as follows:-

1. Establish and agree annual rural housing targets by local authority area over a three year period based on the number of rural settlements below 3,000 population and the Housing Corporation's regional target.
2. Reconcile these broad targets against each local authority's assessment of rural housing need, requirements and priority development locations over the same period and agree refined targets.
3. Identify anticipated SHIP grant availability and any other funding available from local authorities.
4. Match the refined targets to identified schemes, noting existing allocations and pre allocations, and earmarking funding for non allocated sites / schemes.
5. Identify gaps and further unmet demand; establish a list of priority parishes for each local authority area.
6. Build a three-year rolling programme from schemes already identified or allocated, together with priority parishes where unmet need has been identified.
7. Ensure that each site / scheme has been allocated to an RSL within the partnership.
8. Agree a work programme of priority locations / schemes to be pursued by the Rural Housing Enabler (with support from the individual local authority involved.) Given the limited resources of a single full time member of staff, the RHE's workplan will need to be carefully focused to achieve an equitable spread of involvement across the member districts during the 3-year programme

4. RSL membership

It has been agreed that a formal partnership selection process is not appropriate but, because of the number of RSLs developing and managing rural housing in Devon, it is unrealistic to involve all the 'interested' RSLs at partnership meetings. It is intended that RSLs who wish to participate in rural housing development in Devon should agree and 'sign up' to a set of development principles and standards - thus forming a 'pool' of partner RSLs, committed to joint working and shared good practice, who will participate with individual local authorities and establish a 3-year development programme broadly in accordance with existing geographical spread. The exact methodology and arrangements for this process will be agreed by the partnership as a whole.

Four associations have been nominated to represent RSL interests at partnership meetings – see below.

Any RSL not currently owning or managing stock within Devon and wishing to join the partnership 'pool' may be required to undergo a formal selection process.

RSL Partners:

Devon & Cornwall HA; Westcountry HA; The Guinness Trust; Signpost HA; Sovereign HA; Hastoe HA; Magna HA; Exeter HS; Tamar HS; Dartington HA; Falcon HA (formerly West Somerset Rural HA); North Devon Homes; Tor Homes; West Devon Homes.

Partnership meeting representatives: Devon and Cornwall HA; Signpost HA; Hastoe HA; Tor Homes. (Reserve: Westcountry HA)

4.1 LA Partners:

East Devon DC, Exeter CC, Mid-Devon DC, North Devon DC, South Hams DC, Teignbridge DC, Torridge DC, West Devon DC.

Although Exeter City Council will not be developing rural housing within its own boundaries, it has been agreed that it should be a member of the Partnership, partly to reinforce the County-wide approach, partly to be able to contribute to policy development, and partly to be able to inform discussion concerning provision of rural housing for persons who, because of lack of local housing provision, have moved to Exeter from rural environments and now wish to return to their location of origin. Exeter CC has agreed to contribute to the funding of the Rural Housing Enabler post.

North Devon DC and North Devon Homes are members of the partnership but are already contributing to the cost of the Exmoor National Park RHE and will not be expected therefore to contribute to the Devon RHE funding.

4.3 Other key partners:

The Housing Corporation; Community Council of Devon; Countryside Agency; Dartmoor National Park Authority.

The Dartmoor National Park Authority is a local planning authority but not a housing authority. In carrying out its planning functions, the Authority will cooperate with its constituent District Councils as housing authorities in the delivery of their obligations to the Devon Rural Housing Partnership Operating Protocol. It will also directly support those obligations specifically related to its planning functions, always of course subject to there being no irreconcilable conflict with its statutory responsibilities to pursue National Park purposes'