



Overview of Farm Reports



photo by Angus D. Birditt

Recommended Options

Included are individual farm reports for cattle keepers within the Small is beautiful Landscape Recovery Scheme.

Given the uniqueness of farming on the Isles of Scilly three options have been discussed with farmers to assess how much ambition, practical aptitude and cultural adaptation they have.

Option A – Maximalist

Increase cattle numbers through more productive farmland and more bulb fields in grass and/or herbal ley rotation. This provides stores to grow out on the headlands before finishing on in bye land.

This would require significant knowledge exchange and improved collaboration across farming enterprises.

Option B – Minimalist

Cattle are slow reared mainly using the headlands and in bye fields are focused on species rich meadows.

This would require significant time and investment with specialist aid to return significant proportions to achieve endorsed status.

Option C – Use the Status Quo

Farmers incentivised to use cattle on headlands rather than sell stores to the mainland. Potential to work with Tresco to grow on their weaned animals and finish them back on Tresco.

This would require collaboration with Tresco and would achieve results on headland grazing.

Conclusion of options:

After consultation with farmers, it was clear that Option C was the preferred option, but only some agreeing that Tresco's involvement would be most suited.

Our recommendation would be a blended version of all options and believe this would be the best way to achieve the broadest ecological improvement, resilient farming systems and cattle production. It would require significant and ongoing support both financially and with knowledge exchange to achieve. Something that Small is Beautiful is in the position to support.

Blended Option:

Livestock units should be increased to achieve desired results on the headlands as set out in the report. Increase in numbers should be achieved where possible by breeding of replacements on island and within the guidelines set out in a robust biosecurity plan.

A collaborative approach should be supported between those with ungrazed farmed areas returning to a grazeable status and fields in bulb rotation should be optimised for the growing and finishing of cattle. This would include a nutrient dense planting scheme involved cover cropping and legumes in rest rotations. This would have significant improvements on soil for those fields.

Species-rich meadow restoration should be encouraged on a significant area of the permanent pasture. This would add payment value to those in the project who do not have the means to graze headlands whilst improving the ecological status of the Isles of Scilly. The potential loss in production of this intervention would be offset by the ability to graze within the bulb rotation. However, with improved grazing systems and infrastructure we believe an overall livestock unit increase and production could be achieved.





photo by Rebecca Mayhew

Livestock Unit Calculations

Standard Livestock Units are often based on commercial animals, often dairy cows and commercial continental beef and sheep breeds. For this paper we are using the Natural England LSUs based on medium sized breeds, closer in size to the native breeds we recommend for conservation grazing (Taken from IoSWT agreement reference 1486320)

This is used when looking at stocking rates based on the ecology. It is worth noting that the figures for a cow assume it is in calf or has a calf at foot and thus eating more than a dry cow that is just maintaining its weight. As such we would put a native breed dry cow at closer to 0.6 compared to an older still growing animal, i.e. a 2 year old steer. We note Dexters are a lower LSU rate again. This would suggest a herd of 8 older dry medium sized cows and 3 fully grown Dexters equates to 6.3 LSU.

Projected livestock unit increases are based on achieving an average of 1Lu/ha/yr which should be achievable as a guide when grass growth, growing season and livestock type are considered.

Stock types in Livestock Units (LUs)*

Dairy cow	1
Beef cow	1
Cattle over 2 years	0.7
Cattle 6 months to 2 years	0.6
Lowland ewe and lamb	0.12
Hill ewe and lamb	0.08
Ewe follower and/or store lamb	0.08
Horse	7
Pony	0.8

*These figures are for medium-sized breeds and may need adjusting



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