



# **The Campaign for the Farmed Environment: evaluation of partnership, local and wider impacts.**

## **Final Report**

To  
**Defra**  
By

**The Countryside and Community Research Institute  
(CCRI)**



Campaign for the Farmed Environment - Evaluation  
Countryside and Community Research Institute

## Summary of Project

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## Executive Summary

1. An evaluation of the Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE) was undertaken during the period March – September 2012. The evaluation examined the institutional arrangements, operational processes, and implementation of the CFE. The methodology included observation of meetings at national and local levels, interviews with representatives of partner organisations, and an on-line questionnaire for wider stakeholders. A media analysis was carried out, and a range of monitoring and evaluation reports were also reviewed to provide a holistic picture of the overall impacts of the Campaign over the period 2009 – 2012.
2. Impact evaluation reports indicated a range of benefits from the Campaign in the target counties. Reports indicate that not all the Campaign targets were achieved and impacts were variable across the target area. It is difficult to estimate the true situation with regard to achievement of targets as reports suggest problems with accurate recording of farmer activity in the survey. In some cases farmers did include relevant activity contributing to CFE objectives (under-recording) and in other instances activity was recorded that was not correct (over-recording). In addition, recent Fera monitoring has indicated that not all of the activities being undertaken by farmers are providing the desired environmental benefits due to misunderstanding or lack of knowledge on how to apply the measures.
3. Results from the evaluation presented here indicate that national stakeholders had a consistent view of the key aims and objectives of the CFE. Overall there was agreement on perception of aims and objectives of the Campaign at both national and local levels. The majority clearly indicated that there were two main objectives for the Campaign: to ensure the environmental benefits of set-aside were not lost, and to avoid regulation. At the regional level, respondents' descriptions of the aims of CFE were more varied and to a certain extent tended to depend upon the position of the respondent. Farmers tended to describe the aim as avoiding set-aside or avoiding regulation. Others described the aims in terms of protecting the environment without compromising farmers' ability to make a living.
4. At both national and local levels, those most closely involved with the Campaign indicated a range of benefits arising from synergy of the CFE objectives with their organisational and/or individual goals. Partners at the national level indicated a small range of benefits largely linked to the fact that being part of the CFE helped to achieve organisational targets, provided them with opportunities to work with partners that they would not otherwise have, and helped to break down barriers between organisations. The CFE also incurred costs for the partner organisations involved, largely in the form of personnel time but also in the case of the NFU and CLA, significant levels of administrative and managerial support. Few of the partner organisations were able to provide any precise estimates for time or other resource inputs. There is some indication from a small number of respondents that significant amounts of time and effort applied to the delivery of the Campaign are not being accounted for.

5. Respondents at both national and local levels indicated a wide range of benefits arising from the partnership work undertaken during the Campaign. National level respondents noted the Campaign had enabled closer working between previously opposing groups e.g. the farming industry and environmental groups. Success was attributed to a willingness on all sides to work together and the recognition of common goals. Some respondents indicated benefits in the form of improved understanding between partners, which had enabled the group to 'move beyond' politics to work constructively together. At the local level, respondents were generally enthusiastic about the partnerships formed in the Local Liaison Groups (LLGs) and the way they worked. Partnerships formed at the local level were indicated to have 'strengthened the links between organisations' and 'brought people together who would otherwise be suspicious of each other'. None of the regions reported any conflict, and where strong differences of opinion occurred, consensus was reached through discussion in LLG meetings.
6. The impacts of the Campaign were explored under six broad categories of activity: 'Targets', 'Attitude and Awareness', '[Partnership, Message', 'Delivery and Engagement', and 'Resources'. Data from national and local level interview respondents was integrated with information from the on-line questionnaire and from evaluation and monitoring reports to provide a complete overview of the Campaign.
7. Targets. There is clear recognition among those involved in delivery that the land management targets the Campaign set for itself were only partially achieved. Many respondents indicated a key causal factor was the original target-setting process, which was felt to be rushed, resulting in politically driven, arbitrary, and unsuitable targets, some of which could not be measured. More than one respondent (at national and local levels) acknowledged that right from the start it was clear that some of the targets would never be met in the given time frame. In addition, the problems arising from inadequate monitoring and mis-recording of action on the ground, make it difficult to ascertain exactly what has been delivered. Several respondents were more optimistic noting that some of the targets had been met, and there is recognition that a wider range of benefits has been delivered by the Campaign, including: increased adoption of targeted ELS measures, raised awareness and education of farmers, and the value of partnership working.
8. Attitudes and awareness. Changing farmer attitudes was one key area where respondents at the national level felt they had some success. There was a certain amount of polarised opinion with some respondents suggesting there had only been a raising of awareness of environmental issues among farmers, while others suggested a deeper change in attitudes. At the local level, stakeholders also varied in their opinions, some argued more strongly that a change in attitudes had been achieved, while others felt changes were more subtle and superficial.

9. External communications. Communications were perceived as good, the Campaign received widespread press coverage and tailoring of the message to the local situation resulted in a more effective communication with farmers. The Campaign enabled the key messages to reach more farmers as it was reinforced through the multiple organisations in the partnership giving the same message. This has to be tempered with recognition of the difficulties encountered in communicating the CFE message (viewed as too complex), the type of information provided in the farming press (more focused on awareness raising than increasing understanding), and difficulty in engaging with the 'hard to reach' which the Campaign had targeted. Difficulties can be attributed to limited skills, a lack attention to communications in the early part of the Campaign, the disproportionate resources required to engage with hard-to-reach farmers outside existing agri-environmental schemes, and the short period of time over which the Campaign has operated. In some regions particular effort was made to contact with farmers regarded as difficult to engage, with some success, but this was hampered with limited information to enable contact to be made. Respondents familiar with voluntary approaches indicated that, given the short time frame, the Campaign had been extremely successful in raising awareness about its activities. Improving understanding is likely to take longer.
10. Delivery and engagement. The Campaign was effective in helping the partnership organisations recognise that environmental goals could be integrated with production goals. Partners at the local level were able to agree on local priorities, creating a consistent message going to farmers from different organisations. The Campaign was less effective in recognising which activities were successful and which ones did not work and there was a failure to recognise and admit that some approaches did not work. A reluctance to adapt to change was also reported, particularly with reference to targets and there remains a lack of feedback systems that would enable change. In terms of farmer engagement, views were polarised. At the national level, respondents were more pessimistic, indicating that while there had been some behavioural change brought about through improved engagement and encouragement of farmers, it was felt many farmers remain unconvinced. Local level representatives, however, were more positive and a key success, cited across all regions, was the improved engagement with farmers. The local level respondents felt they had engaged more fully with farmers than ever before and this success was attributed to the partnership approach, which resulted in multiple messages coming from different directions, and from targeting those farmers that had not previously engaged with agri-environment schemes.
11. A key issue explored throughout the Campaign was 'how to communicate with farmers' and raise awareness about the central Campaign messages, and in particular how to access the 'hard to reach' farmers. Local level respondents in the study indicated that the key reasons for farmers to get involved in the Campaign included 'peer pressure', 'avoidance of regulation', 'benefits to be obtained in terms of advice and financial support', and 'environmental interests of the farmer'. Reasons for not getting involved included 'uncertainties over CAP reform', 'confusion', and 'being too busy'.

12. The main achievements of the Campaign included: creation of the partnership which brought different organisations together, raising awareness and delivery of environmental benefits, getting more farmers into ELS and retaining those already in the scheme, and recognition of environmental activities farmers are undertaking on their farms.
  
13. The main problems of the Campaign included: uncertainty over CAP reform, confusion from the complex message and poor communications at the start of the Campaign, financial costs of undertaking measures, the difficulty of engaging farmers, unrealistic targets that had been set at the start, and difficulties with monitoring and recording of activities. Uncertainty over CAP reform was cited as a key problem for farmers, and when combined with the confusion from poor CFE messaging it had negative impacts on farmers who became reluctant to get involved and ultimately reduced the level of engagement. The uncertainty increased towards the end of the Campaign as CAP proposals were announced,



## 1 Introduction and Methodology

The evaluation utilised data from a number of sources to explore the process and impact of the CFE. The evaluation was carried out during the period April – September 2012. The evaluation consists of analysis of a range of evidence including the following:

### *A content analysis of media related to CFE (national, regional and farming media sources)*

A keyword search of the Lexis Library database of English language press and media sources was carried out. The search included all national and regional newspapers in the database, as well as reports in foreign media and the trade periodicals within the database resulting in analysis of 453 press articles in the period 2009 to early May 2012.

### *Review of reported data and surveys relating to the CFE*

The research team reviewed a range of documents<sup>1</sup> that contained measurements of achievement relating to different aspects of the CFE over the period 2010 – 12, with a focus on the most recent survey results reported in 2012.

### *On-line questionnaire of LCC/LLG members*

38 responses were received to the online survey from a total of 95 invitations. Participants were invited via a direct email, providing them with a unique login code and password in order to ensure that only eligible individuals completed the survey. Respondents were from the Campaign's LLG/LCC, organisations directly involved, such as CLA/FWAG/NFU and farmers engaging in the initiative. This indicates a response rate of approximately 40%. It should be noted however, that four email addresses were invalid, or delivery was unsuccessful.

### *Face-to-face and telephone interviews at national and local level*

National level - 17 interviews

Local level – 27 interviews (8 Yorkshire Region, 9 East of England Region, 10 South East Region)

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<sup>1</sup> Documents reviewed include:

Evaluation and Monitoring Group Report of May 2012.

Delivery Group and Programme Office Report May 2012 (covering the period February to May).

Defra report on CFE ELS uptake of May 2012 (figures to end of March 2012 from July 2009)

CFE Extension Phase Delivery Plan (April 2012 to December 2012)

Defra report on the Results from the Farm Business Survey 2010/11 (February 2012)

CFE: entry Level Stewardship impact data (May 2012)

CFE Interim Report (July-December 2010)

Defra. Survey of land managed under the CFE 2011/12 crop year, England (May 2012)

Fera Report on the CFE. Annual Report – Quality Assessments and Verification Monitoring. (March 2012)

Defra Agricultural Change and Environment Observatory Research Report 28. Survey of land managed under the CFE 2010/11: additional analysis. (November 2011)

CCRI Report. Farmer attitudes and evaluation of outcomes to on-farm environmental management: First Interim Report. January 2012

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*Observation of meetings held at national and local level*

Delivery Working Group Meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012

Evidence and Monitoring Working Group Meeting, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012

Steering Group Meeting, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012

Coordinator and LLG Day, Stoneleigh 28 May 2012

North Yorkshire Local Liaison Group meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012

Yorkshire Regional Steering Group Meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012

*Discussion groups with LCCs and LLG chairs.*

Two discussion groups were held at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire to explore views of LCCs and LLG chairs.

Data collected from the various sources were analysed to answer the main questions of interest regarding the CFE.

## 2 Commentary on reported data

### 2.1 Introduction

Whilst the measurement of outputs is not the focus of this research, the research team reflected on a range of survey and monitoring documents that contained measurements of achievement relating to different aspects of the CFE. These documents are listed in footnote 1 on page 5.

We have not sought to précis these documents nor to summarise or repeat data contained within them. Nor do we attribute them individually in what follows. Rather, we have undertaken an interpretation of these achievements in the context of the *process* evaluation that has formed the thrust of this project, as such there is still a significant amount of detailed reporting. As a benchmark for this discussion the principal precepts of the CFE are provided below.

CFE began in 2009 as an industry-led approach, as an alternative to regulation, for maintaining the environmental benefits provided by former set-aside. Although the threat of regulation diminished during the course of the Campaign there was still a momentum to promote on-farm environmental action through one or more of three options:

- choosing key in-field target options in Entry Level Stewardship (ELS);
- retaining former set-aside and any other areas of uncropped land and/or
- putting areas of land outside ELS into Campaign voluntary measures.

In pursuing these options the main focus is on:

- resource protection (water, soil, diffuse pollution);
- farmland birds;
- biodiversity,

With the core CFE target being to secure 3 to 4% of arable land managed for environmental benefit. The main objectives and targets, as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding applied over the period 2009 – 2012, envisioned action taking place both within and outside of Environmental Stewardship. Key aspects are outlined in the table below, taken from the original Memorandum of Understanding and later amendments.

CFE Action	Targets and Objectives
Action within Environmental Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help achieve the existing target for 70% of England’s farmland to be covered by agri-environment agreements, by March 2011, and to maintain uptake at least at this level beyond March 2011, including by encouraging farmers with expiring agri-environment agreements (ELS and classic scheme agreements) to renew.</li> <li>• Secure a doubling in the uptake of key ELS in-field options by June 2012, (listed in Annex 1 to the MoU) to approximately 80,000ha.</li> <li>• To double the uptake of ‘more of the same’ options in HLS</li> <li>• To double the uptake of ELS options EE9 and EE10 (6m buffer strips next to watercourses)</li> <li>• Improve the geographical distribution, targeting, and take-up of options within ELS, including through the Campaign’s local action plans and targets.</li> </ul>
Action outside Environmental Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the agreed list in Annex 2 of voluntary measures by farmers outside ELS, namely:                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Block plots &amp; strips – unsown</b></li> <li>V1. Grass buffers along watercourses</li> <li>V2. Reverted arable plots/strips/fields</li> <li>V3. Cult. land out taken of production</li> <li>V4. Farmland bird plots in winter cereals</li> <li>V5. Uncropped cultivated margins</li> <li>V6. Soil erosion control headlands/strips</li> <li><b>Block plots &amp; strips – sown for food</b></li> <li>V7. Game strips (commercial mixtures)</li> <li>V8. GWCT conservation headlands</li> <li>V9. Sown wildflower headlands</li> <li>V10 Pollen &amp; nectar mixtures</li> <li>V11 Wild bird seed patches/headlands</li> <li><b>Stubbles &amp; whole field options</b></li> <li>V12 Rotational fallow</li> <li>V13 Extended spring stubble</li> <li><b>Inputs &amp; plans</b></li> <li>V19 Selective use of spring herbicides</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increase the area of land managed voluntarily under measures listed in Annex 2 to this MoU by 30,000ha above current levels (to be established by survey this autumn);</li> <li>• Encourage farmers and land managers to take up voluntary measures which have the greatest environmental value;</li> <li>• Retain and increase the area of uncropped land from the 1 January 2008 baseline by 20,000ha, by June 2012 (equating to 179,000ha); and</li> <li>• Seek to improve the environmental management of at least one third of this area.</li> </ul>

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<p>Communications and engagement with farmers and their advisers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a national-level communications initiative for farmers and their advisers, including a central information resource; advice and training for advisers and farmers; regional and sub-regional activity; and demonstrations and events to promote awareness and adoption of new practices.</li> <li>• Maintain and improve standards and consistency of advice available to farmers and growers, including through the training of agronomists and farm advisers and production of guidance on farmer actions for other key advisers. Ensure that an appropriate training package for agronomists and farm advisers is developed by December 2009, with the Agencies and the RSPB contributing technical material, and that at least 500 agronomists and advisers receive this training by March 2010 and at least an additional 1000 as soon as possible thereafter.</li> <li>• Building on the existing Voluntary Initiative on Pesticides, the Campaign will also ensure that the National Register of Sprayer Operators (NRoSO) training courses are updated appropriately by autumn 2009 and annually thereafter.</li> </ul>
<p>Targeted local action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Campaign will deliver targeted action at a local level, through the establishment of local liaison groups covering in total at least 66% of the former set-aside land by December 2009, and the delivery of appropriate action plans thereafter; details will be set out in the agreed delivery plan.</li> <li>• Further local liaison groups will be established to cover at least 75% of former set-aside land by December 2010. These groups will develop activity and communication plans for ensuring the take-up of targeted actions, coordinating partner actions and responding to local priorities and opportunities within three months of establishment.</li> </ul>

Source: A Campaign for the Farmed Environment: Memorandum of Understanding, Final Version 24 August 2009.

The main established targets, as laid out in the Extension Phase Delivery Plan to be held until December 2012, are set out in the table below.

Target	Source / Monitoring	Baseline Ha	December 2012 target Ha
<p>To increase the uptake of key target options in ELS. The focus on existing CFE target options in the key arable counties will be retained and will work alongside the current Natural England points target.</p>	<p>Natural England</p>	<p>39 671</p>	<p>80 000</p>
<p>To double the uptake of 'more of the same' options in HLS</p>	<p>Natural England</p>	<p>8 383</p>	<p>16 800</p>

To help achieve Natural England's target of 70% of farmland within an agri-environment agreement by March 2011 including encouraging farmers with expiring agri-environment agreements to renew.	Natural England		
To double the uptake of ELS options EE9 and EE10 (6m buffer strips next to watercourses)	Natural England	4 880	9 760
To retain and increase the area of uncropped land from the 1 January 2008 baseline by 20 000ha	Annual Defra June Agricultural Survey	159 000	179 000
To increase the area of land managed voluntarily by 30 000ha above current levels	Defra survey of land managed under CFE and field verification visits	158 700	188 700
To promote participation in the Campaign by those farmers outside agri-environment agreements	Defra survey of land managed under CFE		60%
To seek to improve the environmental management of at least one third of the uncropped land	Defra survey of land managed under CFE	53 000	59 600
To encourage farmers and land managers to take up voluntary measures which have the greatest environmental value	Local Liaison Groups and ETIP targeting information		

Source: Extension Phase Delivery Plan, pp 6-7.

There are also training, awareness and communications targets.

## 2.2 Reported data

There is a wide range of data being collected in the evaluation of CFE (from at least six sources, and from three separate Defra-sponsored surveys and Natural England data) all of which appear to be slightly differently constructed. The reliability of some of the data has also been questioned through inconsistencies between recorded information and actual conditions on the ground. Much of this will be due to poor recording by individuals on postal questionnaires but these differences must be borne in mind in the interpretation of any aggregate assessment. This section uses the main surveys undertaken to summarise key findings on farmer attitudes and awareness, the delivery of on-farm actions and the quality of management.

### Survey of land managed under CFE (Defra, annual)

Defra's annual farm surveys provided a key agreed monitoring approach to assess delivery of the Campaign objectives and the impact of the CFE on farmers. The Defra monitoring surveys indicate a wide range of impacts resulting from the Campaign over the three year period.

#### *Farmer attitudes and awareness*

Analysis of data from the 2012 Defra monitoring Survey<sup>2</sup> indicated that 70% of farmers felt they had 'a good' or 'some' understanding of the Campaign (an increase from the 65% in 2011) and only 10% of farmers indicated no understanding of the Campaign. Useful sources of information on the Campaign have been relatively consistent over the three-year period with 66% of farmers indicating the farming press as a useful source of information in 2012. Campaign leaflets were also significant (55% in 2012) and information from an advisor/agronomist was the third most important category (22% identified this as a useful information source).

Support for the Campaign increased over the three-year period and in 2012 just over two-thirds (69%, up from 58% in 2010) of survey respondents indicated support for the Campaign's aims and slightly fewer (63%, up from 44% in 2010) supported the approach. A further 15% of those not currently involved in the Campaign suggested they would take action in the future. Just over half (51%) of those who indicated they would not take any further action felt they were already doing enough for the environment, 20% indicated none of the measures were appropriate for their farm and 14% indicated they did not know what to do.

#### *Land management outcomes*

The proportion of farmers indicating that they had left cultivable land out of production (excluding land within agri-environment agreements) declined over the period from 51% in 2009, to 37% in the 2011/12 crop year (down from 43% in 2010/11). The total area of this land in the 2011/12 crop year has reduced to 82,409 hectares (down from 130 thousand ha in February 2011 and 155,875 ha in February 2010). In 2012, 24% of respondents indicated they had land in some form of unpaid environmental management within at least one of the Campaign voluntary measures, and 29% of respondents recorded land under some form of unpaid environmental management outside the Campaign that 'fully meets or closely resembles the essential management requirements' of CFE. It is important to note that these are not two separate groups of farmers. In total, 7% ( $\pm 1\%$ ) of farmers recorded land both within and outside of the Campaign, 17% ( $\pm 1\%$ ) as solely part of the Campaign, 22% ( $\pm 1\%$ ) as solely outside the Campaign and 54% ( $\pm 2\%$ ) of farmers did not record land under either category. In total, 46% of respondents recorded land within voluntary measures (either as part of, or outside the Campaign), a 5% increase from 2011. Respondents indicated a total of 209,000 hectares land (excluding skylark plots) within voluntary measures (of which 94,230 ha are within the Campaign and 115,267 ha are outside the Campaign, up from a baseline of 157,175 ha in November 2009). This is an increase of 11% from 2011.

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<sup>2</sup>

Defra Survey of Land Managed under the Campaign for the Farmed Environment for the 2011/12 crop year (May 2012)

### Interviews and on-farm survey (Fera, annual)

Defra funded Fera to undertake annual farm surveys to assess the quality of environmental management. The small sample was drawn from the Defra monitoring surveys and some of the key findings are summarised below. The findings provide some interesting insights but it is important to keep in mind they are drawn from a relatively small sample of farmers.

#### *Farmer attitudes and awareness*

The majority of farmers interviewed (both those considering themselves in the Campaign, VM-CFE, and those considering themselves outside the Campaign but implementing voluntary measures, VM-Non-CFE) supported the aims of the Campaign (91% and 84% respectively). A smaller majority supported the approach (70% of VM-CFE farmers and 62% of VM Non-CFE farmers). VM-CFE farmers indicated the main reason for implementing voluntary measures was to support environment and wildlife, while many (30%) also indicated they were implementing measures already existing on the farm. The monitoring survey suggests that farmers like the voluntary nature of the Campaign, its flexibility, its ability to fit in with farming practice, and the fact that it benefitted the environment. Aspects of the Campaign most disliked were concern over free riders (i.e. those that would do nothing), the lack of information, and 'taking productive land out of production'.

The voluntary nature of the Campaign was the most common aspect liked in each of the three years (by at least a quarter of those who responded). Environmental benefits were mentioned by a significant proportion each year (28% in 2012), although less so in 2011 than in other years. There were few apparent trends over time, although the flexible nature of the Campaign was mentioned by an increasing proportion of farmers. In terms of aspects that they disliked, concern over 'free riders' (i.e. those who will do nothing) was cited by around 20% of responders each year. Concerns about lack of information/publicity and too much overlap with ES schemes increased over the three years to 23% and 12% of responders respectively in 2012. In 2012, 13% were concerned that the Campaign was taking land out of production, whereas this had been mentioned by very few farmers in previous years. However, a smaller proportion of farmers were concerned that the Campaign was restrictive (4%) compared to previous years (18% in 2010).

The Fera study reveals variable levels of understanding and awareness about different parts of the Campaign. Interviewees were initially asked what they knew about the CFE under four headings (themes, implementation, advice and targeting), and then later prompted about specific items. The unprompted responses reveal a steady upward trend in awareness of general themes (farmland birds, farmland wildlife, and resource protection) over the three years. In the case of birds and wildlife, awareness rose from 34% to 51% and 47% respectively, while awareness of resource protection was much lower, rising from 17% to 22%. When asked about implementation, 57% knew about voluntary measures in 2012 (up from 34% in 2010), but less than one quarter of respondents were aware (without prompting) of any of the other aspects such as ELS renewal. All levels of awareness rose to 76% and above when interviewees were prompted.

More interesting is that when asked about advice and support, interviewees indicated much lower levels of awareness, although there was still an upward trend for all items across the three years. When asked about local liaison groups only 19% of interviewees indicated awareness in 2012 (up from



10% in 2010) and only 14% were aware of county coordinators (up from 8% in 2010). When prompted these figures increase to 45% and 39% respectively in 2012. Section 4 of this report exploring Partnership Working identifies one possible reason for these apparently low levels of awareness, which could be related to working with trusted and familiar advisors who may be involved in a local liaison group, but nevertheless known to the farmer through a different professional relationship or organisation. Awareness of theme leaflets appears to be highest, increasing from 13% to 25% across the period for unprompted responses and rising to 70% in 2012 when prompted. Awareness of targeting was even lower with only around one quarter of interviewees indicating awareness even when prompted. Farmers indicated the CFE booklet and the farming press as the main sources of information. VM-CFE farmers also indicated partner organisations as a source while VM-Non-CFE farmers suggested farm events or shows as a more important source of information.

#### *Accuracy of recorded information*

The Fera assessment and verification monitoring studies revealed the difficulty in measuring uptake of the Campaign. Measures recorded by farmers in the Defra postal survey and those actually surveyed on the ground were not always consistent e.g. a sizeable number of farms did not have the measures expected when visited, and a smaller percentage had measures that were not indicated in the Defra survey. The study also found that the number of farms implementing voluntary measures directly as a result of the Campaign had increased between 2010 and 2011.

The Fera study found disparities between the information collected via interview and that recorded by farmers on the Defra Farm Survey for the VM-CFE farms. In general, fewer measures were found on a smaller number of farms than anticipated and the area of measures was less than recorded on the Defra survey. The results of the verification interviews suggest that farmers 'consistently overestimated the amount of voluntary measures' on their Defra survey returns and overall, fewer measures and less area under voluntary measures was found<sup>3</sup>. In addition, there is 'a large amount of land' managed in ways similar to voluntary measures under CFE, but those land managers do not consider themselves as being part of the Campaign. Over the three years of the Campaign there were differences each year between what was measured on the farm and what was recorded on the Defra survey. The reasons for the differences include mistakes, misunderstandings over more complex arable measures, and reallocation of measures (including between ELS and the Campaign voluntary measures).

The 2012 survey interviewed 80 farmers who had indicated on the Defra survey that they were participating via voluntary measures in the Campaign, and 74 farmers who indicated they were implementing voluntary measures independently of the CFE. At the point of interview a small proportion (16%) of the farmers within the CFE indicated they were no longer participating and 14% indicated they were unsure about their participation. The data suggest that widespread voluntary actions are occurring but an element of confusion among farmers as to how their voluntary actions relate to the Campaign. Farmers in both groups who considered themselves as participating in the Campaign were also asked what contributions they were making: the majority indicated participation through undertaking voluntary measures and participating in Environmental Stewardship schemes;

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<sup>3</sup> Fera, Unpublished Report on quality assessment and monitoring. September 2012.

others indicated they were participating through 'other uncropped land, ex-set-aside land, and by exceeding their ES points target'<sup>4</sup>

#### *Quality assessment and verification monitoring*

The Fera verification interviews also explored the extent to which 'red box' management requirements were met by farmers. The findings suggest that up to one third of the areas assessed did not fully meet red box requirements. The verification interviews also revealed a high level of correspondence between the proportion of farms meeting red box requirements on VM-CFE and VM-Non-CFE farms. The main reasons for not meeting red box requirements include buffer strips and grass areas for prevention of erosion that are too narrow, or being used for access; width and cutting regimes for reverted arable areas; incorrect density and/or location of skylark plots; cultivation dates for uncropped cultivated margins; presence of maize in wild bird seed areas; cutting regimes and seed mixture in areas under pollen and nectar mixes; and, use of pre-harvest desiccants or post-harvest herbicides. The Fera survey suggests highest levels of meeting the right management requirements occurred in 2011 and also notes this was the year when levels of awareness were generally higher.

Under the Fera assessment, farmers were asked whether they would have undertaken their activities without the Campaign. A total of 17 farmers (out of the 80 VM-CFE farmers interviewed) indicated that they undertook measures in direct response to the Campaign (this compares with 15 recorded in 2010 and 38 in 2011 – although direct comparisons cannot be made here as the sample size varied slightly from year to year).

In terms of quality, the Fera study found that only around half of those features assessed met all the red-box requirements. For example: few features providing wild and game bird mixtures had seed available through the winter; resource protection measures were not always located in the most favourable areas, or were insufficient to maximise protection, and there was evidence of vehicle use on a sizeable minority of features assessed for resource protection. However, whilst environmental benefits are not being maximised there is evidence to suggest that some environmental benefits are being delivered.

#### **Additional research and analysis**

##### *Farmer attitudes and awareness*

Data on attitudes was supplemented by additional questions included in the 2010/11 Farm Business Survey<sup>5</sup>. This analysis revealed that the most common reasons given for not supporting the Campaign related to farmers who felt they were 'already doing enough for the environment' and those who 'did not want to commit resources/take land out of production'. Just over half of farmers undertaking voluntary measures indicated a prime reason for their activities was because they could do it at little or no cost to their business. It is also worth noting that around half of all farmers felt their efforts would not be recognised.

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<sup>4</sup> Fera, Unpublished Report on quality assessment and monitoring. September 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Defra report on the Results from the Farm Business Survey 2010/11 (February 2012)

An additional qualitative study by the CCRI also explored farmer attitudes towards environmental management. The CCRI report on farmer attitudes<sup>6</sup> (undertaken in 2011) interviewed 60 farmers and indicated the following key points in relation to CFE:

- there was a good awareness of CFE among farmers;
- promotion of the Campaign was regarded as good;
- farmers recognised that the CFE was something that they should support;
- CFE was not at the forefront of farmers' minds and was not mentioned by the farmers in interviews discussing environmental management unless they were prompted;
- in some cases CFE was viewed by farmers as more unnecessary bureaucracy and they were not recording their CFE activities on-line, partly from fear of inspection;
- farmers were not following the CFE guidelines - farmers are not keen to follow guidelines for activities they are doing voluntarily.

The study suggested that farmers did not like to get involved in voluntary measures that required additional paperwork or bureaucracy, and CFE was perceived as complex with requirements for form filling. Even where farmers were undertaking environmentally friendly measures, the study indicated a reluctance to follow all of the guidelines in what were viewed as voluntary activities. It was generally felt that the CFE had only a small impact, partly because a lot of informal activity was already taking place, partly because farmers did not want to be bothered with what might only be a temporary Campaign. There was also a suggestion that some farmers were happy to undertake voluntary activities but did not want outside interference or someone telling them what they must do – the view expressed was that 'well targeted advice was better than compulsion' in changing behaviour. The CCRI study also noted some discrepancies between information on postal survey forms and what was said during interviews (e.g. farmers who had stated the CFE as the reason for joining the ELS provided a range of different responses during interviews).

### *Communications*

Communications was identified as a priority issue early on in the Campaign and there were difficulties experienced in getting the CFE message across to farmers. The CFE Interim Report for 2010 indicates that the communications approach was refined in September of that year through simplifying the messages and developing a media calendar as well as launching a re-vamped website. The 2010 report indicates that although a new Communications sub-group was formed at national level it would only meet on an ad-hoc basis to deal with priority communications issues. The Fera study (2011) noted that the voluntary measures booklet, the farming press, and the Campaign partner organisations were the most commonly cited sources of information.

## **2.3 Commentary on reported data**

### **Performance measurement**

Three factors must be borne in mind in evaluating the performance or impact of the CFE. The first is that it is impossible to know what would have happened if the CFE had not been introduced; the

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<sup>6</sup> CCRI. Farmer attitudes and evaluation of outcomes to on-farm environmental management: First Interim Report. January 2012

second is that it is not possible to attribute changes that have taken place, unambiguously to CFE; and third, the Fera study (although only based on a small sample of farmers) indicated discrepancies in recording of key information and variability in quality of the measures as they are applied on the ground, suggesting incomplete understanding on the part of farmers. In this context, the measurement of outputs must be considered with some care.

There are also factors to be taken into account in measuring performance against specific targets. Whilst the evidence suggests that achievements are some way below targets in respect of measureable benefits<sup>7</sup>, there is an issue as to whether the targets have been realistic. If the targets are set to one side, achievements can still be recognised in the target counties and compared to cost estimates of the Campaign. This might be a more realistic assessment of output performance than measurements against targets. The difficulty is in establishing the alternative bases upon which outputs could be assessed. The *quality* of environmental change can be as important as the notion of hectare-based *quantity* measurements of uptake, and the Fera Studies (2011, 2012) illustrate that both farmer engagement and habitat quality are variable. Measuring 'quality' change is extremely difficult in practical terms, and may well require longer time frames to establish direction and extent of change. It might make more sense in practical terms, to focus on farmer awareness, attitudes, engagement and management practices, although even here the Fera studies suggest that different techniques might be required to accurately assess understanding and awareness, and closer levels of farmer engagement might be required in order to bring about actual change in management practices. Short term assessment might need to focus on the 'likely' direction of change and where it might occur, which could then be followed up by more focused farm management and ecological surveys at a later date. In practical terms it is difficult to establish the impacts of measures over the short term, and this is one area where the evaluation of policy change needs development, and may require examination of change over longer time periods.

There are also issues to be considered concerning the measurement of targets relating to 'improving environmental management' in a general sense, as this can be subject to a lot of different interpretations. Such improvements (however interpreted) appear to have been successful, as they have taken place on nearly half of uncropped land, against a target of a third. But it is important to also recognise that there has been a decline in the amount of uncropped land and improved management on a percentage of a declining amount of uncropped land indicates a more significant level of success than the figures alone might suggest.

Performance measures are also important in respect of the *processes* that have been introduced under CFE, as well as measureable benefits. These have been seen in this (CCRI) work to have been successful (and significant) in a number of respects. The core of this process issue is that of a culture change (amongst farmers and others) from a regulatory incentives-based process of environmental management to a voluntary one. In this regard, the monitoring described above notes that the area of land managed voluntarily has increased beyond target expectations to 214,916 ha. Some 46% of this is managed within CFE. In addition, just over half (54%) of farmers outside of formal agri-environment

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<sup>7</sup> This is, of course variable by individual target. 'More of the same' HLS option targets are being met, for example, but targets relating to areas of buffer strips next to watercourses are not.

schemes had land under some form of voluntary environmental option (not necessarily inside CFE), or retained uncropped land.

This more general success in the development of voluntary activity in agriculture might be considered an important shift in environmental management, of significance beyond that of individual performance targets, much of which can be attributed to CFE. It suggests a more enduring structural change in attitudes and motivations and this is coupled with an increasing awareness on the part of farmers of the nature of CFE over time and an increasing proportion of farmers agreeing with the aims of the Campaign.

### **Problems of uptake**

Uncertainty can have a particularly negative impact on a voluntary scheme. The two most important ones in relation to CFE appear to be increasing apprehension and uncertainty surrounding the CAP reforms from 2014, and fluctuating market conditions. In the case of the latter, as market conditions improve, there is a tendency for producers to take land out of environmental use and into productive use. In this context, the Defra survey notes some loss of land to more productive use during the CFE period which may be linked to uncertainty over CAP reforms. In respect of uncertainty, too, the different and changing options under ELS have been seen to be confusing and it suggests that this might have inhibited uptake to a degree.

As with any voluntary approach, success will vary depending on the personalities of those running the scheme, the natural propensity of farmers in particular areas to undertake voluntary activity, knowledge and understanding of the actions required, and the extent and quality of voluntary effort. Local knowledge, familiarity and trust are beneficial in this respect. Local level inter-relationships can be complex, in one area, for example, one of the coordinators covers two counties, one of which is one of the best performers (in terms of meeting targets) and one of which is the worst. Other initiatives can also influence outcomes, the SW Farmland Bird Initiative, for example, has been mentioned in Delivery Group meetings as a reason why some counties are doing better than others as this scheme has very good engagement which has complemented the messaging of CFE<sup>8</sup>. A wide range of factors will influence programme implementation including structural processes and relationships between partners, and between partners and farmers on the ground.

Ultimately, there will always be a proportion of farmers who, for whatever reason, will never entertain the prospect of joining an environmental scheme and it is unrealistic to include these in the target group for change.

### **Farmer awareness**

The significance of the farming press in raising farmer awareness is clear (Defra surveys have shown that it is as important as the Campaign leaflet, agronomists and advisers and the Campaign website, and the Fera studies highlight its significance as a useful source of information on the Campaign). The

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<sup>8</sup> Pike, T. Defra. Personal Communication. September 2012.

media (including the farming press), however (as noted in Section 6.4 of this report), have presented a rather diluted message about the CFE, which might partially account for the low level of awareness of some specific elements of the Campaign, and the relatively low numbers of farmers seeking further information on the Campaign. Website use, on the other hand, fluctuates according to busy and slack times of the farming year and remains small overall. Whilst there is increasing uptake of the Campaign newsletter (a 47% increase in the 21 months to May 2012) this is attributable to advisers, agronomists and supporting organisations rather than a higher level of uptake among farmers, which remains small.

All of these factors should be taken into account in seeking to raise awareness and encourage more farmers to join in the voluntary scheme, but the importance of locality, noted above, should also be recognised as a factor in uptake. There seems to be little increase in specific Campaign ELS options uptake since 2009 in counties that are not targeted and in some non-targeted counties there have been reductions in uptake area. This would seem to suggest that the processes of targeting are necessary to trigger net increases in active farmer involvement.

### 3 CFE: Perceived aims, benefits and costs

*“Being associated with CFE has given us access – allowed us to do things through being badged differently, people are more inclined to talk to a person if he is CFE...”*

Data for the study were collected through interviews with both national level and local (in three broad regional areas) level stakeholders involved with Campaign design, development, and implementation. In addition a total of 95 identified stakeholders were invited to participate in the online questionnaire, of which 36 responded (a response rate of 38%). Half of the respondents to the questionnaire came directly from one of the partner organisations and just over one-quarter (26%) of respondents felt that they were actively involved in implementing the Campaign, while similar numbers of respondents felt they either gave advice on meeting Campaign aims, or were members of non-partner organisations that attended meetings (11% and 10% respectively).

#### 3.1 Perceived aims and objectives of the CFE

National stakeholders interviewed had a consistent view of the key aims and objectives of the CFE. Overall there was agreement on perception of aims and objectives of the Campaign at both national and local levels. The majority clearly indicated that there were two main objectives for the Campaign: to ensure the environmental benefits of set-aside were not lost, and to avoid regulation. A smaller number of respondents stated it was also important for the industry to demonstrate it could deliver a focused approach; creating cross-industry partnerships and engaging with the ‘hard to reach’ were identified as additional objectives. Typical comments from the national level interviewees regarding the CFE are illustrated below:

*“...it was set up to compensate for the loss of set aside and the environmental value that was associated with set-aside.”*

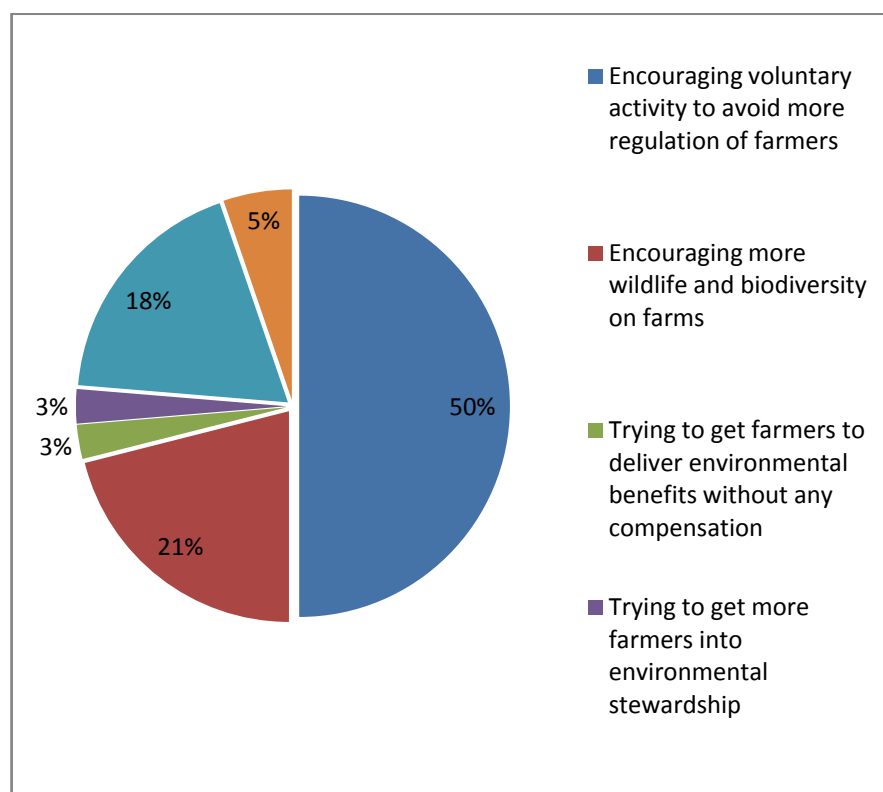
*“...with a secondary aim which is to prove that a voluntary, industry-led partnership could be as effective as regulation in providing public benefit.”*

*“For industry to demonstrate a convincing alternative to loss of set aside...our expectations were that the hard to reach group has to be reached”.*

The on-line questionnaire provided a similar set of responses to those provided from interviews of those involved in the CFE. Figure 3.1 below illustrates that when asked how they would ‘best’ describe the overall aims of the Campaign, 50% indicated it was ‘Encouraging voluntary activity to avoid more regulation of farmers’. ‘Encouraging more wildlife and biodiversity on farms’ was the second most popular response accounting for 21% of responses, while 18% of respondents selected ‘helping to support/advise farmers in delivery of their environmental obligations’. The options ‘trying to get farmers to deliver environmental benefits without any compensation’ and ‘trying to get more farmers into environmental stewardship’ each received one response.

At the local level, in the three areas examined in more detail (Yorkshire, East of England, and the South East), those interviewed provided more varied descriptions of the aims of the CFE. Farmers (with some exceptions) tended to describe the aim as avoiding set aside or avoiding regulation. Others, including both environmental and industry representatives, described the aims in terms of protecting the environment without compromising the farmers' ability to make a living. Similarly, an industry representative described the aim as showing farmers that it was possible to reconcile environmental protection with a commercial approach. There were also several mentions of achieving more (for the environment) from a smaller area (than that in set-aside). Local County Coordinators (LCCs) tended to focus more on issues surrounding avoidance of regulation and emulating the benefits of set-aside than members of Local Liaison Groups (LLGs), who were more varied in their views, reflecting their different professional backgrounds.

**Figure 3.1. Views of on-line questionnaire respondents regarding the aims of the CFE (N=36)**



The interview responses from those located in the three regional areas (interviewees were LCCs and members of the relevant LLGs) examined were broadly similar to each other in their interpretation of aims and objectives (see Table 3.1). What also came across strongly at the local level was the emphasis on encouraging farmers, and the need to improve environmental quality, which were both mentioned in all three areas. Interaction with farmers in order to improve the level of environmentally-friendly farming was seen as a clear aim by LCCs and members of LLGs in all three regional areas. There were some minor variations, for example, breaking down barriers and developing synergy from different organisations working together was cited as a clear aim in Yorkshire while one respondent



indicated that CFE was being used to achieve their own organisation’s goals. In the South-East there was a clear focus on using CFE to demonstrate that environmental enhancement and profitability could be achieved together.

**Table 3.1. Comparison of perceived aims across three regional areas**

<b>Yorkshire Region</b>	<b>South-East Region</b>	<b>East of England Region</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set aside</li> <li>• Avoiding regulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing set aside and/or regulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retaining the benefits of set-aside</li> <li>• Avoiding compulsory regulation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of options for more sympathetic farm management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting the environment/biodiversity whilst allowing farmers to make a living</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing quality and quantity of ELS agreements</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase environmental outputs</li> <li>• Improve environmental performance</li> <li>• Encourage environmentally friendly farming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showing farmers that it is possible to reconcile environmental protection with profitability</li> <li>• Achieving more from a smaller area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving wildlife, habitat quality and resource protection</li> <li>• Reversing decline in farmland birds</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A means to interact with farmers</li> <li>• Farmer engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showing others that environmental gain can be achieved from voluntary approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace the benefits of set-aside with better management</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breaking down barriers</li> <li>• Synergy</li> <li>• Government and industry working together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieving recognition for farmers’ efforts</li> <li>• Building skills and confidence amongst farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage farmers to identify what they can do in the way of environmentally friendly practices</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing farmer attitudes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving environmental input into farms especially where AES are not in place</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieving our (organisation’s) outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness and quality of agri-environment schemes</li> </ul>	

### 3.2 Benefits to member organisations

At both national and local level, those most closely involved with the Campaign indicated a range of benefits arising from synergy of the CFE objectives with their organisational and/or individual goals. Partners at the national level indicated a small range of benefits largely linked to the fact that being part of the CFE helped to achieve organisational targets, provided them with access to farmers that they

would not otherwise have had, and helped to break down barriers between organisations. Some of the membership based organisations indicated it was beneficial in terms of enabling them to provide their members with information. Several respondents noted that the approach fits in with the direction in which they felt agriculture was going. Indicative comments include the following:

*“...its fits in with the general direction of where sustainable agricultural production is heading...so it fits in well (with our aims)”.*

*“...(our) people were there and have been doing all of that, so there’s a certain amount of logical extension in terms of what they’re doing. I think that’s why we felt we were,...a crucial cog in the wheel of making CFE work because we fill that void of what some of the environmental bodies and people like that naturally would be doing, but also at the practical farming level because you have people going down farm drives in great numbers and frequency.”*

*“...we felt that this sort of working in partnership... would be a good way, a good model for other aspects of our work”.*

One interviewee also saw public relations benefits from being involved, while another emphasised access to information as valuable, and a third indicated a financial benefit. Two interviewees also indicated there were potential economic benefits from avoiding the imposition of regulatory set-aside. The range of benefits identified includes the following:

- Industry collaboration
- Public relations
- Reduce barriers to engaging with farmers
- Fits in with the move to sustainable agriculture
- Logical extension to our work/ Links in with our work/ Supports organisational targets
- Supports our ideology
- We need to be part of any substantial partnership which contributes to our national and international targets
- Good value for us – provides information
- Financial benefit
- Moves us away from adversarial, lobbyist approach
- Public relations
- Maintaining member support/Provision of current information to members

At the local level, a number of benefits were perceived from being involved in CFE (see Table 3.2). LLG members indicated a range of benefits from being involved with the partnership. At the individual level this included being better informed about activities in the area, having more knowledge for the provision of advice, having the ability to direct people to experts with the relevant knowledge, and providing a wider range of contacts. Benefits were also suggested at the organisational level, for example, helping to meet organisational targets, and the ability to ‘piggy-back’ CFE activities on other events. In addition, LLG members indicated the importance of feeding information from farmers into the CFE process was extremely beneficial, enabling a greater understanding of issues facing farmers.

LLG members who were farmers themselves also noted the capacity for improving the quality of their ELS options, and recognition for activities they were already undertaking, as well as improving knowledge and increasing the number of contacts they could call on for information. There were no stark differences between the regional areas examined, and most LLG members employed by national organisations indicated that being part of CFE helped them meet their own organisational targets.

**Table 3.2 Comparison of perceived benefits from being involved in CFE across three regional areas**

Source	Yorkshire Region	South-East Region	East of England Region
Agronomist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made me more effective in my job</li> <li>Feeding information in from farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps avoid reduction in acreage farmed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhances value of business</li> <li>Helps avoid additional regulation</li> </ul>
RSPB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports key aims</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental gains</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve quality of habitat on farms and reverse downward trend in farmland birds</li> </ul>
EA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enables 'piggy-backing' on events</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps us meet our targets</li> </ul>
NFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adding value</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps with putting forward farmer's views</li> </ul>
NE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helping to meet targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embeds environmental good practice into everyday management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a holistic approach</li> <li>Improves quality of ELS</li> <li>Enables voluntary action if unable to join ELS</li> </ul>
Local authority advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved knowledge</li> <li>Better able to support farmers</li> </ul>		
Farmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases level of contacts</li> <li>Improves knowledge</li> <li>Provides more interaction with farmers</li> <li>Helping organisations to meet their targets</li> <li>Sharing information</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We were already doing some of the actions</li> <li>CFE is a tool to improve quality of ELS actions</li> </ul>
Regional advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase number of contacts</li> <li>Enhances message</li> </ul>		
FWAG			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ties in with core work</li> <li>History of supporting the voluntary approach</li> </ul>

(Source: Interviews with LLG members in the three regions)

It is interesting to note that a number of those interviewed suggested that involvement in the Campaign helped them meet their organisation's targets (for example in relation to provision of advice to farmers). It might be worth exploring the nature of such organisational targets, as the CFE has illustrated elsewhere that where targets are quantified the focus might be on achieving a numeric objective, rather than on a wider range of desired outcomes (e.g. where advice is being provided, follow-up work might be required to ensure that the desired behavioural change occurs).

### 3.3 Costs to organisations

*"I think it's a worthwhile cost...but it is much more time consuming, much more time consuming".*

Partnership work is not without cost and those interviewed indicated a range of perceived costs from being involved with Campaign as a partner organisation. The main cost identified was time input of staff (from junior up to senior staff), occurring at both national and local levels, which was mentioned by all those interviewed. The amount of time inputs required appear to have been under-estimated by several of the partner organisations (mostly those more involved in delivery of the Campaign). Only one organisation (Defra) indicated a significant financial cost, due to the level of support being provided during the life of the Campaign. The CFE was funded through a £1.5 million grant over three years coming through Defra, and an estimated similar input (including in-kind contributions) from the other partners. The NFU indicated considerable costs in terms of provision of facilities and support activities (e.g. office space, publications, IT and administrative support), and the AIC indicated extensive training costs. In general the NFU and CLA were viewed as incurring the greatest costs through provision of administrative support and management throughout the regions. The range of costs identified through the national level stakeholder interviews is summarised below:

- More time than anticipated/huge amount of time – at centre and regionally
- Encroaches upon main occupation/not always managed to integrate effectively with day job
- Level of input not fully recognised/uncharged work/Unaccounted time inputs
- Funding the programme manager/ financial costs
- Time input for meetings
- Resource cost implications of multiple persons per organisation being involved
- Senior people time
- Opportunity costs of not putting resources into other campaigns
- Potential reputational damage
- Facilities provision/invested time and resources
- Training costs: Internal and external
- Writing articles for publication/production of leaflets/resource inputs to deliver the CFE message

Few organisations were able to provide any precise estimates for the time or other resource inputs. There is some suggestion, from a small number of interviewees, that significant amounts of time and effort are not being accounted for, or costed into the process of delivering the Campaign. These tend to be those involved at the core of delivery and sitting on multiple working groups:

*“...I do an awful lot outside those meetings, I actually just charge for attending the...meetings”.*

*“I think if the advisory industry hadn’t played a very, very significant part in this and taken an awful lot of the messages down the farm drive for free, we wouldn’t be anywhere near where we are.”*

Unaccounted for activities will make it difficult to develop an accurate picture of overall Campaign delivery costs. Other interviewees at the national level provided some indication of their inputs as follows:

*“...it has taken a lot of time...I don’t think anyone’s really expected it to take as much as it has...It’s certainly taken more than, say, the Voluntary Initiative or Tried and Tested...which we were also involved with”.*

*“...staff time, lot of senior people time, sitting on national groups...we seem to be promoting more than the industry at times...”*

*“opportunity costs – our advisors could have been putting out our messages and doing things on other campaigns”*

At the local level, stakeholders were also asked about the costs of being involved with CFE. Costs to organisations were generally expressed in terms of staff time, with considerable variation in how that time was accounted for within the organisation. Examples include: at least one case where the representative was a volunteer rather than a paid member of staff; Wildlife Trust conservation advisers in one county delivering information about CFE as part of their job with no additional cost to the organisation; and, one LCC who indicated that there was a cost to his employing organisation as he is in effect sub-contracted to the CFE work which pays less well than his normal work. The cost seemed to be most significant for the NFU who provided administrative support to the LLGs. Some funding is provided for this but, according to one interviewee, it does not entirely cover the costs. One LLG member, who is also a farmer, pointed out the difference between farmers and those who were paid to be involved:

*“Farmers are giving up paid time or leisure time – but the farmers understand it and the professionals recognise it...”*

There were no clear statements regarding inputs of unaccounted-for time, but some LCCs suggested that it was often difficult to separate their CFE work from other employment, as the two tended to merge.

## 4 Partnership working

*“...it’s one of the good things...it is the real strength of the campaign...and everyone kind of working together has been a real bonus.”*

National level participants interviewed generally agreed that the partnership worked well, and that it had ‘brought the industry together’. This success was attributed to a willingness on all sides to work together, a lot of effort to make it work, and recognition of common goals. Some of those interviewed at the national level indicated benefits in the form of improved understanding between partners, which had enabled the group to ‘move beyond politics’ to work constructively together. Interviewees revealed that the partnership was not without conflict but that processes had been developed to discuss disagreements and suggested that a ‘healthy tension’ was a good thing.

*“...we [came] up with an agreed format of how we would deal with disagreements...in reality we’ve only come close to using it once”.*

*“...once you get away from the kind of rhetoric and politics of different organisations, everyone wants the same thing....they all want to see rich biodiversity and well managed farmland...”*

A small number of problems were indicated, for example, staff changes within partner organisations could cause problems through new people joining the Steering or Working groups who lacked the background understanding of how the partnership had evolved and operated (evidence of this was observed during one of the national level meetings when the representative of a partner organisation asked whether her organisation was actually one of the partners). One respondent indicated the lack of a fully independent chairperson of the Steering Group could be problematic and felt there was an ‘over-reliance’ on NFU and CLA for support and operation of the partnership. The overwhelming view of respondents was that the partnership had worked well and was a considerable source of strength of the Campaign:

*“...the partnership is very good... it has brought the industry together, this is probably where its strength lies...”*

Those interviewed were not shy in identifying difficulties; some alluded to the amount of work that had gone into establishing the partnership, and some to the tensions that existed between organisations. However, such tension was felt to be healthy and methods of working had been developed which allowed for airing of differences and compromise enabling consensus to be achieved.

*“...there is probably a healthy tension between most of the people involved...not as much as there was when it started out...”*

*“You know, there is a camaraderie, there’s always going to be disagreements and it would be naïve to think we don’t...but in general I would say there is a general feeling of camaraderie when we’re in the evidence monitoring group or in the delivery group meetings to try and get to where we want to get to.”*

Where agreement could not be attained in the working groups, the issue could be passed up to the Steering Group for discussion at a different level.

*“...when we’ve not been able to reach a decision, there has maybe been a paper put together explaining the contrasting views and it may go to the steering group where there are the senior members, the different organisations will then take that forward and make a decision.”*

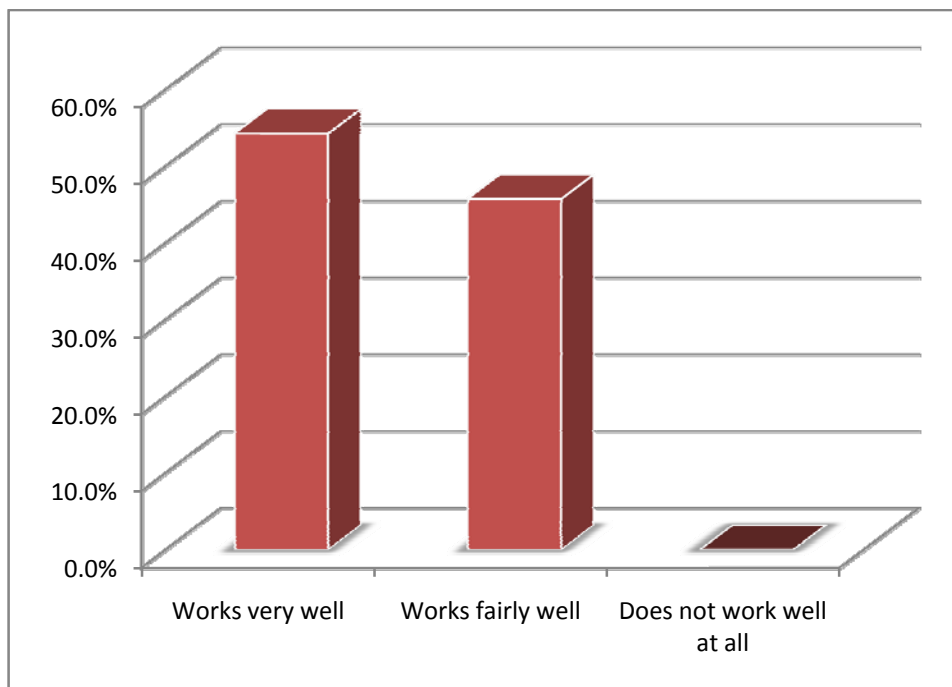
All interviewees indicated that the role of their organisation in the partnership was clear: for some it was viewed as more of a supportive or advisory role; for others it was more about development of the Campaign and delivery on the ground. One interviewee felt that the role played by their organisation could be more significant, while another felt that their organisation played a lone role in ‘policing’ the partnership in relation to environmental issues. There was clearly some tension caused by differences in roles and levels of commitment. A small number of those interviewed indicated that some partners were more committed than others, and there were some suggestions that certain organisations had not participated as much as they could have done.

*“...they all share the responsibility for delivery not just the outcomes...it’s OK for some partners to take a back seat as long as they are supportive and constructive of the direction in which we are going...”*

*“...it’s like bacon and egg, the chicken’s involved but the pig’s committed. We were definitely in the bacon category on this, whereas...it’s fair to say that a number of other partners were much more peripheral...”*

Respondents to the on-line questionnaire supported the information gained from national partner interviews. As Figure 4.1 illustrates, over half of the questionnaire respondents (55%) felt that the partnership approach of the Campaign worked ‘very well’ with the remaining respondents believing it works ‘fairly well’. None of the respondents felt that the partnership approach ‘did not work well at all’. Respondents were able to make comments regarding this question to justify and elaborate on their response. Comments were generally positive in nature concerning the partnership working although a number of observations were made concerning the working relationship, in that there can be conflicting perspectives and working approaches. These observations were very much in the minority however and should not overshadow the broadly positive comments and results as illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

**Figure 4.1 On-line questionnaire response to the question of how well the partnership approach of the Campaign works (N=36)**



Examples of some comments made through the on-line questionnaire are as follows:

*“Works well if all organisations involved ‘do their bit’”.*

*“In general the partners have worked well together. Sometimes the differing aims of the organisations have led to different approaches, but these have generally been resolved through constructive dialogue”.*

*“All groups come together regardless of their political motivations to make the CFE work. This is pretty rare in the farming industry”!*

At the local level those interviewed in the three regions were generally enthusiastic about the partnerships formed in the LLGs and the way they worked. In the South-East Regional area, partnership working was described by one ‘interviewee as ‘one of the huge strengths of CFE’. Partnerships were indicated to have ‘strengthened the links between organisations’ and ‘brought people together who would otherwise be suspicious of each other’. None of the local level stakeholders interviewed in the three regional areas reported any conflict, and where strong differences of opinion occur, they are discussed in the LLG meetings and consensus is reached. The LLGs have also allowed discussion of other issues to take place and thus enabled partners to achieve a better mutual understanding of each other’s aims and objectives. None of the interviewees was aware of any conflicts between partners, although one interviewee in the South-East admitted to ‘initial hang-ups and



suspicions' which had been overcome. All those interviewed were very positive about the benefits of collaborating as partners. When questioned about the constitution of the partnership at the local level there was general satisfaction that the CFE contained an appropriate range of partners and experience. In all local areas examined in the three regions, partnerships were thought to have a good spread of knowledge and expertise. Some local stakeholders mentioned the value of having commercial interests, such as agronomists, as well as voluntary and public bodies as part of the partnership. However, in both the East of England and in the South Eastern areas, local stakeholders suggested that it might have been a good idea to include a representative land agent, as they had proved a difficult group to reach.

*"I think one of the things the Campaign has been very good at with engaging with agronomists, certainly in that respect. Is that these are people that are dealing with farmers on a regular basis, so it's people... and rather than having somebody different going on to a farm to promote a message, you've got people that are already going on to farms and doing other things that can reinforce the message, basically." (LLG, East of England)*

There were some differences reported within regions, and there seemed more enthusiasm for the partnership in some counties than in others. In Hampshire, partnership members had worked together on other projects, including a Nature Improvement Area application, as a result of coming together through the LLG. In the Yorkshire region, South Yorkshire was described as a very difficult area in which to work, and differences in approach were required in both East and North Yorkshire due to different farming characteristics. LCCs in Yorkshire indicated the strength from partnership work through close communications in three large, but very different, areas of the county. LCCs met regularly, had a high level of trust and confidence in each other, and were not "territorially precious"; for example, if the LCC from one area of the region had the right skills and experience they could operate in one of the other areas.

Another factor leading to success in two of the regional areas examined (Yorkshire and East of England) was felt to be the speed with which the CFE was established in those areas. In Yorkshire one respondent said:

*"We seemed to hit the ground running quite fast in Yorkshire in that we got in with the agronomy companies very quickly..."*

Reasons for the short period required to 'get up and running' could be attributed partly to the existing networks and relationships that existed. In Yorkshire, for example, one of the LCCs had good contacts with the agronomists, and the other two had very good contacts within partner organisations as a result of knowing people socially as well as professionally. As a result, there were already strong professional and social bonds between many of those involved in delivering the CFE before it started.

It might be worth considering whether the existing professional and social bonds influenced the way in which the Campaign was perceived by farmers. The Fera monitoring and verification surveys of small samples of farmers in the CFE suggested that, even when prompted, less than half of the sample were aware of local liaison groups, or of the county co-ordinator, as potential sources of advice and support.

Even if the Campaign was operating effectively as a partnership in the regions, farmers may have had nothing to do with either LLGs or LCCs, and instead been dealing with an agronomist or some other advisor who was a familiar and trusted face and they therefore may not have necessarily associated that person (and his/her organisation) directly with the CFE. An additional complication is that some of the professional bodies involved in the Campaign are in competition with each other, and there may have been a reluctance to provide broader information outside their professional remit. These factors may account for the apparently low scores given for sources of advice (other than theme leaflets) in the Fera surveys.

In the East of England Region it was suggested that having a well-developed pre-existing network of partners helped some areas of the Eastern region get a head start in delivering the Campaign:

*“Yes, well an existing good network really...yes I think yes probably good networking so the people in the local liaison group had a good contact base...so Suffolk was quite fortunate because it had that good mix and a bit of drive and was almost ahead of the game as it were.” (LLG, East of England)*

One factor mentioned in the East of England Region was the difficulty of sustained commitment from all partners over time. Taking the response from the interviewees as a whole, the LLG partnerships seem to have lasted well through the duration of the Campaign. There was a lot of engagement in the first year of the Campaign when the partners were heavily involved in decision making on how they would implement the Campaign and meet the targets set for them. However there was some concern that partners' commitment to CFE and attending LLG meetings had fallen more recently and, although it was said that it was not due to a lack of commitment, it was clear there was less involvement once the main elements of the Campaign had been set up. A number of those interviewed mentioned it was important to have targets to work towards as this provided a focus for the LLGs, sustained commitment and helped to engage farmers.

*“I'm not sure how sustainable it would be, I mean, I've sort of maintained my interest knowing that the Campaign was...for a short period, but whether I could find time to be involved in it on-going, I'm not really sure...I think it would be quite easy for the professionals in that area, such as the RSPB or FWAG, because that's been the main core area of their work. But whether the agricultural consultants, or whether some of the farmers would be able to keep going, I'm not really sure.” (LLG member)*

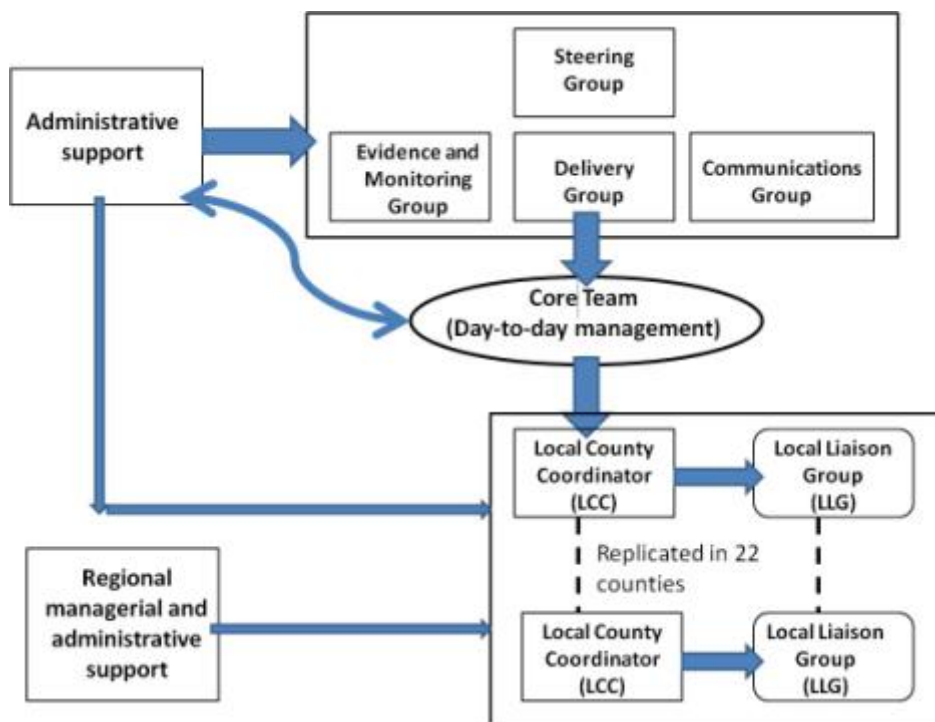
## 5 Delivery of the Campaign

*“There has been very good dialogue between all parties and a willingness to learn and adapt as the Campaign has developed. This has avoided a ‘them and us’ mentality and created more of a genuine consensus of approach”.*

### 5.1 Structural organisation of the CFE

The structure of the CFE resulted in both strengths and weaknesses during delivery. The structure involved eight partner organisations operating at both national and local (county) levels. In addition there were some structures operating at a broader regional level in at least two areas (Yorkshire, and the East of England). Figure 5.1 below illustrates the overall Campaign structure with a set of national level groups made up of partner organisations feeding into an overall steering group concerned with strategic decision making, with the chairmanship shared by CLA and NFU. The Delivery Group has key responsibilities for programme delivery and operates through a core group of four people who are in regular contact with the Local County Coordinators (LCCs). Central support at both national and local level is provided through a Co-ordinator and an Administrator housed at the NFU headquarter offices; some regional support (in terms of line management and administration) is also provided from NFU/CLA regional offices, although the level of support is variable and has declined over the life of the Campaign as the LCCs became more confident and capable.

**Figure 5.1 Overview of the CFE management structure**



Delivery of the programme takes place through the LCCs working with Local Liaison Groups in each county, made up of farmers and representatives of partner organisations. Two areas (Yorkshire and East of England) also benefit from a regional structure linking the LCCs and LLGs in each county more closely together through regular meetings and communications. In the Yorkshire Region for example, the regional strategy group, which hired all three LCCs and appointed the LLG chairs, also provides strong support across all three areas of the region which enables sharing of information and practice. The regional strategy group was indicated as playing a critical role through:

- Providing 'pressure' to make sure CFE was embedded within organisations represented on the LLG (as the members of the strategy group tended to be operating at a higher level within the key partner organisations than members of the LLGs)
- Providing guidance to the LCCs/LLGs
- Providing support to LCCs/LLGs that they are on the right track.
- Enabling sharing of information through regular meetings at regional level bringing together LCCs and members of partner organisations.

At the same time, the regional strategy group in Yorkshire did not try to dictate how LLGs should operate but were guided to a large extent by what the LLGs wanted to achieve in their own areas.

## **5.2 Perceived strengths and weaknesses: national level**

Table 5.1 below identifies some of the strengths and weaknesses reported by national partners relating to the operating structures. Key strengths included the relationship between the national and local levels, the role of the Evidence and Monitoring working group in assessing the evidence, the willingness or partners to work together, and efficient administration of the Campaign at both national and local levels. Weaknesses were less apparent when talking to national level partners but include over-reliance on a single funding source, an inability to discuss certain shortcomings (e.g. role of partner support in the regions), a reliance on a small core of people at the centre to do much of the work, and problems with communications (particularly early on in the Campaign). The lack of agronomy expertise was also noted as a weakness.

The two main areas where opinions were found to conflict relate to administration of the Campaign and decision making. Although the Campaign administration was identified as efficient, there was significant feedback during interviews suggesting that a lot of work is going on behind the scenes that is neither recognised nor accounted for by the main partners. In terms of decision making it was clear that partners were committed to working together and there was much positive feedback relating to collaboration and strong partnership working. At the same time some partners were suggesting that meetings were time consuming (for those sitting on multiple groups), and decision making could be 'painfully slow'. Partly this was put down to some partners having different people sit on different working groups (requiring an extra level of communication to take place), and partly due to the inability of representatives to take decisions for the organisations they represented. Members of national level working groups that needed to go back to their own organisations in order to get a decision slowed down the process and made the structure less effective than it could have been.

**Table 5.1 Strengths and weaknesses of the organisational structure: national level perceptions**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoU sets out responsibilities</li> <li>• MoU required commitment from start</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defra funding and support essential</li> <li>• Over-control by Defra (main funder)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes senior people dealing with policy and delivery group to support local delivery</li> <li>• Key issues feed up to Steering group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rhetoric at senior level of organisations has undermined support on the ground sometimes</li> <li>• Inability to discuss certain shortcomings in a formal manner</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairs of working groups attending other working group meetings reduces potential for rumours to develop and provides continuity</li> <li>• Developed into a team quickly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming meetings</li> <li>• Representation of organisations on groups using different personalities can cause problems, slows the process</li> <li>• Changes in personnel caused difficulties</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent chair of E&amp;M group provides balance</li> <li>• E &amp; M group made up of those with scientific expertise</li> <li>• Separate group to assess evidence worked well – unbiased</li> <li>• Deep and detailed discussions in E&amp;M group</li> <li>• Scientific approach to assessing evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agronomists missing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCCs centrally managed/Check points for local groups</li> <li>• Local structure makes national campaign relevant at local level</li> <li>• Local structure efficient/Building on existing local frameworks</li> <li>• Core team makes feedback loops work – central to local level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local variability in partnerships and level of organisational engagement</li> <li>• National partners not communicating directly with local level</li> <li>• Member based organisations lack awareness of member involvement in CFE at local level</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on small core of people to do much of work</li> <li>• Lack of understanding over how structure actually operates</li> <li>• Unpaid/unrecognised work occurring ‘behind the scenes’/ ‘Hidden’ costs</li> <li>• Unrecognised need for effective management</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness to work together</li> <li>• A perceived ‘hierarchy’ among partners</li> <li>• Partners recognise role they play</li> <li>• Collaboration positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some organisations struggled in partnership role</li> <li>• Some representatives sat on the fence, would not make decisions</li> <li>• Slow process as some representatives must go back to their organisations before making a decision</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes use voting</li> <li>• Issues thrashed out in discussion</li> <li>• Recognition of alliances and tensions between organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications weak/ Communications expertise missing</li> <li>• Chair of communications group rotated – lack of expertise</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communications with farmers in initial phases was poor</li><li>• Lack of partner engagement in communications</li></ul>
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### 5.3 Operation of the CFE

*“I think generally there was a good buy-in from the partnership of the organisations...but I think the benefits of this...have come from the fact that you’ve got a group of organisations that, although they may not sit naturally alongside each other and may have disagreements from time to time, are willing to put the effort in to make things work.”*

The other aspect of partnership working is the day-to-day operation of the structure. Operations are clearly governed by the structural arrangements in place, and to a certain extent this can be seen in some of the comments made by respondents at the national level (e.g. delivery against the Memorandum of Understanding, internal communications improved through the Chairmen of national level working groups attending the meetings of each other’s groups). Table 5.2 summarises the effectiveness of operating structures in terms of national level activities and internal communications.

The majority of those interviewed indicated that the structure of a steering group and three working groups at the national level worked well. The monthly teleconference calls between the national level and the LCCs were also found to be extremely valuable and cited as being significant in enabling delivery, providing feedback from the local areas, and in sharing best practice and ideas among the counties.

*“...the strength of the links are mostly through the Delivery Group Chairman and Campaign coordinator having a monthly conference call with the local coordinators, where they have the opportunity to discuss any issues. And in fact quite a few things have come up from the ground which we then addressed to the Delivery Group, or the Evidence and Monitoring Group and escalated up to the Steering Group where needs be, to get actions taken in partner organisations. And it’s been a great two-way dialogue, so if we see that maybe one area is struggling to get as much farmer engagement as others, we can share best practice through those teleconference events...”*

*“Monthly telecommunications...with all the LCCs – they can say what is happening, compare notes, say what the problems are. National level can provide guidance. Also allows for comparisons between areas. So – there is a direct route is from the core group to the LCCs – also weekly emails from [the Campaign Co-ordinator], and a monthly newsletter that has wider circulation.”*

At the local level, the structure was identified as effective as it allowed for tailoring of the Campaign to the different conditions in each area. There were indications from some interviewees that communications between the national and local level were not as effective as they could have been, though this was linked more to internal communications within individual organisations: some partners had good links within their organisation between those operating at national and local levels, others indicated a lack of interaction/communication within the organisation between those sitting on national level working groups and those representing the organisation at the Local Liaison Group level.

Various operations were identified as not working well, including the time taken to reach consensus and take decisions at the national level where some partners indicated that decision making could be 'painfully slow', others suggested this was the nature of partnership work and the need to reach consensus. At the local level one of the key areas of weakness was identified as the difficulty of getting the CFE message out from the LLGs into the wider county areas. There is some suggestion that the cause was partly due to erroneous assumptions about the role of agronomists in the Local Liaison Groups. The fact that agronomists were in business and in competition with each other was not taken into account and the assumption that the message would be widely spread through those particular networks was incorrect. This might partially account for the apparent low levels of awareness on the part of farmers concerning the role of LLGs in providing support, which was noted earlier in the Fera surveys.

Two issues echo those described under the national structural organisation above: the 'hidden' tier of regional government; and, the lack of recognition of work being undertaken at national level 'behind the scenes' to manage delivery of the Campaign. In two of the regions examined (Yorkshire and East of England) regional structures were established to provide strategic guidance and support. Regional structures resulted in additional meetings between LCCs and chairs of LLGs, and greater sharing of ideas and expertise. Regions with these additional structures appear to have been more effective in getting the CFE message out across the region and raising awareness but did not necessarily result in the targets being achieved any more than in areas without these structures.

At least one interviewee indicated the importance of individuals at the local level, in terms of developing networks and/or getting the message out across their areas. In some instances, interviewees also felt that there had been a lack of recognition of the work done between national and local levels to ensure a two-way flow of information and to keep the local coordinators on track. Some of those interviewed at the local level indicated a relatively high level of work connected to Campaign delivery outside of meetings that was unaccounted for, and also indicated a lack of awareness among some partner organisations that this work was being undertaken.

**Table 5.2 Effectiveness of the operating structures**

	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Not effective</b>
<b>National level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered against the MoU</li> <li>• Few conflicts/look for the middle ground</li> <li>• Tasks assigned through discussion</li> <li>• Some tensions between partners/agreed structure for dealing with disagreements</li> <li>• Generally worked well/willingness to contribute to make it work</li> <li>• Internal communications enhanced by chairs sitting on each other's groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting partnership agreement can take time</li> <li>• Change of personnel caused difficulties</li> <li>• Some issues get 'parked' if too difficult to resolve</li> <li>• Consensus makes for slow progress</li> <li>• Lack of continuity of personnel in some organisations created problems</li> <li>• Slow process of agreeing press releases</li> <li>• Reaching decisions can be long-winded and painful</li> </ul>
<b>Local level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different management structures in each county/region</li> <li>• Enabled tailoring of activity to local areas</li> <li>• Line management provided by regional NFU/CLA personnel</li> <li>• LCCs worked well – able to tune approach to local situation</li> <li>• Piggy-backing onto other events successful</li> <li>• Interactions at local level between partner organisations were effective</li> <li>• Local flexibility to deliver</li> <li>• 'Hidden' regional tier of governance</li> <li>• Variability between regions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity of approaches at local level – some did not work/effectiveness varies</li> <li>• Time required to get LCCs in place</li> <li>• CFE only events not successful</li> <li>• Lack of interaction/communication between national partners and local groups</li> <li>• Individuals important at local level</li> <li>• Lack of recognition of the work done between national and local levels</li> </ul>
<b>Internal communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct communications from core to local areas</li> <li>• Monthly conference calls enables two-way communication from centre to local areas, feedback and deeper exploration of problems</li> <li>• Best practice dissemination through weekly telephone conferences and LCC meetings</li> <li>• Delivery group coordinated work of LCCs through monthly calls</li> <li>• Exchange of ideas between LCCs/Sharing of problems and good practice</li> <li>• Six monthly meetings of all LLG chairs and LCCs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorrect assumptions about role of agronomists within each local group</li> <li>• Agronomists in competition – therefore CFE message not spread</li> <li>• Agronomists had limited time to adopt and communicate the message</li> <li>• Industry structure limits effectiveness of agronomists</li> <li>• Flow of information from LLG to rest of the region has been problematic</li> <li>• Failed to engage land agents</li> <li>• Links between national and local level personnel within some organisations, but not all</li> </ul>



## 5.4 Operation in the regions

In all three regional areas where interviews took place the administration and governance structures were felt to be effective and the level of local autonomy in tailoring the Campaign to each area was felt to be valuable.

*“I think setting the strategy nationally and then getting it down to actual action at a local level is really good because it’s got to be different; it’s got to be adaptive from a national strategy because everywhere is geographically and topographically [different].” (LLG, Kent)*

In the South East region there was some variation in approach due to the different characteristics of the counties examined. In Hampshire, geographical differences within the county reflected the variation in character and types of farming between the arable central belt and, for example, the New Forest where the CFE was not thought to be relevant. Kent has a variety of farming including fruit growing and top fruit growers were cited by one interviewee as a success area and by another in the same county as an area that CFE had not really addressed. There was also a difference of opinion as to whether it was easier to involve small farmers or large farmers, with one LCC (in Hampshire) finding large estates easier to work with as they are not so pushed for time as small family farmers and a LLG chair (in Kent) citing large farms as hard to reach. In Yorkshire, those interviewed indicated that the three LLGs faced different issues and as a result had taken different approaches to communicate with farmers.

In the Yorkshire region differences were also found between the counties due to the different agricultural characteristics and farming traditions. In North Yorkshire the farms are more mixed and have quite a lot of natural features to work with, East Yorkshire consists of larger and more commercial farms, South Yorkshire was said to be more ‘insular’ and it was difficult to get farmers to attend organised events. One LLG member put it as follows:

*“...farmers have different attitudes in different areas. So a farmer in East Yorkshire will have a different attitude to what you would find in North Yorkshire, and obviously that also goes with geographical types. You have got large open arable units in East Yorkshire, you have got probably more mixed farming in North Yorkshire, more hedges, more grassland, and more variety. So you have probably got more options to play with in North Yorkshire, whereas in East Yorkshire you might end up having to look at wild bird seed mixes, and things like that, to fill your ELS application in. So you fit with what the industry wants...”*

In Yorkshire, the LCCs did a lot of ‘agronomy days’ and found it an effective form of communication. They also decided to target very commercial farms as beacon farms, rather than the ‘usual suspects’, as the intention was to engage with the farmers that are not currently engaged in agri-environment activities. Partly this was due to the fact that at the regional level the partnership was “commercially minded” with agronomists and a CAAV agent delivering ELS as well as FWAG agents giving advice, partly it was recognition that the focus of CFE should be on encouraging those that were not already doing something for the environment.

In order to maximise the effectiveness of the LLG, the LCCs indicated that it was important to get the LLG members involved in events. The example of a farm walk illustrates this point:

*“So if we’re doing a farm walk about let’s say, delivering farmland bird options, clearly we’ll have the RSPB there. But also I’d have...(the agronomist) along to talk about how he grows some of the game cover crops or the wild bird seed crops. RSPB can come along and say, ‘These are really good for these birds and this is why they like them,’ but (the agronomist) can say, ‘These are the types of products you can grow and this is the way to grow it to grow it effectively,’ and I think again that’s the uniqueness with having that partnership.”*

In the South East Region, apart from one-to-one communication, the most effective way of involving farmers was found to be demonstration events such as farm walks where farmers could see what other farmers were doing and talk to them about it. This appeared to have been adopted as the main tool in both Hampshire and Kent. Whereas most respondents identified farm walks as a successful way of reaching farmers, in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire an assessment of the longer term effects of this approach was made, which was found to be ineffective in terms of changing behaviour, and subsequently the local groups switched their efforts to individual farm meetings.

*“They [farm walks] were good, but I think there was almost an overkill on farm walks at that time and there was lots happening. Then we sort of decided, because we analysed who came for the farm walks and if there’d been a change in behaviour with Natural England from the options they took up when they renewed the ELS agreement. So we could see if there’d been behaviour changes and there hadn’t. So then we decided to switch...and target farmers on one-to-one visits.” (LCC, South East)*

The experience identified above suggests that contact between the CFE and farmers did not necessarily involve behavioural changes. This might help explain low levels of change suggested in the Fera surveys, as LLGs and LCCs could appear to be having significant success in terms of the number of farmers attending events, but without follow-up to provide additional on-the-farm guidance and support the result was limited behavioural change. This notion is partially supported by the quote below referring to the need for continuity of support from trusted advisors.

Several of those interviewed also admitted that there were groups of hard-to-reach farmers that the Campaign had not contacted and who did not to attend events such as farm walks. One LCC stated he had tried to reach a different group of farmers by attending events set up for a different purpose, with limited success. The NFU and (to a lesser extent) the CLA have used their regular communication with their members to publicise CFE but there is a less scope for reaching those who are not members of these organisations. Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire tried targeted one-to-one visits on the ‘white space’ farmers who were not in agri-environment schemes. The LCC there felt that the key to reaching these hard-to-reach farmers was one-to-one contact from someone they knew or someone who had been recommended by a person they knew.

