

Date: 31 July 2007

Report: RELATIONSHIP WITH YORKSHIRE FORWARD: POSITION STATEMENT

Purpose of the report

1. To provide a summary of recent changes to Defra-funded rural socio-economic support programmes in the region and sub-region and Yorkshire Forward's contribution to these; and

To comment on the continuing endeavours to build on the positive and mutually beneficial relationship with Yorkshire Forward.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

- ***National Park Management Plan***

The aims of the Management Plan, notably:

For community and culture, "Thriving and active local communities in the National Park will enjoy a high quality of life that helps to sustain the environment, local traditions and contemporary culture. All sections of these communities will have opportunities to influence and develop local services that meet their needs"; and

For economy and employment, "The National Park's special qualities will help to support a local economy that provides secure, diverse and sustainable high-quality jobs, maintains thriving, balanced communities and a healthy, cared for environment. Imagination and innovation will attract new types of business and develop a local economy that respects and draws on the area's assets and quality of life and looks to the future for its aspirations".

- ***Best Value Performance Plan objectives***

"Promote 'sustainable development' within the National Park as the basis for the long-term social and economic well-being of local communities..."

Background

3. From April 2005 the Countryside Agency's rural community support activities were transferred to the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). Prior to this transfer the Countryside Agency's main socio-economic work was packaged under its Vital Villages programme. This consisted of four schemes that provided grant for:

- Parish Plans
- Community Services
- Parish Transport
- Rural Transport Partnerships.

The Countryside Agency also ran a number of other, free-standing support initiatives at various times that included 'Eat the View' and 'the Pub is the Hub'.

4. Over a similar period a number of rural programmes aimed at diversifying and increasing the competitiveness of agricultural and forestry sectors were being operated by Defra's Rural Development Service (RDS) under the EU England Rural Development Programme. These consisted of the:
 - Rural Enterprise Scheme
 - Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme
 - Vocational Training Scheme
 - Energy Crops Scheme.

Such diversification and development programmes are now the responsibility of the RDAs as they are responsible for delivery of the socio-economic elements of the new EU Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013 (RDPE).

Current Programmes

5. When the Countryside Agency's socio-economic remit was transferred to the RDAs it came with additional resources and a requirement to meet the government's Public Service Agreement 4 (PSA4), to:

"reduce the gap in productivity between the least well performing quartile of rural areas and the English median by 2008, demonstrating progress by 2006, and improve the accessibility of services for rural people."
6. To provide guidance and leadership on this extended rural remit Yorkshire Forward has appointed Rural Delivery Managers for each sub-region. They are part of the Agency's Rural Renaissance and Tourism Team and work in partnership with the Modernising Rural Delivery Manager.
7. For this sub-region a York and North Yorkshire PSA4 Programme has been agreed to meet the requirement. This has ring-fenced Yorkshire Forward funding and runs from 2006 until 2009. It comprises the following elements:
 - a. Rural Transport and Access Development Officers – two officers appointed to work within the community, in particular with the four Rural Transport and Access Groups (RTAG);
 - b. Community Transport Delegated Fund – building on the Rural Transport Partnership programme, £20,000 per RTAG is available each year to support smaller scale rural transport projects that help solve local transport issues;
 - c. Sub-Regional Wheels to Work Scheme – enabling individuals to take up employment or training where public or private transport is demonstrated to be unavailable;

- d. Community Transport – develop and support community transport resources in line with the County Council’s Community Transport Strategy;
 - e. Assessment of Rural Data and Evidence Base - a sub-regional “drill-down” of the Regional Rural Evidence Base, created to inform programme activity.
 - f. Rural Services Development Officers – area-based dedicated officers appointed to work with communities to improve local service provision. A £600,000 Rural Services Intervention Fund is available to support this work.
8. The total value of this sub-regional programme over its three years of operation is £4.559 million, of which £2.163 million is coming from Yorkshire Forward. There is a roughly even split between capital and revenue.
9. £352,000 of the match funding for this programme comes from the York and North Yorkshire Rural Social and Community Programme (RSCP). This is a two-year, £1 million Defra funded programme, managed by Yorkshire Rural Community Council, running from 2006 until 2008. RSCP co-funds, work on the rural evidence base and access to services.
10. As mentioned above, Yorkshire Forward is now responsible for management of the socio-economic funding of the Rural Development Programme for England. This will provide a regional allocation of £9.5 million per year up to 2013. Of this, £4.5 million per year will be allocated to improving the competitiveness of agricultural and forestry sectors (Axis I) and £5 million to diversification of the rural economy and quality of life in rural areas (Axis III). The measures covered by Axis III include basic services for the economy and rural population, village renewal and development, and conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage.
11. Yorkshire Forward is also the main contributor to the North Yorkshire Rural Target Fund, providing £875,000 for the three years up to 2008. This fund aims to support investment in rural communities in order to reduce disadvantage.

Current and Recent Collaboration with Yorkshire Forward

12. The Regional Economic Strategy for Yorkshire and Humber and the emerging new Sub-Regional Investment Plan recognise that high quality environments and cultural character are valuable assets that contribute to area promotion and business development. There is a growing understanding of how actions can help deliver the objectives of both the National Park Authority and Yorkshire Forward. Several recent and current initiatives demonstrate what is possible:

i) **The Craven Integrated Rural Development Project**

This three year project, run as a partnership of Craven District Council, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, and Yorkshire Forward, aimed to deliver integrated sustainable economic development based on the core assets of the National Park – landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage, historic environment. The project’s achievement included: a comprehensive survey of environmental assets; a study of access promotion; rights of way enhancement; a seminar on better building design; a study of sources of stone roofing slate; a wildlife survey; and various activities resulting from

appointment of heritage and events officers. In addition, several potential schemes identified by the project are now the subject of further investigation and development, notably Langcliffe Quarry. Here the partners have been working to find a long-term solution for the site. The aim is to devise a scheme that will ensure its environmental and historic importance are safeguarded and that will also create jobs and educational opportunities for both local people and visitors.

- ii) **Development of a Sub-Regional Cycling Tourism Strategy**
Yorkshire Forward invited and funded the National Park Authority to prepare this, recognising that recreational activity generated by the strategy would encourage tourism and other business opportunities.
- iii) **Contribution towards the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)**
In 2005 Yorkshire Forward contributed £40,000 to the Yorkshire Dales Nidderdale SDFs. While there was no stipulation of the types of project it should support, it was used as far as possible for schemes delivering outputs that contributed to Yorkshire Forward's objectives.
- iv) **The 'Prosperity and Protection' economic impact study**
A contribution was received from Yorkshire Forward towards the cost of this Council for National Parks research project that explored the economic impact of National Parks in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

13. In other cases our contact with Yorkshire Forward is via partnerships and consultations.

- i) **Sub-Regional Investment Plan (SRIP)**
The Authority has been a consultee throughout the current review of the SRIP and has participated in some of the working groups.
- ii) **Strategic Partnership for the River Ouse and its Tributaries (SPROUT)**
This partnership has overseen preparation of a detailed 'Opportunity Plan' for North Yorkshire rivers in the Ouse catchment. The Plan covers a breadth of issues and project opportunities. It provides an environmental framework for investment and growth over the next 25 years offering a fresh perspective on how the catchment is managed, understood and used. The project has been funded by Yorkshire Forward and the resultant Plan will influence the new SRIP.
- iii) **Yorkshire and Humber Regional Education for Sustainable Development Forum**
Both this Authority and Yorkshire Forward participate in this Forum. The Education for Sustainable Development Coordinator and the Sustainable Food Education Officer posts, which work to the Forum's management group, are part funded by the Agency.
- iv) **RDPE and LEADER**
How and where the programme's socio-economic measures will be delivered in Yorkshire and Humber are topics currently under debate. The Authority has a keen interest in this and has been actively involved in regional and sub-regional discussions.

A Future Relationship

14. Meetings have recently taken place involving Officers of Yorkshire Forward and the 2 National Park Authorities in the Sub-region to discuss how the relationship between the bodies might be strengthened and enhanced. The two NPAs are currently developing ideas/suggestions on how the objectives and targets of the three bodies might be better identified and aligned with a view to producing a document which would identify a much sharper and clearer programme of work to be delivered by the NPAs.

RECOMMENDATION

15. That the report be noted.

David Butterworth
Chief Executive

9 July 2007

Background documents: