



Ideas for a Defra Pilot in the Peak District National Park within the context of the “Farming in the English National Parks” Policy Discussion Paper.

The White Peak Vision – a limestone landscape revitalised

1. Why the White Peak?

Why use the White Peak for a pilot - this special landscape is one of three main National Character Areas (NCAs) in the Peak District National Park. Indeed it is the most difficult landscape for which to reconcile the needs for sustainable productive agriculture and caring for both the natural and cultural heritage of this special landscape. As well as informing the future for the uplands it will help us understand the way forward for both extensive upland fringe and areas where dairy farming is a predominant land use. An approach based on NCAs is one which could be rolled out across England.

“If we can make a new support system work in the White Peak we can make it work anywhere!”
(NFU Representative)

2. Key facts about the White Peak:

- **Number 1 bestselling OS map in England - the White Peak** - accessible and very popular access networks providing a real opportunity to better connect people to place and the public goods it delivers.
- **Rich in human history** - with centuries of farming and industry creating a higher density of settlements compared to the rest of the Peak District National Park.
- **A farmed landscape** - characterised by grassland, dry stone walls, farmsteads, scattered field barns, lead rakes, dew ponds and ridge and furrow.
- **50% and dropping fast** - the % of land in the White Peak in agri-environment schemes was 80% in 2015 and has dropped to less than 50% by 2018 – the current Countryside Stewardship Scheme is not working for this special upland landscape.
- **6,300 non-designated and therefore unprotected heritage assets** e.g. leadrakes, ridge and furrow. There are also 217 scheduled monuments, 803 listed buildings and 46 conservation areas.
- **Only 5% is species-rich grasslands.**
- **Highly fragmented habitats** – the Lawton report states that the White Peak is a highly fragmented landscape.
- **Threat of Ash Dieback** – 22% of the UK’s internationally important upland ashwoods are in the White Peak, collectively forming the largest extent of ravine woods in Britain. Ash Dieback is likely to have significant negative impacts.
- **Only 6% is designated for wildlife** - compared to 45% of the Dark Peak. These diverse and special habitats are often small, linear, fragmented and in variable condition.
- **86% of rivers are in moderate or poor condition** - the underlying fissured limestone creates a special water environment which is sensitive to pollution.
- **89% is a farmed landscape** - 99% of this is grassland, predominantly used to support livestock, with more intensively managed dairy farms on the plateau.

- **154 farm holdings are larger than 100 hectares and cover 49% of the White Peak, with an estimated 860 being less than 100 hectares.**
- **85% is classed as Severely Disadvantaged** - with the plateau land rising to over 400 metres above sea level.
- **An upland landscape with lowland characteristics** – productive grassland at over 400 metres above sea level where national agri-environment scheme prescriptions have always struggled to deliver.
- **94% of land is privately owned and occupied** - with only 6% owned by public or conservation organisations.
- **White Peak Partnership** – bringing people together to revitalise the White Peak please see Appendix 1 for the White Peak Partnership Vision and supporting summary.

3. Pilot ideas – still work in progress.

Farmers and land managers are essential for conserving and enhancing the special qualities of this protected landscape and for the delivery of a full range of public benefits. Land management businesses must be based on a sustainable model which delivers for the economy, the environment (natural & cultural environment) and the community including: -

- Delivering for the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- Contributing to restoring 75% of SSSIs to favourable condition
- Landscape scale approach to ensure naturally functioning and resilient habitats – delivering nature recovery networks and contributing to the 500,000 ha of new wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected sites network.
- Sustainable soil management – wider soil testing including compaction and impacts of aeration, Nitrogen including nitrogenous deposition, Phosphate, Potash, microbes, ph; carbon sequestration, storage and management.
- Recognising the value of the cultural heritage across the landscape, retaining the integrity and readability of these features in the landscape whilst at the same time addressing key features in need of restoration and day to day farming practicalities.
- Sustainable productivity which uses modern techniques and innovative approaches e.g. increasing the efficient use of manures and slurry e.g. by the use of slurry injectors; solar powered machinery; new grassland renovation techniques for productive, semi-improved, pollinator habitats and species rich grassland habitats.
- Farm business profitability and resilience including whole farm business advice and planning which takes a holistic approach (environment and business needs) to include benchmarking, grant support for environmental land management, sustainable productivity and diversification.
- Grows understanding and support for the full range of public benefits that the Peak District National Park delivers including access.