*“It is hard...I think, because I’ve worked in my patch for quite a number of years, they want someone who maybe other people recommend to them so that you’ve got that continuity of face...I’ve spoken to some dairy farmers for example and ELS on their farm wouldn’t work because we just couldn’t find lands to put into the scheme. So they are*

*doing stuff, but voluntary and not tied in...and I think a lot of it is having someone they can ring up and just say, I've got a worry, can you come out and see me, that seems to work. I think it's continuity of face."*

In the East of England Region, a number of those interviewed felt that LLGs had learned that a mixed delivery approach had been more effective than reliance on a single method of communicating with farmers. In the initial months of CFE a lot of time was spent on raising farmer awareness through the local press and the CFE's own publicity, but as the Campaign progressed more time had been spent on direct contact with farmers through CFE events, 'piggy backing' on other events, and through one-to-one visits. The media were felt to be important in the initial awareness raising exercise, but not sufficiently engaging to bring about change.

In the East of England Region, the LCCs and LLG Farming Chairs are very important in determining the direction and level of action. In terms of organisations, the LCCs are all FWAG employees and the two LLG farmer Chairs are active within the NFU and CLA. The Farming Chairs were recruited because of their connection with the NFU and CLA. The Eastern region had decided to employ 3 full-time staff to provide the LCC support and this enabled the LCCs to take on more responsibility compared to regions where the LCCs were employed on a part time basis.

*"I have to say the coordinators do a lot of work. But it's very much the coordinators and the NFU that are probably the strongest membership, in that sense of leading on events, but they will support other partners who have got events where they want the message promoting." (LLG)*

Some of the LLG members in the region thought that it was a benefit to have full-time staff employed to take on the delivery of CFE. However, it was also mentioned (by LCCs in other regions) that LLGs may become too dependent on the LCCs which may lead to a reduction in their engagement with the Campaign. This was not seen as a major problem at present but was felt to be something that needed to be monitored going forward.

*"I don't think that the local liaison group had that much input in this year's events, like the themed events that have been organised regionally. I think we've just been sort of told about them in retrospect rather than having much input in them." (LLG)*

In Yorkshire, the main weakness in terms of operation of the CFE was felt to be a lack of farmers on the LLGs. The LCCs felt that the LLGs should be "farmer dominated", and also more representative of the geographic regions in which they were situated. For example, North Yorkshire is a huge region and it was felt that representation from different geographic areas would have been more helpful. It was felt that more farmer representation would enable the Campaign to engage more effectively with the target audience the CFE was trying to reach. It was felt that the message would be more effective if it was being said by farmers themselves, rather than by representatives of other organisations.

*"It has been quite helpful to have the farmers that come along, they have beacon farms and are sort of representative...When they have been in the room, they've been incredibly helpful because again it's just like, well what about this or what about that? It's very frank and honest and simple."*

A second weakness of the approach, also identified as an issue in the East of England region, was the tendency to pass on responsibility for action to the LCC. The result was to put the burden on the shoulders of the coordinator to get things done, rather than the LLG taking responsibility for moving things along. One LCC felt that the LLG did not take as much 'ownership' of the project as they could have done.

LLG members on the other hand generally felt the decision making processes worked well. LLG operation was indicated as fairly informal and decisions were made on the basis of what the group as a whole felt would be most beneficial to the local area. But, there was recognition that personalities can be important in partnership work. Although the same organisations might be represented on the LLGs, the different personalities involved, and their attitude to the CFE, could result in quite different outcomes. If an LLG member representing an organisation is not that keen or interested in the work, then the outcomes for the group as a whole can be affected.

LLG members also highlighted the amount of effort that had been expended early in the Campaign in trying alternative ways of doing things.

*"There's been a lot of trial and lots of different ways tried...piggybacking on others, leaflet dropping, all sorts of press. So the group has tried very hard to do a range of different measures to get in touch with farmers. Always thinking, 'how do you not just have the converted the whole time, how do you get the hard to reach ones?' So I think there's been a bit of trial and error that's worked out what seems to work and what doesn't, and dropping the things that don't and concentrating on the things that do."*

In Yorkshire, LLG members also picked up on the fact that one reason for successful operation in the region was that many of the partners already knew each other and had worked together previously, with a consequent high level of trust that was there from the beginning of the Campaign.

*"Yeah it's good. It is about using your networks, and the partners. And the partnerships are all about relationships, and the majority of us have worked together for a number of years, so we know each other, and the trust level has been borne out from that; and that is how we work successfully together."*

The existing relationships and level of trust appear to have enhanced the potential for sharing information and for utilising a wide range of events for publicising the Campaign and its objectives. As another LLG member indicated:

*"...those messages - we are having this event, will you come and support us? - are already there ...and if the LCC has certain events I will go and support him...and if I have an event I will say, do you want to come along to it, if you feel that's appropriate...I will be mentioning CFE at events anyway, to our staff but also giving the LCC the opportunity, or the platform, to come to talk to our staff as well."*

One role that has diminished is that of the NFU regional manager who reported having less to do now than at the start of the Campaign, and indicated that this was a result of the successful operation of the LLGs in the region. Regional managers were persons in NFU/CLA regional offices that were identified to provide support and oversee progress in relation to the contracts with LCCs. Whereas the LCCs had

started the Campaign reporting to the nominated regional manager, this had been replaced in favour of reporting only to the centre. However, LCCs have kept in touch with the regional manager through regular phone and email contact.

## **5.5 External communications**

Those interviewed at the national level indicated that although press coverage was good the message being given out was complex and respondents indicated that communications with farmers and others in the sector had been problematic. Communications included a website, Campaign leaflets and brochures, and CFE led events, as well as a visible presence at a wide range of national, regional and local events operated by partner organisations.

Reports from other studies (e.g. Defra and Fera survey reports) suggest that a high level of awareness was achieved through the widespread press coverage and Campaign leaflets. Farmers generally regarded the promotion as good. The data also suggest, however, that the level of detailed understanding of how the CFE operated was low, and that the Campaign aims were not embedded in the minds of farmers. The Fera survey in 2012, for example, illustrated that prompting was required to get the majority of respondents to remember even the main themes of the Campaign.

Press coverage was perceived by those interviewed at national and local levels as both widespread and excellent. The Campaign Administrator developed good relationships with farming press and was able to provide a stream of press releases regarding Campaign activities. The press coverage of CFE activities was extensive but the press analysis (see below) supports the view that the message coming from the press was diluted across a wide range of issues and that the CFE was often presented in a limited manner that did not enhance understanding and awareness. Part of the difficulty associated with getting the Campaign message across to farmers was felt to be a lack of focus on communications at the national level early on in the Campaign. Initially, communications was just part of another working group and none of the partners had adequate communications expertise (this was rectified later in the Campaign with the addition of a communications expert as chairman of a separate Communications Group).

### **Press analysis**

A total of 453 press articles from the period between 2009 and early May 2012 were analysed. The results reveal that the CFE has barely featured in the national press with only three examples of it featuring. It appeared in The Observer as some of project partners responded to an article about the decline of farmland birds, but did not mention the Campaign directly. The Daily Telegraph carried an article about the start of the Campaign and a short commentary on the aims of the CFE and the Times carried a brief, positive mention in a profile of the President of the CPRE Bill Bryson.

In contrast to the national newspapers, the regional newspapers, both dailies and weeklies, featured the CFE regularly, particularly in areas which have a prominent farming community or where a local angle on the CFE was quickly established. These newspapers were keen to report on the CFE, with consistent reporting on events promoting participation in the CFE, such as farm walks, free signage or

competitions. This has also extended to carrying articles encouraging farmers to take part in monitoring surveys, take up particular field options and the availability of support. There were four main types of article found in the regional press:

Promotional articles: There is considerable convergence in content in many of these reports as they are clearly based on the same press releases or agency statements, and appear to generally conform closely to the statements issued by the CFE organisers or the partners in the CFE. A total of 171 articles were found either promoting the CFE directly or giving notice of events that were intended to promote participation in the CFE, the second largest group of articles.

Controversies: Several articles focused on the controversies surrounding the CFE, principally the debates around the decline in farmland birds and its causation and also the trade-offs between biodiversity and food production. These controversies, the claims and rebuttals conform to familiar 'news values' of discussion and dispute, particularly the conflicts between farmers and conservationists. This is a feature of the reporting when it became clear that the CFE was not meeting its targets. This stream of reporting did not stop the reporting of promotional events which were clearly considered to be local news. There is a marked gap between the reporting of the specialist journalists – often the rural or farming correspondent or editor, and those who do not have in-depth knowledge. This can be seen in the sub-editing of the headlines which either misunderstand or generalise the structure of the CFE.

Op-Ed coverage: A third stream of articles in the regional press consists of a relatively small number of opinion or editorial articles, that discuss the CFE either directly or as part of a broader view. Some of the authors are specialists in the area, others provide an example of farmer opinion.

Specialist commentary: The fourth stream of reporting is that of opinion pieces from Land Agents or Surveyors, this are usually couched as reviews of the current policy situation with regard to estate planning or land management. This stream of reporting of the CFE is distinctive as it places the CFE in a wider policy context rather than an institutional controversy.

#### *The trade press*

As might be expected, these magazines and newspapers have carried the most detailed coverage of the CFE in terms of the structure of the Campaign, the expectations of participants, and the options available to them. The details of how the CFE is made operational has tended to be undertaken through profiles of individual estates and holdings, with those featured describing their participation in the CFE. The trade press has also been the place in which there has been some, but generally limited critique of the CFE as a whole. In common with the regional press, the trade press also cover the controversies (e.g. food vs. Biodiversity). The CFE falling short from its targets led to more detail and also encouragement for further participation. The most detailed critiques of the CFE appear in the letters to the trade press.

#### *Partner statements*

Statements from NFU are very frequent in the analysis with 108 of the articles analysed containing statements by the NFU, compared to 34 from the RSPB and the same number from the CLA. The majority of statements came from local, country or regional organisers (34) with a smaller number

coming from the national team (28). Outside the partnership of the CFE, the most significant number of comments were made by government ministers, and land agents/advisors.

#### *Content of the statements*

Given the number of events, discussions, and promotional activities reported in the press it is difficult to find common strands. A total of 115 separate issues associated with the CFE were identified, of which only 21 are referred to ten or more times. The most frequently appearing issues are those associated with the targets of the CFE, the voluntary nature of the scheme, the partnership basis of the campaign, and the role of the Young Farmers. This does suggest a dilution of the messages in the press relating to the CFE, with a large number (115) of subject areas covered and a lack of consistency.

#### *Evaluation*

It is clear that the CFE has communicated very successfully with the farming communities across England through the media, with a solid coverage of events staged by the CFE teams and discussion of the mechanisms of the Campaign in the trade press. That the national press have not covered the CFE is a reflection in part of its general 'newsworthiness', as it is a sector initiative and therefore not of high national news value for the general public.

The media analysis does signal the way in which the press are interested in certain news values. Local stories are a priority for local and regional papers but also the opportunity for a news item to fit within an established narrative that the editors see as newsworthy. Therefore suggestions of dissent or indeed formal debates gather more attention than discussions of partnership. It is also noticeable that dissent or debates are generally staged by, and between, those working on the national stage rather than those people involved at the local level.

Within the structure of commentary on the CFE there are two strands within the regional press. Some of the regional newspapers carry opinion pieces from correspondents with a broad farming/rural brief who tend towards a tone of sweeping, bold statements that seek to polarise opinion. They are generally unsympathetic to the goals of the CFE as part of a stance against the EU/regulation/'environmentalism', conducted in a populist tone. The other source of commentary comes from land agents who contextualise the CFE within the potential for financial returns from the assets held in the business, as is their remit. This commentary leaves the CFE framed within narrow bounds, with little public discussion of the wider environmental role that the farmed environment is playing, and might do in the future.

## 6 Effectiveness of the Campaign

*“...one of the real strengths of the CFE is that it recognised the management the farmers are already undertaking...it recognised the fact that a lot of people already were doing good things...and I think that has helped, although I think that point is still quite confused with people, and people don't always like to tell us about the management they're doing as part of the campaign, because they feel they've always done it.”*

The impacts of the Campaign were explored with partners in terms of where they were and were not perceived to be effective. Analysis of interview data identified six broad categories of activity:

- Targets
- Attitude and awareness
- Partnership
- Message
- Delivery and engagement
- Resources

Each of these categories is explored separately below.

### 6.1 Targets

*“...the targets were the result of a political discussion between two opposing power groups, or shades of opinion and I think the knowledge of that has hampered the whole process really. I'd certainly echo that this was quite a complicated message even for us to understand before we could communicate it...I mean a lot of farmers are saying, I want to help, but tell me in words of one syllable what I have to do, and it wasn't possible to do that in the early stages.”*

Table 6.1 summarises information from national and local level interviews. The table reveals the clear recognition by participants that the environmental management targets the Campaign set for itself were not achieved, and only some indication that some of the 'softer' targets were attained. Discussion of reasons for failure to achieve targets centres around the original target-setting process, which was felt by many to be rushed, resulting in politically driven, arbitrary, and unsuitable targets, some of which could not be measured. More than one interviewee acknowledged that right from the start it was clear that some of the targets would never be met in the given time frame. In addition, there were problems arising from inadequate monitoring, failure to record activity, and mis-recording of action on the ground, making it difficult to ascertain exactly what was being delivered.

Several of those interviewed were more optimistic noting that some of the targets had been met, and 'effectiveness' was interpreted more widely through delivery of a wider range of recognised benefits, including: increased retention of farmers with ELS measures, raised awareness and education of farmers, and the value of partnership work. It is interesting to note that interviewees also identify a range of benefits that underpin environmentally beneficial farming, such as, enabling more flexibility



and better targeting at local level, retention of land in ELS options, operating as an educational tool, and raising awareness of doing something for the environment. These benefits have not been measured in any of the monitoring surveys but they do represent outcomes that may underpin longer term behavioural change (if Campaign activities and pressure to change are maintained).

In terms of lack of effectiveness, the key issue identified was 'a failure to recognise and admit that some approaches did not work'. Those interviewed indicated that the external situation and policy arena had changed yet the Campaign appeared unable or 'reluctant' to adapt, preferring instead to stick to original targets. Lack of feedback loops was cited as one reason for failure to change, others indicated political reasons and a desire not to look 'weak'. A small number of partners clearly indicated that achieving the targets was considered the overriding imperative of the Campaign, while others suggested the targets were arbitrary and developed without adequate scientific input.

*"Yeah, and in lots of ways, we've failed in actually recognising it's failed because we've all been a bit frightened in saying it."*

*"...the targets that we found ourselves setting...we probably set ourselves some difficult tasks..."*

*"So I think that was a huge, huge steep learning curve, in setting targets that end up being very difficult to monitor...We set ourselves a very high bar...which is probably regretted in some ways..."*

*"We missed stuff on quality of what was being produced by voluntary measures – we stuck in the numbers (quantitative measures) then we chased those instead of working on improving quality."*

The lack of effectiveness was assigned to a number of causes, some of which have been flagged up in the Fera verification surveys, for example, the unsuitability of targets for particular areas, monitoring that did not always capture things accurately and the poor recording/mis-recording of activities. In the survey forms, farmers were not recording all they were doing, and there was a recognition that not all farmers want to keep records resulting in a lack of accurate data on voluntary actions on farms (when judged through the farmer survey). When taken together, it is not surprising that the target driven approach of the Campaign appears to be less successful than intended. If farmers are not recording all their activities or mis-recording some activities in survey forms, and not applying appropriate management requirements deeming some activities unsuitable, then the extent to which targets can be achieved becomes questionable.

### **Regional and local perspectives on targets**

*"...the uncropped land target was unrealistic to start with. I think that was never going to happen or work, but that was agreed higher up." (LLG, East of England)*

In terms of meeting targets, the Campaign reveals some variability both within regions and between regions. In Yorkshire, for example, South Yorkshire was felt to be the least successful area for CFE, while in both North and East Yorkshire those interviewed felt the Campaign had been much more successful. In the South-East region, when asked about the overall success of CFE, answers varied from 'very successful' to 'moderate to good' or 'varied from area to area'. However, questions on impact tended to be answered in terms of increased awareness (said to be good, with the exception of some groups) and understanding, rather than referring to change on the ground (perhaps not so large). This fits with the findings of the Fera verification surveys, which suggest a more limited application of measures than indicated by the Defra Monitoring Survey, and with the CCRI study which explored farmer attitudes. The CCRI study suggested that there was a general awareness of CFE among farmers, but limited detailed knowledge, and a reluctance to follow CFE guidelines to the letter as they were not flexible enough.

In all three regions, those interviewed admitted that the CFE had not met all its targets but in many cases it was thought that the targets had been set too hurriedly both in terms of the quantitative scores and what should be measured, and in some cases the targets were felt to be not appropriate to the local area. It was pointed out that some of the targets had been affected by changes in ELS, such as the removal of the stubble turnip option, which disproportionately affected some counties such as Kent and Wiltshire, and that it was easier for counties that started from a lower base to show improvement. In the case of the uncropped land target, comments were made about the lack of clarity, the meaning of the term 'uncropped land', and issues relating to under-recording or mis-recording. In some cases respondents were adamant that they knew from the start that this was a target that could not be attained.

*"...the target that failed, the uncropped land, was always going to fail." (LCC, East of England)*

*"We had an issue about un-cropped land...in terms of the un-cropped cultivated land...I think there is still lack of clarity on that one...there's lack of clarity within the group, and there would be lack of clarity outside, in the wider community..." (LLG, Yorkshire)*

**Table 6.1 Perceived effectiveness of the CFE at meeting targets**

Areas where Campaign effective	Areas where Campaign not effective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some targets reached, some were not</li> <li>• Met all the process targets</li> <li>• Enables more flexibility and better targeting at local level</li> <li>• Possible increase in vegetation/species cover</li> <li>• Increased retention of farmers in ES schemes; retained land in ELS options</li> <li>• Although targets are taking longer to achieve they are still on an upward movement.</li> <li>• The main targets have not been met, but as an educational tool and means of working as part of a partnership it has been very successful.</li> <li>• Whilst not all of the concrete targets have been achieved, the goal of raising the awareness of doing something for the environment does seem to have hit home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets botched; missed targets/arbitrary targets; failure to deliver resource protection targets; some targets not suitable/problems with targets; some tasks too large; targets set too high, too difficult</li> <li>• Lack of clarity on targets; unsuitable targets set; targets not applicable to the local area</li> <li>• Focused on reaching targets at expense of improving quality</li> <li>• Target-driven work limited the ability to be flexible</li> <li>• Targets hampered the whole process – politically driven</li> <li>• Got bogged down in trying to achieve quantitative targets</li> <li>• Monitoring a problem/some targets difficult to measure/monitor; poor recording/mis-recording of activities; people not recording all they are doing; monitoring was not always capturing things accurately</li> <li>• Recording and accuracy of delivery of voluntary measures has been poor, so only achieved half of what was expected</li> <li>• There has been too little monitoring of outcomes to allow measurement of success or failure.</li> <li>• Not all farmers want to keep records; lack of accurate recording of voluntary actions on farms.</li> </ul>

In several instances, interviewees indicated that activities were not being recorded for a variety of reasons, including failure of farmers to accurately log what they were actually doing, and inaccurate filling-in of forms and surveys. At the same time, the importance and necessity of targets in providing focus for the Campaign was acknowledged but a consistent view, presented by many of those interviewed, was that the focus on quantitative targets resulted in a failure to understand and account for the broader benefits of the Campaign. Some of these are identified under the ‘Land management’ category of impacts where it was indicated that the quality of both ELS measure and land management, had improved (e.g. on uncropped land). In addition, the potential for more tailored management was

welcomed by farmers as it enabled the integration of management for environmental benefits with production, recognised actions they were already doing, and provided for more flexibility in implementation.

