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Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund - Monitoring and evaluation Phase 4.

FINAL REPORT

Defra

Project Title:

Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund - Monitoring and evaluation Phase 4. Final Report

Client Reference

Evidence Programme Ref: LM04127

Start Date
10 November 2021

Project Manager
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Finish Date
30 July 2022

Research Team
CCRI, Environment Systems and LUC

Duration
8 months

Date of Report
29th July 2022

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When quoting this report use the following citation:

Short C, Breyer J, James N, Morse A, Raseta S, Lewis N, Mills J, Grant M, Yandell-Thomas M and Medcalf K (2022) Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund - Monitoring and evaluation Phase 4. Final Report, Report to Defra. Countryside and Community Research Institute: Cheltenham.

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List of abbreviations

AES	Agri-Environment Schemes
ALT	Agricultural Landscape Type
BPS	Basic Payment Scheme
CSF	Catchment Sensitive Farming
CS	Countryside Stewardship
CSFF	Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund
DEFRA	Department for Environment food and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
ELMS	Environmental Land Management Scheme
ELS	Entry Level Stewardship
ES	Environmental Stewardship
FC	Forestry Commission
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship
HN	Habitat Network
HT	Higher Tier
LIDM	Land Infrastructure Data Mart
LNP	Local Nature Partnership
LNR	Local Nature Recovery
LR	Landscape Recovery
MT	Mid-Tier
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NCA	National Character Area
NCI	Natural Capital Indicator
NE	Natural England
NERC	Natural Environment Research Council
NIA	Nature Improvement Area
PH	Priority Habitat
PHI	Priority Habitat Inventory
RLR	Rural Land Register
RPA	Rural Payments Agency
SBI	Single Business Identifier
SFI	Sustainable Farming Incentive
SSSIs	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Areas

Executive Summary

Introduction and background

Defra's Countryside Stewardship (CS) was launched in March 2015 and initially administered by Natural England (NE) but has been handled by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) since 2018. Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund (CSFF) provides funding at the landscape scale for individuals or organisations to bring farmers, foresters and other land managers together to increase their knowledge and awareness, and align delivery with the environmental priorities for the area in order to maximise the impact the scheme has on the environment, through bringing larger areas of land under active management. CSFF has a wide remit and can cover land under existing agri-environment and woodland agreements, common land and land not currently covered by a scheme.

CSFF builds on the principles of partnership working, with paid facilitators coordinating training and advice for groups of new or existing land managers (farmers, foresters and/or others) to help deliver environmental benefits. The focus on additional environmental benefit beyond simple scheme agreement is an important and innovative addition for AES schemes going forward.

Since 2018, NE have been evaluating the CSFF in relation to its process and outcomes: Phase 1 (ADAS 2018) considered the process underpinning the introduction of the CSFF; Phase 2 of the project gave an initial evaluation of the success of the CSFF (Jones et al 2019), and Phase 3 (Breyer et al 2020) built on and further revised the overall evaluation framework.

The objectives of Phase 4 were to:

- Map the spatial coherence of all CSFF groups and test their potential to restore and create habitat at scale in line with current Nature Recovery ambitions (Task 1); this had had three parts:
    - Update the previous spatial analysis with new groups and new members recruited since April 2019.
    - Refresh the CSFF WebMap layers covering Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI), Natural Capital (NC), and other data layers to create a multi-layered map.
    - Introduce some spatial analysis of CSFF groups at national, county and Natural England area level.
- Test to see if incidences of non-compliance are lower in CSFF groups than those areas which do not have a CSFF group (Task 2)
- Assess if being part of a CSFF group helps maintain resilience and wellbeing among group members (Task 3)
    - Online survey of 69 CSFF group members
    - Telephone interviews with 18 CSFF group members
- Review how CSFF groups used technology in terms of support and collaboration, and what this means for the future (Task 4)
    - Online survey of 41 CSFF group facilitators
    - Telephone interviews with 19 CSFF group facilitators

Mapping spatial coherence of CSFF groups and assessing contribution to habitat recovery (Task 1)

The expansion of the number of CSFF groups founded as well as the recruitment of new members to existing groups is dynamic, with all groups expanding over time from the initial founding membership. Groups are encouraged to grow through time-limited funding incentives: each new member adds to the facilitator/group budget. The funding period for several groups created in the early stages of the scheme has recently expired. However, the project team was explicitly asked to include these groups in the current study without treating them as a separate entity. The project evaluated up-to-date membership data and this report reflects an accurate picture of group membership to July 2021 (Quarter 2), as well as any changes in membership to both CSFF groups and live ES/CS agreements held by group members since the Phase 3 evaluation in 2019.

The analysis developed during earlier evaluation phases of CSFF was applied in Chapter 2 to produce: summary statistics on current CSFF group membership and CS/ES membership; to reflect changes as a result of new groups and new members recruited since April 2019 (Quarter 1); and to update previous members' details where necessary. Following preparation of the current spatial dataset of CSFF group members' holdings, we compared this with the Phase 3 CS/ES parcel data and recorded and summarised updates and changes where groups have expanded and agreements have been put in place or expired.

CSFF groups vary greatly in size, predominant business types of members as well as landscape area of their location, which frequently determines local environmental objectives and therefore the specific focus of each group's activities. This inherent heterogeneity between groups creates challenges for any analysis that assesses the impacts of the scheme across all groups.

There were some inherent uncertainties in the data which were addressed through rigorous manual cross-referencing and quality control but could not be fully resolved. These include:

- Use of the Single Business Identifier (SBI) worked well except where large organisations (e.g. the National Trust) have a single SBI covering all their holdings;
- Other identifiers, the agreement reference (Agref) and contract ID number help identify agreement land but not total area and change with adjustments to AES agreements;
- The datasets used include duplications within and between CSFF groups, missing SBIs and other errors that required manual checking;
- Datasets were extracted at different times, leading to contradictions in data.

CSFF membership has increased since the Phase 3 evaluation. The Phase 4 report assessed 136 CSFF groups, an increase of 38.7% on Phase 3, covering an area of 807,507 ha, an 20.5% increase, and including 3,330 members, an increase of 8.7%. This is an increase of 38 new groups formed since Phase 3, covering over 137,000 ha and includes 266 new members. Analysis of changes within individual CSFF groups showed large changes in areas and members in some instances, suggesting that CSFF groups might be more fluid than was originally understood. Nearly a quarter of the CSFF groups have less than 10 members and over 70% of CSFF groups have 30 or fewer members. The two largest CSFF groups each have over 70 members.

The relationship between CS and ES and CSFF groups shows that the area under CS agreement has decreased by 656.9 ha, dropping the proportion under agreement by 16% to 31.9%. However, the proportion of CSFF group members with CS agreements has increased by 9.4% to 52.8%. Phase 4 also assessed the role of ES and could therefore assess the full impact of CSFF groups. A key finding of the study is the fact that a very high proportion of CSFF group members (84.02%) are currently engaged in AES agreements and that this is complemented by 61% of all land within CSFF groups being under management options, slightly exceeding Defra's goal to bring up to 60% of England's agricultural soil under sustainable management through AES schemes by 2030 (GOV.UK, 2022).

Task 1 also considered the link between a selected range of CS options and the Natural Capital Indicators described in Lusardi et al. (2018). The results show that the CSFF approach is helping support a wide range of natural capital assets by influencing land management and changing the behaviour of farmers and land managers. Indeed, it is likely that individual group members, as well as CSFF groups as a whole, are contributing considerably to the maintenance and enhancement of natural capital outside the indicators measured (Mills et al., 2018). However, no data are currently available to evidence this. The primary mechanism for this contribution is the presence of CS

agreements, which put in place management actions that positively impact natural capital assets – whether they relate to asset quantity, quality or spatial location – and hence the recovery of ecological networks.

Overall, priority habitats are well represented on land within the CSFF groups as a whole, with just under 30% of land within the schemes comprising priority habitats. This is, however, variable across individual CSFF groups, with 35 groups having less than 10% coverage and five CSFF groups with over 75% coverage of priority habitats. A particularly encouraging observation is the fact that the total area of PHI within CSFF groups under AES agreement comprises 71.52%, with areas of most individual priority habitats within CSFF groups under AES agreement comfortably exceeding 50%.

CS agreements within the CSFF groups protect a significant area of land that is priority habitat which can be viewed also as natural capital, described through Natural Capital Indicators (NCIs) which aggregate into broad habitat types, e.g. as Freshwater, Farmland, Grassland, Mountain/Moor and Heathland, Woodland and Coastal and allows a further way to view land types and natural assets.

However, the picture for the individual NCIs is mixed, with many of the assets seeing a reduction in area supported, either because of agreements expiring and not being renewed due to uncertainty or through land managers with relevant CS agreements leaving CSFF groups that have come to the end of their funded period.

Spatial analysis in Chapter 3 aims to inform priorities for the establishment of new groups or the expansion or linking of existing groups. The national level analysis found significant variation in the coverage of FF groups when measured against each environmental and administrative geography considered in the study.

- At **local authority** level there is wide variation in FF group coverage, with several counties, many districts and unitary authorities having no FF groups or less than 6% of their area (the national average) falling within FF groups; others have much higher coverage (e.g. West Sussex County Council at over 16%).
- By **Priority Habitat** there was wide variation in FF group coverage, with the highest levels found in grassland and upland habitats (lowland calcareous grassland 27%) and much lower levels including coastal, wetland, woodland and lowland heath habitats (mudflats 0.14%).
- **National Character Area** analysis identified a number of geographic areas with low FF group coverage. These include the Thames Valley, Essex and North Kent, Merseyside and parts of Lancashire, the Humberhead Levels and Humber Estuary, and moorland areas in Cornwall. By contrast, some had over 20% covered by FF groups including Pevensey Levels (37%) and Cheviots (42%).
- **Agricultural Landscape Type** confirmed higher levels of coverage in the uplands (11.71%) relative to lowland, more intensively farmed areas (SE mixed 3.82%).
- For **protected landscapes** the coverage is higher than the national average, however there is wide variation amongst both the suites of AONBs and National Parks, from The Broads 0.2% to South Downs 29%.
- Similarly, there was variation in coverage within **Nature Improvement Areas** (five with no FF group coverage and Marlborough Downs 55%), **Local Nature Partnerships** (12 with none or very little and 6 with over 10%), **NE regions** (West Anglia 1.46% to Wessex 8.92%) and areas of green belt.

It is likely that some of this variation reflects intrinsic differences between areas. It is also likely that, in many areas currently without FF groups, agri-environment schemes are making important contributions to environmental outcomes. However, it is clear that there remains significant potential to support the establishment of new FF groups, or the expansion and linking of existing FF groups, to address many of the geographic disparities in coverage and deliver greater environmental benefits. The emphasis of this work should be guided by policy priorities. This could include, for example, aiming to increase the role of CSFF in supporting conservation of priority habitats, or supporting development and delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Comparing incidences of agreement non-compliance (breaches) between CSFF group members and non-CSFF holdings (Task 2)

The intention here was to access data from RPA inspection reports to assess how compliance levels compared between those within CSFF groups and those not in CSFF groups. This involved reviewing the frequency, type and cause of non-compliance. The task was dependent on receiving a viable sample from the RPA covering CSFF and non-CSFF group members, and the related details on compliance issues. Unfortunately, due to the low numbers in the CSFF group it is not possible to draw any conclusions as to any connection between the impact of CSFF delivery and the wider compliance inspection undertaken by the RPA. It might be possible undertake this analysis at a later date using a longer timeframe to generate a viable sample and a more detailed discussion with the RPA, including type of breach, as to the possible parameters of the data request.

Resilience and Wellbeing among CSFF group Members (Task 3)

The aim of Task 3 was to determine whether being a member of a CSFF group helped maintain a collective bonding for social resilience and wellbeing, with particular reference to COVID-19 over the past 2 years. An online survey yielded 69 responses and this was supplemented by 18 telephone interviews with CSFF members.

CSFF groups had remained active over the past 2 years with almost all participants attending at least one event, talk or discussion. However, there was a clear difference between those groups established before February 2020 and those starting at or after this point. For the latter, finding the most appropriate type of event was difficult, whereas for established CSFF groups it was possible to seek agreement amongst the membership as to appropriate events to arrange.

Whatever the age of the CSFF group, membership was considered ‘important’ (55%) or ‘very important’ (25%) to members. The most common benefit was ‘access to advice and support’ (90%) but access to resources, other opportunities and information about changes to agricultural policy/support were all supported by 67% of respondents.

Communication between group members within CSFF groups was ‘frequent’ (22%) or ‘very frequent’ (12%) for participants of the online survey. A key reason for communicating was the gaining and sharing of knowledge concerning CS delivery (80% saying it was either ‘important’ or ‘very important’). In the interviews this was seen as helping the CSFF group function successfully and accumulating or enriching knowledge of the members. The key area for knowledge exchange concerned biodiversity (58% of online survey participants).

In terms of wellbeing, the most positive responses from the online survey were concerning CSFF membership and the links to a positive attitude towards the individual’s farming and environmental management. Lower levels of agreement were found for statements concerning stress management and social isolation, suggesting these were not key factors in either joining or engaging in CSFF groups.

It is clear that COVID-19 did impact how groups functioned, particularly new groups, with most returning to a regular pattern of meetings over the past year or so. Climate change was seen as a key topic by two-thirds of online survey respondents, yet just over half of the groups had covered this topic. The age of the group seems to be important when considering the broadening of topics discussed, with some commenting that they were ‘too young’ to cover such topics.

The overwhelming view of the participants was for CSFF to continue and it is clear that they are committed to its delivery and development. However, several group members mentioned that the current fixed view of what could and could not be included according to the regulations was hampering the development of the group. The constraints mentioned included the limit of attendees per event, and the need to be more adventurous in order to meet the challenges of nature recovery.

Review of technology use by CSFF Facilitators (Task 4)

Task 4 assessed how CSFF groups have used technology over the past two years, both in terms of technical support (e.g. GIS or online tools) and/or collaboration support (e.g. Zoom or other platforms). A total of 41 responses were obtained in the online survey, and telephone surveys were undertaken with 19 CSFF facilitators, self-selected from the online survey.

The findings show a clear growth in the use of virtual communication tools over the past 2 years, particularly in the use of WhatsApp and Zoom. However, the telephone interviews with facilitators revealed that some group members did not have access to emails at all. As a result, some facilitators rely on posters, phone calls and letters to communicate with members. Indeed, these methods were commonly used by many facilitators, with the virtual communication tools supplementing these more traditional methods of communication.

This confirms CSFF members as a heterogenous group in terms of communication, with the role of the facilitator key to determining which combination works best. Initially it is clear that a range of one-to-one meetings and other communications are required. Facilitators are clearly flexible and adaptable, with some operating different systems for different CSFF groups. However, the place of online communication tools has grown, with groups becoming more confident with these technologies.

For the completion of CS applications, the key resource remains MAGIC; this was confirmed by both the online survey and the telephone interviews. This is now supplemented by a range of other GIS resources such as The Land App, Catchment Explorer and other open source options. Some facilitators have developed their own tools combining spatial data from CSFF members holdings and spreadsheets of CS options. Gov.uk is recognised as a key resource but is not without its challenges in terms of accessing the right information.

In terms of continued use of technology and communication tools, issues of connectivity were seen as a major barrier. However, where they are well established it is clear that they will be retained and extended. Disbenefits were identified, largely in terms of reducing the opportunity for informal knowledge exchange and social interaction.

Interaction between facilitators was seen as important and largely an unfulfilled opportunity. As a result, there was widespread support for the idea of a collaboration hub and this is idea warrants further attention. The need to connect with ELM and the development of LNRS was understood by most facilitators.

Suggested next steps

- There is continued evidence, supported by previous evaluations of CSFF group members, that participation is leading to significant knowledge sharing, and there are examples of this leading to changes in management activity. This includes CSFF groups where the funding has ceased.
- The findings have shown that CSFF groups are able to play a significant role in managing habitat types, supporting the objectives of administrative areas and protected landscapes. However, their impact is not evenly spread across any of the spatial measures examined. While the Priority Habitats Inventory informs the current nature recovery strategy and provides evidence that is likely to adjust CSFF priorities, as natural flood management did in 2017, there are opportunities for new CSFF groups on spatial grounds as well as ecological evidence..
- On this evidence, a targeted increase in the number of CSFF groups and associated AES agreements would provide additional benefits. Having established an approach for gathering ecological evidence in Phase 3, that suggests that CSFF group member agreements contain

better options and are more effectively implemented than those in non-CSFF group AES agreements, this needs to be continued in current AES and future ELM schemes.

- The opportunities for CSFF group expansion should be considered and prioritised based on local need and their match with strategic policy objectives.
- A better understanding of CSFF groups will be achieved if the data issues raised in this report are addressed. It would be useful to develop a mechanism whereby the CSFF groups themselves can identify, record and submit data within an England-wide framework. it would be beneficial to collect spatial details on the location and landscape context of actions/outcomes at parcel and sub-parcel level, to contribute to the accurate assessment of natural capital levels and the status of ecological networks.
- Future evaluations might want to consider a greater emphasis on comparing various CSFF group metrics to comparable data across the rest of the country to further establish if CSFF groups are succeeding in maximising the impact of AES schemes by bringing larger areas under active management.
- The range of tools open to facilitators has broadened, and will remain so in the future. The choice as to which is used should remain within the CSFF group but with support and training offered centrally. In terms of assisting with AES applications, MAGIC remains a vital resource and should be maintained and updated regularly.
- CSFF facilitators had varying degrees of connection with a range of organisations, such as FWAG, National Parks or LNPs, which needs examining in more detail. While some are self-employed, the current re-imbursement arrangements present some challenges but a diversity of arrangements for facilitators should be possible.
- Future funding is likely to be more diverse in terms of opportunities, such as carbon credits, biodiversity net gain or water quality funding. There is an opportunity to use these to aid additional activity that could lead to collaborative delivery across holdings and/or on separate holdings. However, the focus should be on maximising the opportunity to deliver actions that aggregate the benefits beyond AES and aid the transition to the CSFF group being self-sustainable.
- The establishment of a collaboration hub warrants further consideration, based on the expressed need of those responding to the online survey and interviews. The focus should be on connecting facilitators, sharing best practice and event ideas, linking into current policy opportunities and securing a sustainable legacy from all CSFF groups. There is potential to include some social indicators here along the lines of Mills et al (2021).
- The issue of collaboration is seen by group members and facilitators as central to landscape scale nature recovery, with a focus on bottom-up groups that develop organically within the CSFF framework. In this sense, collaboration is critical to the development and success of the Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery elements of ELM.
- Scheme transition is a key factor, and urgent attention should be paid as to how to facilitate the successful transition of the large proportion of ES and CS agreements within CSFF groups into follow-up schemes. This should include how to encourage the setting up of more ambitious agreements, noting the incentives suggested by Franks (2019), to build on the increased experience of AES agreement holders and the environmental benefits they have delivered.
- Finally, funding for most CSFF groups will expire in the next year or so. As a result, serious consideration needs to be given to the sustainability and evolution of existing CSFF groups, noting the findings of this report.

1. Introduction and summary of approach

1.1 Introduction and background

Agri-environment schemes (AES) have been running in England for many years and have developed from simple schemes to support a particular habitat into more comprehensive actions aimed at supporting biodiversity, ecosystem services and the natural capital these services provide, as well as resource protection, historic environment and access. Natural capital is regarded as the stock of natural resources provided by the environment that allow people to thrive. Natural capital therefore underpins our economy and society. It is a fundamental part of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (Defra, 2018).

Defra's Countryside Stewardship (CS) was launched in March 2015 and initially administered by Natural England (NE). Following transfer of CS in 2018 to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), NE is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the scheme and the provision of technical advice to RPA. The administration of the scheme by the RPA includes the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund (CSFF). CSFF provides funding at the landscape scale for individuals or organisations to bring farmers, foresters and other land managers together to increase their knowledge and awareness, and align delivery with the environmental priorities for the area in order to maximise the impact the scheme has on the environment, through bringing larger areas of land under active management. CSFF has a wide remit and can cover land under existing agri-environment and woodland agreements, common land and land not currently covered by a scheme.

CSFF builds on the principles of partnership working, with paid facilitators coordinating training and advice for groups of new or existing land managers (farmers, foresters and/or others) to help deliver environmental benefits. To qualify for CSFF funding, a group has to undertake activities that are new to them as a result of their cooperation. These might include aligning management activities across different holdings to deliver at a landscape rather than single-farm scale. This would extend to checking and re-positioning where necessary any existing land management activity that is poorly sited, using any new knowledge or expertise that is provided to operate in a different way, or undertaking new or additional activities. The focus on additional environmental benefit beyond simple scheme agreement is an important and innovative addition for AES going forward.

Over the last few years, Natural England have been evaluating the CSFF in relation to its process and outcomes (Phase 1 and 2 of CSFF evaluation). Phase 1 of the CSFF evaluation (ADAS 2018) considered the process underpinning the introduction of the Countryside Stewardship scheme in the first two years of operation. CS includes a number of changes in approach compared to previous agri-environment schemes and as a result it would be expected that introducing a multi-objective scheme would be a challenging process.

Phase 1 therefore provided a scoping study of the introductory phase of CS, considering:

- What factors have influenced applicants/non-applicants across CS;
- Whether further information is required by potential applicants;
- Whether potential changes to the process of applying can increase applications.

The scoping study found that the strategic aim of establishing a multi-objective scheme had been secured, with the following key conclusions:

- The process of application was found to be robust but challenging because of the level of complexity across the scheme;
- Applicants were utilising either their own agents or advisers in order to enter the scheme;

- Once secured, the agreement holders felt that the agreements and the options they contained were manageable.

Phase 2 of the project gave an initial evaluation of the success of the CSFF (Jones et al 2019), with respect to both quantitative and social capital outcomes. The first part of the project highlighted the need for data collection to allow rigorous monitoring and evaluation of group engagement and objectives, particularly emphasising the need for spatial data. A framework to assess group activity for monitoring was then developed.

The most recent review was Phase 3 (Breyer et al 2020), which built on and further revised the overall evaluation framework. Phase 3 aimed to evaluate the added benefit of CSFF groups with a particular focus on contributions to nature recovery and ecological restoration. The evaluation concluded that:

- Option choice in CSFF groups aligned with strategic aims and is likely to benefit natural capital
- There were signs of behaviour change among CSFF group members, including reduction in social isolation and high levels of trust.
- The increased knowledge of and engagement in environmental activities shown by CSFF members resulted in an almost universal support for the continuation of the CSFF groups.

1.2 Objectives of Phase 4

This fourth phase seeks to apply the monitoring and evaluation framework to include the groups who started in 2020, to review and update the spatial analysis of what the current CS agreements within CSFF groups are achieving, and to identify the gaps in and around each group to highlight opportunities for expansion or group creation in that area. It also aims to capture some of the narrative from experience with regard to the benefits (or not) of being part of a group, together with an assessment of the use of technological aids and how these have helped or hindered progress of groups' ambitions and the well-being of their members. The objectives were:

- Map the spatial coherence of all CSFF groups and test their potential to restore and create habitat at scale in line with current Nature Recovery ambitions
- Test to see if incidences of non-compliance are lower in CSFF groups than those areas which do not have a CSFF group
- Assess if being part of a CSFF group helps maintain resilience and wellbeing among group members
- Review how CSFF groups used technology in terms of support and collaboration, and what this means for the future

1.3 Summary of Approach

This project built on the prior work undertaken during Phase 1 (ADAS, 2018), Phase 2 (Jones et al., 2019) and Phase 3 (Breyer et al 2020). The project was undertaken as four separate tasks:

Task 1: Map the spatial coherence of all CSFF groups and test their potential to restore and create habitat at scale

This task assessed the potential of CSFF groups to secure an increase in biodiversity (habitat/species) in line with Nature Recovery ambitions. It was divided into three parts, outlined below:

1. The previous spatial coherence approach was applied to CS/Environmental Stewardship (ES) Option analysis, to update and refresh the WebMap tool with new groups and new members recruited since April 2019, and to update previous members' details where necessary.

2. The refreshed CSFF WebMap was overlayed with Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI), Natural Capital (NC), National Habitat Network and other data layers to create a multi-layered map.
3. The type and content of ES and CS agreements was analysed and aggregated for each group, at national, county and Natural England area level.

Task 2: Test whether the incidence of agreement non-compliance (breaches) is lower when the CS agreement holder is a member of a FF Group

The intention here was to access data from RPA inspection reports to assess how those within CSFF groups compared with those not in CSFF groups in terms of compliance with scheme regulations. This would also involve reviewing the frequency, type and cause of non-compliance. The task was dependent on receiving an adequate sample from the RPA covering CSFF and non-CSFF group members and the related details on compliance issues.

Task 3: Capture qualitative examples concerning the resilience and wellbeing of CSFF group members

The aim of Task 3 was to capture examples which illustrate whether membership of a CSFF group helped maintain social resilience and wellbeing, where issues such as COVID, change in agricultural support, climate change, and/or other matters are concerned.

An online survey was developed to target all eligible members of CSFF groups. The survey contained filtered sections with a focus on open questions using JISC online surveys. Respondents were recruited via CSFF facilitators and other key stakeholders using the list of CSFF contacts from NE. The use of Likert questions with a range of scales (strongly agree to strongly disagree) was used to supplement the collection of qualitative data thorough open questions. The survey was developed with reference to the NE Social Indicators study (Mills et al 2021) and national sources (e.g. ONS measures of personal wellbeing).

The online survey was followed up by a telephone survey undertaken with 18 CSFF members, all from different CSFF groups. The telephone questionnaire was based on the online survey and permitted a more in-depth discussion on some of the issues raised. The respondents were self-selecting as they had indicated a willingness to participate in this part of the project. The qualitative data was coded for analysis in NVivo 12 Pro, and the Likert scale answers imported to Excel.

Task 4: Review how groups have used technology

Task 4 assessed how CSFF groups use technology for technical support (e.g. GIS or online tools) and/or collaboration support (e.g. Zoom or other platforms) over the past two years when the Covid-19 pandemic restricted in person meetings.

An online survey was targeted at all CSFF facilitators, past and present. As with Task 3, the JISC online survey platform was used. The questions explored the potential of technology to provide technical assistance and support collaboration, as well as discussing the possible format of such support in the future. As in Task 3, the use of Likert questions with a range of scales supplemented the collection of qualitative data. Open questions were used to gather qualitative data, allowing respondents to outline how the CSFF did or did not provide the social support and wellbeing benefits that might have been possible. A telephone survey was undertaken with 19 CSFF facilitators selected from those who indicated a willingness for this part of the project. Like the group member survey, analysis was undertaken using NVivo Pro 12 for the quotes, with the Likert scale answers imported to Excel.

2. Mapping spatial coherence of CSFF groups and assessing contribution to habitat recovery

This section covers the following detailed objectives within Task 1 of the project as set out in section 1.3 above:

- Derivation of a current spatial dataset of parcels on CSFF group members' holdings, identifying land in CS and ES agreements and parcels not under agreement but included within the CSFF group's area.
- Production of summary statistics including the number of groups, number of members, how many have Agri-Environment (AE) agreements and how many do not.
- Comparison with the Phase 3 evaluation CS/ES parcel data and record updates where new agreements have been put in place, expired or ES agreements have transitioned to CS.
- Conducting of an analysis using priority habitat typology and natural capital typology for CS developed in Phase 2 and Phase 3 CSFF monitoring & evaluation for each Priority Habitat type and Natural Capital Indicator.
- Illustration (WebMap) and tabulation (spreadsheet) of CSFF Group membership, including AES agreements, contribution to Natural Capital Indicators and priority habitats to aid development and analysis of future individual or potential group-based agreements.

The expansion of the number of CSFF groups founded as well as the recruitment of new members to existing groups is dynamic, with all groups expanding over time from the initial founding membership. Groups are encouraged to grow through time-limited funding incentives, each new member adds to the facilitator/group budget. This leads to a constantly increasing membership population in the CSFF scheme, of which only a proportion is under live ES or CS agreements as the presence of an AES agreement is not a pre-requisite for membership within a CSFF group. CSFF builds on the principles of partnership working with facilitators coordinating training and advice for members. Members are encouraged to join AES agreements to maximise the impact of the scheme and areas under active management. However, membership to CSFF groups can have wider benefits, both for farmers and relevant agencies, e.g., social well-being, peer-to-peer-support, improved information flows and learning activities as well as potentially lowering perceived barriers to formally joining AES schemes. Many of these impacts have been demonstrated in previous phases of CSFF evaluation.

The funding period for several groups created in the early stages of the scheme has recently expired. However, the project team was explicitly asked to include these groups in the current study without treating them as a separate entity. ES/CS agreements in group areas with expired funding remain and this inclusion also showcases where a group has delivered scheme objectives, as well as noting areas for potential further dialogue and engagement with land managers who have the experience of being members of CSFF groups. Some of these groups have also been able to secure other funding sources and continue to pursue their initial scheme objectives.

The project evaluated up-to-date membership data and this report reflects an accurate picture of group membership to July 2021 (Quarter 2), as well as any changes in membership to both CSFF groups and live ES/CS agreements held by group members since the Phase 3 evaluation in 2019.

2.1 Approach

The spatial coherence and analysis approach developed during earlier evaluation phases of CSFF was applied to produce: summary statistics on current CSFF group membership and CS/ES membership; to reflect changes as a result of new groups and new members recruited since April 2019 (Quarter 1); and to update previous members' details where necessary.

This commenced with the collation of a current spatial dataset of parcels on CSFF group members' holdings, identifying land in CS and ES agreements and parcels not under agreement but included within the CSFF group's area, based on data provided by Natural England at project inception.

Following preparation of the current spatial dataset of CSFF group members' holdings, we compared this with the Phase 3 CS/ES parcel data and recorded and summarised updates and changes where groups have expanded and agreements have been put in place or expired.

We further conducted an analysis using priority habitat and natural capital typology for CS, developed in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the CSFF monitoring & evaluation, for each Priority Habitat type and Natural Capital Indicator. This closely mirrors the Natural Capital Indicator analysis undertaken during Phase 3 of monitoring and evaluation.

CSFF groups vary greatly in size, predominant business types of members as well as landscape area of their location, which frequently determines local environmental objectives and therefore the specific focus of each group's activities. This inherent heterogeneity between groups creates challenges for any analysis that assesses the impacts of the scheme across all groups.

For this reason and inherent data uncertainties set out in section 2.2, analysis in section 2 is confined to basic descriptive tabular and spatial analyses to illustrate and highlight patterns and changes in CSFF group membership and their impact on uptake of AES agreements as well as contribution to natural capital and support of priority habitats.

2.2 Data collation and spatial data processing

As set out in Table 1 below, spatial and quantitative datasets of parcels relevant to CSFF group members' holdings were sourced from Natural England. For each data set, the relevant attributes were extracted and then collated to establish CSFF membership to July 2021. This then allowed the identification of land under CS and ES agreements, and parcels not under agreement but included within the CSFF groups' area. These data were subsequently compared to the data collated under Phase 3 of the CSFF fund evaluation and further evaluated with regards to CSFF groups' contribution to natural capital and PHI habitats.

Table 1: Data sources

Document/file	Information content	Limitations	Assumptions
Master SBI Sheet (SBI = Single Business Identifier)	Group members, SBI identifier, facilitators and AES agreements up to July 2021	Membership information is limited to that supplied by the Rural Payments Agency to July 2021	SBI and agreement references were correctly entered, without duplicates and multiple entries
LIDM anonymised parcel database	All field parcels in England	Date of most recent update is unknown	Dataset is current, parcel boundaries and references align with other project data
Complete farm holdings with SBI	All land holdings in England with SBI attribute	Date of most recent update is unknown	Dataset is current, holding boundaries and references align with other project data

CS + ES parcel data (polygons)	Parcel data with live CS + ES agreements in place	Not routinely cross-referenced against Facilitation Fund members and date of most recent update is unknown	Dataset is current, parcel boundaries and references align with other project data
CS + ES option data (points)	Point data of live CS + ES options at the parcel level	Not routinely cross-referenced against Facilitation Fund members and date of most recent update is unknown	Dataset is current, parcel references align with other project data
Phase 3 spatial data	CS and ES parcel data within Facilitation Fund groups	Included Phase 2 data collated by unknown methodology	Source data was complete and cross-referenced correctly

The collation and processing of spatial data for the project was aligned with the methodology established by Breyer et al. (2020) during the Phase 3 evaluation to ensure comparability across datasets. A multi-step approach was adopted to cross-reference group member's individual SBIs against the LIDM parcel database and to derive a current spatial dataset of membership across all groups (see Figure 1). This included all land assigned to CSFF groups, within and without ES/CS agreements.

There were some inherent uncertainties in the data which were addressed through a rigorous manual cross-referencing and quality control but could not be fully resolved. These include:

- Agricultural businesses are identified using the Single Business Identifier (SBI). For the most part this works well, however, some very large organisations with land in multiple holdings across the country, such as the National Trust, have only a single SBI and therefore where these organisations are involved in different CSFF groups the data becomes more complex to assess, particularly if CSFF groups are located in close proximity to each other. The only way to resolve these issues going forward would be to have a sub-identifier for each separate holding under the main SBI.
- Businesses engaged in AES also have a reference (Agref) for each scheme agreement they hold, and in CS agreements a 'Contract ID' number. However, the SBI and Agref by themselves are still not sufficient to completely describe each landholding under a single SBI without some uncertainty, because the AE agreement may not cover the whole holding. The Agref is only linked to parcels that are under agreement, not with those that are on the same holding but not under agreement. Furthermore, agreement references change each time an AES agreement is amended, therefore potentially introducing more uncertainty over time in tracking and correlating single agreements and the holdings they are located upon across various datasets.
- There are some errors in the data including duplications, typos such as SBIs having missing numbers, false data entries, and members being recorded either in more than one fund or multiple times in the same CSFF group. These were resolved as far as possible by manual quality assurance.
- Datasets are not contemporary: the CSFF data was provided to July 2021 but CS/ES data was extracted later, in winter 2021. The land included within an SBI can have unknown origin dates of individual land parcels, as fields and part holdings are bought and sold. The situation in the CSFF and CS/ES data might not, therefore, reflect the most recent ownership/parcel/agreement changes. This leads to contradictions in data. Again, as much as possible these issues were resolved using manual quality assurance.

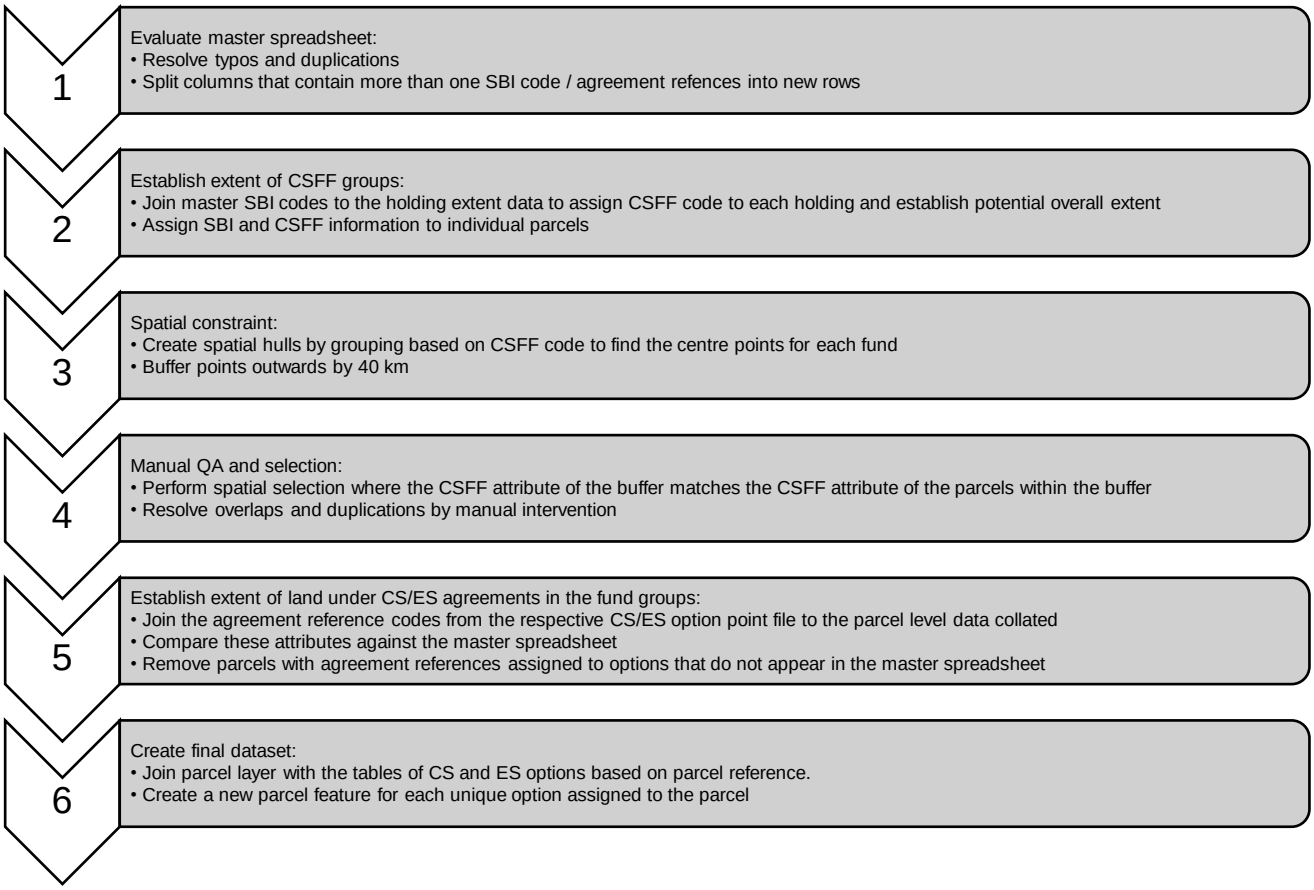

Figure 1: Processing methodology

Going forward, the accuracy of the analysis would be greatly assisted by complete and up-to-date references of land within an CSFF group. It is suggested that this could best be achieved by members being obliged to supply an accurate record of all the Rural Land Register (RLR) parcel references belonging to their holding and notify any changes in these. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has built a Rural Land Register (RLR) to hold digital maps of all registered land parcels and in order to be entitled to payments through AES schemes, land must be recorded on the RLR. This therefore forms a very reliable base data set from which to record maintain an accurate record of land parcels within CSFF groups.

The group administrator could hold these records and they could then be collated on an annual basis or as required for evaluation to accurately assess change over time. This would effectively maintain the currency of land parcels assigned to each group and also address the problem of multiple holdings under the same SBI code being often spread across more than one group.

In comparing the membership of groups and schemes between Phase 3 and Phase 4, it should be noted that the Phase 3 methodology added land to the Phase 2 data. In Phase 4 all the land was re-evaluated; this gives a picture of those leaving schemes and CSFF groups as well as joining schemes and CSFF groups which would not have been as apparent under the methodology used in the Phase 3 analysis which just considered new members joining existing groups and newly formed groups. For example, farmers leaving an CSFF group because of circumstances such as retirement from farming, are now shown in the data as well as those newly joining the CSFF groups.

2.3 CSFF membership

Following preparation of the current (Quarter 2, 2021) spatial dataset of CSFF group members' summary statistics, results of the analysis were produced. These were further compared to the Phase 3

evaluation data (Quarter 1, 2019) and are summarised below. The results include newly created CSFF groups since the Phase 3 evaluation as well as changes in the membership of existing CSFF groups.

Full details on CSFF membership as applies to the 136 CSFF groups examined for the purposes of this report have been provided per CSFF group in a separate spreadsheet. This contains data on membership and change since the Phase 3 evaluation per group was supplied in this format to make it possible to query the data going forward by facilitators and scheme administrators.

In the Phase 4 report on the CSFF, there are 136 Groups covering an area of over 800,000 ha and including 3,330 members (**Table 2**). This is an increase of 38 new groups formed since Phase 3, covering over 137,000 ha and includes 266 new members.

Table 2: CSFF Membership across all FF groups (a full breakdown by FF group is provided in Appendix 1)

CSFF	Number of CSFF groups	Total area (ha)	FF group members
CSFF groups to Q1, 2019 (Phase 3)	98	670,114	3064
CSFF groups to Q2, 2021 (Phase 4)	136	807,507	3330
Change since 2019.1 (Phase 3)	38	137,390	266
Percentage change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3)	+38.7%	+20.5%	+8.7%

This has increased the areas under CSFF groups by 20.5 % and the number of groups by over 38%, with an increase of 8.7% in membership over the last 2.5 years. The lower percentage increase in membership compared to the increase in number of groups could, amongst other reasons, reflect the fact that CSFF groups often start with a smaller core group of members but attract additional members over time. This picture of overall increase in area and membership is more differentiated across individual groups. Some CSFF groups display a decreased membership but an increased overall area, with a few increasing their membership but without a significant expansion in their extent (**Figure 2**). The data shows evidence of some members leaving over time and this naturally has an impact on group area, depending on the size of holdings of the departing and joining members respectively.

Changes in ownership of whole and partial land holdings within CSFF groups over time are likely to be constant (e.g., smaller farms bought up by larger organisations, a change in business focus or expansion of business resulting in additional land acquisition or sales of land to free up capital for a number of possible reasons), creating a dynamic pattern. New owners might have opted not to be an CSFF group member. The large changes in areas in some instances suggest that some landholders with very large holdings have left CSFF groups, leading to large reductions in area not made up by several smaller ones joining. Landholders might leave CSFF groups for a variety of reasons, e.g., retirement, bankruptcy, land sale, change of business focus etc., but it is beyond the scope of this report to establish reasons in detail. However, it is important to acknowledge that overall increases in membership and area of all CSFF groups are underpinned by a constant pattern of loss and gain across individual members and groups.

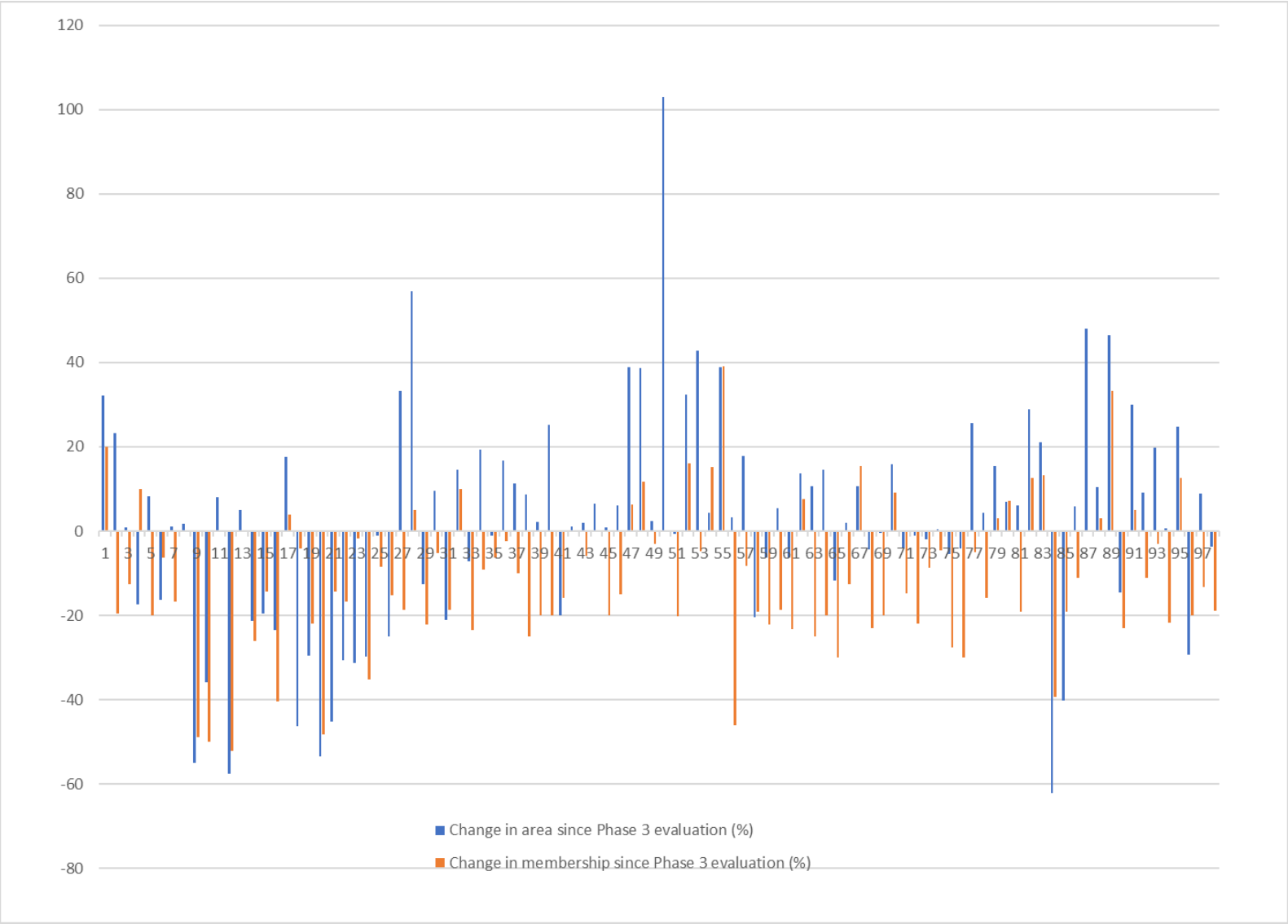

Figure 2: Changes in membership and area in the 98 CSFF groups included in the Phase 3 evaluation since 2019

Any changes in membership over time and the associated addition to or loss of land parcels from the CSFF groups will impact on the Natural Capital contained within the groups as well as area of PHI and any ES/CS options, if present within land that is either added or removed from CSFF groups.

Figure 3 below illustrates the spatial distribution of CSFF groups across England and within the Natural England regions as well as their respective size with regards to total membership. Groups are highlighted with regards to their funding status (funding for groups in orange has recently expired, all of these were created prior to 2019) and period of creation (to highlight if they have been founded since Phase 3 of CSFF evaluation (blue). Funding status of individual groups has been included in report figures for illustrative purposes but has not been accounted for in any wider analysis as per explicit request from the client.

The larger the fund, in terms of membership, the larger the representative circle. This shows that the groups founded pre-2019 tend to have a greater number of members, despite the fluctuations in membership detailed above, either because they started out with a greater initial membership than more recently created groups or because they did attract more members over time.

CSFF membership as well as land area within CSFF groups (Figure 5) are basic but important metrics for CSFF evaluation to record, as all members have access to training, advice and peer support to help them deliver environmental benefits and to align environmental priorities for each area, aiming to deliver at the landscape scale rather than the single-farm scale. The wider the reach of such support activities to a large number of land managers, the greater their potential impact on maximising environmental benefits through existing AES schemes. CSFF group members are actively encouraged to join CS and this brings larger areas of land under active management.

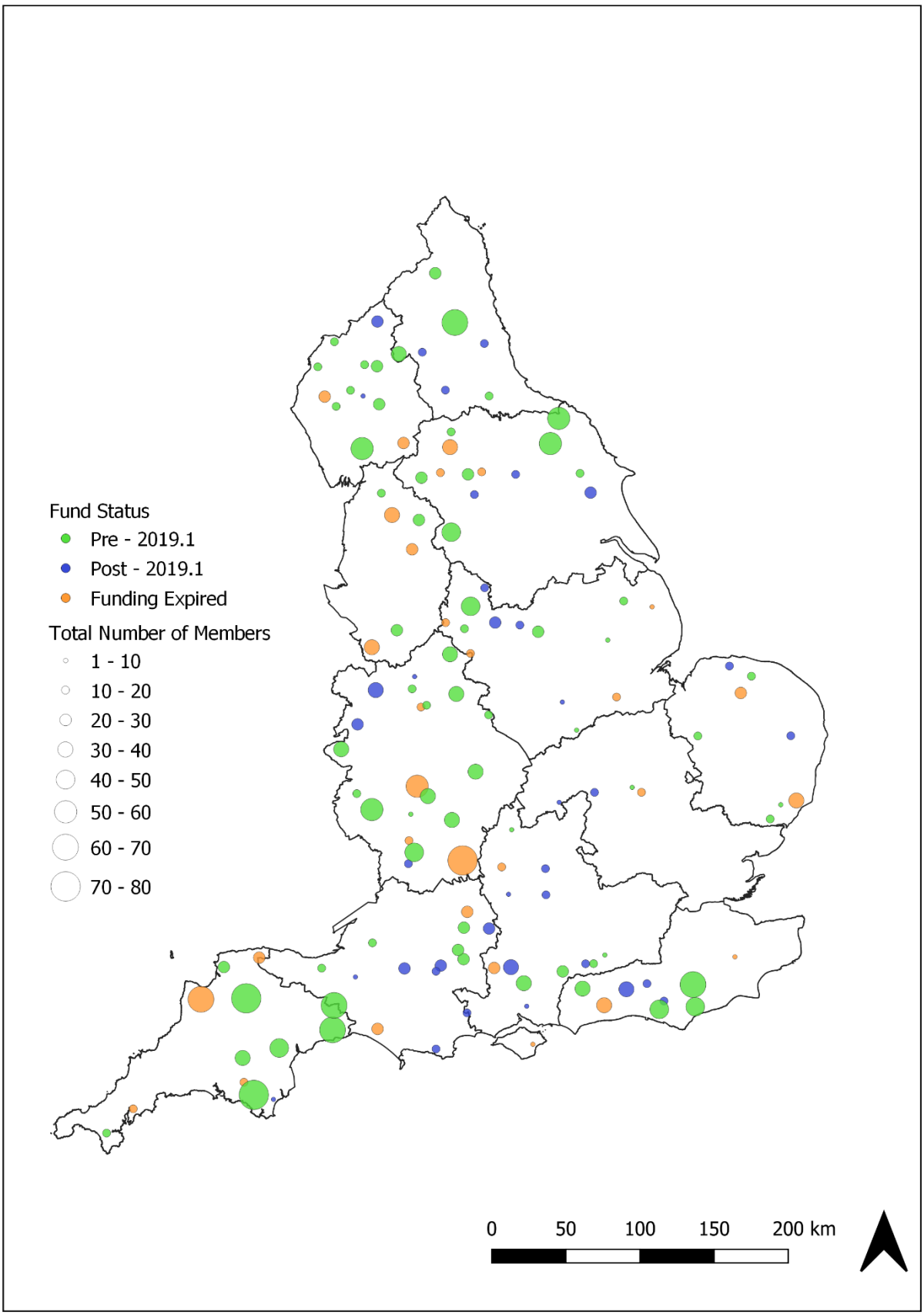

Figure 3: Membership size of individual CSFF groups across England (new CSFF groups created since April 2019 are highlighted in blue).

There are CSFF groups located across all Natural England regions, although there is an emphasis towards the west of England, and the groups in the central and eastern areas are smaller. The lowest

number of CSFF Groups are in Natural England's Area 8 - Norfolk and Suffolk, and in Area 7 - West Anglia. These areas comprise mainly large cereal and arable farming units; precision farming practices to maximise crop yields at minimum cost of agricultural inputs are more common in these areas. It is possible that farms tend to be less financially dependent on alternative income sources such as AES than those in the uplands and where there is a greater proportion of existing habitats. Farms in upland dominated areas also tend to have a tighter profit margin and may be more attracted to join a scheme which offers a financial incentive.

No new CSFF Groups have been established in Area 11 - Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, or in Area 4 - Cheshire and Lancashire since the Phase 3 evaluation in 2019. Both these areas do, however, have a number of groups established in earlier funding rounds prior to April 2019.

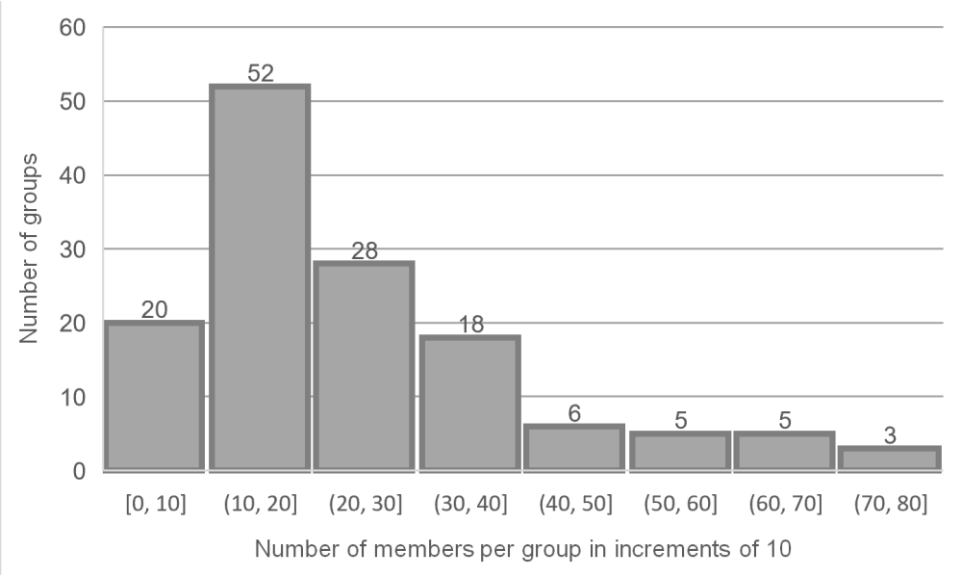

Figure 4: Distribution of number of members in each FF group

Nearly a quarter of the CSFF groups have less than 10 members and over 70% of CSFF groups have 30 or fewer members (Figure 4). The two largest CSFF groups each have over 70 members. Groups with more members and consequently frequently greater land areas will be more likely to have impact on landscape scale changes and subsequently increase the impact that land management actions undertaken will have on natural capital and biodiversity. It is, however, hard to compare groups directly as not only do they operate in distinct ecological and agricultural settings but they also have different objectives.

Figure 5 shows the area in hectares of individual CSFF groups across England, with the new CSFF groups created since April 2019 highlighted in blue. Longer-established CSFF groups tend to be bigger in area (green and orange), either reflecting on-going recruitment of new members during an CSFF group's funding cycle, larger initial membership or, potentially, members with larger holdings, such as in the uplands where many longer established CSFF groups are located.

The largest CSFF groups in terms of area tend to be found where farmed areas per individual holding are potentially larger; for example, groups located in upland regions where member's holdings might frequently contain a large proportion of open hill land, or in those lowland farming regions which may have a very large arable area. The land in CSFF groups in Region 11 - Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly tend to be smaller in size with larger membership numbers, reflecting the average size of farms in these counties.

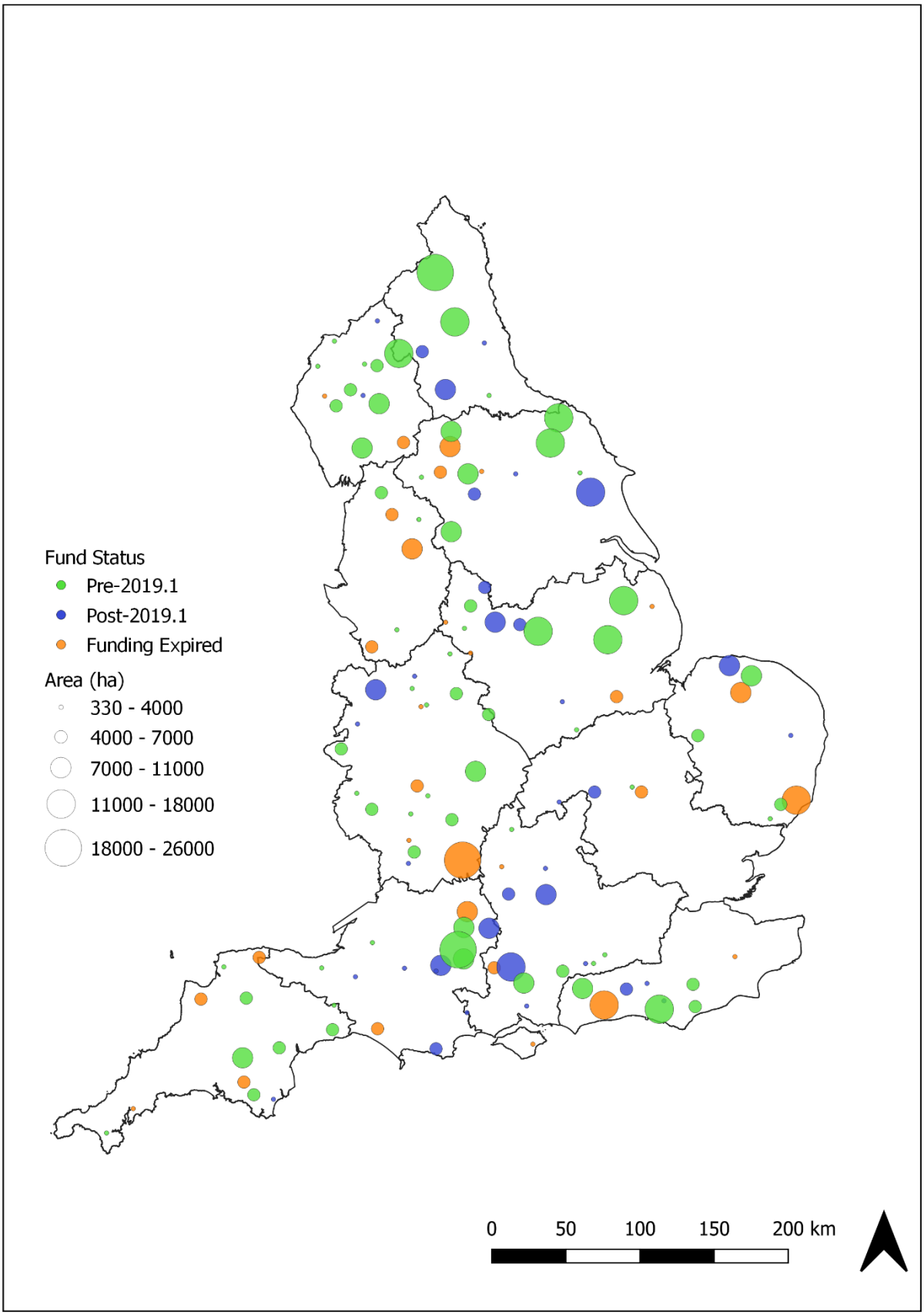

Figure 5: Area in hectares of individual CSFF groups across England (new CSFF groups created since April 2019 are highlighted in blue)

2.4 CSFF and AES

Following the preparation of the current summary statistics of CSFF group membership, the uptake of AE agreements amongst group members was analysed and is summarised below **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** and illustrated in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

Separate figures for ES and CS respectively are provided to illustrate the proportion of members and land area under each scheme individually and to fully characterise this aspect of the overall CSFF membership. The distinction is important when considering how to encourage land holders with ES agreements to transition into CS, or eventually into ELM, when their current agreements expire and to ensure continuity of positive land management aligned with current environmental objectives.

Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference. includes a comparison with the Phase 3 CS/ES parcel data and records and summarises updates and changes where groups have expanded, agreements have been put in place or expired, or ES agreements have transitioned to CS. However, Phase 3 did not consider land under Environmental Stewardship, as the causal links between land management interventions within AES - specifically CS - and the changes in natural capital these bring about were the central consideration of that particular phase of evaluation.

Full details on CS/ES agreements in place as applies to the 136 CSFF groups examined for the purposes of this report have been provided per CSFF group in a separate spreadsheet.

Table 3: CS/ES agreement uptake across all CSFF groups (see Appendix 2 for details of individual CSFF groups and respective CS membership)

CSFF	Area under CS agreement (ha)	Proportion of FF group area under CS agreement (%)	Proportion of members with CS agreement (%)	Area under ES agreement (ha)	Proportion of FF group area under ES agreement (%)	Proportion of members with ES agreement (%)	Proportion of FF group area under either CS or ES agreements (%)
CSFF groups to 2019.1 (Phase 3)	323,260	48.3	43.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSFF groups to 2021.2 (Phase 4)	257,570	31.9	52.76	235,460	29.2	31.26	61.0
Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3)	-656.9	-16.3	+9.36	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Area under CS agreement has gone down in the 2 ¼ years since the last evaluation (**Following the** preparation of the current summary statistics of CSFF group membership, the uptake of AE agreements amongst group members was analysed and is summarised below **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** and illustrated in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

Separate figures for ES and CS respectively are provided to illustrate the proportion of members and land area under each scheme individually and to fully characterise this aspect of the overall CSFF membership. The distinction is important when considering how to encourage land holders with ES agreements to transition into CS, or eventually into ELM, when their current agreements expire and to ensure continuity of positive land management aligned with current environmental objectives.

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Full details on CS/ES agreements in place as applies to the 136 CSFF groups examined for the purposes of this report have been provided per CSFF group in a separate spreadsheet.

Table 3), both in total and proportionally. This is in contrast to increases observed during the evaluations carried out in Phase 2 and 3. There are a number of possible explanations for this:

- Whilst the number of CSFF groups have increased and existing CSFF groups have recruited more members (including for the purposes of this study those groups with recently expired funding), these new CSFF group members would not necessarily have an agreement in place prior to joining or would have set one up in the last 2 ¼ years. It is perfectly common to be a member of an CSFF group and not have an AES agreement in place as is the case for just over 15% of CSFF group members (**Following the** preparation of the current summary statistics of CSFF group membership, the uptake of AE agreements amongst group members was analysed and is summarised below **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** and illustrated in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

Separate figures for ES and CS respectively are provided to illustrate the proportion of members and land area under each scheme individually and to fully characterise this aspect of the overall CSFF membership. The distinction is important when considering how to encourage land holders with ES agreements to transition into CS, or eventually into ELM, when their current agreements expire and to ensure continuity of positive land management aligned with current environmental objectives.

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Full details on CS/ES agreements in place as applies to the 136 CSFF groups examined for the purposes of this report have been provided per CSFF group in a separate spreadsheet.

- **Table 3**). As the number of members has also only increased by just under 9% (Table 2), there is little potential for new members with much land under CS agreement to have joined.
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in reducing the number of new CSFF groups needs to be factored in, as new CSFF groups struggled to meet (see following sections).
- CS started in 2015 and a typical (at least mid-tier) agreement and elements of other agreements would run for 5 years. Since 2020 falls entirely into the analysis period, it is possible that some first-generation CS agreements have expired and were then not renewed, despite existing CS agreements recently having been rolled over to extend scheme membership until ELM is fully operational. The role of the pandemic might also have slowed renewals.
- There will always be people who choose not to renew agreements once they expire. Maybe normally these would be balanced out by new intakes and first-time agreement holders, however, due to the pandemic and its likely impact on the support that underpins the successful set-up of agreements, this might not have happened.
- Brexit also impacted within this reporting period. It is possible that farmers may be waiting to understand the requirements of any new schemes such as ELM before committing to join CS. The uncertainty about when the new scheme will start and the current payments being phased out as England transitions to the new scheme may also be impacting decisions.

With the ‘Living with COVID-19’ policy now adopted by the UK Government, there should be more opportunity and support available for group members to sign up to CS schemes in England. There are also a large number of people already in ES schemes within the CSFF groups. There is, therefore, the potential to encourage these land managers to transition to CS schemes with higher environmental benefits once their current agreements expire.

Figure 6 and Figure 7 respectively illustrate the percentage area under CS and ES agreement within individual CSFF groups across England and within the Natural England regions.

It is possible to join a CSFF group both with an existing agri-environment scheme agreement and without one. Consequently, there is no inherent correlation between agri-environment scheme membership and group membership. However, CSFF groups encourage agri-environment scheme membership. Therefore, the longer the group exists, the more members that should ideally join the CS scheme as peer support and guidance and advice received through facilitators and group learning activities should lower potential barriers for joining CS.

Following the preparation of the current summary statistics of CSFF group membership, the uptake of AE agreements amongst group members was analysed and is summarised below **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** and illustrated in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

Separate figures for ES and CS respectively are provided to illustrate the proportion of members and land area under each scheme individually and to fully characterise this aspect of the overall CSFF membership. The distinction is important when considering how to encourage land holders with ES agreements to transition into CS, or eventually into ELM, when their current agreements expire and to ensure continuity of positive land management aligned with current environmental objectives.

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Full details on CS/ES agreements in place as applies to the 136 CSFF groups examined for the purposes of this report have been provided per CSFF group in a separate spreadsheet.

Table 3 shows that just under 16% of land holdings within the CSFF groups do not have an AES agreement in place, while this also applies to nearly 38% of group area.

Land managers without agreement might value access to the group's activities, peer support and the facilitators or could be waiting to understand what membership of CS would mean for the management of their holding. So, while there remains potential to encourage the creation of further new agreements amongst the CSFF group membership, greater gains to be made to bring larger areas into active management might be made by expanding existing agreements to parts of holdings not currently covered or to transition existing ES agreements that might be coming to an end into CS and eventually ELM.

While noting any scheme expansion potential within CSFF groups, it is very much worth noting that Defra is aiming to bring up to 60% of England's agricultural soil under sustainable management through AES schemes by 2030 (GOV.UK, 2022). Following the preparation of the current summary statistics of CSFF group membership, the uptake of AE agreements amongst group members was analysed and is summarised below **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** and illustrated in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

Separate figures for ES and CS respectively are provided to illustrate the proportion of members and land area under each scheme individually and to fully characterise this aspect of the overall CSFF membership. The distinction is important when considering how to encourage land holders with ES agreements to transition into CS, or eventually into ELM, when their current agreements expire and to ensure continuity of positive land management aligned with current environmental objectives.

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Full details on CS/ES agreements in place as applies to the 136 CSFF groups examined for the purposes of this report have been provided per CSFF group in a separate spreadsheet.

Table 3 indicates that this target has already been reached on land that is part of CSFF groups, which is a very positive indicator for the contribution the CSFF groups make towards bringing larger areas of land under active management for environmental benefit.

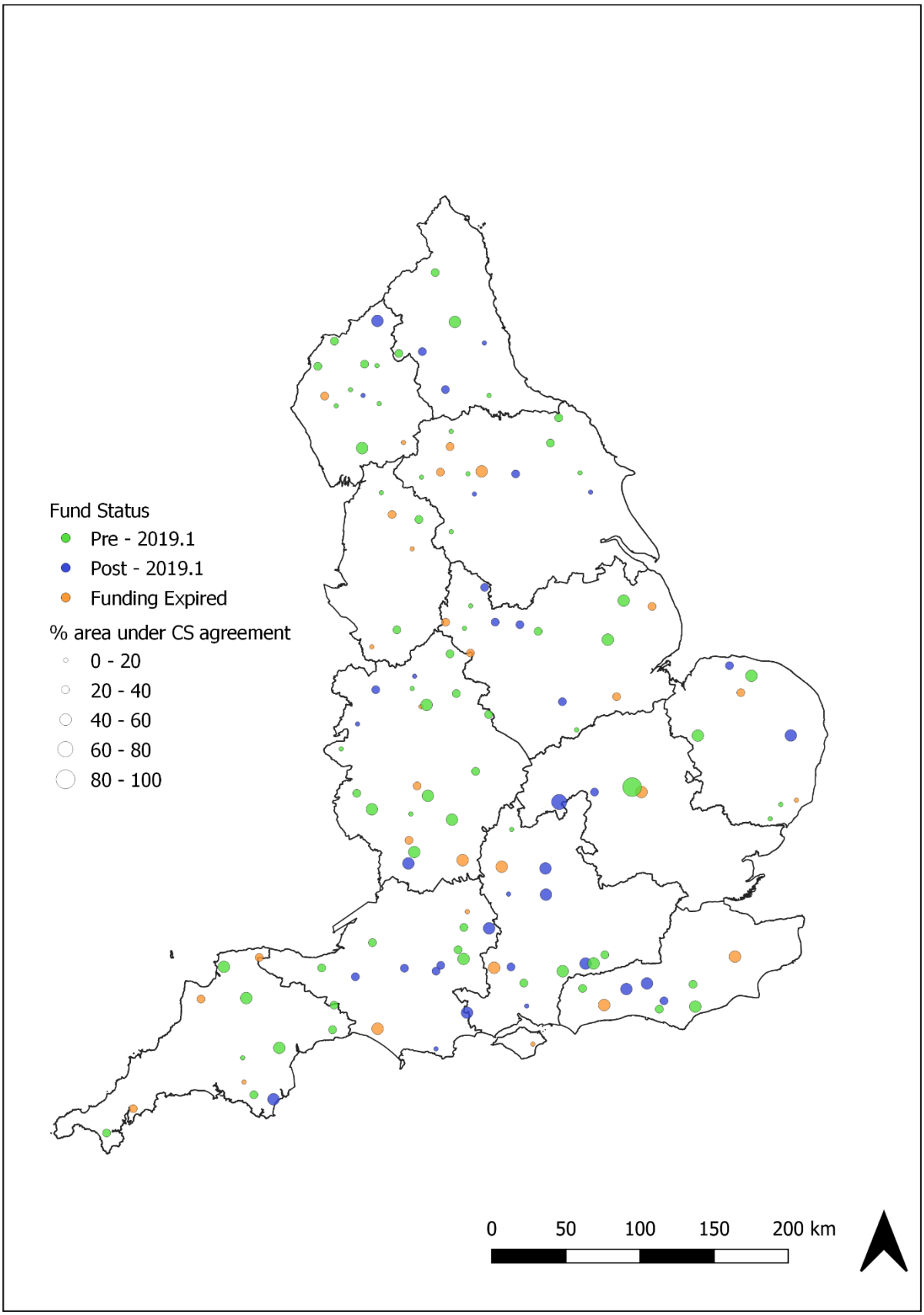


Figure 6: Percentage of individual CSFF group areas under CS agreement.

