

Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial

Access case study series

Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Case Studies

A series of 21 reports based on interviews with farmers, land managers, landowners and access professionals.

Case Studies

This report consists of a series of 21 case studies based on interviews or site visits with farmers, land managers, landowners and access professionals. They all took place in 2020 as part of the Enhancing Access Test and Trial that was conducted by the Kent Downs AONB Unit.

Farm or organisation	Interviewee/s	Date
Bartley Mill Farm	Juanita Rogers	6 th November 2020
Bore Place	Caroline Arnold	1 st June 2020
Coldharbour Farm	William Fraser	28 th October 2020
Dandelion Time	Caroline Jessel & Carol Bridges	4 th May 2020
Elmley National Nature Reserve	Gareth Fulton	9 th November 2020
Hatch Park	Michael-John Knatchbull	4 th November 2020
Higher Cuttlesham Farm	No interview	
Hope Farm	Doug Taylor	9 th November 2020
Kent Public Rights of Way	Graham Rusling, Tom Kennedy & David Munn	5 th August
Kent Wildlife Trust	Ian Rickards, John Wilson, Keeley Atkinson, Brian Fraser (Oakover Nurseries) & Peter Howard (Bockhangar Farm Ltd)	May 2020
National Trust	Jon Barker and Rob Sonnen	15 th June 2020
Natural England	Dan Tuson	7 th April 2020
Nonington Farms	Emma Loder-Symonds	13 th November 2020
North Downs Way	Pete Morris	8 th February 2021
Oakwell Estate	Colin Caverhill	8 th June 2020
Pent Farm	Debbie and Tom Reynolds	19 th November 2020
Ranscombe Farm	Richard Moyse (Plantlife)	6 th May 2020
Quex Park Estate	Anthony Curwen	6 th July 2020
Ramblers	Stephen Russell	24 th July 2020
SW Attwood & Partners	Stephen and James Attwood	20 th May 2020
Wye Community Farm	Richard Boden and Katy Bravery	16 th June 2020

The Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial is being carried out by the National Association for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty on behalf of Defra and delivered by the Kent Downs AONB Unit.

Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series

Bartley Mill Farm

Interviewee

Juanita Rogers

Interview date

6 November 2020



Bartley Mill Farm

Bartley Mill Farm is a small farm of approximately 32 acres (12ha) on the Kent Sussex border. Formerly a Mill, it lies between the villages of Wadhurst, Bells Yew Green and Lamberhurst. The farm is run along organic principles. It comprises grassland for beef cattle, as well as a vineyard and woodlands. A Bridleway runs through the centre of the farm. There is a holiday let building, and they are exploring other farm diversification options.

Juanita is very keen to expand the educational opportunities of the site by opening it up to groups to let them experience the countryside, farming, and outdoor activities in a residential farm setting.

Introduction to Bartley Mill Farm

The farm has been in the ownership of Juanita and Rhys Rogers since 1997. The land was originally rented to an organic dairy farmer before TB movement restrictions meant that they were unable to continue (they are just inside Sussex the farmer was in Kent) They now farm themselves following organic principles. They have previously had sheep but gave up because of low returns, with pigs in the woodland. 9ha are pasture for the Sussex cattle, a local (Weald of Sussex, Kent, and Surrey) red beef cattle, with just under 2ha of broadleaved native woodland.

Being a mill, much of farm lies at the bottom of a valley on heavy Wealden clay, with the River Teise running through it. On the SSE facing slope however they have been able to plant a 2ha vineyard in 2015. This consists of champagne grapes: Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay. They expect to get a useable harvest in 2021. This will be processed and bottled locally.

They have a bridleway, therefore also used as a footpath, going through the middle of the farm, next to the house. The footpath would have historically been there because of the mill. It is unclear when or why it was upgraded to a bridleway.

Countryside Stewardship

Although previously successful in making applications, the farm has not been able to get Countryside Stewardship in recent years, initially with the more evidenced based application. To increase their chances of success this year, they enlisted the help of the Catchment Sensitive Area Officer. They will hear in spring 2021.

The farm has previously been put forward for Countryside Stewardship educational access. There was however no uptake by any groups or schools. It is not enough to be available, there needs to be help marrying suppliers to users.

Bridleway issues

Their location, away from local settlements, mean that their main users are local people who walk, run or ride there. Even in the summer they usually have no more than six people a day. There was only a slight increase during Lockdown (1) in the summer. At this time, the bridleways proximity to the house became more threatening as they were 'shielding' a vulnerable person who had to be particularly careful not to meet any passers-by when leaving the house. The path poses a security risk as they cannot regulate who comes near their property. A quad bike was stolen just before lockdown by persons who had carefully observed their routine.

The mill was formerly a tea shop and tourist attraction and despite having lived there for many years, they still occasionally get tourists arriving at the farm with expectations. People park on their verge, on what can be a fast road, to look over their fence into their garden and admire the view. They also want to picnic on and off their footpath.

Dogs off leads have been known to chase sheep locally.

Local horse riders frequently deviate from the bridlepath, going into their field, to exercise their horses. It is not felt that signage has been a contributing factor to people going off route, since it is clearly marked. This may however suggest a local demand for more off-road riding opportunities.

Due to their location, away from close settlements, there does not seem to be a particular demand for increased permissive paths as evidenced by Lockdown (1). It does not appear to be a case of lack of connectivity to the network. Local users continue to use the route in small numbers.

People driving out are looking for a destination.

Diversification

There are plans for the vineyard to develop a vineyard cafe and tasting room in a barn. This will include all necessary lavatory facilities and be accessed by a track.

They also propose to provide a dog walking field. To achieve this, livestock would be removed, the field properly fenced for dogs, with the provision of a couple of parking spaces. Users will be able to book online. The accepted hire rate is £10.00 an hour for dog walking.

Education

Juanita is particularly interested in introducing young people to countryside activities and skills, something out in the open air, away from screens and away from other sources of influence. It is felt that this is needed because people do not understand the countryside or the benefits of being in it. They also do not understand where their food comes from. This is something that children really need to learn from an early age.

With four sons of her own, she understands that children, and she feels, especially teenage boys, need countryside activities. Her own children went to a centre near Uckfield where they learnt to whittle, build shelters, make a fire without matches etc. She would like small groups to come to the farm for a couple of nights and experience outdoor challenges, with exciting activities that help them experience and manage risks (within Health and Safety Guidelines and fully risk assessed).

She would welcome children from areas of deprivation, including inner city areas, and children with physical and learning difficulties, aware also of the benefits of gardening and putting your hands in the soil. She would also like to attract young people from local secondary school who equally do not go

out into the countryside. She has had first-hand experience of countryside pursuits helping local troubled teenagers.

Led by an outward-bound person (s), based in tents, with compost loos, activities could also include things based around farming such as hedge planting and cutting wood. They could also learn about countryside activities like making charcoal and its uses and the historical ironworking sites in the area.

Ideally, she would like to devote most of the grassland to this activity but retaining enough grazing for 8 of their very docile Sussex cattle so that people can be taught how to be around them safely.

Users would be given the ability to roam within agreed limits and boundaries.

Access ELM at Bartley Farm Mill

Land taken out of food or classic farming activities to provide a public good still needs to generate an income. Not farming and producing food has a knock-on effect on tax. Many of the farms in the area are small and cannot afford to lose this money. Currently, if Bartley Mill Farm diversifies to include outdoor education space, they would lose most of her income, already very little from existing farming activities. The holiday let is not classed as farm income for tax purposes. This is an important driver; many farms can only diversify so much. This will be different for a large farm.

- An Access ELM would need to provide an income to make up for not generating a farming income. This would need to be a scalable value of the dog walking field.

Measures of success

It is hard to put a value on a much greater understanding, appreciation, value, and enjoyment of the countryside. It would have to include better behaviour in the countryside and an increased knowledge of where food comes from. This would be money well spent and provide a public good.

Key points from the interview

Bartley Mill Farm would like to be an activity and educational destination for small groups subject to appropriate payment levels. The provision of outdoor education and activity space for a wide range of disadvantaged children and those with poor or limited access to the countryside would serve a public good.

- Income lost from traditional farming activities because of educational provision would need to be replaced.
- Facilitators would be key in linking groups with farms.
- ELM application must not be unnecessarily complex, with advisers providing an important role

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 **Kent
Downs**
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Bore Place

Interviewee

Caroline Arnold - Director

Interview date

1 June 2020



Bore Place

Bore Place is home to the Commonwork Trust and Commonwork Organic Farms Ltd. It was purchased in 1976 by Neil and Jenifer Wates, who set up the trust and established the ethos of Bore Place. Now, it is a 200-hectare organic dairy farm, organic market garden, residential venue and outdoor learning centre. There is public access to large areas of the farm with three permissive access routes promoted across the site and four cycling routes starting at Bore Place.

Introduction to Bore Place

Bore Place runs a variety of events and offers a range of services that support the overall aims of the trust. These include:

- An organic dairy farm.
- An organic market garden including share farming opportunities.
- A cheesemaker.
- Courses and learning opportunities (growing, green woodworking, cooking, market gardening and connecting people to food).
- Holiday clubs.
- Residential stays for families (currently funded by Children in Need).

- Courses supporting mental health and wellbeing for people with additional needs.
- Conference centre and wedding venue (this helps support core costs).

The overarching aim of the organisation is to promote well-being and learning through an understanding of the natural world, responsible land management and food production. Allowing people to access this is fundamental, whether it is through walking routes, guided tours, venue facilities, courses and events or through the educational programmes. As Bore Place is supported primarily through its own income generation rather than grants, Covid-19 has had a large impact on the finances of the organisation.



Current land management and access

The land at Bore Place is currently receiving funding through the Basic Payment Scheme and through Countryside Stewardship. Monies are received because of the organic status of the farm as well as for educational access. The money for educational access helps to fund some of the current educational delivery. An integrated farm management plan was produced in 2019 to help identify how the farm could be better for wildlife, use less water and have less of an impact on the environment. Ideally, ELM would help Bore Place to implement this plan. The farm is now run in partnership with a local organic dairy farmer who bought into the principles of Bore Place. The profits are shared, with Bore Place investing into the infrastructure of the farm.

Currently, access is provided through three permissive routes in addition to public rights of way. These have signposts but there is rarely the budget

to maintain these walks in a way that Bore Place would like. They can become muddy; signage could be better and they still contain some stiles rather than kissing gates. Bore Place has a car park, which helps to attract people but doesn't receive the same number of visitors as the nearby National Trust property, Ide Hill. Funding has recently been received to add a play trail to the permissive routes. However, the routes are not fully accessible and, consequently, are not promoted as much as they could be.

One of the barriers to the public and other groups accessing Bore Place is that not enough people know it exists. The travel costs for schools and groups are prohibitive and the costs of tutors must also be covered. As most school groups want to come to Bore Place between April and July this causes issues in terms of capacity and being unable to employ permanent staff. The perception of risk also prevents groups from attending a working farm.

Public access does present a few problems. The ecology of the grassland and woodland is not as





delicate as some habitats so off-lead dogs aren't as much of a problem as for some farms. Dog faeces that are not picked up is more of an issue. The public can let cattle out of their fields, which is a risk to both property and is a distraction for staff. Having cows in an area where the public are invited to walk is a safety concern.

How could Bore Place benefit from an access based ELM and how could this be administered?

Bore Place provides public access to their land and farm as well as providing opportunities for under-represented groups to access greenspaces and the farm as part of structured programmes. Consequently, there are several ways that an Enhancing Access Opportunities ELM could be beneficial to Bore Place.

1. Funding to support access by under-represented groups

Bore Place can offer activities for a range of different groups that will help them to understand:

- how the farm works.
- where food comes from.
- traditional rural crafts and skills.
- using cooking to help connect people to nature and where food comes from.
- the wildlife and habitats at the farm.

Staff can be used to deliver these events. They are best placed to do this as they understand their area of work better than others brought in to interpret their work. However, without the level of funding required to compensate them for lost earnings it is difficult to justify running these types of event. This funding could also be used to support some of the other work Bore Place does with under-represented groups.

An ELM that supports this sort of access must contribute to the transport costs of those that attend as this is a major barrier. It is likely that an intermediary is needed to link groups with those farms and organisations that are offering access opportunities. This kind of facilitation role could be administered at a county or regional level and is something that Bore Place could do if financial support was offered. Those farms and organisations that host the visits will also need financial compensation for the infrastructure that needs to be put in place for safe visits.

2. An Enhanced Access ELM

The current permissive routes are difficult to promote as the quality is not as high as Bore Place would like. An ELM that encourages farmers and landowners to provide access of a minimum standard would be welcomed. It is important that this ELM covered both the capital costs of providing access as well as funding maintenance and revenue costs. These are likely to include:

- Providing surfacing that increases the number of people who can access the paths.
- Replacing stiles with kissing gates.
- Information panels and signage.
- Picnic spaces and provision for wheelchair users.
- Increased parking provision.
- Visitor centre within the dairy/farm.

Capital funding would really enhance what could be offered but needs to be available up front. It is unlikely that any farm or organisation would pay for things where the cost of installation would only be recovered over the next 10 years of an agreement. A mechanism needs to be put into place to ensure

that the level of funding reflected the quality of the experience that visitors receive. This could be provided by having different tiers. For example, an entry tier could be given simply for providing access to land with an upper tier based on reaching minimum standards. This would include promoting the access and potentially meeting minimum numbers of people. An ELM such as this could provide the stimulus for other economic activity at Bore Place such as opening a shop or café/restaurant.

Additional comments

Other access related comments that were discussed during the interview include:

- City areas should pay countryside areas for the provision of access as it is often people who live in cities that take advantage of access provided/or could benefit.
- Areas where there is money in the system should be used to pay for access. E.g. section 106 payments.
- Farm clusters could also provide ways of promoting access across wider areas. This may be particularly suited to cycle access.
- Bore Place has found that Countryside Stewardship and the Woodland Grant Scheme doesn't pay for the full cost of providing access or other work. Feels that ELM payments should be tied to outputs.

Bore Place has found the RPA difficult to deal with and unresponsive/slow to requests for assistance. When the system is fully online it is easier. Bore Place has no preference for regional or national administration.

Key points from the interview

- Bore Place would be keen to take part in an ELM that provided opportunities for those under-represented in the countryside to attend events and experience the farm.
- An Enhanced Access ELM that allowed both capital and revenue expenditure would be welcomed.
- Payment rates should reflect the quality of the experience that was provided.

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Coldharbour Farm

Interviewee

William Fraser, also of Perdix Property Ltd

Interview date

28 October 2020



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Coldharbour Farm

(Fraser's of Coldharbour Farm)

Coldharbour farm is a 300-acre family farm in Egerton, near Ashford. It has diversified over the last 12 years to include a successful and award-winning hospitality business, providing local seasonal produce. The whole farm ethos is one of sustainability. Several public footpaths cross the farm.

Introduction to Coldharbour Farm and Fraser's

Originally a dairy enterprise, the whole farm has now been turned over to grass for beef cattle. The aim has been to develop a low impact grass system, with minimal nitrogen input in order to create a highly sustainable farm that promotes wildlife. In the summer 3 x 50 acres are used for the suckler-beef herd, the remaining acreage is cut for hay. The fields are grazed with sheep in the winter.

The farm applied for Countryside Stewardship in July 2020: 8 acres- wild bird mix, 2.5 acres pollinator mix, 50 acres in very low intensity farming, fencing and gates. This did not include any access options. They will find out if they have been successful in spring 2021.

They have worked with the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership to improve great crested newt populations by restoring 5 newt ponds. They created a further pond and scrape in 2020 where they have already seen snipe and teal. This has been done under Natural England's District Level Licensing scheme. They are looking at the potential for enhancement schemes on land adjoining the newt ponds.

The farm is working actively with the Kent Wildlife Trust, Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership and Upper Beult Catchment Farm Cluster. They are currently having winter bird surveys carried out by the Kent Wildlife Trust and then a more detailed, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) style, winter and breeding survey being carried out over winter and into spring 2021.

In 2008 Coldharbour Farm diversified its range of activities, adding a thriving hospitality business called Fraser's. This has continued to expand and develop. In 2017 it won British Farming Large Diversification of the year Award to mark the change

from farming alone into an award-winning restaurant with rooms and a boutique wedding venue. The most recent addition, Stags Barn, was part funded by The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The impact of the business has been minimised with a range of energy saving and environmentally friendly features. The aim of the restaurant is to use locally sourced, traceable seasonal food, reducing both food miles, as well as boosting the local economy.

Access on the farm

There are several public footpaths on the farm. Some are heavily used; others are only used by a few people.

As part of the Fraser's hospitality business, guests are encouraged to walk both around the farm on the existing public footpath network and to walk to the local village of Egerton. Certified maps are handed out for guests and those enjoying the restaurant for a meal or afternoon tea. The cost of these maps is met by the business.

Which groups have visited the farm?

Members of the Upper Beult Farmer Cluster run by Kent Wildlife Trust in partnership with Southern Water, will be visiting Coldharbour Farm to look at the pond restorations and pond and scrape creations when current Covid restrictions allow. The KWT Farm Clusters Officer, Rory Harding, has already undertaken a preparatory visit, and walked the route and discussed visit content. The group, of which Coldharbour is a member, aims to help farms protect and improve water quality, soil health and biodiversity. Shared knowledge has been an important training tool as well as healthy competition species spotting.

Access issues

As part of the farm diversification scheme, application was made for a minor footpath diversion

away from a newly converted holiday cottage building for security and privacy, without detracting from the overall route. The process took two years and cost £2000. The new route has not updated to the online OS mapping system.

Regular footpath users are aware of the countryside code, occasional users can see paths as free access to the land, starting on a footpath but going off route. It was stated that it is important not to create new paths by establishing desire line paths which run the risk of creating new unregulated routes.

Dog can be an issue. Once dog owners have left the metalled road, they habitually either do not pick up after their dogs or do pick up and hang bags in trees and hedges never to be collected. Conflicts also arise with dogs off leads around livestock.

How could Access ELM work

William said that access should all be about the quality of the footpaths rather than the number of paths. The existing network needs to be well signed with appropriate access. He said that that he would consider additional permissive paths if: It would lead to more integration of the path network, the footpaths were beneficial to the overall business, the remuneration level were appropriate for the level of additional work and additional insurance costs were met.

Ideally, he would like people to register online to use permissive routes, agreeing to abide by the countryside code.

There would need to be the ability to alter or close permissive routes when farming conditions or wildlife require it. If there was any mechanism for notifying people at a point on the route when they could make a change, for example on the main road, this should be worked towards.

The cessation of a permissive route at the end of a funding period is an issue as people wish to continue to use them. This would need to be addressed.

Education

The farm has some facilities associated with the hospitality business, including parking, toilets, and meeting rooms. It was felt that it was especially

important to encourage people from towns to visit rural areas. They needed to be educated how to do this responsibly. He would be very pleased to have some school and other group visits the farm if: it could work around existing business, there was an appropriate level of control and additional costs including insurance liability were met.

In addition to organised visits, he would like to enhance what they already have for all users, by adding value to people walking the existing footpaths. This could be done by installing signage at drop off points along the route, for example informing people about the wildlife value of the ponds This could be done using QR codes on posts or other signage.

Measures of success

There has been very low uptake of some Countryside Stewardship elements because of the weight of evidence required. Some measures of success are obvious, others harder to quantify.

- Measurable markers of success would include a reduction in livestock problems, an increase in path usage and an increase in business performance for example users of Frasers facilities.
- Signage near landscape features or points of wildlife interest would help engender respect for those features and add to the overall experience. This may lead to an increase of visitor numbers. This could only be measured by user surveys.
- The rural economy is very fragile, it is important that people visit working farms to understand where their food comes from and can make informed choices when it comes to the supermarket and whether to choose local produce or imported goods. An increase in local produce purchase would be a measure of success.

Organisation

In his role as a rural property and management consultant, William said that there needed to be more balance, flexibility, and common sense in relation to existing footpaths. Footpaths and access present working issues for farmers. If you are trying to encourage them to extend or improve access, there needs to be a better relationship and simplified system when it comes to dealing with matters such as minor diversions for security and

biosecurity reasons around buildings and expanding farmyard infrastructure. If there is a simple, practical solution an alternative route should be made possible. This should be quicker and cheaper and not burdened by lengthy delays by the default position of objections. There seem to be conflicting aims between government departments.

