

NORTHERN UPLAND CHAIN
Local Nature Partnership



High Nature Value Farming

in the
NORTHERN UPLAND CHAIN

- Northumberland National Park • North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty • Yorkshire Dales National Park •
- Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty • Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty •



What is High Nature Value Farming?

Sit in a flower-rich meadow in the Yorkshire Dales or walk across a North Pennines moor with the curlews calling and you get a very different picture from the one often associated with modern, intensive farming.

High Nature Value farming describes low intensity farming systems that are particularly valuable for wildlife, the environment and people. But low intensity does not mean low-maintenance – managing livestock, meadows, and thousands of miles of dry-stone walls is time-consuming, expensive, and requires high levels of skill and knowledge.



Why it matters

The Northern Upland Chain runs from the southern tip of Nidderdale to the Scottish border in the North-umberland National Park. Much of this stunningly beautiful area of hills and dales may look wild but it has been managed by generations of farmers.

More than any other part of England, the area is dominated by semi-natural wildlife habitats. Over 180,000 hectares have been designated as of national and international importance, including:

- huge areas of blanket bog and heather moorland;
- most of the UK's upland hay meadows, and most of England's limestone pavement.
- iconic species like red squirrel, curlew, yellow wagtail, otter, rare orchids, and most of England's remaining black grouse population.



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Ordnance Survey 100022521 (Northumberland National Park)

The Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership was established in 2012, and includes over 50 organisations. It covers four nationally-designated landscapes: Northumberland National Park, North Pennines AONB, Yorkshire Dales National Park, Nidderdale AONB and Forest of Bowland AONB.

Local farming systems use traditional livestock breeds like Cheviot and Swaledale sheep, which have adapted to cope with the harsh conditions. These form the backbone of the national sheep industry, accounting for 20% of British ewes.

HNV farming and land management in the Northern Upland Chain also:

- helps to regulate the flow of many major rivers, minimising flood peaks;
- conserves vast areas of peat and other soils that store huge amounts of carbon;
- maintains over 300,000 hectares of land that is accessible by the public for recreation;
- manages the beautiful landscapes that support a multi-million pound tourism industry.



The challenges

Farming in these uplands is difficult, with long, cold winters, high rainfall and a short growing season. The systems that make best use of the land are relatively low productivity and labour intensive. In other words, farming here costs more and produces less.

Many of the benefits that HNV farming provides are generally not rewarded by the market. The numbers of traditional hill sheep breeds are in decline, and their market value is falling as producers switch to larger, cross-bred sheep.

HNV farmers tend to have low incomes, and a high turnover - a situation that is high risk but low reward. Many do not make the equivalent of the minimum wage on the hours they work. As a result, HNV farming does not provide the capital needed to invest in improving farm efficiency or adapting to the restrictions required by environmental support schemes. This issue is most acute for tenant farmers.

The beauty of the landscapes maintained by HNV farming makes them very attractive places to live - driving up house prices to levels where farmers cannot afford to retire. Their children move away to find housing, and the poor access to local services can make families reluctant to move back.

Large amounts of public money are channelled to farmers in the Northern Upland Chain. Without these payments these types of farm would have largely disappeared. However, the current system fails to get the best outcomes for the farmers or the environment.





A call for action

HNV farming remains the best and only realistic way of maintaining some of this country's most valuable landscapes - but things could be so much better:

The Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership has been collaborating with groups of local farmers to explore ways of securing a more robust economic future and delivering more environmental benefits.

We are now calling on the Government, Local Enterprise Partnerships, environmental agencies and the farming community to work together to support HNV farming here, including taking action to:

- Ensure that the new national Countryside Stewardship scheme targets support to HNV farmers in the Northern Upland Chain;
- Provide a stronger voice for HNV farmers in developing policy;
- Raise awareness of HNV farming and the fantastic food it produces;
- Develop tailored programmes of support, advice and capital investment that are more easily accessible to upland farm businesses;
- Introduce a more collaborative approach to the delivery of agri-environment schemes, using the skills and knowledge of HNV farmers to deliver environmental outcomes in a way that allows the whole farm to work and make sense as a system;
- Rapidly develop new payment mechanisms to enable the market to reward HNV farmers for the many public benefits they provide; and,
- Further reform the Common Agricultural Policy, so that payment rates reflect the real cost to HNV farmers of maintaining some of our most important natural assets.

Get involved

To find out more visit our website at nuclnp.org.uk

