



Thirsk Regeneration Initiative

Mid-Summer Forum

6.30 pm Wednesday 2nd July 2008

Thirsk Rural Business Centre

Minutes

Welcome & Introductions

Lindsay welcomed delegates to the meeting¹, introduced Dr Stuart Burgess, Liz Burdett & Geraint Williams and explained that the purpose of the event was for delegates to consider the issue of economic and social regeneration in a rural setting. Lindsay presented the TRI Chair's report which made reference to the forthcoming Thirsk Festival, an update on the Thirsk Safe Group (including the appointment of Bill Austin, Sowerby Parish Council, as new chair of the Safe Group) and Lindsay's decision to step down as Chair of the TRI after seven years in post. Lindsay thanked members of the group and the sponsoring organisations for their support during this time.

Regeneration in a Rural Setting

Dr. Stuart Burgess described his role as Rural Advocate and provided the context for the recommendations made in his recently-published Report 'England's Rural Areas: Steps to Release their Economic Potential'. Research undertaken by Dr Burgess indicates that the rural economy across the UK generates £325 billion. Dr Burgess suggested that the potential exists for this figure to be doubled should areas of underperformance be targeted.

The Report recognises the significance of agriculture in the rural economy and makes reference to food security, which is now high on the political agenda, and the role of 'younger' farmers and the need for creativity and diversification. The report also acknowledges the need for, and benefits of, access to high quality broadband. Dr. Burgess paid tribute to Women in Rural enterprise (WiRE) and suggested that the establishment of business parks in rural areas are not the *only* solution to regeneration in rural areas.

The Report recommends that government support is required in the following areas:

- Inspiration & leadership
- Investment
- Innovation
- The empowerment of rural communities to tackle environmental disruption

Dr Burgess outlined four of the recommendations made within the Report:

- The appointment of a Minister for the Rural Economy

¹ For a list of delegates see Appendix A

- The creation of a Rural Finance Forum to address the causes of low capital investment and funding for rural economic initiatives
- The creation of a Rural Innovation Initiative to promote technological innovation
- That the Government convene a national Rural Summit and sponsors a series of regional summits which focus on releasing the potential of rural economies.

Dr. Burgess hopes that these recommendations will provide a catalyst for change.

Action Point: Peter to make available a copy of this Report to delegates.

In response to a question about the role of larger scale businesses in rural areas and incentives for such businesses to relocate to rural areas Dr Burgess argued that planning authorities must acknowledge the need for both small and large scale business to drive the regeneration agenda. Dr Burgess agreed to pass on comments about the effect of protection afforded to companies from other European countries and invited delegates to suggest solutions to how a sustainable and integrated public transport system can be implemented. It was suggested that a 'hybrid' system, in which profit is not the key driver, may provide a solution.

The Learning & Skills Agenda

Liz Burdett, Area Director North Yorkshire, provided an overview of the role and responsibilities of the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) and explained the methods by which the government's learning agenda is to be delivered in a rural area. The key priorities of the LSC are to:

- Increase the number of young people remain in education up to 18 years of age
- Upskill the existing workforce
- Increase the number of people of all ages engaging in learning provision

Following the publication of the Leach Report the Government has set a target that by 2020 90% of all adults will achieved a Level 2 qualification (the equivalent of 5 GCSE's or above.) The Leach Report suggests that this is the minimum qualification level needed to make a significant contribution to the economy. A further target has been set that by 2020 40% of adults will have achieved a Level 4 qualification.

Access to learning provision and the choice offered to both young people and adults is a key issue in rural areas, along with sustainability of such provision and changing employment patterns. The LSC is seeking to engage with local employers to ensure those courses being offered are those needed by the private sector and increase the number of work-related learning opportunities. This is in accordance with recent 14-19 curriculum reforms and the introduction of 17 Diploma 'lines' (Thirsk school is to deliver the Hairdressing & Beauty Diploma.)

