

FOOD & FARMING FORUM YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER REGION

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee held at Askham Bryan College, Askham Bryan, York

On Tuesday, 27th April 2010

Executive Committee

Steve Willis (Chair)
David Fraser (Government Office, Yorkshire & The Humber)
Alan Hayes (Yorkshire Forward)
Andy Tordoff, (Yorkshire Forward)
Alan Wolinski (Animal Health)
Helen Wright (East Riding of Yorkshire Council)
Mel Towler (Regional Food Group)
Richard Ellison (National Farmers Union)
Chloe Palmer (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group)
Peter Welsh (Natural England)
George Hamilton (Growing Routes, Yorkshire Agricultural Society)
Dean Cook (Food and Environment Research Agency)

Present

Katrina Williams (Defra Director General of Food and Farming)
Chris Pleass (Defra Head of Finance & Business Management for Food and Farming)
Emma Beech (Defra Policy Advisor / Responsibility and Cost Sharing Programme)
Sally Harrison (Yorkshire Forward)
Steve Hatcher (St Aidan's Church of England High School)
Marian Farrah (St Aidan's Church of England High School)
Mervyn Lewis (Askham Bryan College)

Secretariat

Deborah Hare (Project Manager)

Apologies for absence

Tony Pexton (Rural Affairs Forum)
Nigel Pulling (Yorkshire Agricultural Society)
Dorothy Fairburn (Country Land & Business Association)
Jane Riley (Department of Health)
Dave Melling (Airedale Partnership)

1. Introduction

Steve Willis welcomed Katrina Williams and her Defra colleagues to the meeting. Katrina was presented with a hamper of local produce from Fodder on behalf of the Food and Farming Forum Executive.

Steve welcomed Dean Cook from FERA and informed the group that Dean will be joining the Food and Farming Forum Executive going forward. Thanks were given to FERA for kindly hosting the meetings so far for the Farmer and Researcher Group that has been established, FERA have had a significant input in helping to get this group off the ground.

Steve welcomed Marian Farrah and Steve Hatcher from St Aidan's Church of England High School. They were invited to the meeting to highlight the good work they are doing to make food more exciting for the students.

The members of the Executive Committee and guests introduced themselves.

2. Katrina Williams's address to the Executive

Katrina commented that the value of having the regional stakeholders assembled around the table was enormous, and is interested to see how it all fits together on the ground.

Katrina explained to the group that due to the forthcoming election and purdah rules she would be constrained as to what she could comment on.

Reading the manifestos of political parties, Katrina was pleased to the extent to which food and farming is mentioned, saying this is both significant and important. The future is all about generating excitement around food and farming, focusing economically and socially, about how land is managed, the importance of challenges and the effects of climate change. We can take quite a lot of comfort that all the political parties are talking about how we feed ourselves and how we feed the world.

Also of interest in the manifestos is commonality, in terms of coverage of skills, knowledge transfer, how we boost productivity and how we foster research and development and get it out to the world (an example was the work of FERA).

Katrina stressed there is going to be a challenging period ahead, with important issues around resilience. We need the right sorts of people with the right sorts of skills, and it is how best government can help with this.

With regard to the CAP reform, there will be a big debate and there will be pressures on the EU budget, we need to make sure there is a framework going forward. Public finances in the next year will be challenging.

With regard to the food chain, the question is, what is it that government should be doing and how best to target resources?

Katrina commented she was very keen to listen to the Executive and take away any key messages that we need to focus on and portray to the new leaders.

Katrina thanked the group for inviting her to the region and thanked Askham Bryan College for hosting the day. Katrina thanked Steve Willis for his work as Regional Chair, saying he has a real sense of passion and commitment to the industry.

3. **RDPE update – Andy Tordoff and Sally Harrison (Yorkshire Forward)**
4. **Animal Health & Welfare Initiatives funded through RDPE**
(Presentation available on www.foodandfarmingforumyh.org.uk)

Andy and Sally delivered agenda items 3 and 4 together.

- RDPE budget for 2007–2013 is £65 million, and is split into 5 key programmes:
 - Rural Enterprise Investment Programme (REIP)
 - Rural Business Support Programme (RBSP)
 - Farm Resource Efficiency Programme (FREP)
 - LandSkills
 - LEADER
- In terms of LandSkills, Lantra have produced a report of performance to date, this shows evidence of working well. A handout was circulated to the Executive. Andy stated they are going very much in the right direction.
- The RDAs are under fire that Axis 1 is not being spent, there are issues of confidence in the RDAs and their ability to deliver.
- Adding value to agriculture and forestry products is 32% of the RDPE contracted expenditure. They would make sure they deliver to their promises. They have spent a degree of time working up the programmes and are confident the outputs will be achieved.
- In the region the tourism agenda is in excess of £6 billion, they are maximizing RDPE under this measure.
- They have seen RDPE payments in terms of grant money paid and number of claims rise significantly in quarter 4 of the 2009/10 financial year.
- They have seen less RDPE activity in South Yorkshire, but that area has been subject to Objective One funding.
- Examples of key projects funded through Axis 1 relating to adding value:
 - W Clappison Ltd, Beverley, the project will allow sprouts to be sent direct off farm to the major supermarkets.
 - Makins, Leeds, a soft fruit company, the project will increase automation and reduce the volume of packaging and waste. They are seeing the latter coming through a lot in applications.
- Examples of key projects funded through Axis 3 are:
 - Wenslydale Creamery Visitor Centre expansion
 - Worth Valley Young Farmers – Why local food matters

