Experiences from the Land Management Initiatives

Working for people and places in rural England
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* Both of these are located in floodplains, addressing water and wetland issues.
Introduction

The LMIs were set up by the Countryside Agency to explore how England’s land management and farming systems can respond to the changing demands on agriculture in ways that will maintain a healthy, attractive environment and contribute to thriving rural economies and communities.

When the Land Management Initiatives (LMIs) were set up in 1999, prior to the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001, UK agriculture was already experiencing difficulties. Despite receiving large amounts of subsidy, farm incomes and employment were falling. The trend towards more intensive land management had led to a decline in many of the benefits that can be provided by agriculture.

Farming has the potential to contribute to the management and maintenance of:

- Natural resources of soil, water and air;
- Landscapes rich in local character and distinctiveness;
- Thriving rural communities and economies;
- Opportunities for public enjoyment through outdoor recreation and visual appreciation;
- A rich resource of historic and archaeological features; and
- Important semi-natural habitats and dependent wildlife.

The LMIs worked with farmers, local communities and other interested organisations, to investigate the problems faced by land managers. The aim was to research and demonstrate innovative practical solutions that would maintain viable farm businesses, while providing a wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits.

The aims of each LMI were defined locally, in partnership with stakeholders, and were guided by the objectives of the national programme. A national advisory group helped to guide the development of the overall programme.
The LMI Programme

The LMIs sought to demonstrate new approaches in arable, lowland pastoral, upland and urban fringe areas. They were:

**Arable**
- Humberhead Levels LMI (HHLLMI/Value in Wetness)*
- Norfolk Arable LMI (NALMI)

**Lowland pastoral**
- High Weald LMI (HWLMI)
- Severn-Vyrnwy LMI (SVLMI/Severn-Vyrnwy Project)*
- South West (SWLMI)

**Upland**
- North Yorkshire Moors Upland LMI (NYM LMI/Farm and Rural Community Scheme)
- Northumberland National Park LMI (NNPLMI)
- Peak District National Park LMI (PDLMI)

**Urban fringe**
- Great North Forest LMI (GNFLMI/North East Land Links)

* Both of these were located in floodplains, addressing water and wetland issues.
The LMIs contributed many ideas to the Countryside Agency and the national advisory group on how to improve existing policies and delivery mechanisms. Lessons drawn from all the LMIs helped the Countryside Agency formulate advice to Government and to others during a time of radical policy change. The Countryside Agency hopes that experience resulting from the LMI programme will continue to contribute to the evolution of more effective rural policy.

The most influential funding support for land management, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), is about to change and this is likely to see a radical reshaping of farming. Farmers will no longer receive subsidy payments according to how much they produce, but at a national level there will be an increase in public funding for environmental services from farming. It is hoped that a different industry will emerge as a result of these changes, one that will respond more to market opportunities and embrace its role as custodian of the landscape.

For centuries farming has shaped the English countryside. In addition to producing food and other raw materials, it has created much loved landscapes and has been an integral part of rural communities and economies.
The Humberhead Levels Land Management Initiative

The Humberhead Levels Land Management Initiative (known locally as ‘Value in Wetness’) has investigated and tested new economically viable and environmentally sensitive approaches to water and land management, with a view to contributing to the shape of future long-term international, national and regional agri-environment and wider rural development policies.

The area and the issues

The Humberhead Levels lie across parts of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, encompassing the flat, highly productive agricultural landscape surrounding the head of the Humber Estuary. Much of the area is near or below sea level and has many historic, cultural, wildlife, archaeological and palaeoenvironmental resources of international importance.

The issues affecting the area and its agriculture included:

- the lasting social and economic problems caused by the demise of the coal industry; and
- particular vulnerability to the impacts of erratic weather conditions, flooding, water shortages and, potentially, climate change.
What did the LMI do?

To address the problems and opportunities connected with the future of water and land management in the Levels, the LMI worked closely with farmers and land managers, their representatives, government bodies, local authorities and voluntary groups, to:

- define a set of integrated objectives for sustainable water and land management in arable areas;
- establish practical methods of delivering integrated objectives through small-scale demonstrations;
- show that appropriate alternative water management could deliver benefits of high value;
- demonstrate practical ways in which the EU Water Frameworks Directive can be implemented;
- make recommendations, based on research, concerning changes to policies to assist with implementing the desired integrated objectives; and
- undertake analysis of the potential for Drainage Boards to have a broader-based role in water management.

Researching water and land management in the Humberhead Levels

Starting from a low level of available information, the LMI carried out a series of research projects to inform future integrated objectives for water and land management. Research covered such diverse topics as: water and soil distribution data; new and novel crops; impacts of rewetting on preservation of archaeological resources; sustainable tourism; visualisation of future landscapes, and assessments of the physical and economic practicalities of delivering multiple benefits from farming.

The LMI maintained a regular flow of information to statutory bodies and commercial agricultural, community and conservation interests, through direct meetings, a series of conferences and periodic publication of the Value in Wetness newspaper ‘On the Level’.

Generating new ideas for improved policies

The LMI contributed to advice to central government and international, national and regional decision makers on:

- defining integrated objectives for water and land management in predominantly arable areas;
- better integration of water management with other land management practices, through “Positive Water Management” advice;
- the wider potential benefits of changed water management, for example, using washlands for flood management; and
- design of the new Environmental Stewardship scheme, to address integrated environmental objectives and new economic opportunities for the area such as new and novel crops and sustainable outdoor leisure and tourism.
Contributing to regional activity and local identity

The LMI contributed to the delivery of the Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food within Yorkshire and The Humber through the “Areas4Change” initiative and by piloting the Rural Advisor Information Hub.

The LMI supported the production of two colour publications, to raise awareness and promote enjoyment of the area’s history, character and resources, Enjoying the Humberhead Levels and Saving Sutton Common. The range of work undertaken by the LMI, particularly the information resource gathered throughout its lifetime, has already contributed significantly to a sense of shared identity for the area, a vital part of the process to encourage positive integrated management of the Levels’ water and land resources.

The Humberhead Levels and Moors Partnership has been formed to carry forward the spirit of the LMI work. The work of the partnership will link with the activity surrounding the restoration, development and promotion of Thorne and Hatfield Moors.

Conclusions and recommendations

There is potential to integrate water and land management for the social, economic and environmental benefit of the area. These issues cannot be tackled on a single holding or parish basis. In an area so strongly influenced by the presence and management of water, ensuring that the Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) can embrace change is essential to any future success.

To meet these challenges will require Government support and guidance, backed up with training and resources so that IDBs develop the capacity to make the most of having a wider role in the delivery of national and international policy objectives for sustainability, food production, water management and biodiversity.

Who was involved?

The LMI was managed by a partnership of organisations: English Nature, Grantham Brundell and Farran (Consulting Drainage Engineers), English Heritage and the Countryside Agency, with the support of the Environment Agency, Country Land and Business Association, National Farmers Union and the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire Wildlife Trusts.

Many others contributed extensively to the success of the LMI, including Hull, Exeter, East Anglia and Sheffield Hallam Universities, Royal Holloway Institute for Environmental Research, The Carstairs Countryside Trust, North Doncaster Rural Trust and the Humberhead Levels Green Tourism Forum.

Further reading

The following reports and others on all aspects of Humberhead Levels LMI’s work are available in electronic format from the Land Management Initiatives online database, which can be accessed via www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi


The books, Enjoying the Humberhead Levels and Saving Sutton Common are available from Halsgrove Publishing (www.halsgrove.com).

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Norfolk Arable Land Management Initiative

The Norfolk Arable Land Management Initiative (NALMI) has worked in partnership with farmers and local people in thirteen parishes in mid Norfolk, to develop ways of improving the economic, environmental and social fabric of this rural area and to provide ideas for better rural policy.

Hedges and hedgerow trees are important features of mid Norfolk’s arable landscape.
The area and the issues

The Norfolk Arable LMI (NALMI) covered 14,500ha in thirteen parishes between the market towns of Swaffham, Watton and East Dereham in Norfolk. The landscape is characterised by large open arable fields often bounded by hedgerows with many mature hedgerow trees. Woodlands on the skyline are a feature and well-hedged small grass fields provide a valued contribution to the local landscape.

The main issues affecting the area and its agriculture included:

- significant reductions in farm income for arable and especially livestock farms;
- falling employment in farming;
- increasing workloads and levels of stress and isolation amongst farmers, resulting in the break down of traditional village networks;
- reduced biodiversity and crop diversity, continued erosion of landscape character, and water pollution on some farms; and
- climatic changes and increasing farm size, leading to soil damage in wet seasons.

What did the LMI do?

The NALMI worked closely with farmers and local people to develop a programme of research, trials, workshops and demonstration events.

The main areas of work carried out by the LMI included:

Developing a model for integrated whole farm planning

The NALMI produced 31 whole farm plans, covering over 12,000ha. Each plan covered all four areas of sustainability in depth, incorporated farmers’ own ideas and concluded with an action plan, which farmers are currently progressing. The majority of farmers have made changes to their business and land management practices as a consequence of the plans. This work emphasised the importance of whole farm planning in helping farmers find integrated and sustainable solutions.
Developing indicators for “sustainable land management”.

A set of 120 indicators of “sustainable land management” was drawn up, covering economic, social and environmental aspects of the farm business. The indicators were designed for use in intensive arable areas and in conjunction with a whole farm plan. Farmers contributed ideas towards the development of the indicators and assessed the sustainability of their own farms and lifestyles.

Investigating the role of social networks in sustainable land management

There is increasing evidence from around the world to suggest that farmers with well-developed social networks manage their land more sustainably than farmers who are socially isolated. The NALMI undertook a range of work to explore how improving social networks may assist the transition to more sustainable land management.

The NALMI found that social networks conferred many benefits to farming and the environment. Social networks assisted economic development by providing new ideas for farm diversification. Co-operation (for example machinery or labour sharing) was found to reduce fixed costs and increase farm income. Shooting and conservation groups encouraged a number of local farmers to learn more about habitat management. As a result these farmers invested a significant percentage of farm income in the environmental features on their farms. The NALMI also found that supportive networks helped people through periods of change, such as retirement from farming.

Identifying the decline in social networks

Farmers in the NALMI area reported that with reduced staff and increasing workloads, they had less time and energy to network with other farmers and local people than in the past, and a lack of trust in Government agencies had dissuaded many farmers from making proactive links with decision makers. Social networks had reduced significantly in the NALMI area over the previous 10 - 15 years.
Re-building social networks

The NALMI worked to rebuild social networks in a number of ways. Local people hosted “Thank you” events at which the community could thank farmers for countryside management. “Planning for Real” events in all thirteen parishes also helped to reconnect farmers with local people, encouraged discussion about land management and allowed local people to prioritise the aspects of the countryside they would like to see funded by a reformed Common Agricultural Policy. Breeding bird surveys carried out by volunteers also helped to rebuild the links between farmers and local people and provided farms with valuable data on conservation practice. The links created through this work helped to re-motivate farmers to invest in more sustainable farming practices.

Conclusions and recommendations

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from the work of the NALMI include:

- Facilitation is needed to help rebuild social networks in rural areas. These networks could help farmers move successfully to more sustainable systems of land management.
- Local people need to be more involved in efforts to determine what is valued from the countryside in their area. Facilitation is necessary in order to translate village aspirations into components of whole farm plans.
- More support should be given to farmers to carry out whole farm plans which cover economic, environmental, resource use and community issues, in order to find integrated and sustainable solutions.
- Farmers should be encouraged to plan ahead to tackle issues related to climate change.

Who was involved?

The work of NALMI was led by Project Officer, John Terry. It was steered by a Partners Group including representatives from The Countryside Agency, Environment Agency, The Arable Group (formerly Morley Research Centre), East of England Development Agency, Rural Development Service, Country Land and Business Association, National Farmer’s Union, Norfolk County Council, Breckland Council, Norfolk FWAG and the RSPB. A great deal of support was also kindly given by local farmers and local communities.

Further Reading

The following reports and others on all aspects of NALMI’s work are available in electronic format from the Land Management Initiatives online database, which can be accessed via www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi


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Lowland Pastoral

High Weald Land Management Initiative

The High Weald Land Management Initiative (LMI) was set up to find ways of maintaining and enhancing the environmental, social and economic fabric of the area. It was centred around four parishes in East Sussex within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a distinctive ancient landscape with a mosaic of small fields used primarily for livestock grazing.
The area and the issues

The High Weald AONB is of national importance for its landscape and its high environmental quality. Agriculture has traditionally been based around beef, sheep and dairy enterprises. Farms are generally small and predominantly owner occupied. Production tends to be poor due to the area’s landform and waterlogged soils, which have inhibited agricultural intensification and resulted in low farm incomes.

The main issues affecting the area and its agriculture included:

- a decrease in farm incomes and viability leading to increased sales and fragmentation of farms;
- a strong dependency on labour intensive agriculture to maintain landscape character and features; and
- high land prices driven up by in-migration and land increasingly used for amenity purposes.

What did the LMI do?

The High Weald LMI was set up to develop ways of delivering effective, integrated rural support, through research and demonstration, in order to maintain and enhance the environmental, economic and social fabric of the High Weald. A broad partnership of organisations and local representatives developed and agreed the aims and objectives of the LMI and produced an outline project framework.

The LMI began an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of research and demonstration between 2000 and 2001. However the loss of the Project Director at the end of 2001 resulted in activity being scaled back to focus on delivering a series of Integrated Farm Appraisals (IFA) and an evaluation of the IFA work.
Research and Demonstration (2000 - 2001)

The initial work programme was grouped around six themes. These were:

- **Agriculture and environment** - included promotional and facilitation events, which led to a number of farmers diversifying and utilising grant opportunities.
- **Farm diversification and business development** - included delivery of an Integrated Farm Advice programme, consumer and market research and development of organic, meat and tourism PEGs (Producer Evaluation Groups).
- **Skills and training** - included training events, workshops, research into communication methods for attracting farmers to such events and training for farm advisers.
- **Inward investment** - included production of a directory of local businesses and a directory of available grants (subsequently used by Government Office South East).
- **Social needs** - included ‘duty of care’ workshops that explored local perceptions and priorities.
- **Family farms and new entrants** - included research into land ownership change.

This work provided valuable lessons for policy development that contributed to the Countryside Agency’s consultation responses to Government. It also gave rise to changes on the ground through increased farm diversification and applications for environmental and rural development funding.
**Integrated Farm Appraisals Programme (2000 - 2003)**

The LMI’s main output has been the facilitation and evaluation of a series of Integrated Farm Appraisals (IFAs). This IFA model was designed to help farmers plan the sustainable management of their holdings, through the provision of clear and impartial advice that considered economic, environmental and social issues.

A three-year programme to deliver up to 25 IFAs per year was established. This was delivered through the Countryside Stewardship Special Project facility, funded by Defra and the Countryside Agency. Participating farmers contributed £200 towards the cost of the appraisals, which were carried out by local advisors of their choice.

A report was commissioned to evaluate the success of the appraisals in providing integrated, locally tailored advice that strengthened the farm business and provided economic, social and environmental benefits to the area. The report identified a number of barriers to the successful use of this approach such as:

- a lack of knowledge among advisers of local strategies and policy documents;
- a lack of understanding, among both farmers and advisers, of what truly integrated advice entails; and
- a mismatch between the objectives of the IFA project, the objectives of the recipients, and the skills and knowledge of the advisors.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

The main conclusions and recommendations from the work of the High Weald LMI include:

- There is a need for clearly expressed area-based objectives for land management, to ensure that public money achieves the greatest benefits.
- Rural development projects’ aims and objectives should be clearly communicated from the start to participants and expectations managed according to the capacity to deliver.
- Further training for farm business advisors is needed, if truly integrated advice is to be delivered.

**Who was involved?**

The High Weald LMI was run by Project Director David Stewart, with the support of Project Officer Diana Locke, between 2000 and the end of 2001. After this point work was overseen by Countryside Agency staff. The Countryside Agency, Wealden District Council and the High Weald AONB Unit were responsible for the management of the initiative. Work was steered by a local stakeholders group including representatives from National Farmers’ Union, Country Land and Business Association, Local Authorities and the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

**Further Reading**

The following reports and others on all aspects of High Weald LMI’s work are available in electronic format from the Land Management Initiatives online database, which can be accessed via www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi


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Severn Vyrnwy
Land Management Initiative

The Severn Vyrnwy Land Management Initiative (SVLMI) worked in partnership with the farming community to demonstrate how farming in the area could be supported to become more sustainable. A wide partnership representing farming, tourism, canal and wildlife interests contributed to the implementation of the SVLMI. The LMI identified effective methods of: influencing land management practices; demonstrating that good environmental stewardship is compatible with modern farming; conserving and enhancing existing natural and historic features; and developing business links between the farming community and the wider local community.

The Breidden Hills form a dramatic backdrop to the landscape of the SVLMI project area.
The area and the issues

The SVLMI project area covered 15,000ha in eleven parishes between Oswestry and Shrewsbury in the north Shropshire Marches. The project area is largely low-lying and wet in character incorporating the regularly inundated floodplain of the rivers Severn and Vyrnwy, and the Montgomery Canal. It is characterised by livestock and mixed farming on small and medium-sized family farms with land cover roughly half grassland and half arable.

The main issues affecting the area and its agriculture included:

- changing demands from the public and a dynamic economic environment;
- small farm size and the decline of farm incomes, particularly in the dairy sector;
- flood storage in the flood plain in the context of down-stream flooding and climate change;
- drainage systems falling into disrepair; and
- a large decline in the numbers of wading birds and other wildfowl over the previous forty years.

What did the LMI do?

The SVLMI was set up to pilot a rural development model that would encourage more sustainable land management, provide economic, social and environmental benefits and provide an on-the-ground delivery mechanism for encouraging innovation by rural businesses.

The LMI piloted the rural development model by undertaking four strands of work:

'Farm Focus' - an integrated farm business development service.

The service concentrated on combining the delivery of business and environmental support, integrating all existing support services and ‘gap filling’ key elements of support, including environmental management.

A ‘farm development facilitator’ with detailed knowledge of support available over a wide range of organisations and sectors was used to ensure the successful tailoring of support to individual farm businesses. To raise the chances of a businesses changing and developing, action planning and implementation support was offered as a follow-up to farm appraisal.

Environmental Economic Development - promoting business opportunities in the green economy

The rural development model included the use of ‘pull’ techniques that provided economic incentives for land management practices to become more environmentally and economically sustainable. The incentives developed, in the tourism and food marketing sectors, were identified as a result of engagement with the farming community through Farm Focus.
The Montgomery Canal provides a valuable tourism resource in the project area. ‘Local to Oswestry’, ongoing under the SVLMI’s successor organisation Ruralscapes, includes sustainable land management standards within food quality criteria and a marketing strategy. The aim is to develop the brand ‘Local to’ and adopt a nationally recognised food quality standard, such as the LEAF Marque, that has strong environmental criteria.

‘Shropshire Canal Tourism’ promotes the benefits of green auditing and the green economy to tourism businesses in the Montgomery Canal corridor. A collaborative marketing group that adopts green credentials and uses them in the marketing strategy is being set up.

**Integrated Land Management Strategy - a tool to guide changes in land management**

Feedback from farmers suggested that the demands of government agencies and legislation, interest groups and local communities create a confusing picture for land managers trying to integrate these demands into farm businesses. The SVLMI aimed to produce an area-wide guide to land management planning which identified key issues and priorities for action: initially part of a plan to devise a new agri-environment scheme, the work evolved towards a pilot Integrated Land Management Strategy.

**Monitoring and research**

Starting with an incomplete picture of the project area, the SVLMI undertook a programme of monitoring and research which would improve understanding, create baselines and measure success. New data was collected on farm bird populations, habitats, the agricultural economy and farmer attitudes. Existing data on soil, heritage and vegetation communities has been transformed for use within farm plans and the Integrated Land Management Strategy.
Conclusions and recommendations

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from the work of the SVLMI include:

- Promotion of the Farm Focus service at local level and building working relationships with farmers has been very effective, resulting in high uptake of the service and a willingness to consider alternative ways of managing land or earning a living from their farm assets.

- Business development support should be broad and flexible enough to allow the tailoring of services to individual businesses.

- The integration of agreed objectives for an area in a coherent form would enable land managers to deliver a multi-functional landscape and facilitate the effective targeting of public funds.

- Resources are needed to assemble the necessary databases to improve the accessibility of comprehensive information relevant to land management.

- Existing funding for sustainable rural development projects is fragmented and too narrowly focussed. There needs to be greater emphasis on integrating economic, social and environmental aspects of rural development within funding packages.

Who was involved?

The SVLMI project team was led by Project Officer Dr Angela Cott. Joint implementation was undertaken with the Environment Agency, National Farmers’ Union, British Waterways, Business Link and the Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Support was kindly given by local farmers and representatives of: the Rural Development Service, RSPB, Ponds Conservation Trust, Shropshire Ornithological Society, the Country Land and Business Association and Oswestry Borough Council. Match funding was provided by the Environment Agency, National Farmers’ Union, English Nature, Shropshire County Council, Advantage West Midlands and the European Union.

Further Reading

The following reports and others on all aspects of SVLMI’s work are available in electronic format from the Land Management Initiatives online database, which can be accessed via www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi


Cott, AM (Forthcoming) Severn Vyrnwy LMI Farm Focus Report. Report to the Countryside Agency.

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The South West Land Management Initiative (SWLMI) focused on the Culm - the land that lies between Exmoor, Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor. The Culm is a relatively remote area dominated by small livestock farms and supporting one of the largest concentrations of wildlife-rich pastures (Culm grassland) in Southern England. Agriculture accounts for an unusually high proportion of employment in the Culm, over 40% in some wards. The area offered an ideal location to consider the issues facing lowland pastoral land management systems.
The area and the issues

The area covers 229,000ha, of which 30% is designated as Less Favoured Area and 6% falls within the North Devon AONB. The area was at the epicentre of the 2001 Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak.

The main issues affecting the area and its agriculture included:

- financial difficulties for small farms leading to farm amalgamation;
- increase in part-time farmers;
- ageing farming population often without successors;
- environmental deterioration caused by overstocking or abandonment;
- lack of maintenance of traditional farm buildings, hedges and walls; and
- loss of traditional knowledge and skills.

What did the LMI do?

The SWLMI was set up to explore the social structures of the area and ways of securing the future of family farming. It did not have a new dedicated staff resource but instead pursued its objectives by commissioning research and working in partnership. The main issues addressed by the SWLMI were:

**The effects of CAP reform in the Culm**

Undertaken before foot and mouth disease, this research examined the options and pressures facing farmers in the Culm and identified three main likely responses: to carry on farming by cutting costs or expanding; to diversify to survive; or to stop farming. The research concluded that most farmers were determined to find ways to continue farming.
Local products

A study was undertaken to document existing local product initiatives and marketing methods. Various labelling and marketing schemes were identified and 200 of the 4900 farms in the Culm were found to be selling their products directly to the public.

What do local people value about the Culm?

A literature search was undertaken to catalogue and review the key characteristics of the area, and was followed by a community consultation exercise. This process demonstrated that the local community’s perception and values of their area differed from that in the mainly externally derived literature. Local people were found to value the quality of life offered by small communities, local traditions and the quality of their surroundings.

Integration of existing projects and services

The SWLMI identified a need to improve coordination between existing initiatives and organised a workshop to explore opportunities for integrated working. Participants supported the idea of closer collaboration but it became clear that there was disparity between some sectors and that overcoming barriers to closer coordination could be costly.

The future of land management in the Culm

A study examined a range of future scenarios for land-based enterprises. It concluded that farmers in the Culm should seek business opportunities based on the isolation and natural character of the area.

Farming families’ responses to change

Research was undertaken to identify and help understand the attitudes and responses of farm households to agricultural and economic pressures, exploring the relationship between these and past or existing social networks. In-depth interviews were carried out during 2002 in 26 farm households. As a result of the timing it was somewhat difficult to disentangle the effects of FMD from an analysis of deeper trends. The study concluded that social capital has declined in the area.

Agreeing a common agenda for the future

In 2002 it was decided that the SWLMI would focus on the production of a Sustainable Land Management Strategy (SLMS) to meet a locally expressed desire. The SLMS was designed to serve a number of needs: to provide a long term vision for the Culm; to provide a framework for influencing and proofing existing strategies; to encourage better coordination of existing activity; and to stimulate new projects to fill identified gaps. There was strong local and regional participation and the SLMS helped to foster a new sense of local pride and identity.

Farmers markets provide a valuable opportunity for local producers to sell their wares.

Hatherleigh Market remains a key meeting place for the area’s livestock farmers.
Conclusions and recommendations

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from the work of this LMI include:

- There should be increased awareness raising amongst farmers of the potential value of wildlife and the local environment as a basis for diversification opportunities.

- Increased cooperation amongst farmer groups should be facilitated. Family farm business forums could enable exchange of business ideas and support increased social interaction.

- Farmers should be encouraged to develop further skills in marketing, business management, training and agri-environmental management, using public funding where available.

- Fostering a strong sense of local identity can help in engaging communities and encouraging commitment to more sustainable land management.

Who was involved?

The work of the LMI was coordinated by the South West LMI Research group. It consisted of representatives from The Countryside Agency, Country Land and Business Association, National Farmer’s Union, Rural Development Service, South West Forest Initiative, Devon Rural Community Council, Cornwall County Council, Seale Hayne College, North Devon Coast and Countryside Service and Devon Wildlife Trust.

Terrafirma led a consortium of consultants in producing the Culm Sustainable Land Management Strategy, guided by a Strategy Development Team which incorporated wider interests through strong representation of the community and local initiatives.

Further Reading

The following reports and others on all aspects of South West LMI’s work are available in electronic format from the Land Management Initiatives online database, which can be accessed via www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi


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The North Yorkshire Moors Upland Land Management Initiative (known locally as the Farm & Rural Community Scheme) sought to test integrated rural development in the parishes of Westerdale, Commondale and Castleton village. Following the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease it was extended to include the whole of Danby Parish. Here, as elsewhere in the Moors, the landscape is of great cultural significance, importance for wildlife and value to the tourism industry.

Sheep are vital to the management of the moors.
The area and the issues

The LMI project area covered 9,000ha in the Upper Esk Valley and included 5 villages, 50 farms and 625 households. Farming in this agriculturally ‘Less Favoured Area’ was comprised of beef and sheep enterprises, with some dairy production. Moorland within the parishes had been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area, and candidate Special Area of Conservation.

The main issues affecting the area and its agriculture included:

- poor transport links, services and village infrastructure;
- low farm incomes;
- threats to biodiversity and landscape features from loss of traditional farming practices and skills; and
- a strong and potentially vulnerable link between environmental assets and tourism.

What did the LMI do?

Over five years the LMI explored the principles of integrated rural development and the needs and priorities of local communities. More particularly, the LMI focused on the lessons learned from three areas of practical activity, namely:

- testing a ‘bottom-up’ approach in which local communities identify their own objectives;
- developing the mechanisms to deliver the community’s social, economic and environmental objectives in an integrated way; and
- creating links between farmers and community.

Helping local communities to help themselves

Three Community Groups, established with the support of the Project Officer, carried out 19 environmental projects. In the first year 18 group forums and meetings were held. Whilst time-consuming, this approach provided valuable insight into local circumstances and opinions.

An area-wide Parish Plan provided a long-term vision and a means of building on the spirit of ‘local involvement for local benefit’ beyond the end of the LMI by ensuring that communities not only own the ideas, but are able to see them turn into action.
Promoting agri-environmental work

Following consultation with farmers, a special agri-environment scheme tailored to the area was developed. Twenty voluntary, whole-farm, 5-year Land Management Agreements covering 864 hectares were established, under which 5,100 metres of wall and 3300 metres of hedge were maintained or restored, 235 hectares of conservation grassland brought under management, and 2500 metres of beckside fencing and 6600 hours of employment created. Five new cattle grids were installed to maintain moorland grazing and to help to establish a village flock of sheep in Castleton. Four Countryside Stewardship Schemes were also facilitated. When taken together, eighty percent of the farm land in the original project area has benefited from environment works by farmers in support of the Countryside Character and Environmental Capital Assessment undertaken by the LMI.

The experience gained through this work contributed to the development of the new Defra Environmental Stewardship Scheme. Local farmers were consulted on the development of the Entry Level and Higher Level Schemes.

Promoting the assets of the area

As part of the process of creating links between farmers, community and visitors, a Local Products Event, brought 32 producers from the parishes together with more than 2000 customers. This demonstrated the considerable number of enterprises that can exist in such a small rural area and the strong interest in purchasing local products.

A visitor welcome pack and directory of more than 150 services complemented the local products initiatives. Developed by the community, it encourages use of local services and suppliers and also invites visitors to play their part in the sustainable well-being of the area.

Taking care of the village environment

A vital component to maintaining the day-to-day momentum of the LMI with locals and visitors was the appointment of a Community Caretaker. This highly acclaimed scheme enabled regular maintenance work and better liaison with visitors. It attracted wide national interest, including a visit by the Rural Affairs Minister, Alun Michael.
Conclusions and recommendations

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from the work of this LMI include:

- The impact of rural development schemes can be greatly increased where they build capacity among communities to take control of local issues in a professional way.
- Revenue funding should be available to support the maintenance of the environment in both villages and on farms.
- Community planning processes are an important starting point for integrated rural development and must be adequately funded and supported.
- It is important that policy makers recognise the value of 'bottom-up' approaches and that rural policies are simple, flexible and able to take account of local needs and decision-making.

Who was involved?

The LMI was managed by Project Officer, Fraser Hugill, and received funding from the North York Moors National Park Authority, Countryside Agency, European Union and Yorkshire Forward. Other support has been freely given by local communities, land managers, local businesses, Danby Group Parish Council, Yorkshire Rural Community Council, North Yorkshire County Council, Scarborough Borough Council, Rural Development Service and Business Link York and North Yorkshire.

Further reading

The following reports and others on all aspects of North Yorkshire Moors Upland Land Management Initiative’s work are available in electronic format from the Land Management Initiatives online database, which can be accessed via [www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi)

- North Yorkshire Moors Upland Land Management Initiative Annual Reports (years 1, 2, 3 and 4)

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Tel: 0113 246 9222 Email: Sue.plaxton@countryside.gov.uk Website: [www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi)
The uplands of the Northumberland National Park are of high environmental value, with large areas recognised for their national or international importance for wildlife. The area is also rich in archaeology, history and traditions. Farming in the National Park is mainly traditional livestock husbandry. This LMI set out to explore the problems facing hill-farming and upland areas and seek ways to address them.

The area and the issues

The economy of the North-East region, and the Northumberland National Park in particular, is heavily dependent on agriculture, ancillary industries and tourism. Farming in the area is extensive and traditional, with a strong emphasis on the breeding of quality stock. Many farmers in the National Park were participating in conservation schemes such as the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

The issues affecting the area and its agriculture included:

- declining numbers of people involved in land management and an associated loss of skills;
- increasing average age of farmers;
- declining farm incomes and shortage of capital for farmers to invest in improvements or new business ventures;
- a sparse population and isolated farms; and
- a high proportion of tenanted farms, which can limit diversification opportunities.
What did the LMI do?

The work of the Northumberland National Park LMI explored the following issues:

**An emerging vision for the UK uplands**

This LMI was set up at a time of great hardship and change for hill-farming in England. One element of its work was to explore the priorities of local farmers, residents and visitors for the uplands and to compare these views with emerging national and European 'visions'. All parties saw the uplands as an important source of public benefits as well as a working landscape providing people with a living.

**What public or commercial goods could farms in the area provide?**

The LMI commissioned research to identify what goods could be provided by local farms. This highlighted environmental public benefits, in the form of landscape, biodiversity, public access, flood prevention, erosion control and carbon sequestration. The research suggested environmental public benefits could be increased with the use of:

- an holistic 'ecosystems' approach to address the problems created by upland agriculture;
- a shepherding system to address localised overgrazing, erosion and predation; and
- risk assessments for sheep dip location and use and to identify vulnerable grazing areas.

Research, co-funded by the 'Hadrian's Means Business' project of the Hadrian’s Wall Tourism Partnership, identified that visitors would like more opportunities to buy local products. As a result, 'Hadrian’s Means Business’ developed a local brand for goods produced close to Hadrian’s Wall. The LMI worked with Northumberland Farmers’ Markets Association to provide training for farmers on selling direct to the public but found that high levels of tenancy, remoteness and lack of capital limited diversification possibilities.

Tranquillity was identified as one of the most important public benefits within the Northumberland National Park. Further research is required to develop a way to assess the effect of tranquillity on potential economic developments.

**What are the opportunities for new wild land in England?**

The LMI conducted a survey of what locals and visitors wanted from the uplands, including how people felt about creation of new wild land. The survey found little public understanding of the idea and, perhaps because of this, little support. However, research from the Netherlands has shown that awareness-raising about new wild land can lead to an increase in public support.

Research was also commissioned on the potential social and economic effects of new wild land in Northumberland. This concluded that, with the then prevailing livestock headage payments, any large-scale rewilding would be likely to have negative economic and social effects. It also concluded that the uplands of Northumberland are already ‘wild’ in the eyes of the general public so it would be unlikely to increase the potential for eco-tourism.

**How could positive change in the area be achieved?**

The LMI undertook a range of work to explore how positive change could be achieved in the area through public or private ventures. Regional focus groups took place on how the public felt about current agricultural support systems. Little support was found for paying farmers for production but there was more support for environmental payments such as agri-environment schemes. Not all were convinced, however, that agri-environment schemes were the best way of securing environmental benefits.

The LMI concluded that a diverse local economy in itself could be seen as a public benefit, and that in some remote areas, like Northumberland, financial support to stimulate the economy is as important as paying for environmental management.

Voluntary approaches to the delivery of public benefits were also explored but the research concluded that opportunities in the Northumberland National Park were limited. It considered cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may increase opportunities for land purchase, but recognised that NGOs have limited resources for such work and that they faced potential competition for any large tracts of land from private buyers.
Conclusions and recommendations

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from the work of the Northumberland National Park LMI include:

- Public funding needs to continue to be directed towards creating a diverse local economy as well as promoting environmental management.
- Diversification opportunities, particularly for tenant farmers, are limited in isolated areas with low levels of tourism.
- There is a demand amongst tourists for products with a strong local identity, meaning that there is great potential for local ‘brands’.
- Training for land managers could have a valuable role in increasing the quality of public benefits delivered by land managers.

Who was involved?

The work of the LMI was led by Project Officer Peter Samsom and co-ordinated by the Countryside Agency and the Northumberland National Park Authority. Other partners included Defra, One North East, RSPB, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, National Farmers’ Union, Country Land and Business Association, Northumberland Federation of Women’s Institutes and the Community Council of Northumberland.

Further Reading

The following reports and others on all aspects of Northumberland National Park LMI’s work are available in electronic format from the Land Management Initiatives online database, which can be accessed via www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi


ADAS (2000) An audit of current and possible farm-based activity and an assessment of their potential to deliver sustainable land management in the uplands of Northumberland

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The Peak District Land Management Initiative (PDLMI) focused on the development of a potential new funding package for upland areas. It worked with local farmers and landowners to develop ideas for an ‘Alternative Payment Mechanism’ and explored the feasibility of putting such a mechanism into practice. The PDLMI produced a number of ideas for improving the content and delivery of rural policy.
The area and the issues

The Peak District Land Management Initiative (PDLMI) focused on eight parishes in the Peak District National Park. The project area covered 3000ha, containing 91 farms including beef, sheep and dairy enterprises. The majority were family farms.

The main issues facing the area and its agriculture included:

- financial pressure on farms leading to a reduction in labour;
- loss of biodiversity and decline of landscape features as a result of overstocking or loss of farm labour and traditional skills;
- low levels of participation in rural development and environmental schemes and a strong reliance on production subsidies;
- complicated and time-consuming application processes for rural development funding; and
- issues of farm succession with few young people wishing to take on the family farm.

What did the LMI do?

The concept for the PDLMI was developed from ideas put forward by a group of local farmers. The aim was to address problems facing farming in the area by developing an ‘Alternative Payment Mechanism’ (APM) that would simplify funding and focus on strengthening rural businesses while enhancing the environment.

The work of the PDLMI sought answers to three questions:

How do rural funding schemes interact and how do they affect upland farm businesses?

Initially the PDLMI explored the interactions between existing rural support programmes and the impact these have on the environmental, social and economic well being of upland areas. The research concluded that there was significant conflict between the 13 different funding schemes that local farms were drawing from. The LMI also found that production-linked support schemes were so central to farm viability that other funding programmes were only being used where they did not affect production-linked support. As a consequence opportunities to meet emerging policy objectives of environmental conservation and business revitalisation were being missed.

The PDLMI identified conflicts between the support payments available to hill-farmers.
Can a simpler, more integrated, payment system for farmers be developed?

The main focus of the PDLMI was the development of the APM - a new form of funding for farmers focusing wholly on environmental conservation and business revitalisation. A feasibility study was carried out to establish whether such a project was technically and legally possible. The study concluded that piloting of such an approach would be possible and that local farmers were keen to participate in an experimental project.

How could a new payment system be designed?

Detailed proposals for the APM were worked up by the PDLMI team in discussion with local farmers, a Steering Group, Defra and the European Commission. The design of the APM was intended to encourage farms and other rural businesses to develop business ideas that would be both economically and environmentally beneficial. The APM was to be kept as simple as possible, with a single administration team and only one application form and claims process. Funding for the area under the APM would have been the same as that received from mainstream funding programmes.

The APM was refined throughout the life of the LMI. The final proposal was a single programme with three inter-related measures:

- Environmental Annual Payments;
- Environmental Enhancement Grants; and
- Business Development Support.

The APM and its administration would have needed to be funded with UK money as it did not fit existing EU funding programmes. The use of UK funding would have required a detailed submission on all aspects of the proposed scheme to the European Commission to meet the requirements of the EU 'State Aid Regulations'. The basis of such a submission was agreed with Defra.

Using the ideas from the PDLMI

The original intention of the PDLMI was to pilot the APM with a number of farms. The feasibility of the APM was confirmed, the details fully developed and local enthusiasm for participation established. However, it was decided that it was not appropriate to proceed with the pilot because of the significant imminent changes to agricultural and rural development policy. Later stages of PDLMI work, therefore, concentrated on contributing PDLMI based ideas to policy reviews.

Work is ongoing to find ways to pilot some of the ideas developed by the PDLMI, particularly in view of the proposed changes to rural development support announced in 2004 and the removal of the link between agricultural support payments and production. These new proposals could create opportunities to apply some of the PDLMI ideas in practice.
Conclusions and recommendations

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from the work of the PDLMI include:

- Agricultural support schemes need simplifying in order to promote integrated rural development, business development and environmental protection.

- Agri-environment and other programme payments should be based on ‘results achieved’, thereby engaging land managers more creatively in identifying best ways of achieving desired results.

- Delivery of the different public funding programmes is currently fragmented between many different agencies and geographical areas, often causing difficulties for rural businesses. A locally-based integrated rural delivery mechanism could help to address some of these problems.

Who was involved?

The PDLMI was led by Project Officer Ken Parker, of the Peak District National Park Authority. Support was kindly given by local farmers and representatives from the Government Office for the East Midlands, Defra’s Rural Development Service, English Nature, English Heritage, Forestry Commission, Country Land and Business Association, National Farmers’ Union, East Midlands Regional Development Agency, Derbyshire Rural Community Council, Business Link North Derbyshire and the Peak District National Park Authority.

Further Reading

The following reports and others on all aspects of Peak District LMI’s work are available in electronic format from the Land Management Initiatives online database, which can be accessed via www.countryside.gov.uk/lmi

Peaks District National Park Authority

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Great North Forest Land Management Initiative

The Great North Forest Land Management Initiative (now North East Land Links) was set up to explore the issues affecting land managers in urban fringe areas and some of the relationships between urban and rural areas. Originally one of the Countryside Agency’s Land Management Initiatives it was transferred to the Agency’s Countryside Around Town’s programme in 2003 and re-named North East Land Links (NELL).

The Great North Forest landscape is characterised by arable fields and large blocks of woodland.
The area and the issues

The Great North Forest is a Community Forest, established in 1990 with the aim of regenerating over 20,000ha of urban fringe countryside across South Tyne and Wear and North East Durham. The landscape is very diverse, with lowland areas, hills and plateaus. Around 70% of it is woodland or farmland, the majority of which is arable or mixed farming.

This area’s proximity to large urban centres is unique among the LMI project areas. Some 1.3 million people live within 10 kilometres of the Forest Boundary.

The issues faced by the Great North Forest are common to urban fringe across the country and included:

- lack of physical, cultural or economic connections between urban populations and surrounding rural areas;
- social disadvantage and exclusion, affecting both rural and urban populations;
- significant pressure from urban populations on surrounding rural areas, particularly through recreation and non-agricultural land uses such as built development, horse pasture and mineral extraction;
- increasing numbers of land sales by older farmers or those with small farms, resulting in increasing fragmentation of holdings; and
- substantial areas of degraded or derelict land.

Mineral extraction is just one of the non-agricultural land uses that are increasingly prevalent in the area.
What did the LMI do?

The LMI aimed to identify opportunities for land managers to capitalise on market opportunities offered by adjacent urban population, in ways that contribute to wider sustainable development. A number of possible market opportunities were considered and work consequently focused on three main areas: community food, public procurement (food) and waste recycling to land.

Work on food included:
- events for organisations and individuals involved in community food initiatives (CFI);
- the establishment of the North East Community Food Initiatives (CFI) Network to promote collaboration and exchange of best practice between CFI practitioners; and
- an event, in partnership with Sustain, to raise awareness of the benefits that public procurement of food could bring to the region.

Work on waste recycling to land included research on the opportunities in the Great North Forest area and a conference entitled 'On Farm Composting: a role for farmers in more sustainable waste management cycles?' which was attended by ninety people, over seventy of whom were farmers.

What does North East Lands Links do?

At the beginning of 2003 the Great North Forest LMI was transferred to the Countryside Agency’s Countryside Around Towns programme and renamed ’North East Land Links’ (NELL). NELL has continued LMI work while developing a broader remit to consider the wider context to the different strands of work. It seeks to understand the role (potential and actual) of the countryside around towns and its potential contribution to sustainable development policy objectives.

