

DEFRA consultation: Health & harmony – the future for food, farming, and the environment

The Heritage Alliance

8 May 2018

The Heritage Alliance is England's largest coalition of independent heritage interests. We unite more than 115 organisations which together have over 7 million members, volunteers, trustees and staff. The vast majority of England's historic environment (including more than half of rural England) is owned, managed and cared for by Heritage Alliance members. The Alliance is represented on DEFRA's Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee, and the Alliance's specialist Rural Heritage Advocacy Group has written this response.

The consultation is [here](#). This was an online response (the repetition in parts of the response is intended: different DEFRA teams will analyse different sections of the response and will not necessarily see responses to other sections).

PART 1: MOVING AWAY FROM THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN ENGLAND

2. Reform within the CAP

2.1 Please rank the following ideas for simplification of the current CAP, indicating the three options which are most appealing to you:

- a) Develop further simplified packages*
- b) Simplify the application form*
- c) Expand the online offer*
- d) Reduce evidence requirements in the rest of the scheme*

Please give a short explanation as to your ranking preferences:

We have no strong preferences between these options, but see our next two responses.

2.2 How can we improve the delivery of the current Countryside Stewardship scheme and increase uptake by farmers and land managers to help achieve valuable environmental outcomes?

As the consultation document says, uptake has been limited, by poor and overly-complex scheme design and administration, by disproportionate compliance requirements, by a perception that the

scheme is unattractive and inaccessible, by the loss of the 'universal offer' approach, and by limited options. In particular, under Countryside Stewardship availability of and funding for historic environment options has fallen considerably, and from a shockingly low previous base.

All this needs to change. Simplification is part of this, and is obviously a good thing wherever it removes pointless or disproportionate bureaucracy. However, it is important:

- (i) to widen, not further reduce, the available options. As we say in further responses below, agri-environment funding needs to take a holistic approach. All public goods are potentially important, a wide range of options needs to be available, and priorities will vary greatly by location.
- (ii) not to cause damage: there is obviously less point in funding one public good if it risks harming others. From a historic environment viewpoint, it is important (as below) not only to maintain the GAEC requirements, but also more specifically to protect heritage assets of national importance in the Natural England/Historic England SHINE database, and to base decisions on adequate information including the Historic Environment Record.
- (iii) that inspection/compliance is proportionate, and its cost is inbuilt into the schemes: it cannot rely on unfunded input from bodies like Natural England, Historic England, or local authorities, whose budgets have been dramatically cut in the last 10-15 years.

2.3 Do you have any further comments?

The 25-Year Environment Plan (25YEP) gives the historic environment in future parity of approach to the natural environment. That was far from true of Environmental Stewardship, and is even less true of Countryside Stewardship, which disregards the historic environment almost entirely. Under Countryside Stewardship, funding for the historic environment has fallen to about ¼ of 1 per cent of total CAP funding, and just ⅓ of 1 per cent even of environmental funding. These figures are shockingly inadequate. As the 25YEP says, "in the past, our failure to understand the full value of the benefits of environment and cultural heritage has seen us make poor choices. We can change that...".

The scale of need is colossal: for example, we have already lost half of our traditional farm buildings, and hundreds of thousands more are in decay, almost half of scheduled monuments are under threat, as are hedgerows, parkland, and historic field systems. As the consultation document says (evidence compendium, p55), heritage "is a non-renewable resource which, once lost, cannot be recreated". For much rural heritage, funding as a public good is its only chance of long-term survival.

Work has been done on the scale of need: in particular, *Assessing the costs of Environmental Land Management* (RSPB, National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, 2017) identifies a need for a public goods spend on stone walls and archaeological features of some £210m pa, as part of a total environmental spend of

£2.2bn pa (UK), about 10 per cent of the total. This does not include other historic environment issues, especially the need to repair traditional farm buildings.

The 25YEP throughout gives future parity to the natural environment and historic environment (the purpose of the new Environmental Land Management System (ELMS) is to “incentivise land managers to restore and improve our natural capital and rural heritage”). That same parity of approach should be applied now to the remaining years of Countryside Stewardship, primarily by ensuring that historic environment options are available and funded in improved schemes, and also by using standalone schemes as below. Although the main focus of work should be on ELMS, and Countryside Stewardship is not a good model for ELMS, getting much better outcomes from Countryside Stewardship is an important short-term goal before it is replaced, and may help in designing ELMS.

The Hedgerows and Boundaries Grant has (as the consultation document says) proved popular, and well-designed and administered, and in a year has (inter alia) restored 46 km of stone walls, which has proven environmental, social and economic benefits (see *A Socio-economic study of grant-funded traditional drystone wall and farm building restoration in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, final report, 2007*). We very much support its expansion: 46 km of stone walls for example is a real achievement for the areas affected, but only a minuscule proportion of the total length in decay. Further standalone schemes, for example for traditional farm building maintenance, should be added.

Similarly, there is an urgent need for capital grants for traditional farm building repair/restoration. Past schemes, though on a small scale, have been very effective in delivering fully-repaired buildings and a variety of other demonstrable economic and social outputs. The recently-launched £2m Historic Building Restoration capital grant scheme for five National Parks should be greatly expanded and extended as soon as possible, with a much greater level of funding, not only in National Parks but across the country.

3. An ‘Agricultural Transition’

3.1 What is the best way of applying reductions to Direct Payments? Please select your preferred option from the following:

- a) Apply progressive reductions, with higher percentage reductions applied to amounts in higher payment bands*
- b) Apply a cap to the largest payments*
- c) Other (please specify)*

c) other.

We have no strong preference between these options. It is however important that:

- (i) reductions are part of a managed process, with a clear direction of travel, leading to a system based on payment for public goods.
- (ii) payment for public goods is phased in as direct payments are phased out, so that there are no gaps, and no disruption to existing environmental payments.
- (iii) as in our response to chapter 2, the 25YEP approach of parity for the natural and historic environments should be applied from now and at all stages in the future. The principle of that approach is important, and this also implies much more substantial funding for the historic environment as the total public goods funding budget rises, funding which should begin to reverse decades of historic environment decline as above.
- (iv) reductions should probably not be confined to larger holdings: the whole farming industry and other land management will need to change, and to understand the message that future support will be based on payment for public goods.
- (v) environmental funding (as opposed to direct payments) must obviously not be capped: those who provide the greatest environmental public benefits should be paid accordingly.

3.2 What conditions should be attached to Direct Payments during the 'agricultural transition'? Please select your preferred options from the following:

- a) Retain and simplify the current requirements by removing all of the greening rules*
- b) Retain and simplify cross compliance rules and their enforcement*
- c) Make payments to current recipients, who are allowed to leave the land, using the payment to help them do so*
- d) Other (please specify)*

d) Other

Firstly, it is important that the GAEC conditions relevant to the historic environment are retained in full. These include the retention of stone field boundaries, and the need to comply with scheduled monument and listed building legislation.

Secondly, however, these GAEC requirements for the historic environment are minimal, going little beyond basic compliance with criminal law. To this therefore should be added the retention of nationally-important but non-designated archaeological features in the SHINE database.

The 'greening' rules have little or no relevance to the historic environment.

3.3 What are the factors that should drive the profile for reducing Direct Payments during the 'agricultural transition'?

It is important that new schemes – including obviously for the historic environment – are comprehensively piloted and tested, and funding is essential to allow this. If reducing direct payments is the only source of this funding, it is important that enough funding is recovered to achieve this.

3.4 How long should the ‘agricultural transition’ period be?

From a purely historic environment viewpoint, other things being equal, the quicker the transition from direct payments to a system of payment for public goods, the better. But this needs to be achieved through a properly-planned transition which gives enough time for land managers to plan and adapt, and for the new approach to be properly piloted and tested; this will probably take 3-5 years.

