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Listening to farmers and landowners

Insights and perspectives from across Derbyshire

October 2024

Purpose

Between July 2024 and September 2024, The Young Foundation has been working in partnership with Derbyshire County Council and the University of Derbyshire to engage with farmers and landowners across the county. The project aimed to understand the experiences of farmers and landowners and generate practical ideas to support the recovery of nature in the region.

The things we have learnt are reflected in this report and aim to provide a crucial step towards supporting Derbyshire County Council to create a well informed and locally rooted Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The report details the approach we took to engaging with farmers and landowners, providing a timeline of what we did and an overview of who we engaged with.

The following pages describe what we heard through listening to farmers and landowners, through insights, quotes and summations. We conclude by providing **four concepts for the future** which aim to highlight opportunities for integrating what we've heard into the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

This report is intended for internal use, for the Design Team and Steering Group and captures insights from conversations that have taken place throughout Phase 2, it includes subjective opinions that aren't necessarily shared by all Derbyshire residents, and some of the challenges raised are issues of a national scale and so, will fall outside the remit of the LNRS in practice. But these are topics that were important to those that we engaged with and do play into the wider fabric of nature recovery and the local stakeholders understanding of it.

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Context

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of plans for nature recovery and environmental improvement across England. They aim to expand, improve and connect places across towns, cities, countryside and coast to help deal with three of the biggest challenges we face today: biodiversity loss, climate change and wellbeing.

The purpose of these plans is to establish priorities and proposals to help nature to thrive and provide wider environmental benefits in the future:

- Map our most valuable existing habitats
- Agree priorities for reversing the decline in biodiversity
- Map opportunities for nature recovery and wider environmental goals

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Derbyshire will be specific to the county of Derbyshire and all eleven landscape character areas that fall within it. It will set a long-term plan that is formed and delivered in partnership with a range of organisations as well as local people. It aims to help farmers and landowners, as key stakeholders, to see where and what action to recover nature in their area would be most effective and help to funnel investment such as Biodiversity Net Gain money to areas where nature recovery could have the most impact.

The strategy aims to be published by Summer 2025.



Part 1

What did we do?

Our approach to engagement and who we connected with



Our approach to engagement

Working reflectively, inclusively and collaboratively

The Young Foundation is the UK's home for community research and social innovation, we have a long and a proud history of community-led innovation. The Innovation and Practice team believe that a fairer and sustainable future is only possible through deeper participation between communities, public services, private and charitable institutions. This is a time of great transition of our social, economic, and environmental systems, which demands creative ideas, new ways of working, and a focus on impact.

To navigate this environment, we believe innovation must be a social and collaborative process. One that unlocks the power of diversity and difference. At The Young Foundation, we work in partnership with communities, public systems, and enterprise. We create space for learning and experimentation to bring about big ideas and new ways of working, shaping a fairer, greener future together.

We have been conscious of how the engagement timeline clashes with the farmers calendar – farmers are busy all year round, but key seasonal tasks such as lamb weaning, haymaking, silage collection and the start of combine and harvest season for farmers has meant that our outreach approach needed to be adaptive, creative and flexible. We did this by:

- Going to where the farmers are already (e.g. farmers markets) rather than expecting them to come to our events.
- Visiting them at their own farms.
- Being flexible to conduct 1:1 phone calls around their availability.
- Hosting events online as well as in-person.
- Sending emails/texts for those who can't devote time to a full conversation but can answer a few points.
- Communicating with them that this is just the start of a longer, more meaningful relationship building activity and there will be other opportunities to feed in.

Shaping a fairer future

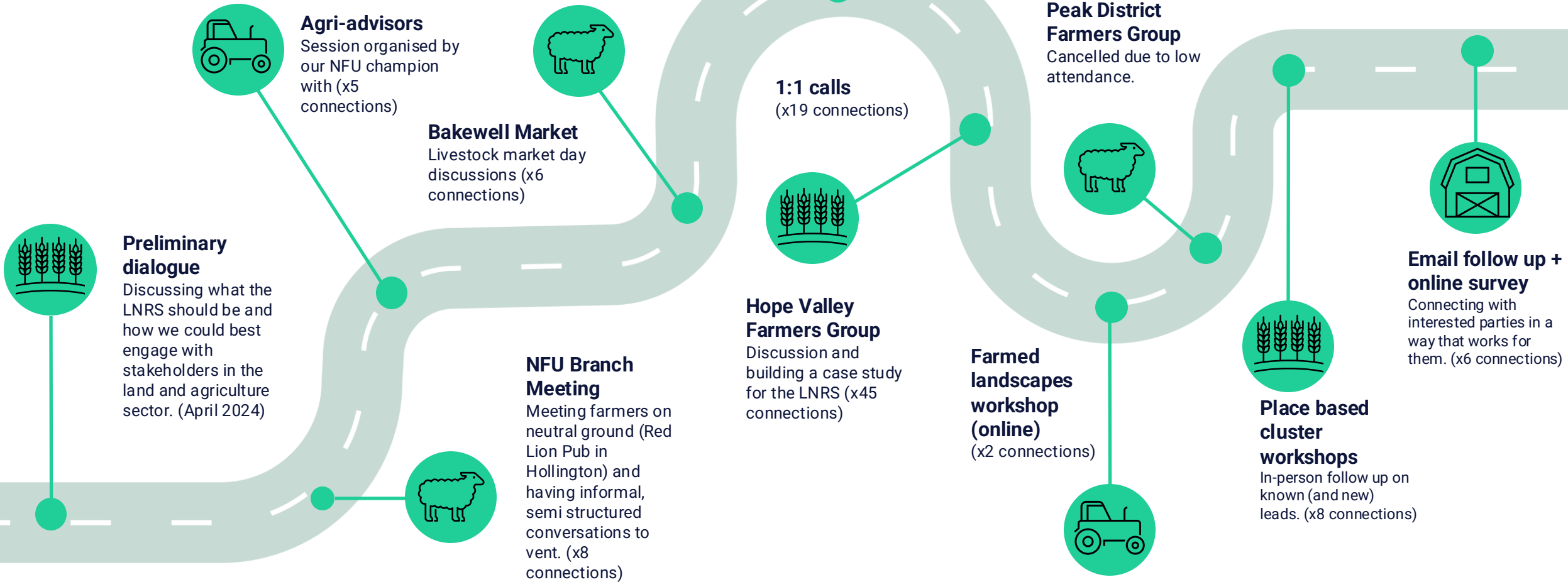
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Engagement roadmap

Who did we connect with?



Process reflections



Engaging farmers and landowners to talk to us about the LNRS has been a challenge, but for every hurdle we have navigated, we have built deeper understanding of how better we can work with and serve this key stakeholder group as we move through the latter stages of this work.

Show awareness, get the timing right

Requesting farmers' time to feed into strategies when it's the busiest season (harvest) can feel a bit 'tone deaf' towards farming communities and might feed into the misalignment between government, ecology and community values. Finding other opportunities to connect as the winter draws in and naming the 'why' is a good way to show sensitivity and awareness.

Peer voices will carry more weight

Although being a neutral party can have benefits when instigating conversations, there is power in a more 'peer led' approach, this does require a much longer time frame than was possible in this phase. Recruiting a young farmer or similar party who can approach conversations with more understanding and feel more authentic and embedded in the community could support ongoing input from farmers.

Follow the energy – begin with the willing

We are keen to connect with all farmers, but with any project like this, there is power in positivity so it's important to nurture those who already care and are invested in nature recovery to build stronger relationships and then, with their support, reach out further to those who are less in favour or resistant to change.

Farmers are not a homogenous group

The more we have made connections and built rapport with farmers and landowners, the more we have appreciated the wildly different priorities and perspectives between livestock farmers and arable farmers, the difference between smallholdings and big estates, and those for whom farming is family and heritage, and those who are new to the scene. There is not a one-size fits all engagement approach, and feedback is layered and diverging in most cases.

Part 2

What have we heard?

Key insights and case studies

Summary themes that come up time and again



Conversations with farmers, local agri-advisors and landowners allowed us to surface tensions and difficulties that form key parts of the agricultural tapestry of Derbyshire. It is important to note that these voices don't represent all farmers and landowners in Derbyshire, we are aware that some of these opinions will be contentious, but the purpose of this exercise has been to capture opinions of those we spoke to.

Resistance to change

Farming is a generational industry, family dynamics come with tensions – older generations can be resistant the younger generations changing things...

Funding needs to reflect nature recovery priorities

There is currently more funding for herbal leys (£500-600 per hectare) vs the potentially more impactful species rich meadows (£250 per hectare).

Balance in the ecosystem

There's urgent need for balance in the ecosystem – culling large populations of species (like badgers and deer) might be seen to create balance or have a positive impact on farmed animals, but this can be seen as an unpopular route.

Collaboration is not always viable

In an industry overflowing with risk, if one person didn't pull their weight with a nature corridor – the whole group of those connected would be penalised, this could be damaging to relationships as well as finances.

Better public education

There are many challenges for farmers when it comes to public footpaths and shared access – dogwalkers need to be aware of the impact their actions can have on livestock and ecosystems.

What do farmers and landowners say they need from the LNRS?



From our conversations to date, we have been clustering themes and capturing insight and have logged the most relevant points in a table for easy navigation. It is important to note here that these are unedited captures of conversations and not necessarily within the deliverables that can be achieved by the LNRS – the LNRS cannot be expected to address or deliver on all these points, but as an exercise in engagement and listening it is important to log how farmers are feeling about this work. Many of the issues raised are on a more national level and less localised to Derbyshire but nevertheless are important for us to grasp and include relevant signposting where necessary.

Needs	Context
1 Increased flexibility in terms/rules for funding opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For example, existing Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)• Flexible restrictions – over the course of 3 years, farmer needs to be able to flex more – e.g. could have 1 year where shifts the date of mowing to meet the change in seasons, but at present the dates are always rigid / set in stone so that mowing needs to happen by x date despite local context.
2 Address the imbalance across programmes so that most impactful nature recovery activities pay the most.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For David in the Hope Valley, the current payment incentive of £500-600 per hectare to church up land for herbal lays, far outweighs what he is currently getting paid for maintaining species rich meadows, which are more impactful for the environment.
3 Flood protections at the top or middle of catchment areas – need investment to be directed towards river courses, tree planting and beaver reintroduction to prevent flooding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shifting river paths where they are straight; planting trees at the edge of watercourses to draw out water and substantiating banks to slow down the river and stop peaks. This will be particularly effective at the top or middle of the catchment to prevent issues downstream.• Funding needed to incentivise farmers upstream, where the impact will be felt downstream.
4 Mindset shift to engage farmers with more sustainable practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative working: Many farmers feel that both collaborative working and nature corridors are not viable, as everyone would be penalised for 1 person not pulling their weight, which could be damaging to relationships• Reframing nature corridors as nature blocks: the risk of one farmer in a corridor letting down the collective means farmers won't engage. If you can organize it around blocks of land that are favourable to species who need to rest between areas, it will help incentivise farmers.

What do farmers and landowners say they need from the LNRS?



Continued... from our conversations to date, we have been clustering themes and capturing insight and have logged the most relevant points in a table for easy navigation. It is important to note here that these are unedited captures of conversations and not necessarily within the deliverables that can be achieved by the LNRS – the LNRS cannot be expected to address or deliver on all these points, but as an exercise in engagement and listening it is important to log how farmers are feeling about this work. Many of the issues raised are on a more national level and less localised to Derbyshire.

Needs	Context
5 Schemes need to be co-designed with farmers to factor in their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simpler more concise guidance and application process: existing schemes are often burdensome in number of pages.• Clarity on goals, outcomes of initiatives: to ensure farmers know what needs to happen and where they can tailor practices to meet goals.• Approach to inspection: many schemes expect farmers to pay for the inspection, which over the course of long-term 20–30-year initiatives can increase and end up impacting the bottom line. “Whoever invests the money should pay for inspectors, not farmers.”
6 Universal Basic Income for farmers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To build more resilience, particularly considering average age of farmers, helping move farmers away from relying on produce, so can do wider environmental work.
7 Incentivise sustaining existing nature as much as much as increasing new nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There needs to be equal weight given to sustain farms that have good nature recovery, should be the same as those working to increase biodiversity... so if you were to increase nature recovery on top of what they've got, they'd need to stack grant money on top of money offered to sustain nature recovery. With the right incentive stacked in this way, they would remove productive land out of production into biodiversity initiatives.
8 Tools to measure carbon sequestration accurately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For example, Plumpton Farm supply milk to Arla Dairies. As part of the contract, they must work out carbon footprint once every 12 months. The only elements that go into it is the carbon used across production / materials (fuel / corn etc) – it does not consider carbon sequestration on the other side.
9 To be rewarded for legacy knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For example, David’s family has farmed that land for 100 years, they know it, have the best knowledge of the land – including what works and what doesn’t. Farmers need to be rewarded for that knowledge, rather than being told by consultants who don’t know the landscape.

Opinions gathered from farmers on current SFI and BNG*



Currently SFI/ELMS do not include protections/payments for low input grassland particularly grassland protecting scheduled monuments, archaeological features such as ridge and furrow in fact a South Derbyshire key habitat unimproved grasslands, you are currently better off in Countryside Stewardship. BNG has inheritance and tax issues still to be resolved and setting an income figure now for 30 years time is incredibly difficult. These schemes are hard for tenant farmers to join.

Small farmers, especially traditional family farmers, don't have the inclination, skills and especially time, to read through the very lengthy documentation which has set out and described SFI or, latterly, BNG. Larger farms, especially those with a manager or family member with academic agricultural education will have inclination and time.

The delivery of the whole SFI programme by DEFRA has been a bit of a shambles and too many of us are in limbo, waiting for DEFRA to sort it out. They are unable to give a time frame and have been saying it will be sorted "soon" for far too long. There are many frustrating inconsistencies with SFI.

There is a gap in funding for more ambitious nature recovery as there is currently no higher tier option available under SFI. More ambitious options can only be funded through Landscape Recovery which is a highly complex scheme than can only be access through a large group of farmers working together with a dedicated delivery team from (usually) an external organisation.



Opinions gathered from farmers on current SFI and BNG*



SFI has excellent options for improving ecological outcomes alongside continued food production. It is possible to replace basic payment scheme (BPS) payments with SFI payments if farmers are willing to make some changes to farming practices (without decreasing profitability of business).

There is also a need for a wider national plan for food security - with wetter winters and higher requirement to house livestock, increased costs for silage storage and manure storage, many farmers are reluctant to give long term commitment to nature projects in case food production becomes more profitable through lack of supply.

As a livestock farmer, I would not consider being a host for BNG - we need to think about our own carbon footprint and there is currently, not enough information to even think about being tied into an agreement for 20+ years for someone else's emissions.

SFI - Good in the way it incentivises farmers financially for delivering biodiversity projects, but it doesn't link in with supply chain initiatives such as Agreena, arable carbon valorisation scheme, ICAL livestock carbon valorisation scheme, Arla carbon reductio incentive scheme and others, there are many silos of nature recovery not linking together.

Opinions gathered from farmers on current SFI and BNG*



There are challenges on farms that have large HLS (old stewardship schemes) as they have been used to receiving this payment and their BPS but will now only receive stewardship payment. But the payment rates for stewardship schemes have gradually increased in real terms but this still feels like a loss of money for farmers.

BNG is not a viable option at the current time in the majority of Derbyshire as there is insufficient demand for credits/units here as a result of little development in the majority of the county. The uplift for being in the National Park is not sufficient to compensate for the distance from the development to make the prices being offered viable for farmers to consider uptake.

Current SFI appears to have lots of 'action/options' for farmer to pick and choose. Some of the reporting requirements seem laborious and over-kill, i.e. need to keep individual parcel details of what cattle have grazed for SPM2/3 but we might move cattle everyday on some parcels - too much 'red-tape' makes this less attractive even though we graze native, rare breeds and could claim this.

BNG is very complicated. Not yet sure if carbon credits will be required by dairy companies/co-ops to off-set their carbon footprint and so may not be available for farmer to trade. No (dairy/supermarkets) industry-recognised tool to calculate carbon sequestration so can't accurately calculate carbon footprint.



What would farmers want to action on their land if funding was available to them?



We asked farmers and landowners to reflect on what they would do (or are already doing) to get an idea for what's front of mind for them.

I have 30 acres of river Trent meadows I would love to increase this to a species rich grassland meadow or similar.

1. Woodland planting (Woodland Trust funding)
2. Wildflower meadow creation (self-funded).

1. Maintaining species rich hay meadows - late cut hay.
2. Grazing with native, rare breeds
3. Maintaining habitats for ground-nesting birds.

Marston on Dove Estates have a BNG plan underway, 22Ha of land southwest of Hilton, between the railway and the River Dove. This land is permanent pasture currently and MoDE have actioned CSXCarbon.com to prepare and deliver a plan to turn it to a wetland nature reserve.

We have a small area of dale side with a footpath through it, approximately 0.35 Hectares, which could be used to provide a high-quality nature area, possibly with some tree planting.

Case studies

The next three pages relate to projects across the Dark Peak and Southwest Peak. We want to flag the limited geographical representation across Derbyshire – we had limited information from other areas at the time of compiling this work and would welcome case studies from other areas in Derbyshire.

