



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas



## *Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund*

# Oxford Real Farming Conference 2020

## *Farmer Collaboration to Restore Nature: Landscape Scale Action across the farmed environment*

Speakers: Brian McDonald Natural England, Chloe Palmer Hope Valley Farmers, Audrey Compton Exe to Teign Farmers Group

**The Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund** was set up in 2015 with £7.8m of RDPE funding, supporting 98 groups, across 453,000 ha of holdings delivering landscape-scale measures for wildlife, water management, landscape and historic environment.

- Since its launch in 2015 the CSFF has enabled ninety-eight groups of farmers and land managers to develop shared plans, coordinate action, and receive training and advice from their group facilitator to aid action to improve its quality and help restore wildlife and natural systems for all our benefit.

- At the heart of the initiative is the transformational approach based on cooperation across holdings, addressing evidence based environmental priorities, helping overcome isolation, depression, fragmentation and upskilling farmers/land managers.

- The 2019 application round has funded (with additional RDP funding of £2.5m) from the 2019 round a further 43 Groups with 610 members who will start work from 1 January 2020. This amounts to 140 groups with over 3,500 farmers/land managers engaged in the initiative.

- The 2019 round attracted 55 applications, over 40 of these have been accepted for funding and will be able to begin work from the start of January 2020.



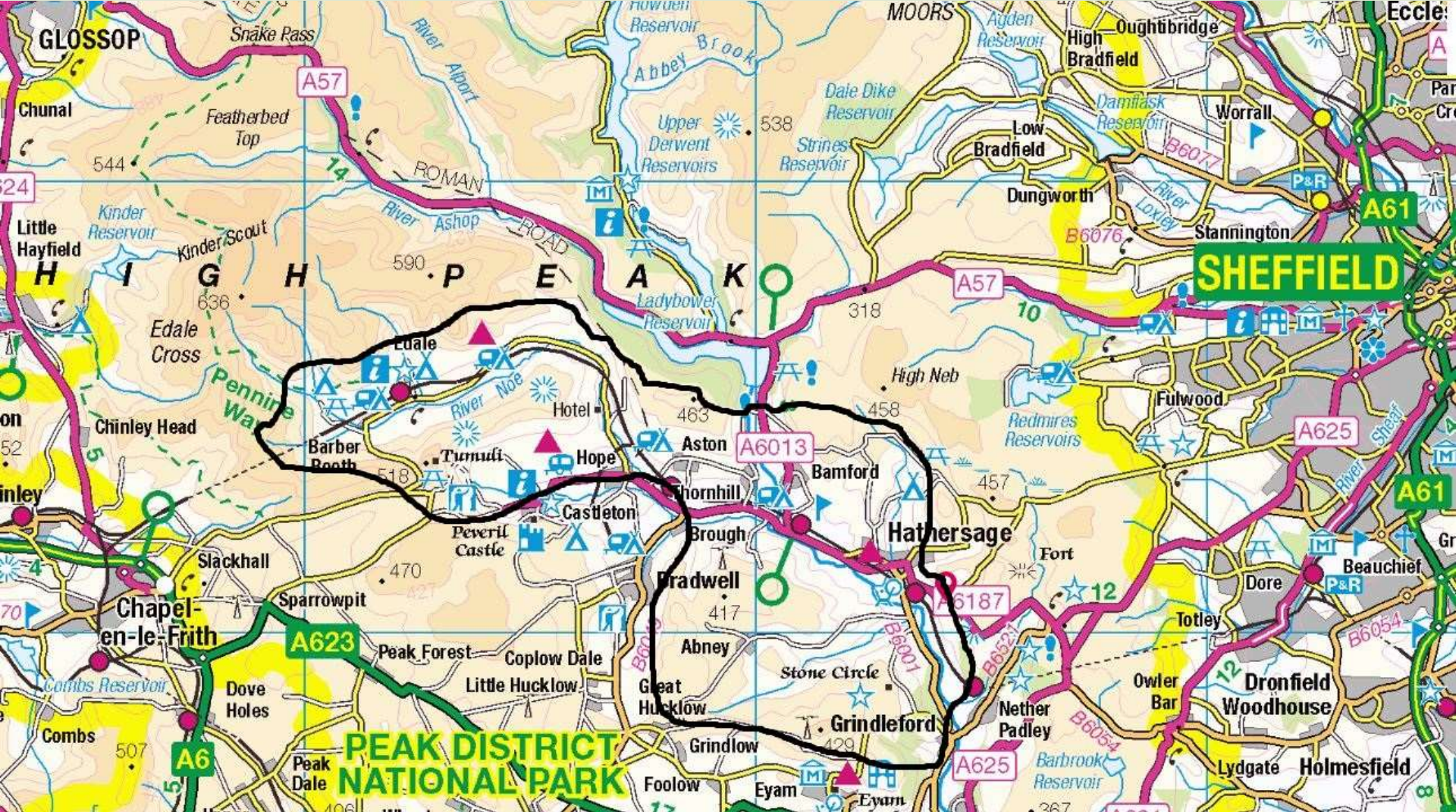
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-facilitation-funding>

