

**CAMPAIGN
FOR THE FARMED
ENVIRONMENT**



CFE County Priorities for Devon

1. Aim

This document has been drawn together by the CFE Local Liaison Group for Devon with input for 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 Devon 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

Devon is predominantly a county of livestock farming, where dairying, lowland cattle and sheep and LFA cattle and sheep farms predominate. The Culm area extends across the top of the county to Cornwall from Dartmoor; this is a lush pastoral area high in dairy and meat production. The rolling ridges and plateaux of the culm are separated by catchments of the Rivers Taw, Torridge and Mole. The farms are typically in a small-scale, enclosed landscape, surrounded by the extensive upland area of Dartmoor.

To the south of the county, South Devon is more mixed farming, with fields flanked by Devon hedgebanks. Towards the coast wooded valleys and rias are more frequent. Then moving east to the Devon Redlands, often called the agricultural heart of Devon because of the underlying red sandstone which dominates visually through ploughed fields, is fertile and lends itself to mixed farming systems. Gently rolling fields with relatively small fields are either grazed or under cultivation. Hedgerow trees and small copses give a wooded appearance to the hills. Valleys are flat bottomed and open into extensive flood plains across the central part of the area; arable becomes more frequent and fields turn larger. Rivers are a key feature.

3. County designated sites and partnerships

International Designations: seventeen SACs, including: Beer Quarry and Caves; Blackstone Point; Braunton Burrows; Culm Grasslands; Dartmoor; Dawlish Warren; East Devon Pebblebed Heaths; Exmoor and Quantock Oaklands; Exmoor Heaths; Lundy; Plymouth Sound and Estuaries; River Axe; Sidmouth to West Bay; South Dartmoor Woods; South Devon Shore Dock; South Hams; Tintagel – Marsland – Clovelly Coast. One Ramsar site: Exe Estuary. Three SPA sites: Exe Estuary; East Devon Heaths; Tamar Estuary Complex.

Seven National Nature Reserves and one Marine Nature Reserves – Lundy.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): over 200 SSSIs covering over 51,000-hectares which is 7% of the county.

A further 2,200 Local County Wildlife Sites in Devon: covering approximately 30,000-hectares or 4% of the county.

Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONBs): East Devon; North Devon; South Devon; Tamar Valley and the Blackdown Hills.

North Devon Nature Improvement Area.

See accompanying prioritisation map for further details and local priority areas.

4. County Priorities

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

a) Theme: Priority farmland habitats and description

Unimproved grassland habitats: including species-rich lowland meadows; culm grasslands; lowland heathland & coastal and flood plain grazing marsh. Key CFE Voluntary Measures: VM19 Fertiliser-free permanent pasture; VM20 Arable land reverted to grass. Manage within Tried & Tested advice.

Arable habitat and field margins. Key CFE Voluntary Measures: VM6 Wildflower mix; VM7 Pollen & nectar mix; VM10 Wild bird seed mix and maize-free game strips; VM11 Skylark plots; VM12 Lapwing plots; VM13 Unsprayed and/or unfertilised cereal headlands; VM14 Cultivated margins; VM15 Over-wintered stubble; VM17 Field corners; VM18 Beetle banks; VM21 Selective use of spring herbicides; VM22 Brassica fodder crops. Manage within Voluntary Initiative advice.

Other: Ancient woodland: key local habitats; manage as part of whole farm approach.

Boundaries: ancient/species-rich hedgerows: key local habitats; manage as above.

Rivers and wetland habitats: key local habitats; manage as above.

Any specific action required:

Retain what is already on the farm; assess habitats and their value – seek advice where necessary – key principles are to protect the existing habitat first, buffer habitat and consider extending habitats to link to other habitats and features.

Promotion of ‘retain what you have’ message until further CAP/greening information and NELM schemes are known.

Encourage the ‘stacking’ of options to increase environmental benefits and make areas out of agricultural production work harder and deliver more for the environment.

Hedgerow management to consider National Pollinator Strategy.

b) Theme: Priority species and requirements

Farmland birds for example cirl bunting and wading species – nesting sites and food sources. Key CFE Voluntary Measures: VM6 Wildflower mix; VM7 Pollen & nectar mix; VM10 Wild bird seed mix and maize-free game strips; VM13 Unsprayed and/or unfertilised cereal headlands; VM15 Over-wintered stubble; VM16 Supplementary winter feeding for farmland birds; VM17 Field corners; VM19 Fertiliser-free permanent pasture; VM21 Selective use of spring herbicides.

Barn owl – nest boxes, hunting ground eg rough grass, especially near to hedge lines. Key CFE Voluntary Measures: VM1 Grass buffer strip next to a watercourse or pond; VM17 Field corners; VM19 Fertiliser-free permanent pasture; VM20 Arable land reverted to grass.

Brown hare – open farmland, preferably large open fields with crop diversity, mixed livestock and arable farming. Key CFE Voluntary Measures: VM6 Wildflower mix; VM8 Legume and herb rich temporary grass; VM15 Over-wintered stubble; VM17 Field corners; VM19 Fertiliser-free permanent pasture; VM22 Brassica fodder crops.

Bats – hedgerows, semi-natural grassland and ponds. Key CFE Voluntary Measures: VM1 Grass buffer strip next to a watercourse or pond; VM17 Field corners; VM19 Fertiliser-free permanent pasture; VM20 Arable land reverted to grass.

Bees/butterflies/invertebrates – food source, shelter, nesting habitat. Key CFE Voluntary Measures: VM6 Wildflower mix; VM7 Pollen & nectar mix; VM8 Legume and herb rich temporary grass; VM19 Fertiliser-free permanent pasture.

Water voles – un-polluted watercourses, protection from non-native species. Key CFE Voluntary Measures: VM1 Grass buffer strip next to a watercourse or pond; VM2 In-field grass strips to avoid erosion; VM3 Management of maize to avoid erosion; VM4 Watercourse fencing.

Any specific action required:

Provide information on the needs of all species to enable beneficial management of habitats to meet their needs.

Promotion of stacking value of voluntary measures.

Provide information on best practice and management of conservation areas.

c) Theme: priority river catchments

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) run down the eastern side of the county. There are two key groundwater priority areas; around Exeter and Honiton. Surface water is more extensive across the country as a priority area; there are seven key areas of which the largest is found between Tavistock, Okehampton and the north coast.

The Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative works across the county, covering approximately 90% of Devon. CSF catchments include the River Exe; Rivers Axe and Otter; Rivers Taw, Torridge and North Devon Streams; South Devon and Tamar – Tavy.

See accompanying priority map for further details.

Key CFE Voluntary Measures include: VM1 Grass buffer strips next to a watercourse or pond; VM2 In-field grass strips to avoid erosion; VM3 Management of maize to avoid erosion; VM4 Watercourse fencing; VM5 Winter cover crops; VM17 Field corners; VM18 Beetle banks.

Any specific action required:

Promote voluntary measures that support better water quality.

Provide advice to reduce diffuse and point source water pollution.

Work with existing, in particular CSF; and new projects within catchments to share resources and knowledge to farmers.