

EERF Steering Group

1.30pm, 9 December 2009

NFU Offices, Newmarket

Minutes

Attendees

Pat Holtom (Vice Chairman & Norfolk)
Martin Collison (L&S Subgroup)
David Wood (Secretariat)

Suzanne Harris (Vice Chairman & Essex)
Mick Carr (GOE)

Apologies

John Yates (Chairman)
Graham Hedger (Housing Subgroup)
Kate Belinis (Herts)

Francis Bedding (Suffolk)
Sarah Hughes (Beds)
Kirsten Bennett (Cambs)

In John Yates' absence, Pat Holtom chaired the meeting.

1. Review of Morning Meeting of Members on Rural Economy

General consensus was that the meeting went very well with good contributions from speakers. The extended question and answer session with the panel of experts was also viewed as a success and the time for debate was a very useful item that should be a key aspect of all our meetings.

Suzanne fed back a suggestion from Mick Page that the meetings should actively consider proposals or resolutions that reflect the views of members on the topics heard during the meeting. The Steering Group felt that in principle this was a good idea but rather than develop resolutions on the spur of the moment, the Group should review the discussion and subsequently distribute (via email) proposals that reflect the views for members to consider. These draft proposals can then be confirmed or not at the next quarterly meeting of members.

2. Next Quarterly Meeting of the Members

The Steering Group considered the provisional dates of 3 & 17 March for meeting, AGM and conference. The Group decided that the quarterly meeting and AGM would be held on 3 March. The Annual Conference should be rearranged to a later date and probably be used to support the launch of the proposed regional Rural White Paper.

Looking further ahead, the Steering Group agreed that the meeting scheduled for 9 June should embrace a site visit potentially looking at business and the environment. A possible venue was the Elveden Estate in Suffolk which had scope for presentations on retail, food, horses and the tourism provided by Centre Parcs. For the meeting in September, it would be timely to consider the impact of the Sub-National Review (SNR) with the creation of Leader Boards and agreement to a single integrated regional strategy.

Regarding the meeting scheduled for 3 March, the Steering Group confirmed that the topic should be rural development as per the Strategic Plan for the EERF. Also, that the venue should be

towards the west of the region. It was proposed that Marston Vale Community Woodland venue should be explored for its suitability for the meeting with Shuttleworth College Facilities as a fall back option.

The following were agreed as the basis for the meeting:

(NB: The agenda was extended into the afternoon at subsequent Rural White Paper project initiation meeting on 11th December 2009 – see minutes of that meeting.)

- Best practice local action group (LAG) with Mike Carter as speaker
- Planning system and its ability to act as an enabling feature or constraint on rural development. Potential speaker from Anglia Ruskin who had run training sessions for the Planners Association.
- The Regional Spatial Planning Strategy with speaker either from EEDA regarding the implementation plan or from the GO East Place team.
- Valuing Eco systems as a tool to decide the best use of land and resolution of conflicts between development and environment. Potential speaker from Natural England could be Dr Jill Hall.
- Community Enterprise, Tony Talbot, CEO Marston Vale Community Woodland Trust

Action: Mick Carr to enquire at Natural England regarding their willingness to contribute and the availability of Dr Hall.

Planning and Infrastructure development with speaker from either GO East Infrastructure team or EEDA where Natalie Blaken a planner within EEDA with useful sub-regional contacts for the Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire area could possibly suggest a speaker.

Given that the meeting also had to schedule time for the formal AGM of the Forum, the suggested list of topics and speakers was probably sufficient for David to explore and produce a final agenda.

3. Operation of EERF

With the loss of John Yates' time to support the Forum, Pat and Suzanne would Chair local meetings and attend the national RAF Chairs and its meeting with the Rural Affairs Minister. It was unclear what other meetings John normally attended.

Action: David to contact Cindy Winn regarding the meetings attended by John with EEDA and other partners.

Action: Mick to discuss with Sarah Prentice any other meetings that John attended with Government Office and its partners.

It was agreed that a longer full meeting of the Steering Group was necessary to plan for the AGM and also to agree a schedule of meetings and ideas for the new year. It was important that representatives from all the counties attended this Steering Group meeting. Provisional dates of either 18 or 20 January were agreed.

Action: David to send alert to all Members of the Steering Group and emphasise the need for their participation at the proposed meeting in January.

The Steering Group briefly touched on finances for the operation of the Forum especially in the light of expected extra effort by Rural Action East to support the development of the Regional Rural White Paper. It was agreed that the budget and expenditure should be reviewed at the January Steering Group meeting.

Close of Meeting

David Wood
Secretary to EERF
Rural Action East