

North Lees Future Management Options - Further detail

THE LAND

Option 1 (Recommended): Keep the moorland and in-bye together

Option 2: Sell the in-bye

Option 3: Lease the in-bye separately to the moorland

- **Farming** - the sheep flock is currently hefted to the moor. I.e. as they have been shepherded and become accustomed to the moor over generations, they graze it fully and do not stray onto neighbouring land. For welfare and practical reasons, the flock needs enclosed grass fields for lambing and over-wintering because agri-environment schemes insist on a reduction in winter grazing of moorland.
- **Woodlands** - As a consequence of reviewing the rest of the Estate, there may be a need to consider how their management should fit in with any new management regime. The Estate woodlands contain ecological and archaeological features which require sensitive management. Conservation volunteers are also involved in woodland management.
- **Protection of core conservation objectives** - In the case of a sale, experience shows that it would be very difficult to protect the conservation value of the land by way of covenants. This is because covenants cannot insist on positive works, we have no monitoring process in place and they are very difficult to enforce. On the other hand, the continuing development of national agri-environment schemes, together with increasing cross-compliance requirements for all land benefiting from direct payments to farmers, means that the case to retain such land is less strong.
- Selling the in-bye would make it difficult to achieve a number of the agreed farm objectives (see Appendix 1), such as 10.2.1 Grazing at sustainable levels with flexibility between moor and inbye, 10.2.3 Maximise the conservation value of all in-bye fields, 10.2.4 Any necessary bracken and weed control should be done by mechanical means if possible, 10.2.5 Organic farming should be welcomed/encouraged , 10.2.6 Farming using rare/traditional breeds will be welcomed, 10.2.7 Enhance all farmland trees and small woodlands and where appropriate, plant new ones, 10.2.9 Widen all hedges, 10.2.10 Provide scrapes (small pools) where appropriate to enhance habitat for upland waders.

- There are additional benefits of retaining control in terms of habitat management experimentation and demonstration to retaining a mosaic of different habitat types. North Lees currently provides this, with rich hay meadows, pastures, rough grazing and moorland. Particular wildlife links are on the moorland edge pastures and hay meadows for birds such as lapwing, reed bunting, linnet, curlew and Ring Ouzel. It also has potential twite habitat, which are red listed and need moorland and in-bye. Any separation should seek to secure the importance of these habitat links.
- **Financial** - short-term capital gain possible from sale of in-bye land (105 acres @ £...../acre = £.....), releasing funds for investment in retained properties. NB. This is a rough estimate by officers.
- **Historic context** - the previous owner, General Sir Hugh Beech (who is still alive and maintains a personal interest in the Estate), sold it to us so that the Estate would not be split up. However, there are no covenants to this effect, only an intention. Sale might result in bad PR for the Authority, so any decision must be taken with this in mind and if justified, should be fully explained.
- **Recreation** - The majority of recreational opportunities are on the moorland. Most forms of recreation have no great link between the two. Local visitors know that it is in one ownership and ramblers walk up through the in-bye to get to the moorland. However, the rights of way network would protect that opportunity.
- **Integrated management** - Greater integration is one of the key stones of the Estate Management Plan and the Stanage Forum process. What is done on one area would reflect on the other to some extent. Separated management would therefore need full consideration and explanation. Management of the whole by one person/organisation is the simplest and easiest to deliver on National Park objectives. Other organisations such as English Nature and the RSPB are currently emphasising the importance of reconnecting in-bye land with moorland because of important wildlife habitat links, for example on the Authority's Eastern Moors Estate.

THE BUILDINGS

Points applying to all buildings

- **Potential partnership approach** - The option of a partnership with the Vivat Trust to manage many or all of the buildings should also be considered. This could perhaps involve a combination of ownerships, joint ownerships, leases or management arrangements to best suit circumstances/needs. Such a partnership stands best chance of delivering the farm objectives and retaining flexibility but this wouldn't necessarily be the best financially.
- **Financial** - There are opportunities for short-term financial gain from the sale of any of these properties, releasing much needed funds for investment in retained properties. However, there is marriage value that would be lost by divorcing the Hall from the farmhouse.
- **Practical/development** - the greater the number of owners/managers/uses of the buildings, the greater the likelihood of conflict and pressure for further development. Such concerns arising at the centre of the Estate would be hard to ignore and the potential for adverse publicity would need to be addressed.

(a) North Lees Hall, adjoining field and pig sties

Option 4: Sell on the open market

Option 5 (Recommended): Sell to the Vivat Trust

Option 6: Maintain as now - in our ownership, leased to Vivat Trust

- **Pig sties and adjoining field:** If the Hall is sold, then it is considered that it would make sense to add the field to the front as a curtilage, as it has very little habitat value and could be restored as an Elizabethan garden/orchard. However, it is of some archaeological importance, as it contains pre 18th Century garden earthworks. Restoration as any type of garden/orchard should be preceded by archaeological investigation (which could run to many thousands of £ worth of work). The most suitable use for the pig sties would probably be as storage in connection with the Hall. The only other possible use might be if a new farm tenant wanted to keep pigs (but this would have an element of conflict with the use of the Hall).
- **Financial:** Once the existing lease has expired (in 2038), the Hall could be worth considerably more than it is now. However, it is most likely that the Vivat Trust would have the right to continue their Business Tenancy beyond

this date under the Landlord & Tenant Act (for up to 15 years, unless we require it for our own business purposes).

- **Practical** - Issues of shared services, such as water, electricity and driveway maintenance could be further complicated by different ownerships, particularly as the water and electrical supply are currently at the limit of their capacity and both are PDNPA's responsibility.

(b) The Farmhouse

Option 7: As now, retain in our ownership and lease as a farmhouse

Option 8 (Recommended): Sell to the Vivat Trust

Option 9: Sell on the open market

- **Financial** - The farmhouse is worth slightly more than the Hall at present, as it is not subject to any lease. There would be additional marriage value in joining it with the Hall. I.e. if sold alone, the Hall is worth £..... and the farmhouse worth £..... but together they are worth £....., therefore having £..... marriage value.
- **Building renovation/maintenance** - Vivat Trust would wish to restore the farmhouse to its original condition. This would involve ripping out the modern internal divisions and opening the building out to its original layout. Any other purchaser is unlikely to want to restore it to its original internal layout and would not guarantee the same level of care and maintenance.
- **Farming** - the stock numbers alone would not justify a farmhouse in an agricultural appraisal - ie there is no essential need for someone to be living on-site, purely to look after that number of livestock on a normal farm. However, this is not a 'normal' farm. The complex mix of inter-related and often conflictual issues and the high level of visitor pressure, traffic and roaming sheep on an unfenced moorland require more supervision and shepherding than an average farm. However, its visitor importance means that the Authority's rangers should maintain a high level presence in the area.
- **Opportunity to provide part-time/start up farm** - like many of our Warslow farms, it would at least provide a good part time living. With ESA, the previous farm tenants generated an income of around £.....a. (and £..... rent for us). This could be seen as a positive fostering of the social make-up of the area and demonstrate support for small, environmentally-friendly farming enterprises.
- **Potential as a viable unit** - If full advantage is taken of the new HLS and a premium is gained from local EQM/organic produce and a diversification element is added in (such as B&B, bunkhouse etc), then it does have the potential to become a viable full-time unit.

(c) Cruck Barn

Option 10: As now, retain in our ownership and lease as part of the farm

Option 11 (Recommended): Sell (or lease or set up a partnership) to/with the Vivat Trust

Option 12: Sell on the open market

- **Farming need** - there is relatively little farming use of the barn at present (a small amount of lambing and hay storage), as it does not meet many modern agricultural requirements. However, it could be used more by a willing tenant. Although the existing modern barn could just about suffice on its own.
- **Diversification** - there is potential to use the barn as bunkhouse accommodation or as an educational resource or Ranger briefing and storage centre.