

Rural Matters

OCTOBER 2008

Newsletter of the Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs Forum

Welcome to the **OCTOBER 2008** issue of Rural Matters. The aim of the Y&H RAF, which comprises a wide and representative range of rural interests, is to provide an opportunity to influence policy-making and delivery affecting rural parts of the region and to further the implementation of the Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Framework (see: [Rural Framework](#)).



Report on YHRAF Forum Meeting By Graham Ward



Michael Jack MP



Stuart Burgess

We had an excellent Forum meeting this month. The Rt Hon Michael Jack, who is chair of the Defra Select Committee (EFRA), gave a very good insight to Westminster politics. He concentrated on the Defra delivery of its responsibility for Stronger Rural Communities. The EFRA report is imminent and Mr. Jack asked that the YHRAF should respond to the Government reply which usually follows about six weeks after his report is delivered. We will post the EFRA report on our website and the Govt reply when it appears on which we should like your views. He also commented about the changes at Defra following the creation of a separate Govt Dept to deal with climate change and thought it a good opportunity to re-emphasise food production and security within the departments priorities. To this end the Rural Board had a presentation by Mr McWhir from the Defra Food Security Team. There will be a Northern Consultation Event shortly and you can find the Defra consultation on the website. I think it is fair to say that in our "rich" economy that long term food shortage is unlikely, but there is too much food poverty and poor diet both in urban and rural communities. The Food Security Consultation (page 29) has five major Indicators, four of which are about these issues and it is these indicators on which your views are so important.

The rest of the Forum dealt with rural poverty issues. The YH Regional Forum had especially raised this issue at Steering Group and Regional Practitioners meetings.

Stuart Burgess the Rural Advocate enlarged on the CRC work and reports. This emphasises the difficulties of identifying both the location and indeed the persons being affected in smaller communities. In much of West and South Yorkshire the problems of industrial decline both of Coal and Steel tend to overlay and mask other rural aspects. Stuart highlighted the need for evidence, to ensure in a mainstreaming culture, proper consideration was being given at LSP/LAA levels as well as at higher regional and national priority discussions to these smaller pockets of deprivation. The higher level indicators do not necessarily do this.

Tom Smith from the Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion then presented a very interesting paper on the work they have been doing to tackle this very issue. His talk will be posted on the website. The RAF will be working with the Regional Practitioners Group over the next couple of months to try to ensure we can get this type of evidence for the Y&H region. It was interesting other members of the Forum believe there is also other "public" evidence available which could help and we will be including these members in our discussions. Another issue raised was the need to increase uptake of benefits already available and again we will look at this to see if RAF can help. (A copy of the presentation can be found on our website under Forum).

Finally David Gluck gave a short overview of the work RAF is doing to prepare a response to the Communities and Local Govt consultation on "A Framework for Regeneration" This of course, deals with delivery of much Government resource to deprived areas which often coincide with poverty. It is a mainstreamed document which is supposed to cover both urban and smaller communities (rural). This is where we must fight to ensure equitable delivery. Rural is no longer special and different we are just smaller and spatially separated. (A copy of the presentation can be found on our website under Forum).

A major job for groups like the RAF, who represent these communities, is "rural" proofing all these strategies and delivery indicators so that we are being the Rural Voice. We will post our response on the website along with the one from CRC.

Inquiry into the future for England's Upland Communities by Howard Petch

Dr Stuart Burgess the Government's Rural Advocate and chairman of the Commission for Rural Communities has launched a wide ranging inquiry into the future for



England's upland communities. England's uplands correspond to 'less favoured areas' and include the northern spine of the Pennines, Cumbrian fells, the upland moors of Yorkshire and the West Country, the Shropshire hills and a part of the Black Mountains in Herefordshire.

The need for the inquiry is a consequence of evidence from:

- Visits by the Rural Advocate to Cumbria, North Yorkshire, Northumberland and Devon providing first hand accounts of hardship and growing concerns from those living and working in upland areas.
- Reports of finding from a range of recent studies presented in a review of research into the uplands by University of Worcester
 - The CRC State of the Countryside Reports over a decade that have served to highlight increasing levels of disadvantage in England's remote and peripheral areas.

These sources of evidence have raised many issues of concern but three are deemed of particular significance;

- A downturn in hill farming
- Changing and increasingly challenged upland communities
- Increased interest in the concept of public goods especially when applied to the upland context.

The primary goal for this inquiry is:

To identify and evaluate drivers of change in the upland communities of England, and to develop and promote realistic policy recommendations that enable and equip these communities to move towards more secure, economically prosperous and sustainable futures

It is anticipated that the inquiry will achieve three related project outcomes:

- Better informed policymaking and decision taking of national, regional and local stakeholder bodies

- A greater clarity and an enhanced understanding of how upland communities function and an improved awareness of what choices or options are available for their futures. Future upland strategies reflect the views and aspirations of the wide ranging interests of stakeholders integrating social, economic and environmental goals.

The scope of the inquiry will be framed by the following main areas of investigation:

Address the apparent absence of, and need for, a more sophisticated analysis of the changes and issues affecting upland communities

- Take the concept of public goods and benefits further, prepared to challenge narrow interpretations of what they are or could be.
- Introduce some fresh economic modeling of how upland communities work, to include developing future scenarios.
- Draw upon international experience in search of innovative approaches and solutions.

The inquiry will be place based, focusing on the people who live and work in the uplands to provide an holistic consideration of both the issues and the potential solutions. In addition the inquiry will seek to hear from a wide range of opinions, from government officials, local elected representatives, special interest groups, local businesses and organisations and others seeking to submit opinion and evidence.

It is intended the inquiry will report to the Prime Minister in September 2009.

Further information about the CRC and this work can be found at

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk

LEADER

Yorkshire Forward is pleased to announce that the South Pennines LEADER Group; Yorkshire Dales LEADER Group; North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Group; East Peak Innovation Partnership; Coast, Wolds, Wetlands and Waterways; and Northern Lincolnshire Rural Local Action Group have all successfully submitted applications to deliver a community led approach to rural development known as 'LEADER'. The six partnerships are now set to receive a share of over £16 million over the next 6 years to fund activity which will encourage and support rural economic development. Anyone who would like to become involved with a LEADER group should make direct contact with the partnership covering their geographic area. Partnerships will be happy to tell you about the work which they have already undertaken and to explain how you can become involved with LEADER. Contacts details for all of the LEADER groups are available from the Yorkshire Forward website - www.yorkshire-forward.com/rdpe

Rural representation on the proposed new regional governance structures

By Mike Feist GOY&H

At its October meeting the Rural Board endorsed the recommendations put forward in a paper by the RAF and RPG on how distinctive rural interests would best be represented in the new structures proposed in the joint submission by Local Government Yorkshire and Humber [LGYH] and Yorkshire Forward [YF] to the government's consultation on the sub-national review [SNR].* The recommendations are aimed at ensuring the rural dimension to policy and delivery is properly represented on decision-making bodies to inform and support their work when the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly is wound up next year..

The Board is recommending to LGYH and YF that:

The Boards of the two key SNR partners should each nominate a member to have a specific responsibility for rural aspects of their Board's work,

Each of the proposed 4 regional thematic Boards covering spatial planning, regeneration and housing, work and skills, and transport identify members who will represent rural interests and act as a link with the RAF.

The RAF Chair should represent rural interest on the proposed cross-cutting Independent Board which aims to test the Integrated Regional Strategy development and delivery against sustainable development and diversity principles.

* YHRAF's response and the background to these recommendations can be found on:

<http://www.yhraf.org.uk/consultation-responses.shtml>

Pennine Prospects win Heritage Lottery bid

The Heritage Lottery Fund have approved the bid Pennine Prospects made for the Watershed Landscape within the South Pennines. This covers the upland plateaux and moorland fringes which form the water catchments for supplying the major conurbations of Leeds, Manchester and the towns of the area. HLF have earmarked £1.97m from their Landscape Partnerships programme, with a Stage 1 approval to work up the projects in more detail. These cover access improvements, local history/geology projects, habitat restoration, Community engagement and training. The programme complements work planned under the Leader programme, for which we received an approval worth £2.8m of EU/Defra money. Both of these programmes involve cross border working with those parts of the North West that lie in the South Pennines.

*Graham Joyce
Pennine Prospects*

Yorkshire Rural Community Council changes name to Rural Action Yorkshire

In a move to better reflect its role as a charity organisation championing and enabling Yorkshire's rural communities, Yorkshire Rural Community Council is changing its name to Rural Action Yorkshire from 1 October 2008.

After 70 years as YRCC, the name change not only reflects a more dynamic, modern, approach but also supports a focused organisation seeking to work even more closely with communities in North, South and West Yorkshire.

Chief executive Sally Rawlings says; "YRCC has had a long and successful history but political and funding changes across the UK means there is a growing need for rural communities to have a stronger voice. We intend to deliver this throughout Yorkshire and at all levels of government.

"Rural Action Yorkshire' confirms that we are not merely a traditional charity but that we are an organisation determined to make a difference for people living in rural communities".

"We will be focusing on four key areas of need; community led planning, access to services, community owned assets and affordable rural housing".

"We are working with around 30 parishes in helping them develop community led plans that not only set out a vision for the community but influence local authority plans and planning applications too."

Rural Action Yorkshire will also be working with around 25 communities to help them improve people's access to services including advising on social enterprises, supporting video link facilities in the Yorkshire Dales and promoting the use of youth cafes, village shops and post offices.

Enhancing the use of community owned assets like village halls will also be a key focus and Rural Action Yorkshire will be providing ongoing grant support and advice to halls across the region.

Sally adds; "YRCC's work on affordable housing has been well recognised, with our advisers in North and West Yorkshire now being employed directly by local councils". We will now focus on enabling affordable housing in South Yorkshire and also supporting the setting up of community land trusts."

On a political level Rural Action Yorkshire will be focused on getting rural voices heard at local and regional government level.

The name change also reflects a national trend where many rural community councils are also moving to more action focused names to better reflect the needs of rural communities in future years.

Rural Action Yorkshire will be based in Skelton, York, for the coming months but is also establishing subsidiaries for North, West and South Yorkshire, so that its work can be based in the locality rather than one central point near York.

Calling all sheep farmers in Yorkshire & Humber



Calling all Yorkshire and Humber sheep farmers – help target funding to where it matters

If you are a sheep farmer in Yorkshire and Humber and passionate about skills and training then the LandSkills Industry Advisory Board (IAB) needs you!

LandSkills, part of the Rural Development Programme for England, needs a representative from the sheep industry to help steer the development of the programme and ensure funding available is targeted to where it matters.

For more information or to download an application form visit

<http://www.lantra.co.uk/businesses/england/yorkshire-and-humber/landskills> alternatively call 0845 707 8007 or email LandSkills@lantra.co.uk

The Deadline for applications is 31 October 2008

FWAG designed woodland wins award

Congratulations to Wheatlands Educational Community Woodland which is the discretionary award winner of the 'Yorkshire Rose Conservation Award' from York's entry in the Yorkshire in Bloom 2008 competition.

The woodland was designed by Yorkshire FWAG for FWAG member Barry Otley. The judges remarks included "The Visit to Wheatlands Community Woodland and the enthusiasm of the volunteers together with the education programme for children was really inspiring. The project had excellent interpretation and leaflets aimed at involving children in nature conservation". The Wheatlands Educational Community Woodland (WECW) is a not for profit organisation. Providing interesting exercise & NEW curriculum based children's on farm and woodland education pack.

Wheatlands is situated off the A59 alongside the A1237 York Ring Road behind Wyevale Garden Centre. Entrance off Northfield Lane Upper Poppleton - volunteers welcome. Contact Barry Otley for details
Tel/Fax: 01904 738008
E.mail: barryotley@btconnect.com

"Stop the drop"

The North Yorkshire branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England have been busy supporting the national 'Stop the Drop' campaign. The campaign, launched earlier in the year by writer and conservationist Bill Bryson, aims to return the countryside to its former glory without the eyesore of litter dropped by visitors and rubbish dumped by fly-tippers.

In August the Ryedale branch attended the Ryedale Show and Helmsley Green Day. These events helped raise awareness and resulted in thirty new volunteers being recruited. A map illustrating where the volunteers are beginning their clean-up work was displayed and 'pickers' were given Stop the Drop bags especially for the clean-up task. The branch has now organised a litter pick on Saturday 1st November in Helmsley. The party of pickers, armed with tongs and bags and sporting reflective jackets, will be starting in Helmsley Market Place at 10am. The event will be led by local CPRE President and Rievaulx resident Sir Richard Beckett.

Craven branch are working with Westmoreland Fisheries in Skipton to step up the campaign to reduce take-away packaging litter, starting in the market town of Skipton.

Having lived in Skipton for 20 years Westmoreland Fisheries owners, Ian and Janet Price, were sick of seeing litter around the town. Ian said "To keep up with the competition we were forced to use polystyrene boxes as an alternative to the traditional paper wrapping. Polystyrene does not biodegrade, and was often seen floating along the canal in the town". Until recently there was no environmentally friendly alternative.

Henry Colbeck, one of the biggest independent suppliers to UK fish and chip outlets has revolutionised the market by introducing the Bio-Box. The box is made from the left-over plant material after sugar cane has been processed. This material was previously burned as it had no use, creating further environmental issues. The boxes rot down after 90 days, keep the food warm, and have even been said to help keep the fish crispier!

On Wednesday 15th October 35 guests enjoyed Westmoreland Fisheries wares and listened to CPRE member Bruce McCleod explain the need to use environmentally friendly packaging. The diners were encouraged to get their local takeaways to follow Westmoreland Fisheries and use biodegradable wrappings. With over 10,000 fish and chip shops in the UK it is a large quest but one which needs tackling.

For more details of what is being done in your local area please visit <http://cprenorthyorkshire.org.uk/>



Business Link

There are more than 270,000 businesses in Yorkshire and the Humber which contribute to an economy worth in excess of £80 billion. With a population growing to more than 5 million people this region ranks alongside countries including Ireland, Greece, Norway and Singapore. At Business Link Yorkshire our aim is to make Yorkshire and the Humber a great place to start and grow a business; an aim that has been strengthened by the wide variety of inspiring business personalities we are meeting throughout the region. We have been working closely with many businesses in rural communities since our launch on 1 April 2008. We provide one to one business support with either our start up or established advisers who look at ways to provide the most effective solutions with the most relevant and specialist support available. We also run a wide reaching and engaging program of free business seminars and events which are fully accessible to people all over the rural community and throughout Yorkshire and the Humber. We are committed to building vibrant, diverse and sustainable local economies – built around competitive and entrepreneurial businesses. Despite the challenges the rural community, and indeed the wider economy faces we are passionate about helping local businesses to maximise their chances of setting up, surviving or growing.

Helen West, Chief Executive of Business Link Yorkshire said:

“Rural retail businesses often need to operate with a greater flexibility than their urban counterparts as they are often the only local service provider. This programme aims to work with existing businesses to ensure that they offer a wide range of goods and services to their customers.”

Yorkshire Forward is investing £170,000 of funding from the Rural Development Programme for England in a pilot programme that will enable essential retail businesses in rural locations to diversify and add to the services that they offer.

Successful businesses applying for support from the Rural Retail Support Programme can benefit from help up to a total value of £10,000 support per business. This can cover both specialist advice to the business and small scale capital investments in developing the business for the future.

The programme will be managed and delivered on behalf of Yorkshire Forward by Business Link Yorkshire, the organisation providing free support for businesses in the Yorkshire and Humber area, offering information for any business, no matter what its size or stage of development.

Having identified the basic requirements of the business with Business Link Yorkshire, the package may include access to the services of a specialist business advisor with an understanding of the issues facing retail businesses in rural areas. The business adviser can help the business assess the underlying business, look at new opportunities, the local market and take forward any actions that result from this assessment.

In addition to specialist support, grant support will be made available for essential capital improvements identified in the action plan. This could include internal or external improvements to the property that will increase

the viability of the business, making a shop more attractive to a wider range of customers, or investing in equipment needed to develop new income streams. The Business Link's business adviser can help retail businesses in rural areas assess whether they are eligible for this grant and how to apply for it.

Qualifying businesses need to be the only essential retail service in that community, and already be considering significant changes to the services they offer. They also need to be prepared to invest in the changes along with the grant support. Businesses benefiting could include village shops, or independently owned petrol filling stations and public houses that already offer a wider range of products for sale to their rural community.

Andy Tordoff, Head of Rural Renaissance and Tourism for Yorkshire Forward said:

“Yorkshire Forward aims to support the development of rural businesses and encourage them to diversify to meet the needs of their customers and the local community. Investing in pilot projects like this helps us to develop a way forward that supports communities at a local level.”

Silsden Town Hall gets a new look



Silsden Town Hall's new look was recently unveiled as its doors were thrown open to the public for the first time since its ground floor was refurbished.

