

Please note: this presentation was a summary of preliminary findings presented to inform and stimulate comments and establish any further weight that could be added to the evidence already collected. It was presented to support the research.

Barriers and Enablers to Natural Flood Management

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Overview

- The project
- Farmers, Agriculture, and Agri-environment schemes
- Local communities and partnerships
- Funding
- Policy and regulation
- Availability of evidence and best practice
- Conclusions and next steps

The background of the slide is a photograph of a stone wall in a rural landscape. The wall is constructed from large, grey, irregular stones and runs across the middle ground. In the foreground, there are several large, dark grey rocks. The background shows a flat, green field under a clear blue sky. The overall image has a slightly faded, semi-transparent appearance.

The project

An overview

The project: Aims and Research questions

Commissioned by **Defra** to investigate the facilitators and barriers to the delivery of NFM, by addressing key questions:

1. Who are the main **stakeholders** delivering NFM projects, and what engagement do they have?
2. What social, regulatory and/or institutional **barriers** are experienced in the delivery of NFM projects?
3. What social, regulatory and/or institutional **enablers** are experienced in the delivery of NFM projects?
4. What are the main enablers and barriers associated with different **funding mechanisms** used to deliver NFM projects?

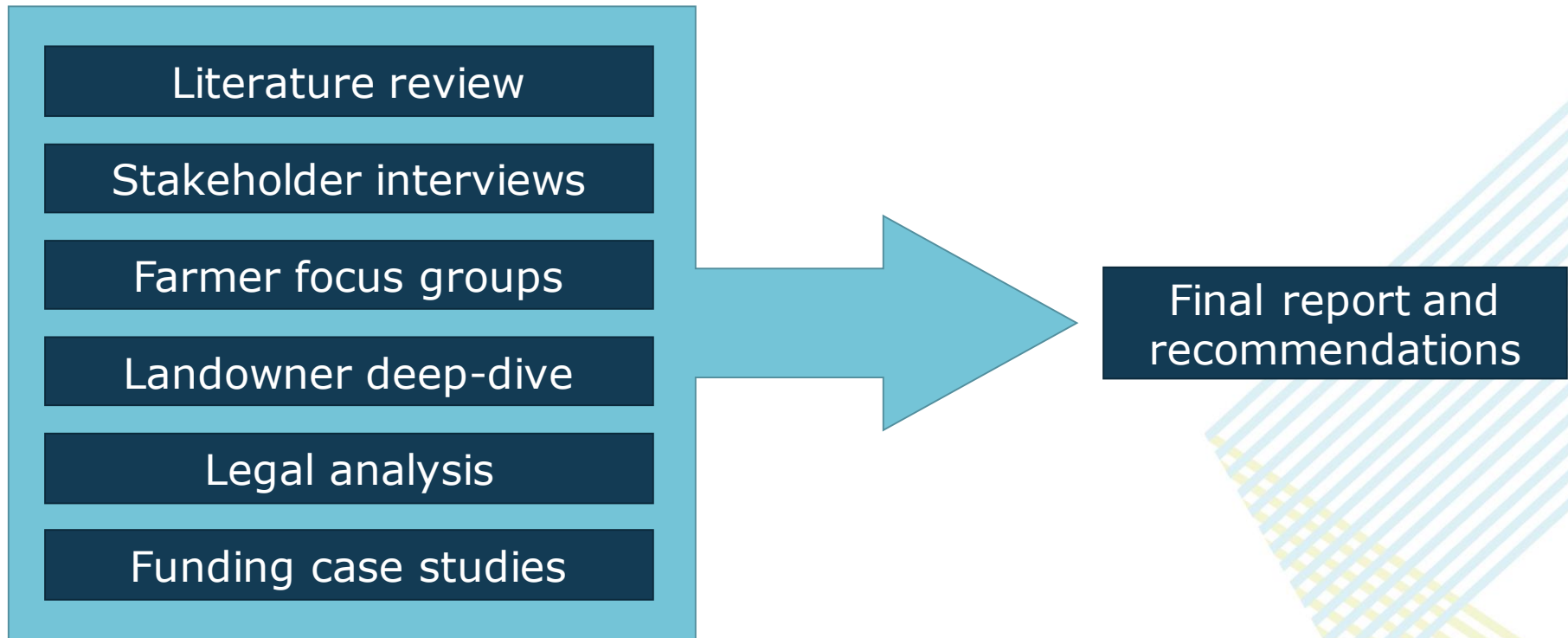
Barriers and Enablers

Barriers: Circumstances or obstacles that prevent communication or progress

Enablers: Circumstances that cause particular phenomenon to happen or develop

The project: an overview

This presentation will provide an overview of some of the **preliminary findings** of the project so far.



Farmers, agriculture, and Agri-environment schemes



Barriers: initial findings

- With low value funding or grants, there can be no business/economic case for the farmers to justify their loss of profits
- Property rights- Tenant vs Landowner
- Uncertainty of future maintenance
- The Commons

*"It takes time and trust to build relationships to change landscapes - many farmers are working for sub minimum wage pay rates producing food - **it is hard to be green when you are in the red**"*

*"some of the payment levels in the schemes **aren't sufficient to justify change** because they are **lower than the agricultural value of the land** for the period in question"*

Barriers: initial findings

- Complex administrative processes with Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme
- Who is legally liable for larger NFM features?
- Challenges in changing the farmers mindset from traditional farming practices
- Difficult relationships between farmers and larger regulatory organisations

*It's very easy to **miss the moment of interest and opportunity** from the farmer due to the lag in getting agreements sorted"
(countryside stewardship)*

*"They [farmers] get this **negative message** that in spite of the benefits they're seeking to deliver, they are still required to go through the **same burdensome processes as someone seeking to deliver something that could harm the environment**"*

Enablers: initial findings

- Appropriate advice and guidance for farmers
- Evidence to show where NFM features have been successfully implemented (demo sites/case studies)
- Positive relationships between farmers/landowners/land agents
- Engaging with farmers in an appropriate way
- Financial incentives

*"Having a conversation with tenants about achieving what we **both want to achieve**"*

*"We were won over by the **empathetic Rivers Trust approach** which seduced us in to taking some modest first steps - and their staff were from local farming families and respected our position - as we learnt to enjoy doing NFM work they have enabled us to become more radical and scale things up."*

Local Communities and partnership working

Barriers: initial findings

- Understanding the extent of effectiveness and limitations of NFM
- Lack of effective communication and sharing of information between stakeholders

*"Storm Desmond has complicated things – people are preoccupied with the threat of similar storm events and **aren't considering that natural flood management interventions will help to mitigate the smaller floods** like those in 2005 or 2009"*

*"Can be some **difficulties working with bigger organisations** such as the Environment Agency where they have different approaches in different departments, different paperwork, lack of information sharing"*

*"It can sometimes be **difficult to communicate to the community groups that NFM will not necessarily be a solution to fix flooding** and that it **isn't a one size fits all type of approach** where what has been done over in one community will work in this one"*

Enablers: initial findings

- Active community participation
- Appropriate skills and enthusiasm for environmental issues within the community
- Good relationships between stakeholders and a collaborative working approach

*"In this area, people are generally quite **socially conscious and willing to volunteer**. They are passionate about issues and take ownership of them to get things done"*

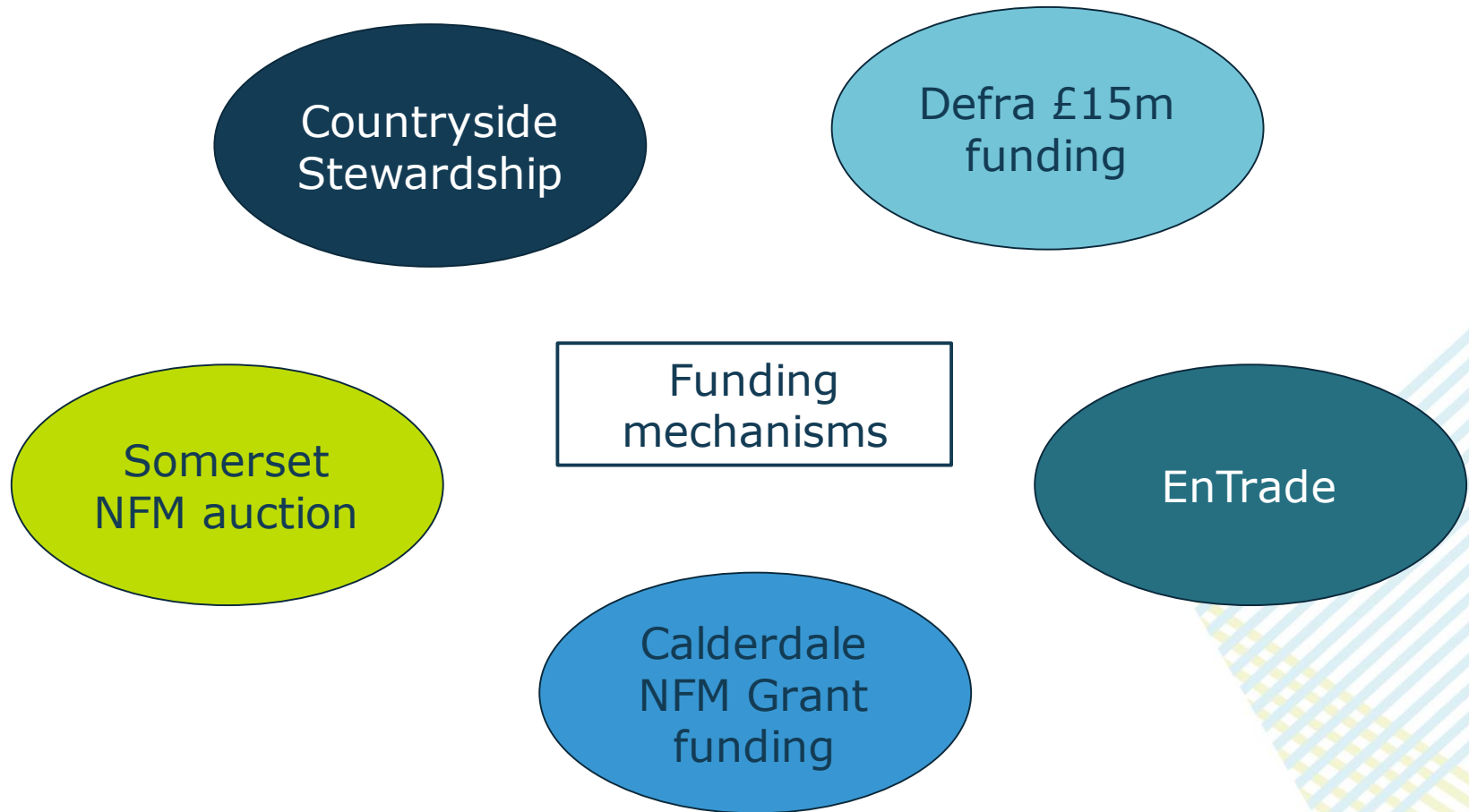
*"A key facilitator is having a **network of people who know and trust one another**, have good relationships"*

