



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

April 2013

## Rural and Farming Network E-News



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RFN Team

Defra

April Edition

## Welcome to the new look Rural and Farming Network e-newsletter...

... we have listened to your feedback, and have made some changes to the content and design. We hope that this offers you an opportunity to catch up on news from across Defra and other government departments.

We have put this newsletter together to help all RFN groups share their information and news. We welcome your ideas, feedback and suggestions for future articles – and hope that you enjoy April's edition. If you have any questions or suggestions please contact [the RFN team](#)

## Rural and Farming Network Spotlight

### **Derbyshire Economic Partnership Rural Forum and Chair, Councillor Lewis Rose OBE**

Cllr Lewis Rose OBE was Leader of Derbyshire Dales District Council between 1989 and 1995 and then from 1999 to date. He is a Member for Carsington Water ward and also former Chairman of the Council.

Chair of the Peak District Local Action Group since 2008 and representative on the LEADER Exchange Group representing the East Midlands area. Cllr Rose has also been a committed member of the Derbyshire Economic Partnership Board since its inception in 2003.



Currently Chairman of the Rural Forum and Rural and Farming Network in Derbyshire. Member of Kniveton Parish Council, Chairman of the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (Derbyshire Dales Community Safety Partnership).

On the LGA and was a member of the former Public Protection Committee. Involved in various Regional Bodies including the Leaders' Board for East Midlands and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.

A strong commitment to the particular problems of rural areas, especially affordable housing; where Derbyshire Dales has been successful in building over 1,000 new affordable homes since 2002, securing £51m in new housing investment. Believes strongly that rural matters need to be placed at the heart of the agenda.

A solicitor in private practice, Cllr Rose is married with 2 children and has lived in the heart of rural Derbyshire on the edge of the Peak District National Park since 1966.

## News

### Dairy farmers to unite for a better deal

Dairy farmers will have more power to get a good deal in the marketplace under changes coming into effect on Monday 8 April.

English dairy farmers will be able to join forces in new producer organisations, pooling their milk for sale to processing companies. The change will give farmers more power to influence contract terms, conditions and prices than they might have had if negotiating as individuals.

Farming Minister, David Heath said:

*“Dairy farmers will now have a louder voice in the market place to negotiate on contractual terms and conditions as well as prices. Better collaboration will give the industry the platform it needs to fulfil its potential.*

*“Now it’s up to farmers and processors to work together to re-shape the industry*

*and take advantage of all opportunities that exist.”*

Producer organisations, which are already widespread in other European countries, could each cover up to a third of UK production.

In summer 2012, the Government helped to secure the industry’s agreement of a voluntary Code of Practice on contracts between farmers and dairy processors. Under the Code, contracts are freely negotiated, fairer and more transparent and farmers have the ability to leave contracts more easily if they are unhappy with the price they receive.

The Rural Payments Agency will take applications from dairy farmers who want to form producer organisations from Monday 8 April.

### Dairy fund

**In a further move to support growth in the dairy industry, dairy farmers have been invited to apply for a share of a £5 million Dairy Fund from Defra's Rural Development Programme for England.** Grants from £25,000 to as much as £1million are available to meet the cost of forming co-operatives that will explore new market opportunities and improve the long term sustainability of the dairy sector. The deadline to apply for funding from the scheme has been extended to 3 June 2013.

For more detailed information please visit <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/dairy-fund> Grants are available from £25,000 to circa £1million and further information on the Dairy Fund eligibility can be found in the [Dairy Fund Handbook](#).

To submit an outline application to the Dairy Fund please read the [Dairy Fund Handbook](#) for guidance **before** completing the [Outline Application Form](#) and if required [Appendix 1](#).

## Review of Environmental Advice, Incentives and Partnership approaches for the Farming Sector

Defra recognises that clear and consistent advice is an essential way of ensuring that farmers and land management businesses understand the environmental issues of relevance to them. We also agree with industry that the current advice delivery framework is complex and that this can lead to inconsistent uptake.

In response to the commitments made in our Business Plan and the Natural Environment White Paper, Defra has conducted a review of current advice, incentives and partnership approaches used by farmers and land managers and published its final report *'The Review of Advice, Incentives and Partnership Approaches in England (March 2013)'*. This report sets out how government intends to meet the challenge of delivering consistent environmental advice in a more efficient way so that it is clearer and more accessible for farmers and land management businesses. The report can be downloaded from the list of publications on [Defra's Food and Farming web pages](#).

