Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Evaluation of
The Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme

Report prepared for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and The Heritage Council by Crane Bag Consulting

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This report has been prepared for:

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and The Heritage Council

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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

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Glossary of Terms

ACRES	Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme
AECM	Agricultural Environment Climate Measure
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSP	CAP Strategic Plan
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
EPD	Environmental Product Declaration
GLAS	Green Low-carbon Agri-environment Scheme
HC	Heritage Council
I-2	Intervention 2 Burren Life Scheme
ICMSA	Irish Creamery and Milk Suppliers Association
ICSA	Irish Cattle and Sheep Association
IFA	Irish Farmers' Association
INHFA	Irish Natura and Hill Farmers' Association
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
RDP	Rural Development Programme
REPS	Rural Environment Protection Scheme
T+S	Travel and Subsistence
WTP	Willingness To Pay

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INTRODUCTION

The GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings (TFB) Grant Scheme was launched in 2016. It is an agri-environmental measure under Measure 7 '*Basic services and village renewal in rural areas*' of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (RDP), working to enhance the significant positive contribution that traditional farm buildings make to the rural Irish landscape in terms of cultural and natural heritage.

Eligible investments include approved conservation works to traditional farm buildings and farmyard features such as historic yard surfaces, gate pillars and gates. To be eligible for the scheme, buildings and other structures must have architectural or vernacular heritage character and make a contribution to their setting. Domestic dwellings, currently in occupation or intended for occupation, are not included.

The scheme was designed as a complementary measure to GLAS (Green Low Carbon Agri Environment Scheme) the main agri-environment measure applying under the Irish RDP 2014-2020. Under GLAS, farmers undertake to carry out a series of measures to protect and enhance the environment on their farms. A key component of the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme is therefore the identification and protection of wildlife habitats in these old buildings.

Some 50,000 Irish farmers signed-up to GLAS over the period of the RDP and these were and remain the only farmers

eligible for assistance under the Traditional Farm Building Scheme.

The scheme is managed by The Heritage Council on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFM). A total of €6 million was allocated to the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme under the RDP over the seven years of the programme, co-funded through the National Exchequer and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Grants cannot exceed 75% of the cost of the works, with a maximum grant available of €25,000 and a minimum grant of €4,000. Current indications are that the budget will be fully used.

OUT-TURN TO DATE

As of end 2021, a total of 382 projects have been completed involving the repair of 522 traditional buildings, returning these to functional use on the farm. This

already exceeds the RDP target for the entire programming period, which was 350 buildings. A total of 1,173 habitats have been identified as part of this process. Over €8 million has been invested between public and private funds (rising to €10.6m if multipliers applied) and over four thousand weeks employment generated directly on supported farms.

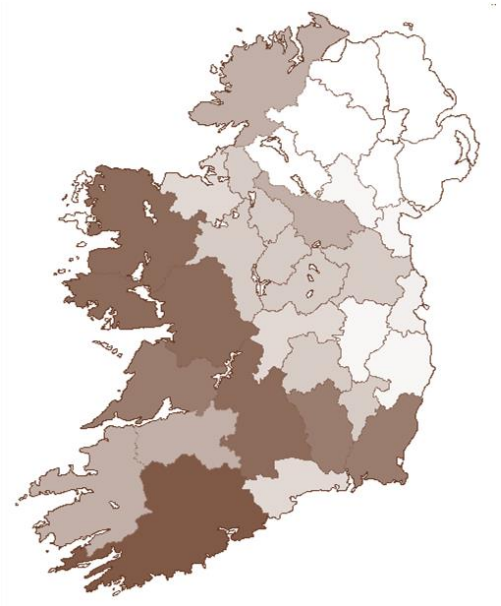


Figure (i) Regional distribution of projects approved and completed 2016-2020, showing strong western and southern concentration.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

Three principal questions were agreed at the start of this process, which together covered all the various detailed evaluation requirements set out for this study. Those three questions were:

- Ambition: To what extent have we achieved the ambition of the Scheme?
- Process: Are we doing it the right way?
- Value: Are we getting value for money?

The overall evaluation approach is built on four main pillars:

- Research: This included a literature review, development of a logical framework, review of programme mechanics, analysis of project commitments, and identification of international comparators.
- Consultation: This entailed interviews with commissioning stakeholders, farm surveys and three expert focus groups.
- Analysis: In-depth examination of the consultations to identify common themes and to help quantify the impact of the TFB scheme.
- Evaluation: This included several elements including a 'Systems Review and Process Analysis', an 'Impact Evaluation' and an assessment of the 'Value-for-Money' of the scheme. An integrated Capital Approach was also employed, looking at the return in terms of Human, Intellectual, Financial, Social, Natural, and Manufactured capital.

The process informed a series of 35 recommendations framing the future development of the scheme.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Our overall assessment of the Scheme is extremely positive in terms of its impact, and very positive in terms of process and value-for-money. The recommendations offered are designed to build on the real success of the Scheme and reflect the outcome of consultations and our own analyses.

Impact Area	Nature Positive Negative Neutral	Impact Low Moderate High	Scale Local/Individual Regional National	Significance Low Moderate High
Traditional Skills Greatly increases awareness/application by participants and opportunities for craftworkers.	Positive	High	Local/Individual	High
Cultural Heritage Preserves heritage, adds value/purpose, increases awareness/pride in 97%+ participants.	Positive	High	Local	High
Attitudinal Change Significant attitudinal change achieved in up to 98% of participants.	Positive	High	Individual	High
Biodiversity Clear benefits to biodiversity: 1,000+ habitats secured, most with protected species.	Positive	High	Regional	High
Climate Change Climate-friendly alternative to new build with potential energy saving of 2.6m MJ p.a.	Positive	Moderate	Local	Low
Landscape 100% of participants say farm looks better, with 98% saying others locally agree.	Positive	High	Local	Moderate
Rural Economy €10.6m invested in rural economy to date (inc multipliers). 4,000 weeks employment created.	Positive	Low	Local	Moderate

Figure (ii) Summary assessment of the impact of the Traditional Farm Building Scheme

Impact of the Scheme

We reviewed the impact of this Scheme across seven distinct areas, i.e. Traditional Skills, Cultural Heritage, Attitudinal Change, Biodiversity, Climate-Change, Landscape and Rural Economy. Our assessment is summarised in the table above.

In every case, the nature of the impact has been positive and in five out of the seven areas reviewed that impact has been High. The big wins are for Traditional Skills, Cultural Heritage, Attitudinal Change and Biodiversity, and even though the scale of impact is classified as Local/Individual (Regional in the case of biodiversity) this does not detract from its significance.

We assess the impact as Moderate for Climate Change and Low for Rural Economy. In both cases this is because this remains quite a small scheme, with only €1 million allocated for the entire country every year. As a result, its impact is highest and most significant at the local and individual level and more limited in what it can deliver for climate-change and economy. It is important to note, however, that despite the relatively low investment the Scheme has generated at least 4,000 weeks employment since 2016 in local economies.

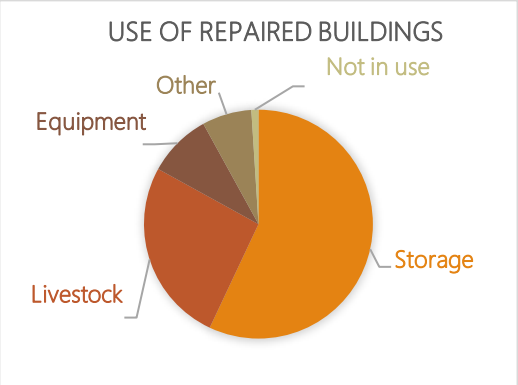


Figure (iii) Current use of repaired buildings

The same pattern emerges when we view the results through the Integrated Capitals prism – see table below.

Capital & Effect	Nature Positive Negative Neutral	Impact Low Moderate High	Scale Local/Individual Regional National	Significance Low Moderate High
Human Significant impact at the individual level, increased pride, awareness of the value of traditional buildings and enhanced skills.	Positive	High	Individual	High
Intellectual Significant attitudinal change at individual level (up to 98% of participants) but contribution of this to wider strategic aims limited by size of scheme.	Positive	High	Individual	High
Natural Clear benefits to biodiversity – 1,000+ habitats, most with protected species. Landscape contribution recognised and potential energy saving of 2.6m MJ p.a.	Positive	High	Regional	High
Built Preservation of culturally important built heritage, adding value/renewed functionality. Farm-level and local spin-offs.	Positive	High	Local	High
Social Impact is less than others but increased community pride noted and new networks developed (inc with Heritage Council links). Wider impact limited by scale of scheme.	Positive	Moderate	Local	Low
Financial €10.6m invested to date (inc multipliers) and 4,000 weeks employment. No direct cost-saving but better VFM when local impact and climate included.	Positive	Low	Local	Moderate

Figure (iv) Summary assessment of impact of the Scheme across the integrated capitals

The impact is universally positive across all six capitals (Human, Intellectual, Natural, Built, Social and Financial) and viewed as High for the first four listed. We see the impact as Moderate for Social capital, reflecting the unrealised potential for networking amongst participants.

We rank the impact as Low for Financial for much the same reason as it is Low for Rural Economy – it simply doesn't have the scale for more extensive impact. However, this is a technical evaluation: it should not detract from its impact at local level, the vernacular architecture protected and habitats safeguarded – not to mention the employment generated and the ripple effect created by quite remarkable attitudinal change which sees 96% of Scheme participants more inclined to use traditional craftsmen now.

A consistent feature of the Scheme then, whether viewed by impact-area or by capital-effect, is that its impact is universally positive but strongest at the individual and local level.

Strategic Contribution

This required review of the Scheme in the context of a wider strategic framework as represented by The Heritage Council's strategic plan *Heritage at the Heart* (2018-2022) and *Heritage Ireland 2030*, as well as the RDP 2014-2020 and the forthcoming programme covering the period 2023-2027.

Our conclusion was that the Scheme had clearly contributed in a very effective way to the three strategic objectives set out in *Heritage at the* Heart, i.e.

1. Advancing national heritage priorities
2. Nurturing belonging
3. Ensuring a vibrant heritage sector.

As regards the RDP, the design of the scheme clearly responds to the Focus Area objectives and has proved itself highly effective in delivering on its aims,

well exceeding the target set for the number of traditional buildings restored (522 to date vs a programme target of 350).

Looking ahead, the opportunities for any new Scheme under the *Heritage Ireland 2030* framework are very exciting, with potential to become a flagship scheme as the initiatives begin to take shape, as well as opportunities for The Heritage Council itself to drive a new focus on vernacular architecture.

Similarly, while any new Scheme may not form part of the next package of co-funded measures under the CAP Strategic Plan (CSP), a wholly Exchequer-funded version can and should maintain an 'ideological' link to the CSP by linking eligibility to participation in the new Eco Scheme, ACRES, EIPs or Organics. This will ensure a joined-up approach towards maximising environmental returns in the broadest sense, as well as ensuring that the 'active farmer' link is maintained.

Value-for-Money

In most cases it seems that the cost of repairing an existing traditional farm building and returning to agricultural use was slightly more expensive than providing the same area through new build. However, spiralling inflation is much more likely to impact on new builds, with their reliance on steel and imported materials, than on works to traditional buildings, where so much material is sourced locally or even recycled. This will very likely bring the cost of repair vs new-build back into balance at the very least, or indeed reverse it.

In addition, the repair of the traditional farm building brings benefits for biodiversity and climate-change which simply do not arise in the case of a new build. Over a thousand wildlife habitats have been secured through the Scheme to date along with savings of the order of 2.36 million megajoules of energy a year. For all these reasons, we conclude that the investment delivers real value for money compared to new build.

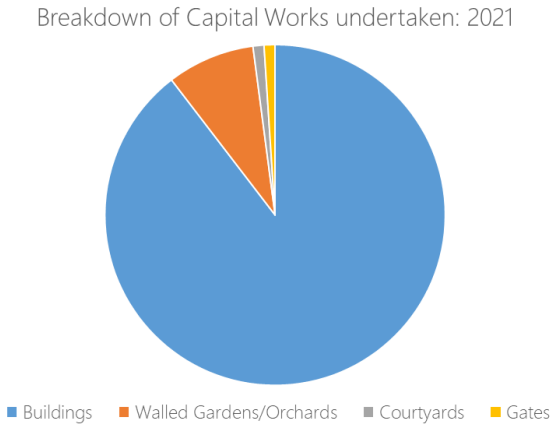


Figure (v) Typical breakdown of works undertaken showing dominance of building repairs

Process

Our review of the programme mechanics was also positive but with room for improvement in some areas. We would draw attention to the relative efficiency of the Scheme and the control of costs, which have remained largely stable over the programming period. It is notable that although the timeframe is so restricted, particularly where wildlife surveys are required, the scheme delivers completed projects in less than ten months from the issuing of contracts, which is impressive. Payment is similarly efficient and an excellent operational relationship between the two partners (DAFM and The Heritage Council) is evident.

That said, the scheme is more costly to run than some others because of the 1:1 attention it gives to beneficiaries. While this has delivered enviable customer-satisfaction, high quality work and minimal need for penalties, we believe there is scope for greater efficiencies. In particular, we feel that the 100% inspection regime applying to all projects at commencement and completion, with perhaps half receiving an interim inspection as well, is too heavy and could be pared back.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our 35 recommendations are organised under the following headings:

- Policy Framework
- Finance
- Programme mechanics
- Research
- Communication

The key recommendation is that the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme should continue, that its budget should be increased and that it should be established on a multi-annual basis as a wholly Exchequer-funded measure.

In our research for similar interventions overseas, we have found nothing to compare with the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme in terms of scale, vision or ambition. It is quite unique. In the meantime, and to allow time for a full redesign, we recommend immediate extension of the existing scheme using the N+3 rule.

The shape of a new Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme

Although entirely Exchequer-funded, we believe the new scheme should remain linked to CSP agri-environment schemes for the purpose of defining eligibility and to ensure a joined-up approach across all such measures targeting Irish farms.

We recommend the annual budget should be increased to at least €1.5m but ideally €2m. This will allow additional projects, wider scope and an increased success rate of up to 30% on applications. We also recommend that the maximum grant should be increased from €25,000 to €30,000 to keep in line with inflationary pressures in the building sector.

The partnership arrangement between the Heritage Council and DAFM has been critical to the success of the Scheme and is an example of how two entities with very different missions can pool resources and expertise to deliver a scheme to a level that neither could achieve alone. That partnership remains critical and should be maintained. However, in order to improve administrative cost-effectiveness, it is recommended that the

100% in-person inspection regime is replaced with a risk-based model and greater reliance on the role of the conservation consultant. Additional staff resources will be required in The Heritage Council and possibly DAFM, depending on expansion of the Scheme. The payment system at the DAFM end should also be automated.

We recommend extending the current 12 month grant-cycle to 18 months to alleviate the time pressure on farmers for completing projects. In addition, introducing mechanisms to assist farmers who are not familiar with forms would help to ensure that 'significant heritage buildings' are not lost due to poorly completed application forms.

We also recommend further strengthening the role of the farmer through up-skilling, incentivising own labour, offering short traditional skills courses, developing farmer-to-farmer 'buddy' schemes and establishing a farmer ambassador programme.

We recommend greater flexibility in the application of the scheme selection criteria to target particular needs from time-to-time and if necessary relax the public visibility requirement further for important buildings. We also question the requirement that supported buildings be used solely for agricultural use: we see real potential for these buildings to assist with on-farm diversification into areas such as agri-tourism which in turn will support overall farm viability.

We believe that the research component supporting the scheme needs to be strengthened. Better baseline data and asset-characterisation is required to help target the scheme where it is needed most. A 'look-back' exercise should also be undertaken of supported projects to assess the continuing impact/benefits for wildlife on the farm.

Finally, we identify opportunities to increase the scheme profile and its achievements through improved public messaging on social media, newsletters, information events and travelling exhibitions. In addition, the creation of an online interactive map of projects would greatly aid new applicants and widely communicate the benefits of this scheme.

Chapter 1

Evaluation Approach and Methodology

OVERVIEW

The overall evaluation approach is built on four main pillars: Research, Consultation, Analysis and Evaluation. These in turn are designed to lead to a series of clear and achievable recommendations for the future development of the scheme.

Pillar 1: Research

The primary activity here is a Desk Review to include the following:

- Development of a logical framework of objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts for the scheme.
- Compilation of all existing KPIs for the scheme.
- A full review of the programme mechanics including the application form, guidelines, grant evaluation process, contract and payment schedule.
- An analysis of project commitments including: approvals, decommitments, investment categories, farm / farmer profile, geographical and monetary value distribution, budget utilisation. This will provide a detailed overview of the programme and its impact.

The research component also includes identification of a good contextual comparator in the form of an international historic farm buildings scheme. The international comparator was identified very early in the process to facilitate ongoing comparison with the Irish experience and to help inform the consultative process as well.

Pillar 2: Consultation

There are three elements to this:

1. Consultation with the commissioning stakeholders
2. The Farm Surveys
3. Focus Group discussions

Consultation with the commissioning stakeholders
The commissioning stakeholders are the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and The Heritage Council. Three separate consults took place, covering both operational and policy aspects with both stakeholders and including policy-makers and scheme managers. The consults with each stakeholder took place separately.

Farm Survey
A very successful Farm Survey was undertaken, to which 66% of all beneficiaries since 2016 responded providing invaluable information and feedback on the Scheme. A second survey of unsuccessful candidates was also undertaken to provide a counter-factual response and assess how the scheme is seen by those not fortunate enough to have secured a grant.

Focus Groups

Three separate Focus Groups were established to share thoughts and ideas in relation to the Scheme. The Focus Groups were set up on a thematic basis, one focusing on the farmer-beneficiary, one on built heritage and one on natural heritage. Each of these groups included experts in their own field with direct experience of working on Traditional Farm Building projects as well as farmers and farmer representatives. Individual submissions were also received from some participants, while others unable to make the particular sessions were interviewed for their thoughts.

Pillar 3: Deliverables Analysis

An in-depth analysis of the consultations with stakeholders, farm survey and focus groups was undertaken to identify common themes, ideas and to quantify the impact of the Traditional Farm Buildings (TFB) Scheme against the programme objectives. This is then brought to bear and factored into the overall Evaluation process.

Pillar 4: Evaluation

The evaluation component includes several different elements:

Systems Review and Process Analysis, looking at the operation and management of the scheme, terms and conditions, scope, effectiveness and operational linkages.

Impact Evaluation, drawing upon the hard-data collected during the research phase, survey results, and focus-group deliberations. The areas covered include landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, climate change, traditional skills, rural economy, attitudinal change and strategic impact. We also look at the question of Value-for-Money in this stage of the analysis. An Integrated Capitals Approach is employed to help guide the evaluation process, looking at the return in terms of Human, Intellectual, Financial, Social, Natural, and Manufactured capital.

Recommendations

On the basis of our research and evaluations, and drawing on what we can learn from the international comparator and consultation process, a series of clear and achievable recommendations for the next stage of the Traditional Farm Building Scheme is set out in the final section of this report.

THE STEERING COMMITTEE

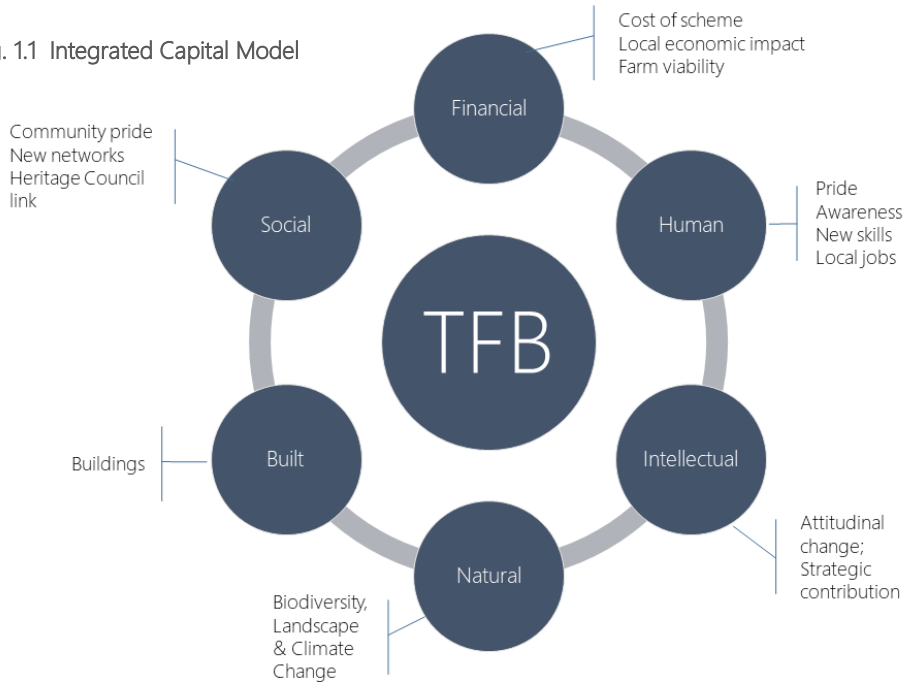
The review was overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and of The Heritage Council. The committee members for the Department were Brian Kennedy, Andrew Ramsay, Ann Cunningham and Michael Mackey, while Ian Doyle and Anna Meenan represented The Heritage Council.

The committee met monthly to review progress and consider reports presented by the consulting team, and provided much valuable advice and guidance along the way.

THE INTEGRATED CAPITALS APPROACH

An Integrated Capitals approach usually categorises the return on investment in terms of Human, Intellectual, Financial, Social, Natural, and Manufactured/Built capital. As the model below shows, each of these headings correspond quite well to the impact areas to be assessed for this scheme. In the model below we have 'cross-referenced' the impact we seek to assess as part of this study to the 'standard' categories used to assess returns under an Integrated Capitals approach. This model will inform our evaluations later.

Fig. 1.1 Integrated Capital Model



A LOGICAL EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

As well as applying an Integrated Capitals approach to assessing the 'return' on investment, we also established and agreed with the committee a Logical Framework for evaluation. This framework acts to structure the evaluation under a number of distinct headings as follows:

- Issues
- Inputs
- Activities
- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Impacts

Issues are those which provide the rationale for the scheme, such as the need to preserve built heritage, provide it with function, protect and create habitats, increase awareness, develop a sense of stewardship and build capacity for independent ongoing intervention.

Inputs are primarily the resources required to make things happen. In this case the main inputs are funding (both public and private), advice, specialist skills, labour and scheme administration.

Activities associated with the scheme include first and foremost the building

works, but also things like publicity, education, networking, inspections, payments and reporting.

Outputs, for the most part, consist of repaired and restored traditional farm buildings.

Outcomes are what result from the primary work of repair and restoration and there are two main outcomes: a *primary* outcome viewed in terms of the functional life of the restored building as part of the day-to-day operation of the farm, and a very important *secondary* outcome which is the protection or creation of habitats.

Impacts are wider again, and include impacts for built heritage, cultural heritage, rural landscape, biodiversity, carbon, local employment, skill-base, networking and the all-important area of attitudinal change.

DETAILED EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme was designed to meet a number of key objectives contributing to focus area 4A of the RDP and to do so as a complementary measure to GLAS. Its primary objective is to place a value on traditional farm buildings and other structures by supporting their restoration for renewed agricultural use as part of the normal working life of the farm. The scheme foresaw a range of benefits flowing from this across areas such as landscape, biodiversity, climate change, traditional skills and the rural economy.

In order to assess the success or otherwise of the scheme a series of detailed evaluation questions have been drawn up.

Evaluation Questions from Client

The main ask in terms of evaluation from the client were:

- Undertake a robust evaluation of the TFB scheme and an assessment of objectives, impacts, outputs and outcomes since 2016.
- Identify the extent to which the TFB Scheme helps deliver and support the strategic objectives of the Rural Development Programme 2014-20 and its successor, the Heritage Council Strategic Plan *Heritage at the Heart* 2018-22 and the new framework *Heritage Ireland 2030*.
- Examine the practices and processes of the TFB Scheme as applied by the Heritage Council including but not limited to the eligibility requirements, application, screening, assessments, scoring criteria, conditions of offer, certifications, guidance, training etc, with a view towards recommendations that will ensure the process remains fit for purpose.
- Assess and advise on multi-functional benefits which arise as a result of this measure in areas such as landscape, biodiversity, climate change, enhancement of traditional skills, and contribution to the broader rural economy.
- Provide a contextual comparator with one relevant international historic farm buildings scheme.

On the basis of the above, the requirement is then for a series of recommendations on the future development of the Scheme to include a cost-effective model for administration and delivery and strengthening its position in relation to agri-environmental and heritage policy.

Additional Evaluation Questions from Consulting Team

To the questions posed by the client, we have added a number of our own:

- Does the requirement that a farmer be first in GLAS to qualify for the TFB Scheme actually work against the objectives of the scheme, by excluding candidates who would otherwise be attracted to it? Does it skew the representation geographically as well, with associated impacts for the vernacular architecture of those areas?
- Is the model where management of the scheme is contracted out to the Heritage Council a good one? Is it cost-effective? Does it encourage or discourage farmers from applying? Or does it make the Heritage Council 'relevant' to farmers in a way which it might otherwise not be? Does this relationship between the Heritage Council and farmers bring other benefits?
- Is the competitive nature of the Call for applications a good thing or a bad thing?
- How valid is the cut-off date of 1960 for initial construction? Is there such a thing as a new generation of 'traditional' farm buildings, whose construction using traditional materials and crafts should be encouraged?
- What about attitudinal change – has participation in the scheme changed farmers' attitude about things like heritage, conservation, traditional materials and crafts, biodiversity? How do we build on that?

In brief, the fundamental questions appear to us to be whether and to what extent we are achieving the ambition of the scheme, whether we are doing it the best way and whether we are achieving value-for-money.

Chapter 2

The Traditional Farm Building Scheme

ORIGINS: THE REPS-4 TRADITIONAL FARM BUILDINGS SCHEME

The precursor of the current scheme was the REPS-4 Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme. This was introduced under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and was a complementary measure to REPS, the Rural Environment Protection Scheme. REPS was an agri-environment scheme under which farmers agreed to carry out certain works and farm in a manner which enhanced the environment.

The catalyst for the new scheme was, to some extent at least, an article written by The Heritage Council's architectural officer Colm Murray in the Winter 2005/Spring 2006 edition of *Heritage Outlook*, the magazine of The Heritage Council. Noting the commitment by REPS farmers to maintain and improve the visual appearance of their farms, this article called on them to look also at the maintenance and repair of old farm buildings, increasingly under threat as the modernisation of Irish farms continued. The article also commented that from a conservation perspective these buildings needed to be used to ensure their survival. When the next iteration of REPS was being developed, provision was made for a new Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme which would attempt just that.

As well as repairing traditional farm buildings, the new scheme actively sought to raise awareness of their cultural heritage and historical significance, pointing out that in many areas these were amongst the oldest buildings surviving, and seeking to foster a sense of stewardship on the part of the farmer.

All of the issues identified here have remained key for the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme under GLAS as well.

Conservation of traditional barn in the Cooley Peninsula carried out under REPS-4. Photo by FMG Architects

Principal Terms and Conditions

All applicants under the original scheme had to be farmers and in REPS-4. Farmhouses, residential or domestic buildings were not eligible for funding, with grants directed instead towards conservation of the exterior of farm outbuildings, including roof, wall, window and door repairs. Only essential repairs that conserve the character of the building or ensured its weatherproofing could be considered. Conservation works to additional features such as historic yard surfaces, walls, gate pillars and gates and millraces, could be considered if they were part of the overall project to repair a building. Farm buildings had to predate 1960 to be eligible, be constructed using

traditional methods and materials for agricultural use.

Administration of the Scheme

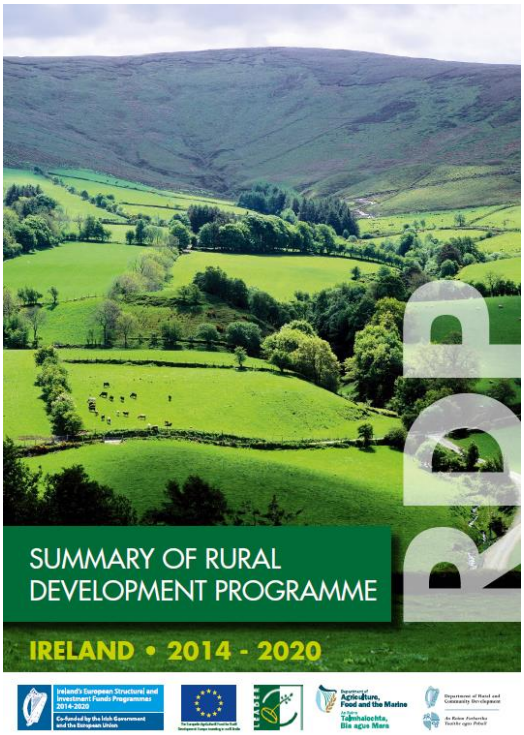
The scheme was managed by The Heritage Council on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. A fulltime Project Manager was assigned to the role. All grant awards were formally approved by the board of The Heritage Council.

Funding

An annual fund of €1 million was made available to this first Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme over the lifetime of the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme. Grants of up to 75% of the cost of the works were available under the scheme, up to a maximum ceiling of €25,000. The minimum grant available was €5,000.[1]

THE GLAS TRADITIONAL FARM BUILDING SCHEME

The GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme was launched in 2016. It is an agri-environmental measure under Measure 7 'Basic services and village renewal in rural areas' of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (RDP), working to enhance the significant positive contribution that traditional farm buildings make to the Irish rural landscape. The Programme explicitly recognised the 'significant cultural and heritage value' attaching to these buildings and the need to repair and conserve these for practical agricultural use as part of the normal working life of the farm.



As with the earlier REPS-4 scheme, domestic dwellings, currently in occupation or intended for occupation, are not included.

The scheme was designed as a complementary measure to GLAS (Green Low Carbon Agri Environment Scheme) the main agri-environment measure applying under the Irish RDP 2014-2020. Under GLAS, farmers undertake to carry out a series of measures to protect and enhance the environment on their farms. Some 50,000 Irish farmers signed-up to GLAS over the period of the RDP and these were and remain the only farmers eligible for assistance under the Traditional Farm Building Scheme.

[1] These were reduced to €20,000 and €4,000 respectively in later years of the scheme.

Principal Terms and Conditions

All applicants under the scheme must be farmers and must have a GLAS contract with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The farm building for which work is planned must have been constructed before 1960, and built using traditional methods and materials. It must once have been and may still be used for an agricultural purpose.

Eligible investments include approved conservation works to traditional farm buildings, including roofs, outside surface of walls, windows and doors. Support is also available for other related structures such as historic yard surfaces and landscape features around the farmyard such as walls, gate pillars and gates. To be eligible for the scheme, buildings and other related structure must have architectural or vernacular heritage character and make a contribution to their setting.

Funding

A total of €6 million was allocated to the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme under the Rural Development Programme over the seven years of that programme. Grants cannot exceed 75% of the cost of the works, with a maximum grant available of €25,000 and a minimum grant of €4,000. The Scheme is co-funded by the National Exchequer (though the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Current indications are that the scheme will use up the full budget available, as well as any similar annual budget made available under the N+3 rule.

Administration of the Scheme

The Heritage Council manage the scheme on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine under a Memorandum of Understanding agreed between the two partners. The scheme is managed by a fulltime Project Manager. All grant awards are formally approved by the board of The Heritage Council. In 2021 the GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme moved from a hard copy, paper based application system to a fully online process.

Close-up of restored Valentia Slate roof on historic outbuilding on farm near Waterville, Co. Kerry – a project funded under the GLAS TFB Scheme.

COMMENT

The similarities between the REPS-4 Traditional Farm Building Scheme and its GLAS successor will be immediately apparent. In fact, the scheme has not changed materially since it was first introduced. This is not necessarily a bad thing but what is surprising is that grant ceilings have remained effectively unchanged since 2007. The maximum grant remains €25,000 despite inflation, and the only real change to the minimum grant has been to reduce it from €5,000 to €4,000. The net result is that the effective value of the grant in 2022 as compared to 2007 has collapsed.

Fig. 2.1 Consumer Price Index Calculator Jan 2007-May 2022

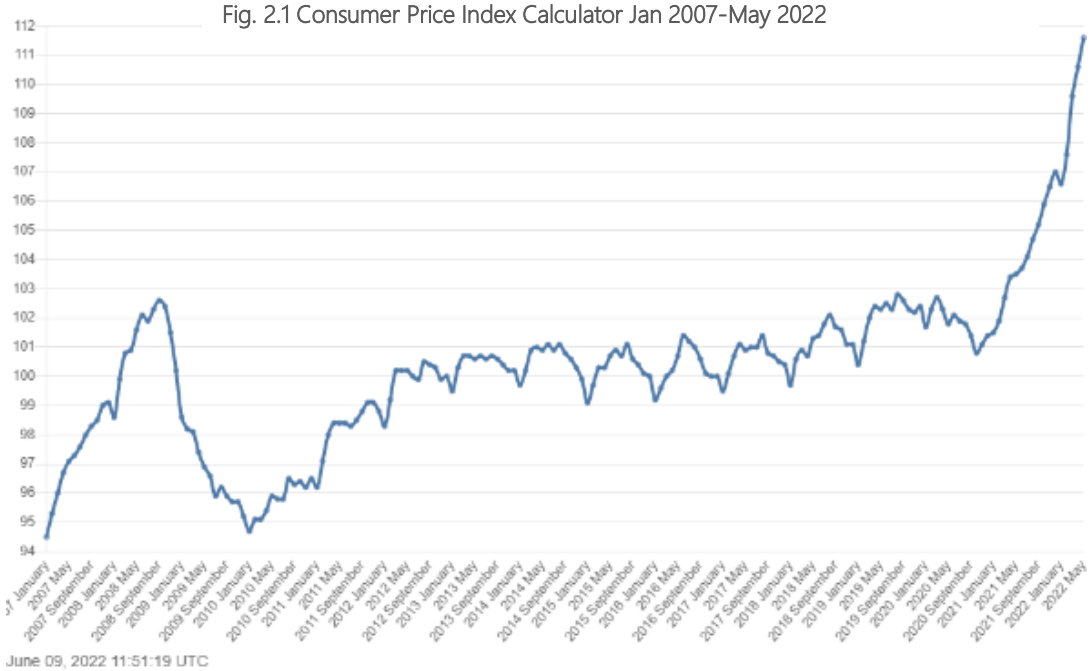


Fig. 2.1 shows the CSO's CPI (Consumer Price Index) calculator, which suggests that the rate of inflation between January 2007 and May 2022 was of the order of 18%. This means that simply to keep pace with 'normal' inflation the equivalent maximum grant today should be €29,500.[2] The chart also shows that the real impact of increased costs has only been felt in more recent years from about mid-2020 on, meaning that for much of its life the effective value of the grant was reasonably stable. However, that is certainly no longer the case.

The overall budget for the scheme tells a similar story: the annual budget has remained unchanged since 2007 at €1m whereas the equivalent figure today would be closer to €1.2m per annum.

The scheme has also remained reasonably consistent in its scope: the types of building considered for funding have not changed substantially, nor has the cut-off point of 1960 moved.

Management of the scheme today follows very much the same model as first applied in 2007. In fact, the Procedures Manual used to administer the GLAS scheme today is very similar to the one used to administer REPS-4.

Again, we would emphasise that this consistency in policy and administration over the last 15 years is not necessarily a bad thing. As we will see later, the scheme works well and the response from beneficiaries is overwhelmingly positive. The case now may be more about building on the scheme's undoubted strengths and impressive track-record (for a summary of this, see fig. 2.2).

[2] Inflation in the building sector has been higher still but is not directly applicable to the type of small-scale craft-oriented work carried out for the Traditional Farm Building Scheme.

Fig. 2.2 Summary Data for Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
No of Projects	48	55	54	76	76	73	382
No of Buildings	72	68	94	112	90	86	522
Square metres	3,008*	4,352*	7,145*	9,697*	6,222*	7,695*	38,119*
Employment hours	15,197*	22,134*	23,472*	41,669*	27,850*	36,550	166,872*
individual consultants	32	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*	34	40	n/a
Wildlife Survey done	30	n/a*	n/a*	63	56	52	n/a
Number of habitats	105	198	144	248	253	225	1,173
Projects with protected species nesting/ roosting	30	47	36	55	49	53	270
Projects with protected species foraging	11	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*	41	44	n/a
Projects with some own labour component	25(4)	n/a*	29(9)	47(12)	35(14)	41(6)	n/a
Public Landscape presence	34	45	n/a*	n/a*	62	55	n/a
Projects hosting event	6	9	n/a*	n/a*	6	14	n/a
Projects contributing to media	4	3	n/a*	n/a*	46	49	n/a
Total grant approved	€726K	€752K	€836K	€1,136K	€1,090K	€1,077K	€5,617K
Average grant rate	70%	70%	69%	70%	69%	65%	69%
Total Beneficiary	€316K	€315K	€372K	€484K	€481K	€587K	€2,555K
Total Cost	€1,042K	€1,067K	€1,208K	€1,620K	€1,571K	€1,664K	€8,172K
Number with penalties	0	1	n/a*	n/a*	0	6	7

*Incomplete data

NOTES

- Data from DAFM records highlighted with additional project detail from Heritage Council files
- In 2020 of 77 projects, 23 delivered by just two consultants with 14 and 9 projects each
- Own labour - figure in brackets indicates where this is wholly own-labour or major component.
- Events curtailed in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid
- Of the 40 consultants in 2021, 50% were 'new' to the scheme vs 2020, at least

Chapter 3

Programme Mechanics and Performance

INTRODUCTION

The discussion in this chapter covers the inputs, outputs and activities headings of the Logical Framework set out in Chapter 1.

PROGRAMME MECHANICS

At a high-level, the mechanics of the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme are easily described. It is a DAFM scheme which is managed on the Department's behalf by The Heritage Council under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding agreed by both parties.

Rural Development Programme. The Department also supplies the budget for the scheme, including the cost of one fulltime manager. It is responsible for general oversight of the scheme and processes all payments to beneficiaries on foot of a payment file supplied by The Heritage Council.

