
Rural Pathfinders National Discussion Forum

Rural Pathfinders: emerging lessons

20 – 21 June, 2007

Venues:

20 June: Lancaster House Hotel – 18.00 (registration) 19.20 to 22.00

21 June: Hornby Village Institute – 09.15 (registration) 09.45 to 15.30

Programme

Note:

A copy of the draft report entitled '**Rural Challenges, Local Solutions - Building on the Rural Delivery Pathfinders in England**' is attached to this programme. This will be the main working document for the event.

20th June

**Lancaster House Hotel, Green Lane, Ellel, Lancaster,
LA1 4GJ – telephone 01524 844822**

18.00 – 19.20

Arrival, registration, pre-dinner drinks (from 19.00) and informal networking.

19.20 – 20.00

Welcome and introduction to the theme of the forum

Welcome

- John Mills, Director of Rural Policy, Defra
- Councillor Hazel Harding, Leader, Lancashire County Council

Rural Challenges, Local Solutions

A presentation of the draft report *Rural Challenges, Local Solutions* by Peter Cleasby, Quanteria

Followed by table based discussion on the report – what are the main challenges arising from the report?

(Worksheet 1)

20.00 – 22.00

Dinner

End of Day One

21st June

Hornby Village Institute

**Main Street
Hornby
Lancaster, LA2 8JR**

Telephone 015242 22227

09.15 – 09.45

Arrival, refreshments and informal networking. Registration for those not present the previous evening.

09.45 – 10.30

Overview of the programme and summary of main themes discussed the previous evening.

(Worksheet 2)

- David Pirnie, facilitator, Rocket Science

Introduction to the theme of the Forum

- Helen Wright, Rural Policy and Partnerships Manager, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Rural Delivery Pathfinders: what we set out to achieve and what we have learned – the highlights

- Andy Ashcroft, Rural Policy Manager, Lancashire County Council

Open Forum - Q&A

10.30 – 11.30

Mainstreaming success and good practice

Introduction

- David Walsh, Group Manager, Community and Economic Policy and Programmes, Dorset County Council

GROUP TASK 1

(Worksheet 3)

Context

There is consensus that the momentum generated by Pathfinder projects should not be lost. There is no single prescription for sustaining the momentum because circumstances differ, but two important factors have been identified as important:

- Ensuring that completed projects and those continuing through 2007 and beyond are properly evaluated and that the learning is captured and made accessible.
- Ensuring that rural policy and delivery issues are effectually consolidated into the mainstream business of local authorities and, as appropriate, partner organisations.

The task

For this task, five groups will be assigned Question 1 and six groups, Question 2.

Q.1

What are the **main challenges** to local authorities and their partners in setting realistic and achievable outcomes for their rural initiatives?

Based on experience **what guidance can delegates offer on the selection of outcome measures** that are **relevant** to rural initiatives, **adaptable** to the needs of different local circumstances, and **proportionate** to the tasks required to capture, process, and analyse performance?

Q.2

What are the **opportunities** and what are the **barriers** presented by main approaches and arrangements such as the following:

- Empowerment of local communities
- Local Area Agreements
- Local Strategic Partnerships
- Multi-area Agreements
- Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships

Open Forum & Feedback

11.30 – 11.55

Break

11.55 – 13.00

Improving the delivery pathways

Introduction

- Clare Greener, Pathfinder Coordinator, Shropshire County Council

GROUP TASK 2

(Worksheet 4)

The experiences of Pathfinders have identified opportunities for improving the routes to rural delivery. Obstacles have also been identified that perhaps are 'cultural' rather than policy instruments or constraints. Change therefore depends considerably on the preparedness of people and organisations to have a shared willingness to work together and in new ways. Concerns have surfaced in particular about 'obstacles' in three spheres:

1. Rural proofing
2. Silo working and a want of joined up "joined-up" behaviour
3. Devolved decision-making in practice

The task

Each group is asked to **review**, **discuss** and **record** what it considers to be the main issues that **challenge effective cooperative working**, and to propose practicable measures to overcome them. Groups will be asked to review **one assigned topic** (1,2 or 3 above), plus one of the other topics, chosen by the group.

Open Forum and Feedback

13:00 – 13.45

Lunch

13.45 – 14.30

Accessing the learning

Introduction to the topic

- John Banks, County Durham Economic Partnership, Durham County Council

GROUP TASK 3

(Worksheet 5)

Context

Each Pathfinder has views and plans about disseminating the results and the learning from its projects and the draft report highlights several approaches to this. Decisions about how best to capture and design access to learning will be influenced by judgements about the nature, needs and motivations of prospective users of this information. (In this regard people may care to have noticed the Audit Commission's very recent publication on this subject, 'Seeing the Light'.)

Overall, there is a clear message emerging that there is a need to think hard about how best to **manage and promote access to Pathfinder learning at local level**. A **national level signposting service** has been suggested as one possibility.

A case is also made for a continuing mechanism that would provide the opportunity not only for those who have been directly involved in the pathfinders, but also others with relevant interests from the different tiers of government and other sectors, to keep in good travel with each other and provide a platform for on-going thinking about innovation and change in rural service delivery. It may well be likely that the National Rural Network that Defra has to establish under the Rural Development Programme could or will become a useful adjunct of a process of this kind.

The task

Q.1

What are the most efficient and effective approaches to promoting the results of the Pathfinder programme to colleagues and stakeholders and how will access to this information be maintained after the Pathfinder Portal ceases to be managed actively?

Q.2

How should policy and delivery practitioners from different tiers of government engage with one another after the Pathfinder project ends?

Open Forum and Feedback

14.30 – 15.15

Looking ahead: where do we go from here...?

PANEL AND OPEN FORUM

A panel comprising representatives of the eight Pathfinders will lead discussion on the main messages and issues to emerge from the Programme and which will probably have been highlighted during the Forum.

1. David Rothe, Pathfinder Project Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council
2. Rob Jones, Pathfinder Coordinator, Peak District National Park Authority
3. John Banks, Country Durham Economic Partnership, Durham County Council
4. Andy Ashcroft, Rural Policy Manager, Lancashire County Council
5. Rosalind Rutt, Pathfinder programme manager, Hampshire County Council
6. David Walsh, Group Manager, Community and Economic Policy and Programmes, Dorset County Council.
7. Clare Greener, Pathfinder Coordinator, Shropshire County Council
8. Colin Walker, Humber Rural Pathfinder Programme Manager, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

15.15 – 15.30

Reflections – Main Messages – Next Steps

- Helen Wright, Rural Policy and Partnerships Manager, East Riding of Yorkshire Council.
- John Mills, Director of Rural Policy, Defra

End of the Forum

Refreshments