

The Borders Foundation for Rural Sustainability

Supplementary Evidence Following the Final Hearing of the Rural Development Committee's Consultation on Integrated Rural Development, 25th June 2002

RURAL DEVELOPMENT FORUMS FOR SCOTLAND AN OUTLINE PROPOSAL;

1. Introduction

The implementation of the Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture and the objectives of the recently announced mid-term review of the CAP necessitate an integrated approach inclusive of all rural and countryside stakeholders. There is at present no mechanism to effectively take this forward on a co-ordinated regional and national basis. There are however numerous local and regional initiatives which recognise and understand the need for integration but do not have a reference point to 'sign upto', causing some confusion and duplication of human and financial resources.

2. Objectives

A Regional Rural Development Forum would instil cohesion into an integrated approach to sustainable rural development. It would provide the format, venue and infrastructure for individuals, organisations, businesses and community groups to share ideas, resources, raise funds, identify R&D requirements, implement local resource audits. As a local forum it would provide a 'sharing platform' which has as its main objective the avoidance of duplication and the sharing of resources and best practice to initiate and guide sustainable rural development, principally on a collaborative and community basis.

3. Structure

Imperative is the local nature of each RRDF (Regional Rural Development Forum), to provide a locally sensitive approach to issues, projects and needs. They must be open to all rural stakeholders including individuals who have no representative organisation. These will be openly invited through the press / mail shots to join. There will be an organising committee including a chairman and secretary. Many regions already have in place partnerships which could with some adjustment take on the mantle of the RRDF, without creating yet another layer of administration.

The RRDFs need a national 'sharing platform' or council, on which ideas and good practice are shared, discussed, guided. This also provides the opportunity for exploring and feeding-back on IRD in other parts of the world. The main function of the Scottish Rural Development Council (SRDC) would be to link, on a continuous basis directly with the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive on the progress of IRD. It should be chaired by the Minister for Rural Development and the Environment.

4. Modus Operandi

Each RRDF will meet 3-4 times per year. In the meantime e-communication can be facilitated through a protected web-based tool such as a Learning Network to enable continuous dialogue to take place and best practice shared. The SRDC will also have a similar e-communication system. (An example of this is that set-up by the

Countryside Agency to facilitate the work of the Rural Affairs Forum for England). This system could perhaps be administered by the local enterprise boards.

Knowledge of local resources which may or may not require primary audits to be undertaken, is essential to the effective enablement of rural development. An early task of each RRDF would be to establish its regional 'evidence base'. This would necessitate securing the funds and commissioning the work through appropriate specialists. Conducting local countryside resource audits is a unifying experience for involved stakeholders.

5. Action Plan

A proposed plan of action is;

- i) Draw up a set of simple ground rules for the operation of the RRDF and the SRDC to insure that the principle objective of IRD nationally is facilitated. These ground rules should not regulate but simply guide the operation of the RRDF
- ii) Each region draws-up a list of all organisations, businesses, community groups, individuals who comprise the local rural stakeholding
- iii) Each Region identify possible existing structures to take the Forum forward
- iv) Open invitation within each region to join each RRDF
- v) Appoint the chair and committee of the SRDC
- vi) Each region appoint the chair and committee of each RRDF

It is envisaged that this process from the first to the sixth point could take upto 12 months.

RRDFs would be a collaborative venture between the Parliament, it's executive and the rural stakeholding. It would provide the link between the public and private sectors in an open forum, essential to the identification and development of economic potential. It would establish and reinforce best environmental practice across the complete range of countryside management interests including farming. It is consistent with Action Points 29, 38 and 45 of the Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture. It would bring countryside management and food production into the mainstream of rural development.

BFRS
July 2002

The Borders Foundation for Rural Sustainability
Peelham, Foulden, Berwickshire TD15 1UG Tel/Fax 01890-781328
Web address www.bfrs.org email:info@bfrs.org
Co-ordinator Denise Walton MSc MIEEM
A Scottish Company Limited by Guarantee and without a Share Capital No SC196842
Registered Office: J&H Mitchell WS, 51 Atholl Rd, Pitlochry PH16 5BU

Diagram 1. A Schematic Outline of the proposed make-up of RRDFs and a Scottish Rural Development Council and their relationship with the Parliament and its Executive

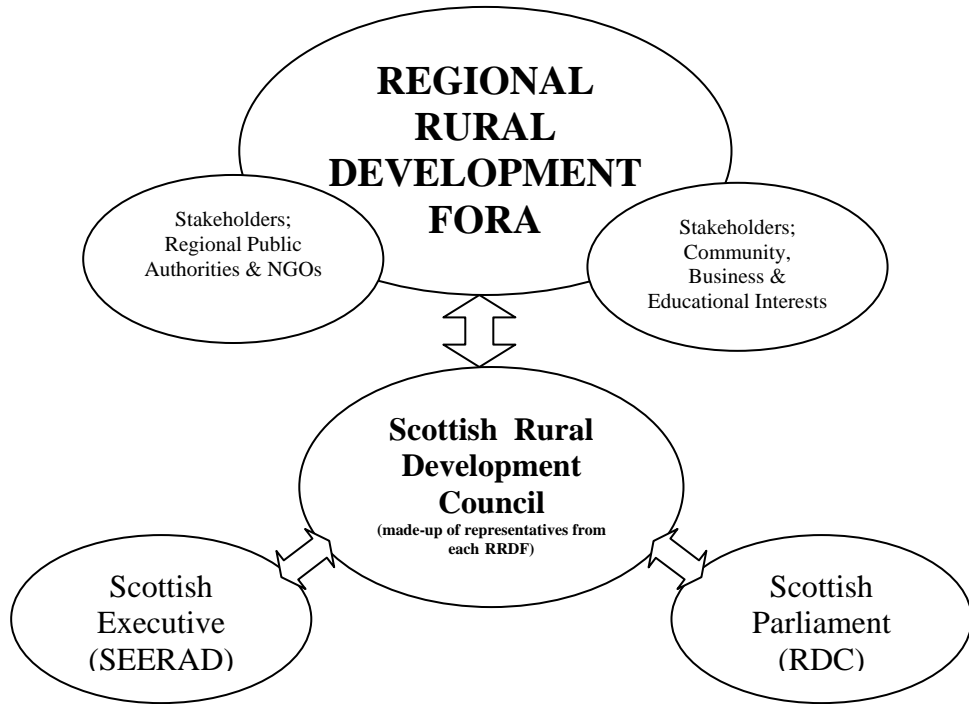


Diagram 2. Schematic summary of the stakeholding components of the Countryside Management industry in the Scottish Borders as the basis for the Scottish Borders RRDF

