



SPECIES RICH MEADOWS

**UPLAND GRASSLAND FOR
BREEDING WADERS**



NATURAL
ENGLAND

Quick bit of scene setting



High Nature Value Services Ltd



- One of only 3 EU-level pilots funded under this EU programme
- Managed by Natural England and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
- National pilot operating in 2 areas to test the concept:
 - Wensleydale (grassland)
 - Norfolk/Suffolk (pollinators & winter bird food)
- 3 year project between Jan 2015 and Dec 2018
- €714,000 budget (€500,000 EU grant, €214,000 partner contribution)

Wensleydale pilot area



Project development – farmer visit to Ireland



Aims of the meetings

1. Bring everyone up to the same level of understanding of the results based payment approach
2. Agree what poor and excellent habitat looks like and the management requirements needed.
3. Agree the type of results that we are looking for to maintain and improve the habitats and agree how they can be verified by the farmer and/or adviser.
4. Decide upon the addition of payment for actions

Positives:

- Overwhelming support for this approach
- Welcome the additional responsibility and being in charge of progressing up a scoring scale
- A mind change over agri-environment scheme management – farmers and government

Concerns:

- I have to understand what ‘they’ want
- Its up to me to decide how to do it (do I really know?)
- How is risk shared between the government and me?
- Am I in control of changing/maintaining the payment
- Will I get good advice?
- Will the civil servants change how they inspect and think?
- What happens if we exit Europe?

Previous schemes

Farmers paid for following a set of management prescriptions – strict mowing dates, limits for grazing and inputs

Results based schemes

Farmers are paid for **a desired result** - species-rich meadows, and good quality breeding wader and chick feeding habitat

Objective: To provide suitable feeding, nesting and chick rearing habitat for breeding waders (lapwing, curlew, snipe and redshank)

A single self assessment in May/June undertaken by the farmer, looking specifically at 5 key habitat features needed to meet the objective:

1. Vegetation height
2. Rush cover
3. Scale of wet features
4. Quality of wet features
5. **Damaging operations**



Vegetation height

Mixed sward height where between 25 - 75% of the field is short and the rest varied, tussocks frequently seen and well distributed	10
Over 75% long. Short swards confined to very small parts of fields (eg gateways, sup feed sites only) Tussocks indistinguishable from other tall vegetation	5
Over 75% short with little to no variation in height. Tussocks rare or absent	5
No difference in height – either all short, or all long with no variation	1

Rush cover

10 – 30% cover, well scattered with local areas of dense rush	10
>30% rush cover, large areas of dense rush and tall vegetation	5
Absent or sparse <5%	1

Scale of wet features

Field is damp across the majority of the area with a number of wet areas scattered across the field	10
Damp areas are contained to approximately 10% of the field, eg springs, remainder of field is dry	5
Damp areas are rarely seen	1

Quality of wet features

Wet features contain a mix of shallow pools and wet vegetation, gently sloping edges, 50% of the edge is mud with less than 25% rush or tall vegetation	10
A number of wet features on the site but not meeting all criteria above	5
Steep sided, no muddy edge, dense rush cover, inaccessible to birds	1

Management costs and income foregone

- Loss foregone for not being able to fully utilise grazing during April to June
- Additional mowing and herbicide treatment costs of rushes
- Costs and ongoing management of scrapes
- Time taken to monitor habitat, undertake surveys and attend training days

Tier	1	2	3	4	5
Total points	<9 points	10-19 points	20 – 29 points	30 – 39 points	40 points
Grant £/ha	35	69	104	139	174

Objective: To undertake sustainable agricultural management to produce good quality herb rich hay

A single self assessment in July undertaken by the farmer, looking specifically at 2 key habitat features needed to meet the objective:

1. Range of positive and negative plant species
2. Impact of damaging activities

Assessment of range of species undertaken by following a set line through the meadow, with the farmer stopping 10 times to ID plant species

Hay meadow score sheet

Meadow survey sheet

Date of survey:												
Survey undertaken by:												
Field number:												
STOPS	Species Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total species score ¹
Positive plant species (✓)												
Betony	3											
Lesser/greater birds foot trefoil	3											
Bugle	3											
Burnet saxifrage	3											
Common bistort	3											
Common black knapweed	3											
Cowslip	3											
Eyebrights	2											
Fairy flax	3											
Globe flower	4											
Greater burnet	4											
Harebell	3											
Hawkbits/cats ear	2											
Lady's mantle (² sp)	4											
Marsh marigold	2											
Meadowsweet	2											
Melancholy thistle	4											

¹ * Total species score - multiply species score by how many stops the species was seen in

Management costs and income foregone

- Loss foregone of gross margin from potential stocking rate across the farm
- Loss of agricultural forage quality from the crop and from the aftermath grazing
- Cost of buying in additional concentrates
- Cost of soil sampling and adjusting pH with lime
- Additional cost of weed wiping and spot spraying
- Time taken for training and monitoring habitat

Tier	1	2	3	4	5
Total points	40 -79 points	80-119 points	120-159 points	160-199 points	200+ points
Grant £/ha	112	186	260	334	371