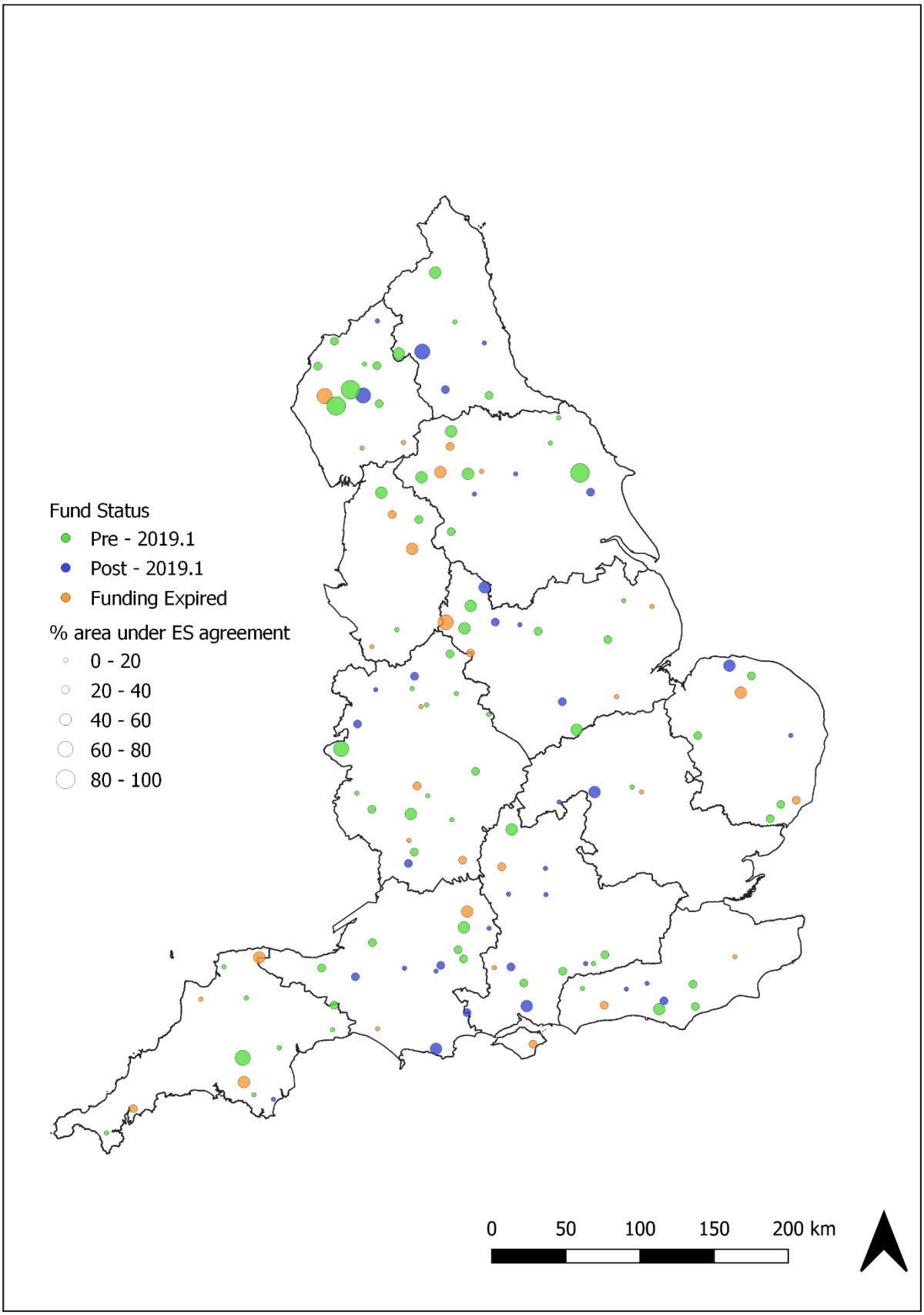


Figure 7: Percentage of individual CSFF group areas under ES agreement

Figure 7 illustrates that, in many CSFF groups, there is still a sizeable proportion of land under ES agreements. Many of these agreements may pre-date the formation of the CSFF group or the landholder's membership of an CSFF group. There is little incentive to change to a higher-level scheme while the current agreement is still active and working, but these holdings are prime targets for transition into CS or ELM once they come to the end of their agreement.

2.5 CSFF and natural capital

Background

Natural Capital [1] is the 'worlds stock of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things from which humans derive a wide range of services through its natural processes'. These are generally at their strongest when natural vegetation types are present. Land managers can protect the natural capital on their holdings by nurturing these habitats, ensuring that they are in good ecological condition and by re-establishing natural processes.

Natural England uses a natural capital logic chain approach to demonstrate how ecosystem assets, such as natural habitats, underpin the provision of benefits to people through the delivery of ecosystem services (Lusardi et al. 2018). The use of logic chains simplifies a complex natural and human system and helps to identify the links across the chain.

The logic chain shows those aspects of natural capital/ecosystem assets (quantity, quality, location) that underpin the provision of ecosystem services. All parts of this chain are affected by management interventions, pressures and drivers of change. Indicators were developed to describe natural capital assets based on native habitats.

Agri-environment schemes provide funding to farmers and land managers to encourage them to farm in a way that supports biodiversity, enhances the landscape, and improves the quality of water, air and soil. With Defra aiming to bring up to 60% of England's agricultural soil under sustainable management through AES schemes by 2030 (GOV.UK, 2022), they have clear potential to maintain and enhance natural capital at scale, providing multiple benefits to people.

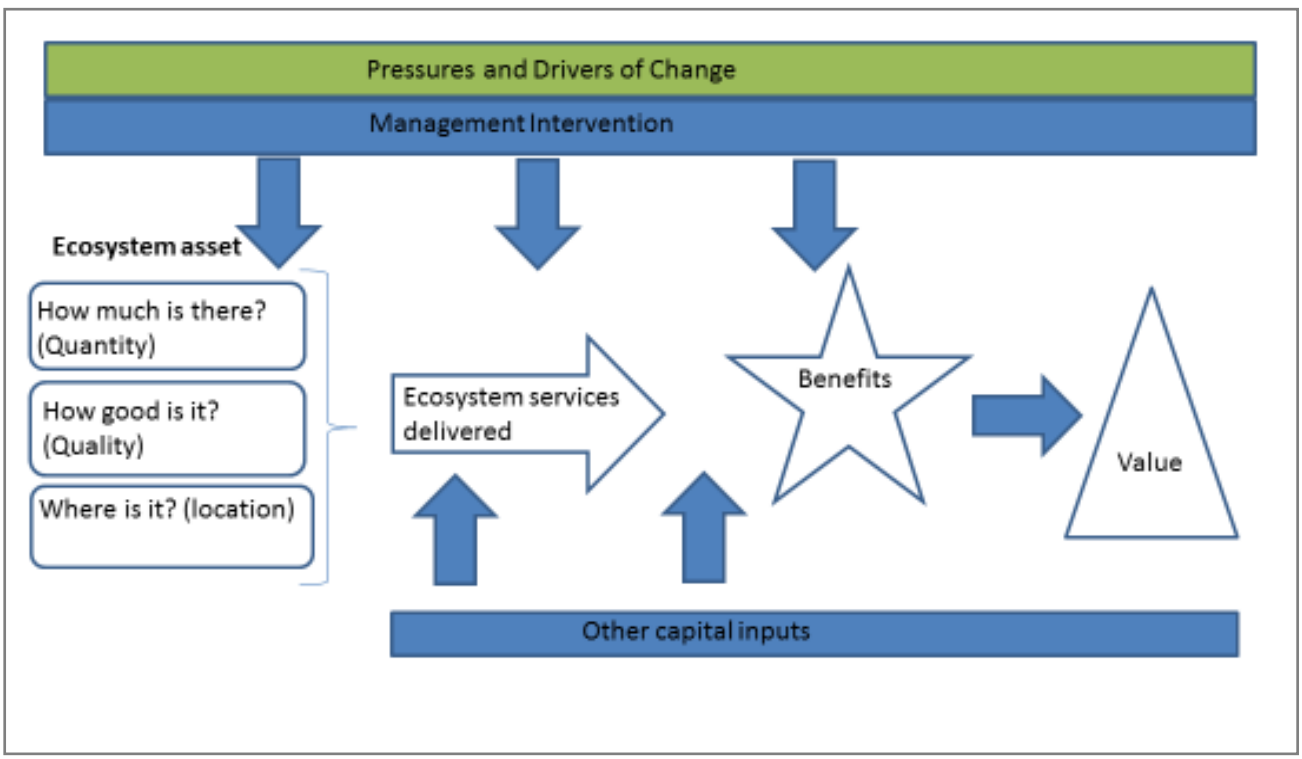


Figure 8: The natural capital logic chain relating interventions to ecosystem assets, services, benefits, and subsequently value.

The CSFF Phase 3 evaluation showed the added benefit of CSFF groups in contributing to nature recovery and ecological restoration. This was achieved by applying an analysis framework (Breyer et al., 2019) which matched CS options to relevant Natural Capital Indicators (NCIs), including six of the

[1] *World Forum on Natural Capital 2022* https://naturalcapitalforum.com/about/

eight main habitat types found in England. This framework has been run again in this evaluation as per the project specification to illustrate the impacts of new agreements and new groups set up in Phase 4.

The following method was undertaken for the current Phase 4 of CSFF evaluation:

- Matching of natural capital indicators to CS options used within 136 CSFF groups across England
- Mapping of contributions to NCIs under six of eight broad habitat categories identified above across all CSFF groups (NCIs associated with urban and marine habitats have been excluded from the analysis as CS agreements are targeted on countryside landholdings)
- Summarising of CS option areas that impact NCIs in alignment with the baseline analysis of the state of natural capital undertaken in the National Natural Capital Atlas (Wigley et al., 2020) and comparison to the national resource recorded by Wigley et al. (2020) for NCIs under the asset quantity theme
- Analysis and summary of change of contribution to NCIs across all CSFF groups from April 2019 (CSFF Phase 3 evaluation) July 2021.

Only indicators that are included in the National Natural Capital Atlas (Wigley, et al., 2020) and that have been matched to CS options (Breyer et al., 2019) are included in the analysis below. These indicators are listed in tables 4 and 11 in section 2.6 below. There is currently no comparable analysis framework available for ES options and these have therefore not been included below. It can be assumed that holdings within CSFF groups undoubtedly contribute at greater rates to Natural Capital than can be demonstrated here through an assessment of land under CS options but there is a lack of current data and methodologies to support an analysis of wider scope.

Full details on natural capital themes, broad habitat category and indicators as applies to the 136 individual CSFF groups evaluated for the purposes of this report have been provided in a separate spreadsheet (Appendix 3 and 4).

2.6 Impact of CS agreements within CSFF groups on natural capital asset quantity

Table 4: Broad habitat categories and associated Natural Capital Indicators (NCIs) related to asset quantity

Freshwater	Farmland	Grassland	Mountain, moor and heathland	Woodland	Coastal
Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh	Arable and rotational leys	Other Semi Natural Grassland	Blanket bog	Broadleaved, mixed & yew woodland	Salt marsh
Lakes and Standing Waters	Orchards & top fruit		Dwarf shrub heath	Woodland Priority Habitats	Sand dunes
Lowland Fens			Woodland (above moorland line)		Shingle
Lowland Raised Bog					
Reedbeds					
Blanket Bog					
Woodland					

Freshwater

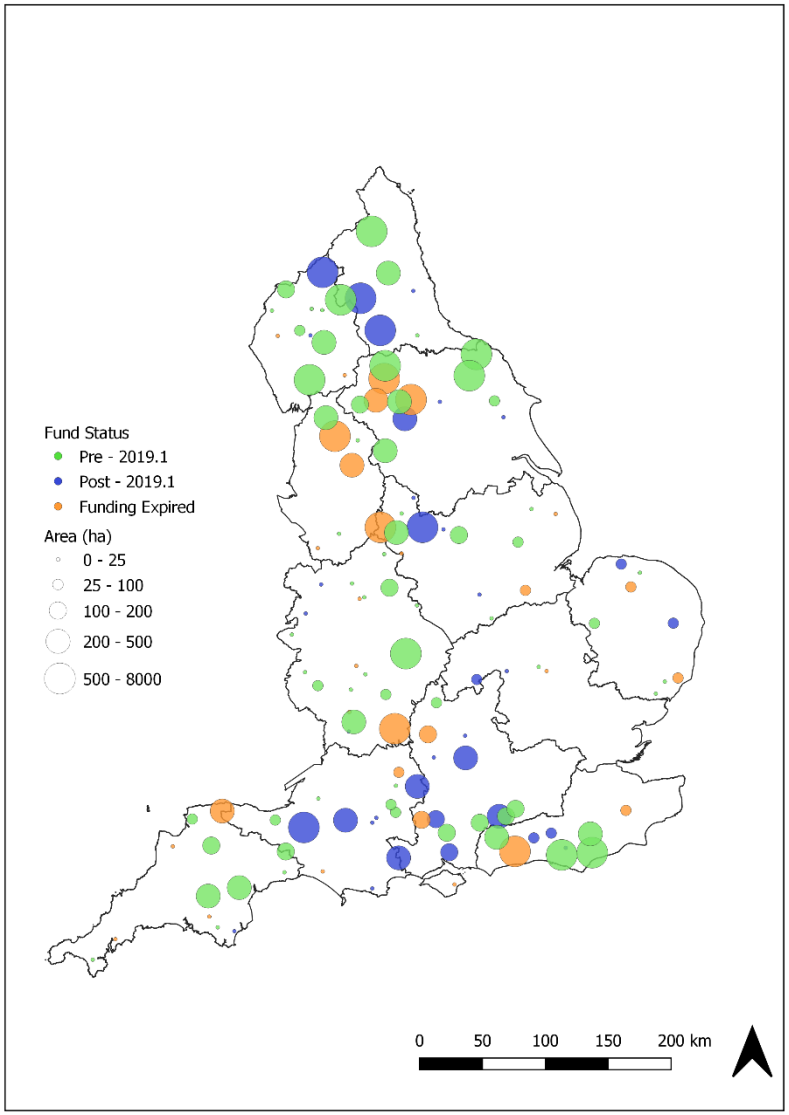


Figure 9: Area under CS options across individual CSFFs Groups which impact NCIs in the Freshwater habitat category

Table 5: Summary of CS option areas which impact NCIs in the Freshwater habitat category compared to national resource identified in the Natural Capital Atlas.

	Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh	Lakes and Standing Waters	Lowland Fens	Lowland Raised Bog	Reedbeds	Blanket Bog	Woodland	Sum across NCIs
National resource identified by Natural Capital atlas (ha)	218,200	49,200	22,200	9,700	7000	277,100	1,305,300	1,888,700
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha)	5806	000	056	83	20	21,812	12,434	40,215
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (%)	2.66	0.00	0.25	0.87	0.29	7.87	0.96	2.13
% Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	-23.78	-100	-90.09	-71.03	-87.65	-87.80	9.22	-79.78

Table 5 shows the amount of land contributing to natural capital in freshwater habitats covered by CS options within CSFF groups. Although the CSFF groups are still protecting and supporting a lot of the natural capital resources from these habitats, one of the most striking trends is that the percentage change for active management has gone down since 2019. For example, 88% of the land that was previously a part of blanket bogs covered by applicable CS options within CSFF groups is no longer captured here. Wet woodland, however, is increasing; this may be due to the new CSFF group started in the New Forest.

Figure 9: Area under CS options across individual CSFFs Groups which impact NCIs in the Freshwater habitat category. Figure 9 shows the distribution of land which is managed under agri-environment options helping to protect freshwater. It shows that there are considerable areas across many CSFF groups where active management through CS options supports and enhances freshwater habitat related natural capital. This is less pronounced in the east of the county where freshwater, and its associated habitats, are less common.

Farmland

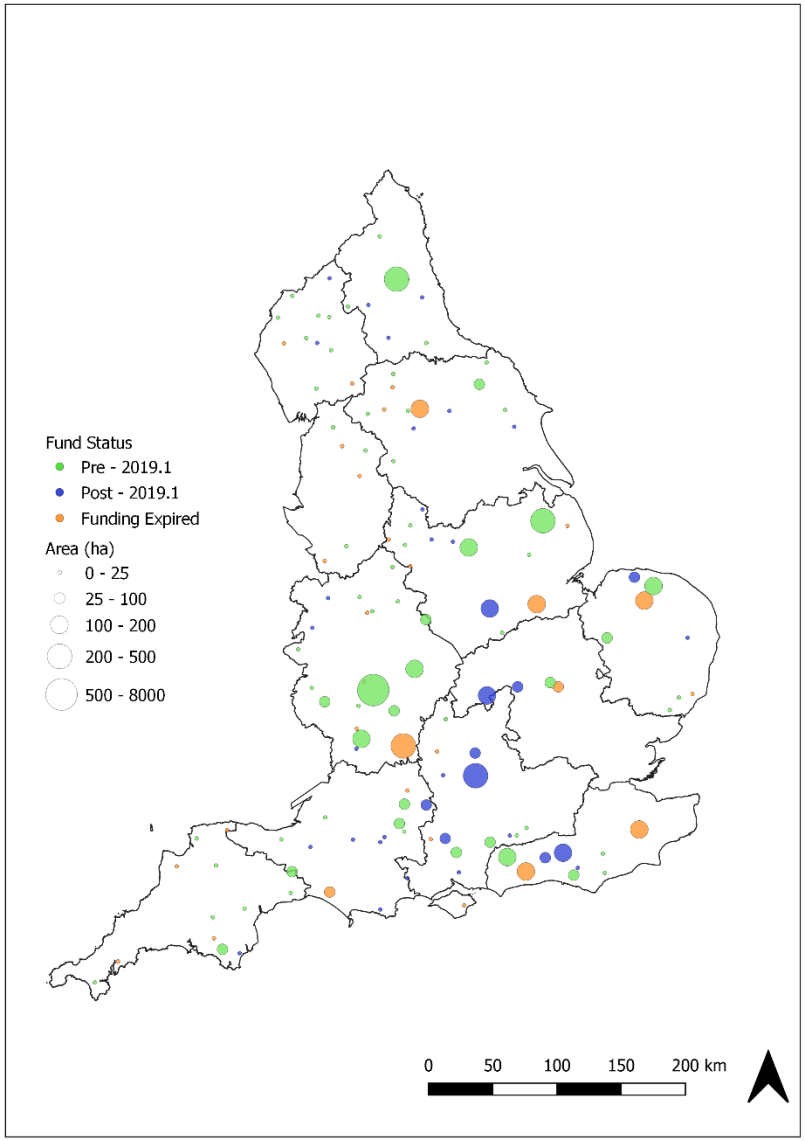


Figure 10: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs in the Farmland habitat category

Table 6: Summary of CS option areas which impact NCIs in the Farmland habitat category compared to national resource identified in the Natural Capital Atlas.

	Arable and rotational leys	Orchards & top fruit	Sum across NCIs
National resource identified by Natural Capital atlas (ha)	4,803,300	15,600	4,818,900
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha)	4,980	192	5,172
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (%)	0.10	1.23	0.11
% Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	33.16	-28.99	14.97

Table 6 shows that although the area of land supporting farmland habitats under the CS options being supported by CSFF groups is relatively small, the area supported under arable and rotational leys has increased by 33%. The area under top fruit and orchards has decreased with nearly a 30% loss, however, this is a comparatively small change in total area and could easily be affected by just a few members with the relevant habitat leaving CSFF groups or agreements with related options expiring.

Figure 10 shows the distribution of land within CSFF groups that is managed under CS options that impact NCIs within the farmland habitat category. Larger areas of land within CSFF groups under CS agreements which support farmland NCIs are located in central and eastern England, where arable cropping tends to be more prevalent.

Grassland

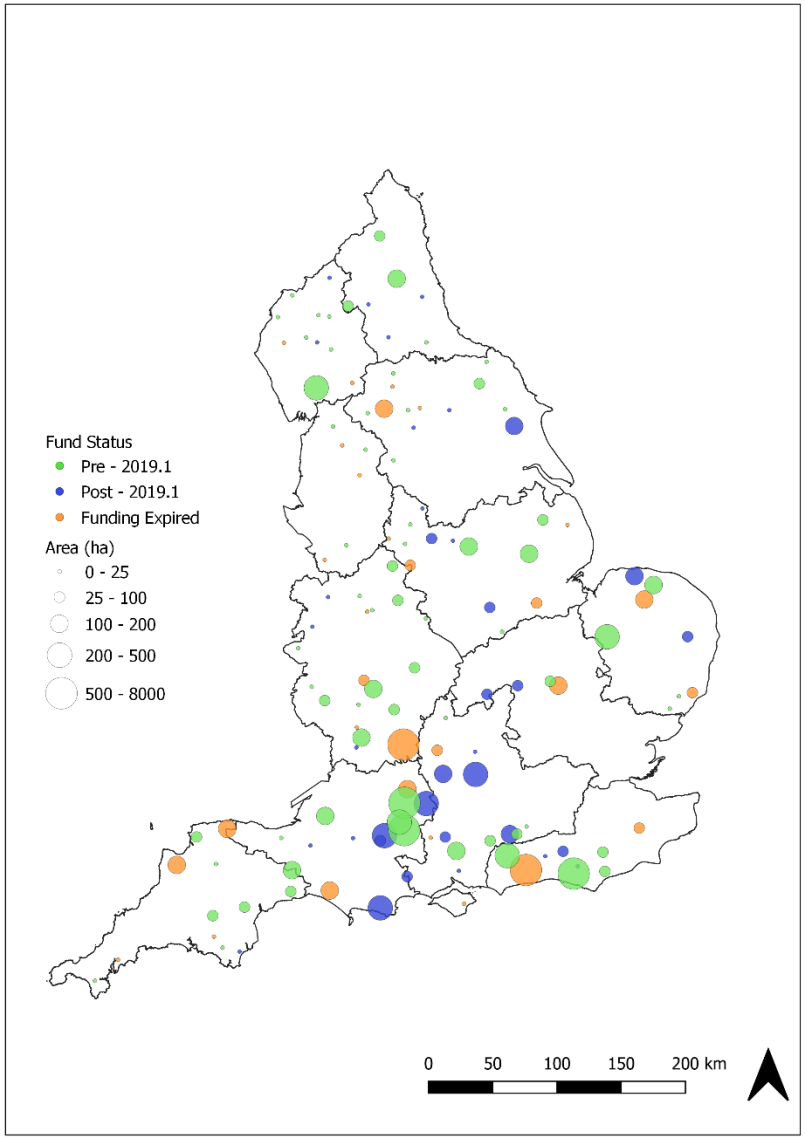


Figure 11: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs in the Grassland habitat category

Table 7: Summary of CS option areas which impact NCIs in the Grassland habitat category compared to national resource identified in the Natural Capital Atlas.

	Other Semi Natural Grassland	Sum across NCIs
National resource identified by Natural Capital atlas (ha)	158,800	158,800
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha)	11,663	11,663
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (%)	7.34	7.34
% Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	-43.43	-43.43

Table 7 shows the CS option supporting NCIs within the grassland habitat category to cover about 7% of the national resource. This is, however, a reduction from 2019 of 43%. Reasons for this strong decrease could include the expiry of larger CS agreements with grassland options in England as well as members with large areas of grassland habitat under CS agreement leaving CSFF groups due to land sales, retirement or other circumstantial or business reasons.

Figure 11 shows that CS options supporting NCIs within the grassland habitat category are common throughout the whole of England, with CSFF groups with particularly high area coverage being concentrated in central, eastern and southern England.

Mountain, moor and heathland

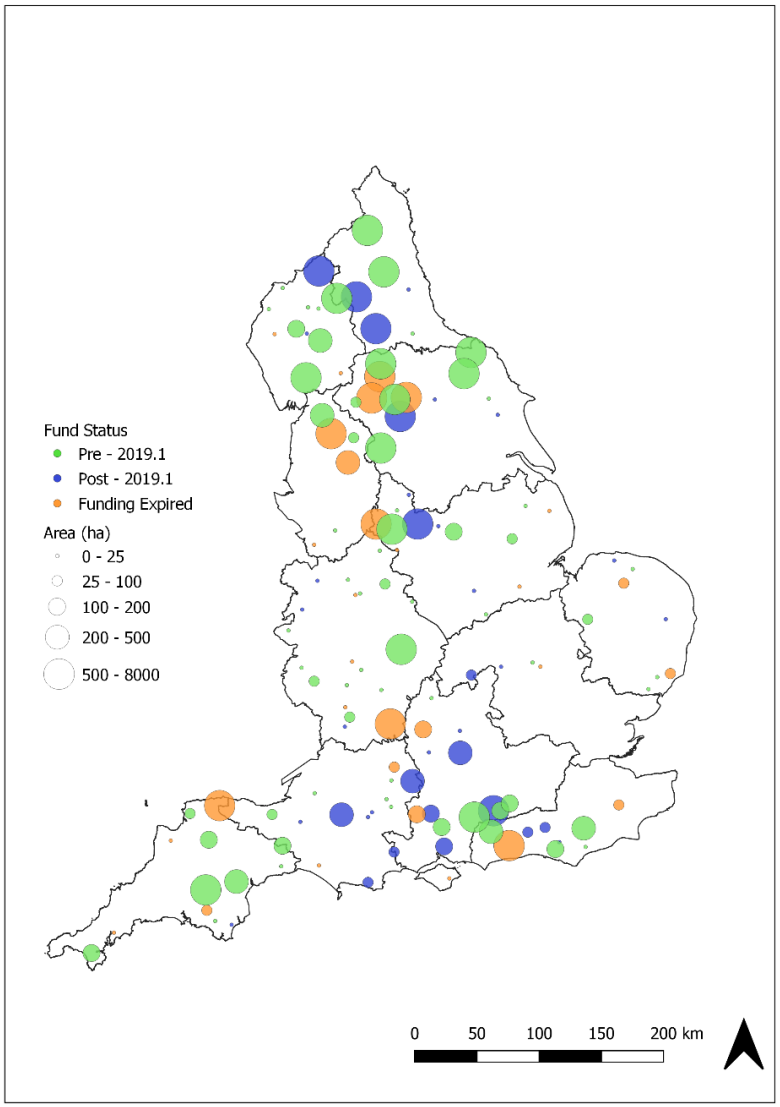


Figure 12: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs in the Mountain, moor and heathland habitat category

Table 8: Summary of CS option areas which impact NCIs in the Mountain, moor and heathland habitat category compared to national resource identified in the Natural Capital Atlas.

	Blanket bog	Dwarf shrub heath	Woodland (above moorland line)	Sum of indicator area (ha)
National resource identified by Natural Capital atlas (ha)	277,100	316,800	12,900	606,800
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha)	21,813	24,324	212.1[2]	46,349
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (%)	7.87	7.68	1.64	7.64

[2] This figure has been adjusted from the previous analysis in phase 3. The extent of woodland remains the same but overstated the area of relevant CS options covering them within FF Groups

% Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	-87.80	-86.83	-98.14	-91.8

Table 8 indicates that groups containing mountain, moor and heathland natural capital assets supported by CS options, whilst still covering a large area, have significantly reduced since 2019: 88% of the blanket bog resource and 87% of the dry dwarf shrub heath as well as nearly all the woodland above the moorland line previously supported by CS agreements is no longer contained within the CSFF groups. Possible reasons for this once again include the expiry of relevant CS agreements as well as landholders leaving CSFF groups.

Figure 12 shows that most CSFF groups supporting mountain, moor and heathland natural capital assets are located across England, with the largest amounts being in the north of England and in the moorlands of Dartmoor and Exmoor. Dwarf shrub heath habitats on the higher land in the south are also being supported.

Woodland

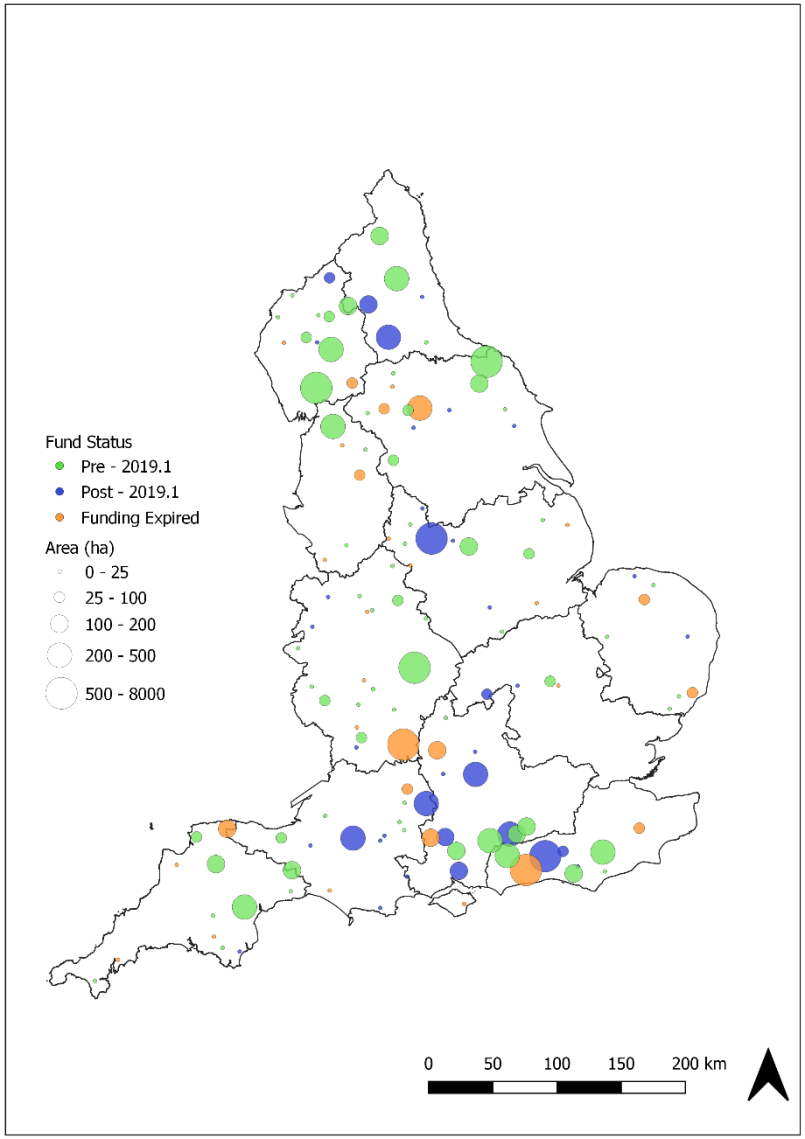


Figure 13: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs in the Woodland habitat category

Table 9: Summary of CS option areas which impact NCIs in the Woodland habitat category compared to national resource identified in the Natural Capital Atlas.

	Broadleaved, mixed & yew woodland	Woodland Priority Habitats	Sum across NCIs
National resource identified by Natural Capital atlas (ha)	846,800	735,400	1,582,200
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha)	13102	697	13,799
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (%)	1.55	0.09	0.87
Percentage change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	3.84	-79.96	-14.26

Table 9 shows CS options supporting NCIs within the woodland habitat category. While many CSFF groups have some degree of uptake of CS options supporting woodland assets, Table 9 shows that the overall support afforded to these types of habitats through CSFF groups is very small, with just over 1.5% of woodland within the natural capital indicators being supported through CS options. There has been a large reduction in the percentage of CSFF groups with CS options supporting priority habitat woodland, although this relates to a comparatively small area and could be accounted for by a single CSFF agreement with a large area of woodland expiring or the landholder leaving the CSFF group. It is possible that other woodland/forestry schemes are more attractive to landholders and this could depress the uptake of relevant CS options reflected here across the woodland habitat category.

Figure 13 shows that comparatively large areas of CS options supporting NCIs within the woodland habitat category are found across England where woodland is more common, e.g., across the New Forest.

Coastal

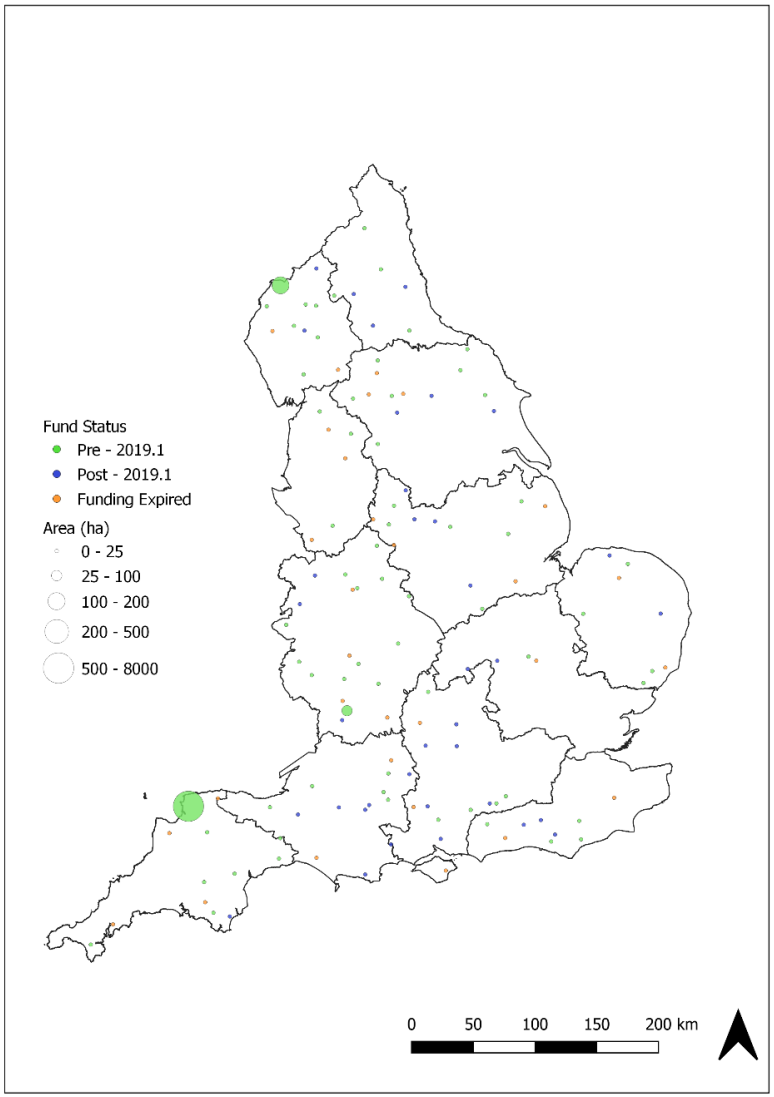


Figure 14: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs in the Coastal habitat category

Table 10: Summary of CS option areas which impact NCIs in the Coastal habitat category compared to national resource identified in the Natural Capital Atlas.

	Salt marsh	Sand dunes	Shingle	Sum across NCIs
National resource identified by Natural Capital atlas (ha)	32,500	10,600	4,100	47,200
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha)	219	1,354	1,354	2,927
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (%)	0.67	12.77	33.03	6.20
% Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	-68.00	0.0	0.0	-13.72

Table 10 shows that the amount of support afforded to coastal assets differs between habitat types, with less than 1% of the saltmarsh resource being supported through CS agreements within CSFF groups, while 12.77% of sand dunes and 33.03% of shingle are afforded some degree of support in this way. There has been a large reduction in the percentage of saltmarsh recorded, but as this relates to a comparatively small area it may be just one or two CS agreements not being renewed or landholders leaving CSFF groups.

Figure 14 shows that uptake of CS options supporting natural capital assets in the coastal habitat category, as would be expected, only occurs amongst CSFF groups located at the coast. Importantly, however, it also shows that not all groups in coastal regions are currently supporting coastal assets through active management under CS agreements, highlighting potential for the targeting of relevant options.

2.7 Impact of CS agreements within CSFF groups on natural capital asset quality

Table 11: Asset quality themes and associated Natural Capital Indicators (NCIs) mapped for all habitat types.

Cultural	Hydrology and Geomorphology	Nutrient and Chemical Status	Species Composition	Vegetation
Favourable condition of SSSIs	Naturalness of water level regime	Nutrient status of water bodies	Naturalness of biological assemblage: number of trophic levels & community composition in each level	Presence & frequency of pollinator larval & adult food plants
Designated Historic Environment Assets (World Heritage Sites, Scheduled monuments (% at risk), Historic Parks & Gardens, Listed Buildings, Conservation Area)		Soil nutrient status		Extent of permanent vegetation cover

Table 11 shows the asset quality themes and associated Natural Capital Indicators (NCIs) mapped for all habitat types. These are further discussed in the tables and figures below. Comparisons to the overall national resource as undertaken in section **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.** for NCIs related to asset quantity were not possible within this section as the National Natural Capital Atlas (Wigley et al., 2020) does not record these figures for NCIs associated to asset quality themes. Therefore, only standalone figures for each respective resource supported by CS options within CS groups are included below.

Cultural

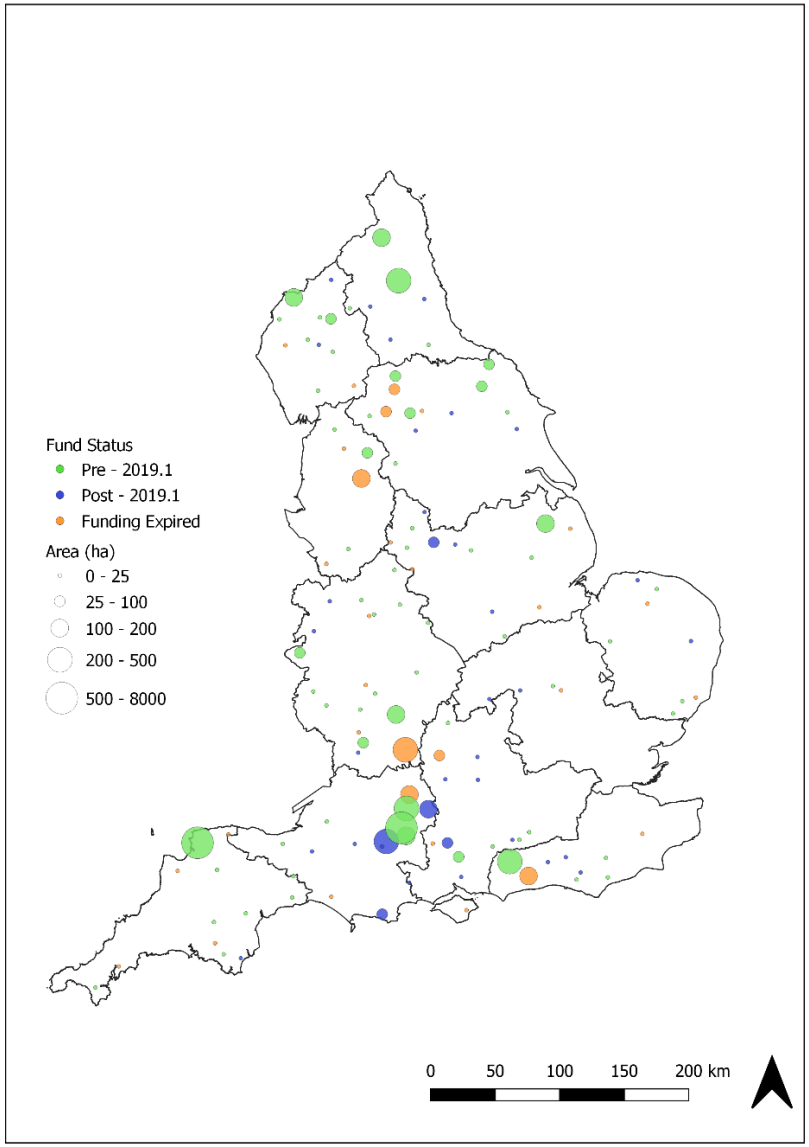


Figure 15: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs within the Cultural asset quality theme.

Table 12: Summary of CS option within CSFF groups areas which impact NCIs in the Cultural asset quality theme

	Favourable condition of SSSIs	Designated Historic Environment Assets (World Heritage Sites, Scheduled monuments (% at risk), Historic Parks & Gardens, Listed	Sum of NCIs
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha)	2,039	23,069	25,108
% Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	-22.84	-76.61	-72.25

CS options within CSFF groups support significant areas of cultural assets (Table 12), indicating that there is a considerable uptake of CS options that target cultural assets within CSFF groups, though without comparative measures of the total area of cultural assets, the exact proportion of the assets supported by active management within CS groups is unknown. It is noteworthy that the majority of area covered by CS options under the cultural asset quality theme impact on designated historic environment assets, rather than the favourable condition of SSSIs. There has been a large reduction in the SSSIs and historic environment features being protected, likely for similar reasons as set out in section 2.6.

Figure 15 shows that cultural natural capital indicators are supported by CSFF groups throughout England, but appear to be more concentrated in central-southern England, with individual CSFF groups in Devon and northeast England also having a strong role.

Hydrology and Geomorphology

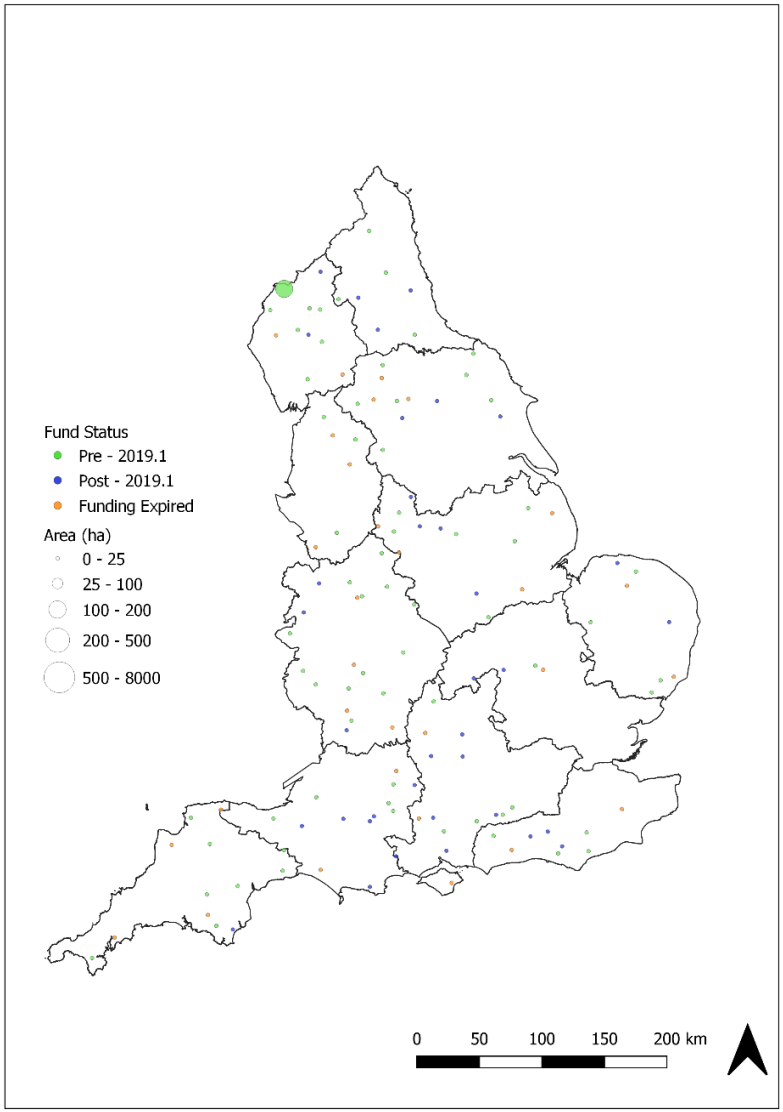


Figure 16: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs within the Hydrology and Geomorphology asset quality theme

Table 13: Summary of CS option within CSFF groups areas which impact NCIs in the Hydrology and Geomorphology asset quality theme.

	Naturalness of water level regime	Sum across NCIs
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha):	141	141
Percentage change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	-83.54	-83.54

Table 13 shows that, at the national level, only a small area of hydrological features is supported through CS options taken up by CSFF groups. Without comparable national metrics it is not possible to establish the significance of the area with regards to the percentage of the total area covered or in terms of the particular sensitivity of the area covered. There has been a large percentage reduction in coverage, which could be due to CS options not being renewed and existing schemes expiring.

Figure 16 shows that CS options supporting the naturalness of water level regimes within the hydrology and geomorphology asset quality theme are concentrated in the north west. There is a small area covered by these options, but this value will be affected by the size of hydrological features compared to other more common larger scale habitats.

Nutrient and Chemical Status

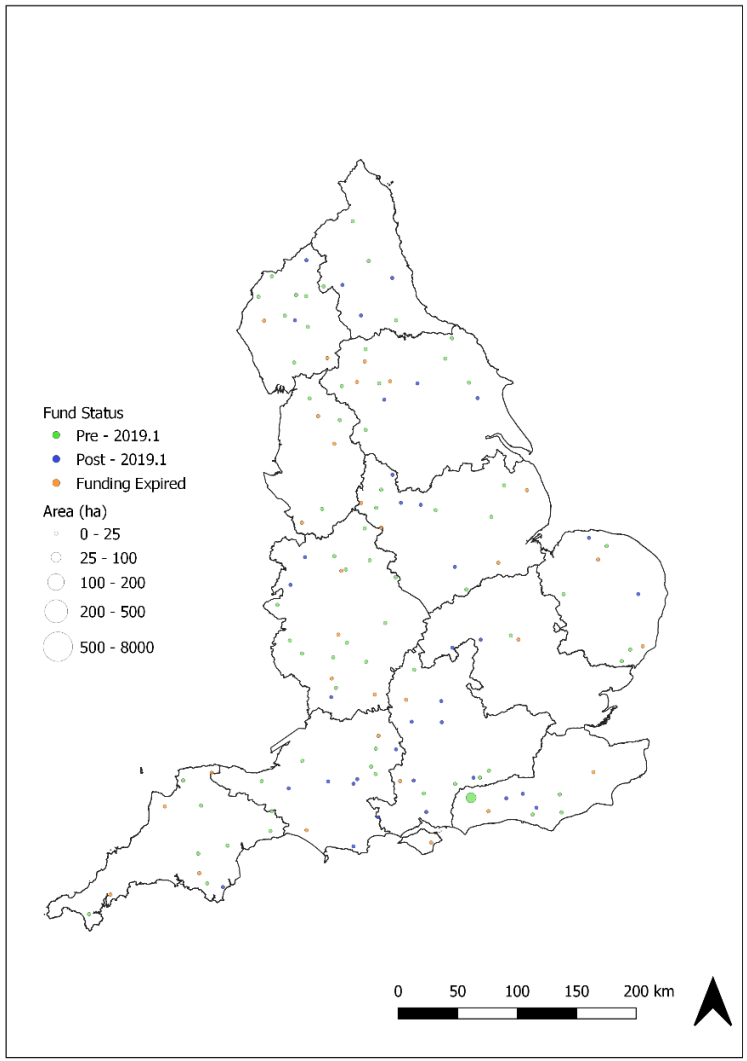


Figure 17: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs within the Nutrient and Chemical Status asset quality theme

Table 14: Summary of CS option within CSFF groups areas which impact NCIs in the Nutrient and Chemical Status asset quality theme

	Nutrient status of water bodies	Soil nutrient status	Sum across NCIs
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha):	0.016	65	65
% Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	0.00	-79.03	-79.03

Table 14 highlights that out of the two NCIs contributing to this asset quality theme, only soil nutrient status is supported through appropriate CS options on CSFF groups' land, compared to nutrient status of water bodies which only shows negligible areas. However, protection of the nutrient status of soil can be expected to have a downstream effect on water quality. The areas supported under soil nutrient status have also reduced by nearly 80% since 2019. Likely causes include CS agreements expiring or landholders with relevant CS options leaving CSFF groups.

Figure 17 shows that few CSFF groups are supporting natural capital indicators under the nutrient and chemical status asset quality throughout England, though areas supported under this asset quality theme are generally low across all groups.

Species Composition

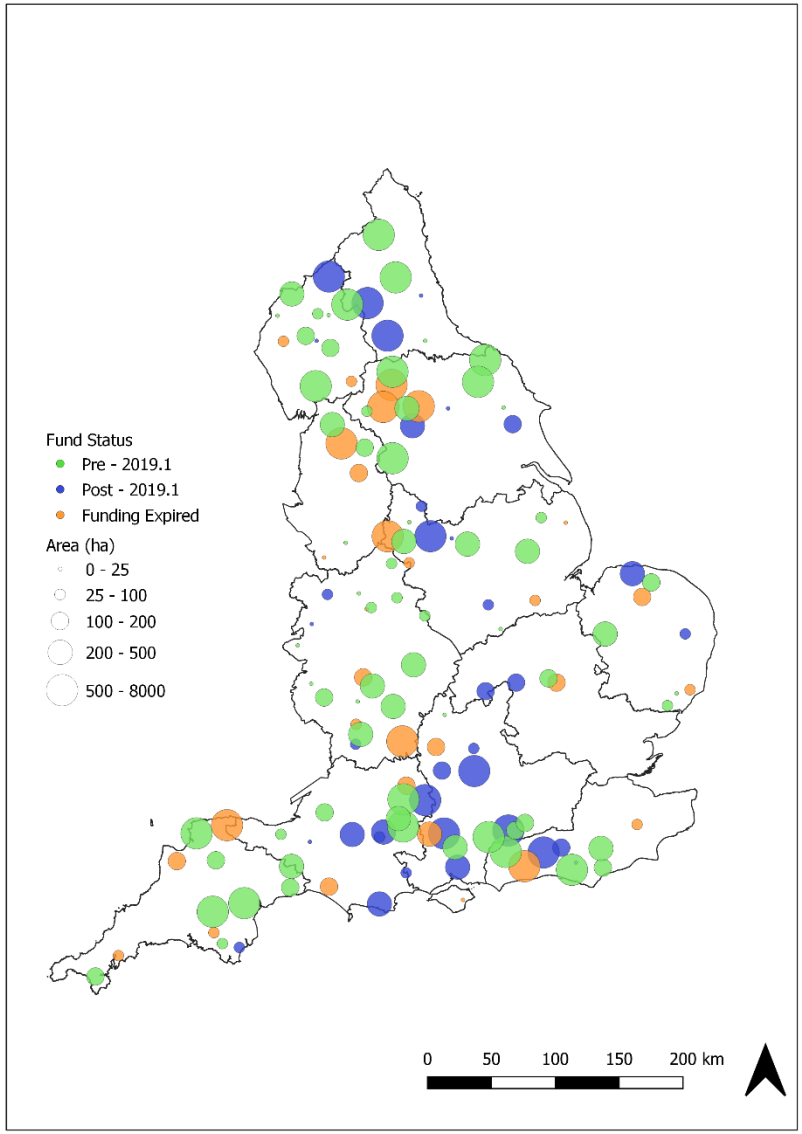


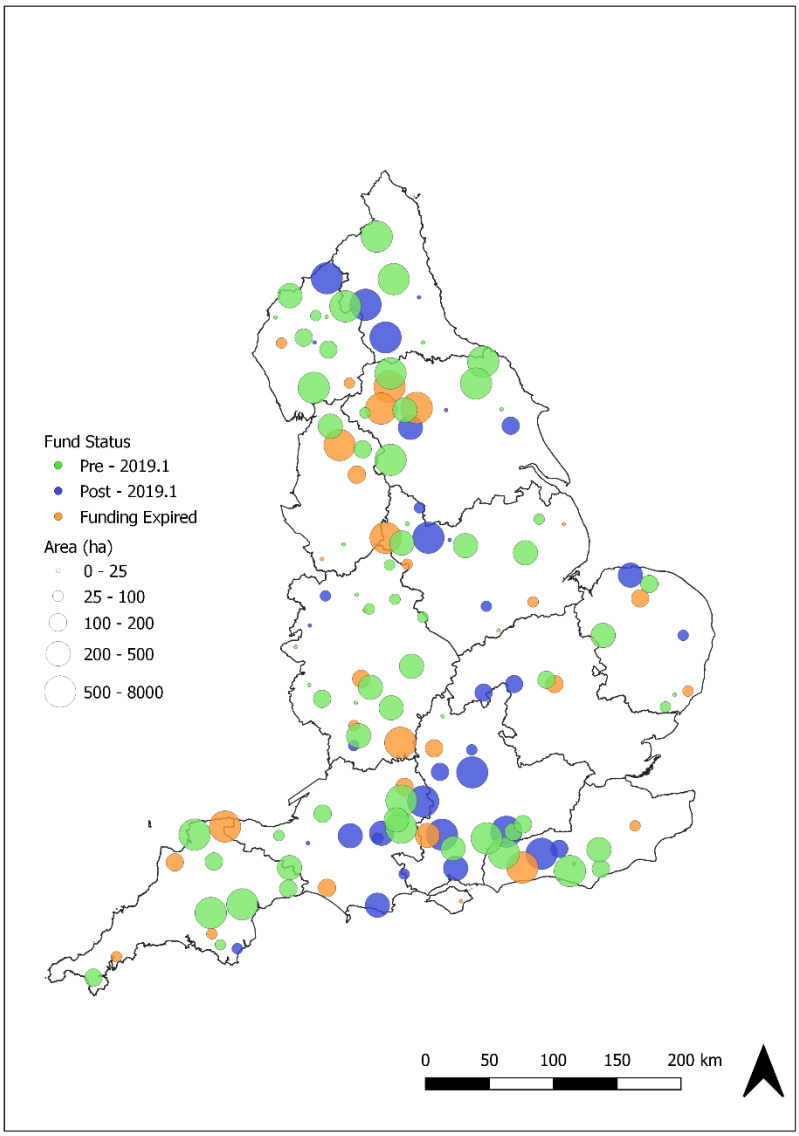
Figure 18: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs within the Species Composition asset quality theme

Table 15: Summary of CS option within CSFF groups areas which impact NCIs in the Species composition asset quality theme.

	Naturalness of biological assemblage: number of trophic levels & community composition in each level	Sum across NCIs
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha):	57,594	57,594
% Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	-75.52	-75.52

Figure 18: **Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs within the Species Composition asset quality theme**

Table 15 shows CS options supporting the Naturalness of biological assemblage NCI under the species composition asset quality theme. Although 57,600ha of land is being supported, this is a large drop since 2019 when over 230,000ha was protected.



shows that most CSFF groups do still contain CS options which support NCIs in the Species composition asset quality theme even if the overall area has considerably decreased. The drop is most likely explained by CS agreements expiring, with large amounts of land supporting the NCI species composition asset no longer being under agreement.

Vegetation

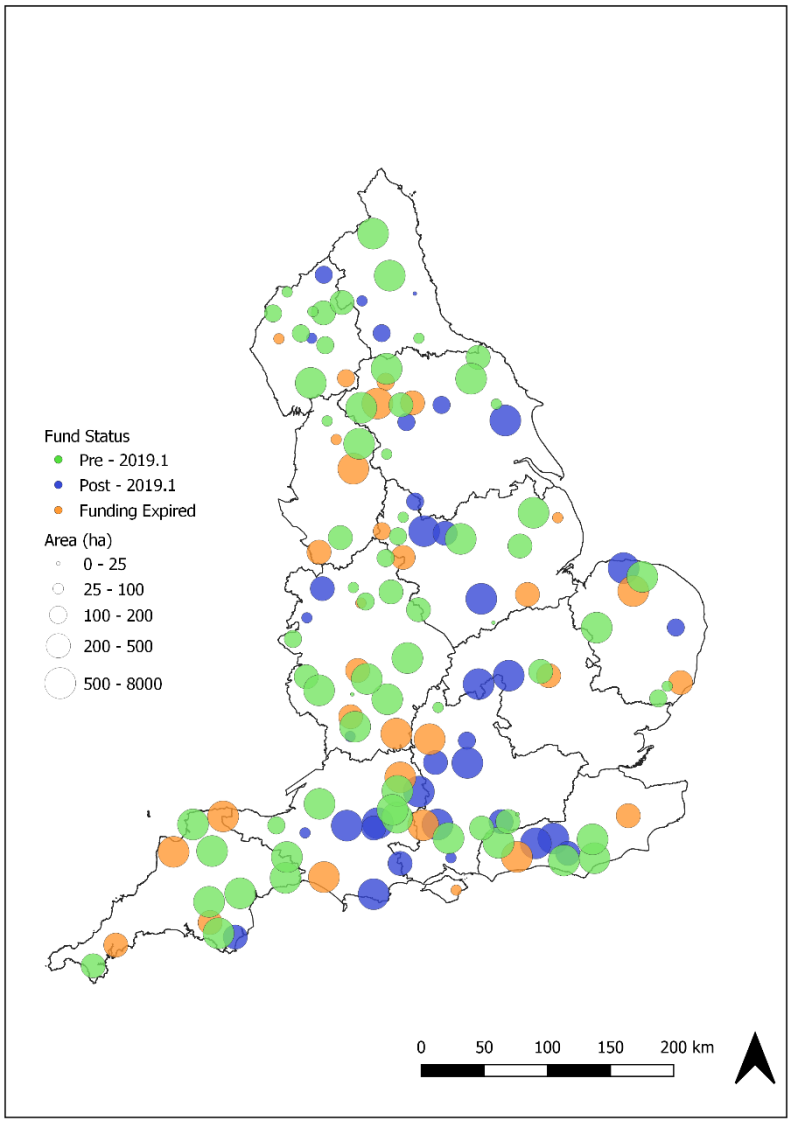


Figure 19: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs within the Vegetation asset quality theme

Table 16: Summary of CS option within CSFF groups areas which impact NCIs in the Vegetation asset quality theme

	Presence & frequency of pollinator larval & adult food plants	Extent of permanent vegetation cover	Sum across NCIs
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha):	43,962	34,625	78,588
% Change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	-29.30	-57.54	-45.33

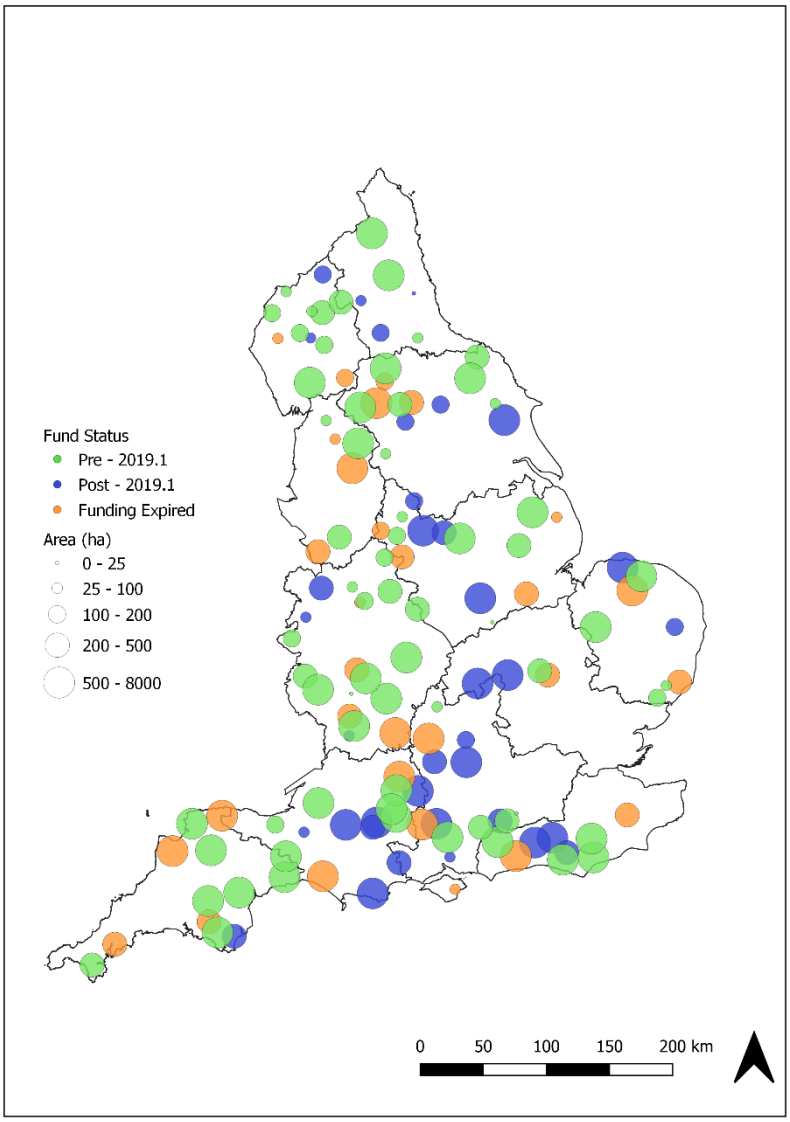


Figure **19: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact NCIs within the Vegetation asset quality theme**

Table 16 highlights that, by area, the contribution of CSFF groups to NCIs under the vegetation asset quality theme is considerable, with over 43,900ha of assets supported by relevant CS options. There is, however, a reduction in the amount since 2019, which likely indicates existing CS agreements expiring or landholders leaving CSFF groups.

Figure 19 shows that the Natural Capital vegetation quality theme is well represented by options under CS throughout the country. The majority of CSFF groups tend to have CS options in place which support NCIs under this theme.

2.8 Impact of CS agreements within CSFF groups on natural capital asset location: Patch size, shape and edge

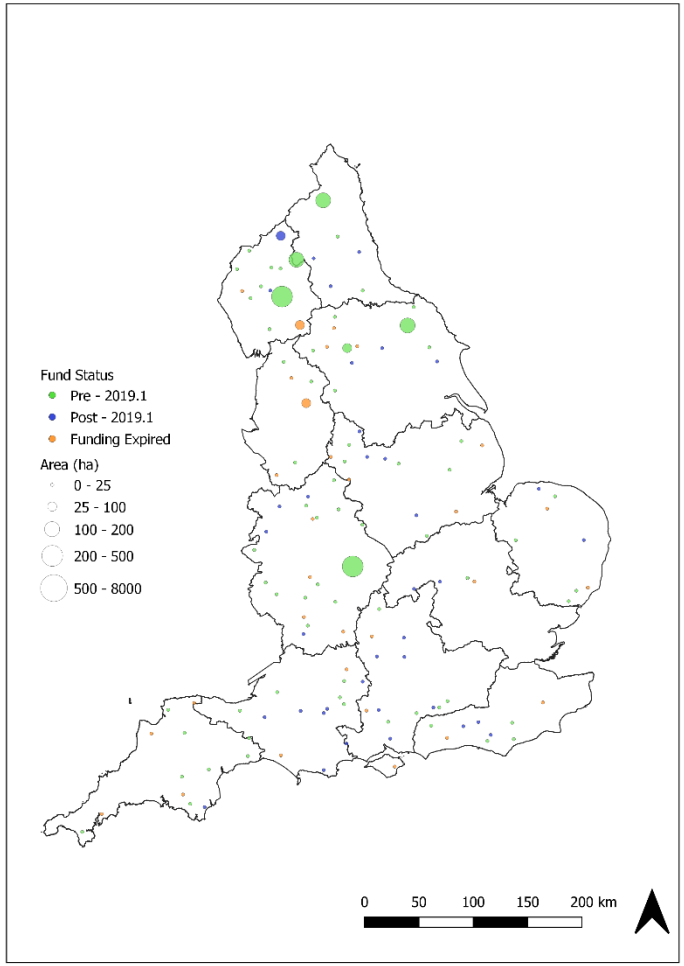


Figure 20: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact the Patch size, shape and edge natural capital indicator

Table 17: Summary of CS option areas which impact the Patch size, shape and edge natural capital indicator

	Patch size, shape and edge	Sum of indicator area (ha)
Resource covered by options within CSFF groups (ha):	1582	1582
Percentage change since Q1, 2019 (Phase 3 evaluation)	1.53	1.53

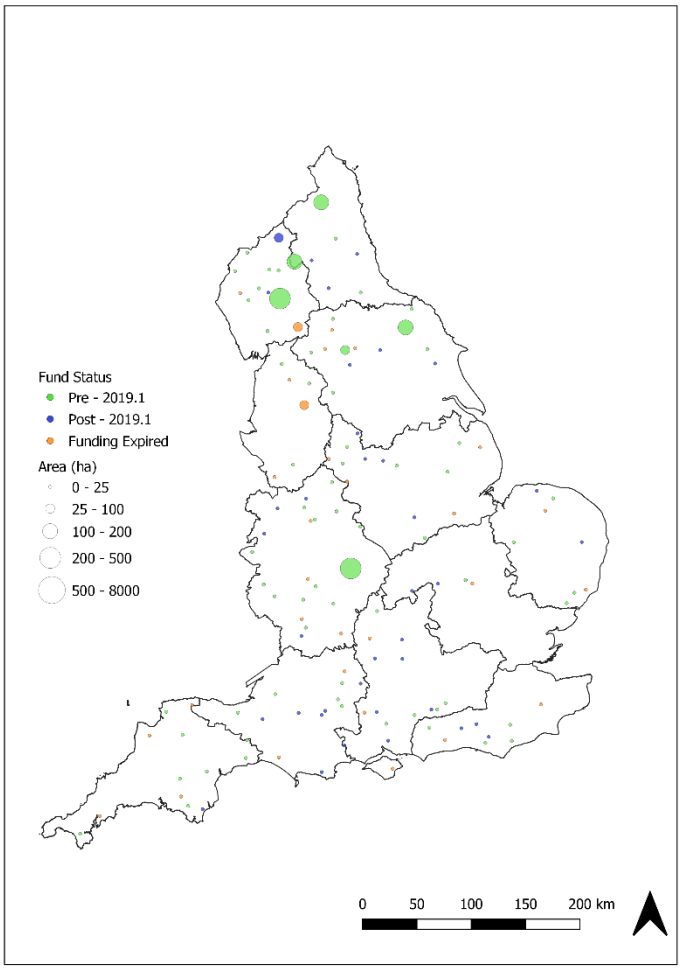


Figure **20: Area under CS options across individual CSFF groups which impact the Patch size, shape and edge natural capital indicator**

Table 17 displays CSFF group uptake of CS options contributing to the Patch size, shape and edge natural capital indicator. Encouragingly, the amount of assets protected by CS schemes within the CSFF groups has increased for this indicator by a small amount.

Figure 20 shows the location of patch size, shape and edge effect assets supported by CS options across England. The asset is concentrated across several CSFF groups in the north and one in the midlands.

2.9 CSFF and priority habitats

The Environment Bill sets out to restore natural habitats, increase biodiversity and make better use of our natural resources, halting the decline in species by 2030. Outside of sites designated for their nature value, the main existing national-scale source of data on the presence of high value habitats in England, which support the largest number of native species, is the Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI). This dataset integrates inventory data for most of the habitats identified as priorities in Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006). For those habitats where this was not possible, the PHI is complemented by individual habitat inventories (e.g., for Wood Pasture and Parkland, Ponds, Ancient Woodland).

PHI data can be used to target restoration or recreation activity and to assess the degree of connectivity or potential for dispersal of different species. CSFF groups who can encourage restoration of, and enhancement in, the condition of larger continuous blocks of habitats as part of coordinated group activities, will have a more profound effect on biodiversity than individual agri-environment agreements in isolation (Lawton et al., 2010).

This section of the report contains figures that show how the CSFF groups relate to priority habitats across England. The analysis does not consider change detection, as there was no analysis undertaken on the coverage of priority habitats under the CSFF groups during the Phase 3 evaluation. Appendix 3 and 4 provide more detail to aid further analysis; this details the extent of individual priority habitats against each of the CSFF groups as well as NE administrative boundaries.

The data collated for analysing the CSFF groups was compared to the PHI. All together there are over 2,229,335 ha of priority habitats within England (

Table **18**). The CSFF groups cover just over 10% of this area. This allows for additional action to be taken to focus future CSFF group locations as well as group expansion at areas of priority habitat, so that a greater proportion of the PHI is covered under this type of landscape scale agreement.

However, looking at the CSFF groups themselves, it is encouraging to note that nearly 30% of the land within the CSFF groups as a whole comprises priority habitats. The Lawton review (Lawton et al., 2010) states that 10% of land on farms should comprise natural habitats. Taken as a whole, the CSFF groups exceed this 10% target of natural habitats, as indicated by the presence of priority habitats on member's holdings (

Table 18). This includes land both within and outside ES/CS agreements (The total area of PHI within CSFF groups under AES agreement comprises 71.52% (

Table 18), with areas of most individual priority habitats within CSFF groups under AES agreement comfortably exceeding 50%. This indicates that option targeting within CSFF groups achieves a good coverage for active management of PHI habitat, maintaining and enhancing their extent and condition.

Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference. records the amount of land under each individual priority habitat that is covered by the CSFF groups. Groups cover nearly 33% of the lowland calcareous grassland habitats across England. This comprises a considerable proportion of a very valuable habitat, which is potentially being protected by active management: 29% of this land is within CS agreements and 47% within ES agreement. Nearly 20% of the area of the blanket bog priority habitats within England falls within CSFF groups. Within the groups themselves, 81.27% of blanket bog habitat is covered under AES agreement.

Priority habitats that do not tend to be actively farmed have the smallest representation amongst the CSFF groups. This includes: mudflats, limestone pavement, coastal vegetated shingle and saline lagoons. All of these cover less than 1.5% of the areas of the priority habitats. Moreover, only 4% of traditional orchards and 5.5% of lowland dry acid grassland are covered by the CSFF groups.

Table 19).

Coverage varies considerably for each individual CSFF group. 35 of the CSFF groups have less than 10% of priority habitat coverage. Within the CSFF groups that do not currently meet the target, expanding the amount of high nature conservation value land on member's holdings

should be a priority. For five of the CSFF groups, priority habitat makes up more than 70% of the area of the CSFF group, with the highest percentage being located in CSFF group 020010 at 81.7% (Appendix 3). In groups where priority habitats make up a larger percentage area of CSFF groups, maintaining and potentially expanding the spatial extent as well as enhancing the condition of existing priority habitats should be a key focus of group activity and AES agreements.

Table 18: Intersection of PHI and CSFF groups

Total PHI area (ha)	PHI habitat within CSFF groups (ha)	PHI habitat within CSFF groups (%)	Total area of CSFF groups (ha)	Area of CSFF groups within the PHI (%)	Area of PHI within CSFF groups under AES agreement (%)
2,229,335	*233,471*	*10.47*	*803,032*	*29.07*	*71.52*

The total area of PHI within CSFF groups under AES agreement comprises 71.52% (

Table 18), with areas of most individual priority habitats within CSFF groups under AES agreement comfortably exceeding 50%. This indicates that option targeting within CSFF groups achieves a good coverage for active management of PHI habitat, maintaining and enhancing their extent and condition.

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Priority habitats that do not tend to be actively farmed have the smallest representation amongst the CSFF groups. This includes: mudflats, limestone pavement, coastal vegetated shingle and saline lagoons. All of these cover less than 1.5% of the areas of the priority habitats. Moreover, only 4% of traditional orchards and 5.5% of lowland dry acid grassland are covered by the CSFF groups.

Table 19: Individual PHI habitats within CSFF groups

PHI Habitat	Total PHI Habitat in England (ha)	PHI habitat within CSFF groups (ha)	PHI habitat within CSFF groups (%)	PHI habitat within CSFF groups under CS agreement (ha)	PHI habitat within CSFF groups under CS agreement (%)	PHI habitat within CSFF groups under ES agreement (ha)	PHI habitat within CSFF groups under ES agreement (%)	PHI habitat within CS groups under AES agreement (%)
Blanket bog	*234,785*	*46,425*	*19.77%*	*9,704*	*20.90%*	*28,025*	*60.37%*	*81.27%*
Deciduous woodland	*735,601*	*41,718*	*5.67%*	*14,783*	*35.44%*	*5,752*	*13.79%*	*49.22%*
Upland heathland	*228,432*	*37,582*	*16.45%*	*11,017*	*29.31%*	*14,323*	*38.11%*	*67.43%*
Grass moorland	*146,442*	*24,348*	*16.63%*	*3,126*	*12.84%*	*16,759*	*68.83%*	*81.67%*
Lowland calcareous grassland	*63,161*	*21,090*	*33.39%*	*6,176*	*29.28%*	*9,998*	*47.41%*	*76.69%*
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	*220,149*	*16,262*	*7.39%*	*5,587*	*34.35%*	*6,317*	*38.84%*	*73.20%*
No main habitat but additional habitats present	*207,976*	*14,233*	*6.84%*	*3,347*	*23.51%*	*7,171*	*50.39%*	*73.90%*
Good quality semi-improved grassland	*74,059*	*10,973*	*14.82%*	*2,634*	*24.00%*	*6,781*	*61.80%*	*85.80%*
PHI Habitat	**Total PHI Habitat in England (ha)**	**PHI habitat within CSFF groups (ha)**	**PHI habitat within CSFF groups (%)**	**PHI habitat within CSFF groups under CS agreement (ha)**	**PHI habitat within CSFF groups under CS agreement (%)**	**PHI habitat within CSFF groups under ES agreement (ha)**	**PHI habitat within CSFF groups under ES agreement (%)**	**PHI habitat within CS groups under AES agreement (%)**
Lowland heathland	*57,187*	*3,917*	*6.85%*	*858*	*21.90%*	*1,670*	*42.64%*	*64.55%*
Lowland meadows	*22,853*	*3,076*	*13.46%*	*1,185*	*38.54%*	*1,309*	*42.55%*	*81.09%*
Fragmented heath	*8,924*	*1,862*	*20.86%*	*732*	*39.34%*	*1,024*	*55.02%*	*94.35%*
Lowland fens	*20,386*	*1,568*	*7.69%*	*470*	*30.00%*	*580*	*37.00%*	*67.01%*
Upland flushes, fens and swamps	*10,060*	*1,400*	*13.92%*	*130*	*9.31%*	*1,078*	*77.00%*	*86.32%*
Coastal saltmarsh	*34,488*	*1,369*	*3.97%*	*119*	*8.67%*	*410*	*29.92%*	*38.59%*
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	*100,14*	*1,207*	*12.06%*	*420*	*34.78%*	*602*	*49.87%*	*84.65%*
Upland calcareous grassland	*9,211*	*1,157*	*12.56%*	*325*	*28.14%*	*562*	*48.55%*	*76.69%*
Lowland raised bog	*8,412*	*1,081*	*12.86%*	*474*	*43.83%*	*321*	*29.66%*	*73.49%*
Lowland dry acid	*15,628*	*879*	*5.63%*	*196*	*22.34%*	*520*	*59.09%*	*81.43%*

grassland								
Coastal sand dunes	*10,280*	*856*	*8.32%*	*627*	*73.22%*	*35*	*4.12%*	*77.34%*
Maritime cliff and slope	*13,444*	*732*	*5.45%*	*270*	*36.92%*	*246*	*33.62%*	*70.54%*
Traditional orchard	*18,641*	*705*	*3.78%*	*240*	*34.08%*	*221*	*31.37%*	*65.44%*
Upland hay meadow	*2,576*	*382*	*14.83%*	*127*	*33.33%*	*191*	*50.06%*	*83.38%*
Reedbeds	*3,246*	*312*	*9.62%*	*36*	*11.62%*	*245*	*78.46%*	*90.08%*
Mudflats	*65,036*	*130*	*0.20%*	*30*	*22.89%*	*50*	*38.75%*	*61.64%*
Limestone pavement	*1,267*	*92*	*7.23%*	*45*	*48.94%*	*36*	*39.78%*	*88.72%*
Mountain heaths and willow scrub	*1,417*	*57*	*4.02%*	*0*	*0.00%*	*57*	*100.00%*	*100.00%*
Coastal vegetated shingle	*3,992*	*22*	*0.55%*	*0*	*0.00%*	*6*	*26.18%*	*26.18%*
Calaminarian grassland	*0*	*20*	*6.88%*	*11*	*51.95%*	*6*	*27.87%*	*79.82%*
Saline lagoons	*297*	*16*	*1.18%*	*0*	*0.00%*	*13*	*83.30%*	*83.30%*

For habitats which are valued for their carbon storage and sequestration, 46,425 ha of blanket bog fall under the areas of the CSFF groups, of which 21% is protected by CS and 60% by ES. In contrast, only 1,181 ha of lowland raised bog are covered by the CSFF groups, but 44% of this is managed under CS agreement and 30% under ES agreement. 41,718 ha of deciduous woodlands are within CSFF land; of this, 35% is under CS management and 14% under ES. Where high percentages of a PHI habitat within the CSFF groups are under ES agreement, there is a danger that once the agreements expire, they won't transition into CS or, eventually, ELM. In such cases, continuity of positive land management could be lost and areas which are now carbon sinks could become net carbon emitters. The CSFF groups with high carbon habitats can play a positive role by encouraging restoration, and by looking to ELM – or potentially, carbon schemes – to ensure active management continues.

The distribution of area of individual CSFF groups that are included in the PHI is shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**. On this map, the larger the circle the more percentage area of that particular CSFF group is in the PHI. The groups that contain the largest amount in the south seem to be based in the area around Southampton, which has a high proportion of natural habitats, and Dartmoor, where there are larger upland moorland areas. Within the north, the land with most priority habitats tends to be on the upland areas around the Pennines and the Lake District.

Error! Reference source not found. shows the areas within the CSFF schemes that are priority habitats and that are under active CS management. The bigger the circle, the more of the PHI habitat in each CSFF group that is covered by a CS agreement. Comparing **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.**, it is clear that the large area of PHI habitats found in the CSFF groups running up the Pennines and through the Lake District have a small percentage of the land in the CSFF which is under CS. This could comprise a good opportunity to encourage members to actively join or transition to the higher-level CS scheme.

Error! Reference source not found. shows the percentage area of PHI habitats present within individual CSFF groups that are included in ES agreements. This has the opposite pattern to **Error! Reference source not found.**,with the area of PHI habitats found in the CSFF groups running up the Pennines and through the Lake District having a large percentage of the land in the CSFF which is under the entry-level ES scheme. This therefore has less protection than land that is in CS and this applies across many PHI habitats. It is important to ensure that land under ES agreements eventually transitions successfully to CS or ELM to ensure continuity of positive land management for environmental benefits on these high-value habitats.

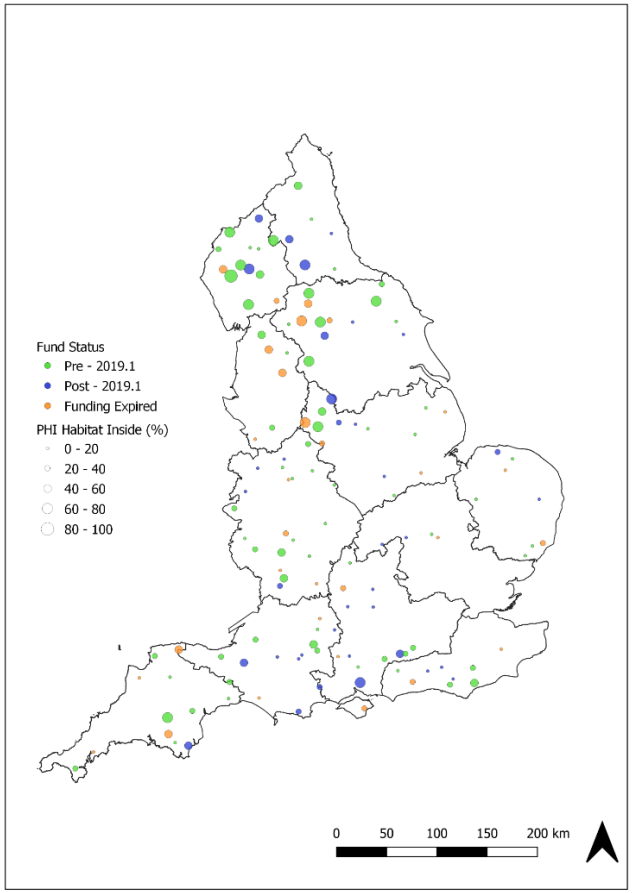

Figure 21: Percentage area of individual CSFF groups that are included in the PHI

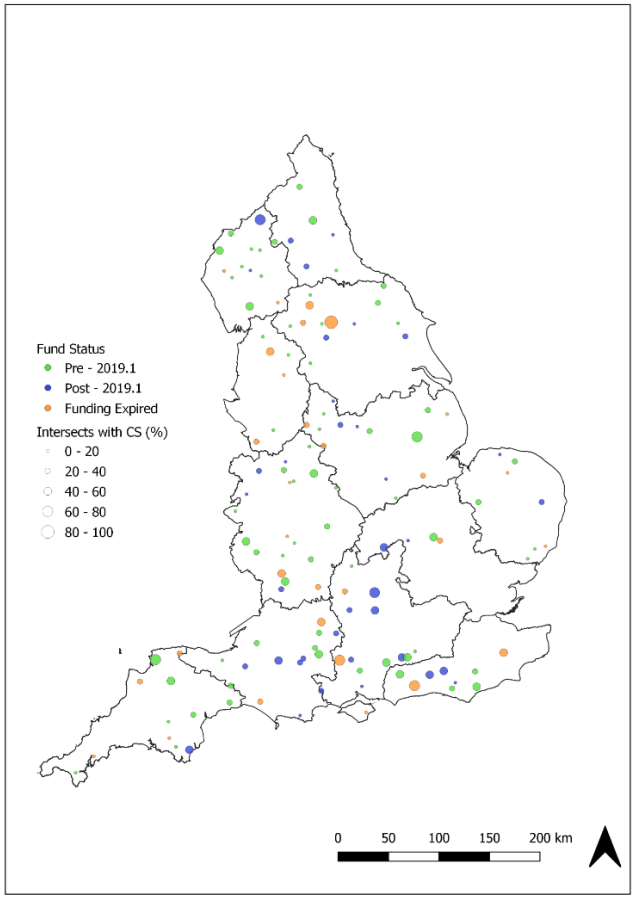

Figure 22: Percentage area of PHI habitats within individual CSFF groups that are included in CS agreements

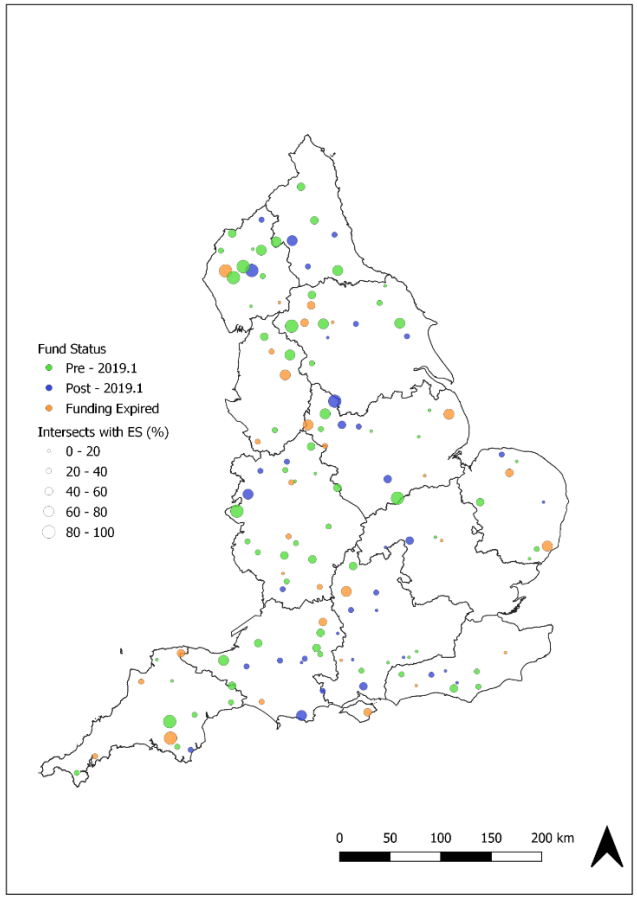

Figure 23: Percentage area of PHI habitats present within individual CSFF groups that are included in ES agreements

2.10 Updates to the WebMap tool

The CSFF Phase 2 evaluation (Jones et al., 2019) created a WebMap tool that allows the viewing of parcel-level information of CSFF group members for the use of Natural England facilitators and administrators.

The existing parcel-level WebMap layer was updated during the CSFF Phase 3 evaluation. The latest available membership information (up to April 2019) was added, as was a layer displaying the natural capital contribution as relates to uptake of CS agreements amongst group members across England.

The primary parcel-level layer produced during the CSFF Phase 3 evaluation was updated for the current phase of the evaluation, to reflect changes in group membership and uptake of CS/ES agreements in existing groups, as well as the creation of new groups from April 2019 to July 2021. Three further layers at the individual CSFF group level were added, to further illustrate CSFF group contribution and interactions with: the CS/ES schemes; Natural Capital themes and broad habitat categories; and the Priority Habitat Inventory.

This allows enabled WebMap viewers to explore the interaction with, and impact of, CSFF groups on a variety of important environmental data layers. Further, it allows local information to be derived, thereby improving decision making concerning the targeting of new agreements or the potential for expansion and creation of CSFF groups.

2.11 Summary

CSFF groups vary greatly in size, predominant business types of members as well as landscape area of their location, which frequently determines local environmental objectives and the focus of each group's activities. It is, therefore, difficult, and potentially misleading to compare and contrasts groups directly as not only do they operate in distinct ecological and agricultural settings but they also have different objectives largely shaped by their location and environment.

However, recording developments and changes in group dynamics regarding membership and CSFF group land area over time allows detailed monitoring of the related uptake of AES agreements and correlated impacts on natural capital and priority habitats.

CSFF Membership

Simple descriptive but detailed analyses of membership metrics across CSFF groups since earlier rounds of evaluation revealed an overall continuing trend of growth in the number and size of CSFF groups but also a previously unobserved pattern of fluctuating membership within individual groups. Non-linear relations documented between changes in the number of members and group areas suggest that the size of individual holdings joining or leaving CSFF groups can have a disproportionate impact on group areas and that other factors such as the buying and selling of individual land parcels, and potentially associated AES agreements might also have a considerable role to pay. There might be many other reasons

for this to be the case, for example prevalent business type in some groups might influence the size of individual holdings, such as extensive upland grazing farms and influence the ratio of group members and area, respectively.

Current scheme data collection does unfortunately not sufficiently support analysis at such a granular level and the inherent challenges contained in the available data, as set out in section 2.2, create an unnecessary, disappointing and difficult to quantify degree of uncertainty in any evaluation until they can be resolved.

It would be possible for DEFRA to design and implement changes in data collection and management as part of the wider AES Monitoring and Evaluation programme which would make analysis more robust, accurate and informed. The issue of the SBI being insufficient to reliably identify and connect individual holdings within larger organisations to local initiatives has been raised in previous rounds of evaluation and is well known within Defra. It does not just affect the CSFF data but also impacts on other aspects of AES M&E.

The data collation and processing methodology developed in Phase 3 of CSFF evaluation and also applied in this current phase ensures consistency and allows for comparisons over time but can't entirely mitigate for the inherent uncertainty in the source data.

Going forward, the accuracy of any future CSFF evaluation would be greatly assisted by complete and up-to-date references of land parcels held within CSFF groups. It is suggested that this could be achieved by members being obliged to supply an accurate and up to date record of all the Rural Land Register (RLR) parcel references belonging to their holding and to notify any changes in these. The group administrator/facilitator could hold these records and they could then be collated on an annual basis or as required for evaluation to accurately assess change over time. This would effectively maintain the currency of land parcels assigned to each group and also address the problem of multiple holdings under the same SBI code being often spread across more than one group.

It is currently unknown if this would place unreasonable additional burden on facilitators and if such a decentralised data collection approach is sufficiently robust. In the absence of any scheme wide changes that address the data issues raised, however, it is suggested that this is a route worth exploring further.

CSFF groups focus on additional environmental benefit beyond simple scheme agreement and a key part of this is their landscape level orientation. There are several options to enhance these benefits through continued scheme expansion, for example:

- At the intensive margin (**intensify**): Increase area of existing CSFF group member's land entered into AES agreements.
- At the extensive margin (**expand area**): Increase area of the existing CSFF groups by adding new members, ideally these new members would also participate in AES.
- **New**: create new CSFF group in priority areas.
- **Linkage**: increase linkage between CSFF group by
    - either expanding existing CSFF, or
    - creating new CSFF or
    - a combination of expand and new CSFF groups.

While the data to compare the relative merits of these alternatives is not readily accessible, it is evident that intensification, expanding of area and the creation of new CSFF groups have so far all been part of the growth of CSFF groups over time.

CSFF and AES

A key finding of the study is the fact that a very high proportion of CSFF group members (84.02%) are currently engaged in AES agreements and that this is complemented by 61% of all land within CSFF groups being under management options, slightly exceeding Defra's goal to bring up to 60% of England's agricultural soil under sustainable management through AES schemes by 2030 (GOV.UK, 2022).

This is a very positive indicator for the contribution the CSFF groups make towards bringing larger areas of land under active management for environmental benefit. It is further worth noting that, while constant fluctuations to CSFF group's membership have been observed, even if a group member leaves, any agreement in place on their land still continues to continues to contribute towards environmental benefits through active land management. While membership to CSFF group's aims to facilitate the setting up and targeting of agreements in line with group objectives, the benefits of individual agreements will still be realised even if CSFF group membership ceases before the agreement expires.

Continuity of active and appropriate land management is exceedingly important to maximise and ensure enduring benefits of any AES scheme. It is therefore desirable to retain land within schemes and to transition expiring agreements successfully as schemes change and evolve. The analysis above highlights the considerable proportion of land holdings within CSFF groups that are still within ES agreements. This poses both a risk and an opportunity.

Upon agreement expiry it is important to engage with the land manager to facilitate successful transition into follow-up schemes such as CS and eventually ELM, so as to maintain, and potentially enhance, active land management on these holdings going forward. Opportunities are present in the potential setting up of more ambitious agreements to build on the increased experience of ES agreement holders and the environmental benefits they have delivered as part of ES. The point of transitions also invites a review of individual agreements to ensure any follow-up remains suitably targeted, especially if environmental objectives might have changed during the duration of the previous agreements.

Whilst there remains potential to encourage the creation of further new agreements amongst the CSFF group membership, greater gains to be made to bring larger areas into active management might be made by expanding existing agreements to parts of holdings not currently covered or to transition existing ES agreements that might be coming to an end into CS and eventually ELM.

CSFF and Natural Capital

Management actions under CS agreements can positively enhance the quantity, quality or spatial aspects of natural capital assets. This includes actions such as management to help habitats retain or maintain good ecological condition, as well as habitat creation. Landscape scale schemes are particularly effective in helping increase biodiversity as they allow land owners to work together to create bigger, better and more joined up networks of habitats, which in turn increases the natural capital delivered. Landscape scale actions are helpful in

terms of ecological resilience, buffering the most sensitive habitats from changes, and thereby maintaining, enhancing or creating natural capital.

As in Phase 3 of the CSFF reporting, the analysis here considered the link between a selected range of CS options and the Natural Capital Indicators described in Lusardi et al. (2018). The results show that the CSFF approach is helping support a wide range of natural capital assets by influencing land management and changing the behaviour of farmers and land managers. Indeed, it is likely that individual group members, as well as CSFF groups as a whole, are contributing considerably to the maintenance and enhancement of natural capital outside the indicators measured (Mills et al., 2018). However, no data are currently available to evidence this. The primary mechanism for this contribution is the presence of CS agreements, which put in place management actions that positively impact natural capital assets – whether they relate to asset quantity, quality or spatial location – and hence the recovery of ecological networks.

CS agreements within the CSFF groups protect a significant area of land that is recognised as providing natural capital through the presence of Natural Capital Indicators (NCIs). However, the picture for the individual NCIs is mixed, with many of the assets seeing a reduction in area supported, either because of agreements expiring or through land managers with relevant CS agreements leaving CSFF groups.

There are CSFF groups present across most habitats and PHIs but the proportion varies. This impacts the ability of the groups to contribute to natural capital asset stocks and local land management priorities. Differences in the underlying landscape, and the presence or absence of specific habitats, will primarily determine individual option uptake locally, the specific area under agreement within each group, and thus its potential impact on natural capital assets and the positive management of priority habitats.

CSFF and PHI

Overall, priority habitats are well represented on land within the CSFF groups as a whole, with just under 30% of land within the schemes comprising priority habitats. This is, however, variable across individual CSFF groups, with 35 groups having less than 10% coverage and five CSFF groups with over 75% coverage of priority habitats.

A particularly encouraging observation is the fact that the total area of PHI within CSFF groups under AES agreement comprises 71.52%, with areas of most individual priority habitats within CSFF groups under AES agreement comfortably exceeding 50%. This suggests that option targeting within CSFF groups achieves a good coverage for active management of PHI habitat already, maintaining and enhancing their extent and condition.

It is important to ensure that land under ES agreements eventually transitions successfully to CS or ELM to ensure continuity of positive land management for environmental benefits on these high-value habitats.

Forward look

- Implement changes in data collection and management to reduce the degree of uncertainty in analysis currently prevalent.
- Future evaluations might want to consider a greater emphasis on comparing various CSFF group metrics to comparable data across the rest of the country to further establish if CSFF groups are succeeding in maximising the impact of AES schemes by bringing

larger areas under active management. The fact that the Defra aim on AES scheme coverage of 10% or more has already been achieved within the CSFF groups supports this conclusion.

- If the scheme is to continue, further, more detailed data collection on those who have left groups and why would be useful to understand land manager's motivations. This should also include a record of any AES agreements present on their land and if CSFF group membership helped facilitate the setting up of agreements. Whilst these no longer contribute to objectives under the umbrella of CSFF group membership, the benefits they deliver remain.
- Limited funding periods mean that funding for a number of CSFF groups funding has recently ceased and while these groups were included in the current analysis at the specific request of the client, future evaluation should take into account the resulting impact on the contribution of CSFF groups on natural capital and priority habitats, for example and could consider examining longer term impacts of group functions such as training, knowledge exchange or social/peer support in landholder's environmental decision making.
- Consider the development of a way to capture contribution of land managers choosing not to engage in formal AES agreements. They might be delivering environmental outcomes of their own accord or as a result of training and knowledge exchange received under CSFF group membership and their holdings will certainly contribute to natural capital, even whilst not under active management.
- Consider how to facilitate the successful transition of the large proportion of ES agreements within CSFF groups into follow-up schemes and how to encourage the setting up of more ambitious agreements in their place to build on the increased experience of ES agreement holders and the environmental benefits they have delivered as part of ES.

3. Analysis of CSFF group coverage

3.1 Background

This section of the report explores the distribution of CSFF groups across England[3]. By analysing group coverage against a range of environmental and administrative geographies, the report aims to inform priorities for the establishment of new groups or the expansion or linking of existing groups. Spatial datasets included in this national analysis included Priority Habitats, National Character Areas, Counties and Local Authorities, and Natural England regions. This aimed to identify any clearly underrepresented areas that could be considered further. The national analysis set the context for a finer grain exploration of new, expanded or linked CSFF groups. The analysis presented in this section provides a starting point for work to increase CSFF group coverage. This should determine which environmental and administrative geographies are priorities and how new or expanded CSFF groups could support strategy delivery in areas such as nature recovery. It should also be informed by local factors and the role of existing agri-environment schemes in delivering environmental outcomes.

3.2 National Analysis

Figure 23 shows the distribution of CSFF groups across England. The first task analysed this coverage against the following spatial datasets:

- Local authorities, including a breakdown of county, metropolitan and unitary authorities
- Priority Habitats
- National Character Areas
- Agricultural Landscape Types
- Protected Landscapes (AONBs/National Parks)
- Nature Improvement Areas
- Local Nature Partnerships
- Natural England regions
- Green Belt

The analysis included calculating both the hectarage and percentage of a given spatial area that is covered by CSFF groups. The aim of this analysis was to highlight those geographies

[3] The analysis is based on the full list of CSFF groups including those where CSFF funding has ceased. In some cases these groups continue to operate on an informal basis.

currently underrepresented in CSFF group coverage to help shape decisions about where to focus work to explore the potential for new or expanded groups. Further work will be needed to determine the appropriateness and added value that could be provided by CSFF groups relative to the environmental outcomes already being delivered by agri-environment schemes.

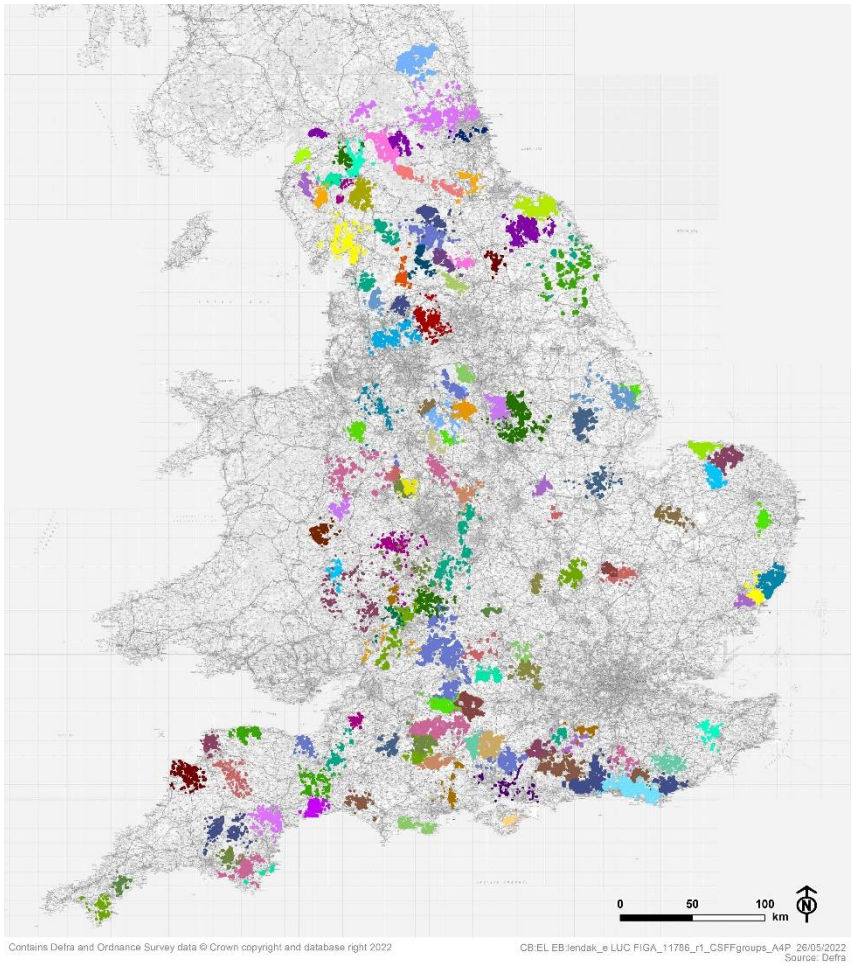

Figure 24: Location of CSFF groups across England

Local Authorities

The Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) introduced by the 2021 Environment Act will be prepared by 'responsible authorities' comprising individual or groupings of local authorities, allowing coordination with other spatial policies and strategies. CSFF groups could play an important role in shaping and delivering LNRS, so analysis was carried out to the extent of existing CSFF group coverage across English local authorities. This will help identify authorities where new or expanded CSFF groups could support LNRS.

A total of 317 local authorities in England were analysed, to determine the proportion of each falling within CSFF groups. The analysis indicates that, overall, 6% of land in England falls within a CSFF group. There is, however, very uneven coverage with significant variations between local authority areas. The results are summarised below, with a full data table included in Appendix 5, Table 1.

Figure 24 shows the results, with local authorities placed in four main groups according to the proportion of the area included within CSFF groups (none = blue, up to 20% = pink, between 20% and 25% = yellow, and more than 25% = green).

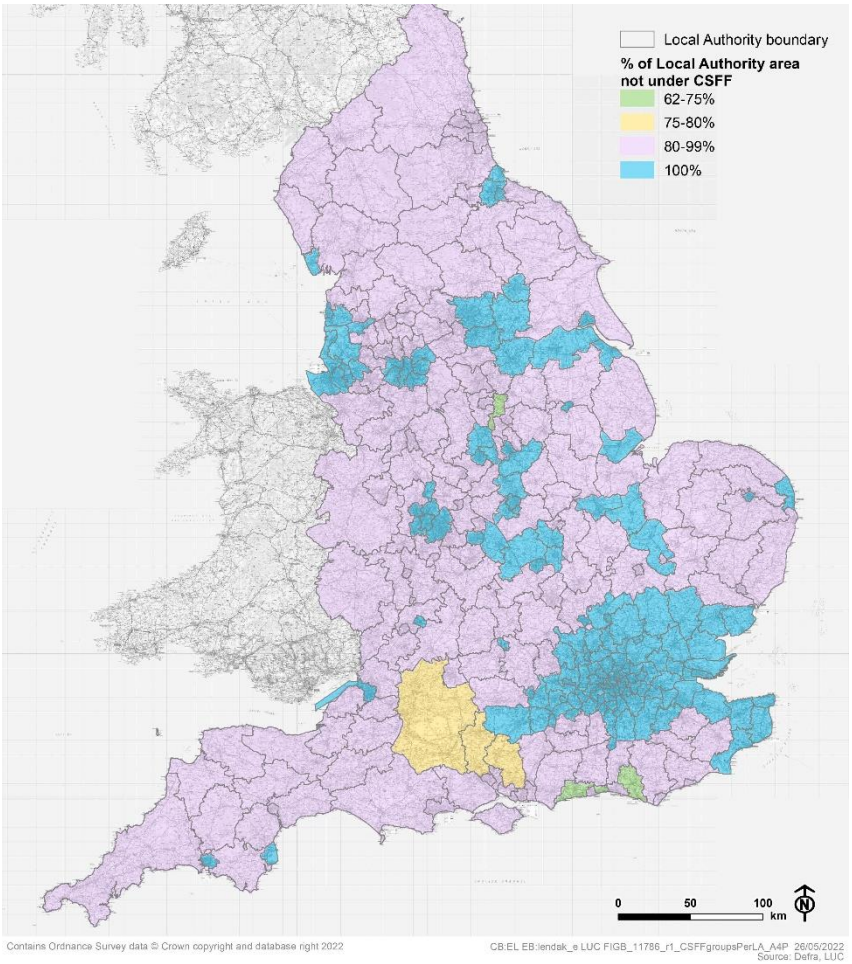

Figure 25: CSFF groups coverage, by local authority

The results suggest that 147 local authorities, accounting for around 19% of the area of England, do not include any CSFF groups. While a significant proportion of these are predominantly urban and limited in extent (e.g. City of Westminster, City of Leicester, City of Liverpool), many include areas of urban fringe land where there could be opportunities for a coordinated approach to nature recovery, linked to public access and the provision of other public benefits. Examples include outer London Boroughs such as Havering and Bromley, and other metropolitan councils including Coventry and Stockport. This group also includes larger and more rural authorities such as Fenland District, North Lincolnshire and Uttlesford.

A further 163 local authorities have less than 20% of their area within CSFF groups. Together, these authorities account for 77% of the area of England and just under 85% of the total area under CSFF groups. Included in this group are a number of urban or urban fringe authorities (e.g. South Tyneside, Carlisle), but also a larger number of predominantly rural areas where there would appear to be greater potential for new CSFF groups.

The remaining seven local authorities have more than 20% of their area within CSFF groups. These authorities account for just 4% of the area of England but 15% of the total area under CSFF groups. Local authorities in this group are Winchester (20.4% in CSFF), Wiltshire

(21.2%), Test Valley (23.4%), Lewes (31.4%), Arun (31.9%), Bolsover (35.1%) and Adur (37.9%).

Table 20: Counties and CSFF coverage

County	Area (Ha)	Area under CSFF (ha)	% Area under CSFF
Essex	369673.19	0	0
Hertfordshire	164306.49	0	0
Buckinghamshire	156494.91	629.4	0.4
Kent	363720.52	3198.15	0.88
Northamptonshire	236699.02	3856.12	1.63
Leicestershire	208378.92	4626.55	2.22
Cambridgeshire	305400.76	8403.57	2.75
Surrey	167007.29	6705.45	4.02
Somerset	351498.41	14546.94	4.14
Warwickshire	197752.05	9314.32	4.71
Lincolnshire	610255.32	30934.58	5.07
Suffolk	385245.26	21258.94	5.52
Worcestershire	174051.42	9850.55	5.66
Norfolk	550713.42	34397.87	6.25
Lancashire	308284.66	20572.48	6.67
Staffordshire	262331.64	19844.68	7.56
Nottinghamshire	208689.47	15977.46	7.66
Devon	663338.77	52314.35	7.89
Oxfordshire	260594.78	20817.95	7.99
Cumbria	718276.40	59843.71	8.33
Derbyshire	255076.04	21810.07	8.55
North Yorkshire	805219.25	78367	9.73
Hampshire	373725.79	39249.5	10.5
Gloucestershire	270452.85	31423.23	11.62
East Sussex	172385.94	25754.4	14.94
West Sussex	202451.19	32852.73	16.23
TOTAL	**8742023.76**	**566550**	**6.48**

A further analysis was undertaken, distinguishing between county, metropolitan and unitary authorities. The full analysis is set out in Appendix 5, Table 2, with key findings presented here.

The analysis suggests that only two county council areas – Essex and Hertfordshire – include no CSFF groups. Eleven county council areas have CSFF group coverage below the national average of 6%, ranging from just 0.4% of the area of Buckinghamshire to 5.7% in

the case of Worcestershire. A further 14 county council areas have CSFF group coverage above the national average, ranging from 6.2% in Norfolk to 16% in West Sussex.

Unitary councils tend to cover smaller areas, and range from predominantly urban to more rural areas. A total of 25 unitary authorities have no areas (or very small areas) under CSFF. Alongside more urban areas, these also include the predominantly rural areas of North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, Bracknell Forest and the Isles of Scilly. A further 20 unitary authorities have coverage below the national average of 6%. These include Central Bedfordshire (0.2%), Bath and North East Somerset (0.2%), North Somerset (0.3%), South Gloucestershire (1.8%), Isles of Wight (3.1%) and larger 'county unitaries' such as the East Riding of Yorkshire (3.5%) and Dorset (4.1%). Only seven unitary authorities have CSFF coverage above the national average, ranging from 8.1% in Telford and Wrekin to 21.7% in Wiltshire.

Metropolitan districts tend to be predominantly urban in character, though many include areas of open country (often greenbelt) on the edge of the metropolitan area. 20 metropolitan councils include no areas under CSFF. Several of these include areas of countryside (e.g. Wirral, Oldham and St Helens). A further 15 metropolitan districts have small areas under CSFF, but lie below the national average of 6%. These range from Dudley with 0.01% to Bury with 3.0%. The remaining six metropolitan authorities have CSFF coverage above the national average. These range from Gateshead with 6.8% to Calderdale with 18% of their area under CSFF.

This analysis demonstrated that there are significant variations in CSFF group coverage at local authority level. Consideration could be given to establishing new groups particularly where this aligns with preparation or delivery of LNRS.

