

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by Doug Robinson

2006 Churchill Fellow

Agricultural incentive schemes for biodiversity conservation

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Dated

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INTRODUCTION

In Australia, I work as a Regional Manager with Trust for Nature, an independent conservation organisation whose mission is to ‘strive to ensure that all significant natural areas in private ownership in Victoria are conserved’.

Trust for Nature implements that mission in a range of ways:

- We encourage landholders to place legally binding conservation covenants on their property title to ensure that the land is forever protected and managed for conservation.
- We purchase and manage properties for conservation.
- We work with other natural-resource management agencies on projects to protect and restore natural areas of habitat on private land.
- We assist landholders in the ongoing management of their land for conservation
- We work with public land managers to improve the conservation management of areas of public land in agricultural landscapes.
- We work with local government to encourage their commitment to nature conservation on private land through rate rebate programmes or amendments to planning schemes.
- We promote our conservation work through open days, the establishment of demonstration sites, newsletters and talks.

In the context of these roles I had become interested in the development and implementation of other models of private land conservation being applied in the United Kingdom (UK) and Europe. I was also interested to learn more about the conservation program of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, a very large independent conservation organisation in the UK.

The Churchill Fellowship provided me with the unique opportunity to travel to the UK and Ireland to learn about their nature conservation programs on private land and compare options being used overseas with current Australian schemes. The Fellowship was also especially rewarding in the sense of making contact with many peers overseas and providing me with the ongoing opportunity to discuss conservation issues and options with them.

I am indebted to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia for providing me with this privileged opportunity to study and learn about private-land conservation overseas.

I am also indebted to Trust for Nature, particularly to Janet Limb, Mike Gooley, Chris Williams and Natalie Holland, for enthusiastically supporting my application. Andrew Bennett and Richard Winspear kindly agreed to be referees for my application and I thank them both. Finally, my grateful thanks to family and friends who provided support in those many essential ways that made the trip possible – dog-minding, house-minding, car-minding, work-minding, project-minding and Doug-minding. Thanks to you all.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Churchill Fellowship funded me to visit the United Kingdom and Ireland to learn about their nature conservation programmes on private land and to recommend options for private land conservation schemes in Australia. The fellowship travel was undertaken between May 4th and June 22nd, 2007. As part of the tour, I met with policy-makers, researchers, advocates, extension officers and landholders involved with the development and implementation of agri-environment schemes in both the UK and Ireland. I also had the opportunity to visit nature conservation reserves owned and managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and nature trusts.

Highlights

- Spending a week working at the RSPB's headquarters at Sandy, Bedfordshire and meeting with staff there involved in every aspect of their conservation program.
- Learning about the RSPB's highly integrated and highly disciplined approach to conservation.
- Visiting the RSPB's own commercial farm, Hope Farm, at Knapwell near Cambridge – a property which the RSPB operates commercially but where it also applies the land management guidelines which it encourages other landholders to adopt.
- Visiting farmers in Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire and talking about their own experiences with the UK agri-environment schemes.
- Spending time at the British Trust for Ornithology at Thetford, Norfolk, and learning about the range of research and monitoring studies they co-ordinate.
- Visiting nature trusts in Buckinghamshire and London and learning about their management, membership and structure
- Meeting project officers working on the conservation of various endangered bird species.
- Meeting policy staff from the Irish Department of Agriculture and Food and being taken on a visit to one of the farms in their agri-environment program.
- Visiting the RSPB's 15,000 ha Abernethy Reserve in the Scottish Highlands.

Recommendations

On the basis of these overseas experiences, I recommend that:

- agri-environment schemes in Australia should become integrated into one standard scheme, rather than being run as separate programs within and between catchments.
- Funding should be provided to landholders as long-term payments to manage parts of their land for public benefits, rather than as one-off subsidies for capital works.
- Funding should be structured to offer higher-level payments equivalent to farm income to manage priority areas for conservation.
- A systematic review is needed to determine the public benefits of existing options funded under agri-environment schemes and gaps in the current range of options.
- We need better systems of research and monitoring as a part of our agri-environment schemes.

