

## **CFE MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2011)**

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This report provides you with a summary of CFE activity from mid-February until the end of March.

### [Renewals](#)

### [Option uptake](#)

### [Website](#)

### [Media activity](#)

### [Local activity](#)

### [Delivery Group issues](#)

### [Evidence and Monitoring Group \(EMG\) issues](#)

### **Renewals**

Whilst the CFE does not have a target for ELS renewals, the current renewal rate is slowly rising and is now gaining on expiries. It is not yet up to the 90 per cent Natural England target: as at 28 February, 87 per cent of the area of these expired agreements had been renewed

The rates of renewal for each individual month of expiry are as follows:

- July - 95 per cent
- August - 95 per cent
- September - 98 per cent
- October - 86 per cent
- November - 84 per cent
- December - 71 per cent
- January 2011 – 65 per cent

The overall renewal rate will reach 90 per cent, but there is currently a delay of around three months between expiry and 90 per cent renewal.

The CFE target for UAA% coverage by 31 March 2011 is 70 per cent. This equates to an area of 6 503 950 ha. The current UAA% figure is 67.3 per cent which equates to 6 254 383 ha. This target will be finally reported against in April.

### **Option uptake**

As shown in Figure 1, overall the March figures for option uptake in ELS show a marked improvement and now stand at 49 050ha which equates to an increase of 23.6 per cent above the 2009 baseline and a good up lift from the February figures of 3.1 per cent. There are 11 491 farms with key target options out of approximate 39,000 agreements, which includes new agreements (including renewals) and agreements which were in place prior to the Campaign.

There are still winners and losers in the option choices. There is a decrease below 2009 levels in the following options:

- **EF 10** – Unharvested cereal headland within arable fields **-49.1%**
- **EF 11** – Uncropped cultivated margins for rare arable plants **-32.9%**
- **EF 9** – Unfertilised cereal headland **-18.3%**
- **EG4** – Cereals for whole crop silage followed by overwintered stubbles **-17.7%**
- Nectar Flower mix options **-98%**
  - **EG3** (Nectar flower mixture in grassland areas now EF4) **-39%**
  - **EF5** (Pollen + nectar flower mixture on set-aside land) **-59%**

## CFE MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2011)

- **EF4 (Nectar Flower mixture) +39%**

But the total area has increased from 2,178ha in July 2009 to 2,813ha to date which equates to a 29 per cent increase

There have been significant gains above the July 2009 baseline in the following options:

- **EF1** – Field corner management **+34.1%**
- Wildbird seed mix (sum of **EF2, EF2NR, EF3, EG2, EG2NR**) **+ 275%**, which equates to a **+ 28%** increase in option area on farm
- **EF7** – Beetle banks **+12%**

Other options which had no 2009 baseline (i.e. introduced in the 2010 ELS option list) are also making good progress including:

- **EF22** Extended overwintered stubbles - 3148 ha (2921 ha in February)
- **EF13** Uncropped cultivated areas for ground-nesting birds – 192ha (173ha in February)
- **EF15** - Reduced herbicide cereal crop preceding over-wintered stubble - 391 ha (371 ha in February)
- **EJ9** 12m buffers against watercourses - 409 ha (350 ha in February)

