



Fferm Ifan ecosystem

Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

IMPROVING RESILIENCE FROM THE GROUND UP

Ysbyty Ifan estate is an agricultural estate in Snowdonia, cared for by the National Trust. The estate, with its diverse landscape and habitats, covers 8,000 hectares of high open moorland and features the Migneint, which is one of the largest areas of blanket bog in Wales.

The Migneint is abundant with plant communities and bird life and forms part of an area that is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area.

With many farms situated on the estate within these designated areas, a group of 11 tenant farmers set its sights on improving the area's ecosystem resilience. The Fferm Ifan farmer led project began its endeavour, taking landscape scale action on land management.

BENEFITS OF THE FUNDING

In 2018, Fferm Ifan received £696,352 of funding under the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources theme, through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.

The project has benefited greatly from the funding and has allowed the farmer led group to undertake activities to manage approximately 2,456ha of land.

By learning, sharing ideas and working closely with the project partners i.e. National Trust, Snowdonia National Park Authority, RSPB, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Bangor University and Natural Resources Wales, the group has gained the necessary expertise to carry out the new-targeted land management actions to great effect.

Work has also been carried out on watercourses to reduce agricultural pollution. The group has fenced off watercourses to keep stock out, improving the water quality of the river Conwy. Soil testing has also been carried out on approximately 240 improved grassland fields surrounding the Migneint to ensure efficient planning for nutrient, soil and water management.





With grazing rights to the Migneint, the group also had guidance from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) on best practice relating to catchment sensitive planting. The group planted 1,505 trees and 139 scattered trees. 11,800m of hedgerows have been planted or restored and 800m of streamside corridors have been created to help protect riverside habitats, to reduce soil erosion and to alleviate flood risk downstream in the Conwy Valley.

The project has not only delivered socio-economic benefits to the 11 farms within Fferm Ifan, but also to the wider rural community. Most of the capital works carried out through the project was done by local contractors which helped to create work locally.

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT...

As part of the grazing trials, cattle have been introduced to the Migneint for the first time in living memory and the Fferm Ifan group is hoping the trees and hedgerows planted and the streamside corridors created will help store carbon and reduce flood risk in the Conwy Valley in the future.

The Fferm Ifan group has been bold and taken on board all the expert advice available to secure the future of this designated land to ensure the resilience of the surrounding ecosystems for future generations in the hope to encourage more biodiversity and wildlife in the peatland.

“We are incredibly proud of what we have achieved with Fferm Ifan. As farmers, we are well aware of the effects of climate change, and we already adapt our farming practices on-farm, as necessary. However, when you collaborate and take action on a large scale like this, you really get to appreciate the power of working together. It is amazing to see subtle, yet crucial, changes to the natural environment as a result of joint effort.

“Through training and working with our project partners, the project has allowed us to learn new skills, gain experience and expertise on how to manage this spectacular landscape, so we can share and pass our knowledge on to future generations.

“Yes, we have accomplished a lot, yet we cannot be complacent. It is an ongoing process, and I hope responsible farming will continue here, and future generations of traditional farming families will be able to make a good living, helping our Welsh-speaking upland community to thrive and prosper. I believe that by using these farming methods to protect our ecosystems and biodiversity will not only be profitable for farmers, but it will be instrumental in nature’s survival too.”

Awel Jones, Fferm Ifan project lead