



Rural and Farming Network E-newsletter

Welcome to the December edition of the Rural and Farming Network E-newsletter. This newsletter is designed to help RFN groups share information and news and for Defra to share updates on government and stakeholder developments with you and your members.

This month's edition features:-

- [The RFN Spotlight](#)
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The RFN Spotlight

This issue shines a light on the Tees Valley Farming Food & Rural Affairs Network and the Farming and Rural Issues Group for the South East.

Tees Valley Farming Food & Rural Affairs Network and Chair Lorna Jackson

The RFN for the Tees Valley (FFRATV) covers a small geographical area compared to its neighbours in Yorkshire and the North East and can be best described as being 'Rural/Urban Fringe' in its nature. However, within this compact area it has a diverse range of issues and a number of particular challenges that go with the territory, so to speak.

The Tees Valley, which includes the rural areas of Darlington, Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland, was originally part of the North East Rural Affairs Forum but when the opportunity to form a local network came about, support was received from a variety of stakeholders for Tees Valley to form its own network. An Expression of Interest was submitted by Tees Valley Rural Community Council (TVRCC) to DEFRA which was approved at the end of December 2011.



The Network was launched on the 14th March 2012 at the Historic Quay in Hartlepool.

Its first Chair elected is Lorna Jackson, who comes from Saltburn, which is further along the coast from Redcar and is hugely active in local food. The family business is a delicatessen called Real Meals

and she also runs a Community Interest Company, (CIC) called Food First. Through this, she runs Farmers Markets at Saltburn, Stockton and is involved in many other local initiatives. In this role, Lorna has attended meetings with DEFRA and represented the views of grass roots opinion and taken forward particular issues important to the area. These range from fishing interests at Hartlepool, Redcar and Saltburn, Farming issues, which this year have been particularly connected to the weather, environmental issues, rural broadband (which is not only a problem in the more remote areas of the country) and the Rural Economy. Tees Valley Rural Community Council provides the lead and secretariat for the Network through its Chief Officer, Doff Pollard and Rural Development Officer, Nick White.

The Aim of the Network is;

To maximise the potential of the rural economy within Tees Valley by increasing communication and identify opportunities, issues and concerns which can be addressed through collaborative action and representation.

Its Purpose is;

The purpose of FFRATV is to provide an overview of rural issues to enable rural communities to become more efficient and sustainable socially, economically and environmentally. We will undertake this through enabling local rural independent stakeholders' to contribute into the local, national and European agenda.

FFRATV's objectives are to provide a flexible forum to advise on issues, concerns and good practice to both DEFRA, Tees Valley Unlimited (the Local Enterprise Partnership for Tees Valley), and the Unitary Authorities of Redcar and Cleveland, Hartlepool, Darlington and Stockton on Tees, and to act as a channel of communication into rural stakeholder and delivery organisations.

FFRATV is seeking to establish activities which add value to the mainstream work of agencies and partnerships in the area. These fall under the following three major themes;

1. Rural Economy
2. Social and Community in Rural Areas
3. The Environment

Andrew Colquhoun – Chair of Farming and Rural Issues Group for the South East

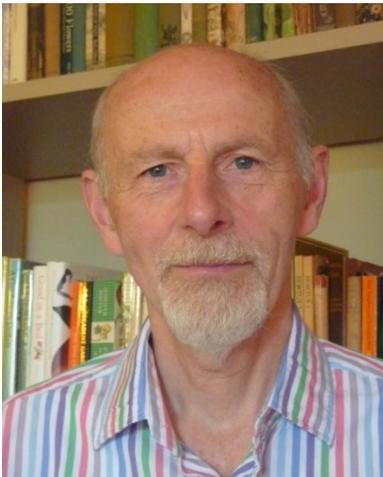
Formed in 1997, the Farming and Rural Issues Group for the South East (FRIGSE) brings together all the main land-based organisations operating in the South East of England. Our membership consists of 14 organisations involved in farming, forestry, horticulture, agricultural engineering, contracting and consultancy.

