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Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

Year 2 update | June 2023





Introduction

The Defra-funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme will run until March 2025. It supports farming and land management projects in England's Protected Landscapes that make improvements for nature, climate, people and place.

The designation of our protected landscapes recognises their exceptional value for landscape, nature and cultural heritage. They have been shaped by generations of farmers and a resilient, sustainable approach to land management sits at the heart of their future.

The FiPL programme approach blends national and local priorities. Contributions to nature recovery and climate resilient businesses, heritage conservation and better access for people to enjoy our protected landscapes all feature in programme delivery.

The programme is now in its third year, and this report highlights some of the projects funded by the end of year two. The report includes the voices of farmers and land managers who have accessed the programme, what they have achieved and their experiences of the process.

181m hedging at Dalefoot Farm, Yorkshire Dales National Park
© Dianne Halliday

How does it work?

Funding is available for projects that reflect at least one of the four FiPL themes:

- Support **NATURE** recovery
- Mitigate the impacts of **CLIMATE** change
- Provide opportunities for **PEOPLE** to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape, its nature and cultural heritage
- Protect or improve the quality and character of the **PLACE**

Projects must help to deliver priorities identified in the National Park or AONB Management Plans.

Applications for under £10,000 are assessed by a senior member of the relevant protected landscape team. Applications over £10,000 are considered by independent Local Assessment Panels with experts from across the protected landscape.

John Atkinson, who farms close to Coniston water, is on the Lake District Local Assessment Panel and explains,

“ Another farmer and I are represented on the Local Assessment Panel. We provide local knowledge, and overall I think we have a good mix of people – with representatives from the RPA, NFU, Defra and NGOs bringing different skills and insights.



The programme offers more opportunities for smaller family farms and the quick turnaround time on decisions make it attractive. Looking forward it would be good to do more in our communities to show what projects have been achieving and share our ideas across different National Parks and AONBs.

Farming in Protected Landscapes programme facts

2,400

More than 2,400 projects have been approved for funding so far

5,000

The number of farmers engaged in the programme has exceeded 5,000

42

The programme has created 42 new farm clusters and helped support 106 existing ones

25 million

Programme funding for farmers and land managers to date is more than £25 million

485

Funding has supported 485 Projects to reduce flood risk

100

Over 100 miles (approximately 190 km) of new hedgerow have been planted

5,000

The number of volunteers engaged through the programme

8

8 miles (approximately 13 km) of dry-stone walling have been restored

Cumulative figures since the programme began in July 2021



CASE STUDIES

At Work - Farming in Protected Landscapes

CASE STUDIES

Butterbrook Farm

Dartmoor National Park Authority

David Sadler had previously been in an HLS Scheme, which had lapsed. His two-year FiPL project has included funding to improve habitats and restore one of the 'leats' - historic water supply channels characteristic of Dartmoor.

The farm is home to one of the best examples of wood pasture habitat on Dartmoor, with hawthorn, rowan and oak of a range of ages forming a variable tree canopy over grass, bluebells and bracken, with clumps of mature gorse.

Installation of a hydraulically driven ram water pump, which supplies half a dozen water troughs has enabled a 'paddock' grazing regime to be adopted - with zero carbon footprint. This in turn means cattle no longer have to walk the length of the wood pasture to reach the stream to drink.

Overflow from the pump is being used to top up the supply to a wet scrape already used by snipe; it's hoped this will attract more winter waders, frogs and dragonflies.



Bea Dunscombe, one of Dartmoor's FiPL Team, reviewing the work completed with David.
© Dartmoor National Park Authority

Grant value:
£26,500



Cattle spend most of the year in the wood pasture, benefiting from the diverse habitat
© Dartmoor National Park Authority



Grant value:
£9,938



Bee gathering nectar on knapweed (above) & wildflower-rich grassland (below), Pewsey Pollinator Project, North Wessex Downs AONB
© Simon Smart

Pewsey Downs Farmer Group North Wessex Downs AONB

Pewsey Downs Farmer Group involves 20 farmers who collaborate to enhance wildlife across 10,000 hectares of the North Wessex Downs AONB. One of the Group's priorities is to provide a landscape rich in pollinators and other invertebrates.

The Pollinators project, funded by FiPL, has supported this aim by:

- mapping key habitats for pollinators
- providing training on species identification to farmers
- identifying gaps in habitat availability
- engaging with local communities to raise awareness of the importance of these essential invertebrates

James Cameron, Chair of the group, says;

“ Here on the Pewsey Downs a group of more than 20 farmers have banded together with a shared determination to try and create a landscape that is much more friendly to our pollinators. In the past much of our conservation activities were carried out on our individual farms with very little consideration to what our neighbours were doing, but by working together and looking beyond our traditional farm boundaries we believe we can achieve much more.

Rectory Orchard

Wye Valley AONB

Traditional orchards such as the 2.8 ha Rectory Orchard in the Wye Valley AONB are a priority habitat, requiring the greatest conservation action, and supporting many important species, including the Noble chafer beetle.

Records dating back to 1886 provided a starting point to guide the orchard renewal project. In winter 2022, and with local pomologists' support, the orchard was replanted with 120 traditional cider apple and perry pear varieties on vigorous rootstocks, replicating the original layout. Veteran trees were pruned appropriately to extend their life. The activities culminated in a community event and a wassail.

Alastair Farquhar, the orchard's owner, explains:

“ We are leaving a legacy for future generations to enjoy. It's a beacon of hope. It gives continuity and connection between local people here and this incredible traditional habitat, and it will do so for another 100 years. We are hugely grateful to the team at the Wye Valley AONB office, whose management of our FiPL grant application demystified the process and made it both straightforward and flexible. The grant contributed greatly to making this orchard renewal possible.

Grant value:
£18,315



Rectory Orchard at Brampton Abbots, Herefordshire
© Wye Valley AONB

Waterhead and Bradley Farms

Northumberland National Park Authority

Located along the Hadrian's Wall corridor this project focused on pond restoration within the Roman Walls escarpment SSSI and the installation of a new water pumping system to support an improved grazing regime.

A historic pond associated with the post-medieval farm steading was drained and a leak fixed. This has protected and enhanced a key archaeological site as well as providing biodiversity benefits, with limited pond habitat in the area.

Working on a steep site, installation of a bespoke multi-stage pump has meant that cattle are able to graze a wider area in summer where previously there was no access to water. This has led to a reduction of rough vegetation and improved habitat for curlew, along with other waders including lapwing and snipe.

Grant recipient Kit Action explains;

“ Without the funding from FiPL we would not have been able to do the work. The application process was straightforward and the collaborative working with the FiPL Officer from the outset was good because we knew the project fitted with FiPL objectives.

Grant value:
£10,301



Traditional washpool restored as pond habitat at Bradley farm steading, Waterhead & Bradley
© Northumberland National Park Authority

CASE STUDIES

Dalefoot Farm

Yorkshire Dales National Park

Dalefoot Farm has a number of SSSI designations including traditional upland hay meadows that are of national biodiversity importance. Project funding is supporting nature recovery through the establishment of a network of hedgerows, riparian strips and trees that connect the existing ancient semi-natural woodland, together with management of the meadows and upland heath habitat.

The riparian strip and adjacent ancient semi-natural woodland has been fenced to protect it from livestock grazing and to protect the River Eden SSSI. The Halliday family, who farm at Dalefoot, have planted 210 trees and over 600m of new hedge themselves.

The condition of the Ash Fell SSSI heath was assessed before the project started and is on the cusp of being in favourable condition. The aim is to manage the heathland to bring it into favourable condition by the end of the project term in March 2024.

The project also includes the restoration of a landmark traditional stone field barn – a key feature of the landscape in this area of the Yorkshire uplands.

Dianne Halliday explains,

“ On contacting Helen [in the Yorkshire Dales National Park] in 2021, I found her to be very helpful. We have 150-acre hill farm in Mallerstang Valley, with a 50 acre heather allotment that is a SSSI.

The application process was very easy with Helen helping with the form filling, but we got to choose what we wished to do, and we even started partway through the year. The whole project approach is very flexible.

In Year 1 we planted 70 trees in the permanent pasture, and 390 meters of hedges as well as installing fencing. We also planted 150 trees by the river Eden and fenced. We counted flowers in our hay meadow and were surprised how many we had.

In Year 2 we planted 249 metres of hedges and fenced. The big project this year was doing up a field barn. It was a big investment that we could not have done without the grant. It looks amazing now. I can wholeheartedly recommend the programme.

**Grant value:
£56,565**

Various Barn images (below), Dalefoot Farm, Yorkshire Dales National Park © Dianne Halliday



Grassland Sustainability Project

Howardian Hills AONB, North York Moors National Park

The Howardian Hills AONB and North York Moors National Park run a joint Local Assessment Panel and are supporting this project to trial different approaches to grassland re-seeding across 10 farm holdings in the two adjoining protected landscapes.

Working with an independent grassland expert from Leeds University the project aims to improve farm resilience by developing sward types that meet future farming needs as well as providing evidence on how different sward types impact on the environment to inform future decision making.

Project facilitator Karen Stanley explains,

“ This group of farmers are looking to provide sufficient high-quality forage without reliance on artificial fertilisers and to reduce re-seeding frequency and costs. We are particularly interested in how incorporating substantial quantities of cocksfoot in seed mixes may contribute to yield and forage quality without nitrogen inputs, whilst the deep roots and hardiness make it tolerant of both wet and drought conditions.

Grant value:
£28,133

Working with an independent grass and soils specialist and Leeds University has allowed us to look into the soils in depth, paying particular attention to soil type, trace elements, soil organic matter and overall soil functionality, with specific seed mixes devised for each trial field.

Our aim over the next few years is to monitor yields, forage quality and soil health comparing a cocksfoot & legume-based mix to a more conventional ryegrass and clover mix. If successful, it could see much less frequent re-seeding, reducing farm costs and helping to protect and enhance our soils.



Chiltern Rangers Community Plant Nursery

Chilterns AONB

This community plant nursery project is growing native trees and shrubs of local provenance for habitat creation and enhancement projects across the Chilterns.

The Chiltern Rangers Community Interest Company (CIC) has established the nursery on land provided by the Penn Estate. Investment in the site has included deer fencing, rainwater harvesting, providing top soil and installing raised beds, a polytunnel, site storage and welfare facilities.

Chiltern Rangers staff are being assisted by skilled and trained volunteers as well as people of all ages and abilities from the wider community including schools and colleges. The nursery provides a place for people to learn and volunteer all year round.

John Shaw, Managing Director (Chiltern Rangers), says:

“ FiPL has really helped make this project possible by being able to fund things that aren't in typical grant schemes. By getting FiPL going it also levered in other funders to maximise the projects value and impact. In addition, it's been a quick process and great to have it run locally. We'd like to sincerely thank Gareth and the team for their help, advice and support.

Grant value:
£45,123

Artists impression of the site (year 5)
© Dan Wilson Decreate

Brooklands Farm New Forest National Park

Crispin Sampson took on Brooklands Farm, in the west of the New Forest, in 2019. His ambitions for the farm have been supported by a FiPL grant for a suite of initiatives to increase the quality, area and connectivity of habitat available for nature.

This has included the installation of wildlife boxes, including a box to encourage Pine Martens to use the farm woodland. It is hoped that this will help improve the woodland for other native species too.

Fencing cattle out of the North Gorley drain has helped to reduce bank erosion, sediment pollution and contamination of the watercourse as well as creating a riparian buffer to improve nature connectivity.

Rainwater harvesting will allow newly planted hedging and trees orchard to be watered in drought years and reduce runoff in winter.



Farmer Crispin Sampson with his cattle
© New Forest National Park

Grant value:
£4,830

Wood End Farm Forest of Bowland AONB

Janet Smalley is on a mission to farm more sustainably on her Lancashire upland farm, and to spread the message about the benefits of this approach to a wider audience. The FiPL funding is supporting improvements to soil health and a move to rotational grazing with herbal leys. This should reduce the farm's fertilizer requirements, which will – over a number of years – lock more carbon into the soil as well as potentially mitigating local flood risk.

Funding has also supported the conversion of an outbuilding to host educational visits for school and community groups, with accessible facilities and opportunities for under-represented groups to learn more about the farm.

Janet said:

“Applying for the grant has transformed the farm's opportunities both in terms of how we farm – and how we engage with visitors – which is a growing part of our business.

Securing the funding started us on a journey to understanding the importance of healthy soils

and the role of regenerative farming in reducing carbon emissions from farming as the sector works towards Net Zero.

Converting the outbuilding into a comfortable space to welcome visitors and improving disabled access with access to an all-terrain wheelchair will allow us to increase the number of visitors we welcome to Wood End and pave the way for further investment in regenerative farming in the future.



Education Room at Wood End Farm
© Forest of Bowland AONB

Grant value:
£30,441



This report was published by National Parks England working with the National Association for AONBs on behalf of all of England's protected landscapes.

For more information about applying to FiPL, please contact your local National Park or AONB team.

Contact details for all National Parks in England can be found at:

<https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk>

Contact details for all AONBs in England can be found at:

National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

www.landscapesforlife.org.uk

Details about Farming in Protected Landscapes can also be found at

www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes

To see the whole range of Defra schemes and grants on offer, search for "funding for farmers" on GOV.UK

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