Implementation and Dissemination

- The lessons learnt from this fellowship are currently being presented to the Goulburn Broken catchment committee responsible for the delivery of agri-environment schemes in that catchment and will be incorporated into a current review of the schemes. If successful, we will encourage adoption of this extension model more widely.
- Some of the lessons learnt about private land conservation options are about to be submitted to an international journal paper in partnership with RSPB researchers.

FELLOWSHIP ITINERARY

7th-10th May, Devon, UK

RSPB Cirl Bunting project tour

11th-18th May, Sandy, Bedfordshire, UK

- Working at the RSPB headquarters
- Meeting with staff and Board members from the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire Nature Trust.
- Tour of one of the Nature Trust Reserves at College Lake, Tring

19th-27th May, Norfolk, UK

- Meetings with staff at the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)
- Presentation about Trust for Nature and one of our threatened bird projects to the BTO
- Visits to the Norfolk Nature Trust's Cley Marsh Wildlife Reserve and Weeting Heath Nature Reserve Suffolk Nature Trust's Lopham Fen Reserve and private estates.
- RSPB Stone-curlew project tour
- Meetings with staff from NaturalEngland and Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- Meeting with environmental staff from the National Farmers Union.
- Visit to the RSPB's Hope Farm.

28th May-3rd June, Worcestershire region, UK

- Visits to farmers involved in agri-environment schemes
- Meetings with extension officers from NaturalEngland, RSPB and Farming, Wildlife Advisory Group.
- Tour of farm involved in agri-environment schemes and a member of the Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) program.

4th-10th June, Ireland

- Meetings with policy staff, farm planners and project officers co-ordinating the Irish agri-environment scheme.
- Visit to property involved with the Irish agri-environment scheme.
- Corncrake conservation project tour.

11th-18th June, Scotland

- Meeting with RSPB Scotland's farmland policy manager
- Meeting with RSPB's national forest policy advisor
- Tour of RSPB's Abernethy Reserve and meetings with conservation managers.
- Visit to Cairngorm National Park.
- Visit to RSPB's Forsinard Reserve.

19th-22nd June, London

- Meeting with NaturalEngland manager responsible for the development of the agri-environment schemes.
- Visit to London Wetland Centre.

FELLOWSHIP FINDINGS

Context

The Churchill fellowship had two main components:

- To learn about the agri-environment schemes operating in the UK and Ireland and consider whether there were aspects that could be adopted in Australia.
- To visit nature trusts and independent conservation organisations such as the RSPB to compare their structure and approach to conservation with that of Trust for Nature's.

One of the immediate lessons learnt, however, was that in order to interpret nature conservation programs operating on private land in these two nations, it was also crucial to understand the nature and context of land settlement, land ownership, the history of farming and current farming practices and policy.

Ecological context

The ecological context of Europe and Australia is very different and has had a substantial effect on the conservation priorities of the two continents.

In Europe, agriculture began more than 5000 years ago and modification of the natural environment has occurred since then in parallel with technological advances. Consequently, the natural biota still persisting is:

- Metastable, such that the ecosystems present are relatively stable, though highly modified from their pre-agricultural state.
- Resilient or even dependent on farming practices
- Predominantly native or long introduced.

Since World War Two, however, a rapid intensification in farm production has caused major declines in many species of plants and animals that had previously been common in farmland.

Based on these two broad environmental patterns of a resilient native biota strongly associated with the farming landscape and recent declines in parts of that biota because of intensified land use, agri-environment schemes in the UK and Ireland focus on:

- The maintenance of farmland habitats
- Restoration of habitats that have been substantially lost in recent history (e.g. lowland wetlands)
- Management of the natural environment to prevent habitat succession
- Maintenance or re-introduction of certain farming practices
- 'extensification' of farming practices to increase the area of land being farmed as it was before World War 2, and to reduce inputs of fertilisers and pesticides, and
- The provision of particular resources (winter food, summer food, nest sites) within the farming landscape.