Case study: Hope Valley Farmers



Hope Valley Farmers is a farmer group based in the Dark Peak Natural Character Area within the Hope Valley. The group comprises over 50 farm holding members which are principally beef and sheep farms but also includes several small holdings and one woodland owner. Hope Valley Farmers (HVF) was formally established in 2017 but the concept of a group in the area was first conceived in 2014.

Since its formation, the group has taken part in various delivery initiatives which have benefitted nature recovery. The most extensive has been a hedgerow and tree planting project which first started in 2018. Since then, almost 12 kilometres of new hedgerow have been planted by HVF members with a further 4km planned for winter 2024/25. 18,000 trees have been planted over this period and a further 1000 trees will be planted this winter. These hedgerow plants and trees have been provided by the Woodland Trust and supplementary funding for fencing and gates has been sourced from the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme administered by the Peak District National Park Authority.

Each year, over 20 trained volunteers carry out wader surveys on 14 HVF members' farms in partnership with the RSPB. This survey commenced in 2022 so there is now three years of data which provides members with details of which species (curlew, oystercatcher, lapwing and snipe) are breeding and/or feeding on their farms and whereabouts. This information helps to target management actions and highlights to farmers where they are already providing suitable habitat.

Each year, at least eight events are organised for members on a range of topics including soil health, species and habitat recovery topics such as species rich grassland restoration and management or pollinators as well as practical workshops to help farmers access funding to contribute to the cost of conservation work. Farmers have the opportunity to learn but importantly, share best practice, practical experience and ideas with other members. This often proves to be the most effective means of knowledge transfer as there is a wealth of expertise within the group.

Looking ahead, Hope Valley Farmers will be seeking funding to continue the great work of Hope Valley Farmers members beyond summer 2025 when the current funding, provided by the Defra's Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund comes to an end. Hedge and tree planting will continue this winter, and the wader survey will once again take place in spring 2025. The group is also looking to green finance opportunities to fund further delivery on the ground such as species rich grassland restoration and species recovery works.



Case study: Peakland Environmental Farmers



A group of hill farmers created a pioneering environmental co-operative back in 2023 to protect against the effects of climate change and boost wildlife, alongside sustainable livestock production. Peakland Environmental Farmers (PEF) has 54 farmers on board, covering over 28,000 hectares of upland in the Peak District National Park.

The innovative collective has enabled farmers and landowners to protect and enhance the natural environment in the Peak District, and offset losses from the withdrawal of existing farming support schemes. It will do this by seeking investment from public and private partnerships, combining ELMS (the new agri-environment scheme for farmers) agreements with environmental offset trades and other sources of green finance.

Conservation work undertaken by the members includes hedgerow planting, protection of water courses, conservation of species-rich habitats, enhancing soil health, sustainable game management, creation of wildlife ponds, peatland restoration and rewetting, and reducing the impact of invasive species such as bracken.

James Howard, of Lane Farm in the village of Holme, can trace his family back through 16 generations farming a mixed upland landholding, with native breeds of sheep and cattle. He said: "We are proud of the way we produce food sustainably while protecting the natural environment. Joining forces offers an opportunity to make people aware of the benefits of environmentally-focused farming and to deliver these outcomes across a larger area. The Peak District is celebrated for its natural beauty, but many people don't realise that our approach to farming has played a major part in protecting and enhancing this landscape.

The loss of agricultural subsidies will have a major impact on the farming community, and within this area of the Dark Peak and South West Peak all traditional funding will have disappeared by the end of 2027, leaving farmers very much in the red.

"Going forward, we also have a role to play in ensuring that schemes devised by policymakers are workable and will achieve their objectives – farmers have the experience to know what works in any particular landscape so we can make an enormous contribution to the benefits we all want to see."



Case study: Mill Farm, Hope Valley



Geoff Eyre of Mill Farm said: “Like a lot of the farming families in the Hope Valley, I can trace my ancestors back hundreds of years in this area. I am still farming some of the same land they did and I walk in the woods they planted – as well as woods I planted some 40 years ago. My grandchildren planted another 7,000 trees during the Covid lockdown, so woodland is not a new flavour on my farm, and I know many other farmers that have planted hedges and trees and restored drystone walls in their lifetime without any real recognition.

“The creation of PEF is being accepted readily by what has been the quiet voice of hard-working farmers needing an opportunity to show firstly what they have already achieved and also the need for future incentives so they can turn their practical skills to any task on the land, be it peat restoration, maintaining wildlife habitats, woodland, hedges, carbon storage, or increasing wildlife.

I know the huge numbers of visiting public adore the farm-created landscape, and it’s important that the jigsaw of family farms remain viable, to encourage a younger generation to have their voice, coupled with actions that show results on the ground. An annual farm income for nature recovery would help to preserve this highly designated landscape, alongside producing high-quality food.”

"I do not see recent nature flavours and huge funding going to NGOs actually increasing many of the existing species in fact, as I feel a lot will decrease with the proposed perceived actions..."



Part 3

What does this mean for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

Principles for the future and next steps

Building better awareness of what the LNRS means for farmers and landowners

A lot of the feedback and insights surfaced to date reflect challenges being encountered by the agricultural sector, but less about what the sector would like to do or be willing to do to combat these.

To truly build an LNRS that offers value and support to farmers and landowners we need to work with farmers further to understand what actions need to take place in order to improve the current circumstances and improve understanding around what the LNRS can do for farmers and how it will work.





LNRS

Opportunities 1-4

Conversations have surfaced several potential opportunities to put nature recovery on the radar for farmers and landowners, carving out opportunities and incentives to make it more achievable and less of a burden.



Opportunity 1 SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES

Funding and incentives need to focus on making the shift to sustainable farming practices financially viable for farmers by subsidising lost income in the transition and making a switch to sustainable farming practices attractive in the long-term.

Opportunities to focus on could include circular farming schemes (using food chain residues to feed livestock, e.g.), promoting agroforestry and hedgerow management on farms, and reducing emissions by lessening farmers' reliance on livestock, using low-carbon feed, and organic fertilisers.



Opportunity 2 POLLUTION REDUCTION AND IMPROVED WATER QUALITY

The LNRS can support the reduction of pollutant run-off into watercourses and the protection of aquatic life.

Conventional farming methods and practices rely on fertilisers and feed that pollute watercourses and kill aquatic life. The LNRS has an opportunity to provide incentives and subsidies that support farmers to adopt organic fertilisers and low-carbon farming practices, as well as water quality monitoring and pollution control measures.



Opportunity 3 INCREASED CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Derbyshire's LNRS has an opportunity to promote carbon credit schemes to support long-term carbon sequestration projects, such as tree planting and peatland restoration; funding for carbon sequestration technologies such as manure harvesting and carbon capture systems; land-use planning tools to identify optimal sites for carbon sequestration and climate resilience projects and; expert advice on creating long-term, high-risk carbon sequestration projects (e.g., 30-year interventions).



Opportunity 4 NATURE-BASED LAND USE AND MULTI-FUNCTIONAL LANDSCAPES

The farming community can work in collaboration with local councils and communities to foster a joined-up approach to nature recovery across different landscapes. Opportunities for community land projects, such as planting schemes, pollinator gardens, or recreation areas, can promote farmer involvement as can grant funding for multi-functional land use and community-led projects.

Furthermore, the LNRS can promote land-use mapping tools to identify areas where biodiversity and land productivity can coexist (e.g., for allotments, recreational areas, wildlife corridors) and consultation frameworks to involve communities and landowners in land-use decisions that balance productivity and conservation.



LNRS

Opportunities 5-8

Conversations have surfaced several potential opportunities to put nature recovery on the radar for farmers and landowners, carving out opportunities and incentives to make it more achievable and less of a burden.



Opportunity 5 MAPPING DERBYSHIRE TOGETHER

To encourage buy-in from farmers fully involve them in designing future strategies and focus areas work from the start, rather than asking them to validate, let them guide the direction first.

There will also need to be a financial incentive.



Opportunity 6 REFRAME NATURE CORRIDORS AS NATURE BLOCKS

The risk of one farmer in a corridor letting down the collective means farmers won't engage. If you can organise it around blocks of land that are favourable to species who need to rest between areas, it will help incentivise farmers.

Collaborative and joined-up nature recovery opportunities need to be highlighted – but the group cannot be penalised as a whole if one farmer doesn't pull their weight.



Opportunity 7 RECOMMEND A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME FOR FARMERS

To build more resilience, particularly considering average age of farmers, helping move farmers away from relying on produce, so can do wider environmental work.



