

ELMs Local Delivery Test and Trial

Purpose

This Defra funded test and trial (T&T) aimed to establish how, through collaborative action and partnerships, local priorities could be achieved effectively, supported by the development of the Environmental Land Management Schemes and private green finance markets.

Objectives were as follows:

- To use local priorities to set strategic direction
- To establish payment mechanisms to channel private funding
- To enable effective partnership working and accountability
- To support and enable existing collaboration and advice models in the local area

Why was it needed?

To enable Defra to gather information to support the ongoing development of ELMs and private green finance, using local knowledge and co-design. To test a previously recommended idea of the role of a local convenor to have strategic overview of all projects, strategies and collaborations in an (as yet undefined) area. To test the Integrated Local Delivery Model, developed by FWAG SW in a previous T&T, for co-design at a local level.

Background

Defra's Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMs) were being developed with the view that they would reward farmers for their contribution towards increasing biodiversity and adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change whilst maintaining food security. The schemes were to coincide with the reduction and subsequent removal of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS).

It was well documented that public funding could not be a long term solution to food, climate and nature and that private finance markets would need to grow to support and be stackable with public funding.

It was Defra's intention to gather information from local sources through tests and trials (T&Ts) to develop funding and finance opportunities that would be successful. In responding to feedback from T&Ts as well as other sources, changes were made to ELMs and start dates and parameters stated for some statutory Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) markets, were changed. This, along with the many other changes in farming, led to uncertainty and confusion.

Locally, Somerset Council became a unitary authority, from a previously district-led model and at the same time began to face financial difficulties, both leading to changes in local strategies and in staffing.

Findings - Local Convenor

Participants agreed a need for a Local Convenor with the attributes and remit shown below.

Based in NCAs



Employed within central organisation

Participants included

Somerset farmers and community groups and...



Partners

TERRANOMICS

OnePlanet.

Findings: Farm Business Management

Key reasons for non-compliance with regulations



Lack of funds



Regulation not known



Short-term tenancy



Misunderstanding of terminology

Key obstacles in the development of a sustainable farm business



Lack of time



Lack of funding



Need for advice and support



Access to machinery

Key obstacles to collaboration



Lack of trust



Differing needs and priorities



Lack of time



Need for leader / facilitator

Findings: Partnership Working

Partnership working is integral to decision-making in Somerset. Strategic partners (eNGOs, ALBs, etc) and representatives from the farming community make up partnerships for peatland, river catchments and nature. There are also farmer cluster groups, Nature Friendly Farming Network members, Exmoor Hill Farming Network, food networks and much more. In order to achieve shared priorities and use funding efficiently and effectively, the convenor role should coordinate join up

Integrated Local Delivery Model provides a framework for enabling change from community / parish - level through partnership working to solve local issues. It was found to be imperative that all key local stakeholders are involved from the start, prior to action planning. For this, building and maintaining positive relationships is key. Trained facilitators and those with formed trusted relationships are key to success.

The **Moor Associations**, designed and facilitated by FWAG SW on the Somerset levels and moors, provide a good case study for developing structures through which farmers and other landowners can make complementary farm management decisions across a hydrological block. These structures could also support fair financial decision-making when accessing nature or climate markets.

Findings: Achieving local priorities

To determine local priorities relating to food, nature and climate, the Local Convenor worked with strategic partners, FWAGSW advisers, farmers and other community members. To test methods of collating all projects, plans and strategies to achieve these priorities, FWAGSW worked in partnership with One Planet (OP) to map, link and monitor a selection from the developing Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to Protected Landscape plans to Landscape Recovery and smaller projects and collaborations. FWAG SW also connected with South Downs National Park Authority through OP to establish the platform's effectiveness in practice.

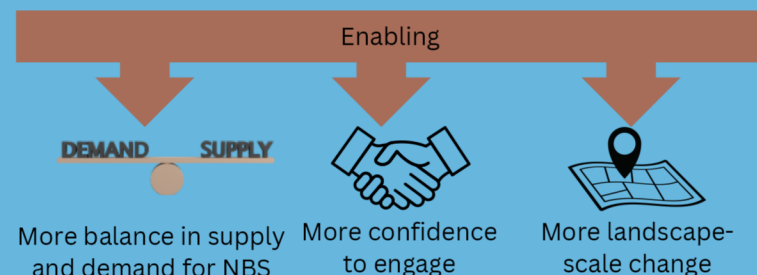
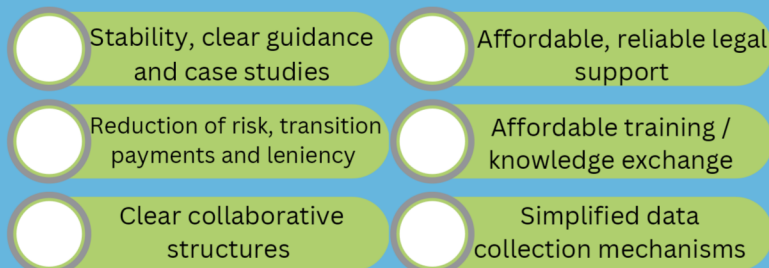
One Planet was found to provide the following benefits:

- Central store all land management activity
- Managers can develop, monitor and report on their project / plan / strategy on the platform - data is always live.
- All can be linked to shared priorities and can monitor progress towards these
- It can involve community groups, farmers, eNGOs, ALBs, etc
- Templates can be created to support self-serve learning
- Projects will be able to be mapped, feeding into a county map
- The above will enable further collaboration for investible projects



Findings - Finance and Funding

Terranomics interviewed businesses & gathered information through desk-based research & local knowledge from farmers & strategic partners, to establish the following landowner / manager needs to enable growth of the green finance & funding markets.



Recommendations for Defra and future actions for FWAGSW (Somerset)

Fund Local Convenor roles nationally, with ringfenced funding. Fund platforms (One Planet) to enable collaborative, connected working to achieve shared priorities. Fund longer-term funding T&Ts to enable in-depth investigation. Provide more stability in funding for farmers. Clearly communicate guidance, ensure it allows time for change. Avoid announcements that do not come to fruition. Communications need to be consistent and regular. Develop policy and guidance that provides reassurance for farmers. Streamline and simplify farming regulations. Ensure terminology used in regulation has a shared understanding. Provide further research into carbon data collection.

- To use of One Planet with all eNGO, government body and farmer / grower collaborations across Somerset in Phase 4 of Defra's test and trials in 2025/26
- To research and develop accessible advice and support models to support farmers and growers
- To further provide opportunities and structures to enable further collaborations for farmers, growers and communities to successfully achieve their aims
- To further develop our work with Barometer Farms