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Food & Rural Affairs

The enablers and barriers to the delivery of natural flood management projects

Appendix C: Focus group report

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Research background and aim

Natural flood management (NFM) aims to protect, restore and emulate the natural functions of catchments, floodplains, rivers and the coast. These types of features include measures such as river restoration or floodplain restoration, leaky barriers, offline storage areas, woodland management, soil and land management, and coastal saltmarsh, mudflat, or sand dune management.

NFM is increasingly being accepted across the industry as a legitimate way of managing flood risk, partly due to recent publications such as the Environment Agencies WwNP Evidence Directory, and the use of NFM in large scale flood alleviation schemes, such as that in Leeds. There is also further interest in NFM as it is recognised that there is potential to achieve multiple benefits from these types of schemes which more traditional hard engineering schemes cannot necessarily provide. These benefits include things such as increasing quality and quantity of habitats, climate regulation and air quality improvements, water quality benefits, and recreational and health benefits to people in these areas, along with the flood risk mitigation benefits.

Early research as part of this project has identified that despite this increasing interest in NFM, it is evident there are still a number of barriers preventing this type of flood risk management from being more widely adopted. Some of these barriers include the limited evidence of the NFM features providing definitive (or quantifiable) benefits, the need for a wide range of stakeholders to be involved and the complexities of facilitating this, legislative challenges and a lack of policy, and the challenge of obtaining funding.

Defra is currently exploring these barriers further, as well as identifying what facilitates the delivery of NFM schemes and it is the aim of this research to contribute towards this through the delivery of focus groups with farmers.

The overall aim of this qualitative research is to:

Explore how land use and land management might act as a barrier to the delivery of these types of schemes, or how we might be able to encourage or facilitate future NFM projects on the ground.

Methodology

Three focus groups were held with farmers in two locations:

- Focus groups 1 and 2 were held in Leicestershire
- Focus group 3 was held in North Yorkshire

Recruitment of participants to the groups used a mixed approach. Participants for the focus groups 1 and 2 was either via the National Farmers Union and JBA Consulting, and free find recruitment by Enventure Research. Participants for the third focus group were recruited by the Farmer Coordinator from the Nidderdale and Eastern Dales branch of The Farmer Network in partnership with JBA Consulting.

Both venues were arranged by JBA Consulting, with the focus groups delivered on Wednesday 20 February and Friday 22 March by an Enventure Research moderator. The number of participants taking part in the research was as follows:

- Focus group 1: Seven participants
- Focus group 2: Seven participants
- Focus group 3: Four participants

Interpretation of the qualitative feedback

When interpreting qualitative research feedback, which for this research has been collected via focus groups, it is important to remember that these findings differ to those collected via a quantitative methodology. Qualitative findings are collected by speaking in much greater depth to a select number of participants. These discussions were digitally recorded, and notes made to draw out common themes and useful quotations.

Therefore, it should be remembered that qualitative findings are not meant to be statistically accurate, but instead are collected to provide additional insight and greater understanding based on in depth discussion and deliberation, something not possible to achieve via a quantitative survey. For example, if the majority of participants in a series of focus groups hold a certain opinion, this does not necessarily apply to the majority of the population.

Key findings

Experience of flooding and NFM is mixed

Many farmers had not experienced flooding in recent years, with many farms situated on hill sides, so they found water runs off their farm. There was a mixed response regarding their knowledge of NFM, with farmers expressing that most of their experience was around dams, ditches, hedge and tree planting.

NFM is seen as the responsibility of Government, Defra and water companies

Some participants were vocal about who they believed was ultimately responsible for NFM, with most believing it was the responsibility of Government, Defra or the water

companies. Some participants also said the drainage authority should be responsible but said they had not seen them working for a long time and were unsure what they actually did.

Self-funding NFM is a significant barrier

Some participants spoke about the cost of implementing NFM initiatives, but agreed that as businesses, they are unlikely to fund something that does not appear to have any direct benefit to their business.

Farmers are reluctant to access grant schemes

There were a number of reasons why farmers are reluctant to access grant schemes, with participants complaining that payments take too long, the whole application process is complex difficult and there is a lack of support from grant scheme administrators. Moreover, many farmers were cynical about new schemes based on previous experience when schemes have changed, and policies have been reversed. There has also been a general lack of flexibility in schemes, where a slight change could have made a significant positive impact.

There is the need for a co-ordinated approach for NFM

All participants were strongly in favour of having a co-ordinated approach to NFM with joined up thinking between the different agencies, farmers and landowners. Some farmers believed that if left to farmers, little NFM would be done.

Having support and advice would encourage farmers to get involved

Generally, participants were reluctant to get involved with NFM unless there was support and advice available from a co-ordinating organisation. Participants stressed that they would prefer to have advisors that were knowledgeable in NFM that provided support and advice from start to finish, including help with grant applications and paperwork. It was also important for advisors to visit sites, so they understood the issues and needs of the area.

Working with neighbouring communities or organisations is not always a priority

Participants' opinions about helping neighbouring communities to reduce flooding, whether it was a local nearby village or large city downstream, was mixed. There was little sympathy as government and councils had given permission for developments on flood plains, and housing developers had made a lot of money from building in these areas.

Research findings

Throughout all discussions, there were common themes arising around NFM. This section details those themes.

Experience of flooding and NFM is mixed

Most participants had not experienced much flooding in recent years, although they commented that there had been some localised flooding occasionally and said there used to be a lot more flooding years ago. They remarked that flooding was not significant in recent years. Some participants also commented that their farms were situated on hillsides, so water naturally flowed through their land onto land below them.

We're on top of a hill, so somebody else gets our water problems. We farm about 1500 acres, 1000 acres of cereals and the rest is grass.

Focus group 2

We're farming on the edge of the city, we're fairly low. We do get a bit of flooding.

Focus group 2

We've just over 100 acres that flood if the river comes up high enough. We've been fairly fortunate in that we just haven't had the rain.

Focus group 1

It hasn't flooded for the last couple of years...Potentially it's a big problem, but we haven't had it lately.

Focus group 1

Each group of participants was asked about their knowledge and experience of NFM. There was a mixed response from participants, with some having more experience than others, and some highlighting flood management on other land. The main experience of NFM was focused on dams, ditches, hedge and tree planting.

Tree and hedge planting

I planted a community woodland down near the River Welland in 2004. It was 7.5 acres on a field that used to be arable. I reverted it back to grass because we only used to get one crop in four on it...That was part of my HLS... It's going really well because it was a really

wet spring when we planted the trees and some of them are now 40 foot high. It seems to have worked, but it hasn't been as wet in the past few years so maybe we could have got a crop on it, but the money they were going to pay me to revert it back to grass from arable was better than the risk of trying to grow stuff on it.

Focus group 1

We've just done all of our hedges. We've done the whole farm, which was under an insurance scheme...but that was only two years ago, so just over the last two winters. So, we won't really know the effect of it until the next couple of years.

Focus group 2

Ditches

We've had some of these logs put across a ditch to try and steady the flow when there is a lot of flow, but whether they work I don't know.

Focus group 2

Gripping

They have been schemes. The scheme we've been in – they gripped it thirty years ago. Everything came off at once. It did a lot of damage. But an independent scheme came and filled them all in again. That's made a heck of a difference to water flow levels, it's about a quarter. It comes off, but instead of one day it's four days.

Focus group 3

For the first time on Saturday in a long time the roads have been flooded. It would have been bad if it hadn't had been gripped. It would have been twice as deep.

Focus group 3

They gripped Lofthouse and the grips naturally furred up and it's just a line of rushes now. But there wouldn't be the same blanket bog up there that there is on this side.

Focus group 3

We had peat restoration work...Yorkshire Water put £850,000 in to block the grips and reprofile the peat hags...It hasn't worked out too badly. They've taken the profile off but they've made them too steep so when you try to re-vegetate them – when you've had a wet and windy winter like we've just had – it blew a lot away. But to be fair to them they are still putting money in and coming back to put a different sort of system on top of the bare peat to try and get it to re-vegetate.

Focus group 3

Capture ponds

A little bit, in that I've been working with the Allerton Trust on and off when they have projects available. So on the farm we've had a few capture ponds put in, mainly in areas that aren't farmable or aren't best farmable areas, and then we've also put in several leaky dams around the place.

Focus group 1

We catch the water. We dug a pit out where it starts to flood, and that seems to have helped. It was Defra who did it for us a couple of years ago. Where it used to flood, the water goes in there and then it stops, and gradually it goes down again...It didn't flood a lot, but making this big catch pit seems to have stopped it.

