

Parish Climate Proofing Challenge

Prepared by Graham Ward, Y&H RAF Chair

Will the word “proofing” in the title create an expectation that we can’t meet? The text in the body of the document is clear that we are talking about preparation/adaptation for change, rather than being able to protect against it. Or am I just out of touch with current terminology?

1. Introduction

1.1. The last RAF meeting at Riccall requested the Chair and Secretariat to investigate further the concept of a climate change champion village. This paper sets out proposals for the RAF to consider.

1.2 Research was undertaken and it was found that a lot is going but with different objectives and little cross reference. Much of the work is about mitigation and carbon reduction and there is far less related to adaptation. However there is quite a lot of *information available*, in particular I have identified information from The UK Climate Impact Programme (UKCIP) funded by Defra at Oxford: www.ukcip.org.uk.

1.3 From this we have developed some initial ideas. I presented a paper to the Steering Group earlier this month, who agreed we should present it to the full Forum, with some alterations which I have included in this version.

1.4 I would like your thoughts both today and by email to the Secretariat: (yhraf@govh.gsi.gov.uk). I am particularly concerned we are not overlapping other regional activity or reinventing the wheel. Please look around as the RAF does not want to be accused of others having ‘been there, done that’.

Background

1.5 Climate change is happening and there will be a need to adapt. It is important for communities to identify within their environs what might happen in next twenty-five years and how they might plan with their local, regional and national authorities to take advantage and to minimise risks. Climate change must be encompassed by everyone and can not be left to ‘them’, particularly as local areas will need very different solutions and what one area does could well affect other communities in the same region. *We also need to consider what communities/local people can do when there are limited funds available.*

Predicted Climate Change

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- Increased rainfall but a change in seasonality giving higher winter rain and drier summers
- Higher temperatures all year
- Many more severe weather events
- Storms with wind and heavy rain over short periods
- Droughts in summer with high temperatures

What Adaptation could involve

1.7

- Dry summers and higher temperature could mean we need different plants and trees - will fauna and flora adapt or do we need to anticipate and help?
- Learning from already hot /dry world regions on matters such as fire risk and use of water

- With increased winter rain and dry summers, issues include ~~flood defence schemes~~ *flood risk management (FRM) schemes* and summer storage measures. *Unfortunately, FRM schemes will not be able to protect everyone against all floods, however this project will give people an opportunity to consider what they can do i.e avoiding building in areas likely to flood, sympathetic land management, sustainable drainage, warnings, emergency plans etc*
- Wildlife issues, such as influencing land management, and creating corridors that will enable wildlife to progressively adapt to changing habitat and climatic conditions. *Could this be linked to achieving the objectives set out in the regional/local biodiversity action plans?*
- Flood *risk management* and coastal erosion schemes in response to rising sea level. ~~from melting ice~~ *(Projected sea level rise is due to hotter temperatures (thermo-expansion), rather than just melting ice). Need to ensure that key infrastructure is not vulnerable to flooding.*
- Changes to farming and landscape by economic actions to mitigate or adapt. *There may be some tough decisions ahead regarding the frequency of summer floods and the impact on crops in washlands/on the floodplain. Evidence this year suggests that crops including grass do not survive summer floods due to high respiration rates compared to winter.*
- *Changes in land management to ensure soil can continue to provide it's full range of services for people and the environment, including reducing flood risk and minimising diffuse water pollution (see covering email and Soil Strategy).*
- Being better equipped to handle severe weather events i.e. flash floods, in respect to drains, gullies, and surge ponds for flash floods, *also need to consider heatwaves.*
- *General hotter temperatures – will people be comfortable in the parish buildings in very hot weather (without installing air conditioning)? Risks of heat stress.*

These are the sorts of changes that will need to be made – so it will be vital local landowners are involved the project. Otherwise people will be able to suggest what changes will be necessary, but won't be able to do much to actually bring about adaptation.

Objectives and Outcomes of the Project

1.8 The aims of the proposed Parish Climate Proofing Challenge (PCPC) project is to involve rural residents in a forward look at their local area, in the context of climate change, and also to engage with others around them in different landscapes to ensure a regional overview is developed. The parish studies will create a report targeted at informing our local and regional bodies when they determine their strategies. The PCPC project should enable rural residents to better understand why certain changes will be required and how they will meet the challenge of adapting positively to a new climate, hopefully dispelling the doom and gloom of much of the commentary on this inevitable change.

The parishes may need a lot of support and guidance in order to produce reports that can be used to inform planning and strategy development in the region. It could also be quite an emotive issue for some communities if they have already experienced severe flooding.

