The Dales and Moors Farm Innovation Project - Supporting High Nature Value Farming
The initial pilot Dales and Moor Farm Innovation Project delivered a tailored programme of training and advice to 50 farms in the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors between February 2015 and June 2015.

Hill farming in the target area is under severe financial pressure with average profits of less than £14,000 per year, despite receiving average payment of over £43,000 per year from the public sector. These payments are forecast to reduce significantly over the next 5+ years.

Improving the resilience of the sector to market price volatility and future changes in grant provision is critical to ensure the future of an industry that is of fundamental importance to the economy, natural environment and key landscapes of North Yorkshire by:

- contributing around £304m directly to the local economy; and,
- helping to maintain the outstanding environmental assets that:
  - supports a £1.2bn local tourism economy; and,
  - makes North Yorkshire such a special place to live and work

The pilot project helped farmers identify ways in which they could improve their business and the natural environment they operate within – with more efficient agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises. Each farm conducted a business appraisal with the support of expert advisers. Each appraisal led to a tailored Whole Farm Plan that identified ways in which farm businesses can be improved through:

- Making better use of their farms.
- Working together to improve marketing and taking control of costs e.g. for items that are related to the farm enterprises such as feed and also for items that are fixed costs such as fuel and power.
- Increasing their business and technical skills.

The 50 Whole Farm Plans provide a platform for each farm to move forward with a better sense of what actions they could take to increase the profitability, sustainability and resilience of their business, and the skills and training they may need in order to achieve this, whilst preserving the wider goods and services they offer.

Analysis of the completed Whole Farm Plans, feedback from project participants and the detailed labour market analysis of the sector performed during the project has helped identify common issues that arose in the plans and wider ways to improve business growth and the farmed environment in the longer term. The conclusions of this analysis have been incorporated into the following recommendations for developing the project beyond the pilot phase.

### Proposed Next Steps

The proposed next stage aims to expand support for High Nature Value (HNV) farming within a framework that enables farmers to make the identified business and environmental improvements that will deliver a more productive and resilient farming sector in a sustainable manner. This approach would ensure that those developing Whole Farm Plans could do so within a supportive farmer-to-farmer environment, with sufficient scale to allow sharing of best practice and development of support mechanisms using the principles advocated by the LEP’s ‘How’s Business’ approach.

### The Framework

The four elements of the HNV Farming Support Framework are:

1. **Farmer Driven Network**: Develop a Farmer-Driven network across the four Protected Areas that is ultimately self-funding to provide cross-cutting support and single entry point of access to information, opportunities and resources to HNV farm businesses.

   **Functions**:
   - Provide dedicated resource to:
     - Establish links between all training, advice, support and resource providers locally and nationally creating a single source of information to support farm businesses;
     - Co-ordinate best practice events, external skills & training and awareness raising activities;
     - Access and support to help link farmers/land managers to external opportunities;
     - Support, promote and engage cluster activity (see Farmer Support Clusters);
     - Support branding and marketing across the entire network.

2. **Whole Farm Planning**: Support to conduct 400 more tailored Whole Farm Plans using an optimised approach based upon the findings and feedback from the pilot study. The scope would be broadened to include arable/mixed farms systems through offering agri-tech advice and planning advice to help...
guide farmers wishing to diversify.

Functions:
- Provide tailored Whole Farm Plans for 400 farms.
- Build a more representative dataset with more farms and farm types helping inform sector analysis and strategic decision-making. This could inform market segmentation to enable tailored support to each farm type.
- Provide dedicated resource to:
  > Target and promote Whole Farm Plans;
  > Identify opportunities to enhance or restore habitats for wildlife to enable farms to obtain higher scoring in the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme;
  > Analyse common outcomes and identify group learning opportunities and potential cluster activity (see Farmer Support Clusters).
- Develop and refine the accreditation of appropriate learning outcomes and accredited courses that respond to the needs of the farming sector and that can be delivered in the most appropriate way for the audience.

3. Whole Farm Support: Provide investment and support to enable farmers to take forward the actions identified in their Whole Farm Plans.

Functions:
- Provide capital grants for farm infrastructure improvements and new non-farm enterprises to improve the efficiency of production systems without intensification - enabling farms to operate with fewer inputs and produce higher value outputs with less environmental impacts.
- Delivering training identified through the appraisal process to improve existing and develop new skills, opening attitudes to change in the sector.
- Investment in survey and habitat restoration work to enable farms to obtain higher scoring in the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

4. Farmer Support Clusters: Support for forming new/adding value to existing small clusters of farm businesses, with the aim of supporting informal peer to peer learning to share best practice within trusted supportive environments, thereby improving business skills and decision taking. Support Clusters will enable groups of farm businesses to pursue collective opportunities for input cost savings, training, business enterprises and research trials. The cluster will help implement common plan outcomes and could provide the necessary scale and cooperation to deliver subsequent Green & Blue infrastructure improvements developed through the LEP.

