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**Evaluation report for the Integrated
Advice Project 2022-23**

**established by FWAG SW with support from
the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation**

by Janet Dwyer, OBE



Evaluation report for the Integrated Advice Project 2022-2023

Established by FWAG SW with support from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

by Professor **Janet Dwyer** OBE, Professor of Rural Policy and Co-Director of NICRE, Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire.



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FOREWORD – Jenny Phelps MBE

With climate emergencies, large-scale biodiversity loss and international crises, we are facing a perfect storm reaching a global tipping point where we need to act now to avoid mass extinction and global temperature increases. Government action can be slow due to the complexity of challenges that we are facing in the UK, but farmers and communities need support now to help them take local action to become resilient, while also delivering the global targets we must achieve.

In this space, there is a vital role to be played by environmental charities and arm's length government bodies, offering support and advice on the ground. This advice will be essential in helping to realise the bright future that we need to realise. We must become resilient for food and fuel security, building healthy living soils to underpin ecological recovery, deliver high-quality, nutrient dense food whilst delivering multiple benefits, such as clean water, reduced flood risk and restored biodiversity.

Without support, people within communities' struggle to interact effectively with an often-complex web of governance. This wastes time and resources, with stakeholders duplicating work and sometimes working against each other to attain conflicting objectives, often achieving little. Often organisations are competing for funding. We no longer have the time for it to be this way. We must respect the role and expertise of others and work together to a shared strategic vision that incorporates and delivers social, economic and environmental solutions.

The essential role of a facilitator/adviser can be the catalyst for swift and coordinated action to gain support from a wide range of experts, enabling the resource of the community to act in a meaningful way, helping with environmental and economic recovery, health and wellbeing.

Gloucestershire is demonstrating through this Gloucestershire Farm Advice pilot that it has a very active Local Nature Partnership (LNP), Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Protected Landscapes (AONB) Partnership, Catchment Partnerships and strong relations with farmer groups, the CLA and NFU. The LNP and LEP quite uniquely work together and have produced one of the greenest Local Industrial Strategies, recognizing that quality of the environment, rural enterprise and farming are at the heart of its economic strategy. All the district councils within the county (that have all declared climate emergencies) work in partnership to contribute towards the LNP, which has produced one of the first Nature Recovery Networks¹, now underpinning our Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

It is now recognized that to deliver the multiple strategic priorities (both existing and new) that we must work collectively towards a shared vision for the county where everyone is coordinated and supported to deliver together using an integrated local delivery approach². The pilot project has resulted in a unique alignment coordinated by the Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership Vision³ and Feeding Gloucestershire⁴, the Gloucestershire

¹ Gloucestershire Nature Recovery Network Map [GLNP | Natural Capital \(gcerdata.com\)](https://www.gcerdata.com)

² Integrated Local Delivery [Integrated Local Delivery | Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SW \(fwagsw.org.uk\)](https://www.fwagsw.org.uk)

³ GFFP [Partnership Network | My Site \(gloucestershirefoodandfarmingpartnership.org\)](https://www.gloucestershirefoodandfarmingpartnership.org)

⁴ Feeding Gloucestershire [Home - Feeding Gloucestershire](https://www.feedinggloucestershire.org)

Regenerative Environmental and Agricultural Transition (GREAT) Project⁵, Environmental Land Management Scheme Trials⁶ resulting in the county being awarded Bronze as a Sustainable Food County⁷. We have created a county based environmental baseline to evidence ecosystem recovery and as a platform for investment in climate change adaptation and opportunities to crack food in equality.

The aim of this partnership project has been to deliver a pilot that demonstrates how farm and community advice provision is essential to deliver societal transformational change. At its heart is support for agro-ecological farming practice that delivers nutrient quality food that also delivers multiple public goods for society. This pilot has the opportunity to demonstrate to both national and local government how to create a systems approach to enabling farmers and communities to get support to act now for climate emergency and how they might become resilient both economically and environmentally.

There are some key principles to our pilot that values everyone's contribution:

Registering and respecting existing advice providers in five ways:

1. Sharing and adoption of a shared vision for coordinated action
2. Geospatially mapping advice provision, valuing and respecting existing relationships
3. Registration of existing expertise on the professional register
4. Upskilling and continued professional development to be adaptive to local needs.
5. Reconnecting farmers and communities for climate resilience.

The pilot has mapped many existing advisers and their areas of expertise under the headings of the Global Farm Metric⁸. The advice skills needed to support this transition can be aligned under the following headings Productivity, Human Capital, Social Capital, Biodiversity, Plant and Crop Health, Animal Husbandry, Nutrient Management, Energy and Resource Use, Air and Climate, Water and Soil. Integrated Local Delivery also creates an opportunity to train specialist facilitators to help scope farm support, advice and training needs relevant to each locality.

The advisers are being encouraged to register on the online open source 'Ag Hub' map created by the Rivers Trust (funded by the Worldwide Fund for Nature and Tesco). As a result of the pilot the hub now directly to the skills, qualifications and continued professional development from the BASIS professional register. These advisers would then be coordinated as a resource for action through the LNP to delivery local landscape and catchment priorities.

Farmer groups have been mapped to develop localised projects for blended finance investment that could be facilitated by the local advisers for partnership delivery of multiple agendas. Social Capital, the action of local communities, could also be released by local

⁵ GREAT [Home | The GREAT Project \(greatglos.co.uk\)](https://www.greatglos.co.uk)

⁶ ELM [Exploring the role of UK habitat mapping in a new Environmental Land Management Scheme - Ecosystems Knowledge Network](#)

⁷ SFP [Sustainable Food Places - Feeding Gloucestershire](#)

⁸ Global Farm Metric [Global Farm Metric | Measuring On-farm Sustainability](#)

facilitators to help with natural capital restoration, mapping and recording an environmental baseline, carbon audits and species recording.

We are now in a unique position, after a year's support from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, to have achieved social, economic and environmental alignment across the county for rapid investment in climate change adaptation. There is much still to do but, now the path is set thanks to this pilot project.

My thanks to Professor Janet Dwyer and the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise for their continued support in the delivery of the pilot and support over the last 20 Years. And our partners in the project, The Rivers Trust⁹, BASIS¹⁰, Ruralink¹¹, NICRE¹², the Nature Friendly Farming Network¹³, The Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership¹⁴ and the Land App¹⁵



Jenny Phelps MBE
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⁹ The Rivers Trust

¹⁰ BASIS

¹¹ Ruralink

¹² NICRE

¹³ NFFN

¹⁴ GLNP

¹⁵ The Land App

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Executive Summary

This report provides a structured assessment of the achievements and the value of FWAG SW's integrated advice approach as applied through the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation funded project in 2022-2023.

It is clear that a significant number of influential activities took place, and that new farmers and communities were reached by these events. The log of activities also shows that FWAG SW achieved all the key performance indicators and targeted outcomes of the funding for this project. In addition, the project achieved further added value by raising the strategic recognition of integrated local delivery as a key delivery vehicle for achieving other County-level targets for the environment and climate action.

Assessing the value that could arise from FWAG SW's work this year has entailed detailed examination of past experience among both farmers and rural communities. A potential value can be computed, net of the costs of provision, that the benefits of the project to Gloucestershire's farming and rural communities is significant, at somewhere around £2 million per year. This is with a multiplier effect of around 18, meaning that the benefits generated over 5 years are as much as 18 times greater than the costs invested over that period.

Looking ahead, FWAG SW estimates that it could more than double farmer engagement with ILD across the County in the next few years, particularly as agricultural transition prompts much more reaching out by farm businesses. Many will need to address the loss of the Basic Payment Scheme support formerly available under Europe's Common Agricultural Policy, perhaps by becoming involved in Defra's new ELM schemes for environmental benefits.

Likewise, on the community's side, FWAG SW estimates that there remains significant untapped potential for benefits from ILD engagement. The County has 33 local catchment areas, averaging around 5 rural parishes per area, of which they have only reached 5 areas, thus far over the last 10 years. It could well be possible, if given further investment in ILD provision from various sponsors, to expand the community level service to cover the rural areas of the whole county, within the coming 5 years.

In conclusion, combining this record of the project's achievements when measured against its targets and performance indicators, and the briefly assessed, indicative computation of the monetized net value and rate of return for what has been delivered and what it should deliver in the years ahead; give confidence that

- the project has represented very good value for money for its sponsors.
- there is significant potential for even greater benefit and resilience arising from further investment in this approach over the coming 5 years.
- There is a case for this approach to be cost-effectively rolled out at regional or national level in view of the urgency of the challenges that it can help to address, for farming and for rural communities.

SECTION 1. Introduction and methods

1.1 Introduction and aims of the project

The FWAG SW Integrated Advice Project is a partnership convened to deliver a pilot that demonstrates coordinated action to support nature friendly farming through farm and community advice. At its heart is support for agro-ecological farming practice that delivers food while also delivering multiple benefits for biodiversity and society. The aim is to demonstrate to both national and local governments how to create a systems approach to enabling farmers and communities to act collectively for nature recovery and climate emergency and how they might become resilient both economically and environmentally.

The project's innovative approach is based on considerable experience of working to streamline and join up advice and support to farmers, in a complex period of transition. It seeks to influence policymakers in how best to focus funding for farm and rural advice, aiming to demonstrate the need for specialist facilitators, and integrated local delivery.

FWAG SW aims to:

- Help **coordinate partnership advice across the county** to deliver nature friendly farming projects working in partnership with farmers, communities and partners.
- Deliver **a template for coordinated advice** across the 6 districts and boroughs to create demonstration nature friendly farm projects in Cotswold, Stroud, The Forest of Dean, Tewksbury, Cheltenham and Gloucester.
- Develop a project template of groups of farmers working together with communities along water bodies to build adaptation and resilience to climate change, linked to the catchment-based approach¹⁶.

This evaluation report aims to document the progress of FWAG SW in this project as funded by The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation in 2022-2023, and to use this evidence **to produce a county-wide cost benefit analysis of the role of integrated and co-ordinated advice provision**, in this context. This work therefore adds to and should complement previous evaluations of FWAG SW's work on Integrated Local Delivery, which can be found at Integrated Local Delivery | Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SW (fwagsw.org.uk)

In particular, the project seeks to report performance against the following outcomes and/or indicators of success:

- A record of the Gloucestershire farmers and communities engaged inclusively to assess transition and climate change resilience needs.
- Identification of issues and opportunities from Gloucestershire farmer and community engagement.

¹⁶ Catchment Based Approach [Home - CaBA \(catchmentbasedapproach.org\)](http://Home - CaBA (catchmentbasedapproach.org))

- Level, extent and quality of current advice provision from public, private and third sector organisations is understood, and future capacity needs identified.
- Advisors are co-ordinated as a resource to enable the delivery of local landscape and catchment priorities.
- A communication strategy is developed with farmers, communities and advisers to share the Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership Vision¹⁷ and co-ordinate advice and funding provision from partnerships across the county.
- Current advisors are mapped on the online opensource Catchment Based Approach Agricultural (CaBa Ag) Hub¹⁸, linked directly to the BASIS professional advice register¹⁹ that records qualifications, areas of expertise and skills.
- The project will enable the further technical development of the CaBa Ag Hub to increase its value to farmer users and enable BASIS to further develop the content of its training modules to incorporate learning around Nature Friendly Farming.
- The key role of specialist facilitators²⁰ is evaluated, in inspiring nature friendly farming with multiple socio, economic and environmental benefits for climate change resilience.

Agreed Outcomes and Indicators (as finalised in dialogue with The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation sponsors, September 2022)

Outcome: County-wide evaluation of farmers and rural communities' advice needs for co-ordinated action on climate and agroecology.

Indicators:

1. A record of all the Gloucestershire farmers and communities engaged inclusively to assess transition and climate change resilience needs.
2. Production of detailed study that assesses and reports on the issues and opportunities identified from this engagement.

Outcome: Level, extent and quality of current advice provision across the county is understood and future capacity needs identified, with advisors being co-ordinated as a resource to enable the delivery of local landscape and catchment priorities.

Indicators:

1. A communication strategy is developed with farmers, communities and advisers to share the vision and co-ordinate advice and funding provision from partnerships across the county.
2. Current advisors are mapped on the online opensource CaBa Ag Hub, linked directly to the BASIS professional advice register those records qualifications, areas of expertise and skills that link directly to the Global Farm Metric²¹ and Integrated Local Delivery.²²

¹⁷ GFFP Vision [The Vision | My Site \(gloucestershirefoodandfarmingpartnership.org\)](https://gloucestershirefoodandfarmingpartnership.org/)

¹⁸ Caba Hub: <https://aghub.catchmentbasedapproach.org/>

¹⁹ BASIS Environmental Register [BASIS | Environmental Advisers Register \(basis-reg.co.uk\)](https://basis-reg.co.uk/)

²⁰ Rural Facilitator [Facilitator \(ruralink.org.uk\)](https://ruralink.org.uk/)

²¹ GFM [Global Farm Metric | Measuring On-farm Sustainability](https://globalfarmmetric.org/)

²² Integrated Local Delivery [Integrated Local Delivery | Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SW \(fwagsw.org.uk\)](https://fwagsw.org.uk/)

Outcome: The financial implications of co-ordinated advice provision are illustrated and better understood.

Indicators:

1. A completed, county-wide cost benefit analysis of the role of co-ordinated advice provision;
2. Evidence of the key role of specialist facilitators inspiring nature friendly farming with multiple socio, economic and environmental benefits, for climate change resilience.

1.2 Methods

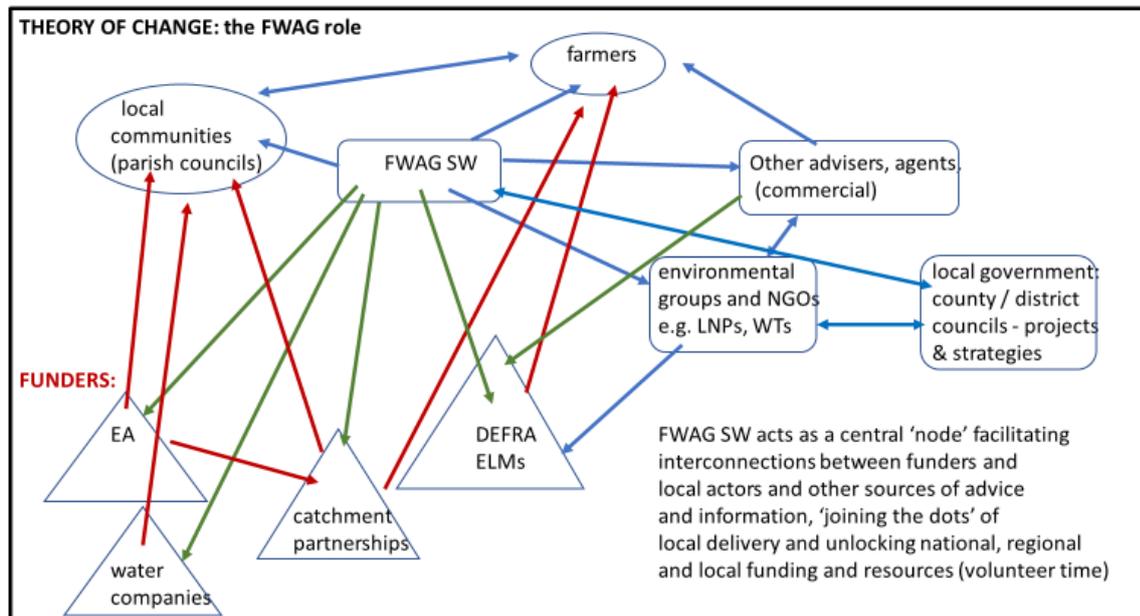
The evaluation has taken a mixed-methods approach, to ensure that it can deliver both

- i. a clear record of performance based around project activities completed, over the funding period;
- ii. a robust evaluation including assessment of both quantitative and qualitative performance data, in order to enable a cost-benefit analysis of the value of this initiative, considering the resources devoted to it and the results obtained.

For item i) the record of performance against the agreed outcomes and indicators, the FWAG SW project delivery team were initially interviewed to identify what records they would be keeping and how information could be recorded and shared with the evaluator, as the project progressed. This information was then gathered and shared, at or immediately following each of the evaluation meetings with the team. This enabled the cumulative tracking of performance and generation of a **list of achievements** over the project period (section 2).

For item ii) an initial meeting with the FWAG SW team was used to identify a **theory of change**, concerning the anticipated outputs and outcomes of the project. This considered the immediate actions and their likely consequences as well as back-casting to capture the likely longer-term impacts of integrated advice provision. In both the short-term and in the longer-term, a **suite of indicators of impact** was generated, leading to an evaluation design which could enable measurement of each of these indicators. Figure 1 explains the research design and its relationship to the impact indicators

FIGURE 1. The Theory of Change: How Integrated Local Delivery works



Blue arrows are flows of information, green are funding applications facilitated by FWAG on behalf of others in the network, and red are funds flowing to those beneficiaries.

So FWAG's role is three-fold:

- It enhances information flows between actors in the network, broadening their understanding of how their interests could be best served by working with others who have complementary or synergistic goals or skills and knowhow.
- It improves local actors' access to information and resources in order to take more action to achieve positive impacts, using local knowledge to target those resources to best effect in their territories.
- It unlocks funding opportunities for local actors by taking them through the process of application and justification for these funds, often reaching sources that they were previously unaware of.