Proposed design of Project

1.9 The PCPC project would involve some fifteen parishes located from the coast at Humber Estuary following the River Ouse and Ure catchments to the Dales above the town of Hawes. The villages could be up to twenty miles off the river, provided their water drainage was part of the catchment. It could be helpful if the parish has had experience of the Parish Planning or Village Design Statements over last few years, but not essential.

1.10 This design allows a continuum from hills to sea, highland and lowland, where different conditions apply so different solutions will emerge. There are implications both up

and down this chain for consideration. *Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS) and Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMP) will help to show how localised climate change adaptation will effect areas upstream and downstream of their parish.*

Project Timing

1.11 We would aim to do some format planning and create a package of input to help discussion this autumn with aim of starting community activity in early spring 2008. The communities would work on their own Parish adaptation ideas and report back by end December 2008 so that an overall report of project would be completed by March 2009. There would be mentoring during the process to help structure discussions and help identify and facilitate technical input from the appropriate RAF member skill base.

Putting it together and probable costs

1.12 Experience is available from RAF SG members Mike Feist (Village Design Statements) and Stephen Fox (Parish Plans) which should enable a sound financial budget to be developed. From my own experience we are probably talking about a grant of £4,000/£5,000 for the work the village puts in, plus getting their report together. We then need some facilitation at least four days per village plus project construction and final report correlation - say 120 days or half a person on loan, possibly from one of our environmentally experienced RAF members. That gives an early estimate of £75,000. There would be voluntary free input of RAF expertise for information meetings and visits.

We are concerned that this is an under-estimate of the costs – particularly for providing facilitation and support for 15 parishes.

1.13 This would be a partnership project and the RAF would only have resources to facilitate the setting up and ongoing support. The outcomes would be used by RAF in its information and lobbying roles to ensure all relevant agencies were aware of the outcomes and what rural residents were thinking

Expressions of interest so far

1.14 I have had expressions of interest in the project from Yorkshire Forward, GOYH, the Regional Forestry Group and The Environment Agency, whilst Natural England offered positive comments at the recent RAF Steering Group meeting. I have speculatively enquired of the Royal Society about finance (<http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/>).

Future action

1.15 If the Forum agrees to proceed, further checks need carrying out by members that we are not overlapping with others. The project will need working up into a proper proposal format and members input on possible briefing questions for parishes is welcomed. We will need to identify partners and indeed financial partners.

Discussion points for the Rural Affairs Forum

1. Is the Forum happy we get involved in facilitating projects or is our role just to feed views to others?
2. Is the Forum happy with this approach to RAF involvement in Climate Change? Is it duplicating any climate change activity that is already happening/ or planned to happen in the region? *We're not aware of any directly equivalent initiatives in Yorkshire & Humber. Projects that we are aware of that could inform the develop of this project include:*

- *'Climate proofing the Cheviots' – project still at scoping stage – intention is to identify demonstration works on adaptation actions*
- *The 'Belford Project' is looking at upland management as part of flood risk measures for the town*
- *'Coastal Futures' – working with communities affected by managed realignment around the estuary, particularly towards Spurn Point.*
- *Rural Pathfinder in East Yorkshire and the proposals for Local Environment Forums*
- *Humberhead levels project*
- *Opportunity mapping for trees & floods in Yorkshire & Humber*
- *The Ouse Catchment Project – this project is in it's early stages and aligns nicely with your proposals. There's a possibility that we could contribute some cash and staff time through this project.*
- *I understand Yorkshire and Humber Assembly are funding a study into future weather conditions in parts of the region – it might be possible for them to include the parishes participating in this project.*
- *Wetland Feasibility Study – this study was completed some time ago, but it may provide useful information.*
- *A recent study tried to predict the effect of climate change on rainfall patterns in the Lake District.*
- *Environment Agency CAMS & CFMPs.*

3. From where do we get the finance? Should it be within the RAF membership?

Do we look for sponsors say big Yorkshire companies? *We'll be able to offer 'in kind' support for the project and maybe some funding (through the Ouse Catchment Project).*

Graham Ward: September 2007

References

EU Living with climate change in Europe

Defra website: Environmental Protection on Indicators for LAA and Nottingham Declaration Action Pack

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/portal/publicsite

Town and Parish Councils act on CO2: Ways to tackle Climate Change Defra

Met Office Hadley Centre in particular 10/08/07 Article in Science giving predictions to 2014

UKCIP www.ukcip.org.uk

Y&H Climate Change Adaptation Issues: GOYH Environment and Sustainability Team July 2007

Many other paper including Stern but mostly on mitigation .