

Clun Forest Facilitation Fund

Farmer Feedback from Open Farmer Meeting, Tuesday 12th June 2018 – Facilitation Fund (first meeting)

Farmer discussion tables – notes (merged responses from 4 discussion groups arranged under themes)

(Question 1) What are your thoughts about what you've heard tonight?

Potential opportunity/ies

- ◆ (on one table of 4 farmers): Unanimous – good idea. We need to be in the driving seat here!
- ◆ Farmers getting together to attract funding – at present little funding from CS – the group will have more voice
- ◆ If it helps join a scheme then a big +
- ◆ Nothing to lose by joining up with other farmers
- ◆ Corridors – interesting to see if could connect with neighbours
- ◆ As a group (we) will have access to information quicker; (There is) so much information its hard to keep a tab on it all.
- ◆ New opportunity. Had past opportunities – need to act on it – changing with time
- ◆ Opportunity to work with interested partner organisations
- ◆ Opportunity to create something that work
- ◆ In the Clun Forest we need to take control now. It is no use waiting for the outcome of Health and Harmony and then complaining – already every environmental and agricultural organisation has developed their own self centred, single-issue view of what should happen. We need something that will deliver for both farming and the environment, which suits the Clun Forest.

Funding/Money – paying for it

- ◆ Good if (farmers) get paid for it
- ◆ Projects (to join up habitat) need incentives
- ◆ More help with understanding grants and what's available

Barriers/negative/cautious points

- ◆ Worries about another bureaucratic scheme
- ◆ Advice can be found already (land agents etc)
- ◆ Cynical about co's being set up to give advice – can get it from NE
- ◆ Independence a barrier to co-operation
- ◆ Concern that Basic Payment will end
- ◆ Voluntary groups could be helpful, but need supervising?

Miscellaneous

- ◆ Presentations good
- ◆ Why have all the waders disappeared?
- ◆ Return of owls

(Question 2) Regardless of funding, and in an ideal world, what would you like to see/do on your farm?

Water/rivers/trees/hedges - features

- ◆ Store more water by having more ponds
- ◆ Hedges galore. Already – still some scope
- ◆ River valley woodland up the valley OK, but not so good down valley – NW (?)
- ◆ Woodland / Hay meadow restoration / people drawn in by wildlife and landscape
- ◆ Maintain rural features – no light pollution – tourism aspect
- ◆ More wetlands
- ◆ Cattle numbers needed for good land management



(Question 2) Regardless of funding, and in an ideal world, what would you like to see/do on your farm? (continued)

Family farms/succession/housing – making a living

- ◆ Fear that young are leaving
- ◆ Cost of housing drives out young
- ◆ Young need to be helped with housing so they can stay in the area
- ◆ Farms need to survive – small farms, family farms. A living on a small area
- ◆ Training/encouraging new/young people / ensuring younger generation stay – up-skilling

Farmers like wildlife

- ◆ Want more wildlife but need to farm as well
- ◆ Farmers really like wildlife

Barriers/negative points

- ◆ Too many protected killers – cause of loss of garden birds – farmers used to shoot
- ◆ Too many sheep, particularly higher up
- ◆ TB restrictions hampering land management – look at vaccine

Possibilities – marketing/training

- ◆ Providing educational opportunities in traditional skills – community college
- ◆ Raise awareness of what it takes to maintain landscape
- ◆ Positive marketing and show what we are doing and self promotion
- ◆ Health benefits – use as selling point
- ◆ Mosaic of features – sustainable management / long-term – attract younger energy

Markets & marketing – post Brexit

- ◆ Balance going too far – food important
- ◆ Fair price for quality food. Realistic price rather than cheap food and support money having to go to farmers
- ◆ Risk from flooded markets undermining food prices further – need method to combat this
- ◆ Clear labelling/understanding of how food is produced, marketing etc.

Grants/money/incentives

- ◆ Now rivers are getting too shaded, as alders have grown up, need grants to coppice them
- ◆ Manage hedges planting under schemes – no money to lay/manage or replace fences
- ◆ Funding to reverse poor management decisions, ie drainage/losing water meadows
- ◆ Would go back to marshland (if paid) – needs to be long-term funds
- ◆ No incentive for grazed open woodland – preserving. Not recognised by ELS/HLS
- ◆ Alternative uses of/for wool (current price for wool too low)
- ◆ Business v conservation – find way to link the two together
- ◆ Funding for effective environmental management – payment for delivering ‘curlew’ - changing definition of ‘productivity’ – needs to be broader
- ◆ Income foregone measures need to take into account that complex mosaics need complicated management – costly in time & money.

Miscellaneous

- ◆ Community voice/lobby
- ◆ Want people who appreciate conservation, peacefulness, sustainability, well being, art



(Question 3) How would you like to take this forward?

White Peak – trip

- ◆ Trip to White Peak – to question farmers at realistic time
- ◆ Visit to similar area eg Peak District
- ◆ Ian Potter visit – Mid August (14th) incorporate with farm walk at Mervin's offered
- ◆ Visit White Peak late Sept
- ◆ Visit to White Peak group

Other technical farm advice/training/help

- ◆ Advice on grassland improvement
- ◆ Discussion groups welcomed on farm issues – but mostly business matters / also where corridors etc
- ◆ Experts need to be extremely good at what they're talking about
- ◆ Provide training opportunities and jobs in key skills
- ◆ Training/grants to help with habitat restoration
- ◆ Holistic advice. Whole-farm (integrated) plans. Someone who can walk whole farm with farmer.
- ◆ Provision of training and information on ways in which farming can deliver more for wildlife and the environment – e.g. Farmers Dens on soil management, flood reduction and diverse leys for better stock feed and bees
- ◆ No consultants
- ◆ One key adviser and continuity of staff. Understand farmers, know where opportunities are.
- ◆ Grassland Management Day / How to be flexible post Brexit workshop/day and maximise potential impact of BPS/Stewardship

Other Farm visits

- ◆ Meeting in pub or someone's home
- ◆ Local farm visit

Grants/pilot scheme for Clun Forest

- ◆ Pilot scheme?
- ◆ Development of new scheme proposals for the Clun Forest, which will fit with Brexit, Health and Harmony and Public Good delivery; one that ensures that farming on the uplands is a financial viable business and at the same time delivers for wildlife. It should be seen as a replacement for the ESA and the Fund should lobby for a Clun Pilot
- ◆ Information on current grant application, 20-30% of local farms are not in an Environmental scheme, there remain some capital grants such as Catchment Sensitive Farming
- ◆ Someone to help with funding applications/paperwork
- ◆ Talk on Mid-tier scheme
- ◆ Someone who can tap into different funding opportunities.
- ◆ Opportunity mapping and finding grants/help to carry out work
- ◆ Update on grant situation

Miscellaneous

- ◆ Linking volunteers to opportunities and social well-being
- ◆ Shared equipment to enable management
- ◆ Business and conservation and farming – finding balance
- ◆ Utilise local knowledge