



Nectarworks



Smallholder network meetings Feedback



Issues, problems and needs:

Meadow/grassland/pasture diversity

- The majority of smallholders have upland hay meadows and/or grassland areas and would like advice on hay meadow management
- Many would like advice on how to diversify meadows; for example how to go about restoration - harvesting and spreading
- Some smallholders have areas that they would like to add wildflower seed to, so would like advice on creating wildflower meadows
- A number of smallholdings are on areas that are very steep which is difficult to manage
- Many smallholders have areas of pasture and would like to know more about management and increasing botanical diversity
- A few smallholders would like advice on managing land for breeding waders

Woodland diversity

- A number of smallholders would like advice about woodland creation and management
- Many smallholders would like advice about woodland management for wildlife, for example coppicing and making bird boxes
- A number of smallholders would like to be able to plant trees – there are financial constraints

Contractors and farmers

- It was pointed out that during hay time the work on smallholders land is very much dictated by contractors, i.e. cutting too early or cutting too late
- Many smallholders explained that they need someone to cut, turn, make hay and bale but either don't have the equipment or can't get a contractor
- The need for helpful, supportive farmers and contractors who are willing to work with smallholders was discussed amongst the groups

Machinery

- It was pointed out that smallholders often do not have access to suitable machinery for hay timing etc
- A number of smallholders are interested in developing a network to share machinery
- A number of smallholders need to use specialist machinery, i.e. chainsaws, but do not have access to training or equipment

Relationships/networking

- The need to build relationships with neighbours was pointed out by many and the importance of developing a link with the farming community was discussed
- Many smallholders were keen to improve networking amongst smallholders
- A number of smallholders explained a need for volunteers to help and wanted to find a way of going about this

Maintenance

- A number of smallholders commented on an overall problem with keeping land in the best shape, i.e. lack of skilled labour, lack of livestock and machinery, cost of fencing etc
- A number of smallholders mentioned difficulties with dry-stone wall maintenance

Livestock

- Meadows need livestock grazing (sheep and/or cattle) and some smallholders don't own their own livestock
- There was general consensus amongst smallholders that sharing livestock would be a good idea
- A few smallholders were asking about where to give wool and wool collection, and commented on the low prices that wool now sells for
- Some smallholders referred to low lamb/beef/meat prices, with a need for fairer competitive prices
- A number of smallholders would like advice on sheep farming, animal health and wellbeing
- Some smallholders would like advice on keeping cows and animal husbandry
- A few smallholders would like advice on looking after hens

Abattoirs and slaughtering

- A few smallholders have pointed out that there is a need for a small local abattoir
- A few smallholders would like advice on slaughtering hens

Drainage and wetness

- There was a general discussion amongst the majority about problems with drainage and many would like to find ways to improve this
- It was pointed out by many that the increase in wetness and lack of good drainage has caused an encroachment of rushes
- A few smallholders have found that an increase in wetness and lack of good drainage has caused an encroachment of meadowsweet

Riverbank erosion

- A few smallholdings on riverbanks have had problems with erosion and these smallholders would like to know how to deal with this problem

Roadside verge management

- A number of smallholders have reported that some flower-rich roadside verges are cut too soon in the year

Scything

- Many smallholders were keen to learn to scythe
- A group of smallholders were interested in developing a scything ring (i.e. going round scything different smallholdings)

Identification of wildflowers and pollinators

- A number of smallholders were interested in learning how to identify wildflowers
- A number of smallholders were interested in learning how to identify bumblebees

Gardens

- A number of smallholders with gardens were keen to get advice about which nectar-rich plants to plant in North Pennines gardens
- It was pointed out that communal manure would be a good idea
- A few smallholders would like advice about creating market gardens

Vegetable gardening

- A few smallholders would like to know how to set up a vegetable business
- It was pointed out that there is a need for poly-tunnels in the North Pennines colder climate, but the planning process is complicated
- A number of smallholders would like advice about the technical information required to grow and sell own produce, i.e. is there a water standard needed for watering crops? what is necessary to sell at the gate?
- A number of smallholders would like further opportunities for selling produce

Honey bees

- A number of smallholders keep bees or would like to keep bees and would appreciate more advice

Weed/pest control

- The problem of rabbits and erosion was discussed; what is the best way of controlling them?
- The rising problem of controlling ragwort was commented on; what is the best way of controlling it?
- A number of smallholders mentioned creeping thistles as a problem; what is the best way of controlling these?
- A few smallholders pointed out a creeping buttercup problem; what is the best way of controlling these?

