

Grazing Forum Notes
29 January 2009
NFU Offices, Newmarket

Attendees:

Chair: Caroline Cranbrook – CLA/Farmer
John Reeves, RSPB
Alex Butler, NFU
Rob Wise, CLA
Jean Turnbull, Business Link
Chris Knock, EEDA
Mike Mack, Easton College
Mike Render, Forestry Commission
Laura Downton, Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust
Victoria Perry – Grazing, Land and Food project, NE
Hilary Taylor – NE - minutes

Apologies:

Mike Richardson
Julie West
Alison Smythe
Barry Brooks

1 Welcome – VP welcomed all to the meeting and expressed thanks for use of the NFU office

2 Talk on the Graze Beds Scheme and Nude Ewe Project by Laura Downton LD working with VP to ensure that the Graze Beds website and the Grazing Exchange [compliment](#) each other and to develop links between the 2 sites.

Natural England had also organised a series of looking courses with the regions Wild life Trusts, NT's and RSPB which LD had supported. Graze Beds has 30 graziers and landowners registered on the website and LD aware of 7 successful matches. Discussed benefits of establishing local contacts for local grazing schemes , eg in each Wildlife Trust was beneficial, especially where people unwilling to place details on website

LD talked about the Nude ewe project. It had been advertised in magazines with good response. Now considering selling knitting kits and fleeces

LD to inform her clients of E of E grazing scheme and encourage those not registered to sign up. Possible help from Business Link considered.

3 Jean Turnbull outlined her role as Specialist Rural Adviser to agriculture, food and landscape businesses working from Business Link East. This involved talking to small businesses, helping them diversify, linking with consultants; also educational element to work, attending shows, promoting teachers' packs. Work with EEDA, particularly in relation to funding opportunities available. Has contact with range of groups, some informal, and is trying to draw up some list - VP to collate

AP VP

4 RDPE skills tenders

MM reported on the 6 RDPE Leader groups - Herts and Essex to sign offer letter, others up and running with 3 year action plans now submitted to EEDA

Norfolk group have website. Project ideas invited from members. Some strategic /regional projects sought but grazing and livestock a real issue on how the projects fit within the measures and with private funding.

JT felt involving farming groups requires time, although in Norfolk felt this is happening

Ouse Washes – Fens Adventures proposed RSPB project selling products under conservation brand – procedure in place – had good chance of funding.

RDPE skills tenders

EEDA let 3 tenders– 1 coordinating, 2 delivery

Coordination contract awarded to Lantra to set up management and 5 skills groups. These were facilitated by a core delivery group chaired by an industry and business representatives.

The 2 training delivery contracts combined – Land Skills East, this will deliver 17,000 training days with 3,500 beneficiaries over the life of the project. The funding for the training is now available but now need to get people signed up. Discussed the necessity of understanding industry needs – training that is needed.

CK asked what the Forum thought was needed and that training projects from the Leader groups and Landskills East will overlap. Still not clear how this will work yet.

CC thought need for expertise in marketing produce from farms in environmental areas was needed. Need to involve all agricultural colleges, training groups, universities and Young Farmers

5 Updates

CK - EEDA

Livestock Strategy and RDPE workshop held 2 weeks ago. Discussion on Livestock Strategy Guidance. This to be superseded by a national document produced by RDA. CK to coordinate and produce regional section.

Concern over misunderstanding of terms of claims and misinterpretation of guidelines 2 areas of particular concern – modernising abattoirs and cutting plants and developing new brands.

MM

Carbon friendly grazing diet – research at University of East Anglia into reducing carbon footprint, but also reducing costs to make industry more efficient. Results and details of a presentation to which all invited to be circulated, this was an example of what could be funded by RDPE.

Norfolk Farming Conference 25 February

AP MM

AB - NFU

Anecdotal evidence of blue tongue and its effects need to research how farms are living with the virus and hence susceptibility. (Could be addressed by a survey)

CK will pursue this on the basis it could be expanded into a wider animal health project
CC through marker needs to be put down – Defra has not the capacity to deal with this

EEDA process for project approval speeding up – reduced from 6 to 2 months (12 necessary steps reduced to 6)

AB to keep group posted

AP AB/CK

VP - NE

Grazing Exchange to be launched in Norfolk **31 March** – members asked to publicise
Some funds available for website development.

Again VP urged all members to send through news, events or other information to put on the Grazing Exchange.

AP ALL

CC suggested small working group and VP to keep site updated and advise on site development

AP VP

Cutbacks in NE has meant that VP could only has 1 day a week for project work, 9This is for the Forum and Grazing Exchange) therefore will need support from members.

At the present time there is money available for capital works for agri-environment schemes and Forum members encouraged to pass this information on to their members. As of 1st April Alex Nichols will no longer be managing AE schemes – still to recruit new project manager.

Woodbridge Agri-environment Conference (joint NE/EEDA) took place last week – good interaction of delegates looking at linking up on RDPE projects that cross the 3 Axis.

JR - RSPB

Graziers on RSPB sites are signing up but possible shortfall of cattle due to economic downturn – graziers going out of business. RSPB don't own any stock.

MR – Forestry Commission

deer a growing problem in this region with numbers increasing 25% a year. Looking at ways to address this problem – including possible regional branding.

AB - NFU

Presentation on spread of blue tongue – map of Europe showing 24 types

BTV6 in Netherlands for which we had no vaccine

BTV1 had jumped from Spain to Brittany. Vaccine available but subject to market forces

AOB

Date of next meeting – 7 May at the NFU office, Newmarket