

Designing and operating an outcome-oriented environmental land management scheme

The example of Higher Level Stewardship in
England
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Background

- ▶ Between 1985 and 2005, there were two main schemes in England:
 - Environmentally Sensitive Areas, focused on particular areas of countryside vulnerable to agricultural change
 - Countryside Stewardship, a competitive scheme available everywhere
- ▶ Both worked mainly through prescriptions – lists of dos and don'ts
- ▶ Both had successes, but also limitations
- ▶ The key limitations were:
 - Coverage
 - More complex, adaptive management

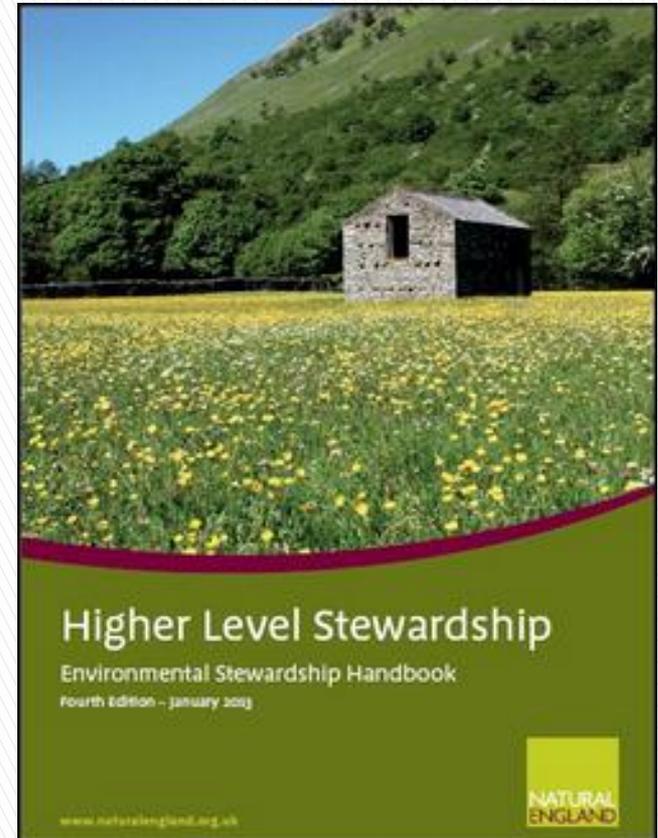
Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) design brief

- ▶ A greater emphasis on outcomes and less on adherence to prescriptions
- ▶ A targeted scheme focused on maintaining & restoring complex habitats and valued landscapes, including important features of the historic environment
- ▶ A more realistic approach to habitat creation
- ▶ Protection of soil and water quality

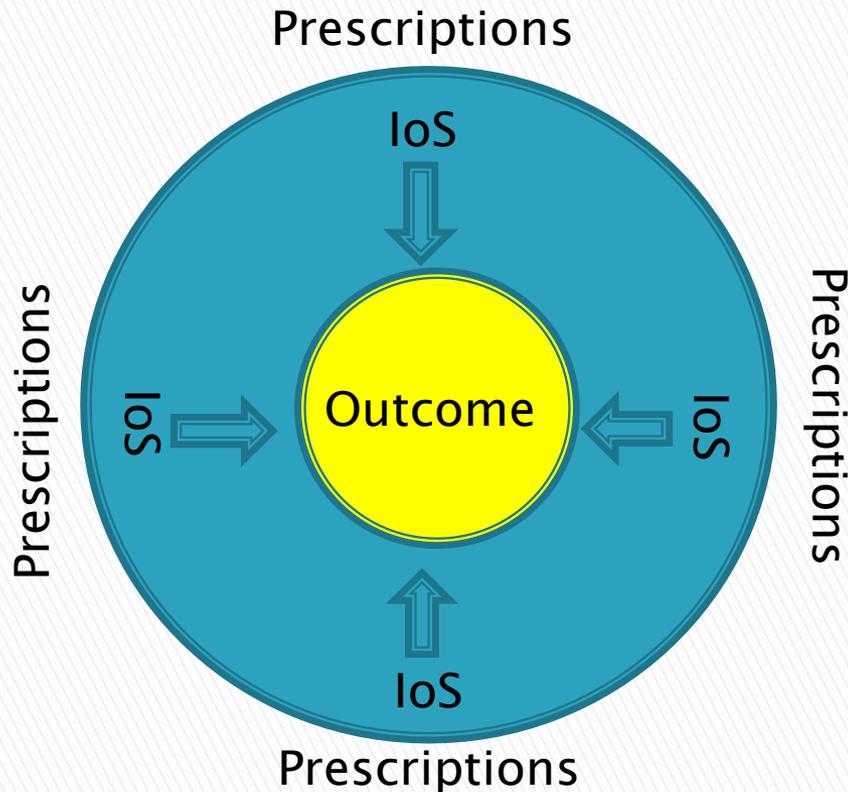


Key design features of HLS

- ▶ Features of HLS intended to ensure a greater focus on outcomes:
 - Careful, evidence-based, active targeting
 - Negotiated agreements based on a whole farm audit of environmental features
 - Indicators of success
 - Regular support, monitoring and feedback
- ▶ These **all** need to work together to be fully effective



Indicators of success (IoS)



The concept

Enhanced wild bird seed mix plots:

“At full crop establishment there should be between 75% & 100% cover of the sown crop”

Maintenance of wet grassland for breeding waders:

Between 5% & 25% of the field should have standing water between 1st March and 31st May (in hollows, scrapes, ditch edges, foot drains etc.)

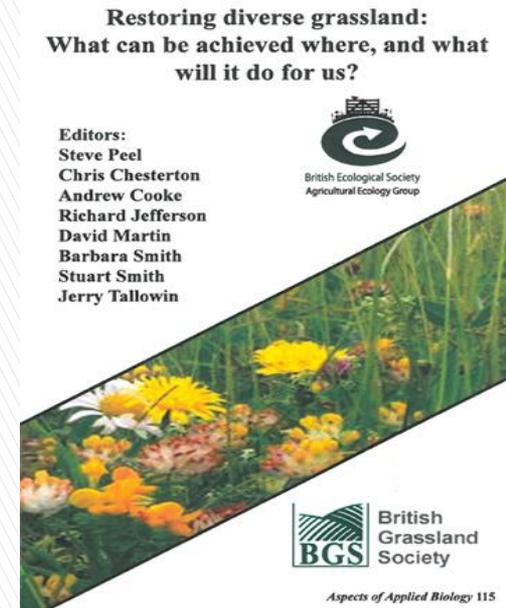
Examples

Indicators of Success

- ▶ Should:
 - Use simple language to describe the successful outcome, and how to reach it.
 - Be easily observable or measurable, by both farmers and advisors
 - Be tailored to the individual management option on the particular site
 - For restoration or creation, provide waypoints to a successful outcome
- ▶ They are not prescriptions, so there is no formal sanction for failure

Has Higher Level Stewardship worked?

- ▶ Sometimes yes!
- ▶ The successful recreation of species rich grasslands is a good, well documented example:
- ▶ A random sample of 36 grassland creation agreements showed huge progress compared to the 'classic schemes':
 - 17 (47%) fitted the description of one of the grassland types in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan
 - 12 (33%) were species-rich
 - 6 (17%) were in good condition
- ▶ **But Little progress on 19 (53%)**



HLS has been successful when:

- ▶ **The Agreement**
 - Matches management options to features
- ▶ **The Farmer**
 - Understands and ‘buys into’ the scheme’s objectives
 - Has the knowledge and motivation to monitor the Indicators of Success and adapt the management as required
- ▶ **The Advisor:**
 - Communicates and establishes a rapport with the farmer
 - Has the technical knowledge to adapt Indicators of Success to the site conditions and monitor their achievement
 - Has time to make the necessary structured follow up visits



Conclusions

- ▶ The success of an outcome-oriented approach depends on:
 - Well targeted agreements that allow the farmer room to optimise management
 - Training and developing advisers with the right technical and inter-personal skills
 - Allowing those advisers enough time to explain and ‘sell’ the intended outcomes and provide adequate, structured feedback.
 - Relatively high transaction costs
- ▶ If well designed and delivered, it can be more cost-effective than low-overhead, hands-off schemes.



Questions?

