

Food and Farming Forum

Yorkshire and Humber Region

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Meeting held at the Yorkshire
Agricultural Society, Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate

on Tuesday 22nd September 2009 at 10.00am

Present:

Helen Cleary (Business Link)

Brian Reynolds (Business Link)

Executive Committee

Steve Willis (Chair)

David Fraser (Government Office, Yorkshire & Humber)

George Hamilton (Growing Routes)

Alan Hayes (Yorkshire Forward)

Jeremy Jones (Animal Health)

Jonathan Knight (Regional Food Group)

Stephen Lofthouse (Young Farmers)

Laurie Norris (National Farmers Union)

Peter Nottage (Natural England)

Chloe Palmer (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group)

Pauline Teale (Yorkshire Forward)

Helen Wright (East Riding Council)

Secretariat

Elizabeth Hudson (Project Manager)

Anna Skilbeck (Project Coordinator)

Apologies for absence

Richard Ellison (National Farmers Union)

Dorothy Fairburn (Country Land and Business Association)

Nigel Pulling (Yorkshire Agricultural Society)

Jane Riley (Department of Health)

Andy Tordoff (Yorkshire Forward)

Graham Ward (Rural Affairs Forum)

Stephen Wyrill (Tenant Farmers Association)

1. Welcome and Introduction

Steve Willis welcomed everyone to the meeting and to the new Regional Agricultural Centre.

Thanks were given to Cheryl Thomas for her work as project coordinator with the group. She has now been replaced by Anna Skilbeck. Congratulations were given to Liz on her pregnancy. Anna will cover Liz's maternity leave.

Thanks were also given to Ian Smith for his work, and David Fraser stated he will be highly missed and that his replacement has not yet been found.

The members of the Executive committee introduced themselves.

Matters from last Minutes

Pauline Teale (Yorkshire Forward) explained how RDPE marketing is no longer limited to Business Link and is now web based with online marketing allowing increased access to the resources.

Steve Willis reported that the CRC Uplands Enquiry will not be published until mid December. The Natural England – Vision for the Uplands Report will be published in November.

Chairman's Update

1. FFF pulled together the relevant parties for a discussion on Succession planning. One of the outputs of the meeting is an event in Pateley Bridge, 8th October. There will be three speakers, an accountant, a solicitor and a land agent discussing the importance of Succession planning for farming businesses.

Action

All attendees are asked to promote this event. An electronic flyer was attached to the agenda and hard copies of the promotional leaflet are available.

Action All

2. The Chair attended a cost sharing consultation in York. Feelings from the meeting were that all livestock keepers should contribute, as the risks from smaller units are considerable.

3. Dairy farmers of Britain collapse on June 3rd was major summer crisis. The Chair and others met with Hilary Benn, Secretary of State at Askham Bryan and asked for NVZ holiday for farmers taking on additional cows from ex DFOB suppliers. The Chair joined a working party led by Alan Hayes and including Ian Smith, Sally Harrison, Pauline Teale, Richard Ellison, Louise White, Steve Cann and Graham Ward to assist DFoB members. Business advice was put in place with three days free advice to farmers.

4. Attended RAF meeting in Saltaire

5. Met with Liz Phillip at Askham Bryan College, looked at common ground and discussed ways to work together, encouraged working with Bishop Burton also.

6. Met with Alan Hayes and Farexchange team

7. A second meeting with the Farmers Forum was held at FERA with more scientists present who were given an opportunity to explain their areas of work and a farmer open day was proposed.

8. Great Yorkshire Show

Day 1

Lunch at CLA, thank you to Dorothy Fairburn.

Regional Food Group event in the evening.

Day 2

Hosted breakfast meeting with Farmers Forum and Executive.

Meeting with DFOB group.

Met Dean Cook from FERA to organise open day in November.

Health checks at GYS organised by Department of Health on Natural England and NFU stands.

9. Meeting in Leeds with Hilary Benn on 'Building Britain's Future'. Interested parties met to discuss government initiatives and priorities in Yorkshire.

10. In August visited the dairy farm of Philip Dunn at Rieveaulx with Jan Anderson and her personal assistant. Phillip is a 21 year old wanting to remain in dairy farming but currently only has a temporary contract. Thank you to Louise White and the NFU for helping to set up the meeting.

11. Steve Willis and Anna Skilbeck met with Paul Rhodes from EFFF to discuss the farmers open day at FERA.

12. Steve Willis and Liz Hudson attended Leeds Rhinos match courtesy of the Department of Health.

13. Attended RAF Steering Group meeting to discuss the future of the Forum. Graham Ward is standing down and a successor is being looked for. David Fraser asked for nominations.

