

Dartmoor Farming Futures

An evaluation of an outcome-focused approach to agri-environment

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NATURAL
ENGLAND



DUCHY of CORNWALL



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2017

Introduction

- Dartmoor Farming Futures (DFF) is an experimental pilot project aimed at developing a new approach to agri-environment delivery for the management of the public and environmental benefits associated with Dartmoor's moorland
- The scheme aims to increase commoner engagement with the design, delivery and monitoring of environmental outcomes through agri-environment agreements

Key elements of DFF

- Commoner involvement in the design and development of the new approach, including the identification of key outcomes for each agreement
- Commoner participation in the monitoring of site and habitat condition
- Greater flexibility to choose appropriate management methods to achieve the outcomes



The pilot areas

The pilot focuses on two very different areas of common land within Dartmoor National Park.



- **Haytor/Bagtor Commons** – a small, almost separate block of common land covering c. 554 ha. There are 8 active graziers.
- **Forest of Dartmoor** – the main, central part of Dartmoor covering c. 11, 170 ha. There are 80 active graziers, it is almost entirely notified as a SSSI.

Evaluation

Aim

The aim of this study was to evaluate the impacts of DFF on farmer behaviours, perceptions and farm businesses

Methods

Semi-structured face to face interviews were undertaken with participating and non-participating commoners from each pilot area

Further interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders to gain an understanding of their perceptions of DFF

Reasons for engagement

- Opportunity for commoners to use their experience and knowledge to shape an agreement
- A scheme that presents commoners with an opportunity to prove that they are responsible land managers who can deliver environmental benefits
- An opportunity to address some of the key issues with agri-environment schemes

Key issues associated with agri- environment schemes

- Blanket schemes that cover the whole country and not tailored to individual areas
- Lack of flexibility and tight prescriptions
- No farmer input
- Schemes do not encourage joint working to deliver the outcomes

Results

Agri-environment scheme understanding and ownership

- Participating commoners have a greater understanding of what their agri-environment schemes are trying to achieve and the outcomes that they are expected to deliver
- Increased ownership of their scheme is being seen among the commoners

Environmental attitudes and understanding

- Commoners have a better understanding of the key species, habitats and archaeological features that can be found on their common
- This has provided them with a better understanding of how to manage the common for environmental outcomes and how this can be incorporated into their management

Results

Monitoring

- Training and monitoring on the Forest plays an important role in the shaping of commoners attitudes and understandings of the management of the commons
- Involvement in monitoring acts as an important learning experience



Farm business impacts (income and management)

- Limited farm income benefits aside from the possibility of cost savings
- Increased flexibility makes management of the farm easier
- Few commoners are trialling new management methods to achieve the desired outcomes

Results

“...it’s made us more aware of things and being aware of it, it’s caused more interest, we weren’t aware that we had an adder breeding colony in one area until somebody identified it and now we swipe around that and burn around that....”

“....it’s not complicated but I just think it empowers farmers a bit to know what the ecologists are looking for and it just gives you some common ground then because you can say well no I saw that...”

“I think that is the biggest advantage farming futures has given to farmers, to engage more with the environmental side then they have done in the past, which I think is a big step forward.”

Conclusions

DFF is resulting in greater understanding and ownership of agri-environment agreements on both pilot areas, however there are differences between the two

Caution among commoners is likely to be reducing innovation

Increased delivery and evidence of delivery of the outcomes



The farmer's view....

