

## MID TERM EVALUATION OF RDPE

The Mid Term Evaluation of the Rural Development Programme for England is now underway, with the purpose of reviewing the Programme's progress against objectives, quality, efficiency and effectiveness, and to develop recommendations for the remainder of the period.

It's an EU requirement that the Mid Term Evaluation is carried out by an independent organisation and Defra has chosen Hyder Consulting to carry out this task. Hyder Consulting is leading the evaluation, working closely with ADAS and DS Research and other specialist advisors. Defra want this to be a high quality and useful evaluation so the scope of the project is significantly wider than that required to meet EU Regulations alone. The Mid Term Evaluation report itself will be submitted to Defra in December 2010. Three further reports will follow by summer 2011, looking at future monitoring and evaluation arrangements, and offering further insights to the MTE evidence. The evaluation will provide a valuable opportunity for those responsible for delivery, funding beneficiaries and stakeholders to have their say about the RDPE, and how to maximise its achievements towards and post 2013.

The Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be applied<sup>1</sup>, and evidence underpinning the evaluation includes:

- **Baseline data:** wider trends in indicators;
- **Programme monitoring data:** scheme inputs (spend) and outputs (no. of beneficiaries, area under management, jobs);
- **Secondary data:** published research and evaluations plus ongoing studies e.g. Ekosgen Economic Impact of Leader study<sup>2</sup>;
- **Primary data:** collection of new (and additional) evidence as part of the evaluation using surveys (beneficiaries as well as those who are potentially eligible to benefit from the Programme but have not to date received RDPE funding), consultation (scheme managers and stakeholders) and case studies. This requires a review of the logic chain and available evidence to identify gaps and dependencies.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/commeval.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.northernruralnetwork.co.uk/uploads/articles/files/Baker%20Leader%20Defra.pdf>

## **What are the next steps?**

*Survey work:* we are finalising the methodology for telephone surveys of beneficiaries of Axes 1 and 3 funds, and forestry Axis 2 beneficiaries. We will also survey non-beneficiaries. Each interview will be conducted by specialist researchers, will last less than 30 minutes, and be conducted during August and early September 2010. Further telephone surveys of ES beneficiaries will be conducted in January 2011. We are working closely with Defra, Natural England, the RDAs and the Forestry Commission to develop the sample, and minimise burden upon participants.

*Interviews:* will be conducted with policy leads, delivery partners and stakeholders. Interviews will be with a lead evaluator, will last about one hour, and be arranged between now and 21 July.

*Profiles:* overviews of activity and delivery in each region will be completed, involving consultation with the RDPE leads in each RDA. These will be carried out in the second half of July and early August.

*Case studies:* 3 regions will be identified for more detailed case studies, which will also examine 3 Leader areas. These case studies are planned for the second half of August. Case studies provide a unique opportunity to gain qualitative evidence, and understand the behaviours and attitudes underpinning the data. We are currently finalising the criteria for selection of case studies with the Steering Group, and will advise participants shortly.

## **How will I be kept informed?**

Regular evaluation bulletins will be issued across the RDPE stakeholders and forums, including through the Steering Group, the Programme Monitoring Committee and the RDPE Network.

## **Contact points**

The contract is managed by John Allsopp, on the RDPE team at Defra, [john.allsopp@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:john.allsopp@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Hyder's Project Manager is Sarah Milne, [sarah.milne@hyderconsulting.com](mailto:sarah.milne@hyderconsulting.com)

The evaluators report to the Steering Group, which has membership from across Defra and delivery agencies, on a monthly basis.