Action

All Executive members to consider nominations for a RAF Chair. Suggestions to David Fraser.

Action All

Liz Hudson gave the following updates

- A conservation competition for schools was organised in partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society and Sustainable Schools. The winning school was from Bradford and the second prize school was from Hull. The latter are wanting to plant some crops within their grounds.
- In conjunction with the Country Trust, FFF are organising farm visits for 40 city schools from deprived areas. Funding provided by Natural England is contributing 50% of the transport costs.
- As yet there have been no adverse reactions from schools to the E. coli outbreak at a farm in Surrey.

- Public procurement is covered in the business plan but we have awaited the outcome of Defra's Deloitte report on public procurement before making firm commitments in this area. Defra want to pilot three projects before deciding on a national approach, FFF have volunteered to take part in the pilot study.

2. Presentation by David Fraser, Government Office on Food Security

(Presentation attached to email and available on website)

This latest consultation is a follow up from recent publication of *Food Matters 2009, Towards a strategy for the 21st Century.* ,

The presentation covered why food matters to the economy, the environment and the nations health, with large focus on food security, prices and sustainability from a local to global scale. David stated that this is a big priority for the current and future governments.

An online consultation entitled 'Food 2030, Defra Online Discussion' is operating until 16th October. If the FFF were to put forward some comments on the issues from the region this would be taken seriously by Defra. Laurie Norris suggested that the group should submit a response to this document. (<http://sandbox.defra.gov.uk/food2030/>).

An open day event is being organised by Defra during November to further discuss food security.

Action:

Any issues that the group wants to be raised should be sent to Liz or Anna before 3rd November.

Action All

Comments

Pauline Teale suggested that we should be concentrating on more domestic food production David Fraser stated that the aim was to work on a number of levels, starting locally then moving to national and global levels. However, it can't be ignored that we currently rely heavily on EU and global imports.

Chloe Palmer suggested that supermarket practice needed to change in order to improve sustainability, with higher standards enforced in the UK supermarkets than import from cheaper, less monitored sources elsewhere.

Alan Hayes brought up the issue of renewable energy and that the government's targets of biomass production will play a large role in the amount of food the UK can produce for itself. A new plant at Drax power station will import crops for bio fuel from Canada.

3. FERA Open Day

The date of the FERA Farmers Open Day has been confirmed as 26th November (10.30am – 3.30pm). Liz ran through the proposed agenda and described how the day will include short presentations by scientists from FERA, a tour of the facility, stands from local partners and a local lunch. It is hoped this will be a good knowledge transfer event and help in advertising the event to farmers would be highly appreciated. Further details will be circulated once confirmed.

4. Jeremy Jones, Animal Health

Discussed how Animal Health is changing and that from October 1st it is being separated into the same regions as Government Offices. A regional management structure has been put in place permanently following the foot and mouth outbreak in order to address any new outbreaks of disease.

Bluetongue - There has been good uptake on the voluntary vaccination scheme and there have been no confirmed cases in 2008 or 2009 (so far) but September to November are the high risk periods. France has greatly reduced its numbers of cases since last year from 24,000 to 60 due to their mandatory vaccination programme. However, the vaccine is for type 8, but type 1 is circulating in northern France and the UK does not have a vaccine for this yet

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TB – Last year £95 million was spent on eradication schemes. The outbreak is predominately in the south but moving northwards with the latest cases in Derbyshire and one case in Huddersfield. There is continued testing of calves and wildlife casualties. In the southwest large changes in practice have had to be adopted in order to combat the spread of the disease.

Comments

Jeremy was asked 'what do Animal Health think to Scotland's recent 'TB Free' statement?'. The main reasons for this are for improved trade, however this is causing problems for farmers near the border due to increased transport restrictions.

The new cost sharing group is made up of 16 people and chaired by Rosemary Radcliffe, an economist. They will report back to Hilary Benn in October 2010. There is a concern regarding the separation of Animal Health and Animal Welfare as they are inextricably linked.

How can the region manage the risk of TB and what information can the FFF put out to farmers wanting advice? A sourcing plan should be put in place on farms, and it should be ensured that all animals are tested pre and post move. Farmers are advised to talk to their local vet regarding sourcing .

Other diseases are also prevalent and costly and should not be ignored.

