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## **Local Development and Natural Protected Areas: Enforcement of Rural Policy in the Northumberland National Park**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

In a rural context which features with the emergence of environmental and recreational concerns it is believed that natural Protected Areas (PAs) play a key role. In fact, the benefits derived from PAs may have a positive impact on rural development. Within this framework, an assessment of the application of the Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES) in the Northumberland National Park (NNP) and its immediate environs over the period 2000-2006 has been made. Thus, whether the NNP makes any difference in terms of the application of rural development measures has been explored.

The methodology employed has consisted of both a descriptive data analysis and a questionnaire survey. The former has relied on secondary quantitative data and the latter on a questionnaire directed to all the RES applicants in the area over the cited period, successful or otherwise. The main research findings reveal that the Park may have some sort of influence on both local development and the application of the RES. However, an over-emphasis on tourism support may be a background reason for unbalanced development within the area.

**GATEWAY:** Environmental Issues in Local and Regional Development

## 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades the rural policy has undergone reforms regarding both its scope and policy instruments. The rural policy has evolved moving away from just supporting agriculture as unique aim towards an approach involving a more territorially focused support to cover a wider range of objectives. To some extent this evolution has been due to the severe socioeconomic and territorial changes that in general rural areas have witnessed both in England and at the European level. Thus, based on a regional perspective, English rural areas have increasingly become places where concerns such as recreation and environment have emerged. The socioeconomic regeneration of remote rural areas has also become a generic aim of rural development policy.

The National Parks policy framework in England has also evolved since the *1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act* was passed. The National Parks have recently incorporated socioeconomic aims into the range of objectives they pursue, primarily related to environmental and open-air enjoyment purposes. In this regard it has been acknowledged the need to integrate the human-natural relationship within National Parks. Such singular areas have acquired a vision partially relying on the enhancement of socioeconomic development for local communities. Hence, the application of rural policy measures within National Parks may have a particular importance as they may contribute to reach objectives devised for such areas.

In this context, the application of the ‘Rural Enterprise Scheme’ (RES) in the Northumberland National Park (NNP) –England, North East region— has been approached as a case study. Due to the distinctiveness that a natural Protected Area (PA) such as the NNP contains, the influence that a particular rural policy measure may have on the site and its immediate environs over the 2000-2006 funding period has been assessed. This evaluation may address both weaknesses and strengths in order to face improvements in the application of the RES for the future. Moreover, as the scheme has been enforced in such a singular area it may bring into discussion some further concerns due to the distinctiveness involved in a PA may indeed determine the application of rural development measures (e.g. the RES).

In this manner, particular research objectives have been set out. The principal aim of the research is to explore whether or not the NNP makes any difference in terms of the application of a rural development measure such as the RES. In a second tier, 3 more objectives have been established as follows: (a) analyse the RES enforcement in the NNP over the 2000-2006 funding period; (b) explore the possible advantages and constraints of applying the RES in the NNP for businesses; and (c) give a number of recommendations to both exploit advantages and overcome constraints detected.

According to the research objectives the methodology employed has consisted of two different parts: (a) analysis of secondary quantitative data<sup>1</sup>; and (b) employment of a questionnaire survey. Following Simmons (2001) and Parfitt (2005) the questionnaire has been divided in 5 different parts and has been devised taking into account *reliability* and *validity* properties. Both analysis of quantitative data and employment of a questionnaire survey pursue particular objectives and have own scope, although they make up a complementary approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Quantitative analysis has drawn on secondary data provided by the Rural Development Service (RDS) within the North East region office of Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The criterion employed to consider applicants “in the NNP and its immediate environs” has consisted of including all applicants in the Park and those located 1 Km within the Park border.

In regard to the text outline, firstly the context of rural policy over the period 2000-2006 in the North East of England is described. A quick review of the linkage between rural development and natural PAs, both from theoretical and empirical perspective, is approached in the next section. Results of the RES enforcement in the NNP are detailed in section 5. Main research outcomes and issues highlighted are brought into discussion then, and finally principal ideas are synthesized as conclusions along with a few recommendations.

## **2. Rural Development in the North-East of England: Policy and Practice**

### **2.1. Rural Policy in England over the period 2000-2006**

The UK fulfilled Community commitments and rural development programmes ran over the 2000-2006 funding period. The rural programmes of the 4 UK nations allocated an amount of over £3.1 billion (€4.6 billion) for the cited period. However, the restricted EU allocation to the UK under the Rural Development Regulation (CE) 1257/1999 (RDR) was a crucial factor in limiting the success of the rural programmes either in the UK (Ward, 2002) or in England (Ward and Lowe, 2004). In fact, the UK Government applied modulation to all direct payments to allow expansion of existing schemes and the development of new ones, particularly in England where support for modulation was more concentrated than in the rest of nations.

The *England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) 2000-2006* totalized a budget of £1.7 billion (€2.7 billion) over the seven-year financing period and it focused on (a) supporting agricultural holdings; (b) facing issues regarding environment (i.e. agri-environment schemes); (c) enhancing social regeneration; and (d) promoting diversification of rural economy. It comprised 16 of the total 22 measures available under the RDR, including both accompanying and non-accompanying measures. But spending allocation seems to be imbalanced in favour of 'Agri-environment' measures, which accounted for the 57% of the budget (*Ibid.*). By contrast, 'Promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas' (Art. 33) accrued only 8.4% of spending, which seems insufficient according to the wide range of sub-measures it contains. However, 3 sub-measures under Article 33 (i.e. Marketing of quality agricultural products, Encouragement for tourism and craft activities, and Diversification of agricultural activities) accounted for over 60% of the spending of this measure, which means 5% of the overall budget.

Most of the measures contained in the ERDP had simply been rolled forward as they were a continuation of past schemes. However, the new schemes were obviously drawn on RDR articles and they were related to them as follows: Energy Crops Scheme (Art. 4-7; and Art. 31); Processing and Marketing Grant Schemes (Art. 25-28); Vocational Training Scheme (Art. 9); and Rural Enterprise Scheme (Art. 33; and Art. 4-7). Moreover, the ERDP schemes can be split into two types, i.e. Land-based schemes and Project-based schemes (Figure 1).

Despite this range of measures put in place, the ERDP's approach has not been exempted from criticisms (*Ibid.*). First, it has been argued that rather than an integrated programme it still looked like and operated like a handful of separate measures. In this respect, a gap between programme's principles and their practical implementation has been identified (Ward, 2002). Secondly, also in conjunction with implementation a contradiction arises regarding, on the one hand, the 'Europeanization' of rural policy insofar as member states had to follow a common European framework guides; but, on the other, the English countryside has recently witnessed both reform and devolution of rural policy in order to approach concerns regarding the 'differentiated countryside'. A third reason derived from the budgeting perspective may be added to these two. Since financial support among measures was

imbalanced in favour of agri-environment schemes to the detriment of socio-economical measures, scepticism may arise about purposes and scope of rural development programmes.

**Figure 1. ERDP 2000-2006 Schemes**

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Land-based schemes</i>: aimed to adopt environmentally beneficial land management practices.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Environmental Stewardship</li><li>b. Countryside Stewardship Scheme</li><li>c. Energy Crops Schemes (establishment grants)</li><li>d. Environmentally Sensitive Areas</li><li>e. Farm Woodland Premium Scheme</li><li>f. Hill Farm Allowance</li><li>g. Organic Farming Scheme</li><li>h. Woodland Grant Scheme</li></ol></li><li>2. <i>Project-based schemes</i>: aimed to help rural businesses (including farming and forestry) to adapt to changing circumstances and to develop.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Energy Crops Scheme (short-rotation coppice producer groups)</li><li>b. Processing and Marketing Grant</li><li>c. Vocational Training Scheme</li><li>d. Rural Enterprise Scheme</li></ol></li></ol> |
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Source: Defra.

However, the Rural Development Regulation agreed in September 2005 differs little from its predecessor in terms of measures and scope. In fact, the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) faces the future with the same basis of its predecessor. The RDPE is being applied over the 2007-2013 funding period and contains 4 principal axes: (a) agri-environment schemes; (b) competitive farming and forestry; (c) creation of economic opportunities and social conditions; and (d) enforcement of the LEADER Initiative. One of the principal concerns regarding the RDPE is the fact that as with ERDP 2000-2006 a relatively high amount of funding (80%) will be allocated to agri-environment schemes, which leaves a relatively little amount of funding for a wide range of socioeconomic objectives (Carroll and Ward, 2006).

## **2.2. Rural Development Policy in the North East of England**

In an attempt to deepen the ‘regionalization’ process that apparently has taken place in England over the last few years<sup>2</sup>, the ERDP included a regional chapter for each region. In this way, project-based schemes were administered at the regional level, namely the Rural Enterprise Scheme, Processing and Marketing Scheme, and Vocational Training Scheme. However, significant measures such as agri-environment schemes, Less Favoured Areas (LFA) support and Energy Crops Scheme were programmed nationally. Likewise, the programme Plan was suggested and guided by a Regional Planning Group (RPG) formed by regional stakeholders. Although this apparent regional strengthening, less than 15% of the

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<sup>2</sup> The emergence of a regional dimension tied to rural development has been a theme studied in detail over the last few years (see e.g. Ward *et al.*, 2003). It seems a ‘regionalization’ process has been developing within England driven by, on the one hand, institutional and policy arrangements within a devolution framework that have attempted to strength on the regional dimension – e.g. Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and Regional Assemblies (RAs) were established in 1999 –; and on the other, a reinforcement of economic relationship that has been apparently taking place at the regional level, allegedly encompassing both rural and urban interests.

ERDP's moneys were allocated at the regional level (Ward and Lowe, 2004). In addition, one should note that the final Programme was much less ambitious from a regional point of view than previous Plan envisaged by regional actors. So the regional perspective in this sense is more rhetoric than real.

Different socio-economic diagnosis of the rural North East undertaken before implementing the ERDP (Whitby *et al.*, 1999; MAFF, 2000) highlighted that peripheral rural areas showed a reduction in population, just the opposite of the main trend across England over the last few years; also pockets of economic decline and social exclusion were revealed; declining of services, specially Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); and financial pressure on agriculture, particularly in Northumberland (see Ward and Lowe, 1999). Furthermore, it must be also considered the unevenness existing in rural areas across the North East in terms of economic performance, demographic composition, natural and cultural assets, commuting patterns, and remoteness to principal infrastructures and urban centres, which may lead to increase disparities within the region.

Drawing on its own analysis the ERDP's regional chapter focused on, on the one hand, valuing both natural and cultural assets within the North East in order to enhance recreation and leisure; on the other, improving marketing of products and services. Thus, the programme revealed an investment need in the region to develop services and a more integrated rural economy, but also changes in attitudes and skills, which may be significant as it puts pressure on the stakeholders involved.

According to the analysis undertaken specific goals and objectives were devised for the region in order to "redress the intra-regional disparities that have emerged" (MAFF, 2000:3). The goals and objectives relied on three pillars, i.e. economic, environmental and social. Some sort of regional distinctiveness may be found amongst them, but in general terms goals and objectives did not substantially differ from those accounted in other rural programmes.

### **2.2.1. Rural Enterprise Scheme**

As a project-based scheme the RES was not focused within the ERDP 2000-2006 on particular sites, and thereby it could be applied where ever. The scheme could assist projects that "support the development of more sustainable, diversified and enterprising rural economies and communities" (Defra, 2004:5) all across the country although it was managed at the regional level. It was indeed operated under the discretion of Regional Programming Committees (RPC).

The RES was in particular aimed to help farmers to adapt to the new situation derived from the agriculture restructuring process, but also to "those which help to protect the rural environment" (*Ibid.*). Depending on the commercial returns of the project, 3 levels of grant aid were offered within the scheme:

- a) 15-30% of approved costs for projects which generate a substantial return (i.e. annual return of over the 25% of the total investment).
- b) 30-50% for projects where the primary objective is an economic return to the applicant.
- c) 50-100% for projects producing no or minimal economic return (i.e. a project either environmentally-oriented or which principally benefits the local community).

However, the RES covered a number of potentially eligible activities derived from the combination of 9 sub-measures under Article 33 (Figure 2). Overall, the wide range of

eligible activities allowed the RES to approach the diversification and enhancement of the rural economy though the bulk of recipients during the first few years had been farmers. In this sense, the measures for the RDR agreed under the 2003 CAP Review were seen as an opportunity to enlarge the scope of Article 33. Particularly, the aid for the management of integrated rural development strategies by local partnerships could have been inserted within the RES (Ward and Lowe, 2004).

**Figure 2. Potentially eligible activities within RES**

1. Setting-up of farm relief and farm management services;
2. Marketing of quality agricultural products;
3. Basic services for the rural economy and population;
4. Renovation and development of villages and protection and conservation of the rural heritage;
5. Diversification of agricultural activities and activities close to agriculture to provide multiple activities or alternative incomes:
  - (i) Diversification into other alternative agricultural activities;
  - (ii) Diversification into non-agricultural activities;
6. Agricultural water resource management;
7. Development and improvement of infrastructure connected with the development of agriculture;
8. Encouragement for tourism and craft activities;
9. Protection of the environment in connection with agriculture, forestry and landscape conservation as well as with the improvement of animal welfare.

Source: Defra (2004).

In terms of budgeting, approximately £145 million (50% EU – 50% UK Government) were allocated to the RES over the period 2000-2006 and over 3,000 projects were approved all across England, creating or safeguarding over 14,500 jobs<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, the implementation of the RES was initially strongly oriented towards agricultural recipients as only 13% of the spending under this scheme (1% of total programme expenditure) had been allocated to non-farm/non-food activities in 2001 (Ward, 2002). In the North East, some 80% of the ERDP regional budget was allocated to the RES, which reveals the potentiality of this scheme as rural development tool for the region.

### **3. Rural Development Policy and its Relationship with Natural Protected Areas**

Rural policy has gradually incorporated the territorial axis since the mid-1970s when LFA support Directive was established. Rural policy has evolved towards a more territorially focused approach intervention on particular regions/areas, so it has become a means to tackle territorially defined concerns. In this sense, the RDR stated that rural programmes had to be drawn up at “the most appropriate geographical scale”, allowing member states to devise rural programmes according to the requirements of their own particular rural areas. Moreover, initiatives such as LEADER programmes embody neatly this approach as they are enforced in particular areas where specific needs have been detected.

Furthermore, rural programmes have adopted a low geographical scale in policy delivery and have generally incorporated tools to intercede on particular sites within their geographical scale. This requires partnership working in order to dovetail joint purposes in different fields such as environmental policy, transport and economy. Particularly, environmental and nature

<sup>3</sup> Available from: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/pbs/default.htm>

protection issues have been recently embraced by rural policy as the close interrelationship between environmental concerns and rural activities suggests. Thus, rural programmes have increasingly paid attention on natural PAs. For instance, the ERDP supported the proposition of the South Downs for becoming National Park. The programme included a regional objective for the South of England for enhancement, restoration and recreation of open down land with the purpose of recreating that landscape within the South Downs area (Garrod and Whitby, 2005).

However, it is widely recognised that the first aim of PAs is the conservation and maintenance of the natural environment contained within them. This is still more emphasised in National Parks, where the protection under specific legislation of a particular area is primarily because of their high standard natural resources, biodiversity, and landscape. In this way, according to the positive externalities derived from the PAs' environmental values these sites can be employed as a policy measure (Lowe *et al.*, 1999). Thus, the creation of National Parks has mainly regarded the promotion of positive externalities within the environmental and protection policy framework.

Nevertheless, the conception of National Park has evolved over the years. Parks used to be seen as just natural reserves for contemplation and conservation, but have been gradually considered as sites which to some extent may contribute to development and enhancement of local communities (García, 1998). The former conception was spread at the time that the first National Park was declared in Yellowstone (US) in 1872. However, that idea of intrinsic natural beauty for which Parks served has been slowly replaced by the perception of an indisputable human-natural relationship within these areas. Hence, a new vision about natural PAs, including National Parks, has emerged through which local community participation has been enhanced and reinforced insofar as it is necessary for conservation purposes as well as for local development (Mac Ewen and Mac Ewen, 1981; Wells *et al.*, 1992; García, 1998).

Over the years natural PAs have incorporated socioeconomic aims in the wide range of objectives they pursue. In fact, in addition to environmental goals PAs are committed to reach some others, such as educational and scientific objectives, recreation and leisure supply, and socioeconomic local development. In this sense, it has been argued that an integrated approach involving rural development generic purpose and PAs' socioeconomic objectives has arisen over the last few years (Troitiño, 1995; Lucio, 2002). Thus, the designation and management of these sites have been increasingly inserted into the rural policy framework, since it has been seen as a factor able to enhance rural areas.

From this point of view it is assumed the existence of positive socioeconomic impacts consequent on the establishment of PAs. Some of these may be, for instance, as follows: revenues derived from tourism; creation of local employment associated with implementation of environmental management plans; targeted aids for farming and rural development projects; proliferation of agri-environment schemes in the site; cultural heritage conservation; creation of a brand-driven identity, which may lead to commercial revenues; improvement in the quality of life as a result of living in a nature-based environment; and a more consistent social cohesion derived from the increasing local community involvement.

In this way, not only positive socioeconomic impacts have been emphasised but it has been argued that natural PAs have become a valuable tool to foster the development of the areas where they are located (Buller, 2000). In addition to PAs, it has been also showed that the implementation of biodiversity protection plans has a positive local impact in terms of creation of wealth and employment (Mills, 2002). However, in contrast to this perception some other researchers have shown the socioeconomic impact that a PA may produce in its environs is scarce (Alba, 1998; Murua *et al.*, 1999).

Furthermore, the socioeconomic impact derived from natural PAs may influence not only the local level, but also further environs such as the regional tier. It is believed that natural assets, including PAs, constitute a valuable resource to develop rural areas, either from a market-guided perspective (Harvey, 1996) or through instruments provided by policy intervention (see OECD, 1999). In fact, this economic perspective of the environment is being applied not only concerning just rural areas, but in regard to the regional development. For instance, it has been estimated that the 5 PAs of the North East<sup>4</sup> contributed economically to the region as follows (SQW Limited, 2004): (a) businesses in such areas generated a total turnover of just over £700 million; (b) the total value added is estimated to be £323 million (i.e. equivalent to about 1% of the North East's Gross Value Added); and (c) employment supported to be 14,000 jobs (i.e. 14% of all direct and indirect jobs supported by tourism in the region).

#### **4. Northumberland National Park: A Socioeconomic Overview**

The NNP was designated in 1956 so it has been running for the last 50 years. It is located in the North East of England (see Appendix 1) and covers a surface of around 1,050 sq Km, which approximately signifies a fifth of the county of Northumberland (NNPA, 2003). With only a few settlements in it and a population of circa 2,200 people, NNP is by far the least densely populated National Park in England with 2.1 inhabitants per sq Km (see Table 1). However, there exist a few market towns just outside the Park's border (i.e. Wooler, Rothbury, Otterburn, Bellingham, and Haltwhistle) (see Appendix 1), maintaining probably a significant relationship with all that the Park involves.

In regard to land use, over 55% of the Park is considered 'open country' (Table 1). Almost 17% of land is 'woodland', predominantly coniferous (16% of the total surface), and over the 21% 'agricultural land'. Sheep farming continues to be an important activity in the NNP; four-fifths of the Park is farmed, of which around 90% is heather moorland and grass (NNPA, 2003). The distribution of land occupation may have contributed to keep farming as over 56% of the land is private (Table 1). As in many English National Parks also in the NNP most of the land is privately owned (Harmon, 1991).

On the other hand, public bodies own about 42% of the NNP: the Forestry Commission owns nearly 20% of the land and the Ministry of Defence over the 22%. Military activities and uses undertaken within the Park have been source of conflicts over the recent years (see e.g. Woodward, 1997). However, the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) reveals a quite accepting point of view in this regard as the presence of the training area in the Park would have been apparently fully assumed (NNPA, 2003).

As noted above, farming is still an important activity within the NNP. However, farming in the NNP has undergone a significant decline over the last few decades in terms of both workforce and income (NNPA, undated), as well as in the county of Northumberland (Ward and Lowe, 1999). According to data gathered in 1999/2000 in a farm survey appointed by the NNPA (164 farmers were interviewed), the workforce of the farms represented almost 30% of the resident workforce in the Park. Average farm size was 561 ha and almost 57% of the land managed was rented, a distinctive pattern of land tenure in Northumberland. There has been an increase in sheep number since the early 1970s, leading to an average stocking density of 0.44 Livestock Units per ha in 1999/2000 – i.e. about 22% higher than in 1972/73.

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<sup>4</sup> The 5 PAs existing in the North East region of England are as follows: Durham Heritage Coast, Northumberland National Park, Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), North Pennines AONB, and North Yorkshire and Cleveland Heritage Coast.

**Table 1. Land use type and land occupation in the NNP**

<b>Land use type</b>	<b>ha</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Land occupation</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Open country	58,452	55.7	Private	56.4
Agricultural land	22,654	21.6	Forestry Commission	18.9
Coniferous woodland	16,490	15.7	Ministry of Defence	22.6
Broadleaved woodland	975	0.9	Water Companies	1.2
Mixed woodland	224	0.2	National Trust	0.7
Cliff & foreshore	0	0.0	English Nature/CCW	0.0
Inland water	144	0.1	NNPA	0.2
Urban area	116	0.1	Other	0.0
Derelict land	15	0.0		
Other/not specified	5,877	5.6		
Total	104,947	100.0		
<sup>a</sup> Common land	150			

<sup>a</sup>: the Common land figure is included in other land categories, e.g. open country.

Source: Council for National Parks.

In terms of income there is no doubt that public subsidies have generally become an important component of farm income. Regarding the NNP, 75% of farmers interviewed in 1999/2000 estimated subsidies contributed at least half of their overall farming income (NNPA, undated). Hence, not surprisingly two-thirds of farms had at least one source of non-agricultural income; and for half of these, non-farming income made up at least a third of total household income. Moreover, most on-farm diversification was relatively modest in scale and conventional in scope, including bed and breakfast, holiday cottages, and caravan or camping sites.

In fact, tourism is also an important activity in the NNP. The NNP is more heavily dependent on tourism and agriculture than other PAs in the North East (SQL Limited, 2004). The total number of visitor days was slightly over 2 million in 2002, including both estimated day visitors and overnight visitors. It has been also estimated that 33% of day visitors come from the North East and 15% from elsewhere in the UK. Moreover, on average a day visitor spends £11.41 in the Park area and an overnight visitor £37.97. Thus, the tourism expenditure in the NNP has been estimated to be over £42.8 million per year (*Ibid.*).

Projects driven experimentally within the Park have probably contributed to encouraging tourism activities (ANPA, undated). For example the *Environmental and Economic Development of Hadrian's Wall Corridor*, a project which ran in the second half of the 1990s and was aimed to developing local land-using businesses while at the same time improving the environment. Outcomes reveal that environmental goals were obtained, but results in the business area are unclear, though "jobs were safeguarded and one full-time job created" (*Ibid.*: 23). On the other hand, the *People and Place* project in addition to objectives associated with environment and tourism sought to provide training to local businesses. Driven by the NNPA, this project was allocated a budget of £143,800 for a 3 years scheme, from 1999 to 2001.

The NNPA's view has indeed relied on the incorporation of socioeconomic aims into the Park's purposes. This is shown by the Management Plan launched in 2003 (NNPA, 2003). This "new approach for managing NNP" regards the recognition of the need of human-natural interaction for both conservation and development purposes. Furthermore, the Authority's vision relies on an economic perspective of the environment contained within the Park since its landscape (e.g. scenery, vegetation, wildlife, and cultural heritage) is considered an

economic asset. Besides, NNPA believes this view is applicable for either local or regional level, as it is thought that “the National Park is also a regional asset” (*Ibid.*:5). In addition, the NNPA makes its own particular contribution to employment in the North East as 55 jobs are supported with an expenditure of £2,738,008 (SQW Limited, 2004).

The Authority can also have an influential impact on rural development insofar as it has a key partner role (Carroll and Phillipson, 2002). However, this role has been partially restricted as the NNPA has particular commitments – limits on what it can do – and is constrained by external budgeting. In this sense, the *Review of English National Park Authorities* (2002) committed Government to review the expenditure constraint that NPAs may have in order to promote rural development within the Parks (Defra, 2002).

## **5. Application of the RES in the NNP over the period 2000-2006**

### **5.1. Quantitative Data Analysis**

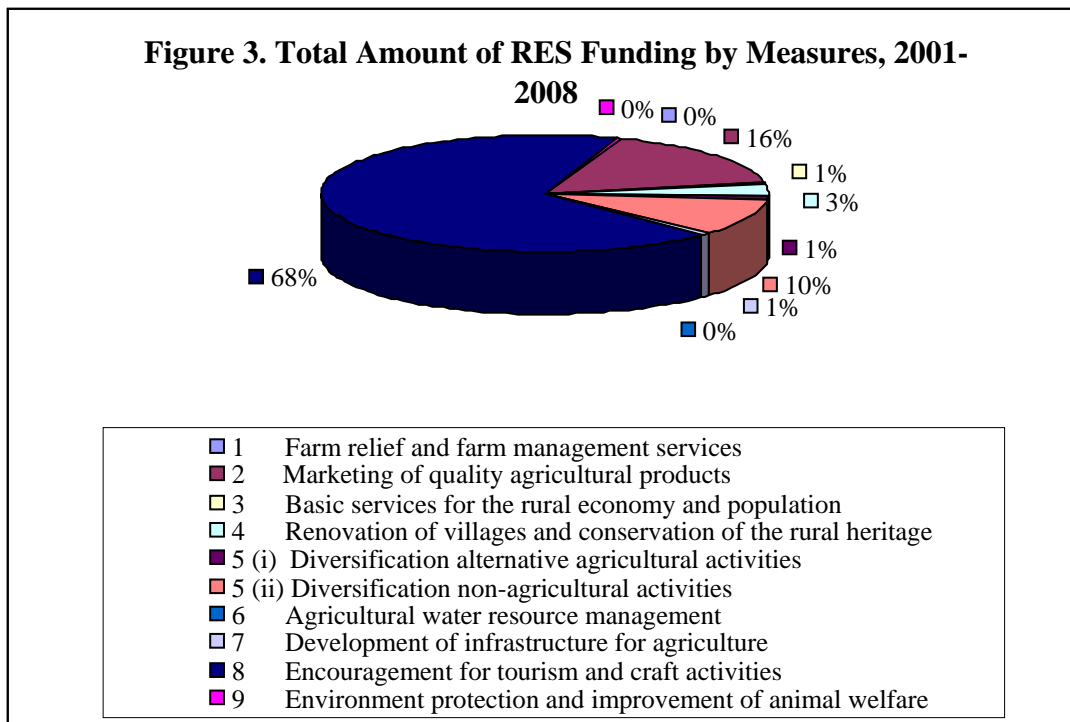
The number of projects that applied for the RES funding in the NNP and its environs over the 2000-2006 funding period reached 43. According to official data from the RDS over £3.8 millions were budgeted for these projects, from which around 52% was public investment. This amount was provided by both the EU – through the EAGGF – and DEFRA with 50% each. By contrast, the private sector was responsible for the 48% of the total amount (i.e. over £1.8 million).

As noted, a wide range of projects may be eligible within the RES, which was devised drawing on a combination of sub-measures under Article 33 of Rural Development Regulation (CE) 1257/1999. Thus, projects’ purposes go from improvements in businesses kitchen in order to offer a higher standard service to provision of a new borehole aimed to provide clean drinking water to the residents of a village. Likewise, depending on the nature of projects they may run for several years, as it is the case that around half of them have run through two or more financial years.

Total investment breakdown by measures reveals an uneven distribution of the RES funding. Projects within measure ‘encouragement for tourism and craft activities’ absorbed 68% of total investment (Figure 3), which clearly shows a strong unbalanced orientation of the RES within the NNP and its environs. In other words, £2.6 million (i.e. over £1.2 million of public investment) was assigned only to encourage rural tourism in the area. Far from the latter, projects aimed to improve marketing of quality products were allocated 16% of funds, and those directed at diversification of non-agricultural activities 10%. So the cited three measures acquired some 95% of the total funding (i.e. the sum of public and private investments) over the eight-year period<sup>5</sup>. Despite the unbalanced orientation of funding towards rural tourism it must be emphasised that private sector has had a remarkable participation on this as 53% of the total investment comes from private entrepreneurs.

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<sup>5</sup> Although projects are encapsulated within the ERDP 2000-2006, as some of them were planned to run longer than this period funding is expected until 2008.



Source: author drawing on data from RDS (Defra).

According to data provided by the RDS, over 52 full-time jobs<sup>6</sup> were created by projects funded within the RES (Table 2). The 29 projects aimed to encourage rural tourism (67% of total number) generated two-thirds of total jobs, revealing again dominance of this measure over the rest. Both measures directed to encourage marketing of quality products and agricultural diversification produced jobs as well (18), but 4 measures for which projects were applied for did not create any job.

Furthermore, analysis undertaken in terms of investment by job created allows us to approach some sort of efficiency measure. According to this measurement differences among the RES measures are remarkable (Table 2). It is so that public investment per job aimed to improve marketing of quality products (£126,000) is significantly higher than that directed at agricultural diversification (around £11,000 and £14,000 depending on the measure). By contrast, investments in rural tourism projects do not differ significantly from average. It means investment in marketing is relatively inefficient compared with other measures, which reveals difficulty of obtaining economies of scale through projects within such a measure. Moreover, inefficiency is still more emphasised in this case as public investment accounts for 77% of total funding within this measure. Nonetheless, in projects regarding marketing an assessment of intangible assets, such as image and brand, in addition to an analysis of revenues derived from the investment would be required in order to obtain a full assessment of investment carried out.

<sup>6</sup> Note that jobs created totals 52.7 as both full-time and part-time are accounted. A full-time job accounts for “1” job and part-time jobs account for less than “1” job depending on involvement. So it makes possible to obtain decimals through the final account.

**Table 2. RES Projects and Jobs Created, 2001-2008**

Measure	Projects	Jobs created		
		No	Pub Invest by job created	Tot Invest by job created
1 Farm relief and farm management services	0	0.0	0	0
2 Marketing of quality agricultural products	3	3.8	126,259	163,661
3 Basic services for the rural economy and population	1	0.0	0	0
4 Renovation of villages and conservation of the rural heritage	2	0.0	0	0
5 (i) Diversification alternative agricultural activities	2	2.5	11,350	19,592
5 (ii) Diversification non-agricultural activities	4	11.7	13,947	33,504
6 Agricultural water resource management	0	0.0	0	0
7 Development of infrastructure for agriculture	1	0.0	0	0
8 Encouragement for tourism and craft activities	29	34.7	35,209	75,204
9 Environment protection and improvement of animal welfare	1	0.0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>52.7</b>	<b>38,087</b>	<b>73,338</b>

Source: author drawing on data from RDS (Defra).

Funding breakdown by project shows that those regarding rural tourism reach again the average as some £90,000 investment per project has been allocated within this measure (Table 3). Far from this figure, it is still remarkable the relatively high amount of investment per project aimed to improve marketing of quality products (£207,000). It reveals again the important financial effort undertaken within the latter measure. However, projects circumscribed within marketing measure generally spanned more years than others. This fact obviously mitigates in some way the relatively high costs of these projects as total costs must be split per project year.

**Table 3. Investment by Project, 2001-2008**

Measure	Funding	
	Total Invest by project	Total Invest by project by year <sup>a</sup>
1 Farm relief and farm management services	0	0
2 Marketing of quality agricultural products	207,304	25,913
3 Basic services for the rural economy and population	21,014	21,014
4 Renovation of villages and conservation of the rural heritage	63,532	21,177
5 (i) Diversification alternative agricultural activities	24,490	12,245
5 (ii) Diversification non-agricultural activities	98,166	10,907
6 Agricultural water resource management	0	0
7 Development of infrastructure for agriculture	30,231	15,116
8 Encouragement for tourism and craft activities	90,011	2,093
9 Environment protection and improvement of animal welfare	14,947	14,947
<b>Total</b>	<b>89,933</b>	<b>1,303</b>

<sup>a</sup>: Note that the term 'year' in this case represents the number of years through which the project has been running.

Source: author drawing on data from RDS (Defra).

## 5.2. Questionnaire Analysis

A response rate of 42% was attained from the 43 projects that had applied for the RES funding. Considering that 25% of applicants could not be contacted during the two weeks period field work, the 18 questionnaires answered accounts for over 56% of those applicants contacted (see Appendix 2). Shortage of respondents may lead to a lack of information, although it is thought in this case the response rate obtained is not poor at all considering both resources and time available. In fact, these were crucial factors as they conditioned the progress of the fieldwork. Likewise, a geographical balance was sought among respondents' locations, so if a more geographically balanced approach was not reached it was only due to impossibility to interview more applicants. The most applications were from settlements near Hexham (18) and the least from Brampton (2) surroundings (see Appendix 1).

A first remarkable conclusion derived from questionnaire analysis is the importance that the RES grant has for respondents in terms of safeguarding the future of the business, since all of them rated it as 'important' or 'very important'. Moreover, 43% of respondents indicated revenues were 'more' than expected before starting the project while a fifth was unable to assess this as their projects still were in progress. Only in one case revenues were less than expected. Hence, it seems that the RES valuably contributed to guarantee to great extent the future of the businesses involved.

However, experience of applying for the RES was graded by a third of applicants as 'poor' or 'very poor', whilst some 40% assessed it as 'average'. Moreover, half of applicants indicated the experience of applying for the RES was 'more difficult' than applying to other funding sources, and generally described it as a long and difficult process. There was one interviewee who defined the application process as "a pain" (Q7) and another who viewed the paperwork the application involves as "a nightmare" (Q3)<sup>7</sup>. The main reasons given regarded the bureaucratic nature of the process in terms of length and information required, and complexity and preparation work of the business project. A few respondents also complained about the conditions required for receiving funding, including the necessity of applicants having to advance the investment.

Nonetheless, when they applied most applicants (77%) found advice offered by DEFRA helpful; this advice was given to every project. But advice was not always given while projects were running, and in those cases it was given some applicants found unsatisfactory. On the other hand, NNPA did not advise all projects – it was not their duty as the RES is run by DEFRA. In the cases where the NNPA had given advice (over a half of respondents) the vast majority (90%) indicated it was 'useful'. Even two applicants of projects placed outside the Park emphasised Authority's approachable help.

However, many of the respondents focused on the person in charge about advising them, whatever the organisation which the adviser belonged to. Adviser's ability and skills at the time the application is being made make a huge difference in terms of both project reliability and resource usefulness. In fact, almost 60% of applicants relied on further advice in addition to that provided by DEFRA and NNPA, including private consultancy and *Business Link*<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, it is remarkable the contribution of the latter to the RES implementation as almost 40% of applicants found out about the RES through this service and a third of them received further advice.

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<sup>7</sup> There is no link between quotations in the text (Q) and No displayed in Appendix 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Business Link* is an official government service, providing advice and information for new and small businesses.

Apart from advice, around a half of respondents received further funding linked to their project. Within these additional funding sources *Energy for Enterprise* must be highlighted as almost 30% of projects received support from this scheme. So businesses involved may assure their electricity supply and in some cases may be supported to move towards a *greener* energy. The two community projects interviewed had obtained further funding derived from an estate agency, lottery funds and small charities.

In addition to the RES, near a half of respondents was funded from other schemes provided by DEFRA. Most of them were supported by either Hill Farm Allowance (HFA) or Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS). Other schemes joined by applicants were environmental ones such as woodland maintenance schemes.

When applicants were queried whether the fact of being in or near the Park makes any difference in terms of being awarded by the RES almost 40% answered it was so, and a third of them thought it was “possibly”. In both cases reasons generally relied on the opinion that the scheme would bring tourism to the Park; on the other, it is believed that NNPA may have had any influence in facilitating funding to the area, even though funds came from DEFRA. In fact, one interviewee argued that the NNPA “had a huge input and helped to get the grant” (Q3). By contrast, 4 applicants indicated the Park should not make any difference in being awarded by the RES. So it may not surprise that 3 of them were funded by the RES and are located outside the Park, and the fourth one was not awarded.

Moreover, when respondents were interrogated about how the Authority could improve their working 45% either did not know or did not answer, and a further 16% had no suggestions. Most of respondents have a good opinion about the Authority. However, criticism of the NNPA included the need to develop a “more sympathetic” (Q9) approach to businesses and the assertion that “NNPA is not about supporting communities; it is about balancing conservation with tourism” (Q5).

The majority of respondents also believe that having the Park makes some difference in terms of local development. The principal argument exposed by respondents again regards tourism as “it helps tourism” (Q14). Around 60% of them think the Park has a positive impact in tourism, mainly because of advertisement the Park makes and infrastructure it provides for tourists (maps, car parks, tracks, etc.) – according to one interviewee “everything is kept tidy up” (Q12). However, on the other hand, some 20% of respondents argue that the Park restricts building, which in some cases may go against local people as “extra housing is needed in the area” (Q1). From this perspective, it is believed the Park may hamper local development since many respondents identified building with local development.

Furthermore, both tourism and building are respectively related to the advantages and disadvantages derived from the Park, as respondents identified. Environmental protection was obviously the advantage most considered along with the natural beauty that the Park contains; secondly, advertisement released regarding the Park and tourism involved in the area were mentioned; thirdly, the role the NNPA plays as fundraiser and adviser both for local people and projects; and finally, 3 respondents (two of them located outside the Park) did not identify any advantages.

But, on the other hand, 27% of respondents did not appreciate any disadvantages and a further 27% did not either answer or know what to answer. Thus, “planning restrictions” was the most cited disadvantage by respondents (33%). In fact, as it was pointed out by a few respondents building restrictions are the counterpart of preserving the environment and landscape – e.g. “this is the other side of advantages” (Q7). In this sense, restrictions in planning were considered by a few respondents as an advantage as they keep the area free from unwanted development.

## 6. Discussion

Drawing on the analysis undertaken it seems that having the NNP makes some sort of difference in both being awarded by the RES and promoting local development. According to this, it may be concluded that the Park provides some sort of differentiation to the area, which may be on the basis of further rural development. Furthermore, it can be concluded that advantages derived from the NNP are greater than disadvantages. In fact, this general perception obtained from respondents' opinion may be endorsed with outcomes derived from other research focused on the NNP but regarding agricultural issues. According to the Farm Survey 1999/2000, more farmers believed that the advantages of farming in a National Park outweighed the disadvantages. However, they also felt that those advantages come out as a consequence of general qualities of the area rather than resulting from National Park status *per se* (NNPA, undated).

A main outcome arising from the analysis undertaken is the emphasis on support for rural tourism in the area. Not only quantitative data but applicants' opinion point out the importance of tourism for the area. In this sense, tourism encouragement is a reasonable approach within a National Park as revenues derived from tourism is one of the principal benefits regarding natural PAs. In fact, seeking tourism enhancement as a strategy for development has been employed within natural PAs policy framework, for instance, in France (see e.g. Buller, 2000).

In cases regarding PAs this approach is obviously drawn on (natural) resources disposed on the area. Particularly in the NNP, Hadrian's Wall area, which is located in the South of the Park (see Appendix 1), is where more tourists are received. This attraction of tourists is due to both (a) the ancient remains of wall and settlements and (b) the existence of a trail for walkers and tracks for cyclists. So the employment of such a resource is a valuable tool for the tourism development in the area as it is apparently well exploited. In fact, 17 out of the 43 projects analysed are located in the Hadrian's Wall surroundings.

However, two concerns arise regarding the *tourism monoculture* developed around the Hadrian's Wall. First, over supporting the southern area of the Park compared to other areas may lead to an uneven geography in terms of tourism development within the Park. In this context, there exists the risk of an unbalanced contribution of funding in favour of the southern area. Secondly, and more important, there are risks associated with over reliance on tourism. This may lead, on the one hand, to overcrowding the southern area, which would become spoiled and busy; and on the other, as one of the respondents argued the point is "what happens when the Wall trail is superseded by another new premier trail" (Q5).

Any effort directed at preserving the Park's distinctiveness will be worthwhile insofar as both natural environment and development strategies are looked after. In this sense, the respondents' opinion regarding the NNPA is also a remarkable point as shows that applicants generally believe the Authority to be a powerful organisation capable of interfering in funding, even in those grants which are not managed by the Authority (e.g. RES). In this regard it must be highlighted again the specific role of tourism as it is believed it plays a key role in both attracting funds for the area and underpinning development. One interviewee thought the Park Authority not only helps tourism, but "it should do and it needs to do" (Q16).

On the other side, it seems disadvantages underwent by local people are not in the analysed case as important as they may be in other natural PAs. The only significant one claimed by respondents were restrictions in planning, but this is in some manner a way to preserve the

natural environment too. Thus, interest conflicts may be faced when: on the one hand, new buildings and infrastructures are needed by local communities either to keep a way of life in such an environment or to improve local accessibility and economy; and on the other, environmental and landscape protection is required along with preserving local settlements' essence and nature. When such a conflict arises each particular case should be analysed and studied, but always within the parameters that a PA involves. So in these cases NNPA's role is crucial as they manage to advice and help local people to arrange issues related to building permissions. In fact, according to the overall opinion revealed by respondents the NNPA generally plays this role satisfactorily.

Another point of matter regarding disadvantages is the fact that the application process of the RES generally was not pleased applicants. Both the long bureaucratic process and advancing money before receiving public funds were the principal complaints. However, this view must be contrasted with DEFRA's point of view. In order to use resources rationally DEFRA needs to be sure to who is offering the grant and for what purpose, for which a thorough process was devised (see Defra, 2004).

One should keep in mind that an integrated approach recognising the human-natural intrinsic relationship is the most plausible and effective view within both the National Parks framework in general and the NNP in particular. In addition to this, the potentiality of the NNP to bring positive socioeconomic impacts to the area must be highlighted. In regard to the application of the RES in the NNP, it seems that it may help to safeguard the future of the businesses interviewed. Moreover, the analysis undertaken has revealed that over 52 jobs were created under the scheme between 2000 and 2006. Hence, according to this the RES has had a remarkable contribution to the rural economy in the NNP and its environs. In this regard, following Harmon (1991:35) the NNP can be viewed as a successful example since "the success of the Parks is measured by how well they invigorate the economy – and particularly the farm economy – within them".

Moreover, it is thought the RES has contributed significantly to development in the area. In particular, it was emphasised the high importance of the RES for safeguarding the future of the business, which highlights its role as successful rural development tool. Nonetheless, the RES enforcement in the area was at the expense of a £2 million public investment, which may be considered a relatively high amount of funding. It is true that this amount encouraged further private investment as complement funding for projects that otherwise would not probably be undertaken in such conditions by private entrepreneurs. But it is not less true that in some cases public investment has not been efficient enough contrasted with the jobs created (e.g. marketing measure). However, further research focused on economic revenues derived from the application of the RES would be necessary to build a more consistent opinion in this respect.

Nevertheless, weaknesses have been also detected regarding some of the measures within the RES. On the one hand, the apparent inefficiency associated with 'marketing of agricultural products' suggests some sort of precaution in funding distribution. A more in-depth economic analysis would be probably required in this regard. On the other, it seems that a few measures have failed in their purpose as they were not able to attract any project in the area. Therefore, the 'success' of the RES may merely be associated with the measure regarding tourism (and craft activities). Furthermore, the RES did not particularly help farm oriented measures within the NNP, unlike the general trend of the RES enforcement all across the country until 2001 (Ward, 2002).

However, the potential benefits derived from the NNP must be definitely exploited within the regional context. In fact, as it has been argued by Lowe (2006:40) "the focus of intervention

to promote rural development and employment should be the rural and regional economy and not the agricultural sector". It is not less true that agricultural activity should be preserved in such a singular area as the NNP, but a view which relies on the regional approach of both the rural development and the National Parks framework is definitely desired.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

According to respondents' general opinion, having the NNP makes some sort of difference in favour of the application of the RES. The main reasons given are both the opinion that the scheme would bring tourism to the area and the belief that the Authority can have influence on the facilitation of funding. Furthermore, the majority of respondents also argued that the Park makes some difference in terms of local development, having a positive effect particularly on tourism.

In addition to environmental protection and natural beauty other advantages identified by respondents are both advertisement and support for tourism and the NNPA's role as fundraiser and adviser. By contrast, when mentioned, the most cited disadvantage was planning restrictions. However, these restrictions can also be understood as way to preserve the environment from further undesired development.

The respondents' general opinion supported the importance of the RES as rural development tool since in their view it played an important role in safeguarding the future of businesses. Nevertheless, weaknesses were also detected in this regard as follows. First, a number of measures under the RES were under exploited and apparently one particular measure (i.e. marketing of quality agricultural products) was inefficiently employed. Secondly, the RES enforcement over the 2000-2006 funding period in the NNP and its environs was clearly biased towards rural tourism. 68% of allocated funding in this period was aimed at encouraging tourism, i.e. over £1.2 million of public investment. Moreover, tourism development through the RES was mostly focused on the Hadrian's Wall area. It seems a reasonable usage of such a resource for tourism, but at the same time risks derived from this tourism monoculture may be faced in the future.

Finally, it must be noted that a few 'research gaps' have been identified as a result of the research undertaken. Thus, *further research* in the topic is suggested as follows. First, it is believed that a research focused on the economic revenues derived from the application of the RES would be helpful. In particular, those projects related to marketing of agricultural products would need priority in this regard as the apparent inefficiency they involve suggests. Second, comparisons of the RES enforcement in other National Parks as well as in not natural PAs should be required to contrast findings. Third, a research aimed to reveal the NNP's overall costs (i.e. direct, indirect, and opportunity costs) would be useful as they may be compared with the economically measured benefits (see e.g. SQW Limited, 2004).

### *Recommendations:*

- 1) An analysis of the reasons why some particular measures under the RES was not applied at all within the NNP is required. Drawing on this, some sort of action must be devised in order to make good use of the RES's potentiality regarding those 'under-funded' measures.
- 2) A more pro-active approach to local community may be needed in order to encourage rural businesses to apply for RES funding. Specialised staff 'on the ground' aimed at advising local communities about the advantages of being funded by the RES would be required.

- 3) The introduction of a geographical criterion among the criteria established to award the RES is also needed. This would be particularly useful in those projects associated with rural tourism. It would contribute the prevention of geographic unbalanced development between the southern area and the remote areas within the Park.
- 4) The process of applying to the RES should be made easier. This would lower costs and inconvenience to applicants. Re-arrangements should be focused on: (a) stronger specialised advice at the point of application, which in many cases would save applicants the costs of obtaining private advice; (b) make a financial effort in order to release funds earlier in the project rather than at the end of the project; and (c) offering further advice while the project is in progress, particularly in cases in which applicants struggle with management duties.
- 5) In cases in which projects are not awarded by the RES an alternative (perhaps under another scheme) is required to allow the completion of the project. This means that co-ordination and co-operation between different organisations involved in the Park would be required. It would be aimed at procuring funding from any of the other organisations involved once the RES bid has failed.

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## Appendix 2: Summary of Questionnaires

No	Project situation	Year approved	Measure	Nearest Town	Questionnaire	NNP
1	Application rejected	--	2	Wooler	Impossible appointment	--
2	Application withdrawn	--	5 (i)	Morpeth	Refused to answer	--
3	Agreement completed	2002	8	Haltwhistle	Answered	Outside
4	Application rejected	--	5 (ii)	Morpeth	No contacted	--
5	Agreement completed	2002	8	Brampton	Answered	Outside
6	Application rejected	--	8	Hexham	No contacted	--
7	Application rejected	--	2	Otterburn	No contacted	--
8	Agreement completed	2002	5 (ii)	Otterburn	Answered	Outside
9	Agreement completed	2003	8	Otterburn	No contacted	--
10	Agreement completed	2002	8	Morpeth	No contacted	--
11	Agreement completed	2003	8	Haltwhistle	Answered	Inside
12	Application rejected	--	8	Otterburn	Refused to answer	--
13	Agreement terminated	2003	8	Hexham	Refused to answer	--
14	Application rejected	--	8	Hexham	No contacted	--
15	Agreement completed	2003	8	Hexham	No contacted	--
16	Agreement completed	2003	3	Wooler	Answered	Inside
17	Agreement completed	2003	5 (ii)	Hexham	No contacted	--
18	Agreement completed	2004	8	Morpeth	No contacted	--
19	Agreement completed	2004	8	Hexham	Answered	Outside
20	Live agreement	2004	8	Brampton	Answered	Inside
21	Agreement completed	2004	9	Hexham	Refused to answer	--
22	Application rejected	--	8	Hexham	Answered	Inside
23	Agreement completed	2004	8	Hexham	Refused to answer	--
24	Agreement completed	2004	8	Hexham	Answered	Inside
25	Agreement completed	2004	8	Hexham	Refused to answer	--
26	Application withdrawn	--	8	Hexham	Answered	Inside
27	Agreement completed	2005	8	Hexham	Answered	Inside
28	Agreement completed	2005	8	Wooler	Refused to answer	--
29	Agreement terminated	2005	8	Morpeth	No contacted	--
30	Agreement completed	2005	8	Haltwhistle	Answered	Inside
31	Application withdrawn	--	8	Haltwhistle	Refused to answer	--
32	Agreement completed	2005	8	Morpeth	Answered	Inside
33	Live agreement	2005	8	Otterburn	Answered	Inside
34	Agreement completed	2005	8	Morpeth	Answered	Inside
35	Live agreement	2006	2	Hexham	Refused to answer	--
36	Live agreement	2005	8	Hexham	Refused to answer	--
37	Agreement completed	2005	4	Hexham	Answered	Inside
38	Agreement completed	2005	5 (i)	Hexham	Answered	Inside
39	Live agreement	2006	5 (ii)	Haltwhistle	Refused to answer	--
40	Agreement completed	2006	8	Otterburn	Answered	Outside
41	Live agreement	2005	7	Hexham	Refused to answer	--
42	Live agreement	2006	4	Otterburn	No contacted	--
43	Live agreement	2006	8	Wooler	Refused to answer	--

Note: (1) Farm relief and farm management services; (2) Marketing of quality agricultural products; (3) Basic services for the rural economy and population; (4) Renovation of villages and conservation of the rural heritage; (5-i) Diversification alternative agricultural activities; (5-ii) Diversification non-agricultural activities; (6) Agricultural water resource management; (7) Development of infrastructure for agriculture; (8) Encouragement for tourism and craft activities; (9) Environment protection and improvement of animal welfare.

Source: author.