Learning from the Burren

Study Tour
21-24 November 2012
Yorkshire Dales Local Action Group
Learning from the Burren - Report of the Study Tour 2012 – Yorkshire Dales Local Action Group

Produced by

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February 2013

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Front Cover: Pullagh Townland, Burren.
Photographs: unless otherwise stated, by R. Berry, YDMT.
Report written by R Berry, Yorkshire Dales LEADER Project Co-ordinator.

Glossary of Terms:

- BFCP – Burren Farming for Conservation Programme
- BLP – BurrenLIFE Project
- CAP – Common Agricultural Policy
- Ha – hectare (2.42 acres)
- HNV – High Nature Value (farming)
- LEADER – Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économie Rurale
- LDS – Local Development Strategy
- NPWS – National Parks and Wildlife Service
- REPS – Rural Environment Protection Scheme
- SAC – Special Area of Conservation
- YDMT – Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust
- YDNPA – Yorkshire Dales National Park (Authority)
Introduction

Collaboration beyond established borders is a way to get access to information and new ideas, to learn from other regions or countries, to stimulate and support innovation and to acquire skills and means to improve rural regeneration. Transnational and inter-territorial networking between LEADER areas, with the aim of sharing and developing good practice, is a key feature of any LEADER programme. The results can benefit rural communities by achieving ‘strength in numbers’ across regional and national boundaries, as well as benefits that might not be available to small-scale and isolated projects. The cross fertilisation leads to positive effects.

Networking and co-operation is at the heart of the Yorkshire Dales Local Development Strategy (LDS) 2008-2013. LDS activities have a strong component of networking and learning opportunities so that the long term impact can create a potential legacy of informed community and business networks post 2013.

A Dales LEADER Task and Finish Group was established in September 2009 to develop the Co-operation activity of the Yorkshire Dales LEADER programme and identify actions that could be undertaken jointly with other areas and contribute to the priorities in the LDS 2008-2013. This was guided by the Dales LEADER Project Co-ordinator and overseen by the Dales LEADER Management Group (decision making body) to create a programme of case study visits to other LEADER areas in order to enable shared learning.

Mutual learning is the main expected result of the case study visits, focused on capacity building and transfer of experience. This may result in future activity such as common publications, training seminars, twinning arrangements, adoption of common methodological and working practices or to the elaboration of joint or co-ordinated development work.

The Burren has many common socio-economic and environmental features with the Yorkshire Dales; geology, habitat, land use, strong local identity, similarity in objectives in conserving and restoring habitats in designated areas.

The Limestone Country Beef Project, (2002-2008) which focussed on 11,000 hectares of the Yorkshire Dales uplands around Ingleborough, Malham and Wharfedale, to the south of the Yorkshire Dales LEADER area, was a case study at the BurrenLIFE Farming for Conservation International Conference 2008.¹

The Burren Context

The Burren in County Clare, Ireland, is internationally recognised for the uniqueness, wealth and diversity of its heritage. Measuring approximately 250 square kilometres, it is one of the largest karst landscapes in Europe. It has an unusually temperate climate, with one of the longest growing seasons in Ireland or Britain. It supports Arctic, Mediterranean and Alpine flora. It is rich in archaeological and historical sites.

Much of the Burren has been designated as part of the Natura 2000 Network under the EU Habitats Directive. These areas contain a variety of priority habitats including limestone pavements, orchid-rich grasslands and turloughs (disappearing lakes).

The main method of farming in the Burren region is transhumance. In the Burren transhumance is in reverse and livestock are moved to graze the uplands, winterages, in winter months and the lowlands in summer. This is the only place in the world where this occurs.
The Burren has many similarities with the southern area of the Yorkshire Dales. Changes in the farmed landscape, perceived or otherwise, have resulted from a cocktail of external social, environmental and economic factors. The Yorkshire Dales is likewise characterised by a loss of population working on the land, farm sizes have gradually increased, new technologies, both chemical and mechanical, have been adopted to manage larger areas and improve efficiency. Farming systems have adapted to meet changing market demands and to improve profitability, resulting in an intensification of in-bye and more productive land. There has been a move from traditional to continental cattle breeds and lower stocking rates, bringing in a whole new set of changes in field system management and care systems. Like the Burren, in the Yorkshire Dales farm incomes have decreased and off farm income has become increasingly important with the families having multiple occupations across retail, service and tourism sectors.

Environmental designations both limit/encourage specific agricultural activity and constrain socio-economic changes on the land and within the population that manage it. Agri-environment schemes in the Burren, such as REPS, and the suckler cow premium resulted in farms being managed differently. In the words of Dr Brendan Dunford, “they were not targeted or proactive enough and, therefore, they were opportunities lost ...”

From the springboard of the REPs, CAP reforms brought the Burren the opportunity to test a new model of sustainable agriculture with practical, locally targeted solutions to conserve and renew priority habitats in the Burren. The BurrenLIFE Project (BLP) (2005-2010) piloted the new model with five years of applied research taking place on 22 farms. Unlike most agri-environment schemes, BLP used management recommendations to deliver desired outputs not mandatory restrictions to limit negative outcomes.

The BLP concluded in January 2010.
The Burren Farming for Conservation Programme

The Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP) agri-environment scheme is based upon the work of the BLP. It is implemented in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. A Project Team, funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), is based in Carron at the centre of the Burren.

The BFCP aims to support high nature value farming (HNV) and engages farmers at the centre of maintaining and protecting their land; linking agriculture, environment, heritage protection, and tourism. It is targeted and locally responsive.

The main objectives of the Programme are;

- To ensure the sustainable agricultural management of HNV farmland in the Burren.
- To contribute to the positive management of the Burren landscape and the cultural heritage of the Burren.
- To contribute to improvements in water quality and water usage efficiency in the Burren region.

By November 2011, the BFCP covered over 13,256 ha of the Burren including 39% of the Black Head/Poulshallagh Complex SAC, 60% of Moneen Mountain SAC and 38% of the East Burren Complex SAC.
It also included 1,196ha of state-owned land, Mullaghmór National Park and Slieve Carron National Nature Reserve².

Key success factors are:

- The strong partnership amongst the stakeholders; the NPWS, Teagasc and the Burren Irish Farmers Association.
- The strong recognition of the role that farmers and farming practices play in the conservation of habitats.
- A practical environmental programme, which contains practical management actions nominated by the farmers themselves, combining modern technology with indigenous knowledge and practices.
- The targeting of the scheme towards the delivery of the production of species-rich grasslands and the improvement of water quality.

BFCP is now in its final year.

“...We say to the farmer, "This is what we want on those grasslands. We want well raised grasslands, quite species rich but you are the expert and it is completely within your authority to farm it in the way you want. You can put a herd of elephants up there for the summer if you want". We do not care as we will assess the output. We give them simple guidelines about how best to farm the land and it is entirely up to them to farm it. There is no calendar farming. The farmer has complete discretion. If he wants to do something, depending on weather, market conditions, family issues and so on, he has the discretion but we spell out clearly what we want and we pay him accordingly at the end of the year. That is fair and he cannot dispute that. It is empowering for the farmer and it is entirely voluntary.”

Dr B Dunford, Programme Manager, BFCP. 15/01/2013. Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine Debate.

² BFCP Programme Report No 2
Learning from the Burren - Report of the Study Tour 2012 – Yorkshire Dales Local Action Group

Aim of the tour

Members of the Yorkshire Dales LEADER Local Action Group are drawn from a variety of sectors within the communities of the Yorkshire Dales area, with representations from agriculture, heritage, business, tourism and rural services. The knowledge and experience of the agricultural sector in the LEADER status area is second to none, as is the understanding of where locally responsive improvements are needed for positive land management in support of HNV farming.

In July 2012 the Yorkshire Dales LEADER Local Action Group proposed to lead a small Study Tour of interested individuals from the Leader area, to meet with Burren farmers, communities and Project staff from the BFCP and to explore behind the scenes of the BFCP model for sustainable agricultural management of HNVF. The core aim was to take participants’ learning beyond what an organisation or individual does, to how they do it.

The objective was to expose participants to a wide array of practices in order to give them the opportunity to identify what might work for them in their own context. The tour was designed around farm visits, with networking both within the tour group and with differing host organisations/individuals.

The target group from the LEADER area were recent graduates\(^3\) in the agricultural sector and persons with an interest in HNV farming and land management.

Timing

In August 2012 information on the Burren (Appendix 1) and an expression of interest (EOI) for a five day tour in October, was distributed through LEADER area networks: Yorkshire Dales Farmer Network, Dales Countryside Trainee Scheme, Yorkshire Dales Hill Farm

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\(^3\) Three graduates expressed interest, one came on the visit.
Apprenticeship Scheme, Limestone Country Beef Project, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), and Dales Rural Estates Network (DREN). Eight EOI’s were received.

The tour dates were set for November 2012 as a result of feedback received:

- Comment by the farming networks that the proposed (five day) length was too long.
- The October dates coincided with key Yorkshire sheep sales and the Burren Winterage Festival October 2012 (organised through the BurrenBeo Trust).

Participants

Budget (see Appendix 2) was confirmed with the LEADER Managing Body and a limited number of spaces were offered.

Nine applications for a study tour were received. Of these, three were through the Limestone Country project, one Hill Farm Apprentice, one Richmondshire District farmer, and one Co-ordinator of Hill Farm Apprentice Scheme. Three participants were in strategic roles relevant to the tour topic, YDNPA land management, YDMT hay-meadow restoration, YDMT conservation, geology and countryside interpretation activity.

Expectations

Prior to the visit, all participants completed a form detailing why they’d like to come and what they’d hope to gain from the tour. This was in order to measure the value and outcome of the tour at the end and to inform the host organisations and individuals about the expectations of those attending. (See Appendix 3, Host Briefing notes).

Participants’ expectations (a selection of edited responses):

- Gain a good understanding of the Burren project, its approaches, what worked and what didn’t, and how farmers have been closely engaged with developing and delivering the project aims.
- To learn farmers’ attitudes to the project and if those attitudes have changed since they joined the project
- To learn the strengths and weaknesses of the project from both the farmers’ and project team’s points of view.
- To see if aspects of the project can be applied to the Dales LEADER area in the future
- Gain a deeper understanding about livestock farming in areas such as the Burren and the Yorkshire Dales and the challenges faced.

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4 A further 4 applications from the agricultural sector came in late and were put on the reserve list.
• To be able to feed knowledge gained from the study tour to the farm apprentices, helping them to appreciate farm and environmental policy beyond their own farm gates. Also at the other end of the spectrum, to make Defra policy colleagues more aware of LIFE projects and their potential.
• With increased understanding, being able to better advise on high nature value farm schemes.
• To bring home new ideas on cattle wintering and make improvements.
• To experience different farming practices.
• Make new friends and alliances with fellow members of the study tour and the LIFE project
• See how the Burren LIFE project has been mainstreamed and how it supports high environmental value farming.
• To consider the implications and results for High Nature Value farming pilots in the YDNP and the wider Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership.
• To discuss with both the Burren LIFE project team and the farmers the merits of the project delivery, incentives and marketing & tourism benefits of the approach.
• Gain an understanding of the Burren: how farming has shaped the landscape, its rich cultural heritage, and its flora, fauna and geomorphology.

Orientation

Orientation is important to give a concept of locality, colour, and local culture. The group had a brief orientation walk around the Carron Turlough on the day of arrival, followed by a detailed presentation by BFCP staff. The BurrenBeo Trust Winter Talk event in Tubber gave the Study Tour their second taste of the BFCP and gave the Burren organisations an introduction to the group, as well as an update on the Limestone Country Project. On the first and the final day, Dr Sharron Parr joined the Study tour group in the evening and Dr Brendan Dunford met with them again on the final day for questions.
In addition to guided farm tours, the group joined with BFCP farmers and BFCP staff on a BFCP farmer training event at Nagles farm, Pullagh and were guided to the top of Slieve Carron.

The tour base was Clare’s Rock Hostel, Carron, overlooking the largest turlough in Europe. It is the only village in the Burren and central to all the host agricultural holdings. Clare’s Rock is a LEADER financed “on farm” diversification Hostel and a member of the Burren Ecotourism Network.

A large part of the farm holding is in the SAC. An afternoon tour was planned with this farm. Due to unforeseen circumstances the group were unable to visit this holding.

See Appendix 4 the tour itinerary.

The Farms visited: Clare Farm Heritage Tours Co-operative

Clare Farm Heritage Tours co-operative is an “on farm” diversification initiative by nine Burren farmers, who have come together to interpret their land and promote the local traditions to the wider community. They offer a behind the scenes ecotourism experience guiding farm walks and are as knowledgeable and passionate talking about their farming practices as they are about ancient historical sites, legends and folklore. All offer a different aspect of land management and experience to the visitor, flavoured with their own personality, interests and background.
Three farmer guided tours were selected, offering a variation in husbandry and culture. All those visited are part of the BFCP. Not all the hosts received the Host Briefing notes, however all were able to adapt to their audience with relevant knowledge.

1. Caherfadda Townland:

Caherfadda Townland is situated in Kilnaboy Parish, on one of the historical strategic entrances to the high Burren.
Main features of the farm:

- Mixed beef cattle – modern breeds.
- Feral goats free-roaming.
- Dense Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) scrub encroachment into limestone.
- Mechanical Scrub clearance used where archaeology is absent.
- Over grown and under-grazed extensive limestone pavement.
- Boundary stone walls being restored in Burren style.
- Significant flora interest.
Historical structures include:
- Goat cros (structures where kids were kept for meat production).
- Remains of 1970’s Silage clamp (top, below).
- Stone quarry complete with unfinished cut stone (left, below).
- Wedge tombs and Neolithic settlements dating to 3500BC (right, below).

Habitats include extensive overgrown limestone pavement, species rich dry calcareous grassland and atlantic Corylus avellana scrub-land.
2. Poulnalour Townland:

Poulnalour Townland is in Kilnaboy Parish.

Main features of Green Road Farm:

- Suckler beef production.
- Feral goats free-roaming.
- 50 domestic goats milked by hand for cheese (and milk).
- Certified organic farm for fish, beef, lamb.
- Traditional methods of husbandry.
- Cut scrub is heaped into brashing piles.
- No chemical treatments are applied.

Habitats include extensive areas of rough limestone grassland and pavement with a strong cover of Corylus avellana scrub, heath, species rich dry calcareous grassland, atlantic Corylus avellana woodland as well as areas of improved agricultural grasslands.

There are approximately 24 Belted Galloway suckler cows, bred to a Belted Galloway bull. Cows calve mainly in February to March, with most of the progeny kept on, to build up herd numbers. External inputs are minimal as this farm is managed according to Organic standards.

Find out More
> Poulnalour Townland
(Map hyperlink)
The farm uses hay and some concentrate feedstuffs and mineral supplements for the outwintering livestock at minimal levels. The hay and concentrate ration is distributed on the ground without any troughs or hay feeders, this works very well for farmer and stock. Paths and encroaching scrub are hand cut to improve cattle movement around the land. The whole farm is part of the East Burren Complex SAC.

Historical structures:

- Prehistoric field-wall systems.
- Stone ring forts and stone cairns.
- Network of old 'boreens' and pathways.
- Goat cros, turf tiles, stone huts, stone enclosures.
- A Fulacht Fiadh, (bronze age site thought to have been used for cooking and bathing), close to the water source.

“Anything that healed was called holy water and the water can only heal when it’s taken at the source where it comes out of the rock. The water is loaded with oxygen and it can heal diabetes but only if you drink it right there.”

3. Glenquin Townland:

Glenquin Townland is in the Parish of Kilnaboy. Altitude reaches 800 feet to the north.

Main features of Glenquin Farm:

- Sheep, suckler cattle, 20 plus Irish Draft horses and Connemara ponies.
- 93 Ha organic certified for over 20 years, selling lamb and vegetables. 2012 vegetable production no longer certified.
- Low lying land is used for meadow and vegetable production.
- Horses are used to plough some areas.
- 10 Ha of land reserved for the preservation of the feral goats (anecdotally the numbers of feral goats over the Burren varies from 500 to 6000).
- P McCormack, farmer, owner of Glenquin house, the Parochial House filmed in Fr Ted (Irish sitcom, 1995-1998).
Habitats include rough limestone grassland and pavement, species rich dry calcareous grassland, atlantic *Corylus avellana* woodland and improved agricultural grasslands. It reaches over 244 metres in the north.

Historical features:

- Cashelmore Stone ring fort, cairns.
- Fulacht fiadhs (bronze age sites thought to be for cooking or bathing)
- One of the 7 holy wells.
- Strip field Lynchets.
4. Pullagh Townland

The BFCP farmer training event at Nagles farm on Pullagh. This farm is also a member of the Clare Heritage farm tours co-operative. When the event concluded, Oliver Nagle guided the group further around the out-wintering site, to the “top mountain”, the top of Slieve Carron (see Appendix 5).

Main features:

- Mixed suckler cattle.
- Solar electric fencing.
- Cut scrub is heaped into brashing piles.
- Water management utilising natural geography.

Historical features:

- A cashel and souterrain.
- Shelter walls, extensive field networks of ancient 'mound' walls and 'slab walls'.
- Goat cros, and stone enclosures.
Outcomes

Rather than précis or embellish the outcomes from the Burren Study Tour, they are presented as the responses submitted in the Burren Study Tour follow-up forms. In this way the full flavour of the tour can be appreciated in the words of the participants.

Expectations of participants – were they met?

The personal expectations of those participating on the tour were met well.

“Yes, expectations were met and exceeded. Really interesting to find out first-hand about grazing systems. The personal interpretation of the farmed environment by the land owners/managers was impressive. It just goes to reinforce that the people who farm the land know it best. The opportunity to learn about the different land management systems and methods directly from each farmer was really interesting and engaging. “

Caherfadda Townland.
“I learned a great deal from the Irish Farmers, in that they made the most of the natural resources they had available. This along with the BFCP environmental scheme is bringing about an improvement to biodiversity and a viable low input cattle system. While there are fundamental differences in climate and land-type, I still think there are several principles that we can bring back home to apply to our own farming system.”

“The place and people exceeded all expectations, quite wonderful. Lots of new ideas and approaches in farm conservation. New friends in Dales farm community made and lots of good contacts in Ireland.”

“All my personal outcomes were more than met by the study tour, in particular the ample opportunities to see the successor to the Burren Life programme as a locally delivered outcome focused yet strong on both rewarding agreement holders and requiring agreement holder participation, run by committed and knowledgeable staff, who we had ample opportunities to meet whilst the Burren as well as meeting a good number of farmers who were excellent in extolling the virtues of the schemes and the area to visitors, and also being financially rewarded to do so, they were the best possible ambassadors.”
“I’d hoped to come back with a good understanding of the BurrenLIFE project and its successor the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP), the approaches taken, and what worked and what didn’t. I also wanted to gain an understanding of how farming has shaped the Burren landscape, its rich cultural heritage, and its flora, fauna and geomorphology. I think these aims were achieved, particularly in relation to the BFCP. The trip was a good mix of activities and experiences including farmer-led tours around their farms, talks on the project aims by BFCP staff, and opportunities to talk on a one-to-one basis with the Burren farmers and BFCP staff.”

“It was very interesting to learn that it was funded from the Pillar 1 national envelope, something that Defra has not used in this CAP round. It did in the previous round and I was involved in designing and running a novel scheme to reduce sheep numbers on the Lakeland fells with farmers putting in bid prices to do so. I learned about the importance of farmer buy-in to the scheme and how actively involving them in the design of the scheme has paid dividends.”

(Experience of...) “different farming practices were well and truly met, worlds apart from us.”

**Most useful Aspects of the tour**

The mix of guided farm tours, presentations, informal and formal meetings with BFCP staff worked very well in engaging participants as part of the tour objectives.
“... Great range of places visited, range of environments, systems and characters. Inspiring stuff at BFCP, obviously great relationships with farmers/community.”

“The Farm Tours were the best. Discovering how the system of farmers interpreting their own landscape was probably the most useful aspect of the visit to me although it was also useful to see how the hostel was equipped and managed.”

“How the cows were kept out all winter. I really couldn’t understand how this would work, but it really does.”

“The involvement in the training session with the farmers who were in the BFCP agreements was the ideal opportunity to understand the elements of the programme and the farmers buy in to it too, as well as the Burrenbeo trust evening meeting, ......which resulted in a very interesting discussion on farming and the environment in special places like the Burren & the Yorkshire Dales.”

“The tour was very well organised. This meant that no time was wasted or diverted from the aims of the visit. Learning about the Burren scheme and its administration was very useful. Also learning from other team members, about the Dales Millennium Trust and what other farmers on the team thought of the Irish farms and farming methods compared to their own.”

“The programme was very well-organised and included a good mix of activities. The farm tours were all generally excellent experiences and they work because the farmers know their land and

“The farm visits went well and were most interesting. The most useful aspect of the visit was joining the Burren farmers on the BFCP workshop, because it was here that we got a real insight into how conservation worked on the ground.”

Burren Study Tour, Nov 2012.
are proud of the landscape and cultural heritage value of their land. It was interesting having tours with a range of farmers with different personal aims but all benefitting from the support of the BFCP and in turn ensuring that the project’s aims were achieved. Clearly the landscape is being protected and restored and the farmers are running their farms as they want to – either in a very traditional, largely pre-mechanised way or through more modern methods. It was useful seeing how closely farmers have been engaged with in developing and delivering the BFCP aims and how they have benefitted from participating in it.”

“The study group was a good mix of farmers and conservation staff. We generally worked well together and seemed enjoy each other’s company, and the timetable wasn’t too crammed so there was time for reflection and socialising.”

**Similarities between the Burren system and the Dales**

“There are similar issues around the need to maintain traditional, low-input farming methods to conserve the Dales landscape ... how economic and social pressures have led to changes in farming practices resulting in large-scale abandonment of those traditional methods for more intensive methods.”

“My present work involves working with farmers and farmer committees. I sometimes find it difficult to engage Dales farmers, they are often busy and the geography of the Dales LEADER area makes it difficult for farmers to meet. I was impressed by farmer turnout at the training course. Although there was a financial incentive, I still think that it would be difficult to engage so many Dales farmers on a winters afternoon. Again, geography works against this.

I got the impression that the Burren is a more cohesive area that the LEADER area.”

“Rural limestone country, down to earth people, habitat enhancement, good community links.”
“There are some similarities between Burren farming and our own. The limestone pastures are exposed and some with difficult access cause similar management problems.”

“The two LIFE funded programmes, Limestone Country in the Dales & the Burren LIFE, were very similar and achieved similar outcomes, but as the Limestone Country agreement holders were transferred into the national scheme (Environmental Stewardship) delivered by the national body (Natural England), and the project officer too, Burren Life had been able to “transfer” in to a local focused and delivered agri-environment scheme designed to enable environmental outcomes yet farmer focused in terms of the management required to deliver these outcomes and deliver locally by knowledgeable and committed staff. Although the areas were similar in terms of geology with the carboniferous limestone link, the farming was significantly different with the cattle dominated grazing in winter, as well as the aspect being coastal and the botanical interest being even more diverse than the Dales”.

There are obvious parallels of the landscape and farm systems of the Burren and the Dales, and significant differences, especially in the winter weather and length of growing season. I am sure that another bespoke agri-environment scheme (AES) similar to Limestone Country could be run to benefit the Dales environment and farming communities. However, the main strengths of the Burren Scheme are also, to my mind, the potential weaknesses.

- It looks to be very ably run by very knowledgeable, enthusiastic and dedicated staff. Issues of staff succession could be a problem.
- It is resource intensive compared to UK AE schemes. Having an adequate and capable staff resource goes a long way in achieving real outcomes as the Burren scheme demonstrates. It could be used as an example of it being better to concentrate resource on a smaller number of agreements and achieving real outcomes rather than playing the numbers game as has always been the case in England, despite the best efforts for the contrary from various agencies. I think that adequately resourced schemes in iconic, targeted areas should be given further consideration.
- It would be difficult to run the Burren scheme as part of the RDR which does not allow such flexibility in the AE measure and this is something that the UK Govt should be pressing for in current CAP negotiations. I only hope that the Irish Govt can continue to fund the Burren scheme under the next CAP round.”
As a result of the experience

The Study tour achieved the objective of giving participants the opportunity to assess what might work for them out of the experience.

“The experience gained will be brought into the piloting work for the Northern Upland chain LNP on High Nature Value farming in an attempt to try to influence the outcomes of CAP reform in the UK to add locally focused and delivered outcome schemes in areas like the dales.”

“Visiting other protected areas and talking to the land managers is always a good way to explore different ways to address common and specific issues relating to conserving and celebrating habitats, landscapes and rural heritage. I think the experience will help me in my role at YDMT, which involves managing meadow restoration and education projects and developing new conservation/heritage projects. The experience of the BFCP has emphasised the need to engage with farmers early on in the process of setting up projects and listening to them and taking their views, experience and aspirations into account. The contacts and experience gained may lead to joint work in the future.”

“I intend to try some cattle out-wintering on one area and see how it goes.”

“I am convinced that a low input system is the way forward for a viable suckler cow system on our farm. If suitable land becomes available in the future, I may adopt an out-wintering system using native cattle breeds to take account of the colder climate we have here in the Dales.”

I am already feeding my experiences of the tour to Natural England colleagues just starting work on the revision of AES in England and to senior colleagues in Sustainable Soils and Land Use Division, Defra.”

“If we run another apprentice scheme we may try to limit the geographical area, or split the scheme into smaller cohesive areas that have more of their own identifies, eg two adjacent dales which use the same market towns etc.”

“I intend to look at our ‘visitor offer’ and to develop closer links with the SAAG group with a view to altering our current programme of activities. I will pass on information to the Low Row pasture committee.”
“If I get involved in the design of AES I would explore ways in which to involve the farming community more in how objectives can be achieved. Also, to explore again the old chestnut of paying by results. This is more easily achieved in a Pillar type scheme than under the RDR which stipulates the same payment for a minimum of 5 years.”

**Improvements to the tour**

Suggested improvements were positive and will help inform further LEADER visits.

“Perhaps participants could meet before the study tour as a way to introduce themselves to each other and to discuss the programme and what each participant wanted to get out of the tour. “

“I don’t think that the host farmers had been adequately briefed about what the group was here to study. They started off seeming to assume that we were tourists. When they did start to understand why we were visiting they adapted well. Personally I would have liked more explanation from some about their farm businesses and how the Burren Scheme fitted in economically.”

Other comments from participants can be split into two sub-headings:

**Transport:**
“Possibly arrange our own transport by hiring a minibus and driving it ourselves would give us more flexibility.”

“The mini-bus driver imposed himself on the group too much rather than sticking to driving. I was not happy with him accompanying the group on a farm tour. This could inhibit the farmer talking about his business etc in front of a ‘local.

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5 As noted, host farmers had not received briefing notes prior to visit.
“I thought that the whole study tour went extremely well. The mini bus driver could have saved some time by knowing the local roads a bit better in terms of directions, but even this became a theme of the visit and everything went to plan with the travel arrangements! The very early flights are always a challenge in getting up in the middle of the night, but inevitably gave us more time in the Burren in daylight at this time of year.”

“Use of a community mini bus might have been helpful, especially if the Burren team could provide volunteer drivers from within the community.”

**Length of Tour**

“The tour was exactly right. Not too long to leave things to go wrong at home, (although they still did!) but long enough to find out about the area. We were kept busy which made good use of our time and maximised our opportunities to meet other people involved in rural business.”

“It was a very action packed tour and I would have benefited more if the activity were spread over more days.”

“Possibly allow a little more time.” “May be see it in the spring, a bit longer time; three days to five days?”

“Very early morning departures from Manchester and Shannon helped maximise study time for the minimum number of nights but did mean that the group were possibly not at their best, attention wise on the first day!”

“Could do with more time in the day, but it was a good balance of activity and reflection time. “
Other comments from the tour group

“It was a fantastic experience.”

“It was a great trip – thanks for organising it! I’d be very interested in taking part in any further study trips relevant to my work and interests.”

“....it has given us a lot to think about for the future.”

“A thoroughly well organised tour with a group of like-minded individuals from a good range of backgrounds.”

“The friendly atmosphere, we all got on together.”

“A really enjoyable and worthwhile trip with an interesting and well organised itinerary. I count it a privilege to have been part of it.”

“Would a network of farmers offering tours work in the YDNP? I’m sure there would be a good uptake from the visiting public.”

Conclusion

Much like the Leader Approach itself, the BFCP is a localised model for allowing community individuals to tailor solutions at a local level. It successfully involves a high level of
engagement in keeping farmers involved into the continuing development and delivery of a working conservation farming system.

The Study tour was successful in achieving its aim, and is able to evidence achievement of its objective. Participants were exposed to a wide array of agricultural practices and systems and from the feedback received it is clear that the experience has been worthwhile in identifying areas that might work in their own context.

The Study tour was very successful in achieving the expectations of the participants. All nine follow up forms were returned. All indicated that they would be sharing their experiences with friends, family and other contacts. The farm tours were invaluable and a perfect networking opportunity, as was the BFCP training event; this is reflected in feedback comments.

Initial feedback indicated that a five day Study Tour would be too long, and so the tour was shortened to three. Comments on this area indicate that a bit longer and/or less activity might also have worked, however it’s clear that the high degree of tour organisation was key to its success.

Without exception the learning experience offered by all of the host farmers and organisations was appreciated by the Study tour group and the hospitality received in the Burren tour was matchless.
Recommendations

Four farmers are on a reserve list and expressed an interest in joining the tour. This is the final year of the BFCP in its present form; there is much to be learned from the BFCP staff and the Burren communities. A further visit is recommended in the late spring to bring a different experience and enable a new set of participants. Minor alterations to the tour are recommended for any future visits.

The Study Tour re-enforced the value of the LEADER Approach features of networking, cooperation and innovation in achieving and initiating lasting effects on the dynamics of rural areas and their capacity to solve their own issues.

Participants were also asked if they had any recommendations for future Study tours. Responses received are recorded below.

- Tours to any European regions that are attempting — successfully or otherwise — to maintain and restore the cultural, nature conservation, landscape and tourism value of traditionally-managed farmland, with a focus on species-rich hay meadows and pastures in particular, would be useful. This could include the Massif Central in France, Transylvania, Pieniny National Park in Poland, and areas in Norway and Italy.
- I do not believe that the UK really makes the most of the potential of LEADER. Anecdotally I hear that other EU member states ’exploit’ this measure much more. It would be interesting to research if this is true and then, maybe arrange a study visit to selected projects to see what could be learned. Defra officials involved in interpreting LEADER guidelines and approving schemes should also attend.
- Czech Republic.
- Visits to other rural LEADER areas would probably also be useful or a repeat of this visit for others who didn’t get the chance to be involved 1st time round. I’m sure we would all recommend the opportunity to colleagues.

Networking and learning/capacity building is core activity within the Yorkshire Dales LDS. The Burren Study Tour outcomes show that positive impacts that can be achieved, with the potential for lasting beneficial activity. More investment in this type of targeted high value networking is recommended.
Further Reading


Bibliography

http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmerschemespayments/otherfarmersschemes/burren farmingforconservationprogramme/


http://changenation.org/solutions/farming-for-conservation

Dunford, B (2002). Farming and the Burren, Teagasc, Dublin.


http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/lookingafter/projectwork/limestonecountryproject/lcp downloads
Appendix 1: Introduction to the Burren

(extracted from http://changenation.org/solutions/farming-for-conservation)

The BurrenLIFE project is placing farmers at the centre of maintaining and protecting their land; linking agriculture, environmentalism, heritage protection, and tourism.

The Irish countryside has been shaped by farming for thousands of years, resulting in a rich tapestry of fields and hedgerows, archaeology and wildlife, prized by local communities and tourists alike. The unprecedented level of change in farming in recent decades has however distorted the traditional ‘balance’ between people and their place.

This has resulted, for example, in the intensification of farming in fertile lowlands and, inversely, in the reduction in activity in other, more ‘marginal’ areas such as uplands. Such changes have of course impacted profoundly on the natural and cultural values of these places, usually – though not always - in a negative way.

Rafts of legislation have been enacted and new agri-envt schemes have been introduced to address the resultant problems but the largely top-down, one-size-fits-all approach has alienated many farmers and has failed to address the loss of farmland biodiversity. Meanwhile, many rural communities, so integral to the character and health of some of Ireland’s finest and most visited landscapes, are struggling to survive.

The extent of the Burren region, is roughly indicated by the solid black line on the map below:
The solution

Brendan Dunford, Programme Manager for BurrenLIFE, views farmers as not just producers of quality food but also as a key resource in sustaining the health of our countryside. But these farmers must be afforded the resources, the flexibility and the trust to deliver on this potential.

With his Farming for Conservation Programme, farmers lead in the development and the delivery key conservation actions on their farms and are rewarded for this. This approach has successfully blended the disparate and often contrarian fields of agriculture, conservation, heritage and tourism to place farmers at the centre of land stewardship and create financial incentives for environmentally-sound landscape management.

Based on years of research and farmer input, Brendan and his team have designed a payment system to reward farmers for the delivery of public goods such as biodiversity and clean water, as well as co-funding necessary conservation infrastructure such as stone walls, water supplies and access tracks.

How it works

The importance of pastoral farming to the biodiversity of the Burren was clearly demonstrated in Brendan’s PhD. The subsequent 5-year grant from the European Commission allowed Brendan and his team to test some new ideas on 20 pilot farms (2,500ha) resulting in the development of an innovative blueprint for sustainable farming in the Burren.

The success of this work in protecting biodiversity, the very positive cost-benefit analysis, along with the strong support of the farming community, led to the Irish Department of Environment to match funding with the Department of Agriculture to implement the program across the Burren.

Roughly 150 places were allocated as part of a competitive application process (c.400 applicants) and a new, streamlined one-page farm plan template was created (typically farm plans are 30 to 40 pages). Farmers are paid an average of €6,000 per annum if they complete a number of self-nominated conservation works, but almost half of this payment is based on the quality of their grassland management, with each field scored on environmental criteria based around landscape, biodiversity and water quality values.

The high level of farmer input in designing plans and of flexibility in managing their land, along with the output-based payment system have proven very popular amongst farmers and has resulted in an exceptionally high standard of work – all for less than €100/ha of prime European habitat.
Objectives of Programme

The primary objectives of the Programme are as follows;

- To ensure the sustainable agricultural management of high nature value farmland in the Burren.
- To contribute to the positive management of the Burren landscape and the cultural heritage of the Burren.
- To contribute to improvements in water quality and water usage efficiency in the Burren region.

Updates:

Initiatives using the BurrenLife methodology in the Aran Islands, Kerry, Wicklow and Connemara will be piloted, subject to EU funding.

Sister organisation BurrenBeo is hosting a place-based learning workshop in August, entitled 'From Apathy to Empathy - Reconnecting People with Place.

A Winterage Festival is being planned for October 26th – 28th.

BurrenLife are now tailoring their existing model to adapt across all 32 counties in Ireland. The Proposal is sitting within Government.

Links:

http://www.burrenlife.com/

http://www.burrenbeo.com/
### Appendix 2: Budget (forecast and actual)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Assumed 8 attendees</th>
<th>REVISED 10 attendees</th>
<th>€ FORECAST</th>
<th>ACTUAL €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel : Car Mileage</td>
<td>200/person@40ppm</td>
<td></td>
<td>640</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel: Flight Manchester to Shannon</td>
<td>8 persons/@€125pp</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus Hire: to and from airport</td>
<td>With driver</td>
<td></td>
<td>625</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus Hire : in Burren</td>
<td>With driver</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1125</td>
<td>1125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast airport (shannon) @€12.50</td>
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<td></td>
<td>123</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breakfast (airport) @$10pp</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breakfast (hostel) @$3ppn</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>lunch Packed @€6ppx3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dinner @$20pppn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>411</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARM TOURS @5 @$10 pp</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>343</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Max Budget Required                           | 4767                | 5741                 | 4596.49    |

Rate agreed of 0.7994 € to the £ taken on 06/11/2012 at 14.00 from http://www.xe.com/ and http://www.exchangerates.org.uk/Pounds-to-Euros-currency-conversion-page.html http://www.exchangerates.org.uk/GBP-EUR-06_11_2012-exchange-rate-history.html shows where average exchange rate finished for that day (€0.801 to £)

TOTAL COST £459.65 per person
Appendix 3: Host Organisation/Visits Briefing Notes

Prior to our visit, all those participating have completed a form detailing why they’d like to come and what they hope they might gain from it. I thought it might be useful to share some of this information with you in advance.

1. **Those attending are:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rima Berry</td>
<td>Yorkshire Dales LEADER Project Co-ordinator. (Tour organiser)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cath Calvert</td>
<td>Hazel Brow Organic Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Condliffe</td>
<td>Manager, Dales Hill Farm Apprentice Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Ellis</td>
<td>Participant, Dales farm Apprentice Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Gamble</td>
<td>Hay-time Project Manager, Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian Shepherd</td>
<td>Head of Land Management, Yorkshire Dales National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Tayler</td>
<td>Deputy Director YDMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Townley</td>
<td>Burnt House Farm, Beef producer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet Whitaker</td>
<td>Ingleborough Limestone Beef producer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Whitaker</td>
<td>Ingleborough Limestone Beef producer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Participants’ expectations (a selection of responses):**

- Gain a good understanding of the Burren project, its approaches, what worked and what didn’t, and how farmers have been closely engaged with developing and delivering the project aims.
- To learn farmers’ attitudes to the project and if those attitudes have changed since they joined the project.
- To learn the strengths and weaknesses of the project from both the farmers’ and project team’s points of view.
- To see if aspects of the project can be applied to the Dales LEADER area in the future.
- Gain a deeper understanding about livestock farming in areas such as the Burren and the Yorkshire Dales and the challenges faced.
- To be able to feed knowledge gained from the study tour to the farm apprentices, helping them to appreciate farm and environmental policy beyond their own farm gates. Also at the other end of the spectrum, to make Defra policy colleagues more aware of LIFE projects and their potential.
- With increased understanding, being able to better advise on high nature value farm schemes.
- To bring home new ideas on cattle wintering and make improvements.
- To experience different farming practices.
- Make new friends and alliances with fellow members of the study tour and the LIFE project.
- See how the Burren LIFE project has been mainstreamed and how it supports high environmental value farming.
- To consider the implications and results for High Nature Value farming pilots in the YDNP and the wider Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership.
• To discuss with both the Burren LIFE project team and the farmers the merits of the project delivery, incentives and marketing & tourism benefits of the approach.
• Gain an understanding of the Burren: how farming has shaped the landscape, its rich cultural heritage, and its flora, fauna and geomorphology.

