Living landscapes: hidden costs of managing the countryside
The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. We promote positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside to ensure change values its natural and built environment. Our Patron is Her Majesty The Queen. We have more than 60,000 supporters, a branch in every county, nine regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in central London. Membership is open to all. Formed in 1926, CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning. Our President is Sir Max Hastings.

Much of what CPRE has achieved has only been possible due to financial support from people who care about our countryside.

To find out how to support CPRE, including information on donating, becoming a member, leaving a legacy or volunteering, please ring Supporter Services on 020 7981 2870, email supporter-services@cpre.org.uk or go online at our website: www.cpre.org.uk/support-us.

The National Farmers’ Union champions British farming and, through representation and services, helps its members run profitable and successful businesses. With more than 60,000 members, 280 local offices supported by staff in seven regional offices and offices in London, Stoneleigh, Brussels and Wales, the NFU is the largest organisation representing the interests of farmers and growers in England and Wales. The NFU has no political affiliation, which enables it to negotiate effectively and independently at every level – providing individual help for members and a voice for the wider industry.

In 2008, the NFU will celebrate its centenary. Our vision for the future of agriculture and horticulture is a dynamic, market-focused, multi-purpose modern industry. We see it offering solutions to society on the quality and security of its food supplies, the management of the countryside, the production of bio-energy and the mitigation of climate change. We believe that our beautiful countryside is not only important in itself, but that it is also one of our most valuable economic assets. We are therefore committed to integrating the maintenance and enhancement of our landscape and wildlife with modern, productive farming.

For more information about the NFU, its role in promoting farming, locally produced food, and managing the countryside, please visit our website: www.nfuonline.com.
Contents

Foreword
Shaun Spiers, Chief Executive, CPRE 2
Peter Kendall, President, NFU 3

Executive summary 5

Introduction 9

Case study
John Ellerington, Yorkshire 11

Challenges for farming in a decoupled world 13

Case study
David Cotton, Somerset 17

Case study
Nigel Oakey, Oxfordshire 19

Challenges for farming in a liberalised trading system 21

Case study
Isabelle and Tom Ostle, Cumbria 23

Future funding for farming 25

Case study
John Addison, County Durham 29

What this means for the countryside 31

Case study
Tom Flower, Derbyshire 35

Case study
Tom Meikle, Worcestershire 37

Farmer survey
Methodology 38
Results 39

Farmer interviews
Methodology 44
Results 46

Case study
Steve Bumstead, Bedfordshire 49

Conclusion 51

Endnotes 52
Foreword
BY SHAUN SPIERS - CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CPRE

Most of the English landscape has been farmed at one time or another during the last 6,000 years. When we think of countryside that we know and love, we are considering one of the great success stories of this country: the integration of agricultural production with beauty and wildlife. This joint report has this understanding at its heart. But it also recognises that farming and a love of the landscape have sometimes been opposed in the past, and that we cannot afford to allow those divisions to remain in the uncertain world we inhabit.

Since 1926 CPRE has campaigned to protect what makes the character of the English landscape unique and so highly valued by those who visit, live and work in the countryside. Today, the countryside continues to be endangered by the pressures of development that led to the formation of CPRE. But what is it about the countryside that we most value? Undoubtedly it is the physical features of the landscape that together form the fabric of the countryside: its patterns of fields, boundaries, moors, marshes, heaths and woods. In a recent CPRE survey we confirmed that many people recognise that these features are, in turn, largely dependent upon the existence of working farms. These cover nearly ten million hectares, all of which depends on continued management to retain its distinctive character. Farming gives meaning and context to our landscapes, providing not only productive countryside but also inspiration to artists and writers, and a refuge for everyone from the pressures of urban life.

The history of our landscapes reflects the history of English agriculture. As farming practices have changed so has the character of our landscapes, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse, as the drivers of agricultural policy and the market exert their influences on farmers’ land management decisions.

The future of the farmed countryside is inextricably linked to the decisions the Government and the European Union (EU) will make about the future of agricultural policy in the next few years. It is already apparent that following the recent reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the continuing evolution of agri-environment schemes, the future of farming and the sustainable management of the countryside are increasingly bound together. But the effects of a global food market, business structures, consumer demands, water availability and climate change will all affect how we use our farmland and consequently how we will manage future changes to the character of our landscapes.

Some are advocating the complete withdrawal of financial support for agriculture. This may be influenced by a simple desire to reduce demands on the Exchequer, by the apparent lack of long term benefits to farmers of a subsidy regime, or by observation of the environmental damage which took place during the years of direct subsidy. But the consideration of a significant reduction in such funding must take account of the inter-relationships between farming, landscape, wildlife, natural resource management and the future of rural communities. We believe that substantial support for farmers should be directed towards securing public goods. This report indicates that the contribution farmers make to the beauty and diversity of our countryside is enormous and that the strategic value of a skilled farming sector is nationally important. The sooner this is universally recognised, the better.
Foreword

BY PETER KENDALL - PRESIDENT, NFU

The English landscape is one of this country’s abiding glories. The European Landscape Convention defines a landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. But to you and me, a landscape is the backdrop to our daily lives, a constant source of inspiration and renewal, a living record of how the land has been managed and farmed down the centuries.

At a more prosaic level, landscapes are hugely important from an economic point of view. They contribute enormously to the quality of life. They attract millions of people to visit the countryside – and spend their money in it – every year. The associations that they offer are a crucial component in the marketing of local foods – think of Cumbrian lamb, Herefordshire cider or Kentish apples and pears. And the quality and variety of our local foods is in turn vitally important to the overall distinctiveness of British food and farming.

Yet, there is no effective way in which the huge value of landscapes can be reflected in the market place. They are known as ‘public goods’. Or, to put it another way, you cannot charge people for looking at the view.

That, of course, is why we have agri-environment schemes – to incentivise and reward farmers for managing the landscape in the public interest – and the income generated from schemes like Entry and Higher Level Stewardship is becoming an increasingly important element in the overall mix of farmers’ incomes. But the role of farmers in landscape management goes well beyond the activities encompassed by these schemes, or by statutory requirements.

Ultimately, our landscape is a reflection of the way the land is farmed. The ever-changing kaleidoscope of crops and grass reflects the current imperatives of profitable farming. But many of the more permanent features of our landscapes – the hedges, copses, in-field trees, ponds and orchards – have long since outlived their original agricultural usefulness. In a world where economics was everything, many of these features would have been wiped off the face of the earth in the name of efficient production. The fact that they have not is a reflection of how farmers instinctively understand the wider cultural and environmental significance of what goes to make up the landscape.

Besides, farmers are only human. They can appreciate the beauty and distinctiveness of our landscapes as well as, if not better than, the next person. The visitor to the countryside will take pleasure from the view. The farmer takes pride in it.

But all of this landscape management – whether conscious or instinctive – comes at a cost. The purpose of this report was to establish, as accurately and objectively as possible, precisely what cost. Not because we would then have a bill that we could send to the Government, but so that the policy-makers and policy-influencers could understand more clearly that there is more to being a farmer than being a least-cost producer of food.

Farming has shaped the English landscape and farming – productive farming – is still an enormous force for good in the English countryside. I hope that this report will serve to reinforce that message in the public mind, and be an important building block for policy for farming and the countryside in the years ahead.
Farmers play a crucial role in shaping and managing the landscapes of England.
Executive summary

Most of England’s countryside is looked after by farmers, and has been for hundreds of years.

Our landscape is a huge part of England’s heritage. Farming plays a crucial role in shaping the landscape, but there is a lack of accurate information on the extent and nature of landscape management activities undertaken by farmers, especially when undertaken outside the framework of agri-environment schemes.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and the National Farmers’ Union (NFU) have joined together to make a first estimate of the extent of this ‘uncompensated work’, that not undertaken through agri-environment schemes, and to consider what might happen if farm finances were put under further pressure. We both want to see a sustainable future for England’s beautiful and diverse countryside. CPRE and the NFU believe farmers have the leading role to play in securing that future.

This report contains a study of English farmers. The first part examined what landscape maintenance work farmers undertook. The second part of the research consisted of a series of face-to-face interviews asking for survey participants’ reactions to the findings, and how their landscape management activities might be affected if farming support was further reduced.

The statistical analysis of the survey results was carried out by the Centre for Agricultural Strategy at the University of Reading, in liaison with the NFU and CPRE. The survey was sent to 2,084 farmers across England. The interviews were conducted by P. Baker Consultancy in association with the University of Plymouth. Twenty seven face-to-face interviews were undertaken with farmers who had participated in the survey to explore its findings.

This report features case studies of individual farmers, some of which are drawn from the research.

Time, money and labour are needed for landscape management

We estimate that the landscape maintenance work carried out on the average English farm, not supported by agri-environment funding, amounted to £2,410 per year. This is based on what it would cost to hire contractors to carry out the work. The contractor rates used were those obtained from the surveys. Our survey revealed some of the maintenance work, such as hedge trimming, is already being carried out extensively by contractors.

On this basis, the total cost to farmers of landscape management outside agri-environment schemes across England can be estimated at £412m per year.

We believe this figure is a conservative estimate. It does not fully consider the loss of income associated with any reduced production. Neither does our calculation consider the extent to which current agri-environment schemes fully compensate the management activities that they require the farmer to...
undertake, nor does it account for the benefits derived from these activities. Finally, this report does not analyse the wider benefits derived from landscape management activities, such as natural resource management and attracting visitor expenditure.

What would happen if agri-environment payments were reduced? And what would happen if the Single Payment Scheme available to all farmers were to be removed? Our research indicates, not surprisingly, that the work of landscape maintenance would suffer dramatically under each of these scenarios.

Farmers would lack the time, money and manpower to do the work on their land or to hire contractors to do it for them. They would either cut back on the work or cease it completely.

For landscape features to be maintained, either farm incomes must be maintained or management work needs to be funded in a way that reflects its true cost and value. If they are not, two things could happen. Some land might be abandoned, become overgrown and lose its distinctive character. The remainder could be exploited ever more intensively for maximum output at minimum cost, or developed.

Both outcomes will swiftly erode the quality of England’s beautiful, diverse and highly valued farmed countryside. That could lead to a vicious spiral, with the public valuing England’s countryside and farmers less – and financial support for farmers falling further.

This should not be allowed to happen. CPRE and the NFU argue that there is a need for much more public awareness about the work farmers do in looking after the countryside we all value. We need much more analysis and debate about how this work should be rewarded following the introduction of a decoupled farm payments system. We hope this report will contribute to increasing public awareness and to the debate about how our landscapes should be managed in the future.

**Compensated and uncompensated work**

Work undertaken within agri-environment schemes is, for the purposes of this report, compensated work. Work undertaken outside agri-environment schemes is referred to as uncompensated.
A lack of farming support payments threatens the future of the English countryside
Wildlife benefits from how the landscape is managed
Introduction

It’s often said that you don’t know what you’ve got until it’s gone. The farmed English countryside, for all its overwhelming popularity and appeal, is increasingly threatened by development pressure and climate change. But there is a third major threat that we believe is being overlooked to a dangerous degree if we wish to retain the valuable, contribution made to the beauty and character of the English landscape by working farms. The survival of farming and farmers as the principal agency of land management across nearly ten million hectares of England that is not already developed is critical to the long-term value of the countryside to the nation.

A casual observation of most farmland in England appears to reveal all is well. However, more and more land is on the edge of viability for profitable and practicable farming. Some has ceased to be farmed at all. The decline in farming is closely connected to the subsequent decline in those activities that support and service farming: veterinary services; abattoirs, seed and feed merchants, markets and advisory services.

The English landscape, more than most, is a place where productive farming, wildlife habitat and local history are intimately associated with each other. The desire of Government to boost production of food following the end of the Second World War meant that wildlife and the landscape came under increasing pressure. But since the 1980s the interdependence of farming, wildlife and landscape interests have become increasingly evident, particularly with the introduction of agri-environment schemes and cross compliance measures. If farmers are given the right guidance and incentives, the management of rural England can find a new harmonious balance: where enterprise and technical expertise can give the nation both a productive industry and a wide variety of landscapes which are full of wild plants and animals and which is accessible for everyone to enjoy.

But what if the number of farmers and their capacity to manage the landscape declined so much that this professional corps of land managers were not on hand? How would the countryside be managed if it were either too expensive for farmers competing in aggressive world markets to do anything other than produce food, or if they, their livestock and their machinery simply were not there any more? What difference would this loss make to the character of the English landscape, the complex pattern of vegetation that is the basis for our habitats, to people’s ability to gain access to the countryside, or to the countryside’s ‘sense of place’? In short, who manages the countryside we value so much, how much time and money is spent in maintaining it, and how this is achieved?

Farmers are overwhelmingly the major force in landscape management. This work is undertaken as part of a complex sequence of activity for a mixture of reasons, almost all influenced or dependent on productive use of the land. The grazing, cropping and cultivation of fields and the maintenance of the boundaries between them does not happen by accident, or magic. This report investigates the scale of the contribution farmers make to the appearance of the landscape. The way the landscape is managed also has implications for the wildlife that lives in it and for the ease with which everyone can enjoy it.

If we know the scale of farmers’ contribution to the management of the countryside, we can decide how to ensure that this continues. With commitment and resources we will not find ourselves regretting the loss of those who hold the key to the landscapes of the future.
“A high proportion of my time is spent on countryside management”

John Ellerington
Case study

JOHN ELLERINGTON  
Yorkshire

John is a tenant farmer. His 324-hectare farm, where he has lived and worked since 1984, is mainly arable, although he has increased the size of his flock of sheep over recent years to around 300.

John is a keen wildlife photographer whose countryside management work has encouraged a growth in both bird numbers and other wildlife.

Reflecting on countryside management work on his farm, John said that he carried out far more stewardship work than he ever received grant assistance for.

He said: “A high proportion of my time is spent on countryside management.

“I believe all farmers should put a little more back into their farms than they take out, it’s a good motto. By doing that here I have seen a rise in bird numbers and the return of a number of species once thought lost to the area.

“I have often increased the size of the six-metre boundary strip at the edge of my fields in a deliberate attempt to attract birds. This has resulted in an increase in lapwing numbers and good numbers of curlew, oyster catchers and skylarks.

“When drilling fields I often leave a bald patch as this encourages skylarks and if I am aware that curlew are nesting in a particular field I will allow time for nature to take its course.

“I’ve also set parsley along some of the boundary strips and this has also encouraged a growth in the numbers of brown hare seen on the farm.

“To walk around my farm is a good five mile walk and all the time you are looking at the environment and noting things that need attention, and also wildlife activity that needs to be taken into account when carrying out work.

“The maintenance of hedges on the farm can also make real demands on time. One hedge on my farm had been cut back so severely that it took 10 years of careful management for it to come back. This year I have also had a go at hedge-laying. It’s hard work but rewarding and I’m pleased with the outcome.

“I have planted more than one mile of new hedge over the years, introducing between 2,000 and 3,000 new plants.”
Breaking the link between support and production will affect land use
In 2003 the European Union (EU) undertook the most significant review and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to date. The EU Council of June 2003 adopted a radical reform of the CAP based on the principles of responding to the demands of the market and sustainability.

The so-called Fischler reform of the CAP is based on the combination of decoupled payments, cross compliance, modulation and financial discipline.

Decoupled payments break the link between support and production. Cross compliance requirements make payments conditional on the fulfilment of certain conditions, including specific EU statutory standards concerning the environment, food safety, animal and plant health and animal welfare, and on requirements to maintain land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC), as defined by EU member states.

On the financial front, CAP reform continues to decouple direct subsidies to farmers and to transfer through modulation a percentage of these funds, from traditional agricultural support (Pillar I) to rural development programmes (Pillar II). A financial constraint, or ‘financial discipline’, has been imposed by the EU, guaranteeing that future expenditure on the agricultural sector will remain within a predetermined budget. A more ambitious rural development policy has been financed through savings in direct payments, while funds are being redistributed away from countries, such as the UK, with larger farms in favour of new member states, often with extensive rural areas, higher levels of rural population and higher numbers of small farms.

English agriculture faces significant challenges as a result of these reforms. Not only has the overall level of support been reduced, but the introduction of decoupled payments has strengthened the link between market returns and the continuation of farming activities at a time when supply chain pressures and globalisation are also putting English farming under further economic pressure. Decoupling is widely expected to contribute to further changes in farming: in the scale and extent of different parts of the industry; in overall levels of agricultural production; and, in substantial changes in land use. There are concerns about possible land abandonment in some areas where farming is no longer economically viable, over-grazing or intensification in other places and more general fears about the reduction in capacity for landscape management.

Certain landscape management activities can be rewarded through specific rural development measures such as agri-environment schemes, for example the Environmental Stewardship Scheme in England. But there is debate over whether these schemes reward the full cost and extent of the work undertaken by farmers that directly contributes to the quality and character of the landscape. A number of issues need to be highlighted. First, as agri-environment schemes have to compete with other rural development measures for
limited funds, the resources available will necessarily fall short of addressing the full scope of landscape related activities and the land area on which the activities are undertaken. Second, agri-environment measures must strike a difficult balance between the breadth and depth of their application. While broad agri-environmental schemes, such as the Environmental Stewardship Entry Level Scheme, can successfully target large areas, they may fail to recognise the specific and distinct landscape characteristics of different places. Conversely, more focused agri-environment schemes, such as the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme, which is directed at the management of the intimate details of a landscape can be ineffective at achieving landscape enhancement on a wider scale if they are mainly targeted at designated areas, such as National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These designated areas are priority areas for the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme. Moreover, a wide range of landscape management activities are inextricably linked to particular farming sectors or practices, for example in upland areas.

Even though some landscape features no longer perform their original agricultural function they are valuable for their contribution to landscape character and as habitats for wildlife. They also provide a physical link to the social and cultural history of an area. This can add economic value for tourism or for marketing of local foods providing a brand for food produced in the area.

As a result, the new policy agenda presents a number of challenges for both farming and the landscape. The decrease in direct support and the focus on market returns as a decisive factor in the continuation of farming activities, along with increasing cost and regulatory pressures and low shares for farmers of final product prices, have resulted in increased pressure on the farming community. In these challenging times, it is

precisely the large number of unrecognised and uncompensated landscape management activities undertaken by the farming community that are likely to be jeopardised. This could either be as a result of land abandonment or because farmers lack the financial resources and time to engage in the maintenance of landscape features through high quality management, including through participation in agri-environment schemes. The rewards from these schemes may increasingly be out- competed by returns from the market for particular crops that are in demand at a certain time. Profits might be maximised if production is undertaken more intensively, which would further undermine the objectives of agri-environment schemes.

Once a farming system is changed, the underlying landscape features will also change. Skilled labour, livestock, cropping regimes and landscape features are far more expensive to reinstate than to maintain.
Some areas, like the Peak District, are linked to specific types of farming.
“I enjoy planting trees and if it was more profitable, I’d plant more”

David Cotton
Case study

DAVID COTTON
Somerset

David Cotton is no stranger to environmental management.

Long before the Entry Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme and cross compliance became the buzzwords, he had enrolled his farm as a trial farm under the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) dairy stewardship scheme.

Working with the Kingshay Trust, independent dairy specialists providing practical support to professional producers, David enrolled the holding on the Entry Level Scheme at the earliest opportunity.

He said: “When growing apples you quickly learn that fruit only appears on second year wood. When managing hedgerows I’ve applied the same principle.

“I ran with the Entry Level Scheme suggestion that hedgerows did not need to be cut back too severely, and the local wildlife has really benefited.

“There is certainly more birdlife to be seen these days and we also have a number of roe deer who use the hedgerows as shelter.”

He has also introduced three metre margins on all arable fields – greater than Entry Level Scheme requirements.

“These fields all have strips wide enough to drive around and are sown with conservation grass. Hedgerows are cut late in the year, not in August as you often see.

“Partridge have responded well to the wider strips and are now seen in good numbers.”

David said that he found it difficult to quantify the amount of time spent carrying out environmental management work. However, like most farmers, he believes it is far greater than any funding could compensate him for.

“Environmental management uses up time and we have to fit it in around whatever’s happening at certain times of the year.

“During a recent wet spell we’ve done quite a lot of environmental work. However, when the sun comes out again we’ll be cutting silage and doing other things.”

David has a particular interest in trees, planting more whenever possible, including a wood planted under the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme eight years ago.

“I enjoy planting trees and if it was more profitable I’d plant more. I think that applies to all environmental work. Bridge Farm also encompasses a designated county wildlife site due to the presence of great crested newts in a pond.”

The farm has 174 pedigree dairy cows, 290 beef and dairy followers, 138 hectares of grassland and 73 hectares of arable.
“Our aim is to show people the natural beauty of the land”
Nigel Oakey
Case study

NIGEL OAKEY
Oxfordshire

Nigel has two farms (run as one unit), one in Oxfordshire and another on the Oxfordshire/Northamptonshire border. He and his wife bought Grange Farm in Oxfordshire in 2000. It's a large arable farm that he runs under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

“When we moved into the farm we sought some advice about what to do with five cottages and some dairy buildings that were in a state of disrepair.

“After looking at the alternative use options we opted to make a considerable investment and convert the buildings into holiday lets.

“We received 30 per cent towards the cost of renovating the buildings.

“This move has proved beneficial given how the profitability of arable farming ebb and flows.

“I would say that more than 20 hours of the working week is now taken up on countryside management.

“This work includes the management of bridleways and footpaths that criss-cross our land. We don’t receive any assistance with the cost of this type of work but we feel it is our duty to maintain these facilities in the best way we can.

“We have also developed a pond which has become a favourite local spot for a picnic in the summer months and complements our fishing lake which is used for coarse fishing.

“Our aim is to show people the natural beauty of the land. Some farmers don’t like the idea of inviting people onto their land but we want people to come here and enjoy it.”
Farmers now operate in local and global trading systems
Challenges for farming in a liberalised trading system

In a closed economy, farming and animal husbandry activities are required in order to produce the food and other non-food agricultural products needed by society. Self-sufficiency concerns have become diluted as countries open up to global trade, and the import of food products becomes an alternative to domestic production.

The substantial increase of the globalised trade in agricultural products in recent decades has resulted in changes to the spatial distribution of agricultural production. EU countries have tended to specialise in non-primary production. Farming has grown most rapidly in countries where land and labour are relatively abundant, and often far cheaper. The process has been reinforced by the increased regulatory pressures facing EU producers that, in the absence of harmonisation of minimum standards at the international level, have resulted in higher costs of agricultural production in Europe. The UK has been no exception to this process, with agriculture currently representing 0.8% of total output value in England and just under 1.5% of total employment, although these figures from Defra do not include the links and associations that exist between agriculture and other economic sectors.

This relocation of agricultural production in an attempt to minimise production costs presents a number of problems. These range from food security concerns, to unease about the environmental effects of production in countries with lower environmental safeguards and lower standards of hygiene and animal welfare, to worries about increased food miles. Moreover, while the role of agriculture as a producer of primary products can be exported to other countries – though at a price – the role of agriculture in the management of the landscape and provider of public goods and services cannot. Globalisation presents a challenge not only to the agricultural sector, in terms of economics and standards of production, but also to the way the landscape is managed.

This multifunctional role of agriculture, as a provider of marketable goods and of public goods and services, is one of the most challenging aspects of the trade liberalisation process and one where national positions tend to differ. This has become one of the most controversial issues of the current World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations. To what extent is support for the agricultural sector justified on the basis of its multi-functional role? If support for agriculture is justifiable on the basis that it provides environmental and other public benefits, then to what extent should it be exempt from further reductions?

Thus globalisation presents a dual challenge for the role of agriculture in landscape management. First, by accentuating cost pressures and shifting production, globalisation can affect landscape management and consequently the character of our farmed landscapes. Second, the rules governing international trade and constraints on the type and extent of support for the agricultural sector will also affect the role of farming in shaping our landscapes. Potentially this could remove its function as a provider of ecosystem services, its economic value for tourism, and its value to society in providing wider social benefits, such as those related to mental and physical health.
“We have a responsibility to maintain the natural beauty of the countryside”

Isabelle Ostle
Case study

ISABELLE AND TOM OSTLE
Cumbria

The Ostles’ arable farm is about 80-100 hectares, with the home farm covered by ESA and the arable farm part of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Isabelle’s parents bought Mill House Farm in 1968 and she and her husband Tom have farmed there for the past 20 years – “we are just being accepted as locals”.

Isabelle said: “Each year we carry out conservation work on one part of the farm. This involves a range of activities in a bid to attract wildlife and conserve the natural landscape.

“We carry out this work in addition to the business side of the farm. Obviously at particular times of the year, when we are lambing or drilling for example, it means that we are extremely busy.

“A good local craftsman helps us with the work. We would never be able to meet all our farm commitments and do this countryside management work as well. But good craftsmen are becoming harder to find and ever more expensive.

“We also find it difficult to persuade some local people of the benefits of the conservation work we undertake. We were criticised about some hedge laying work we did, but received no praise once the benefits were seen including a wonderful display of primroses.

“But we believe we have a real responsibility to maintain the natural beauty of the countryside.

“Once we have undertaken work to develop a conservation area on the farm we would never consider using it for any other purpose.

“We travel the country a lot and see many different ways in which people manage the countryside.

“But we think West Cumbrian farmers are some of the most environmentally conscious farmers in the UK. They really seem to care about their livestock and the countryside.

“We really believe that if you keep the farm right the business will keep right.”

Tom said: “It is difficult to say how much time I spend doing countryside management work. It is easy to spend a couple of hours a day doing small jobs, things you just do as a matter of course.

“In any 80-hour week it is quite possible that 10 per cent of that time is spent doing this kind of work.”
Funding of agricultural support is uncertain
Future funding for farming

These are challenging times for farming. Not only must agriculture face the immediate challenge presented by the reform of the CAP and the pressures of increased trade liberalisation, it also needs to cope with the uncertainty surrounding the medium and long-term funding of agricultural support.

Agricultural policy has traditionally represented the main area of expenditure within the EU budget. However, the share of the CAP in the EU budget has steadily decreased over time, from over 70% in the 1970s to less than 45% today. The nature of agricultural support has also changed from a focus on direct market support to an emphasis on decoupled payments and rural development programmes. Despite recent reforms, pressures on the extent and nature of agricultural expenditure are expected to continue in the years ahead, at both an international and European level.

The approval of the EU budget, or the Financial Perspectives, for 2007-2013 exemplifies these trends and raises a number of concerns. First, the decision to accommodate future EU accession member states within the current budgetary limits of Pillar I will result in a decrease in Pillar I support payments to existing EU member states. Second, the reduction in core rural development funding seems to contradict the supposed new emphasis on rural development programmes. Third, and crucially, the possibility that EU member states may be able to set national modulation rates of up to 20% of direct payments with no requirement to match-fund opens the way for different policy environments, in different EU countries and to that which we know today.

The introduction of national modulation has been the prerogative of member states since the beginning of the decade. It has so far been characterised by the requirement by national governments to match-fund modulated funding from the national budgets. Until now, funds raised through modulation could only be employed on a pre-determined number of programmes. The potential competitive distortions and consequences for the management of the English landscape are evident. Member states receiving a more generous share of rural development funds from Brussels (through core funding and/or a larger share of EU-wide modulation) and who are also more committed to maintaining agricultural support (such as France or Ireland) are unlikely to use national modulation (or use it to a lower extent) to finance their rural development programmes. English farmers are expected to face high modulation rates if rural development commitments are to be maintained. This disadvantage to English farmers will be greater if the Government chooses not to match-fund. Modulation rates in England will need to be higher to meet existing rural development commitments and, if this is not co-financed, less money will be available for farmers to access through agri-environment schemes. The effects on agriculture and the landscape of such a
scenario cannot be underestimated. First, with different modulation rates the level of support available for the agricultural sector will vary across countries. The conditions attached for receipt of this support will also differ, and variations to the amount of match-funding will compound differences between member states even further. Second, modulated funds may not necessarily return to the agricultural sector, for example through agri-environment schemes.

The financial challenges to agriculture and the landscape have short-, medium- and long-term dimensions. In the short- and medium-term, differences in national modulation rates and in co-financing levels are likely to affect the aim of establishing a level-playing field for agricultural trade. Farmers in countries with higher rates of national modulation and lower rates of co-financing will receive, in general, lower levels of support with varying cross compliance requirements attached to it. In the longer term, the challenge is that of ensuring not only that any future agricultural policy acknowledges the complexity and multifunctionality of agriculture in maintaining the countryside, but also that enough resources are available for its landscape management functions and that competitive distortions between EU countries are not caused by excessive variations in policy and funding.

It is with this in mind that the NFU and CPRE reiterate the importance of the Treasury co-financing nationally modulated funds for the financing of rural development programmes.
The Treasury must co-finance funds for rural development programmes.
"It can take one man two months to make all the dry stone wall repairs"

John Addison
Case study

J OHN ADDISON
County Durham

John has farmed at Stoney Keld for the past 25 years and has a substantial number of sheep and suckler cows on his 729-hectare farm.

“It can take one man up to two months of the year to carry out all the dry stone wall repairs on my farm, sometimes more.”

That’s a conservative estimate from John who says he has spent more than 20 years rebuilding walls and hanging gates as he works to return his farm to its former glory.

He said: “When we bought Stoney Keld it was a little run down.

“It has taken me more than 20 years to get it back to how it should be, with an awful lot of hard work being done to repair walls and hang gates.

“To maintain all our dry stone walls is very difficult, it is a dying art. We try to maintain much of them on our own, but sometimes you need a professional craftsman.

“It’s hard work, and these days skilled craftsmen are hard to find. It can cost around £2,500 a year to maintain my walls and there is no real financial reward for doing the work.

“The shrinking number of people with the skills to carry out this kind of work means that a really skilled dry stone craftsman can ask up to £20 per metre.

“The Entry Level Scheme is the first scheme to reward such work and for that reason alone it is to be welcomed.

“Having said that, I couldn’t stand by and watch my farm go to wrack and ruin.”
The value and quality of the English landscape should not be underestimated.
What this means for the countryside

If we buy furniture, clothes, domestic appliances or cars, we expect that the knowledge, technical skill, time, materials and organisation needed to make the product will be reflected in the price. The price will also reflect the quality of that product. There is an urgent need for national, regional and local government, and the population as a whole, to recognise that just the same principle applies to the landscapes of the farmed countryside. But unlike tables, jackets or vehicles, we cannot obtain our landscapes from overseas. They are right here in England and if we lose them or their value and quality is degraded, they cannot be imported.

The time it took to manage a landscape painted by Constable was far greater than that taken to manage the same landscape today, thanks to huge improvements in machinery and technology. But when every hedge, ditch, bank, path, and field is taken into account, the time taken to manage the landscapes of England is still immense. There is no sign that there is an alternative source of labour, with enough time, skill and motivation, to achieve a significant amount of the land management undertaken by farmers, farm workers and agricultural contractors paid for by farmers. We may soon have to choose between risking a substantial reduction in the capacity of the farming community to manage land, (if indeed the land is used at all) and making a commitment as a nation to the support of landscape management by farmers through public finance.

English landscapes that became either unfarmed or managed ruthlessly and solely for intensive production would soon lose the complexity of textures and distinctive details which make them so powerfully attractive and beneficial to wildlife. Even where landscapes have been intensely managed for many years, most of their aesthetic appeal and wildlife value is found in the vegetation and features that have remained consistently managed for the longest time. It is this legacy of continuity that is largely responsible for the richness and diversity of farmland landscapes and their characteristic wildlife.

We must face up to the implications of letting the system unravel. We have determined the patterns of cultivation, cropping and grazing. If we let this cease in large part, we will effectively be obscuring the identity of our landscapes and destroying our habitats through neglect. The melancholy decline of previously farmed landscapes in much of southern Italy, northern Spain or New England show where we could be heading. At the other extreme, entirely unsupported farming which takes no prisoners and works the land hard would slowly but surely erode the sense of place, reduce the variety and abundance of wildlife and crush the fragile sympathy of the wider population that currently exists for the farming community altogether.

CPRE and the NFU do not want England’s countryside and cherished landscapes to suffer either of these fates. We believe that if the public understood the threat, they would share our view.
The Countryside Agency and English Nature have identified 159 separate character areas in England. These range from the Kesteven Uplands in Lincolnshire and the Yeovil Scarplands in Somerset to the Northumberland Sandstone Hills and the Culm of West Devon. The majority of the land that makes up these hugely varied landscapes is farmland or woodland. Each is distinguished by subtle differences in the way we have organised the land, divided it, drained it, and benefited from its natural properties and the ecosystems it provides.

Why one place is distinguishable from another is largely attributable to the way the land is put to productive use. Natural succession of vegetation in a temperate climate determines that deciduous woodland is the eventual vegetation pattern in almost all landscapes. The openness that characterises fields in farmland, together with the precise delineation of field boundaries and variations in the structure of woodland are all created by interventions in the process of succession. Most crops are annual plants which need to germinate in open soil. Environmentally sensitive arable farming is thus the main way that annual wild plants are able to grow in England. The variable colours of wheat, oil seed rape, or linseed are the result of different farming practices. So is the powerful effect of the exposed turned soil of ploughed and harrowed land, such a strong emblem that can distinguish one landscape from another: from the black peaty soil of the Fens or the milky white of the Wiltshire Downs to the striking reds of mid-Devon and Herefordshire and the yellows of Wealden clays. From a wildlife perspective, the cultivation of land affords opportunities for poppies and other wild annual plants to grow. They in turn, provide food sources for insects which are eaten by birds and mammals. Cultivated land also yields the sights, sounds and smells of harvest time.

Grassland, by contrast, can be a permanent vegetation cover or a regularly resown crop that can last a number of years before ploughing and reseeding. The wildlife value of pasture can vary greatly. Either way, the grass is maintained by regular cutting, by livestock grazing or by a combination of the two. The effects of grazing are very different from those of cutting and the appearance and composition of grassland varies accordingly. Within permanent grassland, in particular, a wide variety of other plants also find a habitat. The colour and texture of fields individually and, in combination, give landscapes their rich textures. The level of fertiliser application, the intensity of grazing, the kinds of animals in the fields, will all contribute to the patina of grassland landscapes and the wildlife that inhabits them. The same can be said for field boundaries where hedges, walls and banks range in width, height, density and structure depending on the traditions of construction and management, local materials and soils. Finally, the character of woodlands, whether coppiced, grown for timber, grazed or replant is largely determined by the level and style of management.

Almost none of these management processes can be replicated by activities that are not part of the farming process. Agri-environment schemes in some areas need to be carefully designed and managed to continue particular agricultural practices, for example mixed grazing regimes. These management activities, previously delivered through farming, are a vital requirement to provide the necessary habitat for particular species where farming activities of this type have ceased.

Replication without farming would be almost impossible and certainly unaffordable over the millions of hectares of English farmland. This is no coincidence. Domesticated cows and sheep have grazed in their different ways for thousands of years and their wild
predecessors for far longer. The difference between the nibbling with teeth of sheep and the ripping by tongue of cattle creates completely different grassland and woodland edges. The cessation of grazing quickly leads to the transformation of grassland character and eventually to woodland. Mechanical cutting of formerly grazed land is no substitute for the work of animals and the appearance of fields would soon alter beyond recognition. There is a dullness in fields which gently rot back to a mulch after they have been cut to prevent succession to woodland. Losing the invertebrate food sources from animal dung reduces the number and variety of insects and consequently bird and bat populations. Whether we like it or not, we have created landscapes and habitats through farming and we can destroy them, slowly but surely, by letting the systems that maintain them disappear.

This special and crucial role of farming in landscape management and conservation needs to be better understood. Whether by making a living from the land or by enhancing the countryside so people can explore and enjoy it, the result of environmentally sensitive farming unites the NFU and CPRE. The measures that are currently available to support careful land management go only a small way to ensure the continued management we wish to see. It would be increasingly difficult to deliver the variety of land management practices that we have today through cross compliance requirements. The ending of the Single Payment Scheme would have little impact on the public’s support for farmers, but the resulting inability of farmers to manage the land for access, landscape and wildlife would soon damage their relationship with the public. The farming community and the wider population need to recognise their mutual interests.

Our joint research is a small but important step in a quest to examine the extent of the role and the value of farming in maintaining our landscapes, wildlife and our enjoyment of them. In the end, this can be measured in hours, metres and hectares, training, experience, skill, professional support, labour and fuel costs. Crucially, underpinning this, is the morale, culture and the confidence of farmers to carry on being part of the landscape and knowing their efforts are valued by society. We challenge the Government to demonstrate a better understanding of this.
“The funds don’t meet the cost of the landscaping work we do”

Tom Flower
Case study

TOM FLOWER
Derbyshire

Tom has approximately 500 head of cattle - dairy, beef and followers.

He has farmed at Friden for the past 43 years, with his father having had the farm before him, and his grandfather part of the farm before that. He now farms in partnership with his brothers Neil and Ian.

Tom said: “We do receive payments from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and other sources but these funds do not meet the cost of the landscaping work that we carry out at the farm.

“That’s not that I think it’s about money, I feel we have a responsibility to keep the landscape looking its best for future generations.

“There are no hedges in this part of the world so obviously we always have dry-stone walling repairs being undertaken. We also do a considerable amount of pond clearing.

“We receive a grant of £16 per metre to help with the cost of dry stone walling but finding a skilled craftsman is not cheap and we usually have to pay out more than we receive to ensure the job is done right.

“At the farm there is also one area of woodland, and while we haven’t managed this area for some time we are soon going to have to undertake some felling.

“Cleaning out a pond can also be a time consuming and costly business, especially if it is one where three or four fields meet.”
“I’m planning to create a reed bed system to reduce pollution and encourage more wildlife”

Tom Meikle
Case study

TOM MEIKLE
Worcestershire

Award-winning Worcestershire farmer Tom Meikle is a classic example of someone who had acquired a well-deserved reputation for sterling environmental work long before the reform of the CAP resulted in cash rewards for sensitive land management.

Tom farms 28 hectares at Lower Frelands Farm and a further 101 hectares in partnership with his parents. His father began planting trees around the farm 50 years ago – sparking Tom’s interest in conservation issues.

He has built on this interest and today is an active member on the local Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group committee.

Tom, who won the NFU’s Farming For Wildlife Award in 2004, produces sugar beet, salad onions, dwarf beans, barley and wheat. Integrated farming practice is at the centre of the business’s thinking.

“I keep careful records of rotation with minimum periods between crops, choose varieties with disease resistance, and use thresholds for pest control.

He is a member of Cereal Assured and Produce Assured schemes and has signed up to the Voluntary Initiative. River meadows are alternatively grazed with sheep and cattle to prevent parasite build up.

“My farm has previously hosted an RSPB training day, an ADAS farm walk and a group from the Environment Agency.

“Wildlife that can be found here includes a wide variety of birds with barn owls a recent addition.

“I’m now planning to create a reed bed system, which will restore an old pond and help to reduce pollution and encourage more wildlife to the farm.”
Farmer survey

Methodology

Survey questionnaires were sent to a sample of farmers in May 2005. The timing of the survey was influenced by two factors. First, the survey aimed to predate the introduction of the Entry Level Scheme in England and any resulting changes to management activities. Second, by conducting the survey in the summer of 2005, it was considered less likely that responses received from farmers would be influenced by work due to be undertaken as a requirement of the cross compliance conditions associated with receipt of the Single Payment Scheme.

By timing the survey in this way, it was hoped to establish a baseline set of data for landscape management work that English farmers were carrying out.

The survey was sent to a randomly selected sample of 2,084 NFU members representing the range of farm types and farming sectors across England. Completed questionnaires were returned to the NFU, where geographic and farm structure data (including total area farmed, tenure type, cropping areas and livestock numbers) was added. Confidentiality was preserved at all stages by avoiding any personal identification and by assigning a numerical code to each of the respondents.

Table 1 provides information on the four sections in the questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Personal details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age, membership of farming and environmental organisations, current status and future intentions in terms of Environmental Stewardship Scheme applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Landscape features managed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Features presently managed and by whom, estimated time spent on managing features, management conducted under agri-environment schemes, number of hours spent actively managing each of the listed landscape features in an average year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closest distance to farm of a range of skilled craftsmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An opportunity for respondents to offer additional information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

The core of the survey focused on the role of farmers in managing our landscapes in terms of the time and the labour involved in that management. The results of this survey were then used to calculate\(^{11}\) an estimated value of the landscape management undertaken by farmers in England each year.

Over the whole sample, some 90% of respondents engaged in some type of landscape management of the features listed, either within or outside agri-environment schemes, with only modest variation in this activity rate between farm size groups and with no obvious trend. Similarly, there is only minor variation in these activity levels over farm types.

Given the small variations in the levels of environmental activity over farm size groups and farm types (see Figures 1a and 1b), we can reasonably conclude that environmental management activity levels are high across the whole farming population.

### Key findings

- **90%** of survey respondents engage in some type of landscape management
- **85%** of the hours devoted to landscape management was outside agri-environment schemes
- The average uncompensated cost was **£2,410** per farm per year
- The estimated contribution by farming to landscape management outside of agri-environment schemes was **£412m** per year

Availability of landscape management skills

Initial data appeared in English Heritage’s *State of the Historic Environment 2005* report and indicated there is evidence of a continuing decline in the availability of dry stone wallers and skilled craftsmen to maintain traditional farm buildings. A full report on this part of the research will be published separately.
In general, the most common activities are linked to widely-distributed landscape features, such as hedgerow trimming, followed by maintenance of ditches and ponds, grassland management, and footpath maintenance. Other management activities, such as dry stone walling and management of lowland heaths or upland moors, do not, given their local/regional nature, feature so prominently at the national level. However, figures for these features are significant when results are disaggregated at the regional level.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents engaged in the management of the features listed in the survey.
As well as identifying the activities carried out by farmers, the survey also identified who carried out the management and sought to establish the number of hours spent managing the landscape features listed. Different types of farms vary in terms of the activities making the biggest demands on labour. In the lowlands, hedge laying and trimming, ditch and pond maintenance and grassland management are the most time-consuming activities. In the uplands, maintenance and re-building of stone walls, grassland management and work on farm buildings are predominant. Stone wall maintenance and rebuilding is also predominant on dairy farms, while woodland maintenance features significantly on cereal farms. Patterns in the survey data are consistent with observed differences in farming systems and environmental features across regions and farm types.

The majority of landscape management work is undertaken by farmers, family members, or regular hired labour, with only a small overall percentage attributable to contractors. However, the reported proportion of contractors’ hours can be quite considerable for some activities, such as hedgerow trimming and dry stone wall rebuilding. Convenience was given as the main reason for employing contractors. Figure 3 shows the number of hours per year spent on landscape management activities undertaken by farmer/family, farm staff and contractors.

The survey and analysis of the data differentiated between activities undertaken under agri-environment schemes and those undertaken outside these schemes. Overall, some 85% of the hours devoted to landscape management activities were taking place, outside agri-environment schemes. Figure 4 provides data on the average number of hours devoted to landscape management, both within and outside agri-environment schemes.
Calculating a labour cost for these uncompensated activities presents a challenge. Costs are not directly available from the survey data (where ‘cost per hour’ data was only returned for contractors). There is also a problem traditionally faced by studies attempting to calculate a market rate for labour provided by farmers and family members, as well as the difficulties in estimating the wages commanded by farm workers engaged in landscape management activities. Given the lack of direct and/or realistic estimates for renumeration for farmer and family labour, the analysis assigns them an ‘imputed’ cost, on the basis of contractor rates. It can be argued that contractor rates provide an adequate proxy for the value of those activities undertaken by the farmer, his/her family, or farm workers. This is because contractor rates could be representative of the wages that the farmer/family or farm worker could command if he or she decided to provide a similar service through the market. Applying contractor rates to the total number of hours spent on uncompensated landscape management activities produces an estimate of the expenditure required should farmers be unable to provide these services, and the Government had to secure the same services through the labour market instead.

Adding together all types of activities and all categories of labour provides us with the cost of uncompensated landscape management to the average farm in the survey. From this figure the cost of landscape management to farms in England as a whole was extrapolated. Divergences between the survey sample and the whole population of English farms as a whole were taken into account. The uncompensated cost per English farm was obtained by calculating the cost by farm size group, then weighting the results for each group by the number of holdings in each group, according to the Agricultural Census data for England. After these adjustments, the average imputed cost is £2,410 per farm, per year.

An extrapolation of this figure to the national level would require its multiplication by the total number of farms in England, a figure not available through national statistics. Therefore, in order to undertake the extrapolation, the average cost per farm is multiplied by the number of holdings in England and by a correction factor that estimates the number of holdings per farm. The calculation yields a figure of £412m per year. This represents an estimate of the farming industry’s uncompensated contribution to landscape management.
each year in England. Table 5 provides a breakdown by activity of the imputed cost associated with landscape management activities.

### Table 5. Imputed costs by management activity in £m/year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape management activity</th>
<th>Imputed costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grassland management</td>
<td>108.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedgerows (trimming)</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditches/ponds</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm buildings</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland/trees</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedgerows (laying)</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry stone walls (maintenance)</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field margins</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry stone walls (rebuild)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights of way (footpaths)</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorland</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeology</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetland</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights of way (bridlepaths)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heathland</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| TOTAL £m                      | 411.6         

However, a number of issues need to be further considered. First, this headline figure does not consider the associated benefits, such as to tourism or local food branding, derived from landscape management activities. In fact, the estimated value of public goods or benefits derived from these activities could provide an alternative valuation method for rewarding farmers who undertake landscape management work. This point falls outside the scope of this report, and further research is urgently needed.

Second, our analysis does not analyse the extent to which current agri-environment schemes fully compensate the management activities of which they consist, or whether they reflect the public benefits derived from these activities. Our analysis focuses on the activities that are undertaken outside the landscape management framework provided by agri-environment measures.

Third, the imputed costs outlined above represent initial estimates of labour costs and do not fully consider the total income foregone associated with the land that is subject to landscape management, such as the value of production that could have been obtained on land covered by hedgerows.

Our headline figures, while representing an indication of the importance of the work undertaken by farmers, clearly highlight the need for further research and analysis to understand the costs and labour inputs associated with the management of the landscape.
Farmer interviews

Methodology

Following the completion of the survey it was important to ‘ground truth’ the data that had been collected and analysed. A series of face-to-face interviews with survey respondents was chosen as the method to achieve this objective.

This ‘ground truthing’ exercise was undertaken for three main reasons:

- To validate the responses to the questionnaire, by asking participants how they had interpreted the questions, and particularly what process of calculation farmers had used to arrive at the number of hours they spent managing landscape features in an average year. This meant it was important to gauge the level of understanding of the main survey question which included the terms ‘active management’ of landscape features and the level of understanding of the term ‘average year’. Additionally, the interviews sought farmers’ views on the accuracy of the findings. From this it was possible to gain an idea of the accuracy of the estimates that had been made of the amount of time spent on the management of the various landscape features included in the survey and thus gauge the degree of accuracy of the overall results.

- To further investigate the management practices farmers employed, and the variation in management practices between features that are managed within an agri-environment scheme and features that are managed without the incentive of an agri-environment scheme payment. We also hoped to gather information on any management practices that were specific to landscape features characteristic of the area where each farmer lived.

- To gain insights into the relationship between landscape management and agricultural funding mechanisms. This included: the factors that motivate farmers to manage landscape features either within or outside of agri-environment schemes; farmers’ perceptions of the effects that the introduction of the Single Payment Scheme may have on landscape management; views on how the Environmental Stewardship Scheme and in particular how the Entry Level Scheme might affect management practices; and finally, views on what effect the removal of EU payments to farmers might have on their ability to continue to maintain landscape features; could it be expected that profit margins alone in a free market would allow management of landscape features to continue?

A sample of 27 farmers was drawn from the respondents to the survey. This was designed to provide a wide geographical spread and a mix of farm sizes and sectors.

All 27 interviews were carried out by one interviewer over a period of two weeks and the same structure and questions were used in each interview.

The mean size of farms in the sample was 109 hectares.
The interviewees were involved in the management and maintenance of a wide range of landscape features on their farms. These included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management activity</th>
<th>% of farmers involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedge trimming</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedge laying</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridleways</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditches/ponds</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional farm buildings</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland/trees</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grassland</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field margins</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry stone walls maintaining</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry stone walls rebuilding</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological sites</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only one interview participant was involved in wetland management and only one with moorland. None of the participants said they were involved with heathland management.

Key findings

- Most farmers regard agri-environment payments as very important for continued management of landscape features.
- Farmers have a high degree of awareness of the distinctiveness of local landscape features.
- Many farmers manage features outside agri-environment schemes to the same standard as those in such schemes.
Results

Understanding the questionnaire and estimating time spent on managing landscape features

Around three quarters of the farmers interviewed said they had no problem with the terms used in the questionnaire survey, or with providing the estimates it requested them to make. Some used farm records and invoices that were relevant to their landscape management activities.

Farmers’ assessment of accuracy of questionnaire survey findings

Time spent managing features

A substantial number of the farmers interviewed felt that the average time spent on managing many of the landscape features, as recorded in the questionnaire, was too low. They acknowledged that it was difficult to comment further because of the differences between farms between, and even within, regions.

National contractor rates

Some of the farmers interviewed were unable to comment on the contractor rates identified by the questionnaire survey. In some cases they felt they had insufficient experience of employing contractors to make a judgement because they carried out all the work themselves. For the remainder there was greater agreement over the rates for the more common activities such as hedge trimming. But for other activities there was less agreement. This was mainly because contractors may vary their hourly rates depending on the length of feature or area of land they are contracted to work on. The questionnaire asked what contractor charges were per hour to work on a particular landscape feature.

Differences in the management of landscape features within and outside of agri-environment schemes

Hedge trimming and laying accounted for much of the work in agri-environment schemes, while relatively less management was directed to rights of way. This was especially the case on livestock farms where the presence of animals prevented paths becoming overgrown through grazing of public footpaths.

Over half of the farmers interviewed said they were able to distinguish clearly in their responses to the survey between the management of features that were covered by agri-environment schemes and those that fell outside these schemes. However, nearly half of those managing features under agri-environment schemes said that they did not distinguish between the management requirements of the scheme and the management they undertook on features elsewhere, or that because of similarities between the two there had been some difficulty in separating out the work involved.

Landscape features characteristic to the locality that required variations in management

Farmers had a high degree of awareness of the distinctiveness of local landscape features, and the particular management required for them. This is not surprising given how closely farmers are involved in managing their land. Perhaps more revealing was the deep sense of commitment to the local landscape and its features that was apparent in the farmers’ responses, and the resulting care taken over their management.
The importance of agri-environment funding and farming support payments for future landscape management

A majority of the farmers interviewed (67%) regard agri-environment payments as being very important for the continued maintenance of features covered by such payments in the future. Indeed, some felt that they were imperative for the viability of farming in the future.

This finding was qualified with comments, including:

“Farmers need to be seen to be producing benefits for the subsidies they receive. A non-production subsidy payment just given as a non-production payment is open to criticism and scrutiny… if that payment is given for the betterment of the landscape… features that people go for a walk on Sunday and appreciate, then I think farming is safer through a scheme whereby farmers are rewarded for maintaining the environment.”

“Farmers would go out of business [without payments] so they have got to have something to keep farmers on the land. If I were paying someone else to put up a wall, it would cost £25 a metre, but if it is mine I would do it cheaper in my own time.”

“They [agri-environment payments] are going to become more important out of necessity due to low or negative farming returns.”

“People do not understand the costs involved.”

Some farmers said that they would not be able to continue farming at all without agri-environment payments. The overall opinion was that so long as the payments were available, the features could be maintained. The farmers said that if the payments were removed, they would still continue to spend time maintaining landscape features but, in most cases, the amount of time spent would be reduced to some extent.

Only one farmer said that he would not maintain the features if he did not receive any agri-environment payment. This could imply farmers may be managing features not covered by agri-environment schemes to the same standard.

There was a strong view among those interviewed that, if direct farming support payments were to end, management of landscape features would decline appreciably. Any continuing reductions in farm incomes would render the operations unaffordable. Some of those interviewed said they would have to cease farming altogether. Those farmers who had a more positive outlook would rely on diversification or off-farm income to fund the management of landscape features.

Of those who said they would be unable to continue managing landscape features without farming support payments, low farm incomes were the main reason given. “Something would have to go”, was one comment. If farming support payments were abolished without an increase in profits from farm produce or a rise in the level of agri-environment payments that reflected the true cost of maintaining a feature and its value, management of landscape features would suffer. There were four farmers who said they would not be able to carry on farming at all if farming support payments ended. One said: “Farming payments enables us to manage the features.” Another said: “If the subsidies went, you would not be able to farm… it is uneconomical to farm at the moment… it’s not economical, even with the subsidies.”
“The grass margins around fields are wider than the scheme requires”

Steve Bumstead
Case study

STEVE BUMSTEAD
Bedfordshire

Arable farmer Steve Bumstead has always farmed with the environment in mind, and he’s convinced his business has benefited from it as well as the countryside.

Steve farms around 138 hectares on two farm tenancies in Bedfordshire, growing milling wheat, oilseed rape, pulses and barley.

Under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme he has been paid for some of the environmental improvements he has introduced, including 20 hectares of new woodland planted on arable land and two kilometres of new hedgerow.

Under the Entry Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme he is receiving money for farming practices he has always done, such as leaving over-wintered stubble in fields to provide cover and food for birds. But his commitment to the environment underpins everything he does.

Steve said: “My attitude to farming is to always look at the impact on the environment of any field operation. “What is the least we can do to establish a crop? We look at the structure of the soil and soil conditions and we never go onto the land if conditions aren’t right.

“We always look at the environmental impact assessments of crop protection products and ensure we use the right product for the site and need. That’s particularly important with insecticides because the protection of ‘friendly’ predator insects is paramount.

“Hedges are only cut once every five years to provide cover and food for small mammals and birds, and the wildlife-friendly grass margins around fields are wider than required for payment under the stewardship schemes.

“All straw is chopped and fed back into the soil to build up organic matter and other measures include barn owl nesting boxes and an otter holt. This was built in collaboration with a local wildlife group to help otters moving from the River Ivel to the Great Ouse.

“We are always open to new ideas to encourage birds and farmland biodiversity, but we also have to try and make a profit,” said Steve, a longstanding member of LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming).

“A lot of what we have done voluntarily in the past we are now getting money for and I’m pleased farmers are getting some recognition and reward. Managing the countryside is a job in itself and it should be profitable.”
Farmers spend time and money maintaining the beauty and diversity of the countryside
Conclusion

Farmers in England are spending substantial amounts of time and money maintaining the rural landscapes that make our countryside so beautiful and diverse. If this work of landscape management had to be paid for without the involvement of farmers, it would come at a huge cost.

If we add the estimated cost of managing landscape features to the cost of meeting Government commitments to restoring biodiversity, and combine it with the costs of meeting the requirements of other European environmental obligations, we begin to see that current levels of agri-environment funding alone will not deliver these commitments.

If farm incomes decline further in real terms, and if the number of farmers declines as a result, the maintenance and conservation of traditional landscape features will suffer – for two reasons. More farmland could be abandoned and lose its distinctive character. And, depending on the demands of the market, more farmland is likely to be exploited more intensively for maximum output at minimum cost. This is likely to be accompanied by pressure for diversification which could damage the quality of the countryside.

It is time that the conservation and management of farmed landscapes entered the mainstream of the debate about further CAP reform and the future of farm support after 2013. The Government needs to weigh up carefully the overall public benefits of diverse and beautiful rural landscapes, alongside other benefits the countryside provides – maintaining biodiversity and providing ecosystem services, as well as its social benefits.

The benefits linked to landscape conservation include:

• Maintaining a critical mass of domestic food production in anticipation of climate change which, along with other rapidly changing global conditions, could leave us over-dependent on increasingly expensive imported food
• Sustainable management of natural resources
• Income from domestic and international tourism
• Improved public well-being and health
• Thriving rural communities.

If our farmed landscapes are to be conserved, we will also need a critical mass of farmers to continue to exist in them, acting as stewards of the land while using it productively. CPRE and the NFU want adequate, long-term public funding to secure the landscape conservation work by this critical mass of farmers, alongside the other public benefits which farming can provide but which are not rewarded through sales of farm produce.

We accept that this support should be linked to delivering the farmed landscapes which secure the widest benefit for the public. We would welcome more research and analysis on these benefits, and further discussion and awareness of them. This report is a contribution to this vital debate.
1 Agri-environment schemes provide financial incentives for land managers to adopt environmentally beneficial land management practices. The Environmental Stewardship Scheme has Entry Level, Organic Entry Level, and Higher Level components. These schemes require higher levels of management than cross compliance standards.

2 In a decoupled system payments are not linked to production.

3 Cross compliance requirements are a set of standards that farmers need to meet in order to receive their farming support payments. There are two main elements: Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) standards.

4 Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) is a set of standards that farmers need to meet to receive their farming support payments. These include soil management and protection and the maintenance of habitats and landscape features.

5 A dairy follower is a female dairy cow that has not yet entered the milking herd.

6 The primary sector of the economy generally involves the conversion of natural resources into primary products. Major industries in this sector include agriculture, agribusiness, fishing, forestry and all mining and quarrying industries.

7 Negotiations at the WTO level have, so far, focused on reductions to trade-distorting (Amber and Blue Box) agricultural support. However, non- (or minimally) trade-distorting agricultural support (eg Green Box support) has become increasingly questioned by a number of agricultural exporting countries and middle- and low-income countries. Although decoupled payments (as part of the Green Box) are not expected to be subject to reduction in the current Doha round to trade negotiations, they are likely to be challenged in future trade rounds.

8 The Voluntary Initiative is designed to reduce environmental pollution associated with pesticides.

9 In 2005 the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) replaced 11 CAP payment schemes with one single payment in England. Payments under the SPS are decoupled from production and are conditional on farmers fulfilling statutory GAEC and SMR requirements. Farmers are not compelled to apply for support under the SPS.

10 This implies that, for those features managed in a multi-annual cycle, the answer provided would represent the total number of hours over the cycle divided by the number of years in the cycle.

11 Statistical analysis of the responses and validation of the results was undertaken by the Centre for Agricultural Strategy (CAS) at the University of Reading, in liaison with the NFU and CPRE.

12 The labour required for landscape management activities does not reflect the range of skills and grade that are needed for each individual activity. It is therefore difficult to calculate a labour rate per hour.

13 The correction factor of 1.1 has been calculated by the CAS on the basis of Farm Business Survey data.

14 The income foregone associated with a land management activity represents the total income that a person would have been able to achieve should that activity not taken place.
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Photo credits

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