

East of England Rural Forum
Communications Strategy
2009/2010

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1.0 Objectives of this Strategy

The objectives of the East of England Rural Forum Communications Strategy are as follows:

- To develop and deliver a communication strategy that contributes to the successful delivery of the EERF Action Plan.
- To identify all stakeholders across the rural sector that have an interest in the implementation of the EERF Plan and to set out the purpose, means and frequency of communication with them, ensuring that this is commensurate with their current influence and level of interest.
- To communicate information on the work of EERF to the Defra Minister (and as appropriate other Government Departments) and also to the rural constituents in the East of England region.
- To build working relationships with respective constituent groups in the region.

2.0 Assumptions

The Strategy is based on the following assumptions:

- There will be sufficient funds available in the budget to implement the strategy.
- Members of the Steering Group will actively contribute to the delivery of the communication strategy within their own organisations.
- The Secretariat provides appropriate and timely information and papers.
- There will be sufficient time available to provide high quality and timely input as required (e.g. Input to Newsletter and features on the website)
- There are sufficient resources attributed to the “web master” to input as required and meet deadlines.

3.0 Exclusions

Areas that are excluded from this Strategy are:

- Communication for non EERF activities
- Communication for non EERF projects

4.0 Interfaces

The other projects and pieces of work that interface with this strategy are:

- County Forum Projects and Action Plans
- Other Government supported regional groups and bodies, e.g. the Sustainable Food and Farming Group

5.0 External Dependencies

The strategy is externally dependant on the following:

- Government commitment to the EERF Action Plan
- Regional Strategic partners commitment to the EERF Action Plan

6.0 Benefits

The project will provide the following benefits

- Improved public and sectoral awareness of the Forum
- Increased confidence in the EERF Action plan and its deliverables
- Increased sectoral support and 'buy-in' to the Forum
- Improved and relevant information flow to all members of the Forum

7.0 Costs

Area	Cost (£)
Newsletter	Nil
Annual Conference	£5,000
Website design and management	£1,500
Publication and promotion of Position Papers	Nil
Staff time & costs	£2,000

8.0 Approach

8.1 Initial Milestones

- Terms of reference with regard to the ownership of the Communications Strategy to be agreed with the EERF Steering Group
- Communication Strategy agreed
- Quarterly Newsletters issued
- Steering group meet bi monthly, Communications set item on agenda

8.2 Group membership

The Steering Group consists of the following members:

Organisation	Nominee
EERF Chair	John Yates
Sub-Regional Rural Forums Bedfordshire	Sarah Hughes
Sub-Regional Rural Forums Cambridgeshire	Kirsten Bennett
Sub-Regional Rural Forums Essex	Suzanne Harris
Sub-Regional Rural Forums Hertfordshire	Kate Belinis
Sub-Regional Rural Forums Suffolk	John Mullen/ Frances Bedding
Sub-Regional Rural Forums Norfolk; EERF Vice-Chair	Pat Holtom
EERF Vice-Chair	Andrew Budden
EERF Housing Sub Group; Faith Groups	Graham Hedger
EERF Learning and Skills Sub-Group; Rural Consultant	Martin Collison

GO-East	Sarah Prentice
Commission for Rural Communities	Nicola Lloyd
EERF Co-ordinator	Emma Powlett

9.0 Communication and Stakeholders

9.1 Communication methods

The Steering Group will identify the key communications channels and co-ordinate a communications strategy for all EERF activities.

Primary forms of communication for this Group will be:

- EERF Website
- Link to EERF section of Defra website and Intranet site
- Inclusion of EERF information (where possible) on member organisations websites
- EERF Newsletter
- Position Papers
- Meetings (Forum, Steering group and Task and Finish)
- Annual Conference
- Email & Letters
- Meeting with Regional Representative Groups
- Cascaded Briefing to County and other Forums
- Ministers and Defra's Brief
- Press Releases

9.2 Communication Channels

The communication channels are described below:

Channel: Web site www.eerf.org.uk

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website for outbound communication between the Forum and interested parties
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a method for quick distribution to a wide audience • To provide a place where responses to materials can easily take place.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated as required

Channel: The Newsletter

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter to be published in electronic format. • Drafted by Chair with possible contributions by Task and Finish Groups, Steering Group.
Purposes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report back on Ministers meeting; highlight issues of interest to the Centre. • Communicate progress, issues and matters affecting internal and external stakeholders. • To keep interest in the Forum and promote support and involvement. • For internal and external stakeholder use.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly

Channel: Position Papers

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers containing specific information on key issues identified by forum members. • Available electronically
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To bottom out key issues to the region's rural communities and promote them to all spheres of influence in the region and nationally across all appropriate government departments.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As required as the Action Plan progresses

Channel: Forum Meetings

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings between all Forum members on a quarterly basis.
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Forum for communication between the Members and stakeholders. • An opportunity to discuss rural issues at a regional, county or a local level.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to discuss developing thinking on forward issues from representatives of those at the “grass roots” level.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly

Channel: Steering Group

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives from each county rural forum, CRC representative, officers group meet with the Chair and two vice chairs to define the issues for debate at the Forum
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide effective leadership and set the overall direction for the Forum. • To act as point of contact for information dissemination to, and for receipt of queries from members.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi - Monthly

Channel: Task and Finish Groups

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives from rural forum with particular interest in a specific topic meet to discuss the Forum’s view.
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To discuss issues in order to persuade and challenge developing government policy; feed back to the Forum. • Based on experience and knowledge of the sector.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly

Channel: Annual Conference

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event to take place in the Region. • Opportunity to discuss a key topic in detail with external stakeholders • Also allows open discussion and exchange of ideas from and between Stakeholders in form of open
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	questioning sessions.
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An open and accessible way to enable two-way communication, discussion and exchange of ideas between the Forum members and stakeholders.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually

Channel: Meeting with Regional Representative Groups

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings (keep in touch) between EERF Chair and representative groups who are part of the Defra and other key Government Departments' family. Subject matter to be developed as meetings develops.
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A forum for direct, two-way communication between the EERF chair and other Regional Group chairs. An opportunity to discuss issues surrounding the rural communities An opportunity to discuss developing thinking on key issues and develop a plan on how to address them collaboratively.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As requested and as thinking develops/ decisions are made.

Channel: Cascaded Briefing to County and other Forums

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing to County Forums carried out by the co-ordinator based on points agreed at Steering Group meetings
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that there is a two way process of engagement between County Forums and the Regional forum.
Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly, prior to County Forum meetings.

Channel: Ministers and Defra's Brief

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report to Defra on the work of Forum. • A verbal report to the Minister on key issues that are affecting the regions rural communities and how the Forum is tackling them.
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a regular report to Defra. • To raise awareness of the approach and work of the action plan to the Minister.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly

Channel: Press Releases

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information regarding specific aspects of the Forum and its work released to the Media.
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give information on specific aspects of the Forum relating to important decisions, and in response to media interest in specific areas.
Frequency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As required and as key decisions are made and key deliverables are achieved.

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Activity	Date Planned	Messages	Audience	Channel	Responsibility
Website update	Quarterly	Add position papers - new links - mins of meetings	ALL	Website	Coordinator
Chairman's Newsletter	Quarterly: post Ministerial meetings	Update from Mins meetings etc	Rural Forum members	email & website	Chair
Position Papers	As required as the Action Plan progresses	Promote key regional issues to major influencers at all levels	Interested parties	electronically	Coordinator
Forum meetings	Quarterly	Meet to discuss and debate key issues	Forum members	Face to face Meeting	Chair/ Coordinator/ Steering group/ Secretariat
Minutes of Forum meetings	Quarterly	Post each Forum meeting	Rural Forum Members & cc to chairs of other key regional strategic groups & other Regional Forum leads	email & website	Secretariat
Steering group meetings	Bi monthly	Set the overall direction for the Forum	SG members	face to face meetings	Coordinator/ Secretariat
Minutes of Steering group meetings	Bi-monthly	Post each SG meeting	Steering group members	email & website	Secretariat

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Task and Finish groups	Quarterly	Discuss issues in order to persuade and challenge developing government policy	Forum; outside interested parties	Face to face meetings	Individual forum members
Annual Conference	Annually	Opportunity to discuss a key topic in detail with external stakeholders	All regional and national stakeholders with an interest	meeting	Chair/ coordinator/ Steering group
Meeting with Regional Representative Groups	As appropriate/ requested	opportunity to discuss developing thinking on key issues and develop a plan on how to address them collaboratively	Representative groups who are part of the Defra and other key Government Departments' family.	Face to face meetings	Chair/ Dept. Chairs/ coordinator/
Cascaded Briefing to County and other Forums	Quarterly, prior to County Forum meetings	To ensure that there is a two way process of engagement between County Forums and the Regional forum.	County Forum members	electronic briefing and /or attendance at meetings	Coordinator

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Ministers and Defra's Brief	Quarterly	To provide a regular report to Defra, and raise awareness of the approach and work of the action plan to the Minister	Defra and Rural Ministers and other regional RAF chairs	Face to face and electronic email	Chair
Press Releases	As required and as key decisions are made and key deliverables are achieved	To give information on specific aspects of the Forum relating to important decisions, and in response to media interest in specific areas	Rural communities	face to face and written briefing	Chair, Dept Chairs