# Hope Valley Farmers

Chloe Palmer



# Hope Valley Farmers



# HVF in Numbers

- Group formed in October 2017
- 42 farms/holdings are members
- Covering approximately 4500 hectares
- Largely beef and sheep enterprises with one dairy farm and several small holdings
- Habitats included within this area include moorland, native woodland, species rich grassland, riparian and rivers, scrub
- Predominantly Severely Disadvantaged Area with land rising to 605m (1985ft)
- 18 events held since October 2017



# What do we hope to achieve?

- Greater awareness of conservation issues and management of habitats
- Joined up thinking
- A voice for Hope Valley Farmers
- Recognition for the environmental work HVF members do
- Educational and social events
- Secure funding
- Promote the value of farming, food and the farmland environment
- A sustainable future for HVF members





# What have we done so far....

Lots of well attended events...

- Moorland management, woodland creation, wader conservation, predator control, re-wilding (!), soil health, bird and plant identification
- Visits to North Wales (Henfaes research farm and Fferm Ifan) and Wensleydale Payment by Results scheme
- 39 of the 42 members have attended something, several members attend everything
- Always get positive feedback and ideas from members afterwards
- Invite local experts to present to build links and help establish partnerships and improve evidence base



**Hope Valley Farmers on tour!**

# Action on the ground...

- 1000m of hedges laid
- 1800m of stone walls restored
- 50m of hedges gapped up
- 4,100 trees planted since January 2019
- 12 barn owl boxes erected in autumn 2019
- Four applications to Severn Trent's STEPs scheme
- 15 members in either CS Mid Tier, CS Higher Tier or ES ELS, UELS or HLS
- Two members in Woodland Creation schemes
- Links with partners to deliver action – Severn Trent, Woodland Trust, Hope Valley Bird Group



