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HILL FARMING SYSTEMS PROJECT CUMBRIA FELLS AND DALES

REPORT ON PROJECT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIVITY

Part of a joint project between the
Cumbria Fells and Dales and Gevaudan, Lozère LEADER + Programmes

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SUMMARY OF THE HILL FARMING SYSTEMS PROJECT AND ITS OBJECTIVES

The Hill Farming Systems project was developed by the Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER + Programme in partnership with Voluntary Action Cumbria in response to concerns about the future of hill farming. The aim of the project was to investigate the environmental, economic and social value of hill farming systems in Cumbria in order to:-

- make an improved case for continuing and improving financial support for hill farming
- provide evidence for why consumers might want to pay more for hill farming products
- help the hill farming community communicate to the public its delivery of wildlife habitats, landscape and public access

A project covering a similar agenda was carried out in our partner LEADER + area of Lozère in Southern France and throughout the project there were exchange visits between the two areas. The project started in January 2006 and was completed at the end of June 2008.

To guide the project a steering group was set up with representatives including hill farmers, commoners, National Parks, the National Trust, Friends of the Lake District and Natural England. A full list of steering group members is given in Appendix 1.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE CUMBRIA FELLS AND DALES AREA

The Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER + area covers the majority of upland Cumbria apart from the Northern section of the Cumbrian Pennines. The area includes the Lake District National Park, the Pennine Fells south of Brough, the Orton fells and the Howgills. A map of the area is shown in Appendix 2.

The Lake District is an internationally valued landscape of open fells, craggy mountains, remote valleys, rivers, lakes and a pastoral rolling landscape of farmland, sheltered valleys and broadleaved woodland. Farming has been carried out within the area for many centuries and has influenced the development of its different landscape elements. The valley bottoms are characterized by a patchwork of small inbye fields enclosed by stone walls and hedgerows. The valley sides are typically semi-improved rough grazing and woodland within larger walled areas known locally as 'intakes'. At the top of the slopes, the fell wall marks the transition to the unimproved moorland and rough grazing land of the open fells. Many Lakeland hill farms typically run a small suckler beef herd and a flock hill breeding ewes, although in recent years there has been a move towards sheep-only farming.

The South Cumbria low fells are part of the Lake District National Park but are less rugged with isolated semi-improved small fields in river valleys – principally the river Lune and Kent and their tributaries. This is an area of dairy as well as beef and sheep production.

The North Pennines is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is predominantly an upland landscape with a mixture of moorland habitat and rough grazing including grouse moor and extensive upland sheep production. The Orton fells near Tebay to the east of are an area of limestone upland with limestone pavements and flower rich meadows. Further south and also to the East of the M6, the Howgill fells are a triangular shaped area situated between the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales. This is an area of traditional upland sheep rearing with fewer cattle now than in the past. The hills are steep sided but with rounded tops, less rugged than the Lake District, and dissected by rivers and streams. The habitat consists of upland with moors and rough grazing with some areas of flower rich grassland on northern slopes and blanket bog on the upper fells.

1.3 THE CURRENT STATE OF HILL FARMING

Hill farming in the Cumbrian Fells and Dales is facing a period of unprecedented change as a result of:

- The inherent low profitability of hill farming.
- The impact of Foot and Mouth in Cumbria in 2001 and the extent of de-stocking introduced by environmental agreements which has accelerated since the Foot and Mouth crisis.
- Changes to the Common Agricultural Policy and the introduction of the new Single Farm Payment system from 2005 to 2012.
- Changes to environmental support payments with the introduction of the new Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship schemes.
- A range of social factors, particularly concern over the transfer of skills to younger hill farmers and lack of affordable housing.

The most recent figures available from DEFRA's farm business survey for the North West show that Farm Business Income for Less Favoured Area grazing livestock farms fell from £15,504 in 2003, to £7,383 in 2006. According to a recent report by Newcastle University¹, for all English LFA farms Farm Business Income was only £10,786 in 2007 and, once family labour is accounted for, this falls to -£8,800. Although lamb prices have improved in recent months, the effect of foot and mouth in 2007, particularly the closure of the export market for light lambs, was another blow for hill farms. A more detailed analysis of the current state of hill farming is contained in the first section of the report detailed in Appendix 3 on the economic, environmental and social benefits of hill farming.

On 3rd March 2008, the Government's Rural Advocate, Dr. Stuart Burgess, called on the Government to establish a Commission on the future of hill farming to determine how the sector might be managed into the future. It is intended that the work of the hill farm project and particularly the development of the hill farm charter website will inform such a Commission.

¹ "Farm Business Survey, 2006/7" by Jeremy Franks, David Harvey, Charles Scott Newcastle University April 2008

2. HILL FARMING SYSTEMS PROJECT ACTIVITY

2.1 REVIEW OF RESEARCH INTO THE ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS OF HILL FARMING

As part of the project a review of existing research into the environmental, economic and social benefits of hill farming was undertaken with particular reference to the Cumbria Fells and Dales. For the full document please go to Appendix 3 and the conclusions are summarised below.

Hill farms provide a wide variety of environmental, economic and social contributions to society generally and this is particularly the case in the Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER + area.

For the environment, grazing livestock particularly of native hill breeds, are an important creator both of the landscape and biodiversity. The active maintenance of features such as walls, hedges and traditional farm buildings also form a critical part of the visual landscape. The skills of the hill farming community as conservationists as well as stockmen are undervalued and yet possibly the greatest threat facing the area is the lack of younger farmers entering the industry and learning these skills from the older generation.

Economically, agriculture's contribution nationally is considered marginal, but in remote rural areas its impact is far more significant. This is not only in terms of employment directly in farming, but also in associated trades. One of the greatest economic impacts is hill farming's contribution to the tourist industry in Cumbria; indirectly through the creation and maintenance of the landscape which is so attractive to visitors, but also through the increasingly important farm tourism sector. Finally, the value of management of catchments for water quality should not be ignored with a significant proportion of Lake District fell farms in water catchment areas.

Although difficult to quantify, the social contribution of hill farming is increasingly being appreciated. Work on the social capital of hill farming has demonstrated that although few formal cooperatives exist, hill farmers informally cooperate on activities such as gathering the fells, and the sharing of machinery and labour during periods such as silage/hay making. The knowledge hill farmers have of their farm and its environment is an invaluable educational resource and one starting to be appreciated through the Flora of the Fells farm open day programme organised by Friends of the Lake District. Farmers tend to be long standing members of their community and typically have a high involvement in community groups such as village hall committees and school governing bodies. Perhaps most importantly, they are an intrinsic part of the cultural landscape of the area carrying on traditions handed down over generations of hill farmers before them.

2.2 QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF 40 FARMERS

In the summer of 2006, the Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER + Programme engaged the Cumbria Farmers' Network to survey 40 hill farms in the area. The survey was aimed at examining the economic, environmental and social value of hill farming in the

area, but also investigated how farmers were responding to changes including the new Single Farm Payment System, Hill Farm Allowance and the Environmental Stewardship schemes. The survey highlighted how the farms had been impacted by the foot and mouth crisis of 2001 and asked questions about the proportions of farm income coming from different sources.

The survey was not statistically representative but was a mixture of different types of hill farms across the area ranging from the Lake District to the Howgill Fells. The farmers studied had all been involved with aspects of work on hill farming carried out through various Fells and Dales Leader + projects and with engagement activity carried out by Rural Futures (now the Cumbria Farmers' Network).

A copy of the report is in Appendix 4.

2.3 TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION WITH THE GEVAUDAN, LOZÈRE LEADER + PROGRAMME

The project's link with the Lozère LEADER + Programme was aimed at furthering the understanding of the hill farming systems in both communities including the operation of agri-environment schemes, the branding of local products and the operation of the reformed Common Agricultural Policy.

Fifteen representatives from the Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER + Programme area visited the Lozère region from 19th to 22nd June 2006. The party consisted of 9 farmers and 6 agency representatives including the Lake District National Park, English Nature, The International Centre for the Uplands and LEADER +.

A return visit took place between Monday 25th September and Friday 29th September 2006 with 17 representatives visiting Cumbria from the Lozère region including officials from LEADER + Gevaudan, the Cevennes National Park, the Lozère Chamber of Agriculture and farmers.

During June & July 2007, Carole Julien from the Lozère Chamber of Agriculture undertook an internship with the Cumbria Fells and Dales team. This was facilitated through the partnership between the two programmes. Carole undertook a number of tasks:

- supporting farm visits and events for the Cumbria Hill Farms Charter
- establishing a working model for a database of Cumbrian Hill Farms
- acting as a photographer for the programme
- translating 'Agriculture is Our Nature' – a summary document about agriculture in the Lozere region.

Geoff Brown the Cumbria Fells and Dales Programme Manager and Terry McCormick the Project Officer visited Lozère in September 2007 for a final conference reviewing the joint Hill Farming Systems project and made a presentation about the Cumbria hill farming website.

As a result of contact through the project, Marianne Grisel, a student from ENGRAF (a school educating civil servants from the Ministry of Agriculture), undertook an internship

at the Penrith office of Natural England from 16th June -11th July 2008. This was overseen by Mervyn Edwards, a member of the project's steering group.

A report on the transnational link with the Lozère region including an analysis of the similarities and differences between the two regions and the lessons learnt from the cultural exchange is in Appendix 5.

2.4 HILL FARMER CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

As well as regular steering group meetings, the project has organized five events for hill farmers. These events were aimed at engaging with the hill farming community, informing them and gathering their views on policy issues of interest to hill farmers, and widening their knowledge of marketing initiatives. A summary of the events is given below and reports of the two most recent events are in Appendices 6 and 7.

Date	Theme	Venue	Speakers
1 st March 2006	Hill Farmers Gathering	Hired Lad, Penrith	Mervyn Edwards DEFRA Will Cockbain NFU Uplands Spokesperson Veronica Waller VAC and Geoff Brown LEADER + Programme
30 th Nov 2006	Hill Farmers Gathering	Newton Rigg College	Ian Cairns, Beef & Sheep Specialist Scottish Agricultural College (SAC): Can hill farmers be more market focused? Geoff Brown, LEADER +: Consultation on the best use of the new Rural Development Programme funds
29 th June 2007	Launch of the Cumbria Hill Farms Charter Website	Forest Hall Farm Selside	Speakers at the launch included:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Farron MP for Westmorland and Chair of the All Parliamentary Group on Hill Farming • Landowner, Hal Bagot • Geoff Brown and Terry McCormick VAC
31 st Jan 2008	Hill Farming Matters Conference in partnership with the Carnegie UK Trust	Melmerby Village Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veronica Waller VAC: Hill farmers' response to change • Terry McCormick VAC & Liz Wilton: Hill Farming Charter website • Susan Denyer: Can hill landscapes do without hill farmers? • Dr Pat Thompson RSPB: Can hill farming work with nature? • Gwyn Jones SAC: Can we make economic sense of hill farming? • Mervyn Edwards DEFRA and • Will Cockbain NFU: Options for replacing the Hill Farm Allowance

3 rd March 2008	Marketing the Products of the Hills Seminar	Westmorland Showground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Beaty, Wensleydale Dairies: The Secrets of success • Faith Johnson PDNPA: The Peak District Environmental Quality Mark • Veronica Waller, VAC: Herdwick lamb marketing • Neil Heseltine: Limestone Country Beef • Chris Clark: South Downs Lamb
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2.5 CONSIDERATION OF MARKETING THE PRODUCTS OF THE HILLS

The most difficult objective of the project was to provide evidence for why consumers might want to pay more for hill farming products. Although the project has identified why hill farming is important, there is still the challenge of how Cumbrian hill farm products are branded and marketed. The project organized a conference on marketing the products of the hills in March 2008 to explore some of these issues and a full report of the conference is contained in Appendix 6.

