

## BRAG Steering Group meeting

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2011, Addington Manor**

### MINUTES



#### Attendees

Chris Rawson (CR) – Buckinghamshire Business First  
 Chris Schmidt-Reid (CSR) – Wycombe District Council  
 David Campbell – Rural Consultant  
 Henry Aubrey-Fletcher (HAF) – BRAG Chairman  
 Malcolm Godwin (MG) – Bucks and MK Small Towns Programme  
 Michael Hunt (MH) – Community Impact Bucks

#### Apologies

Cherry Aston – Chilterns Woodlands Project  
 David Meakin - Church of England (Oxford Diocese)  
 Jan Phillips – Milton Keynes Council  
 Nick Phillips – LEADER Programme  
 Nina Thornhill – Colne Valley Park  
 Peter Beckford – South Bucks District Council  
 Peter Geary – Milton Keynes Council

No.	Item	Discussion	Action
1.	Welcome and apologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apologies as above</li> <li>Future BRAG membership/attendance was discussed. Additional representation should be sought to broaden stakeholder input. New Year meeting with Ann Limb (SEMLEP), John Gibss (BALC) to be invited to future BRAG meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CR/HAF to assess scope for additional stakeholder representation</li> </ul>
2.	Minutes of last meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes were agreed and signed off.</li> </ul>	
3.	BRAG Issue Group reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MG – Market Towns Programme now being wound down in line with SEEDA/DEFRA funding agreement. 3 projects still spending – Amersham, Chalfont St Giles and Chalfont St Peter. Administration of the MTP funding now lies with BIS; this has caused a number of issues. MG is now actively looking at new contract opportunities.</li> <li>CR – future C&amp;E representation/feedback likely to come from LNP. Main issue is the establishment of a Local Nature Partnership in Bucks and MK; covering roughly the same area as the GIC. BRAG/LEPs to support the development of the LNP. Status of Nature Improvement Area bid is unknown. AONB Sustainable Tourism project activity underway. BRAG to help promote renewable heating incentive schemes.</li> <li>CR – E&amp;E activity update. Bucks Thames Valley LEP now signed off by BIS; covers all 4 Bucks Districts. Provides the county with further leverage when accessing funding and other opportunities as well as bringing together a coherent approach to strategic economic development. LEP bid document references importance of rural economy; likely to be supportive of BRAG. LEP now able to access approximately £4.3 million of Growing Places funding to support a variety of infrastructure projects.</li> <li>MH – Rural Housing policy and associated activity still in somewhat of a state of flux since the change of Government and reduction in subsidy (HCA etc). Still and issue of great concern in rural communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MG to ensure projects complete MTP spending commitments</li> <li>MG to update on possible extension of MTP-related activity</li> <li>CR to attend LNP meeting at end of Jan 2012</li> <li>MG/CR to assess rural opportunities linked to the LEP (Rural Growth Networks etc)</li> <li>MH to report back on the related progress at Rural Housing Partnership meetings</li> </ul>

		Need to better understand the feasibility of alternative financial models and how NPPF may help to support community aspirations. The provision of affordable housing units is proving to be a significant challenge.	
4.	BRAG 2011 Conference round-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback has been positive on the whole – the event was deemed to be a success. Turnout was excellent and the venue worked well. Feedback forms (collated by CIB) suggested that the speakers were generally well-received and the subject matter was just right.</li> <li>• Main issues which arose were linked to some subject repetition by speakers, time-keeping and the queues which built up in the cafeteria during lunch/refreshment breaks.</li> <li>• Rural Strategy development will continue – scope of consultation and document likely to be aligned to capacity of BRAG and resources available to support this activity. Final Strategy may be ultimately published in 2013 to allow for additional policy reform (CAP, NPPF) and the release of new data/intelligence (Census etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CR/MH to meet to discuss development of Rural Strategy and community-level consultation</li> <li>• MH to assess CIB capacity to support this activity in the short/medium term</li> </ul>
5.	BRAG future issues/opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CR – will be pulling back from existing coordination/secretariat role by April 2012 as part of BBF Business Plan vision and assignment to infrastructure-related projects. It is anticipated that BBF will focus its support on BRAG linked to economic development and may also re-focus MG MTP role dependant on funding opportunities.</li> <li>• MH – CIB has the resources to take on some elements of BRAG going forward, as had been previously discussed. This needs further elaboration but the focus will be on the development of a new RS and the hosting of a 2013 BRAG Conference. Beyond this, BRAG has the potential to be widely involved and influential, dependant on capacity. CR to continue in current role until April 2012.</li> <li>• DEFRA Rural Economy Growth Review – recent policy output from DEFRA suggests possible opportunities for BRAG. Rural Growth Networks look to be an interesting proposition and could provide a platform from which to build on existing MTP/LEADER work; this needs support of a LEP. The Review also outlines support for other initiatives that are relevant to rural Bucks in the form of business development, tourism and broadband.</li> <li>• The NPPF also seen as a priority area for BRAG, particularly in supporting local communities and their neighbourhood planning aspirations. Whilst many question marks remain, the opportunities for community empowerment appear to be substantial.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CR/MH to meet to discuss BRAG activity and handover</li> <li>• HAF/DC to liaise with Bucks CC regarding continued BRAG support and potential to provide resource towards the Conference</li> <li>• MG/CR to assess Rural Growth Network opportunity and development of an EOI</li> <li>• CR to circulate LEP strategy/plan documents once available</li> <li>• All to consider options for supporting this area of work</li> </ul>
6.	Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CR - broadband work is progressing well. Local Broadband Plan formally submitted to BDUK in November; feedback expected early 2012. If approved Bucks will received approximately £1.8m</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CR work with CIB to support all aspects of rural broadband work, particularly in relation to community outreach</li> </ul>

		<p>from Central Government to support broadband roll-out across the county, alongside Bucks CC match funding. It is expected that this project will be 'live' in Q4 11/12 (joint project with Herts, covering both counties). BT investment is also continuing – Buckingham, Princes Risborough and Great Missenden exchanges due to receive superfast in 2012. Also assessing the recently announced DEFRA Rural Community Broadband funding opportunity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DC – LEADER is progressing well and is set to achieve its targets for grant allocations in 2011/12 across both LAGs. A wide variety of projects continue to be supported, creating jobs and helping to develop and grow rural enterprises. Spending profile suggests 2012/13 will be a big challenge if we are to allocate the remaining funds. All grants must be spent by July 2013, thus allocations must be in place by late 2012. Post programme legacy needs full consideration.</li> <li>• MH – DCLG rep due to visit CIB in 2012; seems to have a real interest in the county's issues and support approach. Also supporting the creation of a community oil buying scheme offering more competitive prices; this will cover the whole of the county.</li> <li>• CSR – Next Wycombe Rural Forum scheduled to take place in March 2012; key note speaker is John Morris who will be speaking on forestry-related issues. Woodland and the economic value of timber is gaining increased traction at WDC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CR to assess scope for RCBF EOI development</li> <li>• BRAG to continue support for LEADER; scope to use BBF business database as a marketing/CRM tool</li> <li>• MH to assess potential to invite DCLG rep to future BRAG meeting</li> <li>• CSR to circulate WRF information</li> </ul>
7.	AOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>	
8.	Date of next meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday 02/04/12, 10am – 12pm, Wycombe District Council, Bruce Holland Room</li> </ul>	