

## FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### 'Farming in Protected Landscapes'

#### Background

In late 2020, the Government set out more detailed proposals for an agricultural transition from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy towards a new domestic agricultural policy with a new system of support payments.

This plan entitled 'The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024' outlines the eventual removal of Basic Payment Scheme and reform of Agri-Environment Schemes; to be replaced by an all-encompassing 'Environmental Land Management' system. This will seek to reward farmers and land managers for the provision of public goods (e.g. biodiversity, carbon, clean water, flood risk management).

The new policies and support payments are likely to be a significant departure from those of the EU's CAP, to which most farmers are accustomed. It is anticipated that farmers and land managers will need additional advice, support and guidance to assist them in this transition. In recognition of this, the Government outlined a programme entitled 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' offering additional support for farmers and land managers in AONBs and National Parks.

Since late December 2020, a small group of senior officers from several AONBs and National Parks has been working with Defra, the Rural Payments Agency and Natural England to development and agree the detail of this programme.

Defra plan to share full details of the programme imminently, but at present this is what know about the proposals:

- ❖ Three-year funding programme (from April 2021 to March 2024) offering grants to farmers and land managers, comprising two work streams.
  - a. Farm level projects to diversify incomes and prepare for Environmental Land Management and create more green jobs:
    - *Support for farmers for delivering environment/landscape outcomes. Examples might include peat restoration, planting woodland, hay meadow restoration, creation of heathland and scrub, moorland management, enhancement of wetlands, and dry-stone wall repairs*
  - b. Wider infrastructure and projects on farmland to support farmers and rural economies
    - *Infrastructure, such as better access, clearer and simpler signage, dedicated cycling/electric bike access – to attract more diverse groups of visitors (to farm businesses, camping barns, etc.) as well as creating jobs (e.g. expansion of landscape rangers supporting farmers and visitors)*
    - *Strengthened public engagement with landscapes to attract more, and more diverse, visitors, improving mental health outcomes and better disabled access; walking routes to better connect landscapes.*

- ❖ Managed and administered by AONBs and National Parks – this will include resources to employ staff to manage and administer the programme.
- ❖ Particularly focused on Protected Landscapes in the uplands to support farmers and land managers during transition, to improve the natural environment, cultural heritage and access on their land.

### **Implications for the Forest of Bowland AONB Partnership**

Outlined below are some of the key implications for the AONB Partnership and Unit of the proposed 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' Programme:

- Oversight and scrutiny role for the Joint Advisory Committee on programme management
- Recruitment of staff team to manage and administer the programme and support applicants in project development
- Liaison with Lancashire County Council as host authority and accountable body for the AONB Partnership
- Appointment of grant panel (or panels) to make decisions on applications and grant awards
- Promote the programme to all farmers and land managers within the AONB

To facilitate the timely rollout of this programme, the AONB Manager will be required to begin working up a local delivery plan and commence recruitment of staff and grant panel members before the next Committee meeting in October 2021.

### **Decision Required**

The Committee is requested to:

- i) note the report and offer comments
- ii) offer approval for the AONB Manager to commence preparation and planning for the delivery of the programme, when full details are forthcoming from Defra