The Heritage Council is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the scheme, as well as advising the Department on technical aspects and policy direction. The Heritage Council invites applications, carries out an initial screening process of those received, followed then by a formal assessment via an independent selection committee which it briefs and oversees. The Heritage Council issues all approvals, provides advice to beneficiaries and carries out site inspections. Each project is visited twice: the first takes place before any works are undertaken, to ensure everything is as presented on the application and to assess the need for a wildlife survey; the second inspection

Fig. 3.1 Programme Mechanics

The Department negotiated the scheme (in consultation with The Heritage Council) as part of the CAP 2014-2020 takes place when works are complete, to ensure everything has been done as it should. On foot of this second inspection,

the Heritage Council either approves the project for payment, directs that additional works be carried out or if necessary applies a penalty.

While the Heritage Council does not contribute directly to the 'budget' of the scheme, it does cover the cost of all inspections, including time-inputs of Council officers other than the Project Manager, as well as overheads such as light, heat and office supplies.

'on behalf of' the Department and provides a very short description of what works may be funded, maximum and minimum grants, and who is eligible to apply. The Heritage Council acts as the Department's agent, making all necessary arrangements in consultation with the Department, reporting quarterly, maintaining adequate records consistent with EU audit requirements and providing office accommodation and related services.

Fig. 3.2 Simplified Model of Programme Mechanics

The Memorandum

The responsibilities of the two bodies involved in managing the scheme, i.e. the Department and The Heritage Council, along with the business relationship between the two, is set out in a short joint Memorandum of Understanding.

The Memorandum establishes that The Heritage Council administers the scheme

The Department agrees to reimburse The Heritage Council for the cost of a fulltime Project Manager including PRSI, accrued pension entitlements and travel expenses up to a maximum of €85,000 per annum. The Department also agrees to confirm the GLAS status of applicants prior to the offering of grants and to pay the amounts certified to beneficiaries in a timely manner. The Department commits to

consulting with The Heritage Council prior to reporting to the EU Rural Development Committee on the operation of the scheme and to keep the Council abreast of any changes to the wider framework agreement with the EU which might affect administration of the scheme. The Department also indemnifies the Council against any clawback of funding from beneficiaries for any reason, except where The Heritage Council was culpable or in some way negligent. The full text of the Memorandum is included in the Appendices.

Staff Resources applied

Heritage Council

For the most part, the day-to-day operation of the scheme is managed by a single member of staff, the Project Manager. This is a fulltime post with only limited administrative support, along with input from the Heritage Council's professional officers (Wildlife Officer and Architecture Officer) during assessment and inspection. For 2021, the breakdown of time inputs was as follows:

Resource	Input
Project Manager	Fulltime
Architecture Officer	16 days
Wildlife Officer	16 days
Executive Officer	26 days
Executive Officer	4 days
Clerical Officer	10 days
Clerical Officer	13 days
Head of Conservation	2 days

The total cost, including overhead, has been calculated in two ways, i.e. the Dept of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER) framework for estimating staffing costs where overheads are calculated at 25% of pay; and the Heritage Council's model, where overheads are quantified and attributed by person by time.

DPER Model: €145,877 (€114,988 ex T+S etc)
HC Model: €189,133

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The main resource applied on the Department side is at Higher Executive Officer (HEO) level. This is on a part-time basis only, calculated at about 10-20% over most of the year. The HEO is assisted by an Executive Officer (EO) and a Clerical Officer (CO) at different times of the year, notably around April when the scheme is launched (taking about 20% of time for all three officers) and significantly more in November/December, when payments are being made. It is at this stage that the EO and CO become most involved, with payments taking up to 75% of the EO's time in December and 100% of the CO's. This can run on into January for the CO, when up to 30% of time could be spent processing remaining payments.

For 2021 the breakdown of time inputs has been estimated as follows:

Resource	Input
HEO	22 days
Executive Officer	24 days
Clerical Officer	36 days

Using the DPER framework the total cost of inputs from the Department side in 2021 comes to €18,793.

Total Cost and Value for Money

Applying the DPER model as a common framework, the total cost of administering the Scheme between The Heritage

Council and the Department comes to €133,781 a year, inclusive of overheads but excluding direct costs such as Travel and Subsistence. Based on a public investment of c.€1m a year, the cost of administration is therefore of the order of 13%.

By way of comparison, we calculated the corresponding cost of administration of the Department's Animal Welfare, Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme (AWNSS) which includes a high proportion of building works also. This scheme is staffed by one HEO, three EOs and three COs. The total cost of administration (leaving aside inspection) came to €399,204 in 2021. AWNSS delivered public investment of €9.5m in 2021 meaning that the cost of administration excluding inspection ran at just 4%. Even stripping out the additional inspection resource from the Traditional Farm Building calculation, the cost of administration still runs at about 10% of public investment.

Looked at on a per-project basis the cost of administration remains high: in 2021, 73 projects were processed to payment in the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme suggesting an average administrative cost per project of just under €2,000. The equivalent cost under AWNSS, even attributing all administrative costs to paid applications only[1], was just €200.

It is of course a feature of schemes with small budgets that they tend to be less 'efficient' than those administering bigger budgets. One of the big differences here is the 100% inspection regime which is costly but does serves to build a close bond between funder and beneficiary and delivers better guidance on the ground. That said, a more targeted approach, both in terms of beneficiary-need and project-control, would be better.

Detailed Operation of the Scheme

Inviting applications

The GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme opens for a single tranche every year. Typically the scheme opens and closes for applications between February and March every year.[2] The opening of the scheme is announced by the Minister and is accompanied by a quite extensive publicity campaign, including Press Releases, advertisements, social media and direct briefing of interested bodies such as Teagasc, the Agricultural Consultants Association, and local authority Heritage and Conservation Officers. The process itself is highly competitive and this is made clear in the scheme documents: of the 370 or so applications received every year only around 60-70 are typically approved (that figure increasing to c.80 more recently).

The opening of the scheme each year is accompanied by specific scheme documents for that tranche, explaining the purpose of the scheme, who and what is eligible, rates of aid, the assessment process and how/when grants are paid. There are three main documents issued:

- Guidance Note
- Terms and Conditions
- Application Form

[1] The staff resource on AWNSS would not just be processing payments over the course of a normal year.

[2] A very early opening (20 January) was achieved in 2022 but this cannot be taken as typical.

These are well presented, clearly laid-out and informative, with hyperlinks to other sources of information including examples of successful projects. Contact details for the Project Manager, including name, direct email and mobile number, are also provided. The Guidance note also provides excellent information on the scoring matrix to be used for the tranche in question, explaining the criteria and providing helpful advice to applicants on the sort of detail which will help their application. In addition, in 2021 and 2022 The Heritage Council hosted a very useful webinar for people interested in applying for the scheme, explaining the process and responding to questions. Excellent information, including short videos, interviews etc, is also readily and easily accessed on the Heritage Council website.

Screenshot from online webinar organised by The Heritage Council in 2022

For much of the lifetime of the current scheme, the application-process was paper-based. As with the other scheme documents, the application forms have always been clear and easy to follow. Since 2021, all applications are made online and again the process is clear and intuitive.

It is worth noting that the vast majority of successful candidates surveyed[3] for the current review commented very positively on the availability of advice and information provided, with almost 90% saying that finding what they needed was 'not a problem'. Most (55%) took between 1-4 hours to complete the form while another 26% reckoned it took them between 5-8 hours. Only 19% thought the form was complicated.

Interestingly, a much higher percentage of unsuccessful candidates (35%) found the form complicated to complete (even if they spent a very similar amount of time filling it out as the successful candidates). A much higher proportion (45%) also found accessing information either a 'problem' or a 'big problem' – compared to just 10% of successful candidates. This clearly suggests that further assistance during the critical application phase would result in a higher success rate overall.

Processing of Applications

All applications are acknowledged within 10 days of receipt, with an indication of when a final decision will be forthcoming.

The applications are then passed through an initial screening process to check if all required documentation etc has been submitted and that the applications are valid. This work is done by administrative staff within The Heritage Council. The initial screening process is followed by a second screening, carried out by the Project Manager to assess eligibility and overall merit. The projects are next reviewed to determine the necessity for bat and/or bird surveys: this is done by

[3] See Chapter 4 for a full analysis of these surveys

the Wildlife Officer, the Project Manager and an external expert. If a survey is required, the application is noted and a sum of €600 factored into to any possible grant-offer, unless a specific cost has already been supplied as part of the application.

Selection

At this point the applications are ready for selection. This is done by a specially convened panel of assessors made up of the Project Manager, the Wildlife Officer, the Architecture Officer and others. Ranking of projects is done in accordance with the selection criteria set down for the particular tranche in question.

For 2022, five criteria were identified, with a maximum of 20 points available under each. The criteria were:

- Heritage Interest: what's special about the building?
- Public Benefit: how will you deliver this? Visibility? Access? Events?
- Habitat value/potential: what birds or bats use the building? What else have you done on your farm to help biodiversity?
- Climate Change: reuse of old materials is key here, along with the ultimate use the building is put to.
- Best value: a function of the previous four criteria combined with cost.

The minimum qualifying mark is 60 but not everyone achieving this will be grant-aided. The structure is competitive and the highest scoring projects will be supported with the overall cap on numbers generated by the budget available.

Successful candidates are notified that they have been shortlisted and asked to provide the required conservation specification from an accredited or otherwise qualified consultant and any revised costs within 2-3 weeks. Advice on sourcing conservation consultants is provided.[4] Unsuccessful candidates are notified at the same time.

The list of successful candidates, along with proposed grants, is then put forward for approval at the next Heritage Council Board meeting. Protocol requires that any material like this proposed for submission to the Board be circulated two weeks in advance. The prospective list is also notified to the Department. Once approved at Board level the successful candidates are issued a formal grant-offer, based on the conservation specification supplied, with conditions.

On average it takes about 12 weeks from the closing date for applications to process all applications through the system and issue a formal grant-offer to applicants.

Appeal Process

The rejection letters that issue to unsuccessful candidate explain the reason

[4] Links are provided to the Royal Society of Architects in Ireland, the Irish Georgian Society, the Society of Chartered Surveyors and Engineers Ireland, along with bodies such as the Building Limes Forum, ICOMOS Ireland, Earth Building UK-Irl, and SPAB Ireland.

why the application failed and provide the scores achieved on the various selection criteria. The applicant is invited to put any queries in writing to the Heritage Council either by email or post. In accordance with the Terms and Conditions of the scheme, the decision itself is deemed to be final but if the applicant remains unhappy notwithstanding any further clarifications he or she has the right by virtue of the Agriculture Appeals Act, 2001 to appeal the decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office. This is a separate process to the Heritage Council one. The appeal must be made, in writing, within three months of the date of the decision. The appeal must include the facts and contentions upon which the applicant intends to rely together with such documentary evidence that the applicant wishes to submit in support of his/her appeal. In the event of any oral hearing an officer of the Heritage Council may attend with an officer of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Commencement and Inspection Regime

Successful candidates are generally given three weeks to accept their offers. In the meantime, a webinar or in-person workshop, is organised to explain to all candidates what is expected of them, where to find necessary expertise, the pitfalls to be aware of, and generally answer any questions they may have. If a wildlife survey is required, the importance of getting this done quickly is stressed along with advice on where to find a wildlife consultant if the candidate has not already sourced one.

Once the candidate has accepted the grant-offer a first site-inspection is arranged. These inspections are shared between the Project Manager and the Heritage Council Wildlife and Architecture Officers. In 2022 members of the Conservation Panel were also drafted in to help with these initial inspections. The successful candidates cannot begin any work until these inspections have been carried out and the results of any wildlife inspections received.

Further inspection on about half of the projects takes place mid-term and then all projects are inspected once again upon completion. Before that final inspection, a checklist is sent to the beneficiary for submission of required documents including final report, receipts for expenditure and own-labour timesheets (if being claimed). A Tax Clearance Cert must also be provided at this stage, if expenditure exceeds the required threshold. If everything is in order, the final inspection is arranged. That inspection checks whether the works have been carried out as agreed, provides an opportunity to rectify if possible and applies a penalty if not. If the works are found to be substantially non-compliant and are not capable of being corrected (or the applicant is not prepared to do so), the grant cannot be certified for payment and the applicant is so informed.

Payment

Once everything is in order, the rate of aid is calculated and the grant amounts cross-checked by the Heritage Council Grants Officer. Each project is certified on-line as it is cleared and this information is picked up by the Department who generates the payment instruction. This remains a manual system

at the Department end (what is referred to as the 'F4B' system, meaning that a physical form has to be filled out and sent for payment. The vast majority of projects start to be sent to the Department for payment from mid-November on and the fact that the payment process remains a manual one adds considerably to the workload and to the challenge of getting payments made before end-of-year. Despite that, it is the case that almost all are successfully processed for payment before the year is out.

Timelines

Under the current system, the best timeline which can be achieved from scheme-opening to commencement of works is as follows:

Scheme opens	End-January
Scheme closes	End-February
First Screening	March
Second Screening	March
Panel Assessment	End-March
Issue of Decisions	End-March
Board Approval	End-May
Formal Grant-offer	End-May
First Inspections	June/July
Approval to Commence	End-July

The above timeline was achieved in 2022 but it is challenging to say the least. The ability to open the scheme depends on confirmation from the Department that funding is available and in what amount. If that is delayed, the whole process is delayed. The speed with which first and second screenings took place in 2022, swiftly followed by panel assessment – all within a single month - cannot be taken as a given either.

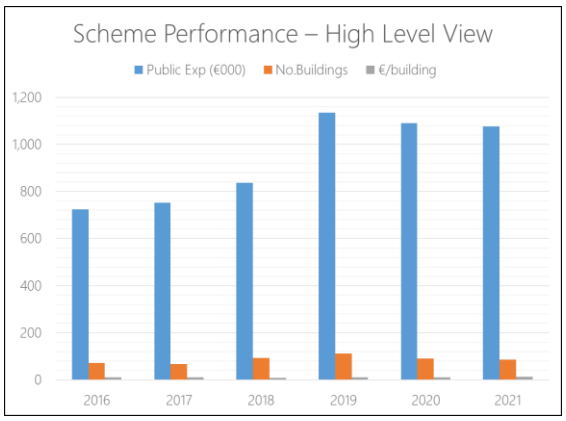
Overall then, under optimal conditions, it will take a minimum of 12 weeks from closing date for applications to issue of full grant-offers and another 4-8 weeks until approval to commence issues for most projects.

Once commenced there is no 'standard' timeline, as so much depends on the nature of the works, availability of tradespeople, whether a wildlife survey is required and the farmer's own timeline. However, all works must be finished by end-October and in practice this can cause serious difficulties where bats and birds are found on site as these cannot be disturbed earlier in the year. In fact, in our survey (see Chapter 4) over half of successful projects said that completing work by the deadline was either a 'problem' or a 'big problem', while 36% of projects which did not proceed (even though approved), said the timeline was their problem.

PERFORMANCE

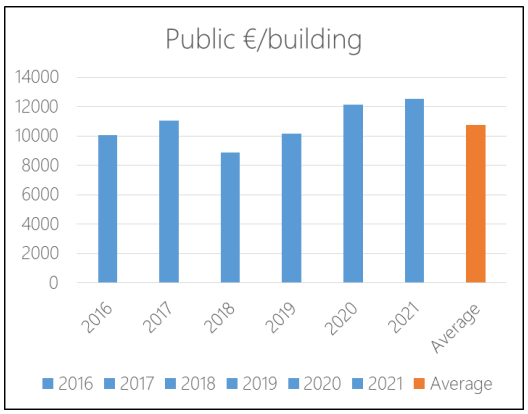
The chart below provides a high-level view of scheme performance since its inception in 2016. For the first three years expenditure fell short of projections, which was due to an understandable concern to avoid over-committing expenditure against budget, but as some projects always fall out this meant that expenditure always fell short of projections. The approach was adjusted from 2019 on to permit limited over-commitment on approvals (roughly 10%) which had the effect of counteracting de-commitments by approved beneficiaries. The impact is clearly discernible below.

Fig. 3.3 Scheme Performance – High Level View



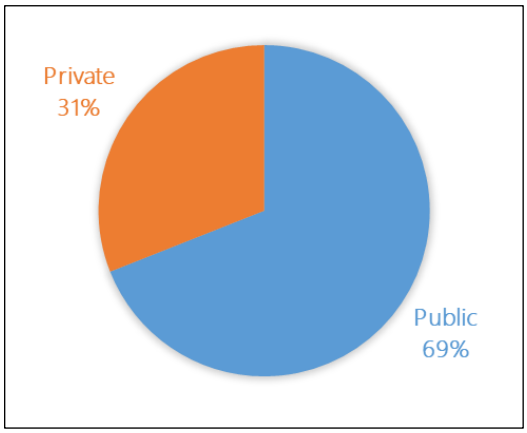
As regards the public investment per building, this (with the exception of 2018) has remained reasonably stable at between €10,000 and €12,000 since the scheme commenced.

Fig. 3.4 Scheme Performance – Public €/Building



The main increase was over the last two years (2020 and 2021) - not surprising given the general increase in construction costs. All in all, however, there has been very good control of the capital cost to the state.

Fig. 3.5 Scheme Performance – Investment Share



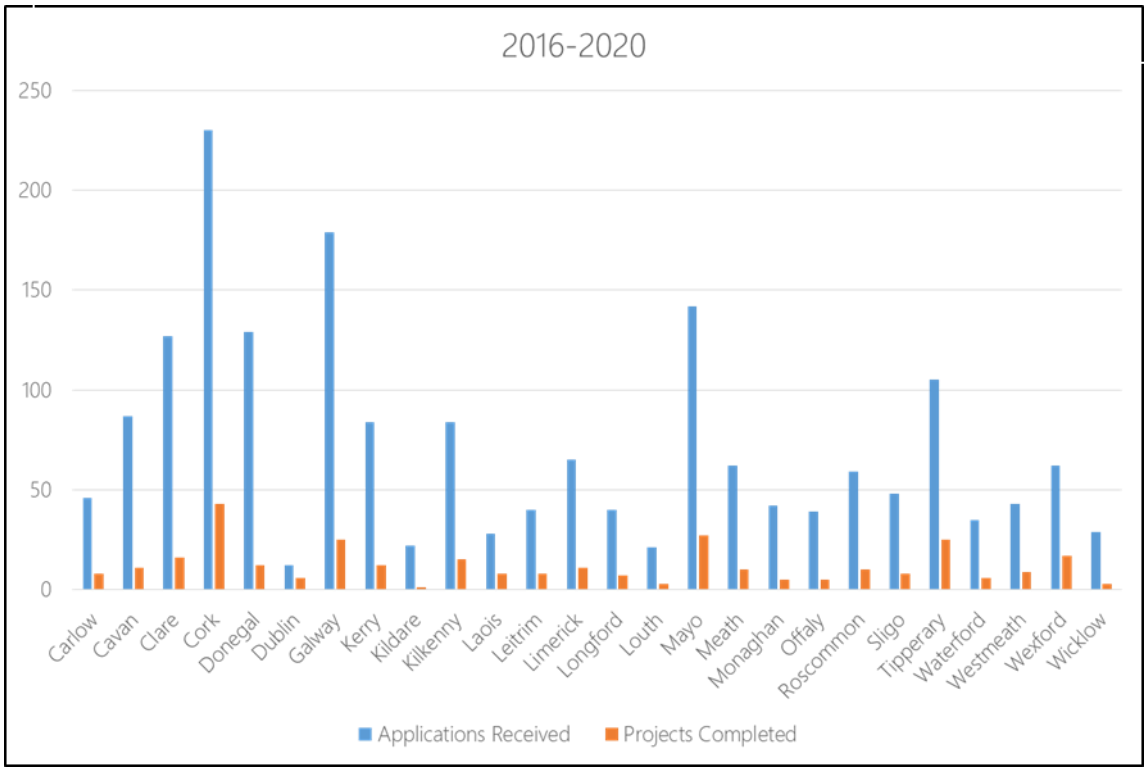
When we turn to look at how overall costs are distributed between state and beneficiary we can see that while the maximum rate of aid is set at 75%, in reality the breakdown averages out more like 70:30. The breakdown shows movement over time: in 2016 about 60% of all grants were at the 75% rate whereas no project received this rate of aid in 2021.

Turning to look at the success rate of applications, we can see that on average only 10-20% of applications are approved for grant-aid. This is a competitive process but the rate of success is a matter for concern and at the broader level could be seen as inefficient having regard to the effort invested by the applicants, the vast majority of whom will not receive support. That said, the rate of success is also governed by the budget available and since 2019 this has been fully utilised. The only way therefore of improving the success rate is either to increase the budget or control the number of applications – or a combination of both.

The chart below presents the data for conversion of applications into completed projects on the ground on a county-by-county basis. The first thing that jumps out is just how many applications fail to secure aid. The next thing is the distribution of applications: unsurprisingly, the largest numbers come from the biggest counties but the distribution is also noticeably skewed towards the western half of the country.

Some counties also produce 'better' applications than others. Again, a glance at the two maps makes this clear. While there is a general correspondence between the areas with most application and the areas with most grant-aided projects, there is some variation as well with Tipperary, Kilkenny and Wexford performing proportionately better.

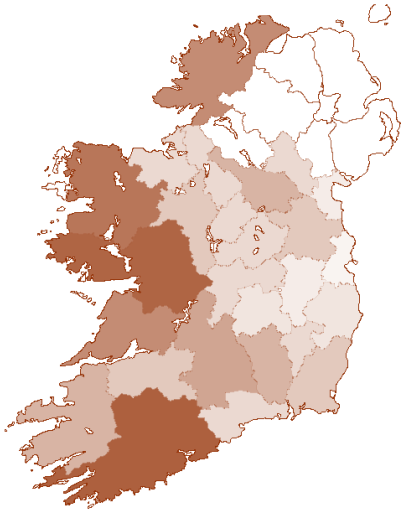
Fig. 3.6 Scheme Performance: 2016-2020



This is easier to see in the maps and at one level clearly represents the distribution of GLAS farms. However, it is not quite as a simple as that because counties such as Roscommon and Kerry, which would be strong GLAS counties, are under-represented in terms of applications. Nor is this simply a matter of size: Kerry has a landmass equivalent to 64% of its neighbour Cork's, but generates only 37% of Cork's applications.

In fact, the success rates for Tipperary and Wexford at 24% and 27% respectively are amongst the very highest in the country. Laois also performs extremely well with a success rate of almost 29% for its applications.

Fig. 3.7 Applications 2016-20



Applications 2016-2020

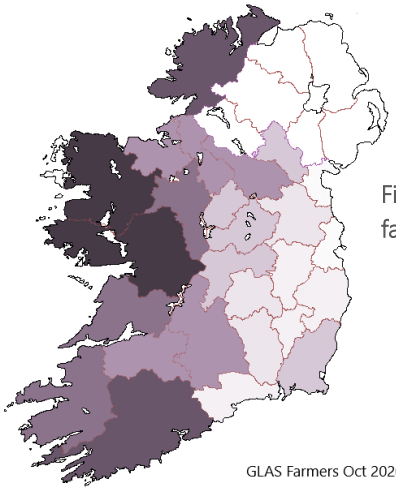


Fig. 3.8 GLAS farmers 2020

GLAS Farmers Oct 2020

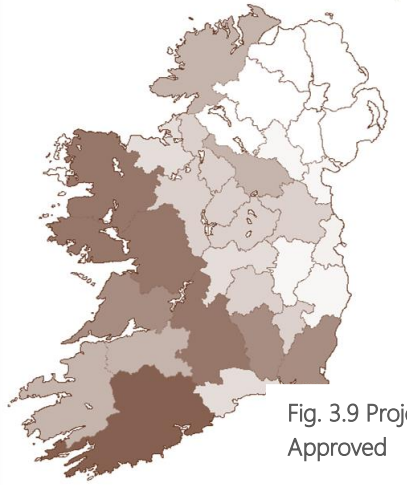
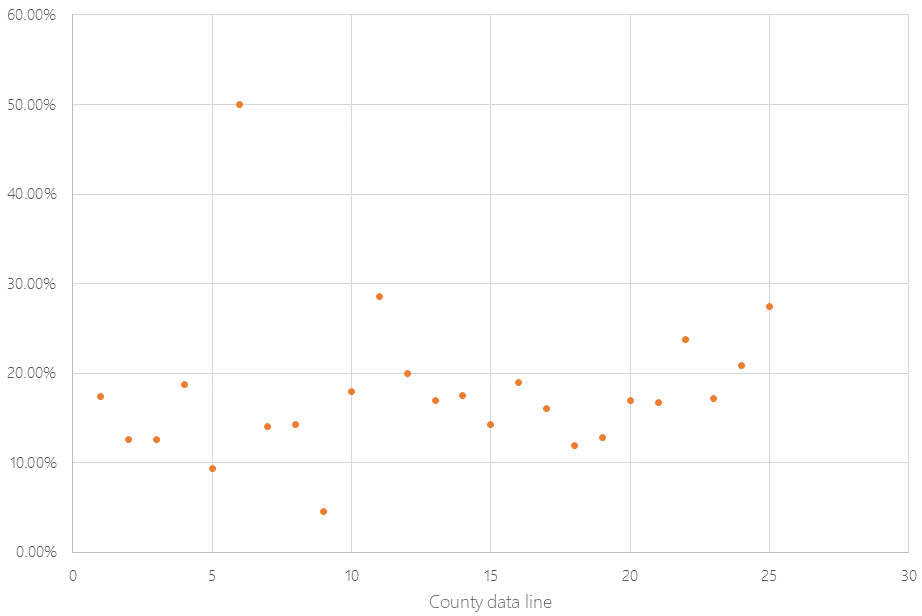


Fig. 3.9 Projects Approved

Projects approved and completed 2016-2020

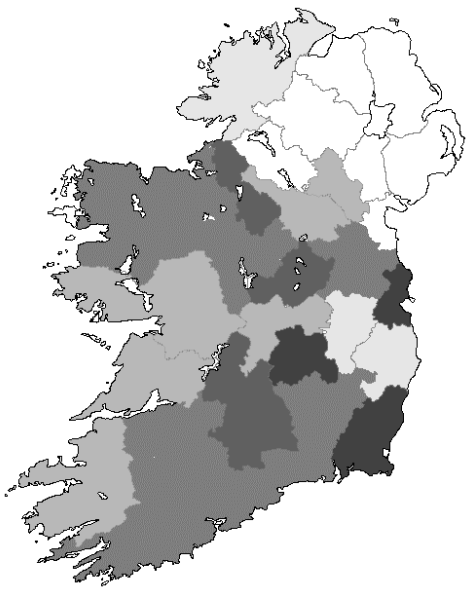
Fig. 3.10 Success Rates 2016-2020



County	Success Rate
Carlow	17.4%
Cavan	12.6%
Clare	12.6%
Cork	18.7%
Donegal	9.3%
Dublin	50%
Galway	14%
Kerry	14.3%
Kildare	4.5%
Kilkenny	17.9%
Laois	28.6%
Leitrim	20%
Limerick	16.9%
Longford	17.5%
Louth	14.3%
Mayo	19%
Meath	16.1%
Monaghan	11.9%
Offaly	12.8%
Roscommon	16.9%
Sligo	16.7%
Tipperary	23.8%
Waterford	17.14%
Westmeath	20.9%
Wexford	27.4%
Wicklow	10.3%

That said, success-rates have been reasonably stable over the period of the scheme, grouping very much in a band of between 10-20% of applications received for almost all counties. This is good to see and speaks to a balanced application of the assessment and selection process. However, it would still be worth investigating why some counties, like Tipperary, Wexford and Laois perform so strongly. The map below shows success rates for all counties taken as a percentage of their applications, with the darkest colours representing the highest rates – in excess of 25%.[5]

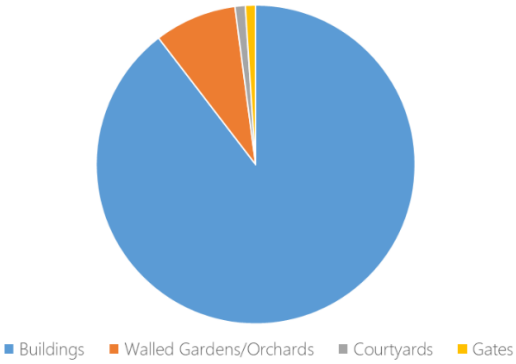
Fig. 3.11 Success Rates by County



Success rates for applications – darker colours indicate counties with highest levels of success

Turning to look at the types of work undertaken, the vast majority (90%) are always works to farm buildings.

Fig. 3.12 Breakdown of Capital Works Undertaken: 2021



The pie-chart here shows the position for 2021 but this can be taken as typical for the scheme as a whole. Again, it indicates that the focus of the scheme remain firmly fixed on what might be regarded its 'core-business', i.e. the repair of traditional farm-buildings and their return to functional use on the farm. Broadening the scope to include other features of the traditional farmyard such as gates, courtyards and walled gardens has not diluted that focus while ensuring that these other valuable features can be accommodated. This is an important consideration looking forward, when thought is being given to further expansion of the scope of this scheme. It can be done without compromising its core-business.

The application of penalties is rare in the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme – just one case is recorded for 2017, six for 2020 and seven for 2021. The cases penalised included use of inappropriate materials (four instances), undue care of the historic fabric (one instance), and an excessive claim for own labour (one instance). As

[5] NB – Dublin's position is an anomaly. Its success rate is 50% but only two projects were submitted.

already noted, however, 2021 was an anomaly in this regard. The extremely low rate of penalties in general, which is either zero or just 1-2% (8% in 2021) contrasts strongly with the position for other similar DAFM schemes such as Animal Welfare, Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme (largely farm buildings) where the penalty rate is about 18%, taken as a percentage of applications. The very low rate of penalty on Traditional Farm Building projects is probably attributable to the fact that a detailed specification is agreed in advance and the whole project is overseen by a qualified conservation consultant. The fact that each project is inspected at least twice is also undoubtedly a significant factor.

Some projects which are approved for grant-aid never proceed. Sometimes this is because the applicant never responds but in more recent years increasing costs, lack of funds, and inability to secure a builder have started to feature more significantly. Data is incomplete but percentage of projects approved which did not proceed seems to have risen from about 7% in 2017 to as high as 19% in 2021.

In the survey undertaken as part of this study (see Chapter 4) candidates who had been approved for grant-aid but did not proceed were asked why they had taken that decision. The results were very informative: 21% could not find the required matching funds, 36% knew they couldn't complete the project within the required timescale while 29% were unable to secure an appropriate builder and 7% couldn't find the right conservation consultant.

The policy of over-committing which was introduced in 2019 means that the impact of drop-outs has not materially affected overall projections. Nonetheless, the increasing number of cases not proceeding and the fact that such a significant proportion (29% in 2021) were due to inability to source a contractor is a matter of real concern.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Our review of the programme mechanics is positive but with room for improvement, especially in relation to administrative cost.

While the process is quite complex at times (in terms of what happens 'behind the scenes') the user-interface for applicants is clear and relatively uncomplicated. The Forms and Guidance notes are clear and helpful, the online information and videos are excellent and the new online application system is easy to navigate. This is not in any way to underestimate what is required of the applicant – this is not a 'tick the box' exercise and nor could it ever be. Because it is a competitive process it is up to the applicant to present the strongest case for his or her project and this can be challenging. However, what is required of the applicant is clearly set out and the range of supports provided is impressive by any standard.

This assessment is borne out by the feedback received from respondents to our survey where 90% of successful candidates reported that finding the information and guidance they needed

was 'not a problem' and while 47% found the form time-consuming to complete, only 19% regarded it as complicated.

Another welcome feature of the scheme is that there is no initial cost to the applicant: the requirement to engage a conservation consultant only kicks-in when a project has been shortlisted and is effectively now in the pipeline for support.

The other thing we would draw attention to is the relative efficiency of the scheme, again having regard to the fact that it is a competitive process requiring assessment not just of eligibility but also of relative quality of each proposal. The fact that this process, involving two separate screening operations followed by qualitative assessment by committee, was completed in a single month in 2022 is quite remarkable.

This efficiency continues into the operational stage as well and it is notable that although the timeframe is so restricted, particularly where wildlife surveys are required, the scheme delivers completed projects every year. Payment is similarly efficient and an excellent operational relationship between the two partners (Heritage Council and Department) is evident.

However, our review also points to areas which might be improved. While to our eyes and those of the many successful candidates, the application process appears clear and well-guided, that view is not shared by a substantial minority of other candidates, including unsuccessful ones. About 45% of these said they found it difficult to source the information they needed as compared to just 10% of successful candidates – over four times as many in other words. About 35% said they found the form 'complicated', while just 19% of successful candidates share this view. This is a function of a competitive system and unfortunately some people will always be better at filling out forms than others. However, the issue here is that excellent projects may never receive the grant-aid they need simply because their owners were unable to make their case as well as others.

Another very obvious challenge are the 'pinch-points' that appear in the system, notably towards the end of the year when so much work is concentrated both on completing projects on the ground to meet the end October deadline, then for inspections, and then for payments by end-of-year. This was a problem for over half of the approved projects and the single biggest factor for approved projects not going ahead.

The scheme is also quite admin-heavy. This may seem a contradiction in terms given that it only has one fulltime member of staff, but the assessment process for approvals which includes two separate screenings followed by individual assessment by a selection committee means that, under the best scenario, it will take between 16-20 weeks to move a project from application to approval-to-commence. For a scheme that operates on an annual basis this is a lot. Initial screening could be largely removed by automating eligibility controls within the online application system. The role of the Heritage Council Board in formally

approving all projects and/or the manner in which it does so could be reviewed.

In addition, the actual cost of administering the Scheme, whether taken as a percentage of the public investment delivered or on a per-project basis, is quite high. This is attributable to the 1:1 attention Scheme-clients receive plus a 100% ex-ante and ex-post inspection regime. There is no doubt that this has resulted in high quality projects, high-turnaround, high levels of client satisfaction and low levels of penalty. The question is whether this model is sustainable into the future, especially if the Scheme is to expand.

The selection criteria used at assessment stage are all valid, relevant and clearly described. The process is transparent and makes it easy for applicants to see what is required of them and, if unsuccessful, where they fell down. However, whether each should score exactly the same is another matter: in a tender process, which is not dissimilar to the process here, it would be normal to differentiate between the various criteria weighting the most important accordingly. There is clearly an opportunity to do this here, and the weighting could be varied from tranche to tranche to target particular types of project. In fact, the possibility for doing just this is explicitly noted in the scheme documents but to our knowledge has never been employed. Different criteria could also apply from year to year, again to better target investment. The application of these criteria is a powerful selection tool and very welcome to see.

The selection process is balanced in terms of geographical spread with success rates for most counties very similar and falling within the 10-20% band. However, the recruitment of applications is not quite so balanced. An east-west divide is clearly evident with nearly 70% of applications coming from counties west of a line drawn from Donegal to Cork.[6] This clearly reflects the distribution of GLAS farmers as well but even within that distribution some counties appear more active than others and disproportionately so (eg Cork vs Kerry) while other counties (Wexford, Tipperary and Laois) seem to produce higher-quality applications. Both deserve further investigation.

In terms of scope, the evidence shows that the vast majority of the investment has been on buildings – and rightly so, given this is the focus of the scheme. The inclusion of other farmyard features as eligible investment items has not detracted from this primary focus. This is good to see and augurs well for any further broadening of the scope in future: this can clearly be done without endangering the primary objective of the scheme.

Some thought could be given to establishing and maintaining a register of consultants (both conservation and wildlife specialists). It is appreciated that good reference sites are provided but a one-stop-shop would be much more user-friendly. Our survey (discussed in

[6] Cork, Clare, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim, Limerick, Longford, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo Tipperary.

detail in Chapter 4) revealed that finding the right conservation or wildlife consultant was either a problem or a big problem for a significant minority of successful candidates (20%+) while it actually prevented 7% of approved projects from proceeding at all. DAFM operates such a system for accredited Farm Advisors and this may provide a useful model.[7]

On cost, we note that while the overall public investment per building has fluctuated slightly over the lifetime of the scheme, it has remained broadly within a band of about €10-12,000 for the whole period. However, even though the capacity is there to grant-aid to a maximum of 75%, in reality the breakdown is more 70:30. The actual rate of aid has fallen in recent years and as costs have increased it seems to be the farmer who has ended up meeting the balance. The answer is either to support less projects, which would be a retrograde step, or to apply more resources to the scheme.

The 100% inspection regime applying to all projects at commencement and completion, with perhaps half receiving an interim inspection as well, is arguably too heavy and could be pared back. If it is not, it will pose a mammoth obstacle to expanding the scheme in future. 100% inspections have been dropped in comparable DAFM schemes (TAMS II) in favour of on-the-spot checks on a sample of projects only, generated by risk-assessment and pre-payment desk checks. The decision to abandon 100% checks for the TAMS II suite of farm schemes was taken having noted that the rate of non-completion of TAMS 1 schemes during the 2007-20013 programme was just 0.034%. While it is appreciated that in the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme this 100% inspection regime also serves to build a close bond between funder and beneficiary, providing direct guidance on the ground, this may be a luxury the scheme cannot afford. A more targeted approach, both in terms of beneficiary-need and project-control, would be better.

Rates of penalty applied are impressively low – just 8% at most taken as a proportion of projects and in some years zero - compared to an average of 18% on DAFM's Animal Welfare and Nutrient Storage Scheme which is very largely based around building work too. While the intensive inspection regime undoubtedly contributes, the very low rate of penalty also speaks to an excellent working relationship between scheme management, farmers and their advisers. The preparation of a detailed conservation specification before works begin, the fact that all projects are overseen by conservation professionals and the clear commitment of the farmers themselves, are key factors in delivering quality projects on the ground. All of these factors lead us to believe that the 100% before-and-after inspections could be significantly pared back without impairing quality in the vast majority of cases.

[7] See https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b41a6-farm-advisory-system.

The fact that the payment process at the Department end remains a manual one makes for a less efficient system overall. If that could be automated in line with other Department schemes that would significantly reduce the impact on staff in the section there.

On a related point, but at a higher level, we also feel that the Memorandum of Understanding needs to be revisited: as things stand, the working–relationship at operational level is excellent but there is no provision for communication at policy level at all. A short annual meeting, at senior level (CEO/ASG/Principal Officer) would be valuable to review progress and exchange information and ideas. The question of data-sharing between the two organisations also needs to be reviewed.

