

Chairs Update May 2009

Our swallows have come. All six nests plus some extras judging by the noise as they sort themselves out. Skylarks on the dog walk. But also magpies and kestrels so fear for bird chicks from them rather than my farmer friends' big machinery.

If anyone remembers I should not be writing this as your chair, as my two year term was up on April 1st, similarly we should have reappointed the Steering Group (SG). It is not because we think we are indispensable or that we have dictator traits that you have not been allowed your democratic rights. The re-organisation of regional structures as a result of the Sub National Review (SNR) is the reason. The SG formally considered the position and decided that existing arrangements should stay in place until September when hopefully things should be more settled.

All through these re-organisational processes the RAF has tried to ensure the rural voice and the rural expertise and experience, which our members have, is available to and influences strategies and public service delivery in our region. This will mean some restructuring of the Rural Framework and this is in hand. We have consulted members via the Forum and the final draft will go to the Forum on June 16th. I know it is tedious and it is taking time away from more "active" work but it is in my view vital. We must in the new cultural agenda of "mainstreaming" rural across all Government Departments ensure that our constituency of 20% of the population living in 80% of the regions land area has equitable say and equitable delivery. This is particularly important as the new economic structures are based around three city region functional sub regions with North Yorks as a special area. The most up to date information on these structures is on this website. Remember Defra is now not delivering to us directly but also working to rural proof other Government Departments and they admit privately its hard work!!!

We are doing other real stuff. The Uplands enquiry being run by the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) is of major importance to our region and we are fortunate to have Howard Petch not only on our SG but also on the management group of the CRC study. The notes on the regional consultation event are on this website. Several RAF members gave evidence.

We continue to liaise with both Defra and Yorkshire Forward on the delivery of RDPE and again the most up to date stuff is on this website. I am chairman of the Coast, Wolds, Waterways and Wetlands LAG (East Yorks) and other members are on various others. Dave Melling is representing views directly to Defra and I feed in via the Ministers meetings. This is a very important expression of the rural voice. Some of the arrangements of finance and the new rural contact in Business Link has something to do with this voice.

I hope by time of my next update, the process is complete and we will know how we fit in. We can then start the process of re-electing our committees. Please start thinking about your new chair.