

Dear Consultee

Review of the Yorkshire & Humber Rural Framework

Aim of the Framework

The overall aim of the Yorkshire & Humber Rural Framework is to direct action that addresses the inefficiencies of governance and delivery structures, identifies and articulates the region's rural priorities based on sound rural evidence, and ensures that the region makes the best use of available resources

Intended as a 'living and dynamic' document, the Framework was developed and agreed by regional partners over six months between the autumn of 2004 and the spring of 2005, as a response to the Government's Rural Strategy 2004. It set up a new structure for regional rural governance, setting up and linking strategic (Rural Priority Board), practitioner (Rural Practitioners Steering Group) and customer groups (Rural Affairs Forum), and encouraged the development of rural groups and effective partnership working at sub-regional level and invested to improve the regions rural evidence base.

Changing circumstances

Public policy drivers for rural areas now are very different to those which led to Lord Haskins review of rural delivery in the aftermath of the Foot & Mouth crisis. Government's focus on rural areas and communities as a 'special case' worthy of dedicated interventions has waned, and been replaced by a belief that key issues of concern for Government (social exclusion, community vitality, economic productivity, housing, sustainable development and climate change) affect people, places and businesses wherever they are situated.

New public policy drivers are emerging; continued devolution of power and resources to local areas, the increasing importance of communities and neighbourhood in service planning, local partnerships taking the lead in 'place shaping' and service delivery, the prospect of City Regions and multi-area agreements across local authority boundaries, the importance of natural resource protection and sustainable development to address climate change.

Purpose of Review

This new context means that it is important to review the role and impact of the Rural Framework; to consider what sort of progress has it made in achieving its objectives, and how its priorities, and the structures which it created might need to evolve in order to remain relevant. We are taking stock with a view to the future.

To do this we are consulting partners to the Framework. We would like to understand how the Framework has contributed to your organisation / interests / role, and whether in your experience progress has been made towards its goals of articulating clear priorities for rural delivery, simplifying the way that services are delivered to customers and developing greater coherence between rural policy and other regional strategies and delivery plans.

Your views

In considering how the Framework should develop and respond to this changing context, we are interested in your perceptions of the impact and/or influence that the Framework has had to date in providing a focus for rural activity in Yorkshire and the Humber, namely:

- Has it been effective?
- Has it made any difference?
- If so how?
- What has worked well, what has failed?

On behalf of the consultancy commissioned to undertake this initial review for the Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber, I would welcome your response to the set of questions set out below. If, however, you would rather simply address the challenges raised in the four bullet points above, I would still be pleased to have your thoughts. Your views will not be attributed to you as an individual, or to your organisation, unless of course you particularly ask for them to be.

Please respond directly to me at rob.hindle@ruralinnovation.co.uk. It would greatly help me report on time if you could **please let me have your response by 2nd October**.

Many thanks for your input; I look forward to hearing from you.

Rob Hindle
Rural Innovation

QUESTIONS

Q1: Structures

a) Do you feel more able to address the region's rural priorities as a result of the development of the new structures at regional and sub-regional level? If so, how? If not, why?

Q2: Funding (Targeting, Management, Impact)

a) Has the development of the Framework and its related structures influenced the way that funding to address rural priorities has been targeted and managed?

b) Have any changes in the way that funding is managed improved the impact that funds have achieved? Have such changes addressed inefficiencies (of governance and delivery structures), encouraged synergy and reduced waste?

Q3: Influence

Have you seen any evidence that mainstream service deliverers and partnerships are aware of the region's rural priorities (*in your particular area of interest*) and have been influenced to take action to address them, for instance through Local Area Agreements, Sustainable Community Strategies, or specific service delivery, eg the way that Primary Care Trusts or Police Services operate? If not, what more do you think needs to be done?

Q4: Reducing Complexity

a) One of the big issues which the Government's Rural Strategy sought to address was the complexity of programmes and schemes to support rural areas, and the confusion that this

caused to businesses and people trying to access them. Do you believe that the situation has improved? Is it easier for people to find, understand and access support than previously?

b) The Framework sought to streamline overlapping initiatives and partnership activity in the region - do you feel that it has been successful? Has streamlining produced any casualties that you regret along the way?

Q5: Evidence

Do you believe that the quality and range of evidence available to you to target interventions and measure impact in rural areas has improved over the last two years? If so, what sources of evidence have provided this improvement?

Rural Innovation

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