

**YORK ENVIRONMENT FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING 10th.Dec. 2019**

Present:

Philip Crowe	York Tomorrow
Penny Bainbridge	Edible York
Caroline Lewis	YEF/Little Hob Moor Trees
Barry Otley	Treemendous York
Rose Hilton	Heslington PC
Audrey Miller	Treemendous York
Andy d'Agorne	Green Party
Ron Healey	CPRE Nth.Yorks.
June Tranmer	Wellbeing in York
Dave Merrett	unaffiliated+(York & District TUC)
John Cossham	Hull Road Green Team
Adrian Lovett	Good Food York
Angela Blackwood	CYC
Graham Collett	York Bus Forum
James Copeland	NFU

Chair Penny Bainbridge

1 WELCOME to James Copeland

2 APOLOGIES:from Mick Phythian, Tom de Simone, Phil Bixby, Sara Robin, Cllr.Martin Rowley

3 FARMING-production, volatility and the environment- James Copeland

JC noted that there were upwards of 6000 farming businesses in the NE/NW region covered through the York office. Its role is to act as an advisory body, promoting sustainable farming practices, and acting as an interface with central government. Many of the fundamental recommendations in farming regulation made two years ago had now been codified in law, so that the industry was now better placed to continue to operate with maximum efficiency and a minimum of uncertainty.

This is important for forward planning, as the 56% of farming income derived from direct support grants will cease in 2027. Approx. 30% of farmland is now covered by some form of environmental support scheme. It is not yet clear how this transition to a purely market economy will be managed by Govt.and whether farming priorities will change as a result.

Farming takes place in a volatile environment, where unpredictable flooding may occur; limits on water abstraction may be imposed due to lower than expected river flows; where rapid depletion of aquifers and increased consumer demand; or simply unpredictable rainfall or air temperature gradients at the wrong time of year need to be allowed for. These environmental challenges may become ever more acute due to climate changes, and may alter farming practices. Catchment-sensitive farming will be ever more important.

The regulatory standards governing UK food production are extremely rigorous, and the need to follow these, eg. need to avoid pollution from farm runoff and the use of less damaging pesticides and fertilisers, means that unavoidable costs must either be absorbed by the producer or passed on to the consumer until a price point limit is reached. To minimise these costs farmers need to be ever more efficient, have access to business support, including full internet access, and a more relaxed attitude from banks, who are currently wary of backing investments when producers are unable to secure long term supply contracts.

While the traditional farming scene is changing slowly, the horticultural sector has made rapid adjustments to changing market and financial conditions. If we intend to maintain our worldwide lead in sustainable high quality food production bad trade deals with other countries must be avoided at all costs, although the end product may cost more at the checkout.

How much land should be devoted to farming? There is a strong lobby for planting trees wherever possible, with a consequent reduction in agricultural land. The UK produces only 60% of the nation's food.. If we are to cut down on food miles, become more self-sufficient and grow locally planting trees on productive land makes little sense. With good land management a compromise is possible. Who will win the argument?

Members thanked James for his highly technical, detailed and informative review of the current state of play in the agricultural scene. Another visit in 12 months time, perhaps?

4 YEF BUSINESS

a approval of minutes: agreed

b matters arising not on the agenda:

Friargate Quakers to nominate a replacement for Roger Pierce.

c membership update & finance:

no update

d subgroup reports:

Transport -The Civic Trust had presented its transport survey results to CYC. There was to be a rebid for revised proposals for York station. A full report would be tabled at the next YEF meeting.

"Treemendous"- CYC had not responded to a legitimate request to release information on ring road planting and associated surveys. Definitive progress on the Northern Forest programme was held over until the budget discussions in January. CYC had now included "Treemendous" on its website. Univ.of York had not yet supplied details of participation options for the One Planet "Green Week" events starting Feb.12th.

"One Planet York"- the constitution had still not been agreed. The status and obligations of potential "sponsors" was not yet clear. There were issues of accountability and financial structure to be clarified.

e further meetings:

no further topics and speakers have been confirmed. Suggestions welcomed.

5 AOB :

none

6 INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Beetlebank Farm at Murton has opened as a community farm.

NEXT MEETING

Date Tue Jan 14th 2020

Tues 11th Feb 2020

Venue West Offices

Agenda as circulated

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