

## **CASE STUDY 1.**

### **SWP19018 White Peak Farmers**

#### **‘Networks for Nature: Facilitating Collaborative Farming’**

Support Staffordshire member ‘White Peak Farmers’ is a group of farmers that united in early April 2015 with the aim of working together to deliver better environmental outcomes in the White Peak area of the Peak District.

The area has a wealth of wildlife and across the different farms they have limestone grassland, traditional species-rich hay meadows and pastures, ancient woodlands, wood pasture and parkland and wet grassland, which support populations of waders such as Lapwing, Snipe and Curlew, as well as the specialist woodland birds, Pied Flycatcher and Willow Tit, and grassland species including Grey Partridge and Brown Hare.



Their historical and archaeological heritage is also rich with the ancient field systems of ridge and furrow apparent in many fields, and burial mounds and medieval deer parks features of the area too. The landscape is strongly characterised by prominent hills and valleys and the River Dove wends its way to the east.

As a group, the farmers have high ambitions undertaking landscape and joined up management to benefit a number of habitats and species, bringing together farmers, foresters, and other land managers to improve the local natural environment at a landscape scale as well as helping to encourage local communities and children to get involved. They

also run a knowledge exchange sessions and workshops to enable better understanding of the habitats and species found in the White Peak and their management needs.



Through the South West Peak Landscape Partnership Scheme Engaging Communities Project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, White Peak Farmers has received a grant to deliver 'Networks for Nature: Facilitating Collaborative Farming'.

This project will provide an opportunity for farmer facilitation groups in the South west Peak area, such as South West Peak Farmers, Peak District Estates, Dane Valley Headwaters and Churnet Valley Farmers to connect with one another, and other groups from all over the country, share experiences, discuss environmental goals and look to the future.

There are many overlaps with regard to conservation priorities between groups and together they offer an effective means to realise sustainable farming on a large-scale.

The plan is to create and broadcast a film about facilitation groups and the good work that farmers are doing to protect the environment, to promote people working together through facilitation groups, to highlight some of the benefits of being part of a group and what can be achieved through them.





In addition, a series of online webinars and workshops are being created and will be broadcast from March through to May this year. With the project culminating in a one-day outdoor networking event (coronavirus permitting) in early summer 2021 to crystallise thinking, ensure ongoing action and celebrate partnership working.

For more information go here: [whitepeakfarmers.org.uk](http://whitepeakfarmers.org.uk)

or email [info@whitepeakfarmers.org.uk](mailto:info@whitepeakfarmers.org.uk)

[Networks for Nature: Facilitating Collaborative Farming: South West Peak](#)

## End Project Monitoring Report

**Please tell us about the difference your project has made – to your community, the local area and the South West Peak area.**

*\* Please attach anything you think can be used as evidence of your project and its success e.g. print and publicity, photographs, summary of satisfaction survey etc.*

The Networks for Nature project has helped create greater awareness of facilitation groups, the important role of farmers and the changing needs of the environment. It has brought greater recognition of the work that farmers and land managers are doing to produce food and protect the environment. The project has also been able to demonstrate the importance of collaborative approaches and of people working together. It has done this both at a local level (within the SWP) for the facilitation groups in the area and on a wider area basis, for the facilitation network and farm-environment community. The project has also been able to shine a light on the Peak District, the challenges of upland farming and the important work that is being carried out by farmers and land managers to manage land for multiple gains (food, wildlife and climate).

A package of farm and environment-related information has been put together that can be accessed at anytime by anyone. A film celebrates the achievements of facilitation groups and inspires others to get involved.

### **The film**

Through the project we have created a film about facilitation groups in which members from South West Peak Farmers and White Peak Farmers talk about their involvement with facilitation groups and what they get from it. The facilitators of both groups are also interviewed.

This has enabled the groups to have greater recognition and also for the groups and individuals to share their experiences and celebrate their roles as members of the facilitation groups. It has also brought about better connections between the groups and improved understanding of what is taking place in the area.

The film involved eleven farmers from the two groups, six of whom are located in the South West Peak and two facilitators. Filming took place in five locations (Lower Grounds Farm, Stanton Pastures SSSI, Hurdlow Farm, Manor Farm and Onecote Grange Farm – the latter three in the South West Peak).

Unfortunately, due to Covid it was not possible to film group activities easily or bring the two groups together for filming.

Two versions of the film have been created – one of 2 minutes' length for use on social media and a longer 10-minute version. These are available to watch on YouTube.

### **The webinars**

Initial consultations with facilitation groups were carried out through conversations with some groups, email requests and an online survey to help put together a programme that would be most relevant to facilitation groups and their members and which could be most accessible to people, particularly farmers.

The Facilitation Fund Manager, Brian McDonald was also engaged with the project and regular meetings were held to discuss the format of the events, their content and identify contributors, as well as the best ways to promote each event.

Bringing all of the information together from the consultation enabled an exciting programme to be developed and delivered online using the Zoom platform, which was considered by the majority of those we consulted with to be the easiest and most user-friendly provider.

As a result of this work, we were able to put together an informative programme and offer a stimulating package by attracting a variety of different presenters, speakers and panellists, including practitioners, academics and other experts in their fields, to deliver the latest thinking, policies and information about each topic.

The presenters represented a range of organisations including 7 facilitation groups, Natural England, Defra, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), Environment Agency, National Farmers Union, The Rivers Trust, Woodland Carbon Code (Forestry Commission), Farm Carbon Calculator, Peak District National Park Authority, Knepp Estate, Chatham House, Sustainable Food Trust and the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission.

In the final webinar the Chair of Natural England, Tony Juniper, also provided an introduction to the event.

The project successfully delivered 11 hours of webinars over seven sessions, which covered topics relevant to farming, the environment and facilitation groups. The webinars typically involved the contributors providing a presentation or commentary. Questions were encouraged from the audience either during the webinar or in advance to make the sessions more interactive and to stimulate discussions online.

The 7 webinars were:

- Better Together: How Facilitation Groups are Transforming Nature Recovery
- Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM) explained
- Green Finance: Unlocking its potential for Nature's Recovery
- Rewarding Land Use Change: Payments for Carbon, Soils and Biodiversity
- Restoring Nature Depleted Britain: The Critical Role of Farming
- Sustainable Food in Harmony with Nature: How Do We Meet the Challenge?
- Building Our Facilitation Network: Collaboration for a Greener Future

The webinars provided a wealth of information and in particular case studies of facilitation groups and evidence of the impact that facilitation groups are having. The first webinar in particular demonstrated the positive difference facilitation groups are making and how collaboration and people coming together is leading to joined up community action and better outcomes for the environment and for people.

Information from Defra about the development of the new Environmental Land Management scheme and the Test and Trials was given by leads of the Defra teams. This was an important theme to look at, as farming and farm subsidies are radically set to change over the next few years. Many Test and Trials are also being delivered through facilitation groups and, again, highlighted their importance.

In the third and fourth webinars, an introduction to private investment was provided as well as alternative or additional payments to farmers and land managers to support environmentally beneficial farming and which could also be accessed by groups or organisations to deliver conservation projects. These included carbon credits, biodiversity net gain, private funding e.g. through water companies, which could incentivise tree planting, reduction in use of fertilisers and which could help mitigate the impacts of development.

In the fifth webinar, the contrasting landscapes and challenges of the Peak District's uplands and the South East lowlands were discussed and demonstrated just how essential farming and farmers are in reversing biodiversity losses and how collaboration can further these aims.

In the penultimate webinar, there was a focus on food and farming and how farming practices and what we consume may need to change in order for the UK to meet biodiversity and climate change targets and how this could be achieved.

The final webinar was held as a question and answer session looking at how facilitation groups, collaboration, farm advice can develop and be better supported and how a facilitation network could be progressed.

Final monitoring figures:

- A total of 23 different presenters contributed to the webinars from 14 organisations, giving their time as in-kind contributions to the project.
- A total of 538 people were contacted, or signed up to receive information about the webinars.
- The events were promoted via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn as well as through the facilitation groups and organisational contacts (Natural England, South West Peak, Defra, RSPB etc).
- The Eventbrite booking pages were viewed 5896 times, 1251 tickets were booked and 833 people attended the webinars.
- The seven webinar recordings have collectively been viewed on YouTube 969 times since being uploaded and this figure continues to increase.

This far exceeds our original target to reach out to 180 people through the project.

The audience consisted of a mix of people with farmers/land managers participating along with conservation organisations (e.g. RSPB, Butterfly Conservation, Nature

Friendly Farming Network), independent consultants, farming organisations (e.g. NFU), Defra, Natural England and Catchment Sensitive farming officers and universities (Gloucester, Edge Hill and the Royal Agricultural University). The audience was largely from England, but attendees also came from Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland and even further afield, from Canada and India, also joining, as they were interested in the concept of facilitation groups and collaborative approaches. This demonstrates the influence of the webinars and ability to have a strong impact both locally and in the UK, but also have an international reach.

Feedback has largely been positive and has been given at the end of the webinars in the online chat, sent in emails following the events and gathered from an end of project survey.

### **Promotion**

As already mentioned, the events were promoted via social media. This led to the events reaching a wider audience. On the White Peak Farmers' Facebook page (which was only set up in April 2021 for the project), the events were shared 27 times and there were 50 likes. On Twitter the events were retweeted a total of 184 times received 180 likes.

### **Event in the South West Peak**

An event between White Peak Farmers and South West Peak Farmers was held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at Warslow Village Hall. This was attended by 6 members from the SWP group and 12 members from the WPF group. The SWP group facilitators were also invited and a request to share the event with their group was sent. The event provided a summary of the project to members of both groups, background to the project and what had been achieved. The films were also shown and were received really well – an applause at the end of the films was a really good seal of approval. Group members commented that the film was 'professional', 'did its job' and 'the passion for, and emphasis on, working together, came through'.

There was a great atmosphere and relaxed environment, which was intended to bring people together. The event remained Covid-safe, with some attendees wearing masks and plenty of space in the hall and hand gel available.