A number of labels and accreditation bodies currently exist that could provide an example of how a hill farming system marketing label might work. These include the organic accreditation systems, the Freedom Foods welfare scheme operated by the RSPCA, and the Linking the Environment and Farming scheme (LEAF). On a smaller scale, the Peak District Environmental Quality mark was discussed as an example at the March 2008 conference. However, the conclusion was that hill farming systems were so diverse and resources needed to fund the accreditation process so great, that a hill farming system label would be very difficult to achieve.

Branding of the lambs from Cumbria's hill flocks is, in theory, simple given the high profile of the Lake District and its landscape. However, new branding schemes need to be considered against a background of previous initiatives and businesses that have ceased trading. The original concept of Cumbrian Fellbred in the mid 1990s was to market beef and lamb from the fell farmers in the Lake District Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme. The products were sold in Booths supermarkets alongside an advertising campaign featuring the fell farmers; however, the bankruptcy of an abattoir owned by the Company led to problems with the scheme. The Cumbrian Fellbred brand is now owned by Udales, a catering supplier, who source from farms within Cumbria but not necessarily from fell farms.

The more recent farmer led initiatives of a cutting plant near Junction 38 and a marketing company, Lakes & Dales, Born & Bred have also ceased trading. Alongside this has been a number of abattoir closures in Lancashire and Cumbria including Winders at Ulverston. These have all made hill farmers risk averse to funding of new cooperative and branding initiatives.

On a more positive note, some progress has been made on small scale branding of native sheep breeds over the past 5 years. Booths supermarket currently sells Lakeland Herdwick lamb on its fresh meat counters during a season running from Christmas until April sourcing from 7 farmers in the Lake District. Udales sources lightweight Swaledale lambs as a speciality product for the catering trade sourcing from a group of producers in the Upper Eden Valley. However, both these schemes affect only small groups of farmers.

The conference in March 2008 invited Chris Clark of South Downs lamb to discuss how his Company has managed to make a success of marketing lamb from a specific upland area. The firm has managed a throughput of 10,000 lambs per year but does have the advantage of proximity to the large affluent population of the South East and a lack of competition from other areas. Cumbria has a large population of sheep as does the rest of the North of England, but a relatively small and economically less affluent local population. However, the South Downs model is an interesting concept that should be explored further by farmer groups with the potential assistance of the new Rural Development Programme.

2.6 THE CUMBRIA HILL FARMING WEBSITE (www.cumbriahillfarming.org.uk)

Development work on the Cumbria Hill Farming website was begun in November 2006 with the support of steering group member Mervyn Edwards (Farm Adviser, Natural England). The website is aimed at championing the cause of hill farms and creating a digital record of the current hill farm status in Cumbria. It is a two-way bridge between hill farms and the wider community and offers a central place where hill farmers can present the characteristics of their farms including the products from their livestock, along with management of the farm environment, its bio-diversity and cultural heritage, and their contribution to public enjoyment and understanding.

A template was tested in December 2006 with Burnthwaite Farm, Wasdale which was then refined and adjusted with another four hill farms. The website was then launched at Forest Hall Farm, Selside on 29th June 2007 with Tim Farron M.P. (Chairman of the All Parliamentary Group on Hill Farming) as the keynote speaker.

The concept of a “charter” for hill farming was discussed with the project’s trans-national partners in the Lozère. In Cumbria it was decided that this would be explored through a dialogue with individual farmers through the website. A draft of charter commitments was placed on the site for consultation and hill farmers included on the website agree to the following:-

- Commit to farming in the fells including the grazing of hill, moorland and common land by heafed native breeds and their crosses
- Conserve the land to protect natural resources and biodiversity
- Collaborate with other hill farms and relevant agencies
- Communicate actively with local communities and visitors to increase public understanding of the countryside (through shows, shepherds’ meets, guided walks, farm open days)
- Maintain the landscape the landscape through enhancing historic countryside features such as vernacular buildings and dry stone walls
- Produce quality local food and tradable goods actively marketed

During 2007 and 2008, supplementary information on different aspects of hill farming was gathered and included on the website. In the Spring of 2008, against a background of the Lake District National Park’s World Heritage Site inscription, a valley-by-valley approach was initiated recognizing that the future support for and management of hill farming may require a focus on clusters of hill farms in key Lake District localities.

