

## Chair's Update - April 2008

Spring is here even if April showers are a bit chilly. The Buzzard is soaring alone so the female is on the nest. The lark rises to sing trying diversionary tactics to protect his nest from my dogs. The first yellow fields are with us and by the time I write again there will be large areas. The fields in lowlands have lots of lambs and I saw the dairy herd out on the way to York last week. Its no wonder that our urban colleagues like to live with us. The task, however, is to involve them in our communities. We need their money to be spent locally not exported to Leeds. We need their skills to help us build vibrant communities not least because we need to communicate upwards. The LEADER programmes offer great opportunities to include projects to enhance community cohesion, make sure your fellow rural residents are getting involved. Parish histories, Parish walks ending with tea and buns in a church or sarnies in the pub, farm walks to explain what's in the fields and where trees and birds fit in. Build on the past but with modern presentation. Does your village notice board have a video presentation so visitors can click on features and services?

The RAF is making its first major effort (during my chairing time) to get grass roots really participating. The Climate Change Conference on May 13th has been specifically targeted for Parish Councillors and Parish Clerks . The subject is how a Parish might study adaptation to the changes which the weather will bring. The speakers will bring scenarios of how they see the challenges. Paul, the weatherman of BBC Look North will predict weather forecasts for future years up till 2080. There will be a presentation by UKCIP on the use of modeling tools for assessing the effects on your village rather than vague areas like the North. Details are on special pages on this website.

Many say we will not get an audience as the grass roots are so fed up with their top down experiences. Yes, I have encountered this when talking in rural communities. I believe that there is a possible window of opportunity to capture back some local initiatives and say over the place in which we live. We must, however, participate and get involved in the "evidence" game to offset the power of the structural management mindset. This conference offers the possibility of some example Parish projects being created to build a Parish Evidence/Action Plan to feed back up the line and get those above to really note our reasoning. Changing moaning into positive evidence.

Yes, it is a risk there may be no audience. Please register not least to listen and learn BUT to show we do want our grass roots opinions heard. I do not want the doubters to say "I told you so " and, thus, justify further top down delivery