## £5 million to support innovative flood defence scheme

Thirteen communities across the country will benefit from a £5 million fund to come up with innovative projects that will better protect homes and businesses from the risk of flooding.

The scheme is aimed at protecting communities where flooding is a major problem and the projects will be required to demonstrate that they can reduce the levels of flood risk in measurable ways. This will give residents evidence about flood risk that could be taken into account by insurers and result in lower premiums.

The projects are funded by the Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder scheme launched by Defra in December 2012. Announcing the funding, Mr Benyon said,

“We want to help local communities do more to protect their homes and possessions from the risk of flooding. The Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder Scheme will enable

communities to find simple, effective ways to minimise their flood risk, improve their levels of preparedness, and build confidence and increased peace of mind.

“All together with money from local communities and business raised through our successful partnership funding scheme, over £2.3 billion is being spent to protect people from flooding...”

Pathfinder projects are designed to complement other flood risk management work already taking place, or planned for the future, to further alleviate the risk of flooding.

The following Local Authorities will be receiving funding: Blackburn, Buckinghamshire, Calderdale, Cornwall, Devon, Liverpool, Northamptonshire, Rochdale, Slough, Southampton, Swindon, Warwickshire and West Sussex.

Further information is available [here](#)

## **New support for Community Pubs**

A new advice line and website has been set up for communities interested in running their own pub. Using the co-operative model of ownership (one member one vote) and funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the new service is run by the Plunkett Foundation. The website includes a range of information including toolkits and an online directory of existing co-operative pubs.

For more information please visit the Plunkett Co-operative Pubs Online website <http://www.pubs.coop>

## **Focus on Rural Broadband**

### ***Rural Broadband fund third round launched. People in rural areas could benefit from super fast internet as the £20 million Rural Community Broadband fund opens.***

Businesses and homes in England's remotest spots could benefit from superfast internet as the third round of the £20m Rural Community Broadband Fund opened on the 22 March 2013.

The fund is part of the joint Defra/Broadband Delivery UK Fund and aims to help hard to reach rural communities with limited or no internet to access superfast broadband, giving rural businesses a greater opportunity to profit and grow.

Environment Minister Richard Benyon said: "People living and working in remote areas face a range of challenges. Having access to superfast broadband will help people overcome these issues and tap into new opportunities to help grow their businesses.

"By getting people better connected, the Government's £20m broadband fund will give businesses and a boost and benefit the local economy."

The fund is targeted at the 10% hard to reach areas which would not otherwise receive superfast broadband under the Government's main broadband rollout programme. Communities in these areas can seek funding for projects where they can demonstrate a need for superfast broadband.

Communities can now apply for a grant of more than 50% of the project costs where a need and value for money can be demonstrated.

## How to apply

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The third Expression of Interest round is open between **22 March and 24 May 2013**. Full details of how to apply to the third round can be found in the Applicant's handbook (see below). It is recommended you read the Applicant's handbook carefully as it contains important detailed information which will guide you through the application process before completing the Expression of Interest Form (see below).

- [Applicant's Handbook](#)
- [Expression of Interest Form](#)

To apply for Rural Community Broadband Fund visit <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/rural-community-broadband-fund>

## Superfast broadband deal for Tove Valley

**Up to 450 homes and businesses in Northamptonshire's Tove Valley are expected to benefit from superfast broadband after a £117,000 grant was approved to get the scheme underway.**

The Defra grant will help homes and businesses to overcome social and economic isolation and give them access to broadband speeds of up to 30mbps.

The announcement coincided with Defra opening the final round of the £20m Rural Community Broadband Fund, which targets the most hard to reach areas of the country. The fund will provide around 50% of the overall project costs.

Rural Affairs Minister, Richard Benyon said:

“Superfast broadband is just as important as roads and rail to get our economy moving. This is great news for people and businesses in Tove Valley and will help the individual businesses get better connected as well as benefitting the local economy.”

