

Actions and prescriptions or outcomes and engagement? Experience from agri- environment schemes in England.

The logo for Natural England, featuring a green square with the words "NATURAL" and "ENGLAND" in white, stacked vertically.

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Image: Natural England/Jenny Wheeldon

Policy Objectives (Single or multi)

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**Intervention
design and
implementation**



**Scheme Design
and
implementation**



**Agreement
design and
implementation**

Intervention design and implementation



Objectives

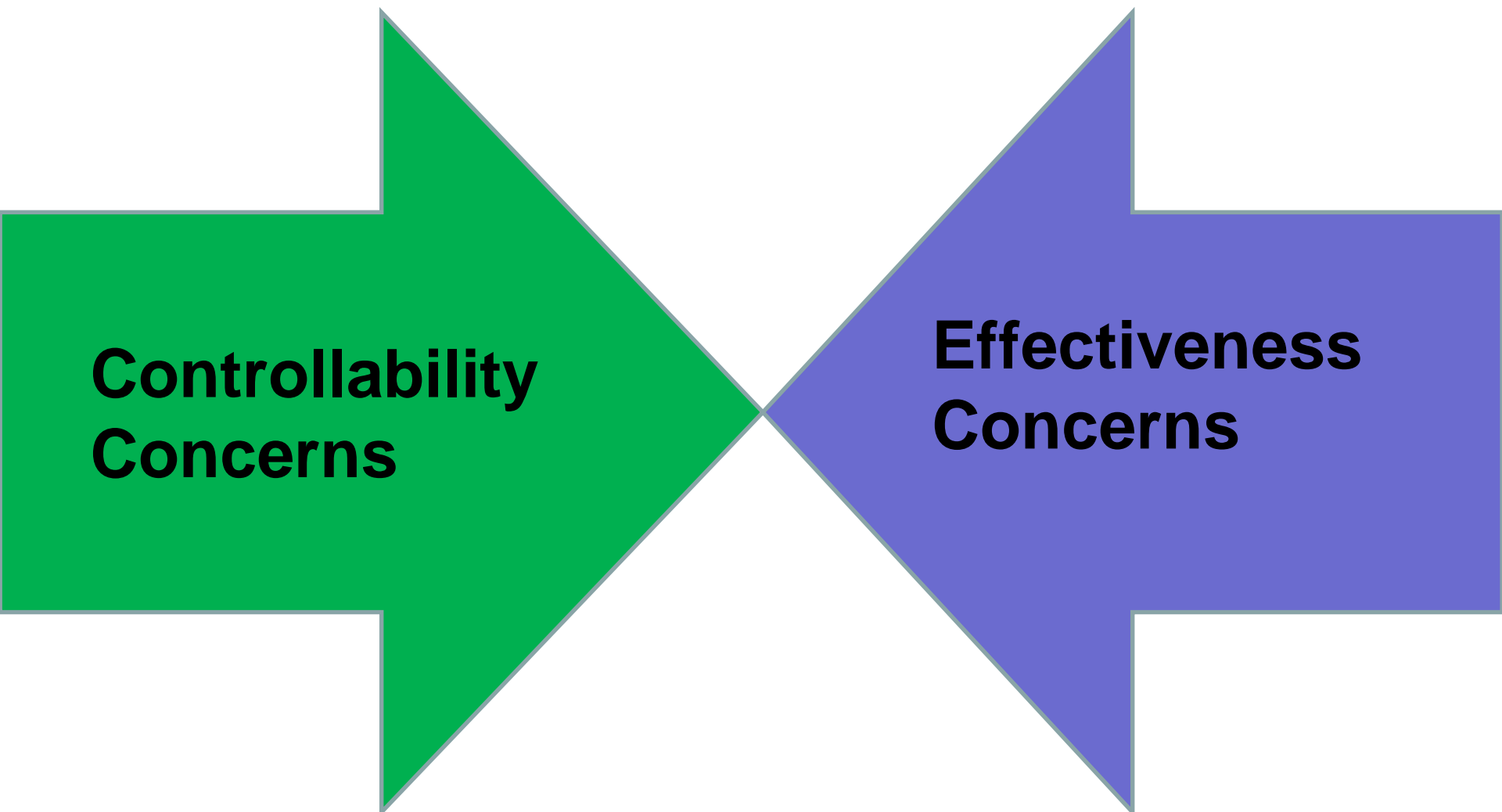
- Well designed interventions
- Appropriately located
- Effectively implemented by land managers

Delivery tools

- Action-based or results-based interventions
- Eligibility criteria (eg baseline habitat quality, spatial restrictions)
- Audits/plans
- Advice/Guidance

Action-based

Predominant approach since schemes began

A diagram consisting of two large, stylized arrows pointing towards each other, meeting at a central point. The left arrow is green and the right arrow is blue. Both arrows have a rectangular base and a triangular tip.

**Controllability
Concerns**

**Effectiveness
Concerns**

Action-based - Example



Countryside Stewardship Option GS6: Management of species-rich grassland

- 7 mandatory prescriptions (tailored for the site)
- 13 optional prescriptions (selected and tailored for the site)
- 11 Potential additional payment supplements (each with their own prescriptions) eg GS15 [Haymaking supplement](#)
- Agreement holders have to provide evidence that prescriptions have been satisfied eg keeping records of stocking rates/movements, invoices, photographic evidence.

Action-based - Concerns



Drives a focus on process not outcomes

- Less than a quarter of HLS agreement holders reported regularly referring to their environmental Indicators of Success (IoS)

Risk of poor option selection/prescription setting

- In relation to HLS 20% of environmental IoS were judged unlikely to be met. Primarily attributed to wrong/poor option selection.

Prescription Limits flexibility/innovation

- Approximately a third of CS Agreement Holders were concerned with the lack of flexibility the scheme offered and contended that the scheme doesn't always work at certain points in time or in certain locations.

Time consuming/bureaucratic

- Over a quarter of CS Agreement Holders primary concern was with the ways in which the scheme was administered – often described as 'red tape' or 'bureaucracy'.
- Complexity – encourages the use of land agents. Farmers may consequently be unengaged and lack understanding of the scheme making successful delivery of outcomes challenging.

Result-based Pilot



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority



Pilot project in England, 3 year project, now in final year.

- **Delivered by Natural England in partnership with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority**
- **One of 3 pilot projects funded by DG Environment**
- **Testing 4 Biodiversity Objectives**
 - **2 in arable farming systems**
 - Provision of winter bird food
 - Provision of nectar resources for pollinators
 - **2 in upland grassland farming systems**
 - Provision of wet grassland for breeding waders
 - Species rich grassland

Result-based



Flexibility/Simplicity

- Focus on outcomes reduces scheme 'options' and removes prescriptions.
- Freedom to manage for site/location/season.

Motivation/Engagement

- Link between result and payment motivates, also an element of 'benchmarking'.
- Onus is on the farmer to seek advice and to improve their skills, and knowledge to enable them to deliver the results.

Cost-effectiveness

- Payment is only made when results are delivered, potentially improving the cost-effectiveness of schemes. eg basic eligibility still a concern, but payment safeguard.

Result-based – Flexibility/simplicity

The logo for Natural England, featuring the words "NATURAL" and "ENGLAND" stacked vertically in white, uppercase, sans-serif font, set against a solid green rectangular background.

“It gives me the freedom to manage the areas as I see fit within broad based parameters”

“Not being tied down with prescriptions, decision making left to farmer”

“Ability to use local knowledge to achieve targets”

Result-based – Motivate higher levels of performance

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“Both parties gain from this approach. I am prepared to put myself out for some reward”

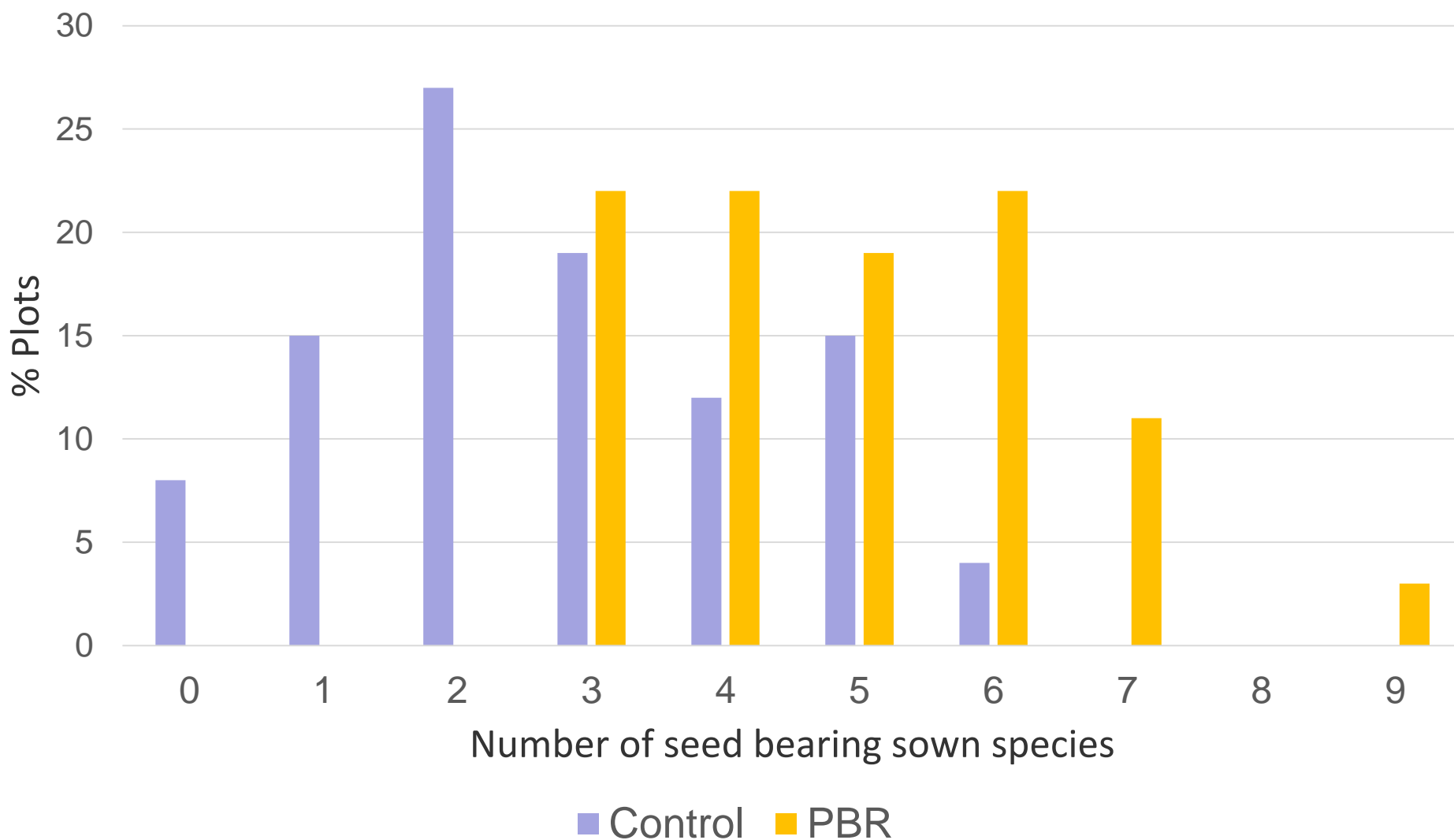
“The more you improve the habitat etc, the bigger the reward - in monetary terms and environmental”

“It concentrated our effort to obtain a successful result”