Opportunity 8 LNRS fills in gaps of SFI (that don't make sense for farmers)

Where the current Sustainable Farming Initiatives have fallen short for farmers, there is an opportunity for the LNRS to step in and begin to fill these gaps. We are intentionally reaching out to co-designing the LNRS with farmers so that we properly deliver a strategy that delivers for all stakeholders, equally.

Concepts for the future

Based on what we have heard from farmers and landowners in Derbyshire to date, we have suggested **four principles for the future**, foundational beliefs, values and ways of working together with farmers and landowners which can be embedded into the emerging work on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy:



Concept 1 A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO NATURE RECOVERY

While nature recovery is an important priority for Derbyshire, the UK and the world, a focus on nature recovery efforts will necessarily impact other social and economic systems. An increase in land used for nature recovery could mean a decrease in land available for livestock and crops, impacting the capacity and self-sufficiency of the UK's food production.

In a time of multiple intersecting crises, including national food insecurity, a precarious healthcare system, and the threat of unpredictable trade relationships, we must take a systemic approach to any adaptations we make to ensure that we don't create unwanted results in other interconnected systems.



Concept 2 WORKING IN COMPLEXITY REQUIRES HOLDING MULTIPLE TRUTHS

There are many different perspectives on land use, all backed by data and research. Working towards nature recovery is going to require that we all are willing to have our views and perspectives challenged and changed by people, contexts and evidence. We cannot solve this challenge from one point of view and will need to work together and pool our knowledge and understanding to move in the direction of nature recovery.



Concept 3 WE ACTIVELY REFUSE TO GUILT, BLAME OR SHAME EACH OTHER

We take it as a given that everyone wants to protect our natural environment and the people and places we love. Vilifying each other, using guilt, blame and shame is not productive, and only damages our ability to work together and our momentum for nature recovery initiatives.



Concept 4 ECOLOGICAL AND BIODIVERSITY EDUCATION IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THIS WORK

We recognise that people want to interact with nature in ways that might be counter-productive to nature recovery – having access to paths for dog-walking which could upset wildlife, e.g.

We want to encourage and provide spaces for people to get out into nature, and we recognise that we may need to engage in education as why this isn't always possible.

Part 4

Appendix

Detail from individual sessions



Agri-Advisors meeting at Bakewell Farmers Market: what did we notice?



Below is a snapshot of key takeaways from the Agri-Advisors meeting at Bakewell Farmers Market on Thursday 25th July 2024. Attendees: Andrew Critchlow, NFU and Steering Group member, Karen Davies, Bagshaws, Emily Mosley, Bagshaws, Chloe Palmer, consultant, member of Peakland Environmental Farmers, Lucy (in lieu of Sally Wood), Farm Services Offices.

What	Insights	Opportunity
Perceptions from neighbours	Farmers are informed and influenced by their neighbours and responses are sometimes based on what someone else has done	Opportunity: the LNRS process and output to galvanise a collective movement
Co-operation on schemes across places	<p>Joining up efforts would be far more effective from a nature recovery perspective (creating corridors of biodiversity attracting meadows is more effective than planting one large acreage, for example). It does not currently happen because of some farmers' attitudes to collaboration and minimal incentives.</p> <p>Example: Managing woodlands is necessary for biodiversity, and currently there are no funding schemes that support mature woodlands. In South Yorkshire, however, there is a Woodland Creation Partnership to support farmers/landowners to set up woodlands.</p>	<p>Opportunity: the LNRS could incentivise more joined up working.</p> <p>Opportunity: how can the LNRS replicate this type of partnership</p>
Shifting mindsets	The metric for good is currently purely production and/or yield.	Opportunity: how could the LNRS support what gets defined as good or better?
Women are key stakeholders in farming	Women in farming are often the ones who apply for funding schemes, keep the books, keep up with regulations, and they talk to each other. Farm advisors know the current schemes inside out, as well as the attitudes of farmers.	Opportunity: women have the ability to influence and may be more willing to collaborate
Gaps in SFI	There are so many gaps to the SFI, because of arbitrary mapping –e.g. “if your land falls north of this line, it’s not eligible” etc. Farmers are worried it doesn’t make sense on the ground. Lots of land in Derbyshire can’t be helped by SFI, as it falls through the cracks of schemes.	Opportunity: How can we ensure the LNRS is simpler in terms of eligibility criteria? How can these areas that are missed be a focus of the LNRS?
Language	Very important to be mindful of language used in the strategy document and to consider the use of NCA in reflecting the realities on the ground. Some farmers commented: <i>“One or two sentences in the white peaks was positive in engaging farmers. Otherwise, it portrays farmers are the bad guys”</i>	Opportunity: create a regular feedback loop ensuring stakeholder groups feed into development of outputs

