

Collingham - Discussion on Sustaining NFM into the future

Summary of Key Points:

1. Actual and perceived barriers to NFM:

- Liability –ongoing struggle to quantify and no one wants it.
- Maintenance – need further clarity on requirements/ possibly design out, as well as funding.
- Landowners – understand their business and engage early.
- Community and volunteer involvement seen both as asset for sustainability and potentially unreliable long term.

2. Sustainability measures currently in place:

- Monitoring in place for length of DEFRA pilots, using citizen science.
- Maintenance – incorporating into contracts with landowners, annual checks. Build cultural change on farms to sustain maintenance. Living structures; Community buy-in.
- Liability – work moving to contractors rather than community groups to address liability; Soil improvement – no liability, win-win.

3. Key learning points from day:

- Still learning best practice.
- Beware design rules of thumb – every catchment different.
- Put NFM officer desk next to consenting officer in Lead Local Flood Authorities.
- Use local knowledge and be proportionate.

4. Barriers to NFM that we did not discuss in detail:

- Need long-term catchment management not 2/3 year projects.
- Getting NFM funding into future investment programmes.
- How to categorise willing landowners.
- Understanding of flood engineers.
- Understanding multiple benefits of NFM.

Appendix: Notes from discussion session

1. What are your actual or perceived barriers to sustainable management of NFM interventions?

- Community ownership is important for sustainability, not just landowner consents
- Treating things as flood assets means we only look at one part of their value
- Liability – no one wants it and we struggle to quantify the risk.
- What is sustainable? Are we trying to keep each asset perfect or is it just the idea/principle of having some sort of NFM on this watercourse?
- Consistent evidence base will help evidence future investment or frameworks
- Funding mechanisms need to look wider into green investment. Government sources often for limited projects and capital investments.
- Still in an exploratory phase – not all avenues explored will be sustainable.

- Funding maintenance and maintenance per se, responsibility for maintenance – landowner, organisation? Lack of knowledge on maintenance,
- Liability for landowner if land sold.
- Potential payments – ELM potentially positive for landowner.
- Out of date data – crops grow, housing estates built, ecological records; data is not high resolution and out of date.

- Funding for maintenance, land manager buy-in
- Design out maintenance
- Are we re-stocking trees for future natural fall
- 180 volunteers/ each week - WYRE coastal and countryside service – been going for 5 years; barrier if not community volunteer engagement days
- What if community unable – bypassing is ok

- Landowner engagement – engage early on about maintenance and ensure they are bought in so ‘no surprises’ when the subject arises. Will they want the responsibility and liability?
- Funding for maintenance
- Timing
- Many people and groups involved – who takes responsibility? ‘Someone else will do it’
- Expectations
- Belief in the benefits of NFM
- What/perception of maintenance required
- Expertise
- Volunteer availability – not always reliable and sustainable
- Using organisations – CDM
- Consenting and permitting

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using local sustainable materials • Links to climate change not made – e.g. carbon sinks • Brexit uncertainty |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding landowners business • Defining NFM scope and managing expectations /timelines • Understanding from the beginning – scope/aim of project • Differing terminology • Foresight of longterm progression • Funding performance – funding fatigue, withdrawal risk, ELMs, idea fatigue |

2. What do you currently have in place or are working towards to ensure:

- **Maintenance and or replacement?**
- **Long term monitoring and analysis of outcomes?**
- **Longer term liability concerns?**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring is in place until the end of the DEFRA pilots. • This might be enough in many cases – what do we want to prove by collecting data? • We are building baseline knowledge amongst land owners and in communities. Cultural change to see NFM as a normal part of the farm will help maintenance. Also links to wider mindset changes around wildlife, pollinators, water quality. • Working to change the narrative from farmers being the problem to farmers being the solution. |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having landowners on board, especially with their choice of contractors. |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More long term projects rather than short term – Upper Aire since 2010, carried out walkovers and now have landowners coming to YWT. Project well established and single point of contact. • Local community becoming more engaged in citizen science. • Hardcastle Crags (NT) – included large leaky dams into an existing annual maintenance check, easy as part of NT site, more difficult if on 3rd party site. • Brompton DEFRA funded project – keen local community group want to be involved in maintenance. • YDRT standard approach for landowner taking on responsibility - contracts. • Tree planting at Gorpley has raised questions around liability, and was one of the reasons that Woodland Trust went with a commercial contractor rather than local volunteer group, as the contractor’s insurance will cover loss of trees for 3 years after planting (e.g. fires) Concern over responsibility for re-planting has meant that in this case a community group has lost out on a planting opportunity. |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do work with different LAs and capture sum of maintenance • Living structures. |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger systems - more structured Memorandum of Understanding needed; 25,000m³. Reservoirs Act – structures less than. • Pressure on revenue funding – needed for funding for longevity of benefits • Monitoring best practice a. Q-NFM Lancashire University; b. Welland York University; c. working with students and longer term. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shropshire NFM project – Council in partnership with Wildlife Trust, supported by the National Flood Forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community flood partnership monitoring ○ Buy in of community at start; take part in maintenance ○ Liability being looked at • Hardcastle Craggs (Slow the Flow) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community led group (sustainable) ○ Monitoring – funded by DEFRA booster money, cameras, river sensors ○ Maintenance – not being done ‘officially’ at the moment, it is done ad-hoc when volunteers / workers are on site |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance and replacement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Movement away from leaky dams? ○ Consider maintenance from beginning everything needs maintaining. • Long term monitoring and analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use headline research findings to translate to local schemes ○ Quick monitoring/ analysis • Liability Concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leaky dams most concerning ○ Tree planting needs to be spun to highlight positives – climate change, shelter • Soils!!! Need to be looks at more: no liability/ win-win/ sustainability |

3. What have you learnt today that could be built into your local projects?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of great projects not always learning lessons from each other yet, but then we don’t actually know what is ‘best’ yet. • Some projects have trouble with community engagement. Are we learning from people like NFF who have done this before? • A lot of NFM is for ‘nuisance floods’ and it is difficult to explain this to communities. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance agreements. • Put NFM officer desk next to permitting officer in local authority (doesn’t always facilitate). • Catchments different – treat generic design parameters with caution: e.g. 30cm freeboard above base flow for leaky dams. Take care with advice which might be perceived as best practice in a ‘community of practice’. • NFM still trial and error approach. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk for woody dams |

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach to designing out maintenance • Yorkshire NFM practitioners and ICASP – great practice and how can we support bespoke other approaches. • Work needed on consenting – special process for incentivising ‘good’ work e.g. NFM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone is learning and picking things up as they go along. Just do it ○ Start small and learn along the way (depends on size of catchment). ○ Using local expertise ○ Be proportionate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Looking at soils ○ Look at long term maintenance agreements ○ Learning about liabilities

4. Any other sustainability challenges which need to be tackled, not discussed today?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has to be Catchment System Operator (proposal to restructure Environment Agency and other bodies) to move to 25 year+ thinking instead of 2/3 years • NFM is not all about the ‘F’ – drought, water quality etc all also benefit. • What can we learn from utilities, e.g: United Utilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A way of categorising land owners into those who are more likely to implement NFM, e.g. use census data, taking more of a human than a physical geography approach. • Lack of guidance for NFM modelling, needs to be more ground truthing. • Don’t rely on ELMs Big question mark about future funding for enviro-agri schemes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consenting guide/best practice products/tools action • Bidding for EA money after DEFRA funding. • How to get NFM into future investment programmes • Implementing national capital approach.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy changes to incorporate NFM and maintenance • Mainstream policy around climate change • Multiple benefits of NFM – need to understand more • Engineers – ‘nice to do’ not ‘need to do’ , need to change their perception on benefits of NFM • Succession/resilience to deliver, e.g. volunteers – need sustainable engagement with communities • Shouldn’t rely on volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure landowners are engaged

- Have plan/strategy to incorporate lessons learnt
- It is a Catchment Based Approach (who will represent it?)