

The advocacy project for agri-environment activities in protected landscapes: Collecting evidence

Your contact details

Which AONB/NPA does this report cover?	Yorkshire Dales
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Section 1: Initial project plans

Please outline your project plans and aims at the start of the project.

Aim:

These funds should be used to engage with farmers to:

1. raise awareness of ELM, and
2. encourage applications for Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CS) as a way of supporting farm incomes.

How to achieve this goal:

Prepare and deliver a series of online webinars covering the key messages and outcomes of the Agricultural Transition Plan with specific focus on CS and ELM.

Webinars to be delivered on Zoom, using Eventbrite to register attendees. Webinars limited to 15 attendees per event to enable in depth discussion. Provide range of times for webinars to allow the most farmers to sign up.

First phase of 1 hour long webinars to focus on CS changes and early news on ELM. Second phase webinars to focus on BPS changes, new schemes on offer and SFI. Second phase dependent on interest from farmers.

Offer one to one meetings with hard to reach farmers and non digital farmers.

Plan to deliver one to many face to face meetings if Covid restrictions are lifted.

Advertise through local press, local land agents, auction marts, Farmer Network, farm team newsletter and our website.

Aim to increase web page traffic by farmers by placing Eventbrite link on it and have key ATP points on the page together with Farming in Protected Landscape Scheme details.



Protected
Landscapes Advocac

Section 2: The work you've carried out

Reporting progress against your plans

The project team organised and delivered 13 webinars – 1 for advisers and agents, 10 for farmers and land managers and 2 for the YDNPA ranger team and land management section. Each webinar was held on Zoom, was an hour long with presentations covering the changes to CS, CSF, BPS and introducing the future agri-environment schemes proposed to be launched in 2024. Webinars either took part during the middle of the day or in the evening. We took the opportunity to introduce what we knew about the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme. Presentations were followed by discussion with the audience and we undertook 2 opinion polls – one on what would restrict the audience from applying to the future agri-environment schemes, and the second on what the audience would like the FiPL scheme to fund. The team used Eventbrite to organise bookings allowing us to restrict the numbers per event to 15 attendees. We utilised the farming web pages of the National Park Authority website to advertise the events as well as issuing press releases, sending direct emails and newsletters to our farmer contact list and utilising the customer base of the land agents and local livestock auction mart.

The work was organised between 4 staff members with one overseeing Eventbrite bookings and sending out invitations and the others developing the webinar, advertising the events and delivering the webinars. A work plan was developed together with a timetable for key delivery dates.

We hoped to undertake one to one calls with farmers unable to attend online meetings, however this wasn't actioned within the time frame given.

Contacting farmers and land managers

In total the webinars were attended by 35 adviser/agents, 160 farmers/land managers and 10 rangers.

The invites were sent out to 150 farmers/land managers on our database, the events were advertised to a much wider farmer audience through the CSF newsletters which was sent out to over 250 farmers. A press release went into 3 local newspapers covering the whole of the National Park area. We were asked by 4 farmer groups to present at their quarterly meetings. The farming pages on the Yorkshire Dales National Park website were amended to include the project and link to Eventbrite. <https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/living-and-working/farming/events-cs-and-elms-update-meeting/>



You are invited to a 1 hour presentation and discussion session provided by the YDNPA Farm Conservation Team

on

Countryside Stewardship
Environmental Land Management Scheme &
Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme
Via Zoom

Dates: Fri 12 Feb 12:00 noon
Mon 15 Feb 1:00pm
Wed 17 Feb 1:00pm
Wed 17 Feb 7:30pm
Fri 19 Feb 1:00pm
Fri 19 Feb 7.30pm
Mon 22 Feb 12:00 noon

For joining details, visit
www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/farming

 YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

 ELM advocacy
project news release

Did you have farm cluster(s) before the project started? If so, how many farms did the cluster(s) include?

Four farmer groups operate within the National Park boundary – Ribblesdale, Swaledale, Westmorland Dales and the newly formed Orton Fells Cluster Group. The Ribblesdale group includes land outside of the National Park as well as within, the core being around the Long Preston Deeps SSSI and the northern edge of the Forest of Bowland AONB. The total number of farmers within the group is 26, covering 4255.8 ha of land of which 1920.61 ha is within the YDNP and 134.02 ha within the Forest of Bowland AONB. This group was set up to discuss in more depth the role of natural flood management. The group is facilitated by the Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust and Ribble Rivers Trust. The Swaledale group is made up of 18 farmers covering 4000ha of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale. Like the Ribblesdale group, it is set up to focus on natural flood management. The group is facilitated by the Farmer Network. The Orton fells farmer cluster group is farmer run and has been in operation since the end of 2020. They are interested in the natural capital value of their farms and will be looking into developing this as a group. The group consists of xx farmers covering xx ha of Orton and Howgills area of the National Park. The Westmorland Dales farmer group is run by the Farmer Network and forms part of the Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership. The group has in excess of 20 farmers covering the northern Howgills and north western edge of the NP.

All four groups have a similar range of farming types – a mix of sheep and beef, plus dairy. Swaledale group is wholly hill farming within the SDA, whereas the Ribblesdale, Westmorland and

Orton groups have some farms either outside the LFA or within DA categorised land as well as SDA farms.

What are the common questions and concerns farmers/land managers have about agricultural transition and agri-environment schemes? This may include questions about ELM, the Sustainable Farming Incentive, the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, Farming in Protected Landscapes, the ELM pilot, reductions in basic payments etc.

SFI, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Schemes:

Will commons be included within the Landscape Recovery scheme?

Farmers need to know the payment rates for each scheme as early as possible so that they can start planning.

What will the agreed exit points be from CS agreements into the new schemes from 2024– will it be annually, monthly or at a stated time within the CS agreement period?

The proposed future schemes look complicated and therefore will there be advisers available to help with applications and guidance through the process?

Worries over availability of ongoing maintenance payments for large scale landscape changes like tree planting. Will this continue after trees have been planted and the farming business has been significantly changed to allow for tree planting at scale?

Moving all schemes onto digital online platforms – farmers worried as broadband is poor, some may miss out due to this and will be at a significant disadvantage to other more connected farm holdings.

Will the new scheme be fairer to small, medium and large farmers because in the current schemes the smaller farmers have been disadvantaged when its based on areas (that's the payments and the way things have been scored in the past), it doesn't help the smaller farmer as it should do and CS has been a barrier for smaller farms, it needs to work on all scales.

Worried that Defra's forecast money is going to consultancy fees rather than farmers – do they realise not all farmers have the opportunity to diversify?

Defra's ambition of 70% uptake for ELM is v ambitious, the simpler the scheme the higher the uptake. There is a risk that agents are going to have to be paid for helping apply to the schemes. If the right carrot is there farmers will follow but if it sets off badly then it will fail.

Is the national park already identifying landscape recovery areas then approaching the local farmers rather it coming from an individual farmer compromised as a tenant and farming commons managed by estates for example?

Any indication on the area (Ha)/scale that they are looking at for component 2 – local nature recovery, in terms of farmers working together.

Slurry storage grants:

Very welcome addition to the range of grants that are available. 60% grant contribution (or more) would be very welcome)

With the slurry systems – there never seems to be any funding for those on muck systems – muck middens – can this be funded?

CS

Can the wood pasture or educational access option be added in to an existing agreement retrospectively?

CSF priority areas need an overhaul so that a greater number of farms have access to the capital grants.

Can the wildlife offer run alongside an existing agreement?

Is there any idea of payment rates in ELM vs HLS vs CT

Reassured that there will be an easy transition across from CS to ELM

Farming in Protected Landscapes:

Measures to capture carbon or reduce carbon use should be included in FiPL, including audits and funding for anaerobic digesters.

What rate will the funding be – at least 50%?

General support for the administration of the scheme by the YDNPA

The green jobs bit – could there be apprenticeships to train people – groups of farmers could get together to help guide them?

Disappointed FiPL is appears to be just capital grants – would like to see an area based payment so it is more equally shared out.

National Park planning department should be involved in FiPL to ensure there are no blockages for development work.

Concerns about encouraging even more visitors to the Yorkshire Dales when some areas are at breaking point already.

Worries over eligibility criteria for farmers if they are already in national agri-environment schemes.

Have NP put ideas forward for walls and barns? That's what we should push for. We have miles of walls and we keep them up as best we can but it costs a fortune and this is the public goods in the Dales that visitors want to see – walls and barns.

Worried that its focussed on larger farms – or that those farms will be more eligible than smaller ones for FiPL

Education of public key – about litter, dog mess, dog control and general understanding of the countryside and how it works

Business planning advise is welcome

Section 3: What are your key findings?

