



Yorkshire and the Humber Rural Affairs Forum,
Thursday 26th April 2007, Riccall Regen Centre

Final Minutes

Pre-meeting screening of 'An Inconvenient Truth' : An Academy Award-winning documentary film about climate change, specifically global warming, presented by former United States Vice President Al Gore. See www.aninconvenienttruth.co.uk

Main meeting:

For attendance please see: [Attendance list](#)

1. Introduction by new Chair Graham Ward

- 1.1** David Fraser, Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber (GOYH), introduced Graham Ward as the new Chair of the Forum, referring to his long and successful career in the horticultural industry. For full biography see www.yhraf.org.uk
- 1.2** Graham thanked previous Chair John Napier, especially relating to the creation of the Yorkshire and the Humber Rural Framework. He then set out the discussion areas he wanted to cover in this meeting and expressed his desire to meet members to discuss their views and areas of work and interest. He is happy for members to contact him directly via email, available on request from the secretariat.
- 1.3** Before moving onto main business he paid tribute to RAF member John Guy of Business Link who recently passed away and extended this to include Mike Blacker of the National Farmers Union whose funeral is today.

2. Steering Group selection

- 2.1** Graham informed members of his wish to establish a new Steering Group (SG). He saw this being a group of around ten; four 'deliverers' and six 'receivers' with equal representation from social, economic and environmental sectors, who would meet 4 to 6 times a year. He felt the deliverers should include: GOYH, on regional government/Defra elements, Yorkshire Forward on economic elements and Natural England on environmental elements. He suggested either the Commission for Rural Communities or the region's Rural Community Councils represent social elements. He was keen to find out who members wanted to represent the receivers and sought endorsement that he would make final decisions.
- 2.2** Rob Scott, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), asked whether the SG will include those with business interests. Graham advised it would and welcomed such nominations. Shelagh Marshall, The Regional Forum on Ageing, supported the FSB having a place on the SG.
- 2.3** Dan Bean, Environment Agency, agreed with Graham's proposal to ensure that social environmental and economic interests are represented through the deliverers and suggested that the receiver places should also be split this way. Graham agreed and

stressed he was conscious that 'rural' was more than about agriculture. Judy Richmond, The National Trust and Regional Environment Forum, advised caution in categorising organisations purely as environmental, social or economic as some have relevant experience in more than one area.

- 2.4** Ruth Hair, West Yorkshire Metropolitan Authorities/Rural Partnership, noted that the local authority sector was missing in the discussion. Graham agreed and advised he would be keen to see this sector represented through the Vice-Chair. Ruth added that Rural Partnerships should also be represented on the SG, which was endorsed by Helen Wright of East Riding Council and Cllr Geraldine Carter of West Yorkshire Metropolitan Authorities/Rural Partnership. Geraldine asked whether the Vice-Chair should be an elected member or officer, Graham confirmed his preference was for an elected member. Geraldine therefore suggested that the rural partnerships should also be represented on the SG at officer level.
- 2.5** Kelly Jevons, Yorkshire and Humber Assembly, suggested that the Assembly should also be represented on the SG, but this might be achieved through a member representing more than one area of interest as has been the case until now.
- 2.6** Graham concluded that there was interest in having the Federation of Small Businesses, Local Authorities, Rural Partnerships and the Y&H Assembly on the SG. He suggested he would also like to hear from land based sector organisations such as the Country Land and Business Association and the National Farmers Union. He advised that the nomination forms and full details of the process would be circulated by the Secretariat shortly.

Action 1: Secretariat to circulate Steering Group nomination form as soon as possible (done 27th April)

3 Vice Chair

- 3.1** In addition to the SG, Graham confirmed that he also wanted a Vice-Chair. He felt this should be an elected parish or local council member keen to represent the 'receivers' viewpoint. This role would include deputising at the quarterly meetings with the Defra rural minister, where he felt that RAFs were taken seriously. He wanted the Vice-Chair to balance his own strengths and specialisms and advised he would make final decision on the appointment. Again, nomination forms would be circulated.
- 3.2** Howard Petch, Commission for Rural Communities, endorsed Graham's suggestions, including that he should make the final decision.