In Australia, by contrast, the native vegetation has not had a long evolutionary history in parallel with intensive agricultural land-use. It has been hypothesized therefore that the vegetation is much more vulnerable to disturbance from European-style agriculture and much more likely to be degraded. In comparison with western Europe, Australia's natural environments can thus be viewed to be either:

- in the initial stages of degradation, whereby more sensitive native species are still being lost, and/or
- in the initial stages of adaptation to a new metastable state (loss of many native species, colonisation by introduced species and more tolerant native species) (Hobbs & Hopkins 1990).

Farmland has consequently not been viewed as part of the natural environment here, as it is in Europe. Much of our conservation focus in farming landscapes has therefore been on:

- Habitat protection and buffering from surrounding farm uses
- Increasing connectivity between remnant patches of habitat
- Re-establishing or at least maintaining populations of sensitive species
- Reducing threats caused by exotic and native competitors and predators.

More broadly, the rapid rate of clearing of native vegetation in Australia in just over 100 years caused a series of other land degradation issues, notably soil erosion, salinity and sedimentation. These broader NRM issues have exerted a strong influence on the direction of agri-environment schemes in Australia because of their direct economic impacts.

Socio-economic context

The other major difference between the approaches to nature conservation on farmland in the European countries and Australia is the influence of the European Union in terms of policy direction and levels of funding support.

The UK and Ireland both joined the European Union in 1973 and thence became eligible for subsidy payments to their farmers as part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Until the early 2000s, these subsidy payments were directly linked to production but in 2003-04, the UK and Ireland began the process of separating the rate of payment from production and will gradually move towards paying the CAP single payment as a flat rate based on farming-land area.

These payments constitute an average of \$379/ha in Ireland and \$386 in England, based on an average farm size of 113 ha in the UK and 33 ha in Ireland. Altogether they represent an annual average payment to farmers of \$47,118 p.a. in Ireland and \$43,573 p.a. in England. For many farms, this subsidy is essential to make the farm business viable.

In addition to the single scheme payments as part of CAP, reforms to the CAP since 1985 required member states to establish agri-environment schemes to improve biodiversity benefits. Currently, these schemes are funded in addition to the Single Payment.

Payment rates for these agri-environment schemes in England on average constitute \$8169 per farm p.a. (\$72.30/ha p.a.) under its Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) scheme. For the Higher Level Scheme, annual payments are >\$900/ha for the land area subject to that agreement and the landholder may then enter the rest of the farm in the ELS program.

In Ireland, the average annual payment under their Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) program is about \$11,808 per property, representing nearly one-third of average farm income.

As acknowledged in both nations, the single payments and agri-environment scheme payments thus constitute a significant form of social engineering whereby land managers are being paid to continue farming, both for socio-economic reasons and because their natural environment requires ongoing,

active management. This approach to government support for farming contrasts dramatically with Australia where subsidy support to farmers has been substantially reduced over the last twenty years.

Agri-environment schemes in UK and Ireland

In both the UK and Ireland, agri-environment (AE) schemes have been available since the early 1990s as part of a commitment by both nations under The European Union's Common Agriculture Policy.

In many ways, their AE schemes differ markedly from the approach currently being taken in Victoria and other parts of Australia:

- Their schemes are based on the fundamental principle of landholder payment for the provision of public benefits (ecosystem services).
- The landholder is being payed to manage their land on behalf of the public to achieve those public goods
- Payments are large (because of financial support as a part of the Common Agricultural Policy) and represent substantial percentages of landholder income (28% of total farmer income in Ireland).
- Their schemes are fully integrated in that all of the natural resource management (NRM) issues are managed through the one funding program.
- Many of the NRM measures being funded are management actions that do not require capital works, for example the setting aside of permanent grassy margins at the edges of cultivation paddocks or next to waterways
- Most of the NRM measures offered to landholders are intended to complement existing farming practices but make those practices more environmentally sustainable. Landholders are paid, for example, to reduce the fertiliser inputs they apply to pasture. Where the intention is to alter existing land practices (e.g. the reversion of arable land to grazing land), high rates of payment/ha are offered.
- Funding periods are long-term in order to provide some financial security and forward planning potential to landholders
- Funding is two-tiered so that funds can be deliberately targeted at high priority sites.
- The management solutions, especially in the UK, are knowledge-based and there has been a standard procedure to trial solutions and to monitor outcomes to feed into subsequent AES iterations.

Lessons learnt

In Victoria, our standard NRM schemes, whilst still being based on the principle of public payment for public good, do not generally recognise the role of the landholder as land steward. Our AE schemes therefore provide a one-off grant to the landholder for capital works as a public contribution towards the achievement of public benefits such as improved water quality, improved soil stability and improved biodiversity. But, they do not provide ongoing income support to the landholder to help them manage land for desired public benefits.

This gap has been recognised in recent years and various government agencies now offer stewardship payments to landholders through tender schemes such as Bush Tender, River Tender, Carbon Tender (www.dse.vic.gov.au) and Bush Returns (www.gbcma.vic.gov.au). The Federal Government has also now announced a \$50 million stewardship package to provide income support to landholders managing their land for public good. The potential flaws with these alternative AE

schemes, however, is that they sit separately from the other AE funding programs – making the system more complicated rather than more streamlined from a landholder’s perspective. A more effective solution might be to integrate all of the NRM funding options into one scheme and offer differential rates based on the expected public benefits. A potential framework for such a scheme is shown below.

One of the useful lessons learnt from the fellowship study of agri-environment schemes in the UK and Ireland was that the Australian NRM programs have many existing strengths. The most obvious strengths of our NRM program in Victoria were that:

- It is available to all landholders.
- It’s a targeted program in terms of cost and extension officer effort.
- The sliding scale of payments for a site based on its collective NRM priority is effective and does influence landholders’ decisions about what works they will undertake.
- It is moderately cost-effective with reasonable levels of uptake.
- There are few administrative requirements on the landholder.
- Extension officers are available for site inspections to provide advice, expertise, and steer the grant process (a very supportive approach compared with the UK ELS and Irish programs).
- There is a strong community approach based on catchment and landcare group structures (these do not exist in the UK or Ireland).
- The generosity of landholders in terms of their preparedness to undertake substantial works on their land for comparatively low levels of funding support.
- Long-term security is available via covenants and land purchase.
- Large-scale protection and restoration options are still possible in Australia but less achievable in the UK and Ireland.

Equally, it became clear that our existing NRM program had some weaknesses. These were that:

- The various NRM schemes are not integrated (e.g. environmental management incentives (EMIs), waterways, Bush Returns, Bush Tender, covenants, land purchase)
- The scheme is not based on a principle of subsidised payment to landholders to manage their land for public benefits.
- The scheme does not provide a comprehensive range of NRM measures, particularly in relation to farming practices.
- The scheme does not focus on good, active management of existing habitats but on protection and revegetation measures.
- There has not been a systematic process for all parts of the NRM program (waterways is a notable exception) of developing practical solutions to NRM issues, trialing those solutions and then, if successful, applying those solutions at a wider scale as part of our EMI program.

The conservation role of Nature Trusts and independent conservation organisations in the UK

One of the astounding contrasts between the UK and Australia is the level of interest in their wildlife. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has more than one million members in a country of 60 million (1:60). In Australia, the comparable figure is about 10,000 members of ornithological societies in a population of about 20 million (1:2,000).

Likewise, there are 43 nature trusts across England responsible for the management of hundreds of reserves and with a membership of about 450,000 people. In Victoria, there is only one nature trust (Trust for Nature). England also has many specialist groups focussing on the conservation of butterflies, fungi, waterfowl, gamebirds, beetles, orchids and so forth, with many of these groups not only undertaking research and lobbying, but also buying land for particular conservation purposes.