Overall approach for a new Environmental Land Management Scheme - will need to be agreed within a national framework which has the flexibility to deliver for individual local landscapes – the White Peak NCA is ideally placed to test this out.

The new support scheme needs to be: -

- Designed in partnership with the farming and land management community.
- Comprised of a base scheme available to all on a whole farm basis – “ELS on steroids” with applications automatically accepted on delivering the essential requirements for that particular landscape (NCA). With a discretionary higher level element for the more complex land management options.
- Outcome/results not prescription focused based on and developing further the Results based pilot being tested out in the Yorkshire Dales and Norfolk.
- Simpler and more flexible for farmers but also easier to administer and monitor.
- Customer focused – enabling early steps on the conservation ladder and building to a fuller delivery of public benefits.
- Include landscape mapping – natural, cultural and access networks need to be available at a wider landscape scale than the farm holding so that farmers and land managers can see where

there holding fits in and how it can contribute to a landscape-scale approach and nature recovery networks.

- Be based on a whole farm plan which records the natural and cultural features/assets on the holding which is then used to calculate the appropriate base/FARM scheme payments. There should also be a simple quick method of updating the local/national data set facilitated by trusted advisers such as the PDNPA advisers.
- Flexibility e.g. as science delivers
- Able to demonstrate the public benefits the landscape and the scheme is delivering: –
 - food production
 - water quality and supply
 - flood mitigation
 - carbon management and storage
 - biodiversity
 - cultural heritage
 - access and recreation - health and well being
- Supported by locally experienced and trusted advisers on a 1:many basis.
- Able to increase public understanding and support for sustainable farming and land management.
- Links closely with and works in harmony with the new rural development support elements of the new support system.
- Properly rewards and incentivizes farmers and land managers to participate and to continue to deliver the desired outcomes.

Research and engagement so far: –

- **Peak District National Park Management Plan** review has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders and has reaffirmed the importance of working with the farming and land management community. It has also identified the need for a new support system which properly engages, rewards and incentivises land managers to maintain and enhance the special qualities of the National Park and to deliver a full range of public benefits. The White Peak has been highlighted as the landscape most in need of habitat restoration and under threat of further loss of both natural and cultural environment features (The Lawton Report, State of Nature for the Peak District and by stakeholders during the PDNP Management Plan review).
- **Peak District Land Managers' Forum** has established a Brexit sub-group to develop a Peak District Ask for a post Brexit support system including the proposal to use the White Peak to test out proposals in more detail.
- **Payment by results pilot** being delivered in the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP) has been shared with Peak District farmers and land managers and this has stimulated interest in and support for this results based approach. There are opportunities to test out further options and refinements e.g. simplifying the list of traditional hay meadow indicator species and using “tractor cab guides” for farmers to more effectively monitor their own sites; adding a bonus payment for those who exceed the top outcome band of the payment structure. Further testing of this results based approach for existing habitats will be part of the YDNPA pilot offer.
- **National Trust pilot** – pilot scheme in the Lake District.
- **White Peak Partnership** – although it is early days for this fledgling landscape partnership the work done so far has identified: -
 - A vision to “Revitalise the White Peak” has been agreed following stakeholder workshops. Please see the attached White Peak Vision and Supporting Summary at Appendix 1.
 - the White Peak as the ideal NCA to pilot a new work of supporting environmental land management and in particular to strengthen and grow the natural networks within this fragmented landscape &
 - the existing networks of the natural environment habitats, cultural heritage and access at the White Peak landscape scale
 - clarified the need to work in partnership with private land owners and managers as they are responsible for 94% of the land area of the White Peak.
 - has identified and prioritised the need to maintain, make bigger, better, more and join up the natural networks in the White Peak – nature recovery networks.
 - opportunities to create naturally functioning and resilient nature networks. Plans have been developed which show the current nature networks and priority areas for

restoration and creation. Further recent research by Natural England has supported this approach and the areas mapped through the Habitat Network Mapping Project.

