



14. The designation of the partners consulted and the results of the consultation

14.1 The partners consulted

1. The consultation arrangements on the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013 (RDPE) have been carried out in a variety of ways including:

- formal and informal meetings;
- public presentations;
- formal public consultations;
- workshops and seminars; and
- written and electronic communication.

2. There were a large number of partners who engaged in these arrangements. These included representatives from the regional and local authorities, public authorities, economic and social sectors, environmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations. A list of organisations and individuals who engaged in the consultation process is detailed at the end of this Chapter.

14.2 The results of the consultations

3. Preparation of the Programme has involved a substantial degree of close consultation with the competent authorities, economic and social partners and other bodies representing civil society, non-governmental organisations including environmental organisations and organisations responsible for promoting equality.

4. At the national level, we held written consultations on our input to the negotiations on the Rural Development Regulation, on the national priorities for the England Programme itself, and on the draft Programme in the context of an Environmental Report, as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment process. We arranged specific consultation events to consult partners about the Community Strategic Guidelines. The consultation on the national priorities for the Programme involved a series of eight regional events. We have also had a process of ongoing consultation with key stakeholders and partners, including through a designated group (“the Policy Advisory Group”).

5. At the regional level, a very wide range of stakeholders and partners have been consulted on the detailed content of the Programme document through the Regional Implementation Plan process, particularly in relation to Axes 1, 3 and 4.

6. The paragraphs below summarise how these consultation processes were managed, including the dates of the consultations and the time given to comment and contribute. They also set out the extent to which we have taken account of the views and advice received.

The written consultation on the negotiations on the Rural Development Regulation

7. Defra launched its formal consultation on the draft EU regulation on 17 August 2004. The closing date for responses was 12 November 2004.

8. The consultation document set out a number of key issues in the draft regulation, and Defra's initial thinking on them, on which stakeholder views were requested. There were a total of 72 written responses to this exercise. The responses from the Defra consultation exercise, along with those from similar exercises carried out in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, were used to inform further the development of the UK negotiating position for the Council working groups, which commenced in the autumn.

9. Whilst we continued to negotiate the Commission's draft Rural Development Regulation, we held informal discussions with key stakeholders on a regular basis to keep them informed and to seek any further thoughts. This was in addition to the 12 week consultation period.

Consultation on the EU Strategic Guidelines

10. The consultation on the draft European Union Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development took place in the form of a written invitation to attend one of two stakeholder meetings held in London on the 1 September 2005 and Brussels on the 5 September 2005. Stakeholders were also invited to comment in writing on the draft Strategic Guidelines. A range of interested stakeholders attended these two meetings. We received 12 written responses. The views expressed were taken into consideration in time for the Special Committee on Agriculture discussion of the proposal at the end of September 2005.

Ongoing consultation with key stakeholders and partners

11. A 'Policy Advisory Group', made up of partners representing in the economic, social and environmental sectors was convened in September 2005. The Group's role was to develop advice on the high-level outcomes to be delivered through the Programme. The members of the Policy Advisory Group were:

Organisation/Representation

Commission for Rural Communities
Countryside Agency
Country Land and Business Association
Defra Structural Funds (also providing linkage with DTI and ODPM)
English Heritage
English Nature
Environment Agency
Government Offices for the Regions
Forestry Commission
Heritage Link
HM Treasury
Local Government Association
National Council of Voluntary Organisations
National Farmers Union
Natural England
Plunkett Foundation
Regional Development Agencies
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Rural Payments Agency
Wildlife and Countryside Link

12. The Policy Advisory Group met frequently during the preparation of the consultation on the priorities for the programme and has met occasionally since then.

Members of the group have also been kept in touch with progress by e-mail and organisations have met with officials on an ad hoc basis to discuss the programme.

The written consultation on the priorities for the Rural Development Regulation

13. A written consultation on the priorities for the Programme ran from 27 February to 22 May 2006. 487 individuals and organisations were advised of the consultation, the document was placed on Defra's public website and hard copies were available on request. A specific separate written consultation was held in parallel on the future of support in the uplands.

