



The Campaign for the Farmed Environment is encouraging farmers and land managers to voluntarily adopt land management practices that will retain and exceed the environmental benefits that used to be provided by set-aside. There is a range of voluntary management measures or ELS options that you can adopt on your farm to benefit the environment, whilst at the same time being agronomically practical

Name: John Hewitt, K F Thornalley & Co.,

Region: East Midlands

Farm: Cotes Grange Farm, South Elkington, Louth, Lincolnshire.

Size: 239 Ha



Background

Cotes Grange Farm is a 197 Ha unit in the Lincolnshire Wolds, soil is a sandy clay loam with varying amounts of flints overlying chalk, the grass field to the south of the farmstead is the site of a medieval grange, probably owned by a local abbey, At the north end of the farm there is a Bronze Age Burial Barrow, and possibly sites of three more.

The tenancy for Cotes Grange Farm was taken by my wife's grandfather in 1932, then in the 1950's my father-in-law became joint tenant. In 1980 Louise and I moved to Cotes Grange to help run the farm, having been an assistant manager on an 800 acre arable/ dairy farm in Cambridgeshire, in 1993 Louise became the tenant and we moved into the farmhouse.

By 1997 we had become a purely arable unit when we gave up the small (100 ewes) sheep flock, renting out the 6ha of permanent pasture to a neighbour. Over the last eight years we have taken on two FBT's totalling 42 Ha's adjoining the southern farm boundary to bring it up to its present 239 Ha's

What voluntary management do you already undertake on your farm?

In the late 1990's we wanted to improve the farms environment, we had few trees and the hedges were of poor quality and gappy due to over trimming annually and grazing by sheep over the years.

We consulted FWAG which resulted in us planting two .2 ha areas with trees and 750 metres of hedge before entering into a fairly comprehensive CSS agreement in 2000 which involved

planting another 5500 m hedge, several small tree plantations, 6500m of 6m margins, 5000m 2m margins, 1.6ha's of arable reversion, entering the grass into stewardship and protecting the archaeological features. In 2003 we were one of the host farms for the SAFFIE project (looking at helping skylarks) and in 2005 we entered ELS gaining points from the wildflower margins created for SAFFIE and the 1ha of wild bird cover we were already growing.

We will not be entering HLS when our CSS scheme ends in September, we feel, as tenants, it a step too far, we have completed the capital improvements we wanted and we can obtain the results we want using ELS and CFE on our farm.

We also want to be environmentally responsible on the land on which we grow crops (after all this is what we do to make a living!) to the extent that I am FACTS and BASIS qualified (including BETA BASIS) and on the BASIS register

How will you be/are you taking part in the Campaign?

We have volunteered to be a Beacon farm to show others what can be done without compromising our ability to farm profitably, and to encourage other farmers to 'try to do their bit'

Will you be using an adviser?

We will consult with FWAG as to the best options to use but having learnt so much during the last 10 years we feel the final choices are our decisions as we have to implement them and make them work.

What are the benefits of taking part in the Campaign?

To be able to show others what can be achieved and promote the benefits to wildlife they bring. By hosting farm walks we will be able to gain from other peoples views be they positive or negative.

How does undertaking voluntary management fit in with your farming business?

Quite easily most of the time as using many of the options available can be used to save time, e.g. take out awkward corners, strips next to woodland and the margins next to water saves having to worry about LERAPs. The pleasure gained from watching the wildlife enjoying the features we provide makes any time taken worthwhile.

What is driving you to take part in the Campaign?

We take a great deal of pleasure from the farm environment and feel the need to show others, be they farmers or otherwise, that conventional farming can go hand in hand with wildlife conservation