

Notes from Forum Meeting 16/10/08

The Chair welcomed everyone to Bedern Hall and gave a brief history and introduced the topic of the Forum “Rural Poverty”

Questions & Answers

Stuart Burgess – Rural Advocate

Kathy Faulks – Voluntary Action Leeds

Q. Re benefits take up. Most of the posters relate to fraud rather than benefit take up. Is the government putting the same amount of money into advertising benefit take up?

A. Will take question away and clarify with Dept of Work & Pensions.

Sally Rawlings – Rural Action Yorkshire

Q. In the Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire & Humber rural economy has been erased at Government level. Rural areas will stagnate if not allowed to develop. Fuel poverty is influencing the Regional Housing Boards role.

A. I echo your disappointment, but keep plugging away. Many strategies are worked over and in terms of urban it is difficult for the rural voice to be heard. Spread best practise and keep a good rural representation.

Question by ???

Q. What type of things would you like to see in the Rural Development Programme to address rural poverty?

A. This is a hard question to answer. I will reflect on it in the next few weeks and come back to you.

Tim Frenneaux Yorkshire Forward outlined the RDPE programme Looking to break low pay/low skills particularly in land based sector. Employers offering good quality jobs are likely to get funding although they are starting to see the impact of the credit crunch on some applications.

Shelagh Marshall – Vice Chair YHRAF

Commented that York & North Yorkshire had been successful in getting people to claim council tax benefits. 1 in 4 people are eligible to claim.

The 2nd annual affordable warmth conference is on Dec 5th.

Q How do you measure the 30% increase in the level of poverty?

A SB referred to the recently conducted report.

Camila Govan – Action for Market Towns

We need to take hold and drive forward the Sub National Review at local level. There is a high skill base in rural areas. We need to develop broadband etc.

SB. I totally agree there are a number of rural areas unable to get broadband connections. I have a meeting with BT next month. We need to drive forward and develop local business. There are a number of women working from home, WiRE are able to assist with start up difficulties.

Heather Garnett – NYCC Councillor

Q Rural transport is an issue, there are very few transport opportunities in rural areas, and people are unable to get to work or further education. The wheels to work scheme is an excellent idea, but have heard that Yorkshire Forward will not be supporting it in the future.

A. Affordable housing & rural transport are top of the agenda. Work on rural transport is critical. Wheels to work are excellent schemes, it can be beneficial and life changing, in some areas there is a community transport bus and dial to ride. The Northern Fells group have 25 volunteers around 6 villages. Most schemes are short of money

Tim Frenneaux – Yorkshire Forward

I am not aware that we are pulling funding from the schemes. It is something I will look into.

SB If you come up with any ideas or solutions please let us know we are open to hear from you.

Judy Richmond – National Trust

The warm front package is not open to the tenanted sector. Landlords should be encouraged to improve their tenanted houses.

SB Excellent point in some areas it has been acted on but it depends on good landlords.

Insulation managed by energy companies is not consistent.

Dr Tom Smith OCSI

Copies of the OCSI report are on CRC websites

Clare Slater – Ryedale DC

Q. It would be useful to tie up the information with postcode classification. As a small Local Authority how do we pull the information together?

A Local Government Association gets support from OAK, commercial providers will always give more support.

David Gluck-Ecotec

David had recently facilitated at a workshop for RAF Steering Group members to enable a response to “Transforming places changing Lives” a short presentation followed.

Rt Hon Michael Jack MP

MP for Fylde and Chairman of the Select Committee in the House of Commons

Tasked to monitor what Defra does

“Countryside a place to do business in” the government will respond to a select commons paper.

I would welcome comment on the governments response

Shelagh Marshall – Vice Chair RAF

Q. In rural proofing the common denominator is the number of people. It is desirable for Governments Depts to mainstream rural.

A. Public resources are under strain. Further monies could be moved from department budgets. Defra has been through change and could go through more. Asked how they quantify rural, they don't see a comparison and contrast between rural & urban.

Question by ????

Q. There is a strong emphasis on Food & Farming. Hill farming is going through change. What assistance and support can Defra give to enable them to sustain a vital role?

A. Talk about it realistically as part of the rural economy. Farmers are feeling pain, but need to recognise they are part of mixed economies. There is exciting entrepreneurship in hill farming areas. RDA & National Parks understand they are part of sustainability. CRC are looking at uplands and economy over the next 12 months.

Heather Garnett – NYCC Councillor

Q. Following the reorganisation of Government departments and the management of food production and bio-diversity where do the Environment Agency & Natural England stand?

A. They are part of the Defra family . We have recommended a cabinet minister for climate change who would support all complex interactions where climate change was concerned. We don't know how the new department will interrelate with Defra. The Secretary of State is before the Select Committee in November so watch this space after November 5th .

Sarah Robinson – Rural Action Yorkshire

Provision for childcare in rural areas gets overlooked. A Sure Start project in Middlesbrough, were given monies for a well equipped nursery which now stands empty, I set up a nursery business in a rural area supported by parents, and is the largest employer in the village but is now closing because of lack of facilities. In villages nurseries etc are delivered from buildings which are not fit for purpose and no investment or help is given.

A. It's the fine grained nature of policy it doesn't pick up on real world problems. A tiny bit of finance would make the cogs go round. It is a challenge because without the childcare facility parents can't work and rural businesses can't take off.

Stephen Fox – Regional Forum

Regeneration Project plans to put communities in control. Local communities need to ask "how can we do something about things we had and now don't. Rural Local Authorities know their areas but often come up against problems i.e. National Parks with planning etc. How do we get the message through to mainstream?

Stuart Burgess

There are many different players in rural England we need to try and get together a consensus and work together. In the end we all want a vibrant community, it is an enormous challenge.

Heather Garnett – NYCC Councillor

NYCC is looking at how to deliver 14-19 education, how do you get young people to schools & colleges? The policy is not thought out.

Marion Blacker

We hear about affordable and sociable housing they are not the same. We want affordable not sociable housing in rural communities.

A. Matthew Taylors report outlined that affordable is designed to lower the price to enable to buy whereas sociable is to rent. How do you get the balance between say holiday lets that bring money into the rural economy and living in a rural area? The key is planning we need to educate people to understand.

Judy Richmond – National Trust

The removal of climate change from Defra could have a detrimental effect. In North Yorkshire the peat uplands have an important role and are vital to reducing CO2. Will there be a link back to Defra.

A. Defra hasn't lost responsibility, there will be a link. The Select Committee will not be losing its monitoring role.