

**Meeting of the Hertfordshire Rural Forum
25th February 2005**

Objective 1: to acknowledge the work of the Forum in the past

Activity

Delegates were given the opportunity to introduce themselves and then note on a time-line their recollection of a high point and a low point of the HRF.

Outputs

The main low points and high points were:

Year	Low points	High points
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not being involved at an early stage 	
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spending time on constitutional issues Frustration with low capacity to develop ideas into good projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networking with members Coordinating members and issues in a partnership First meeting on crime issues
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failed LEADER bid Visits to rural businesses Failure to address rural crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fielder Centre conference
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting on rural transport Most of 2002 	
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herts CC dominating rural appraisal panel Projects declined for lack of funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing EEDA funding for projects Rural transport conference
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of funding for projects Not addressing all parts of HRF Agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional conference on rural crime Setting up rural crime action group Involvement of RIG
2005		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing funding for project

Objective 2: to set the rural policy context: what are the "drivers for change"?

Activity

Ten minute presentations were given by representatives from: Go-East, EEDA, Herts Prosperity: Ecotec Consulting: East Herts District Council: Herts CDA: Dacorum CVS.

Outputs

Up to date information on policy developments at regional, sub-regional and local levels

Objective 3: to identify key issues and priorities for the Forum members

Activity

Delegates each wrote down one issue that they would like to have addressed in a workshop.

Outputs

27 issues were identified. A poll among delegates suggested that the issues of greatest interest were:

- How to ensure long-term sustainability of projects?
- How can HRF ensure rural issues are on the emerging policy agendas
- Inconsistencies in planning policy and regulations
- Defining an appropriate membership for HRF & its relation to other partnerships
- Is the future role of HRF as deliverers or innovators?
- Building stronger communities through community development
- Funding for access and social exclusion schemes

Activity

The issues identified by delegates were categorised under one of the following themes:

1. Issues relating to **social inclusion and community capacity building**
2. Issues relating to **the HRF and its membership.**
3. Issues relating to **links to policy and project sustainability**

Delegates were presented with 3 topics under each of the three themes and asked to discuss and list:

- barriers to solving the issue covered by the topic
- drivers that could help solve or progress things.

Outputs

The **principal barriers and drivers** that delegates associated with each topic were:

Barriers / problems	Drivers
<i>"The HRF should have a role in furthering social inclusion"</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching an agreed definition of social inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The emphasis in policy-making is on balancing social, environmental and economic elements • HRF can advocate, lobby and raise awareness • HRF can be a clearing house for rurally-proved projects that are delivered by partner organisations
<i>"What can the HRF do to ensure stronger communities?"</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources • Shortcomings in transport provision • Lack of activities for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRF has expertise and resources • HRF can work through front-line delivery partners • Topic-specific projects can be designed to address specific problems (e.g. transport)
<i>"What can the HRF do to help deliver a sense of community?"</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural geographies and demographics • Difficulties in getting people to participate • Commuters from dormitory villages • Different levels of service provision by different authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Parish Councils • Parish Plans • Community consultation processes • HRF can provide information to communities
Barriers / problems	Drivers
<i>"The HRF should be composed of those with maximum influence and/or need and who are representative of a clear constituency"</i>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of exclusivity • Time constraints on members ability to participate • Lack of terms of reference or clear criteria for eligibility • HRF becomes an all talk, no action forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership needs to be representative • Has to be a clear process for dissemination of information
<p><i>"What is the role of the HRF in developing [facilitating] effective partnerships?"</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor communication between members • Duplication of the work of other bodies (e.g. RIG) • Lack of links to LSPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members having shared objectives <p>The need to share good practice across boundaries and sectors to ensure effective rural-proofing of LSPs and to influence the work of other partnerships</p>
<p><i>"The HRF should be primarily a network to facilitate [coordinate / champion] delivery</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No power to do this • HRF is not inclusive enough • HRF is too fragmented / diverse • Lack of funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to influence new regional structures • HRF members can change • HRF can change its membership and structures
<p><i>"Better policy knowledge [where informed by evidence of need] leads to better service delivery and projects"</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a lot of policy initiatives • Difficulty in knowing what the policy drivers are and what the opportunities are to exploit policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRF can provide access to information • HRF as rural expert body
<p><i>"HRF should endeavour to ensure that rural issues are properly represented in emerging policy / strategy at all levels"</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty knowing what the emerging strategies are • Disparate views on policies among HRF members • Urban-dominated policies are not linked to rural priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRF can use ICT to share info • Work of the emerging issues group • HRF can access evidence from the grass-roots
<p><i>"Sustainability of projects can be achieved by relating them to the mainstream"</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying suitable funding streams • Lack of exit strategies for projects • On-going reorganisation of statutory agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing emphasis on the need to offer evidence of need to secure funds • Better project risk assessment and exit strategy planning • New project vehicles such as LLPs and CICs