The website was presented to our Lozère colleagues in September, 2007; to the World Heritage Site working group and to a conference of hill farmers in January 2008; and the Cumbria Hill Farming Discussion group in March 2008.

The website currently includes profiles of 30 Cumbrian hill farms and provides a foundation for expansion through the inclusion of more farms and more detailed work on presentation of the Lake District valleys. Hill farms included on the site represent a distinctive cluster of good practice and a group with which further work could be undertaken: for example, in June 2008, six of the hill farmers undertook website training organized by Hill Farming Systems project.

2.7 CONCLUSIONS

- 2.7.1 The project has provided a learning experience for all those involved. The steering group has provided a forum for sharing ideas and knowledge as well as guiding the project during its life. The project has helped bridge the divide between farmers and agencies and the conferences delivered by the project demonstrated an appetite amongst hill farmers for active engagement with those that influence policy.
- 2.7.2 The partnership with the Lozere region offered Cumbria models of good practice in:
- collaboration with the National Park and regional tourism agency;
 - 'pride of place' branding of hill farms
 - an effective system for attracting and retaining young people
 - an illustration of the value of local solutions to local problems.
- 2.7.3 There is an emerging generation of hill farmers who combine their traditional livestock management expertise with new skills and creativity in technology, in cultural tourism and in economic innovation.
- 2.7.4 The project identified particular concern over the difficulty in attracting and retaining young people into the industry. The hill farming systems questionnaire based on 40 hill farms analysed the obstacles to young farmers entering the industry. The lack of affordable housing and availability of capital were two of the most frequently noted obstacles to young farmers. Comments included there is no where for the next generation to live alongside the existing generation to gain experience and that planners need to understand and work with the needs of hill farmers.
- 2.7.5 The Cumbria Hill Farming website – www.cumbriahillfarming.org.uk – has helped the hill farming community communicate to the public its delivery of wildlife habitats, landscape and public access. It offers a tangible long term opportunity to build an active collaborating community within Cumbria and with other hill farming communities elsewhere.
- 2.7.6 The branding of hill farming products, particularly beef and lamb, remains a challenge in Cumbria with a history of initiatives that have failed to make a significant impact on farm incomes. The conference in March 2008 highlighted

some of the issues and, with the example of South Downs lamb, provided an interesting model for farmers to explore for the future.

2.7.7 The most critical issue for Cumbrian hill farmers is the continuation and improvement of financial support for hill farms through the Common Agricultural Policy. The National Trust estimated the impact of reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy on the incomes of their farm tenants in March 2006 and predicted that incomes for their freehold fell farms would fall by 33% by 2012, increasing to a fall of 46% for fell farms with common land. Hill farming is fundamentally unprofitable and needs ongoing financial support to survive.

2.7.8 The work of the project as a whole has identified the environmental, economic and social value of hill farming systems. Cumbrian Hill Farmers carry into the 21st century an evolving dynamic cultural landscape which has been formed from the labour of preceding generations of hill farmers. This legacy needs active protection and management.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIVITY

3.1 DISSEMINATION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE PROJECT

Dissemination of the findings of the project to key policy makers both locally and nationally is a priority particularly against a background of pressure to reduce financial support to farmers beyond 2012. The project findings and the website should be presented to groups including the All Parliamentary Group on hill farming, the DEFRA Uplands Policy unit, ULMAP, the Natural England Upland Futures project, the Lake District World Heritage Site steering group, the North West Rural Affairs Forum and the Lake District National Park strategic partnership.

3.2 DATABASE OF HILL FARMS

The Hill Farming Systems project has highlighted the lack of a coordinated database of hill farms in the area. A number of organisations such as the Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER + Programme, the Federation of Cumbrian Commoners, the Cumbria Farmers' Network and Breed Societies have put together their own databases using a variety of sources but these lists are not comprehensive of all Cumbrian hill farmers nor are they coordinated. During her secondment, Carole Julien from the Lozère region worked on a database of Cumbrian hill farmers using Breed Society addresses and hill farm conference attendees. However, databases need to be kept up to date and an actively managed database would be helpful for the purpose of communicating with Cumbrian hill farmers about events of interest to them, and to gather information to inform policy relating to hill farmers.

3.3 REGULAR SURVEYS OF SAMPLE HILL FARMS

The project carried out a survey of 40 hill farms in the summer of 2006 providing a snapshot of their activities and reaction to change at that time. We recommend that a similar survey is carried out every three years to act as a barometer for how the hill

farming community in Cumbria are reacting to changing support and marketing conditions.

3.4 ONGOING COLLATION OF UPLAND FARMING RESEARCH WITHIN THE UK AND EUROPE

With hill farming being such an important part of the Cumbrian landscape, there needs to be a collation of relevant research and data on upland farming within the UK and Europe which is readily available to policy makers and practitioners. The University of Cumbria's International Centre for the Uplands could provide this facility with documents and research made available through their website.

3.5 COMMUNICATION WITH THE HILL FARMING COMMUNITY

Since 2002, Voluntary Action Cumbria has been involved in organising annual gatherings for hill farmers at least once a year through a variety of LEADER + projects. These included four conferences/seminars organized by this Hill Farming Systems Project.

The most recent of these conferences took place on 31st January 2008 at Melmerby Village Hall with over 100 attendees from Cumbria and across the north of England. This was funded jointly by the Carnegie UK Trust and the VAC Hill Farming Systems project.

At the conference, over 40 attendees signed a form to express interest in future events and activity. A marketing seminar for hill farmers which took place on 3rd March this year also drew farmers from as far afield as Dartmoor and the Yorkshire Dales. This demonstrates the interest from hill farmers in being drawn together for a conference at least annually.

With the LEADER + programme ending on 31st March 2008 there is a need for agencies with an interest in hill farming to discuss what might be done to fill the gap in organising such events, both in terms of funding and staff time. The Hill Farming Systems project steering group has indicated that there is a commitment from the organisations they represent to holding an annual Cumbria/North of England hill farming conference.

There is the possibility that the Carnegie UK Trust may sponsor and organize a conference for hill farmers in early 2009 as part of its project working with hill farmers across the north of England. However, this project finishes in the summer of 2009 and longer term arrangements for engaging with hill farmers needs consideration.

3.6 ENSURING THE FUTURE OF THE CUMBRIA HILL FARMING WEBSITE AND ENGAGING WITH USERS

The Cumbria Hill Farming website is a resource which needs maintaining and expanding to ensure the work carried out so far is safeguarded and developed. A grant from the North West Rural Affairs Forum has ensured the maintenance of the existing website until July 2009 but funding after this date is required.

As well as maintenance, there needs to be active engagement with users of the website which includes:-

- Hill farmers
- Public agencies
- Opinion formers/journalists
- Researchers
- Visitors to Cumbria

A communication plan with these groups needs to be developed and links with other relevant websites expanded.

Ongoing communication with the World Heritage Site inscription process is important both for providing hill farming evidence for cultural landscape indicators and as a potential resource for building a World Heritage Site Hill Farming Management Plan.

Development work on a Knowledge Transfer Fellowship proposal is currently being undertaken with Angus Winchester of Lancaster University which will build on the Cumbria Hill Farming website. The core aim of the proposal is to enable the transfer of the substantial knowledge on the history of hill farming in Cumbria accumulated by Lancaster University to create an inclusive record of up to 200 hill farms telling the rich story of hill farming within individual Lake District valleys and communities. This would act as a major digital archive of historical and contemporary data capturing the culture of hill farming, past and present, for the benefit of future generations. Other outcomes would include exhibitions, workshops; guidebooks and a cultural tourism training & development programme focusing on the contribution of hill farming in the making of a renowned landscape and community.

This Knowledge Transfer Fellowship project will have several strands. Structured by individual upland communities, it will seek to chart the history of individual farms since the sixteenth century, combining historical evidence from archival research with a contemporary survey based on field work and interviews with hill farming families. The key aspects of traditional hill farming culture to be captured include:

- livestock management;
- the development of livestock breeds, notably the distinctive herdwick sheep of Cumbria;
- land management, including the management of common land;
- social/community interactions, such as the traditional shepherds' meets

The digital archive will have contemporary relevance. Maintaining the landscape character of the Lake District in the future requires a full understanding of the hill farming system which created it. The Lake District National Park aspiration to achieve World Heritage Site inscription will require an active hill farming research and management plan; this project will support the delivery of such a plan by providing a sound data set of historical and contemporary farming practice. It would also provide a template for capturing the culture of hill farming in other upland regions in the UK, perhaps signposting a route towards a nationwide system of recording and communicating this heritage and living culture.

3.7 ONGOING COMMUNICATION WITH THE LOZÈRE AND OTHER EUROPEAN REGIONS

The Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER programme has undertaken exchange visits and joint projects for ten years with the Lozère region. The new Rural Development Programme does not require a specific link with another LEADER area in Europe and this relationship could be lost. There is a small budget with the new programme for transnational work and, bearing in mind the work already carried out, this could be focused on continuing the relationship and exploring possible joint activities or projects. Terry McCormick has received an expression of interest from the Pays de l'Albigeois et des Bastides Leader programme that will run from 2007-2013. On 13th June 2008, he attended a trans-national project development meeting with colleagues from this region and from the GAL Midi Quercy at Albi, France. The report from this meeting will contribute towards planning a possible trans-national partnership which will include support for agriculture and sustainable tourism.

3.8 HELPING HILL FARMERS ENGAGE WITH THE NEW RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

The new Rural Development Programme for England which runs from 2008 to 2013 offers scope for further development of initiatives to engage with and help hill farmers. In the Cumbria Fells and Dales, a key principle underlying the programme is around '*sustaining farm and rural livelihoods in and around the Cumbrian uplands*'. The overall targets are to support actions that:

- continue to upgrade the skills base in the rural economy
- add value to products, increases production and co-operation in agriculture and forestry;
- assists the agriculture and forestry industries to meet the challenges of modernisation;
- assist businesses to communicate more effectively with the general public, especially the range of public work and benefits provided by farming and forestry;
- assist farm diversification that creates and develops new non – farm based business;
- create a micro enterprise and social enterprise culture that diversifies the rural economy yet is in tune with an area of high nature conservation;
- increase the 'sense of place' and *eco-musee* high nature conservation and develop niche tourism, e.g. cultural, adventure, outdoor & natural tourism clusters;
- develop new solutions to social economy delivery such as care farms, community supported agriculture, community asset development, community land trusts etc;
- celebrate local pride and distinctiveness through events, sites and cultural activity;
- ensure there is complementarity and synergy between each of these priorities and with those of Natural England and the Forestry Authority, to ensure mutual benefit.

The Carnegie UK Trust project may be able to assist targeted groups of hill farmers with drawing up action plans for developing ideas that may form the basis for applications for funding.

3.9 NEXT STAGE FOR THE WORK OF THE PROJECT

Funding for the Hill Farming Systems Project finished at the end of June 2008. The North West Rural Affairs Forum has provided funding to enable the Cumbria Hill Farming website to be maintained and updated until July 2009. After that date, further funding and resources will be required to maintain and expand this resource and also to action the recommendations for future activity outlined above.

For a summary of the project and the recommendations for future activity please see the leaflet accompanying this report.