



Catchment Sensitive Farming

Working together for a healthy environment

Facilitator Groups: Delivering environmental benefits at the landscape scale

Natural England's Facilitation Fund (FF) created Facilitator Groups (FGs), bringing farmers together and empowering them to work together to improve their farm businesses and the environment.

This case study focuses on lessons learnt from the Lunesdale Facilitation Fund Facilitator Group.

What's a Facilitator Group?

Facilitator Groups are usually started so farmers can work together to deliver larger environmental benefits than working alone. They may have a lead farmer and a local and trusted adviser who will facilitate the running of the group.



Site visit to the Eden Catchment - farm visits took place both in the catchment and further afield.

CSF operated in the Upper Lune (Sedbergh, Garsdale, Dentdale, Howgill, Cautley) from 2009 to 2015. Using the Facilitation Fund, local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers (CSFOs) were able to create several Facilitator Groups, building on relationships forged during that time.

In 2017, the Lunesdale Facilitator Group was set-up by Hannah Fawcett and Tarja Wilson at the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. Thanks to the Facilitation Fund, Hannah and Tarja were able to act as facilitators in an area where support from CSF was no longer available.

The Lunesdale Facilitator Group was set-up to bring farmers together to;

- share knowledge on new farming techniques
- provide training on implementing Natural Flood Management (NFM) solutions
- understand how NFM and positive land management can deliver for landscape, biodiversity and water quality

Getting started with the Facilitator Group

The area was hit hard by Storm Desmond in 2015, so farmers were keen to help reduce flood risk and protect the community.

Hannah said; "We decided to map out the farmers in our local patches. This helped us understand the largest farms who could have the greatest environmental impact and those with the biggest influence. Everyone was treated as equal; small landowners were as equal as larger landowners."

Benefits of a Facilitator Group

- Independent trusted/respected facilitator
- Social element to the events/meetings
- Added incentives for those working and delivering in Facilitator Groups
- Joint delivery with other Facilitation Fund Facilitator Groups in the wider area
- Additional 20% of Basic Score for Countryside Stewardship (CS) applications

An initial meeting was arranged to bring the farmers together and introduce them to NFM. Invites were sent to farmers and phone calls made to explain the benefits of working together and to get farmers to attend. There were several successful Facilitation Fund applications in the local area, run by organisations who Hannah and Tarja had good links with. It made sense to work together to share knowledge, resources and build stronger relationships.

Farmer Carol Moffat said, "The Facilitator Group has been a great way to learn about CS and ways we can help reduce flood risks on our farms."

Working together with the Upper Wharfedale, Swaledale and Wensleydale groups, they agreed to:

- Inform and influence future funding allocations, for example Agri-Environment Schemes
- Explore CS environmental priorities and funding that can help deliver NFM and management for priority habitats and species
- Consider land management and capital works that can help deliver NFM
- Work with the Lune Rivers Trust to continue to improve water quality

Learnings for Facilitator Groups

Setting up and running Facilitator Groups has yielded great results for farmers and nature, however it did have some challenges including;

- Agreeing changes to the programme was difficult - members needed time to digest how the group could work and what they could achieve
- There was no budget for capital items such as leaky dams – so they

utilised existing agri-environment schemes

- Funding was for only for group activity – outside groups, farmers worked to support each other
- Farmers aren't available during busy periods in the farming calendar – the group planned around that to be inclusive



Leaky woody dams were installed on a farm in Sedbergh. This work was completed in partnership with the Lune Rivers Trust. Effectiveness is being monitored by the University of Lancaster.

Next steps to set up or join a Facilitator Group

You can find more information by visiting WWW.GOV.UK and searching for Facilitation Fund.

Contact [Hannah Fawcett](#) or [Tarja Wilson](#) at the **Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority** for an informal chat about their experiences.

Visit gov.uk/catchment-sensitive-farming to contact your local CSFO if you're interested in starting or joining a Facilitator Group.