

Date: 30 March 2021

Report: FUTURE SUPPORT FOR FARMING

Purpose of the report

1. To inform Members about the ongoing work to develop:
 - a. the national 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' programme; and,
 - b. a number of other local initiatives to help farmers in the Yorkshire Dales National Park to make the transition away from EU-based rules and support systems.

Recommendation

2. That Members note and comment on the proposed national 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' programme, and the other local initiatives that the Authority will be delivering in 2021/22 to support farming in the National Park.

Strategic Planning Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:
 - **Corporate Plan 2020/21**
Objective 1: During Brexit transition, support farmers and landowners to deliver a range of public benefits through national agri-environment scheme agreements and other similar initiatives, and monitor take-up.

Background

4. In November 2020, the Government published 'The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024'. The Plan set out the range of measures that the Government intends to introduce in order to facilitate the move away from EU rules and support systems. The most significant element is the phasing out of Direct (area-based) Payments and the introduction of a new system that rewards farmers and land managers while delivering additional public goods that improve the environment ('public money for public goods').
5. The Plan includes measures to tackle a range of issues, which are summarised in the Defra publication, '[Farming is Changing](#)'. Amongst the proposals was a commitment to new support for "Farmers in Protected Landscapes". In particular:

From 2021, we will provide funding through the Protected Landscapes bodies to support farmers, particularly upland farmers (75% of whom live and work in Protected

Landscapes). The funding will be for farmers and other land managers to make improvements to the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access on their land. It will fund: a) Farm-level projects to diversify incomes and prepare for Environmental Land Management; and b) Wider infrastructure and projects on farmland, to support farmers and rural economies.

The national outline for the programme

6. In January Defra officials began discussions in strictest confidence with representatives of National Park Authorities and AONBs on how such a scheme would work, and the level of funding that would be provided. We had hoped to be in a position to be able to provide details of the proposed roll-out of the funding in this report but they are still subject to confirmation from Defra. If details do emerge in time, a verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

Other support for farming and land management

7. Members will be well aware that this Authority has been at the forefront of national thinking on future support for farming in the uplands. Our approach has been based on taking a strongly collaborative approach with farmers and landowners. That means focusing on the outcomes that will be achieved (rather than prescribing *how* to do things) and using the skills and knowledge of the farmers themselves to help deliver the desired results.
8. Projects currently underway to demonstrate and promote this approach include:
 - a. **The ‘[Payment By Results](#)’ national pilot project in Wensleydale**
Working with Natural England and farmers on 18 farms (funded by DEFRA) to carry out practical trials of a new approach to agri-environment support where payments are linked to the environmental results achieved rather than detailed management prescriptions. The trial is focused on hay meadows and habitat for wading birds like Curlew, and has demonstrated positive results in terms of both the environmental outcomes and the engagement of the farmers. The project has just been extended for a further 12 months.
 - b. **Tees-Swale: Naturally Connected**
A 5-year, £8.5m farming/nature recovery programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and a range of other local partners, and led by the North Pennines AONB. The programme builds on the lessons from the PBR pilot, working with clusters of farmers to restore/create around 4,000 ha of habitat (hay meadow; grassland; woodland; peatland and wetlands) on sites that maximise other public benefits (like natural flood management, carbon storage, water quality etc). The programme also includes a range of training and other activities to support future farm businesses.
 - c. **Catchment Sensitive Farming**
On behalf of Natural England, we have been leading delivery of ‘Catchment Sensitive Farming’ partnership projects in the National Park. CSF provides advice and incentives to farmers to use resources more efficiently and reduce

diffuse pollution. Incentives include free management plans for nutrient, soil, muck and slurry testing; and free infrastructure plans. We also help farmers to apply for Capital Grants for works like roofing yards, sheep handling areas & middens; extending concreted yard areas; relocating sheep dips and putting in new farm tracks. Over the last 10 years we have worked with 100s of farmers, helping them to access around £3 million of grants for new infrastructure that reduces the pollution reaching Dales rivers.

d. [‘Our Common Cause’](#)

The Authority has been supporting the development of this national project led by the Foundation for Common Land, in 4 protected landscapes Dartmoor, Shropshire Hills, Lake District & Yorkshire Dales. The project will run for 3.5 years, and has a budget of £3.1 million, including £1.9 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It aims to secure and support collaborative management of Common Land in a way that enhances its special environmental and ecological benefits. Three Commons in the National Park are involved in the project, and the local project officer – based with the Authority – will start work in April.

e. *Farm carbon audits*

With funding from the North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Yorkshire Water, we are working with [Farm Carbon Toolkit](#) and Nidderdale AONB to carry out ‘carbon audits’ for 10 farms. The farmers will then be helped to develop action plans for reducing emissions, and improving the viability of the farm business. Actions identified for farms in the National Park will be eligible for funding through the Authority’s Sustainable Development Fund.

9. Most recently, the Authority has been in detailed discussion with Defra about a further significant initiative. At the request of the local farmers/landowners the Authority has been developing a project in Raydale. The aim of the project is to look at how to optimize collaboration between farmers in the development of a landscape-scale recovery plan – part of the forthcoming national Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM). The proposal to Defra for a 1-year ELM Test has just been endorsed by Defra’s Project Board and should receive formal approval in the next few weeks. It is hoped that this can be developed into a full-scale practical Defra trial in 2022.

Conclusion

10. Members have repeatedly made clear the importance they attach to the Authority’s role in supporting the future of farming in this National Park. As a result, the Authority has developed a highly-knowledgeable and skilled team of staff, who in turn have helped to develop and deliver a range of local and national-level projects. This support will never be more important than in the next few years as the National Park’s farmers wrestle with the transition away from EU rules and funding support, and the need to respond to the climate and biodiversity crises.

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24 March 2021