From the perspective of a Trust for Nature staff member, therefore, the scale of resourcing available to undertake conservation on private land in the UK was remarkable. Across the UK, the RSPB employs nearly 1000 staff. Additionally, it and other organisations such as the British Trust for Ornithology support large numbers of volunteers whom assist with the running of visitor centres, monitoring, and extension work.

For example, building on its volunteer support base, the RSPB has established a very effective farm extension program called the Volunteer and Farmer Alliance whereby bird-watchers undertake bird surveys on properties where farmers have expressed interest in knowing what birds live there. The farmer is subsequently provided with a map of their farm which shows the locations of every bird species of interest recorded there. For species of concern, they are also provided with fact sheets describing what that bird species needs and what the farmer can do to assist its survival.

At the 15,000 ha Abernethy Reserve, the RSPB has about ten full-time staff to manage the land, as well as a team of volunteers assisting with the visitors' centre, visitor tours, surveys, maintenance and management. By contrast, at Trust for Nature's 30,000 ha Ned's Corner property in northwest Victoria, there are no full-time staff.

Lessons learnt

Thus, the most salient lesson learnt from visits to RSPB headquarters, RSPB reserves and nature trusts was simply to acknowledge that the United Kingdom and Australia are very different countries in terms of population density and human interest in issues of nature conservation and wildlife. Trust for Nature can therefore not expect to parallel the RSPB's conservation program or that of the nature trusts.

However, in discussions with staff from various organisations in the UK, one point they reiterated was that Trust for Nature and other organisations like ours in Australia could and should:

- Undertake the necessary research and trials to test practical conservation solutions
- Provide demonstration sites showing good conservation management.
- Undertake good monitoring of the conservation trends of our properties and use that data to inform our subsequent decisions.
- Based on the above research and trial process, the Trust should advocate for the wider uptake of management actions demonstrated to be effective, for example by lobbying for such options to be included in the agri-environment schemes described above.

Another comment made by many conservation officers working for these independent conservation organisations was that the conservation process was the same for all organisations regardless of size. The diagram, below, for example, illustrates the RSPB’s framework for bird conservation.

Based on this approach, it was emphasised that organisations needed to ensure that they had staff dedicated to each part of the conservation cycle – otherwise the organisation could not expect to be as effective as it might be.

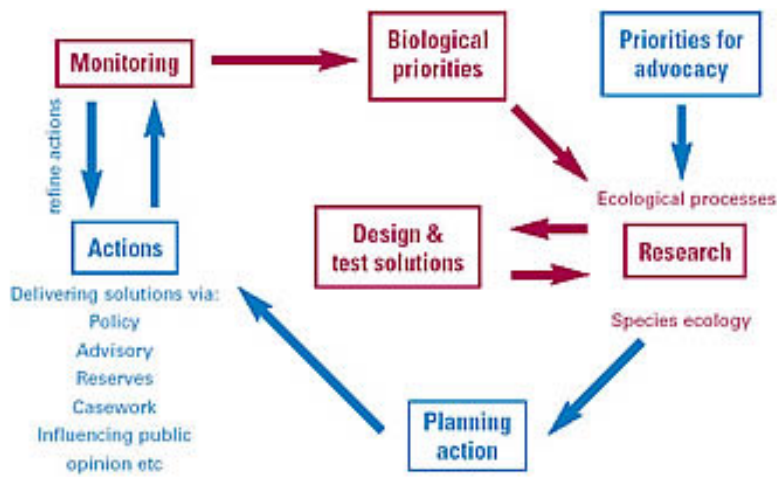


Fig. 1. An example of an adaptive management framework for bird conservation (courtesy RSPB).

