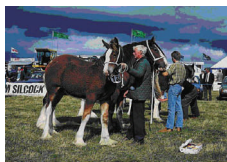


Rural Matters

Special Edition
August 2006

Newsletter of the Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs



Welcome to the **August** 2006 issue of Rural Matters. This special edition is a Stakeholder Update on the Yorkshire and The Humber Regional Implementation Plan (RIP) for the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13. The next regular Rural Matters will be circulated early September.

Yorkshire & The Humber Regional Implementation Plan (RIP)

Purpose

This Stakeholder Update Note has been produced to provide partners with an update on the production of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Regional Implementation Plan for Yorkshire and The Humber. It provides an overview of the progress to date, an outline of the key themes and details of the development process through the agreed governance structure for the region.

The Regional Implementation Plans (RIPs) will be used to inform the England Rural Development Programming document. Due to delays in finalising the details of the budgets and regulation submission of the Programming Document has been delayed, this has had the knock on effect of delaying progress in the writing of the RIP.

Progress to date

The development of the RIP has been undertaken by a Task and Finish Group of the Rural Practitioners Group. The group is made up from representatives of the lead delivery partners for the new programme (Yorkshire Forward, Natural England and the Forestry Commission), supported and assisted by Government for Office Yorkshire and The Humber and a representative from Framework for Change (Tony Cooke).

The group has developed a draft RIP on the basis of the evidence base and regional priorities already agreed and adopted in the Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Framework. The RDPE aims to focus its support on landscape, agriculture, land based businesses and rural communities. The group has therefore identified six of the Rural Framework Priorities which are considered most relevant to be delivered in whole or in part through the new programme.

The group have also considered other relevant regional strategies including the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Forestry Strategy and the Framework for Change Delivery Plan. These priorities have been considered alongside the Rural Framework Evidence Base and Priorities in order to develop 4 'themes' for the RIP. The themes are aimed at identifying how we can use the available measures (areas of funding within the programme) to take forward delivery within the region. The proposed themes are shown below:

New Rural Enterprise to broaden the economic base of the regions rural areas & build on key sectors

- Establishing new businesses
- Establishing new ventures within existing businesses

Rural Business Improvement to support existing businesses to grow and increase productivity, through;

- Provision of training and advice
- Development of new products, services and markets
- Adding value to existing products and services
- Improved collaboration

Community Cohesion and Development to support rural communities through;

- Investing in the provision of services in the community
- Building the capacity of community partnerships

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Enhancing the Value of the Countryside by encouraging farmers and land managers to embrace business opportunities of multifunctional land use to provide goods and services to the general public (beyond commodity food production) through;

- Wildlife conservation
- Maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality and character
- Natural resource protection
- Protection of the historic environment
- Promotion of public access and understanding of the countryside
- Flood alleviation through land management
- Conservation of genetic resources
- Provision of renewable energy
- Supporting woodland creation and management in line with Regional Forestry Strategy Priorities.

The aim has been to develop themes which relate to the Rural Framework and the supporting evidence base. It is clear that further detail will be required on the specific areas of activity which will be supported and it is proposed to develop this in conjunction with discussions with relevant stakeholders through the agreed governance structure.

The Task and Finish Group has also been working on the parameters for developing the use of a Leader type approach as a delivery mechanism in the region. The selection of areas to be covered by the Leader approach will be undertaken taking into account the social, environmental and economic needs and opportunities of the region. The group was pleased to see the proposed expansion of the population criteria for Leader groups to a range between 5,000 and 150,000 which will give greater flexibility in setting up diverse initiatives. It should be noted that this could be subject to change by the Commission.

Budgets

The overall budget for the European Funds including the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development was agreed by the European Council in June, although as yet we have no breakdown allocations between member states. We anticipate a similar percentage share of the budget as for the present programme however the overall available budget will be less than the current programme. It is therefore likely that voluntary modulation will be necessary to raise sufficient money to fund the scale of activity anticipated in the Programme. The Voluntary Modulation Regulation required to introduce this funding mechanism cannot be agreed until the meeting of the European Council in October. In addition, the European Parliament must also express their opinion and be consulted on the regulation before it can be adopted. This means we are unlikely to know the full Programme budget for England until late autumn. This could result in a delay in submitting the Rural Development Plan to the European Commission and a subsequent delay to the start of the Programme.

The Way Forward

The Task and Finish Group aim to present the details of the work to date for discussion at the next Practitioners meeting which is scheduled for the 12th September. The aim will be to use the agreed governance structures in order to ensure appropriate stakeholder engagement / involvement. This will also involve presenting the draft plan to the Rural Affairs Forum on the 7th November 2006. It is hoped that the document will be subsequently endorsed by the Rural Board.

It is clear that delays in agreeing the various complex details at a national and European level have impacted on the original development schedule. It is however important to recognise that regional delivery partners and Government Office are committed to supporting the development process in order to produce a document which fits appropriately with relevant regional strategies and provides strategic direction and focus for the new Programme.

Key Task Group Contacts

If you have any specific queries on the RIP development please feel free to contact a member of the RIP Task and Finish Working Group:

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