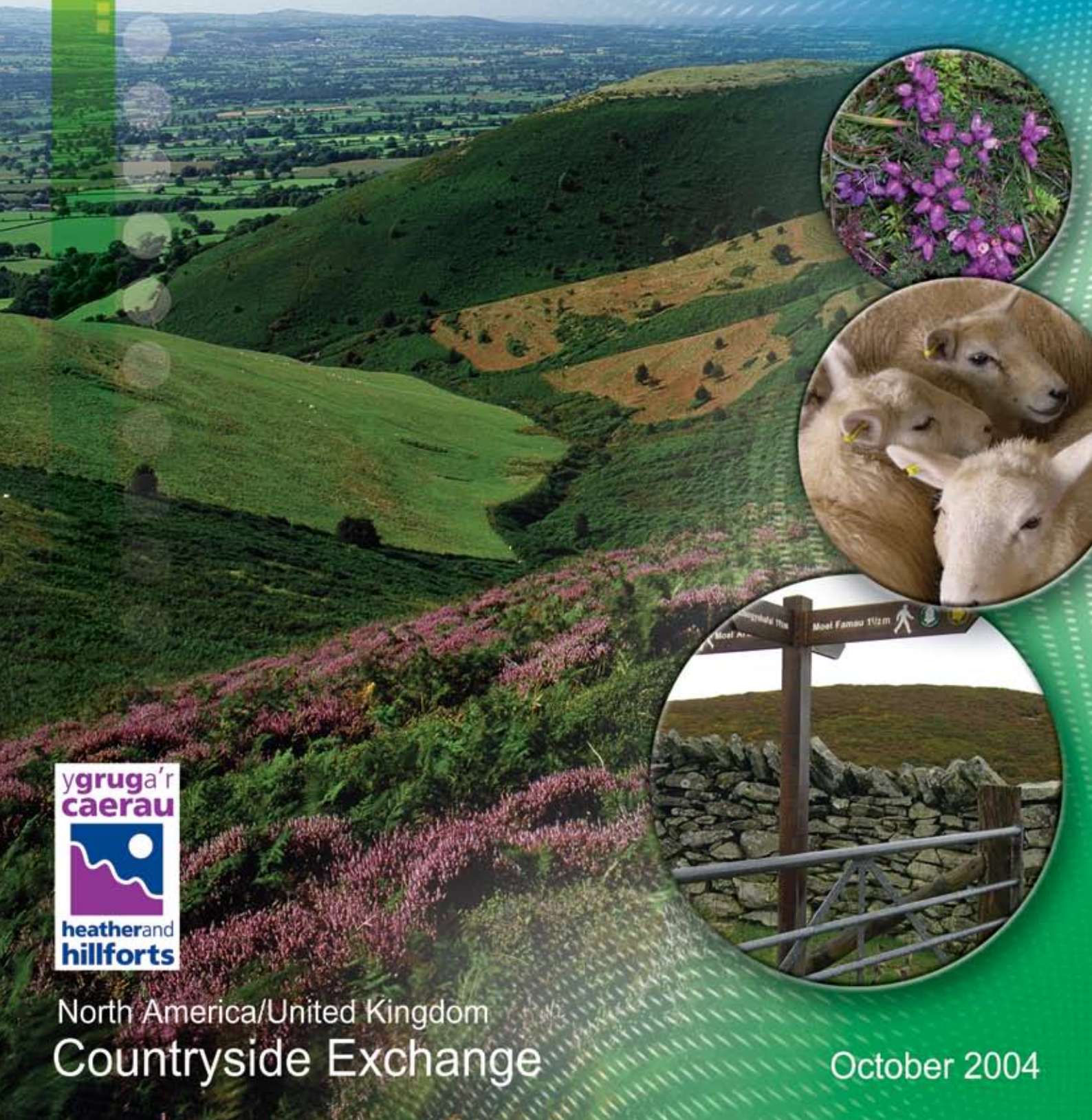


Heather & Hillforts in the

Clwydian Range

and

Llantysilio Mountain



North America/United Kingdom
Countryside Exchange

October 2004

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The Heather and Hillforts Countryside Exchange was funded by:



This report has been written by the Countryside Exchange delegates and does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funding organisations.

BACKGROUND TO THE NORTH AMERICA/UK EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

The North America/United Kingdom Countryside Exchange programme has its origins in a memorandum of understanding signed in 1986 between the United States National Park Service and the Countryside Commission, in which it was agreed to co-operate “on the conservation and management of cultural, natural and recreational resources”.

In 1987 the first Exchange took place in New England, USA, establishing a model which has been followed ever since. A mixed team was assembled from both sides of the Atlantic, bringing together in this case land conservation, development and planning professionals, to work for a short period on common problems in a specific locality, and in so doing to share experience and expertise.

Since 1987 more than 100 separate teams have been hosted in the UK, the USA, Canada and the Netherlands, involving nearly 900 team members. Over this period the scope of the Programme has expanded and diversified from its original focus on National Parks to encompass communities and localities all over the United Kingdom, addressing all three of the ‘legs’ of regeneration and sustainability: environmental, economic and social. As experience has accumulated it has become evident that the benefits to the team members from participating are matched by those to the hosts, both in terms of the ideas and recommendations generated during the visit and of the increased local capacity that develops through the process of planning and managing the event.

In the United Kingdom the Exchange is organised by CEI Associates Ltd. on behalf of a National Steering Group consisting of representatives of sponsoring bodies. In 2004 the sponsors were: the Countryside Agency, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Forestry Commission, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage, the National Trust and the Welsh Development Agency. The Steering Group is chaired by the Countryside Agency and a representative of BTCV (formerly the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) attends as observer.

North American team members were recruited by the Glynwood Center, a not-for-profit body based in New York State and dedicated to helping communities take charge of their future.

John Chapman
CEI Associates
October 2004

BACKGROUND TO THE HEATHER AND HILLFORTS PROJECT

Two distinctive features of Denbighshire's countryside, the Heather and the Hillforts, are the focus of an exciting project which may be in the pipeline for areas of the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio Mountain.

The distinct purple heather moorland that carpets the Clwydian uplands contributes to creating its outstanding beauty, is a valuable habitat for wildlife and provides an agricultural resource. Over the past fifty years the area of heather moorland has declined, with a significant amount of the remaining area being in poor condition. Enhancing the quality of the heather moorlands, through better management and understanding, is a key aim for the Heather and Hillforts Project.

Another striking feature of the Clwydian uplands is the string of Iron Age forts that lie along the hill tops. The hillforts are remnants of a past culture and a way of life, which form an unique historic landscape in Wales. Little is known about this intriguing pattern of hillforts, the aim is therefore to investigate our past, ensuring that the remains are suitably managed for the future.

Overall, the Heather and Hillforts Project hopes to improve understanding, increase awareness and accessibility, and influence the future management



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of the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio Mountain. Over the next year detailed plans will be developed as a basis for further funding applications for work that would benefit the wildlife and the historic monuments, and would re-establish the link between people and the uplands, a link that has been so strong in the past.

The project planning undertaken for the Heather and Hillfort Project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Cadwyn Clwyd and Denbighshire County Council. If successful in gaining further support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Heather and Hillforts Project will be the first Landscape Partnership Scheme in Wales.

The Heather and Hillforts Project was selected as one of only 3 Countryside Exchange Visits that took place in the UK this year. Eight experts from America, Netherlands, Slovakia and the UK came to the Heather and Hillforts Project Area for a week to look at how the Heather and Hillforts Project could contribute towards:

- Improving the management of the heather habitat for conservation purposes, recognising the need for agricultural productivity.

- Enhancing the experiences of local communities and visitors through greater appreciation and understanding of the hillfort and habitat heritage.
- Increasing the participation of the local community in the protection of their upland heritage.

It is a great pleasure for me to present the recommendations of the Countryside Exchange Team in this report, which will be considered and discussed by the Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Board. We would therefore welcome any further comments or recommendations in response to the work of the Countryside Exchange Team.

I would like to thank the Countryside Exchange Host Committee for their sterling work in arranging the visit, the members of the Countryside Exchange Team, who worked tirelessly all week and colleagues and members of the local community who shared their views openly with the Countryside Exchange Team. The outstanding response received to the events arranged for the Countryside Exchange is testimony to the importance of the uplands to the community, for numerous reasons.

Lastly I would like to thank the funders of the Heather and Hillforts Countryside Exchange, without whom the week would not have been possible: Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainable Development Fund, Cadwyn Clwyd, Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Michael Griffith CBE DL
Chairman, the Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Board
October 2004

REPORT OF THE HEATHER AND HILLFORTS COUNTRYSIDE EXCHANGE

OCTOBER 2004

“As we walked along the hills towards it [Moel Famau] the valley looked more charming than ever . . . The day was then threatening and clouded, the sea and distant hills brimmed with purple, clouds trailing low, the landscape clear but sober...” (Gerard Manley Hopkins 1876, preface to *Discovering a Welsh Landscape: Archaeology of the Clwydian Hills* 2004).

PART 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXCHANGE PROJECT

In October 2004, the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio Mountain in North Wales were visited by a North American / United Kingdom Countryside Exchange team, charged with assisting the Denbighshire Countryside Service and the



Heather and Hillforts Partnership Board in developing a landscape partnership initiative to conserve, enhance and raise awareness of the special upland heather habitat and historic heritage of the area, part of which is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The eight exchange team members, with expertise in community and countryside development, tourism promotion, archaeology and conservation management, came from

the United States, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Scotland and England. A previous Countryside Exchange team visited the Clwydian Hills in 1996 and this was only the second time a team had been invited to revisit the same area. This fact alone underscores the importance of this visit.

Heather and Hillforts Countryside Exchange Questions

The Heather and Hillforts Partnership Board had developed a set of questions they wished the Countryside Exchange Team to investigate during our visit:

- Community Involvement: How can all of the sectors of the community in the Heather and Hillforts project area be identified? What is their perception of the upland moorland areas? What frameworks could be established to engage with these communities?
- Heather Habitat: What is the potential to improve the management of the heather habitat for conservation purposes, recognising the need for agricultural productivity?
- Heritage Enjoyment: How can the experiences of local communities and visitors be enhanced through greater appreciation and understanding of the hillfort and habitat heritage?

We concluded that these questions are not mutually exclusive, but rather are interwoven into a number of common issues and concerns shared by many residents of Denbighshire and Flintshire. Therefore, we have chosen to address an array of topics that together are related to the questions of community involvement, heather habitat and heritage enjoyment. It must be emphasized that our collective observations and reflections – and the priorities we have given to certain issues – are a reflection and mirror of what we have heard and what we have seen during our visit.

During our week long exchange, team members met with numerous local residents, including farmers, graziers, students, business owners and officials charged with resource and land management. We have listened carefully to all their concerns and repeatedly, we have heard people talk about the following issues:

- A need to establish links between various communities and the cultural and natural heritage of the heather uplands;
- The call for enhanced awareness of the area for conservation, agriculture and recreation;
- Weak links and relationships between the agricultural community, recreational users and land management officials; and
- A top-down decision-making approach that historically has provided limited control of the outcomes by the various user communities.

Additionally, as we became aware of the numerous reports and plans developed by different governmental and NGO organisations, it became apparent that many have been developed in isolation from one another, creating at times a rather confusing array of policy recommendations and management goals. Furthermore, it appears that many of the recommendations have yet to be implemented.

Exchange team members are aware that a large number of people are expecting expert opinions on what needs to be done, but all we are really doing is providing a different perspective on what local folks already know and care about. While we may indeed be experts in our own fields, we don't have the local knowledge to become experts on all of the complex issues associated with the Heather and Hillforts. Indeed, we have concluded that the expertise to get things done is available locally. But as outsiders, we can provide an external set of eyes that are not biased by having lived or worked in the community or having to carry out various government policies.

Lesley Blainey
Barry Embling
Lindsey Gibb
Bill Haase
Valasta Körnerová
Andy Lewis
Jelleke de Nooy
Ray Sigmon

Heather and Hillforts Countryside Exchange Team

October 2004

PART 2. FOCUSING ON LOCAL INTEREST GROUPS

While it may be overlooked, the Countryside Exchange programme is an outstanding initiative for getting communities to think about the various actors and groups within a community that need to be consulted. In setting up the exchange, the host committee did an outstanding job of identifying interest groups that would have a perspective to share in the management of the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio Mountain. More importantly, we had numerous opportunities to hear these perspectives and to talk with individuals about their ideas and concerns.

While not exhaustive, we had an opportunity to talk with the following interest groups and/or individuals that were representative of these groups:

- Graziers/Farmers
- Elected officials (local, county and even the Welsh Assembly)
- Public managers/civil servants
- Land owners
- Business people/tourism interests
- Conservationists
- Recreational Users



The recreational users were a diverse group and included the following interests:

- Walkers
- Ramblers
- Mountain Bikers
- Off-Road Vehicles
- Equestrians (Horse Riders)
- Motorcycles
- Para gliders and hang gliders
- Remote Control Aeroplane operators
- Sportsmen/shooters
- Naturalists (e.g. bird watchers)

While there is undoubtedly overlap between these interest groups, most individuals seemed to be most passionate about one of the above outdoor activities. Given the changes in the project area and in recreation trends, there will likely be other unforeseen recreational groups in the future. The challenge of course is managing the land in a way that minimises the conflicts between these groups.

While our team had direct contact with many of the users pursuing “silent sports”, we did not have an opportunity to talk with representatives of some of the motorised sports. While conflicts with the motorised sports were often mentioned, there was surprising consensus on the solution. The obvious answer to this problem is the identification of an acceptable location for this activity that would minimize the impact on users pursuing silent sports and damage to the heritage. We believe this will require the direct involvement of individuals

and hopefully some representatives from formal organisations representing this sport. That means having a series of meetings where these users are asked for their formal input. Given that many of those users are from outside the area, this might be a challenge. If an acceptable location could be identified, we would hope that you would also get cooperation from off-road vehicles user groups on the enforcement of the rules. In addition, if this group felt its needs were being addressed, they might be more willing to then discuss the licensing of off-road motorcycles in this area to assist with enforcement, thereby perhaps generating some income to maintain the site.

We observed that much of the public participation is organised at community level rather than by interest groups. In other words, the entire public is invited to attend community meetings to critique and reflect on management issues. While these forums can be ideal for sharing conflicting perspectives and to help everyone understand the challenges of managing a region for a diverse public, there is a need for additional meetings focused on user groups.

We often heard from individuals that many elected officials and public managers do not “listen” to their concerns; rather they impose their own suggestions on the greater public. This is not unique to Wales. In part it might be due to the forums that have been used. If there were additional opportunities for interest groups to focus on what interests them the most, these interests would be less likely to get lost in the broader discussions. From our experience, it was obvious that people were more than willing to share their opinions when given the opportunity. Indeed they felt that the Countryside Exchange format acted as a catalyst for getting people together to discuss common issues.

Equally important is the notion that people not only want to be listened to, but also want to be active participants in the management process. The public participation element of planning needs to move from the consultation mode to the participation mode.

It was very clear to us that the individuals we met with were passionate about



the region where they live. They had a very clear connection to the land that we might call a “Sense of Place”. When talking with sheep farmers we were enlightened about the phenomenon of hefting among sheep. Just as some sheep have a genetically

imprinted connection to the land which becomes their home, so it is with the Welsh people. That passion and energy needs to be better harnessed so as to move the planning process to the action phase. While the passion may at

times make it difficult to come to consensus..... without it, there is no chance of progress.

The people we met all had some level of commitment to the Heather and Hillfort Initiative. However it was evident to us that there were also large groups of people who were disconnected from the process. There needs to be a conscious effort to increase the level of commitment through the community development



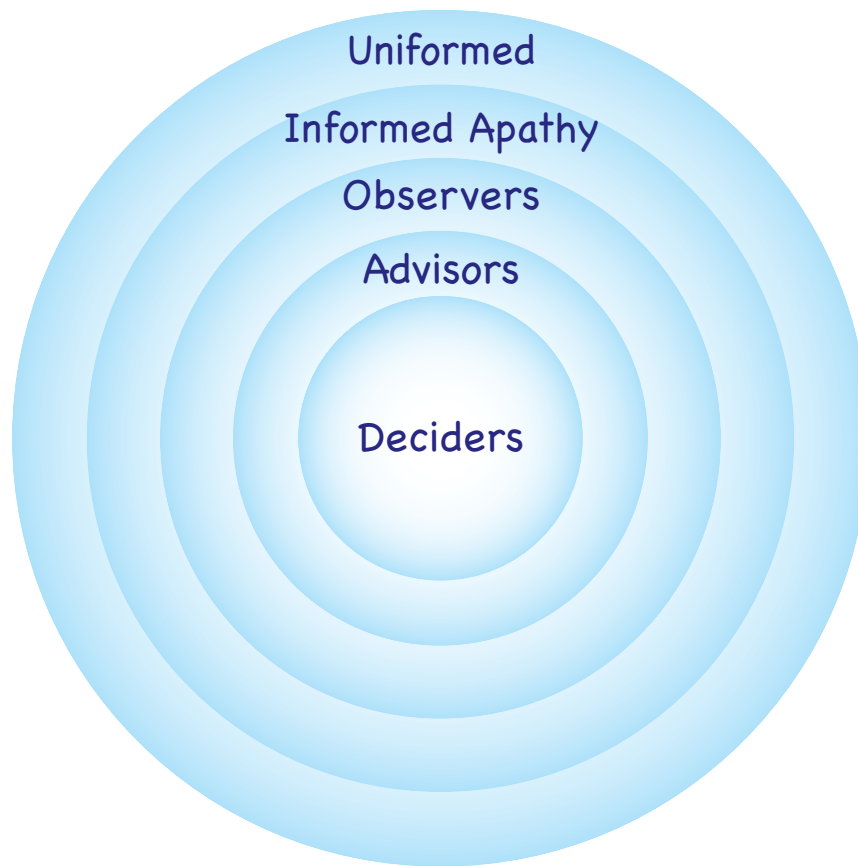
process. That process begins with the informed decision-makers who have the passion to move forward. While the community cannot wait to move forward, those decision makers need to focus on starting at the bottom and doing additional public education.

That might mean increasing the number of educational/information meetings, field days/demonstrations and lectures for the various

interest groups. There also needs to be an intentional focus on the next generation of leaders: the youth of the community. The meetings we had with young people who had been exposed to the management issues of the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio Mountain had a clear connection to the land that would have made any Welsh parent proud. These educational efforts do have an impact and need to be increased in frequency.

If you can succeed in raising people's awareness of the issues and the frequency of their attendance at meetings, you will eventually have an increasing number of people willing to serve as advisors. Advisors have a role that goes beyond simply talking and hoping that their words are heard and understood. They are active participants in the decision making process, and they build the pool of candidates who may be willing to step up to leadership positions in the future.

Figure 1: The Community Development Process



Because the community development process can be lengthy, we also need to have projects that can be implemented in the short term. Too much planning with little action leads to frustration. Small successes need to be celebrated and promoted as a means of attracting additional interest. Demonstration projects such as the establishment of a cooperative Shepherd for upland sheep, historic interpretation in car parks or promotional campaigns might be a step in the right direction.

Community Involvement - A Helpful Tool

The model developed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to analyse stakeholder groups in a participative way, may be effective here. However, this is NOT a tool to be used from behind an office desk! A preliminary DFID model for Heather and Hillforts has been prepared to show what it does and how it works.

Relative importance of the Heather and Hillforts project	<p>Heather and Hillforts is of high importance but stakeholders have relative low influence (A)</p> <p>HERITAGE INTEREST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hillforts study group • black grouse project <p>USERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grazier association - young farmers group - motorcyclists - tourists 	<p>Stakeholders that observe Heather and Hillforts as very important and have high influence (B)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadw • Countryside Council for Wales • Denbighshire Local Access Forum • Denbighshire County Council
	<p>Low influence Low importance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups yet to be identified 	<p>Stakeholders with high influence on Heather and Hillforts / Clwydian Range but for whom it is of relative low importance (C)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flintshire County Council - National Trust - Cadwyn Clwyd - rural development agency
Relative influence on the success of the Heather and Hillforts project		



As mentioned above, it is a specific exercise to have stakeholder groups identify themselves with their positions in a certain 'segment' and see how they position others. The objective is to look for the opportunities for each group to make a success of the Heather and Hillforts project, which means:

- For stakeholders from Group A, to see how they can gain more influence on the Heather & Hillforts management, land use, access, etc.
- For stakeholders in Group C, to make them aware of the importance of the Heather and Hillforts so that they input their opinion.
- For stakeholders in Group B, who are aware of the importance and have influence, it is necessary to make them see how stakeholders in Group A can contribute/ become involved towards the solutions and success of the Heather and Hillforts project.

All this would need to be done in group sessions: continue talking and listening!

A follow-up to this would be a more precise discussion with specific stakeholder groups to define what they might contribute, what obstacles are in the way and what would be needed for them to make their contributions:

Stakeholder	Purpose	Possible contribution	What is needed to make this contribution	Who (other stakeholders) or what would help
Stakeholder 1				
Stakeholder 2				

Keep talking... listening, visioning, planning together and looking for the best solutions.

During our visit we met a lot of interesting people representing different groups of interests. We asked them questions:

- What is the most important thing for you? What links people who live in the area?
- What are the needs (or problems) of locals?
- How can you personally contribute the management of the area?
- If you would have the opportunity to influence decisions about funds, what would you like to support?

We learned:

- There are differences between town residents and countryside people, but they do need each other
- There is a substantial difference between dairy farmers and upland sheep farmers

- Increased access and a lack of responsibility among hikers and walkers is a worry mainly of upland farmers
- Farmers often do not like tourists coming to their farms (“Why don’t they go to national parks?”), but on the other hand, increased access could be the opportunity to influence the political decisions through better understanding of heather/farming issues
- The funds to help rural communities are difficult to reach
- People are willing to contribute the Heather and Hillforts project by their expertise, voluntary work and participation in research, and by helping to plan the process
- A lot of people would like to see more information and interpretation about the values of the area
- A huge amount of research and planning work has already been done and knowledge about the area is high
- The Countryside Service has invested in substantial amounts of consultation with local people and visitors, but there is a lack of real participation during the research and planning work



- Motorbikes are a problem for everyone, but the community of bikers is not understood as a stakeholder community
- Hunters could be important stakeholders, helping with advocacy for the priority of heather management
- Women have a potential for connecting – bringing people together
- The important values for people of every age and profession are similar, so there is potential for collaboration between different groups of interest. When we asked: “What is the most important thing for you,” the following answers were provided:
 - language
 - freedom
 - independence
 - landscape, countryside, amazing views
 - history
 - National Assembly
 - sheep
 - songs
 - old trees
 - stone
 - purple colour of heather...
- A balance between heritage and nature issues is needed (guiding tours would be a good solution)
- The appropriate heather management is crucial for the biodiversity of the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio Mountain.
- Bad heather management is resulting in bracken spreading and poisoning the soil, preventing other species from living there
- There is a lack of power and resources to maintain the heather in good condition
- Farmers are paid subsidies for not using the land
- There is an opportunity for biodiversity management financed by agri-environmental schemes
- There is an opportunity for financing the projects through the LEADER+ Programme
- The Local Biodiversity Action Plan is not related to economic development strategies (Rural Development Plan for Wales, Cadwyn Clwyd LEADER+ Programme) and does not underline the importance of heather management

- The LEADER+ strategy does not say anything about the heather and hillforts priority
- The marketing of the area does not recognise the importance of the heather and hillforts for tourism business and the promotion of the area
- Biodiversity protection and keeping the land in good condition could bring new jobs to farmers (the heather burning on 600 ha needs two full-time jobs)
- Farmers want to participate in the planning of an appropriate jobs strategy for them
- There is a need to increase the capacity of local people to design and manage projects: the training of local trainers/advisors is needed
- Trans-national projects could bring new innovative ideas and job opportunities
- A competition for a logo (HIRAETH) design could be a good strategy for starting the participation process (people love competitions)

Conclusions

The involvement of all important players in the planning process from the very beginning (even during the research phase) is bringing stakeholders together and making them feel ownership of the final management plan. Responsibility for the result makes the difference between consultancy and participation. It will drive up people's confidence in the area and their product.

Ownership of the process will bring an effective matching of funds and will make the plan's implementation much easier. This will happen if nature and heritage protection is connected to the economic/rural development strategies of the area.

The solutions for biodiversity protection and care of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will bring new job opportunities for local people. This is what could motivate stakeholders to participate.

The Heather and Hillforts project could be a Case Study for schools and training, exemplifying sustainable development in practice. A well-protected area would be a source of local pride.

PART 3. THE POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVED HEATHER HABITAT MANAGEMENT AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

In forming our views on heather habitat management and agricultural production in the study area we have spoken to commons graziers, farmers, landowners, agricultural students, local residents and their representatives, local business people, representatives of the Countryside Council for Wales and the Denbighshire Countryside Service.

It is apparent to us that there is a need for improved habitat management on the heather moorland of the study area in order to conserve wildlife and landscape value and meet statutory obligations. It is also apparent that in order to achieve this improvement, the management practices of burning, bracken control, grazing and shepherding need to be applied across the entire area of a common. Piecemeal



application of grazing and of burning can create shepherding problems as sheep are drawn away from their cynefin by the creation of newly regenerated heather with a higher fodder value.

Importantly, statutory obligations to conserve the heather moorland are backed up by a strong desire within local communities to retain the heather. The value placed on the

heather moorland by local communities extends to the communities' cultural connection with land management practice and to the genetic conservation of livestock breeds. Local people feel that the local farming system and the Welsh Mountain Sheep should also be conserved.

In order to achieve the conservation of heather moorland habitats and farming systems, we think that it will be necessary to start from a good information base. It will be necessary to gather information on individual graziers, the areas they manage, their management practices and their inter-relationships. It will also be necessary to agree burning, bracken control and shepherding plans. Importantly, it will be necessary to accept that this work is needed before real progress can be made and that it will require a significant resource commitment.

What is greatly needed is a close working partnership between graziers, commons associations, the Countryside Council for Wales and Denbighshire Countryside Service. Land owners also need to be drawn into the planning process and local communities need to be kept informed. Information about

moorland management practices and the mechanisms being used to deliver them needs to be passed on to young people who may form the next generation of farmers and graziers.

Past experience tells us that it can be difficult in the current agricultural climate to establish and retain close working relationships between commons graziers. However, given the strength of local feeling about historic connections with the landscape we think that it is important that the commons management system itself is seen as being worthy of conservation in its own right. After all, the commons came into being because of local people's economic and social connections with the hill land and in order to provide a vehicle for close co-operation.



Having listened to so many local people, we think that there is an over-reliance on the historic role of commons graziers in delivering management of the heather moorland. Statutory bodies and local communities need to accept that graziers can not continue to provide this management without support and funding. We think that bodies with a remit to conserve the habitat type

and other members of the community need to accept greater responsibility and provide resources.

Achieving an efficient working partnership between commons graziers and statutory bodies also requires considerable commitment of time and effort. Again, it needs to be accepted that sufficient resources need to be allocated to facilitate the development and the retention of this partnership. This links with recommendations elsewhere in report about facilitation and engagement of local communities.

We think that the skills and knowledge needed to advise and co-ordinate habitat management and community involvement are already available in the area, within the local communities themselves, Denbighshire Countryside Service and the Countryside Council for Wales. There is also support available from national advisory bodies such as the Heather Trust.

These issues are not new to the study area and have been under discussion for some time. Again as stated elsewhere in this report, we feel that there has been too much and too long a discussion with too few practical achievements. We think that this has led to a degree of disengagement and despondency. Because there is a lot to do, we think that it is very important to have an agreed set of priorities and to choose areas of work where practical progress can be made. For example, to choose one common and actually achieve a working partnership with commons graziers, or, to successfully set up one Tir Gofal agreement.

In common with many areas of upland Britain, there is a lot of concern within local communities over the future of upland farming, with changes in Common Agricultural Policy farm income support, farmers getting older and fewer young people interested and/or able to take over. This means that the future for the

grazing of hill sheep on the heather moorland is uncertain.

It may be possible to assist in maintaining farming businesses which graze sheep on the heather moorland through the support provided by the marketing of local identity and this is referred to elsewhere in this report.



While a healthy farming system which provides for habitat management and economically viable farm businesses would be the first choice for most of the local groups we have spoken to, we think that it is necessary to accept that this may not be a realistic long term aspiration.

We think that local communities and statutory bodies need to prepare for the long term possibility that grazing with sheep is no longer practiced. The question posed to the Countryside Exchange Team implies that agricultural productivity is a need which must be recognised. However, in future it may be that management systems other than grazing with sheep are needed. In preparing for this eventuality we think that it is important to keep commons graziers engaged and to acknowledge their legal and socio-economic interest as well as their land and livestock management skills.

Recommendations

- Conservation extends to the cultural connection with management practice, the genetic conservation of livestock breeds and the commons system.
- It will be necessary to start from a good information base.
- Local graziers will require facilitation, practical support and funding.
- It will require a strong working partnership between governmental bodies and graziers, owners and the agricultural college.
- It is vital to commit sufficient resources.
- There is a need to select one or two achievable targets and make practical progress in order to engage local communities.
- There is a need to link habitat management and agricultural production to local identity through branding.
- There is a need to work with commons graziers and local groups to develop a longer term view of how the heather moorland is to be managed in the future.

PART 4. LINKS TO THE PAST & SHARING LOCAL IDENTITY

A Shared Local Identity

A striking characteristic that the Countryside Exchange Team has noticed is a strong local identity. All the people that we have met identify strongly with their local environment, whether they are Welsh or not. This is because there is a common interest to all, namely, that there is a dependency on the land, albeit for many different reasons. It has come over strongly that people generally want to continue managing the land in a traditional way to maintain their own way of life in a traditional landscape which is good for wildlife and what's more, it is what visitors to the area expect to see. Furthermore, the project area is geographically accessible to everyone in Flintshire and Denbighshire.

The Heather & Hillforts project will serve as a catalyst to marketing this local distinctiveness, facilitating cooperation between groups and individuals to achieve this common goal. An example of this would be an archaeological dig that would recruit volunteers prior to and during the dig and followed by the involvement of the community looking at the findings.

Branding Heather and Hillforts

Everyone has a vested interest in maintaining this local landscape distinctiveness and deep cultural identity. Although local identity is strong, there is currently no primary focus with many disparate groups and individuals. The Heather and Hillforts project provides this focus and should engender a willingness to buy into it.

Simplicity is the strongest point of the current Heather & Hillforts logo. It is useable and compact, and usefully combines the 2 project areas. However once this has been adopted and begins to be used on permanent features, e.g. leaflets and signboards, it must be accepted as a long term commitment. The Heather & Hillforts project can provide the impetus to begin and then maintain the brand. It must stand independently amongst other local logos and care must be taken for there not to be too many logos in the area.



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At the beginning the brand will be associated essentially with the project but eventually it should become synonymous with the area in preparation for the end of the project funding period. A good example of where this is already working is the

'Ride the Clwyds' bicycling promotion effort – "It'll take your breath away."

The Heather and Hillforts Brand must maintain a high standard. Therefore

a group that is connected to the Heather & Hillforts project needs to act as a regulating sub-committee for businesses and organisations that wish to be partners. Loss of quality would devalue the Heather & Hillforts brand. We suggest that the brand be bought into through affordable annual subscriptions. Financial commitment would create a more meaningful membership of the partnership. It would also create some form of income generation to the Heather and Hillforts project.

The Heather & Hillforts project presents an unique branding opportunity due to its lack of affiliation to statutory bodies, and its marketing will largely be carried out by word of mouth throughout the local community.

Interpreting the Iron Age Hillforts

The six Iron Age hillforts are obviously central to the heritage of the study area. The irony here is that these forts dominate the landscape and yet so little is known of them and the people who created them. In the discussion groups it was strongly emphasised that learning of these ancient people and the hillforts was extremely important in defining the heritage of the area.

The Exchange Team recommends a strong and well funded archaeology programme (project). This would include a research component focusing on areas not previously studied (which appears to be wide open) and merged with existing knowledge. Secondly, and obviously important, is the field work to reveal

what the earth has held as secrets for hundreds/thousands of years.



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We also recommend that the public be involved in this process. The groups we met agreed that once the professional archaeologists are on board there would be a volunteer group organised to assist with the digs.

This would offer the twofold benefit of in-kind services and more importantly continued local support.

Once the excavation and analysis are complete there needs to be a follow-up on the results. This can be accomplished many ways: through published results, live presentations and/or travelling exhibits based on the artefacts and research gleaned from these digs. Again, this would have a reinforcing effect on those directly involved as volunteers with the digs and the potential to win over new converts to the cause.

There was a concern that too few visitors and locals actually make it to the

hillforts because of the remoteness and steepness of the paths, although there are some who feel this is good and in some way has protected them. It was felt by the groups that it was important to make resources available for the visiting public and locals to understand better the hillforts.

We recommend the development of a visitor centre / interpretive centre / museum which would include a model of a hillfort; exhibits on the hillforts and their builders and a video with panoramic views interpreting these ancient forts. To supplement the centres there should be a programme of events and educational outreach. Related to this should be a system of wayside interpretive signs at the car parks and trail-heads and/or at the hillforts just off the hill so as not to impact the site. Few agreed that direct onsite interpretation would be useful. Also, it was felt that brochures would be more of a litter problem than a benefit to interpretation.

Another concern which we found while meeting with the tourism industry panel was the lack of awareness of the hillforts in the nearby towns. It is recommended that a training programme be developed to familiarise businesses and the accommodation industry with the hillforts and teach them how to pass this on to visitors. Another way to impart knowledge might be the 'heritage meet the public' development series, to pass along the stories of the hillforts and heather heritage.

The key to the future preservation of heritage is the next generation. There is in place a study of Welsh and Celtic histories. Where opportunities allow efforts should be made to ensure that students learn and appreciate the heritage of the hillforts and the people who built and lived in them. In addition to field trips and visiting experts one suggestion would be the implementation of the "History Day" concept. Students would compete on a selected theme from Welsh history utilizing various means such as projects, exhibits, writing and performance.

Education permeates all areas of this report. Whether it is training young farmers in heather management or teaching primary school children about hillforts, including education in the project is important to many of the people we spoke to. It must be organised and planned properly with the appropriate connections made in advance with the Education Advisors and others. There are opportunities to involve and work with a wide variety of people and organisations in delivering education programmes. The Heather and Hillforts project offers the opportunity to bring them all together to work on a specific project.

There is presently programming which ties the local communities and visitors to the hillforts and heather. What we are suggesting is to build on this programming and take the opportunity to bring those on the fringe closer to the centre and become more involved. Through this identity there should be the development in pride of the area which should lead to marketing and branding opportunities from outside and appreciation from within.

PART 5. REPORTS AND PLANS ARE AN ASSET . . . AND A PROBLEM

The Countryside Exchange Team reviewed over 20 different official plans and reports, many of which had been written in the past five years. These reports focus on the interrelated issues of Denbighshire's and Flintshire's landscape, countryside, community and public access. It is clear that the authors of these reports know their subjects and they are well illustrated with maps and graphics. The more recent reports show evidence of an increase in use of citizen input to develop a user-based perspective and policy. This is a very positive trend which we believe the Countryside Service has taken to a new level during the week-



long visit of the Exchange Team. Certainly this Team report is itself a reflection or mirror of deeply held concerns shared by residents of Denbighshire and Flintshire.

However, at times one study seemingly begets the call for another plan, creating local confusion about which report, what policy recommendation, or what goals have priority over another. Some of this

is driven by statutory requirements such as the Welsh Local Government Act of 2000, making it easy – perhaps too easy – to focus on the process of planning rather than implementation. And planning, by itself is not implementation.

Furthermore, although citizen input has become an element familiar to local government officials, it does appear that steering groups and study committees charged with producing reports and plans often remain dominated by these officials. This observation explains in part why implementation is so challenging. There is a lack of direct ownership in the process of goal setting and report development by the intended end-users.

But this too is evolving and the Heather and Hillforts Partnership Board – the group organised to develop the Heritage Lottery application and to work with the week-long Countryside Exchange – has a significant number of members from outside local government. The questions that the Exchange Team was asked to evaluate came from the “bottom up”, reflecting concerns and interests of graziers, business owners, tourism providers and other local residents. This is a model we believe should be pursued in the future and offer the following recommendations:

- Get the stakeholders to the table and then empower them by making them, wherever possible, co-equal with the officials actually charged with writing the plan or study.

- Change the role of officials themselves so that they become facilitators of the community involvement process, ensuring that there would be a collective decision-making process.
- Finally, as the American expression goes, “Just do it!”. In many ways the problems are already well-defined, the plans and recommendations are already in place and all that remains is the will to carry them out.

PART 6. THINKING LONG TERM

The Heritage Lottery Fund can support the Heather and Hillforts project for three years, enabling the Countryside Service to carry out initial participative actions and management plans. However, after those three years local people will need to be able to maintain and sustain what has been achieved by that time. Thus it is very important to have created by then a lasting partnership capable of



sustaining the feeling of ownership with different target groups involved, including tourists, and to establish a close working relationship between the stakeholders. This is important as the whole aim of the Heather and Hillforts project is not only to conserve a landscape feature, but probably even more important to establish a social organisation that sustains the landscape. We must be aware that

up till 10 years ago it was for centuries mainly the farmers and landowners who formed the landscape as it is now. With increasing numbers of people feeling some sort of 'ownership of the countryside' as they want to use it for different purposes, while at the same time not taking responsibility for its care, we need a new organisation that includes these users among the carers.

Continued Financial Support

The question we've been dealing with is 'How to re-connect inhabitants of the Heather and Hillforts area, townspeople in Wales and tourists, and how to find ways to involve them in the Heather and Hillforts care and management?': in fact, to take a shared responsibility. What better way is there to connect and involve people than by making them contribute with "Time, Talent and Money"? So there is a critical need to create a funding mechanism, enabling private individuals to make contributions in support of a Heather & Hillforts Trust. Suggested financial possibilities include:

1. Establishing a charity fund to which people can make donations
2. Establishing an investment fund utilising earned interest and dividends
3. Utilising specialised number plates as both a funding and promotion tool

Establish a Heather and Hillforts Partnership Charity

The Heather and Hillforts partnership would be a registered charity dedicated to enhancing visitors' and land owners' understanding of the cultural and natural resources of the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio Mountain.

What the Partnership would do?

The Heather and Hillforts Partnership could be involved in a wide range of activities, such as providing educational and interpretive materials to the public in visitor centres and other appropriate locations; publishing books, guides and brochures; donating funds to the educational and scientific programs of affiliated agencies; providing a mail order catalogue listing the books and audio-visual items in our stores; conducting interpretive programs at selected locations, and helping to fund special events, research and exhibits promoting the wise use of the land.

Membership

Membership of the Partnership would be open to anyone living or working in Denbighshire and Flintshire, or with an interest in the well-being of the area. The aim is to provide a democratic forum of local people that can represent views on issues of importance to the area to the local authority, the Welsh Assembly and others.

The Partnership would not replace, or compete with, the traditional democratic bodies – the community councils, area committees of the County Council, or the County Council itself. Instead, it would provide a single voice for the whole of the Heather and Hillforts area – bringing together the views of the all those with an interest in the well-being of the area.

Establish an Investment Fund

In the Netherlands, an experiment has started to create a large investment fund through which different institutions, including local and regional government and environmental associations, contribute to programmes promoting social and environmental sustainability. If such a fund to be established here, earned interest and dividends would be directed towards an annual incentive to the farmers for the management of the Heather and Hillforts. The challenge is to find an environmentally friendly bank (such as Triodos) that could become involved in the financial arrangements.

Utilise Customized License Plates for Promotion and Fundraising

In the United States, it is permitted to use sanctioned “vanity plates” on automobiles. With authorisation from the Welsh Assembly, it might be possible to utilise number plates, decorated with a heather flower and carrying the title “Heather & Hillforts” (see picture below) to establish financial support. These plates would be purchased by those who support this programme, with the extra money involved in this purchase directed towards the trust or charity fund.



APPENDIX A - BRANDING HEATHER & HILLFORTS

1. Work with tourism authorities to get Heather and Hillforts placed on the top ten attractions map in 'Discover Great Things Out in North Wales'.
2. Ensure Heather and Hillforts is a separate subject in the 'walking' advertisements in 'A Break with Tradition', the tourist information about the North Wales Borderlands
3. Offer a package for the Heather and Hillforts of a week-long stay, including a guided walk to the hillforts, a heather burning session with explanation, a sheep market visit, a visit to the mine and visits to Chester.
4. Involve local people who are already interested as local guides for the visits to the hillforts.
5. Add the countryside code to all advertisements about Heather and Hillforts, not as a separate leaflet but so that people are pushed to read it.

APPENDIX B - BRACKEN & HEATHER MANAGEMENT

1. Bring Welsh Black cattle to the hills in order to trample bracken. The Welsh Black would also have an economic value.
2. There is a big opportunity in involving people with learning disabilities to care for sheep and help manage heather.
3. Another 'market' is to invite managers from Manchester and Liverpool to teambuilding courses, also in a 'package', including stone wall repairs, visits to the hillforts, heather burning etc.

APPENDIX C - MANAGEMENT OF OFF ROAD VEHICLES

The Exchange Team heard from a number of people that off-road vehicles (ORVs) are a problem, particularly on Llantysilio Mountain and to a lesser extent on the Clwydian Range. Denbighshire Countryside Service already devotes considerable effort to educating recreationists in general, which lays the groundwork for positive ORV management. The Service should acknowledge that ORV management must consider the increasing popularity of this activity and that the imposition of restrictions alone provides only a partial answer.

Equally important is reliance on the public's help to find ways to keep pace with the growing use of ORVs. This problem is not unique to north east Wales. In America, Bureau of Land Management Director Tom Fry says, "We don't have all the answers and we're hoping folks will help us develop reasonable guidance and direction. We need to focus our efforts towards on-the-ground solutions rather than tying up our scarce resources in litigation, protests and appeals."

An ORV strategy based on resource inventories and public input can provide local managers with a framework for addressing issues such as the designation of ORV-approved areas; management approaches capable of addressing future increases in ORV use; route inventory needs; monitoring; education; law enforcement, and budget. Once the guidance is written, the Countryside Service's next challenge will be to implement it locally with adequate resources and the help of public and private partners to achieve on-the-ground goals.

Suggested On-the-Ground Management Guidelines

- Locate and manage ORV use to conserve soil functionality, vegetative cover, watershed health and archaeological resources. Manage ORV use to minimize the impact on the land, while maintaining ORV access in designated areas and trails. Integrate concepts of habitat connectivity into ORV planning to minimize habitat fragmentation.
- Establish, clearly identify and maintain an inventory of existing ORV routes and trails, and use this inventory to designate areas of land as open, limited, or closed to ORV use.
- Integrate ORV management into ongoing grazing management initiatives. Manage ORV use by type, season, intensity, distribution and/or duration to minimize the impact on plant and animal habitats. If seasonal closures are appropriate to minimize adverse ORV impacts, consideration should be given to designation of alternative routes.
- Manage ORV use to preserve cultural, historical and archeological resources, and engineer, locate and relocate roads and trails to accommodate ORV activities while minimizing resource impacts.
- Consider issuing user permits, with permitted activities governed by the terms of the permit.

- For addressing and resolving local site-specific ORV concerns, use collaborative planning groups consisting of local representatives, affected or interested user groups and Countryside Service staff.
- Cooperatively develop or improve public outreach programs to promote trail etiquette, environmental ethics and responsible-use stewardship programmes such as, but not limited to, “Tread Lightly!” and “Leave No Trace.”
- Provide ORV management education and training for Countryside Service managers, staff, partners and volunteers. Training should focus on state of the art practices and be tailored to meet local needs.
- Encourage the private sector to conduct responsible marketing of activities on public lands while avoiding the promotion of behaviors and services that are inconsistent with existing regulations and land use plans.
- Utilize high use areas and special events to maximize the dissemination of responsible-use education materials and concepts to the public.



APPENDIX D - WHAT I WILL MISS MOST WHEN LEAVING THE AREA

At the final presentation, the Exchange Team asked those attending to write down those things they would miss the most if they were to leave the area. This information is important in helping to create a sense of local identity.

- The views. The mountain, the clean air (the picture “Moel Fenlli from my window”).
- The Clwydian Range
- Mountains. Wildlife.
- Quiet, tranquil pace of life. Landscape and wildlife value.
- The landscape which is open. Sites we own and manage. Loggerheads/Moel Famau etc.
- Mum and dad. Cows in field at back of garden. Being so close to the sea.
- Weather. Speaking Welsh to people. Marmite. Hills. Driving on the left. Sheep.
- Depends where I went. Livestock Landscape. Varied Colours. Small Farm Community (Language). Sheep possibly.
- I would miss: The sunsets. Views of the Vale of Clwyd the above. The walks - from the front door.
- The uncluttered horizon of the hills. Walking along the tops with my dog. Snow on Moel Famau.
- Nid yw nef ond mynd yn ôl. Hyd y manau dymunol (Heaven is going back to the beautiful places).
- Scenery/views. Mountains. Peace. People I know.
- Picture with: Sunshine, rain, striking landscape, familiarity, natural sounds, fungi, untouched places, sheep, wild garlic, woods, wildlife, natural evidence of people enjoying, rivers, views, caves and shafts, left rotting wood, limestone, wild herbs + lichen, family + friends, space – and all this in the snow too!
- The view from Loggerhead Cliff across to Moel Famau on a sunny day.
- Mountains. Woodlands – walking the dog.
- Scenery.
- Scenery + community.

- Views. Hills. Mountains. Vale of Clwyd. View from the Clwyd Gate. Colour of the area. Landscape. Space.
- The People & the Hills & Valleys (picture of hills).
- The mountains & the sea. Open space. The culture. Wildlife.
- Mountains. Valleys.
- Welsh language. Heather hills. Welsh cakes.
- Hills and mountains. Green countryside.
- Beautiful countryside. Friendly people. Clean air.
- I would miss: The countryside & hills. The people. The archaeology (not seen much yet).
- Miss: Countryside/walking. Friendliness of people.
- The open hill and hill sheep and cattle. Looking out of the kitchen in the early morning at Moel Famau.
- The purple heather in the summer when coming over Llandegla Moors after a long drive from London - why would anyone want to move away?
- Y Gymdeithas. The Community.
- Y Tywydd. The Weather. Community. Cymdeithas.
- 1. The community. 2. The landscape, view, hills.
- Open space.
- The Welsh language. A Green landscape. A view.
- My Family & my Farm. And the Horseshoe Pass. Mountain. Home
- Welsh way of life. Community activities.
- Welsh family way of life. Countryside.
- Trees. Rolling hills. Water.
- Hills (the picture of hills and dog).
- The open space. Empty areas. Sense of discovering places for yourself.
- Hills. Empty roads. Dark sky at night. Would not miss sheep.

- Peace and quiet. Sense of wilderness.
- Bryniau Clwyd y dyffryn ac yr Afon Clwyd. The Clwydian Hills and River.
- The Dee Estuary and its wildlife. The people of Wales.
- Would miss gully path for Graig Farm up to Moel y Gelli, the primroses and bluebells in spring, wood sorrel, the open land would not miss the rain. Would like the west coast of Wales.
- Siarad Cymraeg a pobl Cymraeg. Speaking Welsh with Welsh people.
- Yr iaith Gymraeg (Welsh)
- Just note:
 - extremely friendly people,
 - wonderful range of outstanding scenery,
 - amount of walks open to public,
 - proximity to coast.

APPENDIX E – MEMBERS OF THE HEATHER AND HILLFORTS COUNTRYSIDE EXCHANGE HOST COMMITTEE

George Whittingham (Chairman) (Clwydian Range Grazier's Association)

Michael Skuse (Vice Chairman) (Campaign for the Project of Rural Wales)

Gwen Evans (Merched y Wawr)

Keith Evans (National Farmer's Union)

Fiona Gale (Denbighshire Countryside Service)

Julia Hughes (Denbigh Community College)

Robyn Hughes (Cadwyn Clwyd)

Jane Jones (Denbighshire County Council)

Helen Mrowiec (Denbighshire Countryside Service)

Lisa Orhan (Cadwyn Clwyd)

Huw Rees (Denbighshire Countryside Service)

Anne Richards (Women's Institute)

David Scruton (Friends of Moel Findeg)

David Shiel (Denbighshire Countryside Service)

Emyr Williams (Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council)