

Delivering multiple environmental benefits in the South Pennines

Several key environmental benefits from the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund (CSFF) presence in the South Pennines area have been identified in order to improve habitat connectivity across and adjacent to Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and the South Pennines Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These activities include moorland restoration and enhancement, grassland habitat creation, and enhancing and expanding riparian habitats to benefit flood risk management and water quality while addressing sub-optimal land management

Summary

The network was initially set up by a farm advisor who had good contacts with farmers, local authorities and other large landowners. Land managers in this area have previously struggled to access funding because it is not located in a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which receive additional funding from the Government. This is further compounded by the small size of many of the farms which makes it hard for them to apply to certain farm support payment schemes.

A particular highlight of this network was working with a local council that had been allocated £2 million following the 2015 floods. The group worked to ensure £500k was allocated to an Agri-Environmental Scheme (AES) which the network developed and Calderdale Council oversees. The network has also worked with the Woodland Trust to enhance the woodland creation offer.

Objectives

- Build an informed and cohesive, landscape scale, land management community
- Increased woodland management and creation
- Improved water quality and flood risk in the region
- Improved grassland and moorland habitat connectivity
- Development of non-government funding streams for the delivery of ecosystem services in land management
- Addressing potential issues resulting from sub-optimal land management



Problem description

The South Pennines network includes areas of protected status including SSSIs, SACs and SPAs. However unlike many other CSFFs in the Yorkshire region it is not in a National Park so does not benefit from the additional Government funding that those areas receive.

Farming incomes in this area are built on a long history of mixed livelihoods, from weaving on hand looms to working in the mills during the industrial revolution. The requirement for farmers to supplement their income with out-of-farm activities continues, and can lead to sub-optimal land management. The CSFF strives for a future free from the threat of financial constraints and is aiming for continued land stewardship not intensification of farming.



COLLECTIVE



PUBLIC GOODS



Landscape and scenery



(Farmland) biodiversity



Soil quality (and health)



Resilience to natural hazards



Rural viability and vitality



Cultural heritage



Water quality

Further PG's

Woodland creation and management

CONTRACT

Public-Private contract
Public-private-civil
society

Contract conclusion:
Written agreement



Payment mechanism:
Incentive payments



Financing party:
Government with EU-
funding

Funding/Payments:
Government funding,
£10,000, plus £500 per
farmer in the CSFF
group per year, to
cover the expenses for
attending meetings and
training.

**Length of participation
in scheme:** The length
of the contract is 5
years



Start of the program:
2016

End: 2021
The network began
shortly before the
funding was awarded in
2016 and will continue
for 5 years.

LOCATION

United Kingdom



West Yorkshire UKE4

Data and Facts - Contract

Participation: At its outset in 2016 the network had 8 members and has grown to over 60 with a further 20 non-members attending meetings. The total land area encompassed by the network is 8,630 hectares made up of clough woodlands and upland livestock farms; it includes SSSI, SPA and SAC-designated sites to benefit habitat connectivity.

Involved parties: Three major types of partners are involved in the CSFF group; farmers and land managers, network facilitator and funding body. The facilitator of the group is employed to bring the group together, organise meetings and invite key stakeholders and experts to provide training as well as bring new members into the scheme. They also oversee the expenses of participants and will apply for funding renewal as appropriate. Natural England provides funding, oversees the functioning of the group and provides crucial information on pressing environmental needs in the region and the actions of other CSFF groups in the area.

Advantages: The contract solution facilitates meetings between, and training of, land manager members and is focused on increasing the probability of delivering higher quality environmental public goods through better environmental management and by supporting knowledge transfer.

Management requirements for farmers: The maximum available annual grant is £50k. While there is no set requirement for numbers of meeting between the members, progress reports are required every quarter along with expenses claims.

Controls/monitoring: Results are not monitored yet, but monitoring and evaluation is conducted through the claim expenses of the CSFF facilitators. Natural England determines whether farmers and CSFFs' case is offering good value for money.

Conditions of participation: The minimum number of farmers needed for a CSFF to be set up and be eligible for funding is 4 and the network should have no more than 80 members. The land covered by all members' farms must exceed 2,000 hectares. The farmer's/land manager's land should be part of a landscape area to be included.

Risk/uncertainties of participants: Seasonal fluctuations due to the nature of agricultural activities means participation of members varies throughout the year. A large proportion of the farmers in the network rely on out-of-farm income and additional jobs meaning their time is limited for participation in the network. Most of the farmers are heavily reliant on environmental payment schemes which in some cases makes up the majority of the farm's income. There is a possibility that fellow farmers are viewed as competitors and not as collaborators.

Context features

Landscape and climate: The South Pennines CSFF land holdings are characterized by mainly upland farms 250 – 400m above sea level. These include a variety of habitats and land types ranging from upland heath, blanket bog, moorlands, riparian habitats, acid grasslands, low-input grasslands and pastures for livestock which is the major activity in the area. Towards the bottom of the catchment there are clough woodlands: woodlands that



Credit: J. Bancroft

are in valleys connecting open moorland to the towns below. The area encompassed includes SSSI, SPA and SAC-designated sites to benefit habitat connectivity.

Farm structure: The South Pennines CSFF network land holdings are in an upland area with mainly livestock, predominantly sheep with some beef cattle, used for meat, and a small number of dairy farms and arable in the area. The sheep are usually not finished in the area but sold on for fattening in lower ground where the grassland can provide sufficient nutrients; this creates an obstacle for farmers who wish to set up community supported agriculture schemes or sell direct to the consumer as they are unable to produce animals ready for slaughter. There is no organized forestry in the area and most of the woodlands are under-managed. Many of the farms in the network are owned although some are rented.



ASSESSMENT OF CONTRACT SOLUTION



There are a mixture of different contract solutions being operated by CSFF members and an overall assessment of their success is not possible at this time. The South Pennines CSFF group of land managers benefit from the proximity with other CSFFs that allow for positive spill-overs and common meetings between the groups. Many of the targets are difficult to evaluate as the results will become apparent over a long period of time, however, member feedback is positive and attendance at monthly meetings increases month on month. So far over 30 meetings have taken place covering topics ranging from the Climate Emergency to the marketing of rare breed mutton.

SWOT analysis