*"Having an **operational group** that includes **all the different stakeholders** (including all the big landowners) that **meets regularly** has helped"*

Funding



Funding mechanisms



Barriers: initial findings

- Inappropriate evidence requirements for funding applications (e.g. modelling and mapping of NFM)
- Upfront costs of constructing NFM features

*"the main thing that stops a scheme is the **funding** due to the huge expense required for some work"*

*"it's **set prescriptions** for everybody in the county, and that doesn't work...**stuff just doesn't fit everybody**, every area is different"*

*"there is a **limit** to what you can do with £50k when you have to model it, implement it, maintain it, monitor it, etc."*

Enablers: initial findings

- New, innovative funding mechanisms (e.g. the reverse auction)
- Funding for future maintenance

*"The farmers like the **flexibility**, the incentive; they are getting a clear reward for environmental benefits"*

*"the **auction** style strikes a chord" with them (farmers) as it's **an appropriate language they understand**"*

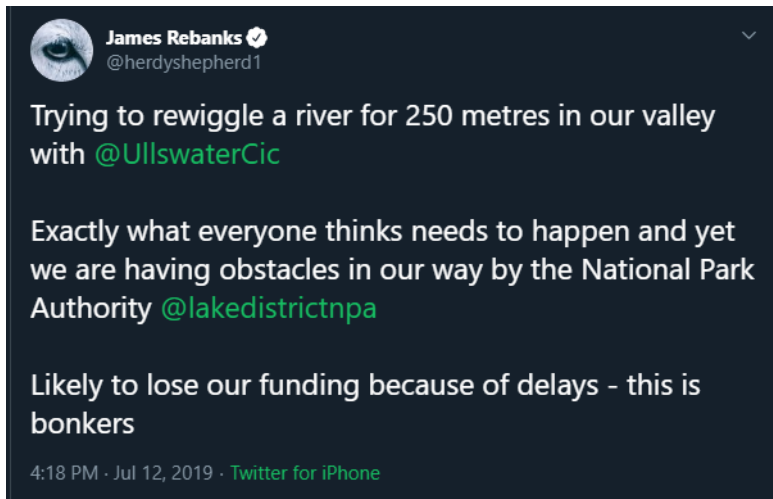
*"It only took me a few minutes to place my bid online and there wasn't any paperwork. I'm **really pleased with what I've been able to achieve with the grant money**"*

Policy and Regulation



Barriers: initial findings

- Lack of policy and regulation specific to NFM
- Designations (e.g. World Heritage Site, SSSI, SAC, SPA, RAMSAR)- add time, costs, and resources though additional consents



*"Many **bureaucratic hoops** to jump through"*


*"Different authorities often have **different rules** which can make things complicated"*

Enablers: initial findings

- Legislative changes that require consideration for the environment (e.g. the Future Generations Act in Wales)

*"We cannot deliver anything properly under these new policies unless you **engage with communities and it is sustainable**- have to deliver something which is showing to deliver multiple benefits"*

(referring to the Environment Act and Future Generations Act in Wales)

The background of the slide is a faded, grayscale image of a rural landscape. It shows a wooden fence in the foreground, a field of tall grasses, and rolling hills in the distance under a cloudy sky.