- **Historic England’s Pilot “Developing an ecosystems approach for dry stone walls”** has just begun and aims to: -
 - explore the benefits created by dry stone walls within the socio-ecological systems of the Peak District National Park, and assign them to particular ‘ecosystem services’
 - demonstrate how the monetary and non-monetary value of the historic environment can be incorporated into ecosystem services approach.
 - develop a methodology to identify the benefits and attribute values for the dry stone walls, and express them in a language compatible with the ecosystem services approach.
 - also identify and recommend other heritage assets whose benefits can be identified and valued using the methodology.
 - improve the incorporation of historic environment assets into ecosystem services/natural capital approaches both in terms of conceptualisation and practical implementation.
 - Explore what reward might be for farmers for maintaining walls in good condition, basic cattle proof condition and retention as a heritage feature.

Further research identified -

- The need to test out what it would take to properly reward and incentivise land managers to buffer and expand the key habitat networks concentrated on the SSSI dales and river corridors. This proposal is currently being considered as a bid to Natural England’s Innovation fund for which a decision is likely in late February/March.
- The need to explore and test out opportunities to deliver a base scheme to deliver the key landscape features across the whole of the White Peak including water quality and pollinator/habitat corridors across the improved plateaux lands. Defra support for this work could help access funding from the National Trust, the Peak District National Park Authority and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.
- Further develop and test a whole scheme approach as outlined below for a sustainable approach to the delivery of public benefits including a resilient White Peak nature recovery network.

4. Pilot White Peak Scheme – initial thoughts.

A. White Peak Base/Farming & Rural Management (FARM) Scheme across the whole holding – farmers and land manager’s to be: -

- **Rewarded for the outcome – protecting & maintaining the essential landscape features/public goods for the White Peak NCA (recorded on a base whole farm plan):**
 - i. Traditional walls & hedges
 - 1. Good condition and well maintained
 - 2. Heritage features to be retained in the landscape. (NB. If cross compliance goes with the Basic Payment Scheme there will be no protection for walls unless Wall Regulations, similar to Hedgerow Regulations are created or there is sufficient incentive for their retention under a future base level support scheme.)
 - ii. Woodland
 - iii. Shelter belts
 - iv. Trees in boundaries and in field
 - v. Field stone getting quarries
 - vi. Limekilns
 - vii. Ridge & furrow – good examples could be protected by an archaeological features in permanent grassland option.
 - viii. Field barns – good condition and/or as heritage feature?
 - ix. Leadrakes
 - x. Dew ponds
 - xi. Vulnerable water areas - water courses and vulnerable areas e.g. sink holes etc. for which the Environment Agency is currently assessing using Lidar maps. Consider effective buffers width – 5 metres?

- xii. Soil health – water permeability/compaction, nitrogen including nitrogenous deposition, phosphate, potash, ph, carbon management (emissions, sequestration and storage). As soil science develops this element also needs to be developed.
 - xiii. Pollinator/wildlife corridors along traditional boundary lines and key access routes. Consider effective minimum width and farmer buy-in to leave the whole field ungrazed after mowing until after the final silage cut and after the pollinator species have flowered and set seed.
 - xiv. Permanent grassland option – further research is needed to fully consider whether the base level should include option(s) for permanent grassland e.g. for low input/semi-improved grassland, existing species rich grassland and the pollinator /wildlife corridors in xiii above.
- **Incentives** to encourage participation in the base/FARM scheme: -
 - i. A suite of simple capital works grants based on standard costs (no quotes or invoices) and up to a maximum amount of funding per 100ha per year with two years to complete the works:
 - 1. Traditional walls & hedges – restoration
 - 2. Water quality capital works – menu of capital works grants building on existing CSF and local STEPS grant scheme experience.
 - 3. Ash die-back mitigation (natural regeneration, planting individual and/or groups of trees)
 - ii. Additional score for participating in the base/FARM scheme when applying for the larger Sustainability grants (Productivity, resource efficiency (CSF, Renewables), innovation, skills training).
 - iii. Access to x hours of locally experienced specialist advice & support (Soil health, natural environment, cultural heritage, succession planning, sustainable business advice, open farm days). This could be in the form of both 1:1 and 1:many advice, including making use of existing networks/knowledge transfer. No consensus has yet been reached as to whether a minimum number of hours should be mandatory or optional. Need for co-ordinated advice to ensure clear messages and support for agreed outcomes.
 - iv. Raising public awareness of the full range of public goods delivered by farmers and land managers – once in the base/FARM scheme then this could act almost as a very simple certification mark i.e. that the farm is in the Base/FARM scheme. At the farm gate the farm sign could state what is being delivered e.g.

