



CFE County Priorities for Suffolk

1. Aim

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

Suffolk has 6 broad landscape characters. In the west of the county around Newmarket is the northern tip of the *East Anglian chalk* ridge. In this area large rectangular grass fields are surrounded by fences and shelter belts to protect the horses on the stud farms associated with this area.

Adjoining the NE edge of the East Anglia chalk are the *Brecklands* (Brecks), where sandy soils prevail on top of underlying chalk geology. One of the driest areas in England, the Brecks sit on a gentle but distinct plateau and soils are at high risk from wind-blow and late frosts. This climate and the free-draining sandy soils support dry heath and grassland communities with a rich and distinct wildlife. Over two-thirds of the land area is cultivated for cereals and vegetable production. Outdoor pigs are also farmed on these sandy soils and indoor poultry rearing is relatively common. Vast conifer plantations predominantly of Scots and Corsican pine are found in Thetford forest, with a shift towards broadleaf planting occurring. Where rivers intersect this landscape, lush shallow valleys provide a contrast to the heathland.

East of the Brecks is the *South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands*; a large plateau of chalky boulder clay with little relief other than where small rivers and streams cut through the landscape. On the flat open land of the plateau, large-scale arable fields have been created due to hedgerow loss; hedgerow oak trees are a distinct but declining feature of this landscape. A more varied and pastoral landscape is found within the river valleys, such as the Waveney, which forms the border of Suffolk and Norfolk and has internationally important calcareous fen habitat. The clay capping of the soils has led to many ponds, important for Great Crested Newt. Cereals dominate most farms with break crops of sugar beet and rape. Indoor intensive pig and poultry rearing also occurs.

On the North Sea coast from Great Yarmouth to Harwich, the *Suffolk Coast and Heaths* stretch in a distinct narrow strip 6 – 12 miles wide. It receives less than two-thirds of the national average rainfall. The geology is free-draining glacial sands and gravels, with heathland and shingle ridge habitats. Areas of saltmarsh and grazing marsh are also found on the coast. Cereals, potatoes and sugar beet are the main crops, though vegetable and soft fruit production also occurs, and there are outdoor pigs on the sandier soils. The recent shift towards vegetable growing in the area has seen a large increase in crop irrigation. Remnants of pasture in river valleys are sheep grazed, as are the heathlands.

A small pocket of the *Broads* national park lies in north east Suffolk at the northern tip of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths and along the Waveney Valley. Pasture remains an important part of the farmed landscape with grazing still common on the water meadows.

The final character area, the *South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands*, has chalky boulder clay overlying chalk, with Grade 2 soils prevalent. The River Stour forms much of the boundary between Suffolk and Essex. The landscape is predominantly arable with hedges, copses and woodland providing a wooded feel. Hedgerows tend to be dense, with oak and ash boundary trees. Primary land use is arable cropping, with pasture and willow plantations in river valley floors. On lighter land, fruit farms and market gardening can be found.

3. County designated sites and partnerships

- 6 RAMSAR sites, 11 SACs, 4 SPAs and 149 SSSIs. 925 County Wildlife Sites covering 19,683ha (>5% of Suffolk geographical area).
- The Suffolk Coast AONB includes many SSSI designations and there are also Important Bird Areas and SPAs.
- Dedham Vale AONB and the Stour Valley Project.
- In the north west of the county the Breckland is a SSSI and Important Bird Area/ European Special Protection zone, and the RSPB has identified the Breckland as one of its Farmland Advice Focus Areas (FAFAs).
- There are six Living Landscape Projects in Suffolk: Stour Valley Woodlands, Blyth-Alde, Sandlings Heath and Forest, Suffolk Broads, Valley Fens and the Suffolk Farmland Living Landscape.
- The Local Nature Partnership covers both Suffolk and Norfolk and is delivered by Wild Anglia.