Result-based



Winter Bird Food - Number of seed bearing sown species



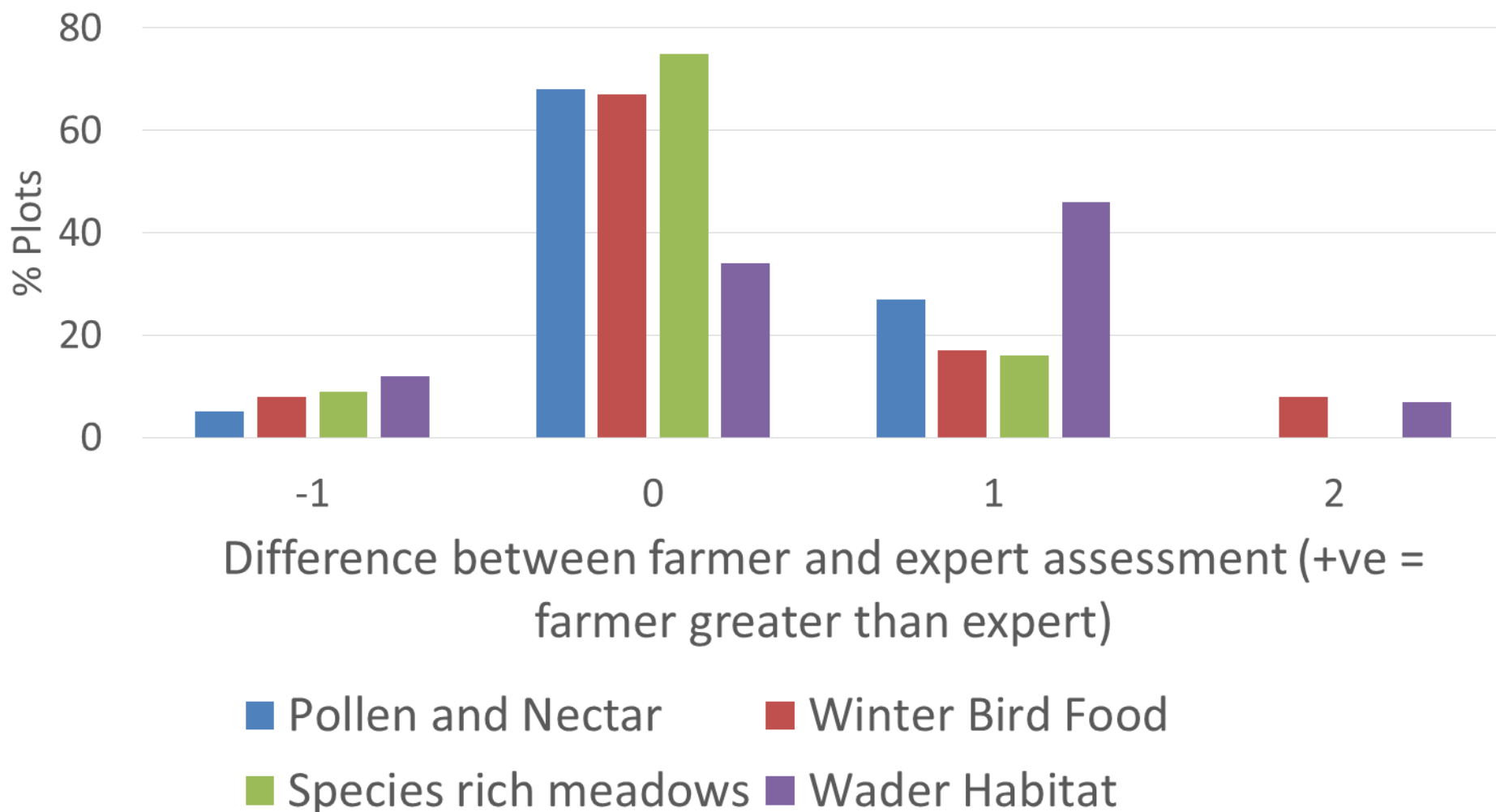




Result-based



Farmer Assessment Accuracy (Payment Tiers)



Result-based – A golden bullet?

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Result-based – A golden bullet?



- **Identifying results Criteria/Assessment methodology**
- **Balancing risk vs reward**
- **Control/Audit**
- **Advice and support**
- **Expectations**
- **Outcomes that operate at greater scale**

Agreement design and implementation



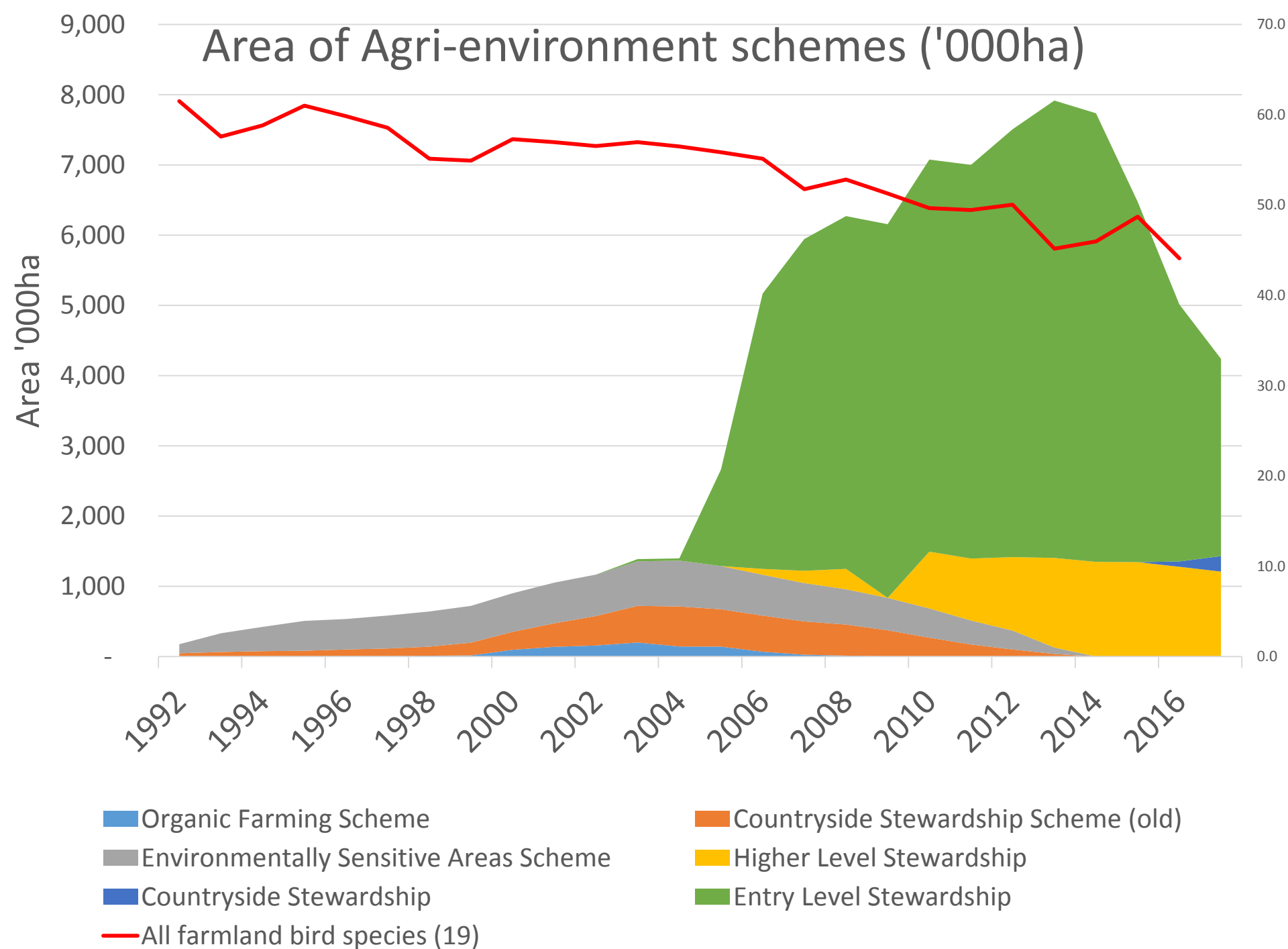
Success measures

- Intensity/scale/mix of intervention required to deliver objective
- Spatial location of interventions (within agreement)

Delivery tools

- Free choice menu
- Split lists/Packages
- Compulsory elements
- Advice

Area of Agri-environment schemes ('000ha)



Free Choice Menu



5.4 Issue 4. Balance of options within ELS agreements

101. Analysis shows that many ELS agreements are focused around a very limited number of options:

- The six most popular options in the scheme (including the compulsory Farm Environment Record) account for 49% of all points scored. The 20 most popular options account for 90% of all the points scored within the scheme. The remaining 42 options account for only 10% of the points scored within the scheme.
- 15% of all ELS agreements score more than 70% of their points from lowland grassland options, with 9% scoring over 90% of their points from this option group.
- 6% of all ELS agreements score 70% or more of their points from boundary options.
- Combining boundary and lowland grassland options together – 40% of all ELS agreements score more than 70% of their points from boundary and lowland grassland options alone, including almost 20% who score in excess of 90% of their points from these two option groups.

Packages/Split lists



Countryside Stewardship Arable Offer

- 1 of 4 'packages'
- There are 11 arable options to choose from, split between 3 categories.
- Farmers must pick at least one option from each category and the package delivers the minimum 3% of farmed land under option management which is needed for farmland birds and wild pollinators.

High level of take up of original packages:

- 38% of CS Mid-tier agreements
- 8% CS Higher-tier agreements

Scheme design and implementation



Objective

- Intensity/scale/mix of intervention required to deliver objective at landscape scale
- Spatial location of interventions/agreements (within landscape)

Design choices

- Locally led vs top down
- Payment rates
- Spatial coordination mechanisms
- Competitive vs guaranteed entry
- Advice/support model

Spatial Co-ordination

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Soft

- Targeting statements
- Targeting maps

Intermediate

- Facilitated groups/Clusters
- Agglomeration bonus

Hard

- Collective agreements
- Target auctions

Spatial Co-ordination



Recommendations – Scheme Design and Process

Natural England should complete further evaluation of the potential effectiveness of geographically explicit approaches to delivering better geographical literacy within ELS, and develop them subject to their effectiveness. As part of this evaluation Natural England should determine the extent to which Income Foregone varies geographically and its impact on future scheme development.

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To adjust the scale of HLS target areas to reflect the resource available and ensure effective co-ordination can be achieved, reflecting evidence on the thresholds of

on required to outcomes.

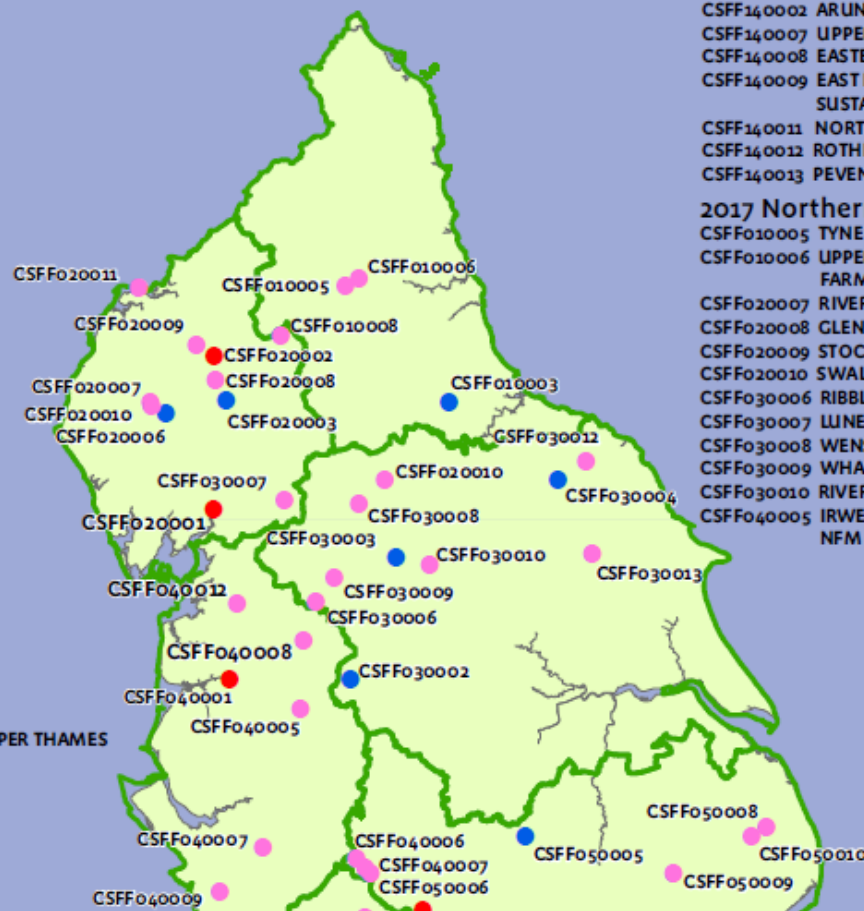
Natural England should continue to develop, refine and implement a map-based approach to targeting HLS agreements. A key feature of this approach will be that most of the resource will be concentrated in a series of multi-objective, priority target areas, with key features outside these areas being targeted individually.

The existing geographical targeting guidance for ELS, including the JCA based targeting statements, should be reviewed to explore ways that it can be made more effective. This review should be linked to the ongoing development work on map-based targeting for ES.

Spatial Co-ordination – groups/clusters

COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP FACILITATION FUND AGREEMENTS

CSFF010003 SKERN CATCHMENT
CSFF010008 SOUTH TYNE
CSFF020001 MORECAMBE BAY
CSFF020002 RIVER PETTERIL
CSFF020003 LOWER LEITH CATCHMENT
CSFF020006 CROOKHURST CATCHMENT
CSFF020010 BORROWDALE
CSFF020011 BOWNESS
CSFF030002 SOUTH PENNINES
CSFF030003 UPPER NIDDERDALE
CSFF030004 DERWENT DALES
CSFF030012 ESK VALLEY
CSFF030013 YORKSHIRE FARM FORA
CSFF040001 RIBBLE RIVERS TRUST
CSFF040006 DANE HEADWATER
CSFF040007 LOWER DANE
CSFF040008 PENDLE HILL
CSFF040009 SANDSTONE
CSFF040012 ABBEYSTAD FARM
CSFF050001 SOUTH Lincs. FARMERS
CSFF050003 WHITE PEAK FARMERS
CSFF050005 GUARDIAN OF SHERWOOD
CSFF050006 SOUTH WEST PEAK
CSFF050007 HOPE VALLEY
CSFF050008 GREAT EAU
CSFF050009 Lincs. HEATHS
CSFF050010 Lincs. WOLDS
CSFF050011 WELLAND FLOODPLAIN
CSFF060001 FARMERS FOR AQUALATE
CSFF060004 WHISTON BROOK
CSFF060005 LONCO BROOK CATCHMENT
CSFF060006 BITHFIELD CATCHMENT
CSFF060007 LAND, LIFE & LIVELIHOODS
CSFF060008 RIVER MEASE CATCHMENT
CSFF060009 CHURNETT VALLEY
CSFF070003 WYRE FOREST
CSFF070005 WORCESTER W.T.
CSFF070006 LEADON
CSFF070007 FARMERS GUARDIANS FOR THE UPPER THAMES
CSFF070008 CARRANT CATCHMENT
CSFF070010 GO WILD IN THE CURL
CSFF070012 HEREFORD MEADOWS
CSFF070013 ARDEN FARMERS
CSFF070014 MALVERN HILLS
CSFF070015 SEVERN VALE
CSFF080001 BOURN BROOK



CSFF120009 EARNE & YEALME
CSFF120010 FAL VALLEY
CSFF130001 SELBORNE L.P.
CSFF130002 WINCHESTER DOWNS
CSFF130004 BRIT & HOOKE
CSFF130006 EAST YAR
CSFF130007 WALLOP GROUP
CSFF140002 ARUN TO ADUR
CSFF140007 UPPER ROTHER AND DUDWELL
CSFF140008 EASTERN SOUTH DOWNS
CSFF140009 EAST KENT
SUSTAINABLE FARMING GROUP
CSFF140011 NORTH DOWNS ESCARPMENT
CSFF140012 ROTHER VALLEY
CSFF140013 PEVENSEY LEVELS

2017 Northern Flood Round

CSFF010005 TYNE RIVERS TRUST
CSFF010006 UPPER COQUETDALE FARMERS
FARMERS GROUP
CSFF020007 RIVER COCKER CATCHMENT GRP.
CSFF020008 GLENDERAMACKIN NFM GROUP
CSFF020009 STOCKDALEWATH NFM GROUP
CSFF020010 SWALEDALE NFM GROUP
CSFF030006 RIBBLESDALE FARM GROUP
CSFF030007 LINESDALE FARMERS
CSFF030008 WENSLEYDALE NFM GROUP
CSFF030009 WHARFEDAILE GROUP
CSFF030010 RIVER SKELL CATCHMENT
CSFF040005 IRWELL CATCHMENT
NFM GROUP

Advice/guidance



Features across all elements

Intervention delivery

- Guidance documents are important for delivery but are widely considered too technical to use.

Agreement development and implementation

- 71% of agreement holders said that advice is important or very important to the successful delivery of their HLS agreement.
- Positive correlations between outcomes and the quality of agreement set-up and agreement holder knowledge.

Scheme Implementation

- Advice and guidance key role in delivering spatial coordination.

Summary



**Land manager
understanding
of what 'good'
looks like**

Focused

**Evidence-
Based**

**Advice and
Guidance**

**Spatial
coordination**

Flexibility

References 1/2



Intervention design

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- LM0443: Resurvey of HLS Baseline for options HK6 and HK7: Species-Rich Grassland Maintenance/Restoration (RP01551)
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- LM0445 HLS Resurvey (forthcoming)
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<http://adlib.everysite.co.uk/resources/000/250/625/PB13076.pdf>
- Making Environmental Stewardship more Effective (2013)
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Advice/Guidance

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<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/11462046?category=62001>
- LM0432: Assessing the role of advice and support in the establishment of Higher Level Stewardship agreements (RP01570)
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5163786125180928?category=62001>
- LM0433: Assessing the impact of continued advice and support on the environmental outcomes of HLS agreements once they have been established (RP01571)
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4903634587353088?category=62001>