

## Chairs Update for August

The uncertainty of the weather, anxiety over harvest, the depression, conflicts of interest and political limbo, these are the topics of conversation. Surely these challenges are always with us, it must be my seasonal blues.

It's show time in the region. I have done my three days at the Great Yorkshire show with my Horticultural hat on. My colleagues once again worked their socks off and we won the Gold Cup in the flower show for the NFU produce exhibit. It is interesting even at the GYS our visitors still question whether the wide range of produce on display actually is grown in Yorkshire. Our only outsource this year was chicory from Lincolnshire. We stick out our chests but the whole of the farming output on show is an illustration of the skills and high quality farming of our region. Something that takes one away from the mundane, and the blues.

I spent another day at Driffield doing my LEADER LAG chair bit. We had an Enterprise Village showing off new businesses. If getting in paper is a measure of success we managed half a page for Leader and some seven photos of our participating stands. The RDPE programme is, including Leader, something the RAF should be encouraging whenever we get the opportunity. It is financial help for change and improvement in our rural economy and communities so important to offset the blues.

The political limbo building to the election next year is with us. You will notice from our website the manifestos are appearing. These point out needs and make the claims for "me" from many sectors, they also have the promises of those who seek power. But will or can they deliver? There is no doubt that the next few years are going to be tough as the money pumped in to save capitalism from collapse has to be reclaimed. We must not forget the Government take in our taxes and their spend (some 30 % plus of our regional employment is public sector) is the biggest economic driver, and if the brakes are on this then the economic squeeze is far from over.

So looking at the RAF and our quest to help the rural voice are we worth it? Should we as a very small £40000 a year guango go?

There are a multitude of interests in rural all based around the sustainability concept (a balance between economic, social and the environment). We have food security, economic viability of the our communities so dependant on earning power and local spend (its called capitalism on which we have spent trillions to prop up). Climate change and the fuel debate, windfarms or growing biomass, other tensions of environment versus production. Biodiversity against people damage whether this be tourists locally or world population increase. I could go on, some say I do. But the RAF I believe gives an opportunity for those who represent these conflicting issues to meet and debate those differences. Often getting a wider understanding of the totality of our combined need to ensure rural influence is not diluted by internal points of emphasis.

To this end we have produced a document (a manifesto!!) that outlines what the Forum members believe represents the rural offer to the region. We have used this to inform those who are reorganising the regions governance structures and in particular delivering at regional level Government policies. We are hopeful this will allow the RAF to contribute by bringing these so important regional rural partnership views, and ensure the expertise of our partners are on the table, when strategies, policy and delivery of the Government spend and direction are being determined.

In the belief that this is worth the £40000 which the RAF costs we are looking at how to manage it in 2010 and onwards. We are also looking for a new chair to take forward this challenge, as my two years is now already two and a half. If you fancy the challenge let me know!