

# FOOD & FARMING FORUM YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER REGION

## Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee held at the Yorkshire Agricultural Society, Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate On Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Present: Chloe Palmer – FWAG  
Bob Baker – CRC

### Executive Committee

Steve Willis (Chair)  
Dorothy Fairburn (Country Land & Business Association)  
David Fraser (Government Office, Yorkshire & The Humber)  
George Hamilton (Growing Routes, Yorkshire Agricultural Society)  
Jonathan Knight (Regional Food Group)  
Stephen Lofthouse (Young Farmers)  
Laurie Norris (National Farmers Union)  
Nigel Pulling (Yorkshire Agricultural Society)  
David Stirling (Natural England)  
Helen Wright (East Riding of Yorkshire Council)

### Secretariat

Elizabeth Hudson (Project Co-ordinator)  
Cheryl Thomas (Project Administrator)

#### Apologies for absence

Jane Riley (Department of Health)  
Kate Sharpe (Animal Health)  
Ian Smith (Government Office, Yorkshire & The Humber)  
Andy Tordoff, Yorkshire Forward  
Graham Ward (Rural Affairs Forum)

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

Steve Willis welcomed everyone to the Meeting. Introduced Chloe Palmer – FWAG and Bob Baker – CRC who are to address the meeting on their work in upland areas.

The members of the Executive Committee introduced themselves.

Kate Sharpe (Animal Health) has advised that she is moving to take up a more central role and her replacement Alan Wolinski will take up his role as Regional Operations Director from 1<sup>st</sup> July and will be the main contact for the FFF (see attachment).

### 2. Presentation by David Stirling, Natural England

(presentation available on website - [www.foodandfarmingforumyh.org.uk](http://www.foodandfarmingforumyh.org.uk))

Following the 2008, England-wide 'State of the Natural Environment' Report by Natural England all regions were asked to produce region-wide reports which focussed on taking the national SoNE's objectives ('informing policy and decision makers') to the next stage.

Key issues identified in Yorkshire & The Humber are:

- Climate change adaptation
- Green Infrastructure
- Environment & Health
- Landscape Conservation
- Marine Conservation

Natural England cannot achieve all its objectives alone and needs to raise awareness and welcomes positive action from other agencies.

Comments –

NE must ensure its objectives are in line with Government targets – PSA 28. If the latter are not achieved, funding could be withdrawn from the region endangering future support and continuity of effort.

NE needs to publicise details and benefits of new stewardship schemes to ensure farmers and landowners coming out of existing schemes are re-captured. NFU, CLA and FWAG can be key agencies in helping ensure the message gets to the right people.

Dorothy Fairburn felt that Natural England have much to do if they are to make a success of Environmental Stewardship.

The decision makers and the public must realize that the countryside today is not natural. The current condition/appearance is the result of farming practices and policies carried out over previous decades. Any changes to those practices – however well-intentioned - could have a detrimental effect.

Regarding climate change issues, RDA is taking a lead and NE is looking into energy sourcing, managing realignment/retreat of land use, animal habitats moving north, etc.

### 3. Presentation by Chloe Palmer, FWAG

(presentation available on website - [www.foodandfarmingforumyh.org.uk](http://www.foodandfarmingforumyh.org.uk))

Chloe won a Nuffield Scholarship funded by Yorkshire Agricultural Society to look into the realistic options to help hill farming industry in Britain

Themes are 1. Policy 2. Marketing 3. Agricultural Systems

Common themes for success are:-

Regional produce (France has retained regional focus and is very loyal to regional produce and local farm shops)

Collaboration between neighbours

Being customer led – produce what the customer wants

Embrace technology where appropriate – soil testing to cut fertiliser costs

Part time farming – diversification

**Action:**

**The Farmers Forum should address the need for R&D for Uplands farmers**

**SW**

### Presentation by Bob Baker, CRC

This farming business support and development project was formed in 2003, after FMD. With Lantra funding promised for the next 2 years, the team is now expanding into all areas of Yorkshire & The Humber to provide discrete and flexible help and support to people in rural areas, particularly the uplands. Bob and his colleague, are based at Thirsk Auction Mart where they are easily accessible and contact with vulnerable members of rural communities is facilitated by local clergymen.

Steve Willis had also spoken with Howard Petch of Farm Crisis Network to obtain an up-date on the Commission for Rural Communities' official Inquiry into the future of the Uplands. Initial submissions now closed but any valuable input is still welcome. Report is due early June but State of Uplands Recommendations will be published in September/October 2009.

### General Discussion & Comments re Upland Issues

How do we define the Uplands? - Officially and historically this was by soil type – 6 main areas in the England predominantly in the North and South-West and parts of the Welsh Borders. There are suggestions to re-define these Less Favoured Areas by water deficit which would remove many traditional areas from this classification and, possibly, funding.

Is RDPE funding accessible to communities in the uplands? Are grant schemes being advertised effectively?

- Marketing is limited by BERR (Department for Business & Regulatory Reform) which allows only Business Link to market RDPE funding. It is vital to promote the schemes via CRC, FWAG, NFU, NE and CLA.
- Could RDPE 'surgeries' be established with individual consultants available to provide expert advice.

Is location in a National Park a barrier to development of businesses? Opinion differs. Some felt that the environment should be protected by stringent planning laws while others felt that this they are a barrier to investment and profitability.

