

Conference Questions and Answers: Day 1

Session 1

Chair: J. Manley, Northmoor Trust

Panel of speakers: Dr. M. Moser, North Devon Biosphere Reserve

D. Appleton and R. Evans, Natural England

P. Wolton, Farmer

P. Burgess, Devon Wildlife Trust

R. Tucker, Natural England

Questions and Answers

Q) B. Grayson (conservation grazier) – There was a discrepancy highlighted in take up of environmental stewardship between upland and lowland farmers. There is a need for farmers to collaborate in areas to start joining up landscape issues. Who's responsibility is it for farmers to come together to address these landscape issues?

A) P. Wolton – There is no one out there at the moment at the landscape scale.

P. Burgess – NE has a strategic vision – is there any other HLS in that area.

D. Appleton – There is a need to do this but NE finds it difficult to do. NE should look to work with partnerships that are taking this forward.

M. Moser – There are barriers and constraints that need to be looked at if this is to be taken forward.

Q) D. West (Forestry Commission) - Comment – What comes forward strongly is the need for coordination with landowners working together.

A) D. Appleton – NE recognises this and we are looking into it through the BAP integrated programme.

Q) L. Alderson (RBST) – I am waiting for the day that farm animal and plant genetic resources are part of biodiversity. It will make life easier when they are brought into the fold. Have we gone too far? – divorced from land management systems?

A) P. Burgess – I can only agree.

Q) L. Alderson (RBST) – If we consider a global increase in the population to 9 billion people with reduced resources to feed them, do speakers think there will be any relevant changes in terms of food production and biodiversity?

A) M. Moser – It is the scale of the problem combined with poor policy development. It could be tackled with a restoration exercise in this country but globally the future is grim.

P. Burgess – Cannot afford to put the emphasis on ecosystem services and can't afford not to restore a robust ecosystem.

D. Bright (West Country Rivers Trust) – Comment – Need to look at ecosystem services as a whole if something needs changing so be it but it needs to be viewed as a whole.

Q) C. Rimes (CCW) – All speakers touched on competing elements of ecosystem approach, I suspect the answer is we want a balance in terms of food security. Can we increase food production and have ecosystem services and biodiversity as well?

A) P. Burgess – Have set targets one of which is food production. It doesn't divorce it as an ecosystem service. Prioritisation causes biodiversity hotspots. Restoration has to be on a county scale, next stage up from a re-integration of reserves.

M. Moser – Process of evolution, if started again what would it look like. Look at how Dutch have approached it. We have compartmentalised.

Q) J. Tallwin (agro-ecologist) – What is the source of funding for the North Devon Biosphere Reserve? How much funding comes from outside the UK and what is the global attachment to the initiative and the UK attachment?

A) M. Moser – All funding comes from national and regional sources. It is an exciting designation in terms of a model for the ecosystem approach. UNESCO site but no dedicated pot of money to try out opportunities, something they are working on.

Q) R. Barker – Organic farmer, going onto HLS. My concern is not the target areas but the people in between. We got together with 30 other landowners to discuss working together, we approached DWT and they put a lot of effort in but this is really difficult and there is no support for the scheme. A lot of farmers are small farmers and they have valuable advice and guidance but no help and their voice is not heard. How do you get help if you are in between target areas?

A) D. Appleton – That is a very valid point. Need to maximise and work with these groups. Always have priority hotspots, group applications/projects. Find it difficult to understand why there is no engagement.

Q) C. Taylor (DWT) – Noticeable that HLS targeting is not within the biosphere. Does the panel support the view that more delegation at a local level would improve things?

A) M. Moser – I would strongly like to see this happen and would hope that the government in the south west would see it as a great opportunity.

D. Appleton – There is a need for a top down and bottom up approach.

Q) How much of the fragmentation is due to species and habitats rather than resources and ecosystems?

A) D. Appleton – Think you may have a point there.

Q) S. Jones (RBST) – I'm heavily involved in rural development and we are all talking about integrated farmers but how is that done with DEFRA and RDPE etc? How do we integrate funding?

- A)** P. Burgess – Identified lack of coordination. There has to be a shared purpose. Working wetlands has achieved that. It needs a huge amount of work, enabling dialogue and potential and starting to work with other Wildlife Trusts and NE.

M. Moser - Comment – Just wanted to make the point that we have already heard about case studies such as the 5 year working wetlands project but it's a pin prick of time and we have seen projects that can't be sustained beyond it. These projects are great examples but they are short lived.

Session 2

Chair: C. Drummond, LEAF

Panel of Speakers: J. Tallowin, North Wyke Research

Dr. D. Bright, West Country Rivers Trust

M. Ross, South West Water

G. Saunders, Forestry Commission

Questions and Answers:

Q) Hoskins (NE) – In the consultants that we engage with the RD scheme and agri-environment scheme how should we make it interactive on a local/community level – availability of payment option.

- A)** G. Saunders – Make a separation between the resource and the prescription of the resource - local level for spending money. In my own experience knowing farmers from childhood that are going into HLS and they say these people don't understand. There is need for dialogue.

D. Bright – WCRT saying weigh up what it's going to cost them, map of the catchment and how much it would cost to preserve these resources for society.

Q) M. Butterfield (DWT) – Gerry how much per hectare will the seed mix cost?

- A)** J. Tallowin – I have all the figures and they are available to anyone who wants them.

Q) C. Rimes (CCW) – Jerry in terms of win wins could you give us some idea how you see these ecosystem services comparing with grassland gems?

- A)** J. Tallowin - Got to accept the jewels in the crown, the semi-natural grasslands, are incredibly important. Need to be quite clear about what we are talking about with carbon sequestration; carbon is in many forms in the soil. Semi- natural grasslands, carbon content, large amounts of much more secure carbon storage, need to quantify though.

D. Bright – Looking at a suite of paid ecosystem services – negotiate with DEFRA – carbon reduction, national – broad brush one of the paid ecosystem services that achieve this goal.

Q) B. Grayson (conservation grazier) – Studies looking into clearing up damage that intensive farming has done and general problems caused by farming system – how the general public would view world where we pay farmers to clear up the damage they have done in the first place. How could we handle that situation?

A) M. Ross – Programme 2010 – customer surveys show willingness to support changes in farming systems. There is a strong willingness to pay the cost in putting it right for the long term benefits.

D. Bright – I haven't met one farmer doing something maliciously wrong, it is normally caused because they can't afford to or don't have the time. The public have an understanding of this and are willing to pay.

G. Saunders – There is collective responsibility and I don't think it will be a PR challenge.

C. Drummond. – Open farm Sunday – there is an appetite for the public to engage with farmers.

J. Tallwin – It's very easy to be pessimistic about climate change but there is lots of room for optimism. The government needs to be clear about communicating with the farming industry – there is a short window of opportunity to turn things around.

M. Ross – If the customer is willing to spend a little extra for 5 years it will generate 5 million for support and interest for paying farmers for clean water.

G. Saunders – Contrast between now and 10 years ago. How do we integrate mind sets? Terribly important to start from where they are when talking to people not where you want them to be.

D. Bright – Polluter Pays to Provider is Paid.

R. Tucker (Executive Director, NE). – There is an elephant in the room. We are biting off bits (of the elephant) with individual projects. Get more people to take a bite – inspire more people to look after the environment.