



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: Lord Willoughby de Broke

Region: Warwickshire

Farm: Ditchford Farm, Stretton-on-Fosse

Size: 365 ha (927 acres)



Background

Ditchford is a predominantly arable farm, growing winter wheat in rotation with two-year temporary grass leys (haylage). Other arable crops include oilseed rape and beans. The farm also has approximately 63 ha of permanent grassland and almost 5 ha of woodland. The total area of grass on the farm is significantly increased by grass margins around most arable fields. Soils are mostly heavy clays.

What voluntary management do you already undertake on your farm?

The farm, previously in Countryside Stewardship Scheme, entered a new HLS agreement in 2010. There are a wide range of environmental measures already in place on the farm, including wild bird seed mixes, pollen and nectar mixtures, wildflower margins, fallow plots for ground-nesting birds and grass margins around arable fields. Further environmental measures that will be implemented under the new HLS agreement include pond restoration, willow pollarding, tree planting in field corners, installation of a number of bird boxes and building two otter holts. It is also likely that beetle banks will be established across the farm's two largest arable fields.

The very high standard of the environmental work at Ditchford was recognised when the farm won a regional RSPB Nature of Farming Award in 2009.

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

Ditchford Farm has a number of environmental land management options in place that are relevant to the Campaign, and plans to continue with these options under ELS and HLS. In-field options already in place on the farm include wild bird seed mixes and nectar flower mixtures. This latter option has proved to be an important source of food for the scarce bumblebee, *Bombus ruderatus*, which was thought to have been extinct in Warwickshire until

its rediscovery at Ditchford a few years ago. Now it is regularly recorded at several Warwickshire farms, largely thanks to the establishment of nectar flower mixtures along arable field edges.

Will you be using an adviser?

As well as working closely with the local Natural England adviser, Ditchford Farm utilises environmental and mapping expertise from a local land agent, to ensure efficient record keeping and compliance with the various agricultural regulations. As and when appropriate to do so, the land agents will also be employed to draw up a management plan for the farm.

What are the benefits of taking part in the Campaign?

I am very aware that a significant part of any farm income is from the Single Farm Payment, courtesy of the taxpayer. I am pleased to be able to use some of this money to enhance our already attractive farming landscape, so users of the footpaths and bridleways may enjoy what they have been at least partly responsible for subsidising. I also hope that this sort of scheme will help to dispel the facile myth that it is farmers who are responsible for everything from biodiversity and habitat loss to housemaid's knee!

I must add that everyone at Ditchford enjoys and takes pride in what we have achieved so far. I am delighted to have the opportunity, working through HLS, to continue such a rewarding project.

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

All of the environmental options that we have chosen to implement through ELS or HLS fits comfortably alongside the commercial farming operations at Ditchford Farm.

What is driving you to take part in the Campaign?

As already mentioned, the environmental benefits of a range of measures in place at Ditchford are clearly evident and appreciated by everyone at the farm. The Campaign, by encouraging farmers across the country to put in place land management options that will bring direct benefits to farm wildlife and also protect soil and water resources without loss of income must be a worthwhile initiative, worthy of the support of all farmers.