

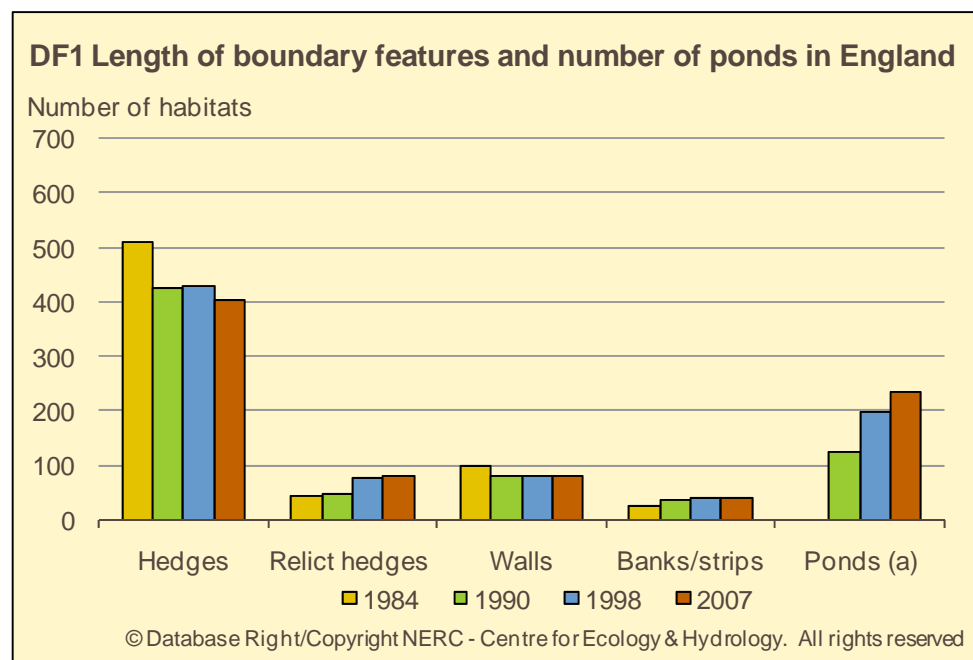
Observatory monitoring framework – indicator data sheet

Environmental impact: Landscape

Indicator DF1: Landscape features

Farmland landscape features are important components of the countryside and contribute to biodiversity by providing connections between farmland habitats. Field boundaries such as hedges, stone walls and grass banks, as well as farm ponds can be valuable wildlife habitats, enhance the landscape and, in some cases, may be of historic importance.

Chart DF1 shows the lengths of boundaries and numbers of ponds in the last four Countryside Surveys.



(a) Comparable data not available for 1984

- There was a significant increase (5%) in the lengths of banks and strips to 42,000km. This habitat feature has been encouraged by agri-environment schemes and a greater awareness of the conservation and production advantages of grass strips and beetle banks.
- The number of ponds increased by 18% to an estimated 234,000. This increase was confined to lowland areas and in particular the Easterly Lowlands.

All hedgerows mainly made of native species of tree and shrub, are now recognised as a Priority Habitat within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Several options under the Environmental Stewardship Entry Level Scheme are directed towards the conservation and maintenance of these features, whilst creation and restoration are possible under the Higher Level Scheme.

This indicator was updated in October 2009. This indicator will not be updated until the results become available from the next Countryside Survey.

- The length of managed hedgerows decreased by 6% (26,000km) with a large proportion becoming lines of trees or relict hedges (which increased significantly in length) reflecting a reduction in management intensity.
- The length of walls decreased in England by a small (1%) but significant amount from 82,420 to 81,500km, with the largest losses occurring in the uplands where walls form a characteristic landscape feature.

Further information and contact

Background information can be found in the accompanying fact sheet.

This is also a Biodiversity Strategy Indicator.

For further queries or information on this indicator contact Defra's Observatory team on +44 (0) 1904 455229 or email Observatory@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Observatory monitoring framework – indicator fact sheet

Environmental impact: Landscape

Indicator DF1: Landscape features

<i>Indicator</i>	Landscape features
<i>Data</i>	Length of boundary features (hedges, relict hedges, walls, grass banks or strips) and number of ponds
<i>Geographic coverage</i>	England
<i>Years</i>	1984, 1990, 1998 and 2007
<i>Source</i>	Countryside Survey, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)
<i>Origin of data</i>	Countryside Survey
<i>Updates</i>	This indicator was updated in October 2009. This indicator will not be updated until the results become available from the next Countryside Survey.
<i>Background</i>	<p>Farmland landscape features such as hedges, stone walls, grass banks and ponds are important to the English countryside as they provide connections between farmland habitats and act as a refuge for many species associated with farmland. Ancient species-rich hedgerows are recognised as a BAP priority habitat. Several options under the Environmental Stewardship Entry Level Scheme are directed towards the conservation and maintenance of these features, whilst creation and restoration are possible under the Higher Level Scheme.</p> <p>Removal of hedgerows was discouraged by the 1997 Hedgerows Regulations which made it illegal to remove hedgerows without prior permission from the Local Authority.</p>
<i>Statistical & methodological information</i>	<p>Farmland landscape features were surveyed and recorded by the Countryside Survey in 1984, 1990, 1998 and 2007. Monitoring of these complex features poses special problems because they form continuous networks, are highly variable in character and can be found singly or in combination. The sampling unit used was a 1km square, and mapping was done at a scale of 1:10,000. The sample squares were taken at random from different land types in Great Britain. Surveyors were asked to annotate a series of maps with a variety of information, by using a series of detailed codes to describe each feature. The presentation of net change may obscure large transfers between categories and suggest that features are stable when they are actually in a state of flux. During the 1990s a balance between planting and removal, degeneration and restoration maintained the total stock of hedges.</p>
<i>Further information</i>	<p>This is also a Biodiversity Strategy Indicator: http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/biodiversity/indicator.htm</p> <p>Further information on the Countryside Survey can be found at: http://www.countryside-survey.org.uk/</p>