Northamptonshire County Council cabinet member for infrastructure and public protection, Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage said:

“Superfast broadband right across our county is essential if we are to be able to compete in the global digital economy and I'm delighted that the County Council has been able to support this pioneering project in Northamptonshire's Tove Valley. I look forward to seeing this community project go from strength to strength.”

Abthorpe Broadband Association has been delivering wireless broadband to local residents and businesses for more than nine years. But the new funding will be used to update their current wireless network with the latest fibre-based network. It will also

allow them to develop a network which links together the villages of Abthorpe, Weedon Lois, Wappenham, Slapton and Weston.

Eric Malcolmson, chair of the Abthorpe Broadband Association, said:

“Everyone in the upper Tove Valley is very excited that a superfast broadband service will soon be available. Defra’s approval for funding our project means that our communities deep in rural Northamptonshire will benefit from fast connections to the internet. This is an opportunity for the 60% plus of properties which have a business interest to survive and thrive and provide a step change in the way households can use the internet.

“I am pleased that my ABbA team can at last see the fruits of their ambitions to bring our area into using 21<sup>st</sup> century communications.”

**To apply for Rural Community Broadband Fund visit**

<http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/rural-community-broadband-fund>

## *Rural Broadband: What has it ever done for me?*

Defra have produced a short film [link to the video](#) (You Tube) in which small businesses talk about their experience and success in using broadband to help grow their business, in order to encourage other small businesses to follow suit.

The video supports the wider Government infrastructure programme to make faster speed broadband available to over 90% of the population, especially in rural areas to support rural growth. Please circulate to your business networks and anyone with an interest in promoting rural broadband. For further information contact [Jenny.barker@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Jenny.barker@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## Government Broadband Programme

Fast broadband has transformed the way people live and do business. But it doesn’t always make economic sense for private sector companies to invest in the infrastructure (like cables) in rural areas or those that are harder to reach. So, the government is providing money to help stimulate private sector investment in broadband, and to ensure that the benefits of improved broadband infrastructure reach beyond the limits of where it is commercially viable to install it. We call this the ‘gap funding’ model.

We have allocated money to local authorities (and devolved administrations, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), that have set out plans to raise additional money locally. We then provide them with support to contract a private sector company to deliver broadband to those areas which do not already have access. For more information [see the Department for Culture Media and Sport webpages on broadband](#)

Visit the local [broadband project map here](#). This [map](#) shows which funding allocations for county councils working together to bring superfast broadband to their areas. You can also [view this spreadsheet](#) which gives details of the projects receiving government funding.

You can find out more about how we are giving the UK the best broadband in Europe in the [Broadband Delivery UK detailed guide](#).

## Defra information on the web is moving

**Most information on the Defra website will move to [GOV.UK](#) on Wednesday, 10 April. This includes policy information, news, publications, consultations and statistics.**

Any visitors to old defra.gov.uk addresses for this information should automatically be redirected to corresponding information on GOV.UK. The aim of GOV.UK is to be 'simpler, clearer and faster' for users – bringing online information and services from government together in one place – and to make efficiencies within government.

18 Ministerial departments are already on GOV.UK, including DECC, DCLG, BIS, DfT, Cabinet Office and FCO. By the end of April, it will have replaced all departmental websites (including No.10).

- See [Inside Government](#) (GOV.UK website)

We hope that inconvenience is kept to a minimum and we appreciate your support and patience while we update and improve our content on GOV.UK.

Some specialist information (including advisory bodies) will remain at defra.gov.uk addresses for a little while. During 2013/14 the GOV.UK site will further expand to include information from most Defra delivery bodies

## Energy Crops Scheme news

**Natural England is alerting farmers and other land managers that they need to get any application for new agreements under the current Energy Crops Scheme submitted by Saturday 31 August 2013.**

Applications from land managers or their agents must be in by this date for new agreements to start by the end of December 2013.

The aim of the Energy Crops Scheme (ECS) is to support the planting of miscanthus and short rotation coppice in appropriate locations. Energy crops are used as a substitute for fossil fuels, they can contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and help to combat climate change.

Payments under the scheme cover 50% of the costs of establishing the crop. ECS participants can plant in one year, or choose to phase the planting for up to three years. Under the arrangements for the current scheme planting can be undertaken in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

If you wish to apply for the scheme, amend an existing agreement, or would like more information then please contact Natural England's Energy Crops team on 0300 060 1624/1413, e-mail [ecsenquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:ecsenquiries@naturalengland.org.uk) or visit the [ECS webpages](#).

