

Chair's Update - March 2008

I return yet again to the Sub National Review and in particular the LSP/LAA process. There is a separate section on this site where we try to keep you up to date. I would refer you to the workshop notes and the Forum debate. The actual LAA documents are well down the track.. There is little more that can be done to ensure *“issues which impact on rural areas* are incorporated. However there is much to be done in monitoring how proportionate delivery is made to rural areas in the new mainstreaming structures. I shall hopefully get full Steering Group approval next week to start contacting chairs of LSPs, enquiring about a rural champion or portfolio holder embedded into their processes.

Defra have just published the [Pathfinder Report](#) . This gives good practice examples of the possible new world. We shall be using it to influence thinking over next few months.

The other navel gazing activity is the future of the Rural Framework of which RAF is one leg of the triangle alongside the Rural Practitioners Group and the Rural Board. Again the SNR will require us to redefine our function. Customer satisfaction from our regions partners must be confirmed if we are to raise funding to continue.

These partners are Yorkshire Forward, the “new” Local Authority Grouping and the “new” Third Sector grouping both of which will arise to replace the Assembly. Then there of course is Govt Office both regional and as our conduit to Defra in London .Our usefulness will be judged on what we can do to influence policy for rural residents and also how well we can bring evidence and experienced knowledge to these bodies which they might find more difficult to obtain on a timely basis by other routes. It is this latter function that will attract our finances!

I know our partners are keen on one point of contact to champion the rural cause so some consolidation in the Framework could be indicated. Your views are very welcome. I have to write a RAF paper for the Board in early April

What are we doing in the real world?

The special event for Parish Councils "*Parish Adaptation to Climate Change – Will you be Ready?*" is confirmed for May 13th. We have secured Paul the Weatherman to make the opening address and discuss the probable weather over next 75 years. The rest of the programme is packed with goodies. This is a major event for RAF in our information role. Please ensure you tell your Parish about it

I have a special interest in Churches as a community space and I have now established contact with all but one of the regions diocese rural chaplains to help identify parishes where there is no shop, no village hall, no school, in fact no public meeting place. I would like to get LEADER funding to do simple updates (loos, kitchen and few chairs) to allow churches to become that space in these smaller communities. I am working with my own area East Yorks and with N. Lincs but could do with help in the other selected LEADER areas please.

Finally I am working with the RAF chairs in the North West, North East and East Midlands to try to get a single coordinated enquiry into the upland rural economy and how it might need a new strategic approach. At moment CRC are doing a desk study and various other groups like Natural England and Upland Landscape Groups and Universities are all doing something. Trying to get some demolition of the silos will be a major task. Feedback again welcome particularly from non-farming economy.

Spring is coming, have a good Easter.