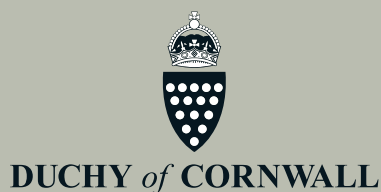


Dartmoor Moorland Vision and Dartmoor Farming Futures evaluation

Report to Dartmoor National Park Authority

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Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



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Introduction

The Dartmoor Moorland Vision and Dartmoor Farming Futures are two initiatives that seek to improve delivery of an impressive range of public goods associated with Dartmoor's moorland and are reliant on farmers and landowners participation. Both arose in response to concerns raised by local farmers. The two initiatives provide unique opportunities to learn the lessons from the development and implementation stages of these innovations. This review is timely and focuses on various aspects of both initiatives. The findings are intended to inform the Dartmoor Test and Trials and other opportunities related to the development of the emerging Environmental Land Management system (ELMs).

The role of farming in the uplands as a means of delivering a significant number of public goods and services is increasingly being recognised by government, farmers and land owners. The Vision and Dartmoor Farming Futures are initiatives designed to improve this delivery and by doing so secure improvements to a range of public goods and eco-system services including the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access.

Neither of these initiatives would have succeeded without the commitment and input from members of the local farming community. Similarly support and enabling provided by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA), The Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners' Council (DaCC) and Natural England (NE) were equally essential.

This evaluation does not set out to report on the success or otherwise of the outcomes within the Dartmoor Farming Futures trial, although aspects of assessing the progress towards achieving the outcomes are included.

The author of this report was the facilitator for the Dartmoor Moorland Vision (DMV) and the initial stages of Dartmoor Farming Futures (DFF).

Shared aspects of both initiatives

Origin: The two initiatives are linked and share the same origin. The DMV and DFF are initiatives that were designed to address the concerns of the local farming community.

In 2002 shortly after the end of the Foot and Mouth outbreak that devastated many farms on Dartmoor the DNPA commissioned a report into the "State of Farming on Dartmoor" (Ref. 1). The report identified the concerns of the farming community and that the majority (66%) of farmers wanted more collaborative working; they wanted to contribute their knowledge and skills to finding solutions. In 2004 DNPA launched Moor Futures to provide such an opportunity. It was a package of initiatives that included the Dartmoor Moorland Vision that led to the eventual development of Dartmoor Farming Futures.

Moor Futures proposed two strands:

1. Developing a vision that demonstrated that all the statutory agencies shared the same ambition for Dartmoor's moorland. This initiative captured what those agencies wanted Dartmoor's moorland to look like in 2030, (DMV).
2. A project designed to improve agri-environment delivery that developed into Dartmoor Farming Futures (DFF).

Both initiatives were succinctly described by the principal land owner, The Duchy of Cornwall:

"The Vision was pioneering in getting majority consensus of what good could look like. The earlier Vision was the key to getting a sense of shared understanding that Farming Futures sought to achieve."

The initiatives followed one after the other; the Vision began in 2003 and the final version was published in 2006. The case for DFF was made in 2009 and the design stage completed in 2011, the trials started in 2012 and are due to end in 2022.

Responding to farmers' concerns: The first initiative; DMV or the Vision, as it became better known, was produced in direct response to the farmers' perception that the various statutory agencies often made conflicting demands on farmers (in particular through agri-environment agreements) and that the same agencies had no shared long term view or ambition for Dartmoor. Following publication the local farmers welcomed the DMV and a group to take the Vision forward was established. The group was composed predominately of local farmers and members of staff from NE and the DNPA. This group began to have concerns that the relevant agri-environment agreements on the commons would not deliver the Vision. These concerns resulted in the opportunity to design a new approach to delivering land management; an approach subsequently called DFF.

Facilitation: Both initiatives were progressed with independent facilitation. The value of independent facilitation was costed by CCRI in 2013, in their conclusion it stated: "Good facilitation is key, the facilitator has acted as a buffer – he is not NE but then is not a farmer/commoner either. This was borne out elsewhere as a similar approach was attempted in Cumbria, but this time using the existing NE officer and within 4 weeks it had fallen apart". (see Ref 2)

Support: The initiatives were enabled and encouraged by DNPA together with input from other agencies and land owners of which the Duchy of Cornwall is the most significant land owner. The contribution to both initiatives by Dartmoor Commoners' Council (DaCC) a unique (at the time) statutory body composed predominately of farmers providing governance to the common land is also relevant.

Agricultural policy context: The Rural Delivery Review, under the chairmanship of Lord Haskins, reported its findings in 2003, as the Vision was emerging. The Review sought to simplify or rationalise existing delivery mechanisms and establish clear roles and responsibilities for effective coordination and identified five principal failings in existing rural delivery:

- Poor accountability
- Failure to satisfy regional and local priorities
- The existence of too many players
- Lack of coordination
- Confused customers

(see Ref.3).

The Vision, and later DFF, offered local solutions to some or all of these failings, and were seen, by some in the local farming community, to have been more relevant and possibly more successful than the institutional changes introduced in 2006.

The changes to agricultural and environment policy at the time when these initiatives were taking shape are also very relevant, especially to hill farmers who experienced significant change to how they were supported and rewarded.

Common land: Both initiatives principally focus on the management of moorland although not exclusively. On Dartmoor almost 80% of the moorland is common land, subdivided into commons that usually have a local common association. There are 92 separately registered commons on Dartmoor, most with no physical boundary between them. The commons are managed by grazing livestock provided by farmers with grazing rights (commoners). The social and cultural aspects of managing commons are relevant to the origins, development and use of both initiatives.

Capturing the key learning from both initiatives:

The same opportunities to learn are not always provided by both initiatives. To better understand the relevance and significance of specific findings this report separates the initiatives and addresses them individually. However where process and the corresponding learning are common to both they are identified as such.

Players

Participation by local farmers is essential to both DMV and DFF and some of the same farmers participated in both. A small number of stakeholders were responsible for enabling and supporting the initiatives and included the DNPA, the Duchy of Cornwall, DaCC and NE. Prior to 2006 those statutory bodies that were merged into NE contributed in their former entities; the Rural Development Service and English Nature. The Rural Payment Agency is a member of the DFF steering group.

Methodology

This report was compiled during the Covid-19 pandemic. The restrictions introduced to combat the spread of the disease included periods of lockdown when meetings and face to face contact were restricted or banned. These restrictions removed some of the normal methods of seeking information.

The information for this evaluation report was gathered from:

- Reviewing notes, correspondence and communication from the development phases of both initiatives.
- A review of previous evaluation reports on DFF, see page 15.
- A postal survey of all farmers and landowners who participated in the design stage of DFF from both trial sites, with some email and telephone follow up..
- A postal survey of most farmers actively farming on the Forest including the majority of those participating in the DFF trial.
- Gathering information from all the stakeholders involved with both initiatives by email and telephone.

The intention of this report is to identify the learning available from the process developed during all stages of the DMV and DFF.

The Dartmoor Moorland Vision

The Dartmoor Moorland Vision was published as a map depicting the principle vegetation zones and identifying where the historic environment was of particular importance. It set out a shared vision of what the statutory agencies wanted the moorland to look like in 2030, 25 years from when a consensus was reached between all the relevant contributors.

Information on the origin and process that secured the vision are included in several other reports. This innovation influenced similar projects on Bodmin Moor and on Exmoor. At one point in time all three south-west uplands had visions for their moorland in place, providing confidence to the local farming community that the future of the south west uplands was as a farmed landscape.

Sources of information on Dartmoor's Moorland Vision include;

The Vision map can be viewed at Appendix 1 or at:

<https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/living-and-working/farming/moorland-vision>

And a succinct introduction to the Vision can be viewed at:

http://www.hnvlink.eu/download/TheUK_TheDartmoorVision.pdf

A short history

As previously explained The Vision has its origins in Moor Futures that was set up by the DNPA in 2002. All of the various strands of the Moor Futures initiative sought to address the concerns of local farmers, especially those farmers engaged in managing the commons.

These concerns, identified in various surveys (*particularly in Ref 1*), included;

- A perception that the statutory agencies did not have the same shared ambition for Dartmoor.
- The need for a longer term vision that would give confidence to farmers that they had a future and to encourage investment in the future.

The farmers concerns echoed the thoughts of many professionals engaged in delivering advice and agri-environment direct to farmers at that time. A workshop for professional advisers in 2004 concluded; *'The provision of environmental advice for farmers where the particular priorities of the different bodies concerned could be reconciled and coordinated into a viable multifunctional and sustainable package has been the subject of considerable debate both within this workshop and beyond'*. (Ref 4)

Farmer attitudinal research carried out by the RSPB in 2003 suggested that as many farmers were happy with having many advisers to choose from as were confused by it. However the same research found that farmers wanted the staff

from agencies to all work well together locally and that a range of advice, not just ecological advice, is essential.

A vision, to be adopted by the agencies, was proposed as a local solution to address such concerns. This vision sought to secure a consensus between all the statutory agencies active on Dartmoor's moorland; English Nature, English Heritage, Rural Development Service, Dartmoor National Park Authority, Countryside Agency, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and Defence Estates (MOD).

The process of capturing a "vision" began by securing consensus, from the ecologists from the relevant agencies, on the vegetation that they wished to see in the future. Ecologists from 4 agencies, together with academics from Exeter University, willingly contributed their time and considerable experience. The results of their debates and discussions were drawn on to maps. The implications of International and national designations were included. Whilst there was a general consensus over the future distribution of the main vegetation zones the impact of climate change and the spread of woodland were less easy to evaluate. Eventually agreement was reached and a single map depicting the main habitats agreed upon.

This part of the process took 6 months (six meetings) with the draft map going through many iterations. A similar exercise addressing the moorland's impressive historic environment ran in parallel and involved DNPA, English Heritage, various archaeological experts and the Rural Development Service. The two groups and the two maps were then brought together as a draft Vision map in 2004. The draft was made available to the commoners and farmers who were asked to comment on its accuracy. Their comments and suggestions enabled further improvements to the map before it was published. A group of farmers and professionals from NE and DNPA, often referred to as The Vision Group, was established to consider how the Vision might best be delivered.

When the Vision was published in 2006 it was endorsed by all the relevant bodies, which at the time were; Rural Development Service (RDS), English Nature (EN), Defence Estates (MOD), English Heritage (EH) and Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA). It was also endorsed by the Dartmoor Commoners' Council (DaCC) on behalf of the farming community.

However later that year all the Defra sponsored agencies (RDS and EN) were amalgamated into Natural England (NE) and the ownership of the initiative by the various statutory bodies began to weaken. Following the restructure of Defra's agencies and significant changes to local staff, ownership and use of the Vision declined. The DNPA hosted the initiative but were distant from its principal use; influencing land management. Without the relevant delivery agency taking responsibility for its use its value to the farming community faded. New staff from agencies are often unaware of its intended role, and in turn farmers failed to use it to support their applications to the agri-environment schemes.

In 2009 additional layers were added to the Vision. These layers addressed access and recreational pressure, water catchment and peat (carbon storage). Gathering the information together to create additional layers to the Vision map was straightforward. Most was easily accessible from the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan or original work. The loss of capacity amongst the stakeholders resulted in a less collaborative approach than used previously, and this lack of collaborative approach may have weakened the value of these new additions. As previously with the original vision the resulting map was intended to be used to guide applications for agri-environment and to identify areas where several eco-system services compete for potentially conflicting land management. These additions also helped farmers understand the importance of a number of the public goods found on the moorland.

The DMV has been incorporated into the National Park Management Plan which provides a statutory basis.

The Dartmoor Moorland Vision: The principle learning points

1. The benefits of securing a **vision to guide delivery** are proven. For the best results it requires all the relevant stakeholders to contribute to the vision and to the delivery of the outcomes identified by the vision.
2. The **process** used to capture the Vision was novel (in 2002). The process used to secure agreement between the relevant professional ecologists and the professional archaeologists was considered successful by those who participated. The approach was predicated on reaching a consensus amongst professionals from within the same discipline; ecologists in one group and archaeologists in another. This encouraged ideas rather than the defensive approach often adopted when discussions include strangers and people perceived to have agendas different from their own. This helped potentially contentious issues to be addressed, including woodland expansion. An increase in trees was considered contentious at the time but the term re-wilding did not have the emotive connotations it has today. The process of building a consensus amongst each discipline enabled such decisions to be resolved “internally” without the oxygen of public debate. When each group had reached agreement on the future they wished to see for their own subject this was shared with the other group and potential issues of conflict addressed. Such areas of conflict turned out to be rare and all were overcome through constructive dialogue. The process took time and providing sufficient time is important; none of the contributors wanted to feel pressured. Providing a draft map with clear demarcation of the vegetation to be

reviewed (ground truthed) by farmers was successful in securing their ownership of the final product. This approach to securing a vision has proved transferable.

3. **Eventual ownership and delivery.** Similar to the later innovation DFF the Vision following publication was embraced enthusiastically by those who had participated in its development. Initial ownership faded due to lack of use caused by changes in staff and lack of ownership by contributing organisations. However, If a Vision is revisited (refreshed) then it will be essential to secure lasting ownership by the stakeholders (including farmers) and to ensure responsibility for its use is firmly embedded in the organisations with responsibility for delivering land management.
4. **Independent facilitation** has been proven essential to both DMV and DFF. During the development of DMV facilitation was required to explain the process to the farmers, ensure effective communication (translate language) and to bring the professional staff together. Findings within the evaluations of DFF confirm this essential role and further information is provided.
5. **Specific Innovations.** The Vision is itself an innovation created through a perceived need to demonstrate that all the statutory agencies shared the same vision. During the development of the DMV a specific innovation was used to address a specific need; to identify landscape scale archaeology and to indicate its international, national or local importance. This approach resulted in Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs). The PALS are areas described on a map that contain archaeology that requires to be appreciated within the landscape and may require specific land management. The original concept for PALs was invented by the Cornwall Council's Historic Environment Service.
6. **Visual and Map based.** The vision is short and visual - map based with illustrative pictures. It has proved easier to understand than a written vision. The vision map is intended to be simple avoid detail however after use the absence of sufficient reference points was considered to be an omission.

Dartmoor Farming Futures

This report sets out to capture what we can learn from one of the first outcome focused models developed in the UK and from the longest running trial of this novel approach. This report includes elements of the context of the initiative as this has a significant impact on its development.

The findings are set out under a series of headings that reflect those aspects of DFF that are particularly relevant to scheme design and to ease access to evidence necessary to the Dartmoor Test and Trials initiative and to other opportunities to influence the development of the proposed Environmental Land Management system (ELMs).

What is Dartmoor Farming Futures?

Dartmoor farming Futures has been described as a logical extension of the agri-environment schemes that have existed in the UK since 1991. In some respects this is correct, the move towards rewarding specified actions is apparent in the later schemes but DFF is fundamentally different in its approach; from prescriptive to outcome focused. Another difference is that it shifts responsibility for delivery from the agencies to the farmer.

DFF is predicated on a set of agreed outcomes. It has no prescriptions; it is up to the participating farmer to decide on the most appropriate actions to secure the outcome he or she has agreed to deliver.

The comment from one of the participating farmers provides a useful snapshot of DFF and the trial that had been running for 6 years. The comment addresses what they considered to be the benefits of DFF compared with an HLS agreement from a farmer's perspective (Table DFF 1).

Table DFF 1: comments from a farmer engaged in DFF on the Forest in 2018

Advantages of DFF over HLS
Allows commoners to use their knowledge and experience to manage the common instead of rigid prescriptions
Allows more detailed management to fit individual areas instead of one rule fits all
Leads to a better understanding of what attributes your common has and how to enhance them
Gives a feeling of control and thus ownership of the agreement which leads to better commitment on the part of the commoners instead of just keeping their heads down and hoping for the best because they don't understand what they are supposed to be achieving or whether they are doing it
Allows innovation and experimentation of different management

The trials have demonstrated that this new approach is not without problems. Some aspects of DFF have not been successful whilst others clearly have been, resulting in increased ownership of the agreement and improved understanding by the farmers on the objectives of their agreement.

Context and short history

The concept of paying farmers to deliver environmental benefits has a long history on Dartmoor. Prior to the first national agri-environment scheme, the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), becoming available to Dartmoor farmers and commons associations in 1994, management agreements had been offered to farmers by the DNPA. These agreements, enabled in 1981 by the Wildlife and Countryside Act eventually covered some 5,262 ha. and included large areas of enclosed moorland (known locally as newtakes). The significance of the English uplands for nature conservation, archaeology and public access have long been recognised and it is no surprise that agri-environment schemes have targeted the hills.

Twenty years ago MAFF's Task Force for the Hills recommended:

"That the payment basis for agri-environment schemes should reward the production of environmental outputs as well as reflecting agricultural income foregone". (Ref 5).

This signalled a significant change in the support for hill farmers and starts the move to use agri-environment to secure the positive management of public goods and services, although the focus often remains on achieving improved condition of the nation's SSSI network, of which a significant proportion is found in the uplands.

One of the most obvious manifestations of this approach was in 2007 when Defra announced that it was fundamentally changing the way in which upland farmers in England were supported, replacing the Hill Farm Allowance (HFA) with a new strand of Environmental Stewardship (ES) aimed specifically at the uplands; Uplands Entry Level Stewardship (ELS). As agri-environment became an integral part of upland farming its role became blurred, all too often seen as only a route to funding; funding that was often perceived by farmers as support rather than as a reward for delivering environmental benefits and changes in farming practice. (Ref 6).

This missed message was compounded by politicians who when faced with less support going to the hills suggested using agri-environment as a means of offsetting the loss rather than securing environmental benefits.

As the ideas that evolved into Dartmoor Farming Futures began to take shape many Dartmoor farmers had almost 30 years of experience with agri-environment and/or land management agreements. There was some confusion over the role of the schemes, and some farmers were critical of their agreements, considering that the objectives were unclear and that the prescriptions within the agreements were unlikely to secure the environmental benefits sought by the individual agreements.

This appears to still be an issue. In 2021 a Defra report on the delivery of ELMs identified that the *“The key barrier to participation is perceived to be poor previous experience of agri-environment schemes. The corollary is reflected in the primary factors needed to encourage participation: adequate financial incentives; and making the processes easy and simple”*. (Ref 7)

Some twelve years previously the same need and issues articulated by a group of farmers evolved and developed into DFF.

In 2009 DNPA & Dartmoor Commoners' Council on behalf of the farming community wrote to the then Defra Secretary of State (*Hilary Benn MP*) proposing a Dartmoor Farming Futures project; *‘a grassroots proposal for a pilot on Dartmoor offering farmers and landowners more responsibility for determining the management of the moorland to deliver an array of public benefits’*.

In response Defra and NE agreed to a first stage; that of designing a new approach to agri-environment delivery. After a model was designed NE gave consent for the second stage; trialling the new approach on two commons. Some of the funding that enabled the innovation to develop was provided by The Ecosystems Knowledge Network, sponsored by Defra and part funded by the Duchy of Cornwall. (Ref 8).

Farmer participation

DFF is in many respects a farmer led initiative; it was their concerns that created the impetus to find a solution. Farmers have been at the heart of DFF throughout its history. At the very start of DFF an independent facilitator was appointed and continued until the start of the trials. The farmers who were active graziers were identified as having the greatest level of experience in managing the moorland and at the inaugural meeting of these commoners they unanimously agreed to engage with the opportunity.

The commoners began by identifying a number of key issues that guided their ambitions, including:

- The new scheme must be simple and easily understood.
- There must be a clear link between the payments and those public benefits provided by the work undertaken under the scheme.

- The new scheme must enable local farmers to offer their expertise and experience to achieve a successful outcome.
- The new scheme must enable local farming practice and traditions to survive.
- Trust must be established.
- The scheme should enable new graziers to join.
- It should build on the positive aspects of previous agri-environment schemes.

Meetings were held with groups of farmers. At each meeting all the farmers were from the same common; graziers on the Forest held seven meetings and the graziers on Bagtor/Haytor commons five. Representatives from 18 of the 23 graziers on the Forest (southern part) attended one or more meetings with 11 graziers attending at least 5 meetings. All 9 graziers from Bagtor/Haytor attended at least 3 meetings with 5 attending all the meetings. All meetings were held in the evening. A note of each meeting was sent to all graziers contacted in the first stages of the initiative.

Following widespread support for the model and in preparation for the anticipated trials a group of farmers from each site were responsible for preparing the list of outcomes and a monitoring programme for their common. To guide their selection of the outcomes relevant to each trial site a range of information was used including the National Park Management Plan and the Moorland Vision. It was an interactive process involving the relevant agencies with the facilitator supporting the farmers. The resulting set of outcomes and the accompanying monitoring programme formed the requests to NE for consent to start the trial.

The trials

In July 2011 at a meeting on Dartmoor hosted by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales senior staff from NE confirmed the agency's commitment to DFF and agreed to enable a trial of the DFF model.

The trial commenced in 2012, on two sites and underpinned by High Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements. The trial is planned to end at the end of the HLS agreements in 2022. The trial sites, The Forest of Dartmoor and one area of common land comprising Haytor and Bagtor commons are two very different commons.

The Forest is the largest common on Dartmoor encompasses the highest parts of the moorland and covers 11,000ha.. It can take 5 hours to reach the centre of the common and return to the nearest road. The size of the common was considered an asset at the start of DFF but the scale and complexity of the site brought different issues to the fore. The Haytor & Bagtor common is much smaller (554 ha.) and lies on the edge of Dartmoor and in parts has areas similar to lowland heathland habitats.

Along with the scale, topography and altitude there were other significant differences between the two HLS agreements. The Forest agreement had 280 signatories to it and of these 80 were active graziers. On Haytor & Bagtor only a few non active graziers were signed to the agreement in addition to the 8 graziers. Once the HLS agreements were in place NE granted derogations from the HLS prescriptions to enable a refocusing on delivering the outcomes within the DFF trial.

On Haytor and Bagtor commons the commoners had already developed an approach similar to DFF; a proportion of their ESA agreement money was paid directly to those undertaking specific work to deliver the good condition of certain features, including access routes and historic monuments. Focusing on outcomes was an obvious development and caused little impact to the graziers. All 8 graziers agreed to participate in the trial.

On the other trial site, The Forest, the focusing on outcomes was a significant departure from the existing prescriptive approach. The eighty or so graziers were offered a choice to engage in DFF or to continue to graze in line with the HLS agreement. The Forest's common's association created a panel of trustees to review requests by graziers to deviate from their HLS obligations, to keep records of all changes and oversee the monitoring and reporting. Initially the additional administration was voluntary but when funding became available from an underspend within the HLS agreement the costs of administration were covered. The time and effort provided by the administrator has been significant. Whilst calculating the costs incurred managing a large scale agreement (of any kind) are outside of the remit for this evaluation it should be noted that without such administration such agreements are unlikely to be successful. The trustees see no financial reward for their contribution.

Of the c80 graziers on the Forest less than 50% participated in the trial; 23 applied to extend their grazing of cattle into the winter, 24 undertook training to monitor the vegetation and 4 proposed activities different to that prescribed by their HLS agreement. Of those farmers who received the vegetation monitoring training 13 went on to provide data to NE.

Why most of farmers on the Forest decided not to engage provides an important learning opportunity and is explored later in this report.

Steering group

A steering group was established during both stages of DFF. To oversee the first stage, designing the DFF model, the DNPA, DaCC, NE and the Duchy of Cornwall were joined a little later by the RSPB. These bodies remained the key stakeholders throughout together with representatives from the farming community (usually one from each area Haytor and The Forest). This group's main purpose was to oversee the facilitation contract. Initially the group's remit was wider than DFF to include work undertaken within the Moor Futures initiative including the further development of the Dartmoor Moorland Vision.

During the second stage, the trials, a new steering group was established with the sole intention of overseeing the delivery of the trials and with a membership almost identical as that in the first phase; the RSPB became an observing partner and the RPA became a participating full member. Once the trials were established the steering group met annually and both trial sites provided an annual report to the group. In recent years this meeting was the only opportunity for the stakeholders to learn what work had been undertaken and what was proposed. The annual review meetings were initially proposed to be held on the common with farmers to discuss management and monitoring however this only occurred on one trial site and the annual steering group meeting provided this service.

Independent evaluations

There have been three independent DFF evaluations. Two of the independent assessments were undertaken in the very early stages of the trials, one study was in the first year. These evaluations can provide useful baseline assessments and as such have additional value. All these studies focused on aspects of DFF, including the process of selecting outcomes.

- a. Economics of Co-ordination in Environmental Stewardship, Project No. DO0119, CCRI report to Defra & NE, UK 2012, (case study 2). (Ref 2)
- b. Dartmoor Farming Futures Project: Independent Project Evaluation, Cumulus Consultants Ltd, report to DNPA & NE. Report No: CC-P-587, July 2013. (Ref 9)
- c. Dartmoor Farming Futures; Evaluation Report, Jen Manning, DNPA, 2017. (Ref 10)

1. The outcomes; using the outcome-focused approach

Delivering against a set of outcomes is core to the DFF approach. DFF is predicated on a set of outcomes that if delivered would improve and sustain the public goods and benefits relevant to its area.

Identifying outcomes

The process adopted was to follow the following steps:

- listing the assets (public goods & eco-system services) on a specific area of land (in this case a common);
- farmers agreeing on the assets and then identifying potential outcomes that would improve and sustain these assets;
- draft list of outcomes developed with the assistance of other external stakeholders;
- outcomes confirmed.

During the design phase of DFF both work groups reached the same conclusion on the importance of setting outcomes however the two processes used to identify the outcomes were subtly different. By the time the trials were confirmed each trial site was required to provide a list of outcomes and at that point the approach adopted was common to both sites.

The process adopted by both groups of farmers began by identifying the key features or assets found on the common. This only involved the farmers and facilitator. On the Forest this began by recognising the importance of eco-system services on their common. Identifying what was important and relevant was helped by engagement with the South West Uplands Ecosystem Services Pilot Project, because the moorland within the Dartmoor National Character Area (NCA) was one of the case studies, and the case study identified the main ecosystem services evident on the moorland and potential mechanisms for delivering improvement to those services. Farming was one of the delivery mechanisms.

The principal eco-system services for the Forest are set out in Table O1

Table O1

Forest of Dartmoor: Eco-system services / natural resources		
Natural resources	relevant to location	further information
Public access	low but locally important	open public access
Archaeology and historic environment	moderate	national & international importance
nature or biodiversity	high - blanket bog, mires and upland heath. BAP species.	national & international designations
Landscape	high	international designation. NP
water - quality and quantity	high - water catchments	also reduce flood risk down stream
carbon	high - stored carbon in peat	mapped and measured
food production	contributes to lamb & calve production	hefts and leers

On Haytor the work group initially listed potential features of importance and then developed a table that also identified potential actions and outcomes. The table approach was adopted by both working groups, (see appendix 2).

The selection of relevant assets illustrated the difference between both sites and reflects the public goods found on each trial site. The emerging list of eco-system services and public goods began to describe the range of public goods unique to each common. The Forest included landscape and community within their list of public goods. Both groups listed farming as a public good.

The Haytor group identified archaeology as an important asset on their common and sought expertise on the issue from a professional archaeologist (from within DNPA). This meeting introduced the idea of setting outcomes for specific features.

Both groups identified issues including:

- The importance of getting the outcomes right. To do this it may be necessary to employ expertise or get help from others. One group felt confident they could draft some outcomes but those relating to the SSSI (biodiversity) were considered to be a challenge.
- The outcomes should include some related to sustainable agriculture, supporting traditional practices and culture.
- The outcomes must remain simple, clear and deliverable.

Following adoption of the process and supported by the agencies each work group was charged with developing their draft lists of assets into a set of outcomes for each common. It was recognised that the outcomes selected would be unique to a common; ensuring relevance to the location.

The initial lists of assets provided by members of both groups were similar in the subjects they proposed; biodiversity/nature, archaeology/historic environment, public access and farming. Additional issues listed included wild fire risk, specific species e.g. snipe, multi-species grazing, shepherding and the control of selected vegetation (*Molina* and gorse).

Both group revised the note of their common's assets and gaps in their knowledge were identified. External expertise was then sought to fill the gaps. To address this gap local staff from the relevant agencies, a water company and ngos were consulted.

Examples of the information received from the external consultations is set out in Table O2.

Table O2

Ideas for outcomes provided by stakeholders other than farmers.

DFF Form B (2): Forest - outcomes	
Assets/natural resources	potential outcomes (sought from external contacts)
Archaeology/historic	Sites free of encroaching vegetation - both gorse and bracken to be removed and treated to prevent regrowth. (DNPA)
	Good visibility and accessibility to sites from a variety of directions plus intervisibility between sites achieved. (DNPA)
nature/biodiversity	The Blanket Bog areas are restored. (NE)
	The valley mires provide suitable habitat for breeding snipe. (NE & RSPB)
water	There is no deterioration in classification of the surrounding waterbodies through impacting water quality. (EA)
	<i>Molinia</i> is controlled to allow rainwater to reach the peat. (SWW)
	Scrub is controlled to reduce the risk of wildfires. (SWW)
carbon	The land is managed to optimise water retention (SWW)
	Ditches would be blocked to slow run-off and stop peat from being lost downstream. (SWW)
	protection of the existing peat resource from further degradation (NE)
	reduce risk of wildfires

The process identified some new issues including:

- Concerns over the number of outcomes a common should be prepared to deliver and whether or not a large common should be expected to deliver more outcomes than a smaller common.
- There was also discussion on whether payment should correlate with the number of outcomes (more outcomes = more payment).

After a number of iterations the number of outcomes proposed for each trial site was reduced from 25 to 10 outcomes. See appendices 3 & 4 for initial and final lists of outcomes on Forest.

Relevant observations from the independent evaluations and surveys

In 2013 the Cumulous study concluded:

The commoners who have engaged have a good understanding of the outcomes for the pilot areas. This can be derived from the assessment of likely impacts of DFF on different outcomes. The scores provided by the two sets of commoners varied more or less in line with the ecosystem service priorities for each common, and the associated comments also showed understanding of the different outcomes and the impacts of management practices on them. This view is also supported by better understanding of the agri-environment agreements and environmental features on the commons more generally, as outlined above. The DFF outcomes which have been developed are also regarded positively by the other stakeholders.

The CCRI (2012) study stressed the importance of providing sufficient time for the setting of outcomes and the value of the process in securing engagement and a better understanding by all stakeholders. It states:

A key task is to give the local stakeholders the space and time to develop the scheme design and the outcomes that are acceptable to both Defra and NE. The greater responsibility given to farmers has been taken seriously and it has provided a tighter bond at the local level and a willingness to engage with and to understand to a far greater level the strategic needs of the agencies.

The third evaluation (Manning 2017) looked at behavioural changes from those participating in DFF. The trials had been running for four years. The study concluded:

*DFF ..is resulting in commoners (farmers) having a greater understanding of what agri-environment schemes are looking to achieve and the outcomes that they are delivering;
Farmer input into the design of the scheme and its outcomes creates scheme (agreements) that are area specific and make use of the local knowledge of the farmers.*

In 2021 and as part of this study those farmers who participated in the design and preparation of the outcomes were surveyed. Of those 17 farmers contacted 12 (70%) responded, (see Table O1).

Table O1

Compilation of responses - outcomes					
Statements	score 1 -disagree to 5 strongly agree				
An outcome-focused approach	1	2	3	4	5
The process of identifying outcomes for the common was straightforward.	1	2	2	3	4
You understand the outcomes that were selected.			1	4	7

The results confirm that for those farmers actively engaged in the process the outcomes were clear, however the process may not have been so well understood or remembered.

Comments from the farmers that responded to the survey included referring to the importance of advice and whilst identifying the outcomes was straightforward measuring the outcome is “more tricky”.

However most of the comments referred specifically to the biodiversity outcome (SSSI condition) on the Forest and this outcome appears to be contentious. Some farmers believe it to be undeliverable and “just plain wrong”. This outcome was imposed by NE and was non-negotiable, and this may have led to less ownership by the farmers than other outcomes and there is some anecdotal evidence to support this suggestion. (*see Delivery sub-section*).

Outcomes, Key Learning Areas:

1. **Providing a shared vision**, endorsed by the relevant stakeholders, is a useful stage to identify the potential outcomes and to engender ownership from all the relevant parties.
2. **Identifying outcomes**: Farmers know their land as well as anyone. Participation in agri-environment agreements, discussion groups and a willingness to understand what is expected enables most farmers to have a shrewd idea of the public benefits that their farm land can deliver. Farmers participating in DFF were able to provide a list of potential outcomes relatively easily; the lists were comprehensive, no public benefits were omitted, and required reducing rather than additions. A desire by most

farmers for outcomes to address farming practices, cultural issues and social priorities are more difficult to justify and require further consideration.

3. **The number of outcomes to be delivered:** This remains a potentially contentious issue. Farmers with many public goods on their land may be required to deliver more outcomes than those with land without such assets. The decision process to choose the number of outcomes for the trials was largely pragmatic and unsubstantiated.
4. **Improved engagement:** There is evidence that being involved in the process of identifying outcomes improves engagement. This applies both to farmers and to professional staff from the relevant agencies, participation helps them better understand the issues and leads to improved trust between all stakeholders. The process can enable a clear understanding of what is important on the land; which public benefits should be addressed. A link between outcomes and potential actions can improve the understanding of why and what an agreement (public money) is paying for. It moves the emphasis away from a perception of non-specific support to one where the target (outcome) is clear.
5. **Improving local relevance:** The identification and selection of outcomes relevant to a specific area is almost certainly going to result in an agreement that reflects the character of that area. Local selection of the outcomes avoids focusing on issues that are not relevant to a farm or common. The perception amongst farmers is that if their agreement is not relevant to their holding the agreement is devalued and not respected leading to poor delivery.
6. **An outcome that is not owned or supported by the farmers is unlikely to be delivered.** Such an outcome can adversely affect the delivery of other outcomes, and have a negative impact on all of the agreement's delivery. The outcomes must be considered to be deliverable. Securing clear understanding and support for all the outcomes at the first stage of the application are essential.
7. **Understanding the outcomes.** There is evidence that the outcomes are better understood by those farmers who participated in selecting the outcomes. Where the outcomes are clear and easily understood then they can be delivered more efficiently, for example improving the condition of historic features has been particularly successful. Complex outcomes that are poorly understood and not easily measurable are less

likely to be less successfully delivered. Participation in subsequent monitoring enhances this understanding and ownership.

2. Monitoring

There are two aspects of monitoring that are embedded within the design of DFF; one to monitor progress towards delivering the outcomes and the second is to monitor the condition of some of the outcomes. A reporting process and a monitoring programme were both integral to DFF; intended to provide confidence to the participating farmers and relevant agencies that progress was being made. A monitoring programme was required by NE before consent for the trials was granted.

The monitoring is reported in an annual review meeting, at which evidence is submitted by the farmers. The purpose from the farmers' perspective was to secure reassurance that the activities they had undertaken to achieve the outcomes were positive and likely to achieve the required target. Monitoring was also intended to give confidence to those responsible for managing the agreement, in particular NE. The annual review was designed to avoid any negative actions perpetuating for more than 12 months.

The annual review meetings were never proposed as the sole means of communication between the stakeholders but in practice this is what has happened. The original proposal was for part of the annual meeting to be held on site. Possibly due to the scale of the Forest these site meetings never took place. An annual site meeting was held on Haytor/Bagtor. The annual meetings are considered valuable by the majority of farmers and see these events as the opportunity for "an exchange of information annually so that any problems are dealt with promptly".

As the trials progressed monitoring was observed to be helping the participants improved their understanding of the agreement. This was confirmed in 2021 when the survey of those farmers who engaged in the design of DFF established that 83% of those farmers agreed that providing the opportunity for self-monitoring is an important part of an agreement. In a recent survey of Forest graziers who had participated in monitoring all the farmers who responded (20) stated that they found it interesting and 60% said it helped them better understand the agreement (and what NE wanted), (see Tables M1 & M2).

The comments that accompanied the responses confirmed the role of monitoring in securing engagement but raised a few concerns including the need for external (professional) verification and the need for trust for this approach to work.