## DCLG's Coastal Communities Fund

**Applications for this year's pot of over £27 million are now open.**

Following huge success last year, English seaside towns now have a second chance to apply to our multi-million pound Coastal Communities Fund, Communities Secretary Eric Pickles announced on 3 April 2013.

Applications for this year's pot of over £27 million are now open. The funds available have been increased by over £4.1 million so more communities can win awards to boost their economic development. The fund for the projects is raised from the Crown Estate's marine assets and reinvested in coastal areas.

In 2012, 26 projects in England from Scarborough to Swanage, and from Torbay to Tyneside, received funding to develop their areas, helping to create and safeguard 5,000 jobs, 1,400 training places, 400 volunteering opportunities and support 250 new business start-ups.

The money was also used for a variety of projects including rejuvenating heritage areas and leisure facilities as well as helping businesses embrace digital technology and promote innovation. The projects also attracted additional funding from public and private co-sponsors of over £16 million.

**Further information**

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Details of how to bid for the UK-wide pot of £27.8 million are available on the [Big Lottery Fund website](#). The closing date for projects in England is 13 May 2013.

The devolved administrations have a country specific board who will work with Big Fund, the non-Lottery funding operation of the Big Lottery Fund, to deliver the money. In England, the Big Fund makes recommendations to ministers who take the final decision on which projects get approved. The Big Lottery Fund has powers to deliver funding from non-lottery sources for charitable purposes or purposes connected with health, education or the environment.

The Fund will be equal to 50% of the revenues generated by the Crown Estate's marine assets. Based on the Crown Estate's Marine revenues in 2010 to 2011 (£47.4 million) the overall fund was worth £23.7 million for the 2012 to 2013 financial year. Funds can be used to support both capital and revenue projects and communities will be encouraged to match funds with other pots of money.

## News from across the RFN

### Rural Network East Midlands

#### *Evidence base of rural housing needs*

The RNEM rural housing sub group has produced an evidence base of rural housing needs. The evidence is being provided to the HCA and other policy makers, strategists and funders to demonstrate the need for rural housing from an East Midlands perspective and to illustrate the work that is going on to meet that need. The current identified needs figures stand at over 1,500 homes required. Around 350 homes are scheduled for delivery by April 2015, another 350 homes could be delivered by that time if funding could be secured, and a further 800+ homes are needed but require more work by partners prior to delivery post March 2015. In short, the housing needs in the rural

areas are huge and, despite there being a great deal of work taking place to deliver homes to meet these needs, there are still many communities and households whose needs are not currently being met. The RNEM rural housing group is working on an action plan to educate stakeholders, share knowledge, bring partners together and establish new delivery mechanisms to help to meet the rural housing needs.

A bit more background to the work for those that are interested:

The 'pipeline spreadsheet' is based upon needs data that exists from Housing Needs Surveys and development work that is currently being undertaken. The

information comes from Rural Housing Enablers, registered providers and local authorities. The evidence was welcomed by the HCA at a recent meeting between their Executive Director for the midlands, Margaret Allen, and a core group of the RNEM rural housing group. One of the outcomes of the meeting is that the HCA, along with other funders and policy makers, would like regular updates of this evidence to inform future meetings

and decisions. It is felt that by demonstrating the needs that have been identified and the work and progress that is being made to meet the need, it will be possible to influence decisions favourably for rural housing in the East Midlands and, eventually, for the Midlands as a whole (a West Midlands version is being pulled together by Midlands Rural Housing and the West Midlands Rural Housing Group to provide a midlands-wide picture).

## *Work continuing to develop Donnington to Surfleet Link*

The Environment Agency has spent the last 18 months continuing its work on the development of the Fens Waterway Link. Work is ongoing to identify a preferred route to connect the Black Sluice Navigation at Donington Bridge with the River Glen. This follows the opening of Boston's Black Sluice Lock which connects the River Witham and Boston Haven to the South Forty Foot Drain/Black Sluice Navigation..

We have looked at 10 route options and considered their impact on the local area. We have been busy identifying constraints and opportunities along the length of each route. The constraints and opportunities fall into a number of categories. These include regeneration, environmental, economic and technical issues. Each route would mean new structures, including locks, bridges, pumping stations and moorings, being built and would create many opportunities for the environment, business and leisure. The short listing process involved engaging our internal

technical specialists and key external stakeholders.

We have identified a broad corridor through which the preferred new link would run. Anyone wanting to receive a copy of the report or to discuss the impact of the new link on land that they have an interest in, should contact Phillip McLoughlin on 01773 426102 [mcloughlinpj@halcrow.com](mailto:mcloughlinpj@halcrow.com).

We have started talking to landowners and those with a direct interest within the preferred route corridor. Information was issued to known landowners from a land registry search and landowners (with land over 5000m<sup>2</sup>) were invited to a presentation and discussion sessions on the 24 and 25 September 2012.

The study will define the route for this part of the Fens Waterways Link. This will be used to develop the outline design of the channel and all the structures associated with the new waterway, including locks, bridges,

pumping stations and moorings. The outline design will be used to determine the construction cost for this link and

will form the backbone of the business case that will be produced to bid for funding.

### Contacts

Paul Separovic (Environment Agency)  
Fens Waterways Link Partnerships Manager  
Tel: 01733 464 327  
[Paul.separovic@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.separovic@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Phillip McLoughlin (Halcrow)  
Donnington to Surfleet Link, Phase 3 Project Manager  
Tel: 01733 426 102  
[mcloughlinpj@halcrow.com](mailto:mcloughlinpj@halcrow.com)

## Farming Food and Rural Network East

### *Industry led-apprenticeship scheme will help bridge the skills gap*

An industry-led apprenticeship programme to boost training opportunities in food and farming and help young people develop careers in agriculture launched on Friday 15 March 2013.

EDGE Apprenticeships in Food and Farming bring together a number of leading organisations to Educate, Develop, Grow and Employ (EDGE) young people in agriculture across the east of England.

The programme, which will be launched at The Forum in Norwich, has received just over £1.4 million of funding from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) Growth and Innovation Fund.

It aims to encourage employers across Norfolk and Suffolk to take on apprentices and equip them with the practical, managerial and technical skills

required to develop successful careers in farming and food production.

The scheme will create hundreds of apprentice placements over the next two years.

The programme is industry-led and is a collaborative venture between agricultural purchasing groups Anglia Farmers and AtlasFram Group, in conjunction with Easton and Otley College, New Anglia LEP, Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council.

The application for funding was made in autumn 2012 in response to concerns from Anglia Farmers and AtlasFram Group members about the widening skills and age gaps in the industry. Many members had experienced difficulties finding young people with suitable skills to replace staff who were retiring,

leading to an increasingly ageing workforce.

EDGE Apprenticeships in Food and Farming will offer training across a wide range of careers, both on-farm and in associated agri-science and agri-business roles. Classroom-based training for apprentices will be provided by Easton and Otley College and other appropriate training bodies.

**Clarke Willis, Chief Executive Anglia Farmers,** said: “The EDGE Apprenticeships in Food and Farming are a perfect example of the industry

working to help itself. The skills and age gaps in many agricultural businesses are widening, so we need to encourage more young people into food and farming to secure the future of the sector as it continues to grow”

“There are so many excellent opportunities for young people and the EDGE Apprenticeships in Food and Farming will open doors to a wide range of careers which are often overlooked”

**For more information please contact the farming Food and Rural Network East group.**

## Cumbria & North Lancashire Farming Food and Rural group: *February meeting - flooding*

Following on from the February meeting of the Cumbria and North and East Lancashire RFN meeting where staff from EA and NE gave a presentation on dealing with flooding issues, a group of farmers from the Longsledale valley near Kendal met with Local MP Tim Farron, staff from NE and EA as well as NFU and RFN chair Will Cockbain. To look at what could possibly be done to minimise flood damage in the area.

Farmers accepted that nothing could be done about the rainfall itself and that it wasn't the water that was the main problem as it tended to rise and fall quickly. The problem is the debris of silt and gravel the flooding leaves behind causing damage to pastures. The meeting was very constructive with all parties agreeing to do some further work to see what can be done mindful of the fact that the site is an SSSI so care must be taken to ensure no damage is done to the protected site. RFN chair Will Cockbain commented that if we could possibly find ways to reduce the amount of gravel entering the stream in the first place above the SSSI site this could be one way forward.