Comments

Steve Willis raised a question that was asked at the Farmer Group meeting at FERA on the 20th April. With RDPE about a year late in starting, is there any lee way and ability to carry spend over the deadline? Andy replied saying no, although experience has shown when allowing slippage at the beginning of a programme it tends to lead to slippage at end, but they have a set period and are working to October 2013

Steve Willis highlighted he was aware applicants were struggling to match fund projects and asked George Hamilton if they were seeing business development opportunities through Growing Routes. George said prior to 2008 the banks were reluctant to lend money, which resulted in some people

having to put the money upfront themselves, we are now seeing the banking system starting to repair itself which should encourage applicants.

Steve Willis referred to the previous night's meeting at Steeton, Keighley where Katrina met some members from Worth Valley Young Farmers. The young farmers had said this RDPE project had increased the club membership from 50 to 90, as parents were encouraged by the good work the club were doing and wanted their children to be involved.

Chloe Palmer questioned the split of money between the RDPE programmes and wanted to know if the allocated budget for each programme was working out to be at the right level? Saying presumably the split was geared to more strategic investment for greater impact and return. Andy said they are finding they have got the split right, with the size and quality of applicants coming through that they require.

Animal Health and Welfare

- Skills – LandSkills has a number of training courses focusing on animal health and welfare.
- Dairy Infrastructure Programme – Yorkshire Forward commissioned a report from veterinary professionals in the region giving them guided principles on what to look for on economics and standards. The project supports additional investment required for over and above standard best practice. They have set the bar high; it is for those farmers looking at the whole farm plan and long-term investment. Andy stated it is a pilot, and the industry will tell us if it is not right, but judging by the bulk of applications, they have got it right.
- Y&H Regional Pig Collaboration – Managed by BPEX, this project is about disease control rather than disease eradication, looking at what is standard and what is above.

Comments

Mel Towler said the Dairy Infrastructure Programme was very welcome for the dairy industry and questioned how long the funding was available. Sally replied that £1million per year will be available for a couple of years and they will monitor it from then on.

5. St Aidan's Church of England High School, Harrogate – Steve Hatcher & Marian Farrah

There are around 1,950 students at St Aidan's school. 10 years ago contract caterers ran the canteen and they were finding a number of children were eating off site. Steve felt he had to do something to change this and appointed a chef from the commercial world who took a huge drop in salary to join the school.

The suppliers were County driven and deliveries would be left by the back door of the kitchens. Now they get supplies as local as possible and the chef inspects all deliveries. Regular trips are made to visit the suppliers.

Everything is freshly made on site with around 40 tonnes of raw material used each year. 20 varieties of meal are available every day. The school even has a Cimballi coffee machine.

The school employs 5 chefs, 22 catering staff and a gardener, the children benefit from the garden. The school also has a part time Clinical Dietician from the Primary Care Trust.

They feel very strongly that food is about the whole experience not just a point of service. The pastoral work backs up the good work carried out in the canteen, it is the marriage between education and food that is important.

The Yorkshire Forward sponsored cooking bus has been with the school for the last 3 years, which is a great experience for the students helping them learn how to cook food.

St. Aidan's host a website offering detailed information about school meals and nutrition. The address is: www.catering4schools.com

Schools can subscribe to use the website, and St Aidan's are getting schools from all over the world interested, even India and Italy. The website contains about 500 recipes and schools can check nutritional analysis for meals, the site will highlight for example if there is too much salt in a meal.

In July, St. Aidan's school are hosting their 4th annual catering conference, where they will be launching the next version of the website. The conference is aimed at all those with a responsibility for ensuring their school is meeting the Government's nutritional standards and those involved in healthy eating and food education.

Food and drink influence behaviour and the school are conducting an ongoing trial to monitor this. Starting with 200 Year 7 students who wore an accelerometer for 7 days (a device that measures physical activity and the degree of it), and in addition, the students had to keep a food intake diary for that period. The trial will be repeated again in November and so on until the students are in Year 11, to see what progress has been made. The results have highlighted that 83% of students were sedentary between tea and bedtime; from this finding the school are trying to encourage parents to get the children to do some exercise in the evening, even if it is just to go for a walk. The aim of the trial is to improve the quality of food and self esteem, and therefore academic availability will increase.