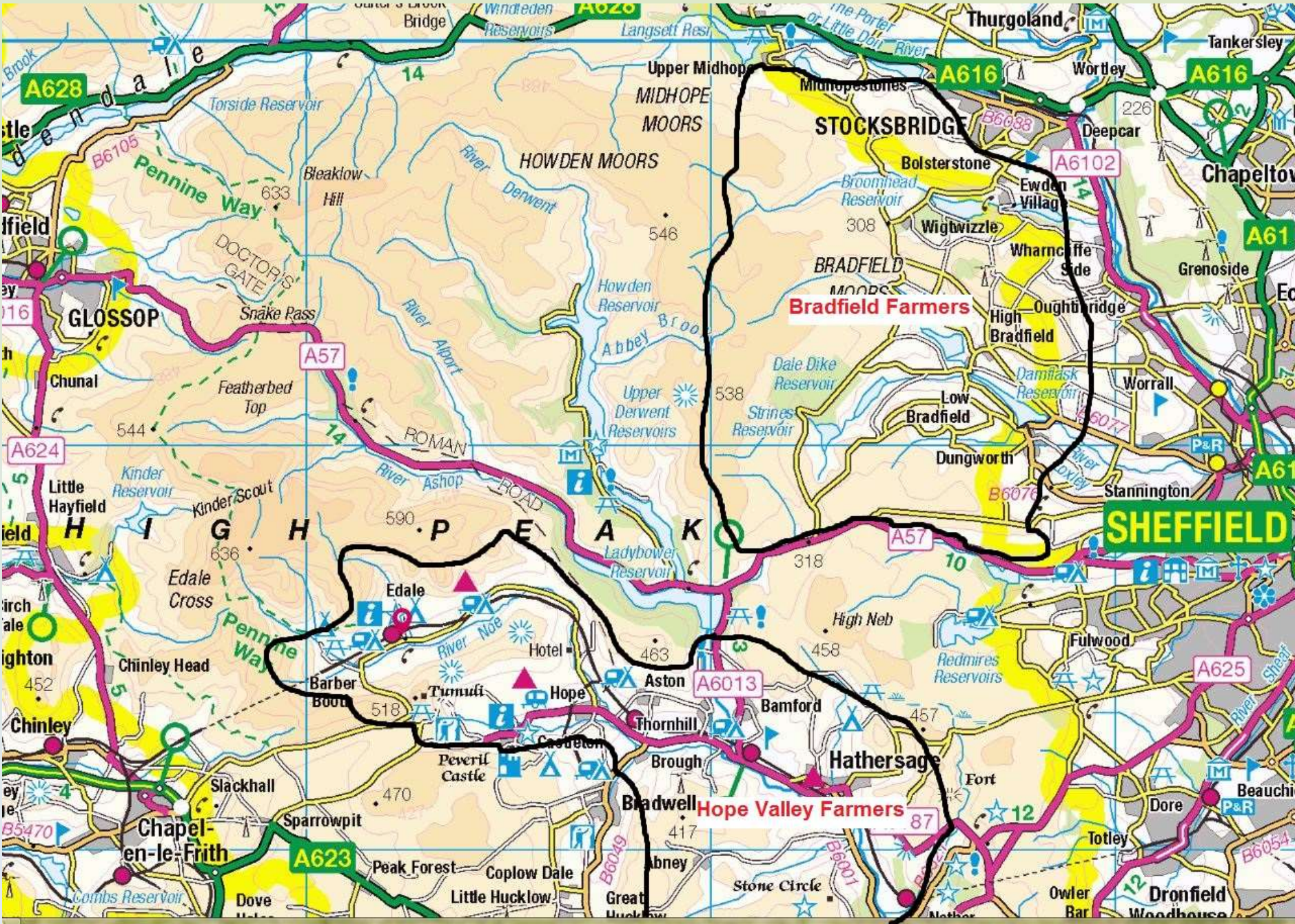
# Challenges

- Lack of profitability in upland beef and sheep farms
- Limited timescale for group funding (3 years)
- CS Mid Tier not fit for purpose on upland SDA farms:
  - Lack of suitable options
  - Woefully low payment rates - £16/ha (£6.50/a)
  - Targeting is erroneous eg. UP2 upland breeding bird habitat
- Need to form a legal constitution to access funding



# Next steps....

- Form a Community Interest Company
- Secure funding beyond March 2021
- Access more funding to enable members to deliver habitat improvements outside CS
- Engage with the development of ELMS – participate in the trials and tests
- More monitoring of achievements
- Links to new Bradfield Farmers group to achieve greater landscape scale action
- Conference in autumn 2020 to engage wider audience in the work of Hope Valley Farmers



**Bradfield Farmers**

**Hope Valley Farmers**





# Farmer collaboration for nature and landscape in the Exe to Teign catchments of Devon



Who am I? Over the last 50 years, I've been an intensive dairy farmer, a ranger - and now I'm a wildlife farmer, eco-warrior and granny!



# Our Exe to Teign landscapes



- Our Group is run through the RSPB and it aims to:**
- \* share ideas and best practice through member-led events and activities.
  - \* enhance the local natural environment from the Exe Estuary to East Dartmoor.



# The Exe to Teign Farming & Forestry Octopus!



# Nature - a farmland birds workshop



**Nature at Knepp:** we travelled to Sussex to find out about 'Wilding' for Turtle Doves, Nightingales, Purple Emperors and much more!





# Nature in Devon meadows - wildflowers, grasses and lots of invertebrates!



# Nature and Landscapes: getting into our amazing Devon hedges and finding signs of the elusive Brown Hairstreak butterfly



# Landscapes suitable for Grey Long-eared Bats at Bickham - with 'Back from the Brink'!



Also at Bickham - Rod Hall's neat system growing low-carbon, organic vegetables & meat.



# Community at Dartington

Agroforestry, Forest Garden, Community Garden



# Climate - a topic on every event!

## Mob grazing for productivity and carbon sequestration at West Town Farm



# Sustainability: Looking after Ancient Woodlands and getting an income from timber!



# Innovation and sustainability - back to the future at Fingle Woods





# Sustainable woodlands and woodland birds with the Woodland Trust at Fingle Woods



Sustainable hedges for wildlife,  
shelter and firewood at Gray's  
Cider Farm.

Tree shears are fun - but chain  
saws are good!



**Food and Friendship: enjoying a great combination of local and home-grown foods - and time to talk!**



# Exe to Teign farmers promoting Facilitation Funds with Andy King (Director of Operations RPA) and Geoff Sansome (Head of Agri NE) finding out how it works at Deer Park Farm!



# Katharine Lowrie - our RSPB Facilitation Group leader

