



Cumulus Consultants Ltd

**Dartmoor Farming Futures Project**

**Independent Project Evaluation**

Final Report for

**Dartmoor National Park Authority and  
Natural England**

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# **Dartmoor Farming Futures Project Evaluation**

Final Report prepared for

## **Dartmoor National Park Authority and Natural England**

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Introduction

Dartmoor Farming Futures (DFF) is an experimental pilot project aimed at developing a new approach to the management of the public and environmental benefits associated with Dartmoor's moorland that:

- Offers farmers and landowners more responsibility for the design and delivery of agri-environment schemes;
- Focuses on the complete range of public benefits (ecosystem services) that are associated with upland farming (from food production to carbon sequestration) and identifies priorities for particular spatial areas; and
- Facilitates a collaborative approach to agreeing the outcomes sought, delivering the management required and assisting with the monitoring of the process.

The initiative was developed by Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) and Dartmoor Commoners' Council (DCC) with support from the Duchy of Cornwall, Natural England (NE), Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) and South West Water (SWW).

DFF links into and complements the Dartmoor Vision, which sets out what the moorland will look like in 2030. It is focused on two areas of common land within the National Park: (i) Haytor and Bagtor Commons; and (ii) the Forest of Dartmoor.

There have been two stages to the development of DFF to date. The first stage, which ran from August 2010 to March 2011, involved commoners in designing a new approach to agri-environment delivery, and agreeing outcomes and a monitoring programme. The second stage, which started in August 2011, involves trialling the new design under existing/new agri-environment scheme agreements. The commons associations and independent facilitator have been integral to the development of the approach.

While the project is at an early stage, this evaluation has been commissioned to:

- assess the extent to which the pilot project has succeeded in developing a more collaborative approach to agri-environment that has led to a better understanding of the outcomes being sought, the management required to deliver those outcomes and how the outcomes will be monitored; and
- identify lessons to learn that can be incorporated into the future development of the pilot and applied to the next Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

The evaluation approach included: the collation and review of relevant DFF documents and data; a series of interviews (33) with commoners involved, or with the potential to be involved with DFF; a series of interviews (13) with other stakeholders involved with DFF; and analysis and reporting.

## 2. Developing a more collaborative approach to agri-environment, with a better understanding of outcomes, management required and monitoring

### Engagement

The DFF project is being trialled on two commons with different characteristics:

- Haytor and Bagtor Commons is an outlying and almost separate block of common land, comprising around 700 hectares and managed as one unit. The majority is owned by DNPA. There are eight active graziers, all of whom are all involved with DFF.
- The Forest of Dartmoor, in contrast, comprises the main, central part of Dartmoor, comprising around 11,400 hectares. It is mainly owned by the Duchy of Cornwall. There are over 300 commoners in total, of whom 87 are active graziers. 23 active

graziers are presently involved with DFF, with this number expected to grow as the project develops.

The commoners involved with DFF represent a range of farming interests, in terms of land area, location, number of common rights held, and livestock grazed, and the vast majority have participated in agri-environment schemes on their own farms and/or common land previously. Seven organisations with an interest in the management of the commons have also been involved with the DFF project through the Steering Group.

The majority of the commoners who have been involved with DFF spoke positively about engaging with the project, both in the initial development and the ongoing pilot.

- On Haytor and Bagtor Commons, where there has been good engagement and a good working relationship between Defra/NE and the commoners for some time, DFF has improved relations further (to 80% good and 20% satisfactory) and also helped with the transition from the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme to the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme.
- On the Forest of Dartmoor, there is a larger, more disparate group. For those who have been involved, DFF has helped overcome some existing barriers to agri-environment scheme entry and management, and improved engagement and relations (to 80% very good, good or satisfactory). However, for those who have not engaged<sup>1</sup> - either because they did not feel that the DFF was for them (due to perceived limited benefit or where only small numbers of sheep or ponies are held) or, in a few cases, because they did not know what the project was about or how it operates - existing agri-environment scheme barriers and problems remain and relations have not changed.

Overall, commoners are more willing to engage because of the DFF project and, where they have, relationships have improved and problems/issues have been overcome. However, there remains a need to consider those that have not yet engaged, both in order to overcome existing problems and avoid causing more disparity and disconnect. The task of bringing on board a wider group of commoners on the Forest of Dartmoor is at an early stage and work in progress.

### **Agri-environment scheme understanding and ownership**

For those commoners who have engaged, the DFF approach has led to a greater understanding of what their agri-environment scheme agreement is trying to achieve. This links to the initial stages of identifying the ecosystem services and public benefits relevant to their common, and then agreeing a set of outcomes for the agreement. This, together with the approach being farmer-led and farmer-managed (for example, through the derogation process), has resulted in a greater sense of ownership of the agri-environment scheme agreements – this element scored highest out of all impacts for both commoners and stakeholders. Commoners are also more enthusiastic and feel more confident that their agri-environment agreement can deliver good land management on the common.

### **Environmental awareness and understanding**

Participating commoners feel that they have a greater awareness of the key habitats, species and other environmental features on their common as a result of the DFF approach. This has resulted from the initial scoping of the agreement, as well as the evidence and information provided during the process, and site meetings. It was recognised, particularly by stakeholders, that more could be done in terms of providing clear and accessible scientific evidence so that this can be taken more into account during the process of setting priorities, outcomes and delivering management. Some scientific evidence has yet to be provided for the Forest of Dartmoor pending the completion of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) re-unitisation and re-assessment of condition. Both commoners and stakeholders also recognise the value of simpler, clearer environmental information including, for example, photographs showing

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. not attended meetings or sought information

specific habitats and species and the use of English rather than Latin names. The provision of this type of information in relation to individual common management units in the Forest is presently underway.

## **Outcomes**

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.

## **Monitoring**

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.

## **Environmental benefits**

Whilst acknowledging that the pilots are at an early stage, both commoners and stakeholders are positive about the ability of DFF to deliver the full range of environmental benefits as set out in the outcomes for each area of common. While the scores for the different ecosystem services varied by common according to the priorities, there is general consensus that the greatest environmental impacts would arise in relation to food production, management of natural habitats and biodiversity, fire prevention and management of archaeological sites. Positive, but lower scores are expected in relation to the management of public access, landscape, soil/peat/carbon and protection of watercourses and water quality. The lower scores in relation to water and carbon may link across to the as yet, untapped potential for delivery of these ecosystem services through Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes.

Commoners and stakeholders agree that the environmental benefits under the DFF approach would be higher under DFF than under ESA or HLS alone. This was due to improved understanding and ownership and the wider range of environmental services being delivered, amongst other things. However the valuable contribution of the underpinning schemes was also noted: the ESA has enhanced biodiversity (by tackling overgrazing) and contributed to fire prevention (via controlled burning) in particular; and the HLS could also be expected to deliver additional environmental benefits in a situation without DFF.

## **Farm business benefits**

There was agreement that commoners have more flexibility under DFF than they would have otherwise under a standalone ESA or HLS agreement, due to the ability to apply for derogations or similar. This element scored the second highest out of all benefits, for both commoners and stakeholders. The commoners also agree that they have adopted new or different management methods to benefit the common. While derogations to date have focused on extending the cattle grazing period and swaling, there is no reason why other management could not be also be applied for.

The commoners reserve the lowest scores for the economic gains associated with DFF (and this was supported by the stakeholders' scores). A few felt that there could be cost savings relating to more flexible grazing and reduced cattle housing periods and an associated fall in reduced bedding/feed costs. The majority could not see any likely income improvements associated with DFF, due to there being no agri-environment

scheme payment increases<sup>2</sup> and, as yet, no additional income anticipated from improved grazing or more stock.

### **Impacts on partners**

Stakeholders, as well as commoners, have also been positively impacted by the DFF project. This includes a better understanding of the commoners' situation and the economic and practical challenges facing them, and for some, a more positive perception of the commoners in light of the response to the opportunity provided by DFF. The partners on the Steering Group also expressed greater understanding of each other's circumstances and constraints. A closer working relationship between the partners, and more collaborative working, has developed as a result of the project.

### **Future management of the commons**

There is agreement that DFF is making a difference to the future management of the commons in a positive way. It is helping to empower commoners and developing capacity to manage the common, alongside other initiatives such as the Hill Farm Project. It is also encouraging them to work together and look at the land in a different way. This includes having a longer term view and being aware of the wide range of environmental services that the commons can deliver. It is however at an early stage in terms of the delivery of identified outcomes.

DFF is having less impact in terms of the organisation of commons management – primarily due to the existence of commons associations prior to DFF – however the introduction of DFF has supported the development of additional, beneficial roles for the commons associations, including identifying priorities, co-ordinating delivery in a flexible way, and monitoring outcomes.

### **Summary**

Overall, both commoners and stakeholders are very positive regarding progress so far against the four key aims of the project. The commoners have been enabled to take more responsibility for the design and delivery of their agri-environment scheme agreements and the DFF process has facilitated a collaborative approach to setting outcomes, delivery on the ground and monitoring. This collaboration includes closer working amongst commoners, between commoners and partners, and amongst partners. Both commoners and stakeholders are optimistic that the agreements will deliver the complete range of public benefits and the identification of suitable priorities for different areas, although there is more caution here given the early stage of the project.

## **3. Lessons for the future development of the pilot and the next Rural Development Programme**

### **3.1 Future development of the pilot**

A summary of the perceived strengths and weaknesses, and risks of the DFF approach to date is set out below, together with recommended improvements. Lessons learned, project design and delivery, governance and management, and value for money are also considered. This summary is based on the responses received and our own analysis.

The main **strengths** of the DFF project, from a long list, include:

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

- Open process
- Improved dialogue between the parties and development of closer working relationships
- Improved understanding of environmental features, ecosystem services and agri-environment schemes
- Empowered commoners to take ownership of outcomes, management and monitoring
- Re-unitisation and re-assessment of SSSI
- Improved verifiability arising from the outcome-focused agreement
- Greater flexibility
- Increased likelihood of positive outcomes from the agreement
- Increased level of support for commoners
- Generated enthusiasm amongst commoners and partners
- Independent facilitator role

The main **weaknesses** of the DFF project were fewer, but include:

- Time input required from commoners (and partners) and time taken to develop the project
- Not reaching/engaging some commoners (on the Forest of Dartmoor)
- Lot of responsibility on the Commons Associations/Trustees
- Access to, and limited uptake of, scientific evidence Lack of simple summaries/updates, resulting in some stakeholders feeling out of touch
- Separation between NE and commoners, arising from communications via facilitator
- Financial limitations, including no increase in payments under DFF
- Lack of a clear project plan
- Differing expectations amongst partners and lack of agreement on a number of matters

A number of **risks** were identified with the DFF approach, these include: not delivering the outcomes for reasons outside the commoners' control; risks for the Commons Association/Trustees associated with co-ordinating the management and monitoring on commons; not engaging with a wider group of commoners (Forest of Dartmoor); any wavering in the commitment to DFF, as this could destroy relations; and high expectations that this approach provides the answer in all situations.

Improvements to the DFF project have occurred as the project has progressed, and this process is expected to continue. That said, we do have **recommendations for specific improvements to the DFF project**, drawing on the weaknesses and risks mentioned above:

1. Speed up the SSSI re-unitisation in order to maintain momentum
2. Increase commoners' understanding further, based on scientific evidence
3. Support the Trustees' roll-out of DFF to a wider group of commoners on the Forest
4. Support the Commons Associations/Trustees in the delivery of management and monitoring
5. Monitor farm-level cost and income data to demonstrate farm business impacts
6. Innovate further, by using the DFF approach to deliver other objectives (e.g. training, capital works, water protection, support for new entrants) at landscape scale, utilising other funding streams.
7. Produce promotional literature and regular updates
8. Develop a project route map and timetable, and share this with a wider group of partners.

There is also interest in progressing the PES scheme alongside the piloting of DFF project. While it is acknowledged this is a separate process, it nonetheless links to DFF and involves the same land and many of the same individuals.

**Lessons learned** which are relevant to similar initiatives in future include:

- Keep things as simple as possible, and focused on specific priorities
- Allow time to build confidence and trust
- Manage expectations from the start
- Allow farmers to take responsibility and have faith in the collaborative process
- Support key individuals e.g. the Commons Associations' Chairmen
- Secure baseline data as an integral part of the monitoring framework.
- Use flexibility carefully, when co-ordinating the management of individual common units
- Communicate regularly, including via an annual meeting/walk
- Seek wider engagement, with 'quieter' farmers and the wider community
- Define the project and process, to help manage expectations
- Independent facilitation is important, but the role/time period needs to be defined.
- Keep people on board and up to speed

Importantly, the DFF project has enabled the development of a stepped approach which can be used and improved as it is applied to other situations.

**Project design and delivery**, and the **governance and management** of the project were generally regarded positively. A few gaps/weaknesses were identified however, and these together with suggested remedies, are outlined under 'weaknesses' and 'improvements' above.

It is difficult to be definitive about the **value for money** of the DFF project, given the early stage of the project in terms of delivery and without knowing whether the desired outcomes will be achieved. We can say, however, that the project is making good progress in engaging deliverers, increasing understanding, involvement and ownership, and developing capacity. This increases the likelihood of the desired outcomes being achieved in the pilot areas. As DFF is taken up by more commoners, these outcomes are likely to be extended.

We can also say that the DFF project is being carried out economically, given that it is relying heavily on many people's goodwill and time, most of which is provided free of charge. It is difficult to derive an accurate estimate of time and costs for DFF given the lack of data, both for the DFF approach and the non-DFF equivalent. The one direct cost associated with DFF, which we do know about relates to facilitation (£38,500), although parts of this can attributed to research and development, and explaining DFF to third parties. It is reasonable to expect, however, that the direct additional costs of DFF will represent only a small percentage of the total cost of the agri-environment scheme payments over the ten year period of the agreements.

There will also be potential cost savings for NE, and the public sector generally, arising from the self-management and monitoring by commoners under DFF. There should also be a reduced risk of the agreements failing and hence loss of investment, by both commoners and the public sector.

Feedback from the interviews suggests that the majority of commoners and stakeholders feel that DFF is good value for money; that is, the current and anticipated outcomes on the ground will be worth the money and time invested. In addition, the project is delivering a new, potentially very effective model for agri-environment scheme delivery.

All things considered, then, it is reasonable to conclude that DFF has the potential to represent good value for money for both the public sector and the private sector. In addition to the environmental outcomes, the commoners should benefit from the additional flexibility and, potentially, more secure agri-environment scheme payments and enhanced opportunity for PES scheme payments.

### 3.2 Wider application and RDPE 2014-2020



## **Wider application**

Both commoners and stakeholders would recommend the DFF approach to others and agree that the approach could be replicated elsewhere. This includes other commons on Dartmoor as well as intakes and in-bye land. More generally, the DFF approach was felt to be applicable to landscape-scale approaches in other parts of the country, both in upland and lowland areas. The outcome-focused approach could also be readily applied to individual farms.

There is however a recognition that the DFF approach would not be a solution everywhere. DFF would not necessarily work where there are conflicts or unresolved issues between commoners/farmers. The need for key individuals within the farming community to support the approach, a good independent facilitator and sufficient resources was also flagged up.

## **RDPE 2014-2020**

There was also agreement amongst commoners and stakeholders that the DFF approach should be considered for inclusion in the RDPE 2014-2020. We would concur that an outcome-focused, farm-led approach, such as DFF, could potentially result in better, more cost effective agri-environment scheme delivery in many areas. Furthermore, improving understanding, engagement and ownership by commoners and other farmers through a DFF approach would be an investment in capacity for the long term. An outcome-focused approach could also contribute to improved verifiability, with benefits over prescription-based agreements.

The DFF approach would fit with several of the proposed themes for the New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS) including landscape scale delivery, a participative, collaborative approach and an outcome focus. It would also be appropriate for the proposed top or middle tiers of NELMS, covering designated sites and landscape scale working with locally prioritised outcomes, co-ordinated across several farm holdings.

Wider roll-out would need to be accompanied by clear objectives (for farmers/areas using the approach), and simple, straightforward structures and processes in order to reduce the costs and time involved in developing projects. It would be beneficial, for example, to develop menus of outcomes, perhaps based on National Character Areas, which can be refined by farmers. Resourcing would also be required for independent facilitation at the beginning of projects.

One issue which it may not be possible to accommodate within the new RDPE would be payments based on outcomes delivered. The proposed EAFRD regulations for the next programme period will only permit agri-environment scheme payments based on income foregone and additional costs<sup>3</sup>, as presently. That said, it should still be possible to incentivise desired outcomes, by tailoring payment rates, whilst adhering to the existing basis.

Whilst potentially beneficial in many cases, it is clear that the DFF approach will not suit every situation. This might mean that a DFF approach may need to run alongside a 'standard' approach. This should be feasible, given that the standard agri-environment scheme would in any case provide the basis upon which the DFF approach stands. The key here would be to clear on which standard elements remained in place, and what was varied via the DFF approach, together with simple, transparent, standardised structures and processes for the DFF approach.

For those areas where a DFF approach is implemented, a further opportunity lies in applying the approach to deliver a wider range of objectives such as farm

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<sup>3</sup> Article 29(6) of the proposed European Agricultural Food and Rural Development (EAFRD) Regulations, October 2011, COM(2011) 627 final/2

competitiveness, animal health or training, alongside agri-environment, in order to address local priorities in a more integrated way. There is potential for this type of integration under the RDPE 2014-2020, with the removal of the current axes and a focus on priorities. A broadened DFF approach would link well into proposed EU rural development measures such as co-operation, producer groups, knowledge, risk management, and restructuring/ innovation/modernisation.

Linking the DFF outcome-focused, ecosystem service based approach with separate, private sector PES schemes is a further opportunity, although not one necessarily required to be accommodated, or referred to, within the new programme.

These positive opportunities need to be tempered with the fact that the DFF project is still at an early stage, with the results on the ground of DFF yet to be fully realised. While there is confidence that the desired outcomes will be delivered, it would be sensible not only to continue the DFF project but also consider trialling it in other areas and circumstances, in order to help test and refine it and understand the circumstances in which it might best be used. This dovetails with a key message of a recent report on co-ordinated management by CCRI<sup>4</sup>, which concludes that a 'one size fits all' approach to co-ordinated management should be avoided. In any case, it is recommended that the DFF-type approach is explicitly incorporated into the new programme given that it is a novel mechanism.

**Our recommendations in respect of the wider application of the DFF approach and the next rural development programme** can be summarised as follows:

- A. Continue to monitor the DFF approach, focusing particularly on the delivery of outcomes on the ground.
- B. Trial the DFF-type approach in other areas and circumstances, to test and refine it.
- C. Simplify and standardise DFF-type objectives, structures and processes, to reduce time taken and improve efficiency, but without losing farmer/commoner lead and input.
- D. Trial an extension of the DFF approach to a wider range of objectives to address local priorities at a landscape scale in a more integrated way.
- E. Incorporate the DFF approach within the new RDPE 2014-2020 to cover the above trials and the potential mainstreaming of the approach in the future.

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<sup>4</sup> CCRI (2012) Economics of Co-ordination in Environmental Stewardship. Project No.DO0119. Report for Defra. This report cites the DFF project.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank a number of individuals and organisations for their input in helping us to evaluate the Dartmoor Farming Futures Project.

We would firstly like to thank all those commoners who gave their time and thoughts during the interviews, including in particular the Chairmen of the Commons Associations – Maurice Retallick and Colin Abel – as well as the treasurer and administrator for the two commons. Their input was invaluable and much appreciated.

Thank you also very much to the other stakeholders on the Steering Group who provided feedback through the interviews. Particular thanks go to the facilitator, John Waldon, who provided very helpful background information including thoughts on key lessons to date and wider application of the DFF approach.

Finally, we would very much like to thank Dr Kevin Bishop from the Dartmoor National Park Authority and Naomi Oakley and Andy Guy from Natural England who guided us in this work.

# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2	EVALUATION AIM .....	2
1.3	EVALUATION APPROACH .....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>DARTMOOR FARMING FUTURES – BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	DARTMOOR AND ITS PUBLIC GOODS.....	3
2.2	THE ROLE, IMPORTANCE AND CHANGING FACE OF AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES.....	4
2.3	RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT FOR HILL FARMING .....	4
2.4	DARTMOOR FARMING FUTURES PROPOSAL .....	5
<b>3</b>	<b>DARTMOOR FARMING FUTURES – AIMS, PROJECT DESCRIPTION, INPUTS AND OUTPUTS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	AIMS.....	6
3.2	PROJECT DEVELOPMENT .....	6
3.3	MONITORING.....	9
3.4	STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE .....	10
3.5	INPUTS .....	12
3.6	OUTPUTS.....	14
<b>4</b>	<b>DARTMOOR FARMING FUTURES – COMMONERS’ VIEWS.....</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1	BACKGROUND.....	16
4.2	AGRI-ENVIRONMENT ENGAGEMENT .....	17
4.3	DEVELOPMENT OF DARTMOOR FARMING FUTURES .....	18
4.4	INPUTS .....	22
4.5	RESULTS .....	23
4.6	LESSONS TO LEARN.....	27
4.7	FUTURE APPLICATION.....	32
<b>5</b>	<b>DARTMOOR FARMING FUTURES – STAKEHOLDERS’ VIEWS .....</b>	<b>33</b>
5.1	PROJECT DEVELOPMENT .....	33
5.2	ENGAGING AND INVOLVING COMMONERS .....	34
5.3	INPUTS .....	35
5.4	RESULTS .....	36
5.5	PROJECT DESIGN, DELIVERY, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT .....	40
5.6	LESSONS TO LEARN.....	42
5.7	FUTURE APPLICATION.....	47
<b>6</b>	<b>FUTURE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ENGLAND .....</b>	<b>49</b>
6.1	PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES .....	49
6.2	AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES (INCLUDING UPLAND SUPPORT) .....	50
6.3	OTHER RURAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT .....	51
6.4	BUDGETS AND PAYMENTS .....	51
<b>7</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>52</b>
7.1	DEVELOPING A MORE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO AGRI-ENVIRONMENT, WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF OUTCOMES, MANAGEMENT REQUIRED AND MONITORING.....	52
7.2	LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PILOT AND THE NEXT RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.....	55

## Appendices

- Appendix 1: Moor Futures
- Appendix 2: DFF Approach
- Appendix 3: DFF Pilot Areas – Ecosystem Services
- Appendix 4: DFF Pilot Areas – Outcomes
- Appendix 5: Commoners interviewed
- Appendix 6: Commoners interviews - questions
- Appendix 7: Commoners' feedback on results of Dartmoor Farming Futures
- Appendix 8: Stakeholders interviewed
- Appendix 9: Glossary

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Dartmoor Farming Futures (DFF) is an experimental pilot project aimed at developing a new approach to the management of the public and environmental benefits associated with Dartmoor's moorland that:

- Offers farmers and landowners more responsibility for the design and delivery of agri-environment schemes;
- Focuses on the complete range of public benefits (ecosystem services) that are associated with upland farming (from food production to carbon sequestration) and identifies priorities for particular spatial areas; and
- Facilitates a collaborative approach to agreeing the outcomes sought, delivering the management required and assisting with the monitoring of the process.

