
NELMS: Options review

Option (s) reviewed:

Badger gates – SBG Cost: £27.00 per gate.

Option use data

Number of Agreements	No. Of Gates	Total cost
21	123	£3,321.00

X3 agreements associated with WLT's or other conservation groups.

ES current Adviser guidance re Suitability and specification :



ES adviser option
guidance

Please note: Unless other sources are given, information in this form has been contributed by members of the options group, plus other colleagues with long experience of these options.

Delivery of environmental outcomes

What environmental outcomes have been delivered by this/these option/s?

Reference evidence sources.

It is clear that option use is specifically allied to new scheme funded fence lines which are in place to provide management of a primary infield option. These options can vary considerably in habitat types, and features under management, e.g. Floristic, ground nesting birds, archaeological, woodlands etc. Consequently it is considered that a variety of features could be impacted on both directly, indirectly and both positively and negatively.

In terms of the species itself, allowing free movement across its territory (which can be a considerable area), prevents concentration of foraging activity in any one spot, thus potentially benefiting a number of features.

It is recognised that Badgers can undermine the stock proof integrity of fence lines, which can particularly effect sheep grazed options, or rabbit exclusion.

Link to NE (internet) guidance re gates allied to rabbit proof fencing:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/31016?category=9001>

Link to Woodland Trust guidance:

<http://frontpage.woodland-trust.org.uk/communitywoodlandnetwork/publications/documents/Spec%203-17.pdf>

Other NE guidance around Badgers can be found:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/advice/advisoryleaflets.aspx#badger>

Factors influencing delivery of environmental outcomes

What has worked well and why? What has worked less well and why?

Reference sources.

Whilst the Badger remains protected under English law under the protection of Badgers Act 1992, provision of Badger gates does not require any specific permission or need of NE's Wildlife Management licence.

Based on option uptake this option is considered under used given the widespread distribution of the species. There is no specific geographic core of option uptake, instead a national albeit small but widespread distribution. Reasons for under use are unknown, but the agreement holders requirement to maintain the stock proof integrity of new fences, should not be under estimated.

Whilst Badgers are considered one of the most favoured mammals by the general public, in agricultural circles they often have a different status due to recognised effects on agriculture.

Link to NE guidance re Badger Problems: use of electric fencing to prevent agricultural damage

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/9011>

Link to NE guidance re gates allied to rabbit proof fencing:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/31016?category=9001>

Deliverability of option/s

Do agreement holders understand how to manage the option/s and can they successfully deliver the management required?

Whilst current Specification adviser guidance could be improved (e.g. addition of an Illustration of gate specification), land managers are aware of appropriate management. Installation and maintenance of option are considered simple.

It is acknowledged that installation can be provided by fencing contractors.

It is acknowledged that Badger gates are also provided independent of scheme funding (by agreement holders) as there is a requirement to maintain stock proof integrity of scheme funded fences for the duration of the agreement.

It is also acknowledged that the requirement of a gate can arise post erection of a new fence line, where requirement was not originally picked up.

Does the option payment rate adequately meet the cost/compensate for the option management required?

Materials required to make a wooden gate are simple, and can be easily

manufactured by an Agreement holder. Based on the specification provided in current guidance, the materials used to make a functional wooden gate; it is considered that current cost is appropriate.

However, it is recognised that a number of suppliers prefer a gate specification slightly larger than that recommended by NE/Defra. This is usually associated with an increase in frame material dimensions, e.g. from NE 40mmx40mm to 50mm x 50mm, or 40mm x 75mm.

Whilst wooden gates should be treated with non-toxic preservatives, to prolong their effective life, it is acknowledged that without regular checking of the gate, and functional use of gate, gates may require replacing at least once through the 10 year life of the agreement.

Suppliers: Costs vary dependent upon materials used.

Wooden:

<http://www.wildlifeservices.co.uk/badgergates.html>

http://www.stuartspraywildlife.co.uk/site/online_shop.asp

Above provides wooden gate at £25 each

Suppliers: Metal

<https://www.wildlifefencing.co.uk/home.php?cat=74>

<http://www.wildlifefencing.co.uk/product.php?productid=32&cat=2&page=1>

<http://www.tornadowire.co.uk/gates-and-fittings/badger-gates>

Do agreement holders have to make significant changes to their farming operations in order to deliver the option requirements? What type of changes?

The option is allied to the installation of new fencing under the scheme. The fencing in itself may contribute to significant change e.g. grazing an area previously un-grazed. Therefore the gate in itself is not considered to contribute to significant change

Where appropriate, is it easy for advisers to tailor the option/s to individual sites?

Option locations are critical as Badger use and maintain traditional access routes. Gates can be designed where they open only one way which may facilitate excluding Badgers off a specific site, once passing through the gate. However, where no gate exists along a fence which crosses a recognised badger

access route, they are more than capable of digging beneath it; and undermining the stock proof integrity of the site.

Dimensions specified in guidance are critical, with a number of specific caveats, e.g. should not be made smaller than NE guidance or excessively larger, due to usage of other mammals e.g. rabbits, deer, foxes. The material (heaviness) used in the construction of the gate flap is also important to mitigate use by other mammals. Regardless there is slight variation in gates dimension design between NE, Woodland trust guidance and that of some suppliers. Consequently, some variety (flexibility in design) is available to advisers, whilst acknowledging the important caveats above.

Alternative materials (metal) are available but at considerable increase in option cost.

Do advisers have sufficient support, guidance and training to tailor the option/s to individual sites?

Reference sources

NE has produced a number of Badger related guidance (links previously provided) which is readily available. Further information (including site specific) can be obtained by contacting regional NE Wildlife management team representatives who have experience of both the species and an understanding of any local issues around issuing of licences to control Badgers.

Advisers could also interrogate an application or live agreement on Webmap using view maps and under the "Site" criteria folder, WML applications – Badger, to see what Badger licence activity has been undertaken on a holding, as well as having proof that badgers are known in the area, which may facilitate decisions around option use.

Easily obtainable internet links to Badger groups, conservation organisations etc.

Are the prescriptions verifiable?

How is/are this/these option/s verified?

Have any issues with verification been raised? Reference sources

The option is verifiable by visually recording option being in place. As a capital item an indicative location of the option will be recorded on the agreement map.

No known instance of any reclaim or non location of option

Key conclusions

What are the key points if considering similar options for NELMS?

- Amend current specification:
 - Include an illustration of spec design, include photos of gate/varieties
 - Currently covers a spec which is a two-way gate, can the option be used to facilitate exclusion off a site?
- Although small uptake to date, option has a recognisable benefit, not only to the species but also to other features.
- Potential to investigate need for a specification to cover metal gates.