Action 2: Secretariat to circulate Vice-Chair nomination form as soon as possible (done 27th April)

4. Secretariat Changes

- 4.1** Graham reminded the Forum of discussions on this topic at the last RAF meeting in November where the out-going Chair, John Napier, offered to host the secretariat from his Kelda offices. The SG had not supported this proposal, but the intention to make the Secretariat more independent remains. Kelda have since confirmed a £10k cash offer for each of the next two years in support, Yorkshire Forward (YF) have also offered £10k this year and GOYH/Defra should be able to contribute at least £10k per year. He clarified that the money would enable the employment of a dedicated RAF secretariat. He felt strongly that sponsors should not necessarily be represented on the SG, or even on the RAF, to avoid the possibility of compromising the RAF's independence, but they should be at arms length, perhaps through a separate finance committee.

- 4.2** Geraldine Carter offered her support for these proposals.
- 4.3** Wendy Bundy, Y&H Assembly, argued there was conflict with an automatic place on the SG going to YF who were sponsors. Graham accepted this point, but highlighted that as the Regional Development Agency, YF should be on the SG anyway, with a further member on the finance committee. Geraldine Carter and Shelagh Marshall offered further support for YF's inclusion on the SG.
- 4.4** Rob Scott queried why an organisation would sponsor the Forum if they were not able to influence its activity. Graham's reply was that organisations had altruistic or charitable reasons for sponsoring.
- 4.5** Mark Crowe, Yorkshire and Humber Regional Forum, queried how the RAF was constituted, and whether it needed an accountable financial body. David Fraser explained that the RAF itself is not a registered company capable of acting as employer and that a financially accountable body would be required to progress new arrangements.
- 4.6** Judy Richmond questioned the significance of having the separate funds as did not expect lots of sponsorship offers coming forwards. She added support for Graham's intention not to give sponsors automatic Steering Group places as this could create a divide amongst the RAF and make those unable to contribute financially have a lesser role. Paul Jackson, Howardian Hills AONB, summarised that although GOYH and YF have provided funds, they should also be on the SG as key public bodies, whilst Kelda's offer was different as it was a parting gift from the outgoing Chair.
- 4.7** Graham suggested that to save overhead costs and to ensure he is close to the Secretariat to use offices at his Stockbridge Technology Centre as host. He asked the Forum if there were any objections. Dorothy Fairburn, Country Land and Business Association, suggested that the Defra offices in York should be investigated as a host venue and members agreed.

Action 3: Secretariat to investigate possibility of Secretariat to be hosted at Defra's York offices.

5. Launch of New Y&H RAF website and leaflet

Graham thanked the Anna Knight of the Secretariat for her hard work in producing a RAF website and information leaflet, which members have a copy of in their packs.

Anna presented the website showing the six pages currently set up: www.yhraf.org.uk

- 1) Chair's Welcome and Update;** for which Graham is to provide regular updates
 - 2) About the Y&H RAF;** explaining the history, aims and purpose of the Y&H RAF and RAFs nationally. Also provides links to important documents and other groups.
 - 3) RAF Meetings;** where papers/details from meetings can be accessed.
 - 4) The Chair and Steering Group;** currently provides a biography of Graham. Once Steering Group and Vice-Chair appointments have been made details will be updated.
 - 5) Membership;** currently lists registered members by organisation, but names and contact details could be added if members agree. Also a link to registration questionnaire.
 - 6) Notice Board and Links;** events put forward by or of interest to RAF members and attachments to key website/documents. Also intend to link to members' discussion forum.
- Attention was drawn to the Secretariat's contact details at the bottom of each page

Action 4: Anna to circulate link to website, setting out areas for development (done 27th April)

Action 5: Members to forward comments on website/notice board items to yhraf@goyh.gsi.gov.uk

6. Arthur Barker, Chair of the Regional Climate Change Executive

6.1 Climate Change Executive and Action Plan

Arthur advised that the regional climate change executive was set up to ensure a co-ordinated approach to climate change strategies in the region. The intention was not to create a new policy or strategy but to develop an action plan which was published in 2005. This covered 6 areas of action: Policy development; communications; new project development and research; Local Strategic Partnership business engagement and monitoring and review. The executive also plays a role in responding to national and international climate change consultation, promoting the alignment of strategies, and communicating & monitoring what is happening with strategies.