The films will now be promoted more widely and used in the future at shows/events and on social media (it has so far been viewed 15 times on YouTube).

### **Project outcomes**

The project has had a number of benefits some of which were anticipated but many which have perhaps gone beyond our initial expectations. The project has:

Created large interest from a variety of different people and organisations in facilitation groups and collaboration as an approach to delivering environmental goals and has significantly raised the profile of facilitation groups both regionally and nationally.

Generated significant discussion between people, often from different backgrounds and with different perspectives about how we can collectively overcome some of the challenges that we face.

Led to an acknowledgement that collaboration and the facilitation group model needs to be embedded in future environmental schemes and needs long term funding. The phrase 'Facilitation groups for life' was coined!  
Has influenced Defra and Natural England's development of ELM (the Facilitation Fund Manager at Natural England has been seconded to Defra to work on development of Landscape Recovery).  
The facilitation group network has been significantly strengthened as a result of the project and there are improved connections between groups.  
Generated a desire from those involved to continue with webinars or similar relevant to facilitation groups to build the network further.  
Created a list of ideas and proposals to take forward to continue developing the facilitation network.  
Put groups in a better position to continue beyond their existing funding streams through providing information on alternative sources of income and through influencing the design of ELM.  
Influenced others to set up new groups or get involved in their local group.

All of this means that farmer facilitation groups in the South West Peak and surrounding areas, as well as national groups, are in a stronger position to continue their work and to build on their partnerships.

#### **End of project survey findings**

The feedback we have received has been hugely positive. A survey was sent out to participants to gauge their experience of the webinars. The majority (93 %) found the series useful, with the same number gaining a better understanding of groups and more likely to get involved with groups.

All respondents would like to see ways to strengthen collaboration and the facilitation network with long term funding, training for facilitators and a farm advice network considered to be the top three ways of achieving this.

Respondents found the webinars to be informative and stimulating topics and positive and inspiring to hear from different groups.

Please see the supplementary document "Post webinar survey".

**How many people did your project benefit?**

851

**What was/were your target group/groups?**

Farmers, facilitation groups,  
environmental stakeholders



**Please explain how you have ensured you have fulfilled your obligations as detailed in the Terms and Conditions you agreed to?**

Please check your T's and C's document and advise how you have addressed each point. Please also submit appropriate evidence where you can

**Use of the grant**

The grant has been used to produce a short film – two edits have been produced – one of ca. 2 minutes for use on social media and a longer version of ca. 10 minutes.

A change to the initial application was agreed due to the pandemic which precluded large gatherings from taking place for several months. Ongoing uncertainty over the situation made it difficult to plan the conference with any certainty. A request to take the conference online and run a series of webinars was accepted by the SWPLPS in November 2020.

All of the webinars and the film are available on YouTube.

An event in the SWP took place to show the films and talk about the project, collaboration and the success of the webinars.

**Information & Monitoring**

Progress reports have been provided to SWPLPS (c/o Support Staffordshire) in December 2020 and February, March, May and July 2021, which outline what was achieved during those periods. Data have been collected to monitor the success of the project and information is provided in this final report and associated evidence documents.

This includes:

Initial consultation results.

Collation and reporting of data with respect to those that have participated in the project including the presenters and webinar participants.

Collation of data relating to promotional activities.

Collation of feedback from participants and presenters via direct email, from the Zoom chat facility and letter from Brian McDonald.

Results of the end of project survey.

An assessment of the project outcomes.

Photographic and digital evidence of the project activities.

**Grant payment**

The grant is being claimed via a single claim at the end of the project. All information and evidence, including in-kind contributions has been provided.

**Publicity and promotion**

All promotional information has included the required logos and acknowledgements as specified in the terms and conditions. The film includes the SWP and NHLF logos; all the webinars fully acknowledged the funders in the webinar content and in the adverts for the events.

The webinars were promoted via a range of ways, including social media, but also through the SWPLPS website, Support Staffordshire website and emails/newsletters.

Links to the webinar recordings have also been sent out using the mailing list and all attendees/participants.

Posts promoting the project and links to the materials generated from the project can be found here:

White Peak Farmers Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/WhitePeakFarmers>

Twitter: @Whitepeakfarmer

YouTube:

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=white+peak+farmers](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=white+peak+farmers)

#### **Insurances**

The project is covered under the project lead's professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

#### **Safeguarding**

The project has not been working with children or vulnerable adults.

#### **Data protection**

Participants have agreed to be part of the project and to be sent information about the webinars. All data, which largely consists of email addresses, has been safely stored and will be deleted following the final claim and completion of the project.

**Has your organisation attracted any other funding since confirmation of this grant?**

<b>Funder</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>This Project</b>	<b>Other Activity</b>
Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund	£37500	01/01/2021	x	x
	£			
	£			

**Are there any other outcomes you have witnessed as a result of the grant from SWP? For example, more volunteers, improved policies, linking with new groups.**

Linking with other facilitation groups; more and improved connections with other organisations and influencing Defra thinking with respect to collaboration/Environmental Land Management scheme.