

28th September 2010

Businesses' meeting with Cllr Keith Knaggs.

Present:

Kevin Taylor, Perry Slingsby Systems
Henry Rayment and Rachel Jack, Castle Howard
Steve Scott, Derwent Training
Ian Connell, Westler Foods
Richard Ellison, National Farmers Union
Simon England, ALA Insurance
Ena Dent, Tourism Association North Yorkshire
Ian Rackham, Atlas Ward Structures
Willem Zwitserloot, Vion Food Group
Jonathan French North Yorkshire Partnership Unit
Cllr Keith Knaggs, Ryedale District Council
Janet Waggott, Ryedale District Council
Julian Rudd, Ryedale District Council
Jos Holmes, Ryedale District Council

Apologies: Phil Bustard, North Yorkshire Moors Railway.

Introductions were made and Cllr Knaggs outlined the purpose of the meeting was to listen to Ryedale Businesses and the learn from them what would make the right conditions for economic success.

Johnathan French of the North Yorkshire Partnership Unit gave a short presentation on the development of Local Enterprise Partnerships in the area – the economic development gateway since the closure of Yorkshire Forward in 2012. Discussion followed

- Some activity would be retained at the regional level such as tourism, flood protection and transport planning.
- LEPs will place the private sector in driving seat. Executive Boards will be lead by private sector businesses. Suggestion that these could take soundings from more locally based business forums.

Julian Rudd outlined some of the Council's aspirations for economic development locally, including the development of a rural enterprise centre, which had not been progressed due to the Local Development Framework not yet being in place. The Council is aware of the need to secure employment land and buildings.

Concern was expressed that, although there were a range of businesses present, their requirements would be disparate. However, subsequent discussion outlined the following key points:

- Human resource requirements – a requirement to attract and retain highly skilled staff.
 - Examples given included skilled technical staff (such as butchers in the food processing industries) and HQ staff such as financial, IT. Some businesses were forecasting substantial growth over the next 5 years, and therefore anticipated increasing difficulties in attracting skilled graduates to the area.
 - A further discussion was had regarding numeracy and literacy issues for non specialist staff and also a requirement to ensure that local schools really understand the local employment market when developing courses and links to businesses.
 - It was noted that at this juncture, the LEPs did not have a remit for skills development. There is a local 'work and skills' partnerships that is developing projects such as the 'opportunity knocks' event on 2nd November to raise awareness of school children with local businesses.

- An understanding that rural areas will not readily attract central Government attention and that we will have to 'help ourselves' as well as bidding for relatively scarce public funding for economic development projects. Lack of access to RDPE funding was cited.
- Lack of suitable premises for expansion. Example given was a requirement for open plan, modern office accommodation.
- Broad Band IT connections, essential for both today and tomorrow's technology, are poor in many locations.
- Planning – Planning process needs to be efficient. An improved understanding of the need to provide economic use for traditional or listed buildings.
- Effective tourism marketing support is essential and making links with partners such as Welcome to Yorkshire or Visit York.
- Promotion of local food producers and growers to support tourism market.
- Capital infrastructure, such as the improvements needed to the A64, lack of gas in Ryedale and the expense of upgrading utility provision. Parking for staff in market towns was also raised.
- Public transport provision is important.
- Business start up and ongoing support to new businesses. Promotion of enterprise. Eg business to business mentoring schemes.

When these requirements are not met, there is the temptation to move businesses away from rural or market towns and into city locations such as York due to good transport connections and availability of office location.

Broadband

There is potential for a County wide Broadband project to tackle the issue of 'Not Spots'. Funding for this could potentially come from the 'Regional Growth Fund' (much reduced replacement for YF funding) and from the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership – Rural Partnership 'reward grant' (for meeting performance targets over a 2 period).

Business Forum

The meeting discussed the way forward and agreed that there was potential. Debate and discussion between businesses was agreed with or without the formation of a LEP. However, it would be driven by businesses and issues categorised into themes as the diversity of businesses in Ryedale would mean that inevitably not all businesses would be interested in all subjects. EG capital issues and revenue issues. The Local Development Framework was mentioned to discuss the provision of employment land allocations.

LEP development.

The businesses expressed a preference for a York facing LEP and an allegiance to the North Yorkshire priorities. Concern that there would be little similarity with issues in Hull for example.

Cllr Knaggs thanked the businesses for attending and bringing their views to the table.