HLS/DEFRA

- Some smallholdings are too small to go into HLS so all land management must be financed by the smallholder
- There is the potential for joint HLS agreements if smallholders could group together
- It was pointed out by many smallholders that the paperwork/legislation/red tape is very confusing and frustrating, what do you pay attention too?

General advice

- Some smallholders commented on the need for guidance from a consultant who could give advice about all round land management necessary on a smallholding
- A number of smallholders commented on the need for advice about planning – building, renewable resources, where to go for information, what permissions are needed

Next steps:

*****PLEASE NOTE*** Smallholder network development; website up and running but work in progress. This website is thanks to a smallholder, Richard Thompson, who attended the smallholder meeting in Allendale. We would like to thank Richard for instigating this website: www.northpenninessmallholders.co.uk**

- Please do sign up on the website
- A forum is up and running, please post ideas, problems, solutions etc
- Please post ideas about what you would like on the website as it is being worked on by Richard

Potential workshops are listed below in boxes labelled A – H. Please use the attached response form to vote for the ones you would find most useful

Meadow/grassland/pasture diversity

A. The AONB could help smallholders to organise an on-farm training workshop on pasture management for wildlife

B. The AONB could help smallholders to organise an on-farm training workshop on meadow management for wildlife

- In the Allen Valleys area, there is potentially a new AONB project called 'Allen Valleys Landscape Partnership' (AVLP), if this project receives funding in April 2014, there is the potential for green hay addition as part of an upland hay meadow restoration process through Higher Level Stewardship (HLS):
 - However, you would need to be in HLS and have a meadow in HK7
 - There is the potential for Natural England to find funds to add capital works (GS) into your agreement
 - **If you have such as meadow in your agreement, please get in contact with Ruth: ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk or Andy Lees: andy@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- If the Allen Valleys Landscape Partnership (AVLP) project receives funding in April 2014, there is the potential for the RSPB to be working on wading birds in the Allendale (plus some sites in other areas of the North Pennines)

Woodland diversity

C. The AONB could help smallholders to organise an on-farm training workshop on woodland creation and management

- If the Allen Valleys Landscape Partnership (AVLP) project receives funding in April 2014, there is the potential for smallholders to receive woodland management support in terms of:
 - Staff time
 - Woodland management plans
 - Training such as horse logging
 - Help with Forestry Commission Grants
 - **If interested email Andy Lees: andy@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- If the Allen Valleys Landscape Partnership (AVLP) project receives funding in April 2014, there is the potential for support for woodland creation:
 - Limited funds may be available for tree planting, including open-grown trees
 - Planting and restoration of hedgerows, i.e. coppicing, fencing, hedgerow trees
 - The AVLP project could cover 50% of costs, including labour
 - **If interested email Andy Lees: andy@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- If you are in other areas of the North Pennines the best body to contact is the Forestry Commission: northengland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Contractors and farmers/Machinery

- The AONB would be keen to help smallholders develop a 'practical working group', who could scythe or use other specialist skills and machinery.
- **This would need the assistance of people who are keen to do this – if interested please use the attached response form and email or post to Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**

- The AONB would be keen to help smallholders in the development of a machinery ring, or a database of equipment to share (however, there is a problem with security and theft so this needs thinking about).
- **This would need the assistance of people who are keen to do this – if interested please use the attached response form and email or post to Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**

- It is possible that help to get funding could be received from a body such as Groundwork North East if a group of keen people were established to plan and organise a project bid. Groundwork North East could assist with training in particular areas too, i.e. chainsaws, strimmers and ground maintenance with an established group of people

Livestock

- The AONB would be keen to help smallholders develop a 'Flexigraze' type of system (sharing livestock or buying livestock and sharing)
- **This would need the assistance of people who are keen to do this - if you are interested, we would like to arrange a specific meeting about this soon, please use the attached response form and email or post to Ruth; ruth@northpennineaonb.org.uk**

D. The AONB could help smallholders to organise a workshop/talk on sheep farming, animal health and wellbeing

E. The AONB could help smallholders to organise a workshop/talk on keeping cows, animal husbandry

- Bulk purchasing – this should happen naturally if the website is used, or the machinery ring, practical working group or 'flexigraze' system is started and smallholders are in contact with one another

Abattoirs and slaughtering

- The AONB could help smallholders to organise a workshop/talk on slaughtering hens if there is sufficient demand
- Coordinating a lobby for a small local Abattoir could start once a smallholder network is established. The website could help with this

