



Case Study 10.9

Oundle Lodge, Northamptonshire – floodplain-meadow creation from the landowners' perspective



Oundle Lodge restoration project is found at Big Meadow, a 10 ha field along the River Nene in Northamptonshire. Previously an arable field, it floods most years resulting in nutrient, pesticide and soil loss and poor crop yields.

The farm is a mixed farm with other riverside meadows and so was able to expand the livestock (beef) enterprise element. The farmer's father was very interested in the environment and in the 1970s and 1980s created new habitats on the farm, and so the project focused on creating further wildlife habitat in addition to managing the site in line with environmental factors.

The farmer already had the equipment and livestock to manage the fields for hay, including aftermath grazing. However, the farm did not have the appropriate physical infrastructure for grazing the restoration fields. The plan drawn up for the Higher Level Scheme over the ten years of the agreement therefore included fencing, gates and cattle drinking points. It also included the use of native-breed cattle.

A Wet Grassland Mixture from Emorsgate seeds (EM8) was used to re-seed the field as no donor sites for either seed or hay were available. This mix had proved to be very successful elsewhere along the River Nene (e.g. Broad Meadow in Upper Heyford in 2008). It was sown at 3 g/m² in the autumn of 2010 and cut four times in 2011. In 2012, spot spraying was carried out to control docks and the hay was cut at the start of July to remove nutrients, and aftermath grazed. This management has continued.

This creation scheme was funded by Natural England's Higher Level Scheme at the following rates:

- ELS payments: £30/ha.
- HLS payment for the creation of species-rich grassland: £280/ha.
- HLS payment for hay making option: £75/ha.
- HLS Payment for native breeds at risk grazing supplement: 70/ha.

Capital works

- Fencing: £2.50/m.
- Gates: £149 each.
- Cattle drinking bays: £119 each.
- Native seed mix: £1,400/ha.

As a result of the project, a number of considerations for advisors were drawn up in discussion with tenant farmers and landowners, and are listed in Table 10.5.





Farmer/business needs and opportunities	Planning considerations	Machinery and stock considerations
Managing the business in the most profitable way	Ensure the case for recreation or restoration is financially sound	Mixed farms may already have the right stock and machinery
Matching the available resources and skills with current enterprises	Check that suitable infrastructure is either in place or is attainable	Arable-only farms may struggle to manage a floodplain meadow in the long-term
Expanding or start an enterprise	Check that the landowner has the means to manage the site in the long term	Intense grassland management is needed in the first year of creation projects
Benefiting the environment	Explore creation/restoration options	Increased weed control may be needed for the first five years on certain sites
Possibility of taking a hay crop on sites that fail to support more intensive crops due to annual flooding		The use and number of livestock needs to be closely monitored over the first five years

Table 10.5 Factors for advisors to consider in planning creation and restoration projects.

