

Sleeping with the enemy. (Experiences of, and reflections, on environmental schemes: a farmer's perspective.)

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Synopsis

In this talk I reflect on my experiences under Countryside Stewardship and now Higher Level Stewardship, and give my views on the key ingredients to a successful partnership between farmer and government adviser. I summarise the unusual route that led me to farming, and how I have ended up managing my land as much for wildlife as for food. Trust, flexibility and time are the key: farmer and adviser must understand each other, have trust and confidence in each other's knowledge and abilities, and have time to speak to one another. Every piece of land, and every season, is different: rigid rules get in the way. Besides, together with reams of jumbled paperwork, they are leaden, uninspiring –passion and belief are needed in this business just as much to produce wildlife and beautiful landscapes as to grow food. Finally, I conclude with a call for more encouragement for neighbouring farmers to work together, so together we can develop and deliver shared environmental dreams across whole swathes of countryside.