

# Rural Strategy 2004 Fact Sheet:

## Rural Development Service

### What will be the long-term future for the Rural Development Service?

- The environmental functions carried out by the Rural Development Service will transfer to the Integrated Agency. In the main, these constitute the delivery of the agri-environment schemes of the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP).
- These environmental advisory and grant-giving functions are here for the long term. In the negotiations for the new ERDP, Defra will seek greater flexibility to be applied to the use of funds transferred from CAP subsidy payments (Pillar 1) to rural development and agri-environmental programmes (Pillar 2), building on the flexibility on use of receipts of the EU modulation system achieved in the 2003 negotiations.
- The Rural Development Service will in this way bring powerful levers to the Integrated Agency.
- The Integrated Agency will have structures at national, regional and local team level. Staff from the parent organisations will over time be co-located, to deliver operational benefits and achieve efficiencies through estates rationalisation.

### What about the socio-economic and other functions of the RDS?

- Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) will have increased responsibility for the socio-economic schemes of the ERDP, to ensure that they are used to best effect in conjunction with other funding aimed at socio-economic regeneration.
- From 2005, the RDAs will be invited to play a greater role in decisions on ERDP regional prioritisation, by setting regional targeting statements and through participation on Regional Appraisal Panels.
- From 2007, we intend that the RDAs will have control over the socio-economic elements of the new ERDP. Decisions on how and by whom the schemes will be delivered on the ground thereafter have yet to be taken.
- The Dairy Hygiene Inspectorate will not form part of the Integrated Agency; its functions will be needed, but its future organisational location will be decided as part of the work to turn the State Veterinary Service into an Executive Agency.
- Woodland functions are intended to transfer to the Forestry Commission.
- Other RDS functions such as wildlife licensing and environmental impact assessments will be addressed as part of the detailed work to design the new Integrated Agency.

### What about existing RDS change?

- RDS is already undertaking a radical change programme, in preparation for the introduction of a new IT system and new Environmental Stewardship schemes in early 2005.
- The detailed implementation of RDS change will be reviewed in the light of the Rural Strategy 2004. But the overall objectives – enhanced customer service, improved working with partners, increased efficiency and improved job quality – remain entirely valid.
- The allocation of staff to new roles, and the substantial RDS training programme, will continue.
- The new IT system – Genesis – will be used for current and future ERDP schemes.

## How and when?

The changes will be phased as follows:

2004/05: The RDS will come together in a confederation of partners with English Nature and the Countryside Agency, working jointly to achieve a common overarching vision and purpose.

The RDS will continue to deliver major improvements through the introduction of new processes and IT to support the delivery of the ERDP. To give the RDS the levers that it deserves as a distinct and important delivery organisation, it will be moved out of Defra's policy core, and will be given greater autonomy and devolved authority. It will, for example, have a strategic board chaired by a non-Executive Director, who will provide non-executive change leadership alongside the Chairs of English Nature and the Countryside Agency.

2005: Decisions on the home for non-ERDP functions currently within the RDS will be taken, and where possible implemented, as part of the design work; and staff will be involved in that process.

2006: Work on existing woodlands schemes expected to transfer to Forestry Commission.

2007: The new Integrated Agency is formally vested (subject to legislative timetable), with the socio-economic schemes under the full control of the RDAs.

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