Availability of evidence and best practice

Barriers: initial findings

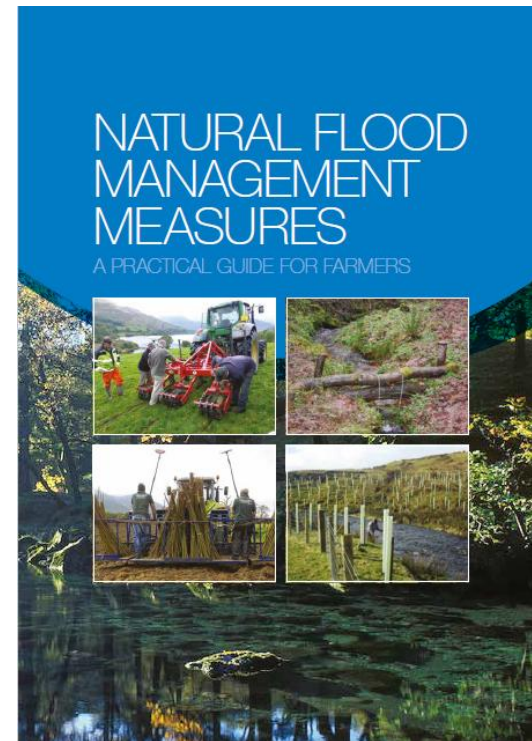
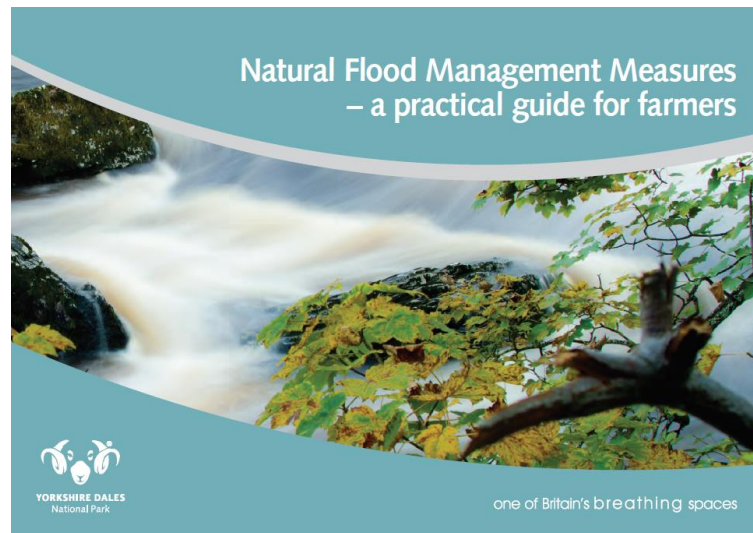
- Uncertainties in specific NFM measures- effectiveness, construction, and maintenance
- Mixed messages from different organisations
- Understanding the value and limitations to modelling and mapping NFM

*"There is a **lack of knowledge on responsibility and maintenance** of NFM schemes"*

*"Some **conflicting views** on how to best implement NFM"*

Enablers: initial findings

- Guidance documents (such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park, Natural Flood Management: A practical guide for farmers)



Conclusions and next steps

Conclusions and next steps

- Several barriers have been identified that could prevent NFM being implemented.
- Many enablers were also identified that can help to implement NFM.
- Participants indicated a number of actions they think would be beneficial in implementing NFM.
- These barriers and enablers, along with some recommendations will now be compiled into a final report to present to policy makers.

Suggested actions

Some of the actions **suggested by stakeholders** in this project:

Funding applications and processes for farmers need to be **more dynamic** to reflect the dynamic nature of farming.

It would be beneficial to have an organisation with the resources to **bring all elements of NFM together**- funding, modelling, design, delivery and monitoring.

Providing farmers and land managers with **face to face guidance that is specifically tailored to the context of their farm business**. Ideally this would be from someone who has a **good awareness of the local area, farming business and practices, and also the funding processes**.

Communities need to be **engaged and educated as early as possible** to manage expectations.

There needs to be more **guidance for local planning authorities** on how to consider NFM projects.

A better **financial delivery system that considers the needs of longevity** (e.g. maintenance) and provides economic gains for the benefits, rather than just compensation.

Ensuring a better, more **joined-up approach** between the different agencies, landowners, and farmers.

Developing **guidance according to specific landscapes** would enable a more localised approach to NFM.

Streamlining of the consent and planning processes to ensure people know who to and what is needed for applications.

Thank you for listening

Any questions?