

Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust Hay Time Project

Results Based Agri-environment Pilot Scheme (RBAPS)

Welcome!

Welcome to the first issue of the RBAPS or Payment by Results (as it's also known) bi-annual newsletter from Natural England and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.

At the beginning of 2016 funding was awarded by the EU to co-finance a three year project delivered by Natural England in partnership with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. The project is looking at a payment by results approach to four existing agri-environment scheme options in two locations in England – Wensleydale and Norfolk/Suffolk.

With a year under our belts and agreements set up we want to provide you with an update of what we have been up to as well as what is coming up.

There has been a huge amount of work going on behind the scenes to put us in a position to promote the pilot, offer agreements and start to provide the support needed to deliver the various RBAPS options.

The project website will be up and running soon where you will be able to find further information.

We are very much looking forward to working with you on this exciting project over the next two years.

The Project Team (introductions on page 5)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>
<http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/>

In the next issue: Reports from arable and grassland training events and the conference in Brussels.....

Live Agreements

34 agreements have now started in the two pilot areas covering 230ha. Read on for more details.....



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Coming Up.....

Norfolk/Suffolk Arable Farmer Event:

Getting the Best out of Your Plots

28th February at Shotford Hall

Wensleydale, Grassland Farmer Event:

1st March: Hay Meadow Restoration

8th March: Managing habitat for breeding waders

The team will be in touch to confirm the venue



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority



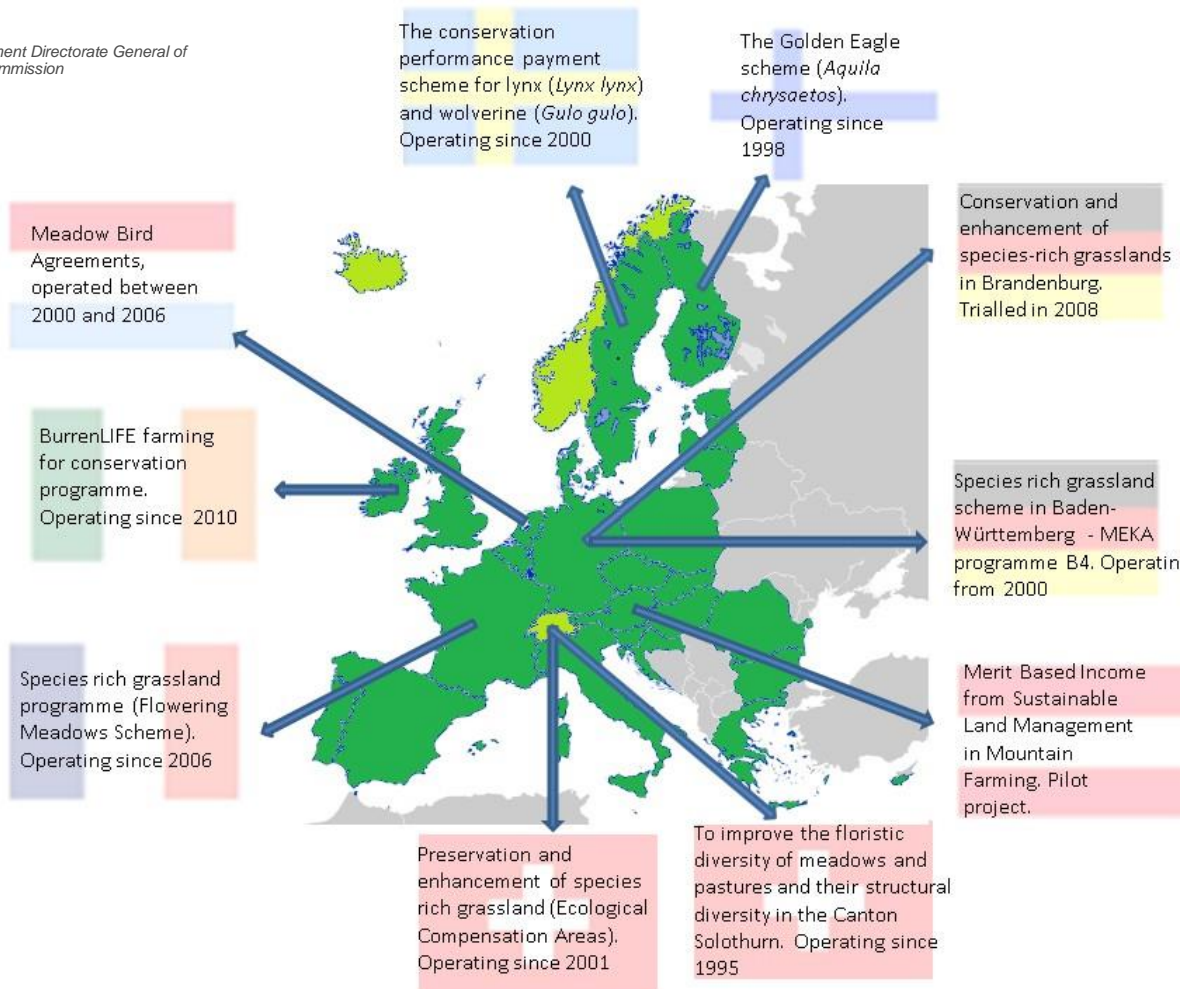
RBAPS in England and beyond

This project is one of three projects being funded by the EU to look at the concept of paying by results in agri-environment schemes. The others are in Ireland and Spain looking at species rich habitats and birds, and Romania for species rich hay meadows.

This approach is not new within the agri-environment context and a number of successful schemes have been run in Sweden to protect lynx, Germany, Switzerland and France for species rich grassland and birds in Holland and Finland. More information on these can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/index_en.htm.

One of the best known projects has been in the Burren in Ireland where payments are based on an annual score for well managed grassland with abundant wildflowers in addition to capital payments for work such as scrub clearance. <http://burrenlife.com>

Source: Environment Directorate General of the European Commission



Put the term 'payment by results' into an online search and there is a huge amount of information out there. The NHS features heavily and has used payment by results to transform the way it moves funding around the organisation. The National Audit Office also has interesting views and produced a report in 2015 looking at the Governments use of this approach. So there is a lot of information on what is becoming an increasingly high profile way of delivering funds.



Source: European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism

Arable Update



With 15 Agreements live and a grand total of 25ha of winter bird food and 17ha of pollen and nectar plots the project is definitely up and running.

This is a fantastic achievement given the tight timescales and agreements being accepted during a busy harvest. Pollen and nectar plots have now been sown and are establishing despite a dry autumn.

Visits have taken place to assess existing winter bird food plots on the farms and are producing interesting results. What is being highlighted is the need to get the mix, establishment and management right.

These themes will be picked up during the training day we are running for Agreement Holders on the 28th February. With Peter Thompson from the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and Marek Nowakowski from the Wildlife Farming Company the training day will provide expert advice on maximising the performance of options as well as an opportunity to have your questions answered.

We are also planning a farm walk in June to look at some plots to discuss best management techniques.

We have attracted interest from wider afield with a visit in the spring from a team who are setting up demonstration farms in Germany. Focusing on conventional farms not currently participating in agri-environment schemes they are keen to understand the work we have been doing with arable farmers.

With a trip planned to Brussels in March to report back to the EU on how the project is progressing, it will be an interesting year.

Contact: Vicky Robinson at vicky.robinson@naturalengland.org.uk

Look out for reports on these events in the next newsletter.

Grassland Update

We had a great response from over 30 farmers across Wensleydale to take part in this exciting new project. Unfortunately we could not take them all but have signed up 19 farmers with 36ha of species rich meadows and 153ha of breeding wader land. The agreements started on 15th September 2016.

We have a great group of farmers from very diverse farming backgrounds, some with larger farms, some with only a few acres.

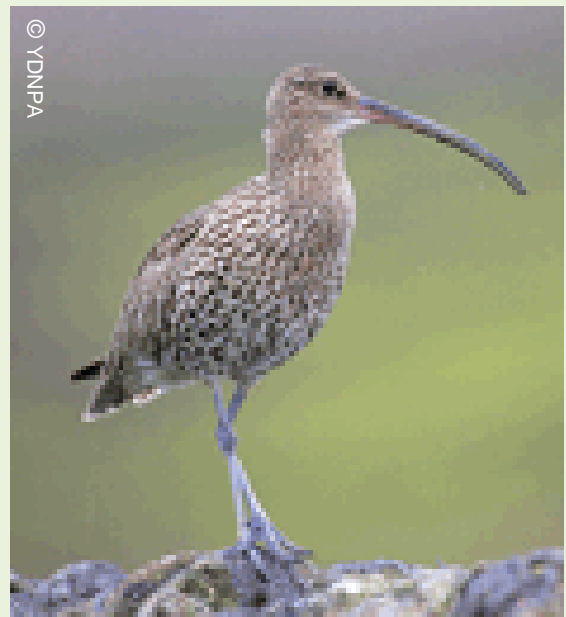
Some are old hands at agri environment having been in schemes from as far back as 20 years and are keen to see how the new approach compares to the old ways. Some of our farmers have never been in a scheme before due to a variety of reasons so it will be interesting for us to see their approach. However all have one thing in common and that is their enthusiasm!

We held a very successful initial meeting for all farmers back in November. We explained a bit more about the history of Results Based Payment Schemes (RBAPS) and showed a couple of short videos of French and Dutch farmers already taking part in their own schemes. It did highlight the positive attitude amongst many farmers towards RBAPS across Europe where they have been successfully running for a few years. We also asked our farmers what type of training and advice they would like in order to get the most out of the project and we are working hard to get this underway with the design of a clear user friendly meadow flower ID chart and a guide to simple capital works that will enhance the habitat for breeding waders.

Other works underway include soil sampling the meadows to assess the nutrient status especially looking at pH and phosphate indices. Most farmers with meadows in the project seemed keen on trying to enhance their species score by adding extra seed. We are currently trying to work out the best method of doing this and will feed back to farmers as soon as we have a definite plan.

In the early spring we will be arranging visits to other farms with excellent habitats for birds and then in early summer to some farms with exceptional meadows to show what we are aiming to achieve.

It should be a very busy and exciting season ahead!



Contact: Helen Keep at Helen.Keep@yorkshiredales.org.uk

Meet the Team

The Arable Team



Vicky Robinson (Project Manager, Natural England) has an arable farming background and 16 years of experience working on agri-environment schemes within Natural England and its predecessors.



David Ward (Project Adviser, Natural England) has worked on agri-environment schemes for Natural England and its predecessors for 15 years. Previous to that he worked as an agronomist for ADAS for 15 years.



Clare Bains (Project Adviser, Natural England) has worked for Natural England and its predecessors for 18 years, in various advisory capacities, especially agri-environment schemes. Working across Norfolk and Suffolk with a range of arable, mixed and livestock farms.



David Whiting (Project Adviser, Natural England) has 17 years of experience working on agri-environment schemes within Natural England and its predecessors. Areas of expertise include agronomy and land management.

The Grassland Team



Annabelle LePage (Project Manager, Natural England) has spent more time than she cares to remember working on the design and roll-out of new agri-environment schemes. Prior to that she's worked in environmental consultancy and visited hundreds of farms collecting agronomic data.



Helen Keep (Senior Project Adviser, YDNPA). Sister to a dairy farmer and originally from Bristol, this offcumden has made the Yorkshire Dales home for nearly 21 years working on the delivery of agri-environment schemes and providing support to hill farmers during this time.



Adrian Shepherd (Contract Manager, YDNPA), brought up and farmed on the family potato, sheep & beef farm in the mosses of North Lancashire. Adrian has worked in the agri-environment sector for almost 30 years including time at FWAG, the Peak Park Joint Planning Board and now in his current role.



Jane Le Cocq (Project Adviser, YDNPA). has a livestock farming background and co-manages the family farm in her spare time! Born and bred in North Yorkshire, Jane has worked for the YDNPA for nearly 12 years on agri-environment scheme delivery and support to hill farmers, prior to that she was a veterinary nurse.