



**Diversification into Farm Tourism:
Case Studies from Wales**

Case study and student material

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Introduction

Tourism has been a focus of [diversification](#) by farms in many countries for a considerable period of time. Indeed, Busby and Rendle (2000) note that farm-based tourism has been recognised as a distinct activity for more than a century in certain parts of Europe. Its growth has been particularly strong in the European countries (especially so in the countries of the ‘New Europe’), but farm-based tourism is also increasingly evident in Canada, the USA and New Zealand (Busby and Rendle, 2000).

The growing popularity of farm-based tourism has been ascribed in large part to the changing policy context in which the farming sector of many developed countries finds itself (Walford, 2001). Agricultural policy has undergone a radical shift in emphasis over the past 50 years (Sharpley and Vass, 2006). Policies that encourage increased production, the [intensification of farming](#) and protection from market forces have been progressively replaced by those that encourage the protection of the natural environment, the use of [extensive farming](#) methods and increased exposure to the market. This has included the de-linking of farm incomes from production, as typified by the introduction of the system of [single farm payments](#) in the UK. Such major changes in policy emphasis have made it increasingly difficult for farming enterprises to survive on farming incomes alone. Recognising the danger that the countryside will become increasingly abandoned and rural landscapes neglected, governments have encouraged farm enterprises to develop a wider range of income streams. This has included, in many cases, the introduction of diversification grant schemes (Hjalager, 1996). Typically such schemes have provided a proportion of the [capital costs](#) of diversification. Pluriactivity¹ has thus become the watchword for the farming sectors of many developed countries.

At the same time, tourism has been viewed by governments in many developed countries as a means of addressing the problems being experienced in the countryside (Sharpley and Vass, 2006). Tourism offers a particularly attractive economic alternative for many rural areas, particularly those that are able to offer visitors the opportunity to engage in active forms of outdoor recreation such as walking, mountain biking or rock climbing, and those that possess distinctive landscapes reflecting people’s perception of the rural idyll² (Roberts and Hall,

1 Pluriactivity refers to the activity of farming in conjunction with other gainful activities, whether on-farm or off-farm.

2 The ‘rural idyll’ is an idealised vision of the countryside based on characteristics, tangible or intangible, real or imagined, that differentiate such places from urban ones. These might include, for example, a sense of timelessness, the air of peace and tranquillity, and the maintenance of traditions and traditional values.

2001). The latter are typified by the networks of national parks and other protected areas that have been developed in many developed countries. Tourism has thus been recognised as one of the main activities into which farms can diversify.

Walford (2001) divides the factors motivating farm diversification into internal and external drivers. These forces interact to help determine the decision whether or not to diversify at any given point in time. Internal drivers could be said to include the degree of indebtedness in which the farm business presently finds itself, the age and educational status of the farmer and whether the family has children who wish to continue in the business of farming. External drivers include the general economic environment, the ease by which planning consent can be acquired, and the availability of grants and loans to assist in the diversification process.

Others have identified a wider range of factors influencing the diversification decision. Bowler, Clark, Crockett, Ilbery and Shaw (1996), for example, employ a system of 34 variables, divided into three major groups, in an empirical investigation of diversification motivations of farms in northern England. The first group, entitled 'farm business characteristics', includes variables such as farm size, land quality, tenure, livestock stocking density, farm debt, farm debt intensity (defined as farm debt per hectare), degree of dependency on hired labour and urban market access. The second group relates to the characteristics of the farmer, including age, formal education, skills and community leadership (whether the farmer holds a position in a community organisation). The third group, meanwhile, is entitled 'farm household characteristics' and includes variables such as the formal education and skills training of the farmer's spouse, community leadership by the spouse, the number of children and adults in the farm family, the amount of family labour not currently (or fully) employed and the number of institutional contacts the family have.

A further study by Ollenburg and Buckley (2007) used a questionnaire survey of farm tourism operators in Australia. Economic and social motivations were found to be of almost equal importance in explaining the diversification decision. Operators' motivations did tend to diverge, however, according to the stage of the family lifecycle the farming family was in. Thus, for some families the decision to diversify was based primarily on the desire to keep the current generation farming, while for others it was effectively a retirement strategy.

Nickerson, Black and McCool (2001), meanwhile, conduct a study of diversification into farm (and ranch) tourism in Montana. Eleven variables are identified in their study as being relevant to the diversification decision, namely: the degree of fluctuation in farming income, employment status of family members, amount of additional income, loss of government support, meeting a need in the recreation or vacation market, tax incentives, the desire to for companionship with guests, interests and hobbies related to the particular form of diversification chosen, the desire to make better use of the farm or ranch resources, degree of success in other farm or ranch enterprises, and the level of education of guests to the farm or ranch. A more recent study by McGehee and Kim (2004) tested these variables in Virginia, USA, and found them to be relevant in that context also.

