



Rural Action Yorkshire
Enabling Your Rural Community

03 November 2017

Dear Rural Action Yorkshire Member,

We have seen significant changes in the voluntary and community sector over the past five years. As outlined in our Annual Report and at our recent AGM we have had to navigate a rapidly changing environment. We have seen cuts in funding available to deliver our core support services; changes in local authority funding as they too struggle with large public sector funding cuts; and watched as a number of local charities have had to close.

We have been working closely with the Rural Action Yorkshire (RAY) Trustees over the last year to explore how we proactively respond to these changes to ensure we can best meet the needs of our members and make sure our services are available in the future. We have managed to offer support to parish councils, community building committees and other rural community groups across North, South and West Yorkshire, but with a very small staff team this continues to be a challenge. Over the last 6 months we have opened conversations with a number of organisations to discuss whether by working together we might be able to offer our members an enhanced service which is more sustainable.

It quickly became apparent that North Yorkshire and York Forum was a compatible organisation which was also seeking an opportunity to look at different ways to support their members in the voluntary and community sector. NYFF is a strategic body which champions the sector by connecting, representing and supporting voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises.

It is the clear belief of the RAY Trustees that there would be significant benefits to a merger and we have examined these in some detail. A non-exhaustive list of benefits to you and other rural community and voluntary organisations across the region include:

- Integrated and improved services offered to members, clients and the wider sector
- The opportunity to work differently across North, South, West Yorkshire and York to meet locally identified needs
- Greater clarity so that you know who to go to for information
- Increased opportunities for sustaining services and creating efficiencies in our delivery models
- Increased reach from our pooled intelligence networks and the ability to better influence policy makers and funder locally, regionally and nationally
- An enhanced voice and stronger representation with greater political leverage
- A holistic approach to development of communities – wedding together community action and the voluntary sector
- A focus on specialist areas of work e.g. rural, health and social care, equality and diversity
- More opportunities for us to grow services to a broader audience
- Maintaining our existing staff and their expertise, knowledge and skills
- Both organisations are in a position of strength and have the opportunity to be more visionary and to invest in the future

Registered Office:

Unit A, Tower House, Askham Fields Lane

Askham Bryan York YO23 3FS

Telephone: 0845 313 0270 Fax: 0845 313 0271

Calls will cost 3p per minute plus your telephony company's access charge

E-mail: info@ruralyorkshire.org.uk

www.ruralyorkshire.org.uk

Rural Action Yorkshire Ltd

Reg Charity Number: 515538 Company Number: 1839458 VAT No: 500 8347 76

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This list provides a flavour of our thinking to date and what we are looking to achieve by joining the two organisations together.

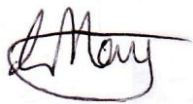
Like RAY, NYYF has also been considering their future, so the timing is good for moving discussions forward. It also means that this is a natural progression for both organisations without one organisation's needs and ambitions taking precedence over the other.

At separate meetings of both RAY and NYYF Trustees this week, both Boards voted on a resolution to move to merger subject to due diligence. It was agreed that we are looking to create one, new entity and that this is a merger of equals. The next step would be to complete a full due diligence which will examine accounts, finances and scrutinise all assets and liabilities. Once the due diligence process is complete and if both Boards of Trustees are satisfied with this then a final decision to merge is expected to be made in January 2017. A critical part of the due diligence process will be seeking to hear the views of RAY members about the proposed merger and ensuring our members agree that it is the right way forward. Over the coming months we will be asking for your thoughts and we very much welcome your feedback. Please do call Leah or send her an email and she can talk through the proposal with you.

It is very important to us that a new organisation is still able to provide a strong representative and influencing voice on all rural matters locally, regionally and nationally. The new organisation must also maintain RAY's commitment to supporting rural communities, providing a support service for village hall and other rural community building committees and being the first port of call for rural groups needing help and advice. Our existing staff are our greatest asset and we intend to work hard to involve them in the merger process and in building the new organisation.

We believe this is an exciting proposal for taking the work of RAY forward and we look forward to discussing this further with members over the coming months. We will keep you informed as the due diligence work proceeds.

Yours sincerely,



Leah Swain
Chief Officer



Jan Thornton
Chair

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Unit A, Tower House, Askham Fields Lane

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