



Yorkshire and Humber Regional Planning Board Notes *Thursday 4th March 2010*

Nick Sandford, Woodland Trust for YHREF

There was a report outlining progress on sub-regional planning assessments. The board has adopted an approach of building up regional planning policy through evidence and assessments at the sub-regional level and an LGYH officer has been assigned to each of the four sub regions to take this work forward. The report gave some brief details of the content which is emerging from the assessments on such topics as infrastructure, water management, renewable energy and housing. I queried the lack of reference in the report to green infrastructure and was assured that is a key part of the assessments. I also asked them to take note of the projects which FC and others have initiated in North Yorkshire to look at the potential for woodland creation and other sustainable landscape management techniques in helping to manage water quality and alleviate flooding.

We received a report on work being undertaken on climate change under the Spatial Planning workstream for the new Yorkshire and Humber regional strategy. Part of this work is developing an ecosystems approach for the new strategy and there is a workshop on this next week in Leeds. There is also debate about how ambitious the region needs to be in setting and delivering carbon reduction targets. Spatial planning has a key role in both mitigation and adaptation. Some specific initiatives underway include a regional flood risk appraisal, a low carbon energy capacity study and developing a green infrastructure evidence base. Later this month there is a regional GI conference at which Natural England will present their GI mapping work. There is also existing evidence provided by Royal Haskonings regional climate change adaptation study.

The climate change report generated a lot of debate. There was criticism of the Environment Agency from some of the councillors who felt that the flood risk maps were not as accurate as they could be and were interpreted too rigidly. It was agreed that someone from EA could be invited to a future meeting to address these concerns. A councillor from Humberside felt that they were being forced to take an excessive amount of renewable energy development. There was some discussion of the target which FOE is promoting of a 40% cut in CO2 emissions by 2020. One councillor said that the language around climate change is too complex and fails the "Dog and Duck Test"..... ie would it be understood by regulars in his local pub? There was a general feeling that implementation is just as important as policy. Leeds City region was quoted as a good example of where a GI strategy is being translated into action on the ground with support from Natural England.

We received a report on the scale and distribution of housing, following on from the recent joint informal discussion between members of the Planning Board and the Housing and Regeneration Board. Members had expressed concern at being asked to look again at housing provision so soon after having agreed targets and locations in the RSS. The informal discussion workshop identified some evidence gaps, including social factors such as an ageing population and environmental factors around green infrastructure, sustainable transport etc. Further work is being done on developing scenarios based around changing demography, a changing economy and a low carbon future, which will then be used to develop policy options to feed into the regional strategy. Some criticisms were raised at the meeting about this being a top down approach. The lack of specific reference to green infrastructure in the scenarios was highlighted by a councillor from York but we were assured that this will be included under the "Low carbon future" scenario.

At the end of the meeting it was announced that Richard Wood is leaving LGYH to take up a post with York City Council. A replacement has not yet been recruited.

No date was fixed for the next meeting and it will not be until after the General Election. There is obviously some uncertainty about the future of regional structures, depending upon the policies of whichever government emerges after the election.