Agri-environment on Common Grazings - a weakness in the RDP process?

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A good test for any rural policy:

Does it work on common grazings?
We hold these truths to be self-evident?

• Common grazings are High Nature Value farmland which deliver a whole range of public goods; maintaining HNV farming systems is a Community objective for RD Axis 2

• Over time, agricultural activity on common grazings has largely been unprofitable without public support and by definition there is no direct market support for public goods

• RDP mechanisms should be easily accessible (and in fact accessed) by all significant classes of ‘deserving’ producers (where ‘deserving’ is understood in terms of policy goals).
Do common grazings have more problems getting into schemes than hill farms?

- No: 27%
- Yes, due to need for agreement: 51%
- Yes, due to rules: 22%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% by parish participating in scheme of</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Lower quartile</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Upper quartile</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>all potential applicants</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>potential common grazings applicants</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>% by parish participating in scheme of...</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Lower quartile</td>
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<tr>
<td>..all potential applicants</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<td>..potential common grazings applicants</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</table>
Is it a matter of all producers in those areas being disadvantaged?
Not at first sight, but then.....
Common grazings participating less than Fragile Areas in general
Common grazings are less likely to participate than producers in general in the same parish.

Parishes where CG over-represented generally have a low overall level of participation.
Is it due to lack of rough grazing options?

- Limited range of options in RP for rough grazings
- Almost all ‘normal’ RP options for RG predicated on change of management (unlike inbye options)
- Almost all RP options for RG also predicated on need to graze less - despite ‘Retreat from the Hills’, around 30% of funds are still spent on removal of ewes from the business

- LMO has the only real support for positive management which is not habitually couched in terms of overgrazing – Summer Cattle Grazing
- Poorly thought out, least accessible where it is most needed
Breeding cow numbers and LMO AE uptake in some primarily crofting areas

Even if ALL CG LMO spend was on this option, budget currently committed would only cover 324 cows. 1951 in Skye alone
But while rough grazing in general under-represented in schemes, CG still worse....
Not only less area managed but less spend per ha on management of existing habitats through RP

NB: CG applications can contain some high value, non-RG options
Other transaction costs and difficulties particular to common grazings

• Need for a committee
  – Around 30% of grazings not regulated
  – Requirement to report is deterrent to re-election of committee
• Negotiating between active shareholders (whether or not active or inactive on the actual grazings)
• Need to engage inactive shareholders: “The written consent of a majority of the crofters ordinarily resident within the township and sharing in the common grazing” (going way beyond the thresholds set in the Crofters Acts)
• If total RP payments >£30k, need to submit accounts for all shareholders
Some regional variation in overall engagement with CAP support

SAC advisory office area

(2011 recipients, Defra database)
What other reasons could there be for non-participation in agri-env/forestry schemes?

- Other reason
- Don't believe in them
- No agreement of inactive graziers
- No agreement of active graziers
- Believe can't get in
- Payments not worth hassle
- Expense
- Lack of information

Source: Grazings clerks sample
Is there a regional variation in advisory service engagement?

SAC advisory office area
Potential clients per advisor FTE

SAC advisory office area
‘Nothing succeeds like success’ or ‘Recipe for a vicious spiral’.....?
Lack of coherent policy?

- Prima facie case that common grazings are somehow disadvantaged in RD policy
- Suggests lack of coherent, ‘joined-up’, policy making
- RDP process is one case which is meant to be explicitly ‘joined-up’ through the programming approach (though direct payments will also be so from 2014)
- SRDP 2007-13 contains no references to common grazings in the main text
- SRDP 2014-20 needs to change this:
  - in the analysis
  - in the measures
  - in the monitoring and evaluation