



CFE County Priorities for Cambridgeshire

1. Aim

This document has been drawn together by the CFE Local Liaison Group for Cambridgeshire with input from all LLG members and their respective organisations. The aim is to ensure that all advisers and partners have a clear, concise and consistent message about the aims of CFE in Cambridgeshire that can be used by farmers and landowners to ensure their actions deliver maximum benefit to the environment. The action undertaken on each farm may differ depending on the farm type and enterprise.

2. County Overview

Cambridgeshire has four main landscape types encapsulated by the following Natural Character Areas:

- *East Anglian Chalk*: wide gently undulating landscape with characteristic very large arable fields, enclosure hedgerows and clumps of woodland. A variety of arable crops are grown, there is little livestock, and few watercourses other than the chalk streams
- *Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Claylands*: predominantly arable landscape, open and gently undulating, with broad river valleys and ancient woodland, particularly in Huntingdonshire and West Cambridgeshire. Rotation is often cereal and oilseed rape, with small numbers of livestock particularly on river banks
- *The Fens*: a large-scale, low-lying drained landscape including high value arable crops and field vegetables, with fragments of wet fen and some smaller fields
- *Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge*: a small area of this enters the county, with fragmented heathland and ancient woodland in a largely arable area
- West of Peterborough a number of landscape types converge, mainly a low-lying limestone plateau with a variety of soils overlying.

Cambridgeshire is an important arable and horticultural area, with over 70% of the county classified as arable. On the light land in the south of the county, cereals in a three crop rotation is common, whereas it is more likely to be a two crop rotation on the heavier claylands. In the Fens to the north of the county, there is more potato and vegetable production and a strong emphasis on water abstraction. In these areas large arable farms are typical and the use of farm contractors increasing.

There is very little livestock or dairy in Cambridgeshire and it is the least wooded county in the country.

3. County designated sites and partnerships

Statutory designations:

- Cambridgeshire has no AONBs (although an application is in progress to make the Ouse Valley through Huntingdonshire an AONB), but has over 100 SSSIs, including important ones at Woodwalton and Holme Fen in the north west of the county, the Nene Valley and Ouse Washes in the north and Wicken Fen to the east of the county.

Non-statutory designations:

- The Wildlife Trust Living Landscape projects in the county are as follows: Great Fen, Cambridgeshire Chalk, Great Ouse Valley, Nene Valley, Wicken Fen and West Cambs Hundreds.
- The RSPB has identified the fens as one of its Farmland Advice Focus Areas (FAFAs).
- The Local Nature Partnership is run by Cambs County Council. Partners include the CLA, NFU, RSPB, Cambridgeshire ACRE, Environment Agency and Natural England.

4. County Priorities

The following sections aim to define the county priorities by theme.

a) Theme: Priority farmland habitats and description

- **Fens:** For example the above mentioned SSSIs, but also smaller pockets of fen-like habitat, e.g. Chippenham Fen, Fowlmere and small wetland habitats on farms in the fen landscape.
- **Ditches:** Including fenland drainage ditches and wet ditches elsewhere in the county. (VM1, VM4, VM19)
- **Arable Field Margins:** The edges of arable fields which, with the right cultivation, can provide habitat for rare arable plants, particularly on light land. Also the enhancement of grass buffer strips. (VM6, VM13, VM14, VM21, VM22)
- **Chalk and Limestone Grassland:** Limestone grassland to the north of the county adjacent to Peterborough, with small pockets of chalk grassland in the south. (VM19, VM20)
- **Floodplain Meadows:** For example at Portholme near Huntingdon. (VM19, VM20)
- **Hedgerows:** Especially in the areas of ancient woodland, such as Huntingdonshire and the West Cambs Hundreds project area. (VM17, VM20)
- **River Valleys:** Typical Cambridgeshire rivers are broad and slow flowing, often lined with willows, many of them ancient pollards. (VM1, VM4, VM17, VM19, VM20)
- **Chalk Streams:** Freshwater streams which flow across the chalk through farmland as tributaries of the Cam, for example the Shep and Granta. (VM1, VM4, VM17, VM19, VM20)
- **Protected Road Verges:** Relics of species rich grassland that often border farmland on lanes and roadsides throughout the county. (VM20)

Any specific action required:

- Natural England has identified the following actions for the Cambridgeshire landscape, some of which can be addressed or enhanced through CFE options:
 - Pond creation and management. (VM1, VM17, VM19, VM20)
 - Ditch management. (VM1, VM4)
 - Green lanes and Drove roads – management with biodiversity in mind.

b) Theme: Priority species and requirements

- Bats, especially Barbastelle – Woodland edge, hedgerows and grass margins. (VM1, VM6, VM7, VM14, VM17, VM18, VM20)
- Brown hare – Requires a mosaic of crop types and grass margins for year round grazing and undisturbed cover for raising young in May/ June/ July. (VM1, VM5, VM7, VM8, VM10, VM12, VM15, VM17, VM18, VM19, VM20)
- Water vole – Vegetated banks on rivers and ditches which have continuous water levels. (VM1, VM4)
- Otter – Pollard willows for lying up, good quality rivers for fish supply. (VM1)
- Arable plants – Cultivated, unfertilised plots or strips in fields, usually around the edges on light soil. (VM13, VM14, VM21, VM22)
- Farmland birds – The Fens area is a major farmland bird priority area and one of the few remaining areas where Corn Bunting and Turtle Dove in particular, but also Grey Partridge, Lapwing, Tree Sparrow and Yellow Wagtail, can still be found. Turtle Dove is a particular priority in Huntingdonshire. Grey Partridge has a stronghold on the chalk. (VM1, VM6, VM7, VM8, VM9, VM10, VM11, VM12, VM13, VM14, VM15, VM16, VM17, VM18, VM21, VM22)
- Invertebrates and pollinators – Beetle banks, dry margins, hedgerows, flower-rich areas. (VM1, VM6, VM7, VM8, VM13, VM14, VM17, VM18, VM19, VM20, VM21, VM22)
- White-clawed crayfish is hanging on in some areas.

Any specific action required:

- Farmland birds: Year-round habitat provided on farms as seed food over the winter (VM10, VM15), infield nesting sites (e.g. VM11, VM12) and source of insects in spring and summer for feeding young (VM6, VM7).
- Encourage uncultivated margins in important arable plant areas rather than grass margins. (VM14)

- Catchment Sensitive Farming identifies the Lower Ouse Catchment and the Cam and Granta as priority catchments for the scheme in Cambridgeshire.
- The Environment Agency has supplied a map showing where water bodies in the county are failing to meet the Water Framework Directive Good Ecological Status because of rural diffuse pollution. See Attached PDF.
- The EA continues to be concerned about Metaldehyde entering watercourses. Anglian Water are concerned about drinking water being impacted at the intake for Grafham Water, raising levels of this chemical above permitted levels for drinking water. A key action should be to push the “get pelletwise” campaign with farmers in the Ouse catchment.
- The EA would also like to promote its Rural Sustainable Drainage advice publications to assist farmers in identifying suitable and cost effective measures to prevent run-off and the loss of nutrients and soil from fields. As we are likely to continue to experience extremes of weather with short intense rainfall episodes these measures are also helpful adaptation measures for the future. These kinds of measures are helpful for meeting our commitments under the Water Framework Directive.
- Anglian Water has concerns over the concentrations of pesticides and nitrate being detected in the raw water abstracted for public supply from the Great Ouse at Offord and at Diddington Brook at Grafham.

Any specific action required:

- Buffering watercourses and avoiding erosion and run off. (VM1, VM2, VM3, VM4, VM5, VM17, VM18, VM19, VM20)
- Promote the Environment Agency publication “Key Actions for Farmers Relating to Water Management” and the 6 actions contained therein.

d) Other county priorities not already covered

Any specific action required:

- Ask farmers if they have any on their land.
- Make them aware of any local initiatives to help, such as the Middle Level Internal Drainage Board mink trapping initiative and the Bourn Free project.

CFE options within Entry Level Stewardship agreements (excluding Uplands ELS)

	2013	2014		2015		2016 and later
		Jan-Jun	Jul to Dec	Jan-Jun	Jul to Dec	
Cambridgeshire						
Maintenance of watercourse fencing (EJ11) - km	0	0	0	0	3	4
Supplementary feeding in winter for farmland birds (EF23) - tonnes	0	0	0	0	0	8
Skylark plots (EF8) - number	0	0	0	0	791	1682
All other CFE2 options (hectares)	0	44	51	76	1299	2873
<i>Permanent grassland with very low inputs: outside SDA & Moorland (EK3)</i>	0	27	44	21	396	893
<i>Field corner management (EF1,EK1)</i>	0	17	3	11	407	843
<i>Wild bird seed mixture (EF2)</i>	0	0	2	6	125	338
<i>Nectar flower mixture (EF4)</i>	0	0	2	2	41	153
<i>6m/12m buffer strips next to a watercourse (EE9, EE10, EJ9)</i>	0	0	0	0	161	367
<i>Extended overwintered stubbles (EF22)</i>	0	0	0	36	114	195
<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	55	84