*“Useful in terms of making ELS perform better. A number of farmers have done better things in ELS/HLS than would otherwise have been the case – it gave farmers a reason for doing things.”*

*“I don’t think you would have had the retention and I don’t think you would have had the continued engagement with agri-environment schemes. I think that is often forgotten. You kind of look at, ‘Oh well, pollen and nectar mixes haven’t gone up as much as we said, and this hasn’t gone up as we said,’ but the fact that we actually have retained people on these schemes and they’ve done that voluntarily, I think it’s a massive success.”*

*“...in terms of how effective it's been, we obviously have a range of targets and some we're doing really well against, and some we're not. We've not been able to influence things such as uncropped land, and farmers are going to be looking at the commodity market and whether it's worthwhile them leaving unproductive areas or whether they should be farming them, if it makes sense for their business.”*

The on-line questionnaire also explored the effectiveness of the Campaign in achieving its aims (Figure 6.1). When asked, a substantial majority (84%) of respondents felt that the Campaign had either been ‘very’ or ‘slightly’ effective in meeting its aims. Just over 10% felt that the Campaign had been either ‘very’ or ‘slightly’ ineffective at meeting its aims. Just over 5% felt it had been neither effective nor ineffective. A large number of comments were made to justify an individual’s response to this question. From a negative perspective a failure to deliver targets, confusion/mixed messages and unsuccessful engagement of some farmers were the main themes. Positive comments were centred on the Campaign having increased general awareness, and encouraged positive environmental actions within the farming community. Examples of comments from the on-line questionnaire are as follows:

*“It might not have met all of the formal targets, but it has kept environmental management to the fore in Campaign counties.”*

*“Messages have been too complicated and confusing. Many farmers haven't taken part. The majority of farmers haven't undertaken voluntary measures and of those that have, many have not implemented them correctly.”*

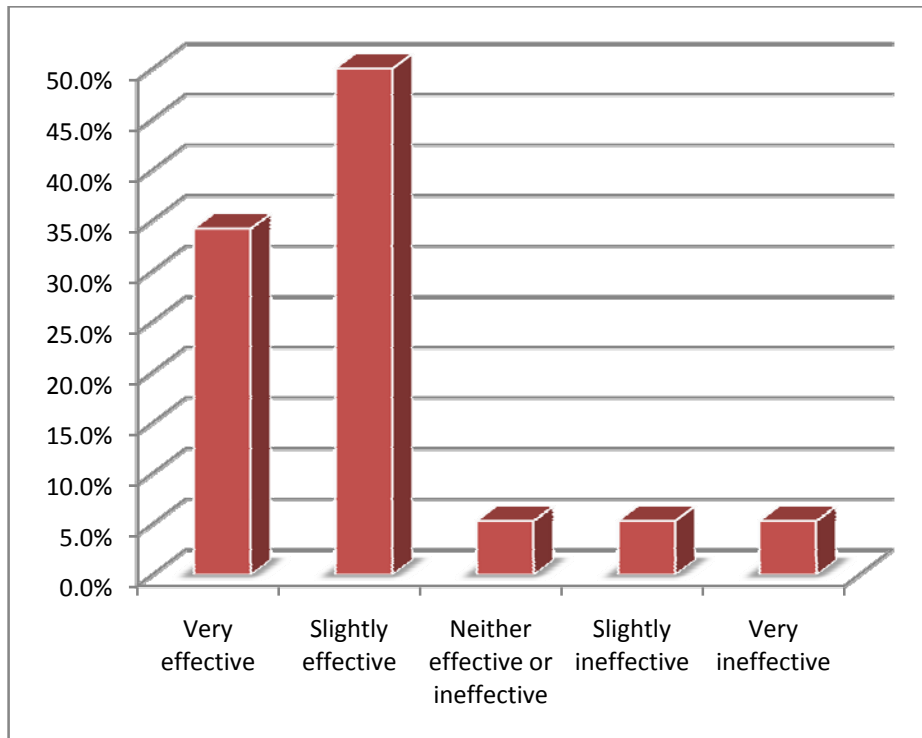
*“It has lead to positive voluntary environmental activity by farmers.”*

One reason for a failure to meet all the targets was also the lack of time. One respondent pointed out that the CFE had only operated over two farm decision periods, which was not long enough to bring about the desired level of change.

*“I think although we haven't hit any of the targets, I think what we have achieved over a relatively short space of time, bearing in mind effectively farmers have only had two*

*cropping years probably in the campaign. So, effectively, they've only two time periods, or two crop years, two decision-making times of what to do with your land, and I think we've achieved an awful lot." (LLG, East of England)*

**Figure 6.1 Perceived effectiveness of the CFE: on-line questionnaire data (N=36)**



Effectiveness in Campaign in meeting its goals	Response Percentage
Very effective	34.2%
Slightly effective	50.0%
Neither effective or ineffective	5.3%
Slightly ineffective	5.3%
Very ineffective	5.3%

Half of respondents to the on-line questionnaire indicated the Campaign was only 'slightly effective' and almost 16% indicated it was either neutral in its impact or ineffective.

## 6.2 Attitudes and awareness

*“...it’s certainly raised awareness that is not going to go away. The whole issue of the environment...”*

In terms of changing attitudes, almost all those interviewed and the respondents from the on-line questionnaire were of the opinion that the Campaign had raised awareness of environmental issues among farmers and in some cases resulted in a significant change in attitudes. One comment encapsulated the general view: *“...(there are ) very few farmers who have not heard of the CFE”*

Only one partner organisation expressed the view that farmer attitudes had not changed, suggesting only that a raised level of awareness had been achieved. Table 6.2 below suggests three broad changes brought about by the Campaign in terms of raising awareness, changing attitudes, and influencing the way farmers think about environmental stewardship.

**Table 6.2 Campaign effectiveness in regard to changing attitudes and awareness**

Areas where Campaign effective	Areas where Campaign not effective
<p><i>Awareness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased environmental awareness; increased consideration of environmental issues</li> <li>• It has kept environmental management to the fore in Campaign counties; farmers are more aware of environmental schemes than previously.</li> </ul> <p>Increased enthusiasm for voluntary management within the farming community</p> <p><i>Attitudes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed attitudes/changed mindsets; ‘Sea change’ in farmer attitudes;</li> <li>• Made the environment mainstream/changed people’s attitudes</li> </ul> <p><i>Influence on stewardship</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been a change in mind-set in farmers with regards to environmental stewardship and this has led to an increase in the habitats required to deliver increased bird numbers, resource protection and wildlife protection.</li> <li>• Changed farmers’ opinions of how to make ELS ‘work for me’; increase in ELS infield options, much greater awareness amongst farmers.</li> <li>• It has focused the work through stewardship to more joined-up options thinking for whole environment cohesion, recording things that are voluntary as well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not changed perceptions - only raised awareness</li> <li>• Takes time to change attitudes</li> </ul>

At the local level, changing farmer attitudes was one key area where those interviewed felt they had some success. In Yorkshire, LCCs suggested that farmer attitudes were changing, one example given was where farmers who had established 'poor quality options' wanted to make them better, they wanted to do things well and make it look good. LLG members also suggested that farmer attitudes had altered significantly over the period of the CFE, and one noted that if CFE is aligned with farmer interests then it would have more impact. One noted that the fact it was an alternative approach, where organisations were not always "preaching down the throat" of farmers, had made a difference.

In the South-East and East of England Regions there was a cross-section of views about whether or not CFE was changing attitudes among farmers. Some of those interviewed felt that attitudes were changing:

*"So we're changing attitudes generally and getting away from some of the dogmas of the past, so that's all helping." (LLG, East of England)*

*"It is making a difference on the ground, but the differences are subtle. Don't think though that you will find massive changes, it's not going to be like that." (LLG, East of England)*

While others were less convinced of the impact of CFE on farmer attitudes, for example one LLG member said:

*"It's difficult just now because convincing people who aren't in it to actually go in or get involved with schemes, we're just getting no traction at all with our tenants. So it's a little bit like the people who are most likely to do it are already in, and the next ones are a lot more difficult to get in. Also, the CAP report has thrown the whole cat amongst the pigeons, and people are taking the attitude, well, we'll wait and see what happens, we're going to get greening one way or another, so I don't see why I have to bother doing this until I really have to." (LLG, East of England)*

### **6.3 Partnership**

*"...everybody sitting round a table three years on is a massive success."*

The partnership approach itself was identified as a key area of success for the Campaign. Those interviewed at both national and local levels referred to the wide level of industry support, the interaction between different organisations, and uniting together a range of organisations towards a common goal.

The partnership was identified by the majority of interviewees as a success and a 'foundation on which to build'. The only negative comment was in relation to the failure to include land agents in the partnership. Although CAAV was a member of the partnership at national level, the nature of the organisation (made up of independent members operating their own businesses) could not ensure involvement of land agents at the local level. Comments in Table 6.3 below are grouped under three headings which summarise the perceived benefits of the partnership:

- Brought organisations together
- Foundation for action
- Interactions between partners

The partnership enabled a range of organisations to sit down together and work towards a common goal, at local as well as national levels. The very act of sitting down together enabled the partners to develop a foundation on which they could integrate their activities, calling on each other’s skills when needed and sharing information, knowledge and events. At the local level, many of the respondents indicated the nature of the partnership itself as a key area of success which had enabled the CFE to reach more farmers and enhanced the capacity for getting the message across by sharing contacts, sharing events, and by making each other more knowledgeable about individual organisational aims and objectives.

The partnership approach clearly also had an impact on delivery as it enabled the Campaign to ‘piggy-back’ on events that it would otherwise be unable to access. This became crucial as respondents also suggested that ‘CFE only’ events were not successful in attracting farmers, a point picked up in the Defra survey<sup>9</sup>, and linking in with other activities was found to be a much more effective way of reaching the target audience.

**Table 6.3 Campaign effectiveness in regard to changing attitudes and awareness**

Areas where Campaign effective	Areas where Campaign not effective
<p><i>Brought organisations together</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unified many organisations to a common goal</li> <li>• Partnership a success/partnership very powerful</li> <li>• Brought different organisations together; industry more involved; partnership of industry and environmental interests</li> <li>• Agronomy companies support it; getting agronomists on board – a long-term achievement</li> <li>• Advisory community support</li> </ul> <p><i>Foundation for action</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships deepened/relationships more constructive</li> <li>• Getting people to sit round the table and review evidence</li> <li>• Provides foundation on which to build; building strong local partnerships</li> </ul> <p><i>Interactions between partners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brought people together; developed a level of ‘camaraderie’ on the ground</li> <li>• Ability to call on others for help/advice</li> <li>• Enabled ‘piggy-backing’ on events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not brought land agents on board</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> Defra. Survey of land managed under the CFE 2010/11 crop year, England (May 2011)



## 6.4 Message

Opinion was somewhat polarised in terms of the effectiveness of the CFE message. On one hand some interviewees (particularly at the local level) were indicating that good press coverage and tailoring of the message to the local situation resulted in a more effective communication with farmers.

*“...it’s been very successful in reconsolidating our message that a one-size-fits-all approach to environmental management just completely makes no sense...that’s why farmers have got behind it, because they want to do tailored management to fit their farm...”*

On the other hand those interviewed were clear that not all farms had been reached, and there were still problems in engaging with the ‘hard to reach’. When interview responses around the issue of the ‘message’ are explored (see Table 6.4), the majority expressed the view that the Campaign had reached more farmers, that there had been good press coverage, and that the joint message coming from the partnership was more powerful. That has to be tempered with recognition of the difficulties encountered in communicating the CFE message (viewed as too complex), the focus of information in the farming press (more focused on awareness raising than increasing understanding), and realisation of the failure to engage with the ‘hard to reach’ which the Campaign had targeted. Part of the failure is attributed to difficulties with the Campaign’s management of external communications mentioned earlier, and partly attributed to the short period of time over which the Campaign had operated. Those familiar with voluntary approaches indicated that, given the short time frame, the Campaign had been extremely successful in raising awareness about its activities. Improving understanding and generating behavioural change is likely to take longer.

**Table 6.4 Campaign effectiveness in regard to communicating the message**

<b>Areas where Campaign effective</b>	<b>Areas where Campaign not effective</b>
<p><i>Nature of the message</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerted message – more powerful</li> <li>• Environmental message included in advice – not tacked on at the end</li> <li>• Reached more farmers (due to tailored approach)</li> </ul> <p><i>Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good press coverage</li> </ul>	<p><i>Nature of the message</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complicated message/too complex; need for clear messages and information</li> <li>• CFE objectives unclear to people</li> <li>• Confusion over ELS and CFE codes</li> <li>• Messages have been too complicated and confusing.</li> <li>• Mixed messages have failed to engage farmers.</li> </ul> <p><i>Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not got through to some big farms</li> <li>• Not getting to the hard to reach 20%</li> <li>• Not accessed all farmers</li> <li>• Poor initial communications</li> </ul>

In all three regions explored, those interviewed indicated that there was a group of hard to reach farmers (estimated to be between 10% and 20% of the total) with whom they had failed to engage, or persuade.

Poor initial communications were cited as one reason, which made for a slow and difficult start. Local level interviewees indicated that farmers were sent information before the supporting structure for the CFE was in place, making it difficult to engage farmers initially. In addition, confusion over targets and differences in codes used for ELS and CFE caused problems and turned some farmers off, making future CFE communications more difficult.

## 6.5 Resources

In terms of resources, those interviewed generally felt the resource provision had been adequate, and most of the skills and expertise required existed at both local and national levels in the partnership. At the local level some members of LLGs indicated that resources were limited as CFE activities had to be conducted ‘alongside the day job’ (farmers in particular), while others noted that CFE work could be integrated with their regular job, blurring the boundaries between their work and Campaign activities.

The key issue raised in terms of resources was the limited time frame over which the Campaign had operated. At both national and local levels, but particularly at the local level, respondents felt the time frame for implementing the Campaign had been too short. In some localities it had taken a significant amount of time to put the structures in place (in some cases well into 2010) and this had resulted in limited time to implement the Campaign in the area.

## 6.6 Level of involvement in the Campaign

A key question throughout the Campaign has been how to communicate with farmers and raise awareness about the central Campaign messages, and in particular how to reach the ‘hard to reach’ farmers. Questions 12 and 13 of the On-line questionnaire asked respondents for their views on what makes farmers get involved in the CFE, and what stops them from getting involved. The four main categories of response in each case are presented below:

<b><u>Reasons for getting involved</u></b>	<b><u>Reasons for not getting involved</u></b>
Peer pressure	CAP reform
Avoidance of regulation	Confusion
Benefits - advice/financial	Financial
Environmental interest	Busy/unwillingness to engage

In terms of getting involved, Table 6.5 below highlights the importance of peer pressure, the concern to be seen to be doing the right thing, and the influence of opinions of other farmers. The level of environmental interest is also clearly important with respondents indicating high levels of interest among some farmers clearly driving them to get involved in CFE. These two factors are also influenced by financial issues and the desire to avoid further regulation. Respondents indicated that the desire to avoid further regulation was a key reason some farmers were getting involved, while only three respondents indicated that payments (from ELS) were a driving force. Access to advice and learning what others are doing seems to be a more important factor for those getting involved.

In terms of reasons for not getting involved, Table 6.6 has four categories. The uncertainty surrounding CAP reform is cited as a key reason for not bothering with CFE, the fact that farmers may soon be forced to undertake ‘greening’ activities under CAP is viewed as a disincentive for current action. Confusion, over the message, what CFE is trying to achieve, and what they should be doing are also identified as reasons why farmers are not getting involved. Several respondents cited the high cereal prices as a key reason, but many more indicated a general unwillingness to engage as a primary reason. Partly this is to do with farmers thinking they are already doing enough, for others it is a matter of avoiding more form filling and for some it is a desire to avoid more inspections, interference, and ‘being told what to do’ by outside agencies.

**Table 6.5 What makes farmers get involved with the Campaign: On-line questionnaire responses (N=36)**

<p><b>Peer Pressure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer pressure and genuine concern for the environment,</li> <li>• Peer pressure, feeling guilty, wanting to do the right thing</li> <li>• Peer pressure, a love of wildlife and the countryside, they want to do the right thing and be allowed to get on with farming.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Avoidance of regulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They also want to avoid compulsory set-aside over larger area because at times of world food shortage that is not economically rational.</li> <li>• Fear of regulation/Avoiding regulation</li> <li>• They want to be acknowledged for their activity and contribute to the wider national agendas e.g. avoiding future regulation.</li> <li>• Negative attitude, fear of more farm inspections, length of tenancy agreements, urban fringe problems such as trespass and fly-tipping.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Benefits - advice/financial</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For ELS financial benefit.</li> <li>• Farm walks and advice on economics of stewardship</li> <li>• Positive message providing benefits for the farmer</li> <li>• Access to advice from a trusted source</li> <li>• Farmers enjoy visiting and learning from other farmers.</li> <li>• Most farmers want to behave in an environmentally responsible way and they are looking for advice and help.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Environmental interest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A natural desire to do the right thing if they possibly can and if it fits with farm economics</li> <li>• A genuine interest by the majority of farmers to get involved in conservation schemes.</li> <li>• Mainly those that are already interested in the environment and involved in environmental management.</li> <li>• Those involved would be doing this type of thing anyway and want to ensure that industry is recognised for doing the right thing for the environment.</li> </ul>

**Table 6.6 What stops farmers getting involved with the Campaign: on-line questionnaire responses (N=36)**

<p><b>CAP Reform</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of information on what they specifically need to do on their farm. Insufficient financial incentive and CAP reform uncertainty.</li> <li>• Concerns about 'Greening the CAP' would rather leave land in production than risk even more being taken out in the future.</li> <li>• CAP reform proposals which imply that they will have to do it anyway so some feel that they may as well produce as much as they can while they can.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Confusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many 'asks' and lack of join-up on messaging</li> <li>• Overly complex requirements;</li> <li>• Survey data suggests farmers think they are already doing enough for environment;</li> <li>• Confusion about which scheme is which, which part is voluntary, which is not etc.</li> <li>• They don't understand that the CFE was set up to help them - they think it is a campaign to re-introduce set aside. Or, they think set aside is never going to be introduced due to the increasing pressure on food supplies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Financial</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The arable market dramatically improved making it difficult for some to consider leaving unproductive land when prices were so good after a prolonged period of losses,</li> <li>• Profits and reluctance to change management practices/High grain prices/No payments</li> <li>• In field options, taking land out of production do not make business sense at high crop prices.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Busy/unwillingness to engage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspicion of Defra and/or NFU and the "turn-off" that these brands represent. Indifference or a belief that they already do enough for the environment.</li> <li>• Mainly the continual criticism from some organisations that whatever they do it will not be enough, and mixed messages from DEFRA and NE about stewardship.</li> <li>• Because they may feel they are doing their 'bit' already through ELS/HLS.</li> <li>• More forms and recording required/ Information overload, time to fill in the forms.</li> <li>• Too busy, don't want outside interference.</li> <li>• Too busy, already doing some sort of environmental scheme (paid)</li> <li>• Many think they are doing enough already and don't see the need for additional voluntary action. Some just aren't interested and haven't bothered to find out about the campaign.</li> <li>• Think that it is about them being told what to do.</li> <li>• Fear of commitment</li> </ul>

## 6.7 Main achievements and problems

*“(The CFE) opened a lot of doors...it made the environment OK to talk about...made it mainstream”*

Effectiveness of delivery and engagement with the Campaign can be explored under three broad headings:

- Recognition
- Management
- Engagement

These are summarised in Table 6.7, which suggests that the Campaign was effective in helping the partnership organisations to recognise that environmental goals could be integrated with production goals – which in turn meant that partners at the local level started to recognise and appreciate what farmers were already doing to deliver environmental benefits on their farms. It also enabled partners in each area to agree on local priorities and the type of advice they should be providing, thus creating a consistent message to farmers from different organisations.

The Campaign was less effective in recognising which activities were successful and which ones did not work. As Table 6.7 illustrates, there was a failure to recognise and admit that some approaches don't work (for example, beacon farms, one reason given was that once a farmer had visited a beacon farm he/she took no further interest in that farm). A reluctance to adapt the CFE approach itself to change was also reported, particularly with reference to targets. Even when it was clear to many that certain targets were out of reach, due to inappropriate target setting, or to changes resulting from external drivers, there appeared to be a lack of feedback systems that could enable change to occur.

In terms of management of the land through adoption of measures, those interviewed indicated a significant level of success. Interviewees at local and national level suggested land management had improved (for example better management of un-cropped land), and that the Campaign enabled farmers more flexibility to tailor the measures to their situation and to integrate management for production with management for environmental benefits. There were also suggestions that there was an improvement in the quality of management of land under ELS. Regional variability was also noted, which meant success in some areas and lack of option uptake in other areas.

**Table 6.7 Campaign effectiveness in regard to delivery and engagement**

Areas where Campaign effective	Areas where Campaign not effective
<p><i>Recognition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised what farmers doing already; given people ownership</li> <li>• Recognition that you can integrate production and provision of environmental benefits</li> <li>• Advice and agreement on priorities at local level</li> </ul> <p><i>Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve existing land management</li> <li>• Better management of un-cropped land</li> <li>• Integrates management for production with management for environmental benefits</li> <li>• Allows for tailored management on the farm; more flexibility</li> <li>• ELS performed better; increased renewals and amount of land in ELS; improved quality of ELS; Good support for ELS</li> <li>• Regional variability; visible success in East of England</li> </ul> <p><i>Engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved engagement with farmers: working with farmers; talking to farmers; encouraging farmers</li> <li>• Changing behaviour</li> <li>• Provided alternative way of getting involved</li> <li>• Those who wish to be involved have become involved</li> <li>• It has led to positive voluntary environmental activity by farmers.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Recognition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to recognise and admit that some approaches don't work</li> <li>• Reluctance to adapt to change; lack of feedback loops to bring about change</li> <li>• External forces changed the situation for farmers; failure to change targets to adapt to external changes</li> </ul> <p><i>Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uptake of voluntary options below expectations in some areas</li> <li>• Geographical variability</li> </ul> <p><i>Engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beacon farms did not work, farmers quickly lost interest</li> <li>• Farmers remain sceptical; tends to be only preaching to the converted</li> <li>• Although the Campaign has raised awareness, action by farmers has been limited.</li> <li>• Many farmers haven't taken part. The majority of farmers haven't undertaken voluntary measures and of those that have, many have not implemented them correctly.</li> <li>• Never managed to get those who are hardest to influence ( key target of the Campaign) to change their approach</li> </ul>

In terms of farmer engagement, views were polarised. At the national level, interviewees were more pessimistic, indicating that while there had been some behavioural change brought about through improved engagement and encouragement of farmers, many farmers remain unconvinced and the Campaign is really only “preaching to the converted”. The suggestion made was that the majority of

farmers had not taken part in the Campaign, and those that had, did not necessarily understand how to implement the measures correctly. In particular, those interviewed were concerned that the 'hard to reach' farmers had not engaged with the Campaign, although some noted that the Campaign had provided an alternative way for farmers to get involved that did not require joining a formal scheme such as ELS.

The picture was more positive when viewed from the local level where a key success, cited across all regions, was the improved engagement with farmers. Despite the recognition that there would always be a group of farmers that could not be reached, those interviewed felt they had engaged more fully with farmers than before. Partly this was attributed to the partnership approach, allowing multiple messages to come from different directions, and partly from targeting those farmers that had not previously been engaged. In the Yorkshire region, for example, LCCs indicated that one tension that had occurred was between the desire to meet the national targets and the desire to reach the uninvolved farmers. In order to meet targets it was felt it might be more appropriate and easier to approach farmers who were already doing some activities to help improve the environment. In Yorkshire, it was decided it was more important to involve the unengaged, rather than those already doing something, and a conscious choice was made to go after the uninvolved, which was a more difficult task, and to worry less about the national targets (which some felt could not be reached).

*"I think it's raised farmer awareness much more than it would have been had it been just left as ELS. And the individual farmers who've got involved and come to the meetings and then gone away to adapt to what they're doing on the farm, the farms have benefited and the wildlife's benefited. So yes, it's been a very good, positive, certainly in the area." (LLG, Yorkshire)*

Interviewees in all regions also felt that the CFE had an impact in both increasing the uptake of ELS and in improving the quality of options being applied on farms.

*"The fact that we are talking about it, and we talk about it on the farm with the farmers, is getting that message out there. So I think it is raising awareness, it is promoting it as good practice. And if it does make that farmer stop and think, 'well actually, I have got soil erosion here, I have got an issue, I am going to put a buffer strip in, oh, but I can go to ELS'. That's changed behaviour, so that's a result for us." (LLG, Yorkshire)*

Table 6.8 summarises the data from the on-line questionnaire of stakeholders in terms of the main achievements of the Campaign. Achievements, as expressed through on-line responses, can be divided into four broad categories, which are used to organise the results in Table 6.8:

- Bring together/partnership
- Environmental benefits/awareness
- ELS and land management
- Recognition



**Table 6.8 Main achievements of the Campaign: on-line questionnaire response (N=36)**

<p><b>Bring together/partnership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bringing the partner organisations together to deliver a single clear message</li> <li>• Bringing organisation together who have not previously worked together to achieve the same goal.</li> <li>• Joint working between the industry and its regulators</li> <li>• Bringing together of farmers as implementers of campaign and interested parties</li> <li>• The valuable partnership working within the LLGs.</li> <li>• Facilitating a collaborative rather than a dictatorial approach to achieving policy goals.</li> <li>• Has got various bodies talking amongst themselves and reaching out to a wider section of the farming community</li> </ul>	<p><b>Environmental benefits/awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating more environmental awareness among farmers</li> <li>• Changing the mind set of farmers with regard to environmental stewardship and delivery of habitats to deliver environmental benefits</li> <li>• Raised awareness of green CAP issues, encouraged better ELS applications.</li> <li>• Raising of awareness about the importance of agri-environment schemes</li> <li>• Raising the awareness of farmers that you don't need to sacrifice commercial farming to benefit the environment.</li> <li>• It has supported a change in mindset of farmers towards undertaking environmental activity without impacting on the overall farm enterprise.</li> <li>• Developing a positive attitude amongst farmers towards environmental activity and supporting voluntary campaigns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ELS and land management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increase in uptake of ELS and HLS.</li> <li>• Increasing the area of land managed to benefit the three campaign themes.</li> <li>• Highlighting biodiversity issues and options</li> <li>• Encouraging farmers to take up ELS options from the option bundle leaflets</li> <li>• Good awareness of objectives amongst farmers, good participation levels</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main achievements are the recording of much of what was already going on.</li> <li>• Recording of all the things farmers are doing voluntarily.</li> <li>• Recognition of farmers' efforts to enhance the environment,</li> <li>• Voluntary activity is taking place on the ground and this has increased during the Campaign.</li> </ul>

Six categories of problems could also be identified (see Table 6.9):

- CAP reform
- Confusion
- Financial
- Engagement
- Targets
- Monitoring/recording

Uncertainty over CAP reform was cited as a key problem for farmers. When this was added to confusion from poor CFE messaging it had negative impacts on farmers who became reluctant to get involved with voluntary measures, and probably reduced the level of engagement experienced.

Targets were only mentioned by one or two respondents as being a major problem area, more significant appeared to be difficulties of accurately monitoring and recording activities on the ground.

**Table 6.9 Main problems associated with the Campaign: views from on-line questionnaire (N=36)**

<p><b>CAP Reform</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAP reform has complicated matters</li> <li>• Uncertainty over CAP Reform compulsory greening</li> <li>• Uncertainty over CAP reform made it very difficult for advisors to sell CFE involvement to growers as they did not know if the advice they were giving on joining AE schemes could be challenged as being poor advice for the farm business at a later date when CAP reform was fully understood.</li> <li>• Uncertainty over CAP</li> </ul>	<p><b>Confusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The overall message is a rather complex muddle</li> <li>• Farmers confused over what was required of them at the start</li> <li>• Communication messages to farmers and the advisory community should have been more user friendly.</li> <li>• Shifting goal posts for Stewardship ELS being made progressively much more difficult for farmers to engage with</li> <li>• Large amount of information going to farmers can lead to information overload</li> <li>• Confusion with other Schemes; deciding if land should be in CFE or ELS</li> <li>• Not definitive enough in its objectives</li> <li>• The voluntary measures are complex and there is a need for clear consistent messages.</li> <li>• Voluntary measures appear overly detailed and complicated for something that is voluntary.</li> <li>• There is no 'sign up' so it isn't clear when farmers are participating or not.</li> <li>• Many farmers aren't clear what they are supposed to be doing because the objectives are complex and not at all clear.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Financial</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different agendas re-environment enhancement vs impact on profits</li> <li>• Changes in commodity prices from the agreement of CFE to date have also meant that initial costings on CFE participation look less favourable for the farmer.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative attitude towards perceived regulation etc</li> <li>• Some farmers will always be keen to be involved (especially if in Environmental Stewardship) whereas others will not want to engage with the campaign</li> <li>• Getting people to attend organised events.</li> <li>• Getting onto farms that do not want to engage - not sure this has really been resolved.</li> <li>• Growers felt that it is not worth becoming involved</li> <li>• Farmers don't read the voluntary measures guidelines and so frequently don't follow the</li> </ul>

	prescriptions.
<b>Targets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Targets were not thought through enough at the time into what was achievable</li></ul>	<b>Monitoring/recording</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of ability to monitor outcomes for many of the targets</li><li>• Insufficient monitoring of the outcomes; imprecise baselines and targets leading to confusion with respect to progress.</li><li>• The two surveys used for monitoring do not show the same picture.</li></ul>

## 7 Reflection

*“What I feel...needs to be retained, is this local partnership working in one way, shape, or form...that is where something valuable has been achieved...”*

### 7.1 Comparison of studies

The impacts of the CFE have been somewhat obscured by the focus on achieving quantitative targets, and the monitoring and assessment which has focused on measuring progress towards those targets. The findings reported here suggest that the impacts of the Campaign have been more subtle and, in places, support the results of the Defra and Fera monitoring surveys, and in other places suggest effects not measured elsewhere. Table 7.1 compares the information across the studies. In terms of engagement and awareness there were discrepancies noted between answers on postal surveys and responses to interviews. The overall impression is of high levels of awareness of general themes but low levels of awareness about specific aspects of the Campaign, with relatively low levels of farmer engagement mostly those already undertaking some form of voluntary activity. Engagement was affected by the complexity of the message (particularly at the start of the Campaign), limited time in which to engage farmers, and external factors such as rising cereal prices and uncertainty created over greening of the CAP.

In terms of implementing measures and meeting land management requirements, the Fera and CCRI attitude studies suggest that there was a significant amount of mis-recording resulting in less area under voluntary measures than other survey data had suggested, and that which did exist was not being managed to the standards recommended for maximum environmental benefit. This study also suggests that mis-recording of activities took place and failure to meet standards of management due to farmers not wanting to be restricted in the application of ‘voluntary’ activities. But it also suggests there is evidence of improved choice by farmers of more suitable ELS options and improved land management.

In terms of programme delivery, a number of beneficial impacts are noted including, bringing partners together and enabling joint working in the industry, enabling local level integrated action and advice through bringing partner organisations together in LLGs, allowing for regional variability in implementation, and improved engagement with farmers.

**Table 7.1 Comparison of studies**

<b>Impact area</b>	<b>2012 Fera verification monitoring (80 VM-CFE farmers; 74 VM-Non-CFE farmers interviewed)</b>	<b>Defra annual monitoring surveys and 2010/11 Farm Business Survey</b>	<b>CCRI attitude study 2012 (60 farmer interviews)</b>	<b>CCRI process evaluation 2012 (national and local stakeholder interviews)</b>
Engagement with the Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some uncertainty over level of engagement</li> <li>• Discrepancies between information recorded on postal surveys and that stated in interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasons for not supporting CFE related to farmers who felt they were 'already doing enough for the environment' and those who did not want to take land out of production.</li> <li>• Farmers undertaking voluntary measures indicated a prime reason was because they could do it at little or no cost to the business.</li> <li>• Farmers felt their efforts would not be recognised.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some awareness of CFE guidelines</li> <li>• Perceived as complex and overlapping with agri-environment schemes</li> <li>• Increasing cereal prices influencing engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preaching to the converted</li> <li>• Large proportion of those involved in CFE already implementing measures</li> <li>• Only involved those who wish to be involved</li> <li>• Led to positive voluntary activity</li> <li>• Changes in commodity prices make CFE engagement look less favourable</li> <li>• CAP reform complicated matters – made it difficult for advisors to support CFE involvement</li> </ul>
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasonable level of awareness of general themes</li> <li>• Limited level of awareness of specific details unless prompted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of awareness and understanding</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of general awareness</li> <li>• Limited detailed knowledge</li> <li>• Some indication of raised awareness among farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raised awareness of environmental issues</li> <li>• CFE message complex and unclear</li> <li>• Not reached the 'hard to reach'</li> </ul>
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CFE booklet, farming press and</li> <li>• Partner organisations</li> <li>• Limited impact of LCCs and LLGs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CFE leaflet and farming press are most important;</li> <li>• adviser/agronomists are significant.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed messages, complicated and confusing</li> <li>• Farm press raises general awareness but does not provide detailed information</li> <li>• LCCs and partners in LLGs effective in getting message across through wide range of activities</li> <li>• Large amount of 'piggy-backing' on different events –</li> </ul>

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				farmers may not realise source of information
Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of support for aims</li> <li>• Many already undertaking voluntary action</li> <li>• Many value the environment</li> <li>• Support flexibility of approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of support for aims and approach A small number of farms that had not taken action in response to CFE in 2012 intended to do so in future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only discussed when prompted</li> <li>• Reluctance to engage with any activity perceived as requiring paperwork and bureaucracy</li> <li>• Reluctance to follow guidelines for voluntary activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough time to change attitudes</li> <li>• Some change in farmer attitudes</li> <li>• Raised awareness among industry stakeholders</li> <li>• Made environment 'mainstream'</li> <li>• Some feel they are doing enough already</li> <li>• Some do not want outside interference</li> </ul>
Implementation of measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main reason was to support environment/wildlife</li> <li>• Large proportion already implementing similar measures</li> <li>• Proportion of Non-CFE farmers implementing similar measures</li> <li>• Limited number of measures undertaken specifically in response to the Campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nearly half of arable farmers had land within voluntary measures (either as part of, or outside the Campaign), About a quarter specifically as part of the Campaign,</li> <li>• Some farmers renewed or joined ELS in response to Campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few new activities undertaken in response to the Campaign.</li> <li>• Widespread informal agri-environmental management occurring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some targets not suitable; set too high, too large to attain in short period</li> <li>• Farmers not recording all they are doing</li> <li>• Improved land management</li> <li>• Better management of uncropped land</li> <li>• Improved management of ELS options</li> <li>• Retained farmers in ELS</li> <li>• Allows more tailored on-farm management</li> <li>• Poor recording of activities</li> <li>• Subtle changes</li> </ul>
Meeting management requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High number of farmers not meeting red box requirements.</li> <li>• Similar proportion of VM-Non CFE and VM-CFE farmers meeting red box requirements</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers not following CFE guidelines; general reluctance to follow guidelines for informal activities.</li> <li>• Importance of flexibility in implementing measures to fit in with farm management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved quality of ELS management</li> <li>• Farmers don't read the guidelines so don't follow prescriptions</li> <li>• Negative attitude towards perceived regulation</li> <li>• Objectives not clear, farmers uncertain what they are supposed to be doing</li> </ul>
Delivery				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bringing partners together</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint working in the industry</li> <li>• Gave stakeholders ownership</li> <li>• Local level integrated action and advice</li> <li>• Enabled 'piggy backing' on events</li> <li>• Regional variability</li> <li>• Recording of what farmers already doing voluntarily</li> <li>• Improved engagement with farmers</li> </ul>
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## 7.2 Lessons learned and reflections on the future of the CFE

Interviewees at the national level (see Table 7.2) indicated a range of views on the ways to improve the CFE, many of which related to the need for more time in establishing a voluntary initiative, and setting realistic, measurable, and achievable targets at the start. At the national level, those interviewed indicated the need for adequate time to implement a voluntary initiative suggesting the current CFE programme was set up too quickly, with inappropriate targets, and lack of time and resources for implementation.

*"It's taught me that you've got to have really, really, really clear, measurable targets at the beginning. We did not have clear, measurable targets, half the time you couldn't measure them and half of them were irrelevant."*

*"...they [targets] need to be measurable, and they need to be achievable".*

A range of potential improvements included the suggestion that partner organisations needed to be less "precious" about their image, and there was a need for a clear purpose and information dissemination. Other suggestions included the need to make a financial contribution to the partnership which would encourage 'ownership' by those involved.

*"I think that's the danger that we have, that if there isn't a genuine partnership in which all the partners have a contribution to make, and actually sometimes make a financial contribution and take real ownership, then you end up just following whoever's paying the money and that's dangerous."*

One issue on which there was no agreement was whether the CFE should have a separate identity or combine with other mechanisms. One interviewee suggested it should be industry led, others

considered the issue of national expansion, inclusion of grassland areas, and the need for a strong identity.

*“...has to be joined up more with some of the other initiatives...a way of harmonising...and bringing them together to give consistent messaging at a high level to farmers...”*

*“...potentially bringing some of the various initiatives together...there’s quite a lot of overlap”.*

*“...CFE2 must not be seen as a NFU/CLA construction, it must be seen as an industry wide programme”.*

*“...expanding this...into grass and I think there are a series of environmental messages that could actually be better coordinated”.*

Table 7.2 illustrates the main areas for consideration in terms of future development of the CFE. Concerns can be grouped into 6 broad categories:

Time	Targeting
Partnership and operation	Identity
Local role	Purpose

The first two categories: time and targeting have been identified earlier in this report as key issues. Many of those interviewed indicated that three years was too short to have an impact (as in some areas the programme had only effectively been operating over two farming decision periods), and also suggested that greater recognition was needed regarding the time required for a voluntary approach to work, as well as the level of resources. It was also stated that targets have to be achievable (in the time-scale set), measurable, and monitored.



**Table 7.2 Suggested improvements and future development of the CFE (taken from national level stakeholders interviews)**

<p><i>Time</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of time/cost required</li> <li>• Set-up on too short a time scale</li> <li>• Voluntary approach takes time and resources</li> </ul>	<p><i>Targeting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure targets set/monitored</li> <li>• Time to set sensible targets at the start</li> <li>• Targets need to be sensitive to the business environment farmers work in</li> <li>• Ensure targets make sense scientifically / need clear measurable targets</li> <li>• Measurable targets and monitoring</li> </ul>
<p><i>Partnership and operation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humility/less egotistical</li> <li>• Partners need to be less precious about their own image</li> <li>• Need to make financial contribution</li> <li>• Need to take ownership</li> <li>• Audit trail</li> <li>• Record all activities and work</li> <li>• Commitment from politicians</li> </ul>	<p><i>Identity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong identity</li> <li>• National expansion</li> <li>• Expand into grassland</li> <li>• Separate identity and purpose or merge with other initiatives</li> <li>• Industry led</li> </ul>
<p><i>Local role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County level delivery</li> <li>• Local partnership important</li> <li>• Local delivery</li> <li>• Protect what achieved</li> </ul>	<p><i>Purpose</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear purpose</li> <li>• Innovate</li> <li>• Coherent and clear message/agree basic message</li> <li>• Clear information dissemination</li> <li>• Backed up with regulations and incentives</li> </ul>

Partnership and operation of the Campaign was identified as a key area for improvement in several areas. This included partners needing to be less concerned about their own image and to take more ownership of the partnership aims and objectives as it was felt that currently some partners were not fully committed. It was also suggested that it is important to ensure all work is recorded (currently significant levels of unrecorded work are undertaken for the partnership) and developing audit trails would assist in this process.

'Identity' was identified as a more complex issue and a wider variety of views was encountered. While almost all interviewees felt that a strong identity was essential for success (to raise awareness and attract farmers) some suggested the need to expand in grassland areas and make the Campaign national in scope, while others felt it should continue to concentrate on the arable areas. There was also a division between those who felt a separate identity was essential and those arguing for linking with other voluntary programmes (such as the Voluntary Initiative). Identity was also clearly linked to 'purpose' in that respondents felt that clarity of purpose was essential in communicating the message of the Campaign and with dissemination of information.

Whilst the CFE extension phase delivery plan will seek to work closer with other voluntary initiatives such as the industry-led Voluntary Initiative and 'Tried & Tested' projects as well as the Catchment Sensitive Farming projects, care will have to be taken not to confuse recipient communities with what could seem like a confusing array of voluntary schemes. Integration and orchestration are critical here.

The final category of suggestions for future delivery related to the importance of the local role in delivery of the Campaign. Interviewees were united in their support for local level delivery, and it was strongly recommended that this aspect of the Campaign should be retained. The county was supported as the most suitable level for delivery and the value of local partnerships at this level was highlighted as significant. Interviewees at national level stated the following in regard to the importance of the local structure:

*"We need to keep that [local structure] in place, so it would be really good if we could roll that out further."*

*"...different counties do different things...there are different environmental focuses in different areas...having that local dynamism is important".*

At the local level a similar set of issues were identified, reinforcing the views found at the national level. Respondents interviewed in the South-East generally seemed to have had positive experiences of the Campaign. Whilst most people had already had positive views of the environment, partnership working and voluntary approaches, a few admitted to being more supportive of the environment or of partnership working as a result of the Campaign.

Looking forward, the Campaign needs to learn from short-comings in the current period. In Yorkshire, LCCs admitted that they had not anticipated the difficulty in hitting the targets established and thus felt they had not given out strong enough messages during the first year of the Campaign. They felt that more direct messages about which options to choose and the need to join or re-join ELS would have been more effective in helping meet the national targets. They also indicated that the CFE message had been complicated and difficult to communicate – at least initially, and by the time the message had been simplified into something easily understandable by farmers, some of the Campaign momentum had been lost. Part of the problem was also attributed to communications with farmers before all the LCCs were in post, farmers were getting information early on but not able to make sense of it.

*"To have spent six more months thinking about it, or six more months preparing once we had got co-ordinators in post, would have been more valuable. I think that six months would have been more than made up later on in the campaign, because of getting the clarity of message. I think if you are putting out a message...that did turn out to be quite complicated, you need to test it on different people before you then go 'live' with it, because we knew what we were trying to do as far as set aside was concerned, but it was just not very clearly articulated."*

LLG members appeared to be realistic in the views of what could and could not be achieved through partnership working on a voluntary programme, and emphasised the need to compromise in order to ensure the partnership survived.

*“...it was time we needed to invest in...taking a holistic view ...and looking for looming scenarios ...and being slightly less pig headed about where you are coming from. Are we getting a win out of it, yes, let's not push the boat and try and get the gold plated bit as well. So don't cut other people off. If we get more buffer strips, and more water courses, it also enhances the wildlife, and it enhances the birds; that has got to be a win for the bigger area, for the environment. And for our specific interest we may want to say, no - we may want more water buffer strips - but that may be counterproductive for other aspects. So I think it is balancing up how much it means to people, or what each organisation wants from the Campaign.”*

One issue, the time taken to implement effective voluntary partnerships, was identified by one LLG member as an issue:

*“Partnership working is about building trust, and it doesn't happen overnight...and I suppose this is a bigger message, wider... for other things that we are doing; Water Framework Directive, and such like, these voluntary partnerships don't happen overnight, and they take time and investment in people's time to talk to other people, and build a network and that relationship.”*

In the East of England a number of interviewees said that CFE needed to maintain a strong purpose. It was said that targets were a useful mechanism around which to base local action, but the targets needed to be carefully thought out going forward and that there should be more consultation with LLGs.

*“I do think you need, if the Campaign continued, you do need targets or something to focus on for the campaign to carry on. Because if it becomes very broad and used to promote something, as opposed to having targets, whether it then just ends up being a bit of a talking shop and you lose the momentum.” (LLG, East of England)*

Those interviewed in the East of England also indicated there possibly needs to be more partners, in particular the land agents.

The uncertainty surrounding CAP reform, particularly the new 'greening' proposals, led some respondents to say that it would be difficult to be sure about the role of CFE in the future. They thought that a clearer picture of CAP reform would be required before the details of a continued or new CFE could be decided.

In Yorkshire, interviewees had similar opinions on the future of the CFE but the majority felt the CFE should continue in some form. Suggestions were made that the Campaign should become more 'industry focused' with a new agenda on how to produce more with less environmental impact, and that the CFE could play a stronger coordinating role to link a range of initiatives, or bridge the gap between environmental protection and production sides of the industry.

Those interviewed recognised that a future CFE must offer benefits to both production and environmental sectors of the industry, and it was not enough to focus on just one or the other. If farmers are going to be asked to produce more environmental quality under a voluntary programme, then they must also be offered means to improve profitability to provide the incentive to get involved.

*“At a simple level if we go on a farm and we say we need 5% of your land in some sort of environmental measure, we should be saying: this is how you can do that, but also have you considered how you can produce 5% more from the land you’ve still got?” (LCC, Yorkshire)*

This was encapsulated in the term ‘bridging the gap’ between the production and environmental quality organisations – which in turn requires continued partnership work. This message was also picked up by some of the LLG members who identified the need for coordination work between the different organisations in the sector. LLG members also indicated the need for a continued focus for the CFE, and warned against broadening it out too much beyond the arable sector. The message was that to be successful it had to remain focused and targeted.

*“...it is in effect bridging the gap isn’t it then? It’s bridging this work that Natural England, RSPB, etc. are doing and that some of the industry bodies are doing...it’s bringing the two together, the environmental quality and precision farming we were talking about yesterday... and I think we should be quite upfront of that in terms of bridging the gap between those two, ...slightly competing agendas.” (LCC, Yorkshire)*

### **Future development – key issues for consideration**

This section will address the categories of concern highlighted in Table 7.2 and explore them in wider detail building on the evidence collected during the course of the study.

**Time:** all the evidence suggests that three years is not long enough to achieve the level of change set out in the original MoU. In many cases farmers have had only two cropping decision years to make any changes, and in some cases LLGs were slow to get off the ground and become operational.

**Targeting:** targets need to be realistic and achievable. Targets should be developed in conjunction with farmers and other stakeholders and relate to overall programme aims and objectives.

**Partnership and operation:** partnership is essential to enable continual support and advice to farmers from a range of sources.

**Identity and purpose:** a clear identify and purpose is required with a simple message that farmers can understand. Targets should be clearly related to the purpose.

**Local role:** the tension between local bottom-up and national top-down approaches are not as apparent as might have been expected in a partnership project of this scale. The operation of a core team at national level providing support, and regional structures in some regions have created effective local level delivery.

Bottom-up local level action clearly needs direction, and also needs to ensure some kind of consistency across the target area. The key might be in better record keeping and more consistent monitoring of activities being undertaken by partner members. Internal communications within partner organisations are also important: where the Campaign has not been accorded significance within partner organisations then there is more reluctance of those partner representatives operating at the local level to engage in the Campaign. This seems to work best where the aims of those operating at the local level match Campaign aims, and where activities can be closely tied into the day-to-day job. This is where the work of the LCC becomes key to the operation. Without a local co-ordinator, or with less time allocated to coordination, it is unlikely that Campaign objectives would be achieved. National level action, without local level structures for implementation, just would not succeed as it would rely totally on each partner organisation internalising and delivering Campaign goals. These would inevitably always be secondary to organisational goals and would not be treated with the same level of importance, even with the best of intentions.

The bottom-up/top-down tensions created in the current structure are a sign of health and activity. There is room for improvement, however, and the Campaign implementation structure could be refined in the following manner:

- i. Regional level coordinators. The two areas that have taken a more regional approach (Yorkshire and East of England) have been successful in implementation of the Campaign. In both of these areas local coordinators have worked more closely together with some regional oversight. The result is that local coordinators are less isolated, they have more resources to draw on through sharing ideas and tasks with other LCCs in the region, and more focus provided through regional strategy. One way to enhance implementation and potentially reduce costs is to focus activity at a regional level using small teams of local coordinators. Local coordinators could divide up the tasks in the way that seems most suitable (not necessarily by county) and work more closely together providing full time coverage (even if each coordinator is only part time). The result would mean fewer coordinators and fewer LLGs as these could be operated at regional (or perhaps sub-regional level where there was sufficient activity). Regional/sub-regional LLGs might make recruitment easier in some areas where there would be a larger pool of potential participants to choose from.
- ii. Integrate the core delivery team and the administrative support more closely. The core team is currently very active in terms of day-to-day management of the Campaign. Recognition of this as a part of the implementation structure would help streamline and formalise the management aspects, particularly if this element was integrated with the administrative support structure. The regional level support (currently provided by CLA/NFU) could be removed if there was a formal management responsibility at the centre.
- iii. Create space for more frequent meetings between national working groups and local delivery bodies, for example, through biannual conferences or workshops, and through invitations to attend national working group meetings. This may require re-allocation of

some resources but is likely to improve understanding of national strategic decision making, and of local level delivery issues.

- iv. Reduce the number of working groups to two (delivery and evidence & monitoring), and integrate communications into the steering group and each working group.

### **7.3 Developing programme theory for a future Campaign**

One important issue that was not mentioned in any the interviews was reference to any theory of change. Despite the long discussions about awareness-raising, changing attitudes, the need to change cultural attitudes and change behaviour, within a range of organisations in the industry as well as on the farm, there was no discussion concerning factors that drive change, or conceptual consideration of factors driving long-term change. Many respondents referred to the short period of time the Campaign had operated, clearly recognising that attitudinal and behavioural change takes much longer than the three years for which the CFE had been in operation (or even less time in some areas where the CFE structures took longer to establish).

A second key feature of the Campaign, not mentioned directly by those interviewed, is the 'reactive' nature of the CFE. The CFE was set up in reaction to the threat of regulation, it was set up to stop something from happening, and it was done in an extremely short time period without adequate consideration of specific objectives or the most suitable means of attaining them. Any consideration for a new Campaign needs to be developed in a more 'proactive' manner, with a clear understanding of long-term goals and how they can be achieved. In particular, any new Campaign must carefully consider how to influence behavioural change among, and within, the organisations making up the partnership itself, as well as among farmers. These are two very different aims yet both must be undertaken if the CFE approach is to be successful.

Future development of the Campaign might benefit from a consideration of theoretical understanding concerning attitudinal and behavioural change, adoption of innovation, and the role of 'extension' and advisory-type services in an agricultural setting. Development of a 'programme theory' specifically for the CFE would help by grounding the development of new structures in an agreed theoretical construct, which would help in communicating a clear message, and identify where a voluntary approach such as the CFE can be most effective both in the short and long term.

The present study, along with the Defra and Fera surveys and literature on agricultural change, is sufficient to underpin development of a programme theory for a voluntary programme such as the CFE. These studies have revealed the following issues as significant:

#### *Attitudes and underlying values*

- There is widespread support for generating environmental benefits
- Some farms are strongly opposed to adopting environmentally friendly measures

- A lot of activity is already occurring on a small scale, but not necessarily to the standards required by the CFE
- There is limited peer recognition and status in managing high nature value farms – notions of good farm appearance conflict with good environmental quality

#### *Flexible measures*

- Farmers don't want additional paperwork and bureaucracy, especially for 'voluntary' activity
- Messages must be simple and measures easy to implement
- There needs to be a clear causal link between measures and benefits
- Measures should be flexible and complement on-farm activities
- Measures need to be integrated into production activities
- Measures should not be too prescriptive but provide room for adaptation to on-farm conditions

#### *Communications*

- Awareness does not translate into increased understanding or knowledge
- Awareness does not translate into support
- Farmers need targeted advice from known and trusted sources
- The message is stronger if it comes from multiple sources
- Aims/targets must be realistic, suitable for the local situation, and long-term (perhaps in the form of long term local and regional goals rather than short term national objectives that may constantly alter)
- Innovators and early adopters should be encouraged, others will follow more slowly
- Peer pressure works – over longer time periods
- The media is limited in its ability to improve understanding.

#### *Partnership*

- Consistent levels of support are required over long time periods
- Partnership is required to reinforce the message through communications from multiple sources
- Partnership provides multiple benefits through improved understanding across different stakeholders in the sector

Any programme theory needs to take the factors identified above into account. Programme theory must come from deliberative processes and interaction with the full range of stakeholders affected by the proposed programme of voluntary action. The aim of a voluntary programme is behavioural change, which means that individual attitudes, knowledge and beliefs must be taken into account along with internal (on-farm) factors and external driving forces. Voluntary and regulatory approaches are different ways of working towards the delivery of societal goals though some activities such as setting standards to be attained, and some form of monitoring is required for both approaches. Experience with the CFE has indicated both the need for farmer surveys and field assessment (to identify what is happening on the ground), but also opposition to any suggestion of formal paperwork and 'bureaucracy'

among those engaged in voluntary activity. The evaluation of the CFE suggests that a voluntary approach will take longer to implement than regulation, but also that it can more tailored to regional, and even local, conditions and objectives. Methods of engagement utilised by industry will need to be different and this makes communication a more critical component of voluntary approaches. Communication may have to be more sustained and focus on improving understanding rather than just raising awareness, in order to have the desired effect. The CFE has demonstrated the value of multiple messaging coming from a range of trusted advisors, which is likely to have deeper impact on farmers in terms of bringing about long term changes in attitudes and belief systems over time. More subtle changes will underlie the behavioural changes made at farm level, for example, the CFE has indicated the potential for industry support based on compromise and negotiation achieved through partnership work, and the importance of setting realistic targets within set time frames.

The CCRI (2012) study revealed that farmers' willingness to adopt environmental management activities are the result of both an intrinsic 'willingness to adopt', which is influenced by personal interests and notions of social responsibility; and by, an 'ability to adopt', which is influenced by factors such as farm tenure, finance, markets, and advice. Each farm is in some sense unique and attempts to change farming practice through voluntary approaches must take that into account, through targeting support, information and advice at different categories of farm.

Recent surveys and this study have indicated there is a significant level of voluntary activity already occurring in the sector among farmers. This is important, as any future programme intervention might be regarded as an imposition on some underlying level of activity, where some farms are doing more than others, and some have higher levels of understanding and knowledge regarding environmentally beneficial farming than others<sup>10</sup>. It is essential to understand what farmers are doing in terms of voluntary activity, what factors influence their actions, as well as the potential impact of different forms of engagement by advisors and regulators. In Figure 7.1 a range of 'farm types' have been identified for the purposes of exploring this aspect of applying voluntary programmes, based partly on established theories of innovation and change, and partly on empirical information collected through recent surveys and studies.

In the figure below:

'Adopters' are those who are already engaging in environmentally friendly farming activities when a programme intervention (such as the CFE) occurs, and it is relatively straightforward for them to opt into the programme. They may have a higher level of knowledge or understanding of relevant issues, or driven by a particular set of values or attitude.

'Followers' are slower to innovate or adopt change, and this can be caused by a number of reasons such as being more risk averse, uncertain about what to do, economic conditions, on-farm financial issues, tenure arrangements, benefits might be unclear, or uncertainty about the future. Some 'followers', however, may already be taking actions before the programme intervention and are more open to persuasion.

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<sup>10</sup> The 2012 CCRI study has indicated variable levels of knowledge and understanding of the beneficial value of different features. CCRI (2012) Farmer attitudes and evaluation of outcomes to on-farm environmental management.

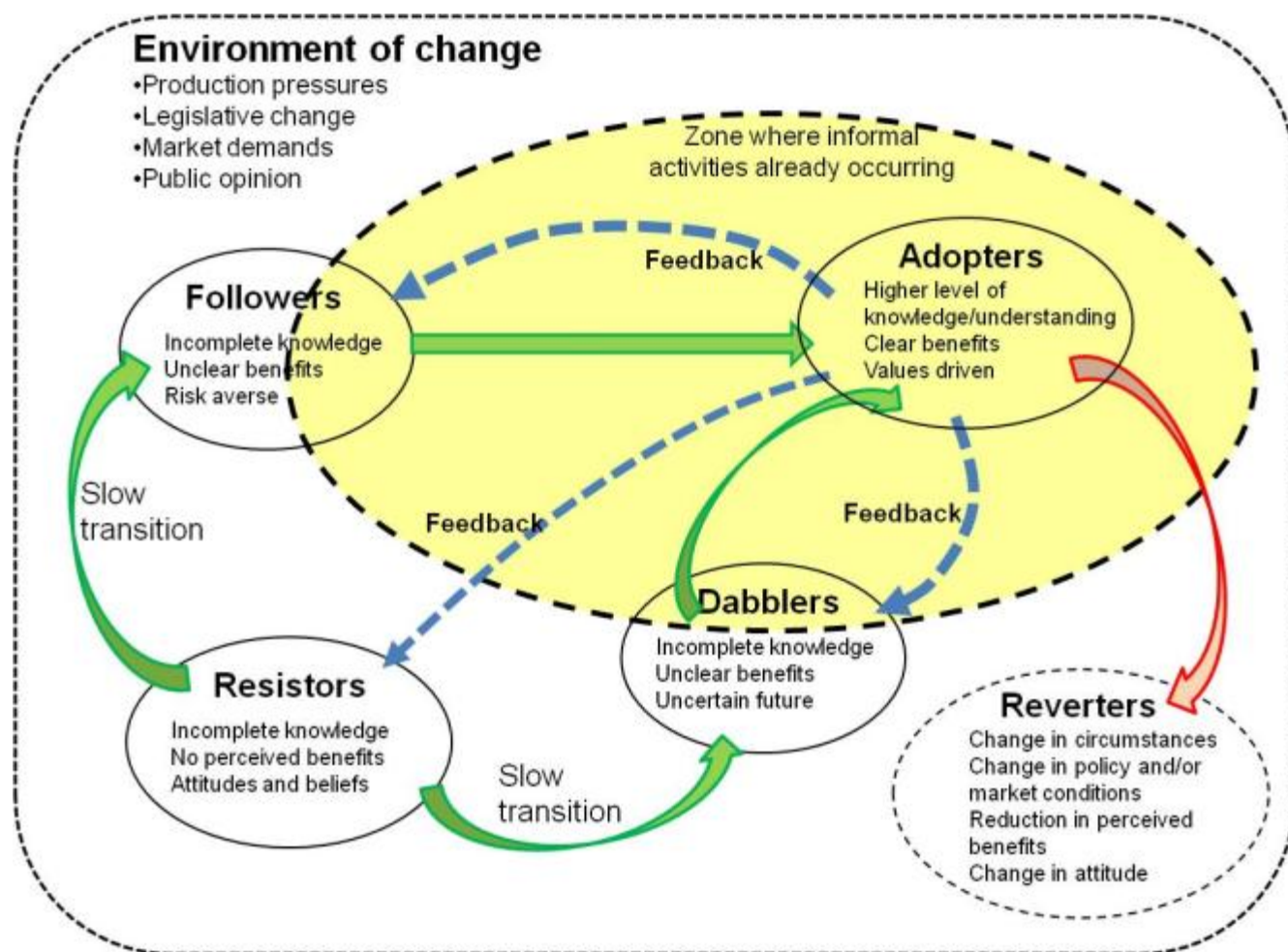


'Resistors' represent the 'hard to reach' farms. They may oppose the approach adopted, be more concerned about maximising economic returns, be highly risk averse and unwilling to change, or driven by value systems based on a productivist model of agriculture.

'Dabblers' may be persuaded to adopt changes once the programme intervention is operational, but they do it on their own terms and may not comply with rules and requirements laid down in a 'voluntary' programme. They may have limited knowledge of what to do, object to increased paperwork, or be concerned about inspections and increased bureaucracy and not want to fully engage with a voluntary approach.

'Reverters' are those who adopt the programme intervention aims and objectives but then at some future point drop out, or go back to previous management practices. This may be because the anticipated benefits did not occur, or because of changes in circumstance caused by external factors (e.g. a change in commodity prices; a change in policy/legislation; or, a change in operator or owner).

**Figure 7.1 Conceptualising behavioural change among categories of farm**



Evidence has shown that farmers are strongly influenced by their peers, so feedback (communications between farmers) becomes extremely important as a means of moving farms from one category to another. This can be summarised in the following statements:

- ‘Dabblers’ and ‘Followers’ are likely to be more open to feedback and communications about the benefits of the voluntary programme, especially as some may be trying out or undertaking measures in a limited manner.
- Provision of feedback to ‘Resistors’ is more complex and less likely to occur through standard communications channels.
- Changing ‘Followers’ into ‘Adopters’ may be relatively rapid with increased communications, facilitation, and support provided through an intervention programme, whereas any transition from ‘Resistors’ into those more likely to adopt change through voluntary activity is likely to be much slower, and require stronger evidence in terms of benefits gained by peers, and/or change in underlying attitudes and belief systems.
- ‘Resistors’ are unlikely to suddenly become ‘Adopters’, the change is more likely to take place in small steps and through incremental change (for example, resistors might first become followers or dabblers before fully adopting programme aims).
- ‘Reverters’ may or may not be open to communications depending on individual circumstances and reasons for dropping out of the programme (for example, if benefits were less than anticipated then they might not be open to future communications about an existing programme, and may only take notice when either new evidence is available or programmes are significantly altered).
- ‘Reverters’ may require a higher level of on-going support to keep them engaged. It is natural for people to embrace new activities with enthusiasm, which then wanes if it not “topped up” in some way.

Communications must be focused and targeted at the needs of the different categories identified in the diagram above. Evidence suggests both peers and trusted advisors are influential. The farming press has demonstrated an ability to raise awareness in a general sense, but little capacity to be persuasive, while leaflets can enable ‘Followers’ and ‘Dabblers’ to begin engagement without pressure or outside interference (even though such activity might not be undertaken properly). However, the evidence from the current evaluation of the CFE programme suggests relatively low take-up of information from leaflets by farmers (and greater utilisation by advisors).

Simply providing information will not be enough to get people on board and keep them engaged. Appreciation and recognition of the work undertaken by farmers are vital, and this can only be delivered through personal relationships. This is where the value of partnership lies, when trusted professionals are part of a Campaign then the message is reinforced and farmers more likely to remain engaged. Keeping people engaged is as important as encouraging new entrants into the scheme and recognition of this might influence the way in which LCCs and LLGs could operate in the future.

The categories of farm outlined in the diagram above is illustrative, and would require further investigation in order to develop an agreed set of categories with identified characteristics. Taking this approach, however, would lead to a more sound conceptual base upon which a revised CFE approach could be built.