

On Monday 11 April 2011, the Rural Services Network (RSN) and Rose Regeneration (with support from Knight Frank) held a Seminar on land and environment in York. Land is both a finite resource and is coming under increasing pressure. The event was intended to help Councils and Rural Service Partnership Members to look at the role that public, private and voluntary/community bodies can play in balancing the competing pressures and demands being made on our land.

The focus of the day was discussion, so three breakout sessions were held. The event culminated in a whole group discussion. The breakout groups were led by Ivan Annibal and Jessica Sellick (Rose Regeneration) and David Inman (RSN). The sessions provided an opportunity for delegates to share and exchange ideas and practice. The sessions were based upon a set of questions linked to presentations from Bradford Metropolitan District Council on their approach to environmental stewardship; sustainable live/work activities undertaken by the Peak District National Park Authority; Taste Tideswell – a community project connecting food and landscape; and Rural Development Initiatives work on environmental incidents. The notes below summarise some of the issues and opportunities identified by delegates that were recorded on flipcharts.

## **Environmental Stewardship on Council land**

### **Danny Jackson – Countryside and Rights of Way Manager, Bradford District Council**

#### **1. What is the unique role Councils can play in protecting and conserving landscapes, rights of way, open spaces and country parks?**

- Ownership and asset management.
- Overview/Leadership – including land within the District even if it is privately owned.
- Strategic view of people and place/area – an in-depth understanding so that you are not starting from the beginning.
- Stewardship.
- Planning enforcement, allocating land, and setting planning policy, controlling mineral extraction.
- Importance of local commitment – including Rights of Way and bridleways control and management.
- Broker/Facilitator/umbrella – to get land owners on board.
- Can connect and influence itself with other organisations and bodies (e.g. LEPs).
- Knowledge and expertise.
- Brings a democratic mandate.
- Can ensure inclusivity.
- Flood management.
- Build ‘land’ into a longer term strategy.
- Accountable body.
- Guardianship – economic development, education and public health.
- Where is the ‘rural’ in economic development now? Are Local Authorities in a position to provide strategic direction to some of the pressures/demands over land?
- Land that no one else wants to manage or that is non-designated – addressing market failure.
- Registering the economic impact of assets – where the asset value is greater than income.
- Historic landscape management.
- Compiling a register of community assets – Community Right To...

#### **2. What are the opportunities and challenges facing Councils in managing their environmental assets?**

##### **Opportunities:**

- Enhanced facilitating role.
- Ecosystem services and opportunities for developing “environmental economy”.
- Loss of knowledge and skills.
- Developing rural housing initiatives.
- Generating income to deliver public services.
- Biofuels.
- Joined up agendas (e.g. around flooding and biodiversity).
- Empowering and encouraging volunteers (the active elderly, the unemployed).
- Encouraging land based activities such as Farmers of the Future projects.
- North/south divide and building community capacity.

- Broadband

### **Challenges:**

- Finance – uplands/lowlands.
- Loss of knowledge and skills – including expertise (e.g. landscape ecology specialists).
- Lack of buy-in from other organisations.
- Lack of funding.
- Difficulty getting land on the policy agenda/as a public sector priority.
- How to pull together disparate agendas.
- Selling off land.
- Needing to develop or know what the asset management strategy is – this should include what is important, where it is located, and what you want to achieve.
- Two-tier authorities may struggle to pull in resources to manage land compared to unitary authorities.
- Agencies ‘fighting’ over ‘territory’.
- Post 2013 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) roll out.

### **3. How can Councils improve and transform the way they use and manage their building and land resources?**

- Income generation.
- Political landscape will drive this.
- Better utilisation of land and buildings.
- Asset transfer?
- Understanding where the Local Development Framework (LDF) strategy is going.
- The importance of expertise, adaptability, being proactive and thinking laterally.
- Compiling a strong evidence base.
- Making the best use of assets – what are the liabilities? What do we want to do? What is the function of this parcel of land (e.g. recreation, housing)?
- Realisation that we use landscape as a resource but what we do to it impacts upon how it looks.
- Identifying areas of land which don’t interfere with existing activities including manufacturing and farming.
- Free up bureaucracy.
- Work with stakeholders and partners.
- Take a holistic strategic view of use and management.
- Remove vacant and un-used land from their portfolio.
- Food and self sufficiency – think about the role of Councils in land share and community growing initiatives.
- Having an exit strategy.
- Generate third party funding.
- Make urban areas have a greater commitment to the rural landscape.
- Demonstration projects on Council land.

## **Living and working in sustainable ways**

**Faith Johnson, Live & Work Rural team, Peak District National Park Authority**

### **1. What are the key issues and pressures facing protected landscapes (e.g. National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)?**

- Climate change and increasing carbon footprints.
- Success in attracting visitors – too much footfall? The role of Visit England?
- Public expenditure predictions v land under private ownership.
- Planning system: in favour of development? Need for development over housing and caravan sites.
- Cost of housing.
- Environment first approach – how can protected landscapes be protected from quarrying, wind farms etc.
- Local employment and opportunities for young people.
- Limited scope of the local economy (and role of external forces and globalisation).
- The economic state of farming (especially in upland areas).
- Finance.
- Preservation versus conservation.
- Facilitation.
- Broadband.
- Agriculture.
- Rising cost of general inputs.
- Longevity of European funding streams post 2013.
- No protection for some landscapes in national parks.

### **2. What can public/statutory bodies that manage protected landscapes do to support and strengthen the role of the environment in driving economic development?**

- Planning system (e.g. encouraging locally sourced building materials, influencing the look/visual impact of physical build).
- Lack of understanding about the number of companies involved in the low carbon sector and traditional skills.
- Understanding the local skills base and supporting firms.
- Use the landscape to drive regular economic development activities.
- Change the use of land and buildings to meet local needs.
- Live or work? Following the Taylor Review we need both.
- Enable broadband.
- Look at economic success and the amount of traffic it generates – encourage visitors to stay not just visit for the day; have a balance between short stay and long stay visitors; address seasonality by looking at how to stretch the visitor season.
- Value added – the profitability of raw materials (e.g. farming, quarrying).
- Sustainability of settlements – community led planning? Exception sites?
- Need to produce more sustainable, renewable energy – how to put the positive view across to enable it to happen.
- Local exchanges and currencies (e.g. time banking).
- Understanding the value of the landscape character and its unique selling points.
- Support for traditional methods of farming.
- Take a structural and strategic approach to development.
- Managing the localism bill.

- Recognising diverse communities of interest.

### **3. How can we ensure that any adverse impacts of development are mitigated and that protected landscapes therefore benefit positively from the local economy?**

- Good design, including building materials.
- Village/parish planning.
- Transport and the cost of fuel?
- Cost of implementing measures (e.g. renewable) and lack of grant funding available (including challenges around accessing European funding streams for domestic energy projects).
- What is the vision for the whole population?
- Providing finance and other resources/support.
- Linking landscape and economy with education.
- Making the case for national park authorities to drive economic development.
- Seepage of national parks in terms of boundaries – ethical quarrying? Traditional industries?
- Scale is important in managing adverse impacts of activities on the landscape.
- Tackle bureaucracy.

## **Taste Tideswell – a community in action**

### **Pete Hawkins, Chairman of Taste Tideswell**

#### **1. How easy would it be to replicate the Taste Tideswell approach in other parts of rural England?**

- Finance, including capital expenditure – where to find £400K for year 1.
- Requires champions who are articulate, enthusiastic and wealthy.
- Television – publicity.
- Should look at the way Taste Tideswell has done things and what we can learn from that (e.g. branding).
- Big society – aims to use enthusiasm within communities. How can you get community members to be active? A controversial issue brings the community together but then everyone disappears. Taste Tideswell highlights the importance of doing something good for your community.
- Is the cookery school and other Taste Tideswell activities providing local business opportunities or putting local shops out of business?
- Think about sustainability in terms of income generation and job creation.
- What is local food? How do you add value to it?
- Demonstrates the challenges of linking food and landscape.
- Role of social enterprise.
- The idea is as important as the place.

#### **2. What are the opportunities and challenges facing communities who want to get involved in looking after local green spaces?**

- They have to want to look after green spaces.
- Finding key individuals within the community to make a start.
- Communities can take a reactive rather than proactive approach.
- The demand for allotments – who owns the land? Needing a village officer to help organise and facilitate access to local green spaces.
- It's about how you sell it and advertise the opportunities to communities.
- Community planning – will identify land and how to use it.
- The presumption in favour of development will lead to a 'can do' attitude and an approach to management built on consensus.
- Asking the community what it wants to do and then listening.
- Make functional use of green space.
- Make the economic case to communities to get them involved.
- Recognise the different traditions and engagement with green space by individual communities.

#### **3. How can the impact of community based initiatives be evaluated?**

- Through questionnaires – part of community/parish plans and include qualitative questions about change.
- Sustainability – is the cookery school open? Community growing spaces still there?
- Survey all the businesses and residents in Tideswell to find out the number of beneficiaries.
- Look at what the project set out to achieve. X years on did it achieve this and was it a good idea? Why did we do it in the first place?

- Look at the direct and indirect effects of the project (e.g. personal development, collecting local narratives).
- Have an audit trail at the outset, throughout and at the end of the project – needs to be longitudinal.
- Get them to think about their exit strategy.
- Class issues and lost rural voices.

## **Fire & water – responding to environmental incidents**

### **Martin Glynn, Director of Rural Development Initiatives**

The following points were raised during the whole group discussion:

- Prevention rather than mitigation.
- Setting criteria to focus investment strategies.
- Bottom up community approaches based on local knowledge are important.
- Where is the Environment Agency engaged with communities and how is this engagement facilitated?
- Opportunities to engage individuals as volunteers has grown in terms of flooding.
- Previously people didn't realise these environmental issues were important.
- Building on what people are already doing in rural areas.
- Sustainability of initiatives and ensure funding is downstream to local levels.
- Taking an ecosystem services approach.
- Leeds University uplands run-off research project.
- Independent coordination is extremely valuable.
- National Park Authorities as independent brokers.