



Terms of Reference

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This document describes the Terms of Reference for the Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs Forum (Y&H RAF) as at September 2007.

1. Background

- 1.1 The eight regional Rural Affairs Forums were created as a result of the Rural White Paper (2000) as a primary means by which grass-roots customers of public services can give direct feedback to Government to ensure services meet rural needs. The Forums are independent bodies, constituted by the regions themselves. Their membership reflects main stakeholder interests who can also have an effective voice in regional policy-making, programmes and delivery of services.
- 1.2 Defra's Rural Strategy 2004 promoted a more streamlined approach to policy-making and implementation aimed at improving the quality of life for those living and working in, and enjoying the countryside. Rural stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sector were asked to review structures for decision-making and delivery in their respective regions through the development of a regional rural framework. Modernising rural delivery entailed simplifying and reducing the number of existing groupings overseeing rural matters and this was taken into account by regional partners in formulating the Yorkshire and the Humber

Rural Framework. It was agreed that the role of the Y&H RAF needed to be strengthened through enlarging its membership and that two further governance bodies should be created, namely:

The Rural Board – to provide high-level strategic direction to, and coordination of, the development and implementation of rural policy at regional level and to act as ‘rural champion’ across the regional agenda.

The Rural Practitioners’ Group (RPG) – to bring together key ‘suppliers’ of Defra’s rural policies and programmes in order to maximise synergy in investment and delivery. The RPG will also assist the **Rural Observatory** in collecting and analysing data for the regional rural evidence base.

1.3 The Framework also encouraged the development of **sub-regional rural partnerships** to champion and promote joint working on the rural agenda to more local levels of decision-making on policy and investment.

1.4 The new structure became operational in Spring 2006.

2. Purpose of the Y&H Rural Affairs Forum

2.1 The role of the Forum and its members can be summarised as follows:

“To be the recognised rural voice of Yorkshire and The Humber to influence rural policy-making and delivery.”

(Y&H Rural Framework, pg 31)

2.2 The Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs Forum seeks to influence rural policy-making and delivery by:

- Regularly bringing together a wide and representative range of rural stakeholders to discuss and represent the views and concerns of the rural ‘customer’ to Ministers, regional organisations, local government and other service providers as appropriate
- Representing the region’s rural interests to the Rural Board and Rural Practitioners Group
- Contributing to the continued development, implementation and monitoring of the Y&H Rural Framework
- Contributing to the rural proofing of regional and national policies through promoting consideration of the rural needs and interests of the region.
- Contributing to the development of an evidence-based understanding of the key issues facing the region and rural England as a whole, including assisting research by the Commission for Rural Communities and others
- Responding to consultations, nationally and regionally
- Facilitating activity at the sub-regional level where appropriate through links with sub-regional rural partnerships and other, more local partnerships and consultations as appropriate.
- Putting forward regional views to inform the Chair’s quarterly meetings with Defra’s rural Minister and with other RAF Chairs.

- Initiating, coordinating and facilitating activities as necessary that might help raise awareness of rural issues within the region and encourage or demonstrate effective ways of addressing them.
- 2.3 In summary, therefore, the Y&H RAF acts as an independent sounding board for national and regional consultations as well as providing a Forum for collective representations to national and regional bodies and a network whereby members can pool expertise and action.

3. Structure and Membership of the Forum

- 3.1 Membership currently comprises around 70 organisations, to establish effective customer linkages across the range of rural stakeholders (see Annex A). Additional requests for membership should be submitted to the Secretariat via a membership registration form (see www.yhraf.org.uk) and will be considered in the light of additional knowledge, experience and commitment that applicants can bring to the Forum.
- 3.2 The Forum is supported by a smaller management body, the Steering Group, comprising 8 -12 individuals appointed by the Chair for their experience, skills and personal standing to develop and take forward the Forum's work.
- 3.3 The Forum Chair is a member of the Y&H Rural Board and is supported by a nominated Vice-Chair.
- 3.4 The Secretariat is led by the Sustainability and Rural Affairs Directorate of the Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber, with certain functions outsourced as of September 2007.

