

## EERF Steering Group: Minutes

18th January 2011 at 2pm  
EEDA, Histon

### Present

Pat Holtom (Chairman & Norfolk)  
Suzanne Harris (Vice Chairman & Essex)  
Martin Collison (Vice Chairman & L&S Subgroup)  
Frances Bedding (Suffolk)  
Anne Marie Hamilton (Bedfordshire)  
John Simmons (EEDA)  
Mick Carr (GO East)  
David Wood (Secretariat)

### Apologies

Martin Aust (Housing Subgroup)  
Kate Belinis (Hertfordshire)  
Kirsten Bennett (Cambridgeshire)

### 1. Minutes of meeting on 4 November 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November were **agreed**.

### 2. Actions and matters arising not on Agenda

#### OECD

The Defra commissioned OECD 'England rural policy review' group were planning a report back session to which RAF Chairman had been invited. Although Pat could not attend, the Steering Group wished to take up the invitation and Fran Bedding agreed to go and represent EERF.

*Action Point:* **John** to facilitate Fran attending OECD meeting

*Action Point:* **Fran** to represent EERF at OECD meeting and report back to Steering Group

#### Regional Rural Intelligence

Defra has commissioned SQW consultants to advise on gathering rural intelligence. This was an opportunity to use our RWP as an exemplar of local data, analysis and prioritisation.

*Action Point:* **John** to ensure SQW appraised of RWP and its value to its study.

### 3. Rural White Paper

#### RWP Roll Out

David reported that he had presented at Herts local forum and had enjoyed good discussion with participants.

Planning for the final local event in Suffolk was underway for a meeting in February.

#### Action Planning Events

David reported to SG on management of these events. Three venues had been booked and an alert had been sent to all EERF members and the very wide range of other organizations and individuals identified at previous SG meeting. Invitations to go to LEPs, including

recently formed East Anglia. A contract and plan with outputs had been agreed with Collison Associates. A draft agenda had been prepared.

After a discussion, the SG agreed:

- Agreed final agenda for workshops
- Participants to be asked to state 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> choices for theme
- Invitations to 'sell events' by emphasising their importance during period of transition from region to local and increased 'localism'
- Participant briefing would be limited to avoid perception of predetermination of actions

John reported that EEDA Area Directors would be meeting LEP partners and he would work with them to ensure RWP was promoted for their use.

#### **4. EERF Development**

##### National Network of Forum Chairs

Pat and Mick reported latest understanding from Defra. Whilst it appreciated the work of RAFs in gathering and reporting information from across the country and would continue to encourage local rural networking, the current financial constraints would prevent further funding of RAFs (and their sister Food & Farming groups). A recommendation for the format of future such groups that "would be more than a simple merger" would be provided in spring 2011. This would be discussed further at 3 March minister meeting. Pat could not attend this meeting and it was **agreed** that Suzanne would deputise for her. Mick Carr was discussing ideas and options with Marie Francis of SF&FS group. Those attending RWP event of 11 Feb at Hylands House should use opportunity to discuss further.

*Action Point:* **Mick** to distribute letter from Defra on RAFs and SF&FS

*Action Point:* **Pat** to meet with Marie Francis to discuss ideas

*Action Point:* **All** to contribute to briefing paper for SH to use at 3 March meeting when representing EERF at Chairs **Defra minister** meeting

##### L&S Subgroup

Martin reported on recent meeting and subgroup ideas and concerns regarding RWP recommendations. There was serious concern all round about recent government announcements of funding of training and likely decrease in support for rural training and loss of small rural training providers. Also there was uncertainty about how to campaign for greater understanding of the issues and preventative actions. The LEPs and Regional Growth Fund were unlikely to be the answer. It was suggested that FSB would be a valuable ally because the core of the concern was economic and included urban as much as rural.

##### Housing Subgroup

In the absence of Martin Aust, there was no discussion.

#### **5. EERF Planning**

##### 9 March

David reported on the current progress with the 9 March meeting on 'Demographic Change' theme from the RWP and would include the AGM.

Regarding 'youth' aspect, Martin referred to YF Officer, Francesco Brown and YF national board member, Helen Reeve, the latter being a preferred speaker. Fran informed SG about Waveney youth group event.

### Next Meeting

The SG **agreed** that the next regular meeting would be on **8<sup>th</sup> June** when rural housing or broadband may be appropriate themes for meeting.

### **6. EERF Secretariat and Finance**

David reported on expenditure and progress to date and that with the extra work and expenditure for the RWP action events, all budget would be used by end March 2011. In the absence of further Defra funding, the SG discussed alternative sources on money. All believed that the work of EERF and its valuable support for rural were worth continuing. The EERF focus may have to change (*see above and attached Defra letter*) but EERF continuation was beneficial.

*Action Point:* **David** to investigate possibilities of funding by BLF, Getty Foundation and Lord Iveagh Land Trust

*Action Point:* **David** to write to each 'rural' top tier authority (UA/CC) asking for support.

*Action Point:* **ALL** to supply examples of EERF benefit to their county for David to use as evidence in support of funding request.

*Action Point:* **John & David** to discuss possible funding by EEDA of RWP action planning events.

*Action Point:* **David** to invoice Go East for final quarter grant payment

### **7. DONM & AOB**

The RWP working party were meeting at **2pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> March** to sign-off RWP Action Plan

The Steering Group **agreed** to meet on **9<sup>th</sup> March** after morning meeting of members at NFU offices.

There being no other business, the meeting closed.