4. A successful future for farming – Farming excellence and profitability; Agricultural technology and research; Labour: a skilled workforce

Definitive answers to these questions about farming are outside our remit, but aspects of this are likely to have relevance to the historic environment. Firstly, managing the historic environment and conserving and enhancing agricultural landscape character to deliver a range of environmental, economic and social benefits poses some challenges: equipping farmers and land managers with the knowledge and skills needed to adapt to changing conditions and technology needs also to include the skills and knowledge needed to manage their farmed landscapes and historic environment.

Secondly, market forces have eroded land management skills across the industry. Examples include the loss of local vernacular boundary management skills, such as dry-stone walling and hedge-laying, and the loss of animal husbandry skills required to conserve important habitats in arable areas once known for their mixed farming systems. There are opportunities to rebuild these skills.

Thirdly, improved technology should bring opportunities, like the ability of GPS-guided agricultural machinery to avoid geo-located scheduled monuments.

PART 2: IMPLEMENTING A NEW AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN ENGLAND

5. Public money for public goods

5.1 Which of the environmental outcomes listed below do you consider to be the most important public goods that Government should support? Please rank your top three options by order of importance:

- a) Improved soil health*
- b) Improved water quality*
- c) Better air quality*
- d) Increased biodiversity*
- e) Climate change mitigation*

f) *Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment*

Please give a short explanation as to your ranking preferences:

We welcome the 25YEP, and very much agree that this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform agriculture and land management, primarily by designing and delivering a world-leading Environmental Land Management System (ELMS) based on the provision of public goods.

We also welcome public consultation: the public will be paying for these public goods.

However, both consultation and design need to be much more sophisticated than this “pick your top three” approach, which is flawed at the most fundamental level. The Heritage Alliance obviously sees the historic environment as a core objective, but funding needs to take a holistic approach: all of the public goods listed are potentially important, a wide range of options needs to be available, most public goods help to deliver other public goods (like heritage structures providing habitats), and what is possible and desirable will vary greatly from holding to holding. We need to move wholly away from the current approach, in which essentially the EU “picked its top three”, via EU Directives, and almost all UK funding was then pushed in that direction. As the 25YEP says, “in the past, our failure to understand the full value of the benefits of environment and cultural heritage has seen us make poor choices. We can change that...”.

An important symptom of that failed approach is that funding for the historic environment is about ¼ of 1 per cent of total CAP funding, and just ¾ of 1 per cent even of environmental funding. These figures are shockingly inadequate. The scale of need is colossal: for example, we have already lost half of our traditional farm buildings, and hundreds of thousands more are in decay, almost half of scheduled monuments are under threat, as are hedgerows, parkland, and historic field systems. As the consultation document says (evidence compendium, p55), heritage “is a non-renewable resource which, once lost, cannot be recreated”. For much rural heritage, the economics of farming mean that funding as a public good is its only chance of long-term survival.

Work has been done on the scale of need: in particular, *Assessing the costs of Environmental Land Management* (RSPB, National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, 2017) identifies a need for a public goods spend on stone walls and archaeological features of some £210m pa, as part of a total environmental spend of £2.2bn pa (UK), about 10 per cent of the total. This does not include other historic environment issues, especially the need to repair traditional farm buildings.

The 25YEP gives future parity of approach throughout to the natural environment and historic environment: the purpose of the new Environmental Land Management System (ELMS) is to “incentivise land managers to restore and improve our natural capital and rural heritage”. This obviously needs to be followed through, fully integrating the historic environment into ELMS; this has

the potential to be truly transformative in the way in which farmers and land managers care for the landscapes and the historic environment.

