

# **North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network (NEFRAN)**

## **Terms of Reference**

**(As at 18 April 2012)**

### **1. Aims**

- (i) To maximise the potential of the people place and quality of life rural North East England by strategically aligning and adding value to delivery across the three interlinked sectors of the rural agenda, namely:
  - Economy
  - Environment
  - Community
- (ii) To enable rural communities to become more sustainable socially, economically and environmentally.

### **2. Purposes**

The purposes of the North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network are:

- To champion rural issues and collaboratively develop solutions;
- To provide the collective voice of local rural independent stakeholders;
- To influence the local, national and European agenda in respect of issues affecting rural North East England;
- To provide a key source of advice on issues, concerns and good practice to both Defra and the North Eastern Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP);
- To create a flexible forum and two-way channel of communication into and from rural stakeholders and delivery organisations; and
- To provide relevant evidence and intelligence to empower it's Chair to have effective one-to-one dialogue with the Defra Minister.

### **3. Roles**

#### **3.1 Communication and Sector Engagement**

- Establishing a wider 'forum' of stakeholders across the NEFRAN area to include the farming and food sectors; rural community, environmental and business interests.
- Facilitating a virtual 'forum' to enable stakeholder engagement.
- Building upon existing sub-regional partnership frameworks such as the Northern Rural Network, County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP) Rural Working Group and the Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP) to facilitate stakeholder engagement and co-ordination.
- Facilitating the communication of clear messages to and from local rural stakeholders NELEP, Defra and other relevant government departments and agencies.
- Holding regular meetings with varying arrangements to attract different participants including quarterly meetings of the Network Board, biannual meetings of the wider forum and issue / sector based activities.
- Promoting good practice examples and learning constructively from challenges from across the NEFRAN area and beyond.

#### **3.2 Leadership and Representation**

- Informing and advising Defra, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP), other public sector organisations and government departments about rural issues in rural North East England.
- Acting as a point of contact providing feedback to Defra on the local impact of significant and/or fast paced events (e.g. extreme weather conditions, animal disease outbreak) so that the right kind of assistance can be provided. (This is intended to compliment rather than duplicate any actions which are being co-ordinated by local resilience fora).
- Working with other partnerships across wider geographic boundaries where there is a common rural agenda.

### **3.3 Policy and Programme Support**

- Seek to develop a consensus across the NEFRAN area on policy issues and advise Defra, DCLG, other government agencies and NELEP on rural views on emerging policies and programmes.
- Assist the development of local priorities and delivery methods for RDPE resources to ensure that the area maximises potential from RDPE and other rural support initiatives.
- Facilitate support for mainstreaming of rural issues into the work of NELEP, government agencies, local authorities and protected area management bodies.
- Reviewing and preparing a rural stakeholders evidence base including gap analysis.

#### **4. Geographical coverage**

NEFRAN shares the NELEP geography (see map at Annex 1). This includes the rural Counties of Durham and Northumberland, and the five Tyne and Wear Local Authorities (South Tyneside, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Gateshead and Sunderland). The area includes Northumberland National Park, The Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and most of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the four LEADER areas of Northumberland Uplands; Northumberland Coast and Lowlands; North Pennine Dales; and East Durham.

Whilst the primary focus of NEFRAN is likely to be in the rural counties, the urban areas of the NEFRAN area are also an important feature with some localities within Local Authorities in Tyne and Wear classified as rural (e.g. parts of Gateshead). NEFRAN is also keen to explore the links and inter-dependencies between the urban and rural areas in undertaking the roles set out above.

NEFRAN will also seek to influence and learn from experience from beyond its boundary and will prioritise early exploration of potential joint working with neighbouring LEP's and geographies such as the Tees Valley LEP, Cumbria LEP, York and North Yorkshire LEP and the Scottish Borders, building on previous arrangements in North East England.

## **5. Activities**

### **5.1 Communication and Sector Engagement**

- The NEFRAN will appoint a Sector Lead for each of the following sectors:

**1) Farming and Food**

**2) Rural Community**

**3) Environment**

**4) Rural Business**

- Each sector Lead will facilitate communications between the sector and NEFRAN and as necessary the NELEP. All members of the NEFRAN Board will be expected to use their existing contacts and networks to support the role of sector leads.
- NEFRAN will hold biannual meetings of the wider rural stakeholder forum and as necessary host or contribute to issue / sector based meeting and forums.
- Varying forms of activities, task and finish groups and other methods of engagement will be considered based on opportunity and need linked to the priorities established by the NEFRAN.
- NEFRAN will communicate regularly with the Defra secretariat team as the key point of contact for the Defra Policy Unit and Rural Development Teams, and as appropriate, Defra Ministers in order to make necessary representation and to receive feedback on how the input of NEFRAN is making a difference.
- The NEFRAN will engage with local representatives of government agencies with an interest.
- NEFRAN will develop and partnership arrangement with the Northern Rural Network (NRN) to facilitate much of its communication and sector engagement role.

