

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

28 March 2006

HAY MEADOWS PROJECT**Purpose of report**

To seek Authority approval for a Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grant of £30,000, which was originally approved for the 'Dales Meadow Heritage' Initiative, to be transferred to a revised hay meadow restoration project – now called 'Hay Time'.

Strategic Planning Framework

The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

- ***National Park Management Plan***

NC5 Implement 'Nature in the Dales' by restoring natural areas and habitats

NC13 Demonstrate that conservation can be a powerful part of a viable economy

EE1 Work to support viable family farming enterprises which conserve environmental quality and character

- ***Best Value Performance Plan***

Work with the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust to submit a bid for funding for a Dales-wide project to restore degraded hay meadows.

Background

In July 2004, the Authority approved a grant of £30,000 from the Sustainable Development Fund to the 'Dales Meadow Heritage' initiative. The project came to the Authority for approval because the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust initiative was to act as 'project manager' and could not, therefore, determine the application themselves.

The emphasis of the original project, worth £85,000 in total, was on maximising the economic benefits from hay meadows – through the development of e.g. tourism initiatives and production of wildflower seed, alongside some restoration work. However, the project ran into the sand because of difficulties in securing the necessary matched funding. At the same time, the Authority and the Trust became aware of a number of new sources of funding for biodiversity work (notably from the Tubney Charitable Trust). As a result, the Trust (with support from the Authority) developed a number of major funding bids, focused on the Authority's priorities – hay meadows and woodlands – all of which have been successful.

'Hay Time' Meadows Project

Details of the revised four-year project, now worth over £500,000, are set out in the attached Project Action Plan (see **Annex**). Overall, the project is expected to restore over 400ha of hay meadows. The project will purchase seed harvesting/sowing machinery, and use local contractors to harvest seed from high quality meadows for use in restoring degraded meadows elsewhere. Major funding for the project is coming from the Tubney Charitable Trust, English Nature's 'Countdown 2010' fund, and Defra's Rural Enterprise Scheme. Two project officers will be employed (one in the Dales and one in the North Pennines AoNB) to provide management advice and co-ordinate the project. The project officers will also develop access, education and community initiatives to promote understanding and enjoyment of what is one of the Park's special qualities.

The Trust is still seeking £30,000 of funding from the Sustainable Development Fund for the first two years of the project (i.e. £15,000 in 2006/07 and £15,000 in 2007/08). Any further contribution from the SDF in years 3 and 4 would be subject to future approval by the Authority.

Conclusions

Flower-rich hay meadows are one of the special qualities of the Dales, and a national priority biodiversity habitat. The 'Hay Time' project will not only deliver the meadow restoration targets set in the local, regional and national Biodiversity Action Plans but also provide a valuable source of additional income to local farmers and contractors, which should continue beyond the life of the project.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members approve the transfer of the £30,000 Sustainable Development Fund grant originally allocated to the 'Dales Meadow Heritage' Project to the 'Hay Time' Meadows Project.

Gary Smith
Head of Conservation and Policy

21 March 2006

PROJECT ACTION PLAN

Sustainable Development Fund



SECTION 1. PROJECT DETAILS

Date submitted to YDNPA for approval:		Final:	Date approved:		Final:	
Ref.:	Project Name:	Project Applicant:			Type of Applicant:	
10066	Hay Time Meadows Project	Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust			Charity	
Parish	Various		Parish ref.	Various		
Project Location:		Grid ref.:	Landowners Consent Form			
Yorkshire Dales (and North Pennines AONB)		Needed?	No	Received?	N/a	

Project description:

A £30k SDF grant offer was approved in July 2004 towards the cost of a Project Manager to instigate the Meadow Mania action plan and project ideas, including implementation of a Meadow Month, community activities, Dales Wildflower Emblems as marketing tools, and linking with a partner tourism-based RES project. However, lack of progress coupled with the emergence of new nature conservation funding from The Tubney Charitable Trust (and latterly Countdown 2010) and the introduction of Environmental Stewardship has led to a re-evaluation of the project's priorities. The project – now called Hay Time – is much more focused on practical conservation and the need to work with land managers to conserve, enhance and restore hay meadows. Also, following YDMT's completion in April 2005 of a hay meadow project scoping study for the North Pennines AONB, the project's geographic coverage has now been extended to include that protected area, as the two areas contain a large proportion of the UK's scarce upland hay meadow resource and the Pennine Dales ESA straddles both areas.

Hay Time is a three and a half year project starting in May 2006 aiming to conserve existing species-rich hay meadows and restore around 400ha of meadows in the YDNP and the North Pennines AONB. The project will significantly contribute to and exceed targets in the regional and UK BAPs.

YDMT led on project development. Together with the YDNPA and the North Pennines AONB Partnership, we have successfully secured funding from Tubney, Countdown 2010 and Defra RES. Contributions from the other partners have also been committed. In the course of developing the budget it had seemed likely that we would request an additional £20k from SDF for 2006-08. This is not now the case (although we may seek further SDF support for the remaining 18 months of the project if the fund continues, and if other funding is not secured).

YDMT's role is to assist in overall project management, administer joint funding, and to deliver, in partnership with YDNPA, the Yorkshire Dales part of the project. Steering groups with representatives from partner organisations and the farming community will be set up in both areas. The YDNP and the North Pennines AONB will each have a dedicated Project Officer (the YDNP Project Officer will be employed by YDMT) who will provide meadow management advice and support, and co-ordinate a seed harvesting and sowing service to provide local origin seed taken from good quality donor sites (meadows and roadside verges) for use in nearby meadow restoration schemes. This will involve identifying and monitoring seed and green hay donor and receptor sites, and co-ordinating local contractors to harvest, dry, store and sow the seed. Seed harvesting will follow established codes of practice developed to prevent the quality of donor sites being compromised. For each area, specialist seed harvesting and sowing machinery will be purchased by YDMT using RES funding secured from regional Defra offices, matched with Tubney funding. A small number of local contractors will be enlisted to operate the machinery. Agri-environment schemes will provide the funding for meadow restoration work, including seed purchase from donor sites and hire of contractors to undertake seed harvesting and sowing.

The project will provide direct economic benefits to the farmers who maintain good quality donor meadows, as seed harvested from their meadows will be paid for (rates need to be determined but could be around £160/ha). Farmers with maintained or restored high quality meadows will be eligible for higher levels of payments by upgrading to ESA Tier 2 or entering Higher Level Stewardship. Contractors undertaking the seed harvesting and sowing will benefit by diversifying their businesses, expanding their skills base, and from the payments received for providing the services. By protecting, enlarging and promoting the hay meadow resource, the economic benefits generated through tourism will be enhanced.

Species-rich meadows are the product of careful management carried out by generations of farmers and so represent a unique cultural heritage asset. To encourage the local community to value and appreciate the meadows in their dale the Project Officer will also implement or support access, education and community involvement initiatives.

The project will ensure that the skills and infrastructure necessary for meadow restoration will be available beyond the life of the project.

Hay Time is supported by a wide range of organisations in each region including EN, Defra, FWAG, Wildlife Trusts, Flora locale, and RSPB. Dr Roger Smith (a recognised expert on the effects of traditional and intensive management practices on the botanical diversity of meadows and who has set up long-running experiments at Colt Park, Ingleborough, and is also involved in the Limestone Country Project) has provided a very supportive technical assessment of the project.

The project complements hay meadow restoration projects set up by Northumberland National Park, North York Moors National Park, and Cumbria Wildlife Trust (partly covering the Lake District National Park). The restoration targets for these projects are however relatively modest compared to the ambitious but achievable Hay Time targets.