Table M1

Compilation of responses: monitoring					
Statements	score 1 -disagree to 5 strongly agree				
Monitoring	1	2	3	4	5
Providing the opportunity for self-monitoring is an important part of an agreement.			10%	10%	80%
Given the choice farmers would prefer to self-monitor.			30%	30%	40%

Evidence from the early evaluations suggests that monitoring is an important part of DFF and influenced the participants' perception of the trial.

The commoners are aware of the monitoring requirements under DFF, including the key indicators of success, and recognised the importance of monitoring in measuring, guide and communicating success. A few commoners felt that robust monitoring was not yet in place and that this posed a risk in terms of not being able to demonstrate progress. (Cumulus 2013)

The training and monitoring process has increased the commoners (farmers) understanding of the biodiversity and environmental features that can be found on their commons. (Manning 2017)

Condition Monitoring

The Forest decided to undertake the majority of the monitoring required for their agreement, including contributing to the official monitoring of the condition of the SSSIs. The other trial sub-contracted most of their monitoring to third parties.

Monitoring the condition of features relevant to the various outcomes, prior to and following management, is an important source of evidence to support positive land management and identify poor or inappropriate actions.

All the outcomes had some monitoring required by the trial. Some were straightforward and others more complex. None were as complex and problematic as monitoring or understanding SSSI condition.

On the Forest the biodiversity outcome relates solely to the condition of the SSSI. (see Table M2). The area of SSSI on the Forest is 9,590 ha. some 86% of the total Forest area, (and this SSSI is part of the Dartmoor Special Area of Conservation (SAC)). This outcome was relevant to the majority of the common; relevant to 13 of the 18 management units, (areas of the common that equate to topography and grazing patterns, identified during the ESA).

The monitoring programme was predicated on measuring attributes (measurable features).

The attributes that NE measure include:

- Cover of important plants like sphagnum and heather
- Vegetation composition
- Presence/absence of some indicators – Positive e.g. Heather – Negative e.g. Bracken
- Disturbance – Bare ground – Drainage

Andy Guy (the NE project officer at the time) stated: "*The enthusiasm with which Dartmoor farmers have approached the monitoring of SSSI condition has been fantastic. The first training session I ran was on a cold wet day in March: I was expecting the half dozen usual suspects and 40 people arrived.*"

This training focused on vegetation monitoring using a quadrant and identifying plant species. A crib sheet identifying the key plant species was made available.

Table M2: Forest biodiversity outcome

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Outcome</u>	<u>Monitoring</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
Nature or Biodiversity	Manage sympathetically the entire common to maintain, and where appropriate, enhance the quality of the biodiversity and within notified sites (SSSIs) to achieve 50% in favourable condition by 2020. Specific vegetation management will be undertaken to deliver the individual Management Area plans agreed in advance with Natural England.	The composition and condition of vegetation within the key features (important habitats) will be recorded within quadrants. The frequency and number of quadrants will be defined in each management area monitoring programme.	Commoners with NE support

Dartmoor has a number of SSSIs, each divided into units that are used for condition assessment. Each unit is assessed to establish its condition and the overall condition of the units determines the condition of the SSSI. The function of the units is to define areas that can be monitored to inform management aimed at maintaining or improving the condition of the notified features. The rationale behind the boundaries of these units was poorly understood by the farmers.

The farmers undertaking vegetation monitoring that was intended to assess the condition of the SSSI questioned the boundaries of the units, there were some 144 within the total area of SSSI. In response NE stated that the unitisation process may not have originally been carried out in a consistent manner and that some units had been amended (re-unitised) in the past, while others remain as at notification. The NE project officer began a programme of re-unitisation with the objective of reducing the number and making the units more rational.

In 2013 the re-unitisation of the SSSI on the Forest of Dartmoor was completed, eventually resulting in 13 units each commiserate with one of the local grazing units (similar to the previous ESA management units). These new management units, 18 in total, were better understood by the farmers. The outcomes and monitoring plans were cascaded from the Forest to each appropriate unit.

The opportunity for farmers to monitor the condition of these new units was introduced by NE in 2013 following two training workshops. Some farmers helped with the training following reduction in NE staff.

In 2013 the CCRI study found that: *The farmers see the development of the monitoring and evaluation (part of DFF) as a positive step as it requires them to engage with NE and is then the result of a more creative dialogue between the statutory body and the deliverer and more likely to lead to a positive outcome in terms of the schemes impact on the area.*

In 2015 a NE Director stated that *“by putting in place tools that farmers can use we have demystified condition assessment and made the outcome that we want to see on the SSSI clear to everyone – farmers and partners alike. The days of condition assessment as a dark art have gone and relationships with a wide range of stakeholders have improved markedly.*

We also have a clear commitment from a large group of farmers to deliver our 2020 target and to assess and record progress towards that outcome for us. Everybody wins! It was brilliant to sit with the Forest of Dartmoor commoners a couple of weeks ago and hear them tell me about their monitoring of their habitats on their SSSI. They said "it would be better if the scheme paid us to do our condition monitoring, but we do it anyway because we want to."

By 2018 the commoners had carried out 280 assessments on heathland of which 84 passed (38%) and 196 failed and 335 on the bogs of which 127 passed (30%) and 208 failed.

By 2020 the total number of assessments had risen to 1114 (619 on bog habitat and 495 on heath) with an average pass rate of 34.5%. The resulting data is entered directly into NE's SSSI condition data base (but this is currently on hold due to a technical issue).

NE acknowledges that the agreement holders have carried out monitoring through DFF and this has been recorded by them and presented in reports. However NE has also carried out its own monitoring due to concerns about how well the agreement was delivering on SSSI condition. It is worth noting that the DFF in-house monitoring largely mirrors the findings of NE's own monitoring.

Table M3: Results from farmers who has participated in the training to undertake vegetation monitoring 2021:

Vegetation monitoring and training, results from the Forest	Yes		No	
	Was the training interesting and useful?	100%	15	
Have you undertaken any monitoring?	93%	14	2	
Do you find the monitoring interesting and does it help you understand what NE want?	60%	9	3	
Has the monitoring influenced how you farm the Forest?		1	13	87%
Do you have the time to carry out monitoring?	60%	9	7	40%
Do you think monitoring by farmers should continue into the next scheme?	73%	11	1	

On the Forest trial the Trustees took the initiative to fund monitoring; vegetation monitoring is financially rewarded (£20 per quadrant). This positive decision incentivised take-up resulting in significant data collection.

On the second trial site farmers were reluctant to undertake specific monitoring of the biodiversity outcome. On this site the important butterfly populations required annual monitoring to inform the following year's land management. None of the participating farmers felt confident that they held the necessary expertise so a third party was employed (Butterfly Conservation) to undertake the monitoring. Their report was then used to identify areas of vegetation to be managed for the various butterfly species. This trial also sub-contracted the annual photographic recording to a non-farmer. Devolving the monitoring and recording appears to have led to less engagement but this has not been measured.

Those farmers who have engaged in monitoring appear to better understand what is expected of their role within an agreement. However when asked if the results from monitoring had in any way influenced their farming only one respondent said this was the case. This is not surprising considering the strongly held view amongst the Forest graziers, and other farmers that they need support and advice to enable and encourage them to make changes, especially changes that where they may feel vulnerable to criticism. NE recently stated that the monitoring on Haytor site has not always resulted in the most appropriate land management (NE adviser pers. comments). Unfortunately this view had not previously been raised and resolved at one of the annual review meetings.

About 60% of the farmers surveyed stated that they had the time to undertake monitoring, with 40% claiming that they had no time for monitoring despite the financial incentive, whether they would have found the time if they had received more encouragement is unclear.

Of those farmers that had received training to undertake condition monitoring 73% thought monitoring by farmers should continue into ELMs.

Monitoring compliance and delivery

Providing evidence of other activities has proved straightforward. The results of the monitoring and reports on specific land management were planned to be reported to the relevant organisations at a review meeting. These meetings were not held on the Forest due to the scale of the task and as the staff resource from NE became limited. The reporting then became part of the annual steering group meeting at which each trial provided an annual report, including depending on site and relevance, annual stocking calendars, photos of the landscape and maps of vegetation management. The loss of the review meeting, attended by more farmers than the steering group meeting, was detrimental to communication between all the stakeholders. The steering group meeting did not require the agencies to provide information or encourage a two way flow of information. The structure of the meeting inhibited the farmers from using the meeting to ask for help and support.

Monitoring: Key Learning Areas:

1. **Monitoring encourages better engagement with an agreement.** Those farmers undertaking their own monitoring developed a better understanding of the outcomes and ambition of their agreement. All the evidence suggests that engagement in monitoring plays a useful role in increasing ownership of an agreement. However if the results are not recognised by those requiring the data and there is little feedback to those collecting the data collection there is a risk they can become disillusioned. It is essential for the data collection and efforts of the farmers to be acknowledged. A reporting process would be valuable and good communication is essential.
2. **Farmers want to undertake monitoring.** There was an enthusiastic take up of the offer to be trained to undertake vegetation monitoring leading to a better and wider understanding and which in turn led to sense of pride and maybe introduced a small degree of competition. Most of

those trained then went on to carry out the monitoring, however over time the number of farmers participating in the monitoring fell. Even after the value of the monitoring was acknowledged responses from some farmers suggests that they began to doubt the value of their efforts and although there was some financial incentive was introduced this failed to encourage some farmers to continue. There must be clear feedback and the opportunity to discuss the implications of the results of monitoring between those undertaking the work and those with responsibility for the agreement. Majority of farmers surveyed would wish to see farmers encouraged and rewarded for monitoring as a component within the ELM system.

3. **Learning from and applying the data.** The use of the findings from the monitoring to influence changes to farming practice to secure improvements to the outcomes appears not to have been successful. This important decision making stage following data collection was not addressed during the development of DFF. For farmers to use this data to inform their farming practices appears to require advice and encouragement. It is difficult to assess if the lack of financial incentives influenced these decisions at this point and if this was a barrier. A significant number of farmers stated that in addition to the lack of a financial incentive the lack of advice on what to do, lack of encouragement and no one to help interpret the data were serious barriers to changing practices. Monitoring is not an end in itself; it is a step and requires interpreting into practical application.

4. **Periodic reviews** are essential but require sustained engagement by all stakeholders. The rules for a review must be clear to all. All relevant stakeholders must participate and understand the commitment. Preparation by all stakeholders prior to the review must be recognised as an important part of the process. Reminders and support may be needed but who has this role is difficult to assess. Managing the process of reporting the results from monitoring was not prescribed and who was responsible is unclear. DNPA performed this function for one DFF trial and in the other trial a farmer was appointed to take responsibility for arranging and preparing for the annual review meeting. Both approaches have merit and benefits but it is essential to identify the roles and responsibilities early in the agreement and to reward the work and efforts required. The model used in the trials has not been successful but the principle of regu-

lar two-way reporting is strongly supported by the farmers and should be considered as an integral part of an agreement.

3. Collaboration

Co-design/farmer participation

If there is an expectation of co-ordinated action between farmers it should also be recognised that the farmers will be expecting co-ordination between the statutory agencies and advice providers. (CCRI Ref 2).

DFF is a farmer led initiative; it was farmers who raised the initial concerns that their agri-environment agreements were unlikely to deliver the vision of what the agencies wanted Dartmoor to look like. Farmers also designed DFF including the core role outcomes and farmers are almost entirely responsible for delivering the trials.

However co-design is also a critical component of DFF and collaborative working was essential for DFF to emerge in a form suitable for the trials. During the development of DFF partnership working is well illustrated by the efforts of the DNPA, Duchy of Cornwall and the DaCC to raise the concerns of the farming community with Defra and politicians enabling DFF to happen. A range of stakeholders contributed to the funding, enabling, design and eventual delivery of DFF.

The idea for DFF came at a time of unease within the hill farming community (a situation that still exists but for different reasons). Policies emanating from the EU and UK were shifting the emphasis from food production to food safety and the protection of the environment. The creation and naming of the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in 2001 illustrates this beautifully; no mention of farming. The launch of the first decoupled subsidy payment scheme (Single Payment Scheme) in 2005 created real tension in the hills as “money moved downhill” leaving many hill farmers worse off financially and moorland farms on Dartmoor were estimated to potentially lose 40% of the public funding provided by subsidy payments.

In 2008 a study of the economics of hill farming in South West England stated *“the economic viability of hill farming is inextricably bound up with the availability of public funding”* and that public funding was changing; increasingly funding from agri-environment agreements was filling the gap. By 2009 the funding from agri-environment agreements was vital to core farm incomes but at the same

time some farmers questioned the appropriateness of their agreements. Many hill farmers felt confused and abandoned by Defra and its agencies. (Ref 11)

Agri-environment schemes were also changing. In 2009 Natural England stated: *'As agri-environment schemes have developed they have become increasingly multi-objective, recognition of the fact that a wide range of ecosystem services can often be delivered simultaneously from the same piece of land. Scheme targeting has become more sophisticated to reflect this. A major challenge now is to continue to develop scheme targeting and decision support systems that identify how to optimise the delivery of these non-market ecosystem services at all scales from the farm to the broad landscape and alongside market-led food production. In particular we need to: Develop a culture in which managing land for services other than solely food production (eg. carbon storage, wildlife, flood storage, aquifer recharge) is embraced by landowners, government and the public.'* (Interestingly again no mention of farmers). (Ref. 12)

On Dartmoor the 2002 study had found that farmers wanted more collaborative working. A survey held under the auspices of Moor Futures a few years later confirmed this view and identified a number of specific issues including that "most farmers wanted to be part of the process and to be able to identify solutions rather than just receiving funds". (Ref 1).

By the start of DFF engagement with the farming community included several initiatives that were farmer led and relied on farmer participation including The Dartmoor Hill Farm Project. These new entities were in addition to existing social networks operating within the farming community, especially within the commoning community. Commoners were well used to collective working within the constraints of the common's association and within the regulations emanating from the DaCC. Many of the active farmers contributed directly to these groups.

In 2015 a case study on Dartmoor, undertaken by the Foundation for Common Land was published in the report Better Outcomes on Upland Commons. The case study captured the mood of commoners on Dartmoor and reported:

'Themes emerged that contributed to the current state of affairs. It has not happened by accident or over-night but has taken time and benefited from a combination of a history of engagement, relatively few stakeholders, a supportive governance and strong leadership. Over 20 years of agri-environment has fostered dialogue and discussion but has not been without its critics'

The report concluded:

In each case study we sought to discover what success looks like, the attributes of successful management and what local stakeholders considered is needed to deliver this in the future.

The project concluded that respectful and long enduring relationships between individuals and groups are at the heart of delivering better outcomes on upland commons. (Ref 13).

It would appear that by 2015 the farming community did feel more empowered as participation in the various initiatives encouraged collaboration with other stakeholders. This partnership working has revealed practicalities and issues that must be recognised. Some of these lie outside of the control of the local players, and some arise from decisions made locally. Recognising and managing them are important lessons.

The impact of some decisions is reflected in the results of a survey of farmers in 2021. Table C1 below identifies that the trust between partners had not been sustained. Within the majority of the comments accompanying the survey’s responses the declining lack of trust was referred to. Specific comments included concerns over failure to sustain a positive relationship with all project officers and the acknowledgement that improving “trust was what we hoped for, but increasingly difficult given NE’s dwindling resources.”

Table C1: From survey of Forest graziers 2021.

	score 1 disagree to 5 strongly agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
DFF has increased trust between partners.	1	3	2	3	3

The players and stakeholders

Farmers on Dartmoor are there for the long haul. Various studies have reported on the resilience and the constancy of their vocation. This is illustrated by the following statements:

- On average upland farmers trace their family farming roots in the area back to mid-1890s
- Upland farming families tend to have very long connections to their farm, with 26.1% of upland respondents reporting that their family had been operating the current farm (or one in the immediate vicinity) since before 1900.
- The vast majority (76%) of the upland respondents came from established farming families (i.e. the current farmer is at least the 2nd generation of the family to farm the current farm or to be farming in the general area).

The implication of this is that the majority of upland farmed land will continued to be managed by the same families that have been farming the land for several generations already, (Ref 14 & 15).

This continuity and resilience is an essential ingredient of the farming community especially on Dartmoor where family is so important, all the moorland farms are family run farms. This situation is demonstrated by the farmers who were engaged in the design phase of DFF. All 17 of these farmers are still farming and live at the same address some 10 years later.

By contrast the turnover of other stakeholders who participated in both the design and trialling of DFF is remarkable. None of the Defra staff engaged at the start of DFF remain in post and within NE the turnover of project officers with direct contact with DFF is significant; 8 in ten years (excluding regional and area managers and above) and none have had continuous unbroken contact with the farmers participating in the DFF trial. Within DNPA only 2 members of staff with direct links to DFF and who were present at the start of DFF in 2010 remain in post. The austerity measures resulting in significant reduction in staff within government agencies have directly impacted on the DFF trials.

The frequent turnover of staff should not necessarily lead to a breakdown in communication or damage the confidence that developed between the farmers and professionals from the various agencies. Confidence that both parties are not changing their position is important especially for the farmers where a change to the interpretation of an agreement or challenge to previously acceptable land management can have severe implications for their income and future. If the organisation has an agreed position it is up to all the staff to respect that position and ensure that it is this approach that continues.

An observation repeated frequently in the responses to the questionnaires in 2021 relates to communication; not understanding what is actually being said. It appears that some agency staff are better than others in communicating with the farming community. At times the poor communication is probably at fault rather than the substance of the issues being discussed. At the same time some professionals mentioned the difficulty with understanding the farmers' points of view. Ensuring efficient communication is one of the roles that needs to be included, possibly provided by a facilitator. The responses in 2021 suggest communication is particularly poor between certain agencies and between farmers. Efforts are needed to address this.

The potential for a clash of cultures must be recognised and managed. It's not an insurmountable issue but requires all to understand why it happens and ensure the right steps are taken to avoid disappointment. The same applies to communication and the use of language. During the surveys in 2021 there were many references made to farmers not understanding what some professionals wanted.

Amongst the stakeholders the role of the DNPA has also been pivotal; providing support to the original concept, funding and providing the framework to enable the DFF trials to progress and be scrutinised. The Duchy of Cornwall has also

provided an important role, facilitating contacts with Defra officials and supporting the farmers' participation.

NE's position is more difficult to evaluate; providing essential and enthusiastic support at times, funding at critical moments but then failing to provide the continuity and conviction that is so vital to the farmers. By 2021 the trust established early in the initiative had dissipated with little evidence from the responses to the survey that farmers agreed with the assertion that DFF had increased trust between the partners. Many farmers suspect that the constant change of staff results in a weakening of commitment; all too frequently the organisations' cultural memories are not passed on, leading to further confusion and mistrust. Leadership has proven to be essential to securing and delivering DFF. Within the farming community one or two farmers have played a critical role in communicating and resolving issues. The use of leaders from within the farming community can be very successful in enabling new ideas to become acceptable. The use of demonstration sites is also a well tried and tested method of engagement.

Initiatives from certain farmers to address specific issues have been particularly successful and include heather restoration on Dunnabridge common (part of the Forest) and experimental grazing on selected archaeology on Riddon Ridge. However distributing the learning from such initiatives has not been so successful, none of the stakeholders felt responsible for ensuring this took place.

Collaboration, Key Learning Areas:

1. **Trust and commitment** are integral to successful co-design and partnership working. This was apparent during the development of both DMV and DFF and both initiatives improved the working relationships between all the stakeholders. Information flow was two ways with all contributors remarking on the improvement in their understanding of other stakeholders' ambitions and agendas. Sustaining the trust that evolved during the intense development phases proved more challenging. The changes with staff, lack of consistency of approach and failure to respect previous decisions all have damaged that positive working relationships.
2. **Active engagement** during the development phase of both initiatives appears to have motivated and empowered all the participants, including those members of the local farming community. The evaluations undertaken at the start of DFF provide evidence of such positive changes.
3. **Ownership** of the DMV and design phase of DFF by all the participants was high; all those engaged at this time stated that they were proud to

be involved. Active collaborative working clearly leads to ownership. During the DFF trials that ownership declined. The cause of this change appears to include the lack of cultural ownership. If a member of one group is new to the initiative or was not involved during the development of that initiative their ownership is less. As staff change the commitment weakens as does the ownership. It is essential that if there is little continuity then training and cultural commitment are provided to emphasise the organisation's position and participation to provide confidence to all the other players.

4. **Hand-holding.** The responses from farmers within one of the DFF trials identified one of the main reasons that they had not used the opportunities provided by DFF more constructively was due to feeling abandoned and left on their own. The approach, of leaving the farmers to get on with it, was flawed; most farmers claimed not to be confident in knowing exactly what was expected and that the risks of failure were too great. This was a new and very different approach and all the stakeholders underestimated the need to build more capacity amongst the participating farmers and provide support at critical times. New initiatives clearly require considerable resources to ensure engagement and sufficient understanding of what is expected. Individuals from within the farming community could provide some of this support. That support must be consistent and available at all stages including during the delivery phase and those providing the support (farmers and /or agency staff) need a support structure to enable and encourage their contributions.
5. **Sustained commitment** from all parties is essential. Failure to provide sustained commitment is repeatedly identified as a barrier to positive relationships and good delivery, and it must be recognised and managed. Whilst partnership working brings many benefits it is also essential to identify who has responsibility and for what. The need for more consistent support during the trials of DFF was underestimated.
6. **Leadership** within all the stakeholders, especially from within the farming community was and remains very important. Using respected members of the farming community to demonstrate innovative ideas or to provide support for new initiatives was a long history of success on Dartmoor (and elsewhere). Identifying those key individuals is important as the association with some individuals can be damaging. This requires

knowledge of the community. The same issues arise within organisations where individuals are permitted to hold views other than the ‘party line’.

7. **Funding** the effort required to secure agreement and maintain the agreement on common land is essential.

4. Facilitation and advice

In 2012 CCRI ‘s report *Economics of Co-ordination in Environmental Stewardship* included DFF as one of their case studies, collecting data during the design stage of DFF. This report stressed that ‘*facilitation together with targeting and financial reward were all essential ingredients for co-ordinated delivery. The report stated “Facilitation involving co-ordinated action of a group of farmers in a targeted area appears to provide the greatest efficiency gains for the government and agreement holders through economies of scale”.*

Independent facilitation was provided throughout the design phase of DFF and again during the preparation for the trials, including setting the outcomes for each area. The responsibility of the facilitator included arranging meetings, capturing the ideas and providing notes of meetings and conclusions. The facilitator also arranged meetings with staff from the relevant agencies and was a member of the steering group.

Shortly after the commencement of the trials the evaluation of DFF by Cumulus (2013) found that independent facilitation was considered important by the majority of farmers, but raised the concern that it had the potential to place a barrier between the farmer and agency staff; reducing direct contact.

Findings from the 2021 surveys identified independent facilitation as important or very important to them during the process of designing DFF, although one respondent added that facilitation was “*not that necessary – we have more knowledge of Dartmoor than we are given credit for”.*

Table F1: Advice and facilitation

Co-design/farmer participation	score 1 -disagree to 5 strongly agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
Independent advice was important to you during the application process.			2	2	8
Independent facilitation was essential to securing the support and participation of all the commoners during the application phase.			2	1	9

One of the surveys in 2021 looked at why the majority of farmers on the Forest had not changed their farming practise given the opportunity that DFF provided. The findings suggest that the lack of continued encouragement and advice from outside the local farming community was a deterrent, leading to a lack of confidence in what the opportunity provided and concerns that should they change their farming they may be penalised. This is explored further in section 4: delivery.

There is significant evidence that advice is critical at certain times during an agreement. Responses from the surveys indicate that demand for advice will be greatest during change; for farmers during the pre-application and application process and during the delivery of an agreement.

A Defra report in 2021 on the delivery of ELMs stated in the summary that the steps necessary “to encourage participation include the provision of advice, minimising the administrative burden, ensuring inclusivity and flexibility, and building trust with land managers”, (Ref 7).

The role of a facilitator in securing the engagement of commoners (farmers) is a separate role. In the 2021 survey it was found to be equally valuable; the response was similar to the previous question with all responses agreeing that it was important or very important.

Table F2: need to fund facilitation of agreements on common land

Compilation of responses; securing agreement					
Statements					
	score 1 -disagree to 5 strongly agree				
securing agreement	1	2	3	4	5
You need to finance the efforts required to secure an agreement on common land			20%	30%	50%

Key Learning Areas:

Facilitation and advice

1. **Independent facilitation.** The case for providing independent facilitation appears to be conclusive. At those times when independent support and advice was not available from a facilitator the DFF trial did not secure the necessary commitment from the participating farmers. The lack of support and facilitation are cited by the farmers as the most important factors contributing to poor delivery.
2. **Timing of provision of facilitation and advice.** There are critical times when external support and advice are required during the application period and during delivery. Some of these times have been identified. In addition to the support required during the construction of the application access to support, in the form of advice and possibly facilitation, is essential to ensure understanding of the outcomes, at the times when farmers decide on the appropriate farming practices to deliver the outcomes and when the results of monitoring are intended to influence delivery. A contribution during the annual review meeting may well be valuable.
3. **Who delivers the support and facilitation?** There are a range of jobs that need to be done to ensure smooth compliance and delivery. Not all would need to be delivered by the facilitator, some could be provided internally, from within the members of an agreement. Where some of the work is provided internally the facilitator would need to complement these arrangements and address external issues such as maintaining the commitment from all stakeholders, ensuring good communication and reporting (both ways) and to ensuring the efforts of the participants is recognised by external stakeholders. In view of the complex suite of things that could be helped by facilitation there is some support for a team composed of people with the right mix of skills.
4. **'One-stop' or 'first-stop' shops for advice.** The Vision set out to demonstrate that all the statutory bodies shared the same vision for Dartmoor's moorland; a first stop shop providing an overview from which to steer land management via agri-environment agreements. It was designed to demonstrate that all the relevant statutory agencies shared the same vi-

sion and ambition for Dartmoor's moorland. The recognition of this role by all stakeholders may now need refreshing. To date the provision of advice relating to the Vision and to DFF has not been provided by the stakeholders.

5. Delivery

Farmer participation in the trials varies between the two sites. On Haytor all the graziers agreed to work to achieve the outcomes. The specific actions targeted on specific features continued to be delivered by one or two of the participating farmers and the grazing regime continued largely unchanged from before the start of DFF; very little changed apart from the new monitoring programme.

On the Forest at the start of the trial the Forest Common's Association developed a process by which any farmer, grazing livestock on that common, could apply to deviate from the HLS prescriptions. The process included the farmer justifying the proposed changes and having to demonstrate how the proposals would benefit one or more of the outcomes. The application was then reviewed by a panel of trustees formed from within the association, as part of the assessment the Trustees sought the consent of neighbouring graziers to ensure the proposal had no adverse impact on adjacent graziers. This process was entirely designed and administered by the trustees and coordinated by the administrator. If consent was given it was for one year only.

The most frequent request made to the trustees was from farmers seeking to extend the length of time their cattle could remain on the common. The HLS prescriptions required all cattle to be removed from the common before 1st November. There are 60 cattle graziers on the Forest and of these about 16 have in at least one of the years sought an extension to the grazing season, some have applied annually. The longer grazing season provides benefits to the farmer (reduced feed and bedding costs associated with keeping cattle off the common in winter) and has potential benefits to the biodiversity outcome by increasing grazing on the vegetation that requires control including *Molina*. The restrictions and controls that accompanied the consent are stringent and failure to keep to the conditions has resulted in the consents being withdrawn.

Example of the forms graziers have to complete are included in Appendix 5.

After ten years of the trial few if any farmers have amended their farming practice in an attempt to deliver one or more of the outcomes. That may not be an issue if the current land management provided by the grazing livestock is correct and will deliver the outcomes. However from the outset a significant number of farmers were critical of the prescriptions in their HLS agreement claiming they were not likely to deliver the outcomes.

Understanding why none of the farmers chose to radically change their grazing in an attempt to improve delivery or find novel ways to address the outcomes even when their own monitoring identified issues is fundamental to the learning from DFF.

A recent review of the condition of the SSSI confirmed that there may well be the need for change. In 2021 NE recognised the disconnect between monitoring and delivery. They stated *'It seems that monitoring by DFF has picked up issues in condition (of the SSSI) but the next step of adjusting management has not occurred proactively or in a way that enables positive changes to be executed and it has been down to NE to flag this to agreement holders'*.

The concern over the condition of the SSSI relates mostly to the dominance of purple moor-grass *Molina caerulea*. The farmers had repeatedly raised their concerns over the previous 5 years but had been advised by different NE project officers that it was 'part of a natural cycle and there was nothing the farmers could do'.

The annual reporting process presented at the review meeting should provide the opportunity to report on the outcomes. Recognition that something was going wrong should have been acknowledged and changes introduced when the issues were first identified. This did not occur and now dramatic changes are demanded towards the end of the trial. This suggests that the annual review would benefit if the results from monitoring and advice on what to do were included.

The annual review meetings appear to be valuable to some but not all stakeholders. NE considers that a more specific workshop style meeting to look at a specific issue e.g. progression of SSSI condition may be more productive. They consider that the group meeting is too large to do this and perhaps has the wrong people present and suggest a move to focused task and finish groups, reporting to the Steering Group. Another stakeholder, directly engaged with the outcomes, suggests biannual meetings; a suggestion that has merit and might help the sense of abandonment between meetings that some farmers mentioned in their responses.

The Duchy of Cornwall has made similar observations, suggesting *'that the Steering Group has effectively been an oversight board with annual feedback from the farmers. To take delivery forward more regular on the ground engagement and discussion is needed with the farmers and landowners in each area to ensure a high level of delivery'*.

All too often the agencies listened to the farmers' reports but failed to respond with constructive comments and advice.

The annual review meeting is part of the trial and could have been amended and developed as the trial progressed. This did not happen and was a missed opportunity to make changes to reflect the concerns that the annual meeting was not providing the two way flow of information that now appears essential.

Table D1: An example of annual reporting 2015 from Haytor site

Example from Haytor annual report 2015		
outcome		Actions undertaken during previous 12 months
Public access	The main access routes between the principal features (tors, quarries and the tramway), adjoining commons and the car parks are kept free of inappropriate vegetation	The vegetation along the tramway has been cut. Paths radiating from the car parks have been cut. A photographic record taken to record progress.
	Selected paths, identified by DNPA, are widened by the removal of vegetation	Met with NP Rangers to identify sites; and vegetation cut along the road leading from Bovey Tracey to Haytor along the path beside the tramway.
Historic environment	Selected archaeological sites including the Tramway and boundary stones are kept free of encroaching vegetation	Vegetation swiped on sections of the tramway; bracken sprayed around the hut circles near Smallacombe Rocks – three sites. Sprayed around two archaeological sites around Pinchaford Ball
Biodiversity	The mires remain dominated by short vegetation, with some taller grasses and areas of water to provide the habitats for snipe, various dragon flies, bog hoverfly, Marsh and Small Pearl – bordered Fritillary butterflies.	An inspection in early 2005 by Andy Guy (NE) and the Commoners established the mires were in good condition with appropriate vegetation and it was noted that cattle had grazed these areas lightly the previous summer. Again a photographic record has been made

In 2013, at the start of the trials, the evaluation of DFF by Cumulus consulting identified a number of risks (*to delivery*):

- a. not delivering the outcomes for reasons outside the commoners' control;
- b. risks for the Commons Association/Trustees associated with co-ordinating the management and monitoring on commons;
- c. not engaging with a wider group of commoners (Forest of Dartmoor);

- d. any wavering in the commitment to the DFF, as this could destroy relations;
- e. and high expectations that this approach provides the answer in all situations.

There are some indications that as we approach the end of the trials some of these risks have been realised.

This report is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of progress towards all the outcomes. This will need to be provided at the end of the trials. This report is focused on the learning that is now available from the process. Some outcomes are reviewed to illustrate the barriers to delivery and others to identify good practice that has arisen during the trial.

An historic environment (archaeological) outcome is common to both trial sites. On the Forest the relevant outcome sought the removal of 12, later amended to 10, scheduled monuments (SAMs) from the at risk register. On Haytor the outcome sought the correct management of six SAMs including the UK's longest scheduled site the granite tramway. All the individual archaeological sites required specific management advice and this was provided by archaeologists from the DNPA. On Haytor 3 sites (1, 2 and 4) have been managed very well and have greatly improved in condition. Although efforts have been made site 5 has proved very difficult to access and locate the features due to the terrain. No progress has been made with sites 3 and 6. (*A Crabb per comments*)

On the whole, there has been a positive outcome for the archaeology in the Forest. The farmers were eager to undertake the works and design their own methodologies for delivering archaeological outcomes. The archaeologist who advised the farmers states; *“local experience and knowledge of landscape is key. Particular success was had on Riddon Ridge where the two largest sites were located. Unfortunately, this led to a temporary issue with NE over an originally approved large burn and experimental liming”*.

Of the 10 SAMs 4 sites have been improved through proactive management works and as result have removed from “at risk” register, 4 sites have had works planned but these have not yet been undertaken, mainly due to unfavourable swaling conditions or COVID-19 restrictions, and works required for the remaining 2 sites remains to be organised.

The historic environment outcomes on both trial sites are clear and measurable; both display a direct response to land management. The farmers have received advice on what the objective of any work should be. The advice has been consistent and easily available. Whilst the outcomes have not yet been achieved progress towards the outcomes has been significant.

On the Forest the outcomes included a specific outcome to address wild fire. Wild fires are a real threat to many of the eco-system services found on this common, including to the peat (carbon storage), public access, biodiversity and water. The outcome required a fire plan to be in place, for farmers to be trained to fight fires (alongside professional fire fighters) and for farmers to attend fires to help put them out. Over the course of the DFF trial there have been 5 wild fires requiring control on the Forest. Commoners have spent 146 hours fighting fires and 22 commoners have been trained (204 hours). Additional support co-ordinating the response has been provided and the Fire Plan is in place. There is a small financial incentive available to the farmers to attend the training and to fight fires. The impact of all the wild fires has been reduced by the farmers' efforts. The public benefits provided by the improved fire control that farmers and their equipment are significant and acknowledged by the professional fire service.

On the Forest the biodiversity outcome relates solely to the condition of the SSSI. This outcome remains contentious (see monitoring sub-section). Despite the efforts of NE to provide clearer information, to provide the re-unification of the SSSI condition units and the provision of training, the outcome remains poorly understood amongst the farming community, and probably just as important, the overall objective is disputed by the farmers. This outcome was imposed by NE and there is little ownership of this outcome amongst the farmers.

NE suspects that unless something changes this outcome will not be achieved. Following monitoring carried out in August 2019 NE stated, "*there has been very limited improvement in SSSI condition. These assessments include units that are currently in Favourable condition not necessarily maintaining that condition and units in Unfavourable Recovering condition which are not progressing towards Favourable condition as hoped*".

Some of the farmers claim that they are unable to deliver the outcome due to the constraints placed upon them by NE; restrictions on stock numbers, no burning and constantly changing advice. Any proposals that had the potential to impact on the SSSI also had to be agreed in advance with NE; almost all such requests were refused. Other external factors are also claimed as barriers to realising this outcome, including nitrogen deposition, climate change and too little grazing. There is also the impact of livestock straying, due to low stock levels on neighbouring commons encouraging animals to move to better grazing. All these issues are relevant but DFF should provide the opportunity to address such challenges.

In 2021 farmers active on the Forest were invited to participate in a survey, the questions focused on their experience with DFF. Representatives from the relevant organisations were also given the opportunity to provide their views on the trials.

The survey of farmers on the Forest resulted in a 41% response of which 86% had or were still participating in one or more aspects of DFF. Of those farmers working with DFF 66% had sought extensions to the length of time their cattle were allowed to graze, 74% had engaged with monitoring (vegetation) and five farmers had undertaken work specifically designed to deliver an outcome. These responses mirror the numbers of participating farmers held by the Forest Trustees and therefore give confidence in the responses to the questionnaire as accurately reflecting the situation.

At the start of the trials in 2012 especially on the Forest the farmers openly discussed radical changes to their farming to improve delivery of the outcomes. Certain HLS prescriptions were heavily criticised by the farmers when making the case for DFF. This was still evident a few years later but towards the end of the trial it is very difficult to find evidence of any such changes having taken place.

The reasons for this were explicitly addressed in the 2021 survey. The farmers participating in the trial were asked why there had been so little take-up of the opportunity to experiment or change farming practice. The results are set out below:

Table D2

Results of survey of Forest graziers: why so little take up of the opportunities provided by DFF	response	
Lack of financial incentive	70%	14
Worried about a risk to your agreement (HLS) payment	45%	9
No encouragement from anyone	40%	8
Not sure what to do	50%	10

The first two issues are a direct result of the nature of the trial that excluded the ability to incentivise change. The distribution of money from within the HLS agreement had to be determined and agreed before the farmers would agree to the HLS application. Securing the HLS agreement prior to the DFF trial was done to ease the consent for the trial and to provide a safety net should the trial fail. With hindsight separating the DFF trial from the HLS agreement may have encouraged greater engagement and provided the financial incentive that appears so important.

At the earliest stage of the trial NE provided assurance that actions by farmers in support of the trial would not impact on their HLS payments or any other payments including BPS. Despite these assurances there remains a concern that NE would penalise farmers for changing practice. This may reflect the lack of trust between NE and some in the farming community.

The significant number of farmers who felt unsure what they could or should do is significant; also the claim there was little encouragement to be radical suggests that the principle of DFF enabling farmers to take responsibility for such decisions was not appreciated by most of the participating farmers. Withdrawing the independent facilitation and direct advice may have been the wrong decision; encouraging the farmers to go it alone clearly did not work. Comments in-

cluded in the responses to the questionnaire include several references to feeling abandoned and being vulnerable to criticism.

The hands-off approach appears to have failed. One responder stated “we need our hand held if things are expected to change radically”.

Delivery: Key Learning Areas:

1. **Deliverable outcomes.** The Vision was designed to guide more site specific land management to improve important historic and natural environment features. Success was in part due to a clear objective and wide ownership. The trial of DFF continues and no formal final assessment on the success or otherwise of delivering the outcomes has yet to take place. The findings suggest that some of the outcomes may not be delivered. However there has been significant progress with some and these share similar characteristics; they are clear, measurable, understood by the deliverer and timely (the impact of management can be seen). It’s clear that when selecting outcomes those that are poorly understood or rely on complex subjective analysis should be avoided or be provided with sufficient consistent advice to enable them to be delivered.
2. **Incentivising delivery.** Within DFF the decisions required to change existing farming practice to deliver the outcomes was left to the participating farmers. Although some farmers identified that change was required, few if any, acted to make those changes happen. Concerns that they might be penalised or criticised for making the wrong decision may have outweighed the benefit. A majority of farmers stated that the lack of a financial incentive curtailed their ambitions during one the trials. Whilst the evidence supports this assumption there is also evidence to suggest that other factors were equally influential including a lack of encouragement, uncertainty of what the right thing to do was and no one to ask for guidance. Clearly trust and a support mechanism is essential to accompany a financial reward structure.

6. Finance

Before looking at the specific aspects of financial incentives and reward, which have surfaced during the DFF trials, it is important to appreciate the financial climate for hill farmers and commoners and the financial drivers influencing their businesses. In the years prior to start of the DFF initiative the policy, regulatory and funding frameworks influencing agriculture, and in particular hill farming, were in a state of flux and farmers on Dartmoor were concerned over their future.

As previously reported the economic viability of hill farming systems is inextricably bound up with the availability of public funding.

Surveys of farmers farming within the south-west uplands (Bodmin Moor, Dartmoor and Exmoor) in 2006/7 and again in 2013 paint a picture of the situation. On Dartmoor during the first survey 90% of the respondents were signed to an agri-environment scheme, this had fallen very slightly to 80% by 2013. Payments for the suite of CAP schemes (SPS, HLA and AEs) accounted for around 50% of the farm's gross agricultural income in 2006 and was similar seven years later; on Dartmoor 21% of responses suggested that over 60% of the farm business income came from the CAP, for 2% of the respondents it was over 80%. This reliance on subsidy or support payments is a driver for these businesses and an imperative to ensure these payments were not threatened by inappropriate actions. This may have been a contributing factor for those farmers who proposed the idea of DFF as a means to improve AE and were nervous about the increase vulnerability due to inappropriate/undeliverable prescriptions within their current agri-environment agreement.

In 2015 (13) The Cumulus Consultants evaluation stated, *'The emerging opportunities to benefit from other outcomes are still in their infancy and much will depend on the reward structure that emerges. As one commoner said 'money is essential but it is no friend to a common, causing disputes and in-fighting'*. This refers to the challenge of negotiating the distribution of the funds among all the contributing parties to a scheme. On commons with an agri-environment agreement the responsibility for this distribution lies with the association or similar body composed of the farmers signed to that agreement.

At the start of the DFF trials CCRI's report Economics of Co-ordination in Environmental Stewardship used DFF as a case study. The report's summary stated that, *"Two case studies stood out as having the most cost-effective elements to their approach for delivering co-ordinated, landscape scale environmental objectives: Integrated Local Delivery (ILD) and Dartmoor Farming Futures (DFF)"*. The

report also stated, “*However, as DFF is pilot, on-going costs were difficult to quantify and may have been underestimated*”.

It is clear that the trials have exposed some elements missing from DFF; provision of advice and support at critical times may have reduced the cost effectiveness of the DFF approach.

With no alternative funding for the trials available from Defra and Natural England both trial sites were encouraged to enter an HLS agreement. These HLS agreements would underpin the trials, providing a safety net should the trial fail, but this pragmatic arrangement also prevented any opportunity to revise payments or offer reward. This was particularly evident on the Forest. To secure agreement from the commoners to apply for an HLA agreement the farmers wanted their proportion of the agreement money to be similar to that received from the preceding ESA agreement and the money had to be apportioned before the agreement was signed. Following the success of the application and receipt of the consent from NE to start the DFF trial there was no “spare” money to administer the trial or to reward specific actions undertaken by those participating in DFF. This situation changed over the years as the Forest accrued a small underspend that could be then used to fund work directly related to the outcomes.

NE summarised the situation: *There has been no change in agri-environment scheme payments under the Haytor and Bagtor Commons ESA agreement. While there has been an increase in agri-environment scheme payments under the Forest of Dartmoor HLS, in the form of additional HR8 payments, this is designed to cover the costs of group management and co-ordination, and will not necessarily be seen by individual commoners.*

Due to the constraints described above the learning in relation to incentivising and financial reward is limited. The impact of no or little financial incentives is however of interest. The inability to be able to financially reward those undertaking works to deliver the outcomes (over and above the relevant HLS prescriptions) has proved to be an important constraint to delivery.

Incentivising and rewarding effort is clearly very important. In 2021 the survey of active farmers on the Forest found that 63% of farmers thought that the lack of incentives had contributed to the poor take-up of DFF. The same survey found that 40% of the farmers were concerned that there was a risk that participation in DFF might threaten their HLS agreement payments. This followed considerable effort to reassure the farming community, including letters from NE, that participation in DFF would not jeopardise the money from their HLS agreement. Clearly this reassurance was insufficient.

In addition to incentivising delivery it also is important to provide financial support to those attempting to secure agreement and collaborative working between all the relevant farmers. Within Higher Level Stewardship the supplement for group applications (HLS option code HR8) payments proved to be essential to secure agreements on commons and to maintain the delivery of the agreement.

The need for financial support to secure an agreement on common land remains important and was apparent from the results of the 2021 survey of those farmers responsible for the design of DFF. All responders thought such funding was essential, see Table F2.

Table F2

	score 1 -disagree to 5 strongly agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
You need to finance the efforts required to secure an agreement on common land			2	3	7

Key Learning Areas:

1. **Incentivising delivery.** There is considerable support for incentivising delivery. Over half of all farmers surveyed stated that the lack of a financial incentive was a barrier to delivery.
2. A perceived **risk** to existing funding streams was also a deterrent; farmers were less inclined to experiment or propose novel ways of working. It is possible the risk was given as an excuse because change requires effort and financial risk to the farmer and lack of support (encouragement) and financial incentive were more important barriers. Although consent to deviate from (HLS) prescriptions was provided this was not sufficient for some. The consents should have been more explicit, made more available and promoted by stakeholders to avoid this situation.
3. **Funding for advice,** administration and facilitation is required to ensure compliance and understanding leading to improved delivery.

7. Innovation

"Necessity is the mother of invention" is an English-language proverb. It means, roughly, that the primary driving force for most new inventions is a need. (Wikipedia)

DFF and the DMV arose out of a need identified by members of the farming community on Dartmoor. They identified a need to address concerns over the apparent conflicting demands from different agencies and that the current approach to agri-environment would not deliver the results that their existing agreements sought. Both these initiatives are clearly innovative in their design and delivery.

In addition to need there are other ingredients required to enable innovation to be successful. These include encouragement and enabling from those responsible for delivering the objective of any innovation. The innovation needs to be recognised and celebrated if it is to be useful.

The two initiatives (innovations) that are the subjects of this evaluation are analysed and reported on elsewhere in this report. This section identifies other specific innovations that have arisen during the development of both DMV and DFF.

Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALS), an innovation within the Dartmoor Moorland Vision

Sustainable grazing, controlled burning with targeted scrub control around access routes and specific features of interest such as Blanket Bog, Heather moorland and Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALS) are key management practices to maintain and improve the landscape and the recreational value to visitors. (From Valuing land management investments in the Dartmoor, South West Uplands Ecosystem Services Pilot Project, 2010). The concept of PALS originated in response to issues on Bodmin Moor. The criteria for selection of the PALS were based on those adopted by Exmoor National Park for a similar exercise, developed on Dartmoor and has begun to be appreciated outside the region.

The need was for there to be a term that described historic landscapes that included archaeology that required to be seen and appreciated in the landscape. The descriptions, designations and notifications available failed to convey that requirement at a time when the Vision needed such an approach.

The description of the PALS on Bodmin Moor is particularly useful *'The PALS have no statutory powers and are not a designation. They do not take precedence over existing Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings, which continue to be covered by English Heritage legislation.*

The Historic Environment resource on the moor can be seen as four layers – Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALS), Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Site, and sites not covered by the above but recorded in the Historic Environment Record in one of a number of forms (Event Record/report, aerial photograph mapping etc).

The PALS were created specifically for the Vision and are the result of discussions between heritage professionals working in Cornwall. An overarching aim of the PALS was to select coherent landscapes rather than individual features. This was

to identify blocks of continuous significant archaeological value with important interrelationships with the topographical landscape of the moor.'

Key Learning Areas:

1. When there is a need innovation can provide the solution. Within DFF there have been innovations, some provided by professionals from an agency and others from within the farming community. For the innovation to be useful it has to be accepted by all those who might be affected by its manifestation. This requires trust and communication. Potential innovations can benefit from demonstration and promotion by key members of any community.

Recommendations

Outcomes

No evidence of the need to change the outcomes. Reporting against each outcome should be formalised and the results circulated to all participants together with an brief explanation of the remaining work, if there is any, to be undertaken.

A 12 month work plan

A concise work plan setting out the work to be undertaken by the farmers should be provided. Ideally covering the following 12 months it would identify the work, monitoring and reporting that is planned to take place. This framework or plan would not need to go into detail but set out the broad strategy, providing clearer information of exactly what is being proposed and why; it needs to stimulate ideas and solutions. The agencies would be invited to comment before the commencement of work. The work would include the acceptable parameters enabling flexibility in delivery without the necessity of going back to consult the relevant agencies. Once agreed the plan would act as a consent. Resources to prepare the plan would need to be provided.

Annual review meeting

The annual review meeting attended by farmers and all the relevant stakeholders is a valued part of DFF. However it requires a rethink to provide the maximum benefits to all contributors. It must be structured to encourage a two way flow of information between the farmers and agency staff, and for both the professionals and farmers willing to accept the decisions made. It should identify who is responsible for the agreed actions and once decided there must be no changes imposed unless all parties agree.

If the number of people attending or the scale of the issue is large it would be pragmatic to hold more than one meeting and/or hold meetings more frequently than the 12 months interval. The meeting should never be more than 12 months from the last meeting. On large sites it would be pragmatic to have a review meeting for parts of the area (the management units on the Forest) to ensure the discussions are relevant to the attending farmers and staff.

A note of the meeting capturing the action points, agreed way forward and who is responsible must be made available soon after the meeting.

Originally the review meeting would include a site visit or visits to the common. This should be reinstated as an essential part of the meeting.

Advice and facilitation

The input of advice and facilitation is critical to efficient delivery. Whilst not mutually exclusive used wisely the application of advice can help facilitate collective working. Who provides the advice will depend on the capacity of the agencies to provide it and whether independent advice is considered more valuable. This would need to be agreed in advance.

The table below offers an attempt to identify the points in the agreement when the provision of external advice and/or facilitation is critical.

	application	agreement											
		12 months				12 months				12 months			
Stakeholders	↕				↕				↕				
Facilitation	↑	↑	↑		↑				↑				
Advice	↑				→	↑	↑		→	↑	↑		
		agree work programme	agree monitoring programme		annual review	agree work programme; who does what	agree monitoring programme		annual review	agree work programme; who does what	agree monitoring programme		annual review

Key

2 way flow



input



inform



Interpretation of the results of monitoring

The agencies must provide clear interpretation of the results of all monitoring and provide this to the farmers.

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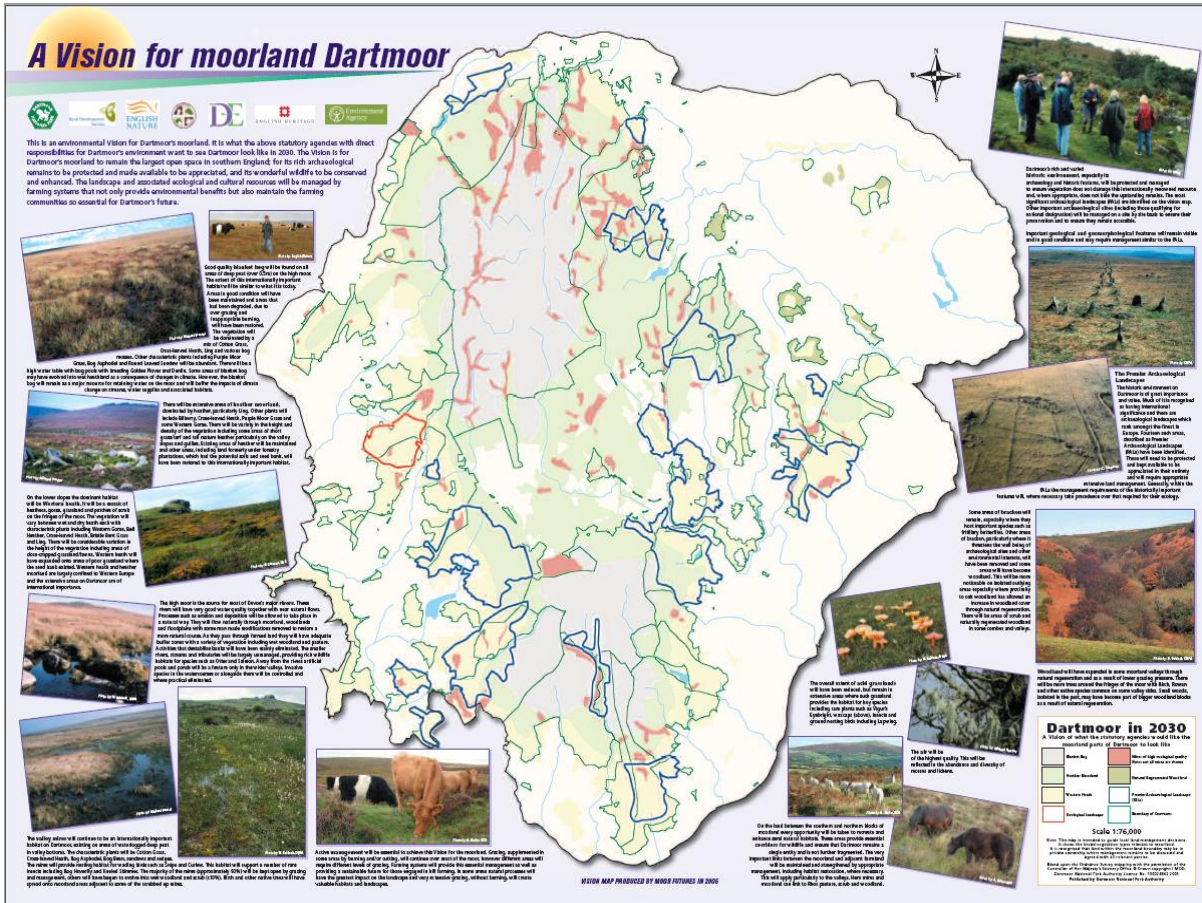
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7. Environmental Land Management Policy discussion document, Analysis of responses. February 2021 Authors: Blue Marble Research, Defra

8. Natural England Research Report NERR046. Delivering the ecosystem approach on the ground – an evaluation of the upland ecosystem service pilots. December 2012
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Appendix 1: the Dartmoor Moorland Vision



Appendix 2: Haytor & Bagtor Commons list of assets

DFF - Haytor and Bagtor Commons: list of assets and actions						
asset →	public goods			ecosystem services		
	access	archaeology	farming	nature	water	peat
designations	DNPA rec strategy - zone of heavy recreational use	a number of scheduled monuments and important sites	none	SSSI at Haytor Rocks & Quarries for exposed granite.	none	none
description	principally walking from car parks, info centre and hotel.	prehistoric, mediaeval and industrial sites	cattle, sheep and ponies. Grazing usually from May to end of Nov.	area of western heath with mires. Important species include butterflies, dragonflies & snipe	reservoir and mires	limited resource only in mires
issues	dog walking & impact on stock. Erosion of some paths	vegetation control required in some areas	some impact from people & dogs but not significant.	loss of HBF butterfly? Decline in snipe? Scrub and trees invading	?	?
level of knowledge	good with some recent data on visitor numbers	good on location but poor on precise management	good	good	unclear on significance	moderate - more info awaited
trend	increasing	condition deteriorating?	stable	stable/deteriation?	?	?
actions	maintain current management. Provide wider paths?	increase management on selected sites.	Flexible grazing period. Flexible swayling programme.	better grazing pressure and swayling?	?	avoid wild fires
outcomes	Reduced erosion. Control of bracken and scrub.	Sites in good condition	Vegetation in good condition and viable stock numbers.	Snipe increased. Butterflies increased.	?	Peat remains wet

#

Appendix 3: Initial list of outcomes - Forest

Box 1 DFF Forest draft outcomes v0.1 - suggestions from members of Forest working group

Access

1. Maintain an open landscape
2. Tracks to remain in good condition
3. Burning of gorse in sections to enhance habitat, with bonus of producing a natural wormer for equines.
4. Damage to commons by the public footfall should be managed and paid for by other means than HLS. We can control the stock but we have no chance of controlling the public.
5. reduce risk of path and track damage, erosion and expansion by sympathetic shepherding and herding practices. Consideration of not just time of year but ground conditions and weather all need introduction to a more dynamic approach to this problem.

Nature/biodiversity/ecological

6. To show evidence of grazing by different types of livestock.
7. On areas of upland heath and upland valley mires, an indication of success is to show a mosaic of vegetation, at different stages of growth.
8. Blanket bog areas to be managed so as to reduce the risks of Moorland fires, achievable mainly by summer grazing.
9. To show a diverse range of habitat to encourage different species of birds to live and thrive on the common.
10. Monitor habitat attractive to snipe.

Historical/archaeological

11. Help maintain a historic environmental record of the archaeology found on the common.
12. Encourage higher levels of grazing in selected areas.
13. Relieve archaeology of damaging plants if legislation allows.

Water

14. Implementation of a swaling program
15. Wild fire plan
16. To restore the blanket bog where possible, etc.
17. Aspire to control Molina to reduce transpiration (water loss) from blanket bogs.

Carbon

18. Maintain a fire plan
19. minimise fire risks to common by managing old growth with appropriate means.

Landscape

20. special vistas remain open
21. Graze to give different sward heights.

Food production (farming)

22. Maintain the different species of grazing animal (i.e cattle sheep and ponies)
23. The shepherding of grazing animals to ensure an even grazing pressure across the common.
24. Use productive animals where appropriate.
25. To graze ovine bovines and equines to facilitate variation of faeces, to produce lower food chain organisms.

Appendix 4: Final list of outcomes and monitoring proposals - Forest

outcomes	monitoring proposals
1. Ensure selected access routes and areas used for public access and amenity are maintained in a suitable condition as defined in the Management Area plans.	The main access routes within each Management Area will be checked annually. An annual map showing areas where vegetation that was hampering access will be provided.
2. The areas of land that fall within the three PALs will be managed by grazing stock and where appropriate burning and cutting aiming to achieve the conditions sought by the individual PAL.	Work undertaken in accordance with individual PAL statements will be recorded by photographs.
3. Of the 56 SMs found on the common 12 Scheduled Monuments appear on English Heritage's "at risk" register and these will be prioritised for appropriate management to enable them to be removed from the register. The required management will be decided on a site by site basis.	The sites and condition will be included within the management area monitoring programme. Work undertaken in accordance with site requirements to be recorded by photographs including photographs of sites before work.
4. Manage sympathetically the entire common to maintain, and where appropriate, enhance the quality of the biodiversity and within notified sites (SSSIs) to achieve 50% in favourable condition by 2020. Specific vegetation management will be undertaken to deliver the individual Management Area plans agreed in advance with Natural England.	The composition and condition of vegetation within the key features (important habitats) will be recorded within quadrants. The frequency and number of quadrants will be defined in each management area monitoring programme.
5. Provide sufficient live-stock and swaling programme to ensure an open landscape remains whilst protecting the mosaic of different vegetation and sward heights. All swaling will be in accordance to a previously agreed plan and follow the Heather and Grass Burning Code.	Selected views to be recorded annually by photographs, in a way that enables year on comparison. Take remedial action if hazards or adverse change recorded.
6. No actions by the commoners will result in reducing the water quality reaching the various abstraction points.	SWW & EA annual monitoring of water quality.
7. To facilitate blanket bog restoration design and conduct trials on the previously agreed 110 ha. by 2015, and then after only on sites agreed in advance by the commoners.	Evidence of trials underway to include photographs and maps.
8. Maintain healthy heathland soils. Provide vegetation management and reduce the adverse impacts of wild fires.	Record condition and changes to areas of exposed peat. Photographs will record remedial action.
9. Ensure that leared flocks and herds remain the principle means of stock management and that all stock are appropriate to the higher moor.	Stock counts undertaken monthly from May to October and once in February will record number, type and position of livestock.
10. Ensure the Forest Fire Plan is kept up to date and sufficient commoners are trained to fight fires. Ideally there will be no wildfires during the term of the agreement. Fire parties to be in attendance in the event of a wild fire.	Plan reviewed annually. A record of all response to callouts and list of participants will be kept.

Appendix 5: Forest form for proposal to amend HLS prescriptions (amended)

Application for a temporary change to HLS grazing schedules

The Dartmoor Farming Futures trial enables changes to the stocking rates and times when stock are permitted on the Forest if such changes are considered to better deliver the agreed outcomes. A list of the 10 outcomes are on the other side of this form. If you wish to make changes to your stock numbers or timing of when they are on the moor, please complete the form below and send it to the Administrator at Glenwood Farm, Lydford, Okehampton, Devon. EX20 4BP.

No changes will be allowed without the Forest Trustees consent.

Any changes to the grazing schedules will not result in a change in payment.

Your name:

Have you discussed your proposal with other graziers within the Management Area?
Yes/No

Describe what you wish to change:

Which outcome are you hoping to achieve by the proposed changes in timing and numbers of stock?

How do you consider the proposed changes will help achieve this outcome?

What could go wrong and how will you avoid this?

To enable changes to land management to be assessed you will need to keep accurate records of actual stock numbers and when and where they were during this temporary change to HLS grazing schedules.

Do you agree to keeping stock records? Yes/No

Can you provide a photograph/s of the area where you propose to change the stock numbers or timing of grazing and agree to provide a photo/s of the same area in 12 months? Yes/No

Do you need help with providing the above information? Yes/No

Declaration

I understand that:

- Any changes are for this grazing season only.
- If livestock cause damage or drift onto neighbouring commons they must be removed immediately.
- Regular driving of cattle to return them to the required area is not allowed after 1st Nov.
- My payment will not change.

I agree to return to my original grazing schedule immediately if requested to by the Administrator. Signature of grazier: Dated:

