

Assessing the effectiveness and cultural value of Countryside Stewardship options HS1 and HS8.

Maintenance of traditional farm buildings.

Agri-environment monitoring theme: BHE

What are the issues?

From its inception over 30 years ago Agri-Environment Scheme policy has consistently recognised the importance of protecting and managing the historic environment, including traditional farm buildings (TFBs), to secure a range of public goods for society. Although difficult to incorporate into modern farming systems, many TFBs are still used and retain a function. They are a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of the countryside and help to define its landscape character and historic interest. TFBs are also important places for wildlife and provide a significant contribution to a sense of place for rural communities and visitors alike. As part of the transition to the Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes an assessment of the effectiveness and cultural value of the TFB maintenance options is required to identify issues which need to be addressed during the remainder of existing agreements, identify areas of success and inform best practice for the development of ELM schemes and establish baseline data for further monitoring.

What are the aims of the project?

To assess the effectiveness and cultural value of Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Environmental Stewardship (ES) TFB maintenance options. To achieve this aim there were 7 objectives for the project:

- 1) Map and analyse the uptake of CS and ES maintenance options.
- 2) Consider the potential of the options to deliver health and well-being benefits.
- 3) Determine the accessibility of maintained buildings as part of understanding the wider benefits of the options.
- 4) Determine if the most appropriate buildings have been selected.
- 5) Assess the impacts of the wildlife and maintenance protocols on agreement holder actions and behaviour.
- 6) Investigate farmer attitudes to determine whether better maintenance has enhanced views on and appreciation of the buildings, their position and role in the local landscape, and the craft skills required to repair them.
- 7) Consider the 'value for money' of the options for the farmer and in relation to the wider natural and cultural capital benefits delivered.



Figure 1: Barn and wall landscape in the Yorkshire Dales. © Peter Gaskell

Which policy areas will the research inform?

Outputs will help review the options and consider them within ELM outcome frameworks and other work to ensure, where possible, that they deliver across the beauty, heritage and engagement (BHE) agenda of the 25 YEP.



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What are the results from the project and how will they be used?

Traditional farm buildings are the most numerous type of historic structure in the countryside. The analysis of CS and ES TFB maintenance option uptake showed that the options were extremely popular with agreement holders and that the spatial distribution of the uptake broadly reflected the nature and character of the national stock of TFBs.

Evidence from interviews with 138 agreement holders and 270 site visits found that the TFB options were making a strong positive contribution to the maintenance and enhancement of the TFB stock and sustaining the flow of supporting, provisioning, regulating and cultural ecosystem services.

There were positive outcomes for the beneficiaries of the services. The TFB stock was both highly visible (99%) and accessible (75%) to the public. Trade-offs were being made in the provision of some of the benefits, for example between the intensity of use and the capacity for wildlife.

Most agreement holders were satisfied with the TFB maintenance options and viewed them positively in terms of value for money. Nine out of 10 CS agreement holders said they would choose the options again knowing what they know now and four out of five felt better able to maintain their TFBs as a result of the scheme.

Agreement holders related to and valued their buildings in a multitude of ways. Personal, instrumental, and intrinsic reasons were important considerations in influencing agreement holder decisions on whether or not to use the TFB maintenance options and also which buildings to enter into the schemes.

Agreement holders were generally aware of most of the supporting, provisioning, regulating and cultural services provided by their TFBs, even though they did not use the language of Natural Capital accounting in articulating their views. The benefits of TFB maintenance for the historic environment, landscape and wildlife were broadly recognised by agreement holders but the benefits for public and agreement holder health and well-being appeared to be less well appreciated.

The introduction of the Building Wildlife Assessment Form (BWAf) and Building Maintenance Plan and Log (BMPL) as part of the revised CS TFB maintenance options has helped some of the agreement holders to deliver positive outcomes from their building management, but it has not been an unqualified success. Although three quarters of the building ranges (72%) are in very good or good condition and 92% show visible evidence of maintenance work, the fact that less than half of the agreement holders were keeping their BMPL

up to date means that the introduction of the form has only been a partial success.

While the vast majority of agreement holders (95%) were maintaining their buildings in a weatherproof condition, essentially by keeping the roof watertight, less attention was being paid to the upkeep of doors, windows and openings.

In promoting policies for providing 'public money' for the provision of 'public goods', adopting language that related to the lived experiences and everyday farming lives of the agreement holders would help improve understanding.

The level of benefits provided by the TFBs maintenance options varied. Increased payment rates could be introduced in return for the provision of additional environmental benefits.

The TFB maintenance options are popular among agreement holders and there has been widespread uptake. Overall the options are effective, straightforward to implement and successful in delivering the desired outcomes. Carrying forward the options into the new ELM schemes will continue to maintain and enhance the flow of benefits.



Figure 2: This large brick range on a farm in Herefordshire has a cellar for cider barrels below the cider mill and a kiln for drying hops. © Jeremy Lake/CCRI

A copy of the final report can be found on the Defra Science Search website.

This project was led by the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) at the University of Gloucestershire. For more information please contact Peter Gaskell pgaskell@glos.ac.uk. Alternatively, please contact the Natural England Historic Environment Expert Team historicenvironment@naturalengland.org.uk

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