4. County Priorities

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

a) Theme: Priority farmland habitats and description

Acid Grassland: Found in the Sandlings and Brecklands, and Suffolk Coast areas. A number of rare plant and invertebrate species are threatened within this habitat. (VM19, VM20)

Ancient and/or Species-rich Hedgerows: A considerable percentage of hedgerows in Suffolk are species rich with the claylands having more ancient hedges than the Brecks and Heaths. Records suggest that hedgerow tree numbers are declining. (VM17, VM19, VM20)

Cereal Field Margins: Within the Brecks and on the sandier soils of the Sandlings, cultivated arable margins should be considered where rare arable plants are likely to occur. (VM14)

Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh: In Suffolk in 2003 there was 10,000 ha of grazing marsh, with most of the botanically rich grazing marshes located away from the coast. Ditches can form an important part of this habitat. (VM19)

Eutrophic Ponds: Suffolk has a high number of ponds, with records of over 22,000 across the county; hence the strong Great Crested Newt populations. (VM1, VM4, VM17, VM19, VM20)

Fens: Within Suffolk, fens occur in the Little Ouse valley and tributaries, the Waveney Valley, Suffolk Coastal river valley fen meadows and the Stour Valley.

Lowland Hay Meadows: Small meadows can be found scattered across the county, whilst some remain as village greens and roadside verges. (VM19, VM20)

Lowland Heathland: The Sandlings and Brecks are the two important areas where this habitat can be found, with the Breckland experiencing a greater decline than the Sandlings.

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland: In Suffolk the majority of these are County Wildlife Sites. (VM17, VM20)

Reedbeds: The three largest reedbeds in the county are found on the Suffolk coast; Suffolk has 15% of the UK reedbed habitat.

Saltmarsh: The estuary of the River Alde/Ore, River Deben, River Stour, River Butley, River Blyth and River Orwell all have saltmarsh and have experienced habitat loss.

Suffolk Rivers: Suffolk Rivers flow predominantly through farmland particularly in the headwaters and provide vital habitat for fish and aquatic plant and animal species. (VM1, VM4, VM19, VM20)

Traditional orchards: These orchards and the associated grass are under threat. There are an estimated 271 traditional orchards in the county with an estimated total area of 81ha. (VM6, VM19)

Wet Woodland: These are located mainly in the Suffolk Broads, the Waveney and Little Ouse Valleys and the Suffolk River Valleys ESA. The commonest of these are the Alder woods. (VM17, VM20)

Wood pasture and parkland: This habitat is associated with a number of species including the barbastelle bat. (VM19)

Any specific action required:

- Advise on the replanting and management of mixed and thorn hedges where arable was historically prevalent in the Brecks. Encourage replanting and pollarding in the South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands including oak hedgerow trees. Ash is the second most dominant tree species in Suffolk, therefore consideration should be given to the potential impact of *Chalara fraxinea*. Encourage the replacement of hedgerow trees in the North Essex and South Suffolk Claylands from the current stock (hedges), and encourage cutting every 2-3 years.
- Consultation with The Suffolk Hedgerow Survey 2012 should be made when choosing hedgerow species.
- Encourage the buffering of woodlands and hedgerows and create habitat linkage through buffer strips and hedge restoration / management. Advise on parkland management and over and under grazing.
- In wet meadows, advise against under-grazing and the risk of lack of management leading to change in floristic diversity. Provide information on invasive species, particularly the Himalayan Balsam issue in some river valleys.
- Buffering and linking of ponds. (VM1)
- Advocating grassland management for insect populations through low input grassland. (VM19)
- Ditch management, particularly on floodplain grazing marsh, and the buffering of fen habitat as valley fens are particularly susceptible to agricultural run-off. (VM1)
- On and adjacent to the Sandlings and Brecks heathlands, advise on the risks of excess grazing and under grazing, the risk of nutrients leaching from outdoor pigs and the eutrophication by soil and water from cultivations.
- Buffering watercourses, as Suffolk rivers are particularly susceptible to agricultural run-off. Reducing the amounts of sediment, nutrients and pesticides entering our rivers and streams is critical for the health of the water environment.

b) Theme: Priority species and requirements

- Dragonflies, water voles, newts and toads are a high priority for Natural England across most of the county. (VM1, VM4, VM17, VM19, VM20)
- Farmland Birds are a high priority for NE in coastal Suffolk and to the west, where the county borders Cambs and Norfolk, and also in the Brecks. (VM6, VM7, VM8, VM9, VM10, VM11, VM12, VM13, VM14, VM15, VM16, VM17, VM18, VM21, VM22)
- Arable plants are a high priority in the west and medium priority in the east of the county. The Brecks is renowned for its diversity and being home to many of the UK's rare arable plants. (VM10, VM13, VM14, VM15, VM21)
- Stone curlew in the Brecks and the Sanderlings. (VM12, VM19)
- Brown hare requires a mosaic of autumn and spring cropping, different 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, VM20)
- The Wildlife Trusts Farmland Living Landscape projects identifies important but isolated 'at risk' populations of dormouse, tree sparrow, water vole and great crested newt.
- Encourage habitat connectivity and planting of appropriate hedgerow species for dormouse.
- For bats encourage insect rich habitat such as ponds, woods and grasslands and encourage hedgerow management and maintenance for linkages between woodland habitats. (VM1, VM6, VM7, VM8, VM13, VM14, VM17, VM18, VM19, VM20)

Any specific action required:

- Increase in insect-rich habitats.
- Buffer ditches, ponds and hedgerows and advise on management elements for newts, voles, dragonflies etc.
- Encourage the creation of networks of nectar rich areas for bumblebees and pollinators across arable land.
- Advise on the many benefits of linking up isolated pond habitats via buffers and creation of grass areas.
- Encourage sowing of seed rich food for farmland birds in winter.
- Advise on the creation of uncropped cultivated margins for rare arable plants.

c) Theme: priority river catchments

- The following are priority catchments:
The River Blyth and surrounding SSSIs
Deben, Alde and Ore
Gipping and Orwell
Waveney
- Anglian Water report cause for concern in the amount of pesticide getting into surface drinking water at Gipping (Sproughton), Tattingstone Brook (Alton) and Mill River (Bucklesham).
- 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.
- Essex & Suffolk Water is concerned with seasonal peaks of pesticides and nitrates in rivers used as sources for drinking water supply, namely: Waveney (upstream of Shipmeadow) and River Stour, and also with pollution risks associated with the housing of livestock, slurry and manure spreading in close vicinity to unconfined boreholes throughout their supply area.

Any specific action required:

- Maintain riparian pastures in river valley bottoms. (VM19, VM20)
- Buffering of watercourses or establishment of infield grass areas. (VM1, VM2, VM4, VM17, VM18)
- Where maize is grown, advise on reducing erosion risks and cover crops. (VM3, VM5)
- Identify landowners interested in river enhancement projects.

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	
Suffolk	Maintenance of watercourse fencing (EJ11) - km	0	0	0	0	1	15
	Supplementary feeding in winter for farmland birds (EF23) - tonnes	0	0	2	0	0	2
	Skylark plots (EF8) - number	0	0	0	0	144	55
	All other CFE2 options (hectares)	25	42	64	35	788	3806
	<i>Permanent grassland with very low inputs: outside SDA & Moorland (EK3)</i>	22	13	33	19	280	1647
	<i>Field corner management (EF1, EK1)</i>	2	23	19	9	282	1201
	<i>Wild bird seed mixture (EF2)</i>	1	1	13	6	82	346
	<i>Nectar flower mixture (EF4)</i>	0	5	0	0	31	115
	<i>6m/12m buffer strips next to a watercourse (EE9, EE10, EJ9)</i>	0	0	0	1	35	158
	<i>Extended overwintered stubbles (EF22)</i>	0	0	0	0	57	121
	<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	1	22	217