Such factors do not, of course, go very far to explain what form of diversification is selected. Why should a farming enterprise choose tourism as its means of diversification? Indeed, Bowler *et al.* (1996) suggest that there are three broad responses to such stimuli: (i) scale enlargement, intensification or specialisation using conventional farm products or services; (ii) changing the

production emphasis to focus on non-conventional farm products or services (such as growing flowers or energy crops), non-farm products or services (such as wind turbines or tourist accommodation) or one or more family members taking paid jobs off the farm; or (iii) winding down the farm by reducing it in scale or turning it into a 'hobby farm'. Ultimately, the latter of these options may mean retirement from farming altogether. Of course, a fourth possible response would simply be to do nothing, presumably in the hope that the current pressures will ease.

Walford (2001) argues that some farms are more likely to diversify into farm-based tourism than others. In particular, he suggests that for farm-based tourism to be attractive as a diversification strategy, the farm will need to be located either close to a large centre of population or near to a natural environment that provides attractive landscapes, a tranquil rural setting or plentiful outdoor recreational opportunities, i.e. areas that are rich in 'countryside capital'³. Walford (2001) then goes on to hypothesise that farm-based tourism tends to work best in locations that abound in all of these characteristics, such as national parks and other areas that are designated as having high scenic or heritage values. Indeed, his study of the spatial patterns of on-farm tourist accommodation in England and Wales finds evidence of a 'neighbourhood' effect in which such enterprises tend to be located in the buffer zones immediately surrounding these designated areas. Diversification into farm-based tourism in such areas is more prevalent because these locations are considered close enough to the designated areas to allow potential visitors easy access to them while at the same time being subject to fewer planning controls than they would be if they were actually located within the designated areas.

It might be said, however, that the preceding analysis is much more about the growth of 'tourism on farms' than it is about farm diversification into 'farm tourism' per se. Busby and Rendle (2000) distinguish between these two approaches, and indicate that many farms were making a transition from the former to the latter in the 1990s. This process has continued into the 2000s and is still relevant today. They go on to argue that the principal driver of this transition has been a shift in fundamental consumer motivation, in which the visitor increasingly recognises and anticipates the farming environment to be part of the overall tourism product. This has been accompanied on the supply-side by a reconsideration of the tourism product. Tourism on farms has almost entirely taken the form of on-farm accommodation, either in the farmhouse itself or in guest accommodation elsewhere on the farm. The approach has tended to be to provide accommodation that just happens to be on a farm. Farm tourism, meanwhile, explicitly recognises the farming context, involving a much wider range of tourism services (see Table 1), generally taking a more integrated approach to delivering them. Indeed, Busby and Rendle (2000) argue that farm tourism has often been adopted as a diversification strategy because of the potential it has to form a symbiotic relationship with farming. In such a relationship, both sides of the business stand to benefit from the presence of the other.

Busby and Rendle also argue that the incomes earned through tourism tend increasingly to outweigh those earned through farming in those farm enterprises that are in the process of transition. This, in turn, has led to increasing professionalisation of the farm tourism sector, the tourism side of the business no longer representing a source of 'pin money' for the household but an important income stream in its own right.

3 Countryside capital has been defined by the UK Countryside Agency as "the fabric of the countryside, its villages and its market towns". See also Garrod, Wornell and Youell (2006).

Table 1: Farm Tourism Elements

Attractions - permanent	Attractions - events
Farm visitor centres	Farm open days
Self-guided walks	Guided walks
Farm museums	Educational visits
Farm centres	Demonstrations
Conservation areas	Activities
Country parks	Horse-riding/trekking
Access	Fishing
Stile/gate maintenance	Shooting
Footpaths/bridleways/tracks	Boating
Accommodation	Amenities
Bed and breakfast	Restaurants
Self-catering	Cafés/tea rooms
Camping and caravanning	Farm shops/roadside stalls
Bunkhouse barns	Pick your own
	Picnic sites

Source: Busby and Rendle (2000)

The following case studies examine the diversification strategies of two family farms in Wales: Aberhyddnant Farm near the village of Crai, and Upper Cantref Farm, which is located near to the town of Brecon. Both are located within the [Brecon Beacons National Park \(BBNP\)](#) and both have chosen activities that could broadly be classified as ‘farm tourism’ as their focus of diversification. However, their strategies are distinctly different. While the former has selected new income streams that are all linked closely to the operation of the farm and are those closely integrated with each other, the latter has adopted a strategy that is less farm-based and more loosely integrated. Both strategies have, however, been highly successful.

Aberhyddnant Farm

[Aberhyddnant Farm](#) is a family farm located near the village of Crai, just within the boundaries of the BBNP. The farm itself is some 92 hectares in size, ranging from 290 to 400m in altitude and receiving over 2.5m rainfall annually (Aberhyddnant Organic Farm, 2008). It was bought by the Matthews family in 1983. The land had been neglected by the previous owner, so the family’s first priority was to bring the land back into production. In 1999 the family then began converting the farm to [organic status](#)⁴. This was achieved in 2001 with [the Soil Association](#) and certification has been maintained ever since. Recently, however, the farm has switched to the Welsh Organic Scheme. This was in recognition of the benefits of maintaining local links, being certified by an organisation that is in close touch with the needs both

4 This requires the farm to be managed using methods that rely on crop rotation, natural manure, composting, mechanical cultivation and biological pest control, avoiding the use of feed additives, chemical fertilisers, synthetic pesticides and genetically modified materials. Farms in the UK must be certified with a valid certification organisation in order to sell their produce as organic. Compliance with organic standards is verified by regular on-farm inspections and there are grants available to assist with the conversion process.

of farms and their customers. The farm also participates in the ‘Tir Gofal’ agri-environment scheme (see below). Furthermore, since 2004 the farm has operated as an organic demonstration farm, working closely with research staff from the [Organic Centre Wales](#), which is based at [Aberystwyth University](#).

The farm

The farm is stocked with 300 breeding ewes. This represents a considerable reduction in stock numbers compared to the time before the farm undertook organic conversion. The conversion to organic methods has made it necessary to stop turning the flock out onto common grazing land in the summer. This has implied the gradual substitution of the Brecknock Cheviot ewes with Texel crossbreeds, which respond better to such conditions. There are also 26 Murray Grey suckler cows, which calve in the spring. The calves are then sold at the local market in November and December. Since achieving organic status, the farm has adopted a small crop rotation comprising stubble turnips, whole-crop oats and red/white clover leys. These crops, together with silage and haylage grown on the farm, constitute the primary source of fodder for the livestock. This particular choice of crops not only increases the conservation value of the land, thus helping the farm to meet its commitments to the Tir Gofal scheme, but also helps to reduce worm problems in the livestock, particularly the lambs (Aberhyddnant Organic Farm, 2008).

Also on the farm are a flock of 250 laying hens and a small herd of pigs. The hens live in groups of around 50 with an organic rotation and are kept primarily to supply eggs for the farm and a local organic produce box scheme. While the pigs are ultimately on the farm for their meat, they are also used to assist in cultivation by being overwintered on land that has grown barley. There they act as natural ploughs as they root up the land, as well as enhancing soil fertility through their manure and helping to impede the growth of weeds (Aberhyddnant Organic Farm, 2008).

Nature conservation activities

The farm is part of [Tir Gofal](#), the Welsh Assembly Government’s flagship agri-environment scheme⁵. Membership has implied many changes for the way in which Aberhyddnant is managed as a farm. It has also opened up many opportunities. For example, the scheme has helped pay for the coppicing and filling of gaps in 1.5 km of hedgerows, as well as the establishment of two areas of woodland to serve as a ‘shelter belt’ for the farm. The family has also been able to restore two old ponds and introduce four more on the land. The scheme has also helped pay for an area of Japanese larch to be replanted with native trees, including oak, ash, alder, hazel

⁵ Tir Gofal means ‘Land Care’ in Welsh. There are currently over 3,000 farms in the scheme, covering over 300,000 hectares of land across Wales. The scheme offers payments to farmers who agree to put their land into the scheme for a minimum of 10 years and to manage it in ways that are beneficial to nature conservation. This includes promoting biodiversity through habitat conservation, preserving the rural character of the area by adopting appropriate land-management practices, protecting historic and archaeological features such as traditional farm buildings and field boundaries, and providing public access. Participants must take a ‘whole-farm’ approach by drawing up and implementing a farm-level environmentally policy. Targeted capital grants and training opportunities are also provided through the scheme. From 2012, the five existing agri-environment schemes in Wales will be replaced by one overarching scheme, to be called ‘Glastir’.

and birch. The timber was used to build some new post-and-rail fencing for the farm, having been processed at a local timber yard, as well as providing some gateposts. Grassland on the farm is now managed sympathetically for wildlife, and rare lapwings now visit two sites on the farm. The number of hares on the farm has also increased noticeably (Aberhyddnant Organic Farm, 2008).

Diversification

While the farm remains the family's primary concern, consistent efforts have been made in recent years to diversify into educational visits, food retailing and tourist accommodation.

Educational visits

Despite being located in a rural part of Wales, where farming forms the backbone of the economy, the family found it surprising to discover how few local children were familiar with farming practices or had ever spent time on a farm. The family therefore decided to encourage access to the farm, not only by local children but also by schools visiting the area and various adult groups. The existence of guest cottages on the farm assisted greatly in this process, insofar as there was no great capital expenditure necessary. Indeed, the guest cottages already included a large room which could be used as a meeting room, classroom or resource room, as well as toilet and hand-washing facilities. These could be used whenever the cottages were not occupied by holiday makers.

The farm's commitment to educational visits has taken on several dimensions. First, the farm took the 'education access' route within the Tir Gofal scheme, which allows the farm to specialise in managing its land for the benefit of visitors. This has resulted in visits by the local [Brownie](#) pack, visits by schools staying at study centres in the area, inclusion in the [National Park's 'Guided Walks' programme](#) and the occasional hosting of Tir Gofal training days.

The farm has also been actively working with local schools. This started by running an open evening for local school teachers to explain how the farm could be used as the basis for activities linked to various educational curricula. This had led to numerous local schools returning to look at different aspects of the farm, involving pupils from nursery age through to those studying for their 'A' levels. The farm has also hosted visits from University groups, including even a visit by a group from the [University of the Third Age](#).

Food retailing

Since 2006, the farm has been involved in food retailing under the brand name of [Crai Valley Produce](#). For many years prior to this, the family had sold food hampers to visitors staying in their guest cottages. Initially the food products were sourced locally but over time the family moved over to supplying the meat products and eggs themselves, while buying in most of the organic vegetables and fruit from a local vegetable box scheme. When possible, the hampers are supplemented by the addition of seasonal produce from the farm's small kitchen garden. Home-made organic preserves are also included in the hampers when possible.

This part of the business is also responsible for the organic egg production enterprise, which sells the free-range eggs to various local companies, including some of the best restaurants in the area. The family also runs a small farm shop and tea room in the nearby village of Trecas-

tle. The village is situated on a busy road that runs along the edge of the National Park, so the shop is in a good position to pick up passing trade, both locals and tourists. The shop sells organic meat and eggs produced on the farm, as well as a selection of seasonal fruit and vegetables produced in the local area. The tea room also makes use of the farm's own meat and eggs, as well as selling [Fairtrade](#) tea and coffee.

Tourist accommodation

Two self-catering holiday cottages are available on the farm, which have both been sympathetically converted from existing farm buildings. This part of the business is known as [Aberyddnant Farm Cottages](#). Nyth y Wennol (which means 'Swallow's Nest' in Welsh) was converted from the old dairy, where butter and cheese would have been made in the days when the farm had a dairy herd, and sleeps six adults and two infants (see Figure 1). Bryniau Pell (meaning 'Distant Hills') was converted from the cart shed and hay loft. It sleeps four adults and two infants and affords panoramic views across the National Park (see Figure 2). Groups booking both cottages also have access to Y Beudy (meaning 'The Byre' in Welsh), which provides a large space for guests to sit and eat together. There is an outside area for eating and cooking barbecues, as well as an outdoor children's play area.

Figure 1: Nyth y Wennol. Photo credit: Brian Garrod



Figure 2: Bryniau Pell. Photo credit: Brian Garrod



Prices in 2011 started at £300 per week for Bryniau Pell and £345 per week for Nyth y Wenholl in the low season, to £420 and £445 per week for the two cottages respectively in the high season. Y Beudy could be hired for £65 per week.

The accommodation is accredited under the Green Dragon environmental standard. Accredited organisations are required to develop and implement a rigorous environmental strategy (see Box 1). Accredited organisations may then display the Green Dragon logo (see Figure 3) in order to communicate their achievement to potential customers. The drive for achieving Green Dragon accreditation has involved making a wide range of changes to the way in which the accommodation is run, including providing a range of receptacles for recycling various forms of household waste. Each cottage is also supplied with a variety of eco-friendly cleaning products. Recycled paper products are used in the cottages as a matter of course. Wherever possible, supplies are sourced locally in order to reduce the environmental impacts of their transport and to help support the local economy. Improved energy use is encouraged through the provision of wood-burning stoves in both cottages. The farm also now produces its own energy through the installation of a micro-hydroelectricity generator in the stream that runs through the farm. This provides electricity directly to the farm and surplus energy is sold back to the National Grid.

Box 1: Aberhyddnant Farm Cottages Environmental Policy

Aberhyddnant Farm Cottages form part of a working 220-acre (92 ha) organic hill farm in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The two cottages have been sympathetically converted from stone farm buildings and are managed with environmental issues in mind. The farm also has a Tir Gofal management plan which gives permissive access to paths through the farm as well as renewing hedgerows and providing streamside corridors. Visitors to the cottages are encouraged to make the most of these facilities in order to raise their awareness of the countryside and their possible impact on it.

The most important management considerations are as follows:

- ◆ Compliance with all relevant environmental legislation.
- ◆ Work towards the reduction of domestic waste by encouraging recycling and composting. Recycling facilities are provided for our guests and we would encourage our visitors to use them.
- ◆ Work towards the reduction of electricity consumption. Light bulbs are being changed to low energy alternatives, all radiators have individual controls and heating is on a timer.
- ◆ To increase awareness of the environment and the importance of farming to the countryside. Farm trails and quizzes are available for visitors and guests are most welcome to ask questions about our methods and organic farming in general.
- ◆ Encourage the use of local food products by visitors. Details on the availability of local and organic produce are made available prior to the guest's arrival. Continue with the Holiday Hampers scheme providing local food to visitors to the National Park. During 2008 we opened a farm shop and tea room to make it easier for locals and visitors to access local and organic food.

- ◆ Commitment to the prevention of pollution.
- ◆ Continual environmental improvement. An energy survey has been carried out and proposals made to introduce our own energy production by solar and micro-hydro systems. The micro-hydro system should be introduced during 2009.

The environmental policy will be updated annually and will be made available to all interested parties. Environmental legislation relevant to this business and our environmental improvement plan will be reviewed on a yearly basis. All appropriate documentation will be stored safely for five years.

Source: Aberhyddnant Organic Farm (2008)



Figure 3: Green Dragon Environmental Standard Logo

Recently the farm has also implemented ‘cyclists welcome’ and ‘walkers welcome’ policies, which involve taking steps to ensure that the specialist needs of such guests are well catered for. In the case of walkers, for example, this includes the provision of a place to dry wet clothing, facilities to clean dirty walking boots, maps of the local area and public transport timetables (see Box 2). The farm even provides a luggage-delivery service, so that guests following an itinerary can have their luggage forwarded to their next destination. Comparable provisions are in place to meet the needs of cyclists (see Box 3). These provisions are similar to those included in the [Walkers Welcome and Cyclists Welcome](#) schemes currently operated by Visit Wales, the national tourism organisation in Wales.

Box 2: Aberhyddnant Walkers Welcome Statement

Aberhyddnant is pleased to welcome walkers of all abilities to stay on the farm for long or short breaks. Please find below a list of the amenities that are supplied for your use.

- 1 There are ample storage facilities for rucksacks etc when not being used.
- 2 Access to outside tap and hosepipe for washing boots etc.
- 3 Both cottages contain a complete first aid kit.
- 4 There is a pay phone for use by both cottages with numbers of emergency contacts and their location displayed above.
- 5 In the porch you will find a box file containing a selection of maps and reference material providing information on walking in the area.
- 6 The box also includes details of cycle hire shops and public transport in the area.

- 7** The porch/boiler room offers washing machines, a tumble drier, a boot drying area and a place to hang and dry wet coats etc.
- 8** Each cottage contains tea and coffee making facilities.
- 9** We have organic meat and vegetables for sale on the farm and we will gladly shop for your prior to your arrival for items you may require for evening meals or packed lunches.
- 10** We are able to take your luggage to your next location, up to 20 miles free of charge and 26p/mile thereafter. We may also arrange collection from and delivery to railway stations in the area.
- 11** Should you have any requirements not covered by the above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Source: Aberhyddnant Organic Farm (2008)

Box 3: Aberhyddnant Cyclists Welcome Statement

Aberhyddnant is pleased to welcome cyclists of all kinds to stay on the farm for long or short breaks. Please find below a list of the amenities that are supplied for your use.

- 1** There is a lockable undercover area for safe storage of bicycles.
- 2** Access to outside tap and hosepipe for washing bikes.
- 3** An emergency repair kit is supplied for your use with items consumed being charged at cost.
- 4** Both cottages contain a complete first aid kit.
- 5** There is a pay phone for use by both cottages with numbers of emergency contacts and their location displayed above.
- 6** In the porch you will find a box file containing a selection of maps and reference material providing information on cycling in the area.
- 7** The box also includes details of cycle hire shops and public transport in the area.
- 8** The porch/boiler room offers washing machines, a tumble drier, a boot drying area and a place to hang and dry wet coats etc.
- 9** Each cottage contains tea and coffee making facilities.
- 10** We have organic meat and vegetables for sale on the farm and we will gladly shop for your prior to your arrival for items you may require for evening meals or packed lunches.
- 11** We are able to take your luggage to your next location, up to 20 miles free of charge and 26p/mile thereafter. We may also arrange collection from and delivery to railway stations in the area.
- 12** Should you have any requirements not covered by the above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Source: Aberhyddnant Organic Farm (2008)

Woofers

The farm welcomes ‘woofers’, who are volunteers who spend time living on organic farms helping with various aspects of their work⁶. Woofers are especially welcome at lambing time, when extra pairs of hands are always needed. The farm can be a particularly busy time on changeover day, when guests leave and arrive. This has recently been changed from a Saturday to a Friday, the former always being a busy day in the tea rooms and shop.

Integrated approach

One of the central features of the diversification strategy adopted at Aberhyddnant Farm, which differentiates it from most others, is the highly integrated nature of the approach taken. The cottages were originally started as an entirely separate business but it soon became apparent that many guests were choosing the cottages specifically because they are located on a working organic farm. The family has therefore encouraged guests to explore all of the different parts of the farm. A way-marked farm trail has been developed to help guests to navigate around the land, but visitors are free to wander as they wish. Guests are also welcome to assist in various jobs around the farm, such as feeding the hens and collecting their eggs. Family members are always on hand to answer any questions visitors might have.

Indeed, the family’s philosophy is that the three new business streams into which the farm has diversified – tourism, food and education – are intrinsically linked, not only to each other but also to the farming side of the business. For example, guests staying in the cottages are offered the opportunity to buy hampers containing organic meat, fruit and vegetables produced either on the farm or in the local area. This not only provides an additional market for the farm produce but it also links the cottages more effectively into the local economy and enables guests to sample various kinds of organic produce, perhaps for the first time. Guests may then be inclined to stock up with more organic food produce for the rest of the week.

Further integration is between the farm production and tourist accommodation elements of the business. Prior to 2006, when the herd of pigs was introduced to the farm, the family had been buying in bacon and sausages to sell on to the guests in the cottages. Part of the rationale for acquiring the herd was to provide more of the farm’s own produce to guests, thereby keeping the production chain as short as possible. The overwhelming philosophy of the business is to achieve as great a degree of self-sufficiency as possible and the close integration of the farm’s various diversification streams is a major way in which this goal is pursued. Guests are also allowed to pet the pigs, which is a popular activity for children.

Opening up the farm to school children for educational visits has also served to integrate the various business streams by generating future business for the holiday accommodation. Children will often try to persuade their parents to book a holiday in the cottages at a later date, especially if they have really enjoyed their time on the farm.

Another link between the business streams is that guests at the cottages are offered the opportunity to fish in four of the ponds that are located on the farm. These contain naturally regenerating stocks of brown trout, weighing up to 5lb. The ponds are located in some of

⁶ ‘Woofers’ is the term used for people participating in [WWOOF](#), a charity organisation which seeks to place short-term volunteers on organic farms. In the UK, WWOOF originally stood for Working Week-ends on Organic Farms. It now stands for World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms.

the most tranquil parts of the farm, and are abundant in wildlife and wild flowers, providing a place of quiet contemplation not just for anglers but for guests in general. The ponds thus serve not only as part of the farm's commitment to the Tir Gofal scheme but also as a recreational resource for visitors.

As mentioned above, links have also been made between the guest accommodation and educational visits diversification streams. The cottages provide a ready-made resource for educational activities, including the provision of a large meeting room, toilet facilities and a place for people to wash their hands after touching the farm animals. The cottages are also available for overnight stays, so that the farm is able to cater for residential groups as well as day visits.

Upper Cantref Farm

Like Aberhyddnant farm, Upper Cantref Farm is a small family-run farm located in the BBNP. While the farm has maintained its conventional farming practices, it has also undertaken substantial diversification in recent times. This includes the development of a visitor attraction themed loosely around farming life and outdoor fun (see Figure 4), as well as converting a barn to bunkhouse-style accommodation and continuing the development of a riding centre that was already part of the family business.



Figure 4: Cantref Adventure Farm and Riding Centre. Photo credit: Brian Garrod

Cantref Adventure Farm

The [adventure farm](#) side of the business comprises both indoor and outdoor activities, aimed mainly at children of primary school age. Having a mix of outdoor and indoor activities is important in the strategy of the adventure farm. Visitors need to have something exciting to do in both good and bad weather. The weather in Wales is famously unpredictable and may change from fine to foul in minutes. Cantref Adventure Farm therefore has a number of more extensive, outdoor activities for when the weather is fine. In poor weather, visitors can take refuge indoors and still be well entertained.

Indoor activities include an indoor soft-play area with various climbing obstacles, ball pits and slides (see Figure 5). Adults as well as children are permitted in the soft play area, and

there is a special reservation for smaller children. Some of the entertainments have a farming theme, for example there are ride-on tractors for smaller children to play on. There are also sheep-shearing demonstrations at appropriate times of the year. However, most of the activities have little or no substantial connection with farming. For example, the indoor play area also includes ball canons, worked by compressed air, and a pet-handling area. In the main visitor season there are pantomimes featuring the farm's mascot, a horse named 'Mr Ev' after the owner of the farm. Children also get an opportunity to bottle-feed lambs.



Figure 5: Indoor Play Area at Cantref Adventure Farm. Photo credit: Brian Garrod

Outdoor attractions include a sledge ride, which is open to both children and adults and is billed as Europe's longest (see Figure 6), hand-propelled paddle boats and a new 'swamp ride', in which the whole family can propel themselves around a specially dug canal system using only one paddle and a series of ropes. There is outdoor play equipment for children of all ages, including trampolines and a sand pit with ride-on mechanical diggers. Soccer skills activities are also available. Again, while many activities do not have a farming theme, there are some that do. For example, there are tractor-and-trailer rides offered throughout the day, which take visitors around the farm to show them the livestock in the fields. Attendants are on duty to provide information to visitors about the animals they meet. Visitors are also invited on an early evening walking tour around the farm to help the farm staff feed them and ensure that they are safe for the night.



Figure 6: The Mega-Sledge Ride at Cantref Adventure Farm. Photo credit: Brian Garrod

Another popular outdoor activity is the daily pig races, where visitors are encouraged to cheer for their favourite pig as the animals race each other around a purpose-built track. There are also special events from time to time, such as sheep-dog trials.

Visitors pay for entry to the adventure farm on a pay-one-price (POP) basis: once they have paid at the entry gate, all of the activities on the farm are free of charge. Entry prices in 2011 were £6.50 for children, £7.50 for adults and £6.50 for seniors. Discounts for families and groups were also available.

During the main tourist season, the adventure farm is open every day from Easter to the end of the autumn half-term school holidays. Out of season, opening is restricted to weekends. Throughout the month of December there is a special Christmas grotto, where visitors get a chance to meet Santa personally. There is also a mini-pantomime for guests to enjoy.

Inside the adventure farm area is a café offering a range of hot and cold food, including various home-made dishes. The cafeteria also hosts children's birthday parties. Guests at such parties are also entitled to use the indoor soft play area and pet barn free of charge. Next to the cafeteria is a small gift shop.

Cantref Adventure Farm also welcomes school groups throughout the year. Programmes of activity can be tailored specifically to the curriculum requirements of the visiting students.

Riding Centre

[Cantref Riding Centre](#) was established over 40 years ago and is an increasingly important part of the farm business. As well as offering horse-riding lessons for children and adults, the centre offers visitors the chance to go pony trekking in the spectacular landscape of the national park. Prices start at £7.50 for a 20-minute ride and rise to £50 for a full day's trekking. The centre offers treks of different levels of challenge for those with various degrees of riding experience. Rides are led by instructors and basic instruction is given before leaving the centre for those requiring it.

In the last 10 years, the centre has also begun to develop longer trail rides, lasting from three to five days in total. These are for more experienced riders and use the centre's own native horses,

which are mainly Welsh cobs. Overnight accommodation is provided as part of the package, which starts at £285 per person for a two-day ride. Riders' luggage is transferred each day to the next stop. A guide accompanies each party on a variety of routes recommended by the centre.

Accommodation

The farm has also diversified into providing basic [tourist accommodation](#) (see Figure 7). Two bunkhouses have been converted from disused farm buildings, one of which can sleep up to 24 people and the other up to ten. The bunkhouses are both self-catering, although guests are encouraged to make good use of the nearby adventure farm café. The larger bunkhouse has a large room which can be used by groups as a common room or classroom.



Figure 7: Bunkhouse Accommodation at Upper Cantref Farm. Photo credit: Brian Garrod

The bunkhouses are particularly popular with groups, including schools and youth organisations, which often book out one or both of the bunkhouses. However, the bunkhouses have separate bedrooms which can be booked by individuals or families. Prices in 2009 were £14 per person per night. The farm also offers camping, priced at £3.50 per person per night in 2009. Facilities are quite basic, comprising toilets, hand-wash basins and a mains water tap.

While the promotion of the bunkhouse accommodation makes it clear that it is located on a farm, guests are not invited to explore the farm or given the expectation that they can participate in particular tasks around the farm. Nor is much emphasis placed on the opportunities guests would have to visit the adventure farm or use the services of the riding centre. Rather, the main focus is on promoting the qualities of the National Park and the outdoor activities on offer, such as walking and cycling.

Overall strategic approach

The overall strategic approach to diversification taken by Upper Cantref Farm is rather different to that adopted by Aberhyddnant Farm. While Aberhyddnant has undergone conversion to organic farming, Upper Cantref continues to use conventional methods. As such, Upper Cantref Farm has not tended to encourage visitor access to the farm and, until quite recently, has not provided visitors with the opportunity to look around and explore. Access to different parts of the farm has been limited mainly to the tractor-and-trailer rides, although visitors to the adventure farm are now invited to accompany the farm staff on their evening rounds.

Recently, however, the family have also developed a [walking trail](#) around the farm. The walk takes visitors through the farm's wildflower meadow, into arable fields with wildlife habitats, and into the woodlands to see the stream and badger setts. The trail takes approximately 30 minutes to one hour to complete. While this development does begin to open up access to the farm, it contrasts sharply with that of Aberhyddnant Farm, where visitor access is a central feature of the strategy that has been taken.

Otherwise, there are surprisingly few links between the farming and adventure farm sides of the business. Indeed, few of the activities provided to tourists have a genuine link to farming, the main exception perhaps being the sheep-shearing demonstrations, the tractor-and-trailer rides and the animal-feeding sessions. It would be hard to argue that the pig racing is linked to farming, other than to concede that pigs are farm animals.

Links between the riding centre and the adventure farm are also quite limited. While the riding school is involved in providing short pony rides for children in the adventure farm at various times of the day, the adventure farm and riding centre operate essentially as separate businesses.

Links between the farm and the café are also limited. While the cafeteria offers homemade food, this does not imply that the ingredients have been sourced locally. The farm does not currently use the gift shop as a direct sales outlet for its produce. While the gift shop does sell farm-themed gifts, such as toy animals and model tractors, a considerable proportion of the stock is made up by general souvenirs of Wales.

One of the implications of the different strategies that have been taken by the two farms is the Aberhyddnant continues to operate very much as a family farm, with little need for employing staff from outside of the family. A concession to this is the use of woofers at lambing time, when the family tends to be very stretched. The changeover day for the guest cottages was changed in order to avoid the overstretching of staff and allow the operations to remain family based. Upper Cantref Farm, on the other hand, has to employ a rather larger complement of staff, which must be drawn from outside of the immediate family. This is partly because Cantref operates at a larger scale than Aberhyddnant, even though they are both relatively small family farms, but mainly because the approach to diversification has been so different.

Conclusions

While Aberhyddnant Farm and Upper Cantref farm have both chosen to diversify into farm tourism, broadly defined, the two farm enterprises have clearly adopted different strategies. Upper Cantref Farm has pursued a strategy that is not strongly based around the operation of the farm. Until recently, visitors to the adventure farm have not been encouraged to walk around the farm or to participate in the activities of the farm, such as feeding livestock. The same is true of those staying in the overnight accommodation, which is bunkhouse-style and aimed very much at attracting people who are interested in visiting the nearby National Park, rather than experiencing the farm itself. Similarly, while the riding centre does provide pony rides for visitors to the adventure farm, there are few links with the farm itself. Indeed, the focus is an outward one, as exemplified by the recent introduction of trekking and longer trail rides into the BBNP. The farming side of the business is now a relatively minor source of farm income, while the adventure farm, riding centre and accommodation have all grown in importance, enabling the farm to remain in existence. The farm now depends on the wider diversification streams much more than the diversification streams rely on the ongoing operation of the farm.

Aberhyddnant Farm, meanwhile, has developed a portfolio of activities that are more closely related to the operation of the farm, including the provision of visitor access, encouraging guests in the tourist accommodation to experience life on an organic farm, and the sale of food produce to both guests on the farm and tourists in the local area through their tea room and farm shop. Whilst the farm initially followed what Busby and Rendle (2000) would consider be a 'tourism on a farm' approach, their approach is now very much a 'farm tourism' one. The strategy has been to develop income streams that are highly dependent on one another. The diversification streams rely entirely upon the ongoing successful operation of the farm, and the farm relies heavily on the diversification streams to keep it going.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the more integrated approach is necessarily more successful than the less integrated one. Indeed, both farms can be considered to have made a successful transition from 'tourism on the farm' to 'farm tourism'.

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Ancillary Student Material

Further reading

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Wilson, L-A. 2007. The family farm business? Insights into family, business and ownership dimensions of open-farms. *Leisure Studies* 26 (3), 357-374.

Related websites and audio-visual materials

Defra (Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs, UK) Farm Diversification Benchmarking Study:

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/evidence/economics/foodfarm/reports/farmdiv/>

Farm and Diversification. Biz/ed: http://www.bized.co.uk/current/mind/2004_5/251004.htm

Welsh Assembly Government: Farm Diversification in Wales 2006/07:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/agric2008/hdw200806242/?lang=en>

Self-test questions

Try to answer the following questions to test your knowledge and understanding. If you are not sure of the answers then please refer to the suggested references and further reading sources:

- 1 What factors encourage farmers to diversify their business activities?
- 2 What is 'farm tourism' and how is this different to 'tourism on a farm'?
- 3 What are the benefits of choosing a more integrated approach to on-farm diversification, such as that adopted by Aberhyddnant farm? What are the risks inherent to such an approach?
- 4 Which of the two farms you think provides the most 'authentic' experience? Do you think that it is important that farm tourism providers offer authentic experiences?
- 5 Is it necessary for the farm to remain in economic operation in order for its tourism provision to be considered farm tourism?
- 6 Would farm tourism be a suitable diversification choice for any farm?

Key themes and theories

The key themes raised in this case study relate to the following areas:

- ◆ Impact of policy changes on farming and rural areas more generally
- ◆ Motives for farm diversification
- ◆ Implementing a diversification strategy based on farm tourism
- ◆ Potentials and problems of farm tourism

The key theories relate to:

- ◆ Forces driving the adoption of farm diversification strategies
- ◆ Factors promoting the adoption of farm-based tourism as a focus for diversification
- ◆ The transition from 'tourism in farms' to 'farm tourism'
- ◆ Integrated and non-integrated farm tourism diversification approaches
- ◆ Benefits and risks of different approaches to diversification into farm tourism