The initiative was developed by Dartmoor National Park Authority and Dartmoor Commoners' Council with support from the Duchy of Cornwall, Natural England, Royal Society for Protection of Birds and South West Water.

DFF links into and complements the Dartmoor Vision, which sets out what the moorland will look like in 2030. It is focused on two areas of common land within the National Park: (i) Haytor and Bagtor Commons; and (ii) the Forest of Dartmoor.

There have been two stages to the development of DFF to date:

1. The first stage, which ran from August 2010 to March 2011, was focused on developing a new approach to delivering agri-environment delivery. It involved the active graziers on the two commons designing a new agri-environment agreement model and agreeing the outcomes with Defra and Natural England, together with a programme for review and monitoring.
2. The second stage started in August 2011 and involves trialling the new design under a new Higher Level Stewardship agreement in conjunction with Natural England. The second stage includes a consideration of the different ecosystem services being delivered on the commons.

The above work has been supported by a facilitator (John Waldon) who has worked with the commoners and has been funded and steered by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA), Natural England (NE), Dartmoor Commoners' Council (DCC), Duchy of Cornwall, and the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). The DFF project is underpinned by agri-environment scheme agreements on both areas (an Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme agreement on Haytor and Bagtor Commons and a Higher Level Stewardship scheme agreement on the Forest of Dartmoor).

## **1.2 Evaluation aim**

Dartmoor National Park Authority and Natural England have commissioned this independent project evaluation of the Dartmoor Farming Futures project in order to:

- Assess the extent to which the pilot project has succeeded in developing a more collaborative approach to agri-environment that has led to a better understanding of the outcomes being sought, the management required to deliver those outcomes and how the outcomes will be monitored.
- Identify lessons to learn that can be incorporated into the future development of the pilot and applied to the next Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

It is acknowledged that the DFF project is at a relatively early stage in terms of implementation on the ground however there is value in assessing what has been achieved to date both to inform future activity on Dartmoor and consider the wider applicability of the approach to policy and other parts of the country.

## **1.3 Evaluation approach**

The approach undertaken during the evaluation included:

- The preparation and refinement of a framework for the evaluation;
- The collation and review of relevant DFF documents and data;
- A series of interviews with commoners involved with DFF, or with the potential to be involved, on the two areas of common land;
- A series of interviews with other stakeholders involved with DFF, including steering group members and representatives of other interested organisations; and
- Analysis and reporting, including the production of recommendations.

## 2 Dartmoor Farming Futures – Background and Rationale

It is important to set out, briefly, the background and rationale to the DFF Project as this provides important context for the development of the project, its current operation and, potentially, its wider applicability. This background and rationale is well described in the DFF Proposal made by DNPA and DCC to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2009<sup>5</sup> and the DFF Case Study produced by John Waldon in January 2013<sup>6</sup>. Key points, relevant to this evaluation, are summarised below.

### 2.1 Dartmoor and its public goods

The South West uplands provide a unique array of ecosystem services and public benefits. On Dartmoor, these public goods include:

- *A remarkable landscape* shaped by the management of its distinctive and often harsh environment over many millennia. The moorland is an exposed upland landscape edged by granite tors, enclosing a broad plateau covered with blanket bog and shallow mire filled basins. Of world renown, it is an essential ingredient of the region's £5 billion tourist industry.
- *Public Access* to over 47,000 ha of open land and to 730 km of public rights of way, providing quiet enjoyment and enhancing the quality of life for the millions of visitors.
- One of the finest *pre-historic and historic landscapes* in Western Europe revealing a chronology of human activity stretching back over 8,000 years, containing unique archaeological sites. Over 6% of the nation's Scheduled Monuments are found on Dartmoor.
- *Biodiversity* of international significance; 120 km<sup>2</sup> of Blanket Bog, 115 km<sup>2</sup> of Upland Heath and 10 km<sup>2</sup> of Valley mires of national importance. The skylark population is seven times the density found in the surrounding lowlands.
- Some of the highest quality *drinking water* in the country. 90% of the water provided to homes and businesses in Devon and Cornwall is collected from the SW uplands.
- *Carbon storage*. On Dartmoor the estimate is 8.4 Mt C (million tonnes carbon) in the deep peat area, 8.8 Mt C in the shallow peat/heath areas and 5.0 Mt C in the remainder of the Moor. This is 22 Mt C in total (or 81 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, or 9 years of Devon's per capita emissions).
- *Food security*. Providing high quality calves and lambs for breeding and finishing stock in the lowlands. Making best use of unploughable natural grasslands, and reducing the need for importing meat from countries where the supply may be less reliable and the implications for climate change much higher in the near future.

These public goods were largely created and are now mainly maintained by farming, in particular by properly managed grazing stock. On Dartmoor this is a combination of cattle, sheep and ponies. This livestock, as well as producing high value food with a low carbon footprint, maintains the sward for the capture and storage of water (rain), protects historic features, keeps the landscape open and accessible, and reduces the risk of destruction by wild fires with resulting releases of carbon into the atmosphere.

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<sup>5</sup> DNPA & DCC (2009) Dartmoor Farming Futures – a proposal by Dartmoor National Park Authority and Dartmoor Commoners' Council to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

<sup>6</sup> Waldon, J. (2013). DFF Case Study January 2013. Dartmoor Farming Futures. Developing an alternative approach to agri-environment delivery on common land. An example of outcome focused delivery.



## **2.2 The role, importance and changing face of agri-environment schemes**

Agri-environment schemes are an important, if not essential, source of funding for those who farm in the uplands, with most farmers participating in such schemes. This is particularly true for farmers providing livestock to graze open moorland, much of which is common land. In 2011/12, agri-environment scheme payments accounted for 25% of Farm Business Income on average for Less Favoured Area (LFA) grazing livestock farms in the South West, with the Single Payment Scheme accounting for a further 58%<sup>7</sup>. Agri-environment schemes in the South West uplands, including Dartmoor, partly reflect the range of public goods referred to above, especially those related to the natural environment.

Dartmoor became an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) in 1994; and prior to this DNPA offered management agreements on selected areas. The ESA proved popular and financially important. In 2004, the area within an ESA agreement reached 71,209 ha and included the majority of the 35,882 ha of common land.

Environmental Stewardship replaced the ESA in 2005 and when ESA agreements on the commons come to an end most commons apply for a combined Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) and Upland Entry Level Stewardship (UELS) agreement. By 2012, some farmers had had almost twenty years of experience of agri-environment schemes.

The common land on Dartmoor is divided into 92 registered commons. Most are contiguous and these “home” commons surround a central common – The Forest of Dartmoor. The majority of the commons have a Common Association and it is this Association that usually applies for an agri-environment scheme.

During the transition from ESA to Environmental Stewardship, commoners expressed a number of concerns<sup>6</sup>, including the following:

- The lack of ownership of common’s agreements by individual farmers/commoners;
- The agreements failed to reflect local conditions & farming practices;
- The land management prescribed by the scheme focused on SSSIs and often failed to recognise other land management required by the other ecosystem services; and
- Farmers were denied an opportunity to contribute their skills and experience to the agreement and to monitoring that agreement.

In addition, NE was concerned about the high number of commons agreements failing nationally and the consequences of this (59% of the 401,200 ha common land in England is notified as SSSI *inter alia*). NE suspected that the lack of ownership of the agreement by individual commoners together with a lack of clarity on why certain land management was being required were the principle contributing factors.

## **2.3 Recognition and support for hill farming**

Alongside the evolution of agri-environment schemes referred to above, a number of other initiatives in support of hill farming on Dartmoor have contributed to the debate:

The ‘State of Farming on Dartmoor 2002’ report commissioned by DNPA stressed that the payment basis for agri-environment schemes should reward the production of environmental outputs as well as reflecting agricultural income foregone (referring to the recommendation of Defra’s ‘Task Force for the Hills’ report in 2001) and that hill farmers would benefit from more co-operative working; the “Moor Futures” approach.

By 2005, the Moor Futures initiative had two strands: The Dartmoor Hill Farm Project and the Dartmoor Vision, see Appendix 1. Both projects involved farmers and landowners and sought to address those issues identified as having a negative impact on hill farming.

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<sup>7</sup> Farm Business Survey 2011/12

During the construction of the Vision and in subsequent discussions within the Dartmoor Vision Group (a group established to help deliver the Dartmoor Vision) concerns were expressed, by farmer members, over the failure of agri-environment schemes to address local conditions and to incorporate local farming practices. Similar concerns were also raised over the lack of a strategic approach to the array of public benefits (now more often referred to as ecosystem services) found on the moorland. They implied that such issues often led to poor ownership of agreements by the farmers. An even more important issue related to the farmers having no clear understanding of what their schemes were expected to deliver and why.

## **2.4 Dartmoor Farming Futures proposal**

An opportunity to discuss these concerns arose in 2009 during a visit by the then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Hilary Benn MP. At a meeting with the Secretary of State, DNPA and DCC (with the support of South West Water (SWW), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Duchy of Cornwall) proposed a new approach to agri-environment delivery on common land<sup>8</sup>. This proposal highlighted the importance of upland farming and grazing to the delivery of a range of public benefits for the nation and concerns over the long term viability of hill farming. Importantly, it also recognised that “farmers are starting to ‘turn their backs’ on moorland management due to financial uncertainty, the need for alternative income and a lack of ownership of and flexibility within agri-environment schemes. There is a growing concern from hill farmers/commoners and landowners that they are no longer in control of their own destiny”<sup>8</sup>.

The proposal outlined a new approach that “focused on developing a more collaborative approach and offering farmers and landowners more responsibility for delivering the correct management of the moorland and its associated public benefits. ....by empowering the hill farming community to take back ownership and responsibility for moorland management, within a clear framework of delivering public benefits, the continued loss of the skills and experience necessary to manage these important assets will be halted and the foundation laid for a more sustainable farming future”<sup>8</sup>.

The proposal met with a positive response from Defra. By 2010, the idea had been developed and NE enabled the design stage to be progressed as part of their South West Ecosystem Pilot. The initiative evolved into a partnership steered by DNPA later that year. The design (Stage 1) and piloting the design (Stage 2) are both part of DFF. The details of these stages are set out in Section 3.



DNPA

**Figure 2-1: Cattle grazing on Dartmoor**

<sup>8</sup> DNPA & DCC (2009) Dartmoor Farming Futures – a proposal by Dartmoor National Park Authority and Dartmoor Commoners’ Council to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

## **3 Dartmoor Farming Futures – Aims, Project Description, Inputs and Outputs**

This section sets out the DFF aims, project development stages, monitoring arrangements, structures and governance, and inputs and outputs (as far as these can be quantified/described).

### **3.1 Aims**

The aims of the Dartmoor Farming Futures project, as defined by the 2009 proposal, are to:

- Offer farmers and landowners more responsibility for the design and delivery of agri-environment schemes;
- Focus on the complete range of public benefits (ecosystem services) that are associated with upland farming (from food production to carbon sequestration) and identifies priorities for particular spatial areas; and
- Facilitate a collaborative approach to agreeing the outcomes sought, delivering the management required and assisting with the monitoring of the process.

### **3.2 Project development**

The DFF project began in August 2010, supported by DNPA, DCC, the Duchy of Cornwall and NE. An independent facilitator was appointed. The initiative designed to comprise of two stages.

Stage 1 (August 2010 to March 2011) sought to design an approach to agri-environment suitable for common land, addressing those issues previously identified including:

- Improving the participating farmers and landowners understanding of what they were expected to deliver and why;
- Improving ownership of the scheme;
- Ensuring the resulting agreement maintained or enhanced all relevant ecosystems;
- Reflecting local conditions (vegetation, farming practices, weather); and
- Enabling local farming practices to continue.

Stage 2 (August 2011 to date) sought to pilot the new design.

An outline of the work involved in both stages of the project, drawing on the DFF Case Study produced by John Waldon<sup>6</sup>, is set out below.

#### **3.2.1 Stage 1 – designing a new approach to agri-environment delivery on common land**

This stage involved the following elements:

1. Assessment of potentially suitable commons. A list of commons on Dartmoor that were nearing the end of their current agri-environment agreement (ESA) was obtained from NE. An assessment of the ecosystem goods and services found on each common identified two commons that between them had examples of all the natural assets required for the pilot. The selected commons also represent very different areas – one on the high moorland (Forest of Dartmoor) and the other on the moorland edge (Haytor and Bagtor Commons). Both areas of common land have the

potential for environmental improvement (i.e. land that would currently be targeted for HLS).

2. Invitation to commons associations to participate. The associations from the two commons were invited to participate in Stage 1 and asked to provide commoners willing to contribute to the design. A group from each common was composed of active commoners (holders of commoning rights that still exercise those rights by providing grazing livestock on the common).
3. Identification of key issues. The two groups of commoners began by identifying a number of key issues that guided their ambitions. These included:
  - 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;
  - The scheme should enable new graziers to join;
  - It should build on the positive aspects of previous agri-environment schemes;
  - The new approach should engender trust between all parties.
4. Development of a new approach. Whilst initially the two groups were encouraged to remain independent of each other their emerging designs were very similar and were, towards the end of Stage one, merged into one design.

The design is for land with the potential for environmental improvement and is set out as a number of steps. The new approach is set out in full in Appendix 2. The main parts of the process are summarised below:

- i. Identifying the ecosystems services and public benefits relevant to the common;
- ii. Agreeing a set of outcomes that reflect those ecosystem services; this is what the farmers and land owners agree to deliver;
- iii. Providing an internal deed setting out who benefits and how payments are distributed;
- iv. The farmers and landowners then decide on appropriate land management necessary to deliver outcomes, this is set out in an annual work programme;
- v. A monitoring programme is agreed with NE that illustrates progress towards achieving outcomes and gives confidence to commoners that their activities are relevant and correct.

The proposed new approach to delivery is predicated on an agreed set of outcomes, understood by all, and allowing the land management, necessary to deliver the outcomes, to be determined by the farmers and the owners of the common. There are no prescriptions within the agreement.

The design is intended to greatly increase the potential of agri-environment schemes to deliver real change and enhancement of a suite of ecosystem services and public benefits, whilst encouraging farmers to take ownership of the scheme.

The new approach was trialled on four home farms to see if the approach was applicable to land other than common land. All the farmers thought that the design was practical and would work on their farms.

### 3.2.2 Stage 2 – piloting the new design

This stage involved/involves the following elements:

1. Invitation to commons to participate in Stage 2. NE approved Stage 2 in July 2011. The facilitator was retained and the two commons that participated in Stage 1 were offered the opportunity to pilot the design, see Figure 3-1 for an outline of each common. Both commons agreed to continue and engage in Stage 2. The commons each provided a working group comprised of active graziers (farmers with rights to graze sheep, cattle and/or ponies) and a landowners' representative to oversee the preparation for the pilot including drafting the outcomes and monitoring programme.

The **Forest of Dartmoor** (common) has an area of c. 11,400 ha. This is a large area of high moorland dominated by blanket bog and deep peat. It is almost entirely notified as an SSSI (and Natura 2000 sites). The common includes nine important water catchments and an impressive assemblage of archaeological sites and monuments. The common is presently under a HLS and UELS agreement administered by a Board of Trustees. The Trustees include representation from active graziers of which there are 87, the land owners, chairman of the Commons Association and an administrator.

The **Haytor and Bagtor Commons.** These two commons are managed as one unit amounting to c.700 ha. This is an outlying and almost separate block of common land well used for recreation and public access. It is rich in historical sites and includes a geological SSSI. There is currently one ESA agreement over both commons; this is due to end in August 2013 (an application to HLS is currently in preparation). The ESA and DFF trial is overseen by the Commons Association comprised of all the active graziers (8).

*Source: Waldon, J. (2013). DFF Case Study January 2013*

#### **Figure 3-1: DFF Pilot Areas: Forest of Dartmoor; and Haytor and Bagtor Commons**

2. Funding through existing agreements. Existing agri-environment scheme agreements were used to underpin the pilot and secure funding and the trials progressed as derogations to the existing schemes; on the Forest of Dartmoor this required waiting for the HLS agreement to begin (March 2012); and at Haytor and Bagtor Commons, the existing ESA agreement was used. This approach provided security to both NE and to the participating Commons Associations. Should one of the trials fail for any reason an agreement would be immediately be available to ensure the land remained under agreement and a mechanism was in place to ensure appropriate land management. For the participating farmers this situation gave confidence that funding would be available. The drawback to this approach was that the existing schemes had already allocated payments to the commoners and a re-allocation of funds, to reflect work associated with the outcomes, was not possible. The internal deeds were retained from the existing agreements.
3. Development of outcomes and local vision. Both groups of commoners followed the design set out in Stage 1. They chose to initiate a set of outcomes and then developed these in consultation with the landowner, NE and DNPA . The final set of outcomes became the basis for the pilot and were core to the application for the derogation. The application for the practical aspects of the pilot also included: a local vision written by the commoners i.e. what they wanted to achieve within the agreement/pilot; a list of issues which the farmers considered relevant to the area; and a list of ecosystem services found in the area.
4. Annual meetings. As the trials started both groups identified the need to have a formal annual meeting with NE. This meeting would fulfil several objectives including an opportunity to report on progress towards delivering the outcomes and the monitoring programme. This reporting includes a short written annual report to NE

including a record of work undertaken during the previous year. Much of the land management would be reported on maps, including maps showing areas swaled (controlled burn) and cut. The annual report would be available in advance of the annual meeting.

5. Assessment and record of deviations from prescriptions. During the trials a record is kept of all deviations from the prescriptions within the agri-environment schemes. An internal process was designed by the Forest to ensure any departure from the existing HLS prescriptions would only be allowed following consent from commoners within the local part of the common and from the Forest Trustees. The form is completed by the farmer and submitted to the Forest Trustees in advance of any change to agreed stocking or other activities. The form requires the farmer to justify the proposals and relate the proposed changes to achieving selected outcomes. The Trustees consider requests at regular meetings. The decision to reject or consent each application lies with the Trustees. The other pilot at Haytor and Bagtor Commons also proposed a similar recording process.



DNPA

**Figure 3-2: Haytor and Bagtor Commons**

### ***3.3 Monitoring***

A monitoring programme, directly related to the outcomes on each common, is an essential part of the DFF pilot scheme.

Also important is an accurate baseline confirming the condition of the land prior to implementation of the scheme in order that the impact of any management change can be monitored. This baseline is in place for Haytor and Bagtor Commons, and currently under development for the Forest; this work includes the re-unitisation of the SSSI (to link into common management units) and the re-assessment of SSSI condition.

The monitoring programmes for the pilot areas have been developed as the outcomes have been tested and refined. The commoners have indicated a willingness to be involved with the development of the monitoring programmes, recognising that this would improve their understanding of how their scheme was progressing.

The process of developing each monitoring programme started with the commoners describing what monitoring they proposed. These ideas were then further developed with NE, which provided expert ecological help to identify indicators of success and suitable monitoring methodology. The commoners reviewed these suggestions to identify those

activities they felt confident to undertake and those they did not. A similar process was undertaken for the outcomes relating to the historic environment. Advice was provided by archaeologists employed by DNPA and English Heritage.

Actions necessary to record progress against each outcome were identified. The monitoring programme also included a brief description of what “good condition” for each outcome would look like and indicators of success. This is supported by photographs of habitats and species, and maps.

The involvement of third parties in monitoring has been considered, particularly with regard to species monitoring which could be carried out by amateur and professional groups or individuals. An alternative is for commoners to receive training to enable certain monitoring to be undertaken; this idea and the possibility of training being funded by the RDPE is presently under consideration.



DNPA

**Figure 3-3: High Brown Fritillary**

The RPA is responsible for monitoring compliance with agri-environment scheme agreements. The RPA was invited to participate in the development of the monitoring programme for each pilot area. This enabled the monitoring programme to include those elements of the scheme which could be inspected (as and when an inspection takes place) and provided information on what evidence would need to be provided by the commoners. All deviations from the prescriptions provided by the ESA or HLS agreement are recorded, using the application form completed by individual farmers and the permitted deviations from the agreement; these are kept by the administrator.

### **3.4 Structure and governance**

The DFF project involves the following key groups/individuals: the Steering Group (including the key funders); the Commons Associations (including the commoners); and the Facilitator. These elements are described briefly below.

#### **3.4.1 Steering Group**

The DFF Steering Group was set up to guide the development and implementation of the DFF project. It includes representatives of the following organisations directly involved with the project as landowners, commoners, funders or the facilitator:

- Dartmoor National Park Authority
- Dartmoor Commoners' Council
- Duchy of Cornwall
- Forest of Dartmoor Trustees
- Haytor and Bagtor Commons Association
- Natural England
- Rural Payments Agency
- Facilitator

There are a number of organisations kept informed of progress with the DFF project (e.g. RSPB, SWW and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation) but which do not form part of the Steering Group.

The Steering Group meets every two months at the DNPA head office at Parke. Dr Kevin Bishop, DNPA chairs the Steering Group and also acts as 'de facto' project manager, ensuring that the project moves in the right direction and communicating with external organisations and individuals who have shown an interest in the approach.

#### **3.4.2 Haytor and Bagtor Commons Association, and Forest of Dartmoor Trustees**

The Haytor and Bagtor Commons Association and the Forest of Dartmoor Trustees are the key groups representing the commoners for the two DFF pilot areas. They are responsible for setting the outcomes, co-ordinating and delivering the management, designing and managing the derogation process, and monitoring the results. They are party to the agri-environment scheme agreements with NE, which underpin the DFF project. They receive the agri-environment scheme payments and then distribute these to the commoners.

The Haytor and Bagtor Commons Association comprises eight commoners, all of the active graziers on Haytor and Bagtor Commons (which are run as one). The Haytor and Bagtor Commons Association is chaired by Maurice Retallick, who attends the DFF Steering Group.

The Forest of Dartmoor Trustees comprises nine commoners and a representative of the landowner (the Duchy of Cornwall). The Trustees are chaired by Colin Abel, who attends the DFF Steering Group. The Trustees employ an administrator, Tracy May, who manages the derogation process and is a commoner in her own right.

The Forest of Dartmoor Trustees is the main body responsible for DFF on the Forest of Dartmoor, and for co-ordinating the 87 active graziers subject to the HLS agreement. It is worth noting however that there is also a separate Forest of Dartmoor Commons Association which represents all those with common grazing rights. There is a close link between the Trustees and the Commons Association.

#### **3.4.3 Facilitator**

It was recognised at the outset that there would be a need for a facilitator to assist the commoners with the process of designing and establishing the DFF approach (Stage 1 and the initial part of Stage 2), and to facilitate between the commoners and NE and DNPA, amongst others. John Waldon was appointed as facilitator in 2010 by DNPA, with the support of funding from NE. In practice, John's role as facilitator has been broader than DFF and has evolved as the project has developed. He has, for example, helped to update the Dartmoor Vision (collating data on carbon, water, access and recreation to develop additional GIS layers for the Vision). This was part of the NE ecosystem services pilot and helped in the identification of outcomes for the DFF pilots.



## 3.5 Inputs

The inputs to the DFF project include the time and financial resources required to design and pilot the project. In addition, it is important to note the agri-environment scheme payments received in the two pilot areas, which underpin the implementation of the DFF approach.

### 3.5.1 Time and financial resources

A useful summary of time, financial and 'in kind' resources involved with the DFF project is presented in the DFF Case Study produced by John Waldon in January 2013. This separates out the input between Stage 1 and Stage 2, see Figures 3-4 and 3-5.

#### Stage 1 - Cost of designing a new approach

The group of 8 graziers from Haytor met six times from 5 October 2010 to 10 February 2011. Each meeting was attended by 6 to 8 farmers. The second group was comprised of active graziers (commoners) from the southern part of the Forest and the Agent to the Duchy of Cornwall who acted as representative of the landowners. The group met seven times between 15 September 2010 and 2 March 2011 and the average attendance was 10 farmers. Both groups' meetings lasted between 2 and 3 hours.

The two groups of commoners contributed at least 280 hours for which they received no financial recompense. The owners' representative covered their own costs.

The total costs incurred by the facilitator between August 2010 and March 2011 was £13,000

The Partners' steering group met 5 times. No additional costs were created by the steering group and costs of participation were covered by the members.

*Source: Waldon, J. (2013). DFF Case Study January 2013*

**Figure 3-4: DFF Project - Stage 1 Costs**

#### Stage 2 - Cost of piloting the new scheme

The group of 8 graziers from Haytor met six times from 28 September to 29 October 2012. Each meeting was attended by an average attendance of 7 farmers. The Forest work group comprised ten active graziers (commoners) together with the landowner's representative. The group met nine times between 17 November 2011 and 25 October 2012 and the average attendance was 6 farmers. Both groups' meetings lasted between 2 and 3 hours.

The two groups of commoners contributed a total of at least 263 hours for which they received no financial recompense. All the participating farmers also attended additional events and meetings to explain DFF to other commoners and third parties.

The total costs incurred by the facilitator between August 2011 and November 2012 was £25,500. This included funding the facilitator to explain DFF to third parties and it is estimated that these costs amounted to £8,000. The landowners' representatives met their own costs.

The Partners' steering group met 4 times. No additional costs were created by the steering group and costs of participation were covered by the members.

*Source: Waldon, J. (2013). DFF Case Study January 2013*

**Figure 3-5: DFF Project - Stage 2 Costs**

These estimates can be complemented by additional information received from commoner and stakeholder interviews (see Sections 4.4 and 5.3). Key elements are described below.

### **Commoners' time and costs**

The feedback from the commoners interviewed enables us to estimate commoners' time input over the past year. For Haytor and Bagtor Commons, 6 commoners (excluding the chairman and treasurer) indicated an average input of 26 hours per year; this comes to 156 hours, plus at least 90 hours for the chairman and treasurer, resulting in an estimated total of at least 246 hours. For the Forest of Dartmoor, 21 engaged commoners (excluding the chairman and administrator) indicated an average input of 15 hours per year; this comes to 315 hours, plus at least 170 hours for the chairman and administrator, resulting in an estimated total of at least 485 hours. The total from both commons is therefore in excess of 731 hours in the past year alone. If this is multiplied up over the 2½ year period since Autumn 2010, this could equate to a total of more than 1,800 hours, although it is acknowledged that time input is likely to have varied from year to year. This compares with John Waldon's figures of 543 hours for meetings only over Stages 1 and 2 of the DFF project (see Figures 3-4 and 3-5).

This time input could be expressed in financial terms by applying a suitable hourly rate, and adding on an element for costs incurred in mileage to and from meetings. At £20/hour<sup>9</sup>, this would equate to a sum in excess of £36,000. However, the above time estimates are indicative only, and furthermore it is difficult to differentiate between the time which would have been incurred in any case (under a 'non-DFF' scenario) and additional time specifically arising as a result of the DFF project. It is therefore probably better not to rely too much on this estimate, and instead simply acknowledge the fact that the commoners' time input has been considerable.

### **Facilitator's costs**

The facilitator's costs for the period August 2010 to November 2012 amount to £38,500. This comprises £13,000 for Stage 1 and £25,500 for Stage 2 (see Figures 3-4 and 3-5). This includes an estimated £8,000 involved in explaining DFF to third parties.

### **Partner organisations' time and costs**

Partner organisations' time and costs incurred in relation to the DFF project include:

- Steering Group members' time input to Steering Group meetings; and
- Partner organisation staff time outside of the Steering Group meetings to: develop and promote DFF internally and externally; provide GIS and other data; and provide other support. This includes, in particular, the work undertaken by Kevin Bishop and colleagues at DNPA to facilitate the project, and the work undertaken by Andy Guy, Naomi Oakley and colleagues at NE to integrate the DFF approach into existing systems (SSSI and ELS/HLS). The work involved with re-unitising SSSI in particular is understood to have been considerable. It is acknowledged, however, that all partners have contributed in different ways to the project.

While estimates of time input and cost have been received from some of the partners interviewed, it has not proved possible to collate a full record of time and costs, together with supporting evidence. As with commoners' time, it is also difficult to differentiate between what time and costs would have been incurred in any case, and additional time specifically arising as a result of the DFF project. For example, DFF was the catalyst for the SSSI re-unitisation and re-assessment of condition, however ultimately this work may also have been necessary to support the effective implementation of a standard HLS agreement.

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<sup>9</sup> This is the hourly rate for managerial labour, as verified by 'Verification of the calculations, methodology and costings used in determining payments for Environmental Stewardship Scheme in 2012' for Defra (Cumulus, 2012)

## Summary

The lack of data makes it difficult to derive an accurate estimate of time and costs for DFF, compared to the non-DFF scenario. It is also very difficult to determine what proportion of time and costs relates to the research and development; that is the element which would not need to be replicated if the approach was rolled out elsewhere. What we can say is that both commoners and other partners have shared in the investment in DFF. This is positive in the sense that it reflects the parties' belief and commitment to DFF, and underpins the commoners' sense of ownership of the approach.

### 3.5.2 Agri-environment scheme payments

The DFF approach is underpinned by existing (Haytor and Bagtor Commons ESA) and new (Forest of Dartmoor ELS/HLS) agri-environment agreements and payments. These agri-environment payment rates, and total payments, were non-negotiable from the outset of the DFF pilots. There has been no opportunity to adjust or change the amount of money individual farmers receive.

During the negotiation of the Forest of Dartmoor HLS agreement, however, an extension of the HR8 supplement for group applications was permitted. Whereas, usually this supplement is payable for one year only, for the Forest of Dartmoor, NE agreed to pay it for the full 10 year term of the agreement. The additional payment equates to £55,853.90 p.a. (£5/ha) over 9 years, or £502,685 in total. It is payable to the Trustees to help cover the costs of co-ordination and management involved with running the HLS agreement on the Forest, including the use of the DFF approach. It is important to note, however, that the additional income received through the extended HR8 payment does not equate to the costs of DFF, nor is it part of DFF.

By way of information, the total agri-environment scheme payments currently payable under both commons are set out in Table 3-1. The Haytor and Bagtor Commons ESA agreement is due to expire in August 2013 and be replaced by a ELS/HLS agreement, the details of which have not yet been finalised.

Common	Area	Total Annual Payment
Haytor and Bagtor Commons ESA	544.46 ha	£46,279.10
Forest of Dartmoor ELS/HLS	11,170.78 ha	£1,361,267.61

**Table 3-1: DFF Pilot Areas - Agri-environment Scheme Agreements**

## 3.6 Outputs

Key outputs arising from the DFF project include the number of commoners involved or potentially involved in the project, the land area covered, and the ecosystem services delivered, see Table 3-2.

It is important to note that the process of engaging with commoners on the Forest of Dartmoor is continuing and the number of engaged commoners can be expected to increase over the months and years ahead. Additional briefing meetings for commoners have been delayed pending completion of the SSSI re-unitisation work.

Output	Haytor & Bagtor Commons	Forest of Dartmoor
Number of commoners currently engaged	8	23 <sup>10</sup>
Number of commoners that could potentially be engaged	8	87
Area covered	544 ha	11,170 ha
Ecosystem services delivered	Management and provision of public access Management of natural habitats and biodiversity Management of archaeological sites and features Protection of water courses and water quality Landscape Food production	Management and provision of public access Management of natural habitats and biodiversity Management of archaeological sites and features Protection of water courses and water quality Landscape Food production Soil/peat/carbon conservation/storage Fire Prevention

**Table 3-2: DFF Project - Outputs**

The DFF approach also has the following, less quantifiable outputs

- An agreed list of ecosystem services/ natural resources priorities for each pilot area, see Appendix 3.
- An agreed set of outcomes for each pilot area, see Appendix 4. These cover the full range of ecosystem services deliverable from the areas;
- An agreed means of co-ordinating and delivering the required common land management, and incorporating the required flexibility;
- An agreed monitoring strategy for each pilot area;
- A closer working relationship between the commoners themselves, and between the commoners and NE and other partners.

An assessment of the likely delivery of these outputs and outcomes is set out in the following sections.

<sup>10</sup> This comprises a total of 18 commoners who have requested derogations and a further 5 commoners who have been involved with the working group but not requested derogations.

## 4 Dartmoor Farming Futures – Commoners' Views

This section summarises the feedback received from a series of interviews with commoners in the DFF pilot areas, undertaken during May and June 2013. The purpose of the interviews was to gather opinion on the process and benefits of the DFF approach, and to help assess the impact of the project so far. A full list of those interviewed is provided in Appendix 5. The interview questions are set out in Appendix 6.

The majority of the interviews were undertaken by telephone (26 interviews) with a small number carried out face to face on farm (7 interviews). The split between Haytor and Bagtor Commons and the Forest of Dartmoor was 25 interviews and 8 interviews respectively. The 33 interviews included discussions with a number of commoners who have not fully engaged with DFF in order to assess possible barriers to participation.

### 4.1 Background

#### Haytor and Bagtor Commons

We interviewed 8 out of 8 active commoners on Haytor and Bagtor Commons. All were engaged with DFF.

The range of farm holding (home farm) varies in size from approximately 60ha up to 341ha (not including common grazing). All the commoners keep suckler cattle (60 – 200 breeding cows, predominantly South Devon, Angus, Limsousin and Galloways) and there is one dairy farm. Most keep sheep (80 – 700 breeding ewes, typically Scotch Black Face and Scotch Mules). A range of rights to grazing on the commons are held but the current cattle and sheep levels are at significantly reduced rates e.g. one commoner holds rights for 166LUs but only grazes 15LUs. A number of commoners keep Dartmoor ponies, with one grazier keeping 16 on the moor.

#### Forest of Dartmoor

We interviewed 25 active commoners from the Forest of Dartmoor common. We spoke with a representative range of commoners including 11 that had fully engaged with DFF and had sought a derogation, 7 that had been involved with DFF but had not requested a derogation, and 7 that had little or no involvement with DFF. We also sought a geographical spread.

Derogations sought to date are of two main types – extending cattle grazing after 31<sup>st</sup> October; and swaling. Note, in future, the Trustees will invite applications for derogations by 31 August each year in order to give time to invite comment from other commoners, assess it and make a decision.

The range of farm holding (home farm) varies in size from approximately 40ha up to 450ha (not including common grazing). Most commoners keep suckler cattle (25 – 350 breeding cows, including South Devon, Angus, Welsh Black and Belted Galloways) and the majority also keep sheep (10 – 3000 breeding ewes, typically Scotch Black Face, Exmoor Horn, Dartmoor and Scotch Mules). One commoner keeps ponies only. A range of rights to common grazing on the Forest are held but current cattle and sheep levels grazing are at much reduced rates.

## 4.2 Agri-environment engagement

We asked commoners to describe their level of involvement with agri-environment schemes in the past, and if they had any problems joining the scheme or managing scheme land. Did they view agri-environment scheme participation as successful?

### Haytor and Bagtor Commons

All the commoners surveyed have engaged with agri-environment schemes in the past, mostly through ESA and UELS. A number are now involved with HLS on their own land/home farms.

None of the commoners felt there were any significant barriers to entry to the old ESA scheme. Most (7 out of 8) felt that the ESA scheme was a success overall in that the scheme was simple to administer and the prescriptions easy to follow. The payments were also deemed positive for the work and destocking involved, and the income had helped farm businesses to survive and allowed investment in much needed livestock buildings for in-wintering. It had facilitated a reduction in stocking numbers on the moors with over-grazing generally being recognised as an historical issue that needed tackling. Comments from commoners included:

***'ESA funding has been crucial to us over the years. Without it we would not have been able to carry on and graze the moor'***

However, commoners expressed concern at the broad brush management approach taken by the ESA scheme using prescriptions and destocking rates based on evidence taken from Northern England experience and not tailored to Dartmoor or individual common conditions and needs. Under-grazing, due to ESA destocking and decreased swaling, is now seen as a major issue. There seemed no flexibility to adjust grazing to the site needs or growing season in the past. The lack of commoner consultation and engagement was also highlighted as a problem of the old scheme.

Other management issues mentioned during discussion related to the high levels of public access on Haytor resulting in disturbance to wildlife and grazing stock, erosion and compaction; and the lack of predator control on the moors.

### Forest of Dartmoor

All but one (96%) of the commoners surveyed have engaged with agri-environment schemes in the past, mostly through ESA and UELS. Many are now involved with HLS on other land or commons. While many farmers welcomed and worked with the ESA scheme a number felt they had no option but to join and remain aggrieved at the stocking cuts. Comments included:

***'I felt pushed into the ESA scheme and stock reductions as part of the association'***

***'Joining the ESA was almost compulsory due to economics and politics'***

***'There were issues with the payment - some farmers claimed for more stock than they actually had which has caused local animosity'***

17 (68%) felt that ESA scheme had, in general, been a success. It has reduced problems associated with over-grazing and the income has been crucial to business survival.

***'The ESA was simple to get into and I had no problems meeting the prescriptions'***

There was a consensus however that destocking under ESA has created or has at the very least contributed to a different set of problems and barriers. Commoner concern is typified by the following:

***'I am not sure if the ESA has been successful – the money was good and over stocking has been addressed but there seems more scrub and under grazing now. Yes, there is more heather but it is aged and in poor condition. We are losing the battle against Molinia.'***

***'Reducing stock on the hill has resulted in reduced farming income and less commitment and ownership'***

***'Having to remove cattle early off the hill was a problem. It put more pressure on our in-bye and new buildings were needed at great expense'***



DNPA

**Figure 4-1: Swaling on the common**

### **4.3 Development of Dartmoor Farming Futures**

We asked commoners to describe their level of involvement with DFF and if their relationship with Defra/Natural England has started to change as a result. Has the DFF approach helped to overcome any previous agri-environment barriers and concerns, and how do they view the project development and management to date?

#### Haytor and Bagtor Commons

All 8 commoners regularly attended meetings and have kept involved in the development process. All the commoners stated that the process of development and ongoing management was positive and well managed. The invaluable role and input of the most active Commons Association and Working Group members, particularly the Chairman and Treasurer, were recognised. The project facilitator was also praised for his crucial input, communication and guidance through development stages.

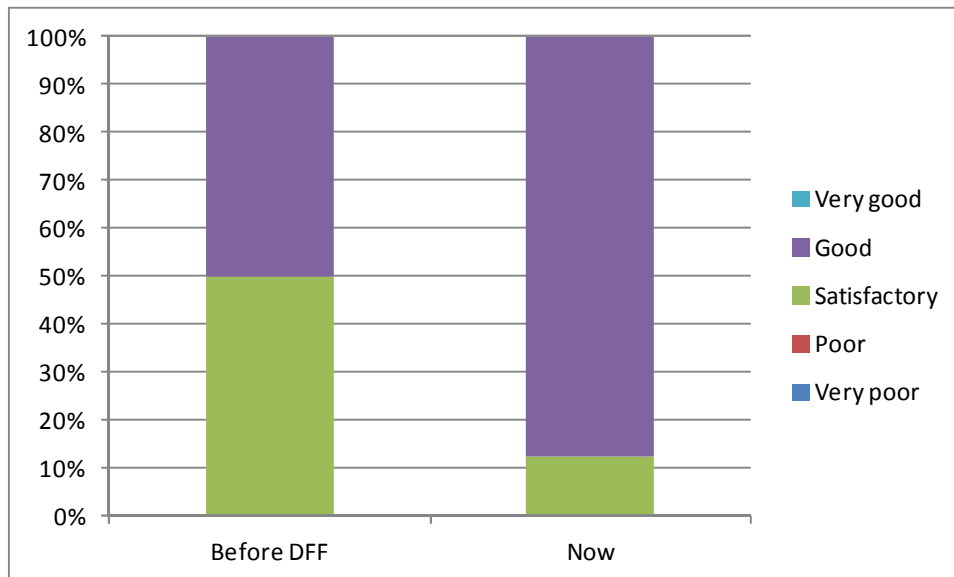
***'The facilitator asked questions and listened to us – his role is very important'***

***'I was sceptical at first but I now feel involved and encouraged'***

As none of the commoners had experienced major barriers to agri-environment entry in the past they did not feel DFF had altered this as such. However, three of those interviewed did state that DFF is helping with the transition from ESA to HLS - this was something they had been concerned about due to the perceived complexity of HLS, the FEP requirements, detailed management prescriptions and indicators of success etc.

***'I was worried about moving from ESA to HLS but the DFF approach has encouraged me as it now seems more flexible and workable'***

50% of the commoners felt that the level of engagement and their relationship with Defra/NE had been good under the ESA regime, if rather limited i.e. there was little contact or linkage. The other 50% rated the relationship as satisfactory. 3 commoners felt that the DFF process has helped improve this relationship resulting in 7 (88%) now rating the engagement as good. See Figure 4-2 below. All felt there was more discussion and interaction between parties under DFF, and that NE played a positive role.



**Figure 4-2: Commoners' views on level of engagement between Defra/NE and commoners (Haytor & Bagtor Commons)**

***'Natural England now seems to be listening and working with us, and the relationship has definitely improved'***

***'Natural England had a very difficult job but they have been very helpful'***

***'I generally had very little contact with Natural England before DFF. There is more now although the facilitator seems to have the key relationship and not us as such'***

The DFF process has been made easier due to the fact that those graziers on Haytor and Bagtor Commons work well as an association and pull together. It was suggested that the process would struggle where the relationship was not so positive.

***'The process would not work if the group didn't get on. We trust each other'***

7 out of 8 commoners felt that the project met their initial understanding and expectations. One commoner, however, initially thought that DFF would allow more grazing flexibility than the current agreement allows.

***'There is flexibility under DFF but not as much as I first imagined and hoped for'***



## Forest of Dartmoor

18 (72%) of the 25 Forest commoners we interviewed have attended meetings and kept involved in the development process. All 18 that have engaged stated that the process of development and ongoing management was positive and well managed. The invaluable role and input of the Commons Association and Working Group members, particularly the Chairman and Administrator, were recognised. The project facilitator was also praised for his input so far.

***'The facilitator role is crucial and he needs ongoing involvement and funding'***

***'The association has worked well together – it is lucky that we get on this part of the moor'***

***'Good reporting back from the Steering Group meetings from our chairman'***

***'DFF requires an energetic and focused leader to keep us motivated and to chair discussions'***

7 (28%) commoners interviewed have not engaged with DFF in that they have not attended meetings or sought further information. Some commoners suggested that they have not linked into the project as it offers them little return as they only run a few sheep or ponies on the Forest. They feel DFF is not for them. In addition, a small number did not know what the project was about or how it operates, and felt openly frustrated at 'yet another project'. This lack of engagement, and to a degree, passive negativity is a concern. Feedback included:

***'I have no time for projects like this!'***

***'There is too much paper work involved – just let us farm'***

***'There's not much benefit or change for those like me with ponies – it mostly helps beef and sheep farmers'***

***'I am unclear on what DFF offers me'***

Of the 18 commoners that have engaged with the project to date, 13 (72%) agreed that DFF has helped overcome some of the problems and barriers they faced under ESA.

***'DFF has helped to some extent with the problems I had with ESA. There is more flexibility to leave cattle out, improved swaling, more understanding and involvement. This will help keep commoners interested and committed'***

***'On site meetings looking at vegetation and stocking are useful and they help both parties and the relationship'***

***'The seed was 'what was wrong with ESA and HLS?'. There was lots of negativity. The facilitator listened and whipped up our enthusiasm, and the Trustees and Association developed aims and helped lead'***

From the group of 7 that have not engaged no one felt that DFF has overcome previous barriers and problems. Restrictions on stock numbers and out-wintering, the amount of paperwork, monitoring and risk of fines, and lack of communication and perceived understanding from Natural England remain issues for many in this group.

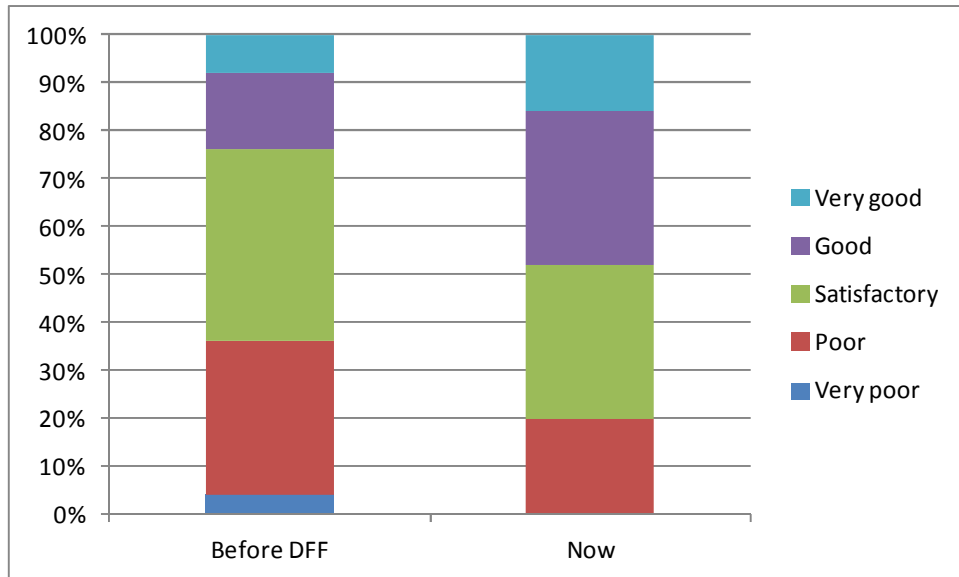
The commoners' relationship with Defra/NE is varied. While 6 (24%) of those interviewed felt that their historical relationship was good/very good and 10 (40%) felt it was satisfactory, a worrying 36% (9 commoners) expressed a negative response. 4 (67%) of the 7 of non-engaged commoners rated their relationship as poor/very poor. Overall, however, peoples' relationships are now improving under DFF. 10 (40%) of commoners

interviewed suggested things were improving due to the project resulting in 20 (80%) now giving a very good/good or satisfactory rating. See Figure 4-3 below. Comments included:

***'We didn't have much say in anything before but now there are discussions'***

***'Natural England have been very helpful and we feel heard'***

***'We can now voice our opinions and concerns'***



**Figure 4-3: Commoners' views on level of engagement between Defra/NE and commoners (Forest of Dartmoor)**

Commoners suggest that it is early days and there is more to do. Comments included:

***'NE seem to want farmers views on management but they are vague on what they want'***

***'NE could be more proactive particularly on issues such as straying and monitoring guidance'***

16 out of the 18 engaged commoners felt that the project met their initial understanding and expectations. Two commoners, however, initially thought that DFF would allow more grazing flexibility and deliver more than the current agreement allows.

***'DFF is good but it took a long time to get going - I expected it to develop faster but I appreciate it is difficult when it's all done with volunteer time'***

## 4.4 Inputs

We asked commoners to estimate the time that they have had to invest into developing DFF and what were their views on partner inputs? The feedback received on inputs is incorporated into the assessment in Section 3.5.

### Haytor and Bagtor Commons

All farmers surveyed have invested more time into the DFF process than they had during previous agri-environment scheme development stages. The average input was estimated to be 26 hours a year each, ranging from of 6 to 36 hours in the year depending on the individuals' role and involvement. The chairman and treasurer have put considerably more (estimated to be in excess of 50 and 40 hours each, respectively). Commoners have not had to put any additional inputs e.g. money, infrastructure etc. into the DFF at this stage.

***'I put lots of time in for meetings and I envisage more in the future too'***

Although it was not possible for those surveyed to estimate actual inputs, all felt that the project partners and stakeholders had also invested considerable effort, time and additional funding and that this effort was paying off.

***'The time that we and all the partners have put in will be worth it as this is very valuable work'***

### Forest of Dartmoor

All farmers that have engaged with the project to date have invested more time into the DFF process than they had during previous agri-environment scheme development stages. The average input was estimated to be 15 hours a year each, ranging from of 2 to 35 hours in the year depending on the individuals' role and involvement. The chairman and administrator (and others) have put considerably in more (estimated to be in excess of 120 and 50 hours each, respectively). Forest commoners have not had to put any additional inputs e.g. money, infrastructure etc. into the DFF at this stage.

The amount of time needed to fully engage is an issue for some. One commoner made the following comment:

***'It is difficult to get properly involved. I would like to go but all the meetings it takes precious time'***

Not all the additional time input has been spent on meetings etc. Leaving stock out longer results in more time needed to check animals on the moor and the grazing impacts on the ground.

***'As well as time input into meetings and administration, I have put more extra time into stock management too to ensure we deliver and that the animals are OK on the hill'***

The engaged commoners generally felt that the inputs from the partners and stakeholders were positive and much needed.

***'It is too early to say but it seems time and money well spent as we have come a long way'***

## 4.5 Results

It is appreciated that DFF is still in early stages. However, it is useful to gauge opinion on progress and the results that are being produced so far, from the process/approach. We asked commoners whether there is any evidence on the ground to show progress? How would they rank or score the results and progress on a scale of 1 - 5?

The following is a summary of the 26 responses from those that have engaged with the project on Haytor and Bagtor Commons and the Forest of Dartmoor. A combined score is shown which covers both commons. If there are marked differences this is highlighted in the discussion.

As the 7 non engaged Forest commoners have had little involvement in the project so far most of this group did not feel well placed to answer most of these questions. Their comments have been included here where appropriate.

See Appendix 7 for a full breakdown of responses from all groups.

### 4.5.1 Is DFF Meeting its Key Aims?

We first asked commoners to consider the four key aims of DFF i.e. the cornerstones of the project. Do they agree or disagree that the project is meeting these key aims (based on the scale below)?

5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 No change	2 Do not agree	1 Strongly disagree
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Result	Score
a) You have been <b>enabled to take more responsibility</b> for the design and delivery of an agri-environment agreement	<b>4.31</b>
b) The DFF process has <b>facilitated a collaborative approach</b> to setting outcomes, delivery on the ground and monitoring	<b>4.15</b>
c) The <b>agreement can deliver</b> the complete range of public benefits	<b>4.00</b>
d) The agreement has identified <b>suitable priorities</b> for particular areas	<b>4.08</b>

All those that have engaged with DFF, on both commons, were very positive as regards the progress so far against the four key aims of the project. The scores highlight that commoners do feel that they have been enabled to take more responsibility and that they have been involved in a collaborative process. Although responses were still positive they were more cautious, and understandingly so at this early stage, about successful delivery of the complete range of public benefits. Comments included:

***'We are very involved and ultimately responsible'***

***'Our views as a group are now important'***

***'Our improved understanding, management flexibility and better monitoring should help ensure delivery'***

***'Better targeting and the FEP work has improved our awareness of the priorities'***

#### 4.5.2 What are the Key Environmental Impacts of DFF?

We then asked commoners to consider the key impacts of DFF on the environment. Do they feel that DFF is having or will have a positive or negative impact (based on the scale below) on the range of features?

5 Very Positive Impact	4 Positive Impact	3 No Impact (or mixed)	2 Negative Impact	1 Very Negative Impact
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Result	Score
a) Management and provision of public access	3.85
b) Management of natural habitats and biodiversity, particularly the SSSI/SAC features	3.96
c) Management of archaeological sites and features	3.96
d) Protection of watercourses and water quality	3.46
e) The landscape	3.88
f) Food production and the role of grazing livestock	3.92
g) Soil/Peat/Carbon ( <i>Forest only</i> )	3.61
h) Fire Prevention ( <i>Forest only</i> )	4.11

All those that have engaged with DFF, on both commons, were positive as regards the ability of DFF to deliver the full range of environmental benefits either now or in the future.

It is worth noting that the group scores varied on each common more or less in line with the key features and issues faced, and the DFF objectives and priorities (see Appendix 2). For example, on Haytor and Bagtor Commons public access is a major public benefit and management issue. There is less access pressure on the Forest. The Haytor and Bagtor commoners gave a score of 4.13 (a positive/very positive DFF impact) whereas in the Forest commoners believed DFF would have less impact scoring it 3.72. Similarly, the responses for the protection of watercourses reflected the lack of water features on Haytor and Bagtor Commons (an impact score of 3). The Forest commoners scored it 3.67 due to the number of watercourses, wetland areas and larger catchment value of the common.

***'Grazing will help keep tracks and access areas open and free from scrub'***

***'Yes there will be habitat improvements but I feel we are short of cattle to deliver the optimum grazing'***

***'I see many archaeological sites at risk of scrubbing up through undergrazing'***

***'The moorland landscape has been created by centuries of farming and grazing livestock, and keeping our animals up there in the future depends on projects like DFF'***

***'More cattle will produce improved grazing for sheep'***

***'Cattle will eat more Molinia and help reduce fire risk'***

### 4.5.3 How do the Environmental Impacts Compare?

We asked the commoners to comment on how they thought the environmental impacts above would compare with those under previous schemes and under a standard HLS agreement. Would the impacts be more significant under DFF?

All those surveyed felt the environmental impacts would be higher with the DFF approach than under ESA or HLS.

Comments included:

***'Although the money is the same the impacts on the ground should be higher than under ESA or HLS as we can fine tune grazing and burning to suit the need'***

***'We have more flexibility and hence our management should be more focused'***

***'ESA had a big impact and DFF is now fine tuning'***

***'There will be a more positive impact. The hills offer good grazing in the summer and autumn and when we leave the cattle out longer into the winter they will roam into new areas looking for shelter and forage so they open up new grazing areas and spread their impact. Any negative impacts on the hill should be measured against their impacts on the in-bye and housing costs (straw, FYM loading, fuel, water etc) and not just taken in isolation.'***

***'Enhanced understanding and flexibility should encourage better and more active management'***

***'DFF type schemes will be more effective as commoners on the ground can see results and make changes over 2-3yrs as opposed to leaving it 10-15 yrs before things change'***

***'HLS with DFF will be better as it is more flexible. ESA resulted in the extreme of overgrazing to the extreme of undergrazing - nobody monitored the effects or allowed reaction to change'***

***'I now have a better understanding of habitats from going to the DFF meetings'***

A number of commoners mentioned the importance of monitoring to ensure that DFF delivers more than ESA or HLS alone.

***'Things need close monitoring especially where derogations have been issued to identify changes and needs and to react if required'***

### 4.5.4 What are the Additional Impacts of DFF?

We asked commoners about the additional impacts of DFF process. Do they agree or disagree that the project is resulting in greater sense of ownership, improved awareness, more flexibility and business sustainability (based on the scale below)?

5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 No change	2 Do not agree	1 Strongly disagree
---------------------	------------	----------------	-------------------	------------------------

Result	Score
a) You are more <b>willing to engage</b> with agri-environment than before.	<b>3.81</b>
b) You feel you have a greater <b>sense of ownership</b> as regards the agri-environment scheme you are working under	<b>4.27</b>
c) You feel more confident that <b>the agreement can deliver</b> good land management on the common	<b>4.12</b>
d) You have a <b>better understanding of agri-environment</b> scheme objectives, process and prescriptions	<b>3.88</b>
e) It has <b>improved your awareness</b> of the key environmental features and designations on the common and their condition and needs	<b>3.85</b>
f) Scientific <b>evidence</b> has been presented to you and used to help guide priorities, the setting of outcomes and management on the ground	<b>3.62</b>
g) You are aware of the key indicators of success and <b>suitable monitoring</b> is in place to assess progress against these indicators	<b>3.88</b>
h) You have adopted different or new <b>management methods</b> to benefit the common	<b>3.58</b>
i) You have more <b>flexibility</b> and ability to modify stocking and management than before e.g. using the derogation process (Forest)	<b>4.23</b>
j) There have been <b>cost savings</b> (possibly due to longer grazing periods, reduced housing etc)	<b>3.35</b>
k) <b>Income has improved</b> (possibly due to increased AE money, stocking rates, grazing quality)	<b>3.23</b>

All the responses from the engaged commoners were positive. The two highest scores show that those surveyed do feel a greater sense of ownership as regards their agri-environment scheme, and that they have more flexibility to modify stocking and management than before.

When asked if they were more willing to engage with agri-environment than before a number of commoners (7 out of the 26) suggested there had been no change under DFF. All 7, however, said they felt positive and willing under ESA and no improvements were required.

An improved awareness of the key habitats, species and features was expressed. This was due to on site meetings and more evidence and information being offered, and more discussion between all parties.

Most were more aware of the monitoring requirements under DFF and how crucial this would be to measuring, guiding and communicating success on the ground. A number of commoners felt that robust monitoring was not yet in place and that NE may not support the process or communicate progress (or lack of it) in the early days. This could jeopardise delivery.

The lowest scores relate to the economic gains associated with DFF. While some (10 out of 26) believe that there could be cost savings related to more flexible grazing, reduced cattle housing periods and an associated fall in bedding/feed costs, most believe there will be no significant change. One participant suggested that the biggest cost saving

would fall to NE – if the cattle graze the *Molinia* and more burning is allowed there will be less need for expensive mechanical control.

The majority of commoners (19) also could not see any likely income improvements as there are no direct (agri-environment scheme) payment increases under DFF. While there may be some improved grazing over time and maybe scope for more stock as grazing periods increase, undergrazed areas are tackled and swaling improved, this would have minimal impact on financial returns. Two commoners felt there may be increased costs associated with the DFF approach in that longer grazing periods and increased straying (cattle on a derogation taking grazing from neighbouring leas) could increase stock management inputs and reduce the amount of available grazing for others.

The range of comments included:

***'I feel more involved and in control so will be more hands on again on the ground'***

***'I have more understanding than I did under ESA'***

***'We have had good info on birds, butterflies and archaeology so far... but more to do'***

***'Not sure whether the monitoring is there – it needs to be'***

***'There is more flexibility but there still a process to go through - Trustees need a level of control'***

***'Extended grazing could save me £1000-£1500 each winter'***

***'There is potential for more and better quality stock in the long run'***

## **4.6 Lessons to learn**

### **4.6.1 Strengths**

We asked commoners to highlight the main strengths of the DFF project to date. There were lots of positive comments made with the open process, improved NE/commoner dialogue and the more flexible and commoner led agreement of particular note. The willingness of NE to engage and take a risk was also highlighted. Comments included:

#### Haytor and Bagtor Commons

***'Our agri-environment agreement is no longer a one sided NE led agreement'***

***'We get on and work together very well, and DFF built on this'***

***'The DFF process had made us more pro-active'***

***'The process is more open and transparent'***

***'Self management resulting in better management and more outcomes'***

***'Individuality – our agreement now meets our commons' needs'***

#### Forest of Dartmoor



***'The willingness of NE to engage – it's pioneering and a risk, and trust has been required'***

***We have been kept well informed and then it has been our own choice whether to be involved or not'***

***'Greater flexibility'***

***'NE are looking at the bigger picture as opposed to just following rules'***

***'NE have shown a more open mind towards burning'***

***'Getting farmers to work together and to talk as a group, and getting NE to listen'***

#### **4.6.2 Weaknesses**

We also asked commoners to highlight the main weaknesses of the DFF project. Although there were few weaknesses identified a number of concerns were expressed relating to the time input required, clarity of purpose, no increase in payments/potentially decreasing payments and the possibility of the process actually putting some people off or not engaging with all. The fact that the derogations may only benefit a few commoners, and issues surrounding the lack of scope for new entrants and commoner inertia, were also highlighted. Comments included:

##### Haytor and Bagtor Commons

***'There is lots of time input needed to get the project off the ground'***

***'It's early days – we will need time to deliver and ongoing support from NE'***

##### Forest of Dartmoor

***'At some meetings it was not always clear what was happening or what is needed as regards sorting the HLS etc. A bit more structure was required'***

***'Derogations may only work for those backing directly onto the common'***

***'The process may put some people off and they may not engage at all, in fact it may put some people off even more'***

***'The project is heavily reliant on a few enthusiastic /people to be responsible, many others are not involved'***

***'The project has not included any review of payment - rates need to be increased in line with current prices'***

***'There is more and more money being taken from the Commoners for monitoring and admin - from all our schemes not just HLS/DFF'***

***'Commoners can feel used by Defra and NE. The views of the DNPA/Duchy etc. seem more important than ours even under DFF'***

***'There is not enough done to encourage new entrants. ESA/HLS payments act as a pension for old boys who'd have otherwise given up. It causes inertia. DFF will only make this worse'***

***'The process can benefit the more aggressive committee men over the quieter farmers with less time to get involved. Need to ensure equity and a voice for all'***

### 4.6.3 Risks

We asked commoners to highlight the main risks associated with the DFF project. There were a range of concerns mentioned with the risks associated with the management of expectations, under delivery, poor monitoring, strict inspection and agreement breach being of particular note. The risk of DFF fuelling local politics and disparity (those that are involved/benefitting from DFF against those that are not, increased straying etc.) was also mentioned. Comments included:

#### Haytor and Bagtor Commons

***'High expectations and under achievement'***

***'The DFF approach may encourage new graziers to become active once more, which is good in one sense but it means we would have to reduce our stocking levels accordingly and split the payments even further'***

***'One farmer messing it up for others'***

***'There is a risk of non delivery and we will be held more responsible than ever before'***

***'We need good monitoring and ongoing support from NE so we know we are heading in the right direction'***

***'We may suffer from conflicts of interest from others e.g. NE versus NP, wildlife versus access'***

***'Heavy handed RPA penalties and inspections – we need understanding and flexibility here too'***

#### Forest of Dartmoor

***'Commoners falling out and DFF further fuelling local politics leading to more dis-engagement'***

***'Cattle straying onto others' lears. They get left out by derogation and go searching for forage, eating out other areas grazed by someone who didn't get a derogation and had to take cattle off'***

***'Change can create animosity between farmers, some leave cattle out and others do not'***

***'Pressure on farmers to make it work and the burden of admin/monitoring'***

***'I worry that that monitoring will not happen and we or NE will not identify any negative impacts quickly enough'***

***'Self-policing could create more animosity and conflict'***

***'Although there was enough put in to get the project started, I am doubtful as to the future availability of funding and how things will run if left solely to farmers'***

### 4.6.4 Improvements needed

How could the DFF process have been improved? Many commoners suggested that no major improvements were needed as the project did what it set out to do. A small number suggested additions and ideas for the future including a new payment mechanism to reward engagement and enhanced delivery; more innovation and a wider remit as regards supporting new entrants and addressing other barriers to biodiversity improvements (predation, access pressure/disturbance, impact of heather beetle, targeted grazing etc.); and a more robust monitoring and feedback system. More time was also mentioned for the both the project as a whole and individual elements/processes e.g. derogation applications. The need for a better practical understanding by NE (and others) and was also suggested. Comments included:

#### Haytor and Bagtor Commons

***'More innovation and joined up thinking is needed to allow even better delivery e.g. more flexible payments/supplements, help for new entrants, targeted grazing with temporary fenced areas etc'***

***'Help with predation and keeping alongside the improved burning and grazing to really benefit wildlife'***

***'We need help with predator control and access management (closed areas) if wildlife is to thrive on the common. Grazing is only a small part of the problem and solution'***

#### Forest of Dartmoor

***'Trustees need more time, at least 3 months, to get derogation applications in and a grazing plan agreed. But how does this allow for weather changes/wet autumn etc'***

***'Enhanced payments for DFF engagement and delivery are needed. Better management and our time input is not reflected in current income foregone payments'***

***'Protect those that have engaged so far and done positive work over the years'***

***'Allow more time for delivery'***

***'Must do more to encourage young entrants and demonstrate commitment. DFF has a role here'***

***'Reduced stocking and tight agreements reduce the capacity for young people to come in and develop new herds and flocks. Can DFF help?'***

***'We need a tight monitoring plan. I understood monitoring would involve before and during photos of the moor to show changes but I am not sure anything has happened yet'***

***'Use layman's terms when describing habitats etc. I went to a meeting with all plant names in Latin so I didn't understand!'***

***'NE need to understand the practicalities of farming the moors e.g. how cattle move about in relation to weather etc. It's not always easy to manage grazing locations'***

***'Need equal opportunity for all – small and big farmers, cattle and sheep, the young and established'***

***'It isn't very clear how the derogation process works – I am still waiting to hear about my request'***

#### 4.6.5 Lessons to learn

We sought the views of commoners on the most important lessons that can be taken from the DFF project so far. The overarching lesson was that this type of project can be successful. Keeping things achievable and as simple as possible, yet focused on each set of bespoke priorities, was mentioned by many, as was the need to allow sufficient time and to manage expectations from the start. Laying down some parameters is desirable at the outset to help guide the process. Allowing farmers to take responsibility and having faith in the collaborative process was also mentioned. In addition, seeking wider engagement i.e. with the local community and 'quieter' farmers was suggested as desirable. Lessons highlighted included:

##### Haytor and Bagtor Commons

***'Collaboration can work and farmers will take responsibility'***

***'Make your agreement achievable and then deliver more if possible'***

***'Keep it simple'***

***'You can get people to agree if you work at it'***

***'Need to agree fair livestock numbers, the grazing calendar etc in advance – give your self time'***

##### The Dartmoor Forest

***'Each common must be mindful of their own environmental priorities'***

***'Need to manage expectations from the start'***

***'Monitoring and showing progress is key'***

***'Ensure commoners don't just focus on the opportunity to increase grazing but also the benefits of raised awareness, justification of payments into the future, monitoring and grazing improvements'***

***'Lay down clear baselines and parameters at the start to save time'***

***'To help sell involvement remind commoners that without AE support we would not survive and so we should get involved and make the most of the schemes'***

***'Don't decrease stock numbers until you have the right grazing for restoration and future management in place'***

***'Ensure an equal voice for all – don't ignore the quiet farmers, local community and new entrants'***

***'Remember it's a learning process'***

***'Use science where possible to guide decision making'***

#### 4.6.6 Value for Money

When asked the commoners if they thought that the DFF was good value for money i.e. are the outcomes on the ground worth the money (ESA/HLS and additional funds) and time (partners and their own) put into the project, all of the engaged group felt that it was.

Haytor and Bagtor Commons

***'DFF and the associated AE payments are good value for money compared to the value and range of public benefits delivered'***

***'We do a lot for the money'***

Forest of Dartmoor

***'It's a good deal for the for the taxpayer – we deliver a lot of public good for the money'***

***'We don't get to know what the true cost is so it is hard to say. Partner time and funding must be considerable. Our time is unpaid and we put a lot in but hopefully it will be worth it'***

#### **4.7 Future application**

We asked if the commoners would recommend the DFF approach to others. All 26 of the engaged commoners suggested they would, with one or two precautionary notes.

It is also worth noting again here that out of 33 surveys, 7 commoners (21%) have not engaged with the process. While this is not statistically robust (the actual level of non-engagement may be more or less than this) it does highlight the need to target the harder to reach farmers as well as the very positive ones. A high level of engagement would be needed if a collaborative project is to be deemed a true success.

Haytor and Bagtor Commons

***'This approach is the only way forward for positive management of the commons'***  
***'Every common is different but the DFF approach can be tweaked to fit'***

***'Yes I would recommend it but only if the commoners get on and can agree livestock numbers. The approach could make things worse in some areas by dragging up old grievances or alienating those that don't want to put effort in'***

Forest of Dartmoor

***'Yes, as long as there is freedom to tailor the scheme and plenty of support for the approach from the commoners at the start'***

***'Yes I would recommend it as long as it's well policed and monitored'***

***'Can use it as a template and adapt depending on what is required'***

Other comments and issues raised included:

***'Consider involving general public and locals for their ideas as to what should be the 'public good' priorities – particularly with access and landscape issues'***

***'DFF is all well and good but there are still financial issues in keeping stock on the moor and HLS payments are not enough to sustain sustainable grazing into the long term'***

## 5 Dartmoor Farming Futures – Stakeholders’ Views

This section summarises the feedback received from a series of interviews with stakeholders undertaken during May and June 2013. The purpose of the interviews was to explore issues relating to delivery and management of the DFF project, results to date lessons learned and wider application of the approach.

The stakeholders included members of the DFF Steering Group together with representatives of a number of other interested organisations. A total of 13 stakeholders were interviewed, as shown in Appendix 8. The majority of the interviews were undertaken by telephone (8 interviews) with a small number carried out face to face (5 interviews).

### 5.1 Project development

Overall, the majority of stakeholders felt that the development of the project had gone well, from the initial concept in 2009, to the current piloting of the approach.

Several stakeholders highlighted and applauded the fact that DFF was a bottom-up, pilot project. It was felt that this had worked well in terms of improving understanding, developing ownership and testing new ideas, and was the ‘right way to go’. The vital contribution of the facilitator was noted in this regard, as was the work of the two Commons Associations /Trustees and their Chairmen.

It was acknowledged that while the development of and transition to DFF was relatively simple for Haytor & Bagtor Commons, it was more complicated and not so easy for the Forest of Dartmoor. The structured DFF process helped, although defining outcomes and the limited flexibility associated with the SSSI designation presented difficulties in respect of the Forest.

Three stakeholders acknowledged that the organic development of the project meant that there was no closely defined project brief and project plan. This resulted in different opinions amongst stakeholders about different aspects of the project, for example the extent to which NE should be involved in development of the DFF approach – central or ‘hands-off’. Expectations also differed in terms of the final approach developed, for example whether grazing derogations would be linked to payments. Several stakeholders commented that the project had taken longer to develop than they had anticipated.

Those stakeholders not on the Steering Group commented that they while they had benefited from informal communication from the facilitator and individual commoners, they were only aware of project developments on an intermittent basis.

Comments included the following:

***‘The development is creative and user focused... (we are a) strong advocate...really important potential innovation’***

***‘Project development has been organic’***

***‘More information would be helpful. Not sure of impacts of the project on ourselves’***

## **5.2 Engaging and involving commoners**

The stakeholders perceived the following barriers to agri-environment scheme engagement by commoners, prior to DFF:

- Lack of ownership of agri-environment schemes
- Lack of understanding of agri-environment schemes
- Perception of management by prescription and farmers 'being done to'
- No pride
- No flexibility in delivery
- Shift from overgrazing to undergrazing
- Suspicion and lack of trust
- Lack of engagement with evidence
- Poor communication

These issues were considered to relate mainly to the Forest as opposed to Haytor and Bagtor Commons where a good engagement and a good working relationship between the parties has existed for some time.

The stakeholders highlighted the different ways in which commoners have been engaged throughout the development of the DFF project and the differing roles of the Commons Associations, the Trustees (on the Forest) and the facilitator.

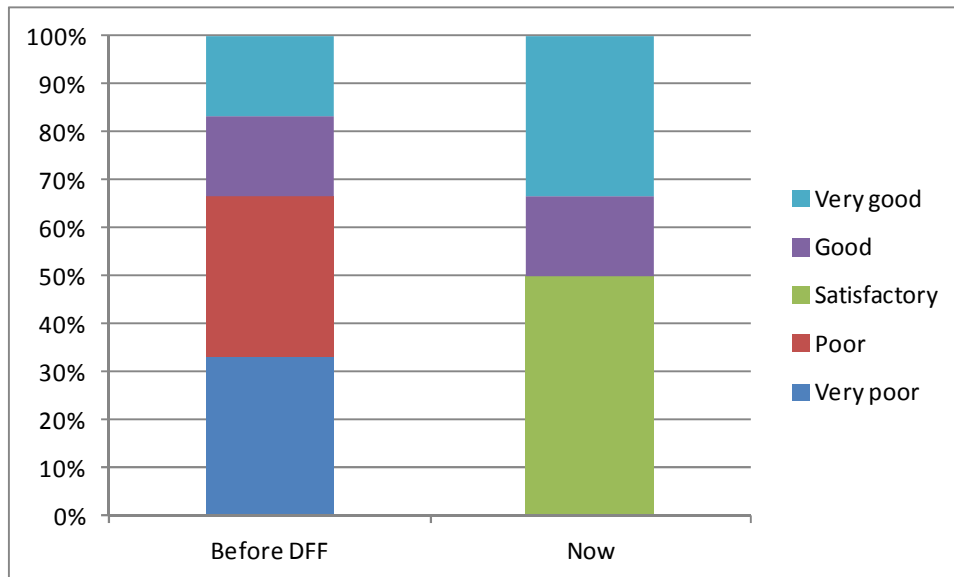
DFF is considered to have been successful in overcoming some existing barriers to engagement by generating enthusiasm, developing understanding, improving ownership, bringing people together and helping bring about a long term perspective on the management of the common. One stakeholder commented that while progress had made, there was still a gap in terms of understanding and taking account of (scientific) evidence.

***'DFF has been successful in pulling disparate groups together. The facilitator has been very important/successful for that.'***

***'Provided formal focus for discussion with NE. Helped with long term vision – picked up national agenda'***

***'Feel more enthusiasm, more ownership, but wider evidence not touched'***

When stakeholders were asked to score the relationship between Defra/NE and the commoners before DFF and now, there was general agreement that the relationship had improved although only six felt able to score it. Figure 5-1 shows the results of the scores provided. Prior to DFF, 40% felt that the relationship had been poor or very poor prior to DFF and 60% felt it was satisfactory or good/very good. By contrast, now, part way into the DFF pilots, 100% of the stakeholders who responded felt that the relationship was satisfactory, good or very good.



**Figure 5-1: Stakeholders' views on the relationship between Defra/NE and commoners**

Those stakeholders who declined to provide score either did so because of lack of detailed knowledge, or because of variations, for example between commons or between relationships on 1:1 basis and collectively (with the former perceived to be better than the latter).

The stakeholders commented that, aside from and general improvement in relationships between Defra/NE and commoners, there had been other changes. Stakeholders identified more openness in the relationship and greater willingness to engage. Others highlighted an improvement in the manner of communication and better understanding.

Several stakeholders commented that farmers focused more on the facilitator now, rather than NE. While the role of the facilitator was overwhelmingly regarded as positive, it was acknowledged that this focus made it hard for the facilitator to remain neutral and had led to NE being distanced from commoners to some extent.

***'Been doing a version of DFF for years ..... common sense ideas..... DFF enlightened us all as to what we've got in front us'***

***'More dialogue, less constrained.....now developing an operations manual with photographs'***

***'Commoners have more understanding – 'why didn't anyone tell us this before?' .....although a small hard core don't want to know'***

***'Facilitator role was important for getting the trial up and running. Couldn't have done it any other way'***

### **5.3 Inputs**

Stakeholders were asked to provide information on their organisation's and individual inputs to the DFF project. A variety of responses and information was received. The combined results, drawing on different sources, are summarised in Section 3.5.



Stakeholder inputs covering time, money and 'in kind' resources included the following:

- Communicating DFF internally to ensure acceptance and buy-in
- Communicating DFF externally to promote the initiative
- Meetings with commoners
- Developing internal Commons Association/Trustees systems to manage and co-ordinate DFF
- Providing GIS and other data to inform development of outcomes
- Providing input to the development of the DFF approach
- Linking the DFF approach into existing systems
- Acting as facilitator to progress the DFF project
- Attending Steering Group meetings.

## 5.4 Results

The stakeholders were asked to score the results of the DFF project to date, in a similar way to the commoners (see Section 4.5) in order to enable comparison, and obtain an overview from both groups. Not all stakeholders scored every item, and the average scores shown reflect the number of responses given in each case.

### 5.4.1 Is DFF Meeting its Key Aims?

The stakeholders were asked to consider the four key aims of DFF. Do they agree or disagree that the project is meeting these key aims (based on the scale below)?

5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 No change	2 Do not agree	1 Strongly disagree
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Result	Score
a) The commoners have been <b>enabled to take more responsibility</b> for the design and delivery of an agri-environment agreement	<b>4.82</b>
b) The DFF process has <b>facilitated a collaborative approach</b> to setting outcomes, delivery on the ground and monitoring	<b>4.59</b>
c) The <b>agreement can deliver</b> the complete range of public benefits	<b>4.32</b>
d) The agreement has identified <b>suitable priorities</b> for particular areas	<b>4.23</b>

The stakeholders were very positive regarding progress so far against the four key aims of the project. The stakeholders perceive that the commoners have been enabled to take more responsibility and that they have been involved in a collaborative process. They were also positive regarding the potential for the successful delivery of the complete range of public benefits and the identification of suitable priorities for different areas, although the score were lower indicating more caution given the early stage of the project.

Comments reflecting some reservations included:

***'20% engaged on the Forest (core group embraced change).....'***

***'Not collaborative between NE and commoners'***

***'Agreed with (c) in theory, but have not agreed much yet for carbon and water (on Forest). SWW may in future'***

***'Not so marked change on Haytor/Bagtor'***

#### 5.4.2 What are the key environmental impacts of DFF?

The stakeholders were then asked to consider the key impacts of DFF on the environment. Do they feel that DFF is having or will have a positive or negative impact (based on the scale below) on the range of features?

5 Very Positive Impact	4 Positive Impact	3 No Impact (or mixed)	2 Negative Impact	1 Very Negative Impact
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Result	Score
a) Management and provision of public access	<b>4.08</b>
b) Management of natural habitats and biodiversity, particularly the SSSI/SAC features	<b>4.23</b>
c) Management of archaeological sites and features	<b>4.15</b>
d) Protection of watercourses and water quality	<b>3.73</b>
e) The landscape	<b>3.96</b>
f) Food production and the role of grazing livestock	<b>4.36</b>
g) Soil/Peat/Carbon ( <i>Forest only</i> )	<b>3.86</b>
h) Fire Prevention ( <i>Forest only</i> )	<b>4.07</b>

The stakeholders were positive about the ability of DFF to deliver the full range of environmental benefits now and in the future. The greatest environmental impacts were expected to be achieved in relation to food production, natural habitats/biodiversity and archaeological sites/features. The impacts on soil/peat/carbon and water were expected to be positive but less significant.

Some stakeholders chose to score the two pilot areas differently. The most significant differences included: Haytor and Bagtor Commons being scored more highly than the Forest in respect of access (4.5 compared to 3.8) and archaeological sites/features (4.5 compared to 4.0); and the Forest being scored more highly than Haytor and Bagtor Commons in respect of food production (4.3 compared to 3.5). These scores reflect some (but not all) of differing environmental priorities on the two commons.

#### 5.4.3 How do the environmental impacts compare?

The stakeholders were asked to comment on how they thought the impacts above would compare with those under previous schemes and under a standard HLS agreement. Would the impacts be more significant under DFF?

There was a general view that the environmental impacts would be greater under the DFF approach than under ESA or HLS. While the valuable contribution of the ESA in respect of biodiversity and fire prevention (via controlled burning) was noted, it was felt that the DFF focus on a wider range of environmental services would be beneficial in terms of soil, peat and carbon. It was acknowledged that some benefits arose from the switch from ESA to HLS, and not all could be attributed to DFF.

#### 5.4.4 What are the additional impacts of DFF?

The stakeholders were asked about the additional impacts of the DFF process. Do they agree or disagree that the project is resulting in greater sense of ownership by commoners, improved awareness, more flexibility and business sustainability (based on the scale below)?

5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 No change	2 Do not agree	1 Strongly disagree
---------------------	------------	----------------	-------------------	------------------------

Result	Score
a) Commoners are more <b>willing to engage</b> with agri-environment than before.	<b>4.00</b>
b) Commoners feel that they have a greater <b>sense of ownership</b> as regards the agri-environment scheme you are working under	<b>4.45</b>
c) Commoners feel more confident that <b>the agreement can deliver</b> good land management on the common	<b>4.25</b>
d) Commoners have a <b>better understanding of agri-environment</b> scheme objectives, process and prescriptions	<b>4.05</b>
e) It has <b>improved Commoners' awareness</b> of the key environmental features and designations on the common and their condition and needs	<b>3.90</b>
f) Scientific <b>evidence</b> has been presented to Commoners and used to help guide priorities, the setting of outcomes and management on the ground	<b>2.89</b>
g) Commoners are aware of the key indicators of success and <b>suitable monitoring</b> is in place to assess progress against these indicators	<b>3.85</b>
h) Commoners have adopted different or new <b>management methods</b> to benefit the common	<b>3.94</b>
i) Commoners have more <b>flexibility</b> and ability to modify stocking and management than before e.g. using the derogation process (Forest)	<b>4.40</b>
j) There have been <b>cost savings</b> (possibly due to longer grazing periods, reduced housing etc)	<b>3.83</b>
k) <b>Income has improved</b> (possibly due to increased AE money, stocking rates, grazing quality)	<b>3.63</b>

The responses from the stakeholders were generally positive. The highest scores related to the commoners having a greater sense of ownership, more flexibility in terms of stocking and management, greater confidence that the agreement can deliver and a better understanding of agri-environment schemes.

Stakeholders also agreed that commoners were more willing to engage, had an improved awareness of key environmental features and designations, had adopted new or different management methods and were aware of indicators of success, with suitable monitoring in place.

However, the stakeholders did not agree that scientific evidence had been presented to the commoners to help guide the setting of priorities, outcomes and management. Some indicated that such scientific evidence had yet to be provided for the Forest, whereas others expressed concern whether the evidence provided had been fully understood.

Relatively low scores were also provided in relation to the economic gains associated with DFF. This related partly to the fact that the project was at an early stage, and these benefits had yet to materialise. However, the low score in respect of improvements in income is influenced by the perception that there is little or no additional agri-environment scheme payments resulting from the DFF project.

The range of comments included:

***'It has given back ownership and self-determination. Rights holders are not being done to, instead they're part of and make decisions about the common'***

***'DFF has greatly enhanced commoners' understanding of a wide range of environmental issues'***

***'Scientific evidence is a difficult one – they're waiting for evidence and the results of the monitoring'***

***'Cost savings are yet to be proven as are income improvements. There need to be indicators and monitoring of costs and income by the Commons Associations'***

#### **5.4.5 What are the impacts on partners?**

The stakeholders were asked about the impact of the DFF project on partners' (i.e. their own) awareness, understanding and attitudes.

All the partners indicated that there had been an improvement in their understanding of where commoners are coming from including the economic and practical challenges facing commoners. There has also been a change in some partners' perceptions of the commoners, given the commoners' positive response to the opportunity provided through DFF.

The partners have also benefited from a greater understanding of each other's circumstances including the regulatory constraints (e.g. SSSI, RDPE) within which DFF currently needs to operate. A closer working relationship between the partners has developed as a result of the project and more collaborative working.

Comments included:

***'Very good – all had to learn – far more understanding of challenges facing commoners'***

***'Better understanding – both ways'***

***'Have been surprised – how responsible and how willing the commoners have been to contribute'***

***'I have a greater understanding of the regulatory constraints in terms of permitting flexibility'***

#### **5.4.6 How is DFF making a difference in terms of future management of the commons?**

Stakeholders were asked how DFF is making a difference in terms of the future management of the commons and the organisation of that management.

There was agreement that DFF was making a difference in a positive way. It was helping to empower commoners and developing capacity to manage the common, alongside other initiatives such as the Hill Farm Project. It was also encouraging them to work together and look at the land in a different way. This includes having a longer term view and being aware of the wide range of environmental services that the commons can deliver. It is however at an early stage in terms of the delivery of identified outcomes.

It was acknowledged that the Commons Associations are longstanding, existing organisations with a focus on individual commons, however the introduction of DFF has supported the development of additional, beneficial roles for the Commons Associations, including identifying priorities, co-ordinating delivery in a flexible way, and monitoring outcomes.

Comments included:

***'DFF is empowering commoners and helping with capacity to manage the common....to get multiple benefits from grazed landscape'***

***'There is an improved understanding of requirements and hence increased likelihood of deliverability of the outcomes'***

***'Commoners are very, very good at developing their own processes and procedures. What's done – in terms of managing variations from prescriptions – is really good. If can increase understanding – this will help with self monitoring in the future'***

***'It is early days, but the potential difference is being revealed'***

### **5.5 Project design, delivery, governance and management**

The stakeholders were asked to comment on the DFF project design and delivery, and its governance and management

#### **5.5.1 Project design and delivery**

A number of different aspects of project design and delivery were highlighted by stakeholders:

The outcome focus is important, but it was recognised that this took time and the process could have been shorter. It was also acknowledged that the outcomes are subject to external influences outside of the control of the commoners (e.g. weather).

The stakeholders praised the way in which the Commons Associations had designed and implemented the derogation process, a key part of the DFF approach. It was recognised that this effectively internalised the management of the common.

Communication is important, and the establishment of an annual meeting/walk between the commoners, NE and DNPA was regarded positively; it enables progress to be assessed and key issues can be discussed. Stakeholders recognised that written communication also needs to be accessible and clear (i.e. short words/text, good illustrations).

The delivery of baseline data at the outset by NE was also identified as being important; it is an integral part of the monitoring framework.

The verifiability of the DFF approach and underpinning AE payments is another vital component, identified by the RPA and other stakeholders. There has been a change in expectations towards 'absolute' verifiability. A more outcome-focused agreement helps in this regard: before and after photos can be used to show differences; and such an approach (despite needing to take account of external influences such as weather) is less complicated than a prescription-based agreement<sup>11</sup>. The RPA inspection protocol/checklist has accordingly been changed for DFF. The importance of the verification process being understood by those delivering on ground was highlighted.

The lack of project planning and milestones (including a clear start date and end date) was highlighted as a concern by some stakeholders.

Comments included the following:

***'May not have given a blank canvass in terms of setting outcomes, perhaps could have used a menu...could have been shorter.'***

***'Derogation processes - have been really good - very impressed'***

***'Could have been a nightmare – administratively, but got to grips because of the flexibility'***

***'Agreement holders want to know, when it comes to inspection, they've done everything they should have done'***

***'Should have done more to define project more clearly – made it more difficult than it needed to be'***

### **5.5.2 Governance and management**

A number of different aspects of governance and management were also flagged up by stakeholders:

The Steering Group was felt by the majority of stakeholders to have worked well and represented all the key individuals and organisations. One stakeholder commented however that it had not 'steered' or made decisions collectively; another noted that the farmers felt out-numbered by the non-farmers. The Commons Associations have key roles in DFF, and were felt to have done a good job in challenging circumstances. The Commons Association meetings were well attended and there was confidence that uptake of DFF amongst commoners would improve over time. The Chairmen – Maurice Retallick and Colin Abel - and Administrator (Forest) – Tracy May - in particular, were praised for their work.

The Facilitator clearly also had a vital role. John Waldon's positive influence during the development and piloting of the project was noted and praised, as was his good track record and trusted position amongst the commoners. A few stakeholders questioned the limitations on access to the commoners as a result of the facilitator role and whether the facilitator had ended up becoming more of an intermediary<sup>12</sup>.

There was no Project Manager as such, although DNPA acted as *de facto* project manager and *animateur* to keep the project broadly on track. One stakeholder commented that it was good/better that the project was not led by one particular party.

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<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to monitor stocking rates, grazing periods etc, especially as BCMS and other livestock data is registered to farms not commons.

<sup>12</sup> It was made clear, however, that this was not necessarily the facilitator's fault.

Other individuals mentioned and praised included: Kevin Bishop, as chair of the Steering Group; and Andy Guy, charged with overseeing the development and implementation of DFF from NE's perspective.

Comments included the following:

***'The Steering Group worked well. It has been open and frank, and positive. It's been chaired well'***

***'The Commons Associations were given the challenge, they've risen to the occasion. Very difficult job on the common'***

***"How Trustees have taken on the responsibility, additional work and risk – brilliant what they've done"***

***'Without John Waldon, we may not have got it off the ground. A facilitator was needed with DNPA, at arm's length, keeping it going with partners'***

***'Andy Guy is doing a great job adapting to doing something very different'***

It is important to note that while the majority of stakeholders were positive regarding the DFF project including its governance and management, a minority of those interviewed expressed views to the contrary, indicating a lack of agreement between stakeholders on a number of matters. Key areas of disagreement included: the lack of a project plan; the role of the facilitator; the level of involvement by NE; and what is actually achievable through DFF.

## **5.6 Lessons to learn**

### **5.6.1 Strengths**

The strengths of the DFF project, identified by the stakeholders, included the following:

- More engagement with commoners
- Empowering commoners to take ownership
- Involving commoners in identifying outcomes and thinking about management and monitoring
- Flexibility, allowing the practical man on ground to determine what common can carry
- Co-operative working between commoners; with flexibility to draw in people from around the Forest
- Caused commoners to think hard about corporate responsibility
- Making the environment requirement more understandable and translated into outcomes; hence increased likelihood of positive outcome of agreement
- Commoners have better idea of what they are being paid to do and why certain stocking rates are required
- Improving commoners' understanding of wider ecosystem services and making it possible to envisage being paid for several services at once (look at land in a positive way)

- Increased level of support for commoners
- Generated enthusiasm and motivated people on the ground
- Improved partnership/collaborative working; this is bringing various parties closer together
- Facilitator role; this has been critical
- Securing commitment to re-unitise SSSI and reassess/monitor condition
- Provided useful test-bed for ideas

### **5.6.2 Weaknesses**

The weaknesses of the DFF project, identified by the stakeholders, included the following:

- Separation between NE and the commoners, due to communications primarily going through the facilitator
- Scientific evidence was not made available to commoners in an accessible form. This has limited understanding and uptake of such evidence in the development of the outcomes, management and monitoring.
- Lot of responsibility on the Commons Associations/Trustees
- Lack of straightforward communication material – simple summaries and regular updates; one consequence of this was that stakeholders not on the Steering Group felt out of touch
- Length of time it took to develop the project
- Lack of a clear project plan, project timescales and project ownership/management
- Differing expectations of the project amongst the parties (and involvement in specific aspects e.g. contributing to setting outcomes) and lack of agreement on a number of matters
- Financial limitations; the money will only go so far

### **5.6.3 Risks**

The stakeholders highlighted a number of risks with the DFF approach/project:

- DFF is outcome-focused; what happens if it does not deliver for reasons outside commoners' control? It will be difficult to measure/assess how any particular failure arises. Also process of change in habitat is very slow, it could be a long time to see the benefit.
- RPA/NE could take money away if the outcomes are not achieved; note while written assurances have been received in respect of DFF as a pilot project, this may not be replicated elsewhere.
- Delays in making ELS/HLS payments, as this could strain relations.



- Greater responsibility and risk burden on the Commons Association/Trustees in terms of co-ordinating the management and monitoring. For example, someone could buy land and put a large number of stock on the common putting the arrangement at risk. This risk is being mitigated by undertaking an assessment of risk (common areas, rights holders etc.) and dialogue with NE.
- Getting a wider group of commoners to understand and engage in the DFF approach (on the Forest). However it is anticipated that wider uptake will come with time.
- There is no contractual agreement between NE and the commoners in terms of the derogations; this may increase risk to NE and the commoners.
- Raised expectations – but this is a process of change - sometimes (we) don't get it quite right
- People see DFF approach as 'the silver bullet' – works here, must work there. DFF approach works well with a cohesive group of people and where there are simple outcomes to deliver; if not, it may be more challenging
- Any wavering in commitment to the DFF approach; "If someone pulls the plug, it would actually destroy relations built up over past 3-4 years – it would be a disaster"

#### **5.6.4 Improvements needed**

When asked whether they would like to suggest any improvements to the DFF project looking forward, several indicated that improvements had been made and addressed as the project had progressed (e.g. the harmonisation of SSSI units and common management units on the Forest, and in due course the re-assessment of SSSI condition to provide a baseline; also the development of an annual application process for derogations on the Forest), and they would expect this process to continue. Self monitoring would enable commoners to take control of their affairs and improve delivery over time. A number of specific improvements were also highlighted:

- A project route map and timetable i.e. who will do what next, and when
- Written communications, including promotional literature and regular updates
- More transparency and more connection with the project; stakeholders who have hitherto been peripherally involved have more to offer (e.g. information, ideas etc).
- Speeding up the SSSI re-unitisation in order to maintain momentum
- Increasing commoners' understanding further, based on scientific evidence
- Monitoring farm-level cost and income data i.e. what difference the DFF approach is making for farm businesses
- Securing additional funding to support the project e.g. money for training. This could involve looking at external sources of funding, given budgetary restrictions.
- Progressing Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES), which - while this is a separate process subject to external factors - links across to DFF and involves the same land and many of the same individuals.

### 5.6.5 Lessons to learn

The stakeholders identified a number of lessons to learn from the DFF project. These link across to some of the points made above:

- Importance of the partnership approach
- Need for a collaborative approach to achieve effective management of large blocks of land
- Need to support key individuals e.g. the Commons Associations' Chairmen
- Independent facilitation is important and required at the beginning, but needs to be focused/time limited
- Basic project management - should have defined it - but this may not have gone down well.
- Communication – keeping people on board and up to speed. The primary emphasis is with landowners and managers, but there is also a need to keep other stakeholders in touch.
- Those commoners who have engaged, can help others to as well
- Need time to build confidence and trust
- Perseverance
- Flexibility is important, but care needs to be taken in giving it out in respect of individual common units
- Understanding of the requirement for ongoing care and maintenance of the agreement (i.e. NE not doing revisions, amendments etc. but instead ensuring an effective forward look)
- If you give commoners the opportunity to lead towards a socially acceptable outcome, they rise to challenge, learning things along the way.

In addition, it is worthwhile re-iterating some of the 'lessons learnt from the pilot', flagged up by John Waldon in his January 2013 case study<sup>6</sup>, see Figure 5-2. These cover some more practical and developmental aspects of the project.

- The method of identifying which ecosystem services are relevant to the area proposed for an agreement was simplified.
- Compiling the set of outcomes is critical to improving ownership as well as increasing understanding of what is to be achieved by the agreement. Enabling the commoners to start the process increases ownership but is costly in time and resources. Encouraging commoners to select from a menu of outcomes relevant to their area (e.g. National Park, Landscape Area) would reduce the time and effort needed by both Natural England and the applicants.
- For those selecting outcomes relating to SSSIs it was necessary to establish what the SSSI should look like by the end of the agreement (in ten years' time). This is different to describing the condition of the individual SSSI units. Site visits, photographs of examples of similar vegetation in good condition and short descriptions can all play a part in conveying an accurate picture to those responsible for delivering the land management. Providing each commoner with a brief synopsis further engages and refreshes their role.
- Engaging with the agencies to secure their comments on the outcomes can take considerable time. All too frequently those asked to engage in discussion on the development of outcomes failed to recognise the difference between an outcome and a prescription; they told the farmers what to do rather than what the result should look like.
- Agreeing on the number of outcomes was important. The farmers wanted the outcomes to reflect the scope of the ecosystem services on their common but at the same time wanted to avoid committing to delivering more outcomes than they could afford to do. At the same time the agencies with legal responsibilities wanted to ensure these were included, e.g. Scheduled Sites and SSSIs. The discussion on the number of outcomes was useful and helped explain the importance of some features.
- A link between the number of outcomes and funding was not explored. However most of the farmers supported the presumption that more outcomes should result in more funding.
- The two Commons Associations intend to retain a stocking calendar for internal use and control. However rather than seeing a stocking calendar "imposed" they have taken responsibility for its production and administration.
- Securing the monitoring programme was a lengthy process. Exchanging drafts between numerous commoners and agencies resulted in delays and required numerous meetings. Now a template is available and the requirements better understood subsequent attempts to draft a monitoring programme should be much simpler.

*Source: Waldon, J. (2013). DFF Case Study January 2013*

### **Figure 5-2: Lessons learned from the pilot**

#### **5.6.6 Value for money**

When asked whether if they thought DFF was good value for money, the majority of stakeholders felt that it was. They felt that DFF was being carried out economically, although it was acknowledged that the project was relying heavily on many people's goodwill, thoughts and time (commoners, Commons Association members /trustees, partner organisations etc.), most of which was being provided free of charge. Some concern was also expressed over the increased administrative burden on farmers. DFF was felt to have been successful in leveraging in other support (e.g. data, information, re-unitisation).

Several stakeholders said that it was too early to tell whether the desired outcomes would be achieved given the early stage of the project. However they felt that project was making progress in engaging deliverers and increasing understanding and involvement. It was also delivering a new model for AE delivery and could contribute to the survival of AE schemes.

It was acknowledged that DFF was delivering both public and private benefit, although as one stakeholder noted value for money for the farmer was to a significant extent dependent on the ELS/HLS payments which, for one of the pilot areas, was still uncertain.

***'If outcomes do appear – and we're not ready to pronounce outcomes – the effort would have been worth it'***

***'Benefit of a more outcome focused approach should save RPA time and money'***

***'The cost of the 'conversation' is piffling when compared to the agreement'***

## **5.7 Future application**

The stakeholders were asked to comment on the wider applicability of the DFF approach and, specifically, whether they would recommend it be adopted more widely as part of the new RDPE 2014-2020, and if so how.

### **5.7.1 Wider applicability**

There was broad agreement that DFF certainly had the potential to be replicated elsewhere. This included other commons on Dartmoor as well as intakes and in-bye land. More generally, it was felt to be applicable to landscape-scale approaches in other parts of the country, both in upland and lowland areas.

It was felt that the outcome-focused approach could be applied to any agri-environment scheme, and was probably easier for individual farms than common land/groups of farms (the fact that DFF was piloted on four home farms, successfully, was highlighted). One stakeholder suggested that it might be beneficial to have a menu of pre-approved outcomes, possibly linked to National Character Areas, to provide a starting point for farmers to select out refine relevant outcomes for their area.

Alongside this positive view, there was also recognition that the DFF approach might not be a solution everywhere. DFF would not necessarily work where there are conflicts or unresolved issues between commoners/farmers. In addition, the results on the ground of DFF are yet to be fully realised, therefore more time may be required to prove these prior to roll-out.

Stakeholders identified the need for key individuals within a farming community to support the approach, and a good independent facilitator. There was also a need for simple structures and processes to help roll out the DFF approach elsewhere (e.g. covering partnership building, proportion of rights holders/farmers engaging, and project planning). Stakeholders felt that if these could be 'cracked' then there was no reason the approach could not be rolled out and be adapted locally. One stakeholder commented that DFF was a practical, old-fashioned approach, one involving communicating and working together, which works. Another stakeholder made a plea for the risks to be shared, with these not all being left on the farmers.

Sufficient resources would be required for facilitation and other set-up costs, but with simplified structures and processes, there should also be cost efficiencies.

***'Depends on farmers' enthusiasm, commitment and positive thinking'***

***'They tried it in the North of England, but it has not progressed there as it was not done from the bottom up'***

***'Real work is keeping it simple and easy for all sides to understand, supply data and verify'***

### **5.7.2 Adoption as part of the RDPE 2014-2020**

There was also agreement amongst the stakeholders that the DFF approach should be considered for inclusion in the RDPE 2014-2020.

A more outcome-focused approach, such as DFF, could result in better delivery across agri-environment schemes – and would be particularly helpful for improving understanding, engagement and ownership by commoners. An outcome-focused approach could also help improve verifiability.

Several stakeholders re-iterated the need for money to fund a facilitator to help with the pre-application part of bring people together and agreeing outcomes. They also acknowledged that RDPE roll-out would require clear objectives, greater structure and straightforward processes. There could, for example, be a menu for various outcomes, and payment rates based on management prescriptions. The DFF approach would in any case need to be explicitly permitted within the new programme given that it is a novel mechanism.

One stakeholder questioned how the DFF approach could be made available, and questioned whether a bid process might be appropriate. Others expressed concern about how a DFF approach would link into existing agri-environment scheme mechanisms, given that DFF is not going to suit everyone or every situation. It would be expensive to run parallel systems; an important consideration in the context of declining agri-environment scheme budgets. An alternative might be to have a hybrid HLS/DFF with better derogation system.

One stakeholder flagged up the potential for linking the DFF approach to the wider farm competitiveness agenda. This could involve farmers identifying priorities for local farms on Dartmoor, for example, covering issues such as animal health, and utilising existing initiatives such as the Hill Farm Project.

***‘Yes – need to move away from the prescription approach’***

***‘Enabling farmers to have more ownership of outcomes on commons is essential – sense of responsibility and interest’***

***‘Yes – but have to have resources to convene the conversation, allow users to engage, and develop outcomes. This could generate radical efficiencies and effectiveness’***

## 6 Future Rural Development Programme for England

This short section provides the context for the future Rural Development Programme for England 2014-2020, in order to inform the extent to which the DFF approach could potentially have wider applicability elsewhere on Dartmoor and in other parts of England. The RDPE 2014-2020 will deliver the Rural Development Regulations in England as part of the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2014-2020.

### 6.1 Priorities and objectives

The EU has set six priority objectives for RDPs. Each Member State will arrange their Programme across all of these themes. These themes are:

1. fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas;
2. enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability;
3. promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture;
4. restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and Forestry;
5. promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors;
6. promoting social inclusion poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas;

The priorities most relevant to the DFF approach include priority 4, but also priorities 1 and 2. The present 3-4 axis structure within the RDPE will be replaced with a programme based on the above EU priorities.

Defra's specific policy objectives for the next RDPE are likely to be based around:

- encouraging effective and successful environmental stewardship and woodland management, ensuring that by 2021 the natural environment is improved according to measures set out in the Natural Environment White Paper;
- enabling strong rural economic growth, resulting in an increase to GDP by the end of the Programme;
- increasing the productivity, resource efficiency and resilience of farming and forestry businesses, in order to improve their competitiveness and support an increase in domestic food production by the end of the Programme;
- improving the level of professional skills, knowledge and innovation in the rural economy, by increasing the scope and uptake of information and advice services, and the exchange, uptake and application of information; and
- building stronger rural communities to support rural growth, improve the quality of life in rural areas, resulting in a reduction of related indices of rural deprivation by the end of the programme.

## 6.2 Agri-environment schemes (including upland support)

There is considerable uncertainty regarding future agri-environment schemes in England. We know however that Environmental Stewardship – including ELS, UELS and HLS – will be replaced by a scheme presently called the New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS).

Key influences on the future shape and size of NELMS include: the nature of Pillar 1 greening implemented in England; the budget (CAP, RDPE and land management); Defra priorities; and agreed design principles.

The latest thinking<sup>13</sup> in terms of NELMS ‘architecture’ is for a 3 tier system, with:

- The top tier focused on specific, designated sites;
- The middle tier focused at a landscape scale;
- The lower tier providing the national offer / being nationally available.

The top or middle tiers would appear to have a good fit with areas such as Dartmoor, which is both designated (NP, SSSI (in part), SM (in part) etc.) and landscape scale. The middle tier would deliver locally prioritised outcomes and be co-ordinated across farm holdings – again, a good fit with the DFF approach. The extent of the lower tier will be highly dependent on the greening approach adopted in England<sup>14</sup>.

NE has identified a number of themes for NELMS emerging from its review of evidence. Themes of particular relevance to Dartmoor and the DFF approach include:

- Theme 1 Clarity of objectives
- Theme 2 Landscape scale delivery
- Theme 3 Participative, collaborative approach
- Theme 5 Outcome focus

When considering the linkage between DFF and other initiatives for example those linked to farm competitiveness, the following themes are also relevant:

- Theme 4 Synergies and integration
- Theme 9 Locally tailored advice and training

When we asked specifically about farmer-led approaches in a recent webinar, Natural England responded “*there are always issues around farmer-led scheme design regarding compliance and meeting EU regulations and detailed requirements, though we haven’t ruled it out at this stage. Defra have indicated one of the things they’d like to include within the new programme is an element of trialling and testing new approaches - farmer-led design may fit into this scenario*”. This would suggest support for both the continuation of DFF, and also a wider roll-out, albeit potentially on the basis of a wider trial.

At this stage, the future form of upland support is uncertain. It can reasonably be expected that upland support will be incorporated within NELMS – as UELS is within ES presently – however theoretically there is an option for England to revert to specific support for Areas with Natural Constraint (the proposed replacement for LFAs) either as part of the RDPE or as part of Pillar 1 support.

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<sup>13</sup> Based on Natural England’s Agri-environment Scheme Development – Briefing for Land Agents and Advisers – May 2013

<sup>14</sup> The CAP reform agreement announced on 26 June 2013 will enable Member States, including the UK/England to deliver its own “greening equivalency” system.

### **6.3 Other rural development support**

EU priorities and proposals to date identify the following other areas which are of potential interest/ relevance to Dartmoor and DFF:

- Innovation: This key theme will be served by different Rural Development measures such as "knowledge transfer" and "cooperation"; It is aimed at promoting resource efficiency, productivity and the low emission, climate-friendly and resilient development of agriculture, forestry and rural areas;
- Knowledge – “a knowledge-based agriculture”: Strengthened measures for Farm Advisory Services (also linked to climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental challenges and economic development and training);
- Restructuring / Investment / Modernisation: Grants;
- Risk Management toolkit: Insurance & mutual funds – for crop & weather insurance and animal disease;
- Producer Organisations/Association of Producer Organisations: Support for setting-up organisations on the basis of a business plan; limited to groups defined as SMEs;
- Co-operation: Expanded possibilities to support technological, environmental and commercial co-operation (e.g. pilot projects, joint environmental schemes, short supply chains, development of local markets).

How these options will be taken up in England is as yet unclear, however there would appear greater likelihood of integrating these types of measures with agri-environment scheme support under the RDPE 2014-2020 than under the current, rather rigid 3-4 axis structure. This might enable DFF to link more formally, with appropriate funding under the RDPE, to initiatives focused on farm competitiveness and training, addressing relevant local priorities.

### **6.4 Budgets and payments**

It appears likely that the RDPE 2014-2020 budget in England will be lower than the current programme budget, possibly significantly, however again there is still considerable uncertainty regarding any future settlement. It can be expected that this will impact on the funding available for agri-environment schemes and other initiatives. The recent CAP reform agreement will permit Member States to transfer up to 15% of funds from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2 (and vice versa), and it is expected that England will utilise this option in the similar way as it has used voluntary modulation during the last programme period.

Agri-environment scheme payments to farmers under the RDPE 2014-2020 will continue to be based on ‘income foregone’ and ‘additional costs’ as presently. There does not appear to be scope within the current proposals for a switch to payment rates based on outcomes delivered. That is not say that the existing income foregone basis could not be used creatively to incentivise desired outcomes.



## 7 Conclusions

This section draws together the findings from the previous sections to address the key questions set out in the aims, and suggests recommendations for consideration in the future.

### ***7.1 Developing a more collaborative approach to agri-environment, with a better understanding of outcomes, management required and monitoring***

The DFF project started in August 2010, with the aims of offering farmers and landowners more responsibility for the design and delivery of agri-environment schemes, focusing on the complete range of public benefits (ecosystems services) associated with upland farming, identifying priorities for particular spatial areas, and facilitating a collaborative approach to agreeing outcomes, delivering management and monitoring. Since then, a new approach to agri-environment delivery has been designed and two pilot areas have been established to implement the approach.

