APPENDIX D

Exmoor and the Quantocks NA
Farm Profiles

(Number of sides - 24)

BRENDON HILL FARM, WHEDDON CROSS

Size:	approx. 81 hectares.
Ownership type:	owned
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	medium cattle and sheep farm
Land in intensive use:	88% (88% grassland)
Land in extensive use:	12% (12% grassland)
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	none
Common land:	none
SSSI:	none
Within Exmoor ESA:	yes
Schemes entered into:	ESA

Summary Description

Brendon Hill Farm is located towards the eastern edge of the Exmoor National Park, entirely within the park boundary, and is situated on an elevated plateau. The land is generally flat and the fields are of uniform size, improved, and divided by large beech hedges with stone banks and some wire fences. The farm house is at the bottom of a driveway in the eastern part of the farm, in a slight dip in the land. The fields in the eastern part of the farm (the White Moor area) have not been reseeded for ten years and are currently under ESA Tier 2, which means that no ploughing or re-seeding will be carried out during the length of the agreement. Some hedgerows are being re-planted here.

Brendon Hill Farm has been farmed by the same farmer since 1972. The farm's area has changed little over the last twenty years and its main enterprises remain beef cattle and sheep. Calves are sold as stores, while lambs are sold fat. Hay is still cut for conserved fodder. However, there have been a number of significant changes since 1975:

- the farm was significantly improved through MAFF grants in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Grant aid allowed the ploughing and reseeding of the farm's grassland, new fencing, top dressing, the provision of water to fields and the erection of two buildings to house cattle and sheep. The improvements significantly increased the farm's viability, which will be an issue of increasing importance as the farmer's son becomes more involved in the farm enterprise;

- the improvements saw sheep numbers increase from 230 to 350 breeding ewes and suckler cows from 20 to 28;

- fertiliser rates have increased by at least 30%;

- sheep have changed from traditional breeds to mule crosses;

- the new buildings have allowed sheep and cattle to be housed over winter, significantly increasing lambing rates and improving grassland management.

Grant-aided grassland improvements have decreased the farm's interest in nature conservation terms. Intensively used, ploughed, re-seeded and fertilised grassland does not have many niches for anything other than agricultural grass species. The increase in livestock numbers and breed size enabled by these grassland improvements serves to perpetuate the existence of the improved grassland.

Although poaching is often regarded as a bad thing on grasslands (see Buscombe, Challacombe, paragraph 6), here, over-wintering indoors which protects the improved sward from poaching, further reduces opportunities for colonisation by "weed" species and diversification of the sward.

The farm was entered into an ESA agreement in 1995, in order to supplement income. Little significant impact on farm management is expected, except for the management of hedges. With the farmer's son now involved in the farm business, nature conservation measures which would significantly reduce income would probably not be considered. Sheep numbers may also be increased in the future. The potential for nature conservation on this farm is not great but the ESA prevents fields from being ploughed and re-seeded and should regulate fertiliser application levels. The grassland may therefore become more diverse in time.

Examples of Good Practice

- Stopped reseeding fields in ESA agreement land
- Hay crop taken
- Semi-improved field retained
- Well-established and managed beech hedgerows with vegetated banks
- Some hedgerow re-planting

BUSCOMBE, CHALLACOMBE

Size:	approx. 170 hectares.
Ownership type:	tenancy
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	large cattle and sheep farm
Land in intensive use:	approx. 25% (10% arable, 15% grassland)
Land in extensive use:	approx. 75% (unenclosed moor 50%, enclosed rough grazing 25%)
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	none
Common land:	none
SSSI:	North Exmoor (approx. 45%)
Within Exmoor ESA:	yes
Schemes entered into:	ESA, SSSI, CSS

Summary Description

Buscombe Farm lies astride the National Park boundary, towards the west of Exmoor. A steep sided stream forms the western boundary, from where the farm rises up the relatively gentle valley side to plateau out onto heather moorland along its eastern boundary. It is bisected by a north-south running road.

On the lower ground between the stream and the road, adjacent to the farmstead, the medium-sized fields are largely given over to improved grassland and arable production. The main features of ecological interest within this area are the characteristic beech hedgebanks which divide the fields and support a range of hedgerow species and the well-treed stream corridor which includes remnant unimproved grasslands with invading bracken and scrub. Many of the improved grassland fields also include patches of gorse and rush especially along the edge of ditches.

To the east of the road, fields are much larger, open and exposed, of unimproved and improved grassland, giving way to open moorland on higher ground. The whole of the moorland falls within the North Exmoor SSSI and is heather-dominated with mature and healthy *Calluna* forming a blanket across the higher slopes and plateau top. Intermixed with this *Calluna* sward are damp flushes supporting a range of attractive and interesting species including cotton grass. On the lower slopes of the moorland the heather has been partially grazed out and replaced by an unimproved sward of purple moor grass and soft rush.

Buscombe is farmed by a tenant whose family have occupied the holding since 1938. The current farmer was taken on as a joint tenant in 1988. The size of the farm has changed little over the last sixty years. The SSSI was agreed five years ago and covers almost half of the farm. Buscombe was entered into the ESA scheme three years ago.

Farming of the land has remained fairly similar for thirty or more years. The moorland areas and unimproved land are grazed; grass crops are taken from better quality agricultural grasses. Whilst the stock numbers have risen only marginally, there have been a number of small but potentially significant changes over the last two decades:

- spring calving cattle are now of a larger breed and calve indoors in a shed erected during the 1980s. They have fewer foot-rot problems as a consequence. Calves are generally larger and fitter;

- ewe numbers are down by about 7% since 1975, having peaked in 1979. They are now brought down to the in-bye land (instead of staying on the moor) during the middle of the winter and lamb indoors. A building has been erected to facilitate this;

- grassland management has seen a switch towards more silage on the improved land; lime is no longer spread on unimproved and semi-improved grassland entered into the ESA.

Lack of shepherding combined with an increase in the size of cattle stock may be responsible for the grazing out of heather on the lowest moorland slopes and around feeding areas. On the other hand, the decrease in ewe numbers and their removal from the moor in winter will have helped alleviate grazing pressure and problems of poaching. Serious poaching during the winter damages the structure of grassland and moorland, whereas limited poaching helps to increase grassland diversity by providing bare ground for other plant species to colonise. The modern buildings for winter housing of the cattle and the lambing sheds, however, do detract somewhat from a traditional Exmoor landscape. The switch to silage (in preference to hay) will have had some repercussions for breeding birds but because the grass crop is taken from improved fields, the effects on botanical diversity will have been negligible. However, pressure on the land is further increased, as more cuts may be taken and because more nutrients in the form of biomass are removed. As a result fertiliser rates must be increased to compensate for this. Chemicals may be used to preserve silage and silage run-off can present a considerable pollution risk. Cessation of lime spreading will enable the restoration of the natural balance of the soil and vegetation.

The farm has never been particularly intensively managed and entry into the ESA scheme has served to support and maintain a farming system which was becoming increasingly uneconomic - without the ESA scheme, the farm would no longer be profitable. Key opportunities for nature conservation which so far are not fully addressed by the ESA are:

- active management of heather swards: the heather is mature and healthy but in the future may need more active management (cutting/ burning/ flailing) to prevent it becoming 'leggy' or over mature;

- hedgerow management: the farmer has not entered the hedgerows into the ESA hedgerow option as it is thought that the prescription (which allows hedgerows to grow and then be laid) would result in the hedgerow no longer being stockproof.

In both cases the farmer would benefit from further guidance and information. In addition further incentives may be required to achieve active heather management.

Examples of Good Practice

- Entry into ESA
- SSSI agreement
- Winter housing for livestock (although buildings detract from the landscape)

COLLACOTT FARM, BERRY DOWN

Size:	approx. 150 hectares
Ownership type:	owned
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	dairy
Land in intensive use:	100% (75% grassland, 15% arable)
Land in extensive use:	0%
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	none
Common land:	none
SSSI:	none
Within Exmoor ESA:	yes
Schemes entered into:	ESA (Heale Down area only)

Summary Description

Collacott Farm is located to the north west of the Natural Area, mainly outside the National Park. The farm is composed of three parts:

- From the road the farm is approached along a wide treeless lane. The area around the farm house is on flat land which descends into a gully at its western edge. To the south it is bounded by a tree-lined lane, to the east a road, and in the north by beech hedgerows. This part of the farm is composed entirely of improved or arable land, with field size varying from small to large, with the majority being of medium size. The overall aspect is open, with a little more intimacy toward the wooded gully. The main areas of interest in this first section are the steeper fields leading into the gully at the north west corner and to the west of Collacott Farm, especially where they adjoin the woodland. The reason for their less intensive use is probably related to difficulties of access on the steeper slope;

- To the north of the main farm area at Twitchen Farm are some large, open, improved fields which straddle the road. Old hedge lines and a few mature trees act as divides;

- The final area is located at some distance from the farm house, toward the north east and within the boundaries of the Exmoor National Park. Situated on the relatively steep north east slopes of Heale Down, it is composed of small fields, and bounded by high, wide hedge banks which give the area an enclosed feel.

The farm's main potential in terms of nature conservation lies in its surroundings. Neighbouring land has plenty of trees with a diverse understorey and represents a good seed and species source.

Collacott Farm was purchased by the present occupier in 1986 as a dairy unit. Since then it has significantly increased in size to allow the expansion of the dairy herd, with almost 57 hectares purchased and a further 100 hectares taken as seasonal grass keep. Arable crops are grown for the farm's own use. Since its purchase, the holding has experienced a number of significant changes:

- The previous owner had a dairy herd of 80 cows and a beef rearing enterprise. The present farmer ended the beef enterprise due to its low profitability and has increased dairy cattle numbers to 209 cows. Expansion was almost prevented by the imposition of milk quotas, which resulted in the need for significant investment in new quota;

- dairy herd expansion was achieved by improved grassland and stock management and improved winter housing of cattle through the erection of new buildings. Fertiliser rates have increased on the grassland, while some areas have been drained and reseeded;

- risk of pollution has been greatly reduced through the instalment of a dirty water system and new slurry store;

- silage has been cut for conserved fodder since before 1975. About 6 hectares of hay is cut for calves;

- a breeding sheep flock was introduced to the holding to 'tidy up' pasture land. The flock currently numbers 350 ewes;

- since 1975, labour has fallen from 3 to 1 full-time worker. This has had consequences for routine work around the farm such as on hedges, which are not as well managed as a result;

- twenty hectares of recently purchased land had been placed in the ESA by the previous owner. The ESA agreement will remain as it is not considered onerous.

The great increase in cattle numbers has meant the grassland has undergone agricultural improvement leading to a lowering of the farm's overall nature conservation interest, especially in the case of drainage and re-seeding. These operations create a vastly altered habitat which is much poorer in terms of species diversity and habitat usefulness. The improved pollution control measures are of benefit to nature conservation as the risk of habitat destruction and contamination has been lowered. Only a small amount of hay is taken on the farm, the majority of the grass crop being in the form of silage. This is not a desirable situation in nature conservation terms (see Buscombe, Challacombe, paragraph 6). The sheep flock creates additional pressure on the grassland and removes any structural diversity which may have been left by the more selective-grazing cattle. In turn this means fewer niches for species living in the grass - including birds, invertebrates and small mammals. The shortfall in labour since 1975 and the consequent neglect of the hedgerows was probably of benefit to these boundaries in the short term. However, they are currently overly-trimmed and more careful and appropriate attention would benefit the hedgerows.

The farmer is willing to consider management for nature conservation providing he is fairly compensated and the conditions are not too onerous: The livestock may be sold due to limited labour and forage resources, and this may lead to loss of grassland as the farm changes over to arable.

Examples of Good Practice

- One outstanding well-maintained stone wall
- Some hedge laying in Heale area
- Hay production
- Some less intensively used fields
- Large, well maintained hedge banks remain at Heale

DAMAGE BARTON, MORTHOE

Size:	approx. 146 hectares.
Ownership type:	mixed (72% owned, 28% rented from national trust)
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	large cattle and sheep
Land in intensive use:	approx 50% (50% grassland)
Land in extensive use:	approx. 40% (unenclosed semi-natural 10%, enclosed pasture 30%)
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	caravan site 10%
Common land:	none
SSSI:	none
Within Exmoor ESA:	no
Schemes entered into:	CSS

Summary Description

Damage Barton is located in the far north west of the Natural Area, on the coast. The farm house is built in a sheltered dip in the land, surrounded by semi-improved fields. To the north, the land rises quite sharply past a stream and a wooded area and on to the cliff tops. The most interesting ecological feature on this farm is this unenclosed, unsheltered rough coastal land, which encompasses a mosaic of gorse, bramble and bracken scrub and improved, semi-improved and unimproved grassland. This area seems to be almost uncultivated. There are a couple of small, enclosed fields in this area which appear to be used as hay meadows (there were old bales in the fields). To the south of the farm house, the slope is shallower and the land is more intensively used. Fields in this area are large, with boundaries made up of hawthorn hedgerows, wire fences and stone walls, all in various states of repair. The streamside presents a good habitat, with many trees and interesting flora (e.g. wild daffodils - *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) and plenty of birds.

Damage Barton has been farmed by the same family for 35 years. The farm has a beef fattening enterprise, which sells about 40 animals a year. The enterprise has slightly decreased in size over the years, to allow for the expansion of the sheep flock. The farm also rents neighbouring land from the National Trust, which includes a significant area of rough grazing. In 1993, this land was placed in Countryside Stewardship, together with the rest of the farm. A further 61 hectares along the coast is also taken as grass keep from the National Trust and this is also primarily rough grazing. A major caravan enterprise exists on the farm, which provides up to 50% of farm income.

A number of significant changes have occurred at Damage Barton over the last twenty years:

- in the early 1970s, grant aid allowed the reseeding and drainage of most of the owned land, together with the erection of buildings to allow winter housing of cattle;

- fertiliser rates have fallen over the years, due to the introduction of land into Countryside Stewardship (encouraged by the National Trust), the availability of new grass keep and because of a general policy of extensification in order to cut costs;

- arable cropping was ended on the farm due to the poor yields in such an exposed location, the relatively poor soil quality and the failure of the enterprise to justify the purchase of new machinery;

- the end of the arable enterprise allowed the release of land to increase the sheep enterprise. The breeding flock has increased from 650 to 800 breeding ewes. Lambing percentage has risen from 150% in 1975 to 200% in 1996 (due to better management and housing);

- labour has fallen since 1975 from 3 to 2 full time workers.

The reseeding and drainage carried out with grant aid in the 1970s ensured wholesale agricultural improvement of the land, resulting in a lowering of ecological interest. Winter housing of cattle has reduced the risk of damage to land by poaching in the winter (see Buscombe, Challacombe, paragraph 6). Reduction in fertiliser applications since initial improvements and since entry into Countryside Stewardship, along with the new grass keep could be hoped to lessen pressure on the grassland, and some improvements in terms of biodiversity may be anticipated. However, sheep numbers have increased and lambing percentages improved and this is likely to result in grazing rates and levels of grassland improvement remaining fairly constant. Stewardship has also allowed contractors to be employed to provide beneficial management of the farm's hedges, for which previously there had been little time or resources available, and also for tree planting and woodland management. The income from the caravan enterprise has also contributed to the farm's ability to extensify.

Examples of Good Practice

- Takes hay crop
- Coastal scrub habitat retained
- Two ponds remain on farm and are reasonably well managed
- Maintenance of diverse streamside habitat
- Stone wall in good state of repair
- Not all grassland improved
- Farm woodland fenced off, coppiced and re-planted
- Hedgerows appropriately managed for wildlife under Countryside Stewardship

FOXHILL FARM, WEST DOWN

Size:	approx. 65 hectares.
Ownership type:	part tenant/ part owned
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	mixed
Land in intensive use:	100% (75% grassland, 25% arable)
Land in extensive use:	0%
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	none
Common land:	none
SSSI:	none
Within Exmoor ESA:	no
Schemes entered into:	FCGS

Summary Description

Foxhill Farm is located toward the west of the Natural Area, quite near to the coast. The main farm area is situated on flat land, just to the west of the village of West Down. At present fields are of medium size, although in the past they were small, boundary removal having enlarged the average field size. To the north west of this main area is another parcel of land on a gentle southerly slope, leading from a quiet road. All of the boundary features have been removed from this area. Where present, the boundaries are composed of relatively thick, layed, but very well-flailed hawthorn hedge banks, accompanied by wire fences. The whole farm is improved and recently re-seeded or ploughed.

Foxhill Farm has been farmed by the same family since before 1975. In 1985, the farming business was divided between the family. The farm's size has therefore been reduce since 1975 from almost 130 hectares to its present size. This has had a number of significant impacts on farm management:

- Increased economic pressure on the holding and reduced labour resources. Pressures will increase as the farmer's son enters the business in the future;
- hedging grants from the Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme have allowed more time and effort to be spent on improving the farms hedges;
- before the farm's division, it had primarily been a dairy holding. Buildings and fixtures/equipment for dairying went to another family member and the main enterprise at Foxhill Farm is now the growth of 7 hectares of potatoes, which the farmer markets himself for added value;
- swedes are also grown for human consumption, together with spring barley which is grown instead of winter varieties as it eases the autumn workload, although this may change in the future;
- a beef enterprise has been introduced and there are currently 9 suckler cows and a beef fattening enterprise of about 40 animals;
- sheep numbers have increased from 280 to 385 ewes. Lambs are sold fat;
- fertiliser rates have increased by 50% to increase farm output;
- pigs are no longer kept on the farm due to labour shortages.

The farm's arable enterprise is beneficial to nature conservation in terms of the timing of crop sowing. Spring sowing means that stubble can be left in the ground during autumn/winter, providing a food source for birds during these more difficult months. Leaving stubble over winter, helps to protect the soil from erosion, and eventually contributes to soil organic matter, improving structure. The increase in sheep numbers and concurrent increase in fertiliser application means that the farm grassland is very improved, composed only of agricultural grass species. This Intensive sheep grazing leads to a lack of structural diversity in grassland and therefore a loss of niches for other species. Hedgerow management will have helped to raise the farm's overall nature conservation value.

This is already an intensively farmed mixed holding and a major factor in its intensification has been its relatively small size. Pressures to continue intensive practices will increase when the farmer's son enters the farm business. However, the farmer is disappointed that the Exmoor ESA does not extend to his area, as it would improve options for farm management. The sucklers will soon be sold as they are not viable and the beef rearing enterprise reduced to release land and labour for the sheep and arable enterprises. This will mean the loss of some grassland area and will be to the overall detriment of the farm's nature conservation interest.

Examples of GoodPractice

- Hedgerows layed
- Some hay production

HIGHER COWLEY, PARRACOMBE

Size:	approx. 81 hectares.
Ownership type:	owned
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	medium cattle and sheep farm
Land in intensive use:	approx. 95% (92% grassland, 3% arable)
Land in extensive use:	approx. 3% (3% enclosed pasture)
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	2% woodland
Common land:	none
SSSI:	none
Within Exmoor ESA:	yes
Schemes entered into:	ESA, FCGS, local authority

Summary Description

Higher Cowley is located toward the western edge of the Exmoor National Park and lies entirely within its boundaries. The whole farm is on quite a steep, north-facing slope. Two roads run through the farm in an east-west direction dividing it into three sections:

- lower land, sloping away from the farm house into a valley bottom and sub-divided by a stream;
- middle land which shelves up behind the farm house, again sub-divided by the same stream;
- higher land which reaches the summit of the hill.

The bulk of the farm is improved, with a couple of semi-improved fields. Date of improvement varies, some fields having been very recently re-seeded while others appear not to have been re-seeded in the past ten years. These fields are now classed as improved largely due to grazing pressure (manuring and repression of species diversity). Fields are generally of a small size, divided by hedges in varying states of repair. The wooded gullies formed by the stream and the valley at the bottom of the farm are the most interesting areas, both in terms of landscape and nature conservation interest, as they add some variety to an otherwise improved landscape. One negative feature of this farm is the amount of litter scattered around - mostly in the form of fertiliser bags and binliners.

Higher Cowley has been farmed by the same family for three generations. It is primarily a beef and sheep holding and an additional 22 hectares of grass keep is also taken. Beef cattle are sold as stores and lambs are sold fat. A small area of winter barley (3 hectares) is grown for use on the farm. Since 1975 there have been a number of significant changes:

- area of cereals has fallen from 15 hectares to 3 hectares. Reduction has allowed the expansion of more profitable livestock enterprises. The reduction was made before Arable Area Payments (AAPs) were introduced and the arable enterprise would not have been reduced if AAPs had then been available;
- suckler cow numbers have risen from 30 to 40 cows, and sheep from 150 to 400 ewes. Lambing rates have also increased from 100% to 150%;
- silage has largely replaced hay as conserved fodder since 1985;

- fertiliser rates have increased due to the increase in stock and the use of silage. However, the amounts remain within ESA limits;

- lambing now takes place indoors but due to limited building space calves are now sold at 6 months. Many of the farm buildings are old and redundant, in poor condition. The farmer would therefore wish to relocate the farmstead but has run into opposition from the National Park;

- due to the farm's small size, full-time workers have fallen from 6 to 2 since 1975. Hedges have become more neglected as a result.

The reduction in arable area will have been to the benefit of nature conservation. Increased livestock numbers have led to an increase in the pressure on the grassland. Taking silage as opposed to hay has a number of negative effects on the farm's nature conservation interest (see Buscombe, Challacombe, paragraph 6). Neglect of hedgerows due to the shortfall in labour is very apparent, with many in need of re-planting. The farmer has received grant under the Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme for hedgerow management. If it was not for grant aid, such work would not have been undertaken, however, the majority of hedgerows are still in need of some attention, including re-planting.

The farmer is sympathetic to nature conservation, although the current problems with the farm's traditional buildings is imposing significant difficulties on the farming business. The farm was entered into the Exmoor ESA in 1994 in order to supplement income. No significant changes to farm management have occurred and the ESA agreement restrictions are not considered significant. The farmer would also wish to exclude livestock from his woodland, however, the woodland is the only access route for stock in one area to reach water. Livestock exclusion from the woodland would therefore only take place if a new water supply were provided.

Examples of Good Practice

- Some hedgerow laying
- Continuation of hay production

MIDDLE DEAN FARM, TRENTISHOE

Size:	62 hectares.
Ownership type:	owned
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	medium cattle and sheep
Land in intensive use:	80% (95% grassland, 5% arable)
Land in extensive use:	20% (20% rough grazing)
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	none
Common land:	none
SSSI:	none
Within Exmoor ESA:	yes
Schemes entered into:	ESA

Summary Description

Middle Dean is located on the north-western boundary of the Exmoor National Park. The farm house is at the bottom of a south-east facing slope and from here the farmland spreads up this slope to its summit and also encompasses the steeper, north-east facing slopes on the other side of the hill. Field size varies with some being small, particularly around the farm house; and becoming larger higher up the hill. The largest fields are on the summit and on the steep, unenclosed north-east facing slopes. These slopes have escaped intensive improvement probably by virtue of their steepness. The wet areas and woodland in this area add to its nature conservation interest. Boundaries are composed of beech hedgebanks in various states of maintenance, with both laying and planting having been undertaken.

Middle Dean has been farmed by the same family since 1964. Eleven hectares of adjacent land were purchased in 1994. Until 1993, the farm held a dairy unit of about 60 cows. However, the dairy enterprise was ended as the farmer approached retirement and the dairy herd has been replaced by a small suckler herd of 18 cows. The farm's beef enterprise is based on the selling of store and fattened animals. A small area of winter barley is grown for use on the farm and about 20 hectares of the farm is let out as grass keep. Since 1975, a number of major changes have taken place at Middle Dean Farm:

- the sheep enterprise was ended in the mid 1970s to release additional forage for cattle and to ease spring labour demands;
- fertiliser rates have been reduced, in order to reduce costs and there is no longer a need for such intensive grassland use;
- economic pressures on such a small dairy farm and the imposition of milk quotas led to a reduction in labour from 3 to 2 full-time workers. Reduced economic and labour resources have led to the neglect of the farm's hedges and banks.

Since 1993, extensification of the farm has been undertaken. This has involved a major reduction in cattle numbers. This reduction has enabled fertiliser application rates to be decreased as the demand for grass has fallen off. The result of these extensifications will be an increase in botanical diversity, with an accompanying increase in associated fauna. To some extent, neglect of hedgerows has been to their benefit, allowing a more diverse structure to develop.

Following the end of the dairy enterprise, the farm was entered into the Exmoor ESA, primarily to finance the improvement of the hedges and the use of contractors for the work involved. This has proven successful, with many of the farm's banks and hedges being put in order. It is unlikely this work would have been undertaken if it had not been for the ESA. However, the farmer has been unhappy over the management of the rough grazing, especially as he is no longer allowed to burn the vegetation. Burning produced a flush of grass growth, providing useful forage. The spraying of the rough grazing to control bracken and gorse is considered slow and unsatisfactory. However, despite this problem, the farm's extensification as the farmer approaches retirement provides a number of opportunities for nature conservation.

Examples of Good Practice

- Re-planting of hedgerows with native saplings
- Hedgerow laying
- Large, semi-improved grassland bank maintained
- Wet area and remnant deciduous woodland retained
- Hay production
- Some semi-improved fields
- Maintenance of traditional farm buildings
- Fertiliser rates reduced

MIDDLE SPREADCOMBE, BRAUNTON

Size:	approx. 80 hectares.
Ownership type:	owned
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	medium sized mixed sheep and arable
Land in intensive use:	approx. 90% (50% arable, 40% grassland)
Land in extensive use:	none
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	coniferous plantation woodland (10%)
Common land:	none
SSSI:	none
Within Exmoor ESA:	no
Schemes entered into:	none

Summary Description

Middle Spreadcombe lies outside the boundaries of the Exmoor National Park, towards the west coast of the Natural Area. The farm extends up a steep, south-west facing slope from an intimate wooded valley. A small coniferous plantation reaches up the east side of the steeper, lower slopes. The land flattens out toward the hill top and here the fields are large and open. Very large hedgebanks bound many of the fields and give a sense of history and timelessness to the landscape. These hedgebanks are old and species-rich, with a number of shrubs, herbaceous species and grasses - both on the banks and around the field margins. At present, these hedges provide a quite impressive diversity of wildlife.

The farm is a mixed enterprise and although composed of arable / horticultural and improved land, does not appear to be particularly intensively farmed. There is a slight air of dereliction, for example, the hedgerows were unkempt. The small area of land to the west of the main holding, at Withycot, has a more 'plain-like' appearance where the land is relatively flat and open in aspect.

Middle Spreacombe has been owned by the same family since the 1930s, farmed as a mixed enterprise, including livestock, arable and horticultural crops. There have been a number of significant changes since 1975:

- A suckler enterprise was ended in the early 1980s due to low economic returns;
- as a result, the sheep flock expanded from 250 to over 400 ewes;
- growing of spring barley and spring oats in rotation with grass leys ceased;
- in 1991, due to family ill-health, there was increased pressure on labour resources. This has led to the reduction of the sheep flock to 120 ewes;
- the arable land is now used for continuous winter cereals under a share-farming agreement;
- grass leys have been lost from the arable rotation;
- potatoes and horticultural crops have been grown since the 1980s, in order to increase farm profitability;

Low stocking rates mean that pressure on the remaining grassland is not intense and there is good potential for the grassland to diversify. The loss of grass leys from the arable rotation will slowly lead to a deterioration in soil structure as the land is continuously cropped. This may eventually lead to an overall increase in fertiliser application.

The farmer's son will enter the farm business in the medium term and has a keen interest in livestock farming. This may lead to an increase in sheep numbers and the restoration of grassland and hedges. As far as nature conservation is concerned, the maintenance of hedgerows is desirable, as long as it is not carried out too intensively. More concentrated use of the grassland by sheep would not benefit the diversity of these fields. The farmer has expressed an interest in nature conservation, as demonstrated by the creation of ponds. He has also expressed an interest in Countryside Stewardship and the Woodland Grant Scheme. These schemes would obviously benefit the nature conservation potential of the farm.

Examples of Good Practice

- Maintenance of wide, high, old, species-rich banks
- Low stocking rates

OVIS FARM, BRATTON FLEMING

Size:	40 hectares.
Ownership type:	owned
Full time:	no
Enterprise type:	small cattle and sheep
Land in intensive use:	60% (60% grassland)
Land in extensive use:	25% (25% enclosed pasture)
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	woodland (15 %)
Common land:	no
SSSI:	no
Within Exmoor ESA:	yes
Schemes entered into:	ESA

Summary Description

Ovis Farm is situated just outside the western boundary of the Exmoor National Park. For the most part, the farm is on a flat plateau. The farm house is situated overlooking a wooded valley which shelves steeply down to a stream at the farm's western boundary, and is accessed via a long drive. Average field size is small and boundaries are mainly formed from well-maintained banked beech hedgerows.

The farm is well cared for and has an ESA agreement and a FWAG farm plan. Upkeep of boundaries is being undertaken with rebuilding of barns and laying of hedges where feasible, i.e. where they are still young enough. All gates apart from one are wooden and old, stone gateposts are being restored and provide an interesting feature and a habitat for mosses and other plant species. The woodland (beech/ oak/ hazel) and unimproved areas (rough fields/ wet areas) to the north are of particular ecological value and the two southern-most fields (on a slope at some distance from the farm house) contain the most interesting grassland. It should be noted that the majority of the fields on this farm do not appear to have been re-seeded within the past ten years. Gorse patches provide additional ecological niches.

Ovis Farm was purchased in the early 1980s from a larger traditional but run-down farm. It is managed primarily as a rehabilitation centre, with farm operations forming part of the therapy. A goat dairying enterprise and an equestrian enterprise were initially present on the farm but have since ended due to the withdrawal of former business partners. Farming is secondary to the non-agricultural objectives. The suckler herd was sold due to the farmer's greater interest in sheep farming and their greater ease of management. As a result, sheep numbers have slightly increased and now total 140 breeding ewes. Lambs are sold either fat or as stores.

The farm is evidently benefiting from the attention given to nature conservation by its owner and from the labour supplied by those receiving rehabilitation. This attention is most evident in the upkeep of farm boundaries. Although levels of fertiliser applications are low, the farm's grassland is not diverse. This lack of diversity may be due to past management and possibly to grazing levels which are, at present, high.

As this is a low intensity farm, inputs are very low and the farm has been entered into the Exmoor ESA, which has allowed hedgerow renovation with the help of contractors. Demonstrations of conservation work are also frequently undertaken. Although the farmer would not wish to see fertiliser inputs fall from their already low levels, he has a strong interest in nature conservation and intends to introduce beneficial management to the farm's woodland by excluding stock. The woodland understorey would benefit if the wood were made stockproof.

Examples of Good Practice

- Upkeep of boundaries hedges, hedge banks and walls
- Retention of woodland and wet area and scrubby banks
- Maintenance of traditional farm buildings
- Hay production
- Not all fields improved
- Stream side with diverse flora

STAPLE FARM, WEST QUANTOXHEAD

Size:	166 hectares.
Ownership type:	owned
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	mixed
Land in intensive use:	approx. 70% (30% arable, 40% grassland)
Land in extensive use:	approx. 15% (enclosed pasture)
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	2% woodland, 13% landfill site
Common land:	yes (Quantocks Common)
SSSI:	none
Within Exmoor ESA:	no
Schemes entered into:	none

Summary Description

Staple Farm is situated toward the north-west of the Quantock Hills, in the north-east of the Natural Area. It divides into three distinct sections, all on gently sloping land. The first is adjacent to Staple Farm, the second to the north west, adjacent to Rydon Farm and the third across a road, to the east of this area. In all sections fields are quite large and divided by mature species-rich hedges.

The farm is notable for the number of trees present, mostly in the form of copses and mature hedgerow trees, which are particularly rich in birdlife. However, this impression of the farm is spoiled by a landfill site, in the southern part of the main body of the farm, which is something of an eyesore.

Staple Farm has been farmed by the same family for 70 years. It is primarily an arable holding, with cropping including wheat, barley, oil seed rape (including industrial rape on set-aside) and beans. There is also a small beef fattening enterprise and 100 breeding ewes. The farm possesses 140-150 sheep grazing rights on the nearby Quantock Common, although these rights have not been exercised for 40 years due to reductions in sheep numbers and farm labour. There is a small caravan enterprise and a small livery using traditional farm buildings.

There have been a number of significant changes since 1975:

- spring barley is no longer cropped as it is lower yielding than winter varieties;
- the use of grass leys has largely ended. The remaining leys are on lower quality arable land and may be placed in long term set-aside;
- the remaining permanent pasture is used to graze 100 ewes plus a small number of beef cattle;
- both beef cattle and sheep numbers have significantly fallen since 1975 (from 65 to 120 and 250 to 100 respectively). However the sheep flock has been retained to allow the retention of a ewe quota to graze land used for caravans and as a reason to retain the remaining grassland areas;
- the move to arable has seen a fall in labour from 3 to 1 full-time worker. This has partly led to neglect of the farm's hedges.

The emphasis on winter rather than spring barley will have led to the loss of a food source for birds in the form of stubble in the autumn. The ending of the use of grass leys will have repercussions for soil nutrient and organic matter levels. The leys give the soil a chance to 'rest' and if ploughed in significantly boost organic matter levels. The fall in livestock numbers will have reduced pressure on the grassland, and should allow the rate of fertiliser application to fall. The combination of a drop in grazing and a drop in nutrient levels means that the botanical (and subsequently faunal) diversity can increase.

In future, measures which would not significantly decrease the arable area would probably be considered, as would beneficial management for the remaining grassland. The farmer is unlikely to exercise his commons grazing rights due to supervisory problems and poor fencing around the common. The common is also under grazed and there appears to be disagreement over its management between the commoners and the County Council.

Examples of Good Practice

- Planted a number of copses
- Well-managed, large, mature hedgerows with diverse understorey
- Not all fields improved
- Maintenance of traditional farm buildings
- Pond creation
- Hay production

WHITE HORSE FARM, OVER-STOWEY

Size:	approx. 30 hectares.
Ownership type:	tenancy
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	dairy
Land in intensive use:	98% (93% grassland, 5% arable)
Land in extensive use:	0%
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	2% - set aside?
Common land:	none
SSSI:	none
Within Exmoor ESA:	no
Schemes entered into:	FCGS

Summary Description

White Horse Farm is located on a small, flat piece of land at the foot of the Quantocks, in the far east of the Natural Area. The aspect is quite exposed and open, and fields are small to medium sized and are mainly under improved grassland divided by hedgerows of beech and hawthorn. A small stream runs through the middle of the farm and there are numerous large, old ditches, indicating that the land is quite wet. As a result of this wetness some of the fields are quite badly poached.

Ecologically, the farm's most interesting habitats are the hedgerow boundaries and managed ditches, as well as the streamsides. A more varied flora has developed along these features and the number of mature trees in the hedgerows and alongside the waterways is impressive. Other than this, the only other feature of ecological interest is a small, fenced off area which is being invaded by scrub.

White Horse Farm is a County Council tenanted small-holding, and the current tenant has been in occupation for 25 years. The farm has been primarily managed as a dairy unit, together with a smaller beef enterprise. As a result, grassland is intensively managed and recently a small area of forage maize has been introduced. Since 1975 there has also been a number of significant changes:

- Dairy cattle numbers have fallen from 70 to 50 and the breed has changed from Ayrshires to higher yielding Holstein/Friesians. The fall in numbers is the result of the farmer's impending retirement;
- the farm no longer raises its own dairy replacements. However, the beef enterprise has intensified, with cattle being finished on the farm instead of sold as stores. This was done to increase the profitability of the enterprise, as the farmer's son now works part-time on the holding;
- the beef animals are now winter housed, which has allowed better management of the grassland;
- silage has replaced hay for conserved forage, due to its ease of management and better feed quality;
- although the grassland now receives less artificial fertiliser, slurry application has increased;
- the grassland is now reseeded every 12 years, instead of every 6 years;
- a slurry tank was installed 6 years ago with grant aid.

A decrease in artificial fertiliser is beneficial but increased slurry application is worrying because slurry has a higher pollution risk to water courses than artificial fertiliser. The fall in cattle numbers will help to overcome both the poaching and slurry problems (see Buscombe, Challacombe, paragraph 6). The provision of winter housing will also reduce poaching, and the slurry tank will minimise the risk of pollution during storage. Cutting for silage is likely to have had adverse affects on the farm's ecological interest (see Buscombe, Challacombe, paragraph 6).

The farm's small size and need for commercial viability limits opportunities for nature conservation. The farmer is also constrained in what he can undertake by the terms of his tenancy agreement (e.g. the tenancy requires annual cutting of hedges). Furthermore, as his son is ineligible to take over the farm, there is little incentive for long-term improvements. The use of conditions beneficial to nature conservation should be considered in any new tenancy agreement. Slurry pollution could pose a problem, especially for the watercourses. It is difficult to see how this problem can be overcome on a small farm such as this. The only feasible solution is probably controlled disposal to the land, as is already happening (but which is undesirable in large quantities) or the introduction of anaerobic digestion as an energy source, although this may be too expensive for one small holding.

Examples of Good Practice

- Slurry tank
- Winter housing
- Ditches well-managed

WORTH FARM, WITHYPOOL

Size:	approx. 300 hectares (excluding common)
Ownership type:	owned
Full time:	yes
Enterprise type:	large cattle and sheep farm
Land in intensive use:	approx. 90% (90% grassland)
Land in extensive use:	approx. 7% (rough grazing/ moor)
Significant areas of non-agricultural habitat:	woodland (3%)
Common land:	yes (Withypool Common)
SSSI:	yes - Barle Valley (approx. 3%) and South Exmoor (part of Withypool Common)
Within Exmoor ESA:	yes
Schemes entered into:	ESA, SSSI, FCGS

Summary Description

Worth Farm is in the centre of Exmoor National Park and includes part of the South Exmoor SSSI (designated mainly due to its heath and moorland vegetation) where the farm has common grazing rights. It also includes part of the Barle Valley SSSI (an ancient Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea)* woodland). The farm house is on high ground, just off the road. To the west of the house, improved land extends up the valley of the small, tree-lined West Water stream. Field size here varies from medium to large, and improved areas eventually give way to unimproved moorland grassland at the farm's western edge.

On the other side of the road is a smaller, steeper area of improved grassland which is divided into small fields by neat beech hedges with stone banks. Some fine, mature trees are present in these fields, along with small areas of gorse. The Barle woodland (SSSI) extends part way up the steeper slopes and is represented by a relatively thin cover of trees. The understorey is not particularly species-rich and would benefit from being fenced off to exclude grazing animals and thus encourage a more diverse ground flora.

Further to the south, gently sloping fields give way to a steep, south facing incline at the southern boundary. Some of these steeper areas (which are less prone to ploughing and re-seeding) include semi-improved grassland on the more inaccessible slopes. Boundaries are again of neat stone banks and well-trimmed beech hedgerows.

The South Exmoor SSSI includes Withypool Common, where the farm has its heft. Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) is absent from this hill. Withypool Common itself is characterised by gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and is somewhat overgrazed.

Worth Farm has been farmed by the same farmer since 1970 as a cattle and sheep farm. Stock numbers have changed little since 1975, and at present there are 1,650 ewes and 75 suckler cows, calves being sold as stores. The farm also has grazing rights for 400 sheep on the adjacent Withypool Common and some sheep are away wintered. The main changes to Worth Farm since 1975 are as follows:

- silage has replaced hay as conserved fodder, as it is less dependent on the weather. Fertiliser rates on the grassland have also increased;

- the size of livestock has increased due to the use of larger, more productive breeds;

- sheep and cattle used to be out-wintered on Withypool Common. However, partly due to over-grazing of the common and pressure from the National Park, a new building was erected to allow winter housing of beef cattle and indoor lambing of the sheep flock;

- the practice of burning the moor no longer takes place.

The production of silage has a number of negative effects on the ecological interest of the farm (see Buscombe, Challacombe, paragraph 6). Larger sheep breeds and increased fertiliser application rates also have consequences in terms of decreased grassland diversity. The new winter housing will help to protect the grass and will be of particular benefit to the heather moorland as heather is at its most vulnerable during the autumn/winter period. Cessation of burning on the moor will lead to the heather becoming over-mature and of an undesirably even age.

The Exmoor ESA was entered into in 1994. The ESA agreement prevents periodic reseeding of pasture, although fertiliser rates remain largely the same. A future fall in stock numbers is anticipated as a result. This will reduce pressures on the grassland, increasing the chances of its becoming more species rich. Withypool Common is managed by a commons committee, one of whose roles is the regulation of stocking on the moor by excluding stock in the winter. This may have the result of allowing heather to recolonise.

Examples of Good Practice

- Hedgerow boundaries well-maintained (perhaps over-managed)
- Two SSSIs within farm boundary
- Retention of semi-improved grassland on more inaccessible slopes
- Stock excluded from moor during winter