Students eligible for free school meals get £2/head for a meal, the average price for a 2 course meal at St Aidan's is about £2.

Steve saw the vision and said the local suppliers have been nothing but supportive.

Comments

Katrina Williams asked why the chef appointed took a pay cut, Steve said it was a life change; the chef is now working 7am till 6pm and has weekends off, allowing more family time.

Mel Towler wanted to know if as a result of this good work, they are seeing students looking at careers in food and farming? Steve commented that they have seen increased options for food technology and Marian gave an example of a student who left the school at 16yrs old and after training with some top chefs is now head chef at a top Harrogate restaurant. Marian works closely with the school's careers department, and they have had a managing director from a food manufacturing company come into the school to inform the students about career options in the food industry.

Helen Wright and George Hamilton both remarked that this is great work and questioned why there is not more of this activity in the region. Steve replied, saying that you need to convince the heads and senior management in schools in order to progress this.

Peter Welsh raised a point about education access, linking schools with farms and building on this. Steve and Marian informed the group about the recent trip to a North East farm where they had taken 240 children, saying this is the way forward in terms of education, and its all about getting that experience into the curriculum.

Going forward, St Aidan's are looking at building a resource in the school to allow other school chefs to come in, so they can transfer this knowledge about local sourcing, food and education.

6. Food 2030 – Regional Action Plan – Alan Hayes (Yorkshire Forward)
(Presentation available on www.foodandfarmingforumyh.org.uk)

Alan set the scene for a discussion with the Executive around Food 2030 and the way forward for the region.

- There are 4 key challenges:
 - Impact of renewable energy on food supply chains
 - Climate change adaptation on agri-food
 - What a low carbon economy will look like?
 - Water availability
- Policy is set out at National level but we need to have a regional agenda, Alan questioned if we want more food, more sustainability or both?
- There is no need to reinvent the wheel, best practice does exist and we can learn lots of lessons from other industry.
- No amounts of money will solve this if delivery is not appropriate.
- Yorkshire Forward have led stakeholder events so far in the region, the intention is to build on multiple stakeholder events. Linking in research and innovation and making sure all activities are joined up.

Comments

Steve Willis advised that we do need to try and take a proactive role in the region, to get where we need to be, we need to be able to visualise what it is we need to be looking at.

Mel Towler agreed it is difficult to visualise it, and that there is a need for a bit more urgency.

David Fraser explained there is a plethora of activity going on all around in the region and it is happening without any leadership or guidance. The government needs to lead with a local action plan, we need to decide what the priorities are and get a joined up approach.

Chloe Palmer felt that with the oil price creeping up, agriculture finds it difficult to adapt and are consequently reducing fertiliser inputs amongst other costly inputs.

Steve Willis said that it is about pulling all the core areas together, agreeing with Chloe that the fluctuation in oil prices has made farmers look at input prices.

Andy Tordoff remarked that the dependence on how much money is available going forward would drive what the region can do. We need to make a few simple decisions.

Katrina Williams suggested we need to decide what matters most to the region and highlight the top 3 things that can be done which would allow us to meet some of these challenges.

Alan Hayes responded with the need to increase production and to be more competitive on a global scale, therefore there are 2 key factors:

- Competitiveness
- Sustainability

We need to focus on training and education and plan for the next 3-5 years.

Richard Ellison advised it is essential we link into the work FERA are doing.

Dean Cook reported that Food 2030 is a core mission of FERA and they are currently looking at land use change in the context of climate change. They are working with breeders looking at the sorts of traits breeders should be heading for in 10 years time with regards to what the market impacts will be, and will shortly be looking for demonstration farms. The unit has to decide what the research and development priorities are. FERA has links with sister companies such as the Veterinary Laboratory Agency and has links to industry and policy, they work closely with Leeds University who can act as a hub out to other academic groups.

Helen Wright stated that we need a framework so we know where we can help.

Alan Hayes summarised saying there is a huge amount of existing work and stakeholder investment, and there is the appetite to collaborate and work on this. We just need an independent facilitator to lead and co-ordinate delivery, suggesting the RDA and Government Office are best placed to do this.

Steve Willis urged that the agricultural sector is not left out and is involved from the start. He suggested we breakdown Food 2030 into priority sectors. The commitment to the challenge is exciting.

Action: Alan Hayes to breakdown Food 2030 into priority sectors for the region.

7. Regional Issues

None

8. Any Other Business

Chloe Palmer raised a query about the SSAFO (Silage, Slurry, and Agricultural Fuel Oil) regulations being reviewed and wanted confirmation on the amendments.

Action: Debs Hare to contact the Environment Agency and verify this point.

Steve Willis closed the meeting thanking everyone for attending and for Askham Bryan College for hosting the day.