

Rural Development Programme for England Programme Communications

1. Following the discussion about communications and integration at the PMC meeting in May, the Programme team has been taking a more strategic look at communications, and the co-ordination of communications activity across the Programme. This was discussed at the meeting of the Programme Board on 5 November.
2. As part of that work we have identified the communications objectives which we believe to be important at Programme level. We have also identified key messages and “killer facts” which we believe will be useful in communicating about the Programme. These are set out below.
3. Programme Board members are giving further consideration to the objectives and messages with a view to finalising early in December. It would be useful to have PMC members’ views on:
 - The description of the **communications objectives**
 - Whether or not the **key messages** are the right ones: is the tone and emphasis right, do you see yourself using them, are they relevant to your organisation or business areas? [we acknowledge that we need to seek further delivery body input to this section in particular]
 - Thinking back to the discussion at the May PMC meeting, will these messages be useful in enhancing the **integration** of the different parts of the Programme, i.e. does this overall view of the Programme help to fill the joining-up gaps that were previously identified by the PMC?

RDPE Programme Team
Defra
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Communication Objectives

- 1 The overarching communications objective is to publicise widely and effectively information about the Rural Development Programme for England.
- 2 Communications with customers and potential customers are primarily the responsibility of RDPE delivery bodies (Natural England, the English Regional Development Agencies, and the Forestry Commission). The main customers are farmers, land managers, businesses in rural areas, and rural communities. Communicating information about the Programme with the general public, national stakeholders and the European Commission is primarily the responsibility of Defra as Managing Authority.

Customer focused objectives

- To ensure that customers and stakeholders understand the outcomes which the Programme aims to deliver, and how they can contribute.
- To provide clear and consistent information for potential customers, ensuring transparency so a range of people have an equal chance to benefit from the Programme.
- To encourage high quality applications from appropriate projects, that deliver nationally, regionally and locally identified priority outcomes, making optimum use of available resources and contributing to the delivery of public benefits

Wider audience

- To ensure that the Programme is publicised effectively and transparently, so that stakeholders are aware of both its priorities and of what it is delivering;
- To promote public understanding of RDPE as a contributor to sustainable development and other government objectives, its role as the major source of public funding of environmental management of farmland and to generate interest in environmental management of species and habitats in the domestic context;
- To maintain engagement of regional stakeholders in identifying local priorities which contribute to the delivery of national outcomes.
- To demonstrate integration of objectives and delivery

Defra internal

- To ensure that Defra staff understand the new Programme and its role in delivery of European and Government objectives
- To meet communications requirements set out in the EU regulations

Key Messages

- RDPE is a coherent and integrated programme of investment in England's rural areas by the Government and the EU. The Programme recognises that rural economic development, environmental stewardship and community sustainability are intertwined.
- RDPE has a significant role to play in meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It can strengthen the positive links between a high quality environment and sustainable prosperity, recognising the value of environmental assets to the wider health of the rural economy.
- RDPE will play a vital role in helping to build profitability, innovation and competitiveness in the farming, food and forestry sectors – helping to build thriving rural industries that meet the needs of consumers and make a net positive contribution to the environment.
- A regionalised approach is key: in developing the regional approach to delivery of the Programme, the RDAs, the Forestry Commission, Natural England and Government Offices have all worked closely together to develop and consult on the Regional Implementation Plans which identify the needs and priorities of the regions' rural areas.
- RDPE is designed to safeguard and enhance our rural environment (with Environmental Stewardship at its heart) and foster competitive and sustainable businesses and thriving rural communities.
- RDAs, Forestry Commission and Natural England are working together to encourage integrated projects that offer sustainable development, resource efficiency and low carbon benefits.
- The future is likely to be shaped by the triple challenge of food, energy and environmental security, so schemes that reward farmers for the provision of public goods and services have an important role to play in the English countryside. New challenges such as managing land for carbon storage and clean water will need an ongoing commitment to develop agri-environment schemes and build on the valuable legacy to date.
- Over the last two decades, agri-environment schemes have provided a real incentive to thousands of farmers to deliver positive management and conservation of the countryside. These schemes have recognised the real costs of conservation and provided an opportunity for farmers to be rewarded for delivering conservation on the ground.

- As taxpayers and consumers, the public have a right to know how their money is spent on conserving and sustaining the farmed environment, which is part of their heritage. And farmers have a responsibility to share with the public the benefits of their care of the land.
- Land managers and farmers across England are taking part in RDPE schemes to enhance the countryside, its landscape, biodiversity and historic environment. The role of farmers is crucial – in conserving and enhancing wildlife habitats, flora and fauna, stonewalls, hedgerows, and archaeological features and providing access to farms
- RDAs are investing in rural areas, and the land-based sector in particular, using a range of funding sources. By working hard to ensure that RDPE support is closely aligned to their core funding and that of broader regional and sub-regional partners, RDAs are able to deliver added value and improved effectiveness and efficiencies in public sector investment.
- RDAs are implementing a new programme of activity, using a new approach to delivery (strategic, targeted, linked to priorities in regional strategies).
- RDAs are playing a key role in ensuring that training and skills development within rural areas is meeting the needs of employers, individuals and a sustainable economy.
- Rural communities play a key role in the development of a dynamic and sustainable knowledge-based economy. RDAs are aligning the RDPE with their core funding and other public sector investment to boost collaboration amongst businesses, improve skills, enhance knowledge transfer and increase entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise to maximise rural areas' potential.
- Local Action Groups will identify priorities for specific areas and direct investment towards meeting those priorities. This delivery mechanism is an effective method of harnessing local knowledge to enable a 'bottom up', community-led approach to the delivery of RDPE funding.

Annex B: Killer Facts

- At £3.9bn, the budget for RDPE is more than double the budget for the previous programme
- Over 36,000 Environmental Stewardship agreements are now in place (together with 20,000 remaining Environmentally Sensitive Area and Countryside Stewardship scheme agreements). The schemes have achieved:
 - * 30,000km of restored or newly planted hedgerows – that’s about the distance from the North Pole to the South Pole and halfway back-again (with a further 90,000km of existing hedgerows being managed in an environmentally friendly way – around half the hedgerows in England!)
 - * 2,600km of dry stone walls
 - * Increases in numbers of rare farmland birds such as the grey partridge, stone curlew and curlew
 - * 800 farms providing educational opportunities to more than 100,000 visitors, mostly school children, per year, and other visits for special interest groups.
 - * Approximately 2,000 permissive access routes around England (including 50 specifically designed for less mobile users), providing opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside and to see the benefits of environmentally friendly farming methods
- Over 6 million hectares of land in England (roughly twice the size of Wales) – 65% of available farmland - are now covered by agri-environment schemes (5 million ha in ES and 1million ha in predecessor schemes), which aim to conserve our landscape, historic environment and biodiversity and improve access to the countryside.
- 75 per cent of all land in England is managed as farmland. Farmers and farming methods are therefore crucial to protecting, maintaining and enhancing our natural environment
- In rural areas in 2006/07 alone, RDAs:
 - created or safeguarded 23,206 jobs;
 - assisted 10,268 people to find employment;
 - helped to create and attract 5,874 new businesses to their regions;
 - assisted 53,810 businesses to improve their performance;
 - encouraged 1,549 businesses to engage in new collaborations with the UK knowledge base;
 - assisted 85,696 people to develop skills relevant to employment.