Actions undertaken for additional payments

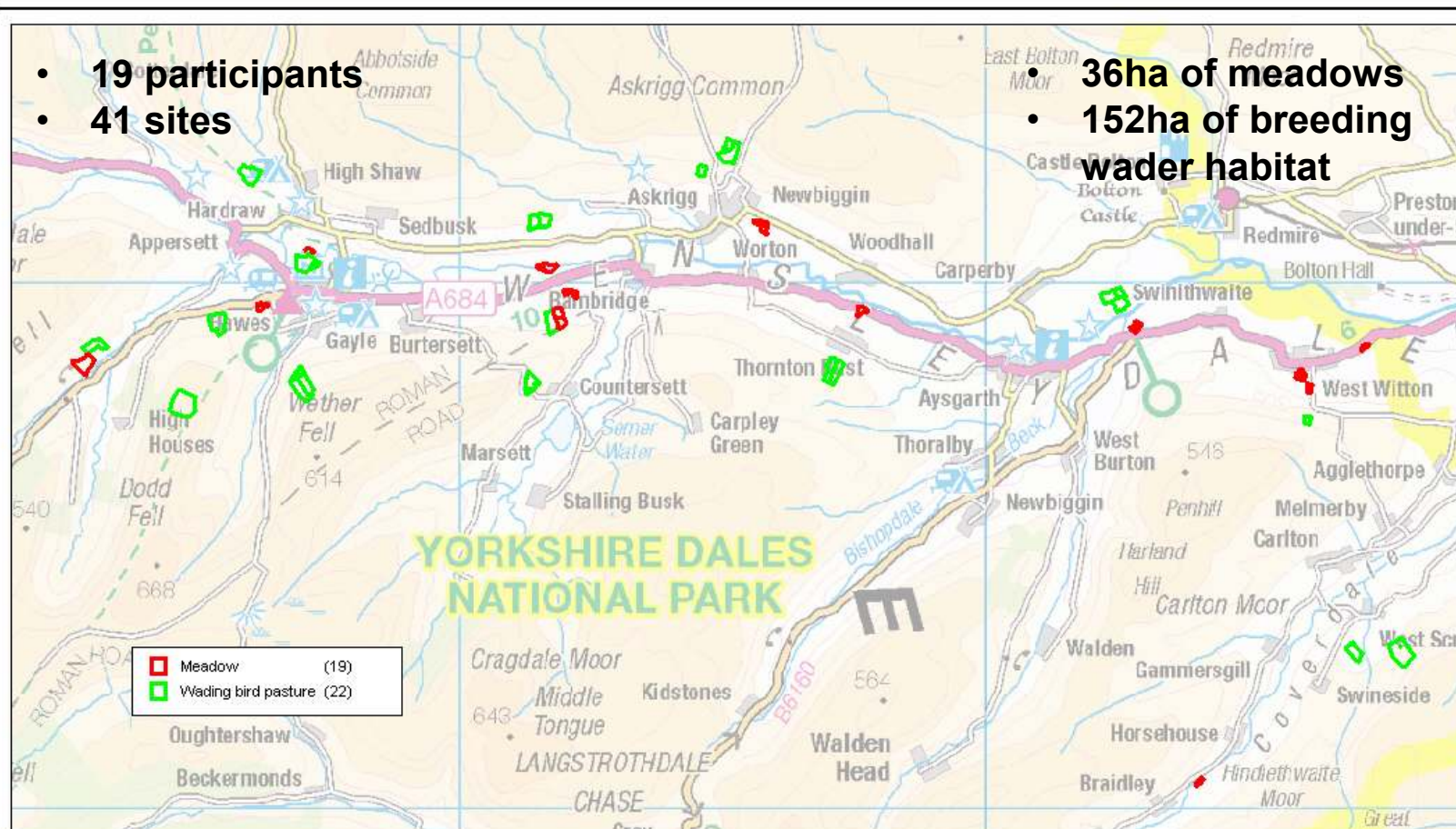
- Native seed

Pilot Results-Based Payment Approaches for Agri-Environment Schemes in Arable and Upland Grassland Systems in England - site locations.