If the uplands gain a bigger share of funding will this mean less money for more productive/commercial areas?

To date, commercial development of upland areas has failed. Projecting 10 years into the future, with results of climate change, there will be pressure for increased food production and businesses will move in to ensure this is achieved. Land will be the most important asset and it is vital to persevere with technical research and development to ensure the potential of the uplands can be realised.

The Government has established the Food & Environment Research Agency at the CSL, Sand Hutton for this purpose. Steve Willis and Liz Hudson have established links with Fera. An inaugural meeting of the Farmer Focus Group took place on 17<sup>th</sup> March to establish a forum for exchange/disseminate information. Fera will host an open day for farmers in November.

#### 4. Business Plan Up-date

Thanks to those members of the Executive Committee who have contributed. A copy of the up-dated plan will be available on the website.

The project Andy Tordoff proposed at the February meeting is under consideration. With similar activity apparently being considered by the recently formed Destination Yorkshire, (executive includes Andy Tordoff, Jonathan Knight, Gary Verity, Graham Ward), Steve Willis is to ascertain if FFF can add anything of value here.

#### Chairman's Up-date

Breakfast Meeting with Fare Exchange at Yorkshire Agricultural Society  
Environment Agency : Common Ground

Team meeting to review Business plan after Executive Meeting and update member's suggestions  
Informal meeting with Chris Blundell  
Climate Change and Sustainability Event, Wortley Hall - FWAG

Meeting with EFPF - Steve Dunkley  
Inaugural Meeting of Farmer Focus/Science Knowledge Sharing at FERA York

Meeting with Graham Ward, Ian Smith - Topic Local Food. Lizzie Fellows (research Sheffield area)  
Regional Chairs Meeting - see minutes

Liz Hudson / Steve Willis meeting with Ian Smith from Beamsley (Real Food and Farming Ltd)  
Meeting With Yorkshire Forward - Pauline Teale  
Attended a RFG Distribution Seminar

Ian Smith and Steve Willis met Alan Hayes, Sector Manager Food/Drink, Yorkshire Forward.  
With Liz Hudson met Emma Macdonald Natural England Senior Specialist Communications  
Met with Hazel Baker (YAS), Liz Hudson to discuss Careers Day  
Team Meeting at YAS

Meet with Kirstie O'Neil (Hull University) Local Food Research PhD Project  
Peter Welsh, Angus Barret re N.E. Stewardship and environmental schemes  
EFPF Fare Exchange Stakeholder Meeting.  
Dept Health Launch - Yorkshire Man

Animal Health Conference/ Cost Sharing  
Rural Economies Seminar  
Stockbridge /HDC Spring Seminar

Phil Robinson - NE Education links with Liz  
Yorkshire and Humber Sustainable Schools Coordination Group GO

Food & Farming Forum's webpage is now live and can be accessed via the Yorkshire Agricultural Society's website or [www.foodandfarmingforumyh.org.uk](http://www.foodandfarmingforumyh.org.uk). The page is cheap and functional and minutes will be posted there in future.

Role of Katrina Williams was outlined. She is Director-General Food & Farming, Defra, and is adding Sir Don Curry's former role to her present duties. She has been invited to attend our next Executive Committee Meeting in September and our Farmers Open Day at FERA in November.

5. Set-Aside Consultation (until end May 2009)

Consultation to ensure the government's environmental goals and criteria are met.

Two options proposed:

1. Up to 6% compulsory set-aside – may discourage landowners coming out of current ELS (38% of current scheme members expire in 2010) to re-join that scheme so they can use current set-aside land.

2. Voluntary arrangement - proposed by NFU and CLA (Defra now moving towards favouring this arrangement) to recapture the environmental benefits of set-aside

6. Cost Sharing Consultation

Relates to livestock England – devolved areas have separate arrangements.

Defra holding public consultation events in May/June 2009. Local events are in York and Skipton. Whilst times are not convenient for working farmers it does provide an opportunity to voice opinions or appoint a representative to do so.

Dairy industry will have the biggest charge. Different levels of charge will apply which could lead to divisions in the industry.

Many issues to address:- registration of sheep ID, how charges will be collected and when, etc.

7. Regional Issues

None.

8. Any Other Business

FFF organizing an informal breakfast meeting at Farmers Meet at the Great Yorkshire Show 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> July – further details will be advised

Department of Health at Great Yorkshire Show – promoting their Yorkshire Man health initiative – blood pressure test, etc. at cattle lines, the NFU stand and the Natural England stand.

Helen Wright was congratulated on the work done by the East Riding of Yorkshire Rural Partnership regarding their report to highlight the importance of rural areas. Dorothy Fairburn suggested that this should be replicated elsewhere. There will be an East Riding Rural Pathfinder event at Bishop Burton College on 12<sup>th</sup> June

Regional Food Group are pleased to report an increase in members from 300+ 12 months ago to 512, the majority being food producers.

9. Date of Next Meeting – 22 September, 10am at the new Regional Agricultural Centre followed by lunch.

**Action – Attach letter – AH**

**CMT**

**Action - Attach presentation Natural England to website**

**CMT**

**Action – Attach presentation FWAG to website**

**CMT**

**Action - The Farmers Forum should address the need for R&D for Uplands farmers**

**SW**