

North York Moors National Park Authority

27 July 2020

Environmental Land Management (ELM) System

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on progress with the Authority's test and trials project which forms part of the development process for the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) System.

2. Background

- 2.1 The contract between the North York Moors National Park Authority and Defra for the delivery of the test and trials proposal that had been submitted to Defra in June 2018 commenced in October 2019.

3. Progress to date

- 3.1 A questionnaire that sought the views of farmers and land managers within the North York Moors National Park as to which public goods they feel willing and able to deliver was sent out in January. Over 500 responses were received, of which 365 were completed to a level that provided sufficient data for analysis.
- 3.2 Eight focus groups were held at the end of February to build on the responses from the questionnaire and to focus on the following specific questions that have been posed by Defra:
- How do you encourage land managers to deliver less popular or more demanding public benefits?
 - What do you do if collaborations of land managers do not commit to the delivery of national priorities?
 - What are the attributes of previous schemes in National Parks that stakeholders would like reflected in the new system?
 - How do you support farmers to collaborate more effectively?
- 3.3 The results of the questionnaire and the discussions from the focus groups have been analysed and a report relating to each has been written and submitted to Defra.

From analysis of the questionnaire data, the following headline conclusions were drawn:

- Public goods reflecting the highest levels of 'willingness' to be delivered by farmers and land managers were 'thriving plants and wildlife', 'enhanced landscape', and 'clean water'.
- Public goods reflecting the lowest levels of 'willingness' to be delivered by farmers and land managers were the 'reduction in environmental hazards & pollution', 'mitigation and adaptation to climate change', and 'clean air'.
- Sub-groups reflecting the highest levels of 'willingness' included the 'Less Favoured Area (LFA) grazing livestock' sector along with 'land managers and agents'; those with

smaller farms (under 5 hectares / 12 acres or less); those with 25% to 50% income from farming, and those with 100% income from farming diversification.

- The highest levels of agreement with statements relating to the delivery of public goods were the belief that ‘food production and the delivery of public goods can go hand in hand on the same farm’; the level to which farmers and land managers ‘would be prepared to join a new Environmental Land Management scheme which paid them to deliver public goods’, and interest in ‘results-based schemes which allows the farmer to choose the method for delivering environmental improvements’.
- The lowest levels of agreement with statements relating to the delivery of public goods included themes of working with other organisations and/or other farmers to deliver public goods, and also the low extent to which farmers and land managers would leave farming if they could not produce food.

The findings from the focus groups suggested:

- Issues focussing upon money and finance were central to encouraging land managers to deliver less popular or more demanding public benefits;
- Suggestions relating to potential actions taken if collaborations of land managers did not commit to the delivery of national priorities focussed on the provision of incentives whilst also recognising a role for enforcement measures if required;
- Attributes of previous schemes that stakeholders would like reflected in the new system included simplicity, flexibility and accessibility, with payments made on time, whilst the view that “local schemes work best” conveyed perceptions of the importance of retaining a local focus;
- Methods to support collaboration more effectively were discussed in very positive terms and included aspects such as the need to build and maintain local groups, for which many suggested the North York Moors National Park Authority could play a role in facilitating, and by doing so could provide a focus on local knowledge, build on the feeling of community across the national park, and foster trust.

4. **Next Steps**

- 4.1 The second element of the test and trials contract is to develop a tool that models the economic impact of attaching different values (payments) to the delivery of different public goods and the impact that this has on different farming sectors active within the North York Moors National Park.
- 4.2 Following a successful tendering process a contract has been awarded to Cumulus Consultants who are well underway with developing the tool. The work is due to be completed by the end of August.
- 4.3 The final element of the test and trials contract is to identify and develop a range of delivery mechanisms that allow for the appropriate delivery of public goods. This work will be informed by the significant levels of consultation with farmers and land managers that the Authority has engaged with throughout the earlier elements of the test and trials work. A final report is due to be submitted to Defra in November 2020, which marks the end of the contract.

5. **Wider Engagement with ELM**

- 5.1 In February 2020 Defra published an ELM Policy Discussion Document which gave an update on progress with the new Environmental Land Management System and an

overview of high level design options. Due to covid-19 the consultation was paused by Defra, but was reopened at the end of June with a response end date of 31 July 2020.

- 5.2 A joint response to the Discussion Document has been submitted by NPE on behalf of the English National Park Authorities. The response was supportive of the proposals outlined, but stressed key points including the need for the integration of a full range of public goods outcomes at a landscape scale, opportunities for enhancement of cultural heritage, access and engagement and a need for future socio-economic funding to be complementary to ELM and seek to support and strengthen the delivery of public goods and not undermine it.
- 5.3 On 8 June 2020 a request was made by Tamara Finkelstein, Defra Permanent Secretary to speak to Rebecca Thompson, Future Farming Policy Officer. Tamara Finkelstein and David Kennedy, DG Food, Farming and Biosecurity, had been asked to a hearing with the EFRA committee giving an update on ELM. Ahead of this meeting, Tamara wished to discuss the North York Moors test and trail work and to hear Rebecca's views on the ELM programme.
- 5.4 The North York Moors Test and Trials project has recently been selected by a research team led by Land Use Consultants, working for Defra on the delivery of the Beauty, Heritage and Engagement (BHE) public goods within ELM. The intention is to develop indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of ELM's impacts on BHE and to develop methods for assigning monetary values to the BHE benefits delivered by ELM.

6. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

- 6.1 The salary costs of the Future Farming Policy Officer for 3 days per week for the duration of the contract are met by DEFRA as are the full operating costs of the contract.

7. **Contribution to National Park Management Plan**

- 7.1 A well designed environmental land management system that delivers sustainable land management and secures the provision of public goods will contribute to a wide range of the aims and policies identified in the National Park Management Plan.

8. **Legal Implications**

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

9. **Recommendation**

- 9.1 That: Members note the level of engagement that the Future Farming Policy Officer has had with DEFRA on the test and trials stage of the development process for the new Environmental Land Management System.

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