

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, 16th February 2010

Executive Committee

Steve Willis (Chair)
Mike Feist (Government Office, Yorkshire & The Humber)
Alan Hayes (Yorkshire Forward)
Andy Tordoff, (Yorkshire Forward)
Alan Wolinski (Animal Health)
Dave Melling (Airedale Partnership)
Dorothy Fairburn (Country Land & Business Association)
Helen Wright (East Riding of Yorkshire Council)
Jonathan Knight (Regional Food Group)
Nigel Pulling (Yorkshire Agricultural Society)
Richard Ellison (National Farmers Union)
Tony Pexton (Rural Affairs Forum)

Secretariat

Deborah Hare (Project Manager)

Apologies for absence

Chloe Palmer (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group)
Jane Riley (Department of Health)
Peter Nottage (Natural England)
George Hamilton (Growing Routes, Yorkshire Agricultural Society)
Stephen Lofthouse (Young Farmers Club)

1. Introduction and update

Steve Willis welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Introductions were made to:

- Deborah Hare who is covering Liz Hudson's maternity leave as Project Manager for the Food and Farming Forum
- Tony Pexton the new RAF Chair, successor of Graham Ward
- Alan Wolinski the Regional Operations Director for Animal Health, replacing Kate Sharpe.

The members of the Executive Committee introduced themselves.

Steve Willis asked Alan Wolinski and Tony Pexton to give the Executive a brief background about themselves.

Alan Wolinski joined Animal Health in July 2009 during its restructuring. Alan's previous role was Regional Manager for the RSPCA for 13 years, and has also worked for Leeds City Council and Banardos. A team of 12 Veterinary Officers has been established in the region with Clare Taylor as the Chief Veterinary Officer, Alan is the overall manager.

Tony Pexton took the role of the Chair for RAF in January 2010. Tony has previously worked with the NFU, and is currently also the Chairman for NIAB Cambridge and the Defra Sustainable Arable Link Program. Tony highlighted that issues relating to Food and Farming will come under the RAF remit and he will ensure cooperation with the FFF.

Chairman's Update

1. Steve Willis and Deborah Hare met with Tony Pexton prior to the Executive meeting to discuss areas of cross over linkages between RAF and FFF. This is to ensure any work is coordinated and prevent areas of duplication.
2. The FERA conference 'Wellies and White Coats', 26th November 2009 was a success, with around 160 attendees, the majority of which were farmers. A number of departments within FERA provided speakers. Feedback from farmers was positive.
3. Deborah Hare and Deborah Goodall (YAS Marketing Manager) have a meeting with Dean Cook at FERA on 23rd February. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss opportunities for future work and areas where FERA can support the GYS Innovation Centre.
4. FWAG held an event called 'Climate Change Sustainability & Your Farm' on 2nd February at the Pavilions of Harrogate, funded by Natural England and sponsored by Farming Futures. The event was very well attended with 140 farmers and a waiting list, signifying keen interest from farmers on this topic. The event was attended by many commercial companies. The main focus was for farmers to understand the common aim regards climate change and how the units relate to specific holdings. Steve Willis sat on the plenary panel.

This event followed on from an event FWAG delivered at Wortley Hall, Sheffield, where 90 farmers had attended. Due to the good response FFF encouraged Natural England to fund another event.

FWAG are also delivering a similar event at Bishop Burton College on 17th February in conjunction with Farming Futures, funded by Lantra.

5. Local Procurement Initiative with Catterick Garrison MOD. A stakeholder group has been set up including Sodexo, Russle Hume (catering butcher), local suppliers and a Regional Forward Programme Team (RFPT) from Catterick Garrison. The group is facilitated by Farexchange with input from Steve Powdrill (EBLEX) and Steve Willis.

First meeting was in September 2009 where the MOD showed an interested in serving local food at 3 of their key events in the year, with attendances of around 100 people. Steve Willis pointed out that on a larger scale there are 20,000 farmers in the region of which a number would be interested in supplying the MOD regularly.

Second meeting was in November 2009. Roland Croke the RFPT Leader questioned if the MOD daily meals could be supplied from regionally produced food. The current supply chain for meat was discussed and it was found that the frozen meat used (i.e. mince) would be from an imported source.

