

# **Uplands Alliance**

**A network for England's Uplands**

## **Creating a Brighter Future Project**

**Meeting with  
North York Moors Hill Farmers  
on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

### **Meeting Notes**

#### **1 Welcome & Introduction**

- 1.1 An attendance list is at the end of these notes.
- 1.2 Briony Fox, Director of Conservation at the North York Moors National Park Authority, opened the meeting.
- 1.3 This was a meeting for the hill farmers but everyone was invited to engage in the discussion about the issues.

#### **2 The Creating a Brighter Future Project**

- 2.1 The objectives and outcomes of the first CABF meeting, held in London on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019, were summarised:
  - 1.1.1 To enable hill farmers to contribute to the development of Defra's future farming policy and assess the likely impacts of emerging policy on upland farming, including consideration of the livestock production trade and the delivery of public benefits.
  - 1.1.2 To identify how hill farmers can best contribute to the development of ELMS.
  - 1.1.3 To assist the UA in reaching out to support hill farmers through this period of transition.
- 2.2 It was noted that the discussion had focussed on eight issues:
  - 2.2.1 Succession
  - 2.2.2 Financial pressures
  - 2.2.3 Landlord – Tenant
  - 2.2.4 Trends in the Tenanted Farm Sector
  - 2.2.5 BPS
  - 2.2.6 Other Schemes
  - 2.2.7 The Agricultural Bill
  - 2.2.8 Environmental Land Management Scheme
- 2.3 During the meeting, the idea had been developed to invite the hill farmers, who attended the meeting, to hold follow up meetings in their local area.
- 2.4 During the meeting, the idea had been developed to invite the hill farmers, who attended the meeting, to hold follow-up meetings in their local area. This was one of nine meetings that are being held throughout the English uplands in July.

- 2.5 Short notes will be taken from each meeting and circulated to those who attended.
- 2.6 All the notes will be collated into one report, which will be passed to Defra. Copies of this report will be circulated to everyone who attended the meeting and it will be made available through the Uplands Alliance network.

### 3 Hill Farmer Topics - best hopes, worst fears,

<b>Best Hope</b>	<b>Worst Fear</b>
Make the right decisions now so that new support systems will result in less stress.	Young farmers drawn away by salaries and greater security elsewhere.
Hill farming will generate more income to allow more investment in the farm.	Too much reliance on tenant farmers providing all the investment.
Enough support for continuation of grazing so that stock numbers are maintained.	The numbers in the national sheep herd continue to reduce – very difficult to reverse the process.
Housing becomes available to encourage young people to stay in rural areas.	Loss of farming income results in a loss of people.
Hill farming output retains its emphasis on quality to ensure market remains.	Stress from the bureaucracy associated with farming support continues.
The approach to the imposition of penalties changes – cooperation with / advice to farmers is likely to provide better value.	The fear of penalties does not get removed in the new schemes.
Importance of the uplands as the start of livestock systems is recognised.	Respect for what farmers do is not regained.
Uncertainty surrounding Brexit removed to allow business planning to take place.	The complication of schemes is not reduced so that the agents are seen to be getting paid more than the farmers.
New support systems are made simpler so that all money ends up in the farm business.	Current support arrangements come to an end (resulting in a 25% drop in income) but rents are not reduced.
More certainty is provided about the future of sales and tariffs allowing farm businesses to plan.	The services available in the local community (banks, shops etc) decline - communities become more isolated.
Income to farms increases and as a result farms spend more in the local community and through local suppliers.	The link between the farmer and the general public is broken.
	Uncertainty about the interpretation of regulations during inspection of farms remains.

### 4 Environmental Land Management (ELM) Scheme

- 4.1 James Le Page is the Head of Advice, Accreditation and Guidance in the Environmental Land Management team at Defra; he provided an update about the development of the scheme.