Finally, one issue we are quite concerned about is the question of support for the Programme Manager, corporate memory and succession planning. At the moment too much is vested in one person.

Chapter 4

Consultations

A series of consultations were designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the Traditional Farm Building Scheme. These included:

- Stakeholder Consults
- Farm Surveys
- Focus Groups

These were conducted in sequence with the stakeholder consults first, followed by the farm surveys and finally the focus groups. Each layer of consultation was analysed prior to completing the next stage. This enabled the findings from each consultation process to inform the design of the next phase.

This section of the report will consider the key findings that emerged from each of these consultations in turn.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTS

A series of stakeholder consultations were designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the Traditional Farm Building Scheme. This included a series of interviews with DAFM and the Heritage Council.

DAFM Feedback

While the scheme is small and definitely peripheral to DAFM's main focus of work, it is seen as making a genuine contribution across a wide range of areas and is regarded as a valuable and positive component of the packages of measures available to farmers.

DAFM's main role from an operational perspective is around publicity, handling some public enquiries, observing application assessments, and making the payments to the beneficiaries.

A number of key elements within the scheme are working well including:

Efficient: The programme is relatively uncomplicated and is delivered efficiently by the Heritage Council although it would benefit from additional staff resources, particularly at certain high intensity periods of the grant process.

Collaboration: There is an excellent working relationship between the Heritage Council and DAFM.

Impact: This programme delivers a significant positive impact on farms and our rural landscape and achieves this with a small budget.

Innovative: The administration of the programme has transitioned from paper-based to on-line in 2021 and this has worked well. There is scope to further extend IT innovations through introducing automated payment systems. In addition, the procedure of approving projects to utilise its full budget allocation was adjusted to ensure that full expenditure of the scheme was completed.

However, it was recognised that a number of improvements could be introduced in future schemes. These include:

Timescales: There is a pinch point between the approval to commence and the completion of work. This 'short

window' - often just 3-4 months - can be further restricted by the requirement to have wildlife surveys completed on farms, prior to the commencement of any works.

High Screening Failure: When applications are initially received, they are screened to ensure all information has been submitted and they are eligible applications. However, it was recognised that there is a high failure rate at this stage, largely as a result of people not providing all of the information that is required.

The scheme could reduce this problem by introducing a mandatory input function into the IT system so that the farmer has to submit all of the required information.

Publicity: DAFM would like to see better use made of the 'good news' potential of the TFB Scheme which offers attractive stories and imagery.

Budget: The scope of this programme could be expanded with an increased budget. This would also address the increase in building costs which has incurred recently.

Broader Scope: DAFM suggest the definition of traditional farm buildings could be broadened as a lot of our old Hay barns and byres would benefit from being maintained. In addition, as farms are becoming larger the older farmyard since the 1970s and 80's are falling into disrepair and would benefit from being included in this scheme.

CAP Programme

The Traditional Farm Building Scheme is under the CAP programme which is formally closing at the end of 2022.

However, the scheme can roll-over in its existing form for another three years under the N+3 rule, provided all works are finished and paid by the end of 2025. If this option is pursued, then it will need to be brought quickly to the Minister for approval.

There are other options available for the scheme post 2022. These include:

GLAS: This scheme could be continued in 2023 under GLAS, within the EU RDP. However, the Indecon review in 2019 recommended that the new RDP measures focus on the delivery of the 'big' schemes, thereby leaving smaller schemes like the Traditional Farm Building Scheme outside that process and funded nationally instead. This has the advantage of giving the scheme more flexibility to adapt to its 'market' from year to year. Nevertheless, it was deemed important to demonstrate a shared portfolio of principles between nationally-funded projects and the RDP funded ones.

In addition, it was recognised that linking the Traditional Farm Building Scheme to GLAS has resulted in some farmers being excluded and the DAFM identified this as one of the main areas of complaints from farmers. However, it was felt important to maintain some link to both the active farming community and also those who are demonstrating an environmental commitment. This could be achieved through aligning the scheme to farmers participating in the new EU 'Eco Scheme', which could potentially include virtually every farmer (depending on take-up).

This would address the issue of non-GLAS farmers being excluded from support, even though they have buildings that

merit repair. However, it was acknowledged that if there is a wider applicant pool then a substantial increase in funding for the scheme would be required because otherwise the application failure rate would be too high.

To address this issue, the concept of 'themed tranches' or funding calls was discussed. This would control expectations and application numbers from year to year, while still ensuring the wider scope of potential applicants, which is desirable.

Heritage Council Feedback

This scheme is extremely important to the Heritage Council and it is one of their most valued and practical interventions. It is the only scheme exclusively targeted at private landowners with generally unprotected structures. It is also really important for the Irish landscape and supports stewardship and custodianship.

The Heritage Council is the administrator of this scheme and they have an excellent working relationship with the DAFM.

Positive elements of the scheme include the following features:

In-kind Labour: This is a very worthwhile element of the scheme and should be continued and further enhanced as it encourages custodianship and traditional building skills development. It also reduces the burden of matching funds / loans for the farmer.

Revised costings: Once applicants are approved they are allowed to resubmit revised costings which is a very beneficial and flexible element to this scheme.

Communication: A considerable amount of time is undertaken answering queries by telephone which can be time consuming but it helps to ensure that the query is effectively answered and this is a valuable dimension to the scheme.

Inspections: These are undertaken ex-ante and ex-post and are deemed critical to ensure works aren't completed prior to date. They also provide an invaluable opportunity to examine the completed work and to ensure that a high standard is maintained.

Collaboration: The Heritage Council administer this grant programme in collaboration with DAFM and a panel of assessors. This process works very efficiently and is continually innovating based on emerging technology and new situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is also very beneficial to have the payments processed by DAFM and they value the link with them as it brings the Heritage Council into contact with farmers, which they would otherwise not have.

The scheme is working very well from the Heritage Council's perspective but they recognise there are opportunities for further enhancement. These include:

Application Process: Many applications fail at screening, often because the farmer has neglected to include all the documents, photos or supporting information. There is scope to amend the online application process so that it can be guaranteed all the documents are correctly uploaded.

Decommitments: A small but significant number of farmers approved for grant-

aid do not take up the offer. This is often because of difficulties meeting the contract deadline or the budget. If there was an opportunity to extend the project deadline this would significantly reduce the number of decommitments. (*This is also explored in the Farm Survey returns).*

Consultant Register: This doesn't currently exist but it would be a very welcome development if the right model could be established.

Publicity: Examples of projects completed under the Traditional Farm Building Scheme are included in the annual Heritage Council report. However, it was acknowledged that there is huge scope to further extend the publicity of this scheme through additional promotion of completed projects and the farmers who participated in this work. This would help to raise the profile of the scheme.

Scheme Restrictions: The current grant programme is limited to farmers in GLAS and this skews the impact of the scheme both geographically and demographically. This effects the types of vernacular buildings which are eligible and results in some valuable buildings not being protected. The Heritage Council would also like to see a wider range of buildings and newer ones being eligible for support, for example: hay barns, limekilns, post 1960s milking parlours.

Budget: The Heritage Council have identified huge merit in expanding the scheme, particularly in terms of the number of applicants, the range of interventions that are eligible, and the overall budget. This is especially important because of the significant rise in inflation and the increasing cost of materials and labour. However, if the budget and remit were expanded there would be a need to increase the resources within the Heritage Council.

Programme Timescales: Extending the time period to 18 months for the completion of projects would greatly aid farmers and ensure that high quality works are undertaken in compliance with all wildlife surveys and regulations. There is also the potential to offer the scheme on a multi-annual basis.

Governance: The collaboration with the DAFM is very beneficial and the Memorandum of Understanding: (MOU) should be redrafted for the new scheme and a meeting schedule agreed. This would include at least two high level meetings annually which reviews KPIs, PR and the overall effectiveness of the scheme.

EU - Rural Development Programme: There are some concerns about this scheme being removed from the RDP, however it was acknowledged that there could be advantages to becoming wholly exchequer funded as it would enable greater flexibility in scheme design, easier to amend design, no compulsory links with other RDP schemes, possibly easier to manage on a multi-annual basis thereby giving a bigger time period for construction.

Impacts

- Increases traditional building skills of farming community.
- Creates positive links between the farming community and Heritage Council.

- Opens eyes of farmers to potential of their older buildings and builds links with conservation specialists and traditional craftworkers.
- Raises awareness and pride of place.

Image by Avondhu Blackwater Partnership

FARM SURVEYS

Two different farm surveys were designed to capture the views of both the approved and non-successful farm applicants under the Traditional Farm Building Scheme. This ensured that the views of the beneficiaries and rejected applicants could be accurately captured.

The farm surveys were designed after the stakeholder consultations had been completed and the programme mechanics and statistics had been analysed. This enabled the key issues within the scheme to be included in the survey so that a deeper understanding from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective could be obtained.

Methodology

Several iterations of both farm surveys were undertaken to accommodate input from stakeholders on the survey design.

The farm survey for approved applicants was then piloted with two farmers and further revisions were undertaken to ensure the survey best captured the issues we wanted to examine.

In advance of the dissemination of the farm survey all applicants were contacted by the DAFM to inform farmers they would be receiving texts from them with a link that was safe to open. This advance notification of the survey provided excellent publicity for this research and it also reassured the farmers that this was not a scam.

The farm surveys were administered with a cover letter via email from the Heritage Council to each farm applicant and they were given an online link which enabled them to complete the survey on a PC or the phone. Paper copies via the postal service were also available on request.

After the Heritage Council had circulated the surveys to all farm beneficiaries a series of text reminders were issued to the farmers by DAFM to ensure the response rate was optimised. This also included the link to the survey for ease of completion.

A copy of the farm surveys and the cover letters are included in appendices 2 and 3.

Response Rates

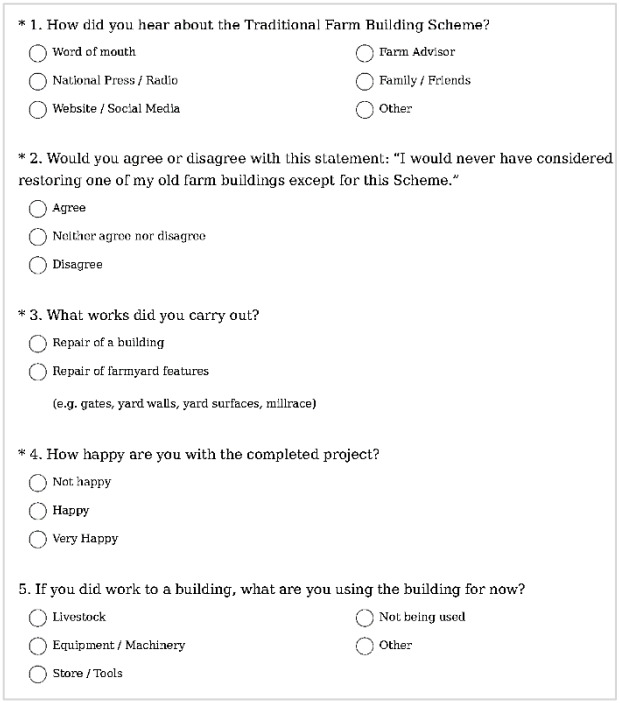
All approved farm applicants from the years 2016 - 2021 were given the opportunity to complete the survey.

257 farm surveys returned by successful applicants – a response rate of 66%.

A survey was also circulated to the unsuccessful farm applicants in 2021 and 99 responses were received out of a total of 291 unsuccessful applicants circulated, a return rate of 34% - lower than for the successful applicants but still a viable return.

99 farm surveys returned by unsuccessful applicants from the 2021 tranche – a response rate of 34 %.

Fig. 4.1 Sample page from online survey



* 1. How did you hear about the Traditional Farm Building Scheme?

- ◯ Word of mouth
- ◯ Farm Advisor
- ◯ National Press / Radio
- ◯ Family / Friends
- ◯ Website / Social Media
- ◯ Other

* 2. Would you agree or disagree with this statement: "I would never have considered restoring one of my old farm buildings except for this Scheme."

- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree

* 3. What works did you carry out?

- ◯ Repair of a building
- ◯ Repair of farmyard features

(e.g. gates, yard walls, yard surfaces, millrace)

* 4. How happy are you with the completed project?

- ◯ Not happy
- ◯ Happy
- ◯ Very Happy

5. If you did work to a building, what are you using the building for now?

- ◯ Livestock
- ◯ Not being used
- ◯ Equipment / Machinery
- ◯ Other
- ◯ Store / Tools

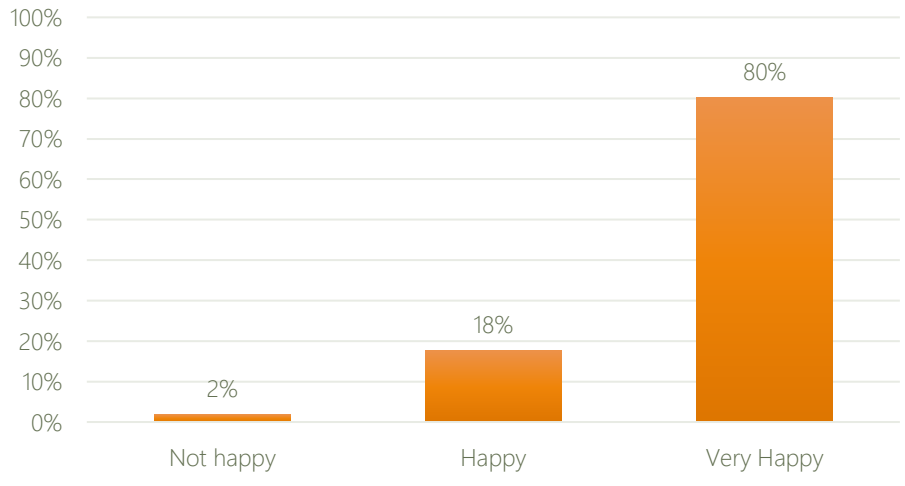
Key Findings: Approved Farmers

- 98% of farmers were either '*very happy*' or '*happy*' with their completed project.

64% of farmers "would never have considered restoring one of my old farm buildings except for this scheme"

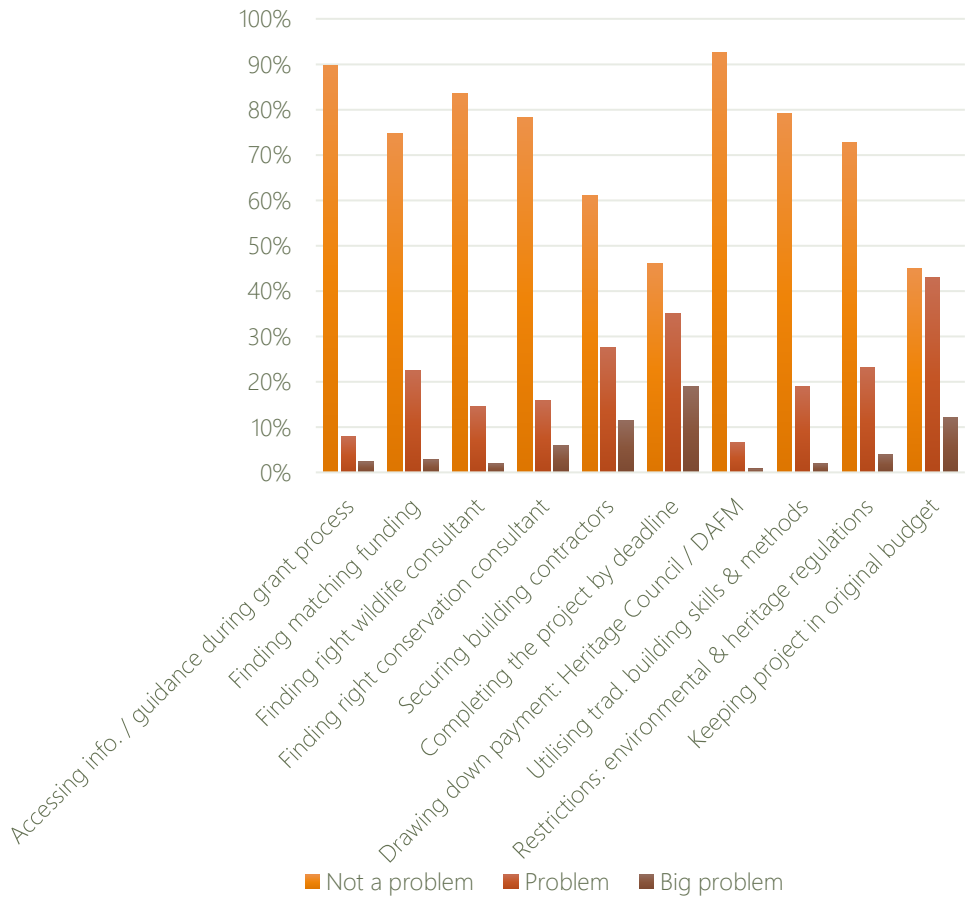
- 54% of farmers either completely or partly undertook the building works themselves.
- 53% of farmers have carried out additional building repairs or conservation works after completing the Traditional Farm Building Scheme.
- The vast majority of farmers repaired a building, with only 7% repairing features such as gates, yard walls or millraces.
- The majority of the repaired buildings are now utilised as a '*store / tools*' (57%) with a further 26% using them for '*livestock*'.
- 82% of farmers used their own funds and 18% accessed a loan to provide the matching funds.
- Over 50% of farmers heard about the scheme through the national press or radio, by far the most important mechanism for promoting the scheme to farmers.

Fig. 4.2 Survey Result: How happy are you with the completed project?



- Farmers found the application form relatively easy to complete with only 19% indicating it was complicated. However, 47% stated it was time consuming and 45% of respondents indicated that it took longer than 4 hours to complete the form.
- 93% would recommend the scheme to another farmer.
- Farmers were asked their views on a range of elements within the Traditional Farm Grant Scheme. The graph below illustrates that the three biggest issues were: completing the project within the contract deadline, keeping the project in budget and securing building contractors.
- However, 76% of farmers indicated they would apply again which strongly indicates the issues such as project deadlines, tight budgets and accessing building contractors weren't insurmountable. That said, 40% of farmers stated they would like to see changes to the grant scheme.

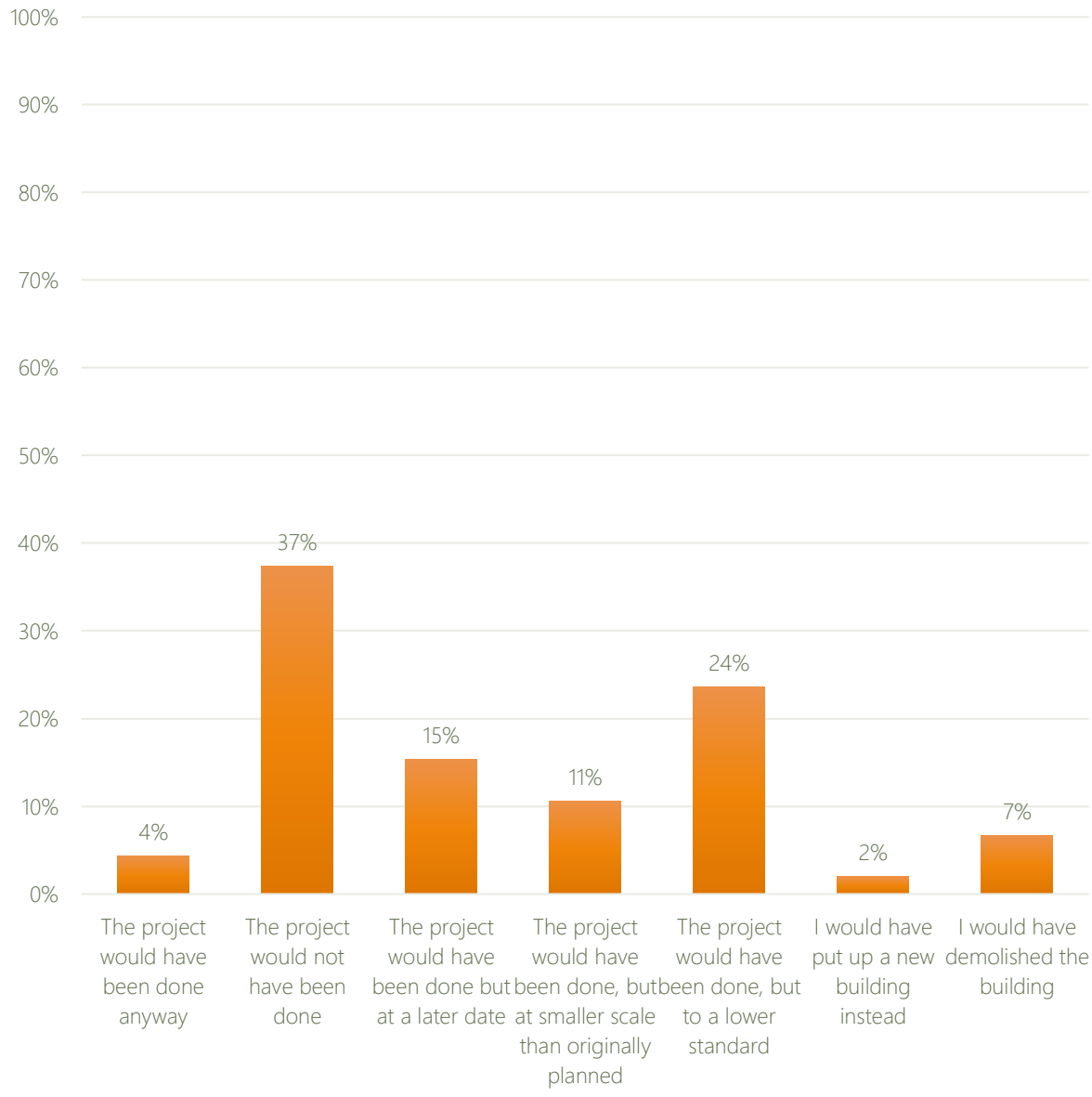
Fig. 4.3 Survey Result: How did you find the following?



- The graph below illustrates what would have happened if the farmer hadn't secured a grant. 37% state that the project would not have been completed and a further 7% state that the building would have been demolished. This demonstrates the significance of this scheme for ensuring traditional farm features are maintained in the countryside.

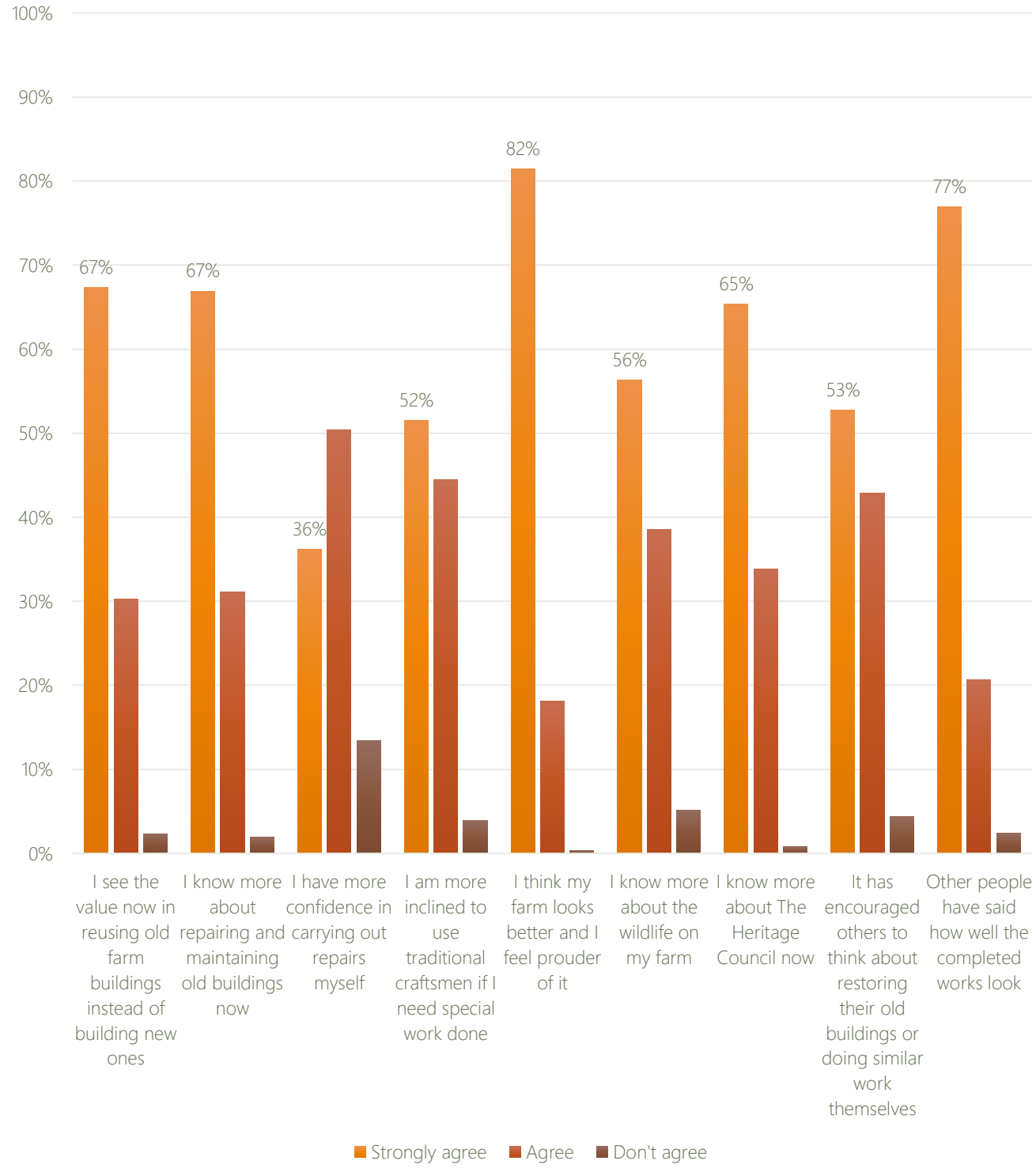
"We were very limited for time to do restoration work. Start date mid-August to end October. We didn't get restoration work completed as a result. It was a large time commitment even though we very strongly agree with scheme ethos."

Fig. 4.4 Survey Result: If you hadn't secured a grant under the Traditional Farm Building Scheme, what would have happened?



- The survey also considered the impact this grant scheme has on the farmers attitudes towards their old buildings / farmyard, traditional building skills and wildlife.
- The graph illustrates that the biggest impact is on the farmer's pride in his farm and also how other people think it now looks much more attractive.

Fig. 4.5 Survey Result: Has the Scheme changed the way you / others think?



Summary

- This scheme is very positively viewed by the farmers with 98% of them pleased with their completed project.

- The wider knock-on impact of the grant scheme is also significant with 97% of farmers stating that it has encouraged others to think about restoring their old buildings or doing similar works themselves.

"Many people have commented on the buildings and have applied since for the grant. These buildings were in a poor state and now look beautiful and should last another hundred years."

- However, farmers recognise the huge potential for broadening the scheme to support diversification.

"I would love if the scheme did not insist that the building be only used for agricultural uses. I think a lot of farming has such low margins that it would be great if other possible uses were considered if the conservation principles were adhered to."

- It has also created attitudinal change with 86% having more confidence to carry out building repairs themselves after the awarding of this grant. This could be further encouraged under any new scheme as it would provide a significant multiplier effect in terms of building conservation; provide value for money; and also address the difficulty of finding building contractors.

"Try to encourage more farmers to do the work themselves. It has a bigger benefit in the long term."

- The results do highlight significant opportunities for improving the grant scheme. Of particular importance is the need to lengthen the timescale for completed works.

"Allow a little more time for job completion because of shortage of skilled workforce and not to rush the job for grant dates."

- Review the rules on the re-use of materials to ensure they provide the best long-term repair solution.

"Terms of restoration were too narrow, and little focus on longevity or practicality of the work carried out."

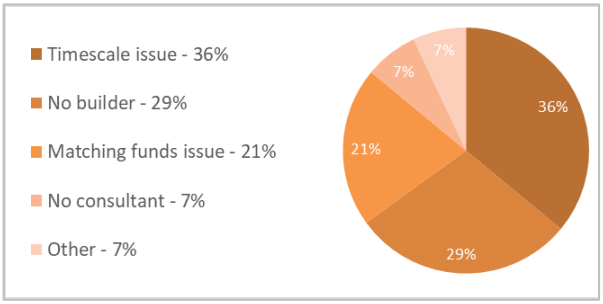
- Finally, consider extending the budget so more farmers can successfully complete projects.

Key Findings: Unsuccessful Applicants

- Unsuccessful applicants were asked about their grant situation and 40% stated they did not score highly enough at assessment stage; 32% didn't make it through the screening process; and 17% were unsure why they didn't secure a grant.

- A further 11% of applicants were approved but decided not to proceed with their project. Of these applicants, 21% stated this was because they couldn't find the matching funds; 36% couldn't complete the project in the timescale; 29% stated they couldn't find a building contractor; and 7% couldn't find a conservation consultant.

Fig. 4.6 Survey Result: Reason for not proceeding with the TFB contract



- Interestingly, the unsuccessful applicants took longer to complete the application form with 55% stating it took over 4 hours compared to 45% of successful applicants. In addition, 35% stated it was complicated to complete compared to only 19% of the successful applicants. This suggests that this cohort of farmers were less experienced at form filling and less able to convey the assets of their project in a written application format.

- 45% of farmers stated that accessing information / guidance during the grant process was a '*problem*' or '*big problem*'. This compares to only 10% for successful applicants.

- 59% of unsuccessful applicants thought the approval process was unfair. Key reasons cited include:
  - Insufficient advice and guidance at application stage.
  - Application difficulties / red tape.
  - Inconsistent scoring and decision making.
  - Not scoring highly enough.
  - Lack of visibility from the road.
  - Need for more funding for the scheme.

- 59% of respondents stated the work wasn't done as they didn't get the grant, while 2% said they had put up a new building. This matches closely the response from successful farmers, 64% of whom would not have restored their building without the grant and 2% who stated they would have put up a new build instead. Only 2% of unsuccessful respondents had actually completed the project without the grant although a further 18% stated they plan to in the future.

- However, 57% indicated they would consider applying again for a Traditional Farm Building grant and a further 28% stated '*maybe*'.

- 41% stated they would recommend the grant to another farmer which is much lower than the 93% of successful applicants who would recommend it.

Summary

- These results indicate that the unsuccessful farmers had more difficulties completing the form and were less experienced at grant applications and administration.
- In future schemes, putting in more supports for farmers who are less familiar with paperwork would help ensure that high quality projects are not missed. In addition, giving applicants the opportunity to submit more information if something is not included would be very beneficial.

"I was rejected because of a poor application - I think there should be some feedback before decision time if there are some items missing."

- Many respondents missed out because they didn't score highly enough and if the budget was increased a greater proportion of projects could be completed.

"I don't know why the building that I applied for was not accepted, anybody that has seen the building would agree that it should have passed for the grant process."

The criteria of '*visibility from the road*' also means that some very worthwhile projects are being missed

"I felt our buildings were highly suitable to the scheme but were rejected as not close enough to a main road. This is arguably discriminatory against farms and farmers in more remote locations."

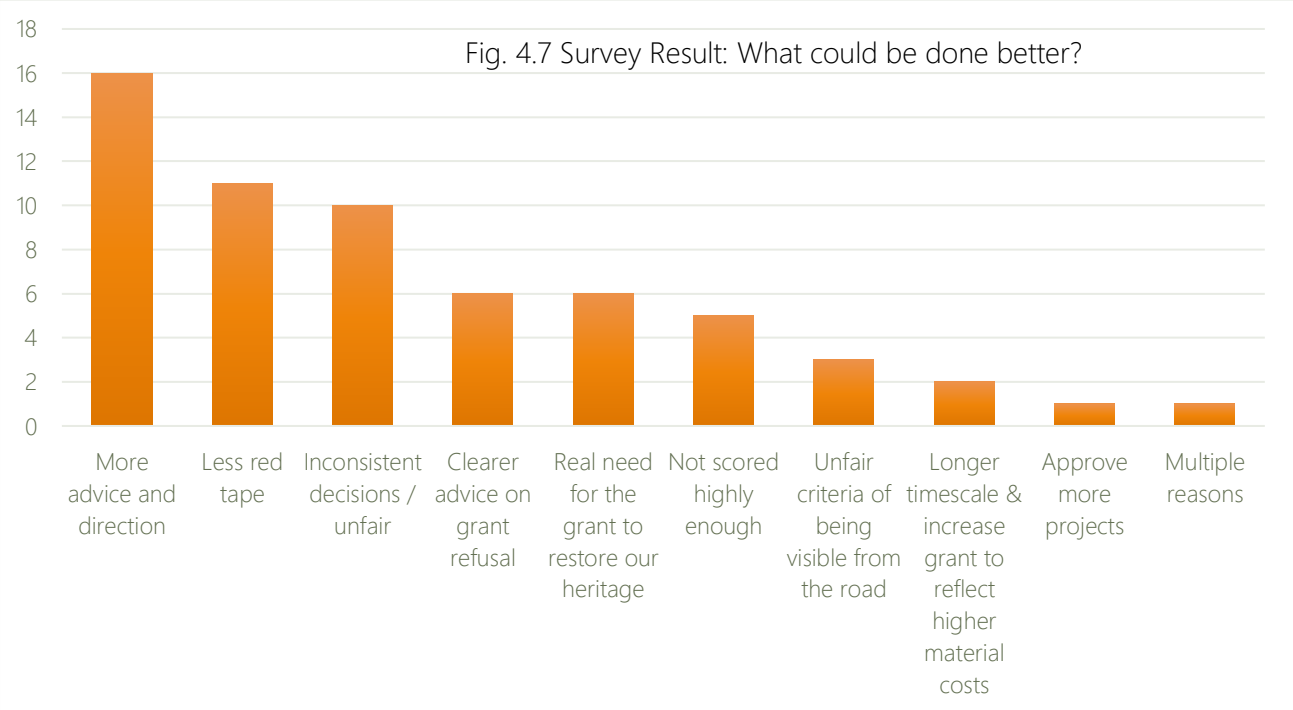


Fig. 4.7 Survey Result: What could be done better?

FOCUS GROUPS

Methodology

Three online '*specialist*' focus groups were held with 6-7 participants in each session to explore the survey results and desktop findings in more detail. Each focus group considered a specific element of the Traditional Farm Building Scheme as follows:

- Farm Owners/Beneficiaries
- Built Heritage
- Natural Heritage

The Farm Owners/Beneficiaries Group included representatives of farm organisations (IFA, ICMSA, ICSA and the INHFA), alongside two farmer-beneficiaries and an expert from the very successful Burren Programme.

The Built Heritage Group included traditional building specialists and conservation consultants, the Architectural Conservation Officer from Waterford County Council and The Heritage Council's own Architecture Officer.

The Natural Heritage Group included representatives from Birdwatch, the Environmental Pillar, the Heritage Officer of Offaly County Council and a bat specialist. A separate interview was held with the Heritage Council's Wildlife Officer as well.

Each focus group explored four broad questions listed below, but participants were encouraged to highlight other issues or follow up after the focus group with any other comments that were relevant.

Question 1: What are we doing well?

Each of the three focus groups were asked what is working well with the programme and they identified many common themes:

- They all commented that the grant scheme is efficiently delivered and the staff are well-informed and excellent communicators. It also creates a big impact for a small budget and represents value for money. In addition, it manages to operate within the wildlife restrictions and deliver completed projects within a short time frame.

- Most feedback from farmers is very positive about the scheme, although it was widely acknowledged that it could be further improved with some minor amendments.

- The scheme plays an important role in protecting traditional farm buildings, whilst also giving then a renewed function on the farm. This supports sustainability as it encourages the reuse of existing buildings instead of new constructions. It was widely acknowledged that in the absence of this grant scheme many of these buildings would further decay or be bulldozed.

"It is a crucial scheme that reaches the dark corners that others do not!"

- The scheme has a very broad remit in terms of eligible buildings which can range from cutstone stables to rubble built cowhouses and this is a positive dimension. In addition, it is one of the few grant programmes that can protect privately owned unlisted buildings.

- It actively supports the retention of traditional building skills in Ireland and encourages the transfer of knowledge from the craftsmen to the farmer which is a very important element to this scheme.

- The grant programme encourages intergenerational custodianship and fosters a greater sense of pride in the farm. This promotes a greater awareness of Ireland's cultural heritage and restores it for future generations to enjoy.

The Natural Heritage focus group revealed a number of additional elements regarding wildlife and the preservation of habitats which weren't mentioned in the other focus groups. These included:

- Many of the traditional farm buildings are actual or potential habitats and this scheme retains and conserves them. It also raises the farmers awareness of the wildlife on their farm and is an invaluable educational tool.

- It is the only heritage scheme that actually includes biodiversity in the application form. This is an exemplar model that could be replicated across other grant schemes to ensure that wildlife conservation is at the fore.

- Many of the older stone buildings on these farms are habitats for some of Ireland's rarest bats and so it is important that these bat roosts are protected and the farmers are aware of them.

Question 2: What could we do better?

All three focus groups had a wide array of suggestions regarding improvements to the scheme. Common themes across all groups included the following:

Timeframe: There was unanimous agreement that greater flexibility and a longer timeframe for completing projects is required. The current scheme results in contractors being required in the same narrow timeframe which can significant limit their availability. It can also negatively impact on the quality of work completed due to the short period allowed to conclude the building works.

> *"Built by farmers, for farmers, from local materials!"*

Farmer Focus: There should be a greater emphasis on up-skilling the farmer so that they can complete the works themselves as this would replicate the environment in which the original construction occurred. Their involvement is crucial to create the bond between the building and the grantee and it would ensure that this

inter-generational culture of repairing and maintaining traditional farm buildings is retained.

It would also deliver better value for money and resolve some of the contractor issues. In addition, once the farmer has learned these new skills they have it for life.

The skills training for farmers should be short (1-2 days) and be available around the country in conjunction with mentoring programmes.

Incorporate a 'peer to peer' learning model so that farmers can learn from each other. It is also really important to keep the scheme simple.

"These buildings have changed and been adapted so we need to think about what 'version' of their past we are restoring them to."