As you can see everyone is coming to learn! Please feel comfortable to share problems, challenges, as well as things that have gone well!

3. **Support needs:**

There are no access issues I am aware of and everyone has been briefed about suitable clothing and footwear.

4. **Resources:**

If there is any printed materials or other resources you can offer participants that would enhance their visit, please let me know in advance if there will be a cost incurred.

5. **Key liaison person:**

Over the 3 day visit that is myself, Rima Berry, my Contact Details are:
UK 01524251002, my MOBILE NUMBER is 079186 25125, email: rima.berry@ydmt.org
and we are stopping at Clare’s Rock Hostel 353 (0)65 7089129 or 353(0)87 123538

6. **The Study Tour Programme:**

I thought it might be useful to give an idea of our overall DRAFT programme while we are exploring the Burren area, so you know where we are!
Appendix 4: ITINERARY

**DAY 1: Wednesday 21st November**

**DEPART CLAPHAM LA2, Yorkshire Dales National Park Car Park**
Check in EARLIEST 06:40, LATEST 08:00, Depart Manchester Airport Terminal 1 EI3601 09:10

10:35 Arrive at Shannon airport. Travel to the Clare’s Rock Hostel, Carron (Approx 1.00 hours)

12:00 Arrive Clare’s Rock Hostel

**13:00 Welcome from Dr Brendan Dunford, BFCP Manager**

14:00 Optional activities: Short local Walk/Carron Farm tour with Patrick Cassidy. Burren Farming for Conservation “clinic” on Planning, 14:00-18:00 at the Michael Cusack’s Centre. Wander Carron Loop. Burren Perfumery stays open till 17:00. Cathair Chomain Stone Fort is within walking distance of the Hostel. Take torches.

17:00 Briefing from BCFP, Dr Sharon Parr
Presentation on Farming for Conservation Programme and BurrenLIFE Best Practice

18:00 Depart Clare’s Rock Hostel for Corofin (15 minutes)


20:00 Exit Bofey Quinns for bus to Tubber Village Hall

20:30 Tubber Hall: BurrenBeo Trust event

22:00 Exit Tubber VH for bus back to Clare’s Rock Hostel

**DAY 2: Thursday 22nd November**

09:15 Depart Clare’s Rock –(15 minutes) for Caherfadda, Frank O’Grady: near Kilnaboy

09:30 Caherfadda farm walk with Frank O’Grady

12:00 Depart from Caherfadda for Clare’s Rock (15 minutes).

13:40 Travel to Poulnalour (20 minutes) Harry Jeuken: Mullaghmore cross (Burren National Park)

14:00 Poulnalour Farm Walk with Harry Jeuken

16:10 Depart Poulnalour for Clare’s Rock


23:00 Exit Vaughans for bus back to Clare’s Rock
DAY 3: Friday 23rd November

07:30  Depart Clares Rock for Poulnabrone Dolmen (10 minutes) (OPTIONAL SUNRISE TRIP

09:15  Depart Poulnabrone Dolmen on bus for Glenquin (25 minutes)

09:45  Tour Glenquin Farm, Organic Mixed farm with Pat McCormack

12:00  Tea at Father Teds!

13:40  Depart Fr Ted’s on bus for Pullagh (15 minutes)

14:00  Farmer Training Session at Pullagh Farm with Pat Nagle.

16:30  Depart Pullagh for Clare’s Rock Hostel (10 minutes).

17:45  Clare’s Rock Meeting Room: Dr Brendan Dunford, Q&A.

18:35  Depart Clare’s Rock Hostel for Ballyvaughan (20 minutes) Logues Bar and Restaurant http://www.logueslodge.ie/index.htm

21:00  Return to Clare’s Rock Hostel. FAREWELL Evening at Cassidys Pub, Traditional Music Night.
Appendix 5: BFCP Farm Demonstration 2012, Nagle's Farm, Pullagh.
Farm: Pat and Oliver Nagle, Pullagh

Site size: 33.25ha (80 acres). All SAC (East Burren Complex)
Farming System: Suckler cows, mixed breeds. Site used for outwintering.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure 1</th>
<th>Field Size (ha)</th>
<th>Eligible (ha)</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>{7}</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measure 1 payment has increased by 30.54% in three years.
For example, Field 4 earned €293.3 in Year 1, but earned €402.24 in Year
3.87% of maximum available payment is now being drawn down.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure 2 Work Undertaken</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Time (days for 2 people)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scrub removal (Area 'A5', using chainsaws)</td>
<td>0.182ha</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall repair (mothair and shelter walls)</td>
<td>245m</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water- build wall around spring (F3/6)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrub removal (Mothairs, using chainsaws)</td>
<td>0.087ha</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrub removal (E side of big Mothair, brushcutter)</td>
<td>0.306ha</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall repair (mothairs)</td>
<td>510m</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water- clean out and fix spring in big mothair</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erect Solar fence (Divide F3 from F6)</td>
<td>250m</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All SAC fields qualify for Measure 3 Payment