Focus group 2

Preventative measures

The two things we did were...fencing down the side of rivers to keep stock from going in and poaching at the side of the rivers, and then letting a bit of sediment get into the river. But that's been a bit of a problem because then it's not being managed and grazed, and we've had a problem with ragwort and Himalayan balsam becoming established. Sheep will control that at the right stage, but they haven't been able to touch it because the fence was down the side of the river.

Focus group 3

Examples of NFM on land elsewhere

It's very clever they do it with these ditches and dams. In the last development near to us they put a series of dams all the way down the slope where they were building their houses, and these ditches, and then in one they did five lakes, so by the time the water goes into the water course, all the run-off that drops off the land has gone...It really has controlled the flooding from urban areas.

Focus group 2

The road between Thrussington and Rearsby flooded rapidly...They put the dams in North Melton and that pretty much stopped it...They've managed to stop it coming down that far, and they've done it by planting trees.

Focus group 1

Engineered flood management schemes

Some participants also highlighted examples of engineered flood management schemes that had worked.

Every housing scheme has that sort of thing. Even along the A46 – there's ponds along the side of the A46.

Focus group 1

There's a lot of hard engineering like that that is put in as a bit of a failsafe really, so if you do get anything that comes through, that flash flooding, it's just there to hold onto it for a little while.

Focus group 1

With all the building that goes ahead now they're building water catchment areas before it gets into the water courses...If you go down the Soar Valley towards Loughborough, which was a big flood plain really, it's worked.

Focus group 2

They also have to put those big plastic things in the foundations that hold the water and release it slowly as well.

Focus group 1

Some farmers said there is no need for the initiatives

Interestingly, a few participants spoke about not needing to introduce new flood management schemes, as there were already things in place that alleviated flooding. Some of these, however, did require active management such as regular clearing of drains and ditches.

There are three brooks on my land. There are bits of wood falling in the brooks and natural dams and all sorts, until it all gets too much and then it just passes through. That just naturally happens – you haven't particularly got to go out and do it.

Focus group 1

I only keep the main drains clear. We haven't carried out a lot of work with actual ditching but rainfall seems to get less and less so the land is not as bad as it used to be....I don't think we've had a lot of run-off over the last few years to be honest. It's far from being wet.

Focus group 2

We've always managed floods up here. You try and keep the drains opened up on the roads and it lets itself off.

Focus group 3

NFM is seen as the responsibility of the Government, Defra and water companies

Participants were vocal about who they believed was ultimately responsible for NFM, with most believing it was the responsibility of Government, Defra or the water companies. However, even though they believed other bodies should be responsible, they also commented that they did not really trust them to do the necessary work properly, or at all.

It probably is [up to the Government], but the trouble is that governments aren't terribly good at doing it, are they? When it comes down to it, the government look to say what they think people want to hear. We had this thing with diesel cars, where they said you must have diesel cars. And as soon as we got a high percentage of diesel cars the price of diesel went shooting up.

Focus group 1

I often wonder why the authorities don't maintain the brooks, because they seem to get worse. But having said that, it does hold the water back...The run off is getting slower because ditches aren't being dug out. Brooks aren't being cleaned out, and of course the run off isn't as fast as it might be, so they're leaving them as they are.

Focus group 2

A small number of participants spoke about the drainage authority which they pay money to, and how it should be working on flood management, although these participants said they had not seen them working for a long time and were unsure what they actually did.

I think I pay something to some drainage board. Who are they? Theoretically there's a drainage board and we theoretically get charged some levy. God knows what they do. What do they do? That seems the logical sort of place to start.

Focus group 2

Get the drainage board to do something up here, that would be nice. I haven't seen them for years.

Focus group 2

Moreover, some participants spoke about the water companies and how they are charged for water run-off from their land, so by definition should, therefore, be responsible for the management of ditches so water can be managed effectively.

Is it not the responsibility of the water companies? They're willing to charge you for run-off off your land, so should they not take the responsibility for having the ditches cleaned out so they can collect it more efficiently?

Focus group 2

Self-funding NFM is a significant barrier for farmers

Many Participants spoke about the cost of implementing NFM initiatives, but agreed that as businesses, they are unlikely to fund something that does not have any direct benefit to their business. They spoke about how they are concerned about the environment, but also confessed that as they are running a business, they do not necessarily have the money to invest in such measures, unless there is support from the Government or other organisations.

At the end of the day, we're trying to make money...The reason all the ditches are filled up is because there is sod-all money.

Focus group 2

Everyone wants an ideal world, but an ideal world costs money, and you can't do it for nothing.

Focus group 1

The point is, we're very busy. We've got 500 cattle and only two men and myself...If we'd a better margin then we could probably afford a secretary, but it has to be done at night when everybody else is watching television.

Focus group 1

You wouldn't get anyone to take them up [without payment].

Focus group 3

They've tried several different cover crops here...so there is some interesting data around that and cost analysis around how much it's costing them to put in a mustard against a chicory, and what the benefits are will hopefully come through on that one...If there was some form of payment on that then I would do it. I can't afford to do it without some sort of payment.

Focus group 1

Some participants spoke about their past experience when they undertook similar flood prevention measures and received support and grants to do it.

Up to the end of the 60s we did a lot of draining...purely because it was grant aided.

Focus group 2

We wouldn't have done the hedges if we hadn't have had the grant. We're talking 75 acres of boundary hedges, so it's quite a lot to do...We're probably lucky, because we got the full amount allocated to us. But you're not making money out of doing it. We still ended up spending a bit more. But at least you know it's all done, and it's just a trimming job for the next man.

Focus group 2

Farmers are reluctant to access grant schemes

There were a number of reasons why participants are reluctant to access grant schemes, with participants complaining that payments take too long to come through, the whole application process is difficult and there is a lack of support from the grant scheme administrators.

Not receiving grant payments in a timely manner or at all

Participants spoke about their experience of grants and shared stories of other farmers having problems accessing and drawing down grants for work they had undertaken. There was a general lack of trust with government bodies in terms of receiving a grant on time.

Getting paid is the biggest worry. You go into the scheme but then it might be two years before you actually get paid for being in the scheme. That is a massive confidence failure for farmers...The RPA are administering the schemes now. But if they don't say you will be paid by 'x', then you can't actually chase it.

Focus group 3

I don't think there'd ever be enough money put forward for us to maintain ditches and hedges on a grant scheme. When I think how many ditches we've got – never mind trying to do the county or the area.

Focus group 2

It's getting worse. My experience with Natural England is that they don't set themselves any deadlines for paying you, so that they can't possibly be late.

Focus group 3

The Peat Partnership has told me that in the future you will have to fork out the money first, pay for it, and then reclaim it back off the treasury. If that happens it will just kill the whole thing off completely...There's no way any of us can find £300,000.

Focus group 3

Payments don't always reach the intended farmers

There was also concern that funding was not reaching the intended farmers and that it was going to landlords instead. This has deterred farmers from accessing grants.

Any money that the government wants to put in place has got to come down to the farmers doing the job on the ground, because they are the people doing the job all the time.

Focus group 3

Some landlords get all the money, basic payment and the environmental stewardship, on the moor. That's what the system was not designed to do. So by coming up with the 'active farmer', a lot of landlords now in the tenant-farmer relationship are snaffling the money off the farmers, which historically went to the farmers.

Focus group 3

Concern over the application process and making mistakes

There was also significant concern that the application process to apply for grants was extremely complex and mistakes could easily be made which would either make their application invalid or would significantly delay their claim. Moreover, participants were also concerned of the consequences an easily made mistake could create and, therefore, did not apply for grants for that very reason.

The paperwork side of things with grant schemes and cross-compliance and payments is always really quite a scary thing for anyone to go through, certainly for me, every year.

Focus group 1

One of the problems is they come up with these schemes – cross-compliance is a cracker – and somebody could come out and say you did it wrong, then the whole weight of God falls on you...They'll really throw it at you.

Focus group 1

You're terrified of being inspected because the inspectors get inspected, and they're terrified of getting fined by the EU if they breach the rules. And what happens when we come out of the EU is that we'll have treasury inspectors coming round to inspect the inspectors and the RPA. It will be the same scenario, it will just be a different group of people.

Focus group 1

The complexity has gone through the roof, so they're completely unworkable. They're undeliverable and unworkable.

Focus group 3

Some participants said that it was easier to just not apply for grants and to have other ways of bringing in an income.

You can rent out houses and holiday cottages and sleep at night, whereas filling a form in wrong will give you a load of grief. I just don't need the hassle.

Focus group 1

It doesn't matter what scheme it is. I personally don't need the hassle.

Focus group 1

Concern that any scheme would keep changing or would not last long

Many participants had been farmers for many years and spoke about how government policy changed and new schemes were introduced and then withdrawn or even reversed depending on current thinking and what flood management practices are 'in vogue' at the time. This had led to farmers becoming cynical about these schemes and as a result, are deterred from participating in such schemes and tend to shy away from them for these reasons.

The other thing is that these schemes aren't long lasting, are they? They [government/ Defra etc.] change their minds like the weather.

Focus group 1

I worry that all these things are very fashionable. In the 60s, 70s, it was 'drain everything'. Now when you see how badly it's silted up it does shake you up. There are people about that think it's quite a good thing, but I don't know.

Focus group 1

In the 1960s there were huge grants for land drainage, and of course many farmers took advantage of those grants...In the 1970s Severn Trent had the grand idea of clearing all the vegetation out of the brook. The combination of the field drainage and clearing the brook out flooded it...Now of course they've gone the opposite way and they want the water slowing down – they're not worried if it stays on the land longer slowed up in the streams.

Focus group 1

How many times have these decisions been made by a third party, and with the benefit of hindsight, they've actually made the wrong decision and they've had to reverse it?

Focus group 3

You start off with being paid a vast amount of money to rip hedges out and drain every bog, and then they turned around about 15 years ago and suddenly it's a complete reversal. So I think you get a bit cynical.

Focus group 2

There seems to be a general lack of flexibility and efficiency of schemes

A few participants spoke about their experience of the schemes and how inflexible they seemed to be sometimes. If a scheme was not working properly, there was not the opportunity for it to be changed or tweaked somehow to improve it and get the best out of it.

That's the problem with the schemes currently. It's set prescriptions for everybody in the country, and that doesn't work...Stuff just doesn't fit everybody. Every area is different.

Focus group 3

If we're talking about planting trees to alleviate flooding, does it really work? I think that's one of the things. There's no opportunity to change.

Focus group 1

They've got to listen to the farmers on the ground. If they don't listen to the farmers on the ground and they just come up with these hare-brained ideas at Whitehall, then they haven't got much chance.

Focus group 3

A different dale could be different. Swaledale and Wensleydale will be different to Niddedale. That's why, whatever schemes they come up with, they've got to be tailored to the particular area you're trying to improve.

Administrators need to know the local area and be knowledgeable in NFM

Some participants spoke about the need to have grant administrators that know the area well and are knowledgeable in the subject matter. From previous experience, participants had worked with scheme administrators that did not know how farming worked and did not appreciate the local area and, therefore, the local issues.

Local administration of these projects I think would be good.

Focus group 3

They should have somebody and give them 20 or 30 farms. Somebody in an area who'd look after those farms, know what's coming and try and get you in. It's hard work trying to keep up to speed. You just don't have time.

Focus group 3

You don't know who to get hold of now, and they wouldn't have a clue who you were anywhere.

Focus group 3

There is a need for a co-ordinated approach

All participants were strongly in favour of having a co-ordinated approach to NFM with joined up thinking between the different agencies, farmers and landowners. They admitted that if left to farmers, little NFM would be done. They recognised that implementing a scheme may be good in isolation and stop or minimise flooding in that location, but it may have a negative knock on effect in other areas downstream which they would not necessarily know about. Moreover, a farmer could introduce a scheme on their land, but if the farmer further upstream does not, it may not solve the issue and become pointless. Therefore, any NFM scheme needs to be co-ordinated in the area to maximise the benefits and the impact it has.

If I get paid to do something which may or may not alleviate the flooding and my neighbour further up or further down doesn't do it, then that water is still going to come to me. I'm doing my bit but then someone else isn't doing their bit. I think it's got to be a collaborative approach, otherwise it's not going to work. There's no good doing a little bit here and a little bit there.

Focus group 1

It's got to be a co-ordinated approach. There's no point doing one bit here which stops it in one place, because it might make it worse elsewhere. You've got to do it along the whole river.

Focus group 1

You've got to look at the total landowners, who's putting what in. If you don't look at it in that way, how can you manage it?

Focus group 2

I'd go back to the first principle – that you can't manage it in isolation. If you want to manage the flow through a particular catchment then you've got to look at the whole thing and see where it makes most sense to interfere. If you just look at one farm it doesn't work. You've got to look at the whole thing and see where you could slow, where you could maybe let the water flow out a little bit, where to hold it back. But that's got to be done over a total area. You can't just look at a farm.

Focus group 2

Participants did also recognise that farmers are not always good at working together and, therefore, definitely needed to be part of a co-ordinated approach.

You can't look at your own situation in isolation obviously. It's a whole continuum all the way down. The problem is pulling it all together, getting people working together, and of course is there isn't a lot of lead from anywhere.

Focus group 2

Farmers are not very good at collaborating, to be honest.

Focus group 1

It's just comments from individuals. No group has really got together yet.

Focus group 2

Having support and advice would encourage farmers to get involved

Generally, participants were reluctant to get involved with NFM unless there was support and advice available from a co-ordinating organisation. Many participants stressed that they would prefer to have advisors that were knowledgeable in NFM that provided support

and advice from start to finish, including help with grant applications and paperwork. It was also important for advisors to meet farmers and visit sites, so they understood the issues and needs of the area.

Participants were keen that any NFM scheme introduced on their land was part of a larger, co-ordinated scheme, rather than an unsystematic approach which could cause problems elsewhere.

Having access to an advisor that can give you advice on-site, that has come from either Natural England or RPA or some government organisation, so you're not feeling like you're paying a lot of money for a consultant to get it wrong. If you can get access to somebody who can come out and tell you exactly what to do, then you've got more of a change of being able to do it.

Focus group 1

You've got to nearly hold the farmer's hand to make sure it's done right, and then make sure it's overseen. The problem with Natural England lately is that they have just vanished.

Focus group 3

If you had somebody that could offer you that sort of advice...from a point of view that was legitimised because it was from the government or it had been had been paid for by a consultant or something like that, that came out and gave you absolutely solid advice, that could do your paperwork for you, and didn't cost the earth, that would be a massive selling point.

Focus group 1

If you've got somebody who's coming out to give you advice then you want them to be from an organisation that knows about the stuff that they're talking about, and not from a bureaucracy or an administrative agency that doesn't know about it – that isn't the bean counting side of things, for want of a better term to use. I think you almost have to take that side of things and say it's administered by one area and it's actually whether that body still has the expertise to advise on the ground. It would be great if you could have that all the way through because going from one to the other can make things very awkward.

Focus group 1

Working with neighbouring communities or organisations is not always a priority

Participants' opinions about helping neighbouring communities to reduce flooding, whether it was a local nearby village or large city downstream, was mixed. Although they did not

like the idea of towns or cities being flooded, many had little sympathy as government and councils had given permission for developments on flood plains, and housing developers had made a lot of money from building in these areas

If it is mainly urban areas that they are concerned about being flooded, they should pay for it. And who the 'they' is, is probably a government or a council organisation.

Focus group 2

It's not really our problem.

Focus group 3

If they build them on a flood plain, they can't be surprised if they flood. It's expecting us to then try and mitigate it.

Focus group 3

They're still building on flood plains now. They've passed thousands of houses to be built on flood plains. It's like banging your head on a brick wall.

Focus group 3

If you're going to insist on giving planning permission to people who are going to build on flood plains, then you should be taking money out of all those buildings to create flood plains somewhere else.

Focus group 2

And the problem may be that we've suddenly got floods because we've built so many houses on the flood plains...[The government] doesn't deal with the problem that they shouldn't be there in the first place. So if you get rid of one flood plain, then you've presumably got to put one somewhere else. But they don't want to pay for that.

Focus group 2

There was, however, some recognition that housing developers had done some flood management work to protect the areas and alleviate flooding.

I think the urban ground has got it covered with these catchment areas for the water. They haven't increased any problems further downstream with the flooding at all.

Focus group 2

New housing developments have to have a water collection pond to catch the water coming away from the development and let it go steadily away from it.

Focus group 1

When asked about playing a role to support their community, the general consensus amongst participants that their farming was a business and as such, should not get involved with NFM or supporting their community unless there was a specific benefit to them.

Farming is a business at the end of the day...The first rule of sustainability is economic sustainability. It's all very well having these schemes and having to do this, this, and this. If there's no incentive to do it economically then I'm not going to do it. It might be nice stopping people from getting flooded out in Stamford, but I'm not the custodian of the water in this country.

Focus group 1

I do educational access, and that's another major issue. The general population have not got a clue what's happening up here...The majority of the population are very little exposed to what's going on in the countryside.

Focus group 1

It's a social good, and unless you're a charity as opposed to a business, you generally don't pay for social good.