5. Business Link from a Farming Perspective. Brian Cleary and Helen Reynolds

(The presentation is attached to email and on the website)

Brian and Helen introduced themselves as project managers of the new online farming sector and advice service from the government.

The farming sector of Business Link has been developed to aid '*successful, efficient and sustainable farming*' by providing collated information from the Government and other sources in order to provide accessible and useful information. There has been a staggered launch of the service with currently 30 guides added to the website since March. By November this should increase to 90 guides, all of which have full links to the appropriate bodies. The main launch will occur in February 2010 and it is hoped by this time start up problems will have been solved and that the site navigation will have been approved by groups of farmers testing the site.

The need for face to face launching of the service within regions has been recognised as farmers often respond better to this.

Comments

Farmers do not always have access or time to use the internet, however as more forms are becoming online only, this will have to change. This website should help as information is found in one place, cutting down time spent finding the correct sites.

Will there be regional versions of the site or links to regional services such as RDPE grants? There is an aim to include these but currently this is not in place. They will need help from local groups such as FFF to feed in information. It is not yet known how this will work.

Business Link is now trying to improve its image and work with others in the industry. All information is sent to the NFU to check before publication on the website.

Action:

Circulate and promote the new information service within the region.

Action All

6. Dairy Farmers of Britain

Within the region of 260 farms were affected with no payment for milk supplied in May and a late payment for milk supplied in June. The reason for the collapse has been investigated with the cause being linked to the failure of the liquid division and the massive cash shortfall this created.

A working party was created to facilitate farmers with temporary contracts. Many farmers not on good transport links are finding it difficult to find new contracts.

The NFU worked with Milk Link to bring in temporary and short term contracts but there is a worry that farmers may be ignoring the short-term aspect of this.

Alan Hayes was chair of the working party and updated the group on the work. Farexchange and RDPE organised 3 days of free business consultancy for farmers affected by the collapse, however there was low uptake on this. Those attending received advice on managing the business effectively, cash flow, renting cattle, diversification etc.

Partners agreed that there was good collaboration between stakeholders in the crisis and this should be used to help projects be more effective in the future.

Comments

After attending a consultancy meeting, Stephen Lofthouse commented that it was not as useful as he had hoped as he was already aware of much of the advice that was given. However, it was stated that many farmers would not be so business aware, hence it may be helpful to them to look at the business from a different point of view.

The lack of attendance at the meeting was also put down to the confusion with addresses when sending out the information regarding the event.

It was suggested that for many this was a reality check to look at their business objectively and to take a step back from the running of the farm to see that in many areas dairy farming is un-sustainable.

An example of where the group helped following the crisis was the family run Chestnut Dairies which was previously running at just 5% capacity but has since been linked to a number ex DFOB farms. It will be given business and marketing assistance through liaison with the Yorkshire Forward. Pauline Teale reported that this help has also been offered to other dairies.

Action

Steve Willis to update Helen Wright on the Chestnut Dairies work

Action Steve Willis

The NFU has asked for an extension the NVZ deadline by an extra year to 2013. Defra has stated this deadline cannot be altered but Yorkshire Forward and the NFU are continuing to push the point to Defra. Steve Willis agreed to take this point to the next Regional Chairs meeting.

The Food and Farming Forum have now taken responsibility for the DFOB working group actions.

7. Regional Issues

The Campaign for the Farmed Environment by Natural England is underway, with emphasis on encouraging farmers to stay in or enter Environmental Stewardship schemes. Peter Nottage encouraged all regional partners to get behind this.

Action

Regional partners to get behind the CFE.

Action All

Jonathan Knight stated that Jim Fitzpatrick will be visiting the region and wants to meet local food producers. Farexchange will be holding an open day entitled Yorkshire Food in a Challenging World at Oulton Hall on 6th October. There are 3 PDO's(Protected Designation of Origin) in the pipeline.

FWAG are in the process of organising events to help farmers with NVZ forms and may have a stand at the FERA open day to advertise this.

8. Date of next meeting

The date of the next update meeting will be 9.30am to 10.30 prior to the FERA Open Day.

9. Any Other Business

Heather Parry gave a short presentation on the new Regional Agricultural Centre and an introduction to Fodder.

Actions

Who

Promotion of Succession Event, Pateley Bridge, 8th October All

Consider nominations for RAF Chair All

Send 'Food Matters' feedback to Liz or Anna All

Circulate and promote new Business Link farming sector

as and when appropriate All

Update Helen Wright on Chestnut Dairys Work SW

Regional Partners to promote Campaign for the Farmed Environment All

Attach Food Security Presentation to website AS

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