CONCLUSIONS

The fellowship study of nature conservation programs on private land in the United Kingdom and Ireland emphasised for me that:

- Our countries have very different ecological, social and economic processes operating and it cannot be assumed that their conservation programs will be appropriate here.
- Many of the Australian NRM programs are as effective as comparable NRM programs overseas. They therefore provide a sound basis for building on, rather than needing new schemes to be introduced.
- Relative to the amount of funding and resources available, conservation schemes on private land in Australia are very efficient and achieve substantial NRM benefits.
- One of the major problems with the existing NRM programs in Australia is that they are very disparate in terms of funding sources, extension advice and NRM guidelines for management. Within a catchment, for example, landholders may have to apply for several different grants to undertake different types of works on their land. Between catchments, the guidelines for funding differ. Between states, processes differ. Accordingly, one of the most useful actions that can be taken is to integrate all of these NRM schemes at least at a State level.
- The principle of paying landholders an income to provide public benefits needs to be better established in Australia such that all citizens appreciate the public benefits that farmers provide them and support the use of public funding to assist with that land management for the public good.
- Better communication material is needed to help increase the awareness of all citizens about the decline of ecosystem health and, more importantly, ways in which they can help to reverse that decline.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for agri-environment schemes in Victoria

Based on the above observations, I suggest that the following changes to our existing NRM programs could improve their overall effectiveness and improve the support provided to landholders to manage part of their land for the public good.

1. Overall program scope

- Retain our current multiple-outcome approach.
- Further integrate the approach so that all sites are scored for their priority in terms of river health as well as salinity, soil and biodiversity.
- Review the program to identify if there are additional public benefits that should be included as part of the funding. The most obvious options for inclusion are:
 - Threatened species conservation
 - River health from a risk perspective, as well as a values perspective
 - Public access (a big feature of the European programs)
 - Reduced nutrient use
 - Reduced sediment inputs
 - Reduced pesticide use
 - Organic farming
- Consider the advantages/disadvantages of a whole-farm based approach. In particular, consider the advantages of committing landholders to delivering public benefits across their entire property and across all NRM issues over a number of years.
- Consider amending the scheme to allow landholders to apply to manage some parcels of public land that do not currently have designated land managers.
-

2. Prioritisation process

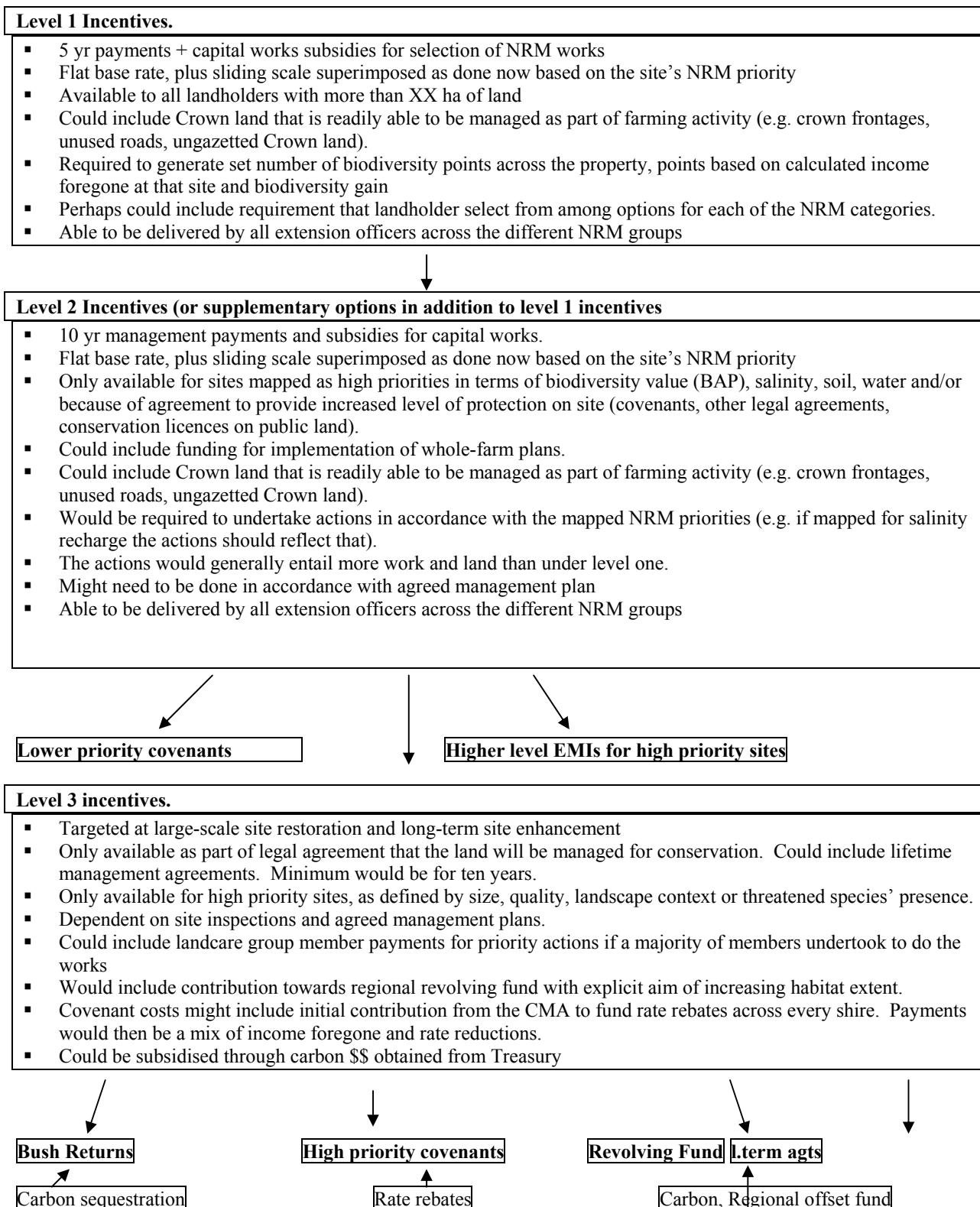
- Retain the current map-based, sliding-scale matrix for prioritising sites in terms of funding.

