

PARTICIPATION OF FARMERS AND OTHER ACTORS ON DARTMOOR

The Dartmoor Learning Area (LA) and the farmers who live and work within its boundary have a well-defined identity. Part of that identity is a social cohesion that demonstrates itself by a range of social networks, some with their origins over 50 years ago. Put simply Dartmoor farmers meet regularly. With a culture of meetings and an array of social events in place and there was little need to create new networks to deliver the ambitions of HNV-LINK. In fact the existing communication networks may well have significantly contributed to the evolution of the culture of innovation that led to the area being selected as a LA.

The decision was taken at the start of the HNV-LINK initiative to use the existing and established means of communication. At the very beginning of the initiative the proposals were presented to a meeting of the local stakeholders before the project began.



Dartmoor farmers attending an annual National Park event to learn more about a specific issue, in this case archaeology on a common.

The dominance of common land on the moorland is an important factor in the numerous social networks and their associated communication. Each common usually has an association which oversees the management of the common, and some commons also have an additional and separate association linked to their agri-environment agreement. The Dartmoor wide governance of the common land is provided by the Commoners' Council. All three strands of governance include regular meetings and other forms of communication.

Away from the moorland the small to medium-sized family run farms have often been owned or tenanted by the same family for many generations. Bonds form between families and this engenders a close community (with exceptions) where information flows relatively freely. The "Dartmoor grapevine" is very effective.



The National Park Authority (DNPA) provides further opportunities for communication with and between farmers. The DNPA holds an annual farmers meeting with guest speakers and discussions of selected themes in addition to the numerous meetings held to address specific issues. Farming matters appear in their various magazines and newsletters including those provided by the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project that is received by all the 600 or so farms within the LA. The Dartmoor Hill Farm Discussion Group still meets regularly having been established by the then MAFF in the late 1950's and attracts an audience of over 50 farmers.

Many of the innovations identified within the HNV-LINK work attract the attention of local statutory agencies and central government. During the past 18 months senior staff from Defra, including the Secretary of State (23rd August 2017), have visited Dartmoor to learn more of specific innovations, especially Dartmoor Farming Futures. These opportunities are used to promote the innovations and farmers with experience of the innovation are expected to provide the main presentations and provide information on the practical aspects of the innovation.

The HNV-LINK project was promoted at various meetings in the autumn of 2016 until March 2017. A two day event *Locally led agri-environment schemes - from a farmer's perspective* was held in March 2017 at which farmers from Dartmoor and the Irish LA (The Burren) presented the various innovations and the ambitions of the HNV-LINK project to an audience of 70 including government staff, NGOs, agencies and other farmers. Since then HNV-LINK updates have continued to be provided at many other local meetings.



Part of the audience on 13th March; a mix of farmers, government agencies and NGOs.

Workshops specifically for farmers were held on the 31 May 2017 and the 2 February 2018. Visits from farmers from other parts of the UK and from Ireland have been hosted by local farmers who have provided demonstrations of firefighting equipment and techniques and discussed issues ranging from outcome focused delivery to TB Regulations.





Farmers from the Blackstairs Mountains in Ireland hear from Dartmoor farmers about innovative techniques for fighting fires.

Selected activities	Date
Promotion of HNV LINK to local farmers and other stakeholders	Oct 2016-March 2017
Conference on farmer led delivery	13 & 14 March 2017
Meetings with selected farmers	31 May/1 st June 2017
Workshop/visit from Irish farmers	13 July 2017
Innovation seminar for local farmers	1 August 2017
Meeting with Defra officials	26 th January 2018
Workshop with farmers and stakeholders	2 February 2018
Proposed visit from Welsh farmers	11 -13 July 2018



Dartmoor farmers commenting on the selection of innovations.

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