We also have representatives from the land-based colleges, training organisations and the CBI.

In short, we cover the waterfront in terms of the land-based economy of farmers, growers, foresters and the professions and industries which support them, as well as embracing organisations and individuals with social and environmental interests such as the National Trust.

Our main aims are:

- * Ensuring that the region's land-based sector is mobilised as the prime deliverer of local food supplies, climate change mitigation, an attractive landscape, and biodiversity.
- * Working to champion and disseminate good practice on the land.
- * Using our collective expertise to help shape official policies which might affect the land-based sector in the South East.
- * Providing a forum for liaison both between its member organisations and with Government agencies
- * Working to boost the rural economy through farming, horticulture and forestry.



My last position was as Director-General for the RHS. Since then, I have chaired the (now defunct) SEEDA Horticultural Working Group and then took over the chair of FRIGSE in 2010. I also chair the National Horticultural Forum which brings together industry and research providers to try to develop a coherent approach to R&D issues for the horticultural sector across the UK. Until earlier this year, I was on the management board of the Natural Environment Research Council. Away from rural affairs, I practise as a counsellor in Hastings. And I am involved in the regulation of chartered accountants in England and Wales.

Visit the new website: www.frigse.org.uk and I can be contacted at colquhounaj@aol.com

Your e-newsletter needs you! Each month we would like to feature profiles of two RFN groups. Thank you for the profiles and pictures received to date. If you haven't already sent your profile in please do send it through so that we can feature your RFN in future editions.

News from you...

Rural Hubs Partnership – Staffordshire

A really successful inaugural meeting of the Staffordshire Rural Forum took place on 4th December 12, at the Council Chambers of Staffordshire County Council, which was opened by Councillor Philip Atkin, and Chaired by Councillor Mark Winnington. An overview of the RFN from a local perspective was delivered by Eunice Finney (Chairperson of Staffordshire Rural Hub) and our guest speaker Sara Eppel (Head of Rural Communities Policy Unit – DEFRA) gave an overview from a national perspective. A question and answer session followed.

Staffordshire Rural Hub is a partner in the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Project (which is Heritage Lottery Funded) with the lead partner being the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, along with 15 other organisations, which has been set up to protect and develop the valleys community and special landscape promoting forestry, farming, tourism, recreation and heritage; maintaining a viable economy to enhance, restore connect habitats and pendent species.

Tees Valley Farming Food & Rural Affairs Network

Tees Valley Farming Food and Rural Affairs Network is seeking to establish activities which add value to the mainstream work of agencies and partnerships in the area. These fall under the following three major themes; 1. Rural Economy 2. Social and Community in Rural Areas 3. The Environment

An update on our work around these three themes follows:-

Rural Economy

For our October Steering group meeting we met at the Piercebridge Farm Shop, run by Chris & Liz Hodgson, for a bacon bun and coffee and then moved on to the headquarters of Farmway, just up the road, by kind invitation of Peter Hull, Chief Executive, and John Seymour, Farmway Chairman. Peter and John showed members around the site which includes a Feed Mill, Seed Dressing Plant, Grain Dryer and Country Store



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Farmway is the largest rural business in Darlington, with an annual turnover in excess of £40m, employing some 120 staff who travel in mainly from North Yorkshire and County Durham, rather than other parts of the Tees Valley. Arising from the meeting, we were able to make introductions between Farmway and the Economic Development team at Darlington Borough Council, who themselves are seeking to include rural business within the scope of their developing Economic Strategy.

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This also illustrated the connection between farming businesses, through Farmway to the ENSUS plant on Teesside, producing Biofuels and other by products. This has given rise to a planned visit to the ENSUS plant which will take place in the spring.

Environment

The environment is to be the theme for TVRCC's Rural Summit, to be held in March 2013 and which will focus on the launch of the Tees Valley Nature Partnership led by the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. The Trust has worked for more than 30 years to protect wildlife and wild places;

to educate, influence and empower people. It manages 13 Nature Reserves and helps others to manage their own countryside sites. This work is helping to secure the future of many important habitats and species, which might otherwise be lost. Many of these lie in the shadow of heavy industrial sites around the Tees Basin and adjoining coastal areas.