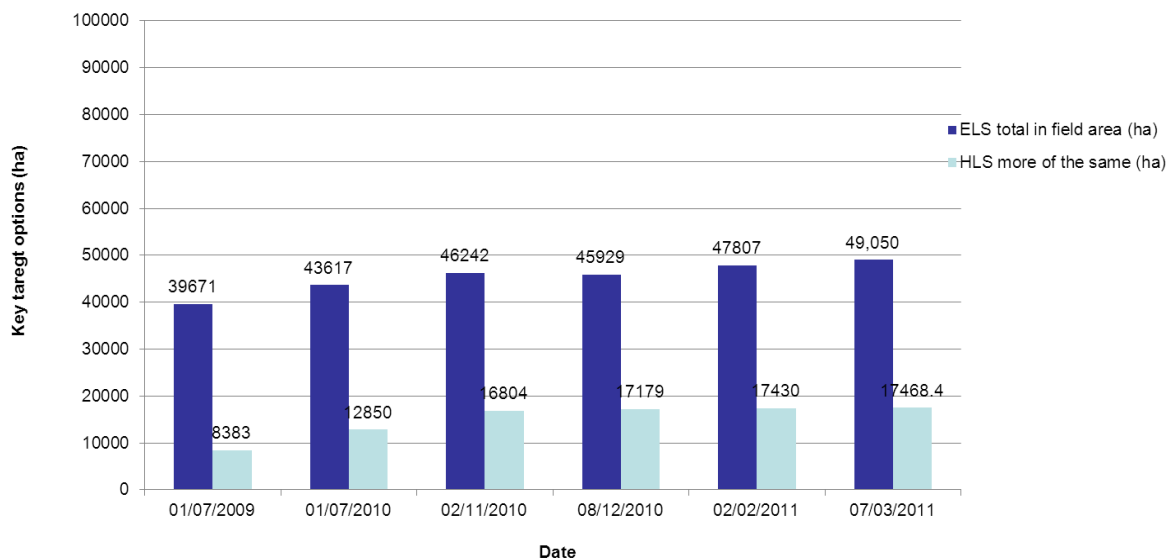


Figure 1. Key target option (ELS and HLS “more of the same”) area (Ha) over time up to 7 March 2011

### ELS 6m buffers against watercourses

The uptake of ELS 6m buffer strips alongside watercourses (EE9 and EE10) currently stands at 1925 ha which is a 23.4% increase toward the target for June 2011. Please see the Delivery Group update for concerns around the coding used by farmers for buffer strip options in ELS.

### HLS Option Uptake

The target was to double the HLS ‘more of the same’ option uptake from July 2009 base line of 8400 by June 2012. As shown in Figure 1 the increase in uptake of ‘more of the same options’ remains pretty static at 17,468ha which is unsurprising

## CFE MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2011)

given the slowdown of HLS agreements being processed by Natural England. The increase remains the same at 108% on the July 2009 baseline

### Option uptake in the key target counties

As shown in Figure 2, key target uptake across the counties in England is varied but good progress above baseline levels is being made in many of them.

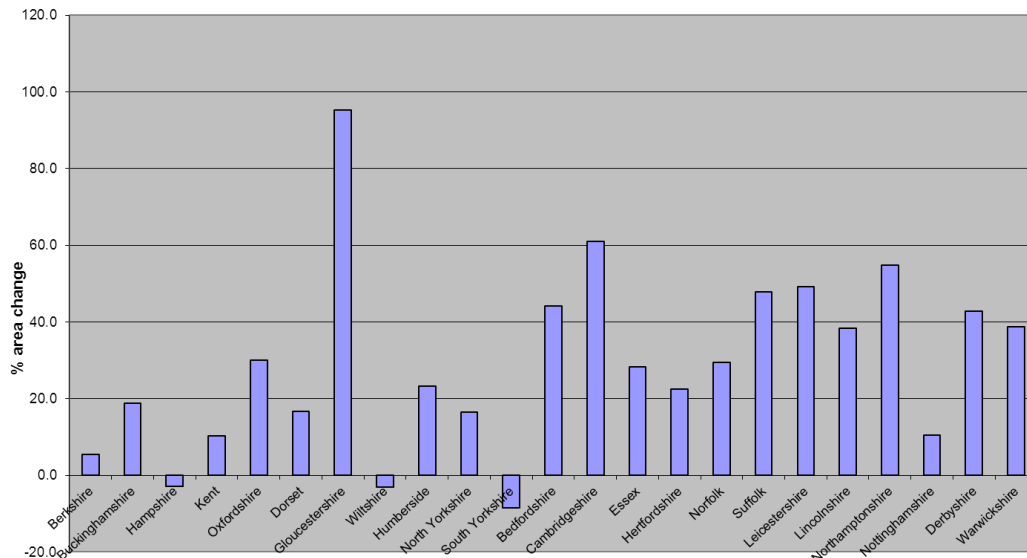


Figure 2. %Change of land in ELS in-field option by county from July 2009 baseline as of 7 March 2011

In the key target counties across East Anglia good progress is being made above or around the national average. However, there has been a significant increase in Bedfordshire (44 per cent above the baseline) and Cambridge (61 per cent above the baseline). In East Midlands, good progress is being made in all ley target counties apart from Nottinghamshire (10 per cent above the baseline). In the South East good progress is being made in Oxfordshire (30 per cent above the baseline) but option uptake in Hampshire has fallen 2 per cent below the baseline. In the South West there has been an increase of 95 per cent of key target option uptake in Gloucestershire but in Wiltshire it has dropped by 3 per cent below the baseline. In Warwickshire key target option uptake is above the national average at 39 per cent above the baseline. In Humberside key target option uptake is 23 per cent above the baseline and in North Yorkshire uptake is below the national average at 17 per cent. In South Yorkshire key target option uptake has dropped 9 per cent below the baseline.

Please see the Delivery Group update for reasons why uptake figures in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Yorkshire may need further examination – relating to the loss of one of the ELS options.

The graphs overleaf show the change in area of key target options for regions on a county basis.

## CFE MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2011)

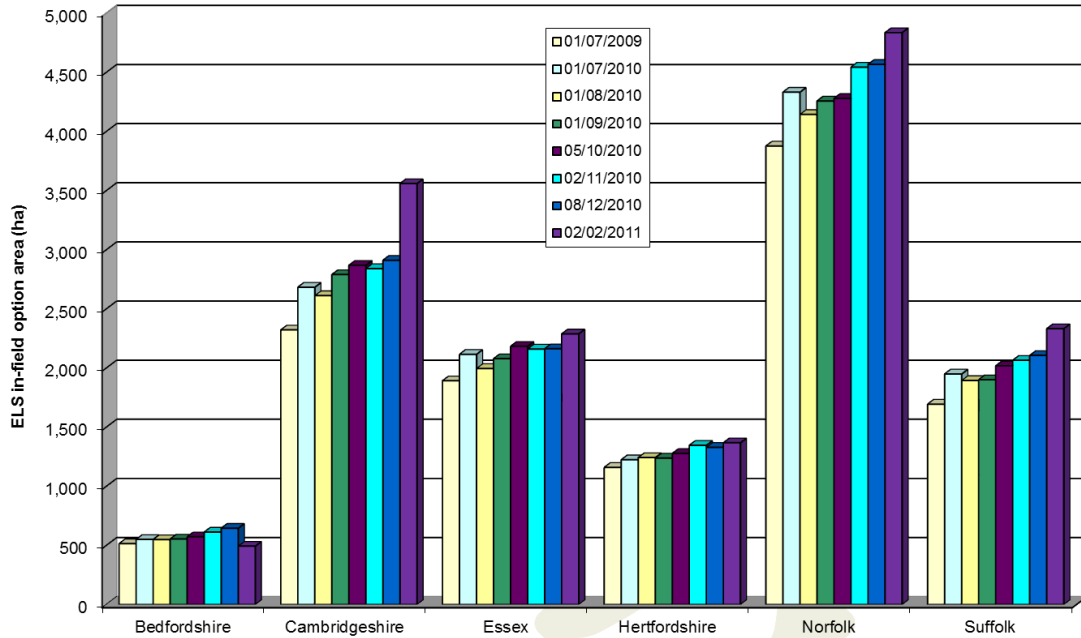


Figure 3. Change in area of key target options for Eastern region by county

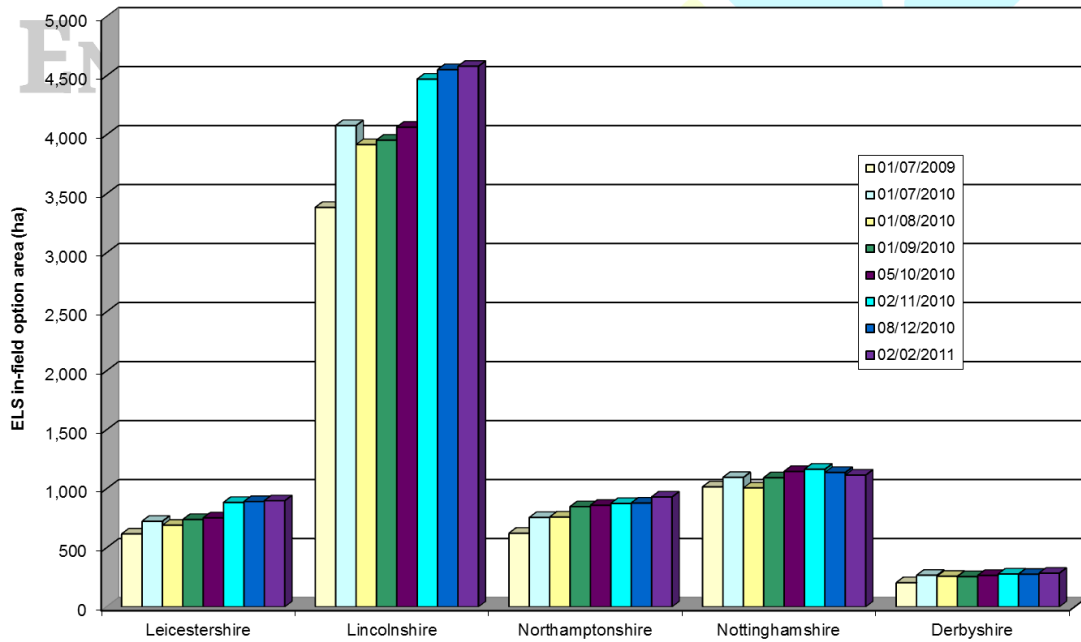


Figure 4. Change in area of key target options for East Midlands region by county