4. Requirements of RAF members

- 4.1 The Forum aspires to have a national, regional, sub-regional and local profile, as appropriate, and therefore members should be able to think and operate at both a local level and at a regional, strategic level.
- 4.2 In addition to representing their nominating organisation, members must be able to engage with and represent their wider sector and also have a role in ensuring that rural customers can identify a clear route of engagement with the Forum. Members should be of sufficient status and have been empowered by their organisations to sit on the Forum.
- 4.3 The Chair may nominate members, where appropriate, to represent the Y&H RAF and its views at meetings, events etc.
- 4.4 The full role and responsibilities of Forum members is set out in Annex B.

5. The Chair

- 5.1 The role of the Chair is to provide leadership and advocacy for the Y&H

RAF and represent the Forum regionally, nationally and locally. Key duties include chairing RAF and Steering Group meetings and representing the Y&H RAF at regional and national level, most notably at the quarterly Ministerial meetings.

- 5.2 The Chair is selected by interview following open nominations from Forum members. The interview panel is drawn from senior representatives of key regional organisations and adheres to set criteria marking.
- 5.3 Full details of the Chair's role and responsibilities are set out in Annex C.

6. Vice-Chair

- 6.1 The role of the Vice-Chair is to support and deputise for the Chair as appropriate.
- 6.2 The Vice-Chair's selection is made by the Chair following open nominations, with support from the Secretariat, for a two year term.
- 6.3 Full details of the Vice-Chair's role are set out in Annex C.

7. Steering Group

- 7.1 The Steering Group (SG) membership comprises 8 to 12 RAF members, inclusive of the Chair and Vice-Chair, who meet regularly (at least quarterly) with a primary aim of managing the Forum's work programme.
- 7.2 SG members are selected by the Chair from invited open nominations by Y&H RAF members. Selection is based on the principle that the group should comprise individuals whose knowledge of and involvement in rural matters, together with their skills, experience, personal standing and commitment, makes them well qualified to develop and take forward the detailed work of the Y&H RAF. SG membership will also seek to link with democratic structures such as the Y&H Assembly and local authorities.
- 7.3 Full details of the Steering Group's role and responsibilities are set out in Annex D.

8. Secretariat *To be update to reflect new arrangements late 2007*

- 8.1 The Sustainability and Rural Affairs Directorate at Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber will coordinate Secretariat support for the Forum.
- 8.2 As soon as resources permit, and in the interests of demonstrating the Forum's role as an independent voice, a Coordinator will be appointed to provide independent briefing to the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Steering Group.

- 8.3 The proposed Coordinator and the Secretariat will undertake complementary roles in making arrangements for meetings, briefing the Chair, and preparing the agenda, reports and minutes for the meeting. The Secretariat will handle enquiries and provide a contact point for people who are interested in finding out about the Forum.
- 8.4 The Secretariat has been delegated authority from Defra to approve expense claims from the Chair, and others where appropriate, and manage the Defra contribution to the RAF budget (see section 11).

9. Meetings

- 9.1 The full Forum will normally meet three times per year across the region, wherever possible at rural venues accessible by public transport. Meetings will be timetabled to enable subsequent input into the ministerial meetings and to interlock with other regional governance meetings, e.g. the RPG.
- 9.2 Meeting dates and papers will be communicated and distributed via email, one week in advance of the meeting. They will only be sent via post in the exceptional circumstance of a member not having access to email.
- 9.3 Meeting dates will normally be set at least a year in advance.
- 9.4 Where appropriate, the Forum may set up task and finish groups to respond to consultations, commission research or undertake special projects. Individuals with an academic or specialist background may be co-opted to work with the Forum. Details in members' registration forms will inform this process.

10. Communication

- 10.1 Communication between the RAF Secretariat and with members will be primarily by email, with the only exception being those who do not have an email account. Those without access to email will be posted a hard copy of key documentation, such as papers for meetings and minutes; however, there is an onus upon them to check the YHRAF website periodically for other updates.
- 10.2 'Rural Matters', the newsletter of the Y&H RAF, will be circulated bi-monthly by email to members and a wider readership. This will report back on Forum activity, provide information and updates and include articles submitted by members.
- 10.3 To facilitate communication and networking between members, the Secretariat can provide members' contact details when requested by other members, unless specifically indicated on their registration form that they do not wish this for this.

11. Financial Resources

11.1 The Y&H RAF receives an annual facilitation budget from Defra to enable it to operate. The Forum seeks to augment this budget with other financial and 'in-kind' contributions from members, in the form of staff time, office resources etc. The deployment of resources will be over-seen by the Chair and the Steering Group. Expenditure and resources will be detailed in the annual report.