3. Program Delivery

- Revise the EMI scheme to integrate all of the NRM programs into one funding scheme (e.g. EMIs, Waterways Grants, Bush Returns, Bush Tender, conservation covenants, Revolving Fund).
- Review the principle of funding support from our current subsidy for capital works to a subsidy for managing land to achieve public benefits.
- On that basis, revise the way in which funding support is provided (one option is to apply the European model of income/opportunity foregone).
- Adopt a two-tiered or three-tiered funding system such that higher rates of funding will be provided to landholders in exchange for more complex management actions, larger-scale actions or actions done with long-term security (a draft outline is shown below).
- Consider the adoption of a whole-farm approach, similar to the Irish model, with funding provided over a number of years to allow implementation of all of the NRM actions agreed to for a property. This approach might be offered as a higher-funded option or could simply be stipulated as a part of the funding programme
- Establish a systematic, evidence-based approach to trialing solutions with pilot schemes first and monitoring the success of those pilots (as per Bush Tender and Bush Returns).
- Encourage Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) to fund pilot rate-rebate schemes for covenanted land or other land protection measures with all shires in their catchments in order to

create a comprehensive system of shire-funded benefits for landholders managing their land for long-term public good.

A possible framework for natural resource management subsidies in Victoria, June 2007



4. Range of options offered

- Review our existing NRM funded activities in relation to a comprehensive list of the actions we think could be funded to provide public benefit.
- Increase the number of options available under the scheme, particularly NRM options linked to farming practice.
- Consider new options that achieve large-scale increases in extent and condition as a part of the proposed, integrated NRM scheme (e.g. lifetime agreements, contributions to regional Revolving Funds, carbon offset funding).
- Consider the inclusion of options that recognise the environmental benefits of organic farming.

5. Management guidelines and targets

- More detailed management guidelines should be developed for every NRM option as a part of the proposed changes to the NRM funding program, in exchange for longer-term and larger funding commitments to landholders.
- The guidelines should include set timeframes for particular activities (e.g. no grazing between August 1st and January 1st) and timelines for the overall project (e.g. complete fencing by the end of year 1).
- Multiple indicators of success should be developed for every option such that there would be a range of ways by which to assess the success of a project.
- The indicators should be broadly defined and defined in a user-friendly manner (e.g. for protection of a site from grazing, we would expect an increase of 10-50% in shrub cover from now, or a visible increase in the abundance of large tussock grasses)
- Indicators could be site-specific rather than generic, so long as they link to an upper category of agreed indicators (e.g. the overall indicator might be improvement in vegetation condition. At different sites, we might choose to assess this by recording presence/absence of grass-tree seedlings, recruitment of grazing sensitive species, recruitment of fire-sensitive species, abundance of annuals, etc.

6. Auditing and regulation

- Standardise and publicise the process of auditing as a part of the funding process.
- Review regulatory controls to see if these could be revised to improve some aspects of farm management
- At the least, produce a brochure or guide identifying all of the legislation and policy that already applies to landholders in terms of their environmental obligations.
- Consider statewide changes to the State Planning Provisions Framework to improve statutory control over some destructive land practices such as drainage, laser-levelling, etc.
- Consider the English option of specifying that all natural features present on the property at the start of the funding periods must be maintained as a part of the funding agreement

7. Site security

- It is important to note that security can be achieved in a range of ways, not just through conservation covenants or other legally binding agreements. Thus, the European models achieve some security through long-term agreements, high payment rates and a penalty system linked to payments
- There remains an important role for conservation covenants, particularly in relation to medium to high priority sites that are considered to be at medium to high risk of habitat degradation (e.g. because of changes in land use from grazing to cropping).
- On that basis it would be beneficial to amend the current EMI agreements so that they were considered to be legally binding agreements that committed the landholder to a range of actions.

In exchange for that increased commitment, agencies should also increase the level and duration of funding.

- Increased effort should be placed on the use of other statutory controls to achieve desired NRM outcomes.

8. Monitoring and review

- As part of the catchment's NRM funding, a component should be allocated for testing and trialling potential new NRM options, as well as monitoring.

9. Program promotion and landholder support

- Further strengthen the role of landcare groups to deliver desired NRM outcomes, in part by maintaining or increasing funding support for facilitators and co-ordinators.
- Recognise the unique capacity of landcare groups to achieve large-scale public benefits by offering substantial grants to landcare group members if the majority of that group agree to undertake set works on their land.
- Review and improve the extension literature provided to landholders.
- Re-establish Land for Wildlife as an effective conservation program in Victoria.

Recommendations for nature trusts and independent conservation organisations

- The key recommendation for nature trusts such as Trust for Nature from observation of various trusts and NGOs in the UK is that they need to have clear, overall conservation objectives as an organisation.
- Following on from that, nature trusts and other conservation organisations need to develop an integrated conservation cycle to achieve those objectives and ensure that they have staff to implement each part of that conservation cycle.
- As outlined above, it is important that organisations in Australia recognise their limitations in terms of resources and community support. Thus, it may be more effective to provide demonstration sites and examples of how to achieve good conservation outcomes, rather than expecting to be able to achieve broadscale change oneself.
- Because of the small and scattered human population in Australia, it is important that the different conservation organisations co-ordinate their activities as far as possible and identify the components of the conservation cycle where they can be the most effective.
- More communication material is needed to engage a wider section of the human community in conservation. A reinvigorated Land for Wildlife might be a useful option to provide this service.

DISSEMINATION OF IDEAS

Many of the lessons learnt from this fellowship have been presented to the Goulburn Broken Catchment committee responsible for the delivery of agri-environment schemes in that catchment and will be incorporated into a current review of the schemes. If successful, we will encourage adoption of this extension model more widely. As part of a wider dissemination process, I have also been asked to talk to community groups in the catchment and other parts of Victoria about some of the learnings from the fellowship. The regional ABC rural report has also done a story about the study tour.

Some of the lessons learnt about private land conservation options have been included in a scientific paper being written in partnership with RSPB researchers. I have also written reports for Trust for Nature and Birds Australia about potential ways in which each organisation might increase their focus on private land conservation.