



CFE County Priorities for Shropshire

1. Aim

This document has been drawn together by the CFE Local Liaison Group for Shropshire 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 Shropshire 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

Agriculture is the predominant land use in Shropshire, amounting to 86% of the total land area (276,903ha). Over one third of the agricultural area is arable (predominantly cereals 71,298ha), while dairy holdings are mainly concentrated in the north and north-west, with livestock breeding and rearing in the south and south-west. There are 3664 agricultural holdings in the county and 20% of Shropshire businesses are involved in farming.

Landscape character areas of Shropshire includes the rolling landform of the Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau and the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain, whereas the Shropshire Hills, Oswestry Uplands, Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills are defined by hills and valleys.

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 | |
| Shropshire | Maintenance of watercourse fencing (EJ11) - km | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 19 | 54 |
| | Supplementary feeding in winter for farmland birds (EF23) - tonnes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| | Skylark plots (EF8) - number | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 144 |
| | All other CFE2 options (hectares) | 19 | 30 | 20 | 60 | 941 | 2404 |
| | <i>Permanent grassland with very low inputs: outside SDA & Moorland (EK3)</i> | 19 | 23 | 18 | 42 | 700 | 1836 |
| | <i>Field corner management (EF1,EK1)</i> | 0 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 131 | 258 |
| | <i>Wild bird seed mixture (EF2)</i> | 0 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 30 | 86 |
| | <i>Nectar flower mixture (EF4)</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 18 | 44 |
| | <i>6m/12m buffer strips next to a watercourse (EE9, EE10, EJ9)</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 85 |
| | <i>Extended overwintered stubbles (EF22)</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| | <i>Other</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 36 | 78 |

3. County designated sites and partnerships

The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1958 and covers a quarter of Shropshire. The main purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, while also taking account of economic and social needs, promoting sustainable development and meeting the demand for recreation.

The Nitrates Directive requires areas of land that drain into waters polluted by nitrates to be designated as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs). Shropshire farmland within the NVZ designated areas is largely concentrated in the northeast of the county although discrete pockets can be found throughout with the exception of the south east. Farmers with land in NVZs have to follow an Action Programme to tackle nitrate loss from agriculture.

Shropshire contains 6 Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) and 1 CSF Catchment Partnership. These initiatives are in place largely because of concerns regarding water quality in Groundwater Protected Areas and Drinking Water Protected Areas. CSF delivers practical solutions and targeted support that helps farmers and land managers take voluntary action to reduce diffuse water pollution from agriculture and to protect water and the environment.

The Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Scheme and Nature Improvement Area (NIA) are programmes which are as part of their implementation trying to improve the environmental value of designated sites. Conservation is focused on improving three Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Colemere, Whitemere and Brown Moss) situated in northern Shropshire.

4. County Priorities

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

a) Theme: Priority farmland habitats and description

The Shropshire Biodiversity Partnership lists 15 habitats including:

| Habitat | Actions required |
|---|---|
| Field margins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field margins – enhance farmland biodiversity and buffering watercourses. Watercourses/wetland/riparian management – promote best practice for soil management, crop nutrition and pesticide use. Hedgerows - promotion of maintenance, restoration and creation. Semi-natural grassland - Promotion of maintenance, restoration and creation. |
| Floodplain grazing marsh | |
| Hedgerows | |
| Lowland dry acid grassland | |
| Lowland wood pasture | |
| Peat bogs | |
| Rivers & streams | |
| Standing open water | |
| Species rich grassland | |
| Others: In Shropshire the mixed arable farming of northern and east of the county are identified as high priority areas for farmland birds (ie. in-field nesting habitat, overwinter seed food and insect-rich foraging habitats). In contrast the livestock breeding and rearing grassland farms in southern Shropshire are designated high priority | |

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| areas for vulnerable grassland. | |
| CFE Option Code | Description |
| VM1 and 2 | Grass buffers and In-field grass strips |
| VM4 | Water course fencing |
| VM6 | Wildflower mix |
| VM7 | Pollen & nectar mix |
| VM8 | Legume and herb rich temporary grass |
| VM10 | Wild bird seed mix and maize-free game mix |
| VM12 | Lapwing plots |
| VM13 | Unsprayed and/or unfertilised cereal headlands |
| VM15 | Over wintered stubbles |
| VM16 | Winter feeding for farmland birds |
| VM17 | Field Corners |
| VM19 | Fertiliser-free permanent pasture |
| VM21 | Selective use of spring herbicides |

b) Theme: Priority species and requirements

The Shropshire Biodiversity Partnership lists 22 species many of which are closely linked to agricultural land

| Species | Actions required |
|---|--|
| Brown hare | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer and winter feeding and nesting habitats – The Big 3 for farmland birds. • Flower and legume rich areas for insects including pollinators (food, fuel, homes) • Manage hedgerows for specific targets and improve connectivity between habitats. |
| Dingy Skipper | |
| Dormouse | |
| Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary | |
| Barn Owl | |
| Farmland Birds | |
| Song Thrush | |
| Lapwing | |
| Water vole | |
| Natural England agri-environment scheme targeting identifies the mixed arable farming of northern and east Shropshire as high priority areas for farmland birds (ie. lapwing, barn owl, grey partridge, song thrush and seed eating species including tree sparrow, reed bunting, corn bunting, yellowhammer, linnet, house sparrow, bullfinch and skylark.) and farm wildlife (ie. brown hare and water vole, dragonflies, newts & toads). The livestock breeding and rearing grassland farms in southern Shropshire are designated high priority areas for farm wildlife (ie. butterflies, bees, bats and dormice). | |
| CFE Option Code | Description |
| VM6 | Wildflower mix |
| VM7 | Pollen & nectar mix |
| VM8 | Legume and herb rich temporary grass |
| VM9 | Ryegrass seed for birds |
| VM10 | Wild bird seed mix and maize-free game mix |
| VM11 | Skylark plots |
| VM12 | Lapwing plots |
| VM13 | Unsprayed and/or unfertilised cereal headlands |

| | |
|------|------------------------------------|
| VM15 | Over wintered stubbles |
| VM16 | Winter feeding for farmland birds |
| VM17 | Field Corners |
| VM19 | Fertiliser-free permanent pasture |
| VM21 | Selective use of spring herbicides |
| VM22 | Brassica fodder crops |

c) **Theme: priority river catchments**

Shropshire contains a network of rivers across the county providing diverse range of habitats for wildlife.

| Catchments | Actions required |
|--|---|
| River Teme is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil management • Managing farm inputs efficiently eg. pesticides, manures (nitrates and phosphates) • Watercourses/wetland/riparian management and habitat connectivity • Use EA's 'Key Actions for Farmers relating to Water Management' |
| River Clun a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and SSSI. | |
| The Meres and Mosses of north Shropshire form part of the largest and most ecologically diverse cluster of natural wetlands in lowland England. Many of them are designated SSSIs, SACs and RAMSAR sites | |
| CFE Option Code | Description |
| VM1 | Grass buffers next to a watercourse or pond |
| VM2 | In-field grass strips |
| VM3 | Management of maize to avoid erosion |
| VM4 | Water course fencing |
| VM5 | Winter cover crops |

5. Action Plan

| CFE Local priority | Delivery action | Delivered by | Target area |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------|
| To help meet the WFD water quality targets | Best practice events, workshops and walks | CFE, EA, NE, CSF, T&T, VI, CMP, M&MLPS. | Shropshire |
| Farmland birds | Farmland habitat establishment and management events and promotion of NELMS. | CFE, NE, RSPB, SWLT. | Northern & Eastern Shropshire |
| Pollinators | Farmland habitat establishment and management events and promotion of NELMS. | CFE, NE, SWLT, VI. | Shropshire |
| To help maximise the environmental potential of EFAs. | Information events, walks to target EFAs to protect watercourses and create habitat | FAS, NFU, CLA, NE. | Northern & Eastern Shropshire |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|------------|
| Industry sustainability | Promote links with partners to advise on pesticides, nutrients, energy and water usage | CSF, CFE, NE, EA, STW, NFU, CLA, SWLT, GGAP, VI, T&T. | Shropshire |
|-------------------------|--|---|------------|