

# Changing Cheviots

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## About Cheviot Futures

Cheviot Futures supports the development of simple and practical long term resilience measures to maintain business viability, whilst also having strong social and environmental priorities, in the face of a changing climate. The approach will reflect the needs of land managers and ensure the emphasis continues to be on practical solutions to real problems. The project aims to demonstrate benefits that will encourage other land managers to invest in adaptation measures because their value is proven.

The impacts of a changing climate include extreme weather events such as increased temperatures, altered seasonality of rainfall, and more severe storms, which can lead to flooding and riverbank erosion. Periods of low rainfall can lead to droughts and extreme temperatures can trigger wildfires and damage crops. We will

work with farmers and land managers in the face of such adversities to ensure their businesses remain resilient and viable, and therefore able to continue underpinning the local rural economy.

Cheviot Futures is innovative in its approach to climate change and assistance to rural business and consequently we want to encourage farmers and land managers to take ownership of the project, suggesting new areas to trial techniques, share knowledge of land issues and lead the project in becoming a UK case study for best practice.

The project will focus on the Cheviot Hills and in particular the Northern river catchments (Coquet, Breamish, Harthope, College, Till, Wooler Water, Bowmont-Glen).



## Project Staff Appointed

As Project Co-ordinator based with Northumberland National Park Authority, Jennifer Hewitson takes the strategic lead of the project. Born and bred in the Northumberland Uplands, Jen has family farming connections in Upper Coquetdale and Redesdale. Since graduating, she has worked on rural projects in England and Scotland - including managing the innovative NNPA pilot Upland Farming Traineeship.

Tracy Hall is the Project Officer based with partner organisation, Tweed

Forum. After graduating from Newcastle University Tracy spent several years working for the Northumberland National Park Authority. Her roles included Project Officer of the Drivers Project, Northern Area Ranger, and a member of the Community Enterprise team. Most recently she was a Land Management and Conservation adviser with Natural England.

Contact details are available above.



Jennifer Hewitson and Tracy Hall

## Farm Resilience Planning

One of the first areas of work we are concentrating efforts on, is the development of the Farm Resilience Planning approach, which we understand is the first co-ordinated approach of its kind.

The Farm Resilience Plans (FRPs) look at an individual farm holding and work with the farmers to identify the impacts that climate change effects, such as increasing temperatures, altered seasonality of rainfall and enhanced flood risk, may have on the farm business. This is the first stage to identifying adaptation measures which can be put in place to make the business more resilient to the challenges posed by climate change, or put the business in a better position to take up opportunities posed by a changing climate.

The effects of climate change will have different impacts on different farms, depending on the

circumstances of that business, for instance type of agricultural activity, land type and topography, location within a catchment system, and preferences of the farmer and land manager.



Tracy with farmer Mark Dixon

The FRPs are still being developed to ensure they are a useful exercise for farm businesses and the approach is being considered as a pilot. We are aiming to complete at least 25 FRPs across the project area, over the lifetime of the project, covering a range of farm types.

The FRP approach does not cost the farm anything as it is completed by the Project Officer through Cheviot Futures. The adaptation measures identified may be supported through the project to assist farms with implementing changes, either through access to further advice and expertise, and/or capital works funding from Cheviot Futures and other sources.

## Training with Northumberland Fire Group

In March Cheviot Futures and the Northumberland Fire Group held a joint training event aimed at farmers, landowners or anyone involved in grassland burning as a management tool.

17 people attended the event, delivered by Andy McNaught of Natural England along with Steve Gibson and Bruce Hardy of Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service. Attendees received training in basic fire behaviour, fire control equipment, legislation and health and safety.

The aim of the event was to give people who already

use fire as a management tool further skills and understanding to help prevent fires getting out of control and understand the valuable role fire can play in grassland management.



Attendees at Controlled burning training

Please get in touch if you are interested in further wildfire training events.

## Sound Boxes

A sound trail for visitors that explains the landscape, nature and history of the North Northumberland countryside.

The trail can be heard along the Breamish Valley and includes five wind-up sound posts that respond with an audio explanation of the natural and historical features that can be seen in the area.

The trail is part of a suite of Cheviot Futures interpretation including interactive displays, at the National Park Visitor Centre at Ingram and The

Fenton Centre near Wooler. The aim is to show what the impacts of Climate Change can do and how we can adapt to, and mitigate against these anticipated changes.

Watch this space for a mobile phone application version of the sound boxes!



Sound box in use

## Update on Capital Works

Cheviot Futures continues to have a focus on completing capital works on farms to increase business resilience to the effects of climate change. The project now has limited funding available to directly support the costs of works, including flood protection and erosion control works, water resource management and habitat improvements. Such projects should reflect the innovative nature of Cheviot Futures, and will be used as demonstration sites to showcase ideas and solutions to a wider audience.

Current projects include:

### Breamish Valley Fire Pond

Creation of a new pond in the Upper Breamish Valley to act as a water resource in the fighting of wildfire.



Fire pond under construction

The pond has been designed in such a way as to be suitable for use by helicopter equipment and also the Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service high-volume pumping system in the event of a wildfire event on the valuable upland habitats such as blanket bog and upland heather moorland.

### Glendale Show Field, Lilburn Estate

Following on from innovative works to stabilise an eroded section of riverbank, riparian planting has been carried out to assist this stabilisation, and maximise the potential for successful erosion management.

The works at this site were undertaken by a local contractor, in partnership with Lilburn Estate.

### Ingram Riverside

Following on from innovative and pioneering riverbank erosion protection works at Ingram, Cheviot Futures has undertaken additional tree planting to assist the stabilisation and re-vegetation of the riverbank.



Volunteers at Ingram

Locally sourced and native trees were planted, with the assistance of Northumberland National Park Voluntary Rangers.

### Yetholm Haugh

This is a key site recommended for action in the Bowmont-Glen Catchment Initiative Report (MNV Consultants Ltd, 2010), Cheviot Futures is working with the landowner to ensure sustainable management of the riparian zone.

The Bowmont Water will be fenced off and the riparian habitat enhanced through planting with native tree species in an attempt to stabilise the sediment and slow down the rate of flood flows through the reach.

This project is seeking to combine sustainable riparian management with the pressures of agricultural management and also heavy recreational pressures.

### Clifton on Bowmont

Clifton On Bowmont has a number of sections of eroding riverbank, presenting management issues to the farm business and also threatening infrastructure, identified through the Farm Resilience Plan.

Cheviot Futures is looking to implement a range of green bank protection measures on the site, to act as a demonstration opportunity to compare and contrast the merits of different approaches. Some elements of the proposals have been developed from an additional consultants' report looking specifically at options suitable for this site, commissioned by Cheviot Futures.

### GrassProtecta Trial

Following an approach from a farm business, the use of ground reinforcement mesh is being trialled as an option to reduce the effect of ground poaching around livestock feeders, working in partnership with Catchment Sensitive Farming. A decision document will also be established to ensure that feeding always takes place on the most appropriate sites.

The trial will use the GrassProtecta product (other similar materials are available) on four trial sites across two farms in the upper Coquet Valley.

The trial will look at the effectiveness of such a solution on reducing the impact of poaching, comparing semi-permanent trial plots with a mobile trial, and comparing the effectiveness with sheep and cattle (both continental types and traditional galloways) in both a haughland and upland situation.

## Capital Works continued

### Upland Tree Planting as Natural Flood Management

Working in partnership with farmers and landowners in the upper catchment of the Bowmont Water, we are looking to identify areas of land which can be planted with native woodland in order to slow the rate of runoff from hill ground, thereby assisting the reduction in flood peak within the main river.

This work follows on from the recommendations of the Bowmont-Glen Catchment Initiative (MNV, 2010), with opportunities within upland cleughs and gullies meaning that woodland creation need not have a negative impact on the farm business.

### Natural Flood Management

Cheviot Futures is working with a landowner within the Coquet Catchment to develop a series of features to assist with the management of flood flow,

ahead of a village with flood risk concerns.

Features such as leaky ponds, large woody debris structures and additional offline storage are being considered.

Monitoring equipment will be installed to measure the amount of flood water stored by the features, and to provide data on the flow rates of the watercourse.

### Other work areas include:

- Management of surface water runoff and associated flood risk
- Reducing wind erosion through hedging as wind breaks
- Sustainable sediment management approaches
- Development of water quality evidence base to support progression of a winter water storage reservoir proposal

## Glendale Children's Day

Cheviot Futures attended the very successful, and very busy, Glendale Children's Day in June, in conjunction with Northumberland National Park. There were nearly 1,700 children on the day, many of whom spent time learning about how climate change will affect North Northumberland. The activities completed included:

An interactive river system model to show the effects that excess water can have on a river system, including flooding and erosion issues. This

was followed up with a visit to the Wooler Water, where this has happened in real life, to see the resilience approach actually taken.

Jigsaw puzzles showing the different issues with climate change in North Northumberland

How to utilise the power of the sun, and the damage that UV can do to you.



River system model at Children's Day

## Weather Station and Webcam Project

Cheviot Futures are pleased to have started a project to install a weather station and webcam in the upper reaches of the Breamish Valley.

In the coming months the equipment will be installed and linked to other similar apparatus in the surrounding area giving the full picture of the weather patterns for all to see.

Changing weather patterns are a big concern when thinking about climate change in the Cheviot Futures area. Being able to monitor

changes in the weather, from changes in rain and snow fall to changes in temperatures, will build up our evidence base of the actual changes in climate in the local area.

Further information will be available in due course, please keep an eye on the Cheviot Futures website for further information.



Breamish Valley

## Land Carbon Management Plan

Cheviot Futures project co-ordinator Jennifer Hewitson is working with the National Trust and Natural England on a project that is piloting the innovative Land Carbon Management Plan blueprint.

The blueprint has recently been created on behalf of the National Trust with the aim of enabling farmers to assess options for carbon management on their farms.

The blueprint has now been applied to a further four farms in Northumberland (three of which are within the Cheviot Futures area) to evaluate its effectiveness,

robustness and clarity in its present state and to consequently make recommendations to enable it to be a useful tool for farmers across the UK.

It is hoped that this exercise will shape future carbon management amongst land managers and potentially policy makers.

A special thank you must go to those farmers that got involved in this project.

Watch this space for further developments on the introduction of Land Carbon Management Plans as a tool

## Climate Change Schools Project

Cheviot Futures project officer Tracy Hall attended a Climate Change Schools Project and Climate NE celebration event in July.

The event covered an exciting initiative called Boardroom versus Classroom.

As part of the project, school children at Dr. Thomlinson Church of England Middle School, in Rothbury, were challenged by the Battlesteads Hotel, in the North Tyne Valley, to explore the opportunities presented by a permaculture approach to supplying the

hotel restaurant. The pupils looked at how crops may be affected by climate change and how to integrate new crops and innovative irrigation solutions and energy supply.



**ClimateNE**

Cheviot Futures are hoping to work on a similar project with the Climate Change Schools Project and ClimateNE with a farming focus.

## Photo Project

Cheviot Futures are interested in starting a photographic project which will involve taking photos from a fixed location on a fortnightly basis for a 12 months. In order to create a photographic log of an area which can be used as baseline data to look into changes in future years.

We are interested in involving people from North Northumberland and the Scottish Borders.

Are you a keen photographer? Would you like to get involved? If so, please do not hesitate to get in touch with either of the Cheviot Futures project staff.

## Upcoming Projects

In the forthcoming months Cheviot Futures will:

- Continue to work with farmers with farm resilience plans
- Investigate surface water management
- Work on a whole estate resilience plan in conjunction with NU LEADER

## Partnership working

In addition to landowners and farmers Cheviot Futures are currently engaging with:

- Northumberland National Park Authority
- Tweed Forum
- Environment Agency
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Natural England
- Catchment Sensitive Farming
- Tyne Rivers Trust
- Forestry Commission
- Northumberland Community Flooding Partnership
- Newcastle University
- Northumberland County Council
- Scottish Borders Council
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- National Trust
- Northumberland Wildlife Trust
- Northumberland Fire Group

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## Funding

Cheviot Futures is a co-operative formed from representatives of agencies and organisations involved in working with rural communities of the Cheviots and the surrounding Tweed Catchment.

The initiative takes a simple, practical approach to land management that focuses on taking action to adapt to the effects of a changing climate.

Funding for Cheviot Futures Phase 2 has been made possible by the securing of the very first cross-border funding from New LEADER sources from both the Northumberland Uplands and the Scottish Border LEADER Local Action Groups.

New LEADER is jointly funded by the European Union and DEFRA/Scottish Government

Other funding has been awarded through:

- Northumbria Regional Flood Defence Committee
- Scottish Borders Council
- SEPA

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<http://www.cheviotfutures.co.uk/>



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas.