

# 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

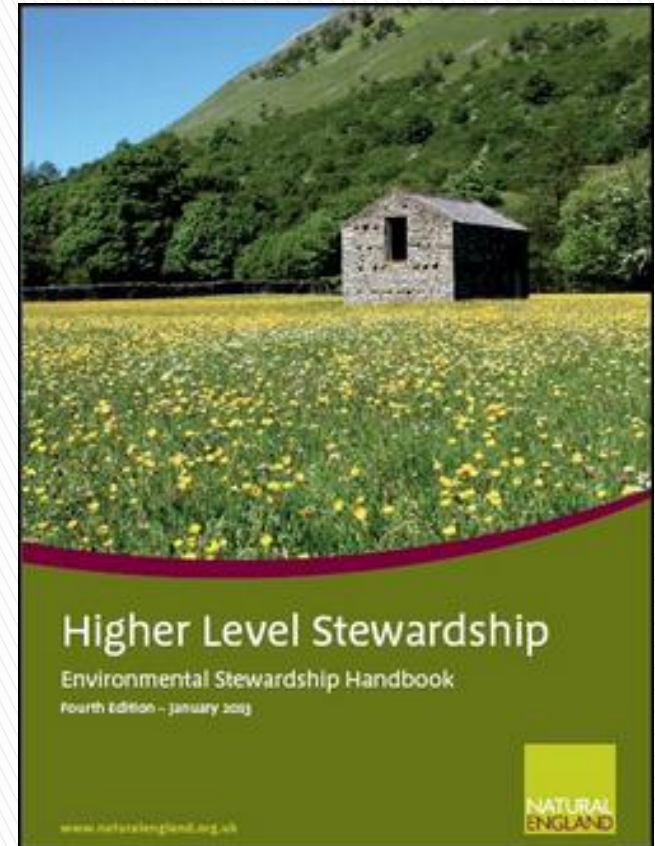
# Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) design brief

- ▶ 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

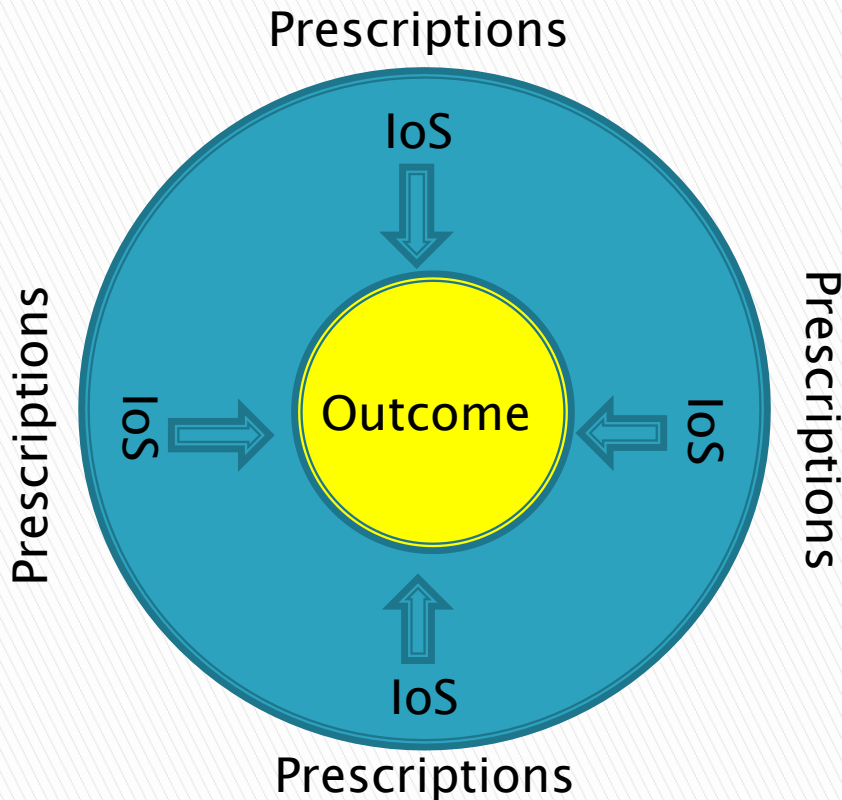


# Key design features of HLS

- ▶ 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 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> May (in hollows, scrapes, ditch edges, foot drains etc.)*

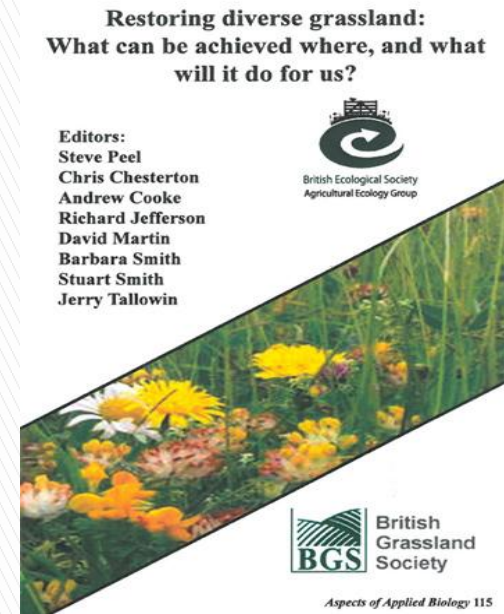
Examples

# 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?