- 4.2 Early agri-environment schemes (e.g. the ESA scheme) had been relatively simple. Schemes became more complicated with the introduction of cross-compliance.
- 4.3 As the ELM scheme is still under development, some of the details were provided in confidence and are not included in these notes.
- 4.4 The fundamental principle of ELM is to provide public money for public goods, and Defra is seeking to co-design it with the farming community.
- 4.5 The objectives for ELM include:
  - 4.5.1 Transforming the role that agriculture and other land management activities play in delivering environmental goods.
  - 4.5.2 Generating public goods from public money and being a major component of the delivery of the 25yr Environmental Plan.
    - Food production is not a public good, as it is rewarded by the market.
- 4.6 It is proposed that ELM will pay for the provision of six public goods:
  - 4.6.1 Clean and plentiful water
  - 4.6.2 Clean air
  - 4.6.3 Thriving plants and wildlife
  - 4.6.4 Reduction in and protection from environmental hazards
  - 4.6.5 Adaptation to and mitigation of climate change
  - 4.6.6 Beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment
- 4.7 To test the proposals for the new scheme, a series of pilots (Tests & Trials) will take place 2021-2024, with a view to the new arrangements being implemented from 2024. The aim will be for payments to be linked to achieving agreed results (payments by results).
- 4.8 Direct payments will be phased out and end in 2028.
- 4.9 Other funding methods are being considered, such as reverse auctions, use of net gain, payment by results, and nature recovery networks.
- 4.10 The tests and trials will feed into a National Pilot that will have the objectives of:
  - 4.10.1 Testing the scheme before it is launched to make sure it works,
  - 4.10.2 Increasing confidence that the scheme will work,
  - 4.10.3 Proving that it is able to work in different locations,
  - 4.10.4 Increasing collaboration to allow work to take place at a greater scale, and
  - 4.10.5 Providing more scope for innovation.
- 4.11 Direct production subsidies will no longer be paid but productivity support, in the form of grants or loans, may be available in the future.
- 4.12 Eligibility criteria are being reviewed. Funding may be available to anyone who can demonstrate the delivery of public goods.

## **5 Key issues for the future of Hill Farming in the North York Moors National Park**

- 5.1 Should hill farming areas be seen as ‘environmentally favoured areas’?
- 5.2 Hill farm incomes can be likened to a three-legged stool. Funding comes from: stock sales, agri-environment schemes and agri-support (BPS).
  - 5.2.1 Removing BPS will leave farms short of income.
- 5.3 In what follows, a way must be found to make hill farming viable.
- 5.4 In the future, would direct socio-economic payments by government to support people living in hill farming areas be more acceptable than being seen to be propping up farm businesses?
- 5.5 A functioning red meat sector is important to maintaining farm incomes but this may involve a move away from traditional practices and markets. A more joined up approach between different parts of the industry might offer benefits.
- 5.6 There is concern that a move towards extensive management approaches may mean that estates do not need farmers to manage their land.
- 5.7 Funding must go to farmers and not be siphoned off by landlords as ‘slipper farmers’ or by agents in administration costs.
- 5.8 The National Park plays a valuable role.
  - 5.8.1 The Park had applied to run one of the Tests & Trials being offered as part of the development of the ELM scheme.
  - 5.8.2 This might provide a platform to continue support of the CABF approach.
- 5.9 Local agri-environment support schemes had been shown to work well in the past with farmers willing to work together with the NPA.
  - 5.9.1 The Moorland Regeneration Scheme in the 1990s was quoted as an example – this had addressed bracken control, sheep ticks and louping ill.
  - 5.9.2 The local knowledge and experience possessed by farmers should be made full use of; they know the land best.
  - 5.9.3 The value of advice from someone through such schemes who understood hill farming and knew the local community was recognised. Continuity of advisors was also seen as attractive.
- 5.10 Schemes that required a low level of input and produced a low level of output were likely to lead to chaos.
- 5.11 Current schemes required too much evidence (data collection through form filling) and did not rely on trust.
  - 5.11.1 A local advisor who knows the area and the people is likely to know where problems exist and would be able to offer help / guidance at an early stage when it was likely to have more impact.
- 5.12 There is a need to identify what each area of land is best for.

- 5.13 Developing and maintaining public trust for farming is important. Could more be done to achieve this?
- 5.14 The value that farmers add through the management of the rural infrastructure should be valued.
- 5.15 The value of on-farm training should be recognised. Passing down skills and experience to sons, and other farm workers, happens on a daily basis.
- 5.16 There is concern about the amount of stress within the hill farming community.
  - 5.16.1 Over-inspection is seen as increasing the amount of stress on farmers and livestock.
  - 5.16.2 Frequent inspections increase the pressure on farmers through the perceived risk of being caught out and incurring penalties.
  - 5.16.3 Payments of public money must be made on time, with no excuses.
  - 5.16.4 Could regular (monthly / quarterly) payments be made with an end of year adjustment?
- 5.17 The value of the hefted flocks should be considered. As they are the result of breeding over centuries, should they be viewed as a form of historic monument?
- 5.18 Peter Dowsland presented a list of 22 issues. These were not discussed in detail but the list is forwarded with these notes to provide a basis for further development and discussion.

## **6 Recommendations & Conclusions**

- 6.1 Defra should be asked to respond to the report from the CABF project and this feedback should be circulated to the farmers.
- 6.2 The farmers should consider further meetings and discussions to include others who were not present at this meeting. If a further meeting(s) takes place, additional input from Defra should be requested and it would be valued highly.
- 6.3 It was agreed that a further meeting should be held. Provisionally, it was booked to take place, 17:00-19:00 on Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in the National Park's offices.
  - 6.3.1 Other hill farmers will be invited to attend; in particular encouragement would be given to younger hill farmers.
  - 6.3.2 It might be possible to explore the possible linkage with the ELM Test & Trial.
- 6.4 Based on the length of time that the support schemes under the CAP took to develop, the new arrangements that are put in place as we leave the EU will be influencing agriculture for many years. Therefore, this is a once in a generation opportunity to contribute to setting up arrangements that work; hill farmers are encouraged to keep up to date with developments and discuss the options and opportunities with other farmers.
- 6.5 The Uplands Alliance had considered carrying out an on-line survey to gather views of hill farmers across the country.

6.5.1 A hill farming questionnaire is being considered as part of the Test & Trial process and conflict with this will be avoided.

## 7 Thanks

- 7.1 Peter Dowsland and Rob Myers were thanked for their help in setting up the meeting and the National Park was thanked for hosting it. The value of the input from Will Jackson from AHDB was also recognised.
- 7.2 Special thanks were given to Defra for the ELM presentation and their input to the discussion during the meeting. The farmers valued the opportunity to talk directly to a senior figure in Defra about pressing matters.

## 8 Further Discussion Topics

- 8.1 Peter Dowsland had provided a list of 22 discussion topics. The list was not reviewed during the meeting but it is circulated with these Notes for consideration and possible discussion at a further meeting.

### Attendance List

Name	Surname	Area / Organisation
<b>Farmers</b>		
Jim	Bailey	Spaunton
Peter	Dowsland	Farndale
Daphne	Jackson	Fryup
Rob	Myers	Bransdale
Reg	Peirson	Goathland
Margaret	Thompson	Westerdale
Peter	Turnbull	Kildale
Robert	Ventress	Littlebeck
Mike	Watson	Levisham/Lockton
<b>Other Attendees</b>		
Jason	Ferdinando	Farndale / Photographer
Briony	Fox	NYM NPA
Will	Jackson	AHDB
James	Le Page	ELM, Defra
Rachel	Smith	NYM NPA
Rebecca	Thompson	NYM NPA
Simon	Thorp	CABF
<b>Apologies</b>		
Lewis	Barraclough	Rosedale
Charlie	Burt	Glaisdale
Matthew	Trevelyn	Spaunton
Alan	Watson	Snilesworth
Catherine	Sanderson	Bilsdale