A third progress meeting with the stakeholder group was arranged for 29th January but was then postponed. An informal meeting did go ahead with representatives from Catterick RFPT and Sodexo. Sodexo proposed to implement a 3 month pilot with Webster Farmers Ltd via their existing supply chain. It was agreed the wider stakeholder group would be reconvened following this pilot.

Comments

Jonathan Knight commented that Tamsin Gane from Sodexo had been talking to the Regional Food Group about the Catterick initiative and also about the Olympics. He stressed the importance of all working together, as this work sits with Farexchange, FFF and the RFG.

2. Feedback from Regional Chair meeting

Steve Willis reported back from the Regional Chair meeting in London on 11th February. Katrina Williams Director General of DEFRA now chairs this meeting, replacing Sir Don Curry.

1. Food 2030 was the main topic of the meeting, Bronwen Jones (Deputy Director, Food Policy Unit at Defra) identified the key issues:
 - Looking at a timeline of 2010– 2015 for fact finding
 - EFFF have been assigned to organise regional Food 2030 seminars
 - There is cross policy support
 - Food has to be affordable
 - There is conflict between agricultural environment schemes and food production, these need to be looked at in more detail.
2. Draft Animal Health Bill
Feedback on the draft bill is required by 19th April. There are positive thoughts that Animal Health will be a non departmental body, the Chief Veterinary Officer will be UK based who will pull in support from all bodies. The FFF Regional Chairs asked for a 2 year grace, they would like to see confidence built for the group before start asking for payment.
3. CAP Reform 2013
Discussions will start in the Summer of 2010 and a detailed plan will be available by Autumn 2011. Aware there are major discussions and downward pressure on the size of the new budget, will be looking at the major contributors and receivers.
4. SPS Payments
At the time of reporting 91% of payments were complete, with a further 13,000 still to pay. Around 50% of hill farmers had not yet received their payment.
Richard Ellison commented the reason for that will be because of the moorland line adjustments. Richard highlighted that in extreme cases of desperation or clearly where concerns of mental health are an issue; there are ways of pushing things through for payment.
5. Agricultural Skills
Lantra were knocked for delivery in particular in the South East and South West, whereas in Yorkshire and The Humber we are seeing Landskills work. Steve Willis commented that it is all about having industry representatives on the panel and bids going through them. Yorkshire has seen consultancy fee day rates pulled into line with a reduction from £1,200 down to £450 per day. Yorkshire statistics to date show Total Training days at 5,642 and Total Beneficiaries at 2,971.

Comments

Andy Tordoff questioned ongoing training and what should be done next. The management of the Landskills Programme, part of the RDPE was awarded to Lantra, and it is coming up for renewal. Number crunching and statistics show the output of training, but what are the actual outcomes in the region as a result of this spend? Part of the Yorkshire Forward evaluation is to dig under the surface of numbers.

Steve Willis agreed that we have to be able to justify feedback.

Action

All Executive members to consider thoughts for ongoing training by the next Executive meeting on 30th March 2010

6. Steve Willis reported Government Office have said there will be percentage cuts in funding. FFF role was for 3 years. The SFFS needs to evolve and nationally there is an opportunity for it to evolve with Food 2030.

3. Food 2030 – next steps

1. Alan Hayes reported on Yorkshire Forward's work with Food 2030
Through Government Office, Yorkshire Forward contacted Bronwen Jones (Defra) and invited her to the region at the end of the Defra Food 2030 consultation. There was a debate in the region with wider representatives from farming to retailers. When Food 2030 was launched Yorkshire Forward went back to Defra and invited them to the region again. Yorkshire and The Humber is the only region to have dialogue with Defra at this stage, and are ahead of all other regions.

There is a Food 2030 seminar on 18th February in Leeds, this has been organised by EFPF. Tony Pexton is chairing the meeting and Yorkshire Forward is acting as an independent facilitator to find a way forward for region.

The key consensus will be on:

- Consumer attitudes and health
- Increasing food production and sustainability
- Reducing waste
- Reducing green house gas emissions
- Developing a resilient profitable food system – this is in the hands of the retailers
- Long term research – in view of Link Programs

If FFF continues and is not affected by political change, is Food 2030 best to sit with the Forum?

2. Tony Pexton gave a brief overview of the RAF meeting held at Bishop Burton College on Thursday 12th February, the theme was Food 2030.

Presenters were:

David Fraser (Deputy Regional Director Environment & Corporate Affairs, Government Office Yorkshire and The Humber)

The Government's Strategy for a Secure Food System - Food 2030

Tony Lomax (Strategic Sector Champion - Food & Drink, Yorkshire Forward)

Food 2030 - The View from Behind the Goal

Sarah Knapper (Research Director, Regional Food Group Yorkshire and Humber)

The Place and Contribution of Local Food

Breakout groups discussed the 6 themes in the strategy:

- Healthy eating
- Sustainable farming systems
- Training
- Waste, reduce and reuse
- Carbon and GHG emissions in the chain
- A competitive and resilient supply chain

Common themes which came out of the breakout groups were:

- Training – whole business
- Carbon – numbers involved, the meaning of, where to start, how to mitigate
- Local food availability and promotion

Tony informed the group that the Regional Food Group has looked at prices in farm shops and other retailers over a period of time. The findings showed that prices in smaller shops (local food) were lower than other retailers.

There is a Royal Society report, 'Reaping the Benefits', October 2009. It was generated by recognition of producing more food but sustainably. A copy of the report can be found on the Royal Society website www.royalsociety.org

Tony noted there are lots of issues with Food 2030 and knowledge transfer and training are hugely important.

Comments

Dave Melling commented that people tend to patronize those that are not wealthy, but in actual fact it is what we as a society presents to them. An example is the poor selection of shops offering a limited range of food on some large urban estates. The concept is that everyone should have access to healthy food and the opportunity to grow their own. People fortunate to live near farm shops have access to local produce.

Andy Tordoff raised the earlier point of rethinking training in the region and opportunities in the Food 2030 debate. With pressures coming forward about public spend, things need to move efficiently. A vast amount of money has been put to Business Link and Andy questions if the agriculture community is fully engaged with the advice and support available at Business Link.

Steve Willis commented that the South East have an excellent relationship with Business Link. There is a view to agriculture not spending enough time to look at where we are, we are very good at closing the door to Business Link.

Action

Check the regional position with Business Link

Helen Wright in her new RAF support role commented that the six Food 2030 issues are relevant to the RAF. Need to look at what role the RAF can have for Food 2030, could there be a role in developing the Regional Strategy? Attendees at the RAF meeting had strong connections and views. If the training issue is going to be addressed how do we do it and who is best placed to lead, the RAF or FFF?

Steve Willis said this comment can be flagged up at the Food 2030 Seminar on 18th February. Education is a priority in the FFF business plan. It does not matter where the lead comes from as long as it is delivered.

Tony Pexton highlighted the broadband issue in the region. Andy Tordoff said both ERDF and RDPE funding was been used to support broadband in rural areas and will provide

greater flexibility than previously. The direction of travel is in the right way, will see many available to put broadband into rural areas although cannot guarantee speed.

Dorothy Fairburn concerned money for broadband support coming out of RDPE funding which has been ring fenced for other priorities.

Steve Willis commented that he recently sat on an interview panel where one of the interview questions was in relation to having a good broadband connection.

4. South Pennines Food Research

Dave Melling informed the Executive of the South Pennines Food Research work commissioned by The South Pennines Leader Group, Pennine Prospects.

Background to the work is the requirement for inward investment in Bradford Metropolitan District and a growth point identified. The challenge is how to keep the balance with landscape and urban development going. Do not know about people and land management or how to help farmers in between urban blocks, as farming changes and processes change are seeing abandonment in these areas.

The South Pennines Food Research work is to look at food growing across the area, identifying local food producers and an audit of current community and commercial activity.

Pennine Prospects have commissioned the research study to Rural Innovation. If anyone has any knowledge of this area and could help in the study can they please contact Michael Lough on 01772 746322.

Comments

Richard Ellison informed the group that the NFU had received a call from Michael Lough requesting statistics for food production and agriculture in the South Pennines. They were unable to help and passed him onto the Regional Food Group.

Jonathan Knight commented that the RFG does not have those kinds of statistics.

Dorothy Fairburn said they should be able to obtain statistics from Defra, as they can filter down to Parish level.

Action

If any Executive members have or know of anyone with knowledge of the South Pennines area to contact Michael Lough.

5. Fresh Start – Business Plan overview

In the absence of George Hamilton, the Executive Committee were handed copies of the Fresh Start Full Business Plan September 2009 and asked for any feedback by the end of February. An electronic copy is attached with the minutes.

Action

If any Executive members want to feedback please contact George Hamilton by the end of February.

6. Katrina Williams Visit Plan 29th & 30th March

Deborah Hare outlined the proposed itinerary for Katrina's visit to the region:

29th March

- Evening meal and discussion in the South Pennines with representatives from the Worth Valley Young Farmers

30th March

- Tour of the Regional Agricultural Centre and Fodder
- Executive Committee meeting
- Visit to Askham Bryan College to discuss the Fantasy Farming Beef League

Comments

Andy Tordoff suggested that we have some asks of Katrina. Questioned how robust is the Food 2030 strategy within the changing election? Ask Katrina what she wants to know from us.

Steve Willis highlighted issues with the GM debate. Suggested if it needed somebody like Jimmy Doherty to explain GM foods to the consumers to increase their understanding, as science can frighten consumers.

Tony Pexton said GM must be part of the tool kit. With water and land restrictions, what technology is there to make food available, thoughts on GM are very polarized.

Steve Willis at the Regional Chairs meeting raised the topic of the regulatory body for retailers to Katrina. Informing her that some retailers post Christmas are reducing costs by 15% to suppliers. Those suppliers involved feel intimidated. Katrina was unaware this was happening. Jonathan Knight agreed it is, and if supermarkets see a drop in sales they look to squeeze the margin from suppliers.

Mike Feist suggested looking at practical examples that can be shown to Katrina when she visits the region.

Steve Willis told the group the focus of Katrina's visit was to see how the FFF group is working. She has not placed any parameters for her visit but has a time constraint.

Actions

SW to contact Katrina to determine what she is looking to take away from her visit

DH to send itinerary to Government Office so they can finalise logistics of the visit

All Executive members to consider potential agenda topics. Suggestions to DH no later than 15th March please.

7. Regional Issues

1. Yorkshire Forward Investment for Animal Health and Welfare in the Dairy Sector.

This is a package of RDPE support for the Dairy sector to encourage capital investment that is over and above standard practice for animal health and welfare.

The proposal has been sent to all of the RDA's for comment. The funding focuses on large scale projects, minimum value £50K, providing 50-60% funding, it links into the REIP. The evaluation will be overseen by vets outside of the region. There are already expressions of interest.

Comments

Dorothy Fairburn was concerned about the size of the projects.

Steve Willis said there could be opportunity to look at smaller projects further down the line.

Andy Tordoff thought as a starter it was good and was all about strategic added value and economic investment, needs to be kept under review as it evolves.

2. Tony Pexton reported that the Vivergo plant will be producing high protein ruminant feed. This could see a change in land use as fattening stock come off the hills to the available food.

He also mentioned about a large vegetable producer who has set up an anaerobic digestion plant but is having to grow 1,000 acres of maize to supplement the material going into the AD plant. This will have an impact on land use as well.

Alan Hayes commented that there will also be a large volume of animal feed available from the Ensus plant at Teeside. There are talks of the feed been transported by sea down to the South East and West to sell to feed merchants. Should we look to utilise this in Yorkshire?

8. Any Other Business

Jonathan Knight provided an update on the Regional Food Group activity:

- In discussions regards the Olympics and the vision of food sourcing, they are looking for red tractor assured products. RFG are organising accelerated training programs to get producers up to the level required.
- 25th March Professor Beddington coming to the region, a lively debate arranged for an evening dinner.
- Yorkshire Forced Rhubarb, are waiting for confirmation from Defra, they are very close to being awarded Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status under the Defra Protected Food Name Scheme.
- 9th February – ‘Meet the Producer’ at Pavilions of Harrogate, there were 78 producers and 200 local businesses attending with 1,400 business interactions taking place. A ‘Meet the Buyer’ is in the diary for April at Thornton Hall.

Action:	Consider thoughts for ongoing training by the next Executive meeting on 30th March 2010.	All
Action:	Check the regional position with Business Link.	SW
Action:	Anyone who can help with the South Pennines Food Research to contact Michael Lough on 01772 746322.	All
Action:	Comments on the Fresh Start Business Plan to be sent to George Hamilton by the end of February.	All
Action:	Contact Katrina Williams to find out what she is looking to take away from her visit to the region.	SW
Action:	Send itinerary to Government Office so logistics for Katrina Williams visit can be finalised.	DH
Action:	Consider potential agenda topics for the next Executive meeting on 30th March. Suggestions to DH no later than 15th March please.	All