

Chair's Update: 14th September 2007

Lots to do this month. The restructuring of Government and its relationships with regions and sub-regions, and possibly with Parish Councils, proceeds at pace. It is now the subject of every meeting one attends as the complex structures try to relate and see their future.

Framework Review

The closest to home is the Review of the Framework document under which we operate. There is lots of stuff on what we are supposed to do, the question is how are we doing? Our role looking after the concerns of rural residents is much wider than the Defra agenda, who are our present sponsors in the sense we have arisen from the Haskin's review and Modernising Rural Delivery. We will be receiving a presentation from Rob Hindle at the Forum on Sept 25th. RAF members should all have been sent detail of the review and the questionnaire by email, so please can you think a little before the meeting.

Role of the RAF: Action or Talking Shop?

My own view after five months as the Chair raises some questions. Having tried to spend a lot of time at parish /smaller organisation level I have found they are frustrated by 'exclusion' and 'top down' ideas on what is good for them. This is of course because the field of view gets smaller and aggregation of evidence for policy making tries to widen the view and thus becomes less relevant to our much smaller separated communities. They tend to think another group, such as the RAF, just talking and repeating the same stuff up the bureaucratic line adds little to their concerns. So do we need to facilitate some example activities which break through? This means taking a few coordinating partnerships forward. The Climate Change Parish Adaptation concept to be discussed at the Forum is an example. Should this be our job or should we just say we have attended all the right meetings and write a summary of all the points for forwarding onto 'someone' to show we have an informed summary view of present knowledge? My other major finding is the silos are still there. I found a new one yesterday. They are like landmines.

It's also about output or outcomes. The only outcome we can record to date is that we have Rob Scott on the RDPE decision making group. Rob was nominated by the RAF but of course is on the group for his own skills and is not a 'RAF' briefed person. The rest are outputs, i.e. attending meetings and responding to consultations is output rather than outcome. It is this aspect of our function I would like you to think about. Do we 'Walk the Talk' or just 'Talk the Talk'?

Governance Structures

Is there a role in new structures between LAA delivery and the RDA (Yorkshire Forward), the Region and CRC, the Government direct or via the Regional Minister and /or Regional Select Committee? Does Defra still need to ensure the 'RA' in their department title is taking account of the rural residents concerns? Will Defra need residents views to use across the other two major Government Departments who will in future be influencing our lives via the Sub-national review.

It will be another tortuous evolution but we need to begin to decide where we fit or do not fit. We have Dave Melling, Stephen Fox and Mike Feist on the Steering Group overseeing the process and also on the RAF Steering Group so your views should be well represented.

The other consultations: (contact the Secretariat for further details yhraf@goyh.gsi.gov.uk)

1. The Flooding Review Lessons Learned. This is being lead by Sir Michael Pitt for the Cabinet Office. The link is www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/floodingreview . The RAF will respond so please send comments to the Secretariat. Feel free to respond directly as well.

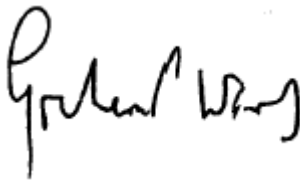
2. Feasibility Study on Defra's future support of the Rural Communities Councils. This is being done by Rubus. The RAF will respond but please feel free to feed in personally.

3. Shared Ownership and Leasehold Enfranchisement Communities and Local Government. This strengthens considerably the ability to retain 'affordable' housing scheme

developments from escaping into the free housing market. These escapes are a major deterrent to small rural schemes where the 'goodwill' is so important because of the intent for these schemes to benefit the community rather than capital gain of a few. Again RAF will respond but please also respond as it is so important in my view.

4. The Assembly Rural Economic Review. This will be presented at the Forum meeting. The RAF will be consulted The Public meeting is on 11th October. Further info at Assembly website see: [Y&H Assembly Scrutiny](#)

Finally the Steering Group is in liaison with the CRC reference the 200 Indicators which will form the basis of the LAA agreement performance measurements in the sub-national review. It is vital that these indicators prepared against a background of mainstreaming have sufficient safeguards to ensure delivery of services and economic development to our smaller communities separated by distance. Any knowledge or input you have gratefully received as it is happening in silos at the moment. This is a major RAF task so we need to make it count on behalf of the rural customers we represent.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Wang'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.