

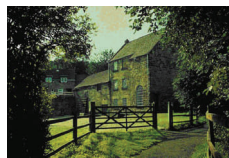
Rural Matters

January 2007

Newsletter of the Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs Forum

Welcome to the **January** 2007 issue of Rural Matters. The aim of the Y&H RAF, which comprises a wide and representative range of rural interests, is to provide an opportunity to influence policy-making and delivery affecting rural parts of the region and to further the implementation of the Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Framework (see: [Rural Framework](#)).

The Humber
Rural Affairs Forum
Yorkshire and



Post Office Network Consultation: Y&H RAF Response

The last RAF meeting in November saw a lively discussion on the future of the Rural Post Office Network. Since then, the official consultation, conducted by the Department of Trade and Industry, was launched on 14th December 2006. The consultation paper is available at [DTI Post Office Consultation](#)

There are seven consultation questions, which include focus on access criteria for deprived rural areas, out-reach amenities and whether any factors have been overlooked in the government's proposed approach. The consultation is open until 8th March.

To build on the previous discussion in Yorkshire and The Humber, a special single issue meeting will be held mid February to identify whether there is sufficient common ground for a regional response to be submitted by the Rural Affairs Forum. This will include members of the RAF Steering Group, Rural Practitioner's Access to Services Task Group and interested RAF members (who had responded to the proposed meeting). The outcome of these discussions will be communicated to RAF members.



Sleights Post Office near Whitby

RAF Chair Update

In the last edition of Rural Matters, we invited expressions of interest to take up the post of RAF Chair. Nominations received will be assessed and interviewed by a selection panel chaired by Government Office for Y&H in early February. RAF members will be advised of the outcome soon after and it is anticipated the successful candidate will be introduced at the next RAF meeting on 26th April (details overleaf) to take up the reigns.

Rural Development Programme for England Update

The Yorkshire and Humber region submitted an updated draft RDPE Regional Implementation Plan (RIP) to Defra on the 18th December. This had been updated to incorporate comments received about the previous version and additional information received from both Defra and the EU. You can view the December RIP submission at: [December Draft Y&H RIP](#)

Defra has not been able to submit the UK and England Programme Document for the RDPE until the rules on Voluntary Modulation have been agreed. The European Parliament and Agriculture Committee are due to discuss Voluntary Modulation over the next two months and Defra expect this to be settled by mid March. If this is the case, they plan to submit the UK and England Programme Documents at the end of March, which should enable the RDPE to start in late summer 2007.

Although the RDPE may not be starting until later in the year, Natural England are still accepting Environmental Stewardship applications and issuing provisional agreements to successful applicants.

Regional Rural Insights Analysis

The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) recently commissioned a survey into the perceptions and priorities of people living in rural areas. This data was reported on in their national Rural Insights Report 2006. The Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Observatory was provided with regional Rural Insights data to further enhance the region's rural evidence base. Look out for this piece of work on the Rural Observatory website in February <http://rural.yorkshirefutures.com/>

Communities England

On 17th January the government announced its new agency to deliver regeneration and housing in a shake-up of the way it supports the delivery of new homes and develops sustainable communities. The proposed agency, *Communities England*, will bring together the functions of English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation, and a range of work carried out by the Department for Communities & Local Government. Although there is an urban focus on regeneration, many of their housing remits will cover rural areas including the delivery of decent homes, housing market renewal and housing growth.

For further information and to follow development of this new agency see: [Communities England](#)

PARISH PLANNING: Nationally and in the Region

Nationally

Parish Plans were introduced in 2000, by The Countryside Agency, to enhance community participation in the planning process following recommendations in the White Paper, *Our Countryside: The Future*. Around 3,000 plans have now been produced, however, a common obstacle remains the difficulty and variability in integrating the plans into statutory planning and service provision systems.

To overcome this, Defra has recently commissioned research to examine the different ways in which Parish Plans have been successfully integrated. They will be able to use these findings as the basis of a Best Practice Guide, containing clear, practical guidance aimed at statutory bodies, but also of relevance for parish planning groups. The integration of Parish Plans into the statutory system is championed by local authorities awarded Beacon status for 'Improving Rural Services: Empowering Communities', which so far include Bradford, West Berkshire, Shropshire and South Somerset.

...and in the Region

An Opportunity To Have Your Say.

Fiona Coleman: Yorkshire Rural Community Council

Community groups are being encouraged to have a say in how their local area responds to events in years to come through developing a Parish Plan. The aim of a Parish Plan is to:

- Help each community identify and prioritise opportunities to make their village a better place
- Develop an action plan to meet the opportunities identified
- Provide 'evidence of need' to help funding bids
- Give the community a voice
- Encourage community spirit and action.

This is done through a wide-spread consultation process using questionnaires and other approaches decided by the community, and it is essential that all sections of the community are involved.

Yorkshire Rural Community Council (YRCC) provides advice and practical support to help community groups carry out a Parish Plan, with over 100 local communities in North, West and South Yorkshire completing one during the last five years.

YRCC can help communities throughout the process, from completing an application for grants, through to undertaking the project. Grants can be used for a range of activities including holding consultation events and preparing & printing the plan.

A limited number of grants are available until the end of March 2008. Communities should contact YRCC as soon as possible on **01904 645271** to discuss how to take advantage of this money.



Mainstreaming Parish Plans in the East Riding **Peter Hirschfeld: Humber and Wolds RCC**

Humber & Wolds Rural Community Council (HWRCC), in partnership with East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC), has taken forward an initiative to 'mainstream' Parish Plans in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

The aim of the group is to use the Parish Planning process and its outcomes to inform the local authority, and other strategic organisations, in order to influence decision making at the wider strategic level, including incorporation with statutory planning documents such as Local Strategic Frameworks.

The group has now approved a definition of 'mainstreaming': - *'That Parish Plans, or other examples of community plans, are embedded into the community planning framework; and are considered in the decision making process for the wider area.'*

The two main partners in the mainstream group, HWRCC and ERYC, are working effectively to produce a system that will empower local communities to take part in the Parish Plan process. They will also ensure information from these documents is relevant and useful and is fed into the planning and policy delivery systems of the local authority and other relevant organisations.

Helen Wright (Rural Policy and Partnership Manager ERYC) commented: "Much good work has already been done in the East Riding of Yorkshire on Parish Planning. The mainstreaming initiative is an exciting opportunity to build on this to ensure that communities have a strong voice."

The Local Government White Paper is set to require stronger local authority involvement in community-led planning. This supports the government's general direction to involve citizens and communities in decisions making in order to result in better services. The Parish Plan process will help take forward these ideas.

For further information, please contact: Peter Hirschfeld on 01377 232134 or peter.hirschfeld@hwrcc.org.uk

Events Notice Board

- **Y&H RAF meeting**—Thursday 26th April, Riccall Regen Centre (near Selby), from 12.30—16.30 inclusive of lunch. This is for RAF members or deputies only. Please contact the secretariat (details below) if you are interested in becoming a member
- **Affordable Rural Housing Seminar** for Local Authority members organised by the Rural Housing Trust in association with Harrogate Borough Council and Richmondshire District Council. To be held at Kettleasing, **Monday 19 February**. Cost: free. Up to 8 councillors/officers from each North Yorkshire local authority may attend. Other interested parties must register. Closing date: Wednesday 7th Feb. Please telephone Rebecca Beaumont on : 020 7793 8114 or email: info@ruralhousing.org.uk
- **Faith in Rural Communities Seminar:** **Tuesday 20th February**, 11-3pm, London SW1A 2HH. To book or for further details, contact modupe.manuel@defra.gsi.gov.uk or 020 7238 4904 by 13th February. Background report: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/research/default.htm>
- **Wildfire 2007:** **5th & 6th June 2007**, Dalby Forest 'Promoting and sharing good practice in wild-fire management'. For further information, email: Enquiries@wildfire2007.org.uk and website: <http://www.wildfire2007.org.uk/>

Contact: **Rural Affairs Forum Secretariat**, Email: yhraf@goyh.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0113 2836863

Rural Affairs Team, GOYH, City House, New Station Street, Leeds LS1 4US