## Key dates and upcoming events

### The Future Rural Development Programme: Ensuring Success

- *Location – nationwide*
- *Date 25 March 2013 – 21 June 2013*

As part of the development of the next Rural Development Programme (2014-2020), Defra has invited the Rural and Farming Networks (RFNs) to cluster together and co-ordinate events across the country to engage with key rural and farming stakeholders.

We are working with the Rural and Farming Networks across England to discuss the progress and priorities of the next Rural Development Programme. The Central England event took place on 25 March at the Conkers Centre. The North West Event took place on 05 April at the NFU Office.

RFNs will invite a range of local rural development and farming stakeholders to consider the foundations of the next rural development programme, including the overall vision, priorities and objectives.

The events are scheduled as follows:

- Central Event - 25 March, 12:30-16:30, Conkers National Forest Visitor Centre
- North West Event - 5 April, 11:00-14:30, NFU Office, Skelmerdale
- East of England Event - 16 May, 16:00-19:00 (venue TBC)
- North East Event - 20 May, 16:00-19:00, Scotch Corner (venue TBC)
- South East Event - 21 May, 13:00-16:30, RHS Garden, Wisley, Surrey
- South West Event - 21 June, 11:00-16:00, Westpoint Arena, Exeter.

### Rural and Farming Network meeting of Chairs – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013, Nobel House, London

**We can confirm that the next meeting of RFN Chairs with ministers is scheduled to take place on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013.**

The meeting will be held at Defra's head office in London with a planned start time of 11.00am and finish at 16.00. Minister Heath and Minister Benyon are likely to join the meeting for two hours from 13.00 – 15.00.

We will be working on an agenda for the day over the coming weeks. In the meantime we would welcome your views on what has and hasn't worked so well during the first two meetings. We would welcome your suggestions for what you might like included in the day, for example more policy workshops focusing on informing high priority issues. 15

We look forward to hearing that the Chair of your group, or one of your representatives, will be joining us on 13th June. If you would like to speak to the RFN team please don't hesitate to get in touch.

## Yorkshire Food Farming and Rural Network: Future Farmers of Yorkshire 16<sup>th</sup> April

# Future Farmers of Yorkshire

A group for like-minded farmers, vets and industry supporters

**Tuesday 16th April 2013 - 7:15pm**

Pavilions of Harrogate (Aire Room)  
Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate HG2 8QZ

# BUSINESS PLANNING

PROGRAMME

<b>7.15pm</b>	<b>Arrival and registration</b>
<b>7.30pm</b>	<b>Light supper with tea and coffee. Bar open.</b>
<b>8.00pm</b>	<b>Welcome and introduction</b> James Hopwood - Future Farmer of Yorkshire.
	<b>Peter Molyneux</b> Partner - Armstrong Watson Accountants
	<b>Guy Poskitt</b> Managing Director - MH Poskitt Ltd
<b>9.30pm</b>	<b>Social networking. Bar open.</b>

To register your free place for this meeting, please contact: Elizabeth Hudson at the Yorkshire Agricultural Society on **07702 598108** or email [elizabethh@yas.co.uk](mailto:elizabethh@yas.co.uk)

This meeting is kindly sponsored by:  
Armstrong Watson, MH Poskitt Ltd and the Yorkshire Agricultural Society,  
and is supported by the other organisations below.

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**YORKSHIRE FOOD, FARMING  
AND RURAL NETWORK**



**Poskitts**



## Keep in touch...

We welcome updates and news items from your group, please send any suggestions for items for inclusion in the e-newsletter through to [ruralandfarmingnetwork@defra.gov.gsi.uk](mailto:ruralandfarmingnetwork@defra.gov.gsi.uk)

We also welcome other suggestions as to how we can help to facilitate networking between RFN groups, or help to share information and best practise. The next edition of the newsletter will be issued during the first week of May 2013.

**We have launched our new Defra Rural Twitter channel [@DefraRural](https://twitter.com/DefraRural) Follow us to find out the latest developments in rural policy and delivery.**