Referring to Al Gore's film screened earlier which tackled the worse case scenario, he explained that the regional Action Plan is based on the more realistic likelihood taken from the 'Warming Up the Region' document. This concurred with findings from the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change produced earlier this year, particularly in respect to temperature and sea level changes. The Action Plan also considers both mitigation and adaptation methods to reduce CO₂, taking note of the Kyoto protocol which aims to reduce this by 8% by 2010, with a long term reduction of 60% by 2050.

6.2 In Yorkshire and The Humber

The effects of climate change in the region are likely to include droughts in some parts, but higher rainfall and flooding in others. Yorkshire and the Humber is forecast to be the second worst affected region in England after the South East, but there will also be some positive effects in relation to agriculture, where the growing season will be extended, and for the tourism industry. Yorkshire and Humber's emission levels suggest the region is doing badly as it is the worst performing English region. However, power generation is a big factor and much of this is utilised outside the region.

The climate change agenda has also been considered in other major regional strategies. The Regional Spatial Strategy looks at reducing CO₂ emission by 20% by 2010 and by 25% by 2015, along with a number of other targets, whilst the Regional Economic Strategy has targets such as 10% from an on-site renewable energy source. The last three months has seen the publication of the Regional Energy Strategy which advocates further use of biomass boilers and ethanol to power vehicles.

6.3 Action for Rural Areas

Specific action for rural areas includes upland floodplain management, with a number of plans soon to be published such as that for the Aire Valley catchment area, and the Strategic Partnership of Ouse and Tributaries. Natural England (NE) will be taking the lead in evaluating the damage done to ecosystems including peat bogs, but this has been delayed by NE's formation. The Forestry Commission's Regional Forestry Strategy looks at increasing the woodland coverage (the region has less than the national average with 5.4% coverage) to assist flood protection and allow more carbon from the atmosphere to be stored as biomass, which when used for energy is carbon neutral. The Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water will also be key in implementing some of the regional Action Plan.

Arthur reiterated the point in the film that the sum of small actions has an important effect. It is important to have international action such as the Kyoto agreement, as well as national regulations, but there is action everyone can be involved with locally and individually.

- 6.4** David Fraser put forward the government perspective, advising that Defra had reoriented itself in two parts; maintaining the natural environment and avoiding dangerous climate change. In terms of relevance to the RAF, he recognised two priorities: Rural Communities as a power driver/sector and the economic reality, based on the Stern Report on the Economics of Climate Change. He invited RAF members to discuss what they and their sector could do to implement the climate change agenda.
- 6.5** Graham Ward added the UK should play an international role and lead by example. Yorkshire and The Humber has a high level of emissions due to the influence of major power-stations such as Drax and only the government can change that. However, domestic and vehicular sources can be influenced at a smaller scale.
- 6.6** Helen Wright suggested the RAF identify and consider the particular rural elements of climate change to give focus. Howard Petch asked whether the Climate Change Bill had identified any actions or opportunities the RAF could take up. Arthur Barker said this had not been done in detail. David Fraser added that it would be worth looking through the five main parts of the Bill to see how the RAF can contribute.

Action 6: All to look through Climate Change Bill for action the RAF can take forward [see here](#)

- 6.7** Dan Bean suggested that RAF could challenge itself to look at its own carbon footprint similar to the Water Frameworks Directive. Anna Knight advised that the West Midland RAF had system to ensure its meetings are it carbon neutral so that should be investigated.