14. In addition, Defra, through the Government Offices, held events based on the consultation in each of the 8 English regions. These were day long events that included presentations and discussion forums open to those who had an interest. The feedback from these events has been reflected in the report on the consultation referred to below.

15. In total, we received 286 written responses to the consultation on the priorities for the Programme, from 284 organisations and individuals. (Two organisations submitted two responses, one dealing specifically with issues relating to biomass and one covering the Programme as a whole). In addition there were 88 responses to the consultation on the future of support in the uplands.

16. The responses to the consultation were used as a reference to views at all points in the decision-making process on the detail of the Programme.

17. The main message from almost all the responses was the need for integration across the environmental, economic and social activity supported by the Programme. In line with this, we have emphasised the importance of close working between our delivery partners for the Programme and set up a process to ensure that this happens, through preparation of the Regional Implementation Plans. Arrangements are being put in place to ensure that this collaboration continues for the life of the Programme.

18. The consultation responses delivered the clear message that the Programme should play a significant role in helping rural areas to adapt to, and mitigate, the effects of climate change. Examples of action we have taken in the Programme to address these concerns include:

- the Environmental Stewardship (ES) review of progress currently being undertaken will examine the contribution of ES to addressing climate change;
- a specific priority for activities funded under Axis 1 is to develop a greater awareness of, and an ability to exploit, the market opportunities offered by the developing renewable energy market;
- continued support for energy crop planting for the production of biomass.

19. In relation to improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors, there was broad support for the proposed focus on skills, knowledge transfer and innovation. This emphasis remains in the Programme Document itself, but the priorities now also reflect the strong steer from the consultation responses towards high value food products and renewable energy as key areas of opportunity for development. There is also a greater emphasis on the benefits of collaboration and cooperation and the importance of developing strong supply chains.

20. On improving the environment and the countryside, the responses to the consultation broadly supported the continuation of the current priorities for agri-environment and forestry schemes. A review of the progress of ES will be carried out in 2007/2008 to ensure that it is contributing to existing objectives as effectively as possible and to consider how it can make a greater contribution to the emerging priorities identified in the consultation responses, in particular for biodiversity, water and climate change.

21. In relation to the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy, there was broad support for the approach set out, which proposed to enhance opportunity in rural areas through a focus on skills, enterprise and innovation. However, there were some concerns, particularly around how the targeting of the resources would work and the weighting given to the objective of “tackling social disadvantage”. To reflect these concerns, the targeting of support under Axis 3 has now been broadened out to “supporting areas of economic underperformance and individuals experiencing disadvantage”. The objective of “tackling social disadvantage” is listed alongside the other objectives for Axis 3 measures.

22. The key messages emerging from the consultation concerning delivery were focused on:

- the need for the delivery partners to work together to make integration a reality;
- strong support for regional flexibility.

23. Each region has produced a draft Regional Implementation Plan, setting out the priorities for the Programme in their region, and how it will be delivered. The delivery partners (the Regional Development Agencies, the Forestry Commission and Natural England) worked together to develop these plans, consulting widely with regional stakeholders and partners. These regional consultations have been both online, requesting written responses, and through specific events and meetings.

24. Decisions on the use and targeting of the majority of funding under Axis 1 and Axis 3, and the Leader approach, will, within the framework of national priorities, be devolved to the regional level.

25. In relation to the consultation on the future of support in the uplands, the main message emphasised by those responding was the importance of farming in maintaining the high biodiversity, landscape, cultural and recreation values in the uplands.

26. The majority of respondents agreed with the Government’s proposal to move towards rewarding upland farmers for the provision of environmental benefits and in particular by doing this through ES.

Consultation on the draft Programme Document and Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

27. The RDPE is subject to the requirement of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (European Directive 2001/42/EC). There are a number of stages in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process which lead to a public consultation on the draft Programme, in the context of an environmental report on the Programme’s likely overall impact.