## CFE MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2011)

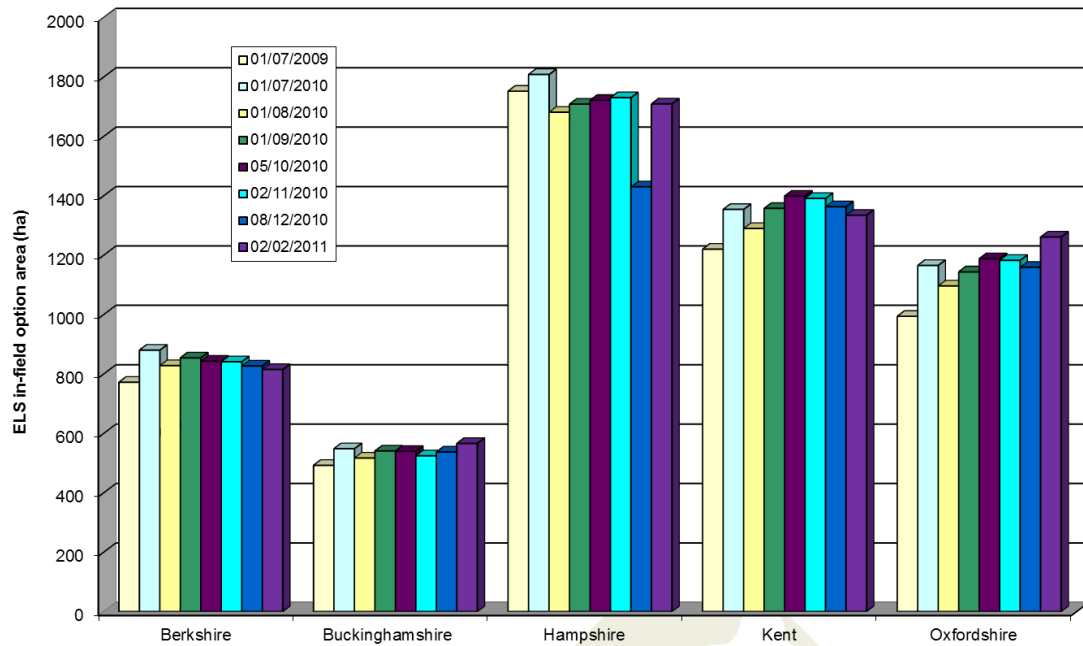


Figure 5. Change in area of key target options for South East region by county

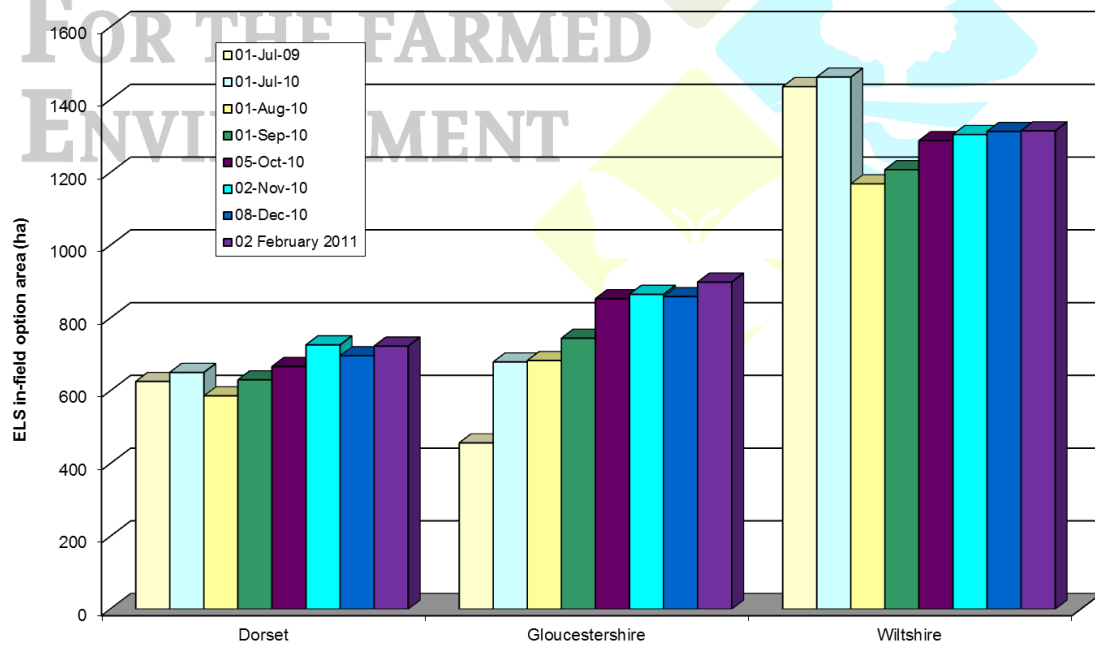