The next step in our theory of change approach is to identify what success looks like and thereby generate indicators of success that we can then take steps to measure and monitor as FWAG's activities begin to generate change. In this context:

- Improved information and broadened knowledge among different organisations in the network is one indicator of success that could be rather difficult to measure, as these organisations may not distinguish the specific role played by FWAG, in improving their awareness and networking, and/or it may be too early in the process of setting up the CaBA Ag hub for other advisers to be able to judge how it benefits their work
 - *suggest to measure later, as a second phase of benefits evaluation*
- Improving local actors' access to specific information and resources should be simpler to track down and measure, using indicators identified by the main local actors: farmers and local communities.
 - measure benefits of ILD as perceived by farmers and local communities and identify financial proxies for the main types of benefit

- unlocking funding opportunities will be straightforward to measure, as everyone involved will be able to trace how FWAG’s support helped them to draw on new or enhanced funding. However, the benefit needs to be measured net of the funds accessed as they act as an investment to deliver benefit rather than a benefit in themselves.

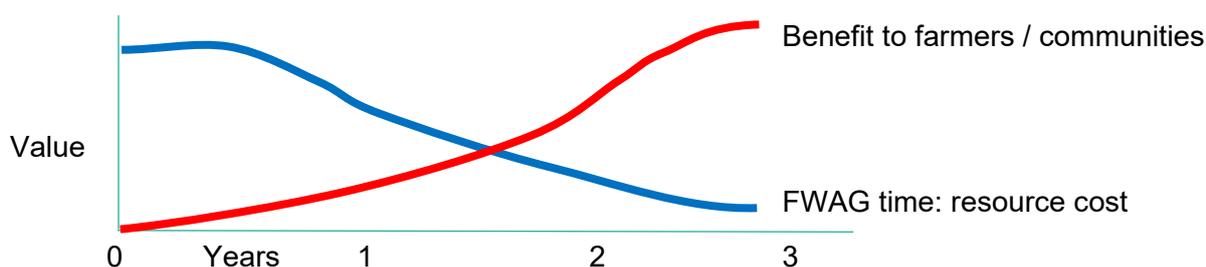
To develop the cost benefit analysis from the impact indicators it was necessary to undertake a monetization of impacts and to gather financial indicators of the costs of integrated advice provision.

Key assumptions involved in this process were discussed and agreed with FWAG SW, before proceeding to monetization.

These included:

- 1) The proportion of total attendees at FWAG events who were ‘first engagers’, during the year; and
- 2) The pattern of development of benefits relative to FWAG’s costs of ILD deliver, over time. The graph illustrating this pattern is shown below in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2. Pattern of benefits generated to farmers and communities relative to costs, in ILD



FWAG SW also noted that the slopes for both curves would be steeper in cases where social capital among the beneficiary groups was stronger, as benefits would be understood and would spread more quickly, reducing the effort required by FWAG SW to make this happen.

Monetization of impacts adopted a shadow pricing approach whereby each type of recorded impact was linked to a plausible, similar type of marketable or priced benefit which could then be used to estimate a financial proxy value for that impact. Details are given in section 4 of this report.

Generation of **a costs calculation** was discussed and agreed with FWAG SW, as it was necessary to clearly identify and distinguish costs associated with the provision of integrated advice to both farmers and stakeholders, from the costs of other aspects of FWAG SW’s business.

SECTION 2: Activities

2.1 FWAG SW project activities over the funded period

1. Evaluation

Three Project Research and Evaluation meetings were carried out in October (2022), May and September (2023).

A development workshop with FWAG advisers to determine theory of change and identify indicators of progress, to understand the existing support used by farmers; gather farmer experience and opinions around current advice provision; and identify needs and gaps.

2. Gathering information

An online questionnaire seeking information about farmers' current use of advice linking to the Global Farm Metric headings, for coverage: Water; Soil; Productivity; Human, Social, Biodiversity; Plant and Crop Health; Animal Husbandry; Nutrient management; energy and resource use; climate and air quality. This survey has been completed by 51 farmers in Gloucestershire (total farm number estimated at 2,000-2,500 in the County (from just over 3,000 holdings). The survey thus represents perhaps 2.5-3% of the farms in the County.

Designing and attending a Farm Adviser workshop, July 2023.

Online and direct communication with 150 farm advisers across Gloucestershire, March to September 2023.

Analysis of feedback from the 50 advisers that attended the workshop, August 2023.

Analysis of Community Climate Event and Outcome Report, September 2023.

Meeting with the NFU and Farm 491 (RAU innovation centre) to develop online access to a Gloucestershire portal for farmers and communities to find advice providers, identifying skills and knowledge gaps.

- Meeting with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to register and include all other non-government organisation advisers in the project.

Presented the project to the Upper Thames Catchment partnership²³ to invite advisers to be involved from other public, private and third sector organisations. Contacted the Gloucestershire Division of the Agricultural Valuers Association to be involved with project.

- Built a database of advisers serving farms in the Gloucestershire area.

²³ Upper Thames Catchment Partnership [Upper Thames Catchment Partnership | Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West Limited \(fwagsw.org.uk\)](https://www.upperthamescatchmentpartnership.org.uk/)

3. Engaging with stakeholders, information providers and funders

Presentation of the project to the Local Enterprise Partnership²⁴ (LEP) and meeting with the Agri-Food Group Skill, Training and Advice strand.

Joined the National Agriculture Advice Hub steering group to develop the catchment-based approach portal (CaBa Ag Hub) with Gloucestershire as a case study.
(<https://aghub.catchmentbasedapproach.org/>)

Discussed how to upskill farmers and advisers registering on the Hub via continued professional development, linked to the Environmental Advice Register and BASIS. Confirmed that education on regenerative agriculture is key to a climate resilient future and the unique role of BASIS as a learning provider.

Presentation to the Gloucestershire Climate Leadership Group and the Strategic Economic Scrutiny Committee about underpinning economic resilience being dependent on climate resilience and a transformed food system.

Presented the essential role of farm advice to the District and Borough Councils in Gloucestershire linking directly to the Shared Prosperity Fund and England Rural Prosperity Fund.

Evidence of previous research and ongoing findings of the Gloucestershire Advice pilot presented at Oxford Real Farming Conference on the key role of integrated advice, skills and CPD training of advisers, carried out by BASIS, Ruralink and FWAG²⁵.

- Evidence and ongoing findings of the project presented at Cereals 23 and Groundswell sessions on the essential role, and cost benefit of advisers that can deliver integrated funding opportunities to assist the transition to nature friendly farming.

4. Developing the integrated service

BASIS launched its Environmental Adviser Register with the aim of focussing the registration of advisers in Gloucestershire as a pilot for the national register, please see attached brief. <https://basis-reg.co.uk/environmental-advisers/becoming-a-member>. Promotion of the new BASIS Certificate of Sustainable Land Management through the advice pilot: <https://basis-reg.co.uk/training?area=environmental-courses&course=certificate-in-sustainable-land-management>

BASIS wrote two articles for local publications about the importance of advice provision, CPD and the Environmental Advisers Register for local Gloucestershire newsletters and publications. These have been shared with a number of local publications and newsletters

²⁴ GFirst LEP [Contact GFirst LEP | Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership](#)

²⁵ <https://orfc.org.uk/session/farming-and-community-advice-and-support-for-our-landscape-climate-and-nature-recovery/>

through their networks, including the Three Counties Farmer, Southwest Farmer and NFU e-bulletin.

BASIS engaged 10 Gloucestershire Farm Advice stakeholders to explain about the role of the Environmental Advisers Register and the routes to entry.

FWAG SW communicated with over 25 individuals and organisations within Gloucestershire about the Environmental Advisers Register, routes to entry and joining process. These organisations included: Canal & Rivers Trust, Freshwater Habitats Trust, LEAF, Berry's, Carver Knowles, Crop Management Partners LLP, DJM Consulting, Laurence Gould, The Farm Consultancy Group, Velcourt, Forestry Commission, and many more. Many of these advisers have registered through the acquired rights scheme or through the qualification to entry, as a result.

BASIS Registered 26 Gloucestershire-based environmental advisers on the Environmental Advisers Register.

There are now over 26 Gloucestershire-based environmental advisers on the Environmental Advisers Register, as members and with more coming through as applicants, which will continue to build. Advisers also have the opportunity to be listed on the Find an Adviser tool (<https://basis-reg.co.uk/environmental-advisers/find-an-adviser>) through an opt-in process and are listed by their expertise and county of operation. As at end September 2023, there were **26 advisers listed** who cover Gloucestershire with environmental advice across a range of areas.

Commissioned through Ruralink, FWAG SW developed Module 4 for the Rural Facilitator Course <https://ruralink.org.uk/facilitator> to help skill existing advisers in facilitating integrated local delivery <https://www.fwagsw.org.uk/ild-integrated-local-delivery>.

The first pilot course was run and completed.

Integrated Local Delivery was adopted by the Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership, the Upper Thames Catchment Partnership and Feeding Gloucestershire, as a framework for facilitating locally led socio-economic and environmental resilience.

The Nature Friendly Farming Network agreed to their budget being used for an additional podcast on integrated local delivery and marketing of the facilitator and ILD training courses, linking this also with the LandApp mapping system as a mechanism for interconnecting nature friendly farming with advisers using the online tool.

In September 2023, the Gloucestershire County Council Climate Leadership Group adopted ILD and the Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership as a key delivery vehicle for climate action across the County.

Section 3: Results, and indicators of impact

3.1 Analysis of the survey of farmers, 2023

The aim of the survey was to better understand what sources of advice farmers currently use, to cover knowledge and information needs in respect of the main themes used in the Global Farm Metric (representing the scope of FWAG SW's ambition for integrated advice delivery). We estimate that Gloucestershire has around 2,000 farm businesses (farmers and growers), and we know that just over 7,000 workers are employed directly in agriculture, within the county.

51 farmers responded across Glos., with a mix of farm types, sizes and labour force.

Most use some form of advice, but 15% said they do not use any regular advice source.

Among sources used, one-fifth of respondent farmers reported using NFU for advice and information on workforce issues and training, while a good proportion (27%) use an agronomist for nutrient advice, pest management and other cropping matters, and 53% use a vet or veterinary practice for animal production advice. FWAG was the organisation most cited by respondents for advice on biodiversity (49%), soil health (12%) and water (37%).

Most farmers say they don't use any particular advice source for advice on energy use and air quality and climate adaptation/mitigation, nor for the community and social roles/aspects of their farm business.

- Farmers have potential **advice gaps in respect of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies including management practices and energy**.
- Key sources of advice divide by enterprise types: for their production needs, **many arable farmers use agronomists while livestock enterprises are advised predominantly by vets** (this is consistent with previous national survey findings).
- **For environmental topics FWAG is a key provider** but others are also mentioned, with the strongest topic coverage on biodiversity, landscape and water management.
- The early signs of **new advisory networks among regenerative and alternative agricultures can be detected: peer-to-peer learning is a key element**, here.
- **NFU is a key source on workforce and legal issues**.

There is thus little evidence of holistic or integrated provision.

3.2 Farmer interviews to assess the impacts of integrated advice (indicator of success)

A broadly illustrative sample of 6 farmers, covering different sizes and types of farm business, who have been engaged for some time in the integrated advisory initiatives facilitated by FWAG SW were selected over the early spring of 2023. Interviews, each lasting between 30 minutes and one hour, were conducted online with each. Questions covered their level/period of engagement and the perceived results and outcomes arising from this.

Findings

All interviewees said that integrated advice from FWAG SW had been critical to their business development in respect of enhanced environmental awareness and focus, offering new opportunities to get involved in environmental schemes and projects and helping them to reduce input use and increase biodiversity benefits and positive water management, on the farm. In two of the cases FWAG SW's integrated delivery approach had facilitated their decision to convert to organic farming by helping them to connect with a wider network of advice and information. In other cases, the value of FWAG SW's ILD input was to raise their awareness of the interconnections between their management practices and the potential benefits to their neighbouring communities, e.g. in reducing flood risk or improving water quality. In all cases, working with FWAG SW was reported as well worth the time involved because it broadened each farm's perspective on its future options for more resilient and sustainable development and built confidence and capacity for environmentally-focused action. FWAG's style of working was recognised as more pro-active and connected locally, than other organisations from whom they sought advice and/or information on a fairly regular basis. A few quotations illustrate the views expressed.

'[FWAG's] Integrated provision supports coordination and doing deals at a larger scale – it can't be done by an individual farmer. For example, calling for contributions to a particular habitat, etc., galvanising the private sector and bringing in other public sector funds to help support this change, including FIPL applications within the AONB. Doing barn owl boxes at scale, enabling large scale FIPL actions, and so on. Capital for direct work is essential.'

It has been really valuable getting non-farm actors on board and working in a coordinated way to pool resources, developing a natural capital approach, etc.

FWAG and FIPL are light years ahead of the RPA – they know the ground and the people, so money goes a lot further without wasting things. This means a more efficient use of the available resources and they are more aware of knock-on effects.

FWAG was very good at suggesting what to think and all based on others' experience – linking lessons from other farms.

We may use FWAG for many things but also can access other experts, if that is needed. FWAG are useful for landscape-scale clusters and connecting people and projects. You need that facilitation. It's one of the most valuable things that FWAG can do.'

All those interviewed reported identifying clear benefits to their businesses and to their land management impacts as a result of FWAG SW's integrated approach to advice and facilitation.

For the business, the key benefits are:

1. Time saved in trying to make sense of different initiatives, opportunities and obligations that apply to their land and their farming practices. FWAG SW's way of working increases the efficiency of their engagement and learning about environmental issues and the contribution that they can make.
2. Increased knowledge and understanding about the wide range of different organisations and goals that can be positively affected by their land management activities, helping to broaden their goals as a consequence and altering their management strategies, leading to increased satisfaction from their work and an increased diversity of beneficial outcomes for nature and climate.
3. Social capital is strengthened between farmers and local communities, and knowledge and trust increases between farmers and government agencies/NGOs.
4. FWAG SW's support provides an ongoing form of CPD which enables continuous improvement in farm management, and keeping abreast of new funding and other opportunities from policy change.

Each of these kinds of benefit can be turned into one or more indicators that could be quantified by considering plausible proxies, per farmer.

Benefit 1.

- Estimated time saving: 2 hours / month over 12 months: 24 hours (3 days) per year.
- Estimated value of learning about environmental issues: a day of training per year.

Benefit 2.

- Estimated value of learning about other organisations and changing management in response: one day of training per year
- Estimated value of increased job satisfaction: enhanced wellbeing – reduction in days lost to ill-health: one per year
- Estimated value of nature and climate benefits on the farm – increase in local community quality of life by reduced ill-health/enhanced enjoyment: one day per community per year.

Benefit 3.

- Estimated increased farmer wellbeing from social benefits: equivalent to spending 2 days' investing in social events (at a cost) and holding meetings with agencies/NGOs, per year.

Benefit 4.

- Equivalent to a 1.5 day per year CPD training event.

Summary, per farm business and neighbours: 3 days of time saved; free provision of 3.5 training days; 2 days of sickness saved; free provision of 2 days' social events / networking.

ESTIMATING REACH: the multipliers

A total of 354 named attendees were recorded at FWAG SW-linked advice events over the project period, on different topics. Of these, approximately 30 were repeat attendees for several events (averaging 4 events out of a total of 18), while c.30 were longstanding FWAG SW members who would already have reaped the benefits of their integrated approach, and around 25 were from established partner NGOs, as identified from scrutiny of individual names on attendance sheets, and checking against FWAG records. This suggests that FWAG SW has reached around 200 new engagers among mostly farm households and their neighbours in communities, over the period.

We can estimate the medium-term benefit of this impact by multiplying the benefits reported by longstanding beneficiaries of FWAG SW's integrated approach, by the c.200 people newly engaged this year, who may go on to reap the benefits of FWAG SW's integrated advice work.

3.3 Assessing the value to stakeholders – Bledington case study and wider implications

FWAG SW's work with local communities has, to date, focused predominantly on helping them to address issues of how water flows through their parishes, in order to help them to develop greater resilience through natural and low-cost flood management measures and better advance planning in liaison with the Environment Agency.

In Bledington, the community has engaged with FWAG SW over a period of just a few years, to significant effect. An initial investment of £900 for a feasibility study led to a larger grant from the Parish Council to FWAG SW of £3,000, to undertake work with local residents and farmers to improve the hydrological system in and around the village so that water quality was improved and water quantity moderated through better retention in soils and upstream water bodies, and better management in the village and downstream, to enable significant reduction in the risk of serious flooding.

FWAG SW's work enabled the community to assess its hydrological system and identify actions needed to help reduce peak water flow into the village. A critical element in the process was in-depth conversations with the farmers managing the land immediately surrounding the village and the water courses flowing through it, which revealed very important knowledge and experience concerning the sources of flood water and the history of water management and modifications in the landscape, challenging the common assumptions of both villagers and external authorities. It enabled FWAG SW to better identify exactly which actions, where, would most effectively reduce flooding incidence and risks associated with heavy rainfall in the catchment. In turn, this involved supporting the community to apply successfully for the following funds:

£110,000 from the Environment Agency WEIF and Natural Flood Management funds over 3 years, administered by the local catchment partnership

£65,000 from Gloucestershire County Council's regional flood and coastal Committee

£80,000 from Thames Water's smarter catchments funds;

All of the funds have been mobilised to achieve improved water management in and around the village and on farms within the parish. The community has now applied for a further grant of £500,000 to the Environment Agency to construct a bund to contain storm water: the outcome of this is awaited. However, FWAG SW suggests that this 'hard engineering' final piece of work would be more for 'insurance' benefit than as an essential element, since the softer measures already implemented should ensure that water levels through the village would seldom rise to a point where the bund would be required.

In respect of the benefits of this activity, they are multiple and include economic, environmental and social enhancements.

Economic benefit

Prior to this work being done, Bledington had flooded seriously twice in the last 5 years. With climate change leading to increased frequency of storm surge water events, it could be anticipated that a similar frequency of severe water level rise could occur in the years ahead. During the most serious of the previous floods, 25 properties in the village were flooded at a clean-up cost of £1.8 million.

Following the flood management work, the risk to properties will be significantly reduced, so the potential saving could be similar to this value. A feasibility study for the bund work (not yet done), estimated that the flood risk may be reduced from 25 to just 6 properties. Village representatives report that already, with the smaller-scale and more natural and diffuse works undertaken with EA, GCC and Thames Water funding, the incidence of serious flooding in the village following severe rainfall has reduced to zero, despite continuing quite frequent periods of very heavy rainfall, when significant flooding is evident in other nearby areas.

In effect, the work already done represents a significant improvement of Bledington's resilience in respect of improved infrastructure to manage heavy rainfall and rising water levels in upstream rivers. If it has already reduced the flood risk to 19 properties to near zero, its value would be in the region of £1.5 million over 5 years.

This has been achieved for an investment of £258,900 of public funding, which from the perspective of the direct cost to the community itself, cost them only £3,900.

Environmental and social benefit

The work undertaken with FWAG SW's facilitation and co-ordination in Bledington, has generated non-monetary benefits to the local community. Better water management will gradually improve water quality by reducing the incidence of pollution into the watercourses from farms and from drains. As this improvement happens, there will be significant benefits to biodiversity.

In addition, the evolution of the flood group has entailed the generation of significant benefits in the form of strengthened social capital within the village, as well as enhanced knowledge and empowerment. Membership of the group has grown from 9 to 30 households over the

period of FWAG SW's engagement, and it has been adopted as a formal sub-committee of the Parish Council. The membership of the group has organised a significant number of volunteering events for community members to work together clearing drains and managing watercourses, which has increased interaction between longstanding residents and those who have more recently moved into the village. They have an active Whatsapp group, and a regular series of events which keep people engaged and informed.

It is not simple to quantify these types of benefit, as they have no ready comparator in commercial markets. However, for the social benefits we can draw some parallels with other, similar actions to which costs could be attributed: for instance, the cost of organising and hosting social events (e.g. as provided by hospitality services) and the benefits of improved knowledge and wellbeing that arise from engaging in group activities (considering the value of improved mental and physical health, and the value of increased knowledge arising from a training event or similar service).

It is possible to build on the benefits identified in section 2, to find proxy benefits in respect of these community impacts. For calculations based on people's time, a lower income figure should be used than that which should be used for farmers and farm managers, reflecting the fact that average incomes in rural areas are generally lower than this, but otherwise the principles of monetization would be similar.

3.4 Identifying the costs of provision and support of the Integrated service

FWAG SW team identified their time inputs directly relevant to this project, as set out in the Table below.

Table 1. FWAG SW team's input to the Integrated Advice project

	Number	Days/week	Proportion of role on ILD	Day rate*	Total in £
Director	1	5	0.8	£540+vat	93,312
Senior Advisers	5	5	0.15	£540+vat	17,496 x 5
Assistants	3	5	0.15	£540+vat	17,496 x 3
Outreach officer	1	3	1	st. total £25,000	£25,000
Total					£258,280

**estimated yearly cost calculated on basis of 180 chargeable days for a 1.0 employee; VAT @20%*

This would represent the full value of the time spent by FWAG SW on integrated delivery over the 2022-2023 year.

SECTION 4: Monetization of benefits and calculation of the Cost Benefit Analysis and rate of return

From the farmer interviews, the estimated benefit per farmer fully embedded in the integrated advisory provision from FWAG SW was as follows:

3 days of time saved; free provision of 3.5 training days; 2 days of sickness costs saved; free provision of 2 days of social events.

Farmers are effectively managers of resources. Their annual incomes will vary from around £25,000 to £60,000 per year, depending on farm profitability and how much they allocate from the overall net income of the business, to their own remuneration. We will assume the average income is £40,000 for a 220-day year – equating to £182/day.

Training costs for a standard day's training on a managerial topic might average around £300/day. Sickness could be costed at the opportunity costs – i.e. lost earnings, so £182/day. Social events might be less highly valued, perhaps around £50/day, for a busy farmer (as they forego their potential to earn, on those days). That would mean the average benefit per farmer would monetize at around $(182 \times 5) + 100 + 1,050 = £2,060$ per year.

If we consider that FWAG SW has reached a further number of 200 farmers this year, the combined benefit could reach **£412,000 per year by year 3**, if all continue to engage and thus benefit from FWAG SW's integrated approach.

Turning to consider the monetary benefit of FWAG SW's integrated approach for local communities such as Bledington, a benefit of up to £1.5 million was suggested for works which reduce flooding risk to a minimum, in a community where flooding was previously becoming relatively frequent.

During this year (2022-2023), FWAG SW, working in partnership with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC), reached out to a further 7 rural parishes to encourage them to get involved in similar work (as registered by their attendance at the joint climate event in September 2023, and willingness to complete a questionnaire afterwards in which they indicated their enthusiasm to become involved).

The benefits of these further initiatives in rural parishes could be as high as those for Bledington, over time, but only if their flooding risk is similar. If we consider that much of Gloucestershire is low-lying and therefore prone to flooding, but that not all rural communities will include land which is in the lower parts of valleys or on floodplains or which has rivers and streams running through it, we might use a conservative estimate of the potential benefits of 7 new rural parishes getting involved in the kinds of activities pursued in Bledington, of perhaps £0.8m per community, on average.

Net benefit to the 7 communities themselves could be valued at £5.6 million over 3 years; but if measured net of the investment funding that would be required from EA, water companies

and the County Council, the added-value would reduce by one-sixth to around £4.5 million over 3 years, or **£1.5m per year on average**.

In addition, there are the social and environmental benefits of the FWAG SW approach. Drawing from the Bledington data, we might cost the social benefits for a day of all working age adults' time, as a proxy measure of this value. Bledington has a population of 450, of which maybe half would be working age. Average income is around £29,000 per worker so the benefit might be somewhere around **£30,000 per year**. As for the environmental benefits in addition to flood control, this is challenging to monetize in any robust way, but it clearly would be valued by villagers.

If we round up, these elements would result in a total monetary benefit of the positive impacts arising from FWAG SW's investment in integrated advice provision in 2022-2023, of **£1.53 million per year to seven village communities in the County**.

Comparing with costs, the result is a clear and significant net positive value arising from FWAG SW's integrated advice approach, where benefits are experienced by both farmers and rural communities across the County.

For the full cost of FWAG SW time invested in this work in 2022-2023, the net benefits would be just over £1.77 million within 3 years (up to 2026).

To turn this calculation into a rate of return it is necessary to compute the benefits arising, then divide net present value of benefits by the total costs. Our graph of the realisation of benefits relative to costs illustrates a reciprocal relationship where costs are front-loaded and benefits end-loaded over the initial 3 years, but the indication is that after those 3 initial years, benefits are sustained whereas costs are minimal. It would therefore be legitimate to consider the rate of return over a rather longer period – perhaps of 5 years – to provide a balanced perspective.

Treasury guidelines suggest the use of a discount rate of 3% per year for projects of public benefit.

The net present value of benefits generated would therefore be something like this:

$$0.25 \times 2.03\text{m (yr 1)} \text{ plus } 0.75 \times (2.03 \times 0.97, \text{ yr 2}) \text{ plus } 2.03 \times 0.97^2 \text{ (yr 3)} \text{ plus } 2.03 \times 0.97^3 \text{ (yr 4)} \text{ plus } 2.03 \times 0.97^4 = 0.5075 + 1.477 + 1.91 + 1.85 + 1.797\text{m} = 7,543,500$$

$$\text{divided by the FWAG SW net present value cost of } [258,280 + 0.5 \times 258,280 \times 0.97 + 0.125 \times 258,280 \times 0.97 \times 0.97] = 258280 + 125,266 + 30,377 = 413,923$$

Meaning that the rate of return would compute as a **c.18-fold benefit relative to the costs invested, over 5 years**.

SECTION 5: Conclusions

This report has provided a structured assessment of the achievements and the value of FWAG SW's integrated advice approach as applied through the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation funded project in 2022-2023.

It is clear that a significant number of influential activities took place, and that new farmers and communities were reached by these events. The log of activities also shows that FWAG SW achieved all the key performance indicators and targeted outcomes of the funding for this project. In addition, the project achieved further added value by raising the strategic recognition of ILD as a key delivery vehicle for achieving other County-level targets for the environment and climate action.

Assessing the value that could arise from FWAG SW's work this year has entailed detailed examination of past experience among both farmers and rural communities. Whilst it cannot be assumed that the value experienced by these groups will be exactly replicated by those who have newly engaged with FWAG SW's work in this year, a potential value can be computed on that basis, which indicates that, net of the costs of provision, the benefits of the project to Gloucestershire's farming and rural communities is significant, at somewhere around £2 million per year, and with a multiplier effect of around 30, meaning that the benefits generated over 5 years are as much as 18 times greater than the costs invested over that period.

By way of caveats, it is important to recognise the challenges of both aggregating and monetizing reported benefits among diverse stakeholder groups, especially when dealing with relatively small sample sizes from which to draw estimates of value. The range of assumptions and estimates provided in this brief assessment could all be refined and improved in future, given greater resources with which to address these challenges through more detailed and thorough empirical work.

In particular, it may be over-estimating the ultimate annual impacts for farmers and communities of the initial engagement that many have had during the project period, because not all of those who have newly engaged may continue to work with FWAG SW in the years ahead. On the other hand, it is recognised that this estimation has not been able to measure and value the direct impacts upon the knowledge and modes of operation of other environmental and farm-focused local groups and advisors, which can be anticipated as positive and likely to build, over time, as facilities such as the CaBA hub become better known and used. Nor has it been possible to devote effort to estimating the environmental benefit of the actions achieved through ILD.

It is also important to note that the evaluation is assessing a moving target, in that FWAG SW's achievements over the year represent further progress in integrating the provision and co-ordination of advice and information for farmers and local communities in Gloucestershire. This means that the general approach to measuring value is likely to be an under-estimate by reference to how integrated the system now is, since it draws heavily on experiences from

how things have been, in the past 5 or so years (for Bledington and for those farmers who were interviewed).

Looking ahead, FWAG SW estimates that it could more than double farmer engagement with ILD across the County in the next few years, particularly as agricultural transition prompts much more reaching out by farm businesses. Many will need to address the loss of the Basic Payment Scheme support formerly available under Europe's Common Agricultural Policy, perhaps by becoming involved in Defra's new ELM schemes for environmental benefits.

Likewise, on the community's side, FWAG SW estimates that there remains significant untapped potential for benefits from ILD engagement. The County has 33 local catchment areas, averaging around 5 rural parishes per area, of which they have only reached 5 areas, thus far. It could well be possible, if given further investment in ILD provision from various sponsors, to expand the community level service to cover the rural areas of the whole county, within the coming 5 years.

In conclusion, combining this record of the project's achievements when measured against its targets and performance indicators, and the briefly-assessed, indicative computation of the monetized net value and rate of return for what has been delivered and what it should deliver in the years ahead; give confidence that

- **the project has represented very good value for money for its sponsors;**
- **there is significant potential for even greater benefit and resilience arising from further investment in this approach over the coming 5 years;**
- **should more funding be secured and this work continued, it is recommended that a more substantive CBA be commissioned in order to generate robust figures that could be used to make a case for this approach to be cost-effectively rolled out at regional or national level, within the coming decade, particularly in view of the urgency of the challenges that it can help to address, for farming and for rural communities.**