Broader Scheme Criteria: Greater flexibility on the grant scheme would enhance its impact. Suggestions included: Restoring buildings that are not seen from the public roads; Allow unroofed structures to be put back into use; Support more buildings e.g. block built buildings; Provide greater flexibility on the ultimate end use of the building as many farms have associated off-farm income streams which could be served e.g. tourism recreation.

Budget: It was widely recognised that this scheme budget is small in comparison to other DAFM programmes. It was also acknowledged that recently there has been significant cost inflation both in materials and labour rates in the building sector and so there is a need to recalibrate the scheme to reflect these rising costs. In addition, there are significant numbers of applicants who aren't funded each year and more could be supported if the budget was increased.

It was also recognised that the scheme could work smarter and more effectively so that the funding goes further. However, if the budget increases the resources within the Heritage Council would also need to be expanded to cope with the enlarged scheme.

Research: All focus groups identified the need for further research into the impact of this scheme.

The farmers group wanted research into the application process and why so many fail and what are the impacts of the restrictions.

The built heritage group identified the need for research into the built materials and what is working and what is the added value from this scheme. It also identified the opportunity to create an interactive map showing projects completed, materials used, people involved, material suppliers, quarries etc. This could become a real resource for farmers embarking on new projects.

The natural heritage group identified the need to evaluate the wildlife impact on farms after a period of time has passed so that a results based approach could be adopted.

Question 3: What could we do better?

Farm Owners/Beneficiaries

The Farm Owners/Beneficiaries focus group revealed a number of additional elements regarding the scheme which weren't mentioned in the other focus groups. These included:

Consultants Fees: Consultants bring invaluable knowledge and skills but there is a need to be more site specific as it often represents a significant % of the investment. A tiered system could be introduced to determine the scale of consultant involvement required. Other methods could include developing a team of 'In-house consultants retained by DAFM or the Heritage Council' who would specialise in this scheme. This would ensure that the knowledge base gets reused year on year and therefore achieves economies of scale.

Farmer Supports: Some farmers require much greater assistance at the application stage and a model to support these farmers should be developed.

Built Heritage

The Built Heritage focus group revealed a number of additional elements which weren't mentioned in the other focus groups. These included:

Materials: Need to be very careful about 'flexibility' on materials used. The emphasis should be on re-use of existing, salvaged and local materials, however they recognised the need to be pragmatic (e.g. using new corrugated iron, especially where deterioration is obvious) and to take account of intended use and lifespan (timbers). The re-used materials need to be functional. There is a worry about modern materials coming into play and there is a need to keep the focus on the core materials.

> *"Continue the focus on high-quality outcomes, including value-for-money as recognised by the durability of the repairs and not just low-cost."*

The emphasis on re-use is justified from a carbon footprint strategy, particularly bearing in mind the embodied energy of new materials brought onsite.

There is also a need to prioritise local materials not imports where possible but recognised that this can be difficult for all building materials e.g. sourcing reeds for thatch. In this instance, a policy to stimulate local production of reed would be advantageous.

Sustainability: This focus group valued the sustainability principles at the heart of this scheme and identified that this could be further enhanced through ensuring the buildings become more economically efficient and are repaired in such a high quality way that they are durable, work and easy to maintain.

Best practice guidelines could be published or available via a blog. In addition, the opportunity to demonstrate the environmental credentials of a farm building repair through a 'Environmental Product Declaration: EPD' could be explored.

Landscape: It was recognised that traditional farm buildings play a very positive role in the landscape. However, it

was suggested that the conservation 'subtlety' of a particular structure is sometimes overlooked or not fully appreciated in the holistic sense of the farmyard complex, which can lead to an incorrect conservation strategy. In addition, the construction of new buildings should also be controlled through Local Authority Planning Departments e.g. by involving a landscape architect to advise on what will fit in best with the landscape and within the traditional farm building setting.

Natural Heritage

The Natural Heritage focus group revealed a number of additional elements regarding wildlife which weren't mentioned in the other focus groups. These included:

Biodiversity: The impact of the scheme is limited as it is difficult from an assessor perspective when reviewing applications to tell if there are bats, birds or pine-martins using the buildings. Ideally a site visit would be done with the applications, even if this was done at the short listing stage.

There is a need to reward rather than penalise farmers when they find wildlife in their buildings. The discovery of wildlife and bat roosts actually costs them money (derogation licences, surveys, species-appropriate responses etc) leaving less money for the actual building works as the grant is fixed. Could a 'top-up' grant be given (e.g. €1,500) over and above the usual grant to cover these costs, and ensure that the cap for grant-aid is adjusted? This would mean that although there are extra costs the farmer is not financially penalised for having wildlife on their farm (such a top-up is in fact already built into the grant award).

There was also a recommendation to utilise the DAFM / HC plaque as a bat box so that it can double up on functionality and publicity.

Ecology Register: There are huge difficulties getting ecologists and a farmer would greatly benefit from a register or list of consultants.

Assessors: Provide more training for the scheme assessors so that there is greater consistency in the decision making.

What recommendations should we consider in future schemes?

Each of the focus groups identified a series of recommendations so these will be considered in turn.

Farm Owners / Beneficiaries Group

Budget: This is one of the best DAFM schemes but it needs a realistic budget as there is no point encouraging farmers if there is very little money available. Under the current scheme the success rate is very low. The funding for the grant scheme should be increased so that more farmers get involved. There is also scope to examine if other funding streams can be accessed as well.

Application Process: This needs to be simplified through possibly adopting a tiered approach based on the level of funding sought. There is a need to simplify the grant scheme so that it is more farmer focused and there are no restrictions with complicated forms.

Wider Grant Scheme Remit: There is a need to be more ambitious in the scope of the scheme so that more buildings are enhanced and a greater number of farmers acquire an increased knowledge of traditional building schemes. There is a need to look at farmers not in GLAS and also explore options for attracting more young farmers into the scheme.

Farmer Focus/Training: A wide range of opportunities were identified to ensure that farmers are at the centre of this scheme. Suggestions include:

- Buddy/Matchmaker system where farmers can share experience and advice on comparable projects. This peer learning has worked very well in the Burren, Co. Clare.
- Training for farmers so that they can acquire new skills in traditional farm building techniques.
- Set up a farm ambassador scheme to develop the farmer-focus approach.

Publicity: Greater publicity of the scheme and deliver a wider dissemination of the results through illustrating case studies and before / after images 'tell the story better'.

Built Heritage Group

Skills Register: This would be highly desirable but difficult to police. However, if random spot checks were undertaken whilst work was being completed this would help to ensure high standards are maintained. It was recommended that a registration of traditional building skilled contractors could be compiled linked to past projects. This could be undertaken in collaboration with local authorities as some of them maintain a skills register.

Mapping: Create an online map of successful applicants that identifies the farmer and the consultants who supported the work.

Building Type: Broaden the scope of the scheme so that some important architecture which is currently excluded can be repaired.

Natural Heritage Group

GLAS: This was discussed in length and in balance it was thought that this link should be retained because it increases the chance of good environmental practice on the farm and it might also encourage other farmers to join the scheme as it opens the door to capital investment for farm buildings not available to other farmers.

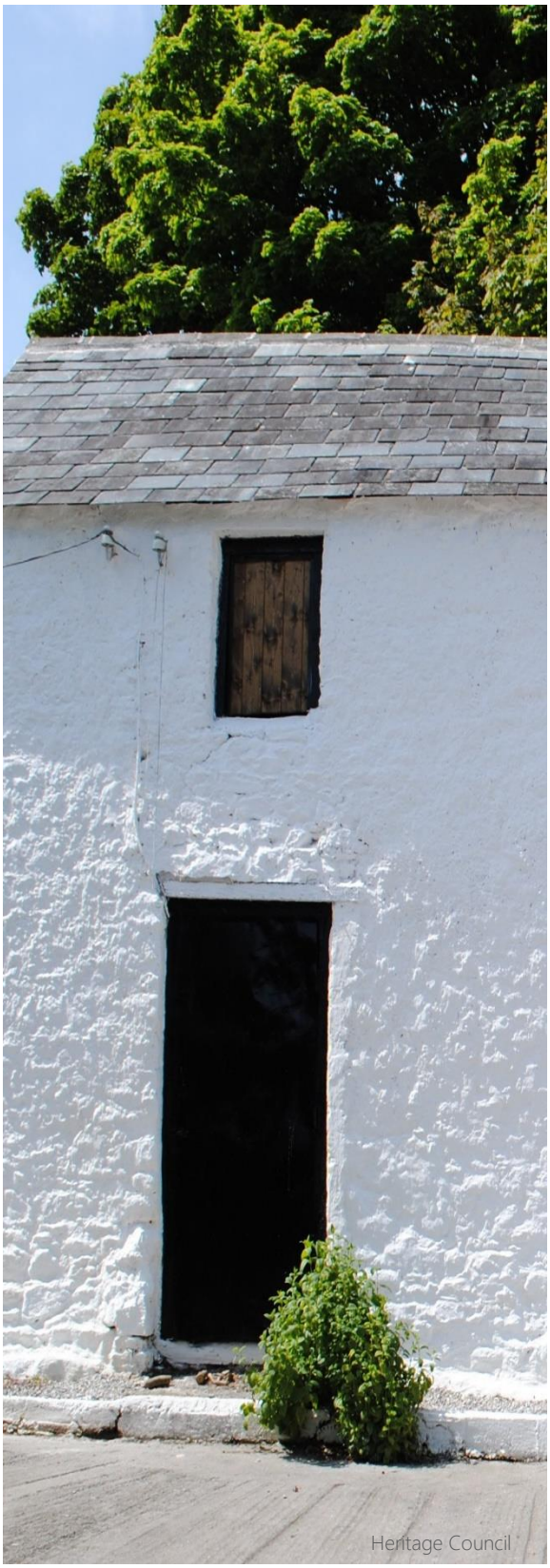
It was also recognised, that with a very limited budget it is a practical way of reducing the pool of applicants.

Environmental Benefits: Opportunities to further enhance the wildlife on the farm, once it is discovered, should be actively built into the range of supports available under CAP over a number of years.

Summary

The priorities of our three focus groups in terms of the shape of any future scheme are summarised in the table below. These have informed our own formal recommendations.

Top Priorities
Farmers / Beneficiaries
Increase the budget
Extend the timeline
Break the link with GLAS but keep some alignment to CAP environmental measures
Make it more farmer focused: More user friendly and simple, training, promotion, mentoring, greater ownership and involvement and no restrictions with complicated forms
Training and up-skilling for farmers.
'Buddy' system where farmers can share advice and help each other
Built Heritage
More flexibility on the end use of the building and not so strictly tied to agricultural use
Extend the timeline
Erect plaques on projects to advertise the project and the protected wildlife
Natural Heritage Group
Bigger budget with emphasis on more beneficiaries rather than applying a significantly bigger budget per project
Maintain a link to an environmental scheme within CAP
Reward the farmer who has wildlife on his farm
Build-in a review-process to assess if it is working for wildlife and support other environmental works on the farm


Heritage Council

Chapter 5

International Comparators

OVERVIEW

A number of traditional farm building grant schemes have been identified across Europe. These offer insights into how other countries have valued and preserved their historic farm fabric within the rural landscape. This was further informed by a number of 1-1 interviews with scheme managers in England.

This chapter will consider the traditional farm building schemes in England, Italy, The Czech Republic and France and illustrate their programme mechanics, objectives and outputs. This chapter will also highlight any elements of these grant schemes which have merit for adoption into future Traditional Farm Building Schemes in Ireland.

"Changing agricultural practices and economic pressures mean that many traditional farm buildings have lost their original purpose and become vulnerable to neglect and decay.
Even those that remain in active agricultural use still need regular maintenance and periodic repairs to keep them in good order."
(Historic England, 2017)

ENGLAND

Countryside Stewardship: Historic Buildings Restoration Grant: 2018-2020

In England, the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) oversaw a '*Countryside Stewardship - Historic Buildings Restoration Grant'* which was administered by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). Technical advice was given by National Parks advisors and appointed architects. There was also additional advice from Historic England and Natural England.

This programme was limited to five National Parks in England with a budget of £8 million. The aim was to help save iconic historic farm buildings from falling out of use within the participating National Park boundaries. The buildings had to be restored for agricultural use, by traditional methods and materials so that it improved the distinctive character of the area.

The scheme closed to expressions of interest in June 2018 and the application process thereafter operated in 3 stages:

Apply for an Implementation Grant (PA1) to cover the National Park or agent costs of helping with the application process and producing a project brief.

Apply for a Feasibility Study Grant (PA2) This is a 100% grant to cover the cost of employing a consultant to produce the detailed Management Plan required for restoring a building.

Apply for an Historic Building Restoration Grant (HE2). 80% grant contribution available towards eligible building restoration work, associated specialist surveys and consultants' project

management work. HE2 grant approved by a Grant Panel and issued by the RPA.

The scheme has now ended but Historic England projected very positive economic returns for the locality as a result of this programme.

Source: Historic England – 1743 restored farm building

"Early economic forecasting of the impact of the pilot grant scheme found that for every £1 of public money offered by the scheme in rural areas, the benefits to the local economy in terms of creating jobs and helping local businesses ranges between £1.65 - £2.50.

The analysis also indicated that the scheme creates around 15 full-time equivalent jobs in the local economy of each of the five National Parks; equating to at least 77 full-time equivalent jobs for an initial grant investment of just over £4m.

Given that the pilot grant budget has been increased to £8 million, it is anticipated that the economic return will exceed early forecasts." (Historic England, 2020)

A comprehensive manual was designed to advise applicants of this grant scheme titled '*Historic Buildings Grant Manual*'.

Core elements of the programme included:

- Mandatory design of a project brief completed in collaboration with the National Park, funded by a fixed grant of £1,100. (Implementation Grant PA1)
- Feasibility Study Grant (PA2) which was 100% funded to cover the cost of an experienced conservation consultant to carry out a detailed Management Plan including specification of works, tendering process and tender report.
- Historic Building Restoration Grant (HE2) to provide funding for 80% of capital costs for roofed non-residential buildings identified as a priority by Natural England which have been built with traditional materials and methods in a characteristic local, vernacular or 'designed' architectural style.
- The grant assessment is based on the building's historic, landscape and wildlife importance as well as the amount of restoration work required. There is a detailed assessment criteria in Annex 3 of the manual. This is split into a number of elements including: Building Significance; Vulnerability; and Public Good. Within each of these elements there are a number of sub-categories which each application is scored on and certain categories are given greater weighting. Each application is required to pass a scoring threshold and are then reviewed by a panel.
- Eligible costs include restoration works, associated specialist surveys

and consultants' project management work. Agreement holders are eligible to work with the building conservation contractors to reduce the costs if they are suitably qualified. Time sheets are required to verify their own labour.

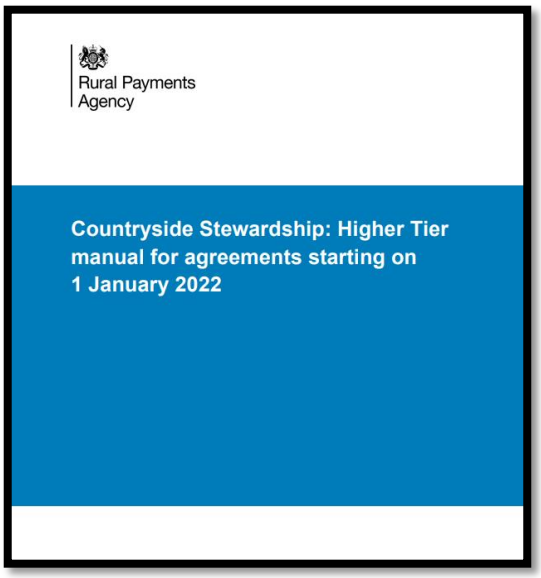
- The manual includes a detailed listing of all eligible and ineligible works under this scheme.
- Eligible buildings include roofed structures which are non-residential, built before 1940. They must have been constructed with traditional methods and materials in a characteristic local, vernacular or 'designed' architectural style.
- All capital works must be completed within 2 years to be eligible for payment. All claims for payment must be submitted no later than two years and three months after the start date of the agreement.
- Individual grants can exceed £500,000 but most have been for between £16-23,000.
- There is some flexibility to make amendments to the grant costs if there are changes required for materials or construction issues.
- Dated photographic evidence is required at both the application and claim stage. In addition, four types of checks are undertaken as part of the control framework. These include administrative record checks, in situ visits, agreement progress monitoring visits and inspections (mostly 100% inception and 100% pre-payment)
- The enhancement of buildings from a wildlife perspective is an important element of the scheme. Wildlife consultants are engaged to undertake scoping surveys at the feasibility study stage. Recommendations on appropriate building works to ensure the habitats for wildlife are protected and enhanced are outlined. Post monitoring surveys are undertaken once the restoration works are finished. These monitoring surveys are completed one year afterwards to ensure a breeding season has been completed.
- In future grant schemes they will consider undertaking wildlife monitoring surveys two years after the building works have been completed. In addition, the opportunity for the farmer to undertake the initial wildlife scoping survey is being actively considered for new grant programmes.
- Wildlife features in building restoration works are encouraged even when species have not been identified because it has been found that if appropriate habitats are created new wildlife will emerge.

"Each project has a wildlife consultant working with the construction team to ensure the work protects wildlife and provides space in which wildlife and nature can thrive. This includes installing bat and barn owl boxes and leaving crevices in the stonework from which wild birds can enter to nest, now they are weatherproof and watertight." (Northumberland National Park, 2021)

This pilot scheme was targeted at the five National Parks and this has now closed. An evaluation of the grant programme will begin shortly.

Countryside Stewardship: Higher Tier Scheme

England is now in a period of agricultural transition over the period 2022, 2023 and 2024. During this period there is a scheme called the '*Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier Scheme*' which is targeted at land managers to incentivise them to look after the environment.



This will then be replaced by a new Environmental Land Management Scheme from 2024 once trialling and piloting has taken place.

The main priorities for the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier Scheme in 2022 is to protect and enhance the natural environment, in particular:

- *"Species rich grasslands, wet grassland and water meadows*
- *Heathland and moorland*
- *Coastal sand dunes, vegetated shingle, saltmarsh, inter-tidal and saline habitats*
- *Fens, reedbeds, ponds and ditches*
- *Wood pastures and parklands, orchards, hedges and scrub*
- *Woodland.*

However, the Higher Tier also gives you access to a wider range of grants to:

- *Protect vulnerable or threatened species*
- *Manage hedgerows, dry-stone walls, stock fencing and gates*
- *Improve local water quality and manage flood risk in your local area*
- *Convert and manage land to organic certification standards*
- *Protect and enhance historic, archaeological and geo-diversity features*
- *Support educational access*."

(RPA, 2021)

Whilst this is predominately an environmental scheme for landowners / farmers it does include grants for:

- '*Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings*' at a rate of £3.25 per square metre (2022 scheme and £4.03: 2023 scheme).
- '*Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings in remote areas*' at a rate of £6.73 per square metre (2022 scheme and £6.86: 2023 scheme).
- '*Stone wall restoration*' at a rate of £25 per metre.
- '*Historic and archaeological feature protection*'. Up to 100% of actual costs.

Application Process

A two-stage application process is in place with initial applications submitted first and these are scored and ranked. If the initial application is successful then a complete final application is required which is undertaken with assistance from Natural England and / or the Forestry Commission. This process takes 11 months from the opening of the application process to the awarding of the agreement offer. These agreements last 5 years although capital works are required to be completed within the first 2 years of the agreement. Applicants are scored according to their land-based features and their species. After-care support is available to the successful applicants through Natural England and / or the Forestry Commission.

A baseline evaluation survey is undertaken to record the condition and extent of features at the time the application is made. This provides an environmental baseline that can be used for checking the agreement in the future. Comparison with the baseline gives a measure of progress in achieving environmental outcomes.

The scheme allows farm labour and use of their own machinery for capital works. The applicant is required to submit details of the hourly rate, work details and dates.

Administrative checks are undertaken on all files. In some instances, monitoring visits are undertaken. Annually, site visits are undertaken on a sample to make sure environmental aims and the scheme requirements have been met.

This grant programme is open to farmers, tenants, landlords and a licensor and it must be for land classified as follows:

- Agricultural land
- Protected site
- Priority habitat
- Land supporting a priority species
- Woodland

"Traditional farmsteads and farm buildings make an important contribution to the remarkably varied character of England's landscape.
They are fundamental to its sense of place and are as important to the character of the countryside as the pattern of fields and boundaries associated with them."
(Historic England, 2017)

Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme

In addition to the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier Scheme there is also a three-year programme called '*Farming in Protected Landscapes*' which is targeted specifically at National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England. This scheme focuses on four themes:

- *Climate – delivering net zero with nature and nature-based solutions to help communities adapt to the unavoidable effects of climate change;*
- *Nature – playing a leading role in the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network and achieving the PMs commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030;*
- *People – providing a natural health service that will improve the nation's public health and wellbeing through increased access to nature across all parts of society, as part of our green recovery;*

- *Place – creating centres of excellence and green innovation that are flourishing places to live and work, each with a strong identity and cultural heritage, and high recognition as attractive visitor destinations*. (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2022*)*

As an example, €1.2 million was available to farmers and landowners in the Peak District National Park in 2021 and further funding will be available in subsequent years until its close in 2024. Applications can be submitted for protected buildings but this will be small scale and limited under this programme. In addition, restoring historic features on farms will be eligible such as lime kilns or lead mining heritage.

Useful Resources

A range of resources are available to assist farmers restore their traditional buildings in England in addition to the capital grants. These include publications such as '*The Maintenance and Repair of Traditional Farm Buildings: A guide to good practice*' which is available free online or for purchase at £22.50 for a printed copy. *'The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings'* was published by Historic England in 2017 to provide guidance on the adaptive reuse, maintenance and repair of historic farm buildings.

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) is the professional body for conservation professionals. It has a database of accredited practitioners from a variety of disciplines which can be found on their website under the 'Specialist Registers'. There is also an online system for checking the standards of a trades-person which can improve confidence in your choice.

The National Park Authorities also offer advice to help people repair, restore and maintain their historic buildings such as houses, outbuildings, barns and industrial properties.

FRANCE

Various grant schemes exist in the different regions of France. One such in '*The Pays de Caux*', Normandy supports the restoration of traditional agricultural buildings and the preservation of the natural heritage in the typical farm types found in this region known as "*Clos Masure*".

Image of The Clos Masure in Normandy, France. Source: Seine-maritime-tourisme.com

The type of works that supported by this grant scheme include:

- Structure: traditional walls whatever their fabric e.g. brick, flint, stones, wood, cob etc.
- Roof: e.g. thatch, slate, tile etc.
- Temporary backup work

Residential dwellings or buildings that have undergone major transformation works are excluded.

This grant scheme supports both the built and the natural environment and includes works such as the planting and restoration of hedgerows and the restoration or creation of ponds.

The basis subsidy rate is 25% including VAT for the 2 components of the grant scheme (built and natural). An increase of 5% is awarded to individuals with low incomes.

The timeframe for completion of works is 3 years.

ITALY

A publication by the University of Basilicata, Potenza, Italy (2017) outlines the economic significance of traditional farm buildings linked to rural tourism opportunities and local food products.

> *Vernacular farm buildings offer a contemporary potential for preserving traditional cattle-raising procedures and dairy products, rich cultural-heritage and new tourism activities.....These constructions constitute a widespread heritage of irreplaceable architectural value, deserving the highest consideration during the process of landscape planning.*
>
> *(Statuto & Picuno, 2017)*

As part of their research they surveyed two different mountainous areas within Southern Italy and Montenegro and mapped rural buildings and historic farms on a geographical information system (GIS).

These results allowed these regions to establish a network to develop rural tourism activities based on the restoration of abandoned vernacular farm buildings linked to the production of local traditional foods. This research stated that this initiative delivered many benefits:

- Saving in energy and building materials
- Creation of jobs and new economic activities
- Promotion of cultural tourism
- Recovery of native construction techniques
- Community pride
- More attractive rural villages

CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic supported a range of priorities under Axis III of their Rural Development Programme (2007-2013). This included: '*Diversification of non-agricultural activities; Renewal and development of villages, civic facilities and services; and Protection and development of rural cultural heritage*.'

The priority of most relevance to the Traditional Farm Building Scheme is the protection and development of rural cultural heritage. This grant programme offered up to 90% funding for non-profit organisations, churches and municipalities but not individual farmers.

The grant could be used to support studies and programmes to restore, use and regenerate rural cultural heritage; restoration works; or the creation of permanent exhibitions and museums. Relevant examples of eligible works are listed below:

Purpose a) studies and programmes

- Preparation of studies on the restoration and use of cultural heritage (e.g. cultural monuments, heritage reserves, heritage zones, landscape heritage zones, cultural elements of villages and rural landscapes, monuments of local importance and related historical parks, gardens, avenues and groups of trees, solitary woods).

- Preparation of programmes for the regeneration of heritage-protected areas, care plans for landscape heritage zones.

- Preparation of inventories and maps of cultural heritage in rural areas.

Purpose b) restoration and enhancement of rural cultural heritage

- Construction renewal (reconstruction, modernization, static security, restoration), revitalization and evaluation of heritage buildings, areas, cultural objects and elements (cultural monuments, objects in heritage reserves and heritage zones and in landscape heritage areas zones, cultural elements of villages and rural landscapes, monuments of local importance and related historical parks, gardens, avenues, groups of trees, solitary woods).

- Provision of structural and historical surveys (including rescue archaeological surveys).

The grant aid was restricted to costs that met the purpose and goals of the measure/ sub-measure. If the costs related to other uses in the building then only a proportion of costs were eligible.

Despite some similarities with the objectives of the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme, the Czech scheme has more in common with Irish schemes like the Built Heritage Investment Scheme. We don't see it as offering any particular pointers for further consideration in the present study.

SUMMARY

Scheme Mechanics and Process

The English schemes offer some useful pointers, as follows:

The use of a two tiered application process holds some merit as it efficiently and equitably reduces the number of potential applicants and ensures that only those with the greatest chance of being approved have to complete the more detailed application.

At the initial application stage, DEFRA has the discretion to appoint Natural England to offer support to develop some applications that score below the national threshold. Adoption of this concept would address the issue of rejecting 'good projects' because of poorly completed application forms.

The use of a sample for post works inspections is interesting and warrants consideration as its significantly reduces the cost of administering the scheme.

The availability of a Guide to Repairing Traditional Farm Buildings and a database of accredited professionals also assists applicants and helps to ensure that work is completed satisfactorily.

The geographical targeting of a pilot scheme which is limited to traditional farm buildings in National Parks is interesting and is something which could be considered for certain geographical areas in Ireland which merit additional support. The English pilot was able to draw on extensive landscape characterisation and photographic studies which provide the baseline data which is key to a targeted scheme.

The completion of post monitoring wildlife surveys at least one or potentially two years after the restoration works have been finished is something that definitely warrants further consideration. This would ensure that the impact of restoration works on wildlife populations is evidence based and these findings would help to inform future building design works.

The inclusion of maintenance of traditional farm buildings as part of the menu of options in England's Countryside Stewardship Scheme is also worthy of consideration, giving these buildings an ongoing monetary value to the farmer, however small.

Evaluation of the English pilot-scheme

An evaluation of the pilot '*Historic Building Restoration Grant*' is to be completed shortly and the findings from this evaluation could be very useful to inform future recommendations for the Traditional Farm Building Scheme in Ireland.

Discussions with English scheme managers conducted as part of our own study were extremely informative. One of the things that particularly caught our attention was the level of baseline data available, which allowed careful targeting of a limited resource into areas of greatest need. On the other hand, the efficiency of the Irish programme was also revealed, both in terms of budget, implementation and scope.

It is recommended that due to the similarities between the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme and the pilot Historic Building Scheme in England that on-going dialogue is maintained between

the relevant agencies in the two countries. Strong interest was expressed on the English side in formalising regular dialogue like this.

Other thoughts

In both the English and the French grant schemes, significantly longer periods were allowed to complete the building works. This ranged from 2 years in England and 3 years in France.

In both the English and the French grant schemes, funding was awarded for both built and natural works within the same aid programme.

The Italian GIS model of traditional farm buildings illustrates the economic potential linked to restoring these buildings for rural tourism. This research demonstrates the value of strategically mapping the built heritage resource, linked to its natural environment, across a particular region. This can then be utilised as a tool to plan the collaborative development of rural tourism linked to culture and local food products. This recalls aspects of England's Countryside Character Areas which proved so valuable in the development of their pilot programme for repair of traditional farm buildings and again underlines the importance of developing this type of baseline data.

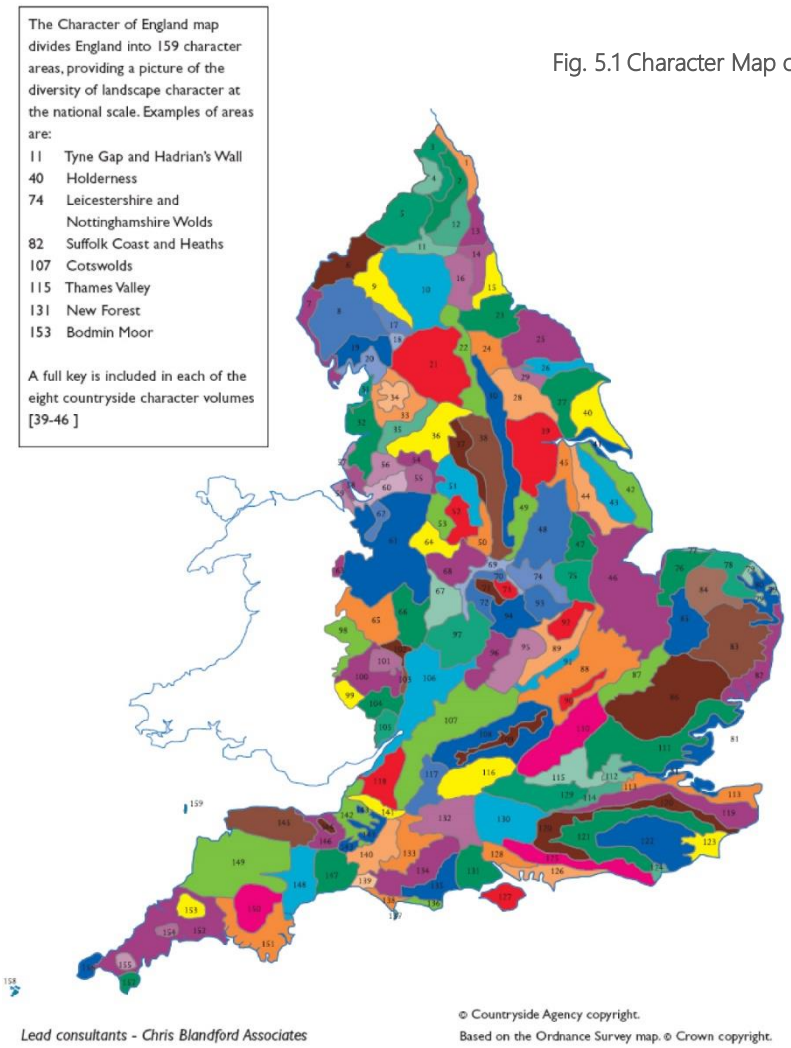


Fig. 5.1 Character Map of England

Chapter 6

Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

The overall evaluation approach is built on four main pillars: Research, Consultation, Analysis and Evaluation. These in turn are designed to lead to a series of clear and achievable recommendations for the future development of the scheme.

In Chapter 3 we looked at the programme mechanics, reviewing the inputs, outputs and activities associated with delivery of the Scheme, and the overall performance of the Scheme. In this chapter we look specifically at the outcomes and impacts across a range of areas like cultural heritage, traditional skills, landscape, rural economy, biodiversity, climate-change and the all-important question of attitudinal change.

After that we look at the way in which the Scheme contributes to the wider strategic landscape, in the form of heritage and rural development policy.

Finally we look at the question of value-for-money and how the cost of repairing a traditional farm building compares with the cost of erecting a new building.

The Integrated Capitals approach

In considering the impact of the Scheme on each area we will also apply the Integrated Capitals approach outlined in Chapter 1. An Integrated Capitals approach usually categorises the return on investment in terms of Human, Intellectual, Financial, Social, Natural, and Manufactured or Built capitals. For each of the impact areas reviewed, such as cultural heritage or rural economy, we will also be considering the 'knock-on' effect for each of the different capitals. The final evaluation at the end of this chapter will provide a summary of the overall impact of the Scheme on these capitals.

Fig. 6.1 Colour coding for the Integrated Capitals Model

Capital & Effect	Nature			Impact			Scale			Significance		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Low	Moderate	High	Local	Regional	National	Low	Moderate	High
Human + subheadings												
Intellectual + subheadings												
Natural + subheadings												
Built + subheadings												
Social + subheadings												
Financial + subheadings												

TRADITIONAL SKILLS

The primary outcome of the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme is the delivery of a restored building which makes a functional contribution to the working life of the farm. The question here is how this outcome impacts on the wider world of traditional skills. This can be considered under three headings

- Specialists
- Farmers
- Wider public

Specialists

All projects funded under the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme require the appointment of a conservation specialist and in most cases the work will require the employment of specialist craftworkers. On the simplest level then, the scheme provides additional employment opportunities for these specialists, additional experience and increased exposure. All of this is clearly positive. Over the period of the programme currently under review a total of 382 projects have been supported, providing a minimum of 166,872 hours of employment. At least 73 individual conservation consultants have been engaged over that period[1]. The success of the programme in this regard can be measured by the difficulty which farmers are increasingly experiencing in locating suitable skilled professionals. Our Farm Survey revealed that of those who were approved for grant aid but did not procced, 16% said this was because they either could not source a conservation consultant or a builder (or both), suggesting there is real capacity for additional resource to enter the market. As things stand, the market has seen real growth with more and more new consultants becoming involved every year.

The scheme has also facilitated greater learning opportunities amongst the specialists themselves: for example, the use of hot limes has accelerated as a result of increased awareness of the technique and increased opportunities for its use on so many projects.

Image courtesy Heritage Council

Farmers

For farmers the real impact here is increased awareness of traditional building techniques, their application on their farm and the acquisition of some of those skills themselves. 86% of respondents to our Farm Survey stated

[1] Based on data for 2016, 2020 and 2021

that they had more confidence to carry our repair works themselves now, and 47% confirmed that they had actually done so. An important aspect of this is also the increased pride which farmers report in the finished project and that so many see the work as having enhanced their farm.

Financially, the use of traditional building techniques has little impact for the farmer, nor does it significantly add to farm viability when compared to the use of more 'conventional' techniques (although as evident from our evaluation of the climate impact, traditional techniques definitely add to the overall sustainability of the farm in environmental terms). Similarly, impact for the local economy is relatively low, especially as many specialists working on these projects will be based elsewhere. However, a particularly satisfying impact for traditional skills is the increased awareness amongst farmers of their value and their readiness to use them in the future: in our survey 96% of farmers agreed or strongly agreed that they would be more inclined now to use traditional craftworkers if they needed special works done. This is an impact for the sector with real longevity.

Despite the positive response of so many farmers the opportunity to capitalise on this has not been fully exploited. There now exists a body of around 350 farmers, 98% of whom are either happy or very happy with their completed projects and 93% of whom would definitely recommend the scheme (and therefor the use of traditional building techniques) to other farmers. However, there is no clear network in place to allow them do so. This is something we will address in our recommendations.

Wider Public

There is no doubt that promotion of traditional skills through the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme has also increased more general awareness of these skills amongst the wider public. In our survey, 97% of farmers agreed (with most strongly agreeing) that others in their community had remarked on how well

Image courtesy Heritage Council

the completed project looked, with obvious implications for increased local/community pride. This has been furthered locally by hosting of on-farm Heritage events and even the production of short videos and podcasts by some farmers. At a national level, the process of annual advertisement of the scheme, accompanied by Ministerial press releases, and very attractive images of completed projects, has also increased wider awareness of the value of these traditional skills. There is a clear opportunity to build on this under any new programme and again we will address this in our recommendations.

Conclusions

By any measure the impact of the Scheme on the traditional skills sector has been very positive, creating demand, generating income, offering learning opportunities and increasing awareness. Obviously the impact is not experienced evenly across the board. It tends to be highest at the individual and local level, pointing to clear potential to expand beyond this under any future iteration of the Scheme. A wider distribution of projects out of 'GLAS-dominated' areas would extend its geographical reach. A new farmer-focused network would also allow the evident goodwill and enthusiasm of those who have already carried out works to be transferred to other farmers. An expanded PR programme would bring greater awareness of the traditional skills sector in Ireland to the wider public, many of whom may have believed these skills a thing of the past, confined to museums and of no relevance today.

The point is well-made by The Heritage Council's own Architectural Officer Colm Murray who commented in a 2007 paper that *"...if we as a society give an economic value to a certain type of work that requires skills (rather than machines) to achieve its ends, the capacity to deliver this quality of outcome remains with the person who carries it out. Thus, it remains in the local economy, capable of delivering an aspect of quality of life in the future."* (Murray, 2007, p.8)

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The impact on cultural heritage can be assessed under four main headings,

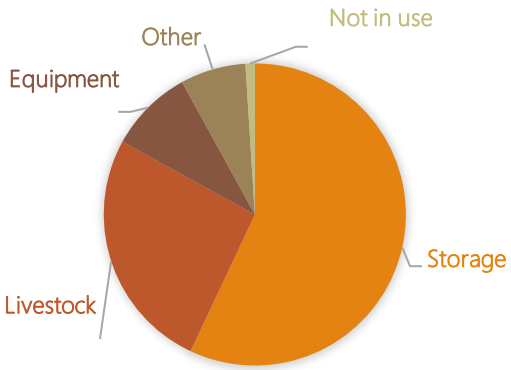
- the repair of traditional farm buildings and other features of the traditional farm
- the discovery of cultural artefacts as part of this process
- promotion of traditional skills and skills-transfer
- increased awareness and custodianship

The buildings

Over the period of the current programme, up to and including 2021, a total of 522 traditional farm buildings have been repaired and restored to functional use on the farm. While buildings represent by far the most important area of intervention, included on almost every project aided, 7% of projects included works to gate-piers, walls, yard surfaces and walled-gardens all of which are important components of the traditional farm.

Restoring some practical functionality to these structures is key to ensuring their ongoing maintenance and therefore survival into the future. The Scheme requires that they be brought back into agricultural use and maintained in such use for at least five years. In our survey, which was anonymous and returned by two-thirds of all beneficiaries under the scheme since 2016, 99% of respondents indicated that their buildings were in use. In 57% of cases these were being used for general storage, while 26% were being used to house livestock. Equipment and machinery were being kept in 9% of buildings while 7% were being used for something else. The overall message is very positive and indicates that the scheme is proving extremely successful in achieving one of its primary aims, which is to give these traditional buildings a purpose once more on the farm.

Fig. 6.2 Survey Result: Use of Repaired Buildings



Earlier non-agricultural use of some buildings or complexes has also been highlighted as part of the restoration process: a farm complex on Valentia was used as a fever hospital in Famine times and the farmer now plans to develop onsite interpretation of this; another in Limerick was used as a prison during the Civil War.

The cultural heritage significance of some buildings can be deeply personal as well: the point was tellingly made during our workshop with farm-owners and beneficiaries that in many cases what is now 'the cow-shed' was once the original family-home. The rich cultural heritage of buildings like these survive only as long as the buildings themselves survive and the Scheme has done great service in protecting these for the future.

Cultural artefacts

The process of repair has also resulted in a number of unexpected finds of cultural artefacts. Two pike-heads were discovered on a project in Laois while work on a project in Mayo uncovered diaries from the War of Independence and the Civil War. While such finds are rare, they are of huge importance, not least for what they do in terms of rebuilding local links with the past and stimulating interest within the wider community. Such finds will undoubtedly continue to be made in the future and it would be worth considering a short guidance note for conservation consultants on the subject. As well as the more dramatic finds of pike-heads and diaries, it is highly likely that finds of less immediately appreciated value, such as old bottles, agricultural equipment and even clay-pipes, are being made and will continue to be made. A guidance note would indicate how finds like this are important and what to do with them.

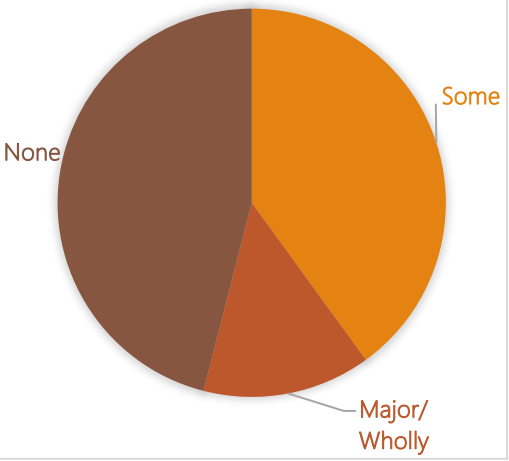
Promotion of traditional skills and skills transfer

The impact of the Scheme on the promotion of traditional skills is considered elsewhere in this chapter and is overwhelmingly positive. The transfer of skills from specialists to farmers as part of this process is hugely important and was something singled out in the consultations we held with practitioners in the field. The point was made strongly by one conservation consultant that these buildings were often built by farmers themselves, using traditional skills and local materials and that it was critical for their future preservation that this relationship be re-established.

> *"We need to replicate the environment in which construction happened – built by farmers, for farmers, from local materials. The farmer is central to this."*
>
> Participant at the Built Heritage Focus Group

Skills transfer takes place through farmer participation. Our analysis indicates that about 40% of projects included some level of own labour, while a further 14% of projects were delivered with major input from, or sometimes wholly by, the farmer.[2]

Fig. 6.3 Own Labour Inputs



Transfer of skills like this is crucial to securing the future of these buildings. This is borne out by the Farm Survey which indicates that 47% of farmers have already carried out additional conservation works themselves, a figure which corresponds closely to the percentage of farmers who were involved in some way in the delivery of their own projects and underlines the value of encouraging such participation in the first place. A major objective of the next programme should be to increase farmer participation and in particular to increase the instance of significant input by farmers.

Increased awareness and custodianship

The Scheme has demonstrably increased awareness of our cultural heritage not just amongst its client base but also across the wider community. The level of attitudinal change effected is examined elsewhere in this chapter but it is worth noting again

[2] These percentages, extracted from Heritage Council datasets, correspond almost exactly to what was reported in the Farm Survey.

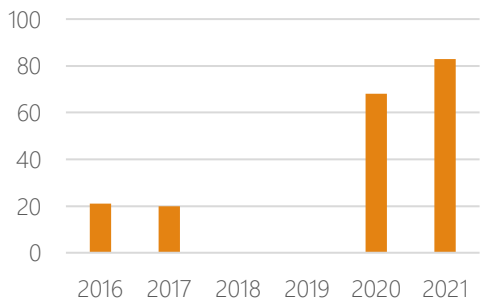
that 97% of farmers said they saw the value now of reusing old farm buildings instead of constructing new ones and 96% said they were more inclined to use traditional craftspeople now. As regards wider awareness, 96% reported that their

> *"The people that went before us constructed them in far harder times. We have a responsibility to maintain them."*
>
> Comment from respondent to Farm Survey

project has encouraged others to undertake similar conservation works themselves, testifying to the 'ripple' effect of this Scheme.

The active involvement of so many farmers telling others about their project, whether by on- or off-farm events or in the media, is also extremely encouraging with 52% of beneficiaries becoming involved this way across the programming period as a whole. This figure would be considerably higher except for the impact of Covid 19 which resulted in cancellation of virtually all in-person events planned for 2020 and 2021.

Fig. 6.4 % of TFB farmers involved in events or media *(no data for 2018-19)*



This level of direct involvement by the farmers themselves in communicating their stories to others can be taken as a proxy for the minimum level of active 'custodianship' achieved, allowing that many others will share similar pride and ownership but may not feel the need to speak publicly on the subject. It is also very encouraging to see such activity increasing year on year, from 10 instances or 21% of projects funded in 2016 to 63 or a massive 83% of projects in 2021. This is a major success story.

Conclusions

The cultural heritage impact of the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme is one of its most significant achievements. It has restored or repaired over 500 traditional buildings and given these a purpose once more on the farm, along with other elements of the traditional farmyard like gate-piers, surfaces, and walled gardens. It has shone a light on earlier use of certain buildings and resulted in some fascinating artefactual finds. It has successfully promoted traditional building skills and transferred these to farmers. It has increased farmer-awareness of the cultural heritage value of their buildings and has been remarkably successful in effecting attitudinal change, including active custodianship in more recent years.

From the Integrated Capitals perspective, its impact is positive and high, particularly at the local/individual level. There is still room for improvement, however. The geographical distribution of the Scheme, which tracks the largely western and small farm distribution of GLAS, means that the impact of the scheme is not felt in non-GLAS areas. Similarly, as has been pointed out previously (see Chapter 4) the

exclusion of some building types from the scheme, along with the blanket cut-off date of 1960 also works to isolate parts of our cultural heritage. A new focus on trying to grow farmer participation in the repair work itself should also form part of any new Scheme, with particular effort on driving-up the percentage of cases in which farmers become significantly involved in the work. A bonus payment for farmers delivering say 40% or more of the project themselves would act as a real incentive.

Pat Chambers with his daughter Maggie and conservation consultant Aine Doyle in the shed where the War of Independence/Civil War diaries were found on his farm in Mayo. Photo by Conor McKeown, Mayo News.

RURAL ECONOMY

While the programme is small in comparison to many other funding programmes within the RDP, it has been designed so that it has a particularly beneficial impact on the traditional building craft sector and the supply chain for traditional materials. This section evaluates its impact under four headings:

- Investment in the rural economy
- Rural employment
- Farm / household income
- Farm efficiency

Investment in the Rural Economy

A total of €6 million was allocated to the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme over a seven-year period (2016-2022). This has funded a total of 382 projects to date at a maximum of €25,000 grant aid. The grant rate is 75% but our analysis shows that the average grant awarded to the farmer is 69%. The average total cost of each project is €21,400.

Based on public investment to date of €5.6 million, DAFM calculates that a total of €8.2 million has been invested in traditional farm buildings in rural Ireland from 2016 to date, allowing for the private investment of €2.6 million. Evidence from the survey demonstrates that this private investment would not have been levered into the rural economy without the pump-priming effect of the scheme itself. We know this as only 4% of farmers in the survey indicated they would have completed the restoration work on the farm building if they had not secured a grant. This is borne out by our survey of non-successful applicants which showed that only 2% of respondents had actually completed their project having failed to secure a grant.

An economic analysis by Historic England of their pilot '*Historic Buildings Restoration Grant*' targeted at farm buildings in National Parks concluded that for every £1 of public money offered by the scheme in rural areas, the benefits to the local economy in terms of creating jobs and helping local businesses ranged between

£1.65 - 2.50.[3] If this multiplier is applied to the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme, the economic impact of the public investment component alone would be between €9 million and €14 million since 2016.

In their evaluation of the Burren Programme (2020) AECOM also calculate output multipliers for each of their programme supports. The calculation for 1-2 Payments (which would be the closest match for our traditional farm building works) estimated that every €1 in grants levered €1.41 into the local economy). Applied to the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme, this increases the effect of the public investment to nearly €8 million

The €6 million budget for the Traditional Farm Building Scheme is projected to lever over €11 million into the local rural economy allowing for the multiplier effect and the farmer's own investment.

locally, which is very much in line with Historic England's lower estimate. Adding in the private investment increases the spend since 2016 to €10.6 million. Once the full budget of €6 million is allocated the total investment in in rural areas is projected to exceed €11 million.

Rural Employment

Investment under the Scheme has directly supported employment in a diverse array of specialist expertise and crafts including: ecologists, conservation consultants, stonemasons, thatchers and carpenters. The Scheme has also helped to ensure that these traditional craftspeople and their skills are retained in the rural economy. In total, a minimum of 166,872 employment hours was created from 2016-2021 (including farmer inputs). That represents over 4,000 weeks' work.

A minimum of 166,872 hours employment has been created by the scheme

Our survey also revealed that farmers experienced varying degrees of difficulty in engaging the required specialists with 39% having either a problem or a big problem securing builder contractors; 22% finding a conservation consultant and 17% finding a wildlife consultant. In the case of those who were awarded a grant but didn't complete their project, our survey showed that in 36% of cases this was because they couldn't find an appropriate building contractor or the right conservation consultant.

This strongly suggests there is an opportunity to grow the employment sector in these specialist fields.

[3] https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/pilot-scheme-success-restoring-historic-barns/ 2020

On-site training for the farmer in use of lime mortar as a traditional plastering technique (Heritage Council)

Training farmers themselves in these traditional skills would also help overcome supply problems. This is specifically provided for in the Scheme and can be costed into the application.

This grant programme has also supported the supply chain for traditional materials such as slate, lime mortar, reeds for thatching etc.

Farm Efficiency

The scheme positively impacts the farm operations and its efficiency because it brings a redundant disused building back into use. While the scale of the impact is difficult to measure and will vary from farm to farm, our survey shows that 99% of farmers are using the building – mostly for storage (66%) and livestock (26%).

Farm / Household Income

The scheme has an initial negative impact on farm/household incomes because of the requirement to provide the 25% matching funds. It also creates a short-term cashflow issue as they have to pay all the invoices, prior to receiving the grant payment. However, in the longer term, due to increased farm efficiencies, however slight, it would be envisaged that this would have a positive impact on income over time.

Geographical Distribution

As outlined in Chapter 3, the distribution of grant-aided projects is not evenly spread across Ireland, with nearly 70% of projects originating west of a line drawn from Donegal to Cork. This is as a result of the link with GLAS and clearly results in an uneven impact on the rural economy.

Conclusions

The Scheme has directly invested some €5.6 million of public funds in the rural economy between 2016 and 2021, leveraging another €2.6 million in matching funds and a further €2.4 million (at least) by way of the multiplier effect. It has created over 4,000 weeks' employment and boosted demand for local craftspeople and materials. All the indicators are for a positive economic impact, albeit at a local level. The scope of that impact could be extended by changing the eligibility conditions and could be deepened if end-use for the restored buildings included farm diversification options, such as agri-tourism.

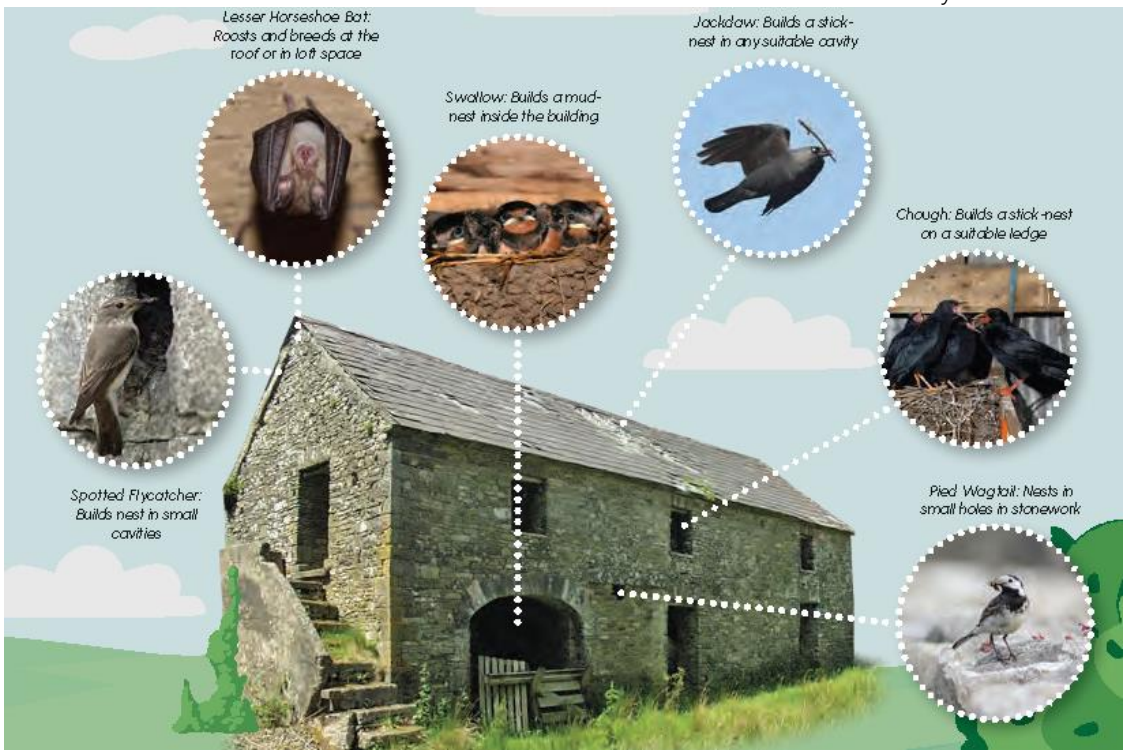
Restored farm building used as camping barn in the UK

Restored farm building used as camping barn in the UK

Fig. 6.5 Species inhabiting old farm building. *Source O'Sullivan and Lusby (2021)*

Wildlife Habitats / Protected Species

Over a six-year period and across some 380 completed projects a total of 1,173 habitats were identified through the TFB scheme. In the case of 270 projects, the habitats were identified as having protected species nesting/roosting. This means that 70% of all Traditional Farm Building projects had protected species which illustrates the huge value of these structures to our biodiversity in Ireland.



BIODIVERSITY

Many of the buildings for which grant-aid is offered are important habitats for wildlife. This section evaluates the biodiversity impact of this grant, focussing on the following:

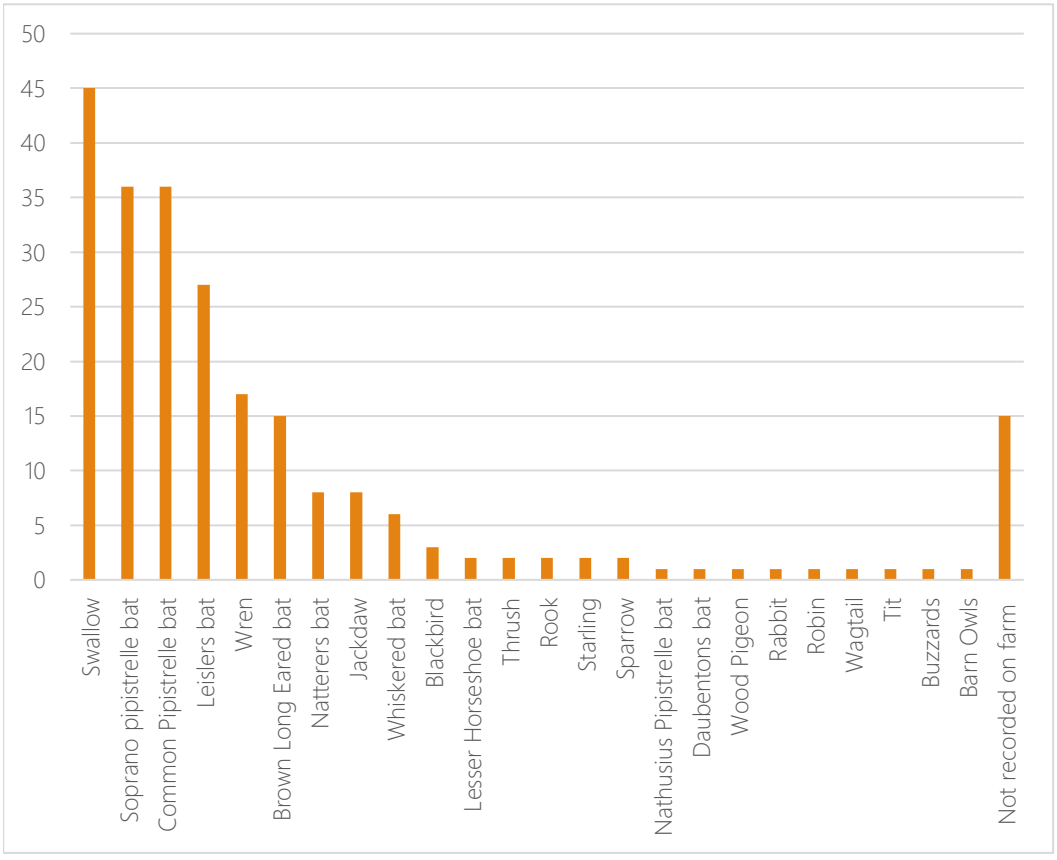
- Wildlife habitats / Protected species
- Raising awareness of biodiversity
- Long-term impact

This point was reinforced in the discussions of the Natural Heritage focus group which pointed out that that most of the rarer Irish bats live in these old stone buildings including species such as the lesser horseshoe bat. The survey results indicated that 7% of respondents would have demolished the farm building if they hadn't got the grant, which would have resulted in destruction of these important habitats, probably unwittingly by the farmer.

To ensure there is no negative impact on these habitats as a result of the building works, wildlife surveys are undertaken on all buildings identified at application stage as having bats or birds nesting/roosting. If their presence is confirmed, a wildlife consultant is engaged to advise on the building works.

Swallows were most often encountered, followed by Common and Soprano Pipistrelle bats. Swallows are an Amber-Listed species, meaning they are of 'medium' conservation concern but their traditional link with Irish farms makes them an iconic species, easily recognised, welcomed, and featuring strongly in rural folklore. Populations of the two tiny pipistrelle bat species appear to be

Fig. 6.6 Mentions of wildlife species on TFB farms: 2021



Total Number of Farms 76

The chart above illustrates the range of wildlife species that were found on farms that were approved for funding under the Traditional Farm Building Scheme in 2021 alone. The chart shows the number of times a particular species is mentioned.

growing, albeit slowly (source: Bat Conservation Ireland). A single pipistrelle can eat as many as 3,000 insects a night, including midges and mosquitos, which makes them a welcome addition to the local environment! Two of our rarest bats, the Whiskered Bat and Natterer's Bat

have also been recorded on a number of Traditional Farm Building projects and their roosts consequently protected and enhanced.

At the other end of the scale, Barn Owls – a red list species of maximum conservation concern – are poorly represented, despite their traditional association with old farm buildings. A joined-up approach with an agri-environment scheme to improve the local habitat where this species is observed would be worth developing.

Barn Owl taking advantage of a readymade home in old farm building (Agriland.ie, 2017)

Long-Term Impact

Wildlife experts participating in the Natural Heritage focus group felt that it would be very important to build in a '*look back*' exercise to understand the impact of Traditional Farm Building repairs on these wildlife habitats and their protected species. Ideally this would be undertaken on a scientific basis using a random sample of buildings in collaboration with Universities. If this longer-term study was completed this would enable a more comprehensive evaluation of the wildlife impact to be determined.

As part of our research into international comparators for the Irish scheme, we spoke with the Senior Farm Advisor for the Peak District in England where a similar scheme has been trialled. There they have found that where buildings works were undertaken to protect certain species observed on the farm, new species were subsequently attracted into the restored farm buildings where they weren't present before. As a result, in England they are considering designing a '*tool kit of building work designs*' that will actively promote the creation of new wildlife habitats in farm buildings with the specific objective of attracting new species in.

Raising awareness of biodiversity

At present, if wildlife is found in a farm building, this results in additional costs for derogation licences, surveys and species-appropriate responses. It also influences the scheduling of the building works and significantly reduces the time period in which the work can be completed, thereby making it much more difficult for the contract to be completed on time.

> *"A great scheme, more farmers need to be made aware of it and not to be afraid of applying for funding for a project. Tight time scale due to presence of bats can be an issue."*
> (Survey Respondent)

We know this creates difficulties as 54% of survey respondents indicated it was a problem to complete the project by the deadline. The Farm Owners/Beneficiaries focus group also stated that with so many projects being squeezed into the same

narrow time-period this caused significant difficulties in finding specialist building contractors who were all required at the same time.

However, despite these difficulties and the additional costs arising, 95% of farmers responded positively to the question in our Farm Survey as to whether participation in the scheme had increased their knowledge about the wildlife on their farm. This demonstrates the importance of this scheme in raising awareness amongst farmers of the biodiversity on their farms and the need to protect it.

Ideally, the discovery of wildlife in buildings scheduled for repair under the Scheme, should be a cause for celebration not concern – a positive outcome bringing benefits for the farmer.

Brown long eared bat resting on a rafter (Heritage Council)

Conclusions

The Traditional Farm Building Scheme is one of the few built-heritage grants that includes a project-aim around biodiversity. Looked at from the Integrated Capitals perspective Its impact across the Human, Intellectual and Natural capitals is positive, with the scale of that impact firmly local and/or individual for the first two but arguably regional for Natural capital. This is because of the role played by these buildings in providing a home for migrating birds as well their contribution to protecting populations of bat-species, for example, which are not simply locally important. For the same reason we rate both the impact and its significance as 'High'.

The survey results also demonstrate how this scheme has increased farmers' awareness. There are opportunities to extend this further by showing farmers how to spot the signs of wildlife in these buildings and dovetailing their protection into new measures like the Eco Scheme or ACRES.

> *"Traditional farm Buildings…also supported an array of wildlife which has become synonymous with farming. Maintaining traditional farm buildings can have real benefits for biodiversity"*
> Sullivan & Lusby (2021)

In the pilot '*Historic Building Grant*' scheme in England, wildlife surveys are undertaken on farm buildings one year after the breeding season has taken place. This enables them to evaluate the impact of the building works on the wildlife that

resides in the building and enables them to acquire a deeper, evidence-based understanding of the impact of repair works on wildlife populations on farms. In our consultation with a National Park advisor in England we were advised that they are recommending that this survey period is extended to two years after the works have been completed to enable a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the building works on biodiversity.

As a first step here, a 'Look Back' exercise would be highly desirable to see what the impact has been here for biodiversity: are the benefits being sustained, expanding or contracting? Have new species found a home in these restored buildings?

LANDSCAPE

One of the predecessors of GLAS was REPS, the Rural Environment Protection Scheme. Under this scheme, farmers committed to maintaining and improving the visual appearance of their farms. The core objectives were:

- The establishment of farming practices and production methods which reflect the need for environmental conservation and protection.
- The protection of wildlife habitats and endangered species of flora and fauna.
- The production of quality food in an extensive and environmentally friendly manner.

In 2005 the Heritage Council and Teagasc published a report titled '*Built and Natural Heritage: Series Two – Traditional Buildings on Irish Farms*'. This report drew attention to the role of traditional farm buildings as an intrinsic part of the rural landscape. This report acknowledged that many of these farm buildings are vulnerable to decay, disuse, demolition or inappropriate alteration due to the radical change in modern farm practices.

In recognition of the value of traditional farm buildings and other related structures to the Irish landscape, The Heritage Council, in partnership with the DAFM established an annual grant scheme for GLAS participants to support the conservation and repair of these vernacular structures.

The first Traditional Farm Building Scheme was introduced between 2007 and 2013, followed by the current scheme which is the focus of the present study. This section seeks to evaluate the significant positive contribution that traditional farm buildings make to the Irish landscape and will focus on the following:

> *"Ireland's landscape is enriched by its heritage of farmhouses and outbuildings, its field patterns and the nature of the boundaries that divide them. The landscape of Ireland is predominantly an agricultural one, and farmers have been its guardians."*
>
> (The Heritage Council & Teagasc, 2005)

- Added value for rural landscapes
- Increased public awareness
- Value in the eyes of the landowner

Added value to rural landscapes

Based on Heritage Council data-sets, 75% of approved projects offered some level of public landscape presence.[4] The records also show that some of these Traditional Farm Building projects are located on farms which operate farm diversification businesses such as guest houses; nurseries; equestrian centres etc. This gives added value to these rural businesses and the wider rural economy.

The impact that preservation and enhancement of traditional farm buildings can have on the rural landscape is recognised internationally in the different schemes developed to promote such work. Some of the European examples were discussed in Chapter 5. It is significant, for example, that in England schemes like this are particularly targeted towards agricultural areas of outstanding landscape value, in the knowledge that works to the traditional farm buildings to be found there will only enhance that landscape value.

Efforts have also been to ascribe notional monetary values to such landscape impact. A study into the landscape benefits arising from REPS (Campbell et al, 2006) is one of the few efforts that have been made in an Irish context to actually 'quantify' the value of landscape to the general public. It was conducted by way of a public survey to measure how much people were prepared to 'pay' for an improved rural landscape. The results indicated that landscape improvements were highly valued by the Irish public with conservative estimates suggesting that the value of the improvements generated by REPS was almost equal to the entire cost of the scheme itself. At the time of the study, REPS did not include its traditional farm buildings component, which would have been a very tangible visual benefit for the public to value. Nonetheless, the study offers some real pointers in relation to people's willingness to pay (WTP) for non-market benefits of landscape preservation and enhancement.

WTP to improve rural landscape attributes ranged from almost €300 per person per year to shift from '*No action*' to '*Some action*' and up to €350 to move from *'Some action'* to *'A lot of action'*. In other words, WTP to move from *'No Action'* to *'A lot of action'* was €650, per person per year. In fact, this particular 'step-change' i.e. moving from a situation of no intervention to one of high intervention, was most valued of all.

> *"The works have greatly enhanced the old building and has attracted a lot of positive interest from passers-by."*
>
> (Survey Respondent, 2022)

Interestingly, within the list of possible landscape attributes that could be improved, the highest WTP values were found (inter alia) for preserving wildlife habitats, followed by cultural heritage – both key elements of today's Traditional Farm Building Scheme. The average WTP per person per year for these were:

[4] Based on the years for which complete records are currently available, i.e. 2016, 2017, 2020 and 2021.

	No action to some	*Some action to a lot*	*No action to a lot*
Wildlife Habitats	€22.67	€54.53	€77.20
Cultural Heritage	€38.68	€31.50	€70.18

Source: Campbell et al (2006)

For landscape improvements based around cultural heritage, the 2006 study estimated the aggregate value at **€13.2m** a year, based on public WTP. The estimates only apply on a whole-scheme basis, i.e. it is not possible to break them down and say for each traditional farm building repaired the public WTP = €X per person per annum. However, it remains a solid indication of public willingness-to-pay for a national scheme delivering landscape improvements based on preserving cultural heritage. In 2006, the conclusion was that the public were willing to pay €13m a year for this.

Increased Public Awareness

Another way of looking at the wider landscape impact is to see how these projects have contributed to increased public awareness of their importance. For example, in 2021 approved projects hosted 14 public events to celebrate the vernacular heritage of these traditional farm buildings. In the same year, 49 projects also told their story to the public through various forms of media. Examples of events and media activities are indicated below:

- Hosting group walks and farm demonstrations
- Training courses and open information days targeted at Heritage Groups, farmers, building apprentices, Teagasc, schools and members of the public
- Signage
- Events during Heritage Week
- Farm activities targeted at members of the public, often arising from other farm diversification enterprises such as guest house, equestrian centre, nursery etc.
- Articles published on relevant websites, social media, RTE, magazines, national newspapers, short films,

> *"Too many lovely buildings in rural Ireland are falling down. It's part of the heritage of rural Ireland and something should be done urgently to stop decay of these historic buildings".*
> *(Survey Respondent, 2022)*

There are no records on the number of people attending these events, training courses or farm activities but this is something that could be considered for future grant programmes so that the level of public interest can be quantified. However, **98%** of respondents in the farm survey stated that '*other people have said how well the completed works look*' which indicates that positive reaction is being achieved at the wider public level across virtually all completed projects.

Value in the eyes of the landowner

All landscape in Ireland is owned by someone, and all farmed landscape is owned by farmers. In this regard, it is legitimate to ask what value the landowner places on the results achieved

under the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme.

We acquired valuable insights into that from our Farm Survey. This revealed that 100% of respondents thought their farm looked better as a result of the work carried out and that they were prouder of it now that the works had been completed. In addition, 97% said that the works they had carried out had encouraged others to think about restoring their old buildings or doing similar works on their farms, feeding a wider ripple effect across the local landscape.

The Farm Survey also revealed that 47% of farmers had gone on to complete additional building repairs or conservation works themselves *after* they got the grant, further confirming the value they attribute to such works and again feeding that ripple effect.

"Over the past 30 years, Ireland's heritage of rural buildings - which make rural areas unique - has been disappearing nationwide"
(Deirdre Hargey, Minister for Communities for Northern Ireland, 2022)

Example of farm buildings prior to repairs (Heritage Council)

Conclusions

Ireland's rural landscape is enriched by its wealth of vernacular farmhouses and outbuildings. However, as a result of modern farm practices, many of these buildings have become redundant and are then under threat due to a lack of repairs.

Vernacular farm buildings offer a contemporary potential for preserving traditional cattle-raising procedures and dairy products, rich cultural-heritage and new tourism activities....These constructions constitute a widespread heritage of irreplaceable architectural value, deserving the highest consideration during the process of landscape planning.

(Statuto & Picuno, 2017)

The GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme has aimed to address this issue through the provision of grants to conserve and repair this built heritage so that the materials and craftsmanship of our previous generations are protected and enjoyed by the public.

In recognition of the value of these traditional farm buildings to the rural landscape a '*Memorandum of Understanding*' (MOU) was signed in January 2022 by Ministers in Ireland and Northern Ireland to protect the built vernacular heritage of the island of Ireland.

The value that Ireland places on its rural landscape is not unique within Europe. In Italy they recognise that the architectural value of their built farm heritage is unique and has a wider impact on the rural landscape as a whole.

The Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme has conserved 522 farm structures over the last six years. Where this has taken place, there is unanimous agreement that this has enhanced the landscape value of this locality. However, due to the large number of farm buildings in Ireland in need of repair, the impact of this scheme is very limited at a national level as is apparent when we look at its impact across the various capitals.

At present, while the nature of its impact is very positive, the scale is primarily at local or individual level. Significantly more funding would need to be invested in this scheme if it is to enhance the landscape value across rural Ireland.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The impact of the Traditional Farm Building Scheme as regards climate change stems from its promotion of the reuse of existing buildings and materials instead of the construction of new.

The conservation of existing structures is part of a broader United Nations policy framework to protect the global environment. The UN Conference on Human Settlement (Habitat II) points out:

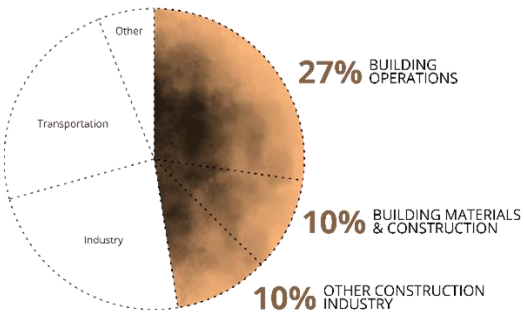
"Conservation, rehabilitation and culturally sensitive adaptive reuse of urban, rural and architectural heritage are also in accordance with the sustainable use of natural and human-made resources."
(United Nations, 1996)

The principle is well and succinctly expressed in the oft-quoted truism *"The most environmentally benign building is the one that does not have to be built."* (Grammenos and Russel, 1997). The principle is restated regularly in both academic and general literature, as well as in Fact Sheets for farmers such as that from our own Teagasc on the subject of diversification alternatives who comment that *"Reusing buildings can be part of the circular economy."* (Teagasc, 2020). Fact Sheet Diversification (Alternatives) 07 V1 2020.

Embodied Energy

All buildings contain 'embodied energy', which is the energy used to produce the building materials and indeed the energy involved in the process of construction itself. This embodied energy is what would be wasted if that structure was demolished. By way of example, English Heritage (2004) have estimated that the demolition of a Victorian terraced house wastes enough embodied energy to fill a car with 15,000 litres of petrol and drive it around the world five times.

Fig. 6.7 Annual Global CO2 Emissions



Data Sources: Global ABC Global Status Report 2021, EIA

The Built Environment

The built environment generates nearly 50% of annual global CO_2 emissions. Of these, building materials and construction ('embodied carbon) account for 20%. The

rest comes from operational costs (source Architecture 2030[5]).

Just three materials – concrete, steel, and aluminium – are responsible for 23% of total global emissions (most of this used in the built environment). Unlike operational carbon emissions, which can be reduced over time with building energy upgrades and the use of renewable energy, embodied carbon emissions are **locked in place** as soon as a building is built. These embodied carbon emissions are the critical factor in considering the environmental impact of the type of agricultural buildings potentially replaced by repaired older stock. This is because such buildings will rarely have 'operational emissions', given their use as stores or animal housing, other than lighting.

Architecture 2030 suggests that achieving zero-embodied emissions requires adopting the principles of:

- **Reuse**, including renovating existing buildings and using recycled materials
- **Reduce**, including material optimization and the specification of low to zero carbon materials.
- **Sequester**, including the design of carbon sequestering sites and the use of carbon sequestering materials.

The first two principles in particular lie at the heart of the Traditional Farm Building Scheme.

[5] Architecture 2030 is a non-profit NGO established in 2002 to transform the built environment as the major contributor of global CO_2 emissions.

Reuse vs New Build

A study commissioned by Dublin City Council in 2004 from Carrig Conservation compared the costs of reusing a variety of existing buildings with the cost of demolishing and building anew. It found that constructing new buildings on brownfield sites was more expensive than retaining and reusing existing buildings, except where the extent of building repair and refurbishment needed was extremely, and unusually, high. It also found that the 'environmental' cost of repair was less than that associated with new build.

The competing values of traditional and modern can be challenging to confront and even filters into the language used by Government agencies. This was summarised neatly during our workshop with farm-owners/beneficiaries on 17 June 2022 by the comment that *"The Heritage Council thinks in lime-mortar while the Department thinks in cement!"*

A comparison between modern and traditional building techniques and materials was undertaken by Lydia Wilson (2007), listing these as follows:

Traditional	Modern
Lime Mortar	Cement
Timber	uPVC
Stone	Steel
Nails/dowels	Solvents
Local	Distant
Thatch/Slate	Sheet metal

In this study, Wilson demonstrates the traditional approach as having lower environmental impact, pointing out for example that the use of lime mortars and renders instead of cement actually *consumes* carbon dioxide as it sets. Wilson also points out that the traditional approaches are all procurable locally and add value through local labour and skill rather than through capital and machinery, which are ultimately sourced far away. Colm Murray (2007) points out that if a JCB is used to level a building, part of the profit is effectively repatriated to the UK where the machine was made, and similarly for the steel used to replace that building and the uPVC which is made from oil (Murray, 2007, p.8). All that can be avoided by restoring an existing building to functional use instead. Again, the analysis speaks very much in favour of the approach adopted under the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme with its emphasis on traditional skills, materials and indeed reuse of existing materials. Experts at a webinar organised by Historic England in November 2020 on the whole question of embodied energy were unambiguous as to the value of reuse rather than new-build, commenting that studies showed that reuse could reduce the embodied carbon element by as much as 85%.[6]

Another study by Carrig Conservation International, this time for Historic England[7] (Carrig Conservation, 2019), compared the embodied and operational carbon emissions of two completed historic building refurbishments to a standard new build of equivalent footprint. The study concluded that restoration of the two buildings saved a combined 266 tonnes of carbon compared to the base-case.

The conclusions are not directly transferable to the repair/new build discussion for agricultural buildings, as the

> *"The retention and reuse of existing buildings should be incentivised by legislation that regulates the construction industry to avoid the unnecessary waste of materials and the embodied carbon embedded within them"*
> (Carrig Conservation (2019, 55))

Historic England study looks at the total carbon cost over 60 years, factoring in the operational cost of heating etc. However, it is still highly instructive, especially in terms of evaluating embodied carbon as a percentage of total life-cycle emissions. The study determined that embodied carbon accounted for some 30% of the new build option but only 2% of the Victorian refurbishment. Thereafter, the relative operational energy efficiency of the new build starts to gain traction BUT this is not something which ever applies to an unheated farm building. In other words, the initial carbon cost of building a *new* agricultural building will never be recovered by any subsequent operational energy-efficiency. For the equivalent floor

[6] https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/online-training/webinars/recordings/webinar-on-making-the-case-for-building-reuse-through-better-metrics-for-avoided-operational-embodied-carbon/

[7] *Understanding Carbon in the Historic Environment.* Carrig Conservation International for Historic England (Oct 2019).

area, repair or restoration of an older building will always be much more carbon-friendly. The emphasis in the Traditional Farm Building Scheme on reuse of older/salvaged materials only adds to the carbon efficiency.

Evaluating the Impact

The impact of the Scheme for climate change is clearly positive. A total of 522 buildings were repaired and brought back into functional use, disposing of any need to construct new buildings to meet that function on the farm. The full embodied energy of any new build was therefore saved and only slightly offset by the energy associated with the repairs works. If the Victorian refurbishment considered by Carrig Conservation (2019) can be taken as some indication, the ratio as a percentage of life-cycle emissions would be 15 times less for the repaired building.

