

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
RURAL ADVISORY GROUP**

NOTES OF THE MEETING ON 8 MARCH 2005

Present: Trevor Cherrett (Chair)
Nick Woolfenden
Wout Janssen
Steve Arnett
Melissa Bocks
Mark Chessell
Huw Williams **Alternate for Richard Clarke**
Bob Connell
Steve Gilbert
Lynette Leeson
David Pryce-Jones
Jacinta Thorley
Mark Wilson
Maddy Winter
Jacqui Cuff

1. Introduction and Apologies.

Trevor Cherrett welcomed Jacqui Cuff of the Countryside Agency who was talking to the group about Rural Proofing.

Apologies for Absence: Paula Amorelli; John Archer; Alan Betts; Valerie Carter; Lisa Creaye-Griffin; Susie Ohlenschlager; Rosalind Rutt.

2. Notes of the Previous Meeting held on 16 December 2004 and matters arising.

The Minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

3. Overview of the Consultation Draft South East Plan

There was a general agreement that although the Plan contained a number of rural specific policies, the overall impression was that it did not adequately address the rural context of the region. The following points were agreed for the Chairman to endeavour to weave into the group's response to the Plan:

- Suggest a redrafted brief section re rural for the Plan's context chapter.
- More emphasis on landscape character.
- Character should be included in the Vision and also cross-cutting.
- Plan should link with CA Vision.
- Should hook to PPS7.
- Concern was raised over the policy on AONBs, which should have the same level of protection as National Parks.
- The meeting agreed that the Chair would write a letter to Mike Gwilliam outlining the concerns of the group.

4. Sustainability Appraisal

- Melissa Bocks updated the group; copies of her notes available.
- The group continued to take a strong interest in how the SA took on board key elements of Rural Proofing.

5. Rural Proofing talk by Jacqui Cuff of Countryside Agency

- Jacqui gave a brief introduction of herself and the work she carries out.
- Jacqui believed that although there are good rural policies in the Plan, it needs better contextual explanation of how it is addressing rural dimensions of the South East.
- A national rural proofing report will be available annually from the new Rural Commission.

6. Taking the Bartlett rural evidence base forward

- It was agreed that more would need to be carried forward. As yet there has been no further action taken, but the funds are available from SEEDA.
- Members were asked to advise NW and/or David Pryce-Jones of any further work.

7. Rural Policy and Strategy Updates

- Countryside Agency – members were given a brief update on the re-organisation - as of 5 April 2005 these are as follows: part of the CA will remain as Landscape Access and Recreation, forming part of the new Integrated Agency; the remainder of the CA will be named The Commission for Rural Communities and will become a watchdog, adviser and advocate.
- Lynette Leeson advised the Group that there would be an event to mark the changes taking place at the Countryside Agency on 23rd March at Epsom racecourse.

8. Future role of RAG

- The Group could become a “virtual group” and would meet as and when there was a need. The Chair asked people to give the matter some consideration.

9. Date of Next Meeting

11 May 2005 10 am - **REARRANGED TO 5 JULY 2005**

The meeting closed at 16:45