The £41,000 scheme has meant a large part of interior of the building, which is managed by Bradford Council, has been given a facelift. Work has involved transforming a room and bar into a meeting room with new flooring, lowered ceiling, computer desks, chairs, seating, storage space, telephone points and broadband connection.

The official opening was carried out with special guests The Lord Mayor of Bradford Coun Howard Middleton and Lady Mayoress Colleen Middleton.

The work has been funded with £41,000 grant from the Government's Modernising Rural Development (MRD) fund which aims to boost the services and economy of rural areas. Yorkshire Forward is delivering the rural strategy - Airedale Connection Project - which it is hoped will see rural areas can reap the benefits of the Airedale Masterplan, a regeneration programme for the Shipley/ Bingley/Keighley area. The Masterplan is being managed by the Airedale Partnership which is led by private sector organisations with the backing of the Council and Yorkshire Forward. Anyone who wishes to hire a room at the Town Hall should contact Mark Davies, Bradford Council's Community Halls Manager, on 01274 431576

What RAF had been doing for you.

- Taking part in discussions with CRC and the NW and NE RAF's together with our Development Agencies regarding the uplands economy and the upland review. (see Howard Petch's contribution)
- Together with the Rural Practitioners Group developing a paper for the Rural Board on the possible future structures which could aid "rural" proofing of the proposed new regional structures and production of the Integrated Regional Strategy (See Mike Feist's contribution)
- Responded to the SNR consultation (see website)
- Held workshop with the Rural Practitioners Group to develop a response to the CLG consultation on regeneration strategy and delivery. (See David Gluck presentation at Forum on website)
- Started visiting South Yorkshire Local Strategic Partnerships to talk rural in conjunction with Rural Action Yorkshire (formally the RCC)
- Taken part in workshop discussing the Regional Five Year Climate Change Strategy
- With other RAF chairs met with Defra Minister Jonathan Shaw. Finalised the partnership agreement between RAF's and the CRC. Started formalising how RAF's with partners will monitor Defra delivery of its DSO Stronger Rural Communities.

Updated website on continuous basis. This has we hope all relevant conferences and consultations posted asap. It also carries reference background information

Things to do for next two months

- Finalise and agree the new regional rural structures and start shadowing the new regional SNR ongoing process. liaise with partners like the sub regional Rural Partnerships and the Sustainable Farming Group to ensure joined up thinking and progress
- Continue to engage with LSP's to track how the needs of scattered rural residents and businesses are being serviced
- Establish contact with new Defra Minister (Mr Hugh Irranca-Davies) at RAF chairs meeting and maintain contact with Regional Minister
- Respond to the rural housing consultations (on website)
- Follow up the Forum presentations with the RPG and the Rural Observatory to get better evidence for support of smaller communities in equitable service delivery at all levels
- Follow up the Select Committee report and Govt response on the Stronger Rural Communities delivery by Defra.
- Remain in contact with membership to ensure we are meeting their aspirations that we are picking up members messages and representing the Rural Voice. Please make this a two way process

NOTICEBOARD

A selection of Rural Events & News

Nov 2 - Fireworks Spectacular – Castle Howard

Nov ☐- Bonfire & Fireworks Askham Bryan College

Nov 23 – Santa Trains - Embsay Steam Railway

Nov 2☐-30 – St Nicolas Fayre – York

Nov 2☐ Dec 6 & 13 – Grassington Dickensian Festival

Nov 2☐- Dec 21 – The House at Christmas – Castle Howard

Various weekends in Dec – Santa Specials NY Moors Railway

CONFERENCES

Nov 4 - Tackling Climate Change – St James Park Newcastle

The role of trees, woodlands & forestry

Nov12 – West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum – Annual Conference The Bromsgrove Hotel

Nov 2☐- Yorkshire Assembly consultation event looking at housing & planning issues facing Yorkshire & Humber. Keynote speaker Regional Minister Rosie Winterton MP – Park Inn York

For more information e-mail Events @yhassembly.gov.uk before ☐ November

Nov 28 – The Regional Forum Annual Conference - Sheffield

"Engaged & Independent". Keynote speaker David Blunkett MP

Nov 2☐- Yorkshire Rural Community Council – Whixley Empowering your rural community

Further details of all the conferences can be found on our website www.yhraf.org.uk