



Position Statement: Farming with nature

Final version

October 2014

Achieving more for nature



GLNP
GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE
NATURE PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

The Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) received official status as a Local Nature Partnership on 17 July 2012 and was formally launched on 8 November 2012. This followed an extensive consultation period and application process that resulted from the publication of 'The Natural Choice' White Paper in June 2011. The GLNP is building on the success of its predecessor organisation the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership.

From the start of the Local Nature Partnership consultation, agriculture was highlighted as a key area for Greater Lincolnshire and one that the Local Nature Partnership should work on.

The agreed vision for the farming with nature workstream is *thriving nature in a productive farmed landscape*. See the Business Plan for more details on planned actions under this workstream.

Points for advocacy

1. Work together more effectively to ensure that there are positive outcomes for both agricultural and environmental sectors

Agricultural and environmental sectors have been working together for some time; however their primary goals are different. Finding a new and better way to work together is important to ensure that both farm profitability and biodiversity can be conserved now and in the future, considering the potential impacts of climate change.

Understanding both sectors and incorporating each other's objectives more effectively is central to a new approach. Nature conservation must appreciate the economics of farming, and in the same way, farming techniques need to ensure environmental outcomes.

2. Promote agricultural policies and practices that improve the state of biodiversity whilst also sustaining profitability.

Much has been done to combat the decline in biodiversity through the implementation of agri-environment schemes and other voluntary measures designed to provide habitat enhancement for wildlife. This mitigation is not yet sufficient to combat the reduction in biodiversity following changes in agricultural policy and practice in the post-war period due to the increased population, the need for food and now bio-energy.

The development of innovative farming techniques that enhance biodiversity or conserve natural biological processes whilst improving farm profitability is ongoing. These techniques should be encouraged where they are appropriate. Examples include non-inversion cultivation, controlled traffic farming and precision farming. Good soil management can significantly reduce the impacts of diffuse pollution and positively contribute to flood risk management.

3. Recognise that nature is a fundamental part of the agricultural system

Agricultural ecosystems provide us with food, forage, bioenergy and pharmaceuticals and are essential to human wellbeing. These systems rely on services provided by nature

including pollination, biological pest control, maintenance of soil structure and fertility, nutrient cycling and hydrological services. The value of these ecosystem services to agricultural businesses is enormous and often underappreciated. Well managed farmed landscapes also provide carbon sequestration, support for biodiversity, and cultural services. Despite the importance of ecosystem services, current knowledge of the links between agricultural land use, biodiversity, ecosystem function and service provision is relatively limited. More work is needed to ensure that both the agriculture and environmental sectors understand and are able to sustain these vital services.

4. Acknowledge that agri-environment schemes have played a critical role in the protection and enhancement of nature on farms but recognise that more can be done

Agri-environment schemes in all their forms have enabled farmers to undertake beneficial improvements to the environment. It is a high priority that this limited funding should continue with an emphasis on ensuring a good return on government spending whilst providing adequate compensation for the farmer who is rewarded for real environmental gains. Past achievements must not be overlooked; they should be built upon with continued investment.

When considering habitat improvements these are generally best when they are long term rather than rotational; larger inter-connected networks rather than small isolated patches. These principles apply at the scale of the individual farm but are most effective when neighbouring landowners work together. The environmental benefits from clustered initiatives will be much greater than the sum of their parts.

In addition, delivering improvements collaboratively and at larger scales can result in economies of scales with a beneficial impact on farm businesses.

5. Targeting of agri-environment schemes should be a balance between priorities for nature and value for money

Resources are extremely limited therefore the first priority is to protect existing areas of high quality habitat, most of which have a long history of effective stewardship by their owners. This will ensure the continued legacy of previous schemes. The second priority will be to target enhancements to habitat and species across landscapes to achieve multiple benefits and the best value for money. Schemes targeted in areas where complimentary action is taking place (such as Nature Improvement Areas) should achieve more.

Providing farmers with advice for innovative or complex options, should become an integral part of all schemes, to improve their effectiveness. Scheme objectives should be clearly identified and the appropriate techniques understood. There should also be more focus on identifying and promoting success to increase stakeholder engagement. All stakeholders must be committed to the continued improvement of schemes. Only by understanding the real challenges faced by land managers will we be able to improve the schemes for farmers and biodiversity.

6. Publicly funded improvements to nature should be secured for the long term



Where biodiversity value has been improved with public funding, such as in agri-environment schemes, both farmers and conservationists need confidence that this funding will continue in order to retain the biodiversity investment. Losing investment, and thus biodiversity, due to lack of continuity in policy is not acceptable.

Continuing this investment is particularly important where the time period needed to develop the biodiversity interest is long. This is often the case in complex restoration or creation projects.

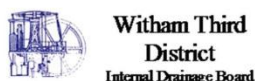
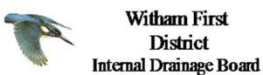
Finally, presenting evidence of the ancillary benefits biodiversity projects may have to farm productivity and profitability (e.g. pollination, water infiltration, pollution control, soil protection and enhancement) will help to ensure continued farmer commitment during difficult times. There are various mechanisms by which this can be achieved including voluntary schemes.

Further information

- Campaign for the farmed environment [Campaign Themes](#)
- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology [Training could improve value of agri-environment schemes](#)
- Defra (2013). [Catchment Based Approach: Improving the quality of our water environment](#)
- Defra [Catchment Sensitive Farming](#)
- Defra & Rural Payments Agency (2014). [Guide to Cross Compliance 2014](#)
- Harper Adams [The National Centre for Precision Farming](#)
- Linking farming and the environment [The LEAF Marque](#)
- Natural England [National Character Area profiles for the East Midlands](#)
- Natural England [New environmental land management schemes](#)
- Silsoe Conference Report (1970). Farming and Wildlife: A study in compromise
- UK National Ecosystems Assessment (2011). [Enclosed Farmland](#)
- UK Research Council (2010) [Findings from the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme](#)
- Woodland Trust (2013). [Benefits of trees to arable farms evidence report](#)
- Woodland Trust (2013). [Managing the drought - Harper Adams Report](#)

Organisations supporting this Position Statement

The organisations listed here support the principles above. However these organisations may take a different view in individual cases based on their circumstances.



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