Summarising your project learnings

We were able to inform 160 farm businesses of the changes to CS and update them on the future agri-environment schemes and get feedback on FiPL. We engaged with advisers and agents – which was a new opportunity and we were able to feedback comments to other parts of the Authority on this event.

The advocacy project has not altered how we work with farmers and land managers, but it has provided us with an opportunity to try something different in the form of online events. This in turn has hopefully increased traffic to the farm teams web pages where our projects and key work areas are described.

The project has increased our contact with other protected landscapes, particularly other AONBs, which goes beyond the work we undertake as part of the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership.

The webinars were well attended and feedback has been very positive.

There are farm holdings and estates within the Yorkshire Dales who are farming with nature or intending to farm with nature. The majority of our catchment head farms are considered to be high nature value farms where the majority of the holding is benefiting nature as well as producing food. There are a number of estates where significant areas of blanket bog have been restored to conserve the peat, reduce flood risk, increase climate impact resilience and build carbon stock. A number of land managers are considering landscape scale approaches to nature recovery, specifically those within the Raydale catchment. This is now the subject of a Defra test project.

Results from the polls that we undertook at each meeting are below:

What would prevent you from applying for the future environmental land management schemes? (multiple choice allowed)	% of responses
Poor payment rates	45
Bad experience of previous schemes	15
Retiring	3
Can't see how it would fit on the farm	18
Won't have enough land	8
I would rather join in after a few years	10
Tenancy agreement prevents me	2
The scheme is not aspirational enough	12
I don't want to be tied to a government scheme	10
None of the above	5

What should the FiPL scheme grant aid? (multiple choice answers allowed)	% responses
Capital grants for machinery that assists environmental management / efficiency on the farm	63
Habitat restoration	58
Barn maintenance	47
Farm business appraisal/action plan	43
Farm carbon audits	41
Training - eg marketing, diversification, tourism business development	29

Knowledge sharing/specialist support	29
Funding to bring farmer groups together and help prepare for Component 2	28
Apprenticeship scheme	26
Cost benefit analysis of a new enterprise	21

Some quotes from the meetings*:

“the farmer must be the first thing to be maintained rather than the flower: without the farmer the flowers would go.”

“Once we have made the changes from livestock to for example planting lots of trees there must be a future benefit to us and our families following us. Will there be ongoing yearly payments and is this being considered?”

“In all of the literature about the upcoming schemes there doesn’t seem to be much available for the next generation, there’s nothing to encourage young people to get into farming, in our area there is an aging population and nobody is coming on to take over.”

“A big thank you to Hannah, Bryony and Emily for putting together an informative and clearly presented introductory meeting to the forthcoming ELMS scheme and how it works with, alongside or after the CSS scheme.”

“It has provided food for thought.”

Section 4: Your wish list for the future

Looking to the future, what would you like to be able to do next to continue your work with farmers/land managers?

Continue engagement programme as more information becomes available about the new funding stream. This may continue to be using an online format and with larger groups, and also sending out newsletters/press releases. Going forward possible face to face meetings.

What are your concerns/needs?

Due to Covid 19 restrictions we were only able to engage via an online setting and will not have reached the number of farmers that we have traditionally engaged with at a face-to-face meeting. Resources – staff time and associated costs with organising meetings/newsletters etc
As more things are brought online some farmers may get left behind due to lack of technology experience/knowledge/poor broadband
We still do not have much information/many answers especially regarding information about payment levels

Section 5: Collaborative working

The Glover report recommended that AONBs and NPAs should work together more closely. A key output of this project is that for the first time this is happening across England in a meaningful way. It's important that we report on this.

Which other protected landscapes have you worked with?

A Cumbria Protected Landscapes network has been set up to share good practice and provide support to protected landscapes in this area on the advocacy project and potentially beyond the life of the project. The network has been meeting every two weeks since February. The network includes the Lake District NPA, Yorkshire Dales NPA, Arnside and Silverdale AONB, North Pennines AONB and Solway Coast AONB.

What did you do?

Questions to consider:

- Did you cover the areas between protected landscapes as well?
- Did you make the links with other strands of work such as nature's recovery/ Nature Recovery Plans?

We met via Zoom every 2 weeks through Jan, February and March to discuss our various approaches to the Advocacy project. Shared ideas, presentations, techniques, skills and agreed a shared paragraph on how we are working together – which would form part of the press releases each PL sent out.

Do you intend to work with other protected landscapes in the future?

Yes

What do you plan to do?

Not completely agreed just yet but it would make sense to share common approaches to managing FiPL as well as future events on future schemes.