The practicalities of becoming more sustainable in farming often mean an intensification of the core infrastructure. Historically many footpaths have gone through farmyards. Intensive central areas allow for efficient management systems, less intensification elsewhere and are better for wildlife in the wider farm.

Key points from the interview

- Access ELM payments at Coldharbour Farm would be useful to promote education and access in a variety of forms. This would always need to be linked to the requirements of the business and subject to insurance and appropriate remuneration levels.
- They would be open to some organised controlled groups coming from urban areas. Will Fraser stated that it was important for people to access working farms in a responsible manner and to appreciate how their food is grown to make informed purchasing choices.
- Would like to see Access ELM pay for signage that enhanced the existing network, for example using QR codes on posts to add information about features of interest, as well as an online system to alert users to closures for stock or conservation reasons.
- Would be prepared to consider permissive routes if they would lead to a greater integration of the network, could be controlled, closed as required and as long as the end of the scheme could be addressed.

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Dandelion Time

Interviewees

Caroline Jessel – Chairman of Trustees

Carol Bridges – Director of Therapy and Training

Interview date

4 May 2020



Dandelion Time

Dandelion Time was founded in 2003 by Dr Caroline Jessel to provide therapeutic support for children with challenging emotional issues. The charitable trust now works across three sites in the Maidstone and Ashford areas providing opportunities for young people and their families to interact with the natural environment through absorbing and calming hands on activities. Therapists guide families through the process to help lay down positive memories and build stronger bonds.

Providing enhanced access opportunities

Dandelion Time does not generally provide unsupervised public access to their own sites in a way that may happen on a farm or a nature reserve. However, the work that they do provides meaningful interactions with nature for young people and their families. These therapeutic interventions provide sensory experiences with nature through caring for animals, experiencing nature and sensory connections with natural materials. Dandelion Time's therapeutic programme is most suitable for children and young people aged 6-13 years and for whom experience of trauma is past rather than on-going. Those that are referred are invited to attend weekly half-day group sessions for between 10 and 15 weeks. The children are usually referred to Dandelion Time by other services.

The organisation now has three sites where opportunities are provided and these are secured through long-term leases. Scout huts in Bethersden and Boughton Monchelsea are used as well as the main site in West Farleigh. The three sites contain

grassland, an orchard and woodland habitats. They also care for chickens, donkeys and sheep. The aim of site management is to create wildlife friendly places. Dandelion Time has never accessed the Basic Payment Scheme or Countryside Stewardship support.

The organisation is funded by a variety of means but very little of this funding is secure. Although a small amount of support is received directly from those that refer children and families, 77% of all funds were received through donations and grant funding in the year up to August 2019. It is difficult for Dandelion Time to access statutory funding.

What the work achieves

The organisation's work helps those that have suffered traumatic events for a variety of reasons. This can often slow a child's development and the natural world can provide a gentle way of restoring these developmental processes. The places where therapy happens are important. They must feel safe and nurturing and the experiences must be positive. The children who attend sessions have often been







let down by adults and care must be taken not to re-traumatise the child.

Many of the children and families that Dandelion Time work with are not used to being outside. Fear of going outside is a real issue and their therapeutic work focuses on nature connectedness. This is not just about being outside but making a real connection with nature. Research carried out by the [Nature Connectedness Research Group](#) at the University of Derby has shown that levels of connectedness may even be low amongst people who live in the countryside. Simply providing access to nature is not the answer to this problem. Meaningful experiences can help people appreciate nature, value their surroundings and improve relationships with those around them.

More information about the work of Dandelion Time and the impact it has on children and families can be found on their [website](#) including an excellent, [regularly updated blog](#).

How could Dandelion Time benefit from an access based ELM and how could this be administered?

Traditional agri-environment models for providing access would not be appropriate for Dandelion Time. Their work is not simply based around providing public access for walkers or educational groups. An Enhanced Access ELM that would be appropriate for Dandelion Time must support the

high quality, intensive work with individuals and families that is provided.

Three ways that Dandelion Time could benefit from an ELM were identified during the interview and ways of administering or qualifying for this support were discussed:

1. Resources to facilitate access

This funding would be provided to prepare places for enhanced access opportunities. It could support the management of land as well as provide parking areas, toilets with cleaning facilities and covered areas for sessions. Without these facilities in place it is challenging to provide a nurturing and healing environment.

Clearly, it is not possible for an ELM to provide these kinds of resources to any farm, nature reserve or establishment that feels they would be useful. Also, it may not be possible to 100% fund these kinds of facilities. However, there could be a qualification process that potential recipients would have to pass before access to these funds was made possible. This could be around charitable status, the kind of individuals that an organisation is looking to engage with and possibly the location of the service.

2. Direct support for services

Countryside Stewardship currently provides support for farms who offer educational visits. Payments for

visits such as these go to the farmer or land manager but do not provide assistance for those who work with the beneficiaries.

If ELM access payments are to reach groups that are under-represented in the countryside or those that would benefit most from being given access to greenspaces a different model is needed. Direct payments to those who offer high quality, structured access to greenspaces for people who need them most could achieve this. It could provide a step change in the provision of public access by agri environment schemes in England and Wales.

One issue with this approach is which organisations should qualify for support to provide access visits. The activity provides a public good as defined by Defra and does result in a better understanding of the importance of nature. However, there would need to be a qualifying test before an organisation is eligible. This would measure their outputs as well as the quality of their outcomes. Once qualified, payment could be made either by head or by session as these outputs are easy to measure. Again, a measure of quality would also need to be taken to ensure that the sessions were achieving their goals. This could be done by evaluation form or through some other method of user assessment. This would need to be both relatively easy to achieve and something that could both be applicable to the organisation and be comparable across organisations.

This funding stream would be dependent upon having the correct administration body and advice for organisations who may want to join this scheme.

This is particularly important as some may not have any other contact with agri environment schemes.

3. Support for visits to other properties

Dandelion Time would benefit from having farms and nature reserves that children and families could visit in places where they don't own or manage land. High quality venues could receive payments for hosting groups that provide specialist access to groups. Mixed farms with a variety of crops and animals would be most useful for Dandelion Time.

These venues must feel safe and nurturing to ensure that they do not re-traumatise children. This would also be the case for many other groups that have specialist needs. Farms and other places providing venues would need to have a safe space for learning as well as toilets and other cleaning facilities. Consequently, they need to be well chosen. However, these venues could provide a network of high quality spaces to provide enhanced access opportunities to a wide variety of groups with specific needs. This would be very beneficial for an organisation such as Dandelion Time and could provide considerable flexibility to deliver their services in a range of locations and respond to demand.

This service could be administered in a similar way to the current Educational Access payments provided through Countryside Stewardship. However, the enhanced requirements to provide venues suitable for a variety of different groups may necessitate capital payments as well as a fixed payment per visit.

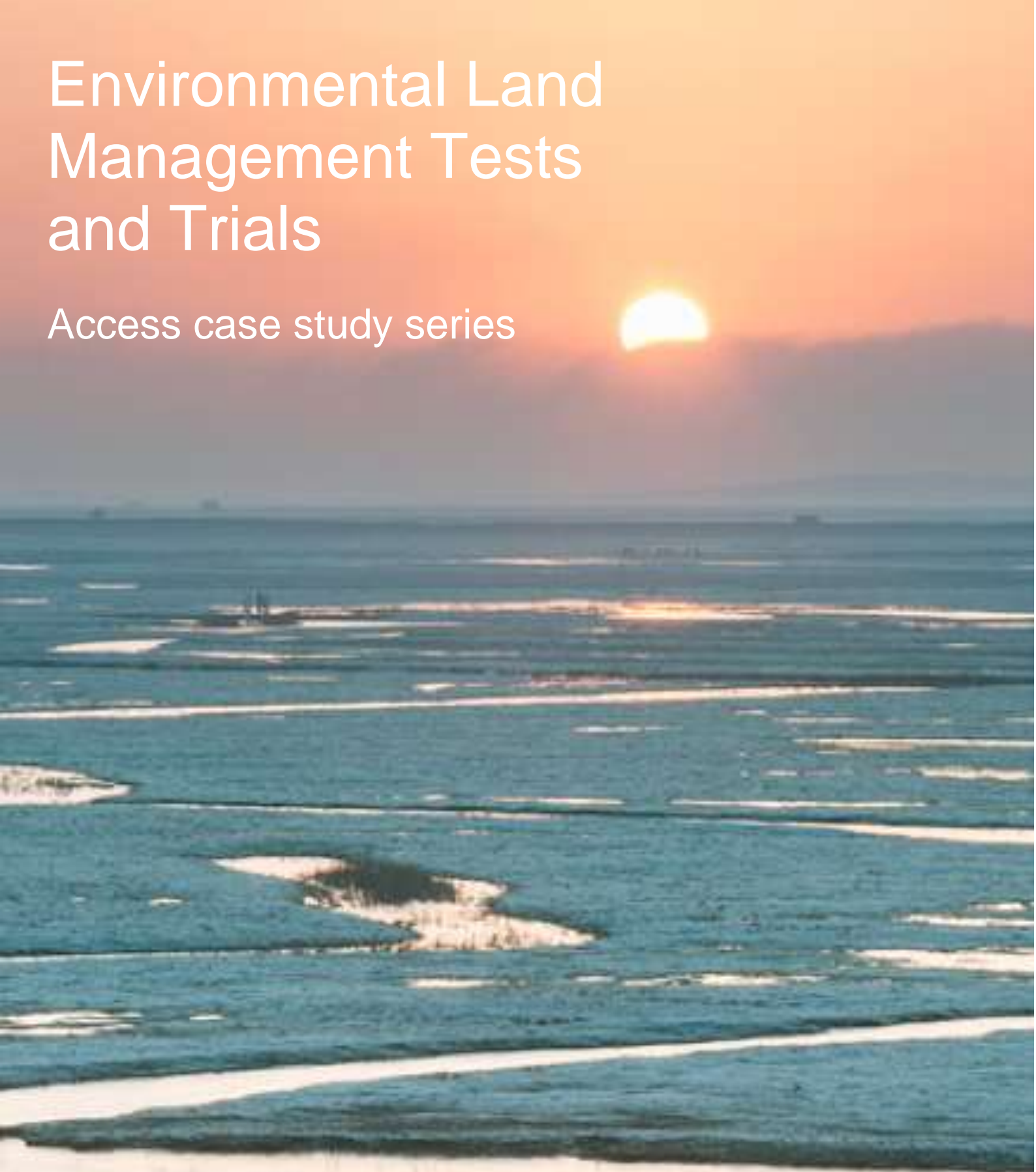
Key points from the interview

- Dandelion Time provide specialist access to green spaces that can't be provided by farmers or other landowners.
- An enhanced access package could provide the resources and facilities to support this kind of access.
- Specialist access providers such as Dandelion Time can be paid to facilitate access for groups that are under-represented in the countryside and other green spaces.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



Elmley National Nature Reserve

Interviewee

Gareth Fulton

Interview date

9 November 2020

Elmley NNR

Elmley National Nature Reserve (NNR) is a site of rugged beauty and of international renown. It comprises 3,300acre of wet grassland on the Isle of Sheppey, off the North coast of Kent. The reserve is on the south western edge of the island. It lies on The Swale, a tidal channel of the Thames Estuary. The wet grasslands are internationally important for birds, especially waders and raptors. The whole site has been designated a Special Protection Area (SPA), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ramsar site.

The Merricks family own and farm Elmley based around the buildings at Kingshill Farm. It is the first family owned NNR in the UK. They have a wealth of knowledge in their dual roles of managing the site for wildlife whilst making it accessible to the public

There are Public rights of way on the site and permissive routes which they have added. It is well used by a wide range of groups and individuals, including those with disabilities and some school groups.

Introduction to Elmley NNR.

Elmley was a traditional farming estate until the 1980's with crops and livestock. Country activities included shooting (famous for duck shoots) and commercial fishing. In Victorian times there were brickworks and cement works. It was very industrial site. A place of human activity.

It is a man-made habitat, substantially changed 400 years ago by the building of sea walls, dug out by hand, to hold back the salt water. They now have fresh and salt water next to each other.

In the 1980's Elmley's natural assets were recognised and the whole site was designated a SSSI, under the legal framework of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. The very endangered Marsh Harrier was present, at that time there was one breeding pair in the country, and an incredibly significant population of wading birds.

All active arable farming ceased by the mid-1980s. The process began of working with the legislation and genesis of agri-environments. Although lots of people were resistant, the owner Philip Merricks, decided to manage the estate positively and revert all arable areas into wet grassland. They set out to manage the site and enhance it for its wildlife outcome, breeding waders and raptors, making it as good as possible for them.

This is what they have continued to do over the last 40 years. By 1994, they were doing this so well that they became the first farming family to own and manage a National Nature Reserve.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) rented 600 acres from them from the 1970s up until 2013. They did the public facing side, including the access. When the RSPB tenancy ended on 600 acres of Elmley in 2013, the Merricks' daughter Georgina, and her husband Gareth Fulton, took on the running of the site, with advice from Natural England, Philip Merricks, and previous site managers.

They have tried to further the public access alongside overnight stays and events to bring a wider diversity of people to Elmley. At the same time, they have, with graziers, undertaken conservation management through extensive grazing. and habitat management for breeding waders and raptors and the full assemblage of wetland flora and fauna.

Access

Elmley's Guiding principle is to allow as many people with as many abilities or not to see as much wildlife and landscape, whilst causing as little disturbance as possible. Within that realising that lots of people will not have seen a place like Elmley before, so they try and make that process as simple as possible.

Public Rights of Way

Public rights of way at Elmley are open and freely accessible. They form part of a much longer walk (The Isle of Sheppey Coastal Path opens in 2021). The route is very exposed and tends to be poorly used. It follows the main track into the site, down to the sea wall.

National Nature Reserve.

Visitors to the NNR pay on entry (*pre-booking during second, English lockdown). There is no discretionary rate, but schools and disabled users are not charged. From the main road, visitors drive down a wide, well maintained access road, from which people are encouraged to stop and view birds from their car, before reaching the farm hub with a car park and toilets. From this central hub, visitors can walk along paths, including public footpaths and permissive paths, to the four hides that they have built. Disabled users can park by the first hide (two wheelchair accessible hides). There is however good viewing along the routes, not just in the hides.

Permissive routes.

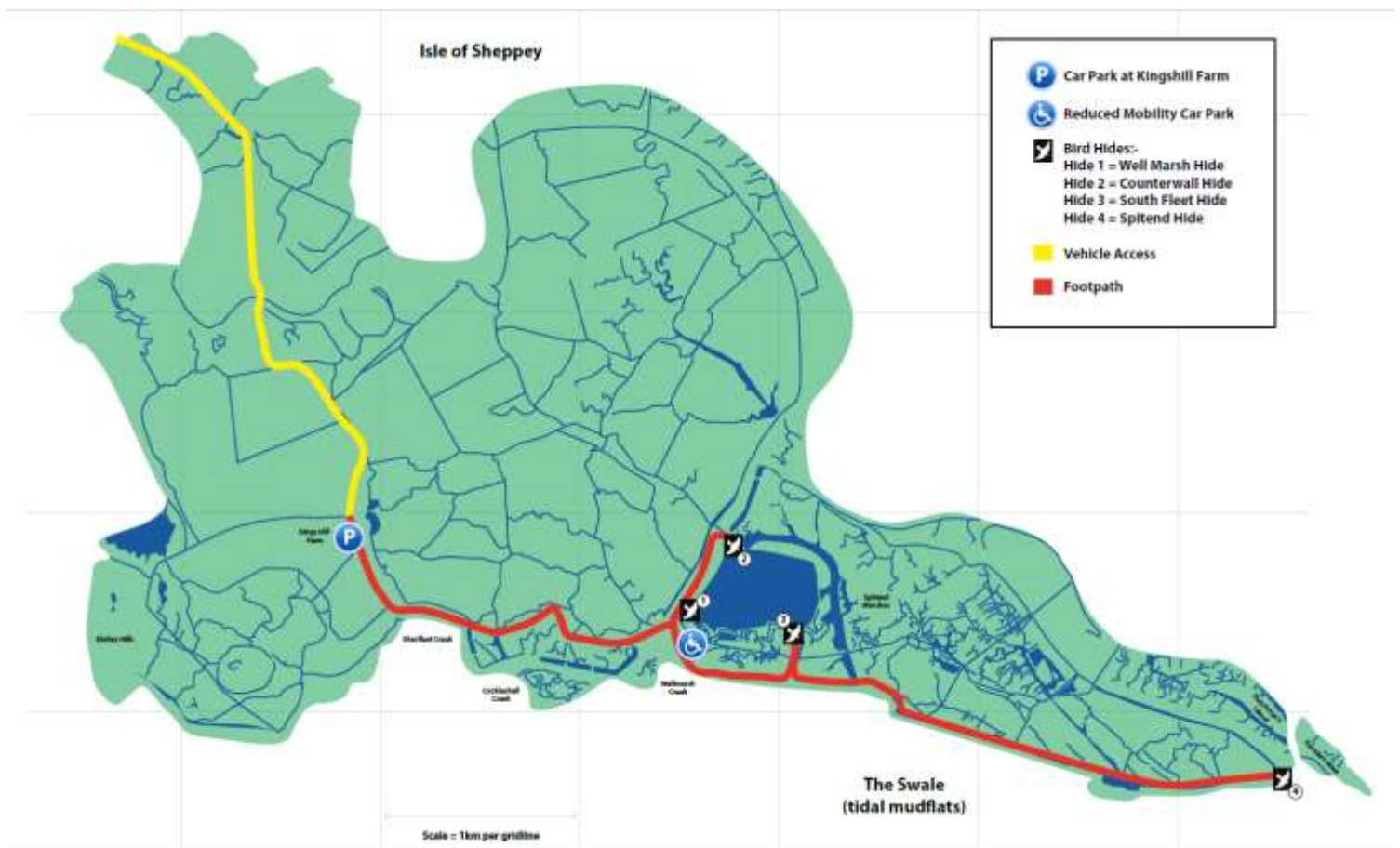
The permissive paths that have been added are accessible for disabled users. The paths are boardwalks (cheaper to install, expensive to maintain) and raised paths (costly to install, cheaper to maintain). For longevity and safety, they are trying to construct raised paths.

Visitor numbers

Elmley usually welcomes in the order of 20,000 visitors a year. (to be reassessed). This level of public access involves the help of a large number of people. It is supported in its work by 450 Friends of Elmley and actively by, five retired Monday volunteers, six voluntary wardens and an office volunteer. A newly employed ranger provides front of house duties; greets people in the car park, writes bird lists, does guided walks, and looks after the Friends of Elmley.

Costs

Such a level of access also comes at considerable cost. Much of the annual £20,000 cost is for infrastructure, especially road, car park and path maintenance. Other costs include ranger, signage, leaflets (25,000 annually), website, office, insurance, and toilets.



Measures to decrease bird disturbance

1. Stay in your car on entry road on entrance road

There is a long stretch of road from the entrance to the car park. Visitors are encouraged to stop and enjoy the birds from inside their car, since the human form is perceived as a threat in a way that a car is not. In this open landscape, disturbed birds fly off a long way. People can have an intimate experience watching a lapwing or a Marsh Harrier from their car.

the edge and see all the way across. You do not need to go to the other side.

3. Signage, leaflets and wardening

The site has a combination of signs, leaflets, voluntary wardens, and a new, paid ranger role. People like to have a leaflet, especially older visitors, but additionally the use of an app may also be revisited, (previously advised against due to low uptake)



2. Keeping paths to the south side of the reserve

All the paths, including site entry road, and permissive routes are in the lower third of the reserve. They have deliberately not added circular routes in order to minimize bird disturbance, giving birds somewhere quiet to go. The linear routes work for the site, minimizing wildlife disturbance so that everyone has a nice time. On the Marsh you can go along

Signs do not change but remain constant throughout the year to make it clear for everyone. The feeling is that people only remember one rule. They do not have any signs saying, 'Private Keep Out', rather 'Nature Sanctuary Area, no access. Thank you'. Signs discourage 'sky lining' on the sea wall causing birds to fly up a long way This is most critical for the waders in the winter months. It is less problematic between June and September.

