



Forestry Commission

NATURAL
ENGLAND

Countryside Stewardship

Case study: Rattenraw

Name: Mrs Susan Salt

Region/County: Northumberland

Address: Rattenraw Farm, Otterburn, Northumberland, NE19 1LH

Farm Size/Type: 175 ha Grassland farm, partly in the uplands

Cropping: n/a

Stocking: Sheep (numbers will be reduced) and newly introduced Highland cattle (about 25 now)

Land features: Purple moor grassland, acid grassland for breeding waders and meadows. Bordering the River Rede which is important for its population of Pearl Mussels, for which various water quality improvement measures will be taken.

Key objectives: Better management of Purple moor grassland and Acid grassland for breeding waders by introducing cattle grazing and adding of scrapes. Water quality improvement through capital works which will slow the flow, reduce the silt and control flooding. Also, meadow restoration is planned for year 2.

This farm was bought by Mr and Mrs Salt 10 years ago, the former owner kept high numbers of cattle all year around with extensive supplementary feeding on the top of the fell. This led to deep tracks into the soft soil and the farm still isn't fully recovered. The farm had a bad reputation which has been turned around by the new owners.

The Salts have sympathetically managed the farm with sheep in much reduced numbers. The farm holds moderate good purple-moor grassland, which is rare in Northumberland so a real find! The acid grassland for breeding waders and meadows will be better managed through CS by the introduction of native breed Highland cattle, with one parcel going into the creation of species rich grassland option. The acid grassland is high in Soft Rush, but also has pockets of species rich grassland with Heather returning in places. There isn't much peat in the soil. The meadows are relatively low in species, but have pockets of species rich grassland. The P index is high due to regular spreading of cattle dung in the past. It is anticipated that the P index will fall with better management and restoration will be attempted in year 2. The Northumberland National Park is currently developing a management plan to improve water quality of the River Rede. Several capital works will be done in year 1, such as fencing, silt traps, dams and possibly some work on stream passages. The Redesdale Revival project (HLF funded) will hopefully fund other necessary work in the years to come.



This CS agreement buys real change in the form of better management with cattle, reduction of run-off to assist the Pearl Mussels and improvement of species rich grassland. It will be very interesting to see the changes on this land which was previously only in ELS. Working together with the Northumberland National Park (who also do regular bird surveys) and the Tyne River Trust especially in the HLF funded Redesdale Revival project will make this farm an example for others.

Mr and Mrs Salt are very enthusiastic about their agreement and their aim is 'to leave the farm in a better state than when we bought it'. They have already acquired about 25 highland cattle and a state of the art cattle handling system. They are working on the fencing now so that the River Rede is protected from the cattle when they will graze there. They also have planted up a parcel adjacent to the river with native Broadleaved trees and restored the trees along one of the streams. Black grouse is an occasional visitor with a lek in the area.

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