Focus group 2

Appendix

Focus Group Discussion Guide

JBA / Defra Focus Group Discussion Guide – Natural Flood Management on Farms

Please note this discussion guide is intended as a guide to the moderator only. Sections may be subject to change during the course of the focus groups if, for example, certain questions do not illicit useful responses. Wording and explanations may change to suit the audience.

Introduction (2 mins)

My name is.....and I work for a company called Enventure Research. We have been commissioned by JBA Consulting and Defra to undertake some research with farmers to talk about natural flood management and the processes which help or hinder their implementation. It doesn't matter if you don't know anything about them or have a lot of experiences.

Please be assured that everything you say during this session is totally confidential, so please be as open and honest as possible. We will not be reporting who specifically said what. There are no right or wrong answers. Enventure Research is an independent research agency, meaning that we are not part of JBA or Defra.

Enventure Research works to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and abides by the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which means that anything you say today will be treated in the strictest confidence, and nothing will be tied back to your name.

We do have a JBA colleague here though, INTRODUCE, but she is here to simply observe and has signed a confidentiality clause to ensure everything said today is confidential.

I will be recording the session so I do not need to take notes as you are talking. However, the recording is only used to help me write my report and is deleted once it has been used. Please speak clearly and do not talk over each other. Can I just ask that all mobile telephones are either switched off or put onto silent mode.

There are refreshments available, so please feel free to help yourself during the session.

The session will last approximately an hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Warm-up exercise (5 mins)

Moderator to go around the group and ask respondents to briefly introduce themselves.

Just so we can get to know each other a bit, can you please introduce yourselves? Ask a selection of questions

- First name
- Where is your farm / type of farm / size of farm
- Are you a landowner or tenant farmer
- Any experience of natural flood management

Current knowledge / experience of NFM (5 mins)

- What do you know about NFM?
- Have you been involved in an NFM scheme?

Introduction of Natural Flood Management (10 mins)

Moderator to provide background and explanation of Natural Flood Management and show examples.

- Presentation slides of examples
- Distribute pictures to participants
- Spend a few minutes discussing

Expectations (15 mins)

- What are your expectations for NFM?
 - What were they prior to getting involved?
 - What do you think will happen if you get involved in NFM?
- How would you expect to be approached about getting involved in NFM?
 - How you want/prefer to be approached?
- Have you been approached by any organisations about getting involved with NFM?
 - Who has approached you?
 - How have they found this engagement?
 - Is there anyone they would want to speak to?
- Is this something you would want to deliver yourself/have delivered yourself?
- If you were to get involved, who would you expect to take on the responsibility, maintenance and liability of the features?
 - Who would you want/expect to take on the financial burden of the features?

Concerns around NFM (15 mins)

- What would be your main concerns about getting involved in NFM / what were your concerns prior to getting involved?
 - Explore issues around access to land, financial burdens, maintenance, liability and responsibility, funding, restrictions from site designations
 - Are there any key influencers on these concerns (i.e. is the media and any particular groups driving the positive/negative reaction?)

Existing information and tools (10 mins)

- Are you aware of any toolkits, resources or publications available to you to help with understanding how you can implement NFM?
 - What is the level of awareness of these types of documents?
 - How have you heard of any toolkits, resources etc.?
 - Where / how did you find out about them?
 - Has anyone used the guidance and if so what do you think of it?
- Would you be more willing to get involved if you were to have more information/access to guides and NFM toolkits?
- Is the existing evidence important to you?
 - Will evidence encourage you to get involved?

Motivations (15 mins)

- If you have been involved in NFM, what prompted you to get involved?
- Did you receive/are you aware of any incentives (e.g. payments) for getting involved?
- What would you want as an incentive to get involved?
- Why have you not been engaged in NFM? Explore a lack of awareness, tenant wners? Are there different issues for tenant farmers?
- What would encourage you to get involved?
- Would you need an incentive or just more information and evidence?
- Are you / would you be motivated by a particular benefit from NFM?
- Would you be motivated by the benefits the surrounding community may experience? Is this important to you?

Relation with local community (10 mins)

What is your relationship with the surrounding/downstream community?

- Would a push from the community encourage you to get involved?
- Would you be more willing to get involved if the NFM made a difference to the community?

Close (5 mins)

- Summarise the key points from the discussion:
- Thank everyone for their time and input
- Any other questions/points to raise?
- Handout incentive payments / sign record form
- Thank & close