Recap: NFU Branch Meeting

Lack of payments / incentives

With the Basic Payment Scheme coming to an end, there are shared concerns around finance and the risk to their livelihoods. With nature recovery, this is reflected in the frustration around lack of payments on offer for looking after hedges and public foot paths, or wider land access. Those planting new hedges get payments but not farmers who spend time maintaining existing hedges. Because of this finance is a major incentive for farmers who face challenges due to shift in BPS to SFI (Sustainable Finance Incentive).

Balance in the ecosystem

A recurring theme was the need for balance in the ecosystem – that culling large populations of species to a sensible level creates balance. This was underpinned by the wider debate around badgers and deer, and the risks they pose to livestock through spreading TB. The badger cull in 2022 has supported farmers who are already doing a lot of work to protect cattle. They also shared that they had seen an increase in honeybees and other insects as a result of the cull. It was felt that greater badger testing is needed to make this sustainable.

Building regulations

The group highlighted the need for increased building regulations on greenfield sites to assess what wildlife exists on the site.

There have been instances of builders cordoning off badgers found on sites, which moves them on and creates turf war on farmers land – putting cattle and livestock at risk.

Access to Land

A recurring theme of the conversation was the challenge of providing public access to land. Too many people do not show respect – with farmers complaining of litter, dogs not on leads, and general noise.

It was felt that maintaining footpaths that increase wellbeing by creating access, keep the public safe and protect the land should come with benefits (e.g. payment). Given that the group was made up of fringe farmers, close to urban areas, this was particularly relevant.

Education for the public

The group expressed frustration with people in villages/towns that don't see themselves as part of nature – either using large amounts of weed killer, whilst farmers are under strict regulations; or not treating access paths with respect.

It was agreed across the group that more education for the public is needed to ensure that nature recovery and increased biodiversity is a shared pursuit – not placing the onus only on farmers.

Additional feedback

Unfair grants – need to be increased

Challenge of monitoring existing biodiversity

Perception that funding is geared towards arable

Concerns about Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Challenges and Opportunities

The NFU farmers identified 5 key challenges and opportunities for nature recovery. These were recurring themes throughout the evening.

Lack of payments / incentives

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With nature recovery, this is reflected in the frustration around lack of payments on offer for looking after hedges and public foot paths, or wider land access. Those planting new hedges get payments but not farmers who spend time maintaining existing hedges.

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Summary of the NFU Branch Meeting

Over the course of just under two hours, we had a generative conversation with the 8 farmers present. 5 key challenges and opportunities were identified as recurring themes. These are captured on the next slide.

Attendees

- Andrew Critchlow, NFU and Steering Group member
- Tim Winder, NFU

- Farmers – mainly representing fringe farming (i.e. at the edge of urban areas):
 - Brian – Derbyshire Dales; 69 acres, farms cattle
 - John – Radbourne Area; 500 acres, arable farming, with 12,000 birds and beef
 - Ann – Ladburne Estate (tenant); 280 acres, dairy farm
 - Phillip – Kirk Langley; sheep, some beef and arable crops (wheat and barley)
 - Angela – Retired farmer, but still involved giving talks etc.
 - Margaret – Duffield, Belper; mixed traditional farming, cow, sheep, grain

What worked...

- Meeting farmers at their level, on neutral ground and joining their event helped remove barriers to participation.
- Following an informal semi-structured conversation allowed space for individuals to vent about wider issues and concerns, whilst opening the dialogue to understand the problems they are facing around balance in nature and public access to land.
- Andrew Critchlow played a crucial bridging role as a trusted representative, by inviting and welcoming us to the NFU branch meeting, introducing the LNRS, and playing 'devil's advocate' to challenge some of the initial resistance from the group.

Learnings...

- Positioning the LNRS to get buy-in – with the possibility of shaping policy and future funding opportunities feels key with the ending of the Basic Payment Scheme.
- Challenge of continuing the conversation beyond the short 90 minutes we had together.
- The initial response to a government scheme for nature was negative, stemming from fatigue with the media pointing the finger at farmers. There is a need to be mindful of this.



Listening to farmers and landowners

Insights and perspectives from across Derbyshire

End