White Peak Farm

Providing beef, lamb, milk & holiday accommodation

Looking after walls, hedges, woodlands, trees,

clean water, pollinators & beautiful landscapes.

This could be expanded if the holding was delivering special habitats and species with the higher level scheme. If in the National Park it could also state that it is also helping to look after the special qualities of the National Park. If the farm business direct sells some of its products or services then this could be developed as a brand.

B. White Peak Farming & Rural Management Enhancement & Restoration (FARMER) Scheme across parts of the holding for delivery at a landscape scale (Higher level)

- **Outcome focused land management options (maintenance, enhancement, restoration and creation) for key habitats and species** in key locations defined by habitat network and opportunity mapping, thus contributing to nature recovery network in 25 Year Environment Plan. The key element here will be to assess the annual per hectare payment required to incentivise participation for the areas identified as priority habitats for maintenance/restoration/creation for this upland landscape with lowland characteristics where up until now national agri-environment scheme prescriptions have always struggled to deliver.
 - i. Species rich grasslands (Calcareous, acid and neutral including hay meadows, calaminarian (lead rake) grasslands)
 - ii. Woodland
 - iii. Access – key access network links

- **Capital works:** -
 - i. habitat restoration/creation
 - ii. species management e.g. predator survey & fencing
 - iii. cultural heritage restoration e.g. traditional building restoration
 - iv. tree/woodland planting
 - v. water quality(CSF type grants)
 - vi. flood mitigation
 - vii. access: -
 1. key access network link improvements
 2. right of way furniture improvements e.g. miles without scheme, change stile to kissing gate
 3. educational access – for the full range of public benefits delivered by the farm including open farm Sunday events

- **Sustainability grants** (Productivity, resource efficiency (CSF, Renewables), innovation, skills training). NB a separate paper covering suggestions for a revised approach for these grants is also being developed.

- **Branding opportunities** -
 - i. Raising public awareness of the full range of public goods including high quality food delivered by farmers and land managers as above for the base/FARM scheme. This could be expanded if the holding was delivering special habitats and species with the higher level scheme. If in the National Park it could also state that it is also helping to look after the special qualities of the National Park.
 - ii. Further exploration is needed to develop “enhanced income from White Peak products and services” building on the experiences of the “Inspired by the Peak District” brand, the Peak District Environmental Quality Mark (a place based environmental accreditation scheme developed as part of the “Eat the View” campaign) and the Peak District National Park – a brand for the Place.

- C. **Monitoring** with greater engagement, understanding and support:
 - Farmer – this would require an element of training but would increase farmer engagement and payment as demonstrated by the Results based pilot. Further improvements could be made to the model e.g. a set of indicator species which is more effective, a reduced number of species, mini tractor guides. There would need to be a follow up audit at agreed intervals.
 - Trusted adviser – offers the training and mentoring support
 - Inspection agency – audit of a sample selection based on risk.
 - Monitoring and review of the scheme itself – locally through feedback and the farmer co-design group e.g. capital works funding could be prioritised by a locally agreed group (farmers, land managers, National Park Authority, Natural England etc.).

- D. **Other ideas still being explored:**
 - Other sources of funding and support: -
 - i. Water Companies e.g. Severn Trent Water and their STEPs capital works grant programme
 - ii. Local company support e.g. Buxton Water
 - iii. Volunteers from the local community e.g. Meadow monitor/surveyor which could contribute to increasing public awareness, understanding and support for the public benefits delivered.
 - iv. Wider engagement with local community e.g. volunteers for key tasks such as ragwort picking, scrub control; Farmer walks and talks.
 - Land manager groups – facilitation fund approach to develop cluster working for landscape scale delivery or contract bidding/reverse auction approach.
 - Positive Conservation covenants – permanent dedication/purchase of special habitats on a forever basis. Could consider a one off capital payment rather than short term annual management payments.