Calculating the actual impact in quantitative terms is much more problematic and would require a separate study. However, a useful analysis of the embodied and operational energy on 20 Norwegian dairy farms was published in 2015 (Koesling et al, 2015). This study uses a bottom-up approach based on different building constructions to calculate the embodied energy necessary to produce the building materials in the envelope of barns and other agricultural buildings on dairy farms in Norway. The study found that the amount of embodied energy in the envelope of barns analysed varied from 750MJ to 3410MJ per cow-place per year, averaging out at 2140MJ. The average per year per animal for 'other' buildings (possibly more comparable to those replaced by repair of older buildings in the Irish situation) was 302MJ.

An earlier study (Williams et al, 2006) calculated the embodied energy for agricultural buildings in England and Wales at 62MJ/m^2 per annum, which is lower but not inconsistent with the Norwegian data when converted to cow-place. The approach would provide a useful comparative model for the Irish situation. Taking the UK data and applying it to the 522 buildings repaired since 2016 under the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme, comprising a minimum of 38,000m^2 (figures derived from Heritage Council datasets), this would suggest a saving of something like 2.36 million MJ per annum has been achieved. This is equivalent to 655,556kWh - enough to power and heat about 30 Irish households for a year.[8]

However this remains highly speculative, based on extrapolated data founded in other jurisdictions with different agricultural systems. We know the impact of the Scheme has been uniformly positive but to quantify it more precisely would require a separate study taking account of Irish building design and construction materials. Such a study is by no means unachievable, especially given the examples mentioned already from UK and Norway. In addition, 'ready reckoner' data for embodied energy in the Irish construction market is available through the Irish Green Building Council which would allow typical values to be generated for various new agricultural

[8] Based on average energy use of 20,955 per annum (source: SEAI)

buildings. This is something which could usefully be done or commissioned in advance of the next programme.

ATTITUDINAL CHANGE

One of the ambitions of any scheme such as the Traditional Farm Building Scheme is to achieve some level of attitudinal change amongst beneficiaries and, if possible, extend that impact beyond the beneficiary pool itself.

The Farm Survey

In order to test the level of attitudinal change achieved, we presented a series of questions to beneficiaries of the scheme as part of our Farm Survey. Beneficiaries were asked to say whether they 'strongly agreed', 'agreed' or 'disagreed' with a series of statements presented to them. These statements were as follows:

- I see the value now in reusing old farm buildings instead of building new ones
- I know more about repairing and maintaining old buildings now
- I have more confidence in carrying out repairs myself
- I am more inclined to use traditional craftsmen if I need special work done
- I think my farm looks better and I feel prouder of it
- I know more about the wildlife on my farm
- I know more about the Heritage Council now
- It has encouraged others to think about restoring old buildings or doing similar work themselves
- Other people have said how well the completed works look

The response was hugely positive. Over 97% said they now saw the value in restoring old farm buildings instead of building new ones; 98% said they knew more about restoring and maintaining old farm buildings now; 87% said they had more confidence in carrying out repairs themselves now; 96% were more inclined to use traditional craftsmen; and 95% knew more about the wildlife on their farm.

By any standards these are remarkable returns and testify to the quite extraordinary success the Scheme has had in changing attitudes across so many key parameters. Farmers supported under the Scheme know more about traditional skills, know more about wildlife and are convinced of the value of repairing old buildings. What is also revealing is the number who 'strongly agreed' with the statements presented: in every case, with the exception of confidence in carrying out repairs, those who 'agreed strongly' were in the substantive majority. They also feel prouder of their farm than they did before: in fact, the response to this statement received the most positive endorsement of all, with 82% strongly agreeing that this was the case and 18% agreeing – in other words, every single farmer felt their farm looked better and they were prouder of it. That this has been achieved by dint of participation in the Scheme is remarkable.

Farmers supported under the Scheme know more about traditional skills, know more about wildlife, and are now prouder of their farms.

The survey also asked farmers how the process had improved recognition of The Heritage Council – a key question as this

would not be an organisation with which many farmers would be familiar. Again, the response was very positive: participation in the Scheme has definitely increased farmers' knowledge of the Heritage Council with 65% strongly agreeing that they knew more about the organisation now and another 39% agreeing that was the case.

The survey also probed farmers on the role the Scheme had played in persuading them to consider restoring one of their old farm buildings in the first place. Again, the response affirms the impact of the scheme, with 64% of respondents saying that they would never have considered doing so except for this scheme. Not only has the Scheme persuaded them to consider restoring old farm buildings, it has actively prevented the decline and even destruction of some of these: if they had not been successful in securing grant aid, 37% of respondents said the project simply would not have been done, allowing the building to slip into further disrepair, while 7% admitted they would have demolished it.

Nor is the impact confined to direct beneficiaries under the scheme: 98% of farmers said that other people had commented on how well the completed works looked while 96% confirmed that it had encouraged others to think about doing similar restoration work themselves.

Long-term implications

The attitudinal change achieved by the scheme is also likely to have long-term effects. Most of the responses look to the future as well as the past: as we have seen already, participating farmers say that they are more inclined to use traditional craftworkers in the future and that they are more confident in carrying out repairs – in fact almost 47% said they already done so. Looking to the future again, 93% of farmers said they would recommend the Scheme to another farmer and 76% said they would apply again themselves. As we have seen already, the quality of the completed projects was also inspiring other farmers to look at their old buildings again and think about restoring them. In free-text commentary, 62 farmers offered the information that they were really pleased with the way the building looked, that they now realised the potential of these old buildings and the importance of preserving rural heritage. It is important to recall that these are unprompted comments.

> *"It's a great incentive to encourage owners of old farm buildings to carry out repair and restoration works thus keeping our heritage and traditional crafts alive..."*
>
> Comment from respondent to the Farm Survey

The Scheme has also fostered a real sense of custodianship amongst participating farmers: in 2021 for example over 80% of all farmers participating in the Scheme got involved in 'telling others' about their projects, either through media or on-farm events. This speaks to a real sense of pride in what they have achieved which again augurs well for the future.

Conclusions

The impact of the Scheme on changing farmer attitudes is impressive, extensively felt and likely to have longterm effect. Looked at under the Integrated Capitals model, the overall impact across all capitals (with the exception of Financial) is positive and the impact is moderate to high. Unsurprisingly, the impact and its significance is highest at individual level. That is the nature of attitudinal change. At a certain point in time, given sustained inputs, it will achieve a critical mass which then flows over into the general population. However, that process can be accelerated by expanding the public-outreach associated with the programme, both through the farmers themselves and through the managing authorities.

STRATEGIC IMPACT

One of the 'asks' of this study was to identify the extent to which the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme helps deliver and support the strategic objectives of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and can make a similar contribution to the objectives of the new Programme covering the period 2023-2027. Similarly, its contribution to The Heritage Council's strategic plan *Heritage at the Heart* (2018-2022) and the emerging *Heritage Ireland 2030* plan needs to be considered.

Heritage at the Heart

Heritage at the Heart is the Heritage Council's strategy document for the period 2018-2022. It sets out a very clear vision that by the end of the period heritage will be at the heart of Irish society and decision-making. The vision is to be realised via three Strategic Objectives:

1. Advancing national heritage priorities
2. Nurturing belonging
3. Ensuring a vibrant heritage sector.

In relation to the first, the plan saw the Council aligning its work with the programming of existing Government initiatives, while (inter alia) developing policies and programmes promoting the sustainability of rural communities and landscapes. The collaborative approach adopted between the Council and the Department in delivering the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme, and the focus of that scheme, chimes strongly with the ambition of this first Strategic Objective.

Turning to the second objective, the document emphasises the role heritage has to play in nurturing belonging. Some of the planned actions here were to invest in landscape partnerships and encourage collaboration, improve the quality of heritage management and create more opportunities for young people to participate in and lead heritage projects. Again, the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme can be seen to contribute directly to the first two creating new partnerships between farmers and the Heritage Council as well as developing the partnership between the Council and the Department. On the last one, while on-farm events and school visits offer an opportunity to engage young people the Scheme certainly offers potential to do much more on this front.

However, it is probably to the third objective - ensuring a vibrant heritage sector - that the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme has contributed most.

Relevant actions here include supporting local communities in caring for heritage, supporting the generation and communication of information on natural and cultural heritage and more general objectives to foster and grow the sector and develop appreciation through the schools programme. Not only has the Scheme made a significant direct contribution towards the conservation of traditional farm buildings, it has also shown the capacity for this to 'ripple' through the local community through farm visits, events and local media. The Scheme has also resulted in important skills transfer from specialists to farmers, while there is significant *unrealised* potential within the Scheme for transfer of skills and information from farmer to farmer.

Heritage at the Heart will be replaced shortly by a new plan, which will be framed around six pillars, i.e.

- Leadership & stewardship
- Climate-change & biodiversity loss
- Research
- Partnership
- Communities
- Educations & engagement

The Traditional Farm Building Scheme would fit comfortably under several of these and reinforces its relevance to Heritage policy going forward.

Heritage Ireland 2030

Heritage Ireland 2030 is the Government's Framework for Heritage, prepared following extensive public consultation. As a framework document it does not provide all the detail or all the answers, but it sets out a process by which further detail will emerge. Its Vision shows the influence of The Heritage Council's earlier Strategy, seeking to place Ireland's heritage at the very centre of decision-making about Ireland's future.

The document is structured around three themes:

1. Communities and Heritage
2. Leadership and Heritage
3. Heritage Partnerships

Under Communities and Heritage, objectives include recognition and support for the owners of heritage assets and strengthening measures to acknowledge and protect local heritage.

Under Leadership and Heritage, objectives include developing a national programme for monitoring and evaluating the value of heritage, developing a national research agenda, taking better care of our heritage through increased investment at local and national level, investment in heritage skills training, and developing best-practice standards and guidelines for heritage conservation and management.

Under Heritage Partnerships, objectives include adequate resourcing of the heritage sector, supporting The Heritage Council in implementing partnership strategies, improving coordination with private property owners (including farmers), investment in research, conservation and management, providing the highest quality heritage information, guidance and advice, and identifying funding paths for heritage in public and private ownership.

The Framework Document also includes an action-plan comprising of over 150 individual actions. Some of these are directly relevant to a new Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme including:

- Multi-annual funding models
- An apprentice programme for Traditional Skills
- Expansion of the Heritage in Schools Scheme
- Integrating heritage into urban and rural regeneration plans
- Promote vernacular built heritage, support skillbase, materials and cross-border collaboration
- Publish and implement 'A Living Tradition' (vernacular buildings)
- Support early intervention and maintenance of historic built environment
- Demonstrate benefits of good conservation through grant-funded exemplars
- Improve communication about heritage
- Support role of local cultural heritage
- Collaborate with heritage partners in EU, Northern Ireland and Britain
- Address gaps in heritage skills training opportunities
- Develop and implement a Heritage Skills Action Plan
- Establish a National Centre for Traditional Building
- Work with the custodians of heritage
- Build awareness in schools
- Fiscal incentives for driving investment
- Identify and target EU funding streams
- Develop national, cross border and international networks for knowledge transfer
- Devise best practice standards and guidance
- Encourage innovation in the sector
- Improve social media reach
- Enhance and expand result-based AECMs for natural/cultural heritage
- Implement a Heritage Skills Action Plan
- Support research into environmental sustainability and historic buildings
- Articulate a national research agenda

As the proposed actions above show, the opportunities for the Traditional Farm Building Scheme under the Heritage Ireland 2030 framework are very exciting. As an existing measure, born out of collaboration between two government entities, with an established track-record of success and enthusiastic client support, the Scheme is effectively 'shovel-ready' for expansion and equipped to deliver on a whole range of areas identified as priorities in the Framework Document. It has the potential to become a flagship scheme for Heritage Ireland 2030.

Rural Development Programmes

In each of its iterations, linked to REPS or GLAS, the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme has been founded in the relevant Rural Development Programme.

The Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme was included under Measure 7 of the 2014-2020 RDP, i.e. Basic Services and Village Renewal in Rural Areas. It was designed as a complementary measure to GLAS. The objective was to ensure that small traditional farm buildings and other structures, which are of significant cultural and heritage value, are restored and conserved for renewed practical

agricultural use as part of the normal working life of the farm.

The Scheme was intended to contribute to Focus Area 4A – Biodiversity, High Nature Value Farming and Landscapes. Various multi-functional benefits were foreseen for landscape, biodiversity, climate change, enhancement of traditional skills and contribution to the broader rural economy.

The design of the scheme clearly responds to the Focus Area objectives and as our analysis has shown, the Scheme has proved itself highly effective in delivering on its aims, including impact across the areas listed. The 'official' indicator for the Scheme, to be reported annually, was simply the number of traditional buildings restored. The 2023 target for this was 350 buildings. To date, well over 500 have been repaired and restored to functional use. The Scheme is also on course to fully utilise its budget. In terms of its contribution to the RDP, the Scheme must be regarded as a success.

Turning to the new CAP Strategic Plan, which runs from 2023, is structured across two Pillars:

Pillar 1 delivers a series of income supports including the Basic Income Support for Sustainability and the new Eco Scheme (mandatory for member states, voluntary for farmers).

Pillar 2 delivers a series of voluntary sectoral-type measures such as AECMs, Organic Farming, EIPs and LEADER.

The Indecon Review of the 2014-2020 RDP recommended the new programme focus on a smaller number of bigger schemes. Accordingly, no provision has been made to include a new Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme as part of the next RDP. We can see the logic for this – the Scheme is small and the benefits of inclusion are arguably outweighed by the complex and often cumbersome protocols of EU programming. However, the link with broader national and EU objectives was an important feature of the previous schemes, giving it status with famers as part of a co-ordinated package of measures as well as providing the integrated policy approach which is now being stressed so strongly through Heritage Ireland 2030.

Conclusions

While a *de facto* decision has been made not to include the Scheme in the next RDP, no formal decision has been made for its continued life in any other guise, pending the outcome of this study. We believe that an immediate decision should be made to extend the Scheme under the N+3 Rule pending its establishment as an Exchequer-funded measure on a multi-annual basis. Establishing it in this way will give it a flexibility it does not have at present, and could not have under the RDP, to allow the new Scheme adapt and respond to conditions on the ground. However, we also feel it should maintain an 'ideological' link to the new RDP, helping deliver key objectives for biodiversity and climate-change by linking eligibility to participation in the new Eco Scheme, ACRES, EIPs or Organics. This will ensure a joined-up approach towards maximising environmental returns in the broadest sense, as well as ensuring that 'active farmer' link, while still giving the new Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme

the flexibility to respond to developments flowing from Heritage Ireland 2030.

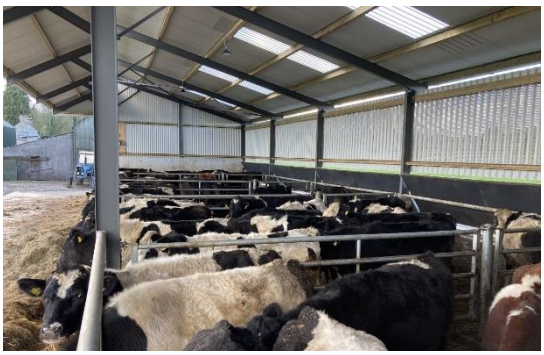
In that regard, the opportunities for any new Scheme under the Heritage Ireland framework are very exciting. The Scheme has been tested and adjusted over almost 20 years and is effectively 'shovel-ready' to play its part in delivering on the ambition of both Heritage Ireland 2030 and the new CAP Strategy.

VALUE FOR MONEY – TO REPAIR OR REBUILD?

In Chapter 3, we looked at the administrative cost of running the Scheme. Using the DPER framework for assessing staff costs in both The Heritage Council and the Department, the total cost of running the scheme (including overheads but not Travel and Subsistence) came to €133,781 in 2021, or around 13% of the annual public investment. On a per-project basis, the cost of administering each project came to about €2,000. Both calculations gave returns well in excess of the cost of running the Department's AWNSS scheme, which has similar levels of grant-aid (€32,000 vs €25,000) and similar focus on building works. We drew the conclusion that the approach applying under the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme could be streamlined significantly to achieve better value-for-money.

In this section we want to look at whether value-for-money is being achieved in terms of the principal output, i.e. the delivery of restored buildings for use on the farm. The default option for many farmers for many years has been 'new build' rather than repair, helped by the availability of grants for new construction under TAMS and its predecessors.

While new builds are impossible to avoid and in many cases are and will continue to be essential for a modern working farm, pre-existing disused farm buildings do provide a viable alternative in certain instances. But how do the costs of new build vs repair 'stack-up'?



TAMS Reference Costs

TAMS (Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes) is accompanied by a set of 'National Reference Costs' which provide a basis for estimating the likely cost of any investment for which grant-aid is sought. At the time of writing, the most recent set of Reference Costs are those issued in April 2022.[9] The cost for construction of a loose-house (probably the best comparison for some of the traditional farm building projects in terms of end-use) is given here as €162.81 per m^2. This is the same rate as given for the construction of a calf-house with no penning – again another reasonably

[9] *National Reference Costs*. Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. 9 April 2022

comparable end-use for a traditional farm building restoration.[10]

Equivalent Costs under the TFB

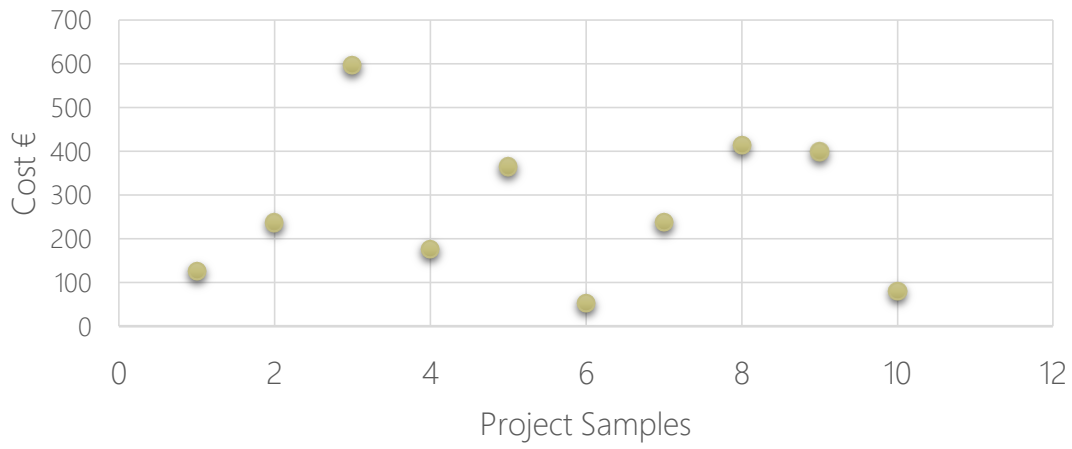
There are no similar reference costs for the repair or restoration of traditional farm buildings as each one is a unique project, designed and costed separately. However, a similar per metre^2 rate can be computed from the average costs, using the total floor areas of the buildings brought back into use. In this regard the 2021 data (the most recent available at time of writing) suggests an average rate of €216 per m^2. The average figure over the scheme as a whole comes in at a very similar €214 per m^2. However, this should be taken to represent the upper-end average, as the total floor-areas for each year are not entirely complete.

Variation in costs per m^2 is significant, however, reflecting the different levels of work required to bring different buildings back into use. Sampling of individual case-files for 2021, based on single buildings with floor areas from 45m^2 to 240m^2 and sampled across 10 counties, produced a range of figures running from €82 to €597 per m^2. Slightly over half of these grouped around or below the generated average. On that basis, it seems fair to use the generated average for overall comparison.

Conclusion

It would appear, therefore, that in most cases the cost of repairing an existing traditional farm building and returning to agricultural use is slightly more expensive than providing the same area through new build. However, costs per m^2 may well come back into balance, or indeed shift in favour of repair, when the impact of recent inflation is brought to bear. This is much more likely to impact on new builds, with their reliance on steel and imported materials, than on works to traditional buildings, where so much material is sourced locally or even recycled.

Fig. 6.8 Traditional Farm Building Costs 2021 - Sample €/Per Metre^2



[10] Note: the cost of construction includes the following elements: roof, end cladding, gutters, pen dividers, walls, drinkers, electrical wiring and fittings.

Into that should also be factored the significant wildlife benefit accruing and the improved landscape impact, neither of which are associated with new builds. Perhaps most significantly in this context is the carbon footprint, which for the traditional building is massively reduced vis a vis the new build. This has been assessed elsewhere in this chapter and shown (drawing on examples elsewhere) that life-cycle emissions could be up to 15 times less for the repaired building, while the embodied energy of the repaired building represents a saved resource in contrast to the energy emission required by the new build.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that the balance is very much in favour of the repaired traditional farm building, where although the cost per m^2 *may* be slightly more on average, the range of benefits accruing makes this investment much better value-for-money.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This chapter set out to evaluate the impact of the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme across a range of areas, i.e. traditional skills, cultural heritage, attitudinal change, biodiversity, climate-change, landscape and rural economy, assessing the extent and nature of that impact via an 'integrated capitals' approach as well. We also looked at the strategic contribution made by the Scheme to date and its future potential, having regard to the wider strategic framework. Finally, we looked at the question of value-for-money, comparing the cost of repairing a traditional farm building with providing the same floor-area by way of a new build.

Impact of the Scheme

Our assessment of the impact of this Scheme across the seven areas identified for review is overwhelmingly positive. Our assessment is summarised in the two tables at fig 6.9 and while the scoring is necessarily subjective it is backed up by the detailed analyses set out earlier.

In every case, the nature of the impact has been positive and in five out of the seven areas reviewed that impact has been High. The big wins are for Traditional Skills, Cultural Heritage, Attitudinal Change and Biodiversity, where the Local/Individual scale of impact (Regional in the case of biodiversity) does not detract from its significance. We assess the impact as Moderate in one case (Climate Change) and Low in another (Rural Economy). In both cases this is because the small-scale nature of the scheme.

The same pattern emerges when we view the results through the Integrated Capitals prism. The impact is universally positive across all six capitals (Human, Intellectual, Natural, Built, Social and Financial) and viewed as High for the first four listed. We see the impact as Moderate for Social capital, reflecting the unrealised potential for networking amongst participants. We see the impact as Low for Financial for much the same reason as it is Low for Rural Economy – it simply doesn't have the scale for more serious impact and there may even be an initial financial loss to the farmer when compared to a new build.

Fig. 6.9 Summary assessments of the Traditional Farm Building Scheme by Impact Area and Integrated Capitals.

Impact Area	Nature Positive Negative Neutral	Impact Low Moderate High	Scale Local/Individual Regional National	Significance Low Moderate High
Traditional Skills Greatly increases awareness/application by participants and opportunities for craftworkers.	Positive	High	Local/Individual	High
Cultural Heritage Preserves heritage, adds value/purpose, increases awareness/pride in 97%+ participants.	Positive	High	Local	High
Attitudinal Change Significant attitudinal change achieved in up to 98% of participants.	Positive	High	Individual	High
Biodiversity Clear benefits to biodiversity: 1,000+ habitats secured, most with protected species.	Positive	High	Regional	High
Climate Change Climate-friendly alternative to new build with potential energy saving of 2.6m MJ p.a.	Positive	Moderate	Local	Low
Landscape 100% of participants say farm looks better, with 98% saying others locally agree.	Positive	High	Local	Moderate
Rural Economy €10.6m invested in rural economy to date (inc multipliers). 4,000 weeks employment created.	Positive	Low	Local	Moderate

Capital & Effect	Nature Positive Negative Neutral	Impact Low Moderate High	Scale Local/Individual Regional National	Significance Low Moderate High
Human Significant impact at the individual level, increased pride, awareness of the value of traditional buildings and enhanced skills.	Positive	High	Individual	High
Intellectual Significant attitudinal change at individual level (up to 98% of participants) but contribution of this to wider strategic aims limited by size of scheme.	Positive	High	Individual	High
Natural Clear benefits to biodiversity – 1,000+ habitats, most with protected species. Landscape contribution recognised and potential energy saving of 2.6m MJ p.a.	Positive	High	Regional	High
Built Preservation of culturally important built heritage, adding value/renewed functionality. Farm-level and local spin-offs.	Positive	High	Local	High
Social Impact is less than others but increased community pride noted and new networks developed (inc with Heritage Council links). Wider impact limited by scale of scheme.	Positive	Moderate	Local	Low
Financial €10.6m invested to date (inc multipliers) and 4,000 weeks employment. No direct cost-saving but better VFM when local impact and climate included.	Positive	Low	Local	Moderate

A consistent feature of the Scheme then, whether viewed by impact-area or by capital-effect, is that its impact is universally positive but strongest and most significant at the individual and local level. This is likely to remain the case, even with increased budget and a relaxation of the eligibility requirement, but there are things that can be done to enhance the impact. The KPIs for the scheme should also be significantly expanded to enable better ongoing evaluation of Scheme performance from year-to-year. Substantial data is already collected by Scheme management and it is simply a matter of formalising this in the form of KPIs and ensuring consistency in reporting.[11]

Strategic Contribution

This required review of the Scheme in the context of a wider strategic framework as represented by The Heritage Council's strategic plan *Heritage at the Heart* (2018-2022) and *Heritage Ireland 2030*, as well as the RDP 2014-2020 and the forthcoming programme covering the period 2023-2027.

Our conclusion was that the Scheme had clearly contributed in a very effective way to the three strategic objectives set out in *Heritage at the* Heart, i.e.

1. Advancing national heritage priorities
2. Nurturing belonging
3. Ensuring a vibrant heritage sector.

As regards the RDP, the design of the scheme clearly responds to the Focus Area objectives and has proved itself highly effective in delivering on its aims, well exceeding the target set for the number of traditional buildings restored (500 to date vs an overall target of 350).

Looking ahead, the opportunities for any new Scheme under the *Heritage Ireland 2030* framework are very exciting, with the ability to contribute in a significant way to at least 26 of its action-points and the potential to become a flagship scheme as the initiatives set out in the framework document begin to take shape. There are clear opportunities here for The Heritage Council as well to drive a new focus on vernacular architecture and other elements of its emerging plan *Our Place in Time*.

Similarly, while any new Traditional Farm Building Scheme seems unlikely to form part of the next suite of EU co-funded measures, a wholly Exchequer-funded version can and should maintain an 'ideological' link to the new CSP by linking eligibility to participation in the new Eco Scheme, ACRES, EIPs or Organics. This will ensure a joined-up approach towards maximising environmental returns in the

[11] We suggest the following KPIs: number of projects, number of buildings, floor-area, employment-hours,% own labour, number of habitats and protected species identified, public landscape presence, public outreach, grants offered and approved, total investment, penalties applied.

broadest sense, as well as ensuring that the 'active farmer' link is maintained.

Value-for-Money

The final area we looked at was Value-for-Money. In most cases it seemed that the cost of repairing an existing traditional farm building and returning to agricultural use was slightly more expensive than providing the same area through new build. However, we also pointed out that spiralling inflation is much more likely to impact on new builds, with their reliance on steel and imported materials, than on works to traditional buildings, where so much material is sourced locally or even recycled.

This will very likely bring the cost of repair vs new-build back into balance, at the very least, or indeed reverse it. In addition, the repair of the traditional farm building brings benefits for biodiversity and climate-change which simply do not arise in the case of a new build.

Traditional farm building in Co. Kerry after restoration works. (Heritage Council)

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

We set ourselves three principal questions at the start of this process, which together covered all the various detailed evaluation requirements set out for this study. Those three questions were:

- To what extent have we achieved the ambition of the Scheme?
- Are we doing it the right way?
- Are we getting value for money?

Each of the chapters has considered different aspects of the more detailed evaluation questions set and each has summarised its own thoughts and drawn specific conclusions along the way. At this point we return to those three big questions under the headings Ambition, Process and Value.

Ambition

In Chapter 6 we considered the impact of the Scheme over a wide range of areas, These were:

- Landscape
- Biodiversity
- Traditional Skills
- Cultural Heritage
- Rural Economy
- Climate Change
- Attitudinal Change

In each case the impact of the Scheme was positive and in many cases very positive. The analysis showed that the Scheme has certainly realised the full *breadth* of its ambition but it also showed that the *extent* to which that had been realised had not been evenly achieved across all. Because of the scale of the scheme, applied at national level with what is arguably a regional budget, its impact is strongest at the local and individual level. This is further skewed by confining eligibility solely to farmers who are signed-up to GLAS.

However, at that local/individual level its impact has been remarkable. This is evident particularly in the crucial area of attitudinal change, where the Scheme has demonstrably changed the way farmers look at the world and very much for the better. Farmers who have benefited under the Scheme know more about traditional skills, have a much better appreciation of their own cultural heritage and greater pride of place. They know more about the wildlife on their farm and through the works they have carried out important and sometimes threatened species have found new sanctuary. The local landscape looks better and this is appreciated by others.

The impact of the scheme at local/individual level has been remarkable. The challenge now is to extend the scope of that achievement.

Significant employment has been created while the benefits of the investment have remained within the local economy, for the most part, rather than being transferred abroad through payments for steel, PVC and machinery. Traditional skills have enjoyed a resurgence to the extent that farmers now have difficulties in

locating skilled labour, pointing to real opportunities to grow this sector further. This choice of building material and techniques, along with the decision to repair rather than build in the first place, has brought significant climate change benefits which continue to be delivered over the lifetime of the building.

All of this represents significant achievement, particularly for a scheme with a budget of no more than €1m a year. The challenge and indeed opportunity now is to extend the scope of that achievement. In that regard, we have identified real potential for this Scheme to become a flagship measure of Heritage Ireland 2030, a tried and tested approach capable of delivering on so many of the actions set out in the framework document.

Process

In Chapter 3, we specifically looked at the mechanics of the Scheme, how it does its business. The basic structure is sound, and indeed more than sound. The application process is relatively simple, excellent advice and support is available to applicants and this continues through the process to the very end for approved projects. The relationship between DAFM and the Heritage Council is excellent and workmanlike. The Scheme is managed with admirable efficiency with virtually all projects completed within the same calendar year, despite the considerable pressure of the various pinch points along the way. The overall management of the Scheme received very positive comment at our Workshops and in the Farm Survey, notwithstanding the ideas also put forward for improvement.

From our perspective we can see areas where the process can be improved too, including automation of elements of the application and payment process, simplification of the approval and inspection regime, making more use of the selection criteria to help target investment from year to year, creating a dynamic casefile of successful projects for new applicants to browse, providing more help with locating consultants and specialists, actively seeking to increase success rates for applications, and broadening the scope of the Scheme geographically and thematically. Increasing the farmer focus of this Scheme through peer-to-peer learning and increased training for farmers in traditional skills would also be very beneficial.

The overall management and delivery of the Scheme is excellent but there are opportunities to improve the process further.

Value

We considered the question of value for money under two broad headings, i.e. administrative efficiency and capital costs of investment.

Under the first heading, we looked at the staff inputs from both the Heritage Council and the Department using the DPER model for assessing costs. On average the cost of administration runs at about 13% of the value of the public investment, or 10% excluding inspections. While this compares very favourably to a scheme like LEADER where a combined administrative/animation function of up to 25% of overall budget is accepted, it is

well in excess of the cost of running the Department's AWNSS scheme which comes in at about 4% of the public investment excluding inspections. The per-project cost of administration shows similar disparity: €2,000 for the Traditional Farm Building Scheme and only €200 for AWNSS. While it is fully appreciated that we are not comparing like with like (the 1-1 support provided under the Traditional Farm Building Scheme does bring real benefits), there is in our opinion still scope for greater efficiency.

When we look at what value is being achieved by the capital investment, the picture is a lot clearer. In terms of floor area, the average cost of repairing a traditional farm building seems to cost slightly more than delivering the same area by way of a new build (€216 vs €163 per m^2). However, the gap between the two costs is likely to close or even reverse with recent increases in the cost of imported materials like steel and uPVC while the benefit to the local economy is stacked very much in favour of the traditional approach.

There is scope to improve efficiency in the administration of the Scheme but as regards the capital investment we conclude that the best value for money is achieved through repair/restoration instead of new build.

Value for money also has to take account of other things too, one of which is quality. Leaving aside entirely any subjective argument about the 'quality' of one finished product over another in terms of workmanship and usability, the restored traditional farm building delivers a much higher quality product in terms of biodiversity, landscape impact and climate change. In the case of the first two variables, the modern building does not register at all while for climate change the impact of a new build is distinctly negative. In our analysis we estimated that life-cycle emissions for the repaired building could be as much as 15 times less, while the embodied energy saved by reuse represents a positive resource in its own right. We conclude therefore that euro for euro the balance of advantage lies very much with restoration rather than new build.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having regard to the foregoing, our detailed recommendations now follow. These are organised under the following headings with each recommendation identified as Priority 1, 2 or 3:

- Policy Framework
- Finance
- Programme mechanics
- Research
- Communication

The key recommendation is that the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme should continue, that its budget should be increased and that it should be established on a multi-annual basis as a wholly Exchequer-funded measure.

In the meantime, and to allow time for a full redesign, we recommend immediate extension of the existing scheme using the N+3 rule. GLAS contracts expire at end of 2022 but, rather than set precedent for any new AECM links at this stage, we suggest that participation in GLAS in 2022

should define eligibility for the Traditional Farm Building Scheme in 2023.

The shape of a new Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme

Although entirely Exchequer-funded, we believe the new scheme should remain linked to CAP agri-environment schemes for the purpose of defining eligibility and to ensure a joined-up approach across all such measures targeting Irish farms.

We recommend the annual budget should be increased to at least €1.5m but ideally €2m. This will allow additional projects, wider scope and an increased success rate of up to 30% on applications. We also recommend that the maximum grant should be increased from €25,000 to €30,000 to keep in line with inflationary pressures in the building sector.

The partnership arrangement between the Heritage Council and DAFM has been critical to the success of the Scheme and is an example of how two entities with very different missions can pool resources and expertise to deliver a scheme to a level that neither could achieve alone. That partnership remains critical and should be maintained.

In order to improve administrative cost-effectiveness, it is recommended that the 100% in-person inspection regime is replaced with a risk-based model and greater reliance on the role of the conservation consultant. Additional staff resources will be required in The Heritage Council and possibly DAFM, depending on expansion of the Scheme. The payment system at the DAFM end should be automated.

We recommend extending the current 12 month grant-cycle to 18 months to alleviate the time pressure on farmers for completing projects. In addition, introducing mechanisms to assist farmers who are not familiar with forms would help to ensure that 'significant heritage buildings' are not lost due to poorly completed application forms.

We also recommend further strengthening the role of the farmer through up-skilling, incentivising own labour, offering short traditional skills courses, developing farmer-to-farmer 'buddy' schemes and establishing a farmer ambassador programme.

We recommend greater flexibility in the application of the scheme selection criteria to target particular needs from time-to-time and if necessary relax the public visibility requirement further for important buildings. We also question the requirement that supported buildings be used solely for agricultural use: we see the potential of these buildings for diversification into areas such as agri-tourism as well, which will support overall farm viability.

We believe that the research component supporting the scheme needs to be strengthened. Better baseline data and asset-characterisation is required to help target the scheme where it is needed most. A 'look-back' exercise should also be undertaken of supported projects to assess the continuing impact/benefits for wildlife on the farm.

Finally, we identify opportunities to increase the scheme profile and its achievements through improved public messaging on social media, newsletters, information events and travelling exhibitions. In addition, the creation of an online interactive map of projects would greatly aid new applicants and widely communicate the benefits of this scheme.

Fig 7.1 Table of Recommendations

Policy Framework

	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	WHO
1	The Traditional Farm Building Scheme (TFB) should continue.	1	DAFM
2	In line with the Indecon recommendation to focus on 'big' schemes in the next RDP, the future TFB should be established as an Exchequer-funded measure, on a multi-annual basis, operating in step with the CSP and contributing to its aims.	1	DAFM
3	Consider maintaining the link to CAP agri-environment schemes (e.g. ACRES, Eco, EIPs, Organics) to ensure the 'active farmer' requirement is met and that the new TFB scheme contributes to wider RDP objectives even if not RDP-funded.	1	DAFM
4	Align new TFB strongly to Heritage Ireland 2030 priorities: use flexibility of a wholly Exchequer-funded scheme to help adapt as these priorities crystallise and deliver as a flagship measure of the new policy. Support and if necessary drive the Heritage Ireland 2030 ambition for a new Centre for Traditional Skills.	1	HC
5	Relax Public Visibility Requirement – provision already exists for this but could be facilitated by reducing the relevant score on the selection criteria; remove altogether if building is of sufficient heritage value.	2	HC
6	Provide more flexibility on end-use possibilities: if proposed end-use forms part of farm-business diversification this should be an acceptable end-use. Scheme should only fund repairs as before but the owner should be free to invest further provided works respect architectural and biodiversity value of the structure.	2	Both
7	Broaden eligibility to include some pre-1960 block-built structures and some post-1960 structures. Inclusion should be based on architectural and/or habitat value.	3	HC
8	Provide better clarity on re-use of materials on site, to include minimum expected lifespans.	3	HC
9	Look at opportunity for using EPDs (Environmental Product Declarations) as a way to demonstrate environmental credentials of a farm building repair.	3	HC

Finance

	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	WHO
10	Continue Scheme on interim basis under the Rural Development Programme until 2025 (N+3 rule) pending full redesign.	1	DAFM
11	New scheme should be wholly Exchequer-funded with a multi-annual basis in step with CAP programming period.	1	DAFM
12	Annual budget should be increased to at least €1.5m but ideally €2m to allow additional projects, wider scope and higher success rate on applications. Keep budget under review to maximise participation.	1	DAFM
13	Maximum grant rate should remain 75%.	1	DAFM
14	Increase maximum grant to €30,000 (similar to current AWNSS ceiling).	2	DAFM
15	Incentivise direct input by farmer through 'own labour bonus' where s/he delivers 40% or more of the project.	2	Both

Operational Issues – Management and Administration

	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	WHO
16	Partnership between Heritage Council and DAFM works well but review the current MoU to include provisions for annual meeting at CEO/ASG/PO level, PR/communication, data-sharing and cost-sharing.	1	Both
17	Consider use of written procedure by HC Board to approve recommended projects	2	HC
18	Increase the Heritage Council staff resource assigned to the Scheme by at least one full time Executive Officer to ensure adequate back-up for Project Manager, safeguard programme-delivery and quality control, protect corporate memory and improve succession planning. Consider secondment from Civil Service.	1	HC
19	Review the requirement for additional staff resource at DAFM side when system changes implemented (shift to 18 month cycle and automated payments).	2	DAFM
20	Agree new set of KPIs to include those recommended (Chapter 6)	1	Both

Operational Issues – Scheme Mechanics

	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	WHO
21	Adopt new 18 month cycle: open October with approvals by February/March	1	Both
22	Consider use of thematic tranches to proactively advance particular objectives while maintaining a core budget for mainstream projects	2	HC
23	Build-in automatic validations into online application system to ensure all applications include all required information before being submitted; build in 'as you go' prompts to guide and improve content.	1	HC
24	Develop a farmer-centred Scheme by: • Incentivising own labour (own labour bonus where delivering 40%+ of project) • Offering short (2 day) traditional skills courses • Developing a 'buddy' system (farmer-to-farmer advice) • Mentoring where farmers struggling with application system • Establishing a register of consultants and wildlife experts (DAFM register of Agricultural Agents is a good model). • Growing the annual gathering of farmers, advisors and others involved in the Scheme • Developing a farmer ambassador programme for the Scheme	1	HC
25	Look at possibilities for actively rewarding discovery of wildlife on farms	2	HC
26	Replace 100% in-person inspection regime with a combination of the following: • Risk-assessment plus random spot-checks • Greater reliance on consultant sign-off • Online video inspections (currently being trialled) • Tiered approach for simple vs complex projects, low-cost vs high; some fast-tracked with minimal oversight and online inspection	1	HC
27	Automate payment system at DAFM end.	2	DAFM
28	Consider annual workshops for Consultants and wildlife experts to ensure consistency of approach. Online CPD-style programme (at home in own time).	3	HC
29	Create standard, coded, spreadsheet for in-house recording of project data – objective should be fully searchable content, synchronised with DAFM data.	1	HC

Research

	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	WHO
30	Consider a 'Look-back' exercise in co-operation with Third Level partner for wildlife impact, building use and on-going use by farmer of skills acquired.	1	HC
31	Consider a national and regional characterisation programme – commission state-of-knowledge review as a first step; identify regional and national priorities for traditional farm buildings in collaboration with Universities.	2	HC
32	Consider the development of a Central Asset Register for traditional farm buildings on Irish farms. All new applications to upload images, maps and descriptions to the Central Register to which applications for aid will then link. Data retained even if application unsuccessful. Agricultural Advisors similarly to post images from each Eco Scheme farm to central database.	2	HC

Communication

	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	WHO
33	Improve public messaging and general PR – annual newsletter, travelling exhibition, share social media feeds/stories/pics with DAFM to reach wider audience.	2	Both
34	Create interactive map of completed projects with farmer/contractor details and sources of materials (consultant could fill out very short, simple input-form on completion). Heritage Maps layer currently in design could deliver much of this. National Rural Network mapping also a good model.	2	HC
35	Develop network with similar schemes internationally – begin with UK.	2	Both

Appendices

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Appendix 2 Farm Survey: Approved Applicants

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

Traditional Farm Building Grant Scheme
Online Survey

Dear Farmer,

We are conducting a very short survey on the **GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme** and as you previously carried out work under this scheme, we would love to get your thoughts on it, how it worked for you and its impact on your farm. Your feedback will be invaluable in helping to shape this grant programme and its future development and funding.

All you have to do is click on the link below to complete the online survey which will take no longer than **8 minutes** to complete and largely involves tick boxes. **This is a completely anonymous survey – you are not identified in any way once you click on the link.** All feedback will be examined by an independent consulting team who are carrying out a full review of the Scheme.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FJNK88V

However, if you would prefer to complete a paper copy of the survey or share your views through a telephone call please email (Heritage Council email address inserted) and this will be arranged. Again, this process will be handled by the independent consultants to ensure **complete confidentiality**.

Your feedback is very important to both the Department and the Heritage Council and we thank you for taking the time to share your views.

Regards,

Anna Meenan

Heritage Council

* 1. How did you hear about the Traditional Farm Building Scheme?

- ◯ Word of mouth
- ◯ Farm Advisor
- ◯ National Press / Radio
- ◯ Family / Friends
- ◯ Website / Social Media
- ◯ Other

* 2. Would you agree or disagree with this statement: "I would never have considered restoring one of my old farm buildings except for this Scheme."

- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree

* 3. What works did you carry out?

- ◯ Repair of a building
- ◯ Repair of farmyard features

(e.g. gates, yard walls, yard surfaces, millrace)

* 4. How happy are you with the completed project?

- ◯ Not happy
- ◯ Happy
- ◯ Very Happy

5. If you did work to a building, what are you using the building for now?

- ◯ Livestock
- ◯ Not being used
- ◯ Equipment / Machinery
- ◯ Other
- ◯ Store / Tools

* 6. Did you undertake the works yourself?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Partly

* 7. How did you fund your portion of the costs? (tick as many as are relevant)

- ☐ Own Labour
- ☐ Own Funds
- ☐ Loan

* 8. Have you carried out any additional building repairs or conservation works yourself on your farm buildings after completing the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Grant Scheme?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

* 9. How did you find the following?

	Not a problem	Problem	Big problem
Accessing information / guidance during the grant process	◯	◯	◯
Finding matching funding	◯	◯	◯
Finding the right wildlife consultant	◯	◯	◯
Finding the right conservation consultant	◯	◯	◯
Securing building contractors	◯	◯	◯
Completing the project by the deadline	◯	◯	◯
Drawing down the payment from the Heritage Council / Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine	◯	◯	◯
Utilising traditional building skills and methods	◯	◯	◯
Restrictions regarding environmental and heritage regulations	◯	◯	◯
Keeping the project within the original budget	◯	◯	◯

* 10. How long did it take to complete the application form?

- ◯ 1-4 hours
- ◯ 5-8 hours
- ◯ 8 hours +

* 11. Please tick the following statements below that best describes your situation regarding the completion of the application form? (tick as many as are relevant)

- [ ] Easy to complete
- [ ] Complicated to complete
- [ ] Time consuming

* 12. Would you apply again under the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme for other works on your farm in the future?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Maybe
- ◯ No

* 13. Would you like any changes to the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Grant Scheme?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Maybe
- ◯ No

* 14. If yes/maybe what changes would you like considered?

* 15. Has the Scheme changed the way you / others think? (answer all please)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't agree
I see the value now in reusing old farm buildings instead of building new ones	○	○	○
I know more about repairing and maintaining old buildings now	○	○	○
I have more confidence in carrying out repairs myself	○	○	○
I am more inclined to use traditional craftsmen if I need special work done	○	○	○
I think my farm looks better and I feel prouder of it	○	○	○
I know more about the wildlife on my farm	○	○	○
I know more about The Heritage Council now	○	○	○
It has encouraged others to think about restoring their old buildings or doing similar work themselves	○	○	○
Other people have said how well the completed works look	○	○	○

* 16. What year did you apply for the Traditional Farm Building Grant?

- ○ 2016
- ○ 2017
- ○ 2018
- ○ 2019
- ○ 2020
- ○ 2021

* 17. If you hadn't secured a grant under the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme, what would have happened?

- ◯ The project would have been done anyway
- ◯ The project would not have been done
- ◯ The project would have been done but at a later date
- ◯ The project would have been done, but at smaller scale than originally planned
- ◯ The project would have been done, but to a lower standard
- ◯ I would have put up a new building instead
- ◯ I would have demolished the building

* 18. Would you recommend the grant scheme to another farmer?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Maybe
- ◯ No

19. Any other comments?

Farm Survey Results:

June 2022

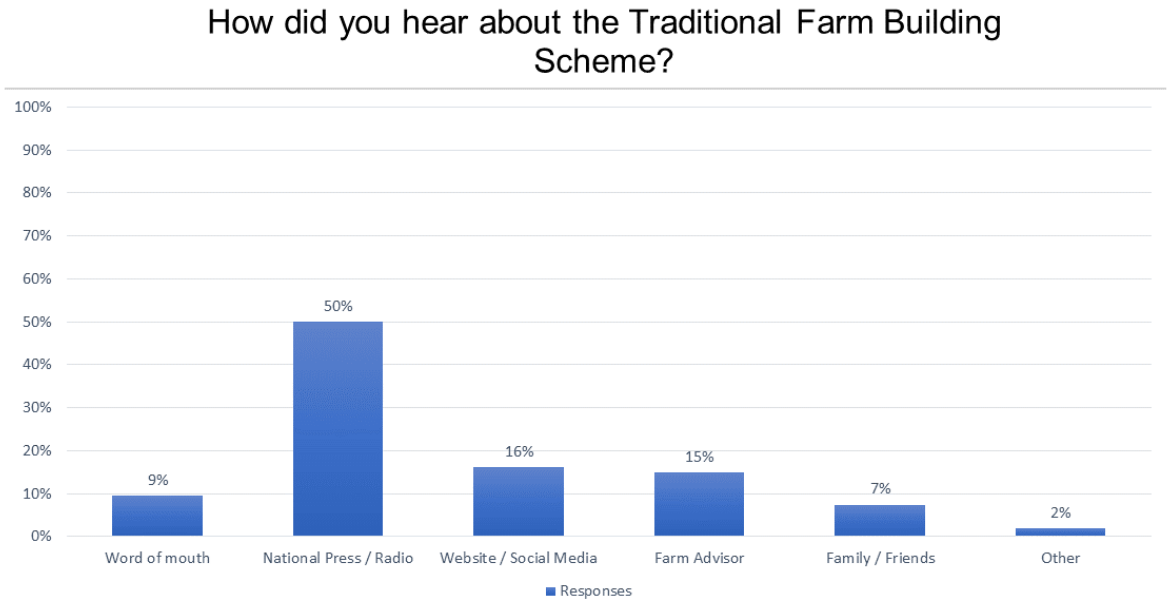
- 238 Successful applicants returned online :

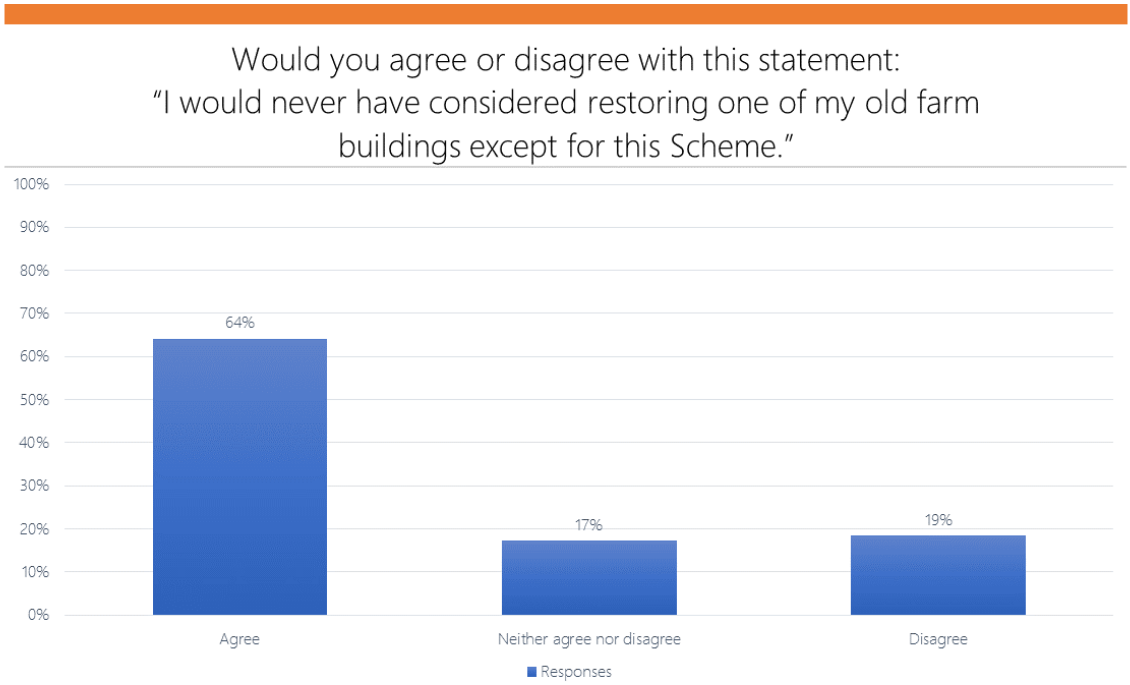
Survey Closed 10.06.2022

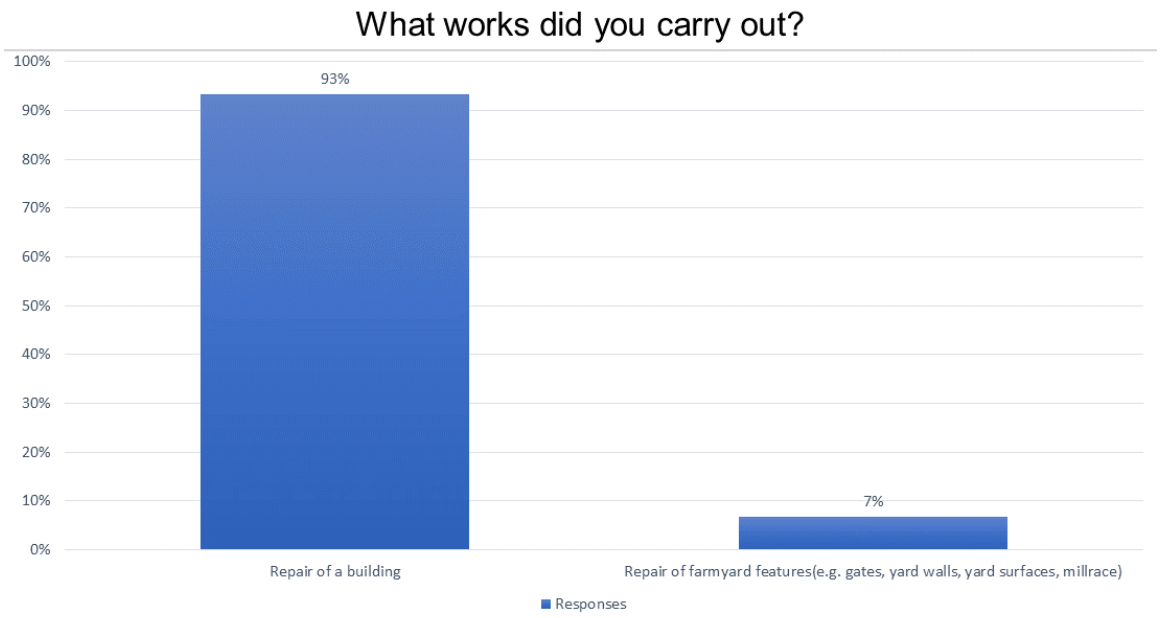
- (19 paper copies received)
- Surveys circulated to successfulfarmers: 2016 - 2021 (6 year period)

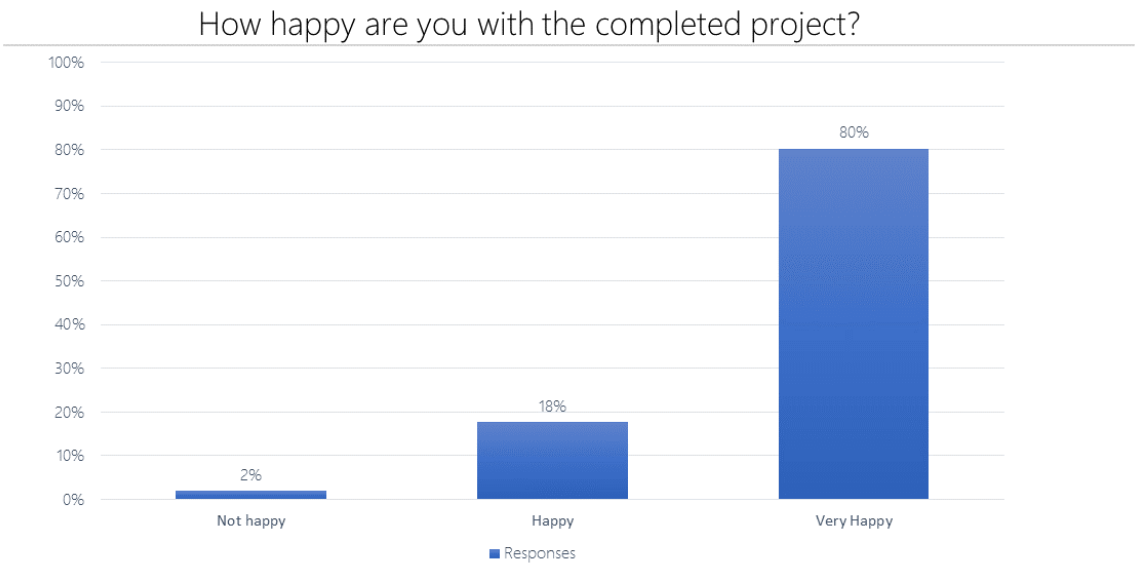
257 returned

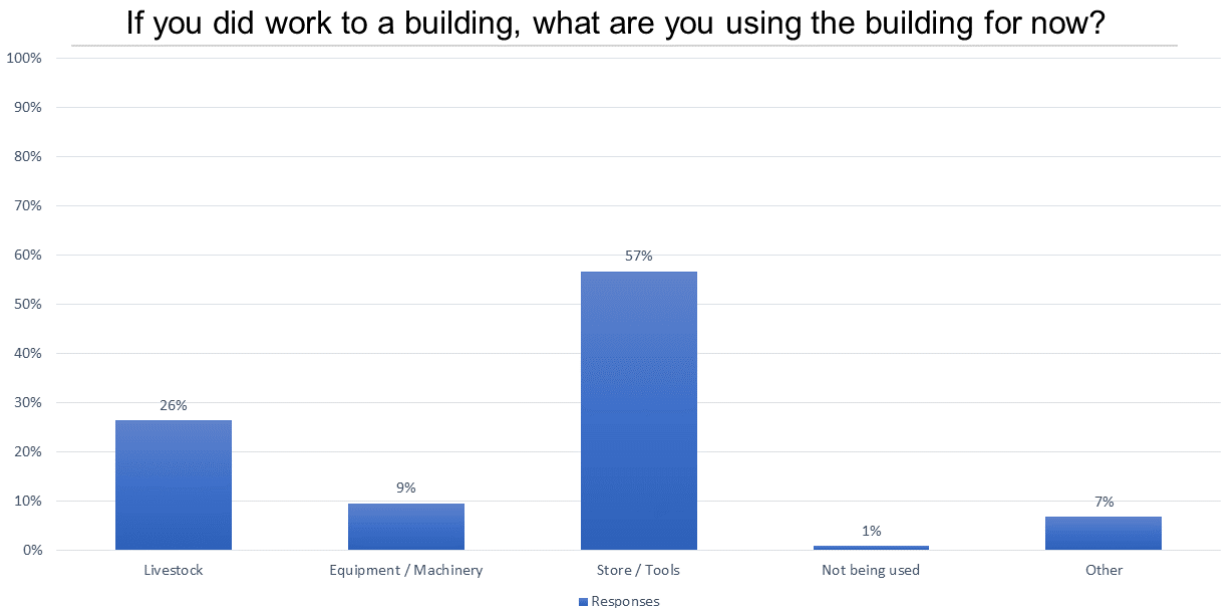
- 99 Non successful applicants returned to date: Survey Live

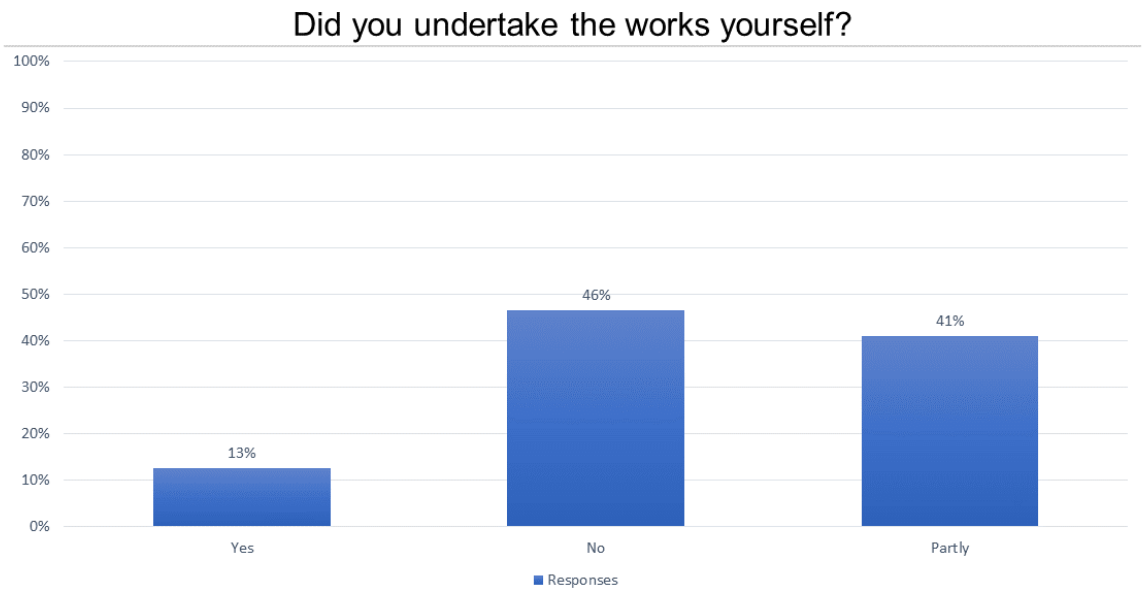


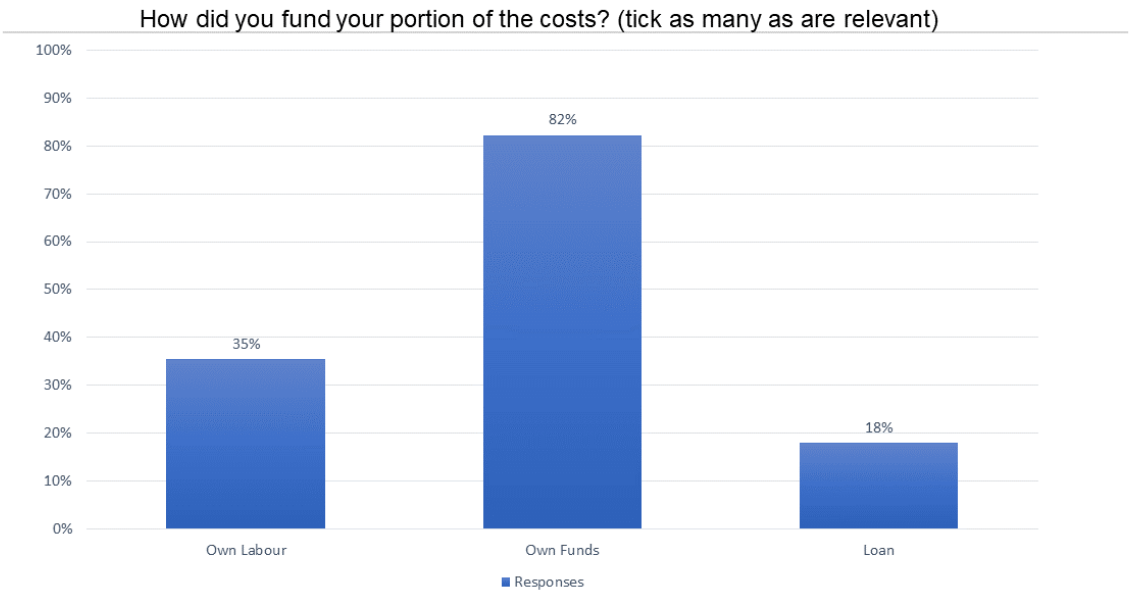

Would you agree or disagree with this statement:
"I would never have considered restoring one of my old farm buildings except for this Scheme."
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
64%
17%
19%
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Responses

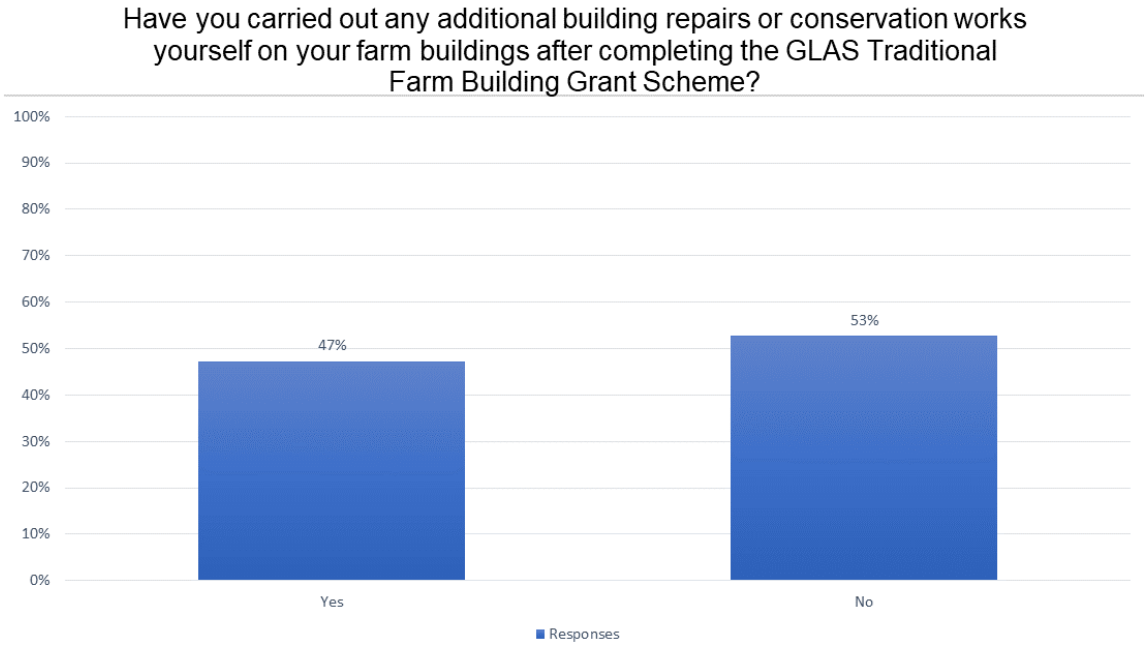

What works did you carry out?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
93%
7%
Repair of a building
Repair of farmyard features(e.g. gates, yard walls, yard surfaces, millrace)
Responses

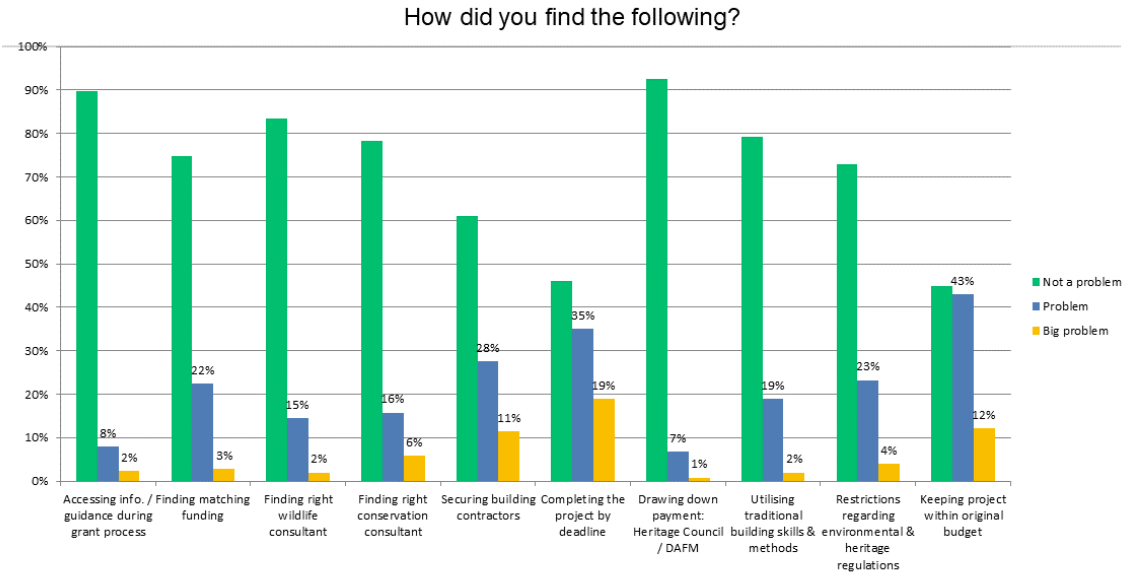

How happy are you with the completed project?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
2%
18%
80%
Not happy
Happy
Very Happy
Responses

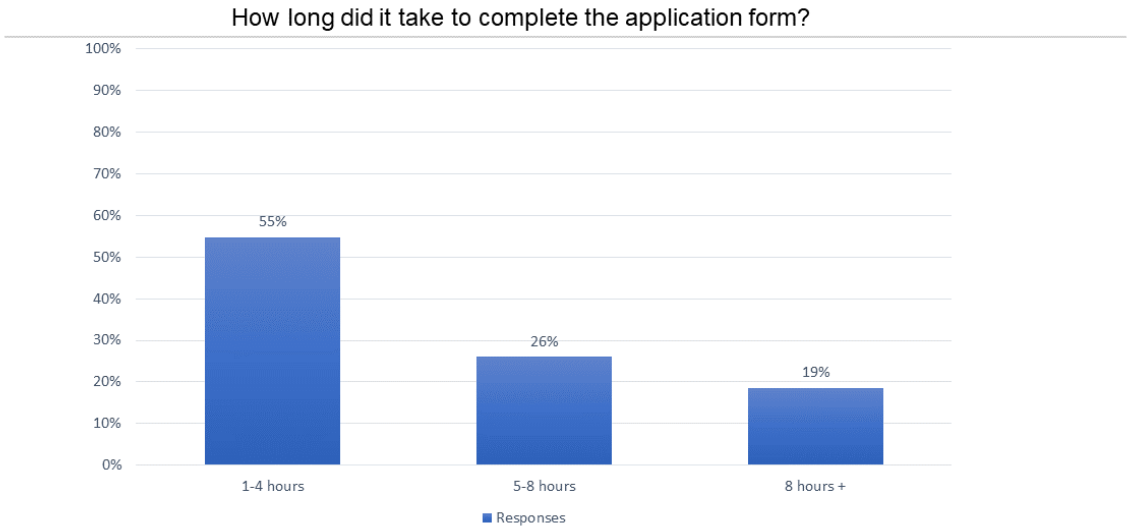

If you did work to a building, what are you using the building for now?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
26%
9%
57%
1%
7%
Livestock
Equipment / Machinery
Store / Tools
Not being used
Other
Responses

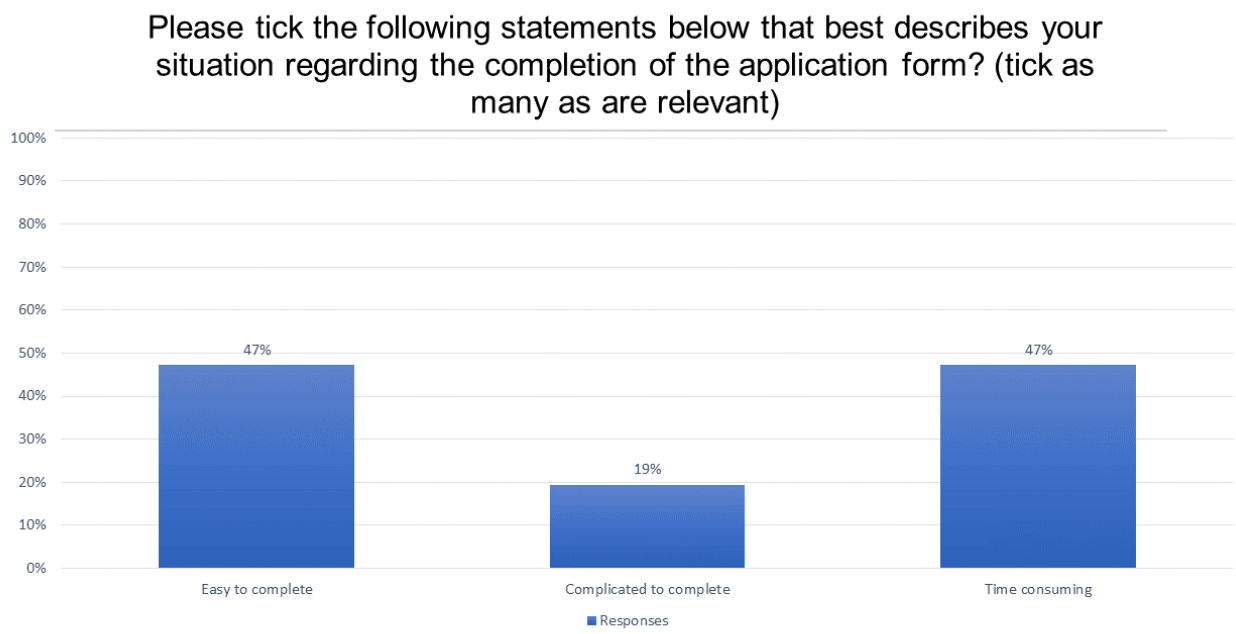

Did you undertake the works yourself?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
13%
46%
41%
Yes
No
Partly
Responses

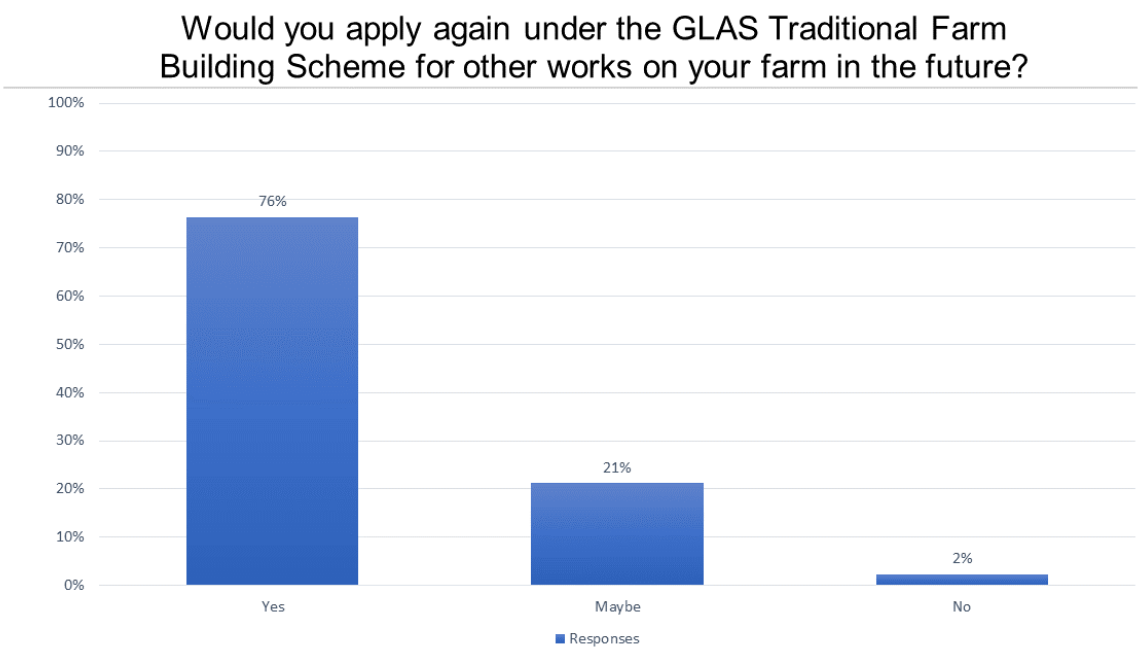

How did you fund your portion of the costs? (tick as many as are relevant)
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
35%
82%
18%
Own Labour
Own Funds
Loan
Responses

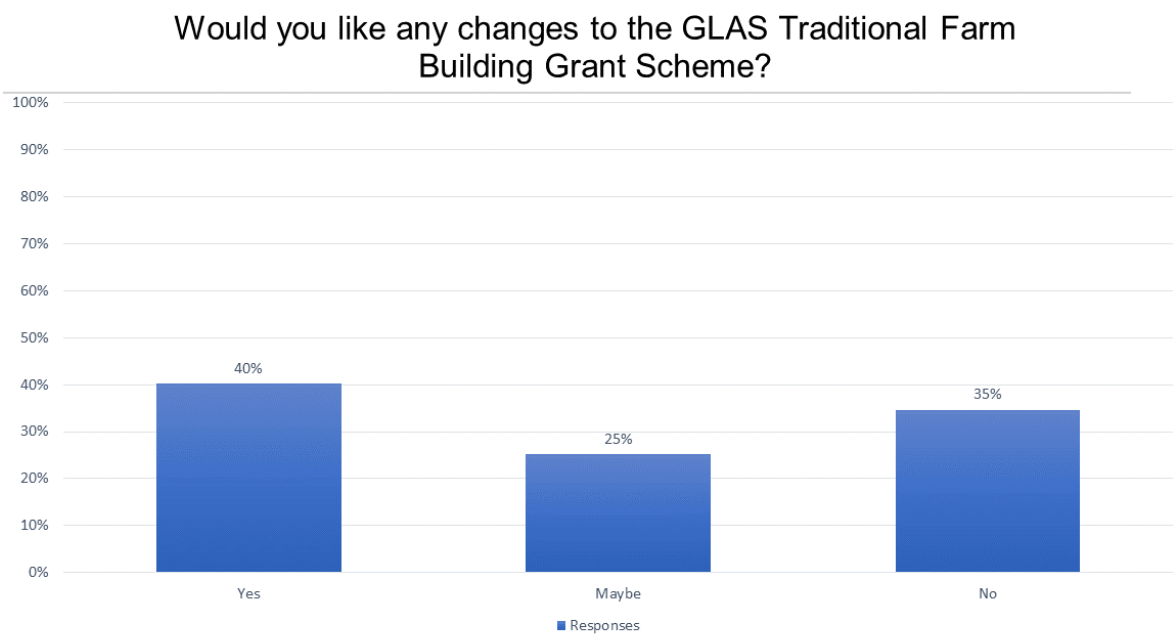

Have you carried out any additional building repairs or conservation works yourself on your farm buildings after completing the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Grant Scheme?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
47%
53%
Yes
No
Responses

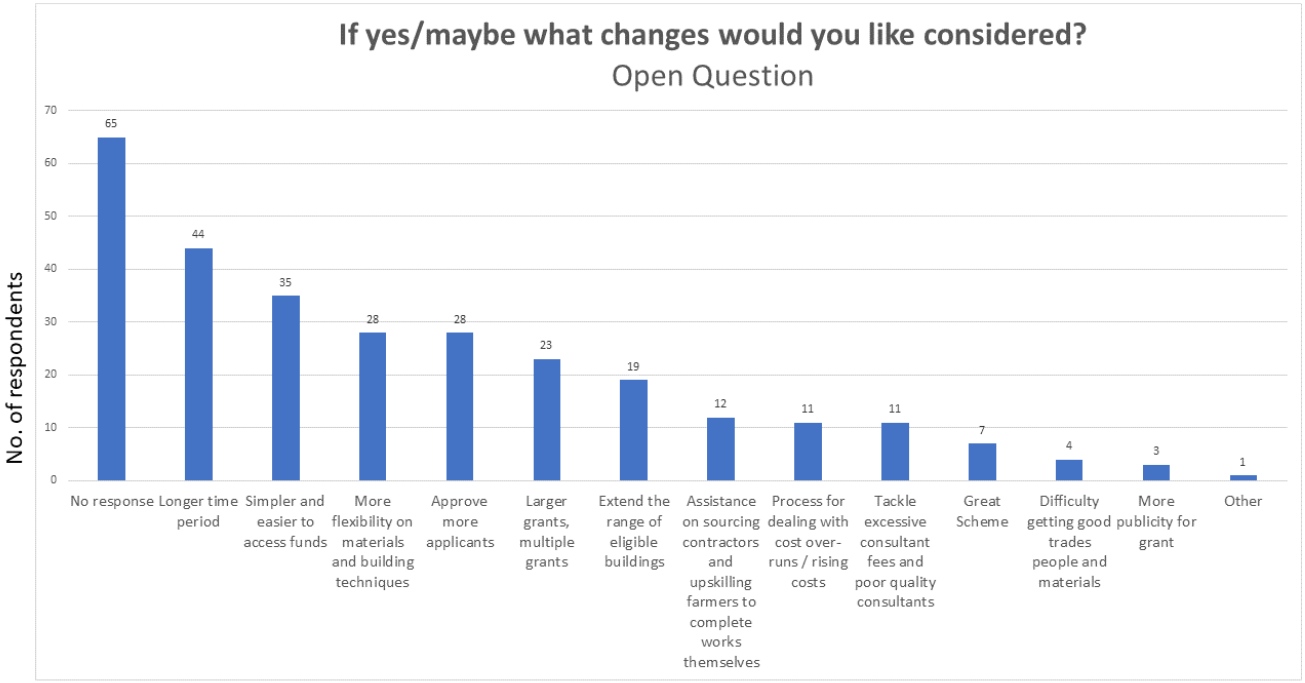

How did you find the following?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
8%
2%
22%
3%
15%
2%
16%
6%
28%
11%
35%
19%
7%
1%
19%
2%
23%
4%
43%
12%
Accessing info. / guidance during grant process
Finding matching funding
Finding right wildlife consultant
Finding right conservation consultant
Securing building contractors
Completing the project by deadline
Drawing down payment: Heritage Council / DAFM
Utilising traditional building skills & methods
Restrictions regarding environmental & heritage regulations
Keeping project within original budget
Not a problem
Problem
Big problem

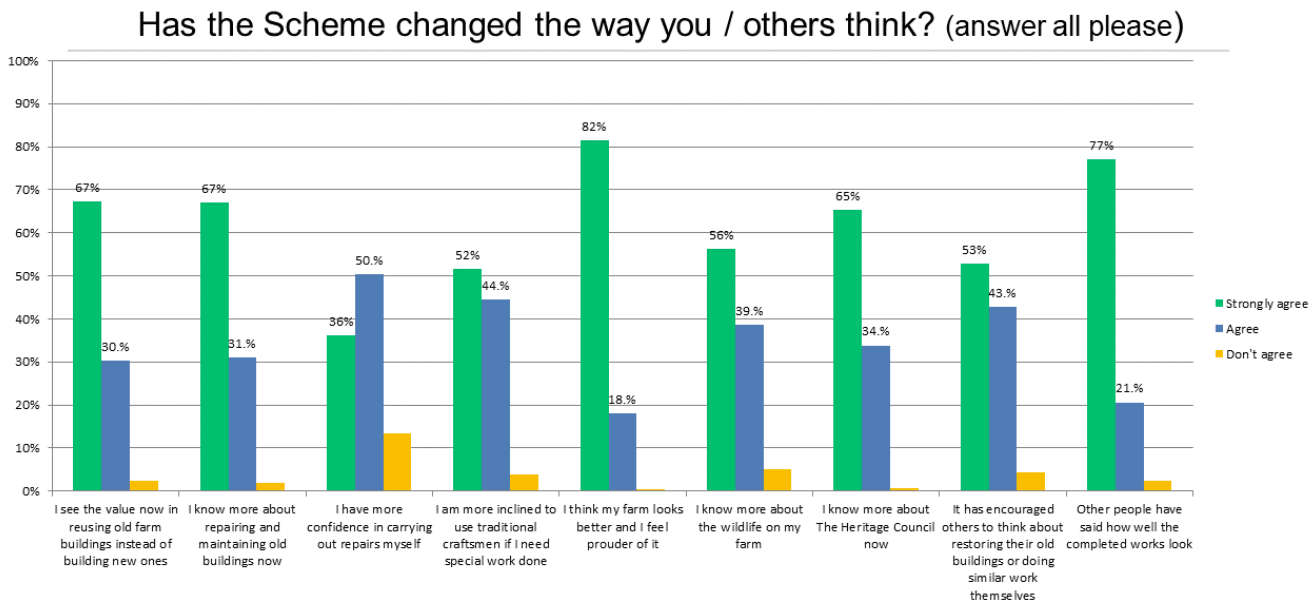

How long did it take to complete the application form?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
55%
26%
19%
1-4 hours
5-8 hours
8 hours +
Responses

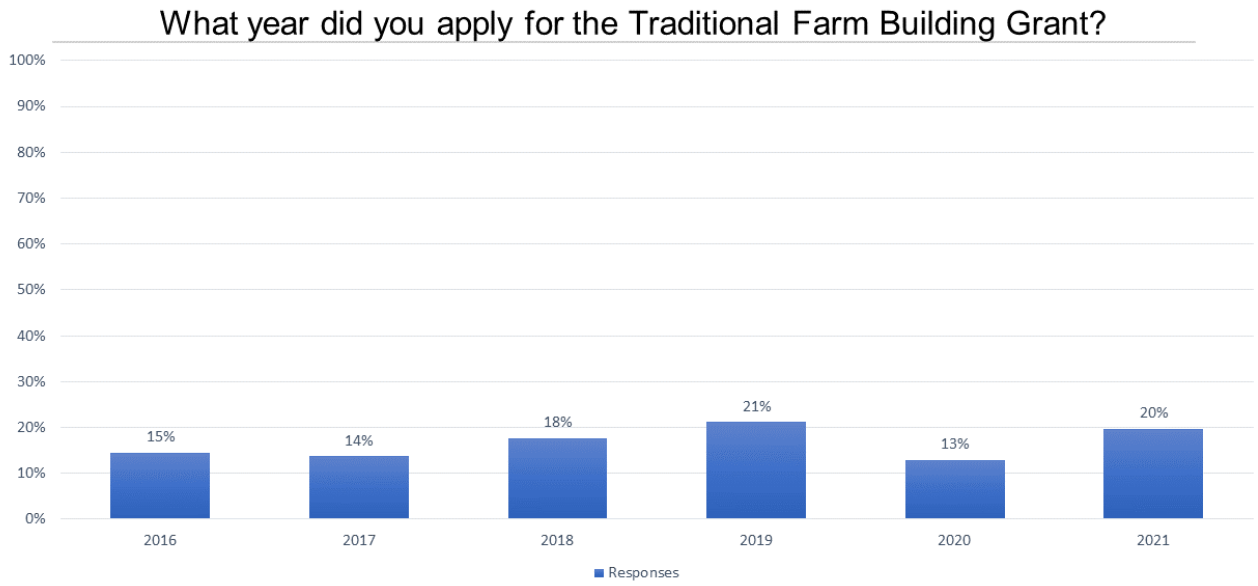

Please tick the following statements below that best describes your situation regarding the completion of the application form? (tick as many as are relevant)
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
47%
19%
47%
Easy to complete
Complicated to complete
Time consuming
Responses

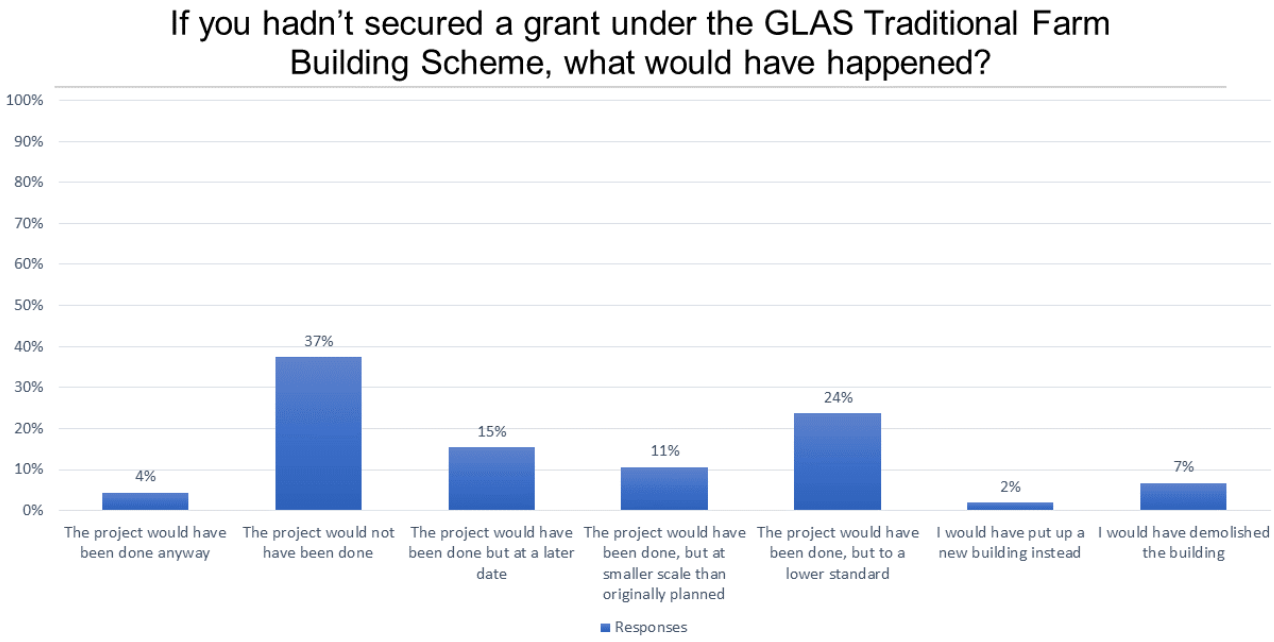

Would you apply again under the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme for other works on your farm in the future?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
76%
21%
2%
Yes
Maybe
No
Responses

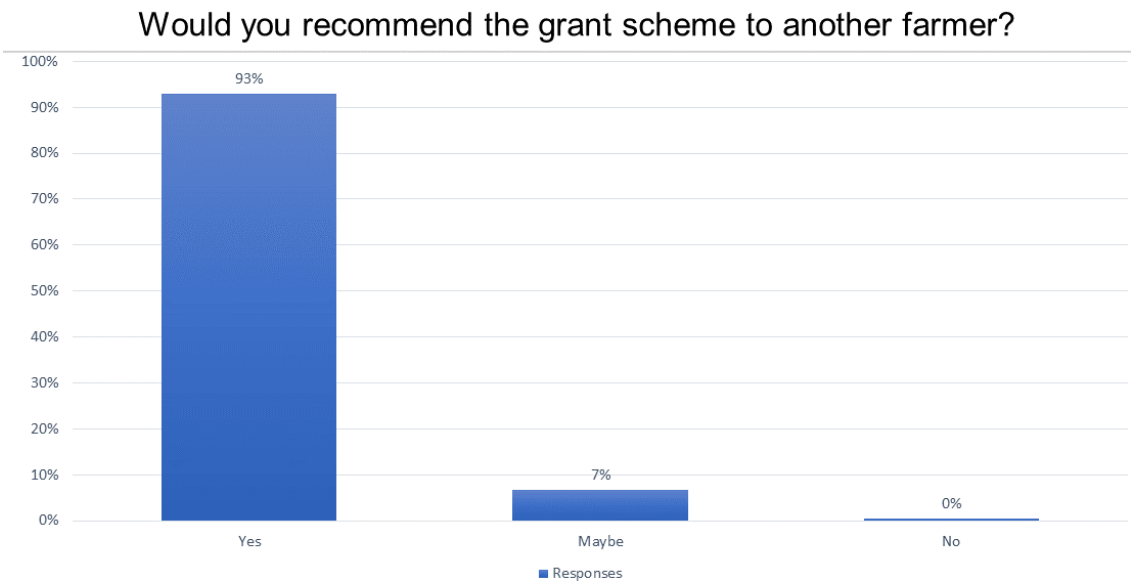

Would you like any changes to the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Grant Scheme?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
40%
25%
35%
Yes
Maybe
No
Responses

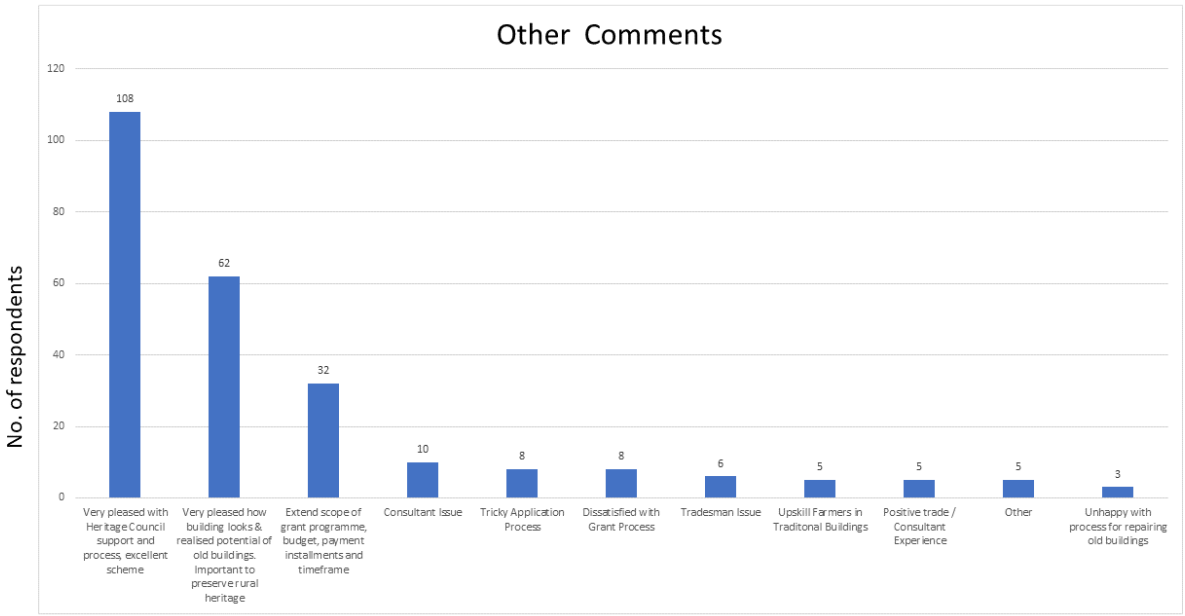

If yes/maybe what changes would you like considered?
Open Question
No. of respondents
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
65
44
35
28
28
23
19
12
11
11
7
4
3
1
No response
Longer time period
Simpler and easier to access funds
More flexibility on materials and building techniques
Approve more applicants
Larger grants, multiple grants
Extend the range of eligible buildings
Assistance on sourcing contractors and upskilling farmers to complete works themselves
Process for dealing with cost over-runs / rising costs
Tackle excessive consultant fees and poor quality consultants
Great Scheme
Difficulty getting good trades people and materials
More publicity for grant
Other


Has the Scheme changed the way you / others think? (answer all please)
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
67%
30.%
67%
31.%
36%
50.%
52%
44.%
82%
18.%
56%
39.%
65%
34.%
53%
43.%
77%
21.%
I see the value now in reusing old farm buildings instead of building new ones
I know more about repairing and maintaining old buildings now
I have more confidence in carrying out repairs myself
I am more inclined to use traditional craftsmen if I need special work done
I think my farm looks better and I feel prouder of it
I know more about the wildlife on my farm
I know more about The Heritage Council now
It has encouraged others to think about restoring their old buildings or doing similar work themselves
Other people have said how well the completed works look
Strongly agree
Agree
Don't agree


What year did you apply for the Traditional Farm Building Grant?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
15%
14%
18%
21%
13%
20%
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
Responses


If you hadn't secured a grant under the GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme, what would have happened?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
4%
37%
15%
11%
24%
2%
7%
The project would have been done anyway
The project would not have been done
The project would have been done but at a later date
The project would have been done, but at smaller scale than originally planned
The project would have been done, but to a lower standard
I would have put up a new building instead
I would have demolished the building
Responses


Would you recommend the grant scheme to another farmer?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
93%
7%
0%
Yes
Maybe
No
Responses


Other Comments
No. of respondents
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
108
62
32
10
8
8
6
5
5
5
3
Very pleased with Heritage Council support and process, excellent scheme
Very pleased how building looks & realised potential of old buildings. Important to preserve rural heritage
Extend scope of grant programme, budget, payment installments and timeframe
Consultant Issue
Tricky Application Process
Dissatisfied with Grant Process
Tradesman Issue
Upskill Farmers in Traditonal Buildings
Positive trade / Consultant Experience
Other
Unhappy with process for repairing old buildings

Appendix 3 Farm Survey: Unsuccessful Applicants

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

Traditional Farm Building Grant Scheme

Online Survey

Dear Farmer,

We are conducting a very short survey on the **GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme** and as you previously applied for a grant but were unsuccessful or decided not to proceed we would be interested in your feedback.

All you have to do is click on the link below to complete the online survey which will take no longer than **5 minutes** to complete. **This is a completely anonymous survey – you are not identified in any way once you click on the link.** All feedback will be examined by an independent consulting team who are carrying out a full review of the Scheme.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6FNQHFT

Your feedback is very important to both the Department and the Heritage Council and we thank you for taking the time to share your views.

Regards,

Anna Meenan

Heritage Council

GLAS Traditional Farm Building June 2022

⊕ PAGE TITLE

* 1. What statement best describes your situation? 0

- ◯ I was approved for a grant but decided not to proceed
- ◯ I did not score high enough at assessment stage
- ◯ I didn't make it through the screening stage
- ◯ Not sure

2. If you were approved but you didn't proceed what was the reason? Please tick the statements below that best describe any change (tick as many as you like) 0

- ☐ I couldn't find the matching funds
- ☐ I couldn't complete the project in the timescale set down in the grant contract
- ☐ I couldn't find appropriate building contractors
- ☐ I couldn't find the right conservation consultant
- ☐ Other

* 3. How long did it take to complete the grant application form? 0

- ◯ 0-4 hours
- ◯ 5-8 hours
- ◯ 8 hours +

* 4. Which of the following statements best describes how you found the application form? (Please tick as many as are relevant) 0

- [ ] Easy to complete
- [ ] Complicated to complete
- [ ] Time consuming

* 5. How did you find the following? 0

	Not a problem	Problem	Big Problem
Accessing information / guidance during the grant process	○	○	○

* 6. What happened to your project in the end?
Please tick the statements below that best describes your situation (tick as many as you like) 0

- [ ] The project was completed anyway
- [ ] I plan to complete the project
- [ ] The project was not done
- [ ] The project was done, but at smaller scale than originally planned
- [ ] The project was done, but to a lower standard
- [ ] I did the work myself instead of engaging a contractor
- [ ] I put up a new building instead
- [ ] I applied again for funding under the 2022 GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme

* 7. Do you think the approval process was fair? 0

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

8. If you answered no, why do you think that? What could be done better? 0

* 9. If you have not already applied in 2022, would you consider applying again for works on your farm in the future? 0

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Maybe
- ◯ Nothing left to do

* 10. Would you recommend the grant scheme to another farmer? 0

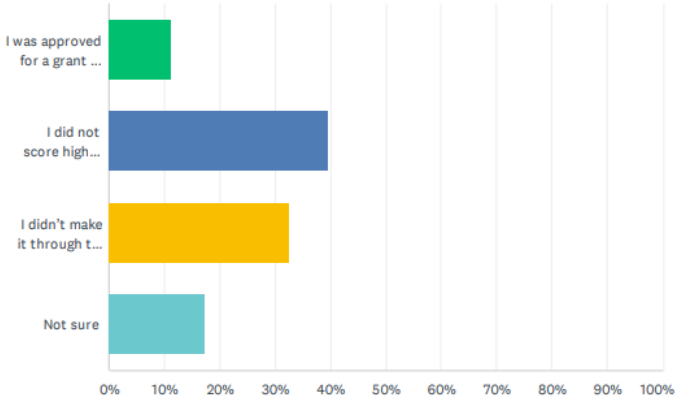
- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Maybe

11. Any other comments 0

GLAS Traditional Farm Building June 2022 SurveyMonkey

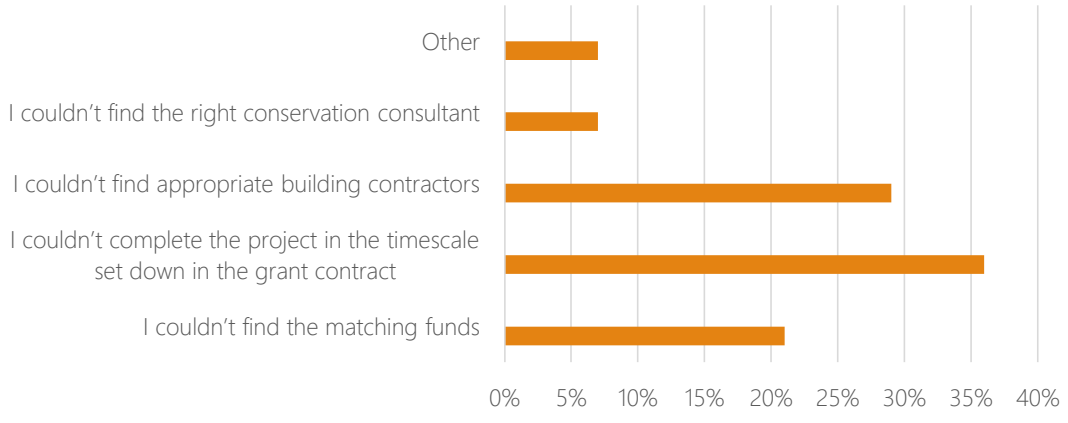
Q1 What statement best describes your situation?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I was approved for a grant but decided not to proceed	11.11%	11
I did not score high enough at assessment stage	39.39%	39
I didn't make it through the screening stage	32.32%	32
Not sure	17.17%	17
TOTAL		99

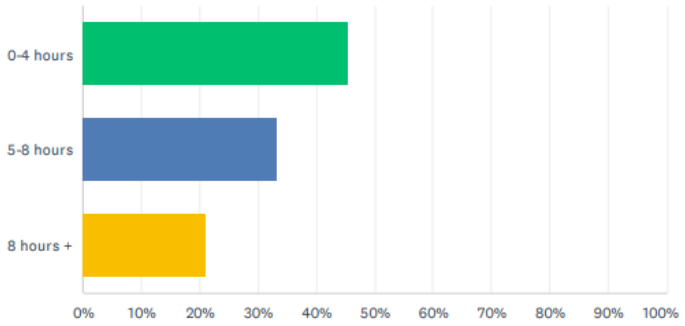
Q2. If you were approved but you didn't proceed what was the reason? (tick as many as you like)



GLAS Traditional Farm Building June 2022 SurveyMonkey

Q3 How long did it take to complete the grant application form?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 0

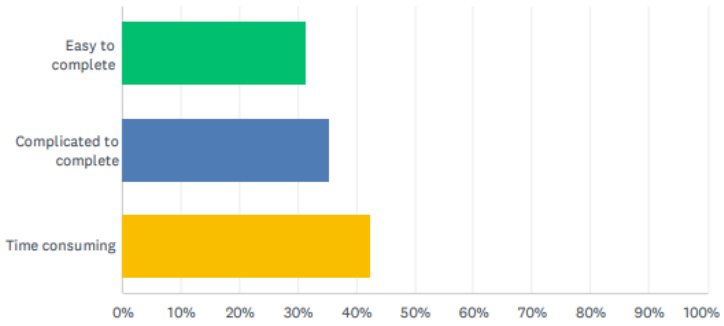


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-4 hours	45.45%	45
5-8 hours	33.33%	33
8 hours +	21.21%	21
TOTAL		99

GLAS Traditional Farm Building June 2022 SurveyMonkey

Q4 Which of the following statements best describes how you found the application form? (Please tick as many as are relevant)

Answered: 99 Skipped: 0

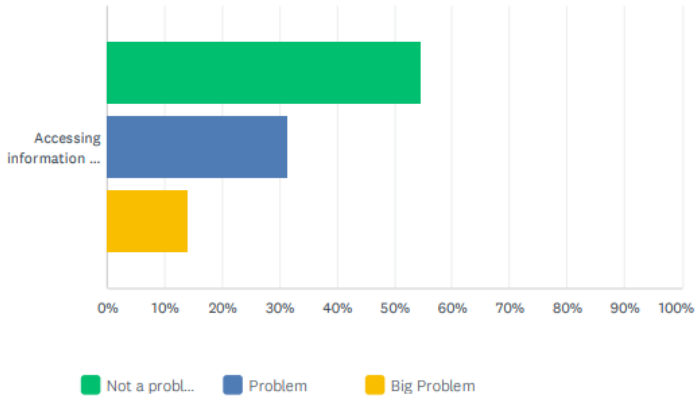


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Easy to complete	31.31%	31
Complicated to complete	35.35%	35
Time consuming	42.42%	42
Total Respondents: 99		

GLAS Traditional Farm Building June 2022 SurveyMonkey

Q5 How did you find the following?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 0

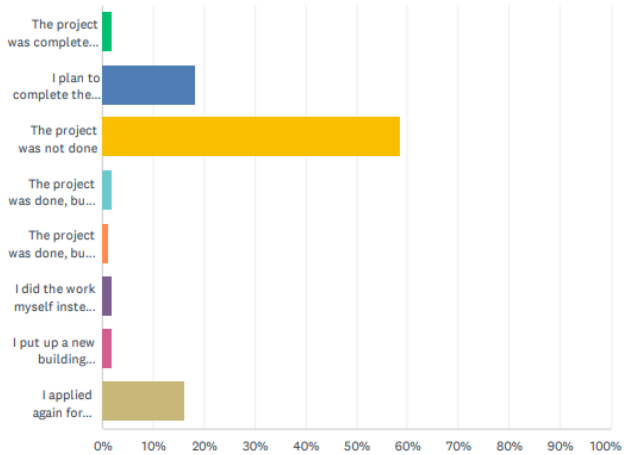


	NOT A PROBLEM	PROBLEM	BIG PROBLEM	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Accessing information / guidance during the grant process	54.55% 54	31.31% 31	14.14% 14	99	1.60

GLAS Traditional Farm Building June 2022 SurveyMonkey

Q6 What happened to your project in the end? Please tick the statements below that best describes your situation (tick as many as you like)

Answered: 99 Skipped: 0

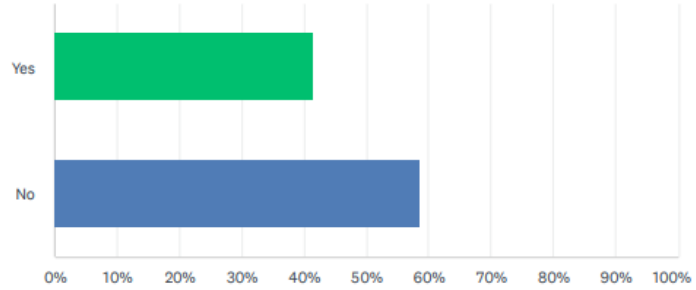


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The project was completed anyway	2.02%	2
I plan to complete the project	18.18%	18
The project was not done	58.59%	58
The project was done, but at smaller scale than originally planned	2.02%	2
The project was done, but to a lower standard	1.01%	1
I did the work myself instead of engaging a contractor	2.02%	2
I put up a new building instead	2.02%	2
I applied again for funding under the 2022 GLAS Traditional Farm Building Scheme	16.16%	16
Total Respondents: 99		

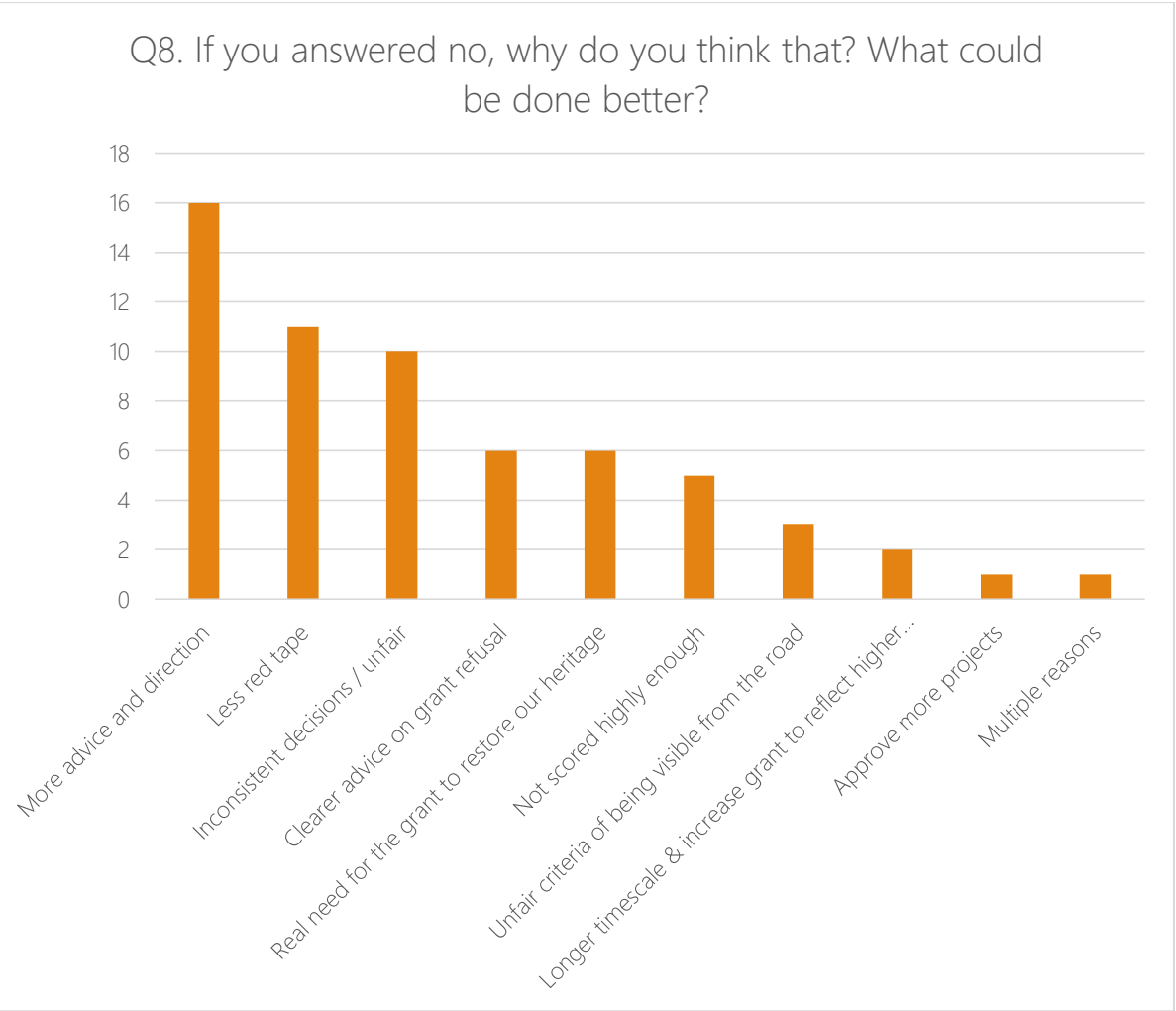
GLAS Traditional Farm Building June 2022 SurveyMonkey

Q7 Do you think the approval process was fair?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 0



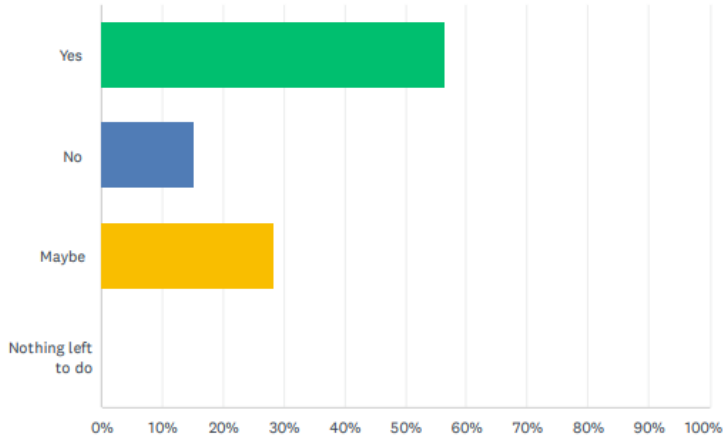
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	41.41%	41
No	58.59%	58
TOTAL		99



GLAS Traditional Farm Building June 2022 SurveyMonkey

Q9 If you have not already applied in 2022, would you consider applying again for works on your farm in the future?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 0

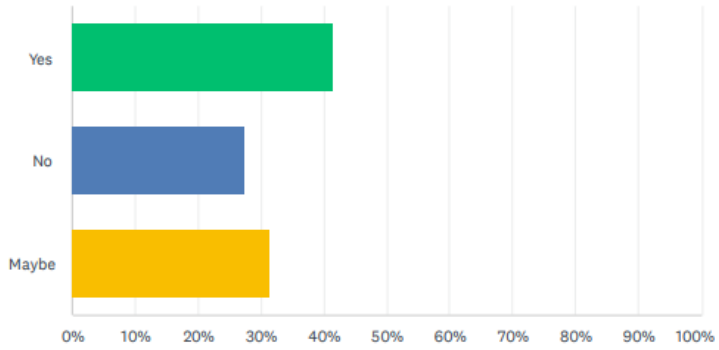


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	56.57%	56
No	15.15%	15
Maybe	28.28%	28
Nothing left to do	0.00%	0
TOTAL		99

GLAS Traditional Farm Building June 2022 SurveyMonkey

Q10 Would you recommend the grant scheme to another farmer?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	41.41%	41
No	27.27%	27
Maybe	31.31%	31
TOTAL		99

Appendix 4 Focus Group Invitation Sample

Subject: Traditional Farm Building Scheme - Farmer Beneficiary Focus Group 17.06.2022.

Participating Organisations:

Farmers, IFA, ICMSA, INHFA, ICSA, Burren Life

Background Info

Small scheme, budget of €6m over course of the RDP. Applicants must be in GLAS. Competitive approach for applications

(Success rate about 10-20%). Some 380 projects approved to date 2016-2021. Strong western distribution. Average grant is about 70%, amounting to c.€11,000 per building repaired.

Framing the Discussion

We have set four questions to frame the discussion:

- What are we doing well?
- What could we do better? What are the factors that really impact on farmers (timeline? budget? contractors?) How do we make them better?
- How do we build on the very positive response from farmers as evidenced in our recent Survey? Is there a 'next stage' where we can take this, particularly to build on what appears to be strong and sustained attitudinal change?
- If you could make just one big change to the scheme, what would that be?

Subject: Traditional Farm Building Scheme – Natural Heritage Focus Group 17.06.2022.

Participating Organisations:

Heritage Officer, Bat Conservation Ireland, BirdWatch Ireland, Environmental Pillar

Background Info

Small scheme, budget of €6m over course of the RDP. Applicants must be in GLAS. Competitive approach for applications

(Success rate about 10-20%). Some 380 projects approved to date 2016-2021. Strong western distribution. Average grant is about 70%, amounting to c.€11,000 per building repaired.

Framing the Discussion

We have set four questions to frame the discussion:

- What are we doing well? Contribution to: preservation of wildlife? preservation of habitat? Creation of new habitat? Sum of knowledge? Farmer awareness and attitudinal change?
- What could we do better? How can we build on the very positive achievements to date? Expand scope of scheme? Bring in new building types? Habitat connectivity? Are we telling our story well? How do we resolve some difficulties in getting wildlife consultants?
- What about the link with GLAS or other AECMs? Positive or negative?
- If you could make just one big change to the scheme, what would that be?

Subject: Traditional Farm Building Scheme – Built Heritage Focus Group 17.06.2022.

Participating Organisations:

Heritage Council, Conservation Consultant, Conservation Engineer, Stone Conservation, Stone Mason and Traditional Crafts, Conservation Officer.

Background Info

Small scheme, budget of €6m over course of the RDP. Applicants must be in GLAS. Competitive approach for applications

(Success rate about 10-20%). Some 380 projects approved to date 2016-2021. Strong western distribution. Average grant is about 70%, amounting to c.€11,000 per building repaired.

Framing the Discussion

We have set four questions to frame the discussion:

- What are we doing well?
- What could we do better? Different/flexible approach to works/materials? Flexibility on things like corrugated iron? Timber replacement? Thatch material? Modern materials? Timing/seasonality? Internal repairs? Visibility from road?
- What about the 'asset register'? Do we know what's out there, where it is and regional differences? What's at risk? What are our priorities? Are we excluding valuable built heritage? Should we include more recent built heritage? Should we establish a register of built heritage consultants with agreed rates?
- If you could make just one big change to the scheme, what would that be?