

Farming in Protected Landscapes 2024 - 2025



CASE STUDIES



Supports **NATURE** recovery



Mitigates the impacts of **CLIMATE** change



Opportunities for **PEOPLE** to enjoy, discover and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage



Protects or improves the quality/character of the **PLACE**



Log jam slows the flow of Blake Brook. The willow provides habitat initially and will reproduce and spread.

Blake Brook Project



Restoring landscapes, Strengthening partnerships

The Blake Brook winds through several landholdings in the upper Dove catchment, an area rich in natural beauty but historically challenged by access issues, habitat degradation, and complex landowner relationships.

Grant value:

£34,160

This project brought long-standing concerns to resolution; improving footpath access, enhancing the condition of the SSSI (part of the Leek Moors), and fostering collaboration between neighbouring landowners. With support from the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme and a design-stage agreement with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, the project enabled effective cooperation between landowners, Natural England, and teams from the National Park Authority.

Key outcomes on individual holdings included:

- First-time engagement of several landowners with national agri-environment schemes.
- Specific environmental challenges addressed through capital works such as pond restoration and riparian fencing.

Major works led by SWT included:

- Footpath improvements resolving a long-standing access issue while benefiting adjacent wet heath and fen habitats previously impacted by erosion, trampling, and drainage.
- Restoration along Blake Brook, where simple but effective interventions such as targeted bank re-profiling, engineered log jams and willow planting, were used to kickstart natural processes.



Bank re-profiling at Blake Brook

These actions are now encouraging the development of complex habitats, including new flow pathways, split channels, floodplain scour, sediment bars, and patchy scrub growth.

The Blake Brook project is a strong example of how collaborative, landscape-scale action can deliver real environmental and access benefits while building stronger relationships across the farming and conservation community.



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Please get in touch if you have a project idea, or would like to find out more:

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Improving accessibility and inclusivity



FiPL has recently launched several projects aimed at improving access to the countryside for everyone.

Managed by the British Mountaineering Club (BMC), Horseshoe Quarry serves both climbers and conservation efforts. The BMC has enhanced the quarry's entrance and approach to accommodate wheelchair users, and developed a safe, level platform at the base of the crag, enabling paraclimbers to access a range of climbing routes more easily.



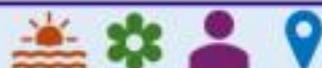
Improving countryside access has taken shape through FiPL-supported initiatives. These include the installation of boardwalks to navigate waterlogged routes in Macclesfield Forest, the replacement of unstable ladder stiles with wider pedestrian gates along the well-used Bradfield Ancient Ways, and the creation of permissive paths. Interpretation panels have been installed at points along these paths, featuring a map of the permissive route and information about its natural and heritage significance.



FiPL continues to support educational visits to farms, with fourteen Peak District farms opening their doors to the public during 2024-25, helping to foster greater understanding of farming and the countryside. Visitors included disadvantaged children and adults, and those with Special Educational Needs.

Projects utilising volunteers are helping people get directly involved in improving the countryside for nature while learning about its management. To date, over a thousand volunteers have been engaged on FiPL projects in the Peak District.

New House Farm



Environmental resilience in upland farming

Mother-daughter partnership Sue Jackson and Erica Leigh combine traditional stewardship with innovative conservation projects at New House Farm, near Chinley.

**Grant value:
£27,016**

With FiPL funding and the engagement of volunteers, they have planted almost 700 metres of hedge providing shelter for livestock and linking two wooded cloughs that have also been enhanced through a woodland grant.

Sue and Erica have opened a pop-up campsite beside the Pennine Bridleway in the farm's upland reaches. FiPL funding of fingerposts and waymarkers enabled a permissive path from the Pennine Bridleway to an existing footpath. South of the farmstead, another permissive trail leads through a wooded valley carpeted with bluebells in spring.



Newly planted hedge links tree planting in the upland clough to the woodland below

To enhance livestock grazing options, and protect water quality, a new supply from the farmhouse to remote water troughs, and a new section of fence means that there is now 2km of woodland and stream protected from stock damage.

Erica has hosted farm visits for a local scout group, giving children hands-on experience with farming and an understanding of the environment. Through these projects, New House Farm not only strengthens its environmental resilience but also fosters community connection to the land.

Lower Barn Farm Meadows and Moors



A vision for nature recovery in the South West Peak

Tenant farmer Norman Belfield's pioneering conservation work at Lower Barn Farm in Wildboarclough has gained national attention, having been featured on Countryfile.

Grant value:
£43,542

Nestled beneath Shutlingsloe hill, 'Cheshire's Matterhorn', Lower Barn Farm is a shining example of how a whole-farm approach and careful livestock management help to restore a mosaic of semi-natural habitats across meadows and moorland. While his business centres on breeding high-quality Aberdeen Angus cattle, Norman's commitment to nature recovery includes the creation of wood pasture on the lower in-bye fields. This forms a gentle transition between the wooded valley bottom and the surrounding acid grassland.



Spreading seed-rich green hay on scarified pasture which will be rolled to aid germination

Norman is transforming grassland into vibrant hay meadows by spreading green hay rich in wildflower seeds, sourced from exceptional meadows in nearby Wincle. He is also managing the banks to support rare species like mountain pansy and grass of Parnassus.

On the upland moors, FiPL funding has enabled the installation of peat dams to rewet the moorland. This encourages the growth of sphagnum moss and other blanket bog species, creating ideal feeding grounds for breeding and overwintering waders, as well as habitats for amphibians and invertebrates.

In partnership with Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Norman has also created wader scrapes; providing vital summer feeding areas for species such as curlew. Norman's work exemplifies how farming and nature recovery can go hand in hand, offering a model for sustainable land management in protected landscapes.



What are our farmers views?

"FiPL has enabled us to carry out work that wouldn't have been possible otherwise and has allowed us to welcome more visitors to enjoy the beautiful environment. It's been a pleasure to share our farming knowledge with the young visitors"

Erica Leigh,
New House Farm

"FiPL has helped me to farm traditionally, and to create habitats for curlew and other species. We've all got to do our bit for the wellbeing of nature, the animals and of us too."

Norman Belfield,
Lower Barn Farm



Thoughts of the Peak District FiPL team

"We're proud to be part of a programme that empowers farmers to embrace nature-friendly practices while safeguarding the unique character of the Peak District landscape."