

EERF Steering Group

2.30pm, 18th March 2009

The Salings Millennium Hall, Great Saling, Braintree, Essex, CM7 5DW

Minutes

Attendees

Kate Belinis	Martin Collison
Suzanne Harris	Pat Holtom
Adam Lavis (CRC)	Emma Powlett
Sarah Prentice (notes)	John Yates (Chair)

Apologies

Francis Bedding	Kirsten Bennett
Diana Bradley	Andrew Budden
Graham Hedger	Sarah Hughes
Nicola Lloyd	John Mullen
Sally Williams	

1. Welcome

1.1 John Yates welcomed everyone to the meeting including Adam Lavis from the CRC.

2. Minutes and matters arising of last meeting (9th February 2009)

2.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

2.2 The review of EERF membership is ongoing. Economic representatives are being sought from the county councils and John Yates agreed to speak to John Mullen and Frances Bedding about Suffolk representation.

ACTION: John Yates to speak to John Mullen and Frances Bedding about Suffolk's representation on the EERF and Steering Group.

2.3 From 1st April 2009 GO-East is no longer able to provide secretariat support to the EERF. Defra has confirmed that there will be a £25k budget for the EERF for 2009/10 with a further £20k to support John Yates in his role as national Chair of RAF Chairs. John reported that national ACRE, Defra, GO-East and the Rural Action East Board have agreed that the funding will be delegated to Rural Action East (RAE) to administer and that RAE will provide secretariat support to the EERF. There is potential for some of the funding to be offered to Emma Powlett and / or Martin Collison to complete discrete pieces of work for the EERF.

ACTION: Sarah Prentice to set up a handover meeting with Rural Action East and forward a copy of the existing Service Level Agreement to David Wood.

ACTION: John Yates to obtain a copy of the Service Level Agreement that exists between the SWRAF and SWAN for secretariat support.

3. Actions and outcomes of Food Security meeting and AGM

3.1 The EERF agreed that it would like to contribute to and champion the 'balanced policy agenda' position paper being developed by the SFFS groups. Marie Francis is keen for the paper, along with another two on research and development and the need to change the way that skills provision is funded, to be submitted to the Regional Partnership Group. The EERF needs to find out from Marie how best to feed into the paper and how the work of the EERF and the SFFS groups aligns. The Steering Group agreed that the county RAFs should be given the opportunity to debate and feed into the issue.

ACTION: Martin Collison's presentation and slides to be sent to the county RAFs.

ACTION: John Yates (?) to liaise with Marie Francis about how best the EERF can feed into the 'balanced policy agenda' position paper and how the work of the EERF and the SFFS groups aligns.

4. Review of Position Papers – Skills update

4.1 The Skills paper has been sent to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and Huw Irranca-Davies and they are picking up the issues.

4.2 The Growth paper has been sent to Defra, who reacted positively, Barbara Follett, who responded to the letter, and EEDA although it was not clear who within EEDA the paper had been sent to.

ACTION: Sarah Prentice to find out who within EEDA the Growth position paper was sent to and to send copies to Jamie Merrick, Fiona Bryant, Richard Ellis and Edward Iveagh.

ACTION: John Yates to write a covering letter to be sent out with the Inward Investment position paper.

4.3 The Steering Group discussed its relationship with representatives of other political parties, the House of Lords and other regional bodies and agreed that John and the Steering Group should explore meeting with the following:

- Richard Ellis, EEDA
- James Paice MP
- Andrew Lansley MP
- Grant Shapps MP
- Norman Lamb MP

In addition the Steering Group will explore the possibility of meeting members of the House of Lords – for example, Lord Hanningfield and Gillian Shepherd – but there needs to be a clear purpose to meeting with any of those identified.

ACTION: John Yates / members of the Steering Group to explore and set up meetings with those identified.

ACTION: John Yates and Suzanne Harris to explore the possibility of a meeting at the House of Lords.

5. Future of the Forum – Update

- a. Rural Action East**
- b. Funding & budget**
- c. Membership**
- d. National Position**

5.1 This was covered earlier on the agenda.

6. Steering Group membership review

6.1 John, Pat and Suzanne had met and had agreed that named representatives should attend Steering Group meetings and that substitutes at local level should be discouraged. Substitutes will however be allowed from regional and national bodies (i.e. the CRC). Martin Collison and Graham Hedger will continue to sit on the Steering Group as Chairs of the Learning and Skills Sub-Group and the Housing Sub-Group respectively.

6.2 Each county should have equal representation on the Steering Group. John reported that Marianne Baker from Cambs ACRE has been put forward to represent Cambs on the Steering Group. Representation from Beds, Cambs and Suffolk was discussed and John agreed to speak to them about their engagement.

ACTION: John Yates to speak to Beds, Cambs and John Mullen from Suffolk about their representation on the Steering Group.

7. Annual Conference

7.1 Feedback from the conference has been mixed: some of the presentations were very good but there was concern that others were narrow in focus despite the speakers having been briefed beforehand. Time was an issue in the afternoon and it was unfortunate that the workshop session, the most important part of the day, had to be shortened.

7.2 There was no evaluation form in the delegate packs but this would have been a useful way of gathering feedback for the speakers on their presentations.

7.3 Emma has produced a report from the conference. She will pull out the key points into an executive summary and circulate both documents to the Steering Group.

ACTION: Emma Powlett to pull together the key points from the conference report into an executive summary and circulate both documents to the Steering Group.

7.4 The Steering Group agreed that the date of the annual conference will be timed in future to fall between two quarterly EERF meetings. This will avoid a clash with the end of year conference season and should help to maximise EERF members' attendance at the March meeting. The 2009/10 annual conference will be an agenda item at the next Steering Group meeting.

8. 10th June Meeting – Access

8.1 Pam Forbes, EERF member for Land Based Industries, had suggested that an EERF meeting could be held at the NFU in Newmarket. The Steering Group agreed to look into this as the venue for the June meeting.

8.2 The Steering Group discussed the content of the meeting, with the following points being made:

- the RES and RSS should feature although it is not clear how the EERF can influence;
- access to traditional services and employment, skills and training for the young and those that have been made redundant;
- transport needs to be recognised as an issue as in some areas it will be the only solution to access;
- clustering of services to make them sustainable – the Church could be involved in this debate;
- broadband speed is an issue – the CLA has carried out a survey; EEDA ran an initial campaign and they could be invited to join the debate;
- there is an issue surrounding how isolated people can access services, particularly in relation to transport issues and post-SNR when things will be more centralised;
- congestion charging could particularly disadvantage rural areas that are sometimes completely reliant on private transport.

ACTION: Suzanne Harris to draft an agenda for the Steering Group to work from.

ACTION: Steering Group members to speak to their RCC to identify a decent multi-function place and a decent cluster.

9. AOB

9.1 None stated.

10. DONM

10.1 10th June 2009 following the EERF meeting on Access.

ACTION: John Yates to invite Huw Irranca-Davies to attend the 10th June meeting.

Sarah Prentice, GO-East, 2nd April 2009