



MINUTES

Yorkshire and Humber Rural Affairs Forum

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

1. Chair's Welcome – Graham Ward

- 1.1 Graham welcomed all to the meeting outlining the day's business and drew attention to the attendance list, for apologies, and [paper 1](#) updating actions from the last meeting. He advised that he had been busy since the last meeting, including meetings with various RAF members such as; Parish Councils, Rural Community Councils, the Church and North Yorkshire Police. He had also met with the new Rural Minister, Jonathan Shaw, with the message from Government being for 'rural' to prove how it is different as the trend of policy movement is towards mainstreaming.
- 1.2 Graham introduced the City Regions item and speakers Simon Foy from Yorkshire Forward and Professor Neil Ward from Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy.

2. 'City Regions' and their Implications on Rural Areas:

See: [City Regions briefing paper \(from Rural Board\)](#)

- 2.1 Explaining City Regions: Simon Foy, Yorkshire Forward's Chief Economist.
See presentation: [Simon's presentation](#)
- 2.2 Implications for Rural Areas: Professor Neil Ward, Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy: Neil explained that the term 'City Regions' has been around almost a century, but has gathered momentum recently following the 2004 Core Cities gathering. He referred to the concept using the metaphor of cities being the locomotive and rural areas being the carriages and likened this to the core/periphery growth pole model. He added that there is a lack of consensus as to whether 'City Regions' are to reflect universal land coverage or just selected areas and that the concept is based more on the perception that successful regions contain successful cities with the expectation that the rest of the region would benefit from a 'trickle down' effect. His view was that City Regions were created in advance of robust supportive evidence.
- 2.3 He identified a number of risks and issues relating of City Regions, some generic and some specific to rural areas:
 - Rural areas may be seen simply as background to urban areas and for recreation by urban dwellers.
 - It is not clear whether the role of rural areas is more as a beneficiary or contributor, which is further confused by the counter-development approach held by rural preservationists.
 - The concept plays down a number of wider economics effects and constrains intra-regional economic relationships.

- Rural areas can enhance the distinctiveness, competitive advantages and branding of cities based on their access to surrounding rural areas, with their distinctive cultural and historical assets.
- The difficulty of considering city regions without a national rural framework.

2.4 Professor Ward concluded that more needs to be done to stimulate cross-boundary working, particularly for RDAs and that central government needs to think more spatially and have a better understanding for places. He also suggested that the smaller rural scale provided many opportunities to experiment and explore innovative ways of working.

Questions and Comments

2.5 David Gluck, Ecotec, advised that a seminar was taking place on Market Town's role in City Regions. This would be in Leeds Town Hall in November and RAF members can attend. David also advised of work the West Midlands RDA are doing work regarding interdependency on thematic matters such as climate change.

ACTION 1: David Gluck to forward details of the Market Towns conference to RAF Secretariat to circulate to RAF membership.

2.6 Cllr Peter Sowray, NYCC, expressed concern at the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) being co-ordinated by YF, an unelected body, rather than the Y&H Assembly. He also feared that local authority transport budgets would be top-sliced to fund urban schemes rather than support the rural infrastructure. Simon Foy advised that local authorities are accountable for the development of such strategies, having to sign them off and that the sub-national review also promotes a number of partnership structures. Neil Ward added that he was happy with economic prioritisation, as long as social and environmental elements follow. Peter Sowray responded that he is not happy with the RSS and RES being just being signed off by local authorities.

2.7 In respect to transport investment, Simon agreed that the figure per head in the regions is less than in other areas such as London and Greater Manchester, so it is a priority to boost such investment. Neil Ward added that he felt that cities regions focus on inter-city and international transport links, but not with their rural hinterland. He feels that the three northern RDAs should work together to form consistent frameworks and strategies.

2.8 Robert Campbell, LEAF, added support for the previous transport concerns and wonders where economies of scale will end. He exemplified this with closures of cottage hospitals and whether the country is moving toward one 'super hospital'. Neil Ward understood the concerns on scale and referred to the Structural Funds Objective 5b funding for the northern uplands and again suggested that the northern RDAs should work together more.

2.9 Dorothy Fairburn, the CLA, felt the term 'City Regions' was not at all positive for rural areas, nor was the insinuation that rural areas were the playground of city dwellers. Simon Foy reiterated that City Regions were not the invention of the RDAs and the concept is supported by local authorities. However it is YF's role to ensure the region has appropriate interventions and links with rural areas and it is important to capture the valuable contributions of rural areas.

2.10 Rob Hindle, Rural Innovation, commented that he was surprised not to have heard reference to the Y&H Rural Framework in the presentation and considered

regional leadership as critical to developing such links. He felt it is important to convey the functionality/logic behind the City Regions set-up to avoid people assuming that it is all about promoting the named city. He added that further clarity is welcomed on the role/consequences for parts of Y&H which form City Regions in other regions, i.e. areas of North Yorkshire linked to Newcastle and Teeside.

- 2.11 Stephen Fox, Rural Community Councils, stressed the importance of evidence, using his experience with the RSS failing to make appropriate links with 'rural', and suggested the involvement of Yorkshire Universities. Simon Foy advised that the rural-urban links present opportunities, including links with Yorkshire Futures and Yorkshire Universities. Neil Ward advised that the use of evidence is critical and that better joint working and outcomes have been made possible with the increasing quantity and quality of datasets and mapping techniques available.
- 2.12 Judy Richmond, National Trust/Regional Environment Forum, queried whether the success measures for City Regions were purely economic, adding that environmental and social issues, i.e. the sustainability of City Regions, also need to be assessed as assessment on the basis of economic measures alone is not sufficient. Simon Foy advised that addressing economic impacts only is not enough and there is a duty to ensure that matters of sustainability and the environment are also incorporated
- 2.13 Graham Joyce, Pennine Prospects, supported Rob Hindle's points, adding that it is important to go beyond the generalities and that more specific information is required. He advised that some City Regions have progressed more than others and it is important for the leaders not to assume that 'one size fits all'.
- 2.14 Cllr David Wells, ERNLLCA, commented that the lack of critical mass in rural areas would limit communities ability vote for their rights and therefore cities should be more accountable for rural areas.
- 2.15 Dave Melling advised that, in preparation for this meeting, he discussed City Regions and rural involvement with Bradford Council colleagues and was left Unconvinced at how far rural had been considered within the Leeds City Region.
- 2.16 Final thoughts from Simon Foy were that City Regions should be seen as a positive step providing opportunities for rural areas, whilst Neil Ward felt that there should be more focus on both local scale and pan-regionally as he does not consider that 'regional' is the way ahead. Graham added that there is a long way to go and rural communities need to ensure that they remain part of the City Regions economic planning.

3. Y&H Rural Framework review: RAF involvement: Rob Hindle of Rural Innovation

- 3.1 [See paper 2](#) and [Rob's presentation](#)
- 3.2 Graham put to the RAF that although 'rural' was seen as needing special treatment a few years ago, i.e. Haskins review, the rural agenda could miss out where activity is mainstreamed once again. Given this, he asked whether members thought the RAF and other regional rural governance structures should be defended. He advised that members should respond individually, although he would be completing a RAF return so responses should be copied to the Secretariat.

ACTION 2: Secretariat to circulate presentation to RAF members and send hard copy of the Framework upon request.

ACTION 3: RAF members to individually complete questionnaire and return to Rob at rob.hindle@ruralinnovation.co.uk by 2nd October.

Questions and Comments:

- 3.3 Helen Wright, ERYC, commented that there are great strengths with the current regional rural governance structure as it brings delivery and decision making down to the local level more and thus should be defended.
- 3.4 Robert Campbell agreed with more focus on the local level, but considered global activity, exemplified by percentage expenditure on food, also to be relevant to local activity and decisions.
- 3.5 Cllr David Wells added that although value for money was a logical way to consider the indicators discussed it may be detrimental to the human rights of rural residents due to their sparsity and lack of economies of scale.
- 3.6 Symon Fraser, Humber Unitary Authorities, added that Yorkshire Forward is already well engaged with rural areas but the issue is a lack of resources, therefore supporting the RDA is key. He also added that there should be performance indicators for rail travel.

4. Y&H Assembly Rural Economy Scrutiny Review: RAF involvement:

- 4.1 [See paper 3 and YHA \(Kelly Jevons\) & Ecotec \(David Gluck\) presentation.](#)
- 4.2 After the presentation David tasked Forum members with responding to the three key questions, adding their comments to respective flipcharts:

1. **Growing new businesses:** which programmes and policies of Yorkshire Forward have been successful in enabling new business start ups in the rural parts of the region?
2. **Supporting existing businesses:** which programmes, policies and interventions have Yorkshire Forward made that have been successful in supporting business growth and diversification in rural areas?
3. **Creating the right setting for investment:** How have Yorkshire Forward created the right conditions for inward investment to the rural areas of the Region?

See member's responses as attached: [YHA & Ecotec rural scrutiny responses](#)

- 4.3 Members were also alerted to the Scrutiny review's public discussion event taking place on 11th October at the Cragland's Hotel, Ilkley.

ACTION 4: If members would like to attend Scrutiny public discussion 11th October event to reply to scrutiny@assembly.gov.uk by 28th September.

5. Chair's updates:

- 5.1 **RAF Climate Change action** [see paper 4](#)
Graham drew attention to the details set out in paper 4. He advised that he had

spoken to a number of parties, with a good level of endorsement, and suggested the best way forward to be a day seminar involving parish councils. RAF members responded positively to this suggestion.

ACTION 5: Members to send any further comments on the proposal to Graham via the Secretariat (yhraf@goyh.gsi.gov.uk) by end of October 2007.

5.2 Post Office network restructuring [see pdf 'map and start date'](#)

Graham advised that an area where the RAF could potentially influence the Post Office network restructuring process was on the provision of outreach services. The RAF Secretariat/Steering Group would also circulate a further update to members in coming weeks on consultation start dates, how and where to respond.

ACTION 6: Secretariat to liaise with Steering Group to co-ordinate update on Post Office consultation to be circulated to members (and via Rural Matters) early October.

5.3 Foot and Mouth update

Graham has written to Defra minister Jonathan Shaw on this issue and provided several update on the RAF website (see <http://www.yhraf.org.uk/links.shtml>). He advised that an event is to be held 28th September to update and inform various stakeholders on the Foot and Mouth and Bluetongue situations. He suggested that RAF members from the National Union of Farmers and Country Land and Business Association could provide further details.

5.4 Secretariat Outsourcing update

Graham advised that the panel had met with two organisations who had submitted tenders and it was agreed that Askham Bryan College, currently in attendance, would be taking on administrative functions. Technical and co-ordination elements would be outsourced on a specific basis according to the work involved, for which arrangements the Chair and current secretariat are to develop these further.

5.5 Member's Terms of Reference [see paper 5](#)

Graham referred to the Y&H RAF Draft Terms of Reference and asked whether members think the RAF is there to 'do things' or just respond to consultations and put forward views.

ACTION 7: Members to put forward any comments on the Draft Terms of Reference to the Secretariat by end of October 2007.

5.6 Graham also advised that he and the SG were considering issues relating to rural affordable housing which may result in future action for the RAF.

6. Dates of next RAF meetings:

Tuesday 12th February

Tuesday 17th June

Summary of Actions: Rural Affairs Forum meeting 25th September

ACTION 1: David Gluck to forward details of the Market Towns conference to RAF Secretariat to circulate to RAF membership (*email circulated 8th October*)

ACTION 2: Secretariat to circulate Rob Hindle's presentation to RAF members and send hard copy of the Framework upon request (*email circulated 26th September*)

ACTION 3: RAF members to individually complete questionnaire and return to Rob at rob.hindle@ruralinnovation.co.uk by 2nd October.

ACTION 4: RAF Members wishing to attend YHA Rural Scrutiny public discussion on 11th October event to reply to scrutiny@assembly.gov.uk by 28th September.

ACTION 5: Members to send any further comments on the Parish Climate Change proposal to Graham via the Secretariat (yhraf@goyh.gsi.gov.uk) by end of October.

ACTION 6: Secretariat to liaise with Steering Group to coordinate update on Post Office consultation to be circulated to members (and via Rural Matters) early October (*email circulated 2nd October*).

ACTION 7: Members to put forward any comments on the Draft Terms of Reference to the Secretariat by end of October 2007.