12. Monitoring and Review

12.1 The Forum operates in a rapidly changing policy and delivery environment and therefore its function and composition will be kept under continuous review.

12.2 Activities of the Y&H RAF will be reported regularly to Defra ministers and officials, as the main the sponsoring department of RAF, as well as and other regional RAFs via the RAF Secretariat Network.

12.3 An annual report of Y&H RAF activity will be approved by the Steering Group and submitted to members.

13. Further information

13.1 Any queries concerning these Terms of Reference should be directed to the Secretariat in the first instance at:

Y&H RAF Secretariat
c/o Sustainability and Rural Affairs
Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber
Lateral
8 City Walk
Leeds
LS11 9AT

Email: yhraf@goyh.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.yhraf.org.uk

Annex A: Y&H Rural Affairs Forum Membership

1 Askham Bryan College	36 Natural England
2 Association of Local Government Archaeologists	37 Nidderdale AONB
3 British Association for Shooting & Conservation	38 North York Moors National Park
4 Bishop Burton College	39 North Yorkshire County Council
5 Business in the Community	40 North Yorkshire Police
6 Business Link	41 Northern Dales Farmers Markets
7 Campaign to Protect Rural England	42 North Dales Hill Farming Initiative
8 Capacity Builders	43 Peak District National Park
9 Churches Regional Commission	44 Penistone LEADER+
10 Commission for Rural Communities	45 Pennine Prospects
11 Connexions	46 Regional Directorate for Public Health
12 Country Land and Business Association	47 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
13 East Riding of Yorkshire Council	48 Selby LEADER +
14 East Riding of Yorkshire LEADER+	49 Soil Association
15 East Riding & Northern Lincolnshire Parish Councils Association	50 South Yorkshire Metropolitan Authorities
16 Ecotec	51 The Humber Economic Partnership
17 English Heritage	52 The Monitoring Group
18 Environment Agency	53 West Yorkshire Metropolitan Authorities
19 Feast	54 Women in Rural Enterprise
20 Federation of Small Businesses	55 Women's Food and Farming Union
21 Forestry Commission	56 Women's Institute
22 Framework4Change	57 Yorkshire Agricultural Society
23 Future Years - Regional Forum on Ageing	58 Yorkshire and Humber Assembly
24 Farming and Advisory Wildlife Group	59 Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum
25 Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber	60 Y & H Historic and Environmental Forum
26 Growing Routes	61 Y & H Regional Environmental Forum
27 Howardian Hills AONB	62 Y & H Regional Forum
28 Humber Unitary Districts	63 Yorkshire Rural Community Council
29 Humber & Wolds Rural Community Council	64 Yorkshire Culture
30 LANTRA	65 Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
31 Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)	66 Yorkshire Forward
32 Learning and Skills Council	67 Yorkshire Local Councils Association
33 Lincolnshire Forum for Agriculture & Horticulture	68 Yorkshire Tourist Board
34 National Farmers Union	69 Yorkshire Water
35 National Trust	70 Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Annex B: Y & H RAF- The Role and Responsibilities of Members

The effectiveness of the Y & H RAF depends upon the willingness and commitment of its members to be active participants and to engage both with the sector they represent and with other members.

1. Role and Responsibilities

- 1.1 A RAF 'member' is taken as someone who, or whose organisation, has registered their details and interests with the Secretariat and subsequently had their membership status confirmed.
- 1.2 Members will represent a specific rural sector (or sectors) at RAF meetings and not just their particular organisation. Members should also be able to take account of the wider regional perspective.
- 1.3 Members should ensure effective communication with and within their sector, thereby ensuring their rural 'customer' base can identify a clear route of engagement with the Forum. This should include consultation within their sector on relevant agenda items before meetings and timely dissemination of information after meetings.
- 1.4 Members are expected to serve at least a two year term and to regularly attend meetings of the RAF. If a regular member cannot attend, a pre-advised deputy is preferable to no representation. It is expected that the deputy would be briefed by the regular member prior to the meeting.
- 1.5 Members should be prepared to join, and contribute to, task and finish sub-groups focussing on specific issues or projects.
- 1.6 Members should act as an advocate for the views and work of the RAF regionally and nationally as appropriate.

2. Skills and Expertise of Forum members should include:

- A broad and deep knowledge of their sector and a willingness to engage in the wider rural debate with their wider networks
- The time and resource to devote to the Forum and the commitment to be a full and proactive participant;
- The ability to articulate views concisely.

3. Remuneration

- 3.1 Unfortunately members will not receive any direct remuneration for time spent on Forum duties, including loss of income. In some cases, out-of-pocket expenses can be reimbursed if members do not have an organisation from which to claim, provided this is agreed in advance by the Secretariat and that resources permit.

Annex C: Role Description for Chair and Vice Chair

1. Chair: Purpose of Role

- 1.1 To provide leadership and advocacy for the Y&H Rural Affairs Forum and represent the Forum regionally, nationally and locally.

2. Chair: Role and Responsibilities

- 2.1 In addition to the responsibilities set out in the members' role description, the Chair will be expected to:
- Provide leadership to the Y&H Rural Affairs Forum.
 - Chair all regular meetings of the Y&H RAF, including conferences
 - Chair meetings of the Y&H RAF Steering Group
 - Be a member of the Y&H Rural Board, responsible for ensuring communication and feedback between the Rural Board and the Rural Affairs Forum / Steering Group.
 - Represent the RAF in discussions at regional and national level, most notably at the quarterly Ministerial meetings.
 - Develop and maintain knowledge of rural issues and delivery arrangements within the region.
 - Develop good joint working relationships with public agencies and organisations relevant to the RAF's interests within the region, particularly key regional stakeholders - Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber, Yorkshire Forward, the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly and Natural England
 - Encourage effective communication between RAF members and between the members and their sectors and help to ensure that the attendance and contribution of members is maintained to a high standard.
 - Understand similarities and differences between Y&H sub-regions.

3. Chair: Time Commitment

- 3.1 It is estimated that the Chair's role will involve a minimum time commitment of approximately 20-25 working days per year to cover:
- 3 Y&H RAF and up to 6 Y&H RAF Steering Group meetings
 - 3 or 4 Y&H Rural Board meetings
 - Attendance at RAF Chairs and Minister meetings (4 per year) and preparation for such meetings.
 - Attendance at other national and regional meetings, events and conferences as appropriate.

4. Vice-Chair: Role and Responsibility

- 4.1 The role and responsibilities of the Vice-Chair is to support and deputise for the Chair as appropriate. The skills, qualities and role of the Vice-Chair should mirror those for the Chair as set out above. The Vice-Chair will have an opportunity to act as 'champion' for various issues as agreed, for example the Rural Framework, Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food, Housing etc.

5. Chair and Vice Chair: Support and Training

- 5.1 Support provided by the Secretariat to the Chair and Vice-Chair includes: arranging meetings; briefings as necessary; preparing and dispatching agendas, reports and minutes for meetings; publishing 'Rural Matters'; maintaining the website and database of members; facilitating contact between members; and acting as contact point for those interested in the RAF and its work. The Secretariat will also arrange for training to be provided for the Chair and Vice-Chair as necessary.

6. Chair and Vice Chair: Remuneration

- 6.1 Unfortunately the Chair and Vice-Chair will not receive any direct remuneration for time spent on Forum duties, including loss of income. In some cases, out of pocket expenses can be reimbursed if either do not have an organisation from which to claim, provided this is agreed in advance by the Secretariat and that resources permit.

7. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

- 7.1 The Chair and Vice-Chair will serve initially a two year term. They can be re-appointed for a second term but must then stand down.

Annex D: The role and operation of the Steering Group.

1. The Steering Group are responsible for:

- Managing the Forum's work programme and agreeing meeting agendas
- Responding to issues arising between full RAF meetings or matters of urgency, as necessary, on behalf of the Forum
- Joint responsibility with the Chair for the RAF's financial affairs
- Acting as a link between RAF members and the Chair.

2. Forum members can ask the Steering Group to consider developing particular areas of Forum activity, which may involve expressing opinions or passing information to bodies such as Defra and appropriate Ministers, through the Chair

3. Operation of the Steering Group

- The group will meet every two months at agreed dates set in advance
- Meetings will require a quorum of at least six members
- Deputies will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances
- Additional members may be co-opted on a temporary basis to add expertise on specific matters
- Papers for meeting and other communication will be circulated electronically
- The Secretariat will circulate agenda and papers at least seven days prior to each meeting
- The Secretariat will post minutes of the meeting on the Y&H RAF website
- The Chair reserves the right to replace any SG member should their contribution or attendance be deemed unsatisfactory.