20 to 30% of people do not adhere to passive instruction. These people cause 90% of the disturbance issues. The role of voluntary wardens is vital to reinforce the message. Someone explaining the reason for the sign and the impact of not following the rules is much more influential than a static sign. It is also helpful for people who can't read English. Wardens can afford to be more relaxed in the summer at less critical times. These measures aim to give people the best visit that they can without disturbing the wildlife.

Countryside Stewardship

Elmley shares the farming communities concerns about funding going forward. With the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) going completely and Countryside Stewardship down by fifth, it is a question of how to make land management and access sustainable without compromising.

They have no access options with stewardship, so receive no funding to pay for public access. All money is for land management.

They did not take up any options for school visits because they found them too prescriptive.

Accommodation and events

Revenue from accommodation and events is an important funding stream that helps support the public access role at Elmley. This has not been done at the expense of wildlife but has been arrived at after detailed discussions with Natural England and following stringent planning conditions. There is careful separation and delineation ensuring that activities are confined to specific areas and do not cause bird disturbance.

Elmley find that the more engaged and communicated to visitors/guests are, the more invested the people coming are and thus the less issues of disturbance occur. This policy has been successful.

Education/School visits

Schools, cubs, and scouts' groups visit Elmley. They are not charged for their visits.

They did not want to be tied by taking set numbers of schools or the method of teaching under Stewardship. They are approached by the schools. Teachers come for a planning visit and undertake a

risk assessment. The teaching is done by the school. Not many local schools have come. Groups have come from the Canterbury and London area.

Special needs groups

There is no charge for groups or individuals with special needs visiting Elmley. They are still welcomed, especially those on the Island.

Elmley are keen to work with groups and individuals with special needs in order to offer them a more meaningful visit. In 2019 they had at least three unscheduled cars or minibuses arrive each week with autistic and special needs individuals and their carers. Many were from private companies being paid by the public sector. Often, they had extremely fleeting visits. It has been difficult to contact the relevant individuals to rectify this situation.

Barriers to visitors

The biggest problem in reaching disadvantaged groups and those people who do not traditionally engage with the countryside is getting them to the site.

There is a station a mile from the entrance and a bus that stops at the entrance, but local people do not come. Many have only heard about the site because of weddings.

A proportion of the money needs to go the other way, to the places that people are coming from. They would like to have the use of a minibus to offer day trips to Elmley from Sheerness, collecting people at 9.30am and returning them at 3.30pm.

Lessons from Covid

Covid has highlighted some of the ways that people access Elmley NNR.

Lockdown (1, UK)

During Lockdown (1) the NNR was closed, with only the public footpath open. Although some of their core visitors will have been shielding, they only had 4 walkers, along a 6 mile stretch of public footpath, in 3 months. This highlights the importance of the road access and facilities for visitors.

Lockdown (2, England)

During Lockdown (2) the reserve has been open to pre-booked visitors, with public footpaths freely accessible as always. The booking has given

visitors the confidence of restricted numbers. Before pre booking, many people were not doing the right thing, now that is all solved at the gate making wardening a lot easier.

With unrestricted access, last year, 3000 people came to see a long-eared owl between Boxing Day and New Year's Day. This had a tremendous impact on the reserve. There were no birds on the entry road and huge use of the car park. Booking has proved a good tool and been greatly beneficial for the reserve and for the people who look after it, but it is an additional barrier to people coming. They may review a hybrid system to ensure quieter times, with booking online at times (potentially during the week) and no booking at weekends. This decision would need to be taken with advice and with due consideration of any future Access ELM.

What should Access ELM pay for?

- Transport to allow schools and community groups to access sites
- Share of ranger. This would be helpful at Elmley, but also, other sites with a high volume of users or site sensitivity. A successful project has been the Bird Wise

initiative paid for by Medway Council, where staff engage with dog walkers on the Saxon Shore Way (between Isle of Grain and Whitstable) highlighting the issues of dog behaviour and bird disturbance.

- Upkeep of permissive paths/cost per metre
- Money for signage, leaflets, potential app
- Education; risk assessments, education packs for a range of ages
- For other sites hoping to undertake education, a capital costs for a shelter.
- Support costs of wardens
- How do you measure success?
- Bird numbers
- Lack of disturbance (This is hard to quantify. When they do a bird count, this does not necessarily represent levels of disturbance. On heavily monitored sites that is easier).
- Users coming from areas which have been difficult to reach

Key points from the interview

- Elmley is an exemplar of conservation management and public access. An Access ELM could support their existing access activities, as well as additional funding to help them reach traditionally underrepresented groups.
- Covid has further demonstrate that despite public footpaths, transport to the site is a barrier to people coming. To help traditionally underrepresented groups access the site, transport is needed from these areas or groups.
- The permissive footpaths have extended the visitor experience including making areas accessible to disabled users. A cost per metre is needed for upkeep of these permissive routes.
- A ranger has been employed to support the activities of voluntary wardens, providing guided walks, supporting Friends of Elmley, and providing public facing duties. Part payment for this vital role would be helpful.
- They would wish to continue to do school visits on a level that is suitable for the needs of the site, but would welcome risk assessment, education sheets, AND transport to site.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



Hatch Park

Interviewee

Michael-John Knatchbull

Interview date

4 November 2020

Hatch Park (currently, Mersham Hatch Estate)

Located near Ashford, Kent, the 2,7000-acre Hatch Park, (currently known as Mersham Hatch Estate), is an historically important and wildlife-rich gem. Falling within the parishes of Mersham, Smeeth, and Brabourne, it lies below the North Downs and within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Kent Downs AONB). Comprising: a deer park with ponds, arable and dairy farmland, woodland, and wildflower meadow. In 1987 the deer park, together with two adjoining areas of woodland were designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for their unimproved acid grassland and ancient pollards.

There is an extensive network of existing public footpaths which cross the estate. An access strategy, in advanced development, includes plans to add a cycle path and destination hubs.

Introduction to Hatch Park

Most of the Estate has been in continual ownership by the Knatchbull family since 1486, during the reign of Henry VII. The landscape retains lots of fields edged by hedges and shaws and scattered woodlands, with narrow single-track lanes. At its heart is a beautiful deer park of 190 acres, with a free grazing herd of around 200 fallow deer, which were established in the 17th century. It has an ornamental lake and pond and numerous majestic veteran trees. There are also two areas of ancient pollarded hornbeam woodland, over 1000 years old.

Originally the park, a mid-18th century landscape park (grade II listed under the Historic Buildings and Monuments Act 1953), extended right up the imposing house (Grade I listed, Mersham-le Hatch, designed in the Palladian style by Robert Adam for Sir Wyndham Knatchbull and altered for subsequent members of the family). In 1942 the area below the house was ploughed up during WW II, as part of: 'dig for victory'. An arable reversion was funded by DEFRA and the Rail Link Countryside Initiative in 2006, returning it to its original deer pasture. By early 2009 deer were reintroduced.



Parts of the park have been enclosed since the reign of James 1 (1603-1625).

In detail the park is made up of 800 acres woodland, 300 acres parkland, 700 acres arable, 800 acres grass for dairy, 60 acres wildflower meadows and ponds.

In their nature conservation plans, the estate is very keen to develop more wildflower meadows on marginal arable land. They are additionally exploring re-wilding options with neighbouring landowners, creating wildlife corridors. Pond restoration and creation are also important management objectives.

Current visitor use

The estate is extensively used by walkers, dog walkers, cyclists, and riders. The deer park is a popular visitor destination. It is well signed with map and information boards at the car park entrance. There are additional finger posts positioned along open routes. There are also posts along tracks to deter trespass into sensitive areas; 'Private this is not a public right of way'. Gates and steps are commensurate with a deer park. Litter bins and dog waste bins are located in or near the car park.

The deer park car park is small (holding approximately 5 cars) leading from the single-track Quarrington Road. This is full at weekends and on



Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)

In common with all farmers, the estate is trying to work out how to replace monies lost after the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). This accounts for more than half of their profits.

The estate has many additional costs, for example looking for new funding streams to pay for expensive, specialist pollarding of their 1300 exceptional ancient hornbeams.

sunny days. It cannot keep up with the growing demand, so cars often park in the narrow lanes on verges. An avenue, planted for the jubilee, has signs saying, "Wildflower field, please do not drive onto the grass verge". Despite informative signage, this does not always work.

The ethos of Hatch Park is to engage with local communities and share Hatch Park with as many people as possible for their enjoyment and wellbeing. It is also important to acknowledge however that access has associated costs. A minority of users engage in antisocial or disruptive



behaviour: signs are removed or get shot at, the deer fencing has twice been cut to let the deer out, dogs not on leads chase the deer.

There was lots of bad behaviour during lockdown (1) when the recycling centres were closed, with endless building rubble or rubbish, littering and fly tipping. Fires were also started under veteran trees.

Although the estate does not have a ranger, people are employed to check the deer and deal with littering and bins.

It is felt that bad behaviour improves when visitor numbers reach a critical mass. The more people using it the more it becomes self-policing. Despite any negative behaviour, Michael John Knatchbull

was at pains to reiterate that there are a huge number of positives stating that: "These are exciting times" During the Covid lockdown (1), many people discovered Hatch Park for the first time.

‘Place Making Plan’ - an access strategy for Hatch Park

The focus of discussions was around the ‘Place Making Plan’, an access plan for Hatch Park. It also marks a user friendly, modernising rebranding from Mersham Hatch Estate. The plan is in advanced stages of development. The aim is to build on the positive benefits of the estate. It aims to: engage and include the community, make it as cohesive as possible and help as many people as possible to enjoy this fantastic asset.

The idea was formulated three years ago when it was decided that Michael-John Knatchbull's daughter Kelly, would eventually take over the running of the estate. Together they started making plans for the next 10-15 years.

Outside consultants undertook research to provide base line data. From this they were able to establish that: 65,000 people live within 5 miles of the centre of the estate, that Ashford, well served by its International Station, and high-speed rail link to London, has attracted a lot of commuters (some renting on the estate). The new junction 10a on the M20 makes vehicular access easier for those coming either from a distance or places along the M20. They also looked at the percentage of the population who were bike users, walkers, etc. Working with Strutt and Parker and the consultants, they have used the data to develop the ambitious Place Making Plan. This seeks to increase connectiveness and respond to visitor demand by building a new cycle route and adding destination hubs with additional parking.

Action Points

1. Cycle route.
They will construct a new cycle route, 2.2km (costing £200,000) between two planned destination hubs. This would pass near the beautiful ancient Bockhanger Woodland. Additional funding needs to be identified for path maintenance and upkeep.
2. Commercial hub- Old Dairy
The Old Dairy will be converted to become a new hub. Discussions are advanced with well-known food makers to set up at the old dairy. They in turn will attract other artisan food makers. There will also be a farm shop selling fresh locally sourced produce.
3. Old Grain Store
The old grain store will be demolished to make way for several new ventures. There will be a kindergarten (A teacher has already been found with lots of good ideas), yoga space, offices, small industrial units, and a couple of other buildings yet to be decided.
There will be parking at both food and commercial hubs

Medium-Long-term Plans

- Destination weekends
In the future (after the Old Dairy food hub, Old Grain Store leisure/commercial hub and woodland cycle routes have been developed), it is hoped to attract people to Hatch Park for destination weekends, with accommodation options still to be explored. Visitors would be drawn by the great walking and cycling at Hatch Park and more broadly by Kent's numerous attractions, as well as coast, and countryside. Good quality, local food, including from artisan producers, would be important.
- Education
Hatch Park would like to encourage creativity and education. After the hubs and cycle route have been fully developed, the Grain Store hub could provide facilities for visiting school groups, having appropriate infrastructure, parking, and lavatories. They would welcome groups from both near and far, including those from areas of deprivation and people traditionally underrepresented in the countryside.

What could Access ELM be used for?

Michael John said that it is right that if you get public money public access should be increased.

- Cycle path maintenance
A maintenance payment calculated at a cost per meter for the planned 2.2km cycle route.
- Parking
Additional parking may be needed at the hubs to accommodate school groups and additional disabled parking (to be reviewed)
- School visits
Money towards school visits
- Signage
Signage to be updated to include the new cycle path as well as explaining the value of the two SSSIs.
- Ranger
A part payment of a ranger at peak times would be advantageous.

Measures of success

- Providing a cohesive local community invested in the success of Hatch Park.
- Creating a place that people visit for their health and wellbeing. In times of rising depression and stress, the NHS is increasingly encouraging

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- people to walk as a tool to boost their sense of wellbeing.
 - Providing a place for people to come and learn about the countryside
 - With a waiting list of tenants, creating somewhere where people want to live, work and play is particularly important.
 - The estate must continue to run in an efficient manner and cover their costs moving forward.

Key points from the interview

- Hatch Park is working on a 'Place Making Plan' to make the wonderful natural resources of the site more accessible to the large population on its doorstep, as well as groups and individuals from further afield. This is responding to an existing and growing demand. It would welcome also inner-city children and those from targeted groups of disadvantage.
- An Access Elm would be helpful for funding the upkeep (cost per metre) of a new cycle path. In principle this route could be used by modified bikes for disabled users, with funding for additional parking bays at the start and end of the route.
- Two new hubs would provide parking for the business and visitors, but additional funding could help with school groups and extra parking for school buses.
- Access ELM would be useful paying for updated signage, to include signboards of the site with the new routes and important information about the ecological value of the pollarded hornbeam woodland that the cycle route would pass by.
- As an access hub, it would be useful to pay towards a ranger at peak times.

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Access case study series



Higher Cuttlesham Farm

Higher Cuttlesham Farm

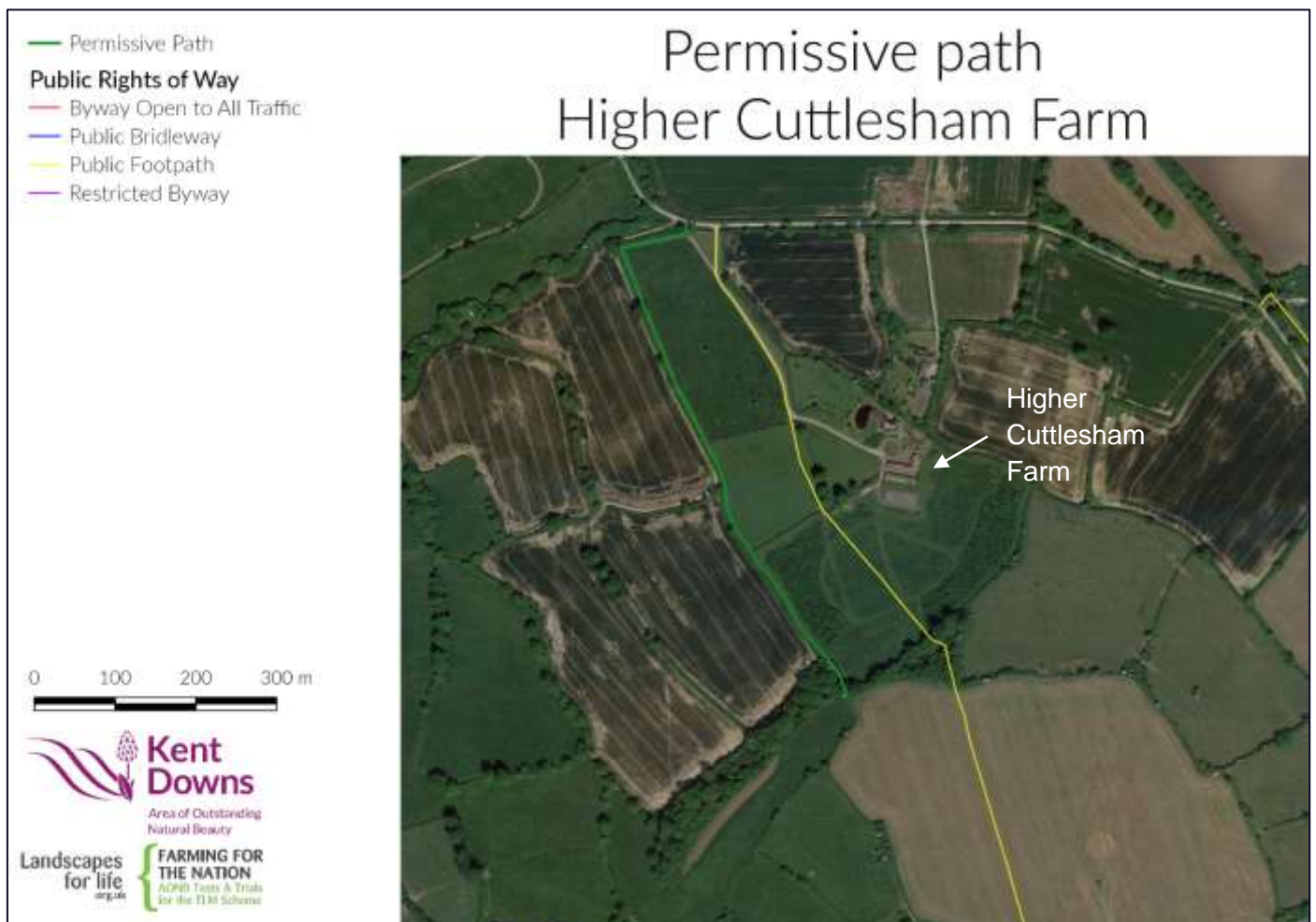
Higher Cuttlesham Farm is a small farm in Somerest near the town of Wincanton. The area is largely rural with a mixture of arable and pasture. There are a number of sites with public access in the area that are owned by National Trust. However, public rights of way are fairly scarce in the area when compared to Kent and are not well connected. Consequently, people use the quite lanes for walking. It was not possible to contact the owners of Higher Cuttlesham Farm for an interview but some observations were made during a site visit.

Permissive access at Higher Cuttlesham Farm

Permissive access is provided from Verrington Lane by a mown footpath that runs around the outside of a field used for hay, grazing and a newly planted woodland. It appears as though this access may have been provided because a public footpath runs up the main drive of the house. By providing

this access the alternative access becomes more attractive than the public right of way. As no contact has been possible with the landowner little more can be deduced. However, providing permissive access through an ELM can be a way of diverting access away from other routes. How a decision is made about what public good is derived from an alternative route needs further investigation.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series

Hope Farm

Interviewee

Doug Taylor

Interview date

9 November 2020

Hope Farm

Introduction

Hope Farm is an 1100-acre farm of combinable crops. It is located between Folkestone, Hawkinge and Capel-le-Ferne. It is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a Special Landscape Area (SLA). Folkestone Warren, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Folkestone to Etchinghill Escarpment Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and SSSI, are nearby.

Formerly a dairy farm, in 2000 it changed to cereal. 200 acres remain as grass on steep slopes, with mixed native woodland.

Diversification has included a tightly regulated green composting site, which has expanded its operations over the years. It has the scope to create important education opportunities along with a possible forest school.

Public Rights of Way across the farm include footpaths and bridleways. Parts of the farm, on the edge of Hawkinge experience high levels of trespass due to pressure of population.

Stewardship

Hope Farm is not currently in Stewardship. They recognize the symbiosis of farming and nature, the importance of pollinators and the food web. They continue to have field margins, and beetle banks in areas, but they are not paid for these. They have had some sort of stewardship since it came out. When reviewing their Countryside Stewardship options with the Natural England adviser, they found there was a very low monetary return for them. This was also subject to a favourable inspection. They felt that it was better for them to do what they want to do. They are not against stewardship; it just did not work for them on this occasion.

Doug Taylor has found that prescriptive elements of stewardship can be unhelpful, and sometimes things do not achieve the results that they set out to e.g. prescriptive cattle stocking rates as first set out, were correct for the summer months, but unhelpfully low in the spring when the grass is growing very fast. In the early spring it needs to be grazed down. Low stocking rates at this time mean that the grass grows too much, causing wildflowers to disappear and there is scrub encroachment. He worked with Dan Tuson of Natural England to change this prescriptive element. When they grazed quite hard, at a higher stocking rate in the spring, then took the animals away, there were a lot more wildflowers.