Drainage and wetness

F. The AONB could help smallholders to organise a workshop/talk on rush control and drainage

Riverbank erosion

- If the Allen Valleys Landscape Partnership (AVLP) project receives funding in April 2014, there is the potential for erosion issues and bank management to be looked at
 - **In addition, if there is demand, a workshop on river-bank erosion control could be organised**
 - **If interested email Andy Lees: andy@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- If in other areas of the North Pennines then the best body to contact is the Rivers Trusts:
 - Tyne Rivers Trust – Susan Mackirdy: s.mackirdy@tynerivertrust.org.uk
 - Wear Rivers Trust – Steve Hudson: steve.hudson@wera-rivers-trust.org.uk
 - Tees Rivers Trust – Ben Lamb: benlamb@teesriversturst.org

Roadside verge management

- As part of the Nectarworks project, Ruth is going to be investigating management of roadside verges in the North Pennines

- **If there is a roadside verge that you particularly care about please contact Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**

Scything

- The AONB would be keen to help smallholders develop a 'practical scything group', who could scythe or use other specialist skills or machinery.
- **This would need the assistance of people who are keen to do this – if interested please use the attached response form and email or post to Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**

- The AONB is running a scything course on – **Saturday 26th July – Sunday 27th July**
 - **Please book now so we can add an extra leader if the course fills up**
 - **If interested and to book, email Mandy; mandy@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**

Identification of wildflowers and pollinators

- The AONB is running beginners wildflower courses as part of the Wildwatch project on **Thursday 5th June**, **Thursday 12th June** and **Thursday 19th June**
 - **If interested email Fiona; fiona@northpenninesaonb.org.uk and booking will start in January**

- If there is more specific interest, the AONB could help smallholders to organise on-farm wildflower training
 - **If interested please use the attached response form and email or post to Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**

- If you would like to volunteer to do botanical surveys as part of the Nectarworks project, the training is on **Tuesday 3rd June** for beginners and **Tuesday 17th June** for survey training
 - **If interested email Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- If you would like to volunteer to do bumblebee surveys in local residents gardens, then the AONB is running one-day bumblebee courses as part of the Nectarworks project on **Friday 16th June** and **Saturday 17th June**
 - **If interested email Mandy; mandy@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**

- If there is more specific interest, the AONB could help smallholders to organise on-farm training on bumblebee identification and gardening for bumblebees
 - **If interested please use the attached response form and email or post to Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**

Gardens

- The AONB is running a gardening for Bumblebees day on **Saturday 14th June**
 - **If interested contact Mandy; mandy@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- The AONB is creating an advice sheet for nectar-rich plants for North Pennines gardens
 - **If interested email Mandy; mandy@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- The AONB will be undertaking bumblebee surveys in residents gardens
 - **If interested email Mandy; mandy@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- If you would like more information, visit the Bumblebee Conservation Trust website for worksheets about creating wildflower areas for bees:
<http://bumblebeeconservation.org>

Vegetable gardens

G. The AONB could help smallholders to organise a workshop/talk about setting up a vegetable business/market garden and selling produce

- Through the establishment of a smallholder network, opportunities for selling should be become easier, e.g. through the website

Honey bees

- Join beekeeping groups:
 - Cumbria Beekeepers; www.cumbriabeekeepers.co.uk
 - Durham Beekeepers; www.bbka.org.uk/local/durham
 - Hexham Beekeepers; www.bbka.org.uk/local/hexham
 - Weardale Beekeepers; www.weardalebees.atwebpages.com
 - Allendale Beekeepers

Weed control

H. The AONB could help smallholders to organise a workshop/talk about weed/pest control, i.e. rabbits, ragwort, thistles and creeping buttercup

HLS/DEFRA

- Through the establishment of a smallholder network, opportunities for smallholders joining together for an HLS agreement could be an option
- Through the establishment of a smallholder network, people could share advice and experience about red tape, paperwork and legislation, i.e. through the website forum and posting information

General advice

- The AONB has funding for approximately two workshops per year for the next three years to help smallholders to organise workshops – these could be workshops run on smallholdings with the assistance of local farmers and smallholders. Workshops could be run on issues such as management of pastures, meadows, woodlands, keeping livestock and weed control
 - **Please use the attached response form to vote for the workshops you would find most useful and email or post to Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- Please use the website to post information, knowledge and advice and answer general queries posted by other smallholders. There is already a wealth of information, knowledge and experience out there, ready to be shared
 - **And if you feel you could help run workshops on your smallholding or have the expertise to run a workshop, please let us know on the attached response form and email or post to Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**
- An audit of skills and expertise within the community of North Pennines smallholders would be useful. The AONB could facilitate this process
 - **Please indicate on the attached response form if you would be interested in participating in this and email or post to Ruth; ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk**

Email response form to Ruth Starr-Kedde:

ruth@northpenninesaonb.org.uk

Or post response form to Ruth Starr-Kedde at:

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Other Nectarworks contacts:

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