#### **Engagement**

The DFF project is being trialled on two commons with different characteristics:

- Haytor and Bagtor Commons is an outlying and almost separate block of common land, comprising around 700 hectares and managed as one unit. The majority is owned by DNPA. There are eight active graziers, all of whom are all involved with DFF.
- The Forest of Dartmoor, in contrast, comprises the main, central part of Dartmoor, comprising around 11,400 hectares. It is mainly owned by the Duchy of Cornwall. There are over 300 commoners in total, of whom 87 are active graziers. 23 active graziers are presently involved with DFF, with this number expected to grow as the project develops.

The commoners involved with DFF represent a range of farming interests, in terms of land area, location, number of common rights held, and livestock grazed, and the vast majority have participated in agri-environment schemes on their own farms and/or common land previously. Seven organisations with an interest in the management of the commons have also been involved with the DFF project through the Steering Group.

The majority of the commoners who have been involved with DFF spoke positively about engaging with the project, both in the initial development and the ongoing pilot.

- On Haytor and Bagtor Commons, where there has been good engagement and a good working relationship between Defra/NE and the commoners for some time, DFF has improved relations further (to 80% good and 20% satisfactory) and also helped with the transition from ESA to HLS.
- On the Forest of Dartmoor, there is a larger, more disparate group. For those who have been involved, DFF has helped overcome some existing barriers to agri-environment scheme entry and management, and improved engagement and relations (to 80% very good, good or satisfactory). However, for those who have not engaged<sup>15</sup> - either because they did not feel that the DFF was for them (due to perceived limited benefit or where only small numbers of sheep or ponies are held) or, in a few cases, because they did not know what the project was about or how it operates - existing agri-environment scheme barriers and problems remain and relations have not changed.

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<sup>15</sup> i.e. not attended meetings or sought information

Overall, commoners are more willing to engage because of the DFF project and, where they have, relationships have improved and problems/issues have been overcome. However, there remains a need to consider those that have not yet engaged, both in order to overcome existing problems and avoid causing more disparity and disconnect. The task of bringing on board a wider group of commoners on the Forest of Dartmoor is at an early stage and work in progress.

### **Agri-environment scheme understanding and ownership**

For those commoners who have engaged, the DFF approach has led to a greater understanding of what their agri-environment scheme agreement is trying to achieve. This links to the initial stages of identifying the ecosystem services and public benefits relevant to their common, and then agreeing a set of outcomes for the agreement. This, together with the approach being farmer-led and farmer-managed (for example, through the derogation process) has resulted in a greater sense of ownership of their agri-environment scheme agreements – this element scored highest out of all impacts for both commoners and stakeholders (4.27 and 4.45 respectively). Commoners are also more enthusiastic and feel more confident that their agri-environment agreement can deliver good land management on the common.

### **Environmental awareness and understanding**

Participating commoners feel that they have a greater awareness of the key habitats, species and other environmental features on their common as a result of the DFF approach. This has resulted from the initial scoping of the agreement, as well as the evidence and information provided during the process, and site meetings. It was recognised, particularly by stakeholders, that more could be done in terms of providing clear and accessible scientific evidence so that this can be taken into account during the process of setting priorities, outcomes and delivering management. Some scientific evidence has yet to be provided for the Forest Of Dartmoor pending the completion of the SSSI re-unitisation and re-assessment of condition. Both commoners and stakeholders also recognise the value of simpler, clearer environmental information including, for example, photographs showing specific habitats and species and the use of English rather than Latin names. The provision of this type of information in relation to individual common management units in the Forest is presently underway.

### **Outcomes**

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.

### **Monitoring**

The commoners are aware of the monitoring requirements under DFF, including the key indicators of success, and recognised the importance of monitoring in measuring, guiding 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.

### **Environmental benefits**

Whilst acknowledging that the pilots are at an early stage, both commoners and stakeholders are positive about the ability of DFF to deliver the full range of environmental benefits as set out in the outcomes for each area of common. While the scores for the different ecosystem services varied by common according to the priorities,

there is general consensus that the greatest environmental impacts would arise in relation to food production, management of natural habitats and biodiversity, fire prevention and management of archaeological sites (average scores<sup>16</sup> of 4.14, 4.10, 4.09 and 4.06 respectively). Positive, but lower scores are expected in relation to the management of public access, landscape, soil/peat/carbon and protection of watercourses and water quality (average scores<sup>16</sup> of 3.96, 3.92, 3.70 and 3.60 respectively). The lower scores in relation to water and carbon may link across to the as yet, untapped potential for delivery of these ecosystem services through Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes.

Commoners and stakeholders agree that the environmental benefits under the DFF approach would be higher under DFF than under ESA or HLS alone. This is due to improved understanding and ownership and the wider range of environmental services being delivered amongst other things. However the valuable contribution of the underpinning schemes is also noted: the ESA has enhanced biodiversity (by tackling overgrazing) and contributed to fire prevention (via controlled burning) in particular; and the HLS could also be expected to deliver additional environmental benefits in a situation without DFF.

### **Farm business benefits**

There is agreement that commoners have more flexibility under DFF than they would have otherwise under a standalone ESA or HLS agreement, due to the ability to apply for derogations or similar. This element scored the second highest out of all benefits, for both commoners and stakeholders (4.23 and 4.40 respectively). The commoners also agree that they had adopted new or different management methods to benefit the common. While derogations have focused extending the cattle grazing period and swaling to date, there is no reason why other management could not also be applied for.

The commoners reserved the lowest scores for the economic gains associated with DFF (and this was supported by the stakeholders' scores). A few felt that there could be cost savings relating to more flexible grazing and reduced cattle housing periods and an associated fall in reduced bedding/feed costs. The majority could not see any likely income improvements associated with DFF, due to there being no agri-environment scheme payment increases<sup>17</sup> and, as yet, no additional income anticipated from improved grazing or more stock.

### **Impacts on partners**

Stakeholders, as well as commoners, have also been positively impacted by the DFF project. This includes a better understanding of the commoners' situation and the economic and practical challenges facing them, and for some, a more positive perception of the commoners in light of the response to the opportunity provided by DFF. The partners on the Steering Group also expressed greater understanding of each other's circumstances and constraints. A closer working relationship between the partners has developed as a result of the project and more collaborative working.

### **Future management of commons and organisation of that management**

There is agreement that DFF is making a difference to the future management of the commons in a positive way. It is helping to empower commoners and developing capacity to manage the common, alongside other initiatives such as the Hill Farm Project. It is also encouraging them to work together and look at the land in a different way. This includes having a longer term view and being aware of the wide range of environmental services that the commons can deliver. It is however at an early stage in terms of the delivery of identified outcomes.

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<sup>16</sup> Calculated by averaging the commoners' and stakeholders' scores.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

DFF is having less impact in terms of the organisation of commons management – primarily due to the existence of commons associations prior to DFF – however the introduction of DFF has supported the development of additional, beneficial roles for the commons associations, including identifying priorities, co-ordinating delivery in a flexible way, and monitoring outcomes.

## **Summary**

Overall, both commoners and stakeholders are very positive regarding progress so far against the four key aims of the project. The commoners have been enabled to take more responsibility for the design and delivery of their agri-environment scheme agreements and the DFF process has facilitated a collaborative approach to setting outcomes, delivery on the ground and monitoring. This collaboration includes closer working amongst commoners, between commoners and partners, and amongst partners. Both commoners and stakeholders are optimistic that the agreements will deliver the complete range of public benefits and the identification of suitable priorities for different areas, there is more caution here given the early stage of the project.

## ***7.2 Lessons for the future development of the pilot and the next Rural Development Programme***

### **7.2.1 Future development of the pilot**

A summary of the perceived strengths and weaknesses, and risks of the DFF approach to date is set out below, together with recommended improvements. Lessons learned, project design and delivery, governance and management, and value for money are also considered. This summary is based on the responses received and own own analysis.

The main **strengths** of the DFF project, from a long list, include:

- Open process
- Improved dialogue between the parties and development of closer working relationships
- Improved understanding of environmental features, ecosystem services and agri-environment schemes
- Empowered commoners to take ownership of outcomes, management and monitoring
- Re-unitisation and re-assessment of SSSI
- Improved verifiability arising from the outcome-focused agreement
- Greater flexibility
- Increased likelihood of positive outcomes from the agreement
- Increased level of support for commoners
- Generated enthusiasm amongst commoners and partners
- Independent facilitator role

The main **weaknesses** of the DFF project were fewer, but include:

- Time input required from commoners (and partners) and time taken to develop the project
- Not reaching/engaging some commoners (on the Forest of Dartmoor)
- Lot of responsibility on the Commons Associations/Trustees
- Access to, and limited uptake of, scientific evidence
- Lack of simple summaries/updates, resulting in some stakeholders being out of touch
- Separation between NE and commoners, arising from communications via facilitator
- Financial limitations, including no increase in payments under DFF
- Lack of a clear project plan

- Differing expectations amongst partners and lack of agreement on a number of matters

A number of **risks** were identified the DFF approach, these include: not delivering the outcomes for reasons outside the commoners' control; risks for the Commons Association/Trustees associated with co-ordinating the management and monitoring on commons; not engaging with a wider group of commoners (Forest of Dartmoor); any wavering in the commitment to the DFF, as this could destroy relations; and high expectations that this approach provides the answer in all situations.

Improvements to the DFF project have occurred as the project has progressed, and this process is expected to continue. That said, we do have **recommendations for specific improvements to the DFF project**, drawing on the weaknesses and risks mentioned above:

1. Speed up the SSSI re-unitisation in order to maintain momentum
2. Increase commoners' understanding further, based on scientific evidence
3. Support the Trustees' roll-out of DFF to a wider group of commoners on the Forest
4. Support the Commons Associations/Trustees in the delivery of management and monitoring
5. Monitor farm-level cost and income data to demonstrate farm business impacts
6. Innovate further, by using the DFF approach to deliver other objectives (e.g training, capital works, water protection, support for new entrants) at landscape scale, utilising other funding streams.
7. Produce promotional literature and regular updates
8. Develop a project route map and timetable, and share this with a wider group of partners.

There is also interest in progressing the PES scheme alongside the piloting of DFF project. While it is acknowledged this is a separate process, it nonetheless links to DFF and involves the same land and many of the same individuals.

**Lessons learned** which are relevant to similar initiatives in future include:

- Keep things as simple as possible, and focused on specific priorities
- Allow time to build confidence and trust
- Manage expectations from the start
- Allow farmers to take responsibility and have faith in the collaborative process
- Support key individuals e.g. the Commons Associations' Chairmen
- Secure baseline data as integral part of the monitoring framework.
- Use flexibility carefully, when co-ordinating the management of individual common units
- Communicate regularly, including via an annual meeting/walk
- Seek wider engagement, with 'quieter' farmers and the wider community
- Define the project and process, to help manage expectations
- Independent facilitation is important, but the role/time period needs to be defined.
- Keep people on board and up to speed

Importantly, the DFF project has enabled the development of a stepped approach which can be used and improved as it is applied to other situations.

**Project design and delivery**, and the **governance and management** of the project were generally regarded positively. A few gaps/weaknesses were identified however, and these together with suggested remedies, are outlined under 'weaknesses' and 'improvements' above.

It is difficult to be definitive about the **value for money** of the DFF project, given the early stage of the project in terms of delivery and without knowing whether the desired outcomes will be achieved. We can say, however, that the project is making good progress in engaging deliverers, increasing understanding, involvement and ownership, and developing capacity. This increases the likelihood of the desired outcomes being achieved in the pilot areas. As DFF is taken up by more commoners, these outcomes are likely to be extended.

We can also say that the DFF project is being carried out economically, given that it is relying heavily on many people's goodwill and time, most of which is provided free of charge. It is difficult to derive an accurate estimate of time and costs for DFF given the lack of data, both for the DFF approach and the non-DFF equivalent. The one direct cost associated with DFF, which we do know about relates to facilitation (£38,500), although parts of this can be attributed to research and development, and explaining DFF to third parties. It is reasonable to expect, however, that the direct additional costs of DFF will represent only a small percentage of the total cost of the agri-environment scheme payments over the ten year period of the agreements.

There will also be potential cost savings for NE, and the public sector generally, arising from the self-management and monitoring by commoners under DFF. There should also be a reduced risk of the agreements failing and hence loss of investment, by both commoners and the public sector.

Feedback from the interviews suggests that the majority of commoners and stakeholders feel that DFF is good value for money; that is that the current and anticipated outcomes on the ground will be worth the money and time invested. In addition, the project is delivering a new, potentially very effective model for agri-environment scheme delivery.

All things considered, then, it is reasonable to conclude that DFF has the potential to represent good value for money for both the public sector and the private sector. In addition to the environmental outcomes, the commoners should benefit from the additional flexibility and, potentially, more secure agri-environment scheme payments and enhanced opportunity for PES scheme payments.

## **7.2.2 Wider application and RDPE 2014-2020**

### **Wider application**

Both commoners and stakeholders would recommend the DFF approach to others and agree that the approach could be replicated elsewhere. This includes other commons on Dartmoor as well as intakes and in-by land. More generally, the DFF approach was felt to be applicable to landscape-scale approaches in other parts of the country, both in upland and lowland areas. The outcome-focused approach could also be readily applied to individual farms.

There is however a recognition that the DFF approach would not be a solution everywhere. DFF would not necessarily work where there are conflicts or unresolved issues between commoners/farmers. The need for key individuals within the farming community to support the approach, a good independent facilitator and sufficient resources was also flagged up.

### **RDPE 2014-2020**

There was also agreement amongst commoners and stakeholders that the DFF approach should be considered for inclusion in the RDPE 2014-2020. We would concur that an outcome-focused, farm-led approach, such as DFF, could potentially result in better, more cost effective agri-environment scheme delivery in many areas. Furthermore, improving understanding, engagement and ownership by commoners and other farmers through a DFF approach would be an investment in capacity for the long term. An

outcome-focused approach could also contribute to improved verifiability, with benefits over prescription-based agreements.

The DFF approach would fit with several of the proposed themes for NELMS including landscape scale delivery, a participative, collaborative approach and an outcome focus. It would also be appropriate for the proposed top or middle tiers of NELMS, covering designated sites and landscape scale working with locally prioritised outcomes, co-ordinated across several farm holdings.

Wider roll-out would need to be accompanied by clear objectives (for farmers/areas using the approach), and simple, straightforward structures and processes in order to reduce the costs and time involved in developing projects. It would be beneficial, for example, to develop menus of outcomes, perhaps based on National Character Areas, which can be refined by farmers. Resourcing would also be required for independent facilitation at the beginning of projects.

One issue which it may not be possible to accommodate within the new RDPE would be payments based on outcomes delivered. The proposed EAFRD regulations for the next programme period will only permit agri-environment scheme payments based on income foregone and additional costs<sup>18</sup>, as presently. That said, it should still be possible to incentivise desired outcomes, by tailoring payment rates, whilst adhering to the existing basis.

Whilst potentially beneficial in many cases, it is clear that DFF approach will not suit every situation. This might mean that a DFF approach may need to run alongside a 'standard' approach. This should be feasible, given that the standard agri-environment scheme would in any case provide the basis upon which the DFF approach stands. The key here would be to clear on which standard elements remained in place, and what was varied via the DFF approach, together simple, transparent, standardised structures and processes for the DFF approach.

For those areas where a DFF approach is implemented, a further opportunity lies in applying the approach to deliver a wider range of objectives such as farm competitiveness, animal health or training, alongside agri-environment in order to address local priorities in a more integrated way. There is potential for this type under the RDPE 2014-2020, with the removal of the current axes and focus on priorities. A broadened DFF approach would link well into proposed EU rural development measures such as co-operation, producer groups, knowledge, risk management, and restructuring/innovation/modernisation.

Linking the DFF outcome-focused, ecosystem service based approach with separate, private sector PES schemes is a further opportunity, although not one necessarily required to be accommodated, or referred to, within the new programme.

These positive opportunities need to be tempered with the fact that the DFF project is still at an early stage, with the results on the ground of DFF yet to be fully realised. While there is confidence that the desired outcomes will be delivered, it would be sensible not only to continue the DFF project but also consider trialling it in other areas and circumstances, in order to help test and refine it and understand the circumstances in which it might best be used. This dovetails with a key message of a recent report on co-ordinated management by CCRI<sup>19</sup>, which concludes that a 'one size fits all' approach to co-ordinated management should be avoided. In any case, it is recommended that the DFF-type approach is explicitly incorporated into the new programme given that it is a novel mechanism.

**Our recommendations in respect of the wider application of the DFF approach and the next rural development programme** can be summarised as follows:

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<sup>18</sup> Article 29(6) of the proposed European Agricultural Food and Rural Development (EAFRD) Regulations, October 2011, COM(2011) 627 final/2

<sup>19</sup> CCRI (2012) Economics of Co-ordination in Environmental Stewardship. Project No.DO0119. Report for Defra. This report cites the DFF project.

- A. Continue to monitor the DFF approach, focusing particularly on the delivery of outcomes on the ground
- B. Trial the DFF-type approach in other areas and circumstances, to test and refine it
- C. Simplify and standardise DFF-type objectives, structures and processes, to reduce time taken and improve efficiency, but without losing farmer/commoner lead and input.
- D. Trial an extension of the DFF approach to a wider range of objectives to address local priorities at a landscape scale in a more integrated way.
- E. Incorporate the DFF approach within the new RDPE 2014-2020 to cover the above trials and the potential mainstreaming of the approach in the future.



## **Appendix 1: Moor Futures**

## **Moor Futures**

Moor Futures comprises two elements: the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project and the Dartmoor Vision. The Hill Farm Project was co-founded by the Dartmoor National Park Authority and Duchy of Cornwall. The Vision was inspired by the former. Both strands were initiated by Dartmoor National Park Authority to help ensure a viable future for Dartmoor's farmers by supporting them through collaborative activities, facilitation in developing ideas, provision of advice, guidance on training opportunities and identifying sources of funding.

### **Dartmoor Hill Farm Project - 'Making a difference for farmers'**

The Dartmoor Hill Farm Project was set up in November 2003, as a result of recommendations set out in the 'State of Farming on Dartmoor 2002'. The project is run by Dartmoor National Park Authority with funding and practical support from the Duchy of Cornwall. Additional funding provided by the RDPE. Current initiatives include Moor Skills – an apprentice scheme for young hill farmers, Moor Wool – adding value to the fleeces from Dartmoor sheep and providing assistance in accessing RDPE grants to address farming and animal health issues. The Duchy provides additional funding to these separate projects.

### **The Dartmoor Vision**

The Dartmoor Vision sought to provide clarity on what the various agencies wanted Dartmoor to look like in 2030 whilst providing the farming community, especially the commoners (75% of the unenclosed land is common land), with a clear statement on the land management priorities. The Vision was published in 2006. The farmers involved in the vision process continued to meet, as the Dartmoor Vision Group, until 2009. This group developed into an alliance of hill farmers and agencies from Dartmoor. The group produced a leaflet 'Moor Farming - Delivering the Dartmoor Vision' that sets out the problems faced by hill farmers and the important role they have in managing the moorland. It is intended to raise the profile of the importance of moorland farming in delivering an array of public benefits and natural resources. The leaflet was produced in April 2008.

*Source: Waldon, J. (2013). DFF Case Study January 2013*

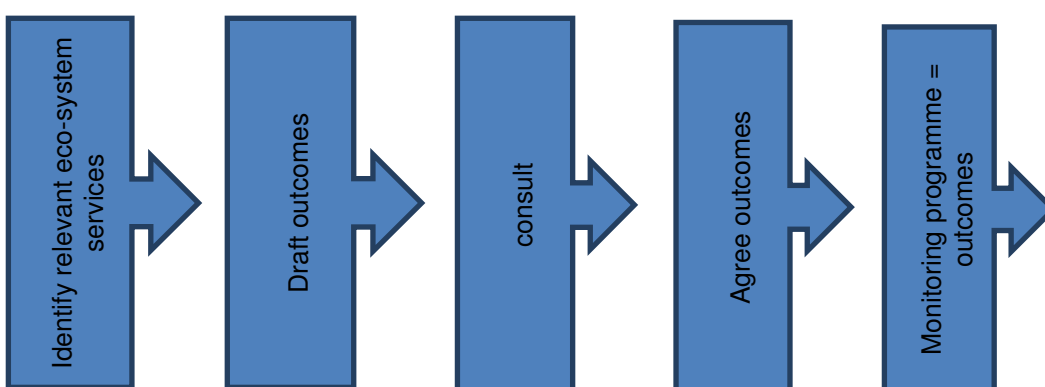
## **Appendix 2: DFF Approach**

The following is an extract from Waldon, J. (2013). DFF Case Study January 2013:

### The new approach

The design is for land with the potential for environmental improvement and is set out as a number of steps. The main parts of the process are:

1. Identifying the ecosystems services and public benefits relevant to the common,
2. Agreeing a set of outcomes that reflect those ecosystem services; this is what the farmers and land owners agree to deliver.
3. Providing an internal deed setting out who benefits and how payments are distributed.
4. The farmers and land owners then decide on appropriate land management necessary to deliver outcomes, this is set out in an annual work programme.
5. A monitoring programme is agreed with Natural England that illustrates progress towards achieving outcomes and give confidence to commoners that their activities are relevant and correct.



**The proposed new approach to delivery is predicated on an agreed set of outcomes, understood by all, and allowing the land management, necessary to deliver the outcomes, to be determined by the farmers and the owners of the common. There are no prescriptions within the agreement.**

Step 1: A simple spread sheet enables all the public benefits and ecosystem services, that might be relevant on their land, to be considered. (see Appendix 1a & b). The completed form is then discussed with Natural England. If an application is encouraged the applicant moves to step 2.