NELL’s work takes a particular interest in the partnerships needed to achieve effective translation of policy into practice. A primary objective is to establish more collaboration across sectoral and geographic boundaries.

Community food

A major element of NELL’s food work is the North East Community Food Initiatives Network, for which a Food Links Project Officer has been recruited with funding from the Countryside Agency and the Northern Rock Foundation. The officer supports the development of the Network and also works with local authority, health and voluntary sector groups to advise on the establishment of food co-ops throughout the region.

A social enterprise has been established to supply these co-ops. The aim is to establish a self-financing food distribution operation to increase access for disadvantaged communities to affordable fresh produce. Local produce is used wherever possible. This work will be evaluated and will provide information on the effectiveness (including cost-effectiveness) of food co-ops such as this as a health intervention tool, and a realistic appraisal of the contribution such projects can make to the rural economy.

Public procurement of food

Funding has been secured from the Countryside Agency and the Regional Development Agency to identify opportunities to deliver the priority objectives of the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative. Progress has included discussions with local authorities about collaboration possibilities and with three schools wishing to operate an independent catering operation using local and organic food.

NELL also contributed to a manual on public procurement produced by Sustain and organised training and awareness-raising events for farmers and government agencies. The NELL project manager leads the regional Strategy for Sustainable Food and Farming task group on public procurement.
Conclusions and recommendations so far...

The key conclusions and recommendations from the Great North Forest LMI and NELL focus on how sustainable development projects can be more effective. They demonstrated that:

- There is a need for more dedicated public sector staff with the remit and resources to identify and pursue cross-boundary and cross-sector work. Greater flexibility of public funding is also needed to facilitate such work.

- Projects with a fixed lifespan should focus on undertaking types of work which can either be continued by participants after formal completion or that achieve lasting change, such as attempting to change behaviours and attitudes rather than simply establishing a food co-op.

- More effort needs to be focused on reconciling conflicting agendas of public organisations in order to identify common goals and achieve them through partnership work.

Who is involved?

Bill Kirkup was the Project Officer for the Great North Forest LMI and continues to lead NELL.

The Great North Forest LMI was, and North East Land Links is, coordinated by the Countryside Agency and the North East Community Forests. Partners include: Defra, One North East, Sustain, several Local Authorities, English Nature, Health Development Agency, Newcastle University, City University, several Primary Care Trusts, Blyth Valley Food Co-op Co., Government Office North East, Durham Rural Community Council, local farmers and landowners and others.

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Conclusion
Lessons from the Land Management Initiatives for Sustainable Land Management and Integrated Rural Development

Introduction
The LMIs were set up to help the Countryside Agency develop appropriate policy advice, from first hand experience, by exploring and testing new ideas in Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Integrated Rural Development (IRD).

What are Sustainable Land Management and Integrated Rural Development?
SLM and IRD have much in common. Both seek to respond to locality, address local concerns and seek active involvement of the local community; and both require integrated thinking to maximise benefits for the environment, economy and community.

The primary difference is that SLM is focused on the sustainable management of land, while IRD is concerned with the sustainable development of a defined rural area. Thus SLM operates within the broader context of IRD.
The LMIs worked with farmers, local communities and other organisations to identify and carry out a wide range of research work and practical activity. The lessons learnt throughout the five-year programme have made a significant contribution to emerging thoughts about SLM and IRD and have been incorporated into the Countryside Agency’s policy advice to Government in many areas, including:

- Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy;
- Mid-Term Evaluation of the England Rural Development Programme;
- Agri-environment review;
- Review of the Farm Business Advisory Service as part of the Learning Skills and Knowledge Review; and
- The Hill Farm Allowance review.

In some cases the findings of the LMIs have served to reinforce messages from elsewhere, such as the importance of facilitation to drive change in rural areas or the need for locally tailored agri-environment and rural development schemes. In other cases new findings have emerged, particularly the importance of social capital for progress towards sustainable land management.

Over the five year lifetime of the LMI programme (1999 - 2004) agriculture has been affected by significant problems and has experienced a great deal of change, not least that taking place within rural policies. To a large extent policy, and in some cases practice, have evolved in parallel with many of the ideas coming out of the LMIs. However as the programme draws to a close there are still many pertinent lessons for the improvement of rural policies in the pursuit of a healthy attractive countryside and thriving rural economies and communities.

**Barriers to SLM and IRD**

The LMIs identified many barriers to the achievement of SLM and IRD. Many of these were recognised at the very start of the LMIs and others became apparent over time. The main barriers included:

**Local environment**
- lack of widespread understanding of the local environment and the implications of its management;
- entrenched views on the most appropriate ways to manage the countryside;

**Local economy**
- past over-dependence on commodity support amongst farmers, distancing them from the market;
- lack of trust by local communities in public organisations, especially central Government, resulting in a reluctance to engage in new initiatives;
- lack of management time, capital, and entrepreneurial skills to engage in new ventures, exacerbated for farmers in more isolated areas by limited availability of business alternatives;
- lack of formal recognition of the role of women in farm diversification activities;
- general reluctance among farmers to engage in co-operative activities;

**Social capital and community capacity**
- little integration between different sectors of the rural community, with a sense of increasing alienation between the farming and wider rural community;
- in some areas, such as the Culm, an increasingly inward focus and isolation of farmers in response to rapidly changing circumstances, with a breakdown in traditional farming networks.

**Partnerships and stakeholders**
- a tendency amongst some partners to pursue their own interest and not engage with other concerns, resulting in a lack of integrated thinking and support;
- frequent changes in key personnel within agencies and organisations leading to lack of continuity.
Public support

- The complexity of public policies and programmes and their potential to conflict;
- The inflexibility of public programmes and their inability to adapt to local circumstances;
- Unsuitability of England Rural Development Plan (ERDP) funding streams for small farm enterprises and a lack of facilitation to encourage uptake and maximise the benefits from such funding.

Time

- The length of time required to develop agreement, build capacity and skills and implement change.

How did the LMIs address these barriers?

All LMIs explored different ways to enhance the environment, economy and/or community of their project areas, through SLM and IRD. In order to do this they each undertook a programme of work that sought to overcome some of the barriers identified above.

Information gathering

For the majority of LMIs there was no comprehensive evidence base on the environment, economy and communities of their project areas. Initial stages therefore included collation of such information on which to build future proposals. To do this the LMIs applied tools such as:

- Environmental capital assessment (North Yorkshire Moors Upland LMI (NYMLMI));
- Parish Plans, to reveal perceptions and preferences (NYMLMI);
- Social research into how and why land managers’ adapt (or not) to change (South West LMI (SWLMI)); and
- Market research into local products and visitors’ expectations of the countryside (SWLMI & Northumberland National Park LMI (NNPLMI)).

An understanding of place or locality proved an essential starting point. For many LMIs a key objective was the conservation and enhancement of the area’s special qualities, both through public support (such as agri-environment schemes in NYMLMI and Severn Vyrnwy LMI (SVLMI)) and through economic activity that reinvested in the enhancement of local character (SVLMI and Humberhead Levels LMI (HHLLMI)).

Community engagement

The majority of LMIs engaged widely with the local community in order to develop an understanding of other perspectives, promote common understanding of issues and identify possibilities for future action. Work included visits to pilot sites, topic workshops, facilitated open meetings and discussion of alternative future scenarios. Greatest engagement occurred when communities were in charge of shaping their own future, as in the preparation of the Danby Parish Plan and appointment of the Community Caretaker in the NYMLMI (See Case Study above).
Working in partnership
All LMIs worked through partnership with stakeholders. Building and maintaining such partnerships was time consuming, however it was considered essential to the success of the LMIs as integrated outcomes require integrated inputs. Partners often changed over time and, while a wide range of partners was useful during establishment and to provide strategic overview, small or bilateral partnerships were often found to be best for the development of specific initiatives.

Developing a shared vision
Some LMIs developed Integrated or Sustainable Land Management Strategies, such as that developed for the SWLMI (see Case Study below). Such work was undertaken as a lack of a shared vision and objectives for the future of many of the LMI project areas was seen as holding back the delivery of integrated outcomes.

Facilitation and involvement of local champions
Project Officers were employed to run many of the LMIs and performed an important facilitation role. They helped to bring groups together, resolve conflicts and convert complex messages from national and regional agencies into simple information for farmers and the broader rural community. In some cases the Project Officers supported farmers and individuals in their decision-taking and development of proposals. This is particularly important where individuals are receiving many different, apparently conflicting messages.

The LMIs also found that the implementation of SLM and IRD was enhanced where champions from the local community assisted the Project Officer. The involvement of local champions gave greater assurance that activities would become self-sustaining, as with the Danby Parish Plan in the NYMLMI.

Integrated advice and whole farm planning
Building on the facilitation role, several LMIs developed a range of methods for delivering integrated whole farm advice to farmers. The most successful method involved the Project Officer coordinating and integrating the inputs of a series of specialist advisors, as in SVLMI and the Norfolk Arable LMI (NALMI). This enabled tailoring of the advice to the needs of individual farmers. Where external consultants delivered the whole service, as in the High Weald LMI (HWLMI), there was a tendency for the advice to become formulaic without sufficient consideration of the specific needs of individual farms.

The Land Between the Moors: A Sustainable Land Management Strategy for the Culm (South West LMI)
The Culm area of Mid and North Devon and Cornwall does not lack initiatives or partners. What it has lacked is common understanding of place and cohesion of direction. To address this the SWLMI produced a Sustainable Land Management Strategy for the Culm, to provide a strategic framework under which existing initiatives can come together - with a long-term vision, detailed objectives for sustainable land management, and a series of priorities.

As in all good strategies, the process of its development has been as important as the final product - developing a shared perspective and joint ownership of the outputs, with two major stakeholder conferences, community meetings across the area, topic-based workshops with stakeholders and experts to help shape the strategy and its focus.

The end product is not so much a stand alone strategy as a framework for guiding the activities of others to bring maximum benefit to the area. It also identifies those priorities requiring a Culm-wide perspective, from development of a marketable Culm identity to collaborative working between small beef producers.
Developing economic pulls

A number of LMIs originally sought to develop bespoke agri-environment packages responding to local needs. However, for many, the emphasis shifted towards investment in encouraging business enterprise that supported high environmental quality. This included both green tourism projects (see Case Study above) and local food initiatives, with an emphasis on collaborative working and business networking, as well as exploration of novel crops.

Re-wilding (returning areas to natural processes) was explored to assess its economic potential for green tourism relative to the income from conventional agriculture. The emerging consensus from the work in the NNPLMI was that the public preference was for managed landscapes, still rooted in the traditional agricultural economy, intermixed with areas of semi-natural habitat, which together offer a varied visitor experience.

Benefits of SLM and IRD

As developing local SLM and IRD takes time, the full outcomes from the LMIs may not yet be apparent, however all the LMIs have started on the journey of SLM and IRD and emerging benefits include:

- A better understanding of place amongst local people and local decision takers, in terms of economic drivers, community needs and social capital, and environmental character and values, allowing decisions to be taken in a more informed environment;
- A greater acceptance of alternative viewpoints with tentative steps towards greater consensus;
- Realisation that the state of social capital in rural areas is a key determinant of achieving a more sustainable future;
- Greater accountability to local people with the delivery of outcomes responding to the needs and wants of local people;
- More committed engagement by farmers in delivering public benefits where they are genuinely involved in developing more sustainable approaches in partnership with others;
- Enhanced environmental quality where agri-environment schemes are responding to local character and are locally administered, as in the case of the North Yorkshire Moors Land Management Agreements;
- Increased delivery of benefits where initiatives encourage co-operative working, as in the Danby Community Caretaker and as now emerging in the Shropshire Canal Tourism project;
- The potential to maximise the benefits from expenditure where objectives are synergistic.

Shropshire Canal Tourism
(Severn Vyrnwy LMI)

The unique small-scale riverine landscapes of north Shropshire remain a little discovered tourism resource. The Montgomeryshire Canal, lying at its heart, has potential, along ecologically less vulnerable stretches, for green tourism and promotion of other sectors of the local economy such as food and drink and creative industries, as recognised in the Oswestry Community Strategy.

Responding to these opportunities, ‘Shropshire Canal Tourism’ is assisting the start-up and safeguarding the future of canal related businesses, including the re-use of canalside buildings through: a rural business development service for those in the canal corridor, networking to encourage improved business performance, collaborative marketing and development of the rights of way network with the potential promotion of themed trails. Lying at the heart of this project is an emphasis on sustainable development and innovation with funding provided through Objective 2/ Transitional and National Rural Regeneration Zone and Redundant Building Grant.
### Key findings and recommendations

The experience gained from the LMIs suggests the following lessons for rural development policy:

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<td>The delivery of SLM and IRD needs to be based on a sound understanding of place, with proposals for individual areas reflecting the character, natural resources and identified needs of the locality, its economy and community. An understanding of contemporary rural communities is an essential component of this.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The results of SLM and IRD and their impact on sustainable development should be measured through key indicators developed at the national level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The experience of the LMIs suggests that SLM and IRD are potentially best delivered at the sub-regional level for areas of common character, such as a Countryside Character Area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Partnership working should be seen as an essential ingredient to the success of SLM and IRD, embodying consensus building and shared responsibility and ensuring that the delivery of individual policies and programmes are mutually supportive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>There is a need for mutually agreed objectives for land management at the local level to help target activity and funds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Facilitation should be integral to the delivery of SLM and IRD, helping break down barriers between different partners, between different sectors of the rural community, and in helping reach farmers that have become socially and professionally isolated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>As part of this facilitation, there should be continuing policy emphasis on the delivery of integrated whole farm advice, aimed at encouraging more sustainable farming that delivers the public benefits that society wants and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>As development of integrated approaches takes time, financial support for IRD projects should potentially grow over time rather than taper, with the first few years focusing on developing partnerships and other relationships and gaining an understanding of needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>In parallel, delivery of national programmes needs to become more flexible and able to respond to the specific needs of a locality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Further research is required into the rebuilding of social capital in rural areas, recognising the increasing isolation of farmers and alienation between different sectors of the rural community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Further consideration should be given to the setting up of families of demonstration sites (for both farms and other rural businesses), which will bring people together to achieve exchange of knowledge and ideas and illustrate examples of best practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 [http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character/index.asp](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character/index.asp)