Functions:
- Provide dedicated resource to:
  > Identify opportunities to conduct Whole Farm Planning activity on a cluster scale to build more resilient groups of farms businesses;
  > Provide local peer-to-peer support for improving business performance, farm productivity and environmental outcomes;
  > Identify and deliver group learning opportunities;
  > Identify external opportunities, support systems and funding. This could include facilitating links to other LEP priorities including:
    * Agri-tech research trials to translate existing research and scientific know-how into practical measures to take the industry forward as a whole;
    * Helping to establish joint applications for funding opportunities including the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund;
    * Green & Blue infrastructure development, including the use of Extensive Farming Systems;
    * Links to the tourism economy and farm diversification;
    * Apprenticeships on farms for young people.
The Outcomes and Benefits
The framework will be used to support and coordinate the delivery of the following actions:

**Agri-tech Investment**
- Investment in the application of agri-tech to improve the management, development and profitability of livestock farming and to deliver associated environmental benefits. Including:
  » Access to soils, blood, manure and forage testing to improve both farm productivity and environmental outcomes;
  » HNV Innovation Project: Project to assess the application of Agri-tech in an HNV context to identify appropriate techniques and wider opportunities within the wider LEP bio-economy and agri-tech programmes;
  » HNV Livestock Innovation Project: Project to trial the application of Agri-tech in livestock management including the development of a selective breeding programme to enable long-term improvement of the genetics of flocks/herds;
  » Provide a delivery mechanism for the LEP’s wider Agri-tech and bio-economy ambitions through linking farms and farm clusters to BioVale and FERA Science initiatives and research trials.

**Renewables and Low Carbon Investment**
- HNV Farm Energy Grids: Project to promote and provide capital investment for the use of innovative renewable farm energy storage to allow feed-in to the grid without the need to upgrade the electricity supply infrastructure within farm clusters.
- Farm Woodfuel Project: Project to develop an integrated woodfuel advisory service to overcome the existing barriers to uptake, and develop local woodfuel supply chains and business networks. This would enable ‘offgrid’ farm businesses to make significant reductions to their input costs and carbon output and provide the opportunity to develop local woodfuel supply chains to provide woodfuel to a wider market that will enable farm businesses to generate additional income and bring significant environmental benefits through carbon reduction and improved woodland management.

**Infrastructure and Capital Investment**
- Funding for farm infrastructure improvements where farms are operating with sub-standard infrastructure. This will enable environmental improvements and better farm management bringing increased productivity to the sector.
- Funding for key environmental improvements (including hay meadow and upland vegetation restoration) that will enable farmers to better qualify for nationally competitive agri-environment schemes that recompense them for maintaining these wildlife features – without which the wildlife and landscape quality of the area would be put at risk.
- Investment in innovative systems and specialist machinery including mobile livestock handling facilities and Electronic Identification Devices (EIDs) readers that can be used both on-farm by individuals to benefit their own businesses and also offered as a service to others.

**Sector-specific Skills Training**
- Peer-to-peer training and knowledge sharing of advanced and modern farming techniques for improving production and managing land for environmental outcomes through stimulating existing farms clusters and helping to establish new ones.
- Targeted business and entrepreneurial skills.

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**Skills Support for the Workforce:**
Local Response Fund
York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership District

**Summary**
Over a short period the pilot Dales and Moors Farm Innovation Project showed that the Whole Farm Plan approach can provide valued and useful support for the farming sector in areas of high landscape significance where HNV farming dominates to provide a range of invaluable goods and services to society.

The pilot stage identified a number of clear and workable recommendations for taking forward this approach within a wider framework. This framework has the ability to integrate with other projects in the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP area to deliver the full aspirations of the LEP’s SEP with respect to food and farming in the remote rural areas. The key elements of this align closely with the LEP’s wider philosophy to business support through the ‘How’s Business’ programme as well as being fundamental to the aspirations of many of the SEP priorities and the Dales and Moors Local Growth Plan. At a national level, the framework’s aim to deliver a healthy natural economy in the protected landscapes will directly support the government’s forthcoming 25 Year Natural Capital Plan.