



Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust Hay Time Project

# Results Based Agri-environment Payment Scheme (RBPS)

## Payment By Results continues

Welcome to the Spring 2020 newsletter for the RBPS project. The RBPS project – also known as Payment by Results (PBR) - began in 2016 with funding awarded by the EU to co-finance a three year project delivered by Natural England in partnership with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. After 2 years of working with our RBPS farmers, carrying out assessments and gathering results, the EU project finished in 2018 and the final report was published and the results presented. More details are on the next page.

Now with funding from Defra, the RBPS / PBR project is continuing for another 2 years until March 2021. It's one of the many Tests and Trials that will together help shape the design of the future Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), looking beyond EU exit and helping to deliver the government's ambitious 25 Year Environment Plan.

All but one of the original 32 participating farmers were keen to continue with their results-based agreements when the original project ended. Many also took up the opportunity to increase the area under agreement within the new Defra Trial. There is still a favourable attitude towards the novel approach amongst these farmers who had already been involved for two years.

The first year of the Defra RBPS project has seen another year of results gathered and what's been happening in the Arable and Grassland pilot areas is summarised in the Updates later in this newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading it and welcome feedback or enquiries to [PaymentbyResults@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:PaymentbyResults@naturalengland.org.uk)

31 agreements in the two pilot areas covering 389ha.

23 Winter Bird Food plots  
14 Pollen & Nectar plots  
29 Species rich hay meadows  
47 Breeding wader habitat fields



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## Coming Up.....

**EU England RBPS final report published**

**England results presented at EU RBPS Conference in Brussels**

**What's been happening in the Arable and Grassland pilot areas**



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



**YORKSHIRE DALES**  
National Park Authority



## **EU England RBPS Final Report (2016-2018)**

Following on from the England RBPS Grassland and Arable Conferences

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6186745217679360>

The EU England RBPS Final Report was published in October 2019

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6331879051755520?category=35001>

The main highlights are:

- Environmental performance is higher using a RBPS approach for all options - winter bird food, pollen & nectar plots, hay meadows, and grasslands for breeding waders.
- Self-assessments agreed with RBPS adviser scores in over two-thirds of surveys.
- Difficult to eliminate extreme weather effects from some scoring systems, but the actual impact was potentially not as great as the perceived risk.
- Training and advice were well received.
- Strong sense RBPS is fair and rewards knowledge, skills & effort, mixed in with pride and a competitive edge.
- RBPS provides motivation and encourages behavioural change.
- Risk of failure provided a focus to apply management skills.
- Simplified results measures or proxy indicators may not correlate with the desired outcomes - more comprehensive validation is required

## **EU RBPS Conference in Brussels**

The England RBPS Arable and Grassland pilot areas were part of a suite of RBPS pilots in Ireland, Spain and Romania. All were invited, including a participating farmer from each pilot area, to present our findings at the EU RBPS Farming for Biodiversity Conference in Brussels in October 2019. The conference introduction outlined what results based payments are, then went on to present the achievements, opportunities and challenges for each of the pilot areas in all 4 countries and also highlighted the farmer's perspective of taking part in the pilots.



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Our England farmers, Caroline Harrison in the Yorkshire Grassland pilot area, and Nick Anema in the Norfolk/Suffolk Arable pilot area did a splendid job of presenting their experiences and representing all our participating farmers very well. The question and answer sessions for all presentation sessions were lively and varied, as were the discussions during the following sessions on current implementation and future steps for RBPS. Discussions continued during the breaks and the whole conference was a good knowledge exchange opportunity. All the conference details, including presentations, can be found here <https://ieep.eu/news/event-building-on-the-know-how-from-the-results-based-payment-scheme-rbps-pilots>.





# Arable Update



@ Natural England/Clare Bains

After a fairly dry first half of the year in 2019 and more summer rain than 2018, the winter bird food and some newly established pollen & nectar plots struggled to get going but eventually produced some good results. Farmers have continued to adapt their seed mixes and management techniques in order to achieve higher scores, especially following RBPS specific training events such as farmer meetings and farm walks where farmers can meet and share their experiences with one another.

As well as continuing to gather data using the same plot assessment methods, the project team have also been testing different assessment methods including a 0.5 m<sup>2</sup> quadrat, an L shaped quadrat, a 1 metre stick, and an increased number of assessment stops. In addition, for the winter bird food plots, assessments along a cut or uncut transect, carrying out assessments earlier and later in the year, and assessing second year (biennial) crops. The results of all these are currently being analysed.



@ Natural England/David Ward



@ Natural England/Emily Swan

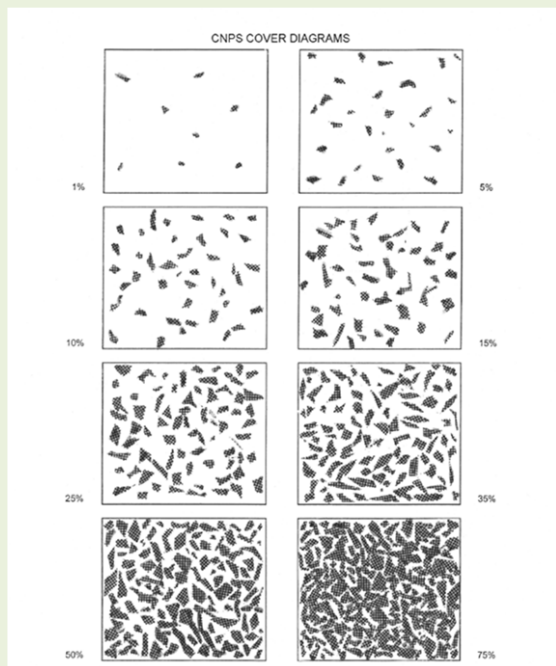
One of the key aspects of the RBPS project is to explore the participating farmers' attitudes to result-based approaches and the role of training, advice and guidance to support results delivery and self-assessments. This has led to the RBPS Project also working with Defra ELMS Test & Trials and Future Food and Farming Programmes, particularly looking at the role of farmer advice and guidance. By meeting and talking with our farmers, as well as RBPS project advisers, the Defra teams have gained a valuable insight into what works well for a range of farmers and which methods are most effective

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# Grassland Update

The DEFRA funded phase of the project gave the opportunity for both wader and meadow farmers to continue and expand their agreement area. The offer meant we saw a large increase in project land; up from 138 ha to 285 ha of habitat for breeding waders and an extra 18 ha of species rich hay meadow to reach a total of 50 ha. This significant increase in agreement area shows the RBPS approach has been welcomed and embraced by the project farmers, including several who would not normally have entered into an agri-environment scheme.

Training usually forms part of the pre-survey season but unfortunately has not been able to take place due to various reasons, including Covid-19 restrictions. Wader training was delivered individually to those that felt they needed a little more clarification, especially on the perennial subject of assessing percentage cover of rush and how to decide what constitutes a wet feature. After this very wet winter most people should have a good score on these criteria if they surveyed early in the season – always a silver lining!



Above: Photo of a curlew nest sent in by RBAPS farmer Paul Chambers who has some excellent wader habitat on his holding.

Left: Training material for assessing rush cover

The results so far have shown that the RBPS approach has been successful in encouraging positive management change on the habitats which enhances their value for wildlife and can also lead to a better payment for the farmer. Farmers with land for breeding waders have undertaken rush cutting and creation of wet features. Scores for wet features have improved in 2019 with 67% of fields scoring top marks. Some have introduced cattle back onto their land management as they realise they can produce some great chick habitat with their hoof prints and muddy areas around streams for example. Others have lessened their stocking rates on land in the breeding season which obviously reduces chick mortality.

Farmers with hay meadows have also done many works throughout their agreements. Introducing hay meadow species seed such as yellow rattle and targeted weed control were recognized as being able to improve both their meadows and their score

Photo: Juliet Madden, RBPS farmer and project staff re-seeding at Adam Bottom meadow, Oct 2019



The media has been very interested in the project from the start and with ELMs on the horizon there seems to be another flurry of interest about how the RBPS approach may fit with the new schemes. Various articles have been written for local and national newspapers, talks have been given to interested groups including many farmer groups and a Radio York interview was given partly on the subject of the RBPS approach.

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# The Team



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



**Patrick Woods** (Project Adviser, Natural England) has worked for Natural England for 4 years on agri-environment schemes in Norfolk and Suffolk and nationally, most recently writing Environmental Land Management guidance for the post EU exit ELM Scheme.

## The Arable Team



**David Ward** (Project Adviser, Natural England) has worked on agri-environment schemes for Natural England and its predecessors for 17 years across Norfolk. Previous to that he worked as an agronomist for ADAS for 15 years.



**Clare Bains** (Project Adviser, Natural England) has worked for Natural England and its predecessors for 20 years, in various advisory capacities, especially agri-environment schemes, across Norfolk and Suffolk with a range of arable, mixed and livestock farms.



**Lucy Hatcher** (Project Adviser, Natural England) joined Natural England 4 years ago and has been rapidly gaining knowledge and experience in a range of work areas including agri-environment schemes, Catchment Sensitive Farming, SSSI and protect sites.



**David Whiting** (Arable Agronomy Senior Specialist) has 19 years of experience working on agri-environment schemes within Natural England and its predecessors. Areas of expertise include agronomy and land management.

## The Grassland Team



**Helen Keep** (Senior Project Adviser, YDNPA) Sister to a dairy farmer and originally from Bristol, this offcudmen has made the Yorkshire Dales home for about 23 years working on the delivery of agri-environment schemes and providing support to hill farmers during this time.



**Emily Coates** (Project Support Officer, YDNPA) Born in the Yorkshire Dales with a long family lineage of farmers. With an environmental background, Emily has worked for the National Park for 4 years supporting the work of the farm conservation team.



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



**Jane Le Cocq** (Project Adviser, YDNPA) has a livestock farming background and co-manages the family farm in her spare time! Born and bred in North Yorkshire, Jane has worked for the YDNPA for about 14 years on agri-environment scheme delivery and support to hill farmers, prior to that she was a veterinary nurse.