Action 7: Secretariat to liaise with WM RAF secretariat in respect to carbon neutral RAF meeting.

- 6.8** Judy Richmond suggested that we need to protect carbon already stored in forests, peat bogs and uplands as this is something practical within our remit, e.g. through regional targeting of agri-environment schemes, and added that there are examples of good practice in Upper Wharfedale. Dan Bean added that the Environment Agency is already working with The National Trust and Natural England on peat bog protection and sustainable management of upland areas.
- 6.9** Alan Eves added the Forestry Commission's stance; although public sector forests are managed, with schemes including woodland grants and continuous forest cover, the issue is with private sector forests where there is little management, therefore an area to be developed further.
- 6.10** Graham Ward addressed the issue of vehicular transport, particular the car, which is of greater significance in rural areas as they are more relied on. However, there are also many people in rural areas without cars and therefore accessing services has been made additionally difficult by the trend to make them more centralised.
- 6.11** Linda Smith, Association of Local Government Archaeologists, suggested that local authorities need to improve public transport as it is presently uneven and patchy. Geraldine Carter agreed, but advised of restrictive legislation on bus subsidy rates meaning reforms have to come from central government.
- 6.12** Arthur Barker advised that subsidies for bus services are usually made on a trial basis and withdrawn if there is little use. Other forms of transport need to be considered, looking more towards community-led schemes rather than traditional bus services.

- 6.13** Shelagh Marshall agreed with more community-led transport but felt there first needs to be a change in legislation to allow over 60s to use their bus passes on such schemes, a Bill on which is currently going through parliament. She also felt that there should be rules on commuter homes and queried whether rural homes should be provided for to those whose sole purpose is to commute. Graham Ward added provision of a 'village car' is an option that is being pursued in his village.
- 6.14** Wendy Bundy agreed, but suggested measures to tackle transport often address the symptoms rather than the cause and need to be considered in conjunction with wider access to services and employment issues, adding that some people have little choice but to commute due to housing costs/availability. She suggested that perhaps public transport commuter costs should come from the city they work in rather than district their home is in.
- 6.15** Howard Petch enquired whether there has there been any requirement to undertake a carbon foot-print study in respect to centralisation of services, including the implication of additional transport. Graham Ward agreed that this should be requested. Wendy Bundy offered the counter-view that centralisation of services, with particular reference to medical facilities, is important to bring together expertise that does not exist at the local level.
- 6.16** Judy Richmond moved the discussion on to consider the role of energy and heat conservation as this is something the RAF could get involved with. Arthur Barker agreed that this was particularly significant in rural areas where homes are generally older with less built-in insulation.
- 6.17** Carol Renahan, North Yorkshire County Council, added that planners have to change their procedures as they prevented solar panels on her home due to aesthetics. Jenny Haynes from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, advised that a forthcoming bill was likely to address this.
- 6.18** Graham Ward concluded by floating the possibility of the Scandinavian practice of community windmills in preference to large wind-farms. He also suggested action for the region could be to run a 'Climate Change Champion Village' competition in the same vein as 'Village of the Year'. This might be funded by the RAF with a view to attracting further sponsorship. There was consensus from the Forum to take this idea forward.

Action 8: Secretariat and Chair to investigate a 'Climate Change Champion Village' competition.

7. Rural Development Plan for England 2007-13 and Regional Implementation Plan
Ian Smith: see [Ian Smith presentation](#)

- 7.1** Ian referred to the consultation on the environmental elements currently being underway by Defra, closing 5th July 2007. To view the consultation website see [Defra consultation](#).
- 7.2** Linda Smith enquired as to how far socio-economic funds were already allocated. Ian replied that he was not sure due to the recent budget increase, but this meant that there should be space for further projects.
- 7.3** Geraldine Carter was interested to find out how the LEADER funds and areas are allocated. Ian replied that community applications with a population range of 5,000-150,000 can be put forward for open competition. Then a panel decide based on areas of most need, along

with Defra and regional specifications. Some areas of need have been identified, but the selection process will start with a meeting on 3rd May organised by YF and hosted by GOYH. Graham Ward added that he would be attending this meeting.

- 7.4** Graham Joyce, Pennine Prospects, asked if this simply meant that YF was doing a desk analysis of the proposed projects. Ian said the decision process is wider than YF and the specific Defra guidance and evidence of need will be adhered to.
- 7.5** Graham Joyce further queried whether the figure of £9million per year for the region factored in the unknown quantities and about the potential for integration across axes. Ian replied, yes the £9million was a best estimate and that YF, Defra, Natural England and the Forestry Commission are keen on integration of the axes as far as possible.
- 7.6** Ruth Hair and Geraldine Carter welcomed the 3rd May meeting, but would like to see the Defra guidance first. David Wilford of GOYH, supported Ian by saying that this should be fine to circulate this, but they would have to check with Defra. David added the 3rd May meeting is the first in a series to reach agreement

Action 9: GOYH to check Defra RDPE RIP guidance ok to make available: [Defra RDPE RIP guidance](#)

8. Rural Access to Services - Kelly Jevons, Yorkshire and Humber Assembly.

Kelly drew attention to a new framework and practitioners' guide on rural access to services led by the Assembly. The focus is on 'non transport solutions' following earlier work which concentrated on transport solutions. Partners include Local Authorities, Rural Community Councils, The Humber Pathfinder, Yorkshire Forward and GOYH. The launch event has been organised for Thursday 24th May, Berden Hall central York: [event flyer](#).

Action 10: Members wanting to attend on May 24th to contact RAF Secretariat yhraf@goyh.gsi.gov.uk

9. Rural Health topic at next Minister's meeting – Graham Ward

Graham advised that health was the focus of the next Minister's/RAF Chairs meeting on 9th May. He was not able to attend as it was recently rearranged, but Dorothy Fairburn of the Country Land and Business Association, would be representing the Y&H RAF. Views on any specific rural health issues should go to the Secretariat for collation. Dorothy added that it would be helpful in the future to allow time prior to the Minister's meeting for a full discussion. Graham accepted this point and that Steering Group meetings would also be synchronised. Anna Knight added that this was not on today's agenda as the Ministers meeting was only recently postponed to this date.

Action 11: Members with any rural health views/experience to email to RAF Secretariat by 4th May.

10. Members' Notice Board: No volunteers

11. Chair's Closing remarks:

Graham thanked all for coming and gave the date of the next meeting as Tuesday 25th September. The location is yet to be arranged but, in light of the day's discussions, he wanted to ensure good public transport access.

Action 12: Members to put Tuesday 25th September in diaries for next meeting.

Summary of Actions

- Action 1:** **Secretariat** to circulate Steering Group nomination form as soon as possible (done 27th April)
- Action 2:** **Secretariat** to circulate Vice-Chair nomination form as soon as possible (done 27th April)
- Action 3:** **Secretariat** to investigate possibility of Secretariat to be hosted at Defra's York offices.
- Action 4:** **Secretariat** to circulate link to website setting out areas for development (done 27th April)
- Action 5:** **Members** to forward comments on website/notice board items to Secretariat.
- Action 6:** **All** to look through Climate Change Bill for action the RAF can take forward [see here](#)
- Action 7:** **Secretariat** to liaise with WM RAF secretariat in respect to carbon neutral RAF meeting.
- Action 8:** **Secretariat & Chair** to investigate a 'Climate Change Champion Village' competition.
- Action 9:** **GOYH** to check Defra RDPE RIP guidance ok to make available: [Defra RDPE RIP guidance](#)
- Action 10:** **Members** wanting to attend May 24th Access to Services launch to contact RAF Secretariat
- Action 11:** **Members** with any rural health views/experience to email to RAF Secretariat by 4th May.
- Action 12:** **Members** to put Tuesday 25th September in diaries for next meeting.

Secretariat contact: yhraf@goyh.gsi.gov.uk