

HLF Programme Objectives			
Objective	Outcomes	Main Objective (tick <b>one</b> box only)	Links to other areas
1	The heritage will be better managed		✓
2	The heritage will be in better condition		✓
3	The heritage will be identified/recorded		
4	People will have developed skills		
5	People will have learnt about heritage		✓
6	People will have volunteered time		
7	Negative environmental impacts will have been reduced		
8	More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage	✓	
9	The local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit		✓

**Objective 3: Improve the sustainability of high nature value traditional farming systems**

### 3e: Elan Wethers



**Summary**

Wethers - castrated male sheep were once traditionally kept as a key part of the mountain flock in the Elan Links area. Wethers are tougher than the ewes and are able to guide the flock to safety or to find food in the hard winter months. For this reason they are known locally as 'the kings of the mountain'. Recently, the lack of a defined market for wethers has seen the loss of this type of animal from our hills. However, wether meat is delicious and in this project we will pilot its promotion through local outlets such as

	<p>Elan’s visitor centre and local hotels. The project will see if sustainably produced wether meat production could become a component of Elan’s farming systems and local farming culture once again.</p> <p>Furthermore the Woodland Project (1c) within the Elan Links programme has identified a need to re-introduce grazing in a number of broadleaved woodlands to help control ground vegetation. It is proposed that wethers, as stronger animals, could have a role to play without becoming entangled in briars.</p>
<p><b>Project Details</b></p>	<p>This project will undertake and test the key elements needed to establish a marketing scheme for Elan wether meat. Evidence gathered from local outlets indicates a wish to see more locally produced and distinctive food. To give these outlets confidence in wether meat this project will undertake product development and taste-test work at Food Centre Wales. The work will focus in the first instance on developing a quality easy-to-use product and serving suggestions for the catering market. Opportunities for marketing products for home consumption will also be identified. Leaflets explaining the distinctive qualities and heritage of wether meat will be developed in order to support marketing to catering and other outlets. Serving and selling through local outlets will give the product visibility supporting sales for consumption in the home. Links between food, sustainability and the environment will be highlighted as will the distinctiveness of local farming culture. The innovative use of the wethers to graze woodland areas will further these links.</p>
<p><b>Need and Opportunity</b></p>	<p>This project has been developed to mitigate the threats identified in chapter four of the LCAP, namely:</p> <p>4.2.2 The threat from changing land management practices</p> <p>4.2.7 A challenging economic and policy environment for Elan and the surrounding area.</p> <p>4.3.1.1 Reinvigorating farming practices.</p> <p>Wethers are a traditional and distinctive product that is virtually unique to Elan and a few adjoining hills. Wethers have traditionally played an important role in ensuring the viability of sheep farming on our hills – helping to protect the ewes during hard weather and ensuring the flocks are hefted onto their traditional sheepwalks. There is therefore a real need to re-establish this traditional component of Elan’s farming system. The opportunity is to develop a high-end market for wether meat based around its distinctive flavour and heritage. The product fits well in to the concept of ‘slow-food’ with animals reared over three or four years as opposed to 6 to 9 months for ‘normal’ lamb. The fact that wethers spend their whole lives growing and fattening on the species rich pastures of the open hill country of Elan is both sustainable and develops the distinctive flavour.</p> <p>Their supplemental role as “woodland grazers” will further enhance their environmental credentials and further encourage their re-emergence as a valuable part of upland agriculture.</p>

<b>Project Management</b>	Natural Heritage Officer reporting to the Natural Heritage Sub-committee and the Partnership Board	
<b>Project Partners</b>	Lead partner: EVT Other partners: Food Centre Wales, local hotels and catering outlets, local farmers, woodland managers and a local food business.	
<b>Project Development</b>	This project has been developed following discussion with local farmers. A number of local hotels and catering outlets are very supportive and have agreed to stock wether meat and test the product. Advice on developing the project has been received from Food Centre Wales. EVT have agreed to initially supply wethers to the project.	
<b>Key Audiences</b> (Please see Audience Development Plan, appendix LCAP3, for more details about Elan Links audiences)	Audiences that will be primarily targeted through this project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌿 Land managers including landowners, tenants and commoners;</li> <li>🌿 Businesses in Elan and Rhayader.</li> </ul>	Secondary audiences who will also benefit as a result of the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌿 Visitors who are within 1 hour's drive away;</li> <li>🌿 Visitors coming for a specific activity;</li> <li>🌿 Residents of Elan and Rhayader.</li> </ul>
<b>Activities and Timescale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌿 2018 Taste testing and product development, Food Centre Wales;</li> <li>🌿 2019 Marketing literature developed. Product roll-out to at least 3 local outlets. Monitor uptake and review marketing strategy;</li> <li>🌿 2020 Develop opportunities for supply-chain development with local meat suppliers.</li> </ul>	
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌿 Market development and testing for wether lamb meat including roll-out to catering outlets on a trial basis;</li> <li>🌿 More effective woodland management at minimal cost with positive benefits.</li> </ul>	
<b>Output indicators and targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌿 Taste test for wether meat in comparison with other related products to identify a Unique Selling Point (USP)</li> <li>🌿 Product development to identify optimum cuts and pre-kitchen preparation</li> <li>🌿 Marketing literature</li> <li>🌿 Market testing in at least three catering outlets</li> <li>🌿 Better and more cost effective management of woodlands</li> <li>🌿 Farmers are encouraged to start keeping wethers again thus restoring a traditional farming system</li> </ul>	
<b>Outcomes</b>	Heritage Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌿 The distinctiveness of local farming culture is secured;</li> <li>🌿 Traditional high nature value farming is sustained with benefits for nature and landscape;</li> <li>🌿 An important part of Elan's cultural heritage is secured.</li> </ul>	
	People Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌿 Visitors and locals alike will have a greater awareness of the heritage of Elan.</li> </ul>	
	Community Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌿 Communities will have an appreciation for the heritage of Elan and the importance of safeguarding it and this will in turn reduce the risks for future harm;</li> <li>🌿 Elan will become more widely known as an area with a distinctive local farming and food culture and this will help to build the reputation of Elan as a tourism destination.</li> </ul>	

<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Project completion reports with evidence;</li> <li> Stakeholder feedback;</li> <li> Progress with project implementation will be reported to the Natural Heritage sub-committee annually.</li> </ul>
<b>Evidence</b>	<p>Sheep stocking diaries held by the Elan Valley Trust and dating back to the 1890's demonstrate that wethers were a key part (around 30 to 40%) of the sheep flock of the area until the late 1980's.</p> <p>Discussions have taken place with, and support offered by three catering outlets: The Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod; The Elan Valley Visitor Centre and the Elan Valley Hotel.</p> <p>Food Centre Wales have provided advice on product development.</p>
<b>Wider Context</b>	<p>Niche marketing of locally produced products is increasingly important as a means of adding value both for the producers and for tourism businesses that benefit from the improved visitor offer.</p>
<b>Legacy and maintenance of benefits</b>	<p>This project is designed as a 'test of concept'. Monitoring and evaluation work will enable the process of supply-chain development with local meat suppliers with the aim that at least one supplier will identify business-benefit from marketing the product as part of their 'offer'. In this way, a market for Elan wethers will be re-established and farmers will again benefit from this traditional activity.</p> <p>This project is designed to test a new-to-the-market product. Wether meat is a niche, high quality product with a fantastic story and as such will be priced similarly to premium cuts of beef and lamb. At these prices it is anticipated that the product will be viable to produce on-farm.</p>
<b>Risks and risk mitigation</b>	<p><u>Risk 1:</u> Price-point will be too high for local outlets. <u>Mitigation:</u> Taste testing and product development work undertaken at Food Centre Wales will help to identify the best ways of presenting the product both to the caterer and to the end consumer. The project will work with the participating catering outlets to monitor and evaluate uptake so that the product can be refined and taken forward by at least one local supplier.</p>
<b>Links to other Elan Links projects</b>	<p>Objective 1c: Through the requirement for heavier stock grazing in 1c this links with the wethers scheme where the areas are too publically accessible to be safe for horses or cattle grazing, wethers can provide the grazing.</p> <p>Objective 6: Monitoring of this project is important and as noted above, photographic recording of the project will happen. This will be implemented through project 6.</p> <p>Objective 7a: This projects will be interpreted through objective 7a in various ways dependant on the project requirements.</p> <p>Objective 7b: Information about the project will appear on the app as well as on the Elan Valley website and Elan Links' social media platforms. All of the events that are organised will be promoted on all of these platforms and they will be updated regularly to show the work that is carried out through the whole Scheme. Any content that is being recorded, either through photograph or film, will be shared and place on all of the platforms to ensure that the profile of Elan is raised and that all followers that have been</p>

	<p>gathered during the development phase are kept up to date and interested in the project throughout the delivery.</p> <p>Objective 7c: Artists will take inspiration from this theme. As well as inspiration, it is possible that some of the artists may wish to interpret the theme in their own way.</p> <p>Objective 7d: All events in this project will be organised through the work carried out in objective 7d.</p> <p>Objective 8: The volunteers that are required for this project can be selected from the database of volunteers that is collected through objective 8. Volunteers who participate in activities that aren't already part of Friends of Elan can be referred over and from there they will be offered a wider range of volunteering opportunities.</p>
<p><b>Background information</b></p>	<p>Elan is located in the Cambrian Mountains, Mid Wales, 5 miles to the east of the Market town or Rhyader. Elan's 20,000 hectares comprises 1% of Wales and is a unique landscape combining remote hill land, isolated farmsteads, steep-sided wooded valleys and the extraordinary feat of Victorian engineering that brought clean water to Birmingham.</p> <p>The community of farmers, tenants, the town of Rhyader and the village of Elan are the backbone of this vast area, with farming and tourism activities being the most significant economic activity in the area.</p> <p>Elan Links: People, Nature &amp; Water Landscape Partnership has an ambitious vision: to generate a step-change increase in beneficial outcomes for people, communities and heritage.</p> <p>Elan Links is a £3.5 million project with a significant £1.8 million secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Scheme.</p> <p>The Elan Links: People, Nature &amp; Water Landscape Partnership is currently made up of 17 different organisations who aim to deliver 26 projects under 12 strategic objectives over 5 years.</p>