28. In order to meet these obligations a public consultation on the draft Programme and SEA Environmental Report ran from 13 April to 5 July 2007. We also held a meeting for stakeholders in June 2007 on the detail of the Programme and the SEA findings. We asked stakeholders, where possible, to let us have their initial responses by 1 May 2007 so we could, as far as possible, take account of them in preparing the Programme document as submitted in May 2007. 6 organisations provided written responses by that date. By the end of the consultation period 45 organisations had responded.

29. The majority of those responding supported the focus of the Programme on Axis 2 activities. Linked to this, the majority of the respondents expressed agreement with the statement, made in the consultation documents, that: “The environmental report concludes commitment to environmental issues is central to the programme”, and that the overall environmental impact of the programme would be positive. By contrast a

number of respondents questioned the rationale for the concentration of programme resources on Axis 2 activities arguing that a higher proportion should be devoted to Axis 1 and Axis 3. An argument put forward to support that was that without financially viable businesses it would not be possible to deliver the environmental benefits envisaged under the Programme.

30. The majority of the respondents agreed that the RDPE provides a primary mechanism for large scale positive change in relation to the preservation of natural and historic features, biodiversity, landscape and access, water quality and climate change. Some respondents felt that the proposed approach to some of the environmental issues raised could be strengthened in particular in relation to climate change, the historic environment and management of coastal regions. Some of those responding cautioned that the ability of the RDPE to impact on climate change mitigation or adaptation should not be overstated.

31. Several respondents argued that it was essential to ensure that commitment to environmental benefits was reflected across the Programme's activities including those in Axis 1 and Axis 3.

32. A small number of those responding suggested that there should be a greater emphasis on measures to promote animal health and welfare.

33. There was broad support for the use of Programme funds to increase the use of renewable energy, but several of those responding felt strongly that mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the establishment of biomass crops does not result in negative environmental impacts.

34. A large proportion of those responding expressed the view that the monitoring and evaluation of the RDPE will be important in order to assess the nature and scale of benefits achieved from the large sums of public funds that the Programme will deploy. The importance of baseline data and monitoring in developing a clear understanding of both the aims and the impacts of the RDPE was seen by many as a key tool for securing the delivery of maximum benefits of the Programme.

35. Many of those responding stated that integration of environmental, economic and social activities would be needed if the Programme was to be successful. Respondents also suggested that the impact of activities, funded under Axes 1 and 3, would depend upon what projects were selected for support. Some went on to suggest that there was a need to provide guidance and training for delivery bodies to ensure that environmental outcomes are reflected in all elements of the Programme.

36. Questions posed in the consultation document as to how positive environmental impacts can be strengthened and potential negative effects minimised produced highly consistent responses. The majority of those responding suggested the involvement of regional partners with environmental remits and the integration of environmental issues in decision making processes would maximise environmental benefits.

37. We asked those responding to the consultation to consider how best to ensure that environmental assessment does not impose a disproportionate burden on applicants or delivery bodies. In general, the aim of keeping application material proportionate and appropriate to the project in question was widely endorsed, but there was some recognition that the range of potential activities may make this difficult.

38. The issues raised during the consultation, together with those raised in the Environmental Report, are detailed in the SEA Statement which is at Annex 2 to Chapter 4.2 of this document. Defra's response to these issues can be found at Annex 3 to Chapter 4.2 of this document.

List of Consultees

39. The following partners, across the environmental, social and economic spheres have all been consulted, by Defra at the national level, on the preparation of the Programme. There have also been consultations at the regional level, and further details about this are provided below.

Regional Authorities and other Regional Economic and Social partners:

England's Regional Development Agencies
Association of North East Councils
England's Regional Government Offices
East Midlands Regional Assembly
East of England Regional Assembly
East of England Regional Partnership Group
East of England Rural Forum
East Riding of Yorkshire Rural Partnership
Humber Economic Partnership
National Association of Local Councils
North East Assembly
North West Regional Assembly
Rural Action East
South East Rural Towns Partnership
South West Regional Assembly
South Yorkshire Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership)
West Midlands Regional Affairs Forum and Regional European Funding and Policy Group
York & North Yorkshire Partnership
Yorkshire and Humber Action for Market Towns
Yorkshire and Humber Assembly
Yorkshire Tourist Board

Local Authorities:

Alnwick District Council
Bedfordshire County Council
Carlton Parish Council
Cheshire County Council & Cheshire and Warrington Rural Partnership
Cornwall Enterprise Company (Cornwall County Council's Economic Development Service)
Cumbria County Council
Derbyshire County Council
Devon County Council
Devon Rural Network (Devon County Council)
Dorset County Council
Durham County Council
East Hampshire District Council
East Riding of Yorkshire (part of Yorkshire Council)
East Sussex County Council
Essex County Council
Essex County Council Historic Environment Branch
Federation of Rural Community Councils
Hampshire County Council
Herefordshire Partnership (Herefordshire Council)
Historic County Services of Cornwall County Council
Isle of Wight Council
Kent County Council
Lincolnshire Assembly (Lincolnshire County Council)
Lincolnshire County Council
Maldon District Council
Norfolk County Council
North Devon District Council
North Norfolk District Council
North Warwickshire Borough Council

North Yorkshire County Council
Northamptonshire County Council
Northumberland County Council
Shropshire Partnership and County Council
South Gloucestershire Council
South Norfolk County Council
South Norfolk District Council
Stafford Borough Council
Surrey County Council
Swale Borough Council
Taunton Deane Borough Council
Tynedale Council
Vale of the White Horse District Council
Warwickshire County Council
West Berkshire Council
West Devon Borough Council
West Oxfordshire District Council
West Sussex County Council
Worcestershire County Council

Local economic and social partners

Cambridgeshire Rural Forum
County Durham Economic Partnership
Derby & Derbyshire Economic Partnership (Strategic Partnership)
Devon Rural Community Council
East Midlands Leader + RPMC
East Midlands SSFF Skills and Business Support Steering Group
England Leader + LAG
Essex Rural Partnership
Fens LeAP Leader+
Gloucestershire First (Economic Partnership)
Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
Herefordshire Rivers LEADER+
Leicestershire Rural Partnerships
Lincolnshire Fenland Leader+ Action Group
Lincolnshire Forum for Agriculture and Horticulture
Mid Kent Leader +
Norfolk Rural Community Council
North Northumberland Leader +
North Pennines Leader +
North West Rural Community Councils
Northamptonshire County Council
Northern Marches Leader +
Northumberland Strategic Partnership
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Peak District Rural Deprivation Forum
Rockingham Forest Trust Leader + LAG
Rural Forum for Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire and Warwickshire Rural Hub
Selby District LEADER +
South East Rural Community Councils
South East Rural Towns Partnership
Staffordshire Rural Forum
Staffordshire Rural Hub
West Midlands Rural Community Council Network (WM Community Council)
West Oxfordshire Network Leader +
Yorkshire & Humber & Wolds Rural Community Councils

Other public authorities

Home Office
Broads Authority (member of National Park family)
Citizens Advice Bureau
Commission for Rural Communities
Defence Estates
English Heritage
English National Park Authorities' Association
Environment Agency
Highways Agency
Learning & Skills Council (DfES)
Local Government Association
Local Government Rural Network
Meat and Livestock Commission
Natural England
New Forest National Park Authority
Rural Payments Agency
Small Business Service
Sustainable Development Commission

Other bodies representing civil society and non-governmental organizations, including environmental organisations and bodies responsible for promoting equality

2nd Pillar Projects
4Children
ACRE
Action for Market Towns
Action with Communities in Rural England
Action with Communities in Rural Kent
Agricultural and Rural Policy Centre
Agricultural Industries Confederation
Anglia Ruskin University
Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network
Arthur Rank Centre
Arts Council
Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations
Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers
British Association for Shooting and Conservation
Biomass Industrial Crops (BICAL) Ltd
Bidwells
Bio-energy West Midlands
Bishop of Hull's Advisor for the Archdeaconry of East Riding
Blaby Recreational Riding Association
Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership
Bournemouth University
British Horse Industry Confederation
British Horse Society
British Institute of Agricultural Consultants
British Trust for Ornithology
British Veterinary Association
Broadland Agricultural Water Abstractors Group
Bulmers Cider
Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
Central Association of Agricultural Valuers
Central Grain Stores

Chester Rural Economy Group
Chilterns Conservation Board
Country Land & Business Association East Midlands
Country Land & Business Association North
Country Land & Business Association West Midlands
Compassion in World Farming
Co-operatives UK Ltd
Coppice Resources
Cornish Woodmeet
Cotswold Conservation Board
Country Land & Business Association
Countryside Alliance
CTC (National Cyclists Organisation)
Cumbria Upland Management Working Group
Dairy UK
Development Trust Association North East
Dorset AONB
Dr Robert Evans (Anglia Ruskin University)
Drax Power Ltd
Dry Stone Walling Association
East Lindsey District Council
East Midlands ACRE Network
East Midlands Environment Link
East Midlands Rural Business Desk
Elm Farm Research Centre
Energy Crops Company
England Forest Industries Partnership
ESD Biomass Ltd
e-Skills UK
European Council for the Village & Small Town
Exmoor Society
FARM
Farm Animal Welfare Council
Farm Crisis Network
Farmed Environment Company
Farmers Retail and Markets Association
Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
Farming Woodland Forum
FARMS Ltd
Farmstay UK
Federation of Small Businesses
Food and Drink Federation
Food from Britain
Forestry & Timber Association & ConFor
Forum for Private Business
Fotheringay Village Parish
Friends of the Lake District
Future of Rural Society
Game Conservancy Trust
Great Western Community Forest
Greenwood Community Forest
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sustainable Business Partnership
Heritage Link
Herriard Estates
Historic Farm Buildings Group
Horticultural Trades Association

Institute of Agricultural Management
Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
Institute of Field Archaeologists
Institute of Historic Building Conservation
Institute of Integrative & Comparative Biology
International Centre for the Uplands
Isle of Wight AONB
John Amos Energy Ltd
Kent AONB
Land Management Steering Group for East Midlands
Lancashire Rural Development Board
Landscape Institute
LANTRA
Leadership Group
Leading the Ornamental Challenge
Lifelong Learning UK
Linking the Environment and Farming (LEAF)
Mendip Cross Trails Trust
Michael Payne Environmental Consultants
MIND
National Association for AONB
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
National Farmers Network
National Farmers Union
National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs
National Forest Company
National Non-Food Crops Centre
National Pig Association
National Proficiency Test Council
National Trust
North East England's European Strategy Group
North of England Civic Trust
North Pennines AONB Partnership
North Yorkshire County Council Archaeology Team
Northamptonshire ACRE
Nottinghamshire County Council
The National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations/ National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
Omnibus Project
People 1st
Plunkett Foundation
Postwatch
Practical Farm Ideas
Proseed Consulting
Ramblers' Association Somerset Area
Rare Breeds Survival Trust
Red Meat Industry Forum
Red Rose Forest
REFA
Renewable Energy Association
Renewable Energy Suppliers Ltd
Renewable Fuels Co
RESCUE - British Archaeological Trust
Reverend R H Dengate
RICS
Rockingham Forest Trust

Roy Dart Rural Solutions
Royal Agricultural College
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Royal Town Planning Institute
Rural Youth Network
Shaping Norfolk's Future
Shropshire Hills AONB
Soil Association
South Downs Joint Committee
South West Chamber of Rural Enterprise
South West Historic Environment Forum
Surrey Community Action
Surrey Hills AONB
Sussex Village Halls Advisory Group
Sustain
Talbotts Ltd
Teignbridge Rural Business Regeneration Partnership
Tenant Farmers Association
The Prince's Trust
TV Bioenergy Coppice
UKRIGS
University of Gloucestershire
Visit Britain
Water UK
West of England Rural Strategy Group
Westley Consulting Ltd
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
Wildlife & Countryside Link
Wildlife Trusts
Women in Rural Enterprise
Women's Food & Farming Union
Woodland Renaissance Partnership for SW
Woodland Trust
Working Woodlands Holdings Ltd
Yorkshire Historic Environment Forum
Yorkshire Water Services