



**CRC 11/07**

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## **Rural Advocate visits flood-devastated farms in Yorkshire**

This week Dr. Stuart Burgess Chairman of the Commission for Rural Communities and the Government's Rural Advocate visited farm businesses in Yorkshire which had been severely affected by flooding in June.

Speaking after his visit Dr. Burgess said: "I have visited Yorkshire to talk to local farm businesses about how they are coping with the aftermath of the severe flooding. First and foremost I want to pay tribute to the way people are coping so heroically with the effects of these devastating floods and I am especially grateful to them for taking time out to talk to me.

"It is clear that the effect of the floods – on individuals, farmers, rural businesses, the local economy, voluntary and community groups – will be felt for many months, even years ahead and extends far beyond the physical damage to homes and property. The most pressing issues I would highlight straightaway include:

- severe financial hardship, both through loss of income and the additional costs involved in repairing property and replacing livestock lost in the floods.
- the knock-on effect for farmers who now face increased costs of production because of lost grazing land and winter feed crops. The full effects of this are unlikely to be seen until the winter.
- the impact on people in small and isolated rural communities where there is no alternative accommodation and who face being away from friends and family for what could be considerable periods of time.
- an increase in the number of visits to GPs because of rising levels of stress and associated illnesses.
- the impact on local tourism with visitors having to be turned away, and income-earning fetes, festivals and shows cancelled.

Dr. Burgess added: "The Government's commitment to provide financial support and assistance to aid the recovery of areas affected by the flooding is welcome but in putting together recovery packages full account needs to be taken of specific medium and long-term impacts on rural communities.

"As part of the visit it has also been extremely valuable for me to be able to meet with many of the key organisations directly involved both with representing the interests of these flood-hit rural communities and coming forward with tangible help and financial assistance that is so vital towards recovery. They are all doing sterling and essential work on behalf of all the people and communities they represent.

MORE...

Dr. Burgess concluded: "As a matter of urgency I shall be recommending to Government what I believe now needs to be done, making clear the achievable and practical measures that need to be put in place".

ENDS

For further information contact Chris Wynne-Davies on 07900 608030

Notes to editors:

1. Dr Burgess' itinerary for the visit to Yorkshire was as follows:

- Visit to arable farm at Brandesburton near Driffield.
- Visit to livestock farm at Melbourne near York.
- Working dinner involving representatives of the Commission for Rural Communities, ARC-Addington Fund, National Farmers' Union, Tenant Farmers' Association, Yorkshire Rural Community Council, Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute and a representative of the Archbishop of York.

2. Pictures from the visit are available on request. When published, the following wording is to be included – "Photography © Commission for Rural Communities/Charlie Hedley 2007".

3. The Commission for Rural Communities is an independent government body established in October 2006. Our role is to provide well-informed, independent advice to government and ensure that policies reflect the real needs of people living and working in rural England, with a particular focus on tackling disadvantage and economic under-performance.

We have three key functions:

- Rural advocate: the voice for rural people, businesses and communities;
- Expert adviser: giving evidence-based, objective advice to government and others; and
- Independent watchdog: monitoring and reporting on the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally.

Further information about the Commission for Rural Communities and its work can be found at [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk)