

Limestone Country



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority





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Yorkshire Dales National Park

- Area – 1,760 km²
- Resident population – 19,500
- Nature conservation designations: SSSI – 500 km² (of which 400 km² is Natura 2000)
- Farming – 1,100 farm holdings with 900 full time farmers
- Tourism – 7.5 million day visits, 1.3 million staying visitors



Limestone Country

Project area

Project area of 11,100 ha covers the United Kingdom most important limestone region in the UK and includes 12 internationally important habitats (Natura 2000)

The range of habitats present includes the most extensive series of limestone pavement in the UK along with the most extensive area of upland limestone grassland. Malham Tarn wetland complex is considered to be one of the most outstanding in the UK.





Farming in the Dales

- Long history of pastoral farming
- Farming is marginal – remoteness, climate, terrain
- Farming is completely dependent on farm subsidies and agri-environmental payments which equate 60 -80% of farm income
- Primary use –hill sheep flocks and suckler cow herds
- Agri-environment covers large areas of land
- Reduction in cattle since 1970s

Ecology - Habitats and species

- Karst landscape with habitat mosaics – grasslands, blanket bogs, juniper, woodland
- Degraded habitats – many in unfavourable ecological condition
- Cattle have an important role in the management of wildlife habitats





Farming management issues

- Current economics of farming cattle are poor
- Availability of appropriate cattle and farming systems
- Cattle need to be adapted to physical conditions and be able to graze through winter months with little supplementary feed (benefits of native breeds?)
- Grazing regimes/stocking calendars under agri-environment are different from conventional husbandry systems
- Remoteness of land and provision of handling facilities and water supplies

How to solve the problem? – development of the project

- Our key partner is the farming community
- Established good working relationships
- Effective dialogue – talking and listening
- Working together on ideas
- Mutual understanding and ownership of the project



Limestone Country

Project Objective

‘To Restore Habitats within the Ingleborough Complex and Craven Limestone Complex Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) by encouraging a return to mixed farming using hardy cattle breeds’

Farm Management

- Environmental audits and whole farm plans
- Management agreements on Natura 2000
- Annual costs:
 - transitional costs
 - grants for additional management costs
- Capital costs:
 - stock protection
 - provision of water
 - cattle
 - adaptation of buildings









Results



- **18 herds of traditional breed cattle grazing 1850ha of Natura 2000 (and also other areas of the farm)**
- **Provision of 7 new stock watering facilities**
- **Provision of handling facilities for remote sites and purchase of 2 mobile cattle crushes for use by farmers.**



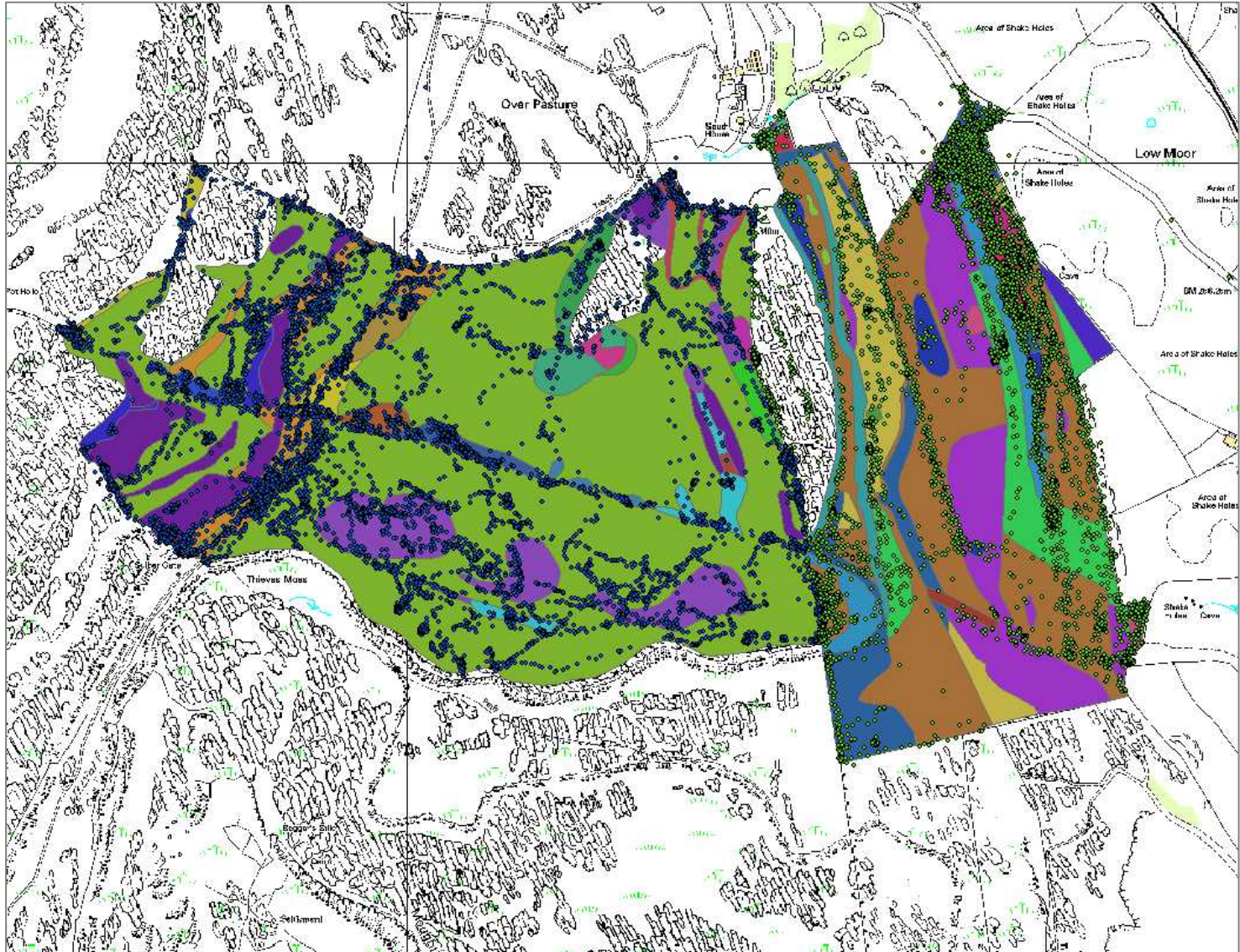


Ecological Research

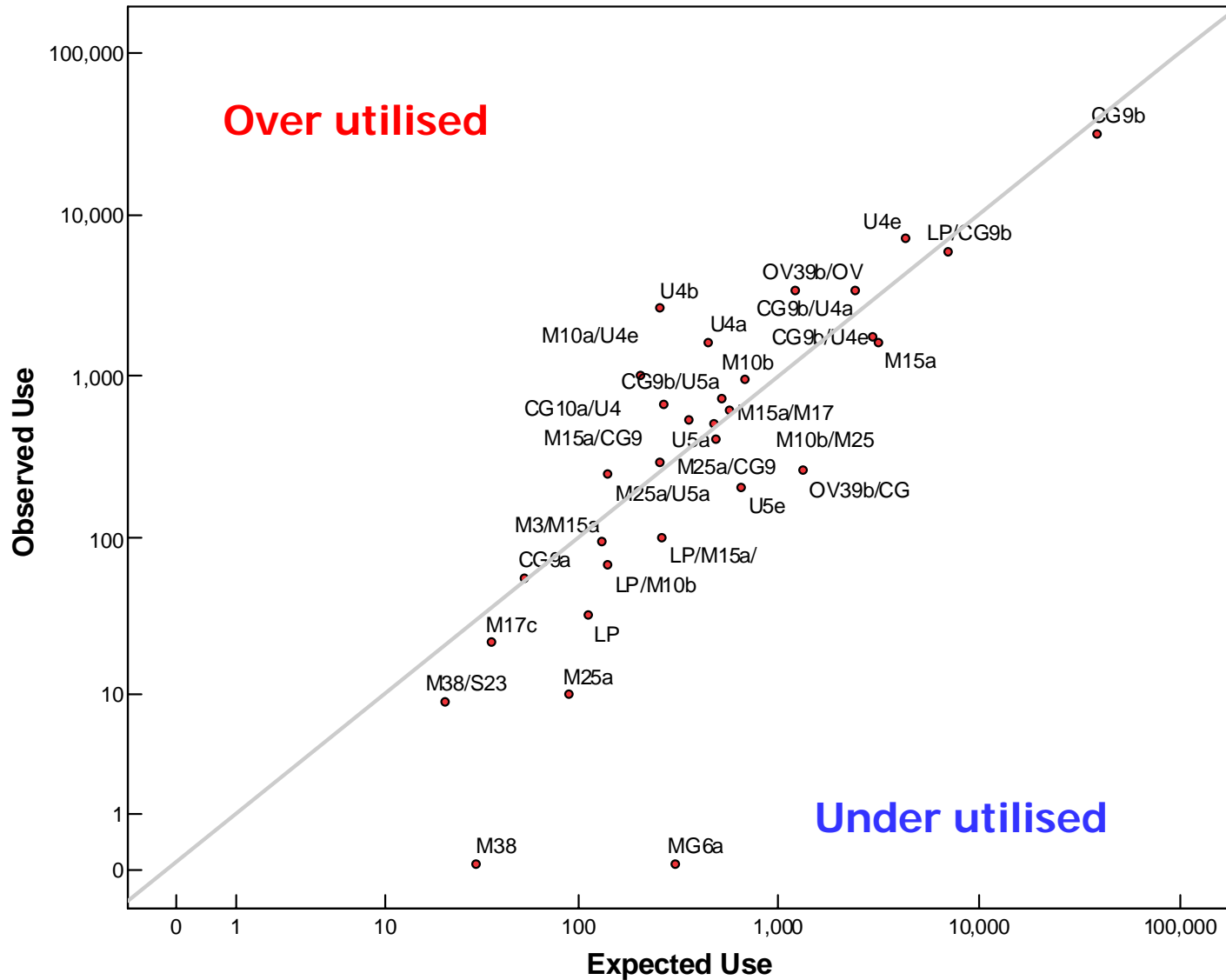
- 3 years data –indicating improvements to pavement and grassland habitats with cattle grazing
- Tracking collars - 7 deployments between Dec 2004 and Sept 2006 (2 current)
- 152 days of data
- 88,441 data points
- Record: date, time, position, height, temperature, pitch & roll.



Habitat



Compositional analysis

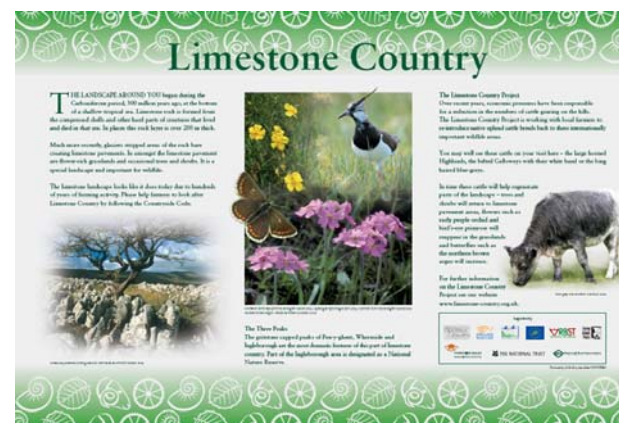




Other achievements

- Raised the awareness of the importance of cattle in upland nature conservation.
- Influenced the development of Environmental Stewardship (the national English agri-environment scheme)

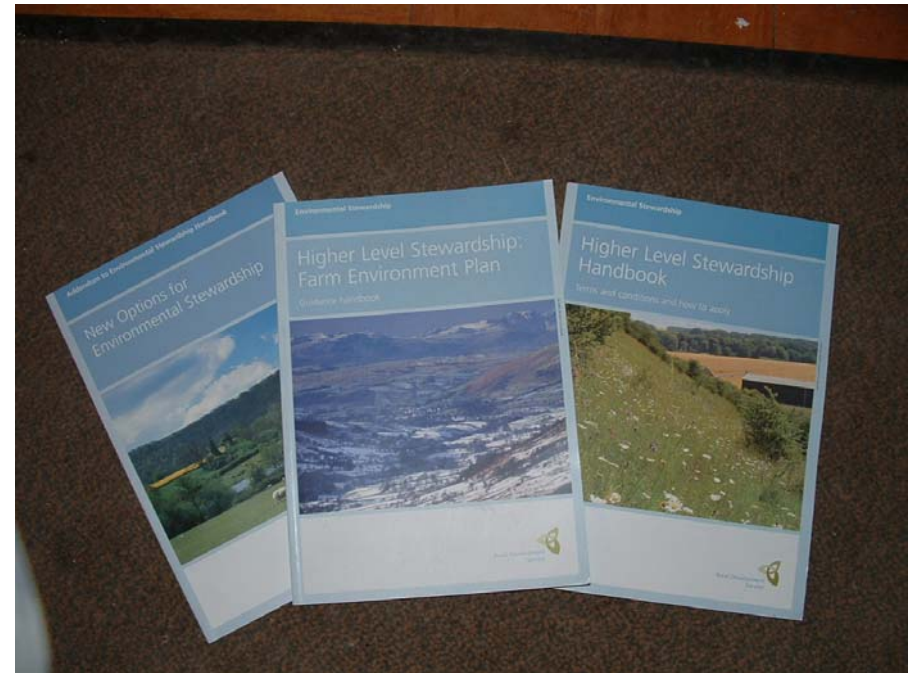
- Whole farm agreements
- Farm Environment Plans
- Cattle options



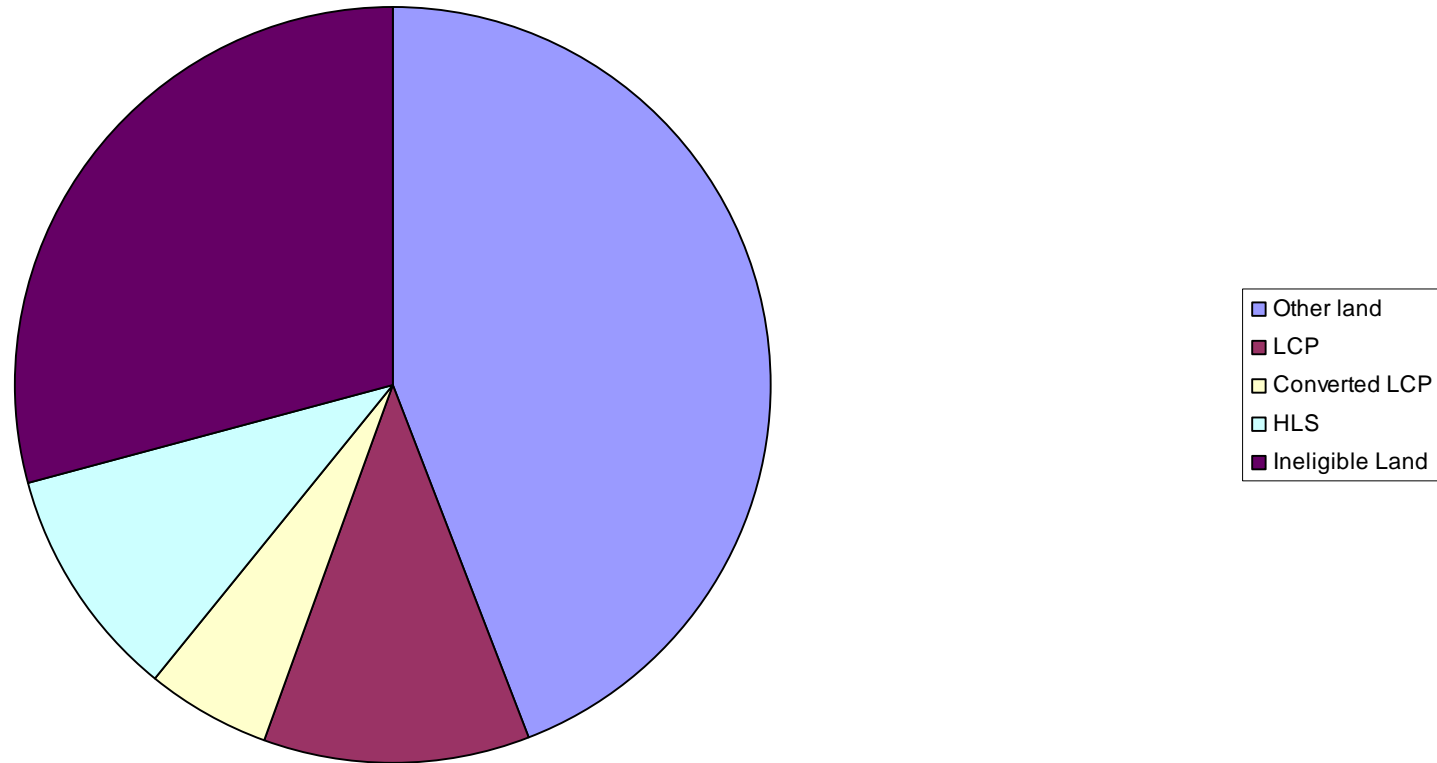


Environmental Stewardship

- Cattle grazing supplements
- Native breeds at risk supplement
- Both introduced in 2006 to assist the maintenance of cattle grazing in uplands and on grazing marshes



Natura 2000 Land areas



- c.3,000 ha under cattle grazing agreements
- Of which c.1,100 under new Higher Level Scheme

Beyond the Limestone Country

- **Cattle have an essential role in the management of wildlife habitats**
(but recognise that cattle in the uplands may be for conservation reasons only and support will be needed)
- **Predictions are for more extensive livestock farming systems – particularly with sheep in the uplands**
- **Need to ensure that current agricultural and environmental policies do not lead to further moves away from cattle.**
(Cattle numbers are expected to reduce further in the UK upland areas)
- **May need flexible and local mechanisms required to identify and address issues**
- **Need to assist farmers to develop the premium markets needed to stay profitable.**



Thank you