Current Access issues

The farm has a number of footpaths and bridleways. Most are in regular use. Fields bordering highly populated urban areas have a high level of footpath use but also significant levels of trespass.

Paths are also subject to issues related to dogs, both off leads and faeces.

The farm experiences fly tipping in areas, but this goes in spells. The closure of a council tip a few years ago resulted in less fly tipping. This is because if people went to the tip and it was closed, they would just fly tip it.

The farm uses the 'Country Eye' app, which they have found to be helpful.

Trespass

For Hope Farm, the most important thing that they would like an Access ELM to address is the significant population pressures of the urban fringe on their farmland.

They have a field at the back of Hawkinge, hemmed in on 3 sides by houses. It has footpaths on it, but people exercise their dogs all over it, ignoring the paths. Those not on a path are trespassing.

The biggest comment from dog walkers is that 'my dog isn't doing any harm', but they do not know what harm their dog is doing. Having people walk all over

the field is upsetting, potentially confrontational and costly in crop loss.

It is not the only area where they have experienced people going where they should not, but it is by far the worst and most urgently in need of addressing. They get it in lots of places that are next to an urban settlement. The age of the development can have an impact on the level of trespass.

stops on the existing public rights of way network should be made possible, so that the best outcomes can be achieved for all parties. In this case putting a temporary closure on the existing public footpath through the fields, when the permissive dog walking paths are in place.

Hope Farm - proposed permissive access

Public Rights of Way

- Byway Open to All Traffic
- Public Bridleway
- Public Footpath
- Restricted Byway
- Permissive Path

0 130 260 390 m



Walking/dog walking margins

As a farm, and in discussion with Kent Downs AONB, they have been exploring the idea of stopping, or at least, dramatically reducing the level of trespass at Hawkinge. This would be done by creating a circular dog walk. This could turn a negative into a positive for both farm and public. It would be done by putting a margin around the outside of the field (width to be determined) with a meandering path going through it. It would be a permissive walking/dog walking path. It is the type of access that the community in the area clearly want and would be responding to a public demand.

Doug Taylor believes that for the duration of an Access ELM agreement, possible diversions or

Permissive routes, broadly following areas of existing trespass, to be set in field margins

In his role as National Farmers Union Representative, sitting on the Kent Downs AONB, Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and Executive committee, Doug Taylor could see other situations where adding field margins with permissive routes could be very advantageous to some farmers. He thinks that an Access ELM, in the context of a whole Farm Plan, could encourage extra permissive access where it makes the farming side more efficient. These are not necessarily areas that are of low productivity, but would lead to a more efficient farm e.g. If you have an arable field which is not a uniform shape, the farmer will cultivate broadly a square, calculated to be the right number of sprayer widths, ending back at the gate/entrance. The

outside could form a walker's margin. This could attract different farmers as it makes their work easier, decreasing the hassle factor and making the farm more efficient.

Additional access in this way would be aided by the provision of wider gates. This would provide better and safer access for walkers and farm machinery, allowing the two things to work together. It would be an attractive option for land managers.

Other Access ELM options to be explored would be all-weather, unrutted tracks in certain locations.

Adding additional permissive paths

Hope Farm is right on the edge of the Downs, a 'destination' where people come, sometimes from afar, to walk. There is already an abundance of footpaths in the area, most well used.

Public access needs to be managed. Doug felt that some National Trust sites have too high a footfall. They cannot cater for the numbers without causing damage. There is a balance. His view is that, in areas already well served by public footpaths, if there is no public access at the moment, in some cases the environment does better without adding more. Adding additional public access can be detrimental to other environmental things that they are doing.

Introducing more paths coming out onto their small lanes are not appropriate. Equally, with many stables locally, additional riding opportunities could be explored on more suitable land.

In a village location, people might want to add a permissive route to link two destination buildings, but they are not in that position.

Signage

The wider walking/dog walking margin at Hope Farm by Hawkinge would be created for people living near there, not a destination drawing people from a distance. It is a farming solution that satisfies a local demand. To be effective it would need appropriate signage around the boundary. This would say that it was a route for local people. It would detail who had funded it, as well as appropriate behaviour (dogs on leads) and inappropriate behaviour (motorbikes). It could appear on a website.

Wildlife or points of interest signs could potentially be beneficial on existing footpaths for some people. With a broad mix of people using routes, those taking their time going around would have more time to take them in.

In farms adding extra permissive margins, signs could indicate that these are opened or closed depending on wildlife e.g. nesting birds. This would not happen on the proposed Hawkinge loop at Hope Farm, where the presence of large numbers of dogs would preclude this.

Education

Doug Taylor said that, "Educating people is part of what most institutions should do more of".

Open Farm Sunday

They had not been involved in events such as Open Farm Sunday, because they have felt that combinable crops did not have the same appeal for visitors as livestock.

Forest School

They have however been approached to have a forest school. They are tenant farmers on the proposed area but would like to explore the possibility subject to relevant agreements. There is not enough interest from combinable crops alone, but if they had a forest school, it would give them the opportunity to talk about them. People could be drawn from a wide area, including from groups of deprivation and those traditionally underrepresented in the countryside.

Green Waste Viewing Gallery

The farm would like to consider the potential for a viewing gallery for the green waste site. The facility forms an important function for the public and something people do not get to see. Their main problem comes with the level of plastic sent out in green waste. Showing people might help reduce this.

More generally, Doug Taylor felt that there was a lack of understanding about the countryside that needs to be addressed. People have suffered from the legacy of 'Open Access', (not so much around them). Many people think that the countryside is 'Open Access', but only parts are. They still need a

map to show what is Open Access, where the paths are and what are farm tracks.

What should Access ELM pay for?

- A permissive margin, responding to public demand for a dog walking route.
- Information sign boards, both around the new walker's field margins and on existing routes to add interest to walkers.
- Costs relating to facilities for the public as a result of the forest school and green waste viewing gallery.
- Money for school visits

Costs

The costs of creating a walking/dog walking margin needs to reflect the fixed costs of the farm and include potential profit. If you reduce the cost of a croppable farm, then you are spreading costs over a smaller area. Every farm will be different. If they are over mechanized, then the costs will be greater. If under mechanized, this will result in less work so will be helpful. The cost, difficult to accurately put a figure on, could be in the order of £500/ha.

The cost of the marginal dog walking route would need to include provision and emptying of dog bins.

How should ELM be administered?

The role of Natural England advisers has been shown to be invaluable.

Key points from the interview

- An Access ELM at Hope Farm could deliver very good results by responding to population pressure on the urban fringe, creating a well signed permissive circular walking margin for local residents, stopping people walking over crops.
- Hope Farm believe that in the process of creating an ELM agreement specifically regarding access, the existing public network should be considered and possible diversions or stops used for the duration of the agreement, so that best outcomes can be achieved for all parties.
- A whole farm plan, proposed under Access ELM, could be used to show how any scheme has an overall benefit especially with farm efficiencies
- An Access ELM could also encourage permissive routes for some farmers where it would lead to more efficient farms.
- The role of English Nature advisers continues to be important, but applications should be simpler and applied for by land managers.
- A forest school and compost viewing gallery at Hope Farm could offer opportunities for education for more widely drawn groups.

ELM should be administered more along the lines of Environmental Stewardship's, Entry Level Stewardship (ELS). It should be simple to administer for farmers and not burdened with too much consultancy. This would lead to a better outcome. In some businesses, it will be the consultant or land agents' job to enhance the environment or get as much relevance. It would be better if the individual working farmer can apply for the scheme. The recipients should be the person doing the day-to-day management, not a condition of landlords who then receive the benefit. If it is the land managers themselves who want to do it, then you get the best results.

Measures of success

- Creating a well signed, circular walk for local people that would benefit the community at Hawkinge, thereby getting people sticking to the new wide field margins rather than going through and damaging the crop.
 - The public's better understanding of farming and the countryside through potential forest school and additional signage.
 - Reduction in plastic in the green waste coming to the composting site as a result of engaging with the public at the proposed green waste site viewing gallery.
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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



Kent Public Rights of Way

Interviewees

Graham Rusling – Public Rights of Way and Access Service Manager

Tom Kennedy – Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer

David Munn – West Kent Area Manager

Interview date

5 August 2020

Kent Public Rights of Way and Access Service

The Public Rights of Way and Access Service team (PROW Team) manage the network of footpaths, bridleway and byways of Kent as well as managing access in Access Land and around the England Coastal Path. The total network length is 6900km. This work involves the recording, protecting and maintenance of the network. It may involve liaising with landowners upgrading the network and developing an improvement strategy. The improvements in the county's network will be guided by the [Rights of Way Improvement Plan \(ROWIP\)](#).

What could an Access ELM look like?

Kent County Council's Public Rights of Way and Access Service has responded to the 2020 consultation on ELM that was issued by Defra. Their response suggested that an ELM could be used to benefit access through both tier 1 and tier 2.

Tier 1

One of the benefits of cross compliance that stemmed from the Basic Payments Scheme was to provide an incentive for landowners and farmers to fulfil their statutory obligations regarding rights of way. Compliance improved dramatically when failure to comply could result in a loss of payments. The PROW Team feel that a similar form of

incentive to maintain rights of way should be included within the entry level payments of ELM.

Tier 2

Some of the gains that could be made through tier 2 interventions include:

- The PROW Team can't currently oblige landowners to replace stiles with kissing gates or other furniture that increases accessibility. Incentives could be given to replace these barriers to access. Greater incentives could be given for removing barriers altogether where appropriate.
- The creation of higher rights (cycling and equestrian) is also seen as an important role of an ELM. Ideally, this would be to upgrade rights by agreement with a set level of compensation. If only permissive rights were granted, then it is felt that compensation rates should be



- considerably lower. A similar process could be followed for the creation of pedestrian only rights.
- Permissive access to land could be granted where it does not conflict with other interests such as game conservancy, biodiversity or built heritage. However, this should be in areas where it can be shown that it is needed.
 - Formal access would be preferred to permissive access. It is unwise to commit resources to capital projects if access can be removed.
 - It would help if an ELM could set compensation levels for the creation and upgrading of access. This would help in other circumstances where creation orders are made.

Importantly, Access Teams across the country should be involved in the strategic prioritisation of resource allocation. ROWIPs can be used to help set out local priorities. This can help to avoid projects that provide little benefit. It was felt that access projects funded through Environmental Stewardship often provided little benefit and were poorly publicised.

Spatial prioritisation

The ROWIP identifies where improvements need to be made in the network. Essentially, it is not felt that there is a shortage of access across the county, so there is not a great desire to create a lot of new access. The Covid-19 situation shows that even when access increased the network could cope in most places. However, priorities for the enhancement of the network include:

- Specific creation to address network fragmentation by filling gaps or making connecting routes.

- Upgrading routes so that they can be used by cyclists and horse riders (currently only 15% of routes are bridleways).
- Creating routes adjacent to lanes that have become busy with traffic.

What are the barriers that stop under-represented groups accessing the countryside?

It is felt that communication about the benefits of walking and active travel is the main barrier to engaging those that don't use the access network. There is also a perception that there are cultural barriers. South Asian communities do not have a culture of walking, it is something that you do if you are poor. The black African community also do not use the countryside regularly.

Good signage and interpretation can help to encourage access. There are many people who don't really know how to access the countryside properly. Well maintained routes provide people with the confidence to use the network. Uncertainty is not only a barrier, but it is more likely to lead to trespass. The creation of car parks would encourage the use of the network in some places. However, it can lead to antisocial behaviour and would incur maintenance costs.

How to address the barriers that prevent landowners and farmers from providing access?

Friction has increased between landowners and users of the network, particularly as many new users have started accessing the PROW network in recent months. The Countryside Code is not in the



consciousness of most people. Until there is a step change in the way that these messages are communicated, this will remain a problem. There is a perception that many dog walkers do not want to know that their dog should be under control and cyclists may not be concerned that they are not supposed to use public footpaths. Better communication of the Countryside Code and its key messages is needed. This needs to be done by marketing experts and not access experts.

How to promote access granted by ELM

If newly created or enhanced access is to be used and provide the maximum public good, it is essential that people know about the access that is available. It is important that the public rights of way network and permissive access routes are made available to potential users easily. This means that it needs to be available on the kind of mapping that everybody has access to, such as Google Maps, Bing and Open StreetMap. For this to happen, the information needs to be made publicly available for free. Central government needs to play a role in ensuring that this happens.

How could the PROW Team be involved in the administration of an ELM?

The expertise of access professionals working for local authorities can help to both prioritise actions and provide valuable advice and guidance to ELM applications. The challenge is to find a way that staff can support applications when budgets are already stretched and there are other priorities. It is

unlikely that the PROW Team could do much more than comment as a consultee in most cases.

The potential for providing additional funds to Access Teams to be able to become more involved in assessing applications would be welcomed. This could help to ensure that ROWIPs will be considered when making decisions locally. It may also provide an incentive to create more detailed ROWIPs for some authorities.

Whilst ROWIPs do not identify specific routes that are a priority to create, they provide the basis for making decisions locally. Considerable preparatory work needs to be done before creating a new route including landowner liaison, obtaining necessary consents and ecological surveys. This can't be achieved as part of a ROWIP and identifying new routes may compromise existing landowners if they attempt to sell land with a proposed route.

However, the Kent PROW team are also creating a GIS layer that captures requests for enhanced and/or new access routes. The requests can be scored based on factors such as ease of creation, potential benefits and estimated cost. This layer will be used to help identify 'shovel ready' projects as well as identifying projects when consulting on planning applications and to support funding applications. It could also be used to assist spatial prioritisation in an access-based ELM.

Clusters of farms looking to make strategic decisions about access on their land and potentially promote specific routes should be encouraged. They should engage with PROW Teams. The PROW Team would not be keen to co-ordinate such clusters

Key points from the interview

- It is important to retain the incentives for landowners to fulfil their statutory access obligations that cross compliance currently provides.
- Tier 2 payments should focus on upgrading footpaths to cycle paths and bridleways and to address specific network fragmentation issues. Priority should be given to formal rather than permissive access
- PROW and Access teams should be involved in the prioritisation of network enhancements to ensure that public benefit is maximised.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



Hothfield Heathlands and Sandwich/Pegwell Bay

Interviewees

Ian Rickards, John Wilson, Keeley Atkinson – Kent Wildlife Trust
Brian Fraser – Oakover Nurseries Ltd
Peter Howard – Bockhangar Farm Ltd

Interview date

May 2020



Hothfield Heathlands & Sandwich/Pegwell Bay – Kent Wildlife Trust

Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) is one of the county's largest landowners and land managers with public access possible at many of their reserves. Public access is an important way to increase knowledge of the organisation and to build support for their work. However, public access also puts pressure on wildlife. There are certain sites that, because of the level of access and the particular sensitivities of the wildlife, are more impacted than others. This case study focuses on the Hothfield Heathlands and Sandwich and Pegwell Bay reserves. Both reserves have car parks that promote access and have national and/or international designations for their wildlife. Both sites are within the Countryside Stewardship scheme but neither make use of the Educational Access option. KWT would be in favour of using an ELM option that encouraged different groups to access their land and learn about the wildlife and management of the sites.

Introduction to the reserves

Hothfield Heathlands is an 85 hectare reserve that contains Kent's largest areas of acid heathland and bog. It also contains an area of riparian grassland and an area of woodland to the north of the A20. Most of the site is owned by Ashford Borough Council and has a well-used car park. Just less than a quarter of the site is owned by KWT. The car park and the proximity to Ashford makes Hothfield Heathlands a popular destination for walkers and others looking for a place to exercise or enjoy nature. The car park has been improved in recent years and approximately 200 cars use the car park daily during the summer and at weekends. It is also well used by local people who walk to the site.

Pegwell Bay and Sandwich Bay is KWT's largest reserve at 615 hectares. It is split into two by the mouth of the River Stour with Pegwell Bay north of the river and Sandwich Bay to the south. The site contains salt marsh, dune pasture, shingle beach and a large intertidal area. The site is well known for its rare bird life. The site has multiple owners including Thanet District Council, Dover District Council, Kent County Council (KCC), RSPB and National Trust. A KCC run car park at Pegwell Bay provides excellent access for those arriving by car. Sandwich Bay can only be accessed by car through the Sandwich Bay Estate which charges a £7 toll for access. The England Coast Path runs through the site.

Current access issues

Hothfield Heathlands has a car park. It has become extremely popular with dog walkers since the entirety of the site was fenced, making it a safe place for dogs to be let off the lead. Tree pipits have been lost from the site with the probable cause being disturbance. Dog walker behaviour has changed in recent years with faeces more likely to be picked up. However, dogs are still left to roam across the site. This issue is not as much of a problem where areas have been fenced off. This is easier to do in the land that has been purchased by KWT.

Pegwell Bay has a car park, public toilets and a café. These facilities, as well as open access across most of the reserve, make it a popular destination. There is less access at Sandwich Bay, but it is still well used. There have been catastrophic declines in some of the bird numbers in recent years and some of the rarer species have been lost entirely. Although the reasons for declines can be complex, increased public access is thought to be largely responsible. Off lead dogs disturb ground nesting birds and wading birds. Direct disturbance and causing birds to take many additional flights has had a cumulative impact on populations. Kite surfers are less numerous than off-lead dogs but are thought to cause significant disturbance. Other issues include threats to wildlife posed by littering and arson.

The problems are exacerbated by the following:

- Some partners and landowners want to increase access in places. Even if they recognise the issues, local authorities are under pressure to provide more access.
- Inadequate fencing does not provide enough control over where people can access.
- Interpretation is sometimes old and does not provide a consistent message.
- Agreements must be reached between all landowners and often consent is required from Natural England. This can make swift responses to specific issues difficult.

There is a common thread that runs through all the issues that access causes. Damage to ecologically sensitive habitats is caused either by people accessing areas that they shouldn't or by carrying out activities that cause damage. In the following sections we will examine some of the ways that these issues can be mitigated and whether an ELM could be a useful tool to achieve this.

How can these issues be resolved?

There are a variety of ways that some of the problems can be resolved. Some of these are more

viable than others and may require support from other landowners, statutory agencies and local authorities:

- Additional fencing can restrict access in some areas, and this may extend to buoys on coastal sites.
- Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to require certain behaviours of visitors. These require local authority support and can be difficult to police.
- Additional interpretation to provide a clear and consistent message. This can be either traditional signs or sound posts/QR codes.
- Mobile interpretation centres can be moved around many of the KWT reserves as and when needed and spread the message of where access is allowed and why.
- Promoting areas that are purely for wildlife with no public access.
- Improving paths can reduce the establishment of desire lines and encourage public access in areas where it is wanted.
- Improving access in the least sensitive areas.
- Talking to people. Sandwich and Pegwell Bay has coastal guardians who are volunteers that talk to members of the public. Part of their role



is to advise people where they can and can't go. This is significantly cheaper than additional staff.

How could an Enhancing Access ELM be used to address these issues?

Different ways of using an ELM to reduce some of the pressures faced on sensitive sites were considered which are summarised below.

1. Funding to restrict public access

This option would provide funding directly to landowners to restrict the levels of public access on sites. The funding would pay for many of the measures outlined above. However, it is a challenge to package these measures as public money for public good, which is the underlying principle behind ELM. Whilst there is direct benefit for wildlife this approach could be seen as paying public money to exclude the public from areas that they once had access to.