Priority Habitats

Priority habitats comprise a range of semi-natural habitat types that have been identified as being the most threatened and requiring positive interventions to improve their condition and extent. These interventions will vary according to the type of habitat in question, but agri-environment schemes, including the activity of CSFF groups, can play an important role in managing priority habitats.

The analysis examined the area and proportion of CSFF coverage for each of the priority habitats across England. Overall, the analysis indicated that 8.5% of the total area of priority habitats falls within CSFF groups. This is higher than the national average of 6%, but remains relatively low, suggesting that groups could be playing a fuller role in managing priority habitats.

Table 21: Priority habitat and CSFF group coverage

PHI Main Habitat	PHI Area (ha)	PHI Area under CSFF (ha)	% PHI Area Under CSFF
Mudflats	90372.19	129.56	0.14
Coastal vegetated shingle	4675.81	22.05	0.47
Saline lagoons	1687.96	16.14	0.96
Traditional orchard	30160.86	704.63	2.34
Coastal saltmarsh	41822.11	1368.93	3.27

PHI Main Habitat	PHI Area (ha)	PHI Area under CSFF (ha)	% PHI Area Under CSFF
Lowland dry acid grassland	22743.32	879.18	3.87
Mountain heaths and willow scrub	1416.61	56.98	4.02
Deciduous woodland	1006512.71	41717.79	4.14
Maritime cliff and slope	13879.55	732.39	5.28
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	299211.8	16262.41	5.44
No main habitat but additional habitats present	260335.17	14233.28	5.47
Lowland heathland	66521.36	3916.8	5.89
Lowland fens	26136.09	1568.03	6
Reedbeds	4710.15	312.15	6.63
Calaminarian grassland	296.92	20.42	6.88
Limestone pavement	1267.36	91.6	7.23
Coastal sand dunes	10915.3	855.63	7.84
Lowland meadows	32386.85	3075.74	9.5
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	11046.28	1207.25	10.93
Good quality semi-improved grassland	99285.11	10973.05	11.05
Upland calcareous grassland	9211.57	1156.64	12.56
Lowland raised bog	8411.74	1081.37	12.86
Upland flushes, fens and swamps	10181.89	1400.2	13.75
Upland hay meadow	2580.56	382.11	14.81
Upland heathland	232597.35	37582.42	16.16
Grass moorland	148542.84	24348.05	16.39
Blanket bog	234787.7	46424.67	19.77
Fragmented heath	9064.71	1861.59	20.54
Lowland calcareous grassland	78236.94	21090.46	26.96
TOTAL	**2758998.81**	**233471.52**	**8.46**

Table 21 shows that 18 of the 29 priority habitats have CSFF coverage of less than 10%. Some of these habitats include categories which might be considered less likely to fall within the scope of CSFF groups (e.g. mudflats (0.14%), maritime cliff and slope (5.28%)). Others are limited in total extent (e.g. Calaminarian grassland, limestone pavement, mountain heaths and willow scrub). However, this group includes some extensive habitats where CSFF coverage is relatively low. These include, for example, lowland heathland (5.89%) and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh (5.44%), indicating areas where interventions could make a significant difference. Deciduous woodland makes up just over 36% of the total area of priority habitat in England, but only 4.14% falls within a CSFF group. Some of these habitats are likely to include areas under agri-environment scheme agreements, though not falling within CSFF groups.

Eleven priority habitats have CSFF coverage greater than 10%. These include blanket bog, fragmented heath and lowland calcareous grassland which have between 19.77% and

20.96% falling within CSFF group coverage. Grassland and upland habitats tended to be best represented.

National Character Areas

National Character Areas (NCAs) provide a broad classification of landscapes across England based on a combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, cultural heritage and land use. Each has a combination of qualities that combine to create a unique sense of place. Agri-environment schemes, including through the work of CSFF groups, can play an important role in conserving and managing landscape, ecological and historic features which contribute to NCAs' distinctive character. Analysis of CSFF group coverage helps identify NCAs where there could be potential for CSFF groups to play an enhanced role.

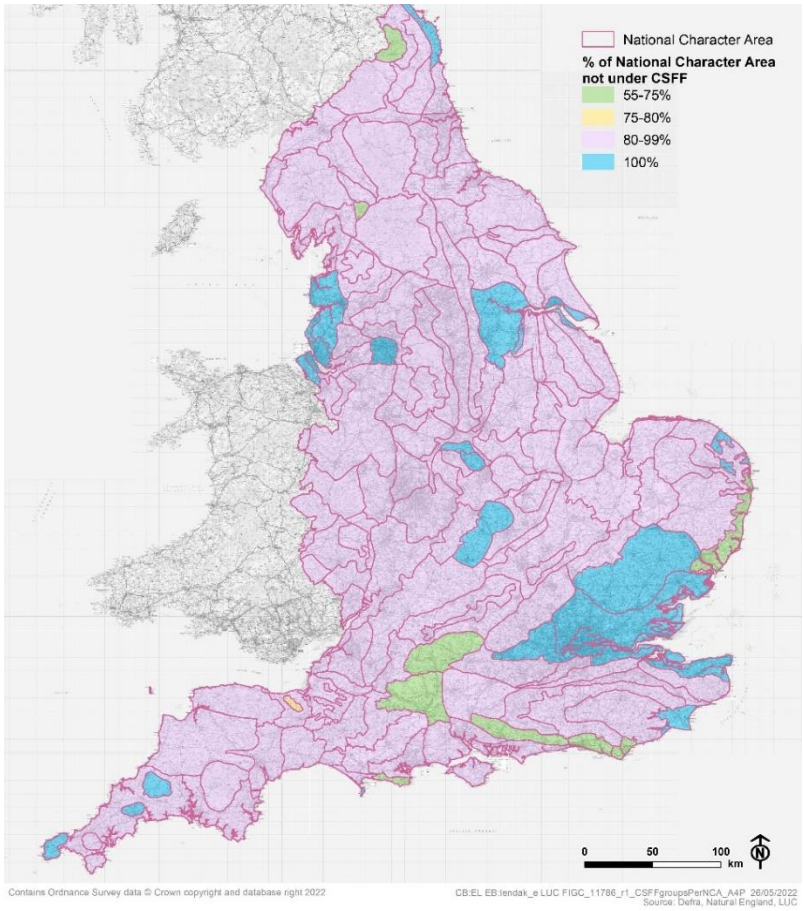

Figure 26: CSFF groups coverage, by National Character Area

CSFF coverage was analysed spatially against the 159 NCAs. The results are summarised below, with a full data table included in Appendix 5. Figure 25 shows the results, with NCAs placed in four main groups according to the proportion of the area included within CSFF groups (none = blue, up to 20% = pink, between 20% and 25% = yellow and more than 25% = green).

24 NCAs have no coverage of CSFF groups. A small number of these are predominantly urban in character (e.g. Inner London and the Manchester and Merseyside Conurbation NCAs). Many others are more rural in character and could provide opportunities for the

expansion or creation of new CSFF groups. Examples include Bodmin Moor, West Penwith, the Humberhead Levels, Northamptonshire Uplands and Romney Marshes NCAs.

125 NCAs have between 0 and 20% of their area falling into CSFF groups, though the average for this group stands at just 5.5%. These NCAs, shown in pink in Figure 25, cover the majority of England and include upland, lowland, coastal and urban fringe landscapes and habitats.

Only 10 NCAs have more than 20% of their area falling into CSFF groups. These range from the Quantock Hills at around 22% and Suffolk Coast and Heaths at 25%, to the Pevensey Levels at 37% and Cheviots at 42%. These NCAs are shown in Figure 25 in green.

While CSFF groups may not be appropriate within all NCAs, this analysis confirms that there is significant potential explore the potential for new or expanded groups within those NCAs currently with no, or low group coverage.

Agricultural Landscape Types

Agricultural landscape types (ALTs) provide a broad classification of rural landscapes across England. They provide a spatial characterisation of rural landscapes based reflecting the interrelationship of topography, landcover and farm type and can be useful in identifying issues associated with particular types of landscape. The six ALTs are as follows:

- SE Mixed (Wooded)
- Eastern Arable
- Western mixed
- Upland Fringe
- Chalk and Limestone Mixed
- Upland

Table 22: Agricultural Landscape Types and CSFF group coverage

Agricultural Landscape Type	ALT Area (ha)	ALT area under CSFF (ha)	% of ALT under CSFF
SE Mixed (Wooded)	1432594.96	54758.97	3.82
Eastern Arable	2715539.20	104155.72	3.84
Western mixed	2864355.71	125079.78	4.37
Upland Fringe	1604724.62	74123.04	4.62
Chalk and Limestone Mixed	2435584.02	215194.29	8.84
Upland	1957519.06	229229.95	11.71

Table 22 shows differences in the coverage of CSFF groups across these six ALTs. It indicates that CSFF group coverage is greatest in the Upland ALT (11.71% by area) and Chalk and Limestone Mixed ALT (8.84%). The remaining ALTs have between 3.8 and 4.6% of their area covered by CSFF groups.

The analysis indicates that there is potential to increase the coverage of CSFF groups in lowland and more intensively farmed landscapes.

Protected Landscapes (AONBs/National Parks)

Nationally protected landscapes in England include Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (designated on the grounds of their scenic quality) and National Parks (designated on the ground of their scenic quality and recreational importance). There are 34 AONBs and 10 National Parks in England and together they are considered to represent the country's finest landscapes. The analysis explored CSFF group coverage across AONBs and National Parks, reflecting the potential role that groups could play in conserving and managing these national landscapes.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Appendix 5, Table 3 shows the coverage of CSFF groups across Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Taken as a whole, AONBs have an average of 11.4% of their area within CSFF groups, almost double the national average.

Of the 34 AONBs in England, three do not have any CSFF coverage. These are Dedham Vale, Isles of Scilly and Northumberland Coast. Fourteen AONBs have up to 10% of their area falling within CSFF, while a further twelve have between 10 and 20% coverage. Only five have more than a fifth of their area covered by CSFF groups.

The Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB has the highest level of CSFF coverage as a proportion of the protected landscape, with 31.9% of the AONB within CSFF groups. Interestingly, the neighbouring Dedham Vale AONB (managed by the same AONB team) is one of the three AONBs without any CSFF coverage. Similarly, the Northumberland Coast AONB does not have any CSFF coverage, while the nearby Northumberland National Park has 22.4% of its area (23,551.6 ha) within CSFF groups.

The analysis confirmed that, while AONBs have almost twice the national coverage of CSFF groups, there is significant variation between designated areas. This suggests there could be potential for new or expanded groups where coverage is low or absent altogether.

National Parks

Table 23 (below) shows the coverage of CSFF groups across English National Parks. Taken as a whole, National Parks have an average of over 15.6% of their area within CSFF groups, compared with just 6% nationally.

The Broads (characterised by wetland habitats) has the lowest coverage of CSFF groups of the ten English National Parks, with only 60 hectares (or 0.2% of the National Park area) within CSFF. The New Forest also has low coverage at just over 1% of its area, possibly reflecting the prevalence of commoners' rights over more than half of the park.

Only Northumberland NP and the South Downs NP have more than 20% of their area covered by CSFF groups (22.4 and 29% respectively). National Parks with extensive areas of uplands and moors tend to have higher levels of CSFF group coverage.

Table 23: National Parks and CSFF group coverage

National Park (NP)	NP Area (ha)	NP Area under CSFF (ha)	% NP Area under CSFF
The Broads	30151.28	60.67	0.2
New Forest	56652.48	730.02	1.29
Exmoor	69312.18	6155.29	8.88

National Park (NP)	NP Area (ha)	NP Area under CSFF (ha)	% NP Area under CSFF
Lake District	236239.55	26671.29	11.29
Dartmoor	95574.75	12863.54	13.46
Yorkshire Dales	218482.67	30504.86	13.96
Peak District	143783.18	22704.93	15.79
North York Moors	144106.16	25970.92	18.02
Northumberland	105093.44	23551.59	22.41
South Downs	165267.93	47907.53	28.99
TOTAL	**1264663.62**	**197120.64**	**15.59**

The analysis confirmed that, while National Parks have over twice the national coverage of CSFF groups, there is significant variation between designated areas. While some the variation may reflect patterns of tenure or land cover, this suggests there could be potential for new or expanded groups where coverage is low or absent altogether.

Nature Improvement Areas

Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) are designed to create joined up and resilient ecological networks at a landscape scale. Twelve NIAs were launched in 2012 and they run with the aid of Local Nature Partnerships

Table 24 shows the coverage of CSFF groups across these areas. Taken as a whole, NIAs have an average CSFF coverage of 8.33%, slightly higher than the national average of 6%.

The results show that of the twelve Nature Improvement Areas, five have no or very little (less than one hectare) CSFF group coverage. These are Birmingham and the Black Country, Dearne Valley Green Heart, Greater Thames Marshes, Humberhead Levels and Nene Valley.

The Nature Improvement Areas with the highest amount of CSFF group coverage are the Marlborough Downs (55.1%), South Downs Way Ahead (38.5%), Wild Purbeck (12%), Meres and Mosses (9.8%) and Morecambe Bay Limestones and Wetlands (9.6%).

Table 24: Nature Improvement Areas and CSFF group coverage

Nature Improvement Area (NIA)	NIA Area (ha)	NIA Area under CSFF	% of NIA Area under CSFF
Birmingham and the Black Country	62470.3	0.91	0
Dearne Valley Green Heart	16514.09	0	0
Greater Thames Marshes	54336.67	0	0
Humberhead Levels	49868.89	0	0
Nene Valley	41479.37	0.86	0
Dark Peak	28540.18	1907.41	6.68

Northern Devon	72560.14	4955.63	6.83
Morecambe Bay Limestones and Wetlands	49138.69	4698.76	9.56
Meres and Mosses	40153.08	3951.48	9.84
Wild Purbeck	46164.55	5534.97	11.99
South Downs Way Ahead	41519.59	15967.28	38.46
Marlborough Downs	10398.44	5723.99	55.05
TOTAL	**513143.99**	**42741.29**	**8.33**

The findings suggest that CSFF groups could be making a notable contribution to delivery of two NIAs, a moderate contribution to a further five NIAs and little or no contribution to the remaining five NIAs. This suggests there may be potential for new or expanded CSFF groups to be playing an enhanced role in supporting ten NIAs.

Local Nature Partnerships

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) were established as a result of the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper. They cover most of England and are aligned either with local authority boundaries or areas defined by their landscape character. LNPs work at a strategic scale and aim to improve the range of benefits communities and businesses derive from the environment. Key areas of activity include linking health and environment, communicating the value of the environment, making the case for investment in the environment and engaging public, local organisations and economic development initiatives.

Appendix 5, Table 4 shows the coverage of CSFF groups across Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs). Coverage of CSFF groups within LNPs is low overall at 5%. Four LNPs (Birmingham and Black Country, Hertfordshire, London and Thames Gateway) have no CSFF coverage. Only six have more than 10% of their area falling into CSFF groups (Gloucestershire, Peak District, South Pennines, Northern Upland Chain, Sussex (E and W Brighton and Hove) and Wiltshire and Swindon). This suggests there is scope for much stronger alignment between CSFF groups and the work of LNPs.

Natural England regions

Natural England plays a key role in supporting the establishment of CSFF groups. Analysis across NE regions was carried out to determine whether FF coverage is greater in some regions than others, and whether there is potential to explore increasing coverage as a result.

Table 25: NE regions and CSFF group coverage

NE Region	NE Region (ha)	CSFF region (ha)	% of NE Region under CSFF
West Anglia	1258988.18	18372.85	1.46
Cheshire to Lancashire	761842.01	30583.25	4.01
Thames Solent	1325746.21	71965.08	5.43
Devon, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	1047591.02	57665.03	5.5
Norfolk & Suffolk	935192.49	55656.81	5.95

NE Region	NE Region (ha)	CSFF region (ha)	% of NE Region under CSFF
East Midlands	1398638.93	83744.65	5.99
Yorkshire & Northern Lincolnshire	1534679.42	95066.52	6.19
West Midlands	1550198.88	97723.99	6.3
Northumbria	867639.56	69129.37	7.97
Sussex & Kent	774244.89	63328.71	8.18
Cumbria	718202.77	59843.79	8.33
Wessex	1120808.78	99940.76	8.92
TOTAL	**13293773.14**	**803020.81**	**6.04**

Table 25 shows the coverage of CSFF groups across Natural England (NE) Regions. It shows that coverage of CSFF groups ranges from just 1.46% of the area covered by the NE West Anglia region to 8.92% of the NE Wessex region.

Green Belt

The coverage of CSFF groups was analysed in relation to green belts around urban areas, to provide an indication of the potential contribution to nature recovery, landscape enhancement and public access enhancement close to where many people live.

The analysis was undertaken at local authority level and the results are set out in the Appendix 5 (see Table 5). It shows that 180 English local authorities include areas of green belt. Of these, 43 have CSFF groups covering 1% or more of their designated green belt. The average for these 43 authorities is just under 10% and rises as high as 38% in North Tyneside and 40% in Chesterfield, albeit covering relatively small areas. The Northumberland greenbelt includes the largest area covered by CSFF groups at 7,670 ha.

3.3 Local level gap analysis

The national level analysis found significant variation in the coverage of CSFF groups when measured against each environmental and administrative geography considered in the study. It is likely that some of this variation reflects intrinsic differences between areas. It is also likely that, in many areas currently without CSFF groups, agri-environment schemes are making important contributions to environmental outcomes. However, it is clear that there remains significant potential to support the establishment of new CSFF groups, or the expansion and linking of existing CSFF groups, to address many of the geographic disparities in coverage and deliver greater environmental benefits. The emphasis of this work should be guided by policy priorities. This could include, for example, aiming to increase the role of CSFF in supporting conservation of priority habitats, or supporting development and delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

However, to explore the potential further, a more detailed gap analysis was undertaken. This examined opportunities for new or expanded CSFF groups to increase coverage of priority habitats, whilst increasing coverage at district, county, protected landscape and NCA levels,

as appropriate. It is informed by the findings from the national analysis presented above and the interrogation of map layers. This analysis is not comprehensive and does not take account of the take up of agri-environment schemes in areas currently outside CSFF groups. It does, however, provide an indication of potential and a starting point for more detailed work at the local level.

Opportunities have been classified as follows:

- **New**: locations with high environmental value (e.g. priority habitat or protected landscape) and where there are currently no CSFF groups, and where establishment of a new CSFF group would improve coverage within the relevant administrative area
- **Expanded**: locations where existing CSFF groups provide partial coverage of priority habitat and where expansion within the existing geographic group, or expansion to expand the area covered by the group could be appropriate
- **Linked**: locations where two or more existing CSFF groups cover part of a priority habitat but where gaps in coverage lie between them. Linking groups by expanding geographic coverage and aligning or combining groups could be appropriate in such locations.

This exercise has highlighted gaps where CSFF groups could deliver more for the benefit of semi-natural habitats and landscape (e.g., areas of priority habitats or protected landscapes). It is not an exhaustive list of opportunities, but is designed to identify locations that could be prioritised to increase coverage of CSFF groups across a range of spatial frameworks.

Appendix 5 includes map analysis for 41 opportunity areas across England. The opportunity areas are presented as follows:

- A map of where the new/extended/linked CSFF group could be located
- The identification number of existing CSFF group(s) (if present)
- Bullet points listing the main features that could be targeted by CSFF groups
- A summary paragraph which expands upon the information highlighted within the bullet points and links the identified opportunity area to the findings of the CSFF review of the national level.

Maps illustrating a total of 41 opportunities are included in Appendix 6. The table below summarises some of the key examples and opportunities highlighted in Appendix 6.

Table 26: Examples of opportunities for new or expanded CSFF groups

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
North Downs NCA	140009	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Deciduous woodland - Lowland calcareous grassland • Increase coverage of CSFF within the Kent Downs AONB • Create coverage within Swale/Canterbury Local Authority areas	There is opportunity to **expand** the existing CSFF group to the north and east. This could target deciduous woodland and lowland calcareous grassland priority habitats. This would improve coverage within the Kent Downs AONB, which is currently lower than average at 1.2% (the average across all AONBs is 11.4%). Existing CSFF group coverage within the North Downs NCA is lower than average at 1%. Expanding this CSFF group would create overage within the Swale and Canterbury Local Authority areas, as both currently do not have any CSFF groups.
The Fens NCA The Brecks NCA	090005	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Deciduous woodland - Lowland calcareous grassland - Lowland heathland - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh • Improve coverage within the Fens and the Brecks NCA • Increase coverage within Breckland District and Norfolk County	There is opportunity to **expand** the existing CSFF group to the east towards The Brecks. This could target expansive areas of deciduous woodland, lowland heathland, lowland calcareous grassland and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh priority habitats. Coverage of CSFF groups in The Fens and The Brecks NCAs is also lower than the England average (3.1% and 0.7% respectively). CSFF group coverage is below average in Breckland District (4.3%) and while coverage in Norfolk County is in line with the national average of 6%.
Isle of Wight NCA	130006	• Target priority habitat including: - Deciduous Woodland - Lowland Calcareous Grassland - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh • Improve coverage within the Isle of Wight unitary authority area • Improve coverage within the Isle of Wight AONB	The existing CSFF group on the Isle of Wight could be **expanded** to incorporate more areas of priority habitat, including deciduous woodland, lowland calcareous grassland and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. The Isle of Wight unitary authority area has 3.12% coverage of CSFF groups, less than the national average of 6%. Coverage is also low within the Isle of Wight AONB with 2.28% of the protected landscape falling within CSFF groups, compared to an average of 11.4% across all English AONBs. Expanding this CSFF group (or linking to a new group) would improve coverage for the protected landscape.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland NCA Northern Thames Basin NCA	090007	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Deciduous woodland - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh • Create coverage of CSFF within Dedham Vale AONB • Increase coverage within Babergh District and Suffolk County	There is opportunity to **expand** the existing CSFF group to the west along the corridor of the River Stour. This would target deciduous woodland and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh priority habitats. Currently there is no CSFF coverage within the Dedham Vale AONB, despite the neighbouring Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB having the highest proportional CSFF coverage of all AONBs. Both the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland NCA and the Northern Thames Basin NCA have no CSFF group coverage. Most of the River Stour area occurs within Babergh District/Suffolk County. Both Babergh District and Suffolk County have CSFF coverage slightly below the national average of 6%.
The Lizard NCA	120005	• Target extensive areas of lowland heathland priority habitat • Improve coverage within the Cornwall AONB • Improve coverage within the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly LNP area	The existing CSFF group on the Lizard could be **expanded** to incorporate additional areas of lowland heathland which are adjacent to the existing group. The Lizard also forms a component part of the Cornwall AONB. 4.2% of the AONB is within CSFF groups, less than the average of 11.4% across English AONBs. Extending this CSFF group would also help to improve coverage within the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership Area, which is less than the national average at 1.47%.
Cornish Killas NCA	120005 120010	• Target priority habitat including: - Deciduous woodland - Lowland heath • Improve coverage within the Cornwall AONB • Improve coverage within the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly LNP area	CSFF coverage within the Cornish Killas NCA is below the national average at 1.5%. Existing groups could be **expanded and linked** to include additional areas of priority habitat and link up the component areas of the Cornwall AONB.
Bodmin Moor NCA	new	• Target extensive areas of priority habitat including: - Blanket bog - Upland heath - Grass moorland • Improve coverage within the Cornwall AONB • Improve coverage within Cornwall county • Improve coverage within the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly LNP area	The creation of **new** CSFF groups in the Bodmin Moor area could target extensive areas of multiple types of priority habitat, including blanket bog, upland heath and grass moorland. Bodmin Moor also forms a component part of the nationally designated landscape of the Cornwall AONB (purple hatch). 4.2% of the AONB is within CSFF groups, less than the average of 11.4% across English AONBs. Currently, only 1.48% of the Cornwall Local Authority Area/county is within CSFF groups, less than the national average of 6%.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
			Similarly, the coverage of CSFF in the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership area is less than average at 1.47%.
West Penwith NCA	new	• Target areas of lowland heathland priority habitat • Improve coverage within the Cornwall AONB • Improve coverage within Cornwall county • Improve coverage within the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly LNP area	The creation of **new** CSFF groups in the West Penwith NCA could target the extensive areas of lowland heathland priority habitat. West Penwith forms a component part of the nationally designated landscape of the Cornwall AONB (purple hatch). 4.2% of the AONB is within CSFF groups, less than the average of 11.4% across English AONBs. Currently, only 1.48% of the Cornwall Local Authority Area/county is within CSFF groups, less than the national average of 6%. Similarly, the coverage of CSFF in the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership area is less than average at 1.47%. A new CSFF group in the West Penwith NCA could improve coverage within these areas.
Dartmoor NCA	120008 120009	• Target areas of priority habitat including blanket bog, grass moorland and upland heath • Improve coverage within the Dartmoor National Park • Improve coverage within the Devon LNP area	The existing CSFF groups within Dartmoor National Park/NCA could **be extended and linked** to include expansive areas of priority habitat which are adjacent to the existing groups. Priority habitats include blanket bog, upland moorland and upland heath. Existing CSFF coverage within Dartmoor National Park is approximately 13.5%. Extending the coverage of CSFF groups in Dartmoor would also help to increase coverage within the Devon Local Nature Partnership Area, which is currently 7.7%.
The Culm NCA Exmoor NCA	120002 120004 120006	• Target deciduous woodland priority habitat • Improve coverage within the Northern Devon Nature Improvement Area • Improve coverage within North Devon and Torridge Local authorities • Increase coverage within Devon LNP area • Increase coverage within Devon, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly NE Team area	There are three existing CSFF groups in the North Devon area which could **be expanded and linked** to incorporate more areas of priority habitat, including deciduous woodland. The North Devon and Torridge local authority areas have 8.1% and 7.4% coverage of CSFF groups. Both of these figures are above the national average of 6%. Expanding/linking these CSFF groups would also improve coverage within both the Devon Local Nature Partnership area and the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly NE Team area.
Thames Basin Heaths NCA	New	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Lowland heathland - Deciduous woodland - Lowland dry acid grassland	There is opportunity to create a **new** CSFF group in the Windsor/Bracknell/Camberley area. This could target priority habitats including lowland heathland, deciduous woodland and lowland dry acid grassland. Currently there is no CSFF coverage within the Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead Local Authority areas. This area also falls within the Thames Valley and Thames Basin Heaths NCAs, both of which have less than 1% of CSFF group coverage.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
		• Create coverage of CSFF within Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead Local Authorities • Increase coverage within Thames Valley and Thames Basin Heaths NCAs	Improving coverage in these NCAs would also address the low CSFF group coverage within the South East Mixed (Wooded) ALT group, which at 3.8% is lower than the national average of 6%
Thames Basin Heaths NCA	130009 110017 100005 130001	• Link up existing CSFF groups within the surrounding protected landscapes • Improve coverage within the Hampshire & Wight and Berkshire Local Nature Partnership areas	In addition to opportunities to target priority habitats within the Thames Basin Heaths NCA, there are also opportunities to **link** up existing CSFF groups within the surrounding protected landscapes, namely the North Wessex Downs AONB, Chilterns AONB, South Downs National Park and Surrey Hills AONB. This would also improve coverage within the Hampshire & Wight and Berkshire Local Nature Partnership areas.
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA Northamptonshire Vales NCA Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge NCA	080004 080005	• Target priority habitat including: - Deciduous Woodland - Lowland Calcareous Grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland - Good quality semi-improved grassland - Lowland meadows • Improve coverage within the Nene Valley NIA	The existing CSFF groups to the south and east of Northampton could be expanded/linked to include priority habitats such as deciduous woodland and lowland grassland/meadows. CSFF coverage would also be increased within the Northamptonshire Vales NCA which is currently 1.7%, below the national average of 6%. These CSFF groups could also be extended to include more of the adjacent Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area, which currently contains no CSFF groups.
Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain NCA Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCA	040007 040009	• Target pockets of priority habitat including: - Deciduous Woodland - Lowland meadows - Traditional orchard • Improve coverage the Cheshire to Lancashire NE Team Area • Improve coverage within the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain and Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCAs	The existing CSFF groups at Winsford and Bickerton could be **expanded/linked** to incorporate more areas of priority habitat, including deciduous woodland, lowland meadows and traditional orchards. Coverage of CSFF groups within the Cheshire and Lancashire NE Team area would be improved, as the amount of CSFF coverage is lower than the national average at 4%. Expanding/linking the existing groups would simultaneously increase coverage in the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain and Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCAs. CSFF group coverage in the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain NCA is slightly below the national average of 6% (5.5%). However, the amount of coverage within the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCA is over double the national average at 13.6%.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
Greater Thames Estuary NCA North Kent Plain NCA	New	• Target priority habitat including: - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh - Coastal saltmarsh • Create coverage within the Greater Thames Estuary and North Kent Plain NCAs • Create coverage within the Thames Marshes NIA	A **new** CSFF group could be created in the Thames Marshes Nature Improvement Area (NIA), specifically to target coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and coastal saltmarsh priority habitats. There are no existing CSFF groups in the NIA or the wider area although there are a number of existing CS agreements in this area. There is also no CSFF coverage within the Greater Thames Estuary and North Kent Plain NCAs (which the Thames Marshes NIA falls within).
Hensbarrow NCA	New	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Lowland heathland - Lowland fen - Deciduous woodland • Increase coverage within the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership Area	A **new** CSFF group could be created within the Hensbarrow NCA to incorporate and link up priority habitat areas including lowland heathland, lowland fen and deciduous woodland. There are several existing CS and ES schemes within the NCA. Introducing a new CSFF group would also help to improve coverage of CSFF groups within the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership area, which is currently only 1.4% and significantly less than the national average.
Pevensey Levels NCA	140013	• Target coastal and floodplain grazing marsh priority habitat	Although the Pevensey Levels NCA has very high existing coverage of CSFF groups (37.1%), this existing group could be **expanded** further to incorporate more of the coastal and floodplain grazing marsh priority habitat which characterises the Pevensey Levels.
Mid Norfolk NCA Central North Norfolk NCA	090002	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh - Deciduous woodland - Good quality semi-improved grassland - Lowland heathland	There is opportunity to **expand** the existing CSFF group north of Dereham to the east towards Norwich. This could target a variety of priority habitats, including deciduous woodland and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh which are concentrated along the valley of River Wensum. CSFF uptake coverage within the Norfolk county area is approximately in line with the national average at 6.25%.
Quantock Hills NCA	110012	• Target priority habitat including: - Deciduous woodland - Lowland heath - Upland heath	Although existing CSFF coverage within the Quantock Hills AONB is relatively high at 21.1%, there is scope to **expand** these existing groups. These could target areas of priority habitat not currently within a CSFF group, including lowland heath, upland heath and deciduous woodland.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
		• Increase coverage within the Quantock Hills AONB • Increase coverage within the Somerset Local Nature Partnership area.	Expanding this CSFF group would also help improve coverage within the Somerset Local Nature Partnership, which at 4.1% is currently below the national average.
The Broads NCA	090013	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh - Lowland Fen - Reedbeds - Coastal Sand dunes - Mudflats - Lowland Deciduous woodland • Create coverage of CSFF within Norfolk Broads NP and explore links to existing CSFF group to the south-west.	Currently there is extremely low CSFF coverage (0.2%) within the Norfolk Broads National Park. However, a large part of the Broads are already under some kind of Stewardship agreement, - either CS, ES or LIFE funding. A large proportion of the broads are priority habitat, and this could be further linked and extended to those areas not already under an agri-environment scheme if a CSFF fund project were set up to support this. There is a CSFF project to the south-west which could be extended, or a new one could be set up. The low CSFF coverage in the Broads compares to average (6.25%) coverage in Norfolk County.
New Forest NCA	100010 130012 110007	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Lowland Heathland - Lowland dry acid grassland - Lowland fen - Deciduous woodland - Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh - Saltmarsh • Explore links to CSFF projects to the West and East.	Only 1.3% of the New Forest is covered by CSFF groups. The central portion of the forest is covered by the Verderer's HLS agreement, and there are several other CSS agreements in the south and east of the Forest. There are three CSFF projects on the borders of the NP – 100010 to the east, 130012 to the west and 110007 to the north-west. There is an opportunity to **extend** the western project to the north of Ringwood to cover more of the area on the fringe of the NP which is not currently covered by any Agri-environment scheme. This would benefit lowland heathland, dry acid grassland and fen habitats. There is no CSFF coverage between Totton and Redlynch on the north-eastern fringe of the Forest, so it would be beneficial to extend CSFF group 100010 to encourage management of the priority habitat here.
Exmoor NCA	110010	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Grass moorland - Blanket bog - Upland heathland - Deciduous woodland - Lowland heathland	The coverage of CSFF groups within Exmoor is 8.9% and is mostly made up of a single project centered in the north-east of the National Park. There is an opportunity to **extend** this further to cover more of the National Park area and its extensive areas of priority habitat including moorland, blanket bog and upland heathland. The project to the east (110012) by contrast covers 21% of the Quantocks AONB and there is an opportunity to extend it west to the National Park, to link up priority habitats.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
		- Lowland dry acid grassland • Explore extension of existing CSFF project to increase coverage in the National Park	The coverage of CSS and ES generally within Exmoor is very good, but more linking and improving habitat opportunities might be realised if the CSFF projects were extended.
Northumberland coastal plain NCA	010006	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh - Sand dunes - Mudflats - Saltmarsh • Create coverage of CSFF within Northumberland Coast AONB and explore links to CSFF project to the west.	Currently there is no CSFF coverage within the Northumberland Coast AONB. There is an opportunity to extend and link the priority habitat areas, particularly in the central portion of the AONB in the Beadnall Bay Area. This would link and extend areas of sand dune and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. However, there is relatively good CSS and ES coverage across the whole AONB, except for the area to the north of Beadnell where there is an opportunity for arable and improved grassland to create wildlife corridors. This could be extended west towards the Cheviot Hills and links with the existing CSFF group (010006) could be explored.
Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCA	060004 060006	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Deciduous woodland - Lowland heathland • Create coverage of CSFF within Cannock Chase AONB • Increase coverage within Cannock Chase District and Staffordshire County Council	There is currently only 0.3% CSFF coverage within Cannock Chase AONB, and the figure for Cannock Chase District is zero. However, 7.56% of Staffordshire County is within CSFF groups, which is above the 6% national average. There is an opportunity to encourage CSFF in this area, particularly to **link and extend** areas of fragmented lowland heathland to the west towards Penkridge. This could be a priority area as the uptake of CSS and ES, both in the Cannock Chase AONB and the land to the west is currently low. There are also opportunities to link to adjacent CSFF projects, 060006 and 060004.
Cornish Killas NCA	120008	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Deciduous woodland - Lowland heathland - Lowland dry acid Grassland - Mudflat and reedbeds - Coastal and Floodplain grazing marsh - Traditional orchards • Increase coverage of CSFF within Tamar Valley AONB	Only 1.69% of the Tamar Valley AONB is covered by CSFF groups. This contrasts with the coverage in the adjacent Dartmoor National Park, which is 13.46%. There is opportunity to **expand** the existing CSFF group to the north and east along the corridor of the River Tamar. This would target deciduous woodland, traditional orchard, reedbed and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh priority habitats. CSFF groups targeting the river could link and extend habitats and buffer the watercourse along its length. There are good opportunities for additional support to generate CS agreements in the part of the AONB south of the A38 as uptake of schemes is relatively low. Options here could extend, manage or restore the large areas of grazing marsh and related intertidal priority habitats.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
Howardian Hills NCA	030004 030013	• Target priority habitat areas including: - Deciduous woodland - Coastal and Floodplain grazing marsh • Create better coverage of CSFF within Howardian Hills AONB • Increase coverage within Ryedale District and North Yorkshire.	The local authority areas of Ryedale District and North Yorkshire have relatively good coverage of CSFF groups at 12.75% and 9.73% respectively. This prevalence is not mirrored in the Howardian Hills AONB, which has a much lower coverage of 0.8%. There is one CSFF group central and to the south of the AONB (030013) and another to the north, centred around Kirkbymoorside, (030004) but most of the land involved is outside the AONB boundary. There is an opportunity for these groups to be **linked** and include areas of deciduous woodland and floodplain grazing marsh priority habitat. There may also be an opportunity to create a **new** CSFF opportunity in the central part of the AONB, particularly to the north and east of Skewsby, where there is lower uptake of CS and ES and fragmented woodland parcels that would benefit from being linked and extended.
Vale of York NCA	030017 030018	• Create coverage of CSFF within York's greenbelt • Link to adjacent CSFF projects • Target priority habitat areas including: - Deciduous woodland - Lowland heathland - Coastal and Floodplain grazing marsh - Lowland meadows	York has no CSFF projects within the green belt area. There are opportunities to create a **new** project or **extend** one of the two nearest projects to cover the green belt area. This would link priority habitats. There is also an opportunity to increase the level of agri-environment uptake along the Ouse and Derwent rivers in the greenbelt around York to specifically target the coastal and floodplain grazing marsh habitat and buffer the rivers. There is 10% ES coverage in the York Local Authority area and 10.6% CS. There is an opportunity to increase this uptake through new CSFF projects.
Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield	New	• Create coverage of CSFF within Wakefield's greenbelt by facilitating a new CSFF project • Target priority habitat areas including: - Lowland calcareous grassland - Lowland fen - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh - Deciduous woodland	The wider Local Authority area of Wakefield has 5.61% CS and 1.64% ES, with no CSFF group coverage. A new CSFF group could be centred in this area to facilitate the linkage of the priority habitats. There is currently no CSFF in this area of green belt but a new CSFF project could be created.
Bedfordshire Claylands NCA	New	• Create coverage of CSFF within Central Bedfordshire's greenbelt by creating a new CSFF group • Target priority habitat areas including: - Lowland calcareous grassland - Lowland meadows	The wider Local Authority area of Central Bedfordshire has 7.06% ES and 22.47% CS coverage, however, CSFF groups only cover 0.19% of the Local Authority Area. A **new** CSFF group could be centred in this area, particularly to facilitate the linkage of lowland calcareous grassland and deciduous woodland priority habitats. There is currently no CSFF in this area of green belt and no local CSFF projects.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
		- Deciduous woodland	
Cotswolds NCA	110005	• Create coverage of CSFF within Bath and North East Somerset's green belt • Link to adjacent CSFF project in the Mendip Hills AONB • Target priority habitat areas including: - Lowland calcareous grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland - Deciduous woodland	The wider Local Authority area of Bath and North East Somerset has 15.29% CS and 8.07% ES scheme coverage, with a CSFF group coverage of only 0.2%. A new CSFF could be centred in this area to facilitate the linkage of priority habitats including calcareous grassland and deciduous woodland. There is currently no CSFF in this area of green belt The CSFF project centred in the Mendip Hills AONB could be extended to benefit priority habitat in the green belt or a new adjoining CSFF project could be set up.
Sefton Coast NCA Merseyside Conurbation NCA Lancashire and Amounderness Plain NCA	040005	• Create coverage of CSFF within West Lancashire's greenbelt • Link to adjacent CSFF project • Target priority habitat areas including: - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh - Coastal Sand Dunes - Coastal Saltmarsh - Lowland raised bog	The West Lancashire green belt around Southport and Skelmersdale does not currently have any CSFF group coverage. 2.47% of land in West Lancashire District is currently under ES and 15% under CS. There is an opportunity to extend the existing CSFF project in the east, westwards, or create a new project to facilitate the linking up and buffering of priority habitats, particularly coastal and floodplain grazing marsh to the north of Skelmersdale.
Somerset Levels and Moors NCA	110018	• Target extensive areas of Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh priority habitat • Link with nearby projects in the Mendip Hills and Quantock Hills AONB • Increase CSFF group coverage within the Somerset Local Nature Partnership area	The existing CSFF group within the Somerset Levels and Moors NCA could be **expanded** to incorporate more of the vast areas of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh which characterise the NCA. This CSFF group could also be **linked** to other existing project areas in the north (Mendip Hills AONB) and the south (Quantock Hills AONB). Expanding this group would also help to increase CSFF coverage within the Somerset Local Nature Partnership area, which is currently at 4.1%, less than the national average.
Mendip Hills NCA	110005	• Target priority habitats including lowland calcareous grassland, lowland heath and deciduous woodland • Increase coverage within the Mendip Hills AONB • Improve coverage within the Somerset Local Nature Partnership area	The existing CSFF group in the Mendip Hills AONB could be **expanded** to include additional areas of priority habitat including lowland calcareous grassland, lowland heath and deciduous woodland. CSFF group coverage within the AONB is 10%, which is slightly less than average for protected landscapes. There is also the opportunity to link with the existing CSFF group to the south in the Somerset Levels. Expanding this group would also help to increase CSFF coverage within the Somerset Local Nature Partnership area, which is currently at 4.1%, less than the national average.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
Severn and Avon Vales NCA	070015	• Target extensive areas of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh priority habitat • Link to CSFF groups in the Wye Valley AONB and Cotswolds AONB	The existing CSFF group covers an extensive area along the River Severn within the Severn and Avon Vales NCA. This group could be **expanded** further to incorporate additional areas of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh along the valleys. There is also the potential for this group to link to other existing groups within nearby protected landscapes, namely the Wye Valley AONB to the west and the Cotswolds AONB to the east.
Low Weald NCA Wealden Greensand NCA	100003 100006 130001 140011 140012 140016	• Target deciduous woodland priority habitat • Link up existing CSFF groups surrounding the Low Weald NCA	There are several existing CSFF groups in the areas surrounding the Low Weald NCA which are mostly associated with the nationally protected landscapes of the South Downs National Park, Surrey Hills AONB and High Weald AONB. These could be **expanded and linked** to incorporate the areas of deciduous woodland priority habitat present within the Low Weald NCA and to facilitate the linking up of habitats.
South Coastal Plain NCA	100010	• Target priority habitats including saltmarsh, coastal vegetated shingle and mudflats • Increase coverage within the Chichester Harbour AONB	The existing CSFF group could be **expanded** to incorporate the adjacent areas of intertidal and coastal priority habitats including saltmarsh, coastal vegetated shingle and mudflats. Expanding the existing CSFF group would also improve coverage within the nationally designated landscape of the Chichester Harbour AONB, which is currently less than 1% and much less than the 11% average across the English AONBs.
Humberhead Levels NCA	New	• Create coverage within the Humberhead Levels NIA • Improve coverage within the South Yorkshire and Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Partnership areas • Target priority habitat including deciduous woodland, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadow, lowland heath and lowland raised bog	There is the potential to create a **new** CSFF group within the Humberhead Levels NIA, which contains a mosaic of priority habitats including coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadow, lowland heath and lowland raised bog. This would also introduce coverage within the Doncaster and North Lincolnshire District local authority areas (which do not have any existing CSFF groups) and improve coverage within the South Yorkshire and Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Partnership areas.
Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase NCA	110007	• Target priority habitat including lowland calcareous grassland and deciduous woodland	The existing CSFF group to the north-east of Shaftesbury could be **expanded** to the south to incorporate additional areas of priority habitat including lowland calcareous grassland and deciduous woodland. This would also increase coverage within the nationally protected landscape of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

NCA	Existing CSFF groups	CSFF group opportunity(ies)	Description
		• Increase coverage in the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB	Although existing CSFF coverage within the AONB is higher than average at 18.4%, there is opportunity to extend the existing group and potentially link to other groups (e.g., adjacent to Verwood in the south-east).
South Downs NCA	14002 14008	• Target lowland calcareous grassland and deciduous woodland priority habitat	The South Downs National Park has the highest CSFF group coverage of all the English National Parks, at 29%. However, extensive areas of priority habitat, particularly deciduous woodland and lowland calcareous grassland, remain outside of CSFF project areas. The existing groups could be expanded and linked to incorporate these areas and facilitate the linking up of habitats.
Hampshire Downs NCA Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs NCA	130007 110009	• Target lowland calcareous grassland and deciduous woodland priority habitat • Link existing CSFF groups in adjacent protected landscapes	While existing CSFF coverage within the Hampshire Downs NCA and Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs NCA is higher than average, there is opportunity to **expand** these existing project areas to include additional areas of lowland calcareous grassland and deciduous woodland. There is also the opportunity to link existing CSFF groups in nearby protected landscapes, including Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs and North Wessex Downs AONBs and the New Forest and South Downs National Parks.

3.4 Conclusions

This section of the report has described the spatial analysis of CSFF groups across England and examined coverage against a range of environmental and administrative geographies. Against all measures, the analysis found considerable variations in coverage of CSFF groups. While some this variation may reflect local factors, including the take up of other agri-environment schemes and the largely bottom-up and organic emergence of CSFF groups (Table 26), the analysis suggests there is potential for CSFF to make an enhanced contribution to a range of environmental outcomes.

While the variations in spatial coverage identified across different datasets (e.g. priority habitats, national character areas, agricultural landscape types) are in many cases similar, it is likely that policy priorities will be important in shaping future work to address these differences. The emphasis is likely to be on different areas if, for example, the focus is on extending coverage of priority habitats rather than supporting the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Currently, priority habitats underpin the nature recovery network and the current CSFF Priorities are informed by Environment and Resource Management evidence. As a result, the training and advice provided by the CSFF group has to address these evidence based priorities, which is assessed at application stage for CSFF. In future, adjustments in the thematic focus informing CSFF development, for example around tree and woodland expansion, could be directed along spatial spread of CSFF as well as evidence-based lines.

The more detailed analysis of opportunities for new, expanded or linked CSFF groups provides a wide range of example of ways in which variations in coverage could be addressed.

4. Comparing incidences of agreement non-compliance (breaches) between CSFF group members and non-CSFF holdings.

4.1 Background

The intention here was to access data from RPA inspection reports to assess how compliance levels compared between those within CSFF groups and those not in CSFF groups. This involved reviewing the frequency, type and cause of non-compliance. The task was dependent on receiving a viable sample from the RPA covering CSFF and non-CSFF group members, and the related details on compliance issues.

A viable sample was agreed to be inspection data relating to both Pillar I, covering Basic Payment Scheme, and Pillar II, covering AES such as ES and CS inspections, for both CSFF group members those not in CSFF groups. This was undertaken for a period covering 2015-2020, so that the sample could be identify using the Single Business Identifier (SBI). Using this method, we were able to use a slightly broader definition of a CSFF group member as someone who had been involved in a training/event under the CSFF scheme. In this was we are able to capture those who participate in CSFF group activities but are not in an AES agreement and so recorded as such on the RPA database.

4.2 The sample

This process yielded just over 3,500 SBIs that had been involved in CSFF delivery through membership, training or events between 2015-2020. This number is slightly larger than the total membership of CSFF groups, calculated as 3,330 SBIs, in Chapter 2, confirming the broad definition of CSFF membership. Of these, only 53 SBIs (1.5%) had received a Pillar I or II inspection. The England-wide figure for those receiving a Pillar I or II inspection, and not involved in CSFF delivery, over the same time period was is 27.6%.

It's not possible to provide an explanation about why the number of recorded Pillar I and II inspections for those in the CSFF sample, given the broad definition used, was as low as it is. Unfortunately, due to the low numbers it is not possible to draw any assumptions as to any connection between the impact of CSFF delivery and the wider compliance inspection undertaken by the RPA.

It is important to note that the RPA made clear that the Master SBI List does not provide any explanation of what each CSFF delivers in terms of training. Second, the Master SBI List does not provide full details indicating the date of delivery of any given CSFF related training. As a result, no analysis could be undertaken to see if there was any shift in inspection outcomes as a result of membership or participation in CSFF, however broadly this is interpreted. It might be possible undertake this analysis at a later date using a longer timeframe to generate a viable sample and a more detailed discussion with the RPA, including type of breach, as to the possible parameters of the data request.

5. Task 3 - Resilience and Wellbeing among CSFF group Members

5.1 Introduction and background

The aim of Task 3 was to capture examples which illustrated whether or not being a member of a CSFF group helped maintain a collective bonding for social resilience and wellbeing. This was particularly pertinent given the impact of issues such as COVID-19 over the past 2 years, as well as the extant changes in agricultural support and the increasing discussion around climate change and biodiversity loss.

An online survey (see Appendix 7) was developed using JISC online surveys, to target all eligible members of CSFF groups. Respondents were recruited via CSFF facilitators and other key stakeholders using the list of CSFF contacts from NE. The survey contained filtered sections, with a focus on open questions to collect qualitative data. Questions with a range of Likert scales (strongly agree to strongly disagree) were used to supplement the open questions. The survey questions were developed with reference to the NE Social indicators study (Mills et al., 2021) and other national sources (e.g., ONS measures of personal wellbeing).

The online survey was supplemented by a series of telephone surveys undertaken with 18 CSFF group members (see Appendix 7). These respondents were self-selecting, as they had indicated a willingness to participate in this part of the project. The questionnaire for the telephone survey was based on the online survey, but permitted a more in-depth discussion of some of the issues raised. The qualitative data was coded for analysis in NVivo, and the Likert scale answers imported to Excel.

5.2 Activities and communication

The online survey was available for a period of three weeks from mid-February until early March 2022. Facilitators were asked to pass the survey details to their CSFF group members, and the survey was also promoted on the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook. A total of 69 responses were obtained, covering 19 facilitation groups. As a result, we can be sure that at least 18 facilitators passed on details of the survey, as two groups had the same facilitator. The response rate of 69 group members represents 2.73% of the potential 2,527 group members who might have been eligible to respond. It was not possible to contact all of the facilitators, as some had moved posts and others had incorrect contact details. It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic was still having an impact, as some people were no longer located at the place of their original contact details. This was also the

fourth survey into CSFF at a time when there were a number of other surveys concerning new scheme development, so survey fatigue may also have played a part. Finally, three former CSFF facilitators contacted us saying that the CSFF group was no longer active and they were reluctant to pass on the details in case this suggested that it might be reactivated. We were aware that some of the 136 CSFF agreements had expired, but wanted to include them to see if they were continuing in some form, as proved the case in the interviews. However, this further limited the pool of potential group members who would be able to respond, even if their views would be valid.

The outputs from the survey are reported below, largely in the order in which the questions appeared in the survey.

5.2.1 About you and your CSFF group

Respondents were asked a series of questions concerning the group to which they belonged and a range of associated details. The first of these asked which Natural England area their CSFF group was located in. A map was presented alongside the question as a reference (see Figure 27).

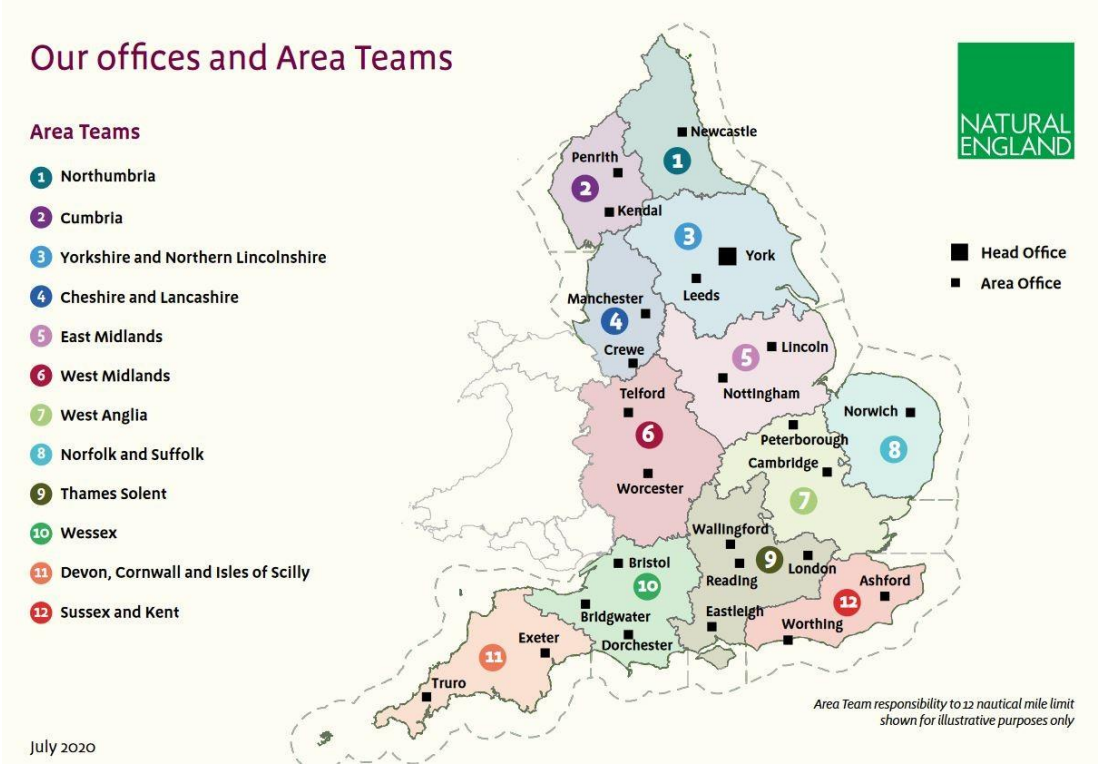

Figure 27: Map detailing Natural England geographical areas of operation

The majority of those completing the survey were located in the West Midlands area (31.3%). Wessex was the second most common geographical area (20.9%) with Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly third (17.9%). There were three areas which did not receive any responses: Northumberland, Cheshire and Lancashire, and West Anglia. Further, two respondents chose to not answer this question. Figure 28 presents full response details.

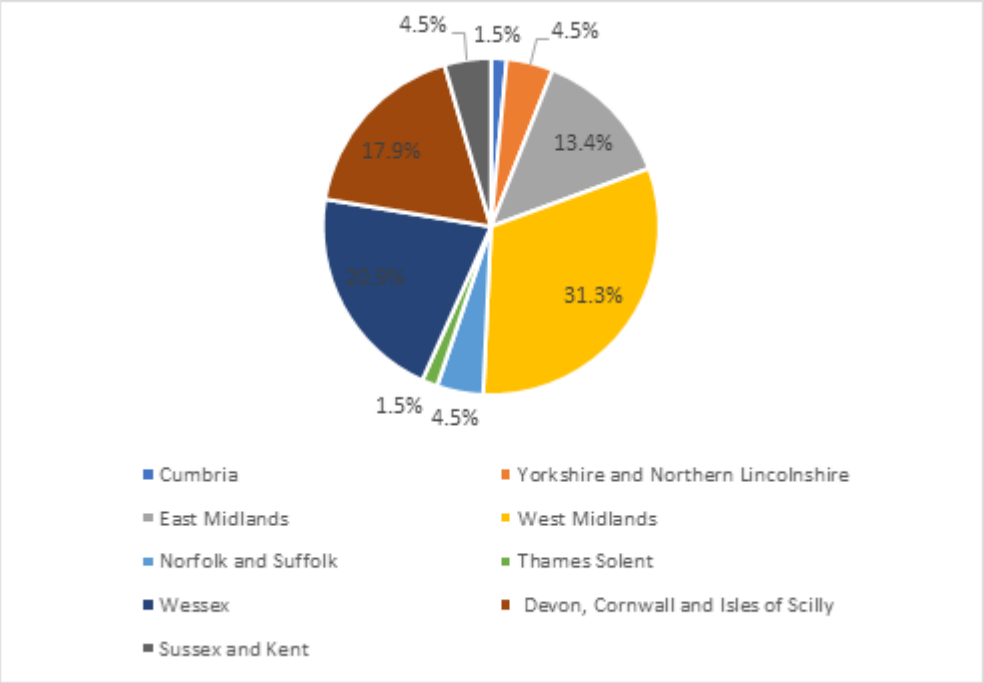

Figure 28: In which Natural England area is your CSFF group located? (n=67)

Respondents were then asked what their motivations for joining their group were. A range of options were offered, with multiple selections being possible. Two options were notably more popular than others. These were '*I have an interest in the overall aims of the CSFF group'* – selected by 47 (68.1%) of respondents – and '*to prepare for changes in agricultural policy / support'* – selected by 43 (62.3%). A small number of '*other*' reasons were offered, such as being directly contacted by the facilitator, being new to the farming community in their area and as an opportunity to learn more about wildlife. Figure 28 presents full response details.

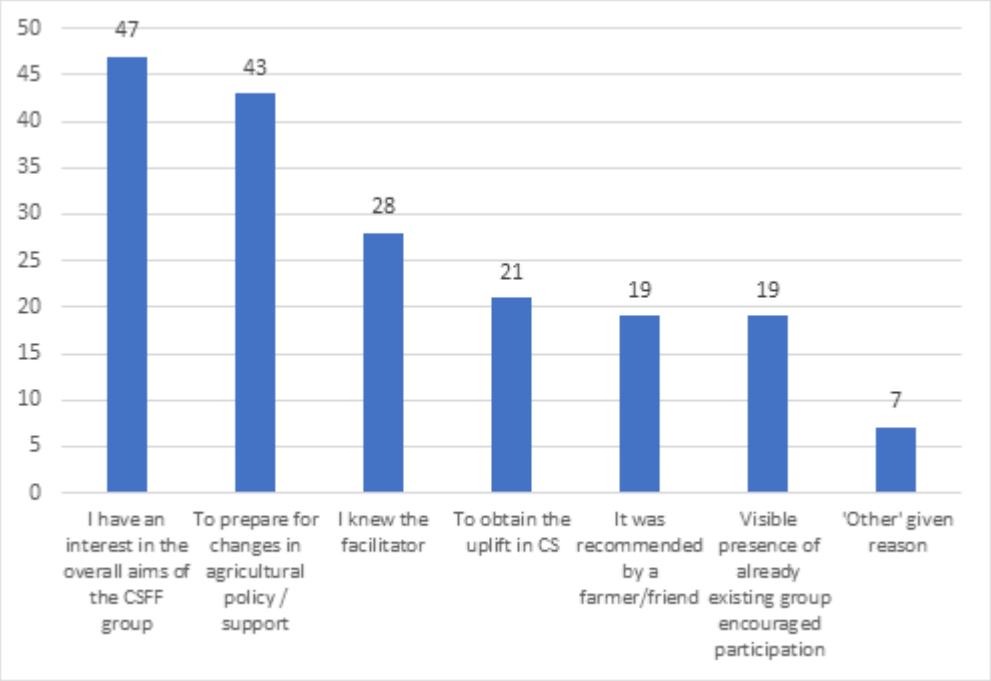

Figure 29: What were the reasons you decided to join your CSFF group? (n=69)

This question was then followed up with '*what was the main reason you joined the CSFF group?'*, with the same options presented. The two most popular reasons discussed above were reflected when specifying the main reason, with '*I have an interest in the overall aims of the CSFF group*' being selected by 39.1% and '*to prepare for changes in agricultural policy / support'* selected by 29%. See Figure 30 below.

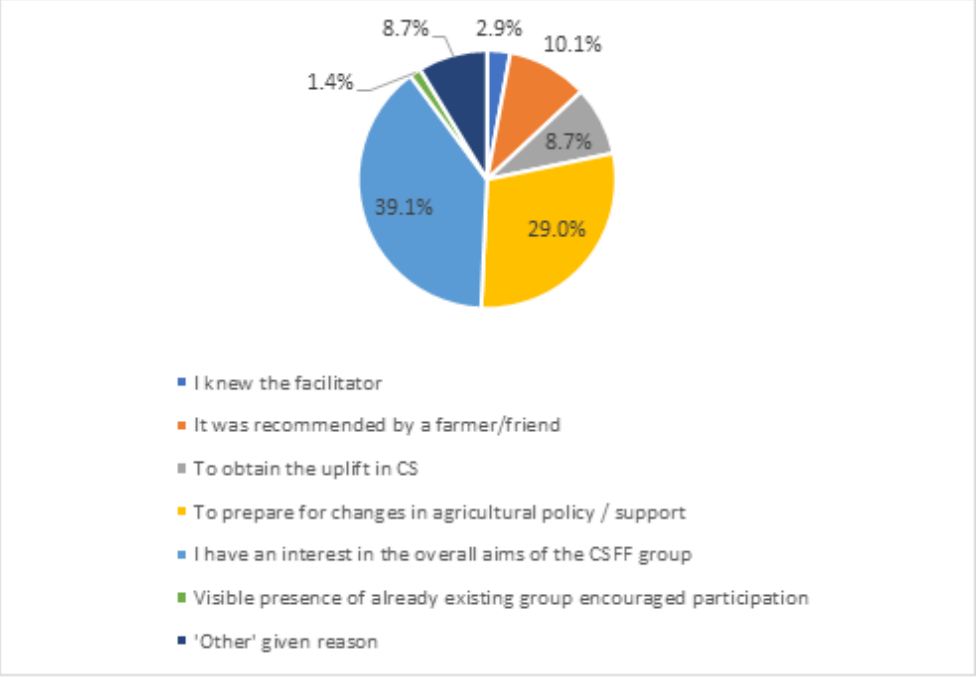

Figure 30: What was the main reason you decided to join your CSFF group? (n=69)

In the telephone interviews, respondents commonly indicated that a primary reason for joining a CSFF group was because they saw the benefits of working collaboratively from an environmental perspective, whether or not this coincided with CS.

> *Joined at the beginning because wanted to promote things that were good for the environment. Facilitator was employed to do environmental stuff on participants' farms [GM2]*
>
> *We wanted to farm in a wildlife friendly way. Didn't plan to go into CS, it was a way to meet others doing a similar thing in the area. [GM3]*
>
> *We're in an area where environment is important. Working with local farmers and estates and thought was good opportunity to get landscape scheme ready. [GM9]*

Only one said they joined purely for the CS uplift, but they acknowledged that since that time the '*other benefits have grown'*. The CS uplift refers to the payment, currently £500, for new members joining CS as a result of CSFF membership.

The telephone respondents were also asked what advantages they saw to being part of a CSFF group compared to those in stand-alone CS agreements. For the most part the benefits were seen in terms of '*passing of knowledge'*, as well as the uplift from CS itself. The role of the facilitator was seen as important '*because they are well connected'*. At least two mentioned that they were new to farming and so valued the chance to *'see and hear about other farms'* and noted that it would be '*much harder for them to find this type of information and opportunities on my own'*. For some, this was quite specific in terms of the current developments, as the following quote illustrates:

> *Being kept up to date with the latest information on a lot of rural and environmental news. The way things are going with ELMS and with high intensity environmental matters, it keeps, for those who are interested abreast of what's going on. [GM6]*

The responses to the question of what respondents valued about being a CSFF group member centred largely around being part of a '*network of knowledge exchange'* and '*getting together as a group'* . This quote sums up a number of points made by others:

> *I value the potential to learn more, although experienced always learning. Help others by sharing knowledge and impart wisdom about maintaining land, soil recovery and healthy nature within a farming system. [GM13]*

Similarly, the respondents felt that they gained from the opportunities to meet and exchange experiences, ideas and knowledge. Only one felt that they gained 'very little', and this was because they were able to find out information a little earlier than most other farmers. The majority of telephone interviewees felt that they had learnt a great deal, and many had gone on to implement this knowledge on their own farms.

The final question in this set asked the telephone respondents what it was that they felt they contributed to the group. For some, this contribution was organisational, either because it suited their skills set (e.g. ex-Army) or because they had the time (e.g. largely retired). For others, the contribution was experiential, for example: having been in AES for over 20 years; having specialist knowledge about wild flowers; or being able to provide '*the opposite opinion'* or ask questions. What is clear is that there are a range of roles across the

telephone respondents and the CSFF groups are living, evolving organisations in their own right.

Activities participated in over past 2 years

Participants were asked about what CSFF activities they had engaged with. A range of four options were offered, with multiple selections possible. Alternative answers could also be offered. Nearly all (68 out of 69) had '*attended events/talks/discussion groups'*, with 29 stating they had '*hosted an event or talk on my land*' and 29 stating they had '*contributed to a steering group (or similar) within the group*'. A small number of other answers were offered, such as chairing an event and soil testing activities.

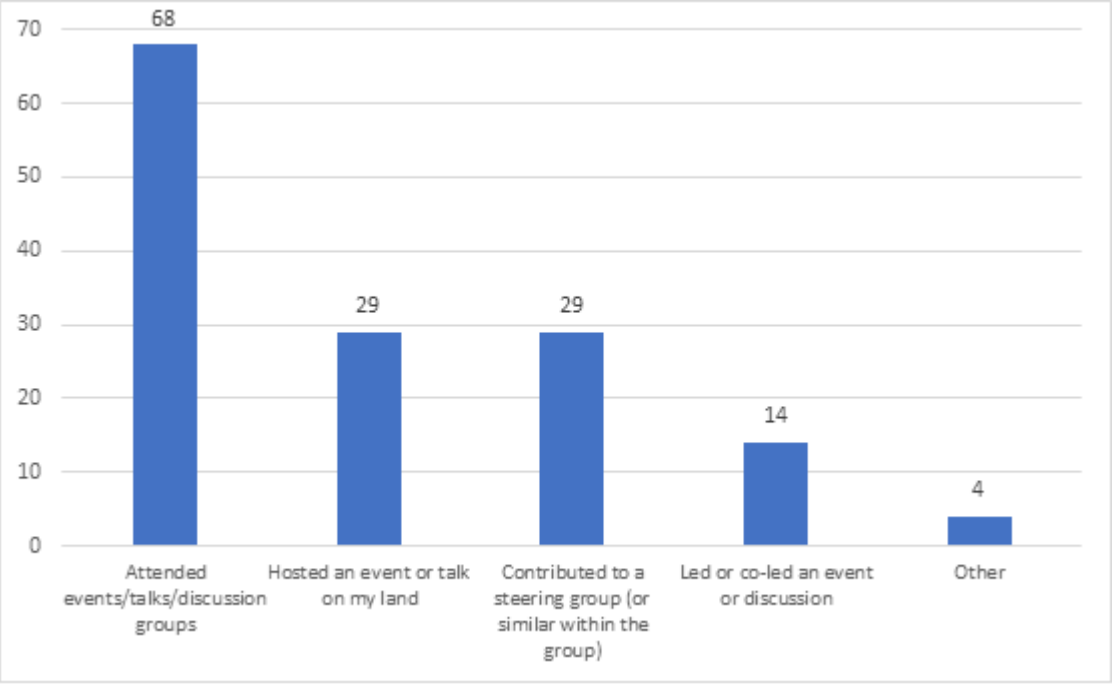

Figure 31: Which of the following CSFF activities have you taken part in? (n=69)

All but one of the telephone interviewees had been to events organised through the CSFF. There was a difference between those groups that had become well established before the COVID-19 pandemic, and those who had started just prior to the period of lockdown. For the groups established in 2020 it was difficult to begin CSFF activities, and many group members waited several months before events could be started. When events did take place, there was a preference for farm walks – including some which were socially distanced – with different focuses, e.g. veteran trees, soils, cover crops and management to enhance bird populations. The clear preference, as these quotes illustrate, is for walks and on-farm meetings.

> *First year 2020 [there] was no event, I was involved in saying COVID won't go away but farm visits are outside so we did a bird dawn chorus visit. Walked around with ecologist and looked at habitats. [GM1]*

Soils sessions, birds, hedges, woodland, deer management, starting to look at carbon. [GM12]

Been to local venue with bats and identified them, been to see wild ponds, and areas to count harvest mice, been on bird identification days, been around large estates where they promote better soil and arable crops, hedge laying demonstrations. Some meetings online due to pandemic. [GM8].

Plan to speak and host an event in May. Some have been out to see the site. [GM18]

In order to gauge feelings towards CSFF group membership, participants were asked how important being part of the group is to them. A scaled of response options was offered. Just over half (55.1%) of respondents stated that the group was '*important*', with nearly one-quarter (24.6%) stating '*very important'*; this is a combined total of 79.7%. 10.1% stated the group was '*very unimportant*' and a further 2.9% '*unimportant'*. Full results are presented in Figure 32.

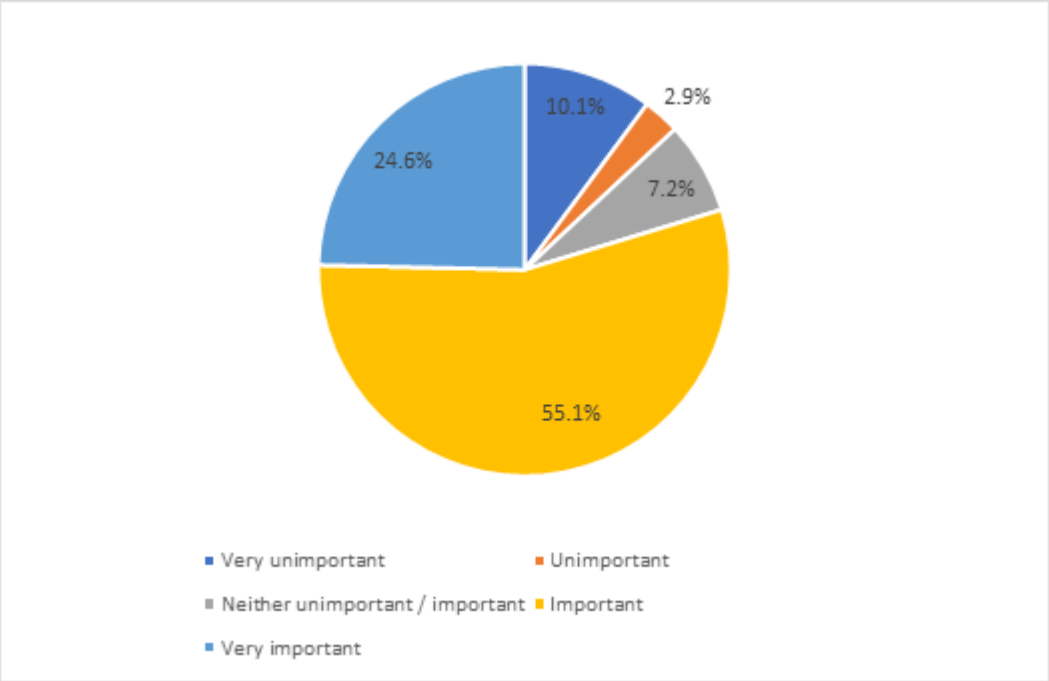

Figure 32: How important to you is being part of the CSFF group?

Benefits associated with group membership were also explored. Participants were asked to select what they perceived to be advantages '*to being part of the CSFF group that are not available to non-members in stand-alone CS agreements?*' A range of options was offered, with respondents able to offer alternatives where they felt it to be necessary. The most widely selected benefit was '*access to advice and support'*, which was chosen by 62 of the 69 respondents. The remaining 3 options were selected by either 46 or 47 respondents. They were:

- Access to more resources (n=47)
- Access to more opportunities (n=46)
- Access to information about changes in agricultural policy/support (n=47)

A total of nine 'other' benefits were offered, which included '*networking with other landowners and managers'* (or similar comments), and '*to learn new practices'* in relation to more environmentally sustainable farming. Comments concerning bringing farmers together were also offered, both in relation to the social aspect and with regard to collaborative farming practices.