The historic environment needs to be fully integrated into the pilots from the start, and the heritage sector needs to be fully involved in developing ELMS alongside land managers and other stakeholders: ELMS is unlikely to be transformative unless it has full stakeholder involvement in development. The detail of this is likely to include:

- Further work on the integration of historic environment and landscape values, perhaps by developing the concept of environmental capital and adopting a landscape perspective. Although the 25YEP explicitly sees the historic environment as part of 'natural capital', there are a number of wider and widely-acknowledged issues with the Natural Capital Approach which need to be resolved.
- Innovative thinking, for example on (a) delivery mechanisms, by land management contracts or similar, by universal schemes and targeted schemes, and so on; (b) combinations of environmental funding with economic use, which has generally been forbidden in the past, but may where appropriate be able to achieve better outcomes at lower cost; (c) area-based delivery systems, eg Protected Areas, where environmental, economic and social objectives are integrated and considered holistically; and (d) learning from other schemes and research (eg the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Scheme; or Public Ecosystem Goods And Services from land management – Unlocking the Synergies (PEGASUS; www.pegasus.ieep.eu/).

As already noted, it is vitally important that future policy is not driven by EU directives carried into UK legislation. Current approaches, in which environmental funding depends almost entirely on whether an activity was subject to EU Directives, bias funding very heavily towards those areas and away from others. In future, funding for public goods should not follow EU legislation: it should fund public goods, goods which benefit the public, who are paying for them, and which otherwise would not be provided. It should thus be driven by UK needs, and by considerations of public benefit, public consultation, and measured outcomes.

Given the ambition of the 25YEP – leaving the whole of our environment better – 'universal offer' schemes need to be the core of ELMS.

It is obviously also important that environmental funding is not 'capped': there is no logic in that, and government has said it will not do this.

Finally, option f) in the question should be amended to 'engagement with the environment', ie not just 'natural environment', so as to encompass projects promoting engagement with the rural historic environment.

5.2 *Of the other options listed below, which do you consider to be the most important public goods that Government should support? Please rank your top three options by order of importance:*

- a) *World-class animal welfare*
- b) *High animal health standards*
- c) *Protection of crops, tree, plant and bee health*
- d) *Improved productivity and competitiveness*
- e) *Preserving rural resilience and traditional farming and landscapes in the uplands*
- f) *Public access to the countryside*

Please give a short explanation as to your ranking preferences:

See previous response: the same points apply. In option e), add “local distinctiveness”.

5.3 *Are there any other public goods which you think the Government should support?*

Chapter 5 of the 25YEP makes no mention of cultural heritage in seas and oceans. It rightly notes that seas and oceans are an integral part of our history, but makes no provision for the huge wealth of historic and archaeological sites that make up our maritime past. Coastal heritage and historic sites such as shipwrecks are important to the economy, supporting multi-million-pound sectors including tourism, coastal recreation, diving and sea angling. It is important that the Government’s promised review of marine targets and indicators – and its marine online assessment tool – should encompass the marine environment including cultural heritage, not just Good Environmental Status as defined by the EU Marine Framework Directive.

6. Enhancing the environment

6.1 *From the list below, please select which outcomes would be best achieved by incentivising action across a number of farms or other land parcels in a future environmental land management system:*

- a) *Recreation*
- b) *Water quality*
- c) *Flood mitigation*
- d) *Habitat restoration*
- e) *Species recovery*
- f) *Soil quality*
- g) *Cultural heritage*
- h) *Carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas reduction*
- i) *Air quality*
- j) *Woodlands and forestry*
- k) *Other (please specify)*

Please give a short explanation as to your preferences:

In principle, we support approaches which look beyond individual farm units and embrace a landscape-scale approach. In historic environment terms it is often the pattern of field boundaries, vernacular buildings and archaeological features across multiple units that help to define landscape character. Landscape characterisation has already been carried out across England and is a very helpful tool, held in Historic Environment Records.

There is potential to devise broad schemes based on some of the principles of the Entry Level Scheme in Environmental Stewardship. In addition, the development of a Hedgerow and Boundaries Grant and a Historic Building Restoration Grant at a landscape scale would reinforce and strengthen landscape character and deliver a range of environmental, economic and socially beneficial outcomes.

We would not however want all funding to be at a landscape scale, because there is much that can be achieved at single-unit level, and because that might prevent important public benefits being achieved if some units did not wish to participate.

6.2 What role should outcome-based payments have in a new environmental land management system?

Outcome-based payments appear in principle to make a great deal of sense, paying for proven outcomes, and allowing land managers to decide from on-site experience how those outcomes can most effectively be achieved. The current trials of outcome-based payments do not yet involve heritage, but heritage should be added. The benefits of heritage public goods will usually be readily measurable.

6.3 How can an approach to a new environmental land management system be developed that balances national and local priorities for environmental outcomes?

No comment.

6.4 How can farmers and land managers work together or with third parties to deliver environmental outcomes?

Working together is clearly desirable, especially to achieve landscape-scale benefits, and can achieve greater public benefits than not doing so. We think land managers are willing to work together and with others, provided that schemes include and budget for the additional costs involved in co-ordinating this and in securing appropriate advice, external co-ordination, and inspection/compliance.

6.5 Do you have any further comments?

We have already stressed in our response to chapter 5 the failure of past approaches, the colossal scale of historic environment loss and need, the importance of implementing the 25YEP's approach of parity between the natural and historic environments, and the transformational changes that would achieve.

7. Responsibility to animals

No comments.

8. Supporting rural communities and remote farming

8.1 How should farming, land management and rural communities continue to be supported to deliver environmental, social and cultural benefits in the uplands?

Remote land managers and communities face particular challenges. As the consultation document says, these areas also tend to have particular concentrations of heritage, much of which is at current or potential risk. Payment for the provision of heritage public goods could therefore make a major contribution to tackling the problem, supporting tourism and jobs in rural communities, provided the rates paid are sufficient – as elsewhere, this must move wholly away from current approaches based on ‘income foregone’, which of course is small (at best) in these areas. Whether payment for heritage and other public goods will be enough to keep upland and remote land in active management is beyond our field of expertise, but it should at least make a major contribution.

8.2 There are a number of challenges facing rural communities and businesses. Please rank your top three options by order of importance:

- a) Broadband coverage*
- b) Mobile phone coverage*
- c) Access to finance*
- d) Affordable housing*
- e) Availability of suitable business accommodation*
- f) Access to skilled labour*
- g) Transport connectivity*
- h) Other, please specify*

Please give a short explanation as to your ranking preferences:

All or any of these can be important. We would mention in particular transport issues, especially the “final mile” problem of reaching many rural locations by public transport; and skills issues, which are likely to worsen without action to improve skills, or import them in ways not wholly dependent on the payment of high salaries (see the Heritage Alliance’s Brexit immigration briefing at <http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/tha-website/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/THA-Immigration-Briefing.pdf>).

8.3 *With reference to the way you have ranked your answer to the previous question, what should Government do to address the challenges faced by rural communities and businesses post-EU Exit?*

Many Heritage Alliance members are impacted by these challenges. Investing in heritage can help to solve many of them, and – albeit on a small scale overall – many heritage projects and the rural communities that surround them have benefitted from LEADER funding available through the RDPE. RDPE funding is split equally between business development, rural tourism and food processing, with LEADER funding offering more specialised funding for micro and small businesses and farm diversification; boosting rural tourism; providing rural services; providing cultural and heritage activities, as well as increased farm and forestry productivity. This funding is especially important for rural tourism and heritage projects, as other funding opportunities have become more and more limited. There is conclusive evidence that funding for rural heritage diversification rewards the investment: DEFRA’s impact assessment of the current RDPE programmes (2014) found ROIs of 5.07 and 3.7 (p50) respectively for the business and community investment parts of the LEADER programme, and an ROI of 2.5 (p48) for the growth programme. These or similar funding streams should be and expanded in future.

8.4 *Do you have any further comments?*

No comment.

9. Changing regulatory culture

9.1 *How can we improve inspections for environmental, animal health and welfare standards? Please indicate any of your preferred options below.*

- a) *Greater use of risk-based targeting*
- b) *Greater use of earned recognition, for instance for membership of assurance schemes*
- c) *Increased remote sensing*
- d) *Increased options for self-reporting*
- e) *Better data sharing amongst Government agencies*
- f) *Other (please specify)*

Please give a short explanation as to your preferences:

We welcome better regulation in general terms, but the detail of this is outside our expertise.

9.2 *Which parts of the regulatory baseline could be improved, and how?*

The GAEC rules need to be continued, including those which protect the historic environment, but these are minimal and to them should be added the retention of nationally-important but non-designated archaeological features in the SHINE database. The regulatory baseline should be consulted on.

9.3 How can we deliver a more targeted and proportionate enforcement system?

No comment.

9.4 Do you have any further comments?

No comment.

10. Risk management and resilience

No comment.

11. Protecting crop, tree, plant and bee health

No comment.

12. Ensuring fairness in the supply chain

No comment.

PART 3: THE FRAMEWORK FOR OUR NEW AGRICULTURAL POLICY

13. Devolution: maintaining cohesion and flexibility

Our remit is limited to England, and in general the historic environment does not require a common approach – the history, agencies, mechanisms, and laws are often different.

14. International trade

14.1 How far do you agree or disagree with the broad priorities set out in the trade chapter?

No comment.

14.2 How can Government and industry work together to open up new markets?

No comment.

14.3 How can we best protect and promote our brand, remaining global leaders in environmental protection, food safety, and in standards of production and animal welfare?

This question is mostly outside our remit, but it is important to note that the historic environment is very important to the UK's brand, and drives much overseas tourism (the Secretary of State has said that "heritage is the glue that holds Brand Britain together"). Investing in rural heritage and in linked skills maintains and develops this brand. The Heritage Alliance's recent International Report (<http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/blog/2018/03/28/heritage-alliance-publishes-first-ever-international-report/>) demonstrates this and how it can be taken forward.

14.4 Do you have any further comments?

No comment.

15. Legislation: The Agriculture Bill

15.1 How far do you agree with the proposed powers of the Agriculture Bill?

Agree/disagree etc

Neutral – the consultation gives little detail.

15.2 What other measures might we need in the Agriculture Bill to achieve our objectives?

The new Agriculture Act must maintain and update the 1986 Act (Agriculture Act 1986, Sections 17 and 18), obliging the Secretary of State to put heritage on an equal footing in funding and other decision-taking with the natural environment, the social and economic interests of rural communities, and public enjoyment of the countryside. The wording needs slight revision to provide a more holistic definition of the historic environment; it could read "...the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside (including its flora and fauna and geological and physiological features), and of heritage assets (of value for their archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic interest)". This accords with standard definitions of heritage assets, including in the National Planning Policy Framework.

It is vitally important that future policy is not driven by EU directives carried into UK legislation. Previous approaches, in which environmental funding depended almost entirely on whether an activity was subject to EU Directives, biased funding very heavily towards those areas and away from others. In future, funding for public goods should not follow EU legislation: it should fund public goods, goods which benefit the public, who are paying for them, and which otherwise would not be provided. It should thus be driven by UK needs, and by considerations of public benefit, public consultation, and measured outcomes.

The Agriculture Bill is an opportunity to amend s61(7) of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 so as to allow the limited number of nationally-important archaeological sites without structures, which cannot be designated under existing law, to be considered for designation as scheduled monuments. It might also provide an opportunity to revisit Class Consent 1 in the same Act, which allows ploughing above scheduled monuments in some circumstances, though we understand that DCMS and DEFRA are currently looking at this with a view to reviewing the secondary legislation, building on the risk-based and agreement-based approaches developed by Historic England, DCMS, DEFRA, and Natural England over the last 15-20 years which aim to constrain or prevent ploughing in circumstances where it could cause damage.

15.3 Do you have any further comments?

No comment.

For further information, please contact The Heritage Alliance:

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