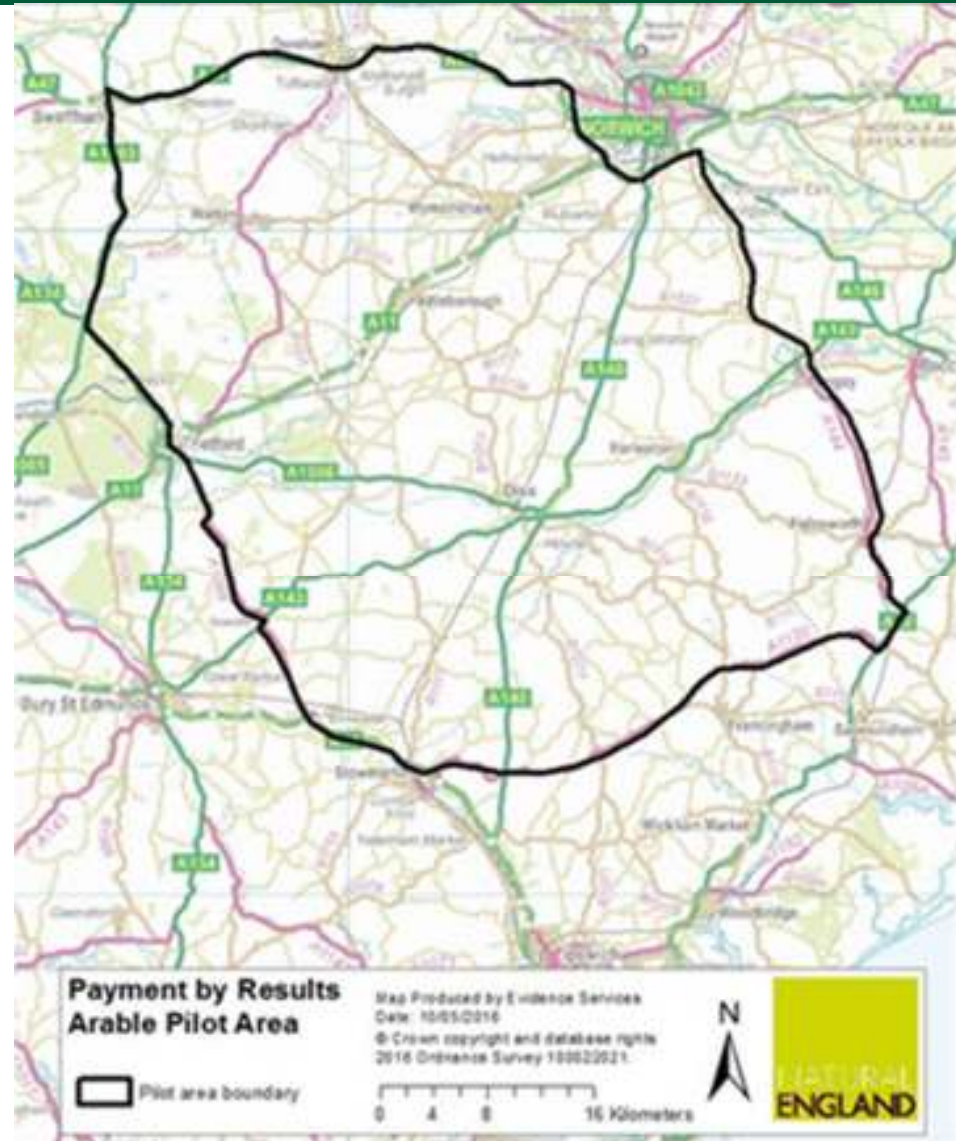
Scale 1:100000

Compiled on 9 January 2017





- 15 participants
- 25ha winter bird food
- 17ha pollen & nectar mix



- Training & guidance – fitting this to farmers needs:
 - hay meadow restoration techniques
 - plant identification
 - wading bird habitat management
 - peer to peer learning
- Survey of attitudes (to the pilot...)
- Publicity and knowledge sharing
- Field assessments
- Setting up monitoring sites

To keep up to date with the project:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/results-based-agri-environment-payment-scheme-rbaps-pilot-study-in-england

National Trust Payment for Outcomes



The approach



1. Identify the main components of a healthy natural environment within the Malham and Upper Wharfedale estates.
2. Design payment options with farm tenants that depend entirely on the environmental outcomes they deliver – rather than on the completion of set management tasks.
3. Payments made based on the outcomes delivered in practice, or indicators of progress towards those outcomes.
4. Two levels of agreements:
 - whole farm – short term
 - ‘top up’ – long term

Key habitats and species



Developing an assessment system



Things we considered:

- What scale – group of habitats or individual, whole farm approach or just specific high nature value areas.
- What are the key attributes for that habitat or species – what does a habitat in optimum condition look like
- Can the attributes be assessed in a relatively simple way
- When do you undertake the assessments
- Who will undertake the assessments
- Are there common over-arching outcomes that should be applied to every farm – landscape / historic related

Example suite of measures



Acidic moorland

Two assessment periods – Spring and late Summer

Assessment method: fixed point quadrats (4mx4m) located in blanket bog and mire habitats

Spring

Winter grazing level assessment –
presence of flowering
cotton grass

Late Summer

Summer grazing level assessment –
diversity of moorland species
presence of flowering heather
Condition of habitat –
cover of species
area of exposed peat

How it will work in practice



- NT and farm tenants agree which habitats / species are included and set appropriate outcomes – farm specific and farm wide.
- Farm tenants use their knowledge and expertise to manage the land to achieve the optimum condition for the habitats.
- Farmers expected to undertake up to two surveys per habitat according to the particular requirements of the habitat scoring sheets
- NT ecologist will undertake the same survey and compare results with the farmers at site meetings.
- Overall habitat scores will be agreed and payment issued according to score level.

- Locally developed schemes have the potential to be far more effective
- Involving farmers from the start significantly aids project development and ‘buy in’
- Keeping it simple is very difficult!
- RPA considers results based schemes to be more easily verifiable than the prescriptive agri-env schemes