

Y&H Rural Affairs Forum Meeting, 5th July 2006, Askham Bryan College

Question and Answers 1; following presentations by

The Rural Agenda for Yorkshire and The Humber

David Fraser - The RAF and Rural Policy.

Hazel Thomas - Launch of Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Framework

Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013

Andy Tordoff - RDPE Delivery by Yorkshire Forward

Ian Smith - Development of the RDPE Regional Implementation Plan

1. Black and Ethnic Minorities Inclusion

Q. Ratna Lachman, The Monitoring Group

What assurance is there that rural BME (Black and Ethnic Minorities) groups, including migrant workers, will be included in Framework activity, funding, proposals and consultations?

A. David Fraser: Many groups were involved in the Rural Framework's development, so this should be reflected in future activity. People are still listening and your invitation to talk to the Y&H RAF on the proposed BME conference today is an example.

A. Hazel Thomas: In taking the Framework priorities forward it is recognised that those who have not yet been heard need to be heard. Natural England will be committing to this by taking forward the Countryside Agency's Diversity Review.

Q. Gopal Lama, BME Regional Panel, Y&H Regional Forum

How do the smaller minority groups such as the voluntary, community and faith sectors influence the 'single' RAF voice?

A. David Fraser: Many people in rural areas, especially in minority interest groups have lots in common with these groups so there is empathy. Ideally there should be joined-up working/involvement with Parish Councils in order to increase all minority group representation and involvement. This process is still evolving.

A. John Napier: Understands this frustration as the desired recognition is often linked with proving capacity before any money is realised, especially in relation to public funding where many measures need to be established.

2. Rural Development Programme for England Regional Spending Priorities

Q. George Hamilton, Growing Routes/Yorkshire Agricultural Society

Who will fill in the spending boxes for Yorkshire and the Humber region RDPE spending priorities?

Q. Dan Bean, Environment Agency

There is only a relatively small number of organisations developing the RDPE implementation documents under a fairly tight timescale. Is there to be wider consultation on this?

Q. Wendy Bundy: Yorkshire & Humber Assembly

There isn't enough information made available on this process and the presentation slide on the funding priorities is far too small to read; can this be circulated?

A. David Fraser: The box filling will be done by a task and finish group made up of the delivery partners who will take into account the Framework priorities. This will be a technical exercise and not a re-writing of the 10 priorities. There will be assurance in checking back with RAF at every stage of development.

Action: To email full RDPE RIP spreadsheet to group (done 6th July 2006, also on webpage)

3. Merits in using the LEADER approach

Q. Helen Wright, East Riding of Yorkshire Council (to Andy Tordoff)

Is the LEADER approach going to be taken forward in RDPE activity given that it has already lent itself to a lot of sustainable rural delivery?

A. Andy Tordoff: Yes. Example given of LEADER activity in Valencia, Spain which covers the full region as a good approach. LEADER It is a 'how' rather than 'what' approach and has to be bottom up and will also need to fit in with the European framework.

4. Delivery By National Park Authorities

Q. Michael Graham, North York Moors National Park Authority (NPA)

a) How are the region's NPAs being considered for RDPE delivery?

b) Will there be any facilitation to help achieve delivery by NPAs, for example, in relation to sustainable tourism?

A. David Fraser: **a)** NPAs are considered to be very important, along with AONB's, in both rural delivery and as strategic partners.

A. Andy Tordoff: **b)** Yes there will be facilitators to help achieve this - two in North Yorkshire and one each in the other sub-regions.

5. How to Improve Sector Involvement and Democracy

Q. Adrian Koster, Soil Association

Expressed concern at level of democracy in this sector in the region, especially the perception that consultation exercises have predetermined outcomes which dissuades involvement. We need to think about how this can be improved.

A. John Napier: You have to start somewhere and the Y&H RAF has made a good commitment to this by more than doubling in size. It's about dialogue and working together and it's about sustaining interest. This will only be achieved if people feel it can influence, so the important challenge is to maintain this interest.

Question and Answers 2; following presentations by
Planning for the Future of Rural Yorkshire and The Humber

Rob Murfin - RSS and EiP - Yorkshire and Humber Assembly
Peter Bradley - Affordable Rural Housing Commission Report

1. More details required on Examination in Public (EiP) Information Seminars

Q. General concern at short notice of seminars in Sheffield 12th/13th July - venue?

A. Rob Murfin: The EiP panel secretariat are arranging this and as a rule, details are not sent out so people are advised to check their website

www.goyh.gov.uk/goyh/plan/regplan/376422

(Nb: Further details also circulated by Anna Knight, GOYH, 6th July 2006)

2. RSS Consistent with Sustainable Development?

Q. John Wright, Yorkshire Culture

Urban and city regions still dominate the plans and there is the view that remote rural areas are stuck in aspic. Is the Y&H plan consistent with sustainable development in respect to provision of infrastructure for rural service provision?

A. Rob Murfin: Urban deprivation is still higher than in rural area therefore has greater focus. There is multi-deprivation in the rural areas, including homelessness, but jobs and services need to be provided as well as affordable homes.

Peter Bradley: There is a greater need to work, as well as live, within rural communities in order to support the village shop rather than the large supermarkets near the workplace. The extensive provision of broadband in rural areas provides many opportunities in this direction. Sustainable communities will not be achieved simply by allocating housing in correlation with transport routes.

3. Charity owned land as an Affordable Rural Housing Solution

Q. John Davis, Churches Regional Commission/Yorkshire & Humber Faiths Forum

A lot of land in rural areas is owned by charitable trusts, which must make a maximum return on any they sell or let in keeping with charity rules. This makes affordable rural housing difficult. Should this be looked into?

A. Rob Murfin: A form of restrictive housing policy is agreed as the way forward to tackle the affordable rural housing needs, i.e. exceptions sites, but we could never build enough houses to cause a significant drop in prices, as argued by some economists, e.g. Barker, as this would conflict with environmental and other objectives. The RSS has to reflect all the sector voices and the affordable rural housing agenda has been pushed as far as possible under current rules. There are particular challenges in different parts of the Yorkshire and Humber region and in South Yorkshire, for example, many settlements have become redundant due to coal and steel industry decline. We need to identify the role of places and match form to function.

4. Various Issues & Viewpoints Surrounding Affordable Rural Housing

Q. Symon Fraser, Humber Unitary Authorities

- Not everyone in rural area wants the provision of all facilities in their locality. Many are simply happy with peace, quiet and waste disposal.
- A good percentage of villages/rural areas have affordable housing in their current stock and therefore do not need specific 'affordable' developments.
- Not aware of a clear definition of what 'affordable' means
- We need to be more imaginative on the affordable rural housing issue. It's not just about unit purchase or rent costs, it's also about the long term running costs, therefore we also need to look at energy saving opportunities etc.
- Provision of affordable rural housing should not be about importing urban problems into rural areas. Many people who hold this view are powerful, rich and well-informed.
- A key challenge is for budget holders to get talking. They need to realise the issues and how they and their funds can influence them.

Q. Lucy Bjorck, RSPB

Agrees with the point made regarding affordable housing needing to be looked at more imaginatively. Energy and environmental issues should be looked at as having a more important role in the debate.

Q. Graham Moore, Regional Public Health Group

This also needs to tie-in with the affordable warmth agenda.

Q. Adrian Koster, Soil Association

Draws attention to 'sustainable' meaning different things in different places, for example in other countries this refers to solar panels and loft conversions. Longer term planning needs to be addressed

A.

Rob Murfin: An interesting reference to everyone needing waste management as there are even major objections regarding a location of a small compost site. You will inevitably upset some people in the planning process and need to educate/assure them that they are not bearing a disproportionate burden.

Peter Bradley: There will always be objections to any planning development. In a new-town development people living in houses on the most recently developed land objected to development in the next field. Amongst all of this we must ensure that the most needy are listened to. We have to look at where we are now and where we want to get to and this may have to mean being tougher on 'Nimby's'.

Rob Murfin: Having a higher standard of design in-keeping with rural areas can be very expensive and there are also strict building regulation constraints in respect to making existing buildings more energy efficient, however this is a price worth paying. 'Lifetime cost' of a dwelling has been looked into, but this has to be part of national policy and the regions need to keep on the back of National Government to investigate this area further.

5. Young People living in Rural Areas

Q. Richard Ellison, National Farmers Union

There is the assumption that young people want to stay living in the country but just can't afford to. Many want to leave regardless of job and housing but may want to return later in life.

Q. Malcolm Shorney, North York Moors National Park Authority

There are also plenty of young people who do want to stay living and working in the country but cannot afford to do so.

A. Panel: Agree that both are true and it's simply about provision for those who want it.

6. RAF's consensus on the Affordable Rural Housing Issue on RSS/EiP

Q. John Napier, Chair,

Are we working from the presumption that all RAF members think the provision of affordable rural housing is a high priority?

A. Show of hands: approx: 75% Yes, 25% No

Q. John Napier:

Is there a collective RAF view on housing and sustainability issues to take forward at the EiP or is it to be left it to individual views?

A. Show of hands: More in favour of collective RAF view than against.

A. Wendy Bundy, Yorkshire and Humber Assembly

Final EiP participants have now been selected. The region's two Rural Community Councils (RCCs) have been selected and will be happy to consider taking forward views of other RAF members. To put views forward, or for further information, please contact Stephen Fox (Yorkshire RCC and Humber & Wolds RCC policy co-ordinator) on stephen.fox@williamhouse.co.uk or 07722 127494

A. Rob Murfin:

This is a good opportunity to feed forward views. Advises succinct lines and strict adherence to the word limit/deadlines; submissions may not be accepted otherwise.

A. Peter Bradley:

This is a once in a generation opportunity to contribute to a regional spatial plan. Don't let it pass.

ACTIONS & AGREEMENTS

1) RAF Secretariat: To circulate the regional RDPE spending priorities spreadsheet to members (emailed 6th July and available on webpage)

2) RAF Members: To contact Stephen Fox, joint RCC policy co-ordinator, to discuss whether their RSS views can be considered within RCC EiP representation.

3) RAF Chair: To put forward a RAF view on affordable housing to the RSS following agreement at the meeting.