The LSC regard employers as key drivers behind the learning & Skill agenda and is looking to work in partnership with the business community, the voluntary sector and Jobcentre Plus to increase capacity and identify skills needs (for details of the free Train to Gain service visit: <http://www.traintogain.gov.uk/>)

Thirsk Festival Town: A Window of Opportunity 2008-2009

Geraint Williams provided the historical context for the Thirsk Festival (1999-2006) and described how such a festival could:

- Showcase the cultural diversity and heritage of Thirsk
- Increase cultural participation and audience development
- Contribute to Thirsk pride and enthusiasm

- Attract visitors and associate spend
- Create and enhance a positive Thirsk image and reputation
- Market Thirsk as a great place to live, work and study

Geraint confirmed that the 2nd Annual Festival Dinner is to be held on February 5th 2009. Dame Tanni Grey Thompson has been booked to attend.

Geraint believes the Festival Partnership should be a voluntary organisation which brings together the various elements of business, culture & arts and town, district & county councils, to interact with one another and with the community. The partnership will assist in co-ordinating & encouraging co-operation between key players to drive forward plans to develop & extend the Festival in both commercial and community activity. Geraint suggested a full-time and paid Festival Co-ordinator be appointed to direct, organise and administrate activities which should meet the demands of a more discerning and astute consumer.

It was agreed that such a Festival would require involvement both from the private & public sector, Parish Councils, the voluntary sector and community groups.

Closing Remarks

Lindsay thanked Dr Burgess, Liz & Geraint for their presentations and delegates for their attendance. Mick Jewitt thanked Lindsay on behalf of TRI and the community it represents for his support for the Group over the last seven years and presented Lindsay with a gift of appreciation.

Appendix A: Delegate List

Bell, Judy MBE	Shepherds Purse Cheeses Ltd.
Bell, Nigel	Shepherds Purse Cheeses Ltd.
Bielby, Mike	Sessay & Hutton Sessay Parish Council
Boddy, John	Dalton Parish Council
Brown, Les	Reed Boardall Group
Cartridge, Don	Thirsk Clock
Chandler, Julie	North Yorkshire Learning Partnership
Charlton, Jayne	NYCC Highways & Transportation
Cllr. Baker, Bob	Hambleton District Council
Cllr. Barker, Arthur	Hambleton District Council
Cllr. Dadd, Gareth	NYCC & Hambleton District Council
Cllr. Hall, Tony	Hambleton District Council
Cllr. Storm, Ellen	Sowerby Parish Council
Cole, Peter	Hambleton District Council
Collings, Noel	Hambleton District Council
Collison, Sarah	Guidance Services
Cramb, Alison	Severfield-Reeve Projects
Croft, Ken	Dalton Parish Council
Gibbon, Linda	TRI
Gill, Gillie	Rotary Club of Thirsk
Grainger, Jane	Thirsk Primary School (PAINT)
Grant, Jessica	Higher York
Hall, Angela	Rural Arts North Yorkshire
Haynes, Mark	Hambleton District Council
Hignett, Emma	england PR Agency & Richmond Town Council
Holt, Kevin	Hambleton & Richmondshire Rural Transport & Access Partnership
Homer-Mcghie, Abigail	Thirsk Clock

Jewitt, Mick	Hambleton District Council
Keast, Mike	Hillside Rural Activities Park
Madden, Amanda	Hambleton District Council
Marshall, Jan	Thirsk Town Council
McVay, Janice	Rural Arts North Yorkshire
Miller, Jill	Thirsk Ladies Chamber of Trade
Morley, Canon Rev. Leslie	Diocese of Ripon and Leeds
Musgrave, Colin	MB Audio Visual
Naisbitt, Ted	TRI
Osbourne, Julie	Fairtrade
Parnaby, Dennis	Thirsk Resident
Peckitt, Janet	Borrowby Show & Hillside Rural Activities Park
Penson, Mo	Thirsk Resident
Potter, John	The Ritz Cinema
Roberts, Freda	TRI
Sands, Ros	NYBEP
Scurrah, Alison	World of James Herriot
Simpson, Peter	Hambleton District Council
Smith, Nicky	Northallerton & District Voluntary Services Association
Swinbank, Sam	Hambleton District Council
Walker, Peter	Superskills Construction Training
Woodhead, Harry	Thirsk Auction Mart
T/Ch. Supt. Ali, Javad	North Yorkshire Police
Irving, Neil	North Yorkshire County Council
Jordan, Tony	TRI
Rowling, Rev. Richard	TRI