Step 2: The applicant(s) begins to draft a set of outcomes, relevant to the public goods and ecosystem services on the land. These draft outcomes are then discussed with a small group of representatives from relevant agencies, including the National Park, Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England to ensure that the outcomes are clear and appropriate. This collective consultation also prevents one individual dominating the process and progressing the outcomes within a meeting also reduces the risk that work for one outcome might compromise or damage another outcome. Within the DFF project the outcomes were expected to be compatible with the Dartmoor Vision. The agreed outcomes become the core of the agreement. An example of a set of outcomes is included in Appendix 2.

Step 3: Prior to the start of the agreement the Commons Association or management committee will have agreed with the participating commoners the following:

- An internal deed - describing the operation of the committee and agreement.
- A Management Plan, that includes stocking rates, timing of grazing, type of stock and swaling programme, written by the commoners or on their behalf. The plan will conform to all appropriate regulations, including those arising from cross-compliance, the National Park and the Dartmoor Commoners' Council.

- Agreement from those commoners signed to the agreement on the following year's work plan including grazing regime, stock numbers and additional work. The farmers provide a stocking calendar.

Step 4: The active graziers decide on what land management is necessary to deliver the outcomes. When agreed this is set out in a work plan for the following 12 months.

Step 5: A programme of review and monitoring is provided by the farmers and agreed by Natural England following discussion and consultation. A monitoring programme is essential and should provide confidence to the commoners and to Natural England that the land management is progressing in the right direction.

The monitoring schedule contains the previously agreed outcomes and together they form the application and are submitted by one individual on behalf of the common. Additional information provided by the applicant at this stage would include a map of the area including the boundary, a short report setting out information relating to any designated sites, legal obligations (e.g. arising from scheduled monuments and SSSIs), an internal deed (describing how the scheme will operate) and a list of those benefiting from the agreement.

The draft design is intended to greatly increase the potential of agri-environment schemes to deliver real change and enhancement of a suite of eco-system services and public benefits, whilst encouraging farmers to take ownership the scheme.

The new approach was trialled on four home farms to see if the approach was applicable to land other than common land. All the farmers thought that the design was practical and would work on their farms.

## **Appendix 3: DFF Pilot Areas - Ecosystem Services**

<b>Haytor commons: Ecosystem services / natural resources</b>		
<b>Natural resources</b>	<b>relevant to location</b>	<b>further information</b>
Public access	high	throughout and varied
Archaeology and historic environment	high	4 SMs + multi entry on historic record
nature or biodiversity	moderate	BAP species present
Landscape	high	international importance
water - quality and quantity	low	River Lemon no direct link to abstraction
carbon	no	little deep peat
food production	yes	livestock farming

<b>Forest of Dartmoor: Ecosystem services / natural resources</b>		
<b>Natural resources</b>	<b>relevant to location</b>	<b>further information</b>
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	Significant contribution to lamb & calve production	hefts and leers essential

## **Appendix 4: DFF Pilot Areas - Outcomes**



## **Haytor and Bagtor: Outcomes**

### Access

1. 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.
2. Selected paths, identified by DNPA, are widened by the removal of vegetation.

### Nature/biodiversity/ecological

3. The areas of Western Heath, including gorse, are retained and managed to provide a variety of age and structure and therefore create suitable habitat for priority species including Dartford Warblers.
4. The mires remain dominated by short vegetation, with some taller grasses and areas of water to provide the habitats for snipe, various dragonflies, bog hoverfly, Marsh and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterflies.
5. The areas of bracken are managed to prevent an increase in area and to create a mosaic of grassy areas and bracken to provide habitats suitable for High Brown, Pearl-bordered, Dark Green and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterflies.

### Historical/archaeological

6. Selected archaeological sites (6), including the Tramway and boundary stones are kept free of encroaching vegetation.

### Water

7. No actions by the commoners will result in reducing the water quality in the River Lemon.

### Landscape

8. Grazing cattle, sheep and ponies remain in the landscape.
9. The tors remain visible and connecting paths are not visually intrusive.

### Food production (farming)

10. There is no decline in the number of grazing livestock days (number of cattle and sheep x days grazing).

## **Forest of Dartmoor: Draft Outcomes<sup>20</sup>**

### Public access

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.

### Nature/biodiversity/ecological

2. 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.

### Historical/archaeological

3. 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.
4. 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.

### Water

5. No actions by the commoners will result in reducing the water quality reaching the various abstraction points.
6. 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.

### Soils/Peat/Carbon

7. Maintain healthy heathland soils. Provide vegetation management and reduce the adverse impacts of wild fires.

### Landscape

8. 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.

### Food production (farming)

9. Ensure that leared flocks and herds remain the principle means of stock management and that all stock are appropriate to the higher moor.

### Fire prevention

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.

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<sup>20</sup> v0.9 - following input from Natural England 24 April and Environment agency 4 May 2012 and the Forest work group on 16 May 2012

**Appendix 5: Commoners interviewed**

<b>Haytor and Bagtor Commons</b>
Mr T Colwill
Mr B Vallance
Mr M Bowden
Mr R Mann
Mr P Bowden
Mr E Williams
Mr M Retallick
Mr R Retallick
<b>Forest of Dartmoor</b>
Mr C R Abel
Mr L C Branfield
Miss T H F May
Mr P R Coaker
Mr M Cole
Mr Dodd
Mr T Friend
Mr R E Gray
Mr C P Heard
Mr D R W Reddaway
Mr S J Francis
Mr J A T Hodge
Mr D H Legassick
Mr S J Arrowsmith-Brown
Mr E G Bellamy
Mr W J Jordan
Mr B W J Lavis
Mr B E Palmer
Mr S G Palmer
Mrs H C Radmore
Mr K Watson
Mr J Wilkinson
Mr R S Winsor
Mr P Skelley
Mr M J Wonnacott

## **Appendix 6: Commoners Interviews - Questions**

## Dartmoor Farming Futures Project - Evaluation Commoner Interviews – Questions

### A) Farm/Common Background

Q1. Name and contact details:

<b>Name of Commoner</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Common</b> ( <i>circle one</i> )	<b>Forest</b> <b>Haytor/Bagtor</b>

Q2. Very briefly outline your farming and common grazing system

<b>Farm Size and Tenure</b> <i>Area of core farming business in ha (not including common land)</i>	
<b>Farming Enterprises</b> <i>Outline the current farming system Number of breeding cattle and sheep Any ponies?</i>	
<b>Common Grazing</b> <i>Active or non active Rights exercised on Forest or Haytor/Bagtor common. What stock do you put on the common?</i>	
<b>How long have you or your family been grazing the Forest or Haytor/Bagtor common?</b>	

### B) Engaging and Involving Commoners

Q3. Please describe your level of involvement with agri-environment schemes in the past (ESA, WES, UELS, ELS, HLS etc).

Q4. Was the old scheme a success (discuss)? Outline any problems you had joining the agri-environment schemes or managing scheme land in the past.

*Yes or No*

*Outline successes and problems.  
[ Explore understanding of intended environmental outcomes, success in delivering environmental outcomes; and impacts on farm business under old scheme(s)]*

Q5. Please describe your current level of involvement with the DFF project.

<i>I have heard about it but I have not been to any of the meetings or engaged with DFF</i>	
<i>I attended an introduction meeting but have not engaged any further with DFF</i>	
<i>I have attended a number of meetings and keep involved with the project</i>	
<i>I attend meetings, keep involved and have signed up to the agreement/used derogation process etc</i>	
<i>Other?</i>	
<i>Any comments regarding level of involvement or the process of engagement and communication etc?</i>	

Q6. Has the DFF process helped overcome previous agri-environment problems and barriers?

<i>Yes or No</i>
<i>If yes, please describe how.</i>

Q7. How would you rate the level of engagement between Defra/NE and yourself before the project started and now?

	Before DFF	Now
Very poor		
Poor		
Satisfactory		
Good		
Very good		

Q8. How has your relationship with Defra/NE changed since you engaged with the project?

<i>Yes or No</i>
<i>Please describe how</i>
<i>(For example: whether now more empowered, less constrained, more information provided, more contact/discussion etc?)</i>

### C) Development of the Project

Q9. How do you feel the development of the DFF project went, from initial concept to the current approach?

Q10. Does the current design/approach meet your initial understanding/expectation?

*Yes or No*

*Please describe*

Q11. What do you think of the governance and management of the DFF project? Any comments on the role and performance of the following:

- Partnership
- Steering Group
- Project management and co-ordination
- Commons Association
- Facilitator



## D) Project Inputs

Q12. How do you think your time input compares to a situation without DFF? Have you put more or less time into the development and management of your agri-environment scheme than before (say, compared with ESA or HLS)?

	A lot more	More	Same	Less	A lot less
Time input compared to the situation before or without DFF Can you quantify this?					

Q13. Have you had to put any other inputs into DFF project so far, for example, money towards a survey, monitoring or expert advice?

<p><i>Yes or No</i></p> <p><i>Please describe</i></p>
-------------------------------------------------------

Q14. What is your view on the inputs (time, money, staff, other) from partners (Commons Associations, NE, DNPA, Duchy etc) that have been put into the project?

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## E) Project Results (Outputs, Outcomes and Impacts of DFF)

Q15. Thinking about the key aims of DFF do you agree or disagree, on a scale of 1 – 5, that the project is delivering the following results:

5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 No change	2 Do not agree	1 Strongly disagree
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Result	Score	Comments
a) You have been enabled to take more responsibility for the design and delivery of an agri-environment agreement		
b) The DFF process has facilitated a collaborative approach to setting outcomes, delivery on the ground and monitoring		
c) The agreement can deliver the complete range of public benefits		
d) The agreement has identified suitable priorities for particular areas		

Q16. It is appreciated that it is early days but what do you think will be the level of impact, using a scale of 1 – 5, of the DFF project on the ground in the following areas:

5 Very Positive Impact	4 Positive Impact	3 No Impact (or mixed)	2 Negative Impact	1 Very Negative Impact
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Result	Score	Comments (inc any evidenced progress to date)
a) Management and provision of public access		
b) Management of natural habitats and biodiversity, particularly the SSSI/SAC features.		
c) Management of archaeological sites and features		
d) Protection of watercourses and water quality		
e) The landscape		
f) Food production and the role of grazing livestock		
g) Soil/Peat/Carbon ( <i>Forest only</i> )		
h) Fire Prevention ( <i>Forest only</i> )		

Q17. How do you think these impacts compare to those seen or experienced under the previous ESA or HLS approach? How has the process altered your understanding of these environmental issues?

Q18. Thinking about the process and your involvement in DFF (compared to before the project started) do you agree or disagree, on a scale of 1 – 5, with the following:

5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 No change	2 Do not agree	1 Strongly disagree
---------------------	------------	----------------	-------------------	------------------------

Result	Score	Comments
a) You are more willing to engage with agri-environment than before.		
b) You feel you have a greater sense of ownership as regards the agri-environment scheme you are working under.		
c) You feel more confident that the agreement can deliver good land management on the common.		
d) You have a better understanding of agri-environment scheme objectives, process and prescriptions.		
e) It has improved your awareness of the key environmental features and designations on the common and their condition and needs.		
f) Scientific evidence has been presented to you and used to help guide priorities, the setting of outcomes and management on the ground		
g) You are aware of the key indicators of success and suitable monitoring is in place to assess progress against these indicators.		
h) You have adopted different or new management methods to benefit the common.		
i) You have more flexibility and ability to modify stocking and management than before e.g. using the derogation process (Forest)		
j) There have been cost savings (possibly due to longer grazing periods, reduced housing etc)		

k) Income has improved (possibly due to increased AE money, stocking rates, grazing quality).		
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**F) Lessons Learned**

Q19. What have been the strengths of the DFF project to date (compared to previous or current AES approaches)?

Q20. What have been the weaknesses of the DFF project to date?

Q21. What are the risks of the DFF approach?

Q22. What would you say are the key lessons learned to date from the DFF project?

Q23. What improvements would you would like to suggest for the DFF project looking forward (if any)?

Q24. Does the DFF project seem good value for money?

<i>Yes or No</i> <i>Comments</i>
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**G) Wider Application**

Q25. Would you recommend the DFF approach to other commoners/farmers, and if so, how?

<i>Yes or No</i> <i>Comment – why and how, or why not.</i>
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**H) Additional Comments**

Q26. Are there any other comments or points you would like to raise?

**Thank you very much for taking part in this interview**

**Appendix 7: Commoners' feedback on results of Dartmoor Farming Futures**

## Commoners' feedback on the results of Dartmoor Farming Futures

This Appendix sets out the responses by common/grouping, referred to in Section 4.5 of the main report.

The following averaged scores are split three ways – Haytor and Bagtor Commons (based on 8 responses), engaged Forest commoners (based on 18 responses) and the non-engaged Forest commoners (based on 7 responses). As the non-engaged Forest commoners have had little involvement in the project so far a score of 3 (no change) was used unless a specific issue was raised and a positive or negative score offered. Most of this group did not feel well placed to answer.

Result	Score	Comments/Evidence from Commoners
	Haytor and Bagtor Commons	
	Forest or Dartmoor - engaged (Forest of Dartmoor - not engaged)	

### Is DFF Meeting its Key Aims?

We first asked commoners to consider the key aims of DFF i.e. the cornerstones of the project. Do they agree or disagree that the project is meeting these key aims (based on the scale below)?

5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 No change	2 Do not agree	1 Strongly disagree
---------------------	------------	----------------	-------------------	------------------------

Result	Score	Comments/Evidence from Commoners
a) You have been enabled to take more responsibility for the design and delivery of an agri-environment agreement	4.75	<i>'Yes, definitely, we are very involved and ultimately responsible'</i>
	4.11 (3.00)	
b) The DFF process has facilitated a collaborative approach to setting outcomes, delivery on the ground and monitoring	4.50	<i>'Our views as a group are now important'</i>
	4.00 (3.14)	<i>'I felt there was a fair amount of collaboration with NE already through my own HLS'</i>



c) The agreement can deliver the complete range of public benefits	4.38	<i>'Our improved understanding, management flexibility and better monitoring should help ensure delivery'</i>
	3.83 (2.57)	
d) The agreement has identified suitable priorities for particular areas	4.50	<i>Better targeting and the FEP work has improved our awareness of the priorities'</i>
	3.89 (3.14)	<i>'More awareness is fine but its still difficult to control where stock graze'</i>

### What are the Key Environmental Impacts of DFF?

We asked commoners to consider the key impacts of DFF on the environment. Do they feel that DFF is having or will have a positive or negative impact (based on the scale below)?

5 Very Positive Impact	4 Positive Impact	3 No Impact (or mixed)	2 Negative Impact	1 Very Negative Impact
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Result	Score	Comments/Evidence from Commoners
a) Management and provision of public access	4.13	<i>'Grazing will help keep tracks and access areas open and free from scrub'</i> <i>'It's more about on-going management than improvement'</i>
	3.72 (2.86)	<i>'Under-grazing has restricted access so hopefully more grazing will start to improve things'</i>
b) Management of natural habitats and biodiversity, particularly the SSSI/SAC features.	4.25	<i>'The ability to refine of grazing numbers and timings will benefit the vegetation'</i>
	3.83 (2.71)	<i>'Yes there will be improvements, but I feel we are short of cattle to deliver the optimum grazing'</i> <i>'More grazing is required to create tussocky areas for birds like curlew and lapwing'</i>

c) Management of archaeological sites and features	4.00	<i>'Better grazing and chemical scrub control will help protect these sites'</i>
	3.94 (2.86)	<i>'I see many sites at risk of scrubbing up through undergrazing'</i>
d) Protection of watercourses and water quality	3.00	<i>'There are a few boggy areas but no water courses on Haytor Bagtor so there will be minimal impact'</i>
	3.67 (3.00)	
e) The landscape	3.88	<i>'Bracken encroachment is a landscape issue as well as biodiversity one'</i> <i>'We are more aware of the landscape mosaic'</i>
	3.89 (2.86)	<i>'The moorland landscape has been created by centuries of farming and grazing livestock, and keeping our animals up there in the future depends on projects like DFF'</i>
f) Food production and the role of grazing livestock	4.00	<i>'There maybe better grazing areas and swards in the long run'</i> <i>'DFF recognises the importance of cattle and sheep grazing, and encourages farming for food not just wildlife'</i>
	3.89 (2.86)	<i>'More cattle will produce improved grazing for sheep'</i>
g) Soil/Peat/Carbon ( <i>Forest only</i> )	NA	
	3.61 (2.86)	<i>'Poaching is a risk as cattle out longer but we shall monitor and manage this'</i> <i>'Burning practice is improving due to DFF and NE support'</i>

h) Fire Prevention ( <i>Forest only</i> )	NA	
	4.11 (2.71)	<i>'Cattle will eat more Molinia and help reduces fire risk'</i> <i>'NE need to permit more controlled swaling'</i> <i>'Need to work more with fire service'</i> <i>'We need to increase the areas of swaling, 5ha patches are a drop in the ocean'</i>

### What are the Additional Impacts of DFF?

We asked commoners about the additional impacts of DFF process. Do they agree or disagree that the project is resulting in greater sense of ownership, improved awareness, more flexibility and business sustainability (based on the scale below)?

5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 No change	2 Do not agree	1 Strongly disagree
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Result	Score	Comments
a) You are more willing to engage with agri-environment than before.	3.63	
	3.89 (2.71)	<i>'I have been in ESA/HLS for years so I already feel engaged'</i>
b) You feel you have a greater sense of ownership as regards the agri-environment scheme you are working under.	4.63	
	4.11 (2.86)	
c) You feel more confident that the agreement can deliver good land management on the common.	4.25	<i>'Yes, but the impact of predation, weather etc must be taken into account'</i>
	4.06 (2.71)	<i>'Yes but will depend on good monitoring and policing'</i> <i>'Once cattle taken off the moor it is difficult to replace hefting/breed/hardiness etc. and to graze as well as we did'</i>
d) You have a better understanding of agri-environment scheme objectives, process and prescriptions.	3.88	<i>'I have more understanding than I did under ESA'</i>
	3.89 (3.00)	<i>'The requirements are well set out in HLS agreement so no new info in DFF really'</i>
e) It has improved your awareness of the key environmental features and designations on the common and their condition	3.88	
	3.83 (2.86)	<i>'The best thing about the project for me'</i>

	and needs.		
f)	Scientific evidence has been presented to you and used to help guide priorities, the setting of outcomes and management on the ground	3.63	<i>'NE and the NP have given us useful support particularly on butterflies'</i> <i>'We have had good info on birds, butterflies and archaeology so far but more to do'</i>
		3.61 (2.86)	<i>'A handbook is being developed to help show sward condition, key species etc – this should be very useful'</i> <i>'I don't feel the monitoring/survey not always independent &amp; subjective'</i>
g)	You are aware of the key indicators of success and suitable monitoring is in place to assess progress against these indicators.	4.38	<i>'Monitoring is crucial and we have made a start. We are all involved. First proper meeting with NE is planned for in August'</i> <i>'Its good to receive info but it needs to be in laymans terms i.e. use common names not Latin when talking about plants and habitats'</i>
		3.67 (2.86)	<i>'Not sure whether the monitoring is there – it needs to be'</i> <i>'Different objectives may have conflicting success. Hard to monitor'</i>
h)	You have adopted different or new management methods to benefit the common.	3.38	<i>'I feel more involved and in control so will be more hands on again on the ground'</i> <i>'ESA and loss of headage payments etc forced the main changes'</i>
		3.67 (3.00)	<i>'We have extended our grazing period'</i>
i)	You have more flexibility and ability to modify stocking and management than before e.g. using the derogation process (Forest)	4.50	
		4.11 (3.29)	<i>'Yes, but still a process to go through. Trustees need a level of control'</i> <i>'Our system is more influenced by economics, not really DFF'</i>
j)	There have been cost savings (possibly due to longer grazing periods, reduced housing etc)	3.00	<i>'Possibly for cattle graziers but not sheep'</i>
		3.50 (3.00)	<i>'There may be feed savings'</i> <i>'Extended grazing could save £1000-£1500 each winter'</i> <i>'Extending cattle grazing will help save costs'</i>
k)	Income has improved (possibly due to increased AE money, stocking rates, grazing quality).	3.13	<i>'There may possibly better cattle grazing in the future as we tackle the rank areas'</i>

		<i>'HLS income will remains the same or go down to pay for admin'</i>
	3.28 (3.29)	<i>'Potential for more and better quality stock in the long run'</i>

## **Appendix 8: Stakeholders interviewed**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Steering Group member</b>
Ian Mercer	Dartmoor Commoners Council	✓
Colin Abel	Dartmoor Forest Commons Association	✓
Kevin Bishop	Dartmoor National Park Authority	✓
Nigel Sharpe	Defence Infrastructure Organisation	
Tom Stratton	Duchy of Cornwall	✓
John Waldon	Facilitator / SW Uplands Federation	✓
Maurice Retallick	Haytor & Bagtor Commons Association	✓
Layland Branfield	National Farmers Union	✓
Andy Guy	Natural England	✓
Naomi Oakley	Natural England	✓
Mark Robins / Helen Booker	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	
Kirk Fosbrooke	Rural Payments Agency	✓
Martin Ross	South West Water	

## **Appendix 9: Glossary**



CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
DCC	Dartmoor Commoners Council
DFE	Dartmoor Farming Futures
DNPA	Dartmoor National Park Authority
EAFRD	European Agricultural Food and Rural Development
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
ELS	Entry Level Stewardship
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship
LFA	Less Favoured Area
NE	Natural England
NELMS	New Environmental Land Management Scheme
NP	National Park
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
RPA	Rural Payments Agency
SM	Scheduled Monument
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SWW	South West Water
UELS	Upland Entry Level Stewardship