



**Minutes of the Yorkshire and Humber Rural Affairs Forum  
Steering Group Meeting held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009  
At NFU, Agriculture House, Tadcaster Road, York YO24 1UD**

**Present:**

Graham Ward (GPW)	Chair
Mike Feist (MF)	Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber
Helen Wright (HW)	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Heather Garnett	Nidderdale ANOB
Howard Petch (HP)	Commission for Rural Communities
Peter Nottage (PN)	Natural England
Tim Frenneaux (TF)	Yorkshire Forward
Cath Lee (CL)	FSB
Richard Ellison (RE)	NFU
Steve Willis (SW)	Food & Farming Forum
Carol Casson (CLC)	Secretariat

**1. Introductions and Apologies**

**Introductions**, Lynsey Brooks Policy Advisor FSB

**Apologies**, Shelagh Marshall, Stephen Fox, Dave Melling

**2. Minutes of the meeting held on**

These were agreed as a true record.

**Action Points**

Action points were noted.

Food Security – There are a number of meetings in the region in the next few months to discuss the topic.

**3. The Future Structure of YHRAF**

Regional Government structures are connected around the Regional Thematic Boards, they provide strategy and structures. The RAF provides a rural voice and a base of expertise.

The Rural Board is likely to disappear, the Sub Regional Structure will lose connection if the Rural Board disappears and will be replaced by a Functional Sub Regional Structure.

The Steering Group will be much bigger, to incorporate the Rural Practitioners Groups, Rural Board and RAF. The new Chair will be independent and will be selected by a panel most likely to be made up of YF, CRC, GOYH and LGYH. After much discussion it was decided that the new structure would include 8 representatives from LAs to include 1 officer and 1 elected councillor from each. GW advised that he had had talks with Sheffield and they would be interested in joining, he has also had talks with Gary Fielding of North Yorkshire Rural Partnership.

HG felt the need for some political people from the LAs as they can take forward what is happening in the wider world.

The Sustainable Development Board will be appointing a person with rural expertise, but it was decided this was not a job for the RAF Chair. All agreed that this person must sit on the RAF Steering Group. This position will be advertised in October. TF advised that he would take the comments back to Yorkshire Forward but we cannot interfere with the nomination process.

The Vice Chair will be elected by other members of the SG group, representatives from Yorkshire Forward, GOYH, LGYH and CRC will be nominated by their respective organisations. The Chair of the Food & Farming partnership will also be in the group.

In addition 2 environmental representatives, 2 economy and business representatives and 2 social representatives will be nominated by RAF members of the Forum, but it was stressed that they will be appointed by the Chair as there must be a balance within the group.

RE stressed there must be an agricultural representative in the group. SW agreed.

It is likely sub groups will be set up to deal with specific topics

HP said the Terms of Reference were a sound basis in which to move forward, the new structure needs time to bed in.

#### **4. Secretariat**

GW outlined the current funding. Monies will be available from Yorkshire Forward over a 3 year period. This has to be managed by an accountable body, an organisation not related to the Coordinator/Secretariat function. It was also pointed out that this could not be run by a trust. Discussions took place as to why this function could not go to tender. This maybe a option if an accountable body cannot be found.

It is likely the new Chair will Chair RAF meetings and attend some external meetings, it is essential to appoint a Co-ordinator with significant rural expertise who will drive the whole thing forward. It is expected they are likely to come from Local Authority, RCC's etc. RE & HP both agreed that the Coordinator was an executive function and we must be prepared to pay for the right person. HW agreed that they must have good knowledge. RE suggested that it would be better to pay for the right person for a shorter time rather than appointing someone who is not really suitable.

**GW left the meeting at this point and MF took over as Chair**

#### **5. Forum 13<sup>th</sup> October**

SM has put together some initial ideas for a forum on ageing in the rural community, but this has not been progressed. MF asked do we want to suggest a different theme or postpone to a later date.