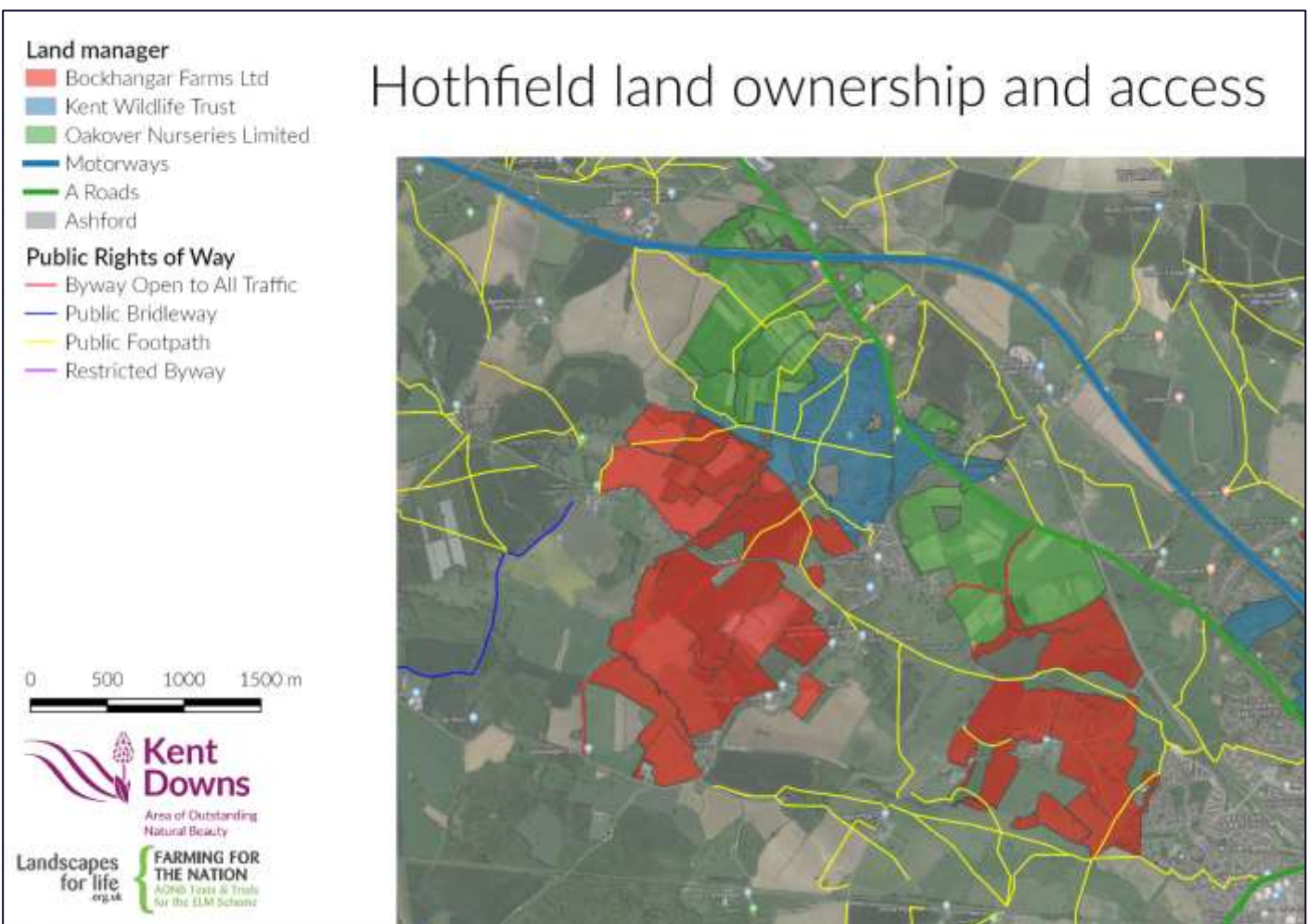
2. Increasing access on neighbouring land

One method of reducing public pressure on Hothfield Heathlands is by providing alternative access to locals and dog walkers on nearby properties. This approach is more difficult at Sandwich Bay/Pegwell Bay as the biggest neighbours are golf courses. It was suggested that this approach may be more successful at Oare Marshes. The selection of these sites and the local knowledge required to both select alternative sites and build relationships with landowners is complex. High quality, well-trusted advisers and/or effective farm clusters will be required for this method of mitigating damaging access to ecologically sensitive sites.

As well as providing parking and signage for this alternative access, the support of neighbouring landowners is necessary.

Bockhangar Farm

Bockhangar Farm is a neighbour of Hothfield Heathlands. It is predominantly an arable farm situated to the south and west of Hothfield Heathlands. There is also woodland that has shooting rights. Current public access is through public footpaths and a byway open to all traffic.





Peter Howard, the farmer, has a keen understanding of the pressure of public access and how it is impacting Hothfield Heathlands. However, public access also impacts his operations and the wildlife on his land. Ground nesting birds are affected by walkers, particularly those that do not keep to footpaths and walk on the margins and buffer strips around fields. Dogs cause issues by running through crops if they are not on leads. Sometimes owners throw sticks for their dogs and these are left within the arable crop. These sticks then have the potential to jam and damage combine harvesters.

For these reasons, Bockhangar Farms is not keen to allow permissive access on its arable land. The shooting rights on the farm would make permissive access impossible within and around the woodland.

Oakover Nurseries Ltd

The other major landowner adjacent to Hothfield Heathlands is Oakover Nurseries. This tree nursery grows a wide range of trees and shrubs on the land to the north-west and south-east of The Kent

Wildlife Trust reserve. Current access is limited to several public footpaths and a byway to the south of Hothfield. Oakover no longer have a publicly accessible retail unit on the A20.

Sadly, theft is a persistent problem for Oakover Nurseries and this takes place largely from the public footpaths. The public access that is possible draws attention to the crops that does not happen when people drive past on the A20. Consequently, additional permissive access would not be considered. The rate of stock loss is too high to justify any realistic compensation payments.

Additional land at Hothfield Heathlands

As the neighbouring landowners at Hothfield Heathlands are resistant to allowing additional access to their land, another option is to direct pedestrian traffic at Hothfield Heathlands to the least sensitive parts of the site. These include areas of woodland to the north of the A20, that whilst they are sensitive, are more resilient than most of the SSSI to the south of the A20. In order to make the most of this opportunity the following would be beneficial:

- Improved surfacing to entice walkers into the northern area of the reserve.
- Willingness of Ashford Borough Council to close the reserve south of the A20 (except the public rights of way) at certain times of year to relieve pressure on the ecologically sensitive areas of the site.
- Staff/volunteer presence at the site to help explain why part of the reserve is temporarily closed.

3. An enhanced public access ELM

A third method of payment that would encompass all of the needs of options 1 and 2 was also considered. This approach would provide an enhanced level of funding to farmers and landowners that provided high quality access on their sites. The ELM would have minimum requirements in order for a landowner to qualify but would provide significant funds to help landowners provide and maintain excellent access for the public. Funding could be used to pay for car parking, fencing, surfacing of paths, signage and interpretation.

All of these services to the public could be used to direct public access towards the least sensitive parts of the site and restrict access to the most

sensitive parts. Additionally, this funding stream could be used to help landowners that are adjacent to sensitive sites to provide good quality access.

Additional comments

The following comments were made that are relevant to the delivery of high quality access and may be relevant to an Enhancing Access ELM:

- Good quality local access in new developments and on the urban fringe is essential to reduce the number of people who use nature reserves.
- Visitors to nature reserves are disproportionately well-off and the public benefits are not equally shared by all in society.
- KWT nature reserves are a public service and currently only members contribute towards. Visitors do not pay. A payment similar to a precept could be levied to local residents for the service provided as this is how parish councils pay for the green space they provide.
- Would like to see Natural England advisers involvement in the administration of an access ELM;
- It is felt that KWT could administer a scheme such as this in Kent. Possibly at a national level the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts could also do this.

Key points from the case study

- Kent Wildlife Trust provides public access to people across the county and receives very little public funding for this service.
- An Enhanced Access ELM that could allow facilities to be enhanced whilst providing funding that can be used to direct access to the least sensitive parts of sites would be welcomed.
- Support exists for increasing public access capacity adjacent to sensitive sites despite the difficulty of identifying sites where landowners are prepared to take part.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



White Cliffs

Interviewees

Jon Barker – National Trust

Rob Sonnen – National Trust

Interview date

15 June 2020



White Cliffs – National Trust

The National Trust is owns a number of properties across Kent but this interview focused on their holdings around the White Cliffs of Dover. Specifically, the Langdon Cliffs area and the estate that stretches north and east along the coast towards Kingsdown and Walmer. The White Cliffs site is unusual due to the accurate and extensive data about visitor numbers collected by an array of automatic counters that have been placed around the site. It is one of the country's most visited locations.

Introduction to the White Cliffs

The White Cliffs forms a part of the Dover to Kingsdown Cliffs Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This area is ecologically important and the SAC status of the site means that National Trust have responsibilities to monitor the impact and mitigate the actions of visitors on the site. This is particularly challenging given the popularity of this iconic site that contains important built heritage features as well as wildlife. Visitor numbers are now so high that the site is not proactively promoted. On busy days, cars must be turned away as the car park becomes full. Visitor counters on the site record approximately 400,000 people per year in the most popular parts of the site. Although there is no public transport that stops near White Cliffs and most visitors do arrive by car, traffic

on footpaths from Dover total somewhere in the region of 100,000 people per year. This level of visitor numbers is significantly higher than any other chalk grassland site in Kent. Additional land has been purchased at Wanstone Farm, which is outside of the designated area and it is hoped that this additional capacity will help to alleviate some of the pressure on the rest of the site.

Current access issues

A lot of people use the White Cliffs site. The National Trust has open access on all the land that it owns and controls access to as a matter of policy. The White Cliffs is also open access anyway under the CROW Act as it is coastal margin and downland. As well as this, the England Coastal Path also runs through the site. The sheer number of visitors mean



National Trust landholdings in south-east Kent

that paths become braided, trampling of grassland increases and soils can be completely denuded over time. Work carried out by the National Trust has shown that the recovery time for an area of chalk following severe trampling can be up to 50 years. This is significantly higher than in other areas where there is a lot of pedestrian footfall such as the Cornwall coast. Consequently, the ever-increasing numbers of visitors is inevitably causing problems. The problems facing the White Cliffs are similar to those at other sites, simply on a different scale. Off lead dogs impacting livestock, anti-social behaviour, litter and damage to site infrastructure all occur. Many people who visit White Cliffs are not regular visitors of the countryside and do not have the knowledge of how to behave. This is generally not willful damage, simply a lack of understanding.

Efforts have been made to mitigate for the numbers of people on site. A disabled access path was installed between the visitor centre and the viewing point for the cliffs. This area had become severely braided and the grassland was being damaged. Its bonded surface has not only allowed additional access for people with limited mobility but has kept visitors to a narrower section of the grassland. The path has now naturalised into the landscape. For remarkably high numbers of visitors, this is the favoured solution but it is expensive. Good quality interpretation and signage can also help to control some behaviours.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created additional challenges for the National Trust. For many weeks, the only places that people could meet friends and family were outside and this created multiple pressures and difficulties at White Cliffs. People were disproportionately pushed towards their sites. Interestingly, Eid celebrations at the end of Ramadan were held at White Cliffs which has never happened before.

Inclusivity

The National Trust has employed an inclusivity officer to help shift the demographic of visitors to the White Cliffs. Sadly, this member of staff has been furloughed during the Covid-19 pandemic and was not able to attend the meeting. Although White Cliffs receives many overseas visitors due to its worldwide reputation and proximity to an entry port, visitors that are white and middle class are overrepresented at the site. This picture is repeated

across most of the National Trust's sites. The charity has been developing a project that works specifically with several groups in the Dover area that come from underrepresented groups. These groups include Astor College (a school in one of the most deprived areas of the town), the Silverbacks (a project working with troubled families), two schools that provide education for pupils with severe, emotional, social and mental health needs as well as a veterans group. The project also includes purchasing a vehicle that can be used to transport people to site, something that is often a barrier to access. This work can be expensive but is a vital part of the National Trust's long-term strategy.

How could an Enhancing Access ELM be used to address these issues?

Different ways of using an ELM at White Cliffs were discussed. One of the issues with the level of funding that an ELM may provide is that it may only have a limited impact at a site like White Cliffs, where visitor management is particularly resource intensive. The level of funding required to provide appropriate access is orders of magnitude higher than it might be at a rural, farm site with relatively few visitors.

1. Increasing access on neighbouring land

The National Trust has spent a considerable amount of resources securing management control and purchasing land around the White Cliffs site. The benefit of this is that the coastal margin has been widened and other areas that the public can use have been secured. Much of this new land is outside of designated areas and is ecologically less sensitive. However, if neighbouring farms were able to open up access to their land this could be used to reduce levels of access at the White Cliffs site further.

William Hickson land

The land between the White Cliffs site and Upper Rd is farmed by William Hickson. This land is currently intensive arable land. Margins could be created on this land that could be walked by visitors, especially if car parking was also provided either from Wanstone Farm or limited parking on site. However, after contacting the farmer, it was made

clear that this is not currently something that would be entertained.

2. Enhanced Access ELM

There would be numerous ways that an access ELM could support the activities of National Trust at White Cliffs and on other land that they own and manage. Many of these have been mentioned in other case studies so will only be listed here:

- Creation of paths with bonded surfaces along the route of the England Coast Path (Natural England/National Trails may make a contribution to this).
- Increased quality of paths
- Better interpretation
- Steps
- Fencing to control public access
- Maintenance of access furniture

Other issues discussed included having mitigation land created elsewhere if access is enhanced. This could either be on site or off site and would be an area where the public were not allowed access and habitats lost or damaged could be created. The creation of a landscape engagement post would be a very effective way of helping people understand access at White Cliffs and neighbouring sites. This person would be employed to talk to people when they enter the site, get the National Trust message across and teach people about responsible public access. It was considered that this may be an appropriate role for a farm cluster as well. Although this could be a volunteer role but there are still costs involved with this approach.

3. Improving access for groups underrepresented in the countryside

This is work that National Trust is doing as part of its engagement strategy. It also fits well with the National Lottery Heritage Fund's priorities for its current strategic framework. Generally, it was felt that previous projects that included inclusivity as one of the aims were not really successful as the inclusivity part of the project was not central. More resources need to be spent on this work if it is to be effective.

The National Trust has been offering Forest School type activities to some groups and would welcome help to set up an area for schools outside of the designated part of the site. They would like to spend more time community mapping to identify the

correct groups to work with locally. There is an understanding that there are barriers to some communities accessing the countryside. This may include not having the resources to get to the countryside. There may be a need to pay an intermediary to help provide transport and network with groups.

4. Work that would complement an Enhancing Access ELM

As is well documented, both in this case study as well as others, public access does not come without a range of issues for landowners and managers. Several measures were mentioned that could help to mitigate for increased public access.

The first was a full relaunch of the countryside code or a similar public education and awareness programme. Those that are new to the countryside, as well as some that use it regularly, cause inadvertent damage to wildlife and livestock. Greater awareness and increased signage could help to promote responsible behaviours.

The second was to fund a research programme that looked at the impact of public access on specific habitats and types of wildlife. Planning and managing public access is more difficult without knowledge of either footfall numbers or the full impact of public access on a specific habitats.

Finally, the development and planning system could be improved to create better quality greenspace. Developments within a certain distance of Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas have to make contributions through the planning system. This could be used more effectively within the planning authority's greenspace strategy to create high quality public access away from sensitive areas. It is felt that this has not been done well enough when recent large developments have been processed by Dover District Council.

Administration of an ELM scheme

Some general thoughts on how ELM should be run and administered were shared which included the following:

- ELM should not be business as usual with payments only made for genuine public good that the market will not support.
 - Money to support Farm Environment Plans are important as not all landowners can afford to pay
-

for these. Consequently, smaller farmers are in danger of missing out. Access and advice for the scheme should be aimed at creating a level playing field in terms of access to the scheme and not just for those that can afford to go through the process.

- The process needs to be easy for the applicant.
- Levels of payment need to reflect what is actually done. Methods of measuring this were not discussed.

Key points from the interview

- National Trust face significant public access pressures at their White Cliffs site and would welcome support from an ELM to help mitigate the impacts of this access.
- Nature recovery mitigation sites could be funded through an ELM for sites that are impacted by public access. This could be achieved by creating additional access on nearby sites in certain circumstances.
- Support for the National Trust's work to broaden and diversify their audience would be welcomed.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



 **Kent
Downs**
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Natural England

Interviewee
Dan Tuson

Interview date
7 April 2020



Natural England

Dan has been a Natural England adviser for many years and has helped countless farms with stewardship and countryside stewardship schemes. The role of advisers has been discussed by many farmers and other stakeholders during this and other Tests and Trials. Almost without exception, advisers are praised for their local knowledge and for their ability to create long-lasting and meaningful relationships with farmers.

Introduction

The specific focus of the meeting was ecologically sensitive areas and how to provide access on nearby land to relieve pressure on these sites. The opportunity was also taken to ask about the role of advice in ELM delivery and how the scheme may operate.

Access to ecologically sensitive sites

Some sensible issues regarding the difficulty of using ELM payments to divert traffic away from sensitive areas were raised.

- It is important to identify what areas you consider as sensitive and how these will be identified. Which habitats and species groups are you looking to protect?
- Ground nesting birds and vegetated shingle were regarded as the most likely targets for this kind of ELM.

- Ground nesting birds tend to do best in areas where there is currently limited access. Consequently, by diverting footfall away from honeypot sites such as Lydden Temple Ewell Nature Reserve and White Cliffs may inadvertently increase access in areas where species sensitive to pedestrians and dogs currently do well because there is no access. It is possible that more harm than good could be done. For example, much of the land around Lydden Temple Ewell is in stewardship and owned by the MOD.
- Sites would need to be chosen very carefully with expert input and it would be exceedingly difficult to map these sites across Kent, and even more difficult across the country.
- For something like this to work it would probably require expert advice and input at a local level.
- Potentially, this is an issue that a farm cluster could look at. i.e. a farm cluster would identify where access could be improved based on a



number of issues (public need for access, good parking nearby, less impact on wildlife, avoiding areas where there might be a biosecurity risk etc.). This would address the ecologically sensitive areas partially.

- The other possible method of delivering this aim is that future advisers would be able to pinpoint sites that are suffering from overuse and be able to prioritise access schemes on nearby farms.
- It was suggested that Natural Trust land at White Cliffs and surrounding farms could be used as a case study.
- It was also suggested that RSPB are contacted to get their opinion on ground nesting birds and ELM public access.
- Often, stewardship plans are designed to restrict public access (e.g. plough up to field boundaries near areas of public access to prevent use of margins for walking) as some members of the public do not stick to public rights of way and

areas of permissive access. This makes granting permissive access a challenge.

General opinions on ELM introduction

Dan was generally worried that the role of advisers may be under-valued and that Defra may be inclined to let market forces dictate where advice was given i.e. a farmer would pay for advice on ELM options. He feels this is problematic as other advice farmers pay for tend to have economic benefits rather than benefits for public good and there may not be enough of an incentive for farmers to pay for advice.

Building trust is an especially important part of his work. This is something that can take up to ten years to do before a farmer will sign up to a scheme. Feels that uptake of ELM could be poor if the advisory services are not in place.

Key points from the interview

- Care needs to be taken if choosing to divert access from ecologically sensitive areas. Adjacent land may be just as sensitive and, as yet, undisturbed.
- Local, specialist advice needs to dictate which sites are ecologically sensitive and where access should be diverted to.
- Care must be taken before allowing the market to dictate what advice farmers receive around ELM payments.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series

Nonington Farms

Interviewees

Emma Loder-Symonds – Nonington Farms

Interview date

13 November 2020

Nonington Farms

Nonington Farms Limited, farm 3,000 acres in East Kent, with their own 400-acre family farm at its core. They span the northern boundary of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) near its most easterly edge, between Canterbury and Dover. They are mainly arable, growing a range of LEAF Marque certified combinable crops. They also have some sheep.

Introduction to Nonington Farms

Sustainable land management is at the heart of the business, reducing carbon emissions, building healthier and more productive soil, delivering better air and water quality, and enhancing biodiversity. They aim to become carbon neutral asap and are looking at regenerative agriculture system, going down to minimum till and no till, including incorporating as much livestock onto cover-crops.

They became a LEAF Demonstration Farm in 2020 (16th June), the only one in the south east. They aim to show the beneficial practices of Integrated Farm Management (IFM) to a broad range of audiences through organised trips, raising awareness of sustainable food and farming.

With core values of 'Learn, Grow, Protect', Nonington Farms has a strong commitment to educating and engaging people of all ages, something they will build on further as a LEAF

demonstration Farm They have undertaken extensive work with schools over the years, and in 2019 were delighted to be winners of the Bayer-LEAF Education Primary School Partnership Award. With appropriate funding, they hope to construct a new permanent shelter for school groups with associated facilities.

Public footpaths, bridleways and the North Downs Way National Trail run through the farmland that they manage. A permissive path was created at Goodnestone Park (they manage the farmland) They plan to create a permissive path near an exciting new venture on their farm, a mill and visitor centre



Countryside Stewardship

They have been in forms of stewardship for more than 20 years, initially with the old Countryside Stewardship scheme, and then through ELS, and then HLS, and now CSS again.

Since 2010 have been doing the access part of Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) and continue to role that out to their clients that are going into the equivalent.

Public rights of way

The 3000 acres of farmland has many footpaths and bridleways and includes sections of the North Downs Way (NDW). There is the potential for farmland that they manage to explore permissive routes, possibly with links to the North Downs Way, in the future.

Goodnestone Park, famously associated with Jane Austen's brother, has already created a popular permissive walk on the parkland (they farm Goodnestone Estate). The resulting 'Serpentine Walk' is a revival of an 18th century walk, which passes through chalk grassland and woodland pasture. Interpretative panels have been produced in conjunction with Natural England.

Mill, Visitor Centre and Permissive Path

As an arable farm working with LEAF Marque certified combinable crops, Nonington Farms would like to be able to do more processing inhouse. They are in the advanced research and development stage of building a mill on their land, to process their own wheat into high quality stone-ground flour. This is something they currently demonstrate on micro scale for education groups. They want to be able to do it on a much bigger, more commercial scale.

Part of plan would be to build a visitor centre where people could also buy the stoneground flour. They plan to create a permissive walk around surrounding fields so that people can enjoy a good day out, visiting the mill, visitor centre and going on a walk. As well as seeing the wheat at different stages of growth, the walk, with appropriate signage, would showcase other environmental initiatives on the farm. These include sustainable

solar panels (zero carbon footprint), skylark plots, wild bird seed plots, bumble mixes, hedge laying.

Footpath issues costs /benefits

Public rights of way are subject to the usual problems; people not sticking to paths, dogs off leads running loose, wildlife disturbance, fly tipping esp. down tracks, footpath degradation.

Some trespass is resolved if you put up clear signs. Mostly people going on a footpath want to stick to a footpath or make it their route. Paths through crops need to be marked out clearly, especially as many walkers do not have maps. Directional posts need to be present and visible. If people do not know where they are going, they will make it up. Additional information boards about farming and wildlife help deter trespass.

Like many areas, the warm, spring and summer lockdown (1, UK) saw a significant increase in people streaming out into the countryside. This was less so in the winter lockdown (2, England). They were on roads, both walking and riding bikes. Many had clearly never walked on footpaths before and walked on tramlines or thought that they could walk all over the fields.

Nonington Farms really want to see people getting out into and enjoying the countryside. They would like to see them doing this in a responsible manner aided by good signage, information boards and including an understanding of the countryside code. This needs to be taught to children from a young age.

Educational visits

Nonington Farms have made a huge commitment to educating people about farming, wildlife, and sustainability. As a LEAF Demonstration Farm, they will now be doing additional access trips. They work with groups of all ages, including those with a range of special needs and disabilities. They have formed lots of relationships with schools particularly. A trained teacher, Emma Loder-Symonds leads groups, both visiting the farms and goes out to schools.



Schools and school-age groups on the farm

Most groups come from schools in Kent, although they have had some from London and one from France. These are predominantly primary schools, with some secondary schools, groups with special needs and groups from the home educated community (school age).

The groups who come to Nonington Farms have visits that last from 2 hours up to a day (dependent on requirements and abilities). They are held outside on the farm including in woodland, with some activities taking place under a parachute awning. Lavatory facilities are currently available either through a neighbouring business centre or café (dependent on site).

In addition to individual visits, from January they will be starting a 'farm school initiative' with one school, where they will take a class (or half a class) for a day per week for six weeks (roughly a term). This will give the children a greater understanding of farming. It will allow them, as

educators, to go deeper into the curriculum, and for it to become more imbedded.

Visiting schools are also an important way of increasing the knowledge of the teachers who come with their classes.

There is an extremely high demand for visits from schools. An additional group run by Nonington Farms is the Seedlings Farm Group (mostly under 8's) that meets once a week at the farm. This has been so oversubscribed recently that an overflow group has started on Thursdays too. Families pay £5 per visit for this.

Groups with more complex needs

A school from Deal brings small groups of children (14-16 yr.) with behavioural and emotional needs. They have one to one carers. The groups attend 4/5 sessions on the farm. They benefit greatly from doing outdoor sessions in the woods, gaining confidence with successive visits. The school returns year after year.

In mainstream schools, classes often have one or more children with physical disabilities or additional needs.

Work in schools

Forest schools

Emma Loder-Symonds set up a forest school for a local primary school. Every class goes into the woods for at least 2-3 hours. Emma continues her involvement by leading seasonal walks around the farm.

After school clubs

Emma runs the 'Woodland After School Club' with a local primary school. They work with a range of children, including those from disadvantaged groups supported by additional payments from the 'pupil premium' With their allotment, they learn about growing their own food, looking after resources, growing things sustainably and eating properly.

Goodnestone Primary is federated with Nonington primary. Nonington has their own land which she helps them with.

'Facetime a Farmer'

coordinated by LEAF. This initiative gives schools the opportunity to talk to farmers for 10-minute,

fortnightly Skype or Facetime session throughout the year.

Podcasts

They have contributed to school websites by doing podcasts. Lambing time is particularly popular for this, but also schools ask NFL to participate in careers fairs for their students, advocating outdoor jobs such as farming to their pupils.

Adults

Guided walks

Emma has led many guided walks around the farm. In one highly successful activity, local people, including the active local ramblers' group, were invited to come on 4 seasonal walks around the farm. Emma explained what they were doing and trying to achieve. The walks were well attended, with 30-40 people each time. The feedback was particularly good. One person said "I have lived in Nonington for over 50 years and I never knew as much about the land as I do now"

Emma has gone to village halls to give talks to Women's Institute (WI) groups followed by a short walk at the farm.

The Historical Society of Kent are due to visit, delayed by Covid.



Open Farm Sunday

NFL has held several OFS events, either on their own farm or on farms that they manage. They were forced to cancel an Open Farm Sunday for Nonington. This was replaced by four seasonal walks (detailed above). They hope to hold more in future.

Barriers to education/teaching

- Access to farm sites can be limited by availability of transport. Small village schools are disproportionately affected compared to bigger schools or ones with their own minibuses.
- Current payments are for 5-14yrs olds which means that GCSE groups must pay, unlike under HLS. Education for children needs to be for any age, particularly as interested adult groups learn as much as children on any farm visit.
- Visit number must not be too prescriptive. Under HLS they could only do one visit per day. Example given of a federated school, where one school came in the morning, another in the afternoon, but it was counted as one school visit.
- There needs to be recognition of the value of work undertaken going out to visit schools and working with them there.
- Adult education is particularly important. Guided walks and groups, whether part of an interest group or a talk in a village hall, need to be appropriately funded.
- The current teaching payment of £100/day trip, is inadequate. It is rising to £290. This more accurately reflects the lesson and preparation time, but it usually relies on one person leading throughout the day, with little respite or scope for other people to be involved alongside.
- Lesson length and numbers can be too prescriptive when dealing with some groups, especially those with special needs.
- Many classes have one or more children with additional needs. These classes often do not come out on trip at all because it is easier for the whole class to stay in school. Extra help and resources may be needed to assist farms with these groups.

- Facilities can be lacking for groups with very complex needs. Example cited of a child who needed facilities for changing.

What do you want Access-Environmental Land Management to pay for?

- Transport- Want it to pay for enabling access to the access. Minibus shared with other providers or transport costs covered.
 - Capital for shelter. - To improve school and group visits, they would like to build a shelter with fixtures like tables to knead bread. It would include lavatory facilities, ideally also with a shower, to give them the ability to cater for groups with more complex needs.
 - Risk assessment payment - Under HLS there was a baseline payment to carry out detailed risk assessments for their full range of activities. This could then be checked by Natural England and their insurers. This made it much quicker and easier to produce their risk assessments tailored for each visit.
 - Lesson plans-These plans are linked to the national curriculum. It would be useful to share these resources online.
 - National Curriculum- Putting farming on the National Curriculum- Current content is wholly inadequate.
 - Signage-Path markers. Some trespass can be prevented by having clear route markers.
 - Information signs/boards- This would include new signage for the permissive path by the mill and visitor centre. The NFU and LEAF produce a range of information boards about wildlife and farming. Additional local boards could include things of interest, or indeed rarities to report. e.g. Nonington Farms are working with Natural England to extend the range of the Small Blue Butterfly. Sightings by the public would be helpful.
 - Permissive path maintenance, cost per metre.
 - Rural ambassadors-The countryside is for everyone, but many groups are very poorly represented. They would like to harness local expertise and knowledge by creating
-

Rural Ambassadors. These would aim to enable people e.g. BAME, to feel confident enough to visit the countryside. The rural ambassadors could meet groups at a railway station, take them for a walk on a farm and on footpaths, potentially with a tractor ride back

Administration

As with the straightforward BPS, Environmental Land Management should be easy for farmers and land managers to administer themselves, without the authorization or involvement of land agents. Farmers are entrepreneurial, computer literate, businessmen and women. They do not need others to get the fees.

Measures of success

- The whole premise of LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) People need to have a greater understanding about the environment and how their actions are linked to it.
- More people supporting British agriculture and understanding where their food comes from.

- Interest and understanding promoted by well signed new permissive path, mill and visitor centre.
- With British agriculture having probably the finest standards in the world, the public should strongly object to any lowering of standards when threatened with the prospect of being flooded by sub-standard imports.
- Huge mental health benefits for all ages, that come from farm visits and access to the countryside.
- Everyone feeling welcome and able to visit the countryside
- Children growing in understanding and confidence about the countryside because of school trips to farms, afterschool clubs, forest schools and nature clubs, whether it is over the course of a year, 6 weeks or one day. These will be experiences that they have lived and will not forget. If we can show that there is a different way of life, that does not involve computer screens, consuming energy, that is worth doing.
- Continuing demand for school visits

Key points from the interview

A LEAF demonstration farm, Nonington Farms have core values of 'Learn, Grow, Protect.' They are committed to education of groups of all ages. Along with the need to have appropriately funded sessions, with farming properly in the national curriculum and teaching about the countryside code, they would like an Access- Environmental Land Management to help them by.

- Funding school transport to allow groups to visit their farms. This is one of the biggest barriers to school visits
- Provide capital funding for an outdoor shelter with facilities to allow groups with more complex needs not to be excluded, to include a shower in addition to disabled access toilets.
- Signage- posts and information boards to provide information on farming, wildlife, and points of interest, including on the new permissive path.
- Maintenance cost for a new permissive path.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



 **Kent
Downs**
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

North Downs Way National Trail

Interviewee
Pete Morris

Interview date
8 February 2021



North Downs Way National Trail

Pete Morris has been the North Downs Way Trail Manager since 2015 and is responsible for promoting the trail, improving connectivity to the trail and enhancing the level of access and understanding. This makes him well placed to understand what needs to be done to improve levels of use on different kinds of paths. His role includes working with the Public Rights of Way teams, volunteers and other access groups to make the North Downs Way a more appealing destination.

Introduction

This case study was derived from a telephone conversation between Pete Morris and Test and Trial staff. The call focused on whether there was anything specifically that National Trails could benefit from through the E.L.M. scheme. As the conversation developed, it became clear that the actions that have been developed as part of the Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial are a good fit for the work that Pete is trying to achieve with the North Downs Way. The trail itself is well used but there is additional capacity for it to be used more. This requires routes that connect to the trail from transport hubs, better surfacing in places so that it can be used by a wider range of people and some support to give people the confidence to make their first visit.

What actions would be most beneficial for National Trails?

Accessibility for National Trails is key and as an already established network of well-developed assets are well placed to take this kind of work forward. The kinds of actions that are felt to have the most benefit include:

- The removal of stiles and other restrictive furniture will help a lot more people use the National Trail. This ranges from people in mobility scooters to those with some limitations on their mobility. Some access furniture is difficult for everybody. For example, some gates are very difficult for anybody with a backpack on.
- The creation and/or enhancement could be made to link routes to and from train stations, transport hubs, towns & villages and major attractions. These links make it easy for people to find the National Trail. Lack of routes or muddy, rutted paths may put people off trying to reach the National

Trail, no matter how good the surfaces are once you get there.

- The creation and enhancements of routes that avoid road walking and avoid dangerous road crossings.
- Year-round multiuser surfaces in places will allow so many more users to access the paths. This is particularly the case for long-distance routes.
- Local champions or ambassadors can also make a difference. These people can interpret the countryside for new users and be a friendly face to show them around and how the countryside “work”. These roles are particularly important when trying to encourage people to make their first visits to the countryside.
- Having mapping and trail info in plain English accessible on the move on popular mobile phone apps will make a big difference. Currently the trails are not as easy to find on most common mapping software as it should be.
- Debunking myths about countryside use and making any rules that there are easier to understand is important. This requires a suite of information that is readily available and promoted widely that does the job that the Countryside Code should do.
- Facilitators to link landowners and local tourism businesses to the trail. Ensure that walking in the countryside is seen as a farm/business diversification opportunity and can be monetised.

Pete went on to say that coming to the countryside is an experience. It is not just about walking or cycling but part of a bigger experience. Access is fundamental but most people will not come just for a nice path! There needs to be infrastructure to make it a day out.

General opinions on ELM and the opportunities for National Trails

Pete felt that the actions that are being proposed through the Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial plays to the case that National Trails are making. As the primary routes through protected landscapes, National Trails are a good way to

provide good quality access to the millions of people that make leisure visits to the protected landscapes every year. They are an entry point to enjoying the wider countryside and if they can be made easy to use, easy to follow and easy to find the benefits will go beyond the usual suspects that already use the access network.

Key points from the interview

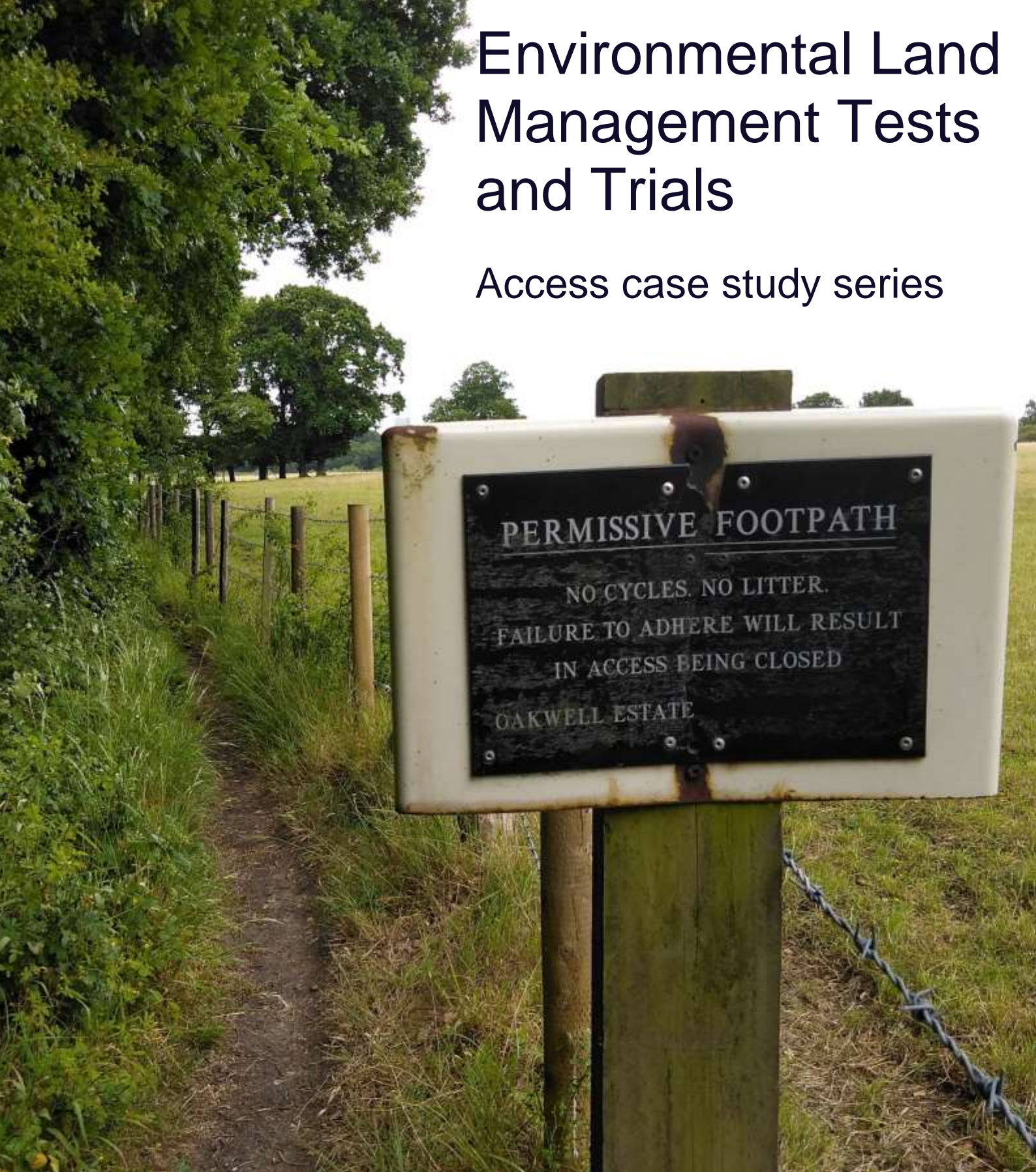
- The National Trails are a good way to give people their first experiences of the countryside where paths are well signed and good quality.
- The National Trails are well-placed to deliver improvements in the access network, not just on the trails themselves but by creating and enhancing links to the trail from nearby places and transport hubs.
- Access to the countryside for most people is about more than the footpaths and routes themselves. The experience is what makes people come back.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



Oakwell Estate

Interviewee

Colin Caverhill

Interview date

8 June 2020

Oakwell Estate

Oakwell Estate was purchased by Colin Caverhill's family in 1834, shortly after the Canterbury to Whitstable railway was opened. It was owned by Colin's late wife's family. The land stretches from the edge of the University of Kent estate in Canterbury to Tyler Hill either side of the old railway line.

The creation of a permissive path

Large parts of the Oakwell Estate was purchased by the University of Kent when the campus was first developed in the 1960s. Students were generally unaware where university land ended and private land started. Consequently, students and other members of the public walked across the fields. Although the family were happy for people to walk on their land they wanted them to keep to the edges of the fields. The permissive path was created shortly afterwards for two reasons:

1. To create a circular route when connected with other rights of way allowing pleasant walks from the university without having to walk on the dangerous Canterbury Hill road.
2. To provide an alternative to creating a path using the disused railway as was proposed at one point. The railway line is a corridor used

by bats, with nightingales also heard singing regularly.

No financial support through agri-environment schemes has ever been received for this permissive access.

Living with permissive access

In the 50 years or more that permissive access has been allowed there have been very few problems. Access has been enjoyed, litter levels have been low and cyclists and horse riders only very rarely use the path. More recently the Canterbury Trail has been created using the estate's public footpaths without consultation but this has not impacted the permissive routes.

A benefit of having the permissive access became more obvious when the university unveiled plans to turn the railway line (which is in university



ownership) into a pedestrian access route. One of the factors that stopped this from happening was that there was already existing permissive public access parallel to the railway line.

How can things be improved

Both the estate and the tenant farmers have benefited from support provided by the Public

Rights of Way team for their public footpaths including the donation of kissing gates, bridges and other furniture that has made controlling public access much easier. This kind of support has not been possible on areas with permissive access. A future ELM that could cover the costs of capital items would be welcomed. Compensation for land lost was not discussed.

Key points from the interview

- Permissive public access has been perceived by the landowner as a positive contribution to public good and with few negative issues
- Permissive access has diverted the public away from ranging freely across land.
- Public funding through an ELM would help improve the quality of the access.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



Open Access Land, Pent Farm

Pent Farm

Interviewee

Debbie Reynolds and Tom Reynolds

Interview date

19 November 2020

Pent Farm

Pent Farm is a 200ha, 3rd generation family farm, located between Folkestone and Canterbury. It lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). 100 acres are permanent pasture, the rest is arable. Tom and Debbie Reynolds are committed to farming with excellent environmental and wildlife outcomes.

The farm has several forms of public access. These include public footpaths, the North Downs Way National Trail and 'open access land'. It is additionally bordered by an unrestricted byway. The poor state of the byway impacts the farm. There are a large number of people using the paths and open access land, many in an inappropriate manner. There are significant levels of trespass including onto wildlife margins. The 'open access land' has been used 'like a country park' to the great detriment of chalk grassland species.

Introduction

Pent Farm is on the North Downs, with land stretching from the top to the valley floor. There is a range of both topography and soil type. At the top there is a small area of clay with flint, under arable reversion. The scarp slope is permanent pasture. As species rich chalk downland, it is capable of supporting good numbers of wildflowers, invertebrates and ground nesting birds. This area has suffered from significant trampling (Autumn Lady's-tresses (none in 2020), successful breeding skylarks (none in 2020)).

The heavy gault clay at the bottom of the Downs is under drained and bordered with drainage ditches. These fields are predominantly arable. The arable includes wheat, beans, oats and grass for local seed merchant. They have 'pasture for life assured' suckler cattle (Sussex and South Devon crossed with an Angus bull).

Working with his uncle (S Salbstein Ltd.), Tom Reynolds contribution to farming was recognized in the award for South East Arable Farmer of the Year 2019. He was commended for "his outstanding ability to interpret scientific data, putting this into practice alongside a sound knowledge of landscape and countryside management".

Pent Farm are also farming contractors and have some diversification which includes an airstrip.

Stewardship

The farm has been in some sort of stewardship for 30 years. They are coming to the end of 10 years in Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). It has worked fairly well for them resulting in some good benefits for the environment.

They did have school groups 10 years ago but not in recent times. They are keen to forge links with local schools now.

Access Issues

There has been a steady increase in people using public access in all areas across Pent farm in recent years. Lockdown (1, UK) also led to many more people wanting access to open space more generally, including in significant numbers at Pent Farm.

Fields next to open access land

At the top of the Downs, on the flinty clay soil, there are fields of reversion land in permanent pasture and unharvested margins. There are a couple of footpaths running through, including the North Downs Way National Trail. Everyone walks along the margins, making their own circular routes. It is probable that because it is connected to open access land, it is also viewed as open access. An array of extra routes appeared throughout lockdown.

Open access land

The farm has 30 ha of species-rich chalk downland on the scarp slope, designated 'open access land' under the 2000 CRow Act.

A viewing point and various car parks near the 'open access land' means that it is readily accessible. It is



Attempts to talk to users, have met with abuse. Debbie Reynolds has stopped and personally spoken to more than 50 people in the last few months. She has politely tried to explain the sensitivity of the land, that they are trying to manage it for biodiversity including ground nesting birds and rare orchids. Only one person, out of those spoken to, has been polite. Having to challenge unacceptable behaviour with the prospect of abuse has been damaging to her own mental health.

It seems that the public think that they have a right to do as they please on the 'open access land'. There is no concern about the consequences of their actions.

used by large numbers of people 'like a country park', without concession to the habitat. It is also a



popular dog walking spot. Dogs off leads chase ground nesting birds. People slide down important orchid banks, even hitting balls against them. They have put up laminated cards to tell users about the importance of the site for wildlife and advise on appropriate behaviour. They have all been ripped down and thrown in hedges.

Open Access Land - Pent Farm

— Existing routes
— Routes worn in 2020

Increasingly fewer undisturbed areas are being left for wildlife.

Footpaths in the lower farm

The largely arable fields in the lower part of Pent Farm are criss-crossed by footpaths. Many have unharvested margins, pollen and nectar plots. People, forge new paths through the margins, causing great damage.

Around the bottom part of Pent Farm, they have waterway ditches, buffered by grass margins. They are also seen by many, as a route around the fields. They use the footpaths, then make a circular walk out of the margins, even climbing over double strand electric fences to do so.

They are widely used by dog owners, with animals off leads, and not infrequently multiple dogs, causing great disturbance. They have stonechats, reed buntings, skylarks and flocks of yellowhammers, on the lower part of Pent, all disturbed by dogs running around.

Many people use these trespass routes, which emboldens others to continue the unacceptable behaviour. When they observe this, Debbie and Tom Reynolds make a point of politely explaining to people why they should stick to the paths, but they cannot police it and trespass continues.

Byway

The byway bordering the bottom of the farm is used by 4-wheel drives and motocross bikes, creating a deeply rutted track, and rendering it unusable for cyclists and walkers. Their field margins are more inviting to walk on than the byway, therefore increasing the levels of trespass on Pent Farm. They have a small bridge and a stile onto the byway but are unwilling to upgrade currently as it would encourage motocross users onto their margins.

If the byway was made a restricted byway between October and March, this could have enormous benefits. An unrutted surface would create a safe, off-road, carbon neutral cycle route for school children going to Brockhill School (Stanford North to Saltwood section).

Overall

There is a widespread lack of understanding about how to access the countryside appropriately. Comments from people include “they don’t know where to walk” and “there is nothing to say I can’t walk here”. There are obvious way markers on the footpaths, but people walking in the countryside

have either forgotten to look on a map, don’t know how to read a map, or don’t know how to read a sign. They don’t know where to walk, so walk anywhere. This is completely the wrong attitude to have. There is a lack of personal responsibility.

Additional permissive paths

They already have lots of public access on their land and would not want to increase this. There are many options for circular walks locally using the existing public rights of way network.

A restricted byway would also result in a useable route adjoining the farm. This could be used as part of another beautiful circular walk, incorporating stretches on the Pent Farm footpaths.

Education

Children

They did have schools visit to the farm 10 years ago. Time constraints and inadequate funding have prevented this more recently.

Debbie Reynolds is very dedicated to linking the farm with school(s). She would like to link with Stowting Primary or Sellindge Primary. Links with secondary schools are equally if not more valuable. She feels strongly that farming is something that should be on the National Curriculum. (It should be put in the Access ELM strategy). Subject to time availability they would be prepared to take school children from further afield including from traditionally underrepresented groups.

They have the facilities needed for school visits but would need the correct equipment to undertake good science-based visits. Secondary groups would need additional scientific equipment.

Debbie Reynolds referenced her work with Godinton House and their excellent education programme, especially helping ‘pupil premium’ (PP) children to gain a greater understanding of the countryside. As a charitable trust Godinton pay Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership to deliver teaching. Transport and lessons are currently free of charge to these schools. It is an excellent introduction for the next generation to nature and farming.

Facetime a farmer

They had signed up to a school initiative to link a school with a farmer. Technical issues with the school then Covid have meant that this has not happened yet. It is a very worthwhile initiative which they hope to pursue in more equitable times.

Adults

Guided walks for local people have proved a valuable tool in helping educate the local community about the countryside as well as providing important insight into their perspective.

Debbie led guided walks around the lower part of Pent Farm for the people of the village whilst promoting the Postling Action for Conservation and the Environment Group. It aims to get people engaged with their local environment, encouraging them to take more care of the environment, including their gardens. The tours showed people what they as a farm are trying to do for wildlife including the benefits of longer grass management, margins, appropriate ditch management. People were asked to look up at the chalk downland. She talked about their concerns over the trampling, resulting this year (2020) in no successful breeding pairs of skylarks. She asked, "what we are missing"? A couple of people said that it is interpretation, when they walk up there, "they don't know where they should and shouldn't go".

Eco-tourism

They aspire, one day, to bring the wildlife of the site to a wider audience by converting an agricultural building into accommodation for ecotourism. It is a balance. Plants such as the Late Spider-orchid and Autumn Lady's-tresses have suffered through trampling.

Open Farm

They ran a two-day farm event for charity a few years ago. This show-cased what they are doing on the farm. It also incorporated planes (part of their farm diversification air strip) with vintage vehicles. The event was very well received They will explore taking part in Farm Sunday in the future.

Signage- adding value and control

They need a big push on signage and interpretation, but not so much that they advertise themselves as a place to go. It is trying to find the right balance.

- On the "open access land, they would like every entrance to the site to have an interpretative board. This would detail both wildlife of interest and a simple big illustrative map. Blue routes would mark where they would like people to walk. This would help reinforce the message and provide structure when approaching people.
- QR codes on finger posts for people to use with their phones would add value to walks. They referenced the South Downs where the QR codes provided links to video footage of farmers explaining what they were doing. They could have other information including maps, farming updates, points of interest, bird song.
- Maps of the local area for local people would help keep them on the footpaths. Many more houses are due to be built in the next 10-15 years so it is important to establish good patterns of behaviour which others will follow.
- Paths need to be well marked on the ground so that there is a clear distinction between path and crop.
- Additional signage is needed to say that you are entering a conservation agriculture farm, managed for the benefit of wildlife, please stay on the paths.
- Private land signs
- Additional finger posts on open tracks of grazing land.

What would you like an Access ELM to pay for?

- Signs at each entrance on the open access land. (5 x £1,500).
 - Extra finger posts in open access land
 - QR codes plus associated updates
 - Money for doing school visits that adequately reflects the preparation involved to make it an enjoyable and useful trip. (£250)
 - Equipment to run school visits. This would be a starter kit for primary schools (£1000 to buy grinders, clip boards, spade, soil compacter test etc.) and detailed science equipment for secondary schools' 'A' Level students (£2000)
-

- Local maps to encourage good behaviour patterns amongst local users.
- Transport and resources for schools to visit the farm.

Role of advisers

- The government needs to put a lot more money back into Natural England Local Stewardship Advisers, who have provided an invaluable role.
- The Environment Agency has been underfunded for a long time.
- It was strongly felt that the farming industry needs to act and be seen to act as part of the solution in tackling climate change. The government should be stricter on farmers who are not cross compliant and do nothing to address issues such as polluting waterways. They need to be better as an industry.

Measures of success

- Less misuse of open access land.
- Seeing people enjoying the open access land in a responsible way.
- People staying on the footpaths and using the land in a much more responsible way.
- Reduction in confrontation.
- Increase in species and population numbers, especially on the chalk downland, as a result of change in user behaviour. e.g., increase in the numbers of Autumn Lady's-tresses (none in 2020), successful breeding skylarks (none in 2020).
- An increased understanding of wildlife on the farm as a result of education.
- Farmers ability to manage land for wildlife.

Key points from the interview

Chalk downland, open access land at Pent Farm has been used by large numbers of people 'like a country park', to the detriment of chalk grassland species. Adjoining land has also been treated as if they were part of the open access land. All Public Rights of Way on the farm have suffered from significant levels of trespass including onto wildlife margins.

An Access ELM could help:

- Provide interpretation boards to make users understand what they are trying to protect.
- QR codes in the lower farm could add value to peoples walks and let them know how they are managing the farm for wildlife.
- Putting farming and wildlife firmly in the national curriculum including teaching the countryside code.
- Providing education trips for primary and secondary schools, including establishing local links.
- Providing guided walks for adults, to help everyone understand the link between the countryside, farming and wildlife.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



Ranscombe Farm

Interviewee

Richard Moyse

Ranscombe Project Manager, Plantlife

Interview date

6 May 2020



Ranscombe Farm - Plantlife

Ranscombe Farm is a 260 hectare reserve situated to the south west of the large urban area of Medway. It is Plantlife's largest reserve in England and is a flagship for the work of the organisation. It serves both to conserve some of the UK's most important wildlife and provide extensive public access to the countryside. The site is particularly important for rare wild plants associated with arable farmland. Approximately 130 ha of the site is woodland, of which the majority is ancient woodland and around 90 ha is arable farmland, which is managed commercially by a tenant farmer. 38 ha of the site consists of grassland, the majority of which is grazed by a tenant farmer agreement. The site is in the freehold of Medway Council and Plantlife. Plantlife are responsible for the management of the entire site. Countryside Stewardship funds are accessed, predominantly by the tenant farmer. Educational access visits or funding for access furniture does not form part of the agreement.

Current public access

There are approximately 16 kilometres of public rights of way across Ranscombe Farm, the majority of which are footpaths, and on some of which cycling and horse riding are permitted. Additionally, there are desire lines that have been created by the public as they pass through the reserve. Public access is restricted in certain sensitive areas by fencing. There are multiple entrance points to the reserve and two of these have pedestrian counters on them. Visits per year are estimated at between 50,000 and 60,000.

Issues with public access (costs, benefits and limitations)

Plantlife welcome visitors as an organisation. It is an important way to get the message over to people about the work that they do as well as a driver for

membership. The organisation would also like to work more with under-represented groups. Although public access does generate some money when events are run this does not amount to a major source of income. The reserve is a net consumer of funds.

Some of the costs of public access include:

- Dog fouling and litter.
- Dogs can sometimes chase livestock as well as disturbing ground nesting birds.
- Arable farming is slightly impacted by additional access (trampling) but it is not thought that access causes significant damage to the rare plants on the reserve.
- Livestock farming is impacted more by access. Sheep farming is not possible in areas with public access.





- Enhanced safety requirements – risk assessments and possible tree felling to make areas safe.
- Cyclists using public footpaths and pedestrian only access routes can cause issues.

Insurance has not been an issue to date but this may be because insurance is procured nationally rather than locally.

Other issues that may impact the type of access that is offered at Ranscombe Farm include the lack of public toilets. Toilets are available for small groups but these are not open to the public. The car park at Ranscombe Farm only has a limited capacity which will cap the amount of growth the reserve can accommodate.

How can public access be enhanced?

The measures that could be implemented to improve public access at Ranscombe Farm that would incur costs could include:

- Additional public car parking (though the morphology of the parking area may prevent this).
- Path surfacing to enhance equality of access.
- Security gates on boundaries to limit inappropriate access.
- Enhanced entrance points (made more welcoming).
- Maintenance costs for footpaths.
- Signage and maintenance of signage.

- Provision of resting places and/or picnic tables.
- A volunteer warden scheme to provide support and guidance for visitors.
- Officer (possibly 3 days a week) to maintain and enhance access as well as support visits from under-represented groups and schools.

How could an enhanced access ELM work?

The access required at Ranscombe Farm is not necessarily the same as that at a traditional farm. The measures listed in the section above are expensive but provide an enhanced access experience for visitors. It also provides the kind of inviting welcome that encourages those that don't often walk in the countryside to make a visit.

This kind of package could form part of an enhanced access package under an ELM. Those taking part would need to be identified by an adviser and would have to provide a range of services to qualify. This may be a scheme that could work better for farm clusters so that access can be provided over a larger area.

Richard felt that the role of Natural England advisers was very important. People who know the local area and have an understanding of the needs of farmers and other landowners are vital. The personal confidence of farmers in advisers really does make a difference.



There may also be a role for organisations such as the Kent Nature Partnership in identifying some of the areas that could qualify for the enhanced access package. Disability and other access groups should also be involved.

How success is measured was discussed and there was an understanding that measures must be easy to record and meaningful. Numbers of visitors can be counted though there is a cost to this. The quality of the visitor's experience is also important as is the type of people that are taking advantage of the access. Quantifying and comparing these results may not be easy. The level of funding received for enhanced access provision would need to be high enough to justify the expense of measuring results.

Under-represented groups

Plantlife has policies set nationally that include engaging with groups that are under-represented in the countryside and encouraging them to visit the

reserve. This has not always proved to be an easy thing for staff to do at Ranscombe Farm. Like many conservation organisations, the skills of staff present on the ground are based around land management and public engagement of people who are already engaged with nature conservation. Plantlife does have centrally-based outreach staff.

The issue that is often faced by Plantlife at Ranscombe Farm is how to properly engage with under-represented groups. Finding groups who genuinely want to access green spaces and need assistance to do so outside of the normal audience can be a challenge. Staff may also not have the specialist skills required to work with some groups.

Being able to work with third parties through an ELM scheme would be useful. Specialist third parties would be able to identify groups who would benefit from increased access to the countryside and provide structured activities when on site. In return, Plantlife could provide a safe and welcoming environment for people to explore the countryside.

Key points from the interview

- Ranscombe Farm would welcome the opportunity to increase visitor numbers.
- An enhanced access package could help provide exceptional access facilities both increasing the level of access and the quality of visitor experience.
- The chance to work with specialist third parties to provide opportunities for groups that are under-represented in green spaces would be welcomed.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



Existing permissive bridleway on Quex Park Estate

Quex Park Estate

Interviewee

Anthony Curwen – Estate Manager

Interview date

6 July 2020



Quex Park Estate

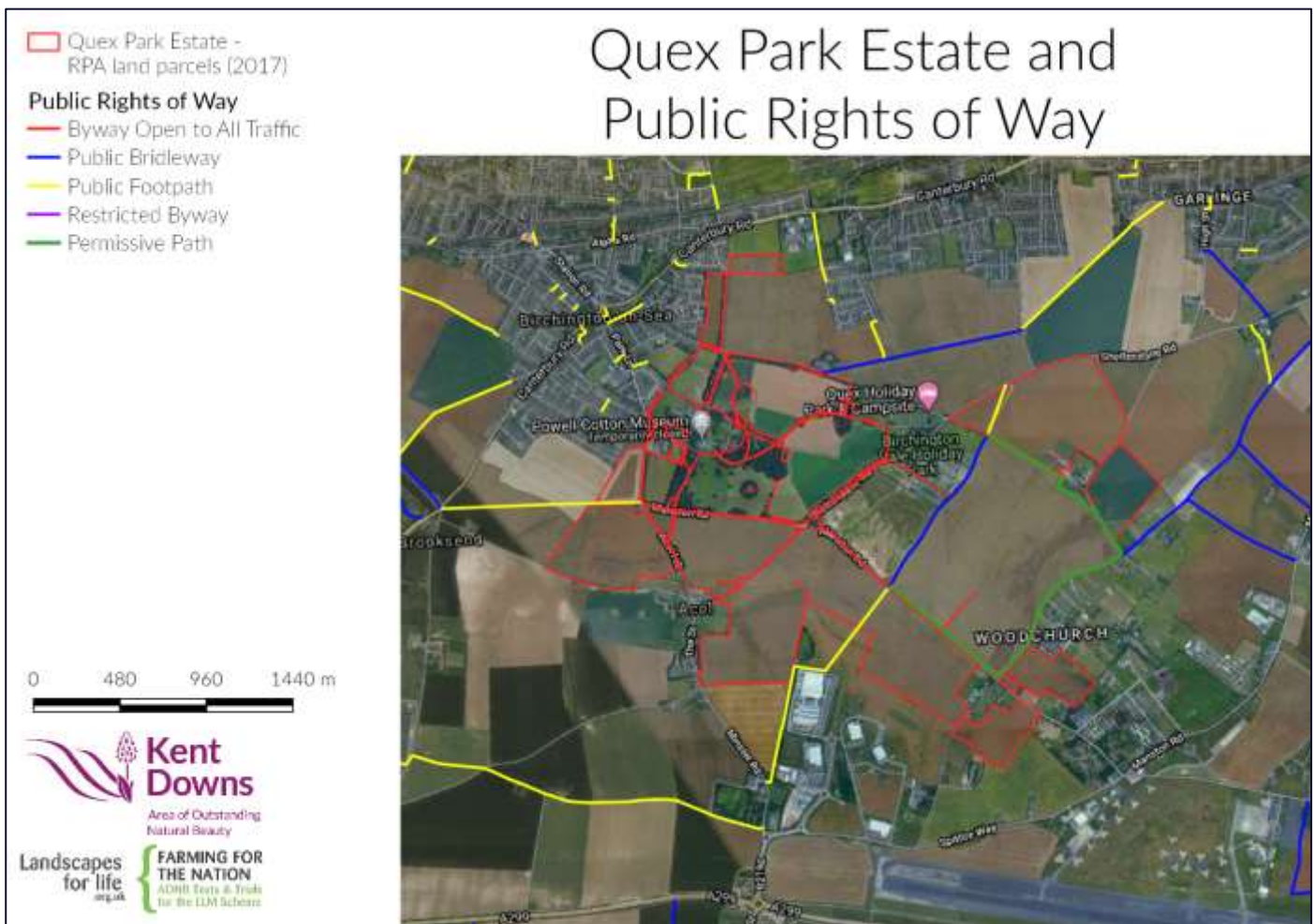
Quex Park is an 1800-acre estate in Thanet, Kent. There are 110 tenants across the estate, some of which are commercial but many are residential. The estate also farms the tenanted land on behalf of many of the tenants and is a contract farming business that manages another six farms locally. As farming becomes more specialised, different arrangements are in place for managing the land including some land being farmed under licence where Quex Park provides the land, irrigation and farming infrastructure but the crop is managed by a 3rd party. The majority of the land is arable but there is approximately 35 acres of woodland and a similar amount of pasture. There are a number of activities that take place on the estate including adventure golf, restaurants, shops etc. that are also tenants and responsible for their own activities. The Powell Cotton Museum is also based on the estate but has its own freehold that dates back to the formation of a charitable trust around 100 years ago. There is also a section of land in the marshes north of Richborough known as Kings End Farm.

How access is currently managed

Open access is provided in the 30 acres of attractions and these receive around 250,000 visitors a year. However, this report will consider how access is managed across the rest of the estate. Statutory access is limited with several footpaths and a bridleway. The Saxon Shore Way crosses Marsh Farm.

A permissive bridleway was created in 2001 as part of a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme.

This was created to connect local stables to the bridleway network. A hedge was planted adjacent to the bridleway and the route is well used. When Countryside Stewardship replaced HLS, funding for the bridleway was removed. The route is so well used it is not possible to close the bridleway without damaging relations with the community. Consequently, a return to funding permissive access would be welcomed. Some of the footpaths on the estate are not well used as they cross some of the large roads in the area.



Additional building may change this and there is a lot of planned development in and around the Thanet area.

How could an Access ELM work at Quex Park Estate?

Anthony Curwen would be prepared to see additional permissive access based on the assumption that the payment rates justified the decision. The kind of things that would be possible on the estate include:

- Better signage that helped to keep people to the areas where access is permitted.
- Better access furniture (particularly self-closing kissing gates).
- Gated entrances to paths to prevent inappropriate access.
- Permissive paths to enhance the public footpath network and create circular or linear walks.
- Disabled access where applicable.

There are also certain things that the estate would not want to consider:

- Upgrading of the status of statutory routes (for example, footpath to bridleway).
- Open access across the estate or part of the estate.
- The provision of car parking.

The estate would also want to make a claim for existing permissive access created under a Higher Level Stewardship agreement. Access improvements can be linked with other ELM initiatives such as tree planting and hedge planting that will improve biodiversity as well as help to control access.

Educational Access

It is important to recognise the lack of diversity in the countryside and this does need to be addressed. However, educational access is difficult at Quex Park, even though there are 130,000 people living in the urban areas of Thanet. The farm is largely arable, has few links with natural spaces and may not have enough points of interest for groups. Anthony would be prepared to have a small plot with all different crops growing to make visits more interesting. Ideally, there would be target farms that had the right facilities including

hand washing and toilets as well as cover for if it rains. They would be farms with lots of features to create interest. Can we access virtual classrooms?

There used to be educational access on the estate but it was a challenge to get schools to come and it is likely that an intermediary between schools and farms would help this. It can be costly for schools to get to farms.

ELM administration

Lack of uptake of Countryside Stewardship has been, in part, down to the inspection system. A lighter touch is needed as trust has been lost. It would be preferable for the emphasis to be on keeping to the spirit of the agreement rather than the letter of the agreement.

Payment levels

Payment rates are important. They will have to cover more than simply income forgone and there would need to be some profit. This will be the key to uptake rates.

Advice

Advice is an important component of creating an effective ELM. Access needs to fit into a plan for the entire estate and advice received would ensure that access could be created in areas that are not environmentally sensitive.

In 2001, Anthony put together a Countryside Stewardship bid by himself. This was the best scheme in terms of fitting in with the workings of the farm but probably not the most beneficial for wildlife and public benefit. When the scheme expired and a Higher Level Stewardship bid was worked up, Paul Cobb of FWAG gave advice.

Personally, Anthony would prefer to see the Natural England adviser given more authority to make decisions. They have the knowledge of farming, wildlife and the local area. They are also best placed to create hubs and connections between local farmers.

Applications and reporting

It is felt that when stewardship schemes have been competitive it does provide an incentive to do things well. That must be set against the fact that most farmers are not estate managers like



Anthony and are time poor. Assistance needs to be given to farmers to ensure that as many holdings as possible make applications.

On the question of spatial prioritisation, it was felt that access was an issue everywhere. All footpaths need to be of a high quality. Although there may be more need for access in urban areas, the amount of litter and the higher likelihood of antisocial behaviour makes the need for better infrastructure greater.

Key points from the interview

- Access at the Quex Park Estate could be improved by the creation of additional permissive paths and the upgrading of existing access.
- It is vital that the intervention rates for ELM access options provide adequate incentives for farmers to take part.
- The role of Natural England advisers is incredibly beneficial in terms of building trust and ensuring that resources are allocated where they are needed most.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



Ramblers

Interviewee

Stephen Russell – Policy and Advocacy Officer

Interview date

24 July 2020



Ramblers

The Ramblers, as an organisation, has made a detailed response to the ELM consultation individually and as part of the Wildlife and Countryside Link group that also includes British Canoeing, British Mountaineering Council and Open Spaces Society. The organisation has given considerable thought to how public access can be enhanced following the departure from the EU. The organisation sympathises with the needs of farmers and landowners and, contrary to the misconceptions of some, does not challenge the vast majority of applications to change public rights of way.

What could an ELM look like

The Ramblers have not called for a right to roam over farmland. There is an understanding that entry to ELM is voluntary and that farmers will have a choice. Instead, the organisation would support payments for enhanced public access and would hope that ELM could be used to help maintain the existing network. This would have implications across all three tiers of ELM:

Tier 1. Entry to tier 1 of ELM should be conditional on a farmer or landowner complying with their statutory obligations around existing public rights of way. This part of cross compliance within the Basic Payment Scheme was particularly useful for ensuring that landowners kept rights of way clear and that access furniture was maintained. Tier 1 should also include improvements in access

network due to mobility issues that either they suffer from or somebody within their family.

Tier 2. This is where additional permissive routes (or possibly permanent) could be created and these can be across landholdings. The kind of things that could be funded include:

- Alternative routes to busy country roads. Creating a means for active everyday lives.
- Creation of circular routes to link amenities and the existing network.
- Creating access points to open access land.
- Link the England Coast Path to communities inland.
- Creating links to the other public goods that ELM is paying for and helping people understand what ELM is achieving.



Tier 3. Ensuring that public open access is maintained when tree planting takes place on land that currently has open access. Additionally, existing access should be incorporated in the scheme and new access provided so that the public can experience the changes taking place.

Spatial prioritisation

There is an understanding that any enhanced public access must provide value for money and that new access will be more valuable in some areas than others. Each local authority has a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and this could be the basis of any spatial prioritisation. Although these plans vary across the country, knowing that they might underpin ELM funded improvements could provide the incentive to make them more comprehensive. Health and wellbeing data can be used to identify communities that are the least active and these can be targeted for additional funding.

Overcoming the fears of landowners and underrepresented groups

Understanding of the countryside amongst many is not good. There is a need to promote the Countryside Code more widely and this should be done as ELM is being developed. There are some

good local initiatives to learn from. People will take care of things that they understand. Initiatives like this may help to give farmers and landowners the confidence to take part in access schemes.

There is a feeling that some of the problems landowners currently face are due to poor management of rights of way. If signage was clearer and paths were kept clear, this might help people to keep to the path network. This will also help people who are unsure about where to walk in the countryside gain confidence in making visits. Interpretation about farms and farmers will also help.

The Ramblers would like to get away from the perception that, as an organisation, they are preoccupied on rules about where you can and can't go. This can over complicate the path network. It should be seen more as somewhere you go to do what you do rather than somewhere just for walkers. The path network must be made relevant to people if they are to use it. There is a hope that, as ELM is funded by the UK government, rather than the distant CAP regime EU payment, the public may be more likely to recognise that ELM payments come from the public purse and that there should be clear benefits for the public as a result.



Car parks and toilets are not generally seen as the most important use of public money to improve the path network. However, there is an understanding that parking can be important to help improve access for people with limited mobility. There is a tendency for visitors to congregate at honeypot sites, which can cause congestion and inappropriate parking. Advertising of other sites is important; particularly for any new access created to maximise returns on investment. Even during busy times, there is plenty, although unequal distribution, of access in England. People need to know how to find it.

Educational access

Ramblers understand the need for educational access. There is a concern that educational access will be used in place of wider access or compete for funds that might otherwise be used to improve the network for the benefit of the wider population.

Administration of an access ELM

Part of a farm plan should be an assessment of natural capital, which would include the value and potential value of access.

Advice

As public access activities under tier 1 should be relatively straightforward and easy to undertake, guidance for participants should suffice, subject to the quality of that guidance. This should also ensure that compliance with statutory obligations for public rights of way. For tier 2, advice is important. There

should be a link to local highway authorities as advice may be more impartial though there may be capacity issues. Local access forums could provide advice as these are existing groups with expertise and include both users and landowners. Funding should be provided to support this level of advice. This could also provide an incentive to produce high-quality Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

How is success measured?

There are several ways that the success of an access-based ELM could be measured. Changes in Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) could be used but only at a national level rather than for individual farms. The indicators outlined in the 25 Year Environment Plan could also be used, though it is felt that this plan is not ambitious enough, particularly where access is concerned.

For individual schemes, the following could be used to measure success and payments could be made against:

- Length of the network
- Quality of the work done – against standards
- Accessibility standards

It is not felt that proving numbers of people using a path to calculate payments is appropriate and would be unfair for participants.

Key points from the interview

- An access-based ELM should ensure that compliance to statutory obligations required by the Basic Payment Scheme is retained as part of the conditions attached to entry into the new regime.
- ELM provides a way to improve access above statutory standards (Tier 1) and to create new, high quality permissive or permanent access where there would be a clear public benefit.
- Tier 3 projects should result in no net loss of access rights on open access land (for example through the redesignation of current open access areas following tree planting projects), and landscape-scale transformational projects should consider from the outset the ways in which public access could be incorporated. increase levels of open access rather than provide opportunities to reduce it

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series



 **Kent
Downs**
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

SW Attwood & Partners

Interviewees

Stephen Attwood

James Attwood

Interview date

20 May 2020



SW Attwood & Partners

SW Attwood and Partners is a family run business. It was set up in 1938 as a farm on the outskirts of the Medway Towns. The business has since expanded and diversified but farming is still fundamentally important covering around 4000 acres across Kent and Sussex. The business is also involved in property development and management, grain storage, engineering clay and land drainage. The main farm holdings of the business are in Sheppey, around Faversham and across the northern part of Kent

The importance of farm payments

SW Attwood currently accesses the Basic Payment Scheme across most of the farm. It has Countryside Stewardship agreements in place for land at Elmley that falls within a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is felt that the money that is received through these schemes is fundamentally important to the future economic viability of many farms. It is considered vital that the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme allows farms to retain similar levels of funding. This is essential to avoid major disruption of the supply of food in England.

What an Enhancing Access ELM could pay for

SW Attwood is prepared to allow increased access to their land to receive ELM payments and feel that there could be several ways that this could be achieved. However, the focus of discussions was on a scheme to provide high-quality cycle paths that could connect local centres by crossing farmland.

Long-distance multi-user paths

The provision of cycle paths and high-quality footpaths is currently a very high profile issue. The increase in outdoor exercise that has taken place during the Covid-19 lockdown in the UK has seen a step-change in the use of footpaths and other public rights of way. The public is now being encouraged to return to work either on foot or by bike where possible. Political support has been given to the creation of a network of high quality, traffic-free cycle and pedestrian routes.

Currently, the provision of cycle paths or multi-user paths can be patchy. This has resulted in incomplete paths that fail to properly link communities to the places they want to get to. Currently, paths might be funded by local authorities, charities such as Sustrans or as planning conditions for property developments. Some of the incomplete paths are a consequence of poor planning but can be because farmers or other landowners do not allow access across their land.

An Enhancing Access ELM could compensate farmers for allowing these paths to cross their land.



Barton Hill footpath on land owned by SW Attwood



The compensation would be for farmed land that is lost. The farms that these paths cross may also need to be compensated for the impact that additional visitors might have on farming activities. This might range from damage to crops and impact on livestock to additional litter.

It is essential that paths have high-quality surfaces if they are to be used by lots of people. SW Attwood has created a cycle path as a planning condition on Sheppey with a tarmacked surface. It is extremely well used. The vision for these paths is that they could be paid for by housing developments. Potentially the network could be part of a local authority's Local Plan. Property developers' payments could create and maintain the paths with farmers and landowners being compensated for allowing the paths to cross their land.

Long-term ELM agreements would be needed to ensure that access to the paths was guaranteed. This would help to justify the expenditure. Clusters of farmers would need to work together to deliver a strategic network of long-distance routes. These paths could qualify as a tier 2 ELM initiative.

Other Enhancing Access ELM options

Other ELM options that SW Attwood would consider that relate to access were discussed. These include providing car parks. Often people drive to the countryside and want to use public rights of way but there are very few places to park. What resource is available for local people is used quickly and others park inconsiderately and dangerously. Farmers could be paid for providing parking areas that could

either be permanent or temporary services. Enhanced pathways, signage and toilets could also be provided. This would be well suited to farms that are near urban areas, where there is little current provision or if farms have shops, cafés or other services that might benefit from additional footfall. This ELM option is similar to the enhanced access ELM discussed in the Plantlife case study. It is something that SW Attwood consider would be appropriate for their land on the urban fringe near Faversham.

Another option discussed was that farms could be paid for removing rubbish and litter that is both dropped on their land or that blows there from roads and other public places. This service could provide employment and would provide a definite public benefit. It would also enhance the experience of those who access the countryside. This option could either be part of what a farmer was expected to do as part of something similar to a Basic Payment Scheme or be an option that could be delivered as a tier 1 option or as a cluster in tier 2.

It was felt that providing access to third parties through educational access or hosting specialist groups could be a useful ELM. However, it was also considered that this was better suited to small mixed farms rather than large, mainly arable farms.

Scheme administration

No strong opinions were offered as to how the scheme is administered. SW Attwood feels that the RPA has administered the current scheme relatively well although they feel that some flexibility over measuring areas and what has been achieved might be helpful.

Key points from the interview

- SW Attwood has been proactive in promoting access through high-quality multi-user paths with farmers being compensated for the loss of land and increased disturbance.
- There is a feeling that the farming community can provide services that provide public good, such as a litter removal service that would enhance the access experience.
- ELM has the opportunity to provide a similar level of finance to farmers as the Basic Payment Scheme does presently, even if the requirements of farmers are different.

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Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials

Access case study series

Wye Community Farm

Interviewees

Richard Boden
Katy Bravery

Interview date

16 June 2020

Wye Community Farm

[Wye Community Farm](#) was established in 2008 following the closure of Wye College and the loss of local opportunities to train in agriculture. It was based on the [Fordhall Farm](#) model that had opened a year before. It is community-owned and run by many individual shareholders who can purchase shares from £50. The farm is run as an Industrial and Provident Society for the benefit of the community.

Introduction to Wye Community Farm

The farm does not own any land but grazes approximately 100 acres of land, currently with 14 different landlords. Most of this land is secured with verbal agreements that can be subject to termination at short notice, making business planning a challenging task. The one exception to the short-term agreements is a six-acre plot that is also home to the farm's pole barn. This land is secured for as long as the farm is in existence. Primarily, Wye Community Farm is a working farm that produces food, wool and firewood. It has 60 ewes and 12 suckler cows. There are no companion animals.

What makes the farm different, apart from being community-owned, is that it provides hands-on opportunities to learn about livestock management and how a farm is run. These

opportunities range from open volunteering sessions through to sessions for children with special educational needs (SEN), community payback teams and a unique farm club for interested teenagers. Young people have gone on to higher education in agricultural and veterinary subjects after their Wye Community Farm experiences and offenders have returned voluntarily.

The farm has no access to either the Basic Payments Scheme or Countryside Stewardship. Being a grazier on short-term contracts, working with relatively small areas of land is challenging. Either land is not registered with the RPA or the landowner claims the Basic Payments Scheme money. The farm is financed by three funding streams, each of which is roughly similar in size. These are:





- Trading. Cash generated by selling products and livestock as well as money received from running sessions for SEN students.
- Monies raised through membership, the sale of shares and donations.
- Grant aid.

Being dependent upon grant aid for core running costs is a strain on the organisation as levels of funding are difficult to predict and not guaranteed.

Potential to provide more

One of the advantages of being a small organisation with multiple funding streams is that, by nature, the farm is fleet of foot. It can react quickly and draw upon a wide range of skills that village residents and volunteers can offer. Bushcraft sessions can be run in Brook Wood, courses can be delivered in a range of subjects from green woodworking to fungi identification. Consequently, there is considerable scope for the expansion of the farm's activities.

How could an ELM work for Wye Community Farm?

The land that is worked by Wye Community Farm is owned by others, is leased on short-term contracts and is split into numerous small parcels. This set up does not lend itself to the provision of high-quality public access through footpaths. However, the farm is very well positioned to provide excellent opportunities for groups that are underrepresented in the countryside to experience a genuine farming experience. The traditional

breeds that are used are excellent for managing high-quality grassland and can be used as a way of introducing nature conservation subjects. The farm has a compost toilet, uses solar panels for electricity and has pumped water so is well placed to teach about sustainability issues.

An Enhancing Access ELM would ideally provide:

- Funding per session to deliver a tailored package to groups. These sessions could be in a wide range of subjects but all based around a farm experience.
- Funding to support capital purchases to support these sessions. Money to help provide a better training area will be essential.
- Improved interpretation and the purchase of webcams for remote learning when groups return from their visits would also be beneficial.

There was considerable discussion about how sessions might link more closely with educational programmes. OCR is currently developing a [Natural History GCSE](#) and it was suggested that an ELM may provide the grounding for this sort of qualification. The discussion also centred around training for some of the farm's volunteers that could make them more employable.

ELM administration

Payment levels

For a small organisation, it is important that an ELM provides enough funding to justify the administrative costs of applying and creating the

resources needed to deliver sessions. This applies both to the rate that is paid for delivery as well as the length of the contract and the number of sessions that are paid for. Currently, the farm charges £40 an hour for running sessions for groups. A five-year contract to deliver sessions would provide stability for the farm. It is also important that the costs of those that are taking part in the sessions are at least partially covered. These are likely to be transport costs but may also include staff costs.

Application process

Methods of applying were discussed. It was suggested that the application might be a competitive process with those wishing to deliver this sort of innovative access putting together a proposal that outlined:

- The cost of delivering sessions.

Key points from the interview

- Wye Community Farm is a small, locally run organisation that provides opportunities for people to learn about and experience farming.
- The farm can offer opportunities to widen participation in the countryside and would be well placed to provide the public benefits required of the ELM scheme.
- A flexible but long-term agreement would be favoured to allow for proper business planning.

This case study examining Enhancing Access Opportunities is one of three Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials managed and run by the Kent Downs AONB unit on behalf of the National Association of AONBs.



- The type of sessions that would be delivered.
- How groups would be identified and engaged in the project.

Identification of participants

It was felt that guidance would be needed in this area, either in the form of application guidance or the provision of a coordinator, who linked farms to groups. Wye Community Farm has good links with a wide variety of groups and schools locally. Questions were asked about who the main beneficiaries of opportunities to access the countryside should be. Should priority be given to creating local opportunities or for creating opportunities for people from the most deprived, inner-city areas? Questions also surround whether the location of the farm should be used for the prioritisation of funding for this ELM.