## **5.2 Leadership and Representation**

- NEFRAN will seek to meet with Defra Ministers and other relevant Ministers as appropriate to deliver its advocacy and feedback role.
- NEFRAN will support visits of Defra and other Ministers to the NEFRAN area.
- The Chair of NEFRAN will meet with the Defra Minister at least one annual meeting and will have direct contact with the Minister as necessary.
- The Chair of NEFRAN will hold at least one annual meeting with the NELEP
- The Chair of NEFRAN will hold At least one annual meeting with the Chairs of other Rural and Farming Networks.

## **5.3 Policy and Programme Support**

- NEFRAN will focus on a limited and focused set of activities which add value to the mainstream work of agencies and partnerships in the area and where there is evidence that the Network can make a difference.
- NEFRAN will work with relevant research partners to collate information about relevant work within rural areas of North East England.
- NEFRAN will seek to shape the development and delivery of RDPE and other rural support programmes and will maintain close links with relevant delivery bodies to monitor the impact of the programmes and the delivery of priority outcomes.
- NEFRAN will develop and partnership arrangement with the Northern Rural Network (NRN) to facilitate much of its policy and programme support role.

## **6. Membership and Governance**

### **6.1 Network Board**

A Network Board will be established to oversee the work of NEFRAN. The Board will be representative of rural stakeholders in keeping with the Defra guidance on membership of Rural and Farming Networks.

Membership will consist of a Chair and:

#### **Land Based industry organisations and partnerships**

Country Land and Business Association (1)

National Farmers Union (1)

#### **Unitary Authorities**

Durham County Council (1)

Northumberland County Council (1)

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough to represent other Local Authorities in the NEFRAN area (1)

#### **Environment /Protected Areas**

Northumberland National Park Authority (1)

#### **Leader Local Action Groups or subsequent successor organisations**

(2)

#### **Non Land based Business Interests**

Federation of Small Business (1)

Rural Community Development/ Land Trusts (1)

#### **Rural Community Action North East**

Community Action Northumberland (1)

Durham Rural Community Council (1)

**Partner Bodies**

Newcastle Uni. Centre for Rural Economy (1)

North Eastern Local Enterprise Partnership (1)

## **6.2 Chair/Vice Chair**

A Chair and a Vice Chair will be appointed by the Network Board at the first meeting of the Board following adoption of its Terms of Reference and thereafter on an annual basis.

## **7. Meeting arrangements**

- Four meetings of NEFRAN Board to be held annually.
- A corum for NEFRAN meetings will be five members
- All notification of meeting and meeting papers will be circulated to members by email.

## **8. Decision making**

NEFRAN will seek to achieve a consensus from across its membership. Where this is not obtainable decisions will be made on the basis of a simple majority with each member having one vote.

## **9. Sector Leads**

The NEFRAN will appoint sector leads as set out at 5.1

Lead responsibilities for the wider programme of activity of NEFRAN will be established as a collective plan by the Network Board and will be led by Sector Leads and other members of the Network Board or wider rural network as appropriate.

## **10. Secretariat**

Durham County Council with support from partners will arrange co-ordination of secretariat support for the NEFRAN Board and will support liaison with Government and NELEP.

This will include making arrangements for meetings and briefings (Defra and the NELEP) and being an initial point of contact for people interested in the work of NEFRAN.

## **11. Resources**

NEFRAN will seek to secure resources to:

- Undertake its roles as set out at 3. Above.
- To deliver from time to time chosen priority programmes and activities.

## **12. Review**

The Terms of Reference and operations of NEFRAN will be reviewed annually. The annual review will consider any amendments and revisions needed to improve the:

- terms of reference and governance arrangements;
- purposes and roles of the Network
- membership and performance of the Network
- communication and engagement
- policy and activity programme
- secretariat arrangements

In addition NEFRAN may be reviewed as a result of guidance or requests received from the Defra Minister.

## Annex 1: NEFRAN Geographical Coverage