Food security and farming were suggested. It was therefore decided that Bishop Burton would be a good place to hold an event with this topic on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010 to give plenty of time to arrange

**Note: The Forum on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010 is now booked for Bishop Burton College.**

MF will approach SM to go ahead with forum on ageing with a change of venue and possibly date.

## **6. Feedback on City Regions**

HW advised that Hull & Humber Ports City Region is progressing well, they need to get structures in place. One of the challenges is what is best addressed at City Region or drilled down to grass roots. Humber Rural Partnership has representatives on themed groups. We need to look at how City Regions will develop further and make sure rural activity is taken seriously by key players.

MF advised that the West Yorkshire meeting was concerned with how to take things forward. Leeds City region now have a coordinator who is looking to develop a work programme.

North Yorkshire comes under York and North Yorkshire Rural Partnership, it is sometimes difficult to get cooperation from York. Janet Wagget Chief Executive would welcome representation with RAF.

South Yorkshire is currently in discussions with Yorkshire Forward. Barnsley has requested members ideas on what rural agenda might be.

PN asked how does this affect the Rural Partnerships, do the City Regions replace them. HW said we need the right people around the table. SW stated that lines of communication need to be kept open with all partnerships. MF said that Leeds City Region is very important. PN emphasised that we need to be very careful who we are inviting. HG pointed out that parts of North Yorkshire are in both the Leeds City Region and North Yorkshire Partnership. If West Yorkshire is leading how does North Yorkshire fit in? TF advised that West Yorkshire are making sure they continue on to Craven and beyond, the people on the ground understand that links need to be made.

## **7. Uplands Enquiry**

HP advised the publication of the report has been put back to mid December, they have been overwhelmed by the volume and complexity of the evidence. They are committed to test the emerging findings with key stakeholders. Natural England are due to publish their vision for the uplands on 12<sup>th</sup> November.

TF asked if the report would have distinct areas

HP said the report will address national and regional dimensions, they realise that each of the 6 areas are different and there will be policy recommendations.

RE asked if there was a commitment by Government to act on recommendations.

HP advised that the report was commissioned by No10, mindful of the fact there will be a general election a meeting has been held with the shadow team to ensure the report is not shelved.

CL asked if the report would be placed within the public domain. HP said it would be and it is hoped it would be seen as an upbeat report. We have probably underestimated what a national asset the uplands are.

RE asked if it would challenge Natural England's aspirations and are you talking with them.

HP advised that it would be a fine balance not to lose independence. We have to be true to the evidence heard by a substantial amount of people. This was an enquiry in which we have to reflect the evidence heard.

PN stated that the core message was to value the uplands.

## **8. Regional SNR Structures**

TF outlined the major SNR structures. The Integrated Rural Strategy has made a commitment to rural proof. The 4 Regional Thematic Boards will have 2 additional workstreams, climate change & environment and quality of life & equalities.

PN asked how the workstreams would fit in. TF advised that they will report to the respective boards.

The Sustainable Development Board will have an independent Chair and will have places for all interested parties. It will be there to challenge and inform.

This will be in place by 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

The Integrated Rural Strategy will have a formal consultation, gathering and analysis of evidence will take place from November until summer 2010. TF will share the key lines of enquiry with the Steering Group for comment.

The strategy should address key strategic challenges at regional level, this is a massive opportunity for rural evidence gathering.

There will be a part local economic key lines report produced in March/April next year and a regional conference in February to discuss what is emerging.

MF asked how you see RAF having an input. TF advised by sharing messages and evidence.

## **9. AOB**

MF advised that South Yorkshire have agreed that they would like to form a partnership with RAF.

### **Date & time of next meeting**

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Venue TBC

**Actions from meeting held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009**

<b>Agenda Item No</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Still Outstanding</b>
2(2/12/08)	Action 1: Food security to be agenda item for Forum meeting. <b>Agreed to be subject of Forum on 9/2/10</b>	GPW/Secretariat	Yes