Figure 6. Change in area of key target options for South West region by county

## CFE MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2011)

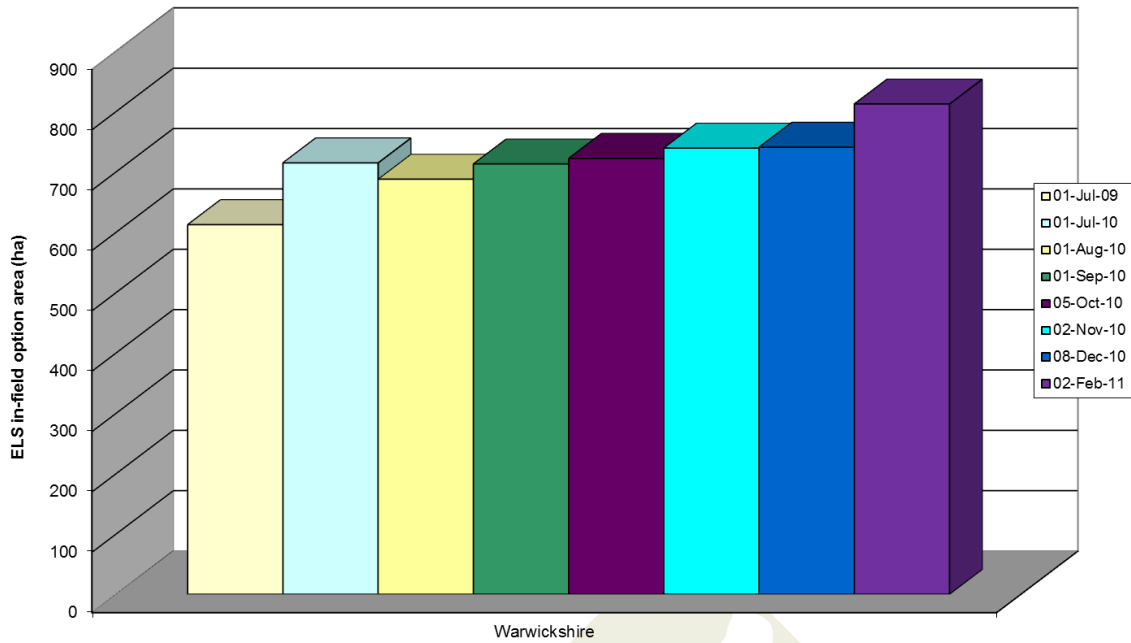


Figure 7. Change in area of key target options for West Midlands region by county

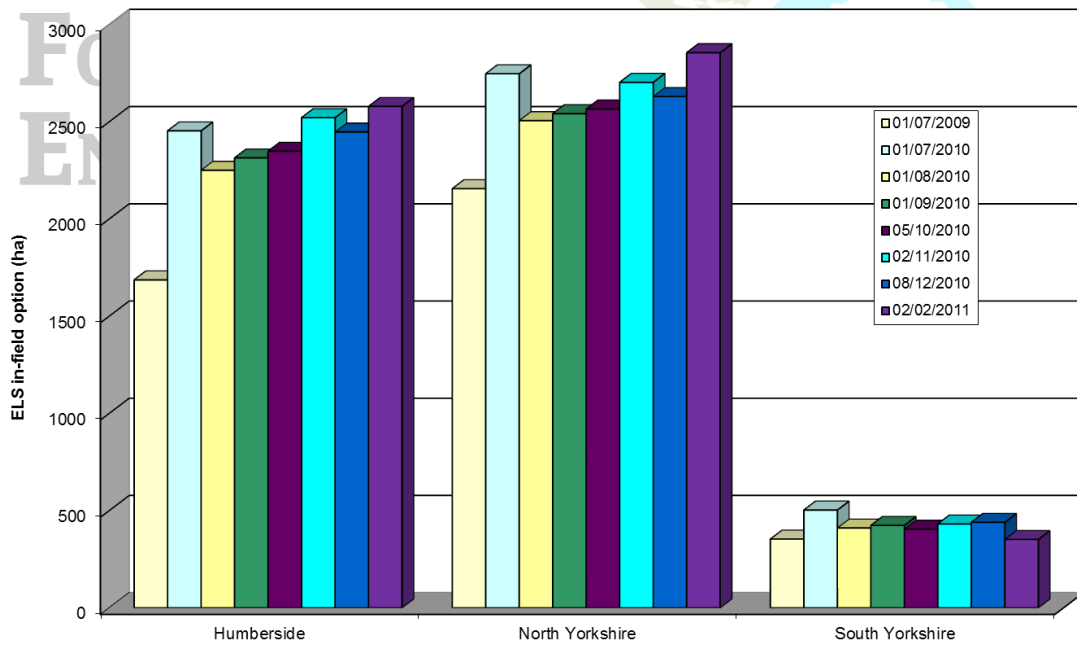


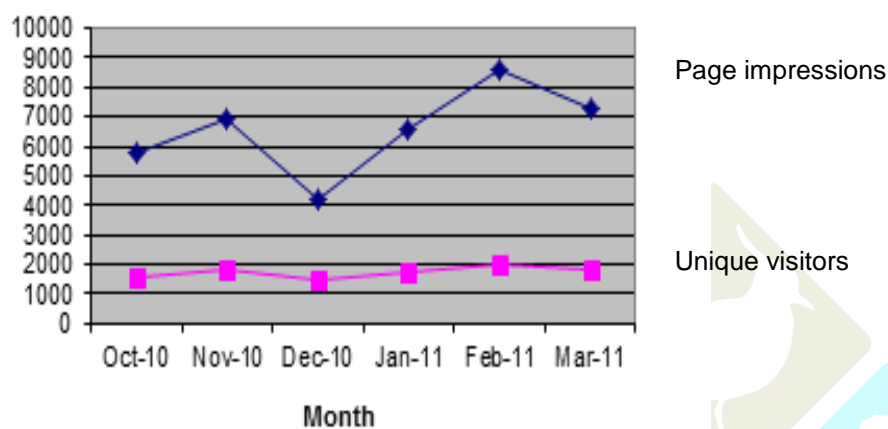
Figure 8. Change in area of key target options for Yorkshire & Humber region by county

## CFE MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2011)

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### Website

The website statistics for the CFE website reached a peak in February with nearly 9000 page impressions. March has been a quieter month and new features including an interactive map highlighting the beacon farmers, are being developed to attract increased visitor numbers. Aside from the homepage, the most popular page is the online record area. Whilst this was closed during the time the postal survey was sent to farmers, the page asked farmers to ensure they were completing the annual postal survey and informed users that the online record will reopen in May 2011.



## FOR THE FARMED

To date almost 5000 on farm signs have been disseminated to partners and individual farmers and land managers. Since the beginning of March nearly 1200 signs have been requested directly from farmers from the national Programme Office.

### Media activity

To continue with a high media profile, letters from the partnership, and farmers and advisers have appeared in Farmers Weekly during February and March. On the 11 March the Campaign received coverage (three pages) in Farmers Weekly which highlighted a beacon farmer supporting the Campaign through ELS (based on the CFE guidelines) and it showed how a compulsory approach would impact his business. Since then case studies of beacon farmers have regularly featured in Farmers Weekly and Farmers Guardian.

From the middle of February onwards the Campaign has continued to attract coverage in the regional press including: East Anglian Daily Times, Your Ashford, Evesham Journal, Pocklington Post, Staffordshire Weekly, Malton and Pickering Mercury, Cotswold Journal, Cornish Guardian, Romsey Advertiser, Hampshire Chronicle, Driffield Post, Darlington and Stockton Times, Bucks Herald, Bordon Herald, Shooting UK and the Smallholder.

A CFE event with the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs (NFYFC) held on a beacon farm in Gloucestershire was covered by BBC Radio Gloucestershire on their Countryside Matters programme on the 3 April.

## **CFE MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2011)**

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### **Local activity**

From mid-February onwards around 300 advisers and agronomists have attended CFE events organised by the LCCs and also those organised by partner organisations.

So far this year over 4500 farmers have attended local events where the CFE has had a presence including CFE events (conferences/walks) partner walk's, wider industry meetings and open days and conferences and agricultural shows. The greatest engagement has been achieved when the CFE has piggy-backed on events. The local groups have also developed a range of incentives for farmer engagement on the ground including seed for the establishment of Campaign options and measures and free promotional items including mouse mats.

### **Delivery Group issues**

The Delivery Group took part in a brief conference call on the 21 February where they discussed the following:

- The options for farmers in ELS if a regulatory approach is introduced, which has been followed by the sub-group of the Steering Group.
- Progress towards the targets including issues around the coding of buffer strips
- The reaction to the open letter and communications moving forward which will focus on case studies.

The group then met formally on the 23 March and discussed the following issues:

- **Key target option uptake in ELS** – group members discussed the progress that is being made towards the final target. They also looked at county uptake and referred an issue which is impacting uptake in Yorkshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire. There are 7 000 ha of the EG5 - Brassica fodder crops followed by overwintered stubbles (EG5) option in the Campaign's baseline figure. This is now a discontinued option and currently 3,800 ha remain in ELS. The option is only worth 90 points per hectare and there is no direct replacement option available – this means farmers could be substituting these areas with the higher value Campaign target options which would equate to a lower area. The EMG will be looking at this issue at their next meeting.
- **CFE communications** – the Delivery Group are pleased with the coverage in the farming press since the open letter. Over the next few months they agreed that the focus should be on case studies of beacon farmers who are taking part in the Campaign in a way that fits in with their farming business.
- **Cereals** – the group discussed the offer from Haymarket for the CFE to occupy a large area at the event. Whilst the group members thought this was a great opportunity, lack of resources in terms of funding and adviser time and a very short lead time might mean that this isn't a viable option. Either way, they agreed that the CFE will have a presence at the event.

### **Evidence and Monitoring Group (EMG) issues**

The Evidence and Monitoring Group met on the 22 February. There was a pre-meeting to discuss whether and how to measure the environment outcomes of the Campaign. Following an extensive discussion around this topic it was decided that the group would support increasing the FERA sample size. A sub-group of the Evidence and Monitoring Group is being set up to take this forward.

## **CFE MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2011)**

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The issues discussed in the actual meeting included the following:

- Key target option uptake at a county level – the group will be exploring how to present the county data set against the context of varying baseline levels.
- Interpretation and monitoring of two Campaign targets not previously defined:
  1. *To seek to improve the environmental management of at least one third of the uncropped land referred to in subparagraph (b) above [i.e. the uncropped land target]* – it was decided that a sub-group will take this forward and review the ways to monitor this target.
  2. *To encourage farmers and land managers to take up voluntary measures which have the greatest environmental value* – it was agreed that progress towards this target will be assessed by looking at the quality of local communications in encouraging the uptake of CFE options.
- CFE cost calculator – group members were asked to provide feedback on the proposal to develop the cost calculator and views on the usefulness of the tool are also being sought from the LCCs. Early indications suggest the tool will not be as useful now because the Campaign is seeking to promote the positive benefits of participating in the Campaign. Instead comprehensive case studies including the financial costs of taking part in the Campaign compared to regulation, will be highlighted in the press.

CAMPAIGN  
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