Community

As the lead partner, Tees Valley Rural Community Council has been working hard on three areas of community interest;

Community Planning,
Rural Broadband, which is also an important driver for the rural economy,
Transfer of Community Assets.

We are working with the Hartlepool Villages as they work through the process of building a Community Plan. This will seek to influence the local plan currently being developed by Hartlepool Borough Council

Our Senior Rural development Officer, Janice McColm, as our Village Halls advisor, is assisting with often difficult issues involved in the transfer of village halls and other community assets into the direct management of local community groups, who may not have the experience, skills or knowledge of how to take on these more exacting and inherently risky responsibilities.

On Rural Broadband, we have assisted five communities to submit expressions of interest in Round two and although none progressed to full application we are now working to re-submit in Round three. As this programme progresses, we learn more about the subject and hope for success this time round.

Other projects.

Following the launch of the Darlington Food Map within the Making Local Food Work programme delivered by CPRE and the Plunkett Foundation, we submitted an application to Plunkett to take this forward and were successful.

The project group, facilitated by Nina Dales, Plunkett Foundation, have chosen to develop up to four separate project ideas within the scope of the funding. These are;

1. A Meet the Buyer/Producer event to be held next spring,
2. The establishment of a Local Food outlet within the Darlington Covered Market.
3. A trade based website based on the 'Feeding Manchester' model,
4. A local food mapping project in East Cleveland.

We have also submitted an application to the Princes Trust Countryside Fund which aims to support matching employment opportunities within the Rural/Urban fringe to young people up to 25 years of age, to consider employment in the rural economy. We hope for a positive response to this application by the end of December.

To finish, we can only hope for a better growing season and further successful development of the RFN for 2013. From all of us in the Tees Valley, best wishes for 2013.

News from Defra and beyond

New £5 million fund to prevent local flooding

A £5 million pilot fund for communities devastated by flooding or for those who are at risk has been launched by Environment Minister Richard Benyon to protect their homes and businesses.

Up to 20 communities will receive grants for local flood risk management schemes. Defra will evaluate the success of each scheme to identify the best ways to improve resilience to flooding in communities across the country. For more information visit [Community Pathfinder scheme](#).

Here's the link to the [Defra news story](#)

£5 million RDPE 'Dairy Fund'

The Dairy Fund is now open for applications from eligible projects that will deliver transformational change to multiple English dairy farm businesses.

The Dairy Fund is now open for outline applications, please note that the deadline for submission of completed electronic and signed hardcopy outline applications is **17:00 on the 28 February 2013**. Any applications submitted after this deadline may not be accepted.

Grants are available from £25,000 to circa £1million.

[Full details of the RDPE Dairy Fund are available by clicking here](#) including a handbook that provides eligibility rules, information on how and when to apply and contact information in case any guidance is required when you are considering or making an application for funding.

Call for case studies

Rural businesses using superfast broadband?

Now the Government has state aid approval for the £530m rural broadband programme we are working with Local Authorities to press ahead with delivering broadband roll out. Projects are being managed in a timetabled pipeline. Demand stimulation and showcasing the business benefits of Next Generation Access (NGA) superfast broadband (speeds of 24 mps plus) will be an important aspect of the programme next year.

With this in mind Defra is looking for case studies of rural businesses that are already successfully utilising superfast broadband using digital and web based technology to help expand and deliver their business. We are hoping to use case studies in a range of communication activity to help stimulate demand for superfast broadband throughout next year. We are keen to find examples of small and micro rural businesses from a range of sectors such as farming, horticulture, food and drink, manufacturing, creative industries, tourism, forestry, retail. So if you do know of any businesses in your locality that are already using superfast broadband to deliver, expand and promote their business who might be happy to engage with Defra to develop a case study please can you get in touch with Jenny Barker at jenny.barker@defra.gsi.gov.uk before the end of January 2013.

