



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 2009.

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 The Government'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 and to 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.
- 1.5 In 2008/9, this structure was reviewed in the light of experience to date and major change in regional and sub-regional governance structures under the Government’s Sub-National Review (SNR) programme and an emphasis on a City Region approach. The result was to simplify the rural governance arrangements set out above by incorporating the RPG into the RAF and seeking assurances that the role of the Rural Board would be satisfactorily covered at a senior level of decision-making within the new SNR Boards.
- 1.6 The review also resulted in the publication in July 2009 of a refreshed version of the regional Rural Framework under the title, ‘Maximising the Rural Potential’. (See <http://www.yhraf.org.uk/documents/rural-framework/>) The original aims of the Framework remain unchanged but the refreshed document seeks to highlight the key roles played by the rural parts of the region in contributing to Yorkshire and the Humber’s economy and wellbeing and priorities for action in realising opportunities as well as tackling the problems and barriers facing rural areas.
- 1.7 Changes in the RAF’s structure, which come into effect in Autumn 2009, are set out below. The RAF’s purpose and objectives remain unchanged.

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 Objectives

- To influence a wide range of public, private and independent organisations on rural policy issues in the region, including the importance of social and economic well-being.
- Promote awareness on how sustainability issues within the region can best be tackled through working in partnership and effective communication.
- Inform national policy development and implementation through advice to and meetings with the rural Minister of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), other RAF Chairs, the Commission for Rural Communities and other bodies as appropriate.

2.3 The Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs Forum seeks to further these objectives by:

- Regularly bringing together a wide range and representative range of rural stakeholders and expertise to discuss the views and concerns of the rural 'customer' and to represent these to Ministers, regional bodies and organisations, local government and other service providers as appropriate.
- 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 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.
- Using the skills, resources and expertise of individual members to gather evidence, collate and share information with partners and other stakeholders.

2.4 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 of the Forum currently comprises around 70 organisations, who cover and link to a wide range of rural stakeholders (see Annex A). The Membership is open to others via a membership registration form (see www.yhraf.org.uk) and applications are considered in the light of additional knowledge, experience and commitment that applicants can bring to the Forum.
- 3.2 The Forum and the Chair is supported by a smaller management body, the Management Group, whose role is to develop and take forward the Forum's work.
- 3.3 In addition the RAF currently embraces three main sub-groups within its structure: the Rural Practitioners' Group, which consists of officers responsible for delivering policy and programmes affecting rural areas across the region; the Food & Farming Forum, which focusses on agricultural matters; and the Financial Sub-Committee which deals with budgetary matters and accountability, and works with the RAF's accountable body. Further sub-groups or task and finish groups will be considered where these can best help realise the RAF's objectives.

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, through them, their constituents and wider membership 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 convened by the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, acting on behalf of Defra. It will be drawn from senior representatives of key regional organisations and adhere to set criteria

5.3 Full details of the Chair's role and responsibilities are set out in Annex C.

6. The 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 Steering Group, for a two year term.

6.3 Full details of the Vice-Chair's role are set out in Annex C.

7. The YHRAF Management Group

7.1 The Management Group (SG) will consist of individuals who have been nominated by partner organisations, all of whom are YHRAF members, or selected from nominations made by YHRAF members as follows:

- Chair – Independent. Selected from respondents to public advertisement by a panel of regional/national stakeholders /funders (LGYH, YF, GOYH, CRC).
- Vice-Chair – elected from nominations by SG members.
- Two members nominated from each of the four Functional Sub-regional rural partnerships. One to be an elected Councillor and one to be an official.
- Local Government Yorkshire and Humber – nominated by LGYH
- Yorkshire Forward – nominated by YF
- Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber – nominated by GOYH
- Commission for Rural Communities – nominated by CRC
- Food and Farming Partnership – Chair or nominee of partnership
- Two representatives from the Forum's environmental membership – selected by Chair from RAF members' nominees

- Two representatives from the Forum's economy and business membership - selected by Chair from RAF members' nominees
 - Two representatives from the Forum's social sector membership - selected by Chair from RAF members' nominees.
 - Sustainable Development Board member (may also be one of the above)
- 7.2 Representatives are either nominated by key organisations, eg sub-regional rural partnerships, or 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 aspects of their particular sector, together with their skills, experience, personal standing and commitment, makes them well qualified to develop and assist the Chair in taking forward the detailed work of the Y&H RAF. SG membership also seeks to link with democratic structures - the Joint Regional Board and its associated Thematic Boards and local authorities.
- 7.3 Note. As key rural bodies, it is expected that nominees from Natural England and the Rural Community Councils would occupy one place for their respective sectors. It is also expected that both agricultural production (e.g NFU) and other rural business (e.g FSB) should be represented from the economy and business sector.
- 7.4. The Management Group will meet regularly (at least quarterly) with the primary aim of managing the Forum's work programme and providing active support to the Chair.
- 7.5 Full details of the Steering Group's role and responsibilities are set out in Annex D.
- 7.6. Sub-groups. The new Management Group arrangement will be complemented by sub-groups and 'task and finish' groups. With the exception of the Finance sub-committee, which will report direct to the Chair and the Accountable Body, the sub-groups will operate independently within the YHRAF family. At present the sub-groups comprise the Food and Farming Forum and a Rural Practitioners Group which, like its predecessor, will focus on practical issues of rural policy and service delivery. Further sub-groups may be established as necessary but 'task and finish' groups are likely to be the best way of dealing with specific rural issues. All sub-groups will report to the Management Group and the RAF.

8. The Secretariat

- 8.1 Secretariat services are provided on contract. Funding for this is currently provided by Defra and Yorkshire Forward with additional support in kind being provided by the Environment Directorate of Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber (GOYH) and by key partners. The GOYH role is

primarily to provide strategic and technical advice through its links with Defra and other government departments and networking with other regional Government Offices.

- 8.2 The Secretariat acts as the first point of contact for members and potential members, handles day-to-day communication and meeting arrangements, writes and circulates minutes, prepares the RAF newsletter and manages the website content. The RAF seeks to augment these administrative function through a coordinator who can develop and implement technical aspects of the RAF's work.
- 8.3 Secretariat functions are set out in Annex E

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.
- 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 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. Those without access to email may on application 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 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 members specifically indicate on their registration form that they do not wish this.

11. Financial Resources

11.1 The Y&H RAF receives an annual facilitation budget from Defra to enable it to operate. Funding is also currently provided by Yorkshire Forward. Additional support in kind is provided by the Environment Directorate of GOYH and by key partners and 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 is overseen by the Chair and the Management Group, with the Financial sub-committee monitoring expenditure.

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 the RAFs, and other regional RAFs via the Government Offices 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. The address is set out on the Y&H RAF website - <http://www.yhraf.org.uk/index.shtml>.

13.2 In the event of any difficulty please contact:

Y&H RAF
c/o Environment Directorate
Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber
Lateral
8 City Walk
Leeds
LS11 9AT

0113 341 2866

Annex A: Y&H Rural Affairs Forum Membership

1	Action for Market Towns	40	National Farmers Union
2	Askham Bryan College	41	National Trust
3	Association of Local Government Archaeologists	42	Natural England
4	Bishop Burton College	43	Nidderdale Plus
5	British Association for Shooting & Conservation	44	Nidderdale AONB
6	Bradford MDC	45	North Lincolnshire Rural Forum
7	Business in the Community	46	North York Moors National Park
8	Business Link	47	North Yorkshire County Council
9	Calderdale MBC		Northern Dales Farmers Markets & Hill Farming Initiative
10	Campaign to Protect Rural England	48	Farming Initiative
11	Churches Regional Commission	49	Parish Councils Association
12		50	Peak District National Park
13	Commission for Rural Communities	51	Pennine Prospects
14	Connexions	52	Regional Directorate for Public Health
15	Country Land and Business Association	53	Pennine Prospects
16	Development Trust Association	54	Regional Forum on Ageing
17	East Riding of Yorkshire Council	55	Rural Yorkshire
18	CWWW Leader (East Yorks and Ryedale)	56	SIRIUS
19	Ecotec	57	Stockbridge Technology Centre
20	English Heritage	58	University of Hull
21	Environment Agency	59	Welcome to Yorkshire
22	ERNLICA	60	West Yorkshire Metropolitan Authorities
23	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group	61	Whitby Town Beacon
24	Feast	62	WKD Consulting
25	Federation of Small Businesses	63	Women's Food and Farming Union
26	Food & Farming Forum	64	Yorkshire Agricultural Society
27	Forest Enterprise	65	Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum
28	Forestry Commission	66	Y & H Historic and Environmental Forum
29	Farming and Advisory Wildlife Group	67	Y & H Regional Environmental Forum
30	Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber	68	Y & H Regional Forum
31	Growing Routes	69	Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
32	HCA	70	Yorkshire Forward
33	Howardian Hills AONB	71	Yorkshire Local Councils Association
34	Humber Economic Partnership Ltd		
35	Humber & Wolds Rural Community Council		
36	Kirklees Council		
37	LANTRA		
38	Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)		
39	Learning and Skills Council		

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 Forum members will not receive any direct remuneration for time spent on Forum duties, including loss of income. In some cases, out-of-pocket expenses may 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
- 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 and how these relate to applying the principles of sustainable development.
- Develop good joint working relationships with public agencies and organisations relevant to the RAF's interests within the region, particularly key regional governance bodies and stakeholders – Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH), Yorkshire Forward (YF), Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber, Natural England and the Environment Agency.
- 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 meetings anticipated for inputting to regional governance structures and consultations.
 - Attendance at RAF Chairs and Minister meetings (4 per year, usually in London) 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.

5. Chair and Vice Chair: Support and Training

- 5.1 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. Travel and subsistence and any other 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 Management Group.

1. Management Group members are responsible for:

- Managing the Forum's work programme and monitoring performance.
- 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.
- Where appropriate, overseeing projects, research or sub-group working and/or representing the RAF on relevant committees or regional forums.
- Consulting the sector they represent, and representing their concerns and ideas to the SG and the full RAF to inform regional and national consultations and RAF activity.
- Networking and communicating within their sector to disseminate and support the work of the RAF
- Supporting the work of the Executive Manager

2. Forum members can ask the Management 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 Management Group

- The group will meet at least 4 times a year at dates set in advance.
- 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 and will post minutes of the meeting on the Y&H RAF website
- Meetings will require a quorum of at least twelve members.
- Deputies will only be accepted by agreement with the Chair in exceptional circumstances.
- Additional members may be invited to meetings on occasion to contribute expertise on specific matters.

- The Chair reserves the right to replace any Management Group member should their contribution or attendance be deemed unsatisfactory

Annex E. Secretariat Services to be delivered by Contract.

These may be delivered as a package or separately subject to effective joint working arrangements.

1. Administrative Functions

- a. Support the RAF Chair by acting as first point of contact on administrative and communication matters.
- b. Circulate material, predominantly by e-mail, to RAF Steering Group and RAF as required, eg information from Chair and Steering Group members [mainly weekly]
- c. Consult, set agendas and minute the following meetings: RAF Steering Group (approx six times a year), full RAF meeting (approx three times year) and task and finish or ad hoc consultation meetings or events as required. Circulate minutes to appropriate membership following Chair's endorsement within agreed timescale.
- d. Organise venues, catering, equipment, transport, and all practical matters for meetings of the RAF in consultation with GOYH, RAF Steering Group, and ad hoc meetings
- e. Procure and purchase services at the direction of the RAF Chair in accordance with agreed financial procedures
- f. Maintain accounts for all income and expenditure by the RAF and provide reports as necessary.
- g. Routine website updates (adding links, minutes of meetings etc) through liaison with the web administrator,

Note. The degree of delegation for some functions above- f and g for example - will be reviewed in consultation with whoever undertakes the coordinator function.

2. YHRAF Coordination and Technical Functions

- a. Coordinate engagement of rural stakeholders both from the YHRAF and elsewhere as appropriate, including agenda-setting for RAF meetings, and developing and servicing RAF Sub-Groups and task and finish groups, in consultation with the Chair, group Chairs and steering group as appropriate..

b. Monitor and assess regional and national media for matters relevant to the aims and objectives of the YHRAF, recommend action points to the Chair and steering group and lead or coordinate as appropriate agreed action.

c. Prepare, or assist YHRAF members in preparing briefing, consultation responses and papers on policy matters as appropriate for the Chair, the RAF Steering Group, the RAF, sub-regional rural partnerships and regional governance structures (eg. Sustainable Development Advisory Board and Thematic Boards) ensuring a consistent and high quality style.

d. Initiate, develop and manage projects and events to take forward the aims of the Forum and its sub-groups in liaison with key partners.

e. Represent YHRAF at relevant meetings and committees at sub-regional, regional and national level as appropriate.

f. Review and implement a Communications Strategy for the YHRAF, covering both internal communications and promoting the work of YHRAF and the regional rural agenda to a wide range of stakeholders

g. Undertake lead responsibility for the production, including editing, of Y&H RAF newsletter, "Rural Matters" (currently bi-monthly) and the development and management, including updates, of the YHRAF website to a high standard. (Note: some aspects of newsletter and website activity may be delegated or outsourced).

h. Undertake lead responsibility for:

- monitoring agreed YHRAF procedures re elections, contract arrangements etc
- in conjunction with the accountable body, drafting and managing YHRAF's budget in accordance with requirements set by funding bodies and reporting to the steering group.
- Producing an annual report on YHRAF activities and interim updates for Defra in conjunction with GOYH

i. Supervise and coordinate administrative functions listed under 1. above to the specified deadlines and professional standards.

Notes:

1. Prioritising work on the above functions and activities will be on the basis of a work programme agreed with the Steering Group, and on any necessary day to day issues with the Chair.