Approved Usage:

To contribute to the costs of a project officer, project management, machinery insurance and maintenance, contractor, farmer and volunteer training, botanical surveying, and promotion of the project in the YDNP

Approved Purposes:

To conserve, enhance and restore species-rich hay meadows in the Yorkshire Dales National Park

SECTION 2. WORK PROGRAMME

Planned project start date	May 2006	Planned project completion date	October 2009
Location plan received?	Yes	Specification received?	Yes
Quotations received?	Yes	Applicant VAT registered?	No

Project cost breakdown

Item cost including VAT	Estimate	Quote
Full project costs for both areas for three and a half years		
2 x Project Officers salaries and on-costs	223,848	
Recruitment, travel, training, overheads, project management	105,194	
Machinery purchase and RES bid development (funded by RES and Tubney)	83,992	
Machinery maintenance and insurance	22,102	
Contractor training and demonstration events for farmers	17,536	
Volunteer training, botanical surveying and advisory materials	45,402	
Advertising and promotion	14,852	
TOTAL PROJECT COST	£512,926	

SECTION 3. GRANT DETAILS

Funding package		%	£
Tubney Trust (confirmed)		33.8	174,581
Countdown 2010 (confirmed)		15.5	80,000
Defra RES (confirmed)		13.0	67,194
Natural England (to be arranged)		9.7	50,000
YDNPA (confirmed or to be arranged, including further YDMT fundraising)		12.1	59,381
North Pennines AONB (some confirmed, plus further fundraising)		10.1	51,770
YDNPA SDF (previously committed to Dales Meadow Heritage Initiative)		5.8	30,000
SDF GRANT OFFER REQUIRED	£30,000 (£15,000/year)	TOTALS	100
			£512,926

Maintenance requirement			
X	No additional maintenance requirement above that contained in the standard agreement		
SECTION 4. PROJECT EVALUATION			
Selection Criteria Comments			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project meets all of the essential selection criteria • The project will provide a new and innovative service to land managers which will assist in sustainable land management • It will encourage greater co-operation between land managers, and collaboration and closer working arrangements between partner agencies • It will make a significant contribution to local and UK BAP targets • It provides economic benefits to participating land managers and contractors, and supports wildlife-based tourism • It will involve residents and visitors in activities that protect and celebrate the biodiversity and cultural heritage value of hay meadows • The project levers in substantial external funding 			
Project Assessment Comments			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project scores highly and fits very well into the fund's criteria • It reinvigorates the stalled Dales Meadow Heritage Initiative • It provides the skills and infrastructure to meet its ambitious restoration targets • The benefits of the project will carry on beyond the life of the project • It is supported by a wide range of organisations including YDNPA, EN, Defra and Flora locale 			
Project Assessment Score	Score 1-10		Score 1-10
Further First National Park Purpose	9	Environmental Sustainability	8
Further Second National Park Purpose	7	Social Sustainability	7
Priorities	7 <i>(score out of 11)</i>	Economic Sustainability	8
SUB-TOTAL: ESSENTIAL AND PRIORITY CRITERIAL SCORE	23 /31	SUB-TOTAL: SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA	23 /30
TOTAL SCORE	46/ 61		
Key Sustainability Indicators			
Flora & Fauna	The project will enhance the nature conservation value of restored meadows		
Consumption Reduced	Restored meadows will be returned to traditional management which excludes the use of inorganic fertilisers		
Valued Structures	Traditional barns may be used or brought back into use to store dried seed and hay, and drystone walls will be maintained to enable proper meadow management		

Designations and Permissions					
	Needed ?	Rec'd ?		Needed ?	Rec'd ?
Planning Permission	No		Forestry Commission Consent	No	
Listed Building Consent or Tree Preservation Order	No		Construction Design Management Regulations	No	
Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent	No		Building Regulations	No	
English Nature Consent (is the site a SSSI, NNR or SAC?)	Possibly		Is the land in an ESA or FCS agreement?	Possibly	
Conservation Area Consent	No		Secretary of State Consent	No	
Environment Agency Consent	No		Other		
Public Relations Strategy					
Press Release As part of general YDMT/YDNPA press release strategy. BBC Countryfile is likely to feature the project in June 06.			Plaque Funders will be acknowledged on printed material, interpretation panels etc		
Interpretation The project will implement or support a range of activities that raise awareness and understanding of hay meadows			Event The project will implement or support a range of activities that celebrate hay meadows		
GRANT CONDITIONS					
Grant Offer – conditions.					
1.	SDF funding should contribute only to costs associated with implementing the project in the YDNP				