Non-Departmental Public Bodies reviews (Triennial Reviews)

Review of Environment Agency and Natural England

As part of the Government's commitment to ensure accountability, value for money and transparency of public bodies, Departments are required to review their sponsored Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) at least once every three years in order to ensure that the functions of individual NDPBs are still required and that the NDPB model is fit for purpose and offers taxpayers the best value for money.

On 12 December 2012, the Environment Secretary Owen Patterson announced the start of the Triennial [Review of the Environment Agency and Natural England](#) (the Review). This follows a period of informal engagement with stakeholders.

A Discussion Paper has been issued and Stakeholders are invited to contribute their views and evidence to the Review. You are invited to respond to the discussion document **by 4 February 2013**. Responses can be sent to Defra by email to EA-NEreview@defra.gsi.gov.uk, or you can write to Triennial Review Team, Defra, Area 6D Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR.

Defra's Rural Economic Bulletin 2012

Defra recently published its Rural Economic Bulletin 2012 for July to September (Quarter 3). Below is a selection of economic indicators summarising aspects of the rural economy compared with April to June (Quarter 2 / Q2):

- **Rural house prices up in Q3** (average sale price of properties)
Rural areas: £271,600 (6% higher than in Q2)
Urban areas: £249,600 (5% higher than in Q2)
- **Rural unemployment rate no change in Q3**
Rural areas: 4.8% (same as in Q2)
Urban areas: 8.8% (up from 8.6% in Q2)
- **Rural claimant count no change in Q3**_(% of working age population claiming unemployment benefits)
Rural areas: 1.9% (same as in Q2)

Urban areas: 4.3%(same as in Q2)

- **Rural redundancies up in Q3** (Redundancies per 1,000 workers)
Rural areas: 5.7 (up from 5.4 in Q2)
Urban areas: 5.2 (down from 6.3 in Q2)
- **Rural business insolvencies no change in Q3** (Insolvencies per 1,000 businesses)
Rural areas: 0.7 (same as in Q2)
Urban areas: 0.9 (same as in Q2)

See the full report by [clicking here](#). Our latest statistical releases on Food and Farming are available [here](#)

Cross Compliance Guidance – changes in 2013

Changes to 2013 Cross Compliance Guidance will be notified to farmers and landowners by post very shortly. You are recommended to keep these changes with your hard copy of “The Guide to Cross Compliance in England 2012.

An update on the RDPE Skills Framework

The RDPE Skills and Knowledge Transfer Framework has been developed as part of a more nationally consistent offer for a range of products and services delivered in the rural areas of England through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) 2007-2013.

There are 32 training providers contracted on the Framework (the list is published on the [RDPE network website](#)). The Framework aims to provide skills and knowledge transfer activity through a range of training providers across England with contracts running until March 2014.

This training will be available to adults working in the agricultural, horticultural and forestry sectors or an individual/small business in the traditional rural skills/tourism sectors based in a rural area. Training provision has been designed to cover a wide range of subjects that stakeholders have identified as being important to the sectors.

These are encompassed in the following themes:

1. Business Management, Leadership and ICT Skills for Agriculture, Horticulture & Forestry
2. Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and Technical Skills for Agriculture Horticulture & Forestry
3. Agricultural Animal Health and Welfare
4. Marketing and Supply Chain Efficiency for Agriculture, Horticulture & Forestry
5. Resource Use Efficiency in Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry
6. Traditional Rural Skills and Rural Tourism

Training will be delivered through a range of packages, formats and methods e.g. courses, workshops, seminars, mentoring, conferences etc. Further information is available through the providers' websites which can be accessed through Defra's [RDPE Network website](#)

Defra is currently working with the training providers who have been awarded a contract to develop the detail. This is a staged approach so contracting for the training activity is an on-going process and as contracts are awarded Defra and the providers will continue to develop and implement detailed delivery plans across England

The following six out of the fourteen specifications have been awarded to:

- Management & Business Skills – Traineast
- Advanced Technical Skills in Livestock – AHDB
- Animal Health and Welfare – AHDB
- Endemic Livestock Disease Awareness – AHDB
- Supply Chain Efficiency and Benchmarking – UEA
- Upland Technical - ADAS

The remaining eight specifications will be awarded during December and early January.

Further information on the contracts awarded and how to access the training can also be found on the [RDPE network area of the Defra website](#) which is updated as contracts are awarded.

Open Consultations

Defra has a number of open consultations - that is, those on which we are still inviting comments. You may wish to review and, if you have a particular interest or view, respond to formally. You can view all open consultations [here](#)

- **[Consultation on the implementation in England of the EU dairy package.](#)**

Please [click here to view the consultation on implementation in England of the 'EU dairy package'](#). This is the consultation on the implementation in England of the EU Dairy Package (Regulation (EU) no 261/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 511/2012 and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 880/2012). The consultation is open until **Monday 21 January 2013**

- **[Consultation on future scanning surveillance for animal disease](#)**

Please click here to view the [consultation on future scanning surveillance for animal disease](#). The consultation is open until **15 February 2013**.

- **Marine Conservation Zones: Consultation on proposals for designation in 2013**

This consultation seeks views on proposals for the [designation of Marine Conservation Zones \(MCZs\)](#) in English inshore and English and Welsh offshore waters. This consultation seeks to engage with everyone who has an interest in the marine environment and coastal communities. The consultation is open until 31 March 2013.

- **Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)** also has a number of open consultations, the departments full list of open consultation can be viewed [here](#). These include:

[Planning performance and the Planning Guarantee](#) The consultation seeks views on what measures to use to identify an authority's performance, how to identify underperformance and how to identify improved performance and related measures to underpin the Planning Guarantee. This consultation closes on 17th January 2013.

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency

AHVLA would like to invite the RFN to be aware of, and participate in, a consultation on a future veterinary scanning surveillance model. Please [see their website](#) for further information.

If there are any technical or policy questions about the consultation, please email: Andrew.Soldan@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk . Responses should be received by 15 February 2013.

Forestry Commission

Ash dieback - A new strategy

[A new strategy to tackle Ash dieback has been published.](#)

The Chalara Control Plan sets out the Government's objectives for tackling the disease and outlines what further action we will take over the next few months. The plan also re-affirms the Government's commitment to focus its efforts on:

- reducing the rate of spread;
- developing resistance to the disease in the native UK ash tree population;
- encouraging citizen, landowner and industry engagement and action in tackling the problem; and
- building resilience in the UK woodland and associated industries.

The Chalara Control Strategy can be found [here](#). For further information on Ash dieback visit www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara.

Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS)

Would your business benefit from a Mentor?

Working with a mentor can often be the determining factor in the success of a new company. In fact, results from the [SME Business Barometer](#) indicate that around 70,000 of those employers that secure support from a mentor report an improvement in their company's performance profits. And around 100,000 feel it improved their ability to develop business plans and strategy.

If you feel that your business could benefit from the unbiased, experienced perspective of a mentor, [Business in You](#) partner [mentorsme](#) can point you in the right direction.

Conrad Thornton founded [Green Street Media](#), an innovative marketing company with a focus on sustainability, in 2010. He found a mentor via Sheffield's Entrepreneur Exchange, part of Business & Education South Yorkshire, one of the organisations on [mentorsme.co.uk](#).

Conrad says his meetings with his mentor have been "inspirational" and led him to analyse his potential market more carefully and rebrand his company accordingly. He adds, "The Entrepreneur Exchange has given me the direction and inspiration to transform Green Street Media into a national scale brand. The support and encouragement that I have received have really helped me in expanding my business and improving our brand identity."

[Mentorsme](#) can put you in touch with over 100 mentoring organisations across the UK who can help you find the kind of mentor that suits you.

To learn more about the benefits of mentoring, or to get started with finding a mentor, visit [Business in You](#).

One of the many organisations on Mentorsme is the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs ([www.ioee.co.uk](#)). Sign up as an affiliate member to connect with a volunteer mentor who has completed free mentor training with Get Mentoring.

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## Rural Payments Agency: \*Banks urge farmers to be vigilant\*

The Rural Payments Agency has been made aware by banks that fraudsters, pretending to be from their bank's fraud department, may be targeting farmers who are receiving their Single Payment Scheme payments at this time of year.

We urge farming businesses to be aware of this and to remain vigilant. The banks have asked us to remind farmers there are a number of simple steps that can be taken to reduce the chances of becoming a victim of deception:

- Remember that your bank will never request your full online password information

- Banks would not request a token response used to log on to your online account
- Your bank will not ask you to make a payment over the phone by using your online account
- Be aware that if your bank does request you to call back, you need to ensure that you can hear a dial tone first or use a mobile to phone the bank directly (as the phone line may be held open by the fraudster)

Please could you share this as widely as possible through your websites, newsletters and other routes. Obviously if farmers have concerns they should contact their banks.

## What's on?

### Herefordshire Rural Hub

How does a farmer keep up to date with the continuing change within the industry?? This was a question posed at a Herefordshire Rural Hub meeting back in 2005.

The amount of paperwork and introduction and updating of rules and regulations was at that time, causing confusion and frustration to every farmer who just wanted to get on and farm. To help ease the burden the 'Green Futures' delivery programme was developed.

A delivery team of representatives from the Rural Hubs Network, Environment Agency, Natural England, Catchment Sensitive Farming, Farming Advice Service, NFU and CLA work collaboratively in the West Midlands to provide farmers with an opportunity at least once a year to 'get up to date'.

The programme for 2013 is now planned and bookings are taking place. Details are:

|                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday – January 22 <sup>nd</sup><br>Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LZ.   |
| Tuesday – January 29 <sup>th</sup><br>New Cattle Market, Hereford HR4 9HX                          |
| Tuesday - February 5 <sup>th</sup><br>Rudyard Hotel, Rudyard, Staffordshire, ST13 8RN              |
| Wednesday – February 13 <sup>th</sup><br>YFC Centre, Shires Farm, Hawford, Worcestershire, WR3 7SG |
| Tuesday – March 5 <sup>th</sup><br>Craven Arms Community Centre, Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 9PS   |

All events will be held from 7pm – 9pm

NRoSO and Basis registration applied for

Topics to be covered this in 2013 are:

- Cross compliance issues, including 2013 update and inspection issues.
- CAP Reform – latest news.
- Campaign for the Farmed Environment – where we are now and what more can farmers do.
- Waste Exemptions - help with registering your waste activities before the October 2013 deadline.
- ELS and HLS update from Natural England.
- Rural Hub Network – will provide information on funding that is relevant and available in your area.

This model has worked because we :

- Recognise that there is a need
- Have the needs of the farmer as the top priority
- Work collaboratively to maximise expertise and resources

We are now some seven years on but the challenges are still with us and so is 'Green Futures'. For further details contact: Herefordshire Rural Hub - Tel: 01432 870033 or Email: [herefordshirehub@hct.ac.uk](mailto:herefordshirehub@hct.ac.uk)

## 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012 meeting of RFN Chairs

The next meeting of the RFN Chairs with Ministers is scheduled to take place on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January from 10:00am– 15:30pm. Papers for the meeting were sent out on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December. **If you have not received the agenda and papers please contact the Defra RFN Secretariat team.**

If you have not already done so please do email the Defra RFN Secretariat team to confirm that your groups Chair or deputy can attend and if you have any special dietary requirements for the light sandwich lunch.

## Keep in touch

We welcome updates and news items from your group – please send any suggestions for items for inclusion in the e-newsletter through to [ruralandfarmingnetwork@defra.gov.gsi.uk](mailto:ruralandfarmingnetwork@defra.gov.gsi.uk) and we shall endeavour to include suggestions where possible.

We also welcome other suggestions as to how we can help to facilitate networking between RFN groups, or help to share information and best practise.