Overall, the respondents felt their association with the CSFF group had allowed them to improve their decision-making and access funds which they may not have otherwise known about.

5.2.2 Relationships with other group members & individuals involved with CSFF / farming more generally

Survey participants were asked about how frequently they engaged with different groups of people, including: Others within their CSFF group; CSFF Facilitators; People not involved in farming (e.g. ecologists); Members of the public. A scaled response was to be selected, ranging from '*never*' to '*very frequently'*.

Typically, respondents engaged with the aforementioned groups on an occasional basis. This ranged from 38.8% for interactions with *members of the public*, to 48.5% for '*people not involved in farming'*. When we consider with whom the respondents engaged either 'frequently' or 'very frequently', a notable difference can be observed. Interactions with '*group members*' were much more likely, with 22.1% of respondents stating this occurred '*frequently*' and 11.8% stating this occurred '*very frequently'*. When this was raised in the telephone interviews, it was clear that most of the CSFF group members communicated at group events. Some went further and indicated that they spoke more frequently with those who shared similar interests to themselves. However, they valued group events for the opportunity to hold more detailed conversations about particular topics relating to the event. Such events broadened the range of contacts within the area, and also positively impacted how well group members knew each other and the level of knowledge that they had of others' interests.

Similarly, interactions between respondents and 'facilitators' were reported as occurring '*frequently'* for 33.3% and '*very frequently'* for 8.7%. In the telephone interviews, the CSFF facilitators were the most frequently communicated with. The group members saw them as the coordinators of events and the biggest source of information. It should be noted that the respondents were likely to know the CSFF facilitator prior to CSFF group set up, for example as a farm advisor.

The inverse for this can be observed when considering interactions with 'people not involved with farming' and 'members of the public'. Responses of '*never*' were highest for these two groupings, with 10.6% and 11.9% respectively. Interactions occurring '*very infrequently'* and '*infrequently*' were also consistently higher in these groupings compared to 'group members' and 'facilitators. Figure 33 presents full results for this question.

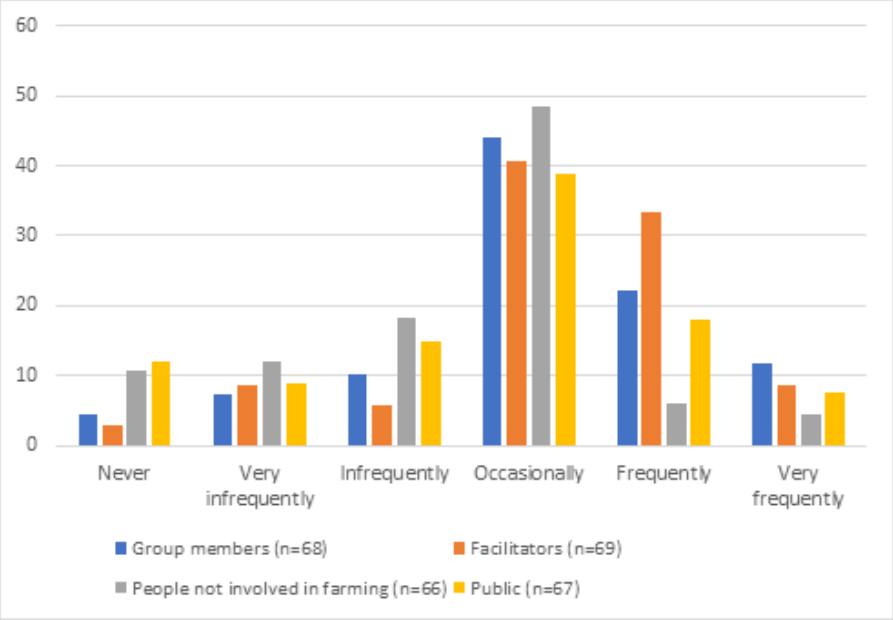

Figure 33: Please indicate how frequently you communicate with the following people outside of organised CSFF events - % (n=66-69)

These findings were confirmed by the telephone interviews, where only those who were on a steering group regularly spoke to someone other than the facilitators, and this was in addition to them. Most other contact occurred before, during and after CSFF meetings and with neighbours.

The telephone interviewees were also asked if there were any social benefits of being a CSFF group member. 50% (nine of the eighteen) said that there was, with another two saying that this had been hampered by COVID-19. For some, it is the breadth of people within the group that is important:

> *[The CSFF group has] been very inclusive, to extend to farm managers and game keepers. It's impressive, not the usual types of people that you see at NFU. [GM12]*

> *Yes, you make connections and opportunity to get off the farm, and talk to people. [GM16]*

For those who were less sure, some felt they were too new to highlight any social benefits but were hoping that these would occur in the future. For others, it had not extended beyond those whom they already knew. Only one person said there were no social benefits, without going into further detail.

Respondents were asked how important it is to them that they are able to '*gain and share knowledge relating to Countryside Stewardship with other group members?*' Responses were ranked on a scale with over half of respondents (55.1%) stating that this was '*important*' and 24.6% stating '*very important'*. Full results for this question are provided in Figure 34. This question was followed up with what they felt to be the main reason for their previous response, selected from a range of options, with the opportunity to offer an alternative if necessary. There was very little evidence of communication between CSFF groups.

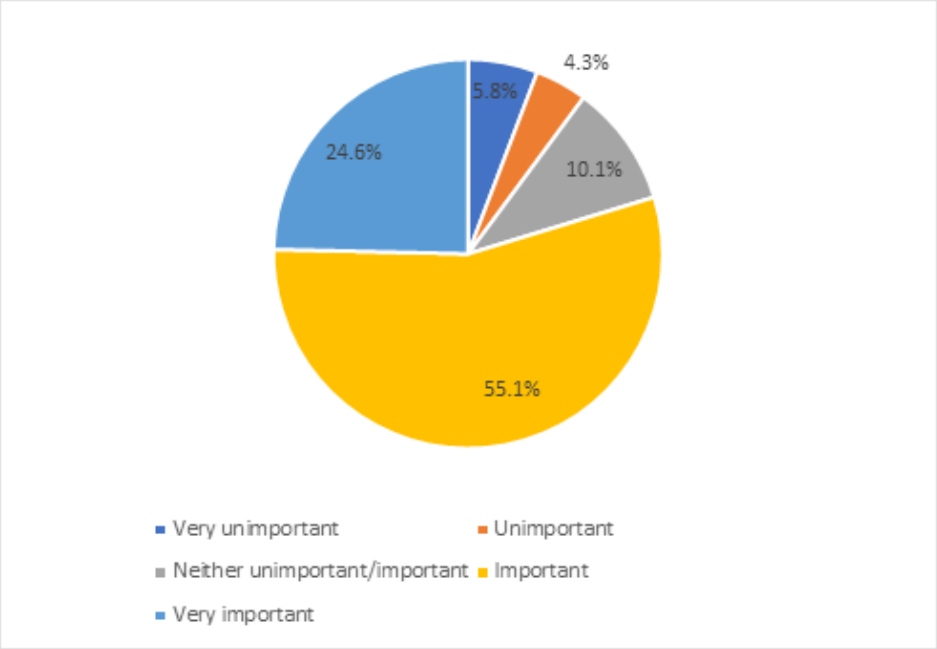

Figure 34: How important is it for you to be able to gain and share knowledge relating to CS with other members in your CSFF group? (n=69)

This spread of responses was confirmed in the telephone interviews. One of those saying that they did not gain or share knowledge indicated that this was due to COVID-19, but another felt this was obstructed through individuals pushing their own opinions rather than sharing knowledge constructively within the group. For the majority (15 out of 18) who did think groups worked well for knowledge exchange, this was due to the diversity of the group and people's openness to exchange.

> *Going forward, farmers are going to need more knowledge. The days of letting ground do what it wants to do are gone. ... Farmers are going to find they need more learning infrastructure, can't just rock up and put animals on land, need to understand land and its capabilities. [GM7]*
>
> *We've seen other people's woodlands and how they've encouraged public access and assess risk. [GM10]*

This was felt to be particularly important as new schemes are under development. Most respondents indicated that they were sharing their knowledge with others in the group. However, one respondent felt that group attendance was too limited to those who are like-minded and less interested in other points of view.

When respondents were asked to explain their previous answer, again selecting from a list of reasons, two answers were significantly more popular than others. '*It will help the group function successfully'* and '*It will help the group to accumulate or enrich their knowledge'* both accounted for around one-third of all responses. Full responses to this question are provided in Figure 35.

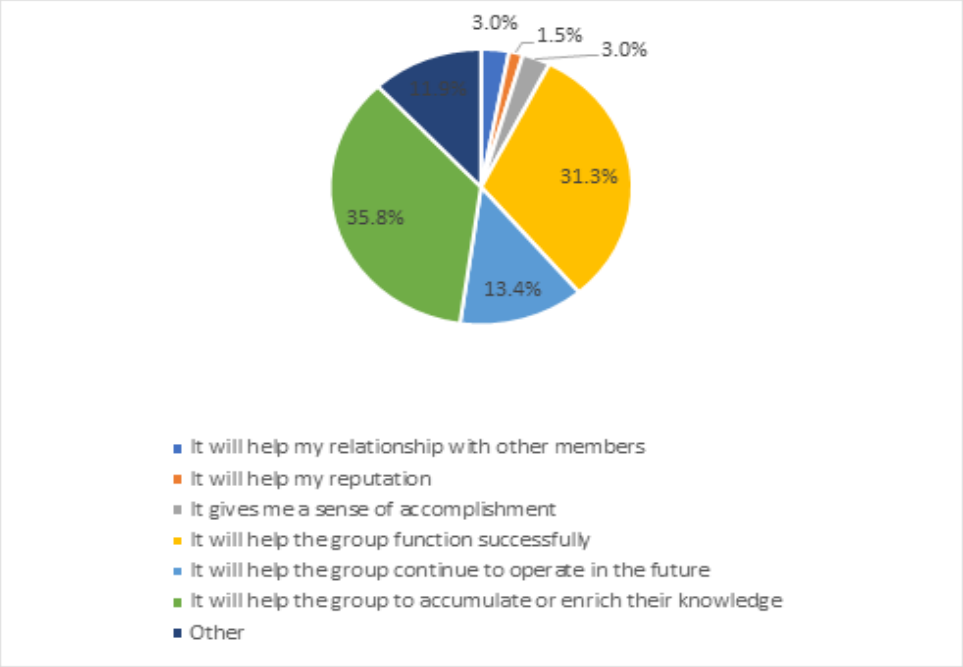

Figure 35: What is the main reason for your response [How important is it for you to be able to gain and share knowledge relating to CS with other group members?] (n= 67)

The telephone interviews confirmed that the exchange of information is a two-way process, and those interviewed were willing to share knowledge with other group members. For most, this was a natural aspect of group membership and had been happening from the start, but this was not the case for all. Some noted that the group had evolved:

> *Hasn't always been the case – early days [of CSFF], ..., were just doing workshops on health and safety so not sharing as much, ... but putting more beneficial knowledge forward now. [GM7]*

However, this was not universal and those on the fringes, in a social sense, of their local group felt it was an uphill struggle if their message or approach was a little different to the mainstream:

> *A little bit, but again, there's a limited amount of people open to it. When we do try and share knowledge, they think we don't know anything and therefore anything we say is not really relevant to them. If established local farmer, then would be different. [GM3]*

> *But they don't like to hear it. On a pond walk, discussing re-routing the river so it didn't flood. My input was why did you allow them to build a housing estate on the floodplain as water will flow faster over the concrete. [GM5]*

Participants were asked what sort of information they felt was most valuable in terms of their business planning and land management choices. A range of options were offered, with the ability to provide an alternative if appropriate. Nearly 60% of respondents stated that '*all of the options offered were equally important'*. Of the remaining options, *'information on funding opportunities*' was the next most popular, although this accounted for just 14.5% of responses. See Figure 36.

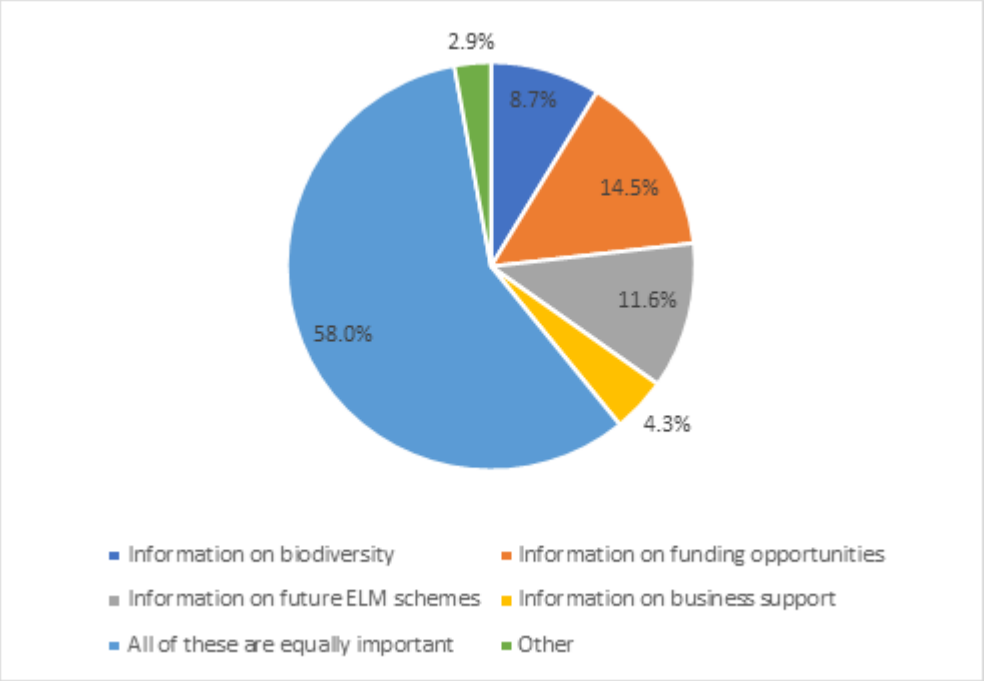

Figure 36: What information do you consider to be most valuable in your business planning / land management choices? (n=69)

The information referred to in the previous question was the subject of the final question in this section of the survey. Participants were asked how important they thought the skills learned in relation to CS delivery and outcomes will be in ensuring that their business can adapt to future changes in the sector. A scaled response range was offered. Nearly half (47.8%) stated they felt the skills would be '*important'* with 33.3% responding with '*very important'*.

The telephone interviewees were asked how these activities had helped them with matters such as business planning and confidence, and associated decision making. For some, these activities had clearly helped them decide on CS options and establish these. Practical tips, such as obtaining the right seed, were also to be gained. Some interviewees had seen clear benefits of CSFF membership, as these quotes illustrate:

> *CSFF increased my confidence that this is the right way to go with agriculture and to develop our understanding. [GM8]*
>
> *On herbal leys we planted the first lot of these and also specific things on how you manage these. Hedgerow management interesting but did not change what we did - more confident we are doing the right things. [GM16]*

For those interviewees already carrying out positive environmental management activities, the CSFF activities were less obviously useful to them.

The final two sections in the telephone interviews focused on whether the CSFF group members felt they had accessed the information that they had anticipated, and whether they felt being a member of the CSFF group had been worthwhile.

In terms of accessing the information they had anticipated, for most (n=15) this had met or exceeded expectations, as these quotes illustrate:

> *Yes, more than anticipated. I didn't know what I didn't know. [GM2]*
>
> *Exceeded our expectations, our facilitator has tailored our sessions to what we want. [GM6]*
>
> *We wanted to be at the front of the change - which is why we joined. There's vague info around ELMS. [GM13]*

For others, information is still awaited but expected:

> *Not yet, very little about CS at the start. Nothing about options. FWAG getting feet on the ground. [GM13]*

For two interviewees, this has not been the case:

> *No. Haven't had that support either. This ties in with the whole CS higher-tier. As part of that, we expected people to come out and do surveys and for people to look at land and see what's here, do in-depth studies and give recommendations for improving our patch.... But it was limited to you've got greater horseshoe bats, we can tick that box. We already knew that, the fact we had the bats had no bearing on the rest of the CS application. ... FWAG person helped with forms, but there was no advice. NE too busy, rushed off their feet. [GM3]*

Most (n=17) felt they received information ahead of those not in CSFF groups, but at present, the picture around AES is so confusing that all recognised there are other sources of information available. Many (n=13) had explored topics that they would not otherwise have considered, with some noting the range of issues from specific species to private finance, and water regulations to hedge laying.

In terms of whether being a CSFF group member has been worthwhile, 16 of the 18 said '*yes'*, including some who added '*absolutely'* or '*definitely'*. One said '*not yet'* and the other rated it as '*50:50'*. When asked if being a member had developed their skills, about half said '*yes*' and gave examples. These included being trained to use GIS or to identify certain species. Communication skills were also mentioned, such as learning to host a CSFF session and '*having to explain what we do and why we do it'*.

5.3 Group members and health & wellbeing

Participants were presented with a series of statements that related to CSFF group membership and the extent to which they felt that membership had affected certain aspects of their lives. The statements posed were, in varying degree, related to an individual's wellbeing. Responses could be offered on a scale, but in this instance, there was also the opportunity to state '*I'd rather not say'*. The statements posed to participants were, '*CSFF Group Membership…':*

I. Has allowed me to become more flexible & adaptive to change

II. Means I am better able to recognise & manage the things that cause me stress

III. Means I feel comfortable sharing my opinions with others

IV. Provides me with a collective voice on important farming & environmental issues

V. Has encouraged me to develop skills required to achieve what I want with my farm business

VI. Has made me feel more positive regarding my farming & environmental management

VII. Has allowed me to feel less socially isolated

The majority of respondents agreed with statements I (53.6%) and III (55.1%). Statements IV (47.8%) and V (44.9%) also ranked highly. Statement VI received agreement from 40.6% of respondents, but received a slightly higher number of '*strongly agree'* responses at 42%. Other statements that received a significant number of '*strongly agree'* responses were IV (29%), V (20.3%) and VI (20.3%). The most common response for statements II and VI was *'neither agree/disagree'*, accounting for 44.9% and 36.2% respectively. See Figure 37.

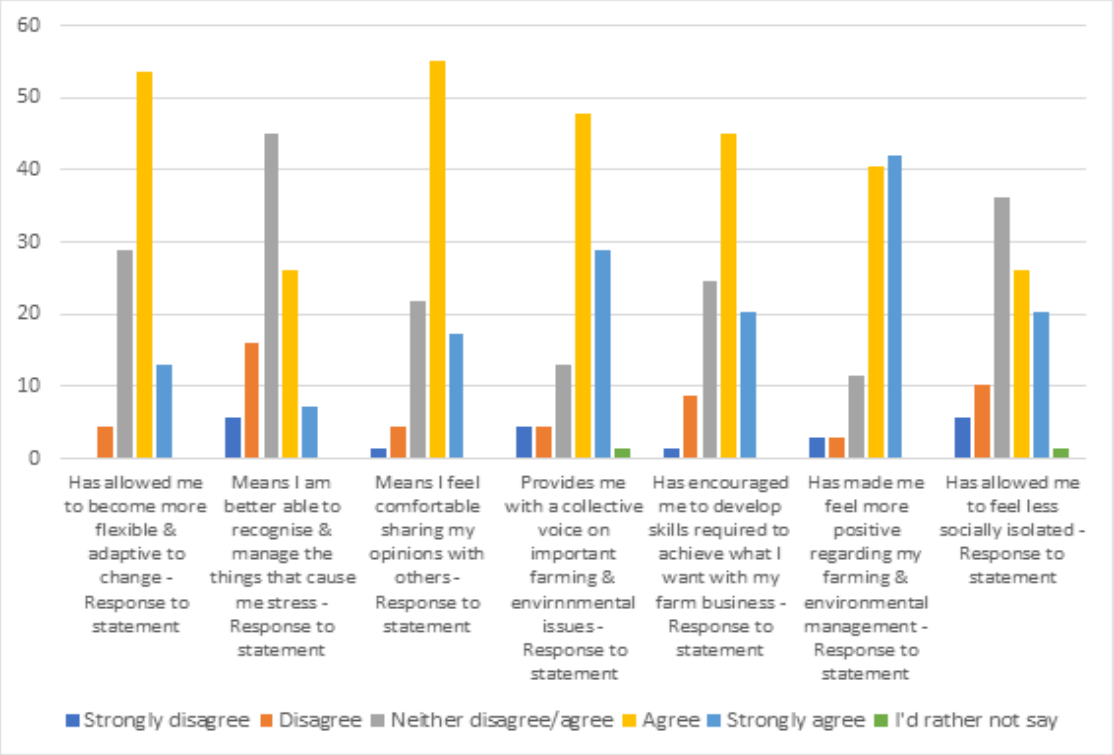

Figure 37: Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about CSFF group membership: "CSFF Group Membership..." (n=69)

The analysis would have been more powerful if it had been possible to determine those who had been involved in AES agreements before and those for whom the current CS

agreement, and CSFF membership was new experience. However, these data were not available.

To ascertain the extent to which respondents as a collective agreed with the statements, a numerical value was assigned to responses (strongly disagree = 1; strongly agree = 5) and the mean value was calculated; the higher the value, the greater the level of agreement. A value of three would indicate that collectively the respondents neither agree nor disagree. Please note that responses '*I'd rather not say'* are excluded from this analysis. The results are shown in Table 27.

Table 27: Mean response scores to the statement: "CSFF Group Membership..." (n=68/69)

Statement	Mean value
Has allowed me to become more flexible & adaptive to change	3.75 (n=69)
Means I am better able to recognise & manage the things that cause me stress	3.13 (n=69)
Means I feel comfortable sharing my opinions with others	3.83 (n=69)
Provides me with a collective voice on important farming & environmental issues	3.94 (n=68)
Has encouraged me to develop skills required to achieve what I want with my farm business	3.74 (n=69)
Has made me feel more positive regarding my farming & environmental management	4.16 (n=69)
Has allowed me to feel less socially isolated	3.46 (n=68)

By calculating the mean scores, we observe that in all instances the mean response value is greater than three, meaning that collectively respondents 'agree' with all statements posed. The lowest mean value of 3.13 is observed for the statement relating to stress management, with the second lowest being related to social isolation. Only one statement has a mean score above four; this is related to how CSFF membership links to a positive attitude towards the individual's farming and environmental management.

The telephone survey looked at this in more detail, under six different wellbeing headings: social; economic; environmental; physical; political; and health. Each contained some statements and the interviewee responded on a five point scale from '*strongly disagree'* to '*strongly agree'*, with a chance to offer additional comments. Interviewees were asked to respond to each statement from the perspective of being a CSFF group member. Most statements had seventeen responses, with one respondent saying they were too new to offer a response.

Looking first at social wellbeing, there were four statements, shown in Table 28 below.

Table 28: Wellbeing statements by telephone interviews: social

Social statements (As a member of a CSFF group ...) (n=17)	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
I feel closer to others in my community	1	1	-	8	7
My trust in others has improved	1	-	6	7	3
I have a stronger sense of belonging here	-	-	7	5	5
I am better able to access online communication tools	2	1	6	7	1

From a social perspective, the most positive response (from 15 out of 17 interviewees) was for '*I feel closer to others in my community'*. For the other statements on trust, belonging and online communication, there was a core number who were neutral but the other responses were mostly positive. The additional comments offered mostly focused on interviewees' own skills in communication, but a few stated things such as:

A farmer network is crucial to recover nature. [GM1]

For the economic wellbeing section, there were three statements, shown in Table 29.

Table 29: Wellbeing statements by telephone interviews: economic

Economic statements (As a member of a CSFF group ...) (n=16-7)	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
I feel more optimistic about the future of my role as a farmer / land manager	1	2	5	7	2
I feel more satisfied with my (business) income	3	2	7	4	-
I feel more satisfied with my understanding of opportunities in CS	2	1	4	7	3

There was less clear agreement with the economic statements than the social ones, with more respondents disagreeing, either 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree', with each statement (between three and five in each of the three statements) and more remaining 'neutral' (between four and seven). However, for the statements about feeling optimistic and satisfied with their understanding of CS, nine and ten interviewees respectively, agreed (either 'agree' or 'strongly agree'). The business income statement found agreement with only four respondents, all 'agree' only. From the comments provided by respondents it was clear that CSFF membership has little impact on income, but it is seen to be beneficial in terms of understanding the direction of policy travel and CS opportunities.

There were three statements on environmental wellbeing, shown in Table 30.

Table 30: Wellbeing statements by telephone interviews: environmental

Environmental statements (As a member of a CSFF group ...) (n=17)	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**

I feel more connected to the natural world around me	1	2	2	7	5
I feel more satisfied with the appearance of my local landscape	1	3	6	4	3
I feel more interested in trying new land management options	1	1	2	5	8

All three of these statements had a majority of responses at the 'agree' end of the scale, two notably so. Being '*more interested in trying new land management options'* was agreed ('agree' or 'strongly agree') by 13 respondents, of which eight 'strongly agreed'. Twelve interviewees also felt '*more connected to the natural world around them*', with five strongly agreeing. Feeling '*more satisfied with local landscape*' was less clear cut, with six remaining neutral and seven agreeing. When explaining their responses, some of those negatively indicated that they were already '*connected to the landscape around',* or that being a member made them see that '*there was much more to do'*. Disagreement was, therefore, not always because of concerns with CSFF as an approach.

> *Has increased environmental interest, it is extremely important. When you own land, people assume you have money, but this is not necessarily the case ... Misconception within group about this, some farms are huge and very wealthy, but not the case with all but everyone passes on advice and help. [GM2]*
>
> *Slightly the opposite as I see the bits that need to improve - agree with statement 2 but see it differently. [GM15]*

The three statements on physical wellbeing shown in Table 31.

Table 31: Wellbeing statements by telephone interviews: physical

Physical statements (As a member of a CSFF group ...) (n=13-17)	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
I can voice my concerns about developments in this area	1	2	4	5	5
I feel safer in this area	1	1	4	6	3
I can access the services I require, when I require them.	1	0	2	5	5

As before, responses here are weighted towards agreement, although two of the statements only gained thirteen and fourteen responses in total. Most felt that being a CSFF group member means that they can voice concerns, in this case about developments in the area. We were not specific about the term 'developments'. Some felt that their group had not touched on such issues yet, while others were able to name examples where a WhatsApp group linked to the CSFF group was now a useful tool to quickly warn group members about hare coursing or illegal raves.

Political wellbeing comprised two statements, shown in Table 32.

Table 32: Wellbeing statements by telephone interviews: political

Political statements (As a member of a CSFF group ...) (n=17)	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
I have access to a collective voice in current debates on farming and environmental management	2	1	4	10	-
I feel more confident in sharing my opinion on land management issues	1	0	3	8	5

There is general – but not strong – agreement for the '*collective voice'*, with ten saying they agree and four responding neutrally. In terms of being '*confident in sharing opinions'*, thirteen agree, with five doing so strongly. Fewer comments were made in this section, but those that were offered generally related to a feeling that whilst a collective voice is present, it is not listened to by those higher up the process, or that the collective voice does not represent their own views.

Finally, there were four statements related to health, shown in Table 33.

Table 33: Wellbeing statements by telephone interviews: health

Health statements (As a member of a CSFF group ...) (n=17)	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
I feel the things I do with the group are worthwhile	0	0	1	6	10
I am better able to manage the things that cause me stress	1	2	7	6	1
I can access the support I require, when I require it.	1	0	8	4	4
I am better able to deal with problems	1	0	7	6	3

The statement '*the things I do with the group are worthwhile'* gained the most positive responses, with ten 'strongly agreeing' and none disagreeing. All the other statements in this section have only one or three disagreeing, but between seven and eight neutral responses. The comments confirm that the interviewees see a benefit from the activities, as this quote illustrates:

> *Going out and talking on farms was refreshing and good for wellbeing.[GM2]*

> *Group is not as stressful, still lots to do, but not as stressful as day to day farming. Facilitator is link for support, needs to be good at their role. Being part of group doesn't mean to say you're going to sort problems, but does help. [GM7]*

Overall, the process shows that there are a broad range of benefits arising from CSFF groups, and that only some of these relate directly to CS itself. However, the benefits are not felt by all participants, sometimes because they existed prior to CSFF group membership, and sometimes because needs were met elsewhere. The most supported statements related to CSFF group membership being worthwhile, and positively impacting environmental issues.

The next section looks at CSFF membership and associated business impacts.

5.4 CSFF Membership and Business Impacts

Participants to the online survey were asked a series of questions regarding CSFF membership and how important it was in providing them with a 'forum to discuss and address the (potential) impacts' of a range of issues on their business. The issues in question were the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and agricultural policy.

COVID-19

For this question, 42.6% of respondents stated that CSFF membership was '*neither unimportant/important*' in the provision of a forum to discuss the potential impacts of COVID-19 on their business. Nearly one-quarter (23.5%) stated it was '*very unimportant'*, with 13.2% stating it was '*unimportant'*. Just 4.4% stated it was '*very important',* with 16.2% stating it was '*important'*. See Figure 38.

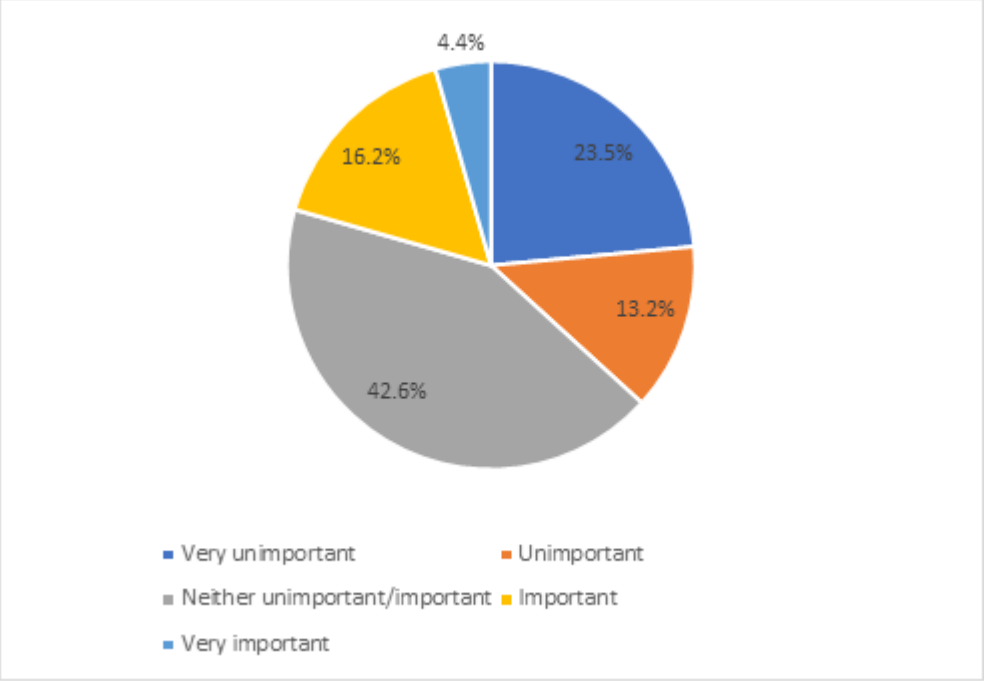

Figure 38: How important to you has being a member of your CSFF group in providing a forum to discuss and address the (potential) impacts of COVID-19 on your business? (n=69)

Participants were asked whether they have engaged in conversations at their CSFF meetings on the topic of COVID-19. Just twelve (17.4%) stated that they had; the majority (65.2%) had not. Of the twelve who had discussed the topic, five (41.2%) felt it had improved their business's ability to '*adapt to the situations arising from COVID-19'*; 50% responded to this statement with 'somewhat' and the remaining 8.3% stated that it had not.

During the telephone interviews, the respondents were asked if they noticed a change in the nature of the group over the pandemic. For those in CSFF groups which started in 2020, this was a tricky time with few, if any, meetings and no chance for the group to 'start' in any meaningful sense.

> *Nothing in 2020 by 2021 really keen to get out and meet together. Managed what we could in 2020 and keen to be out and about. [GM1]*
>
> *Started in pandemic, in year 3 and things starting to happen. Big impact on 1st year. [GM13]*
>
> *Tricky as just got going when it hit, better now than it was. Nearly died in pandemic but going again now. Critical are the topics to get people out. [GM15]*

For those that had been in a group prior to the pandemic, there was a big change, but also a few advantages:

> *Everything had to go to Zoom. Most people came to webinars. It was different - conversation is not as free flowing. We could have speakers from anywhere in world which was a big positive. [GM4]*

It is clear that the pandemic affected groups in different ways, but most seem to have been returning to some sort of regular pattern over the last year or so.

Climate Change

Participants were asked whether they have engaged in conversations at their CSFF meetings on the topic of climate change. The responses are shown in Figure 39.

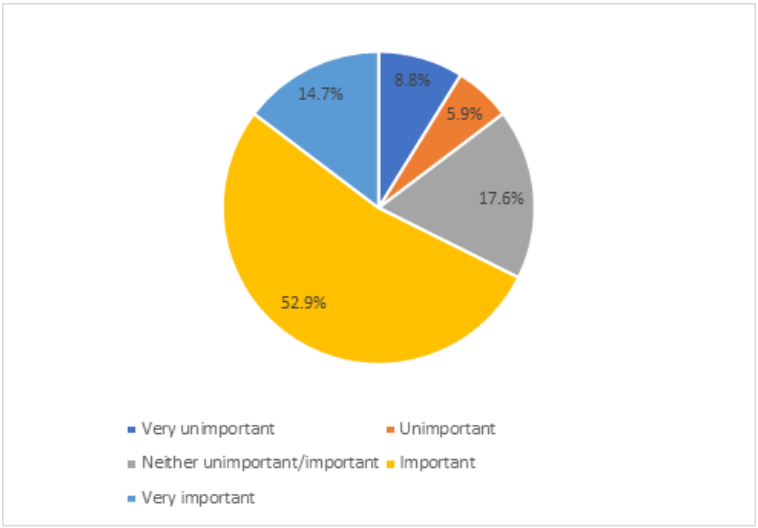

Figure 39: How important to you has being a member of your CSFF group in providing a forum to discuss and address the (potential) impacts of climate change on your business? (n=68)

Over half (52.9%) of participants stated that CSFF membership was '*important'* in the provision of a forum to discuss the potential impacts of climate change on their business, with a further 14.7% stating it was '*very important'*. 17.6% felt it was '*neither unimportant/important*', with just 14.7% considering it '*very unimportant'* or '*unimportant'*. See Figure 39.

Participants to the online survey were asked whether they have engaged in conversations on the topic of climate change at their CSFF meetings. Over half (38 respondents, 55.9%) stated that they had, with nearly one quarter (23.5%) stating they had not. Of the 38 who had discussed the topic, over one-third (36.8%) felt it had improved their business's ability to '*adapt to the situations arising from climate change'*, 52.6% responded with 'somewhat' and 10.5% stated that it had not.

Agricultural Policy and Support

Nearly two-thirds (63.8%) of respondents stated that CSFF membership was 'important' in the provision of a forum to discuss the potential impacts of '*changes in agricultural policy and support*' on their business, with a further 20.3% stating it was '*very important'*; this is a total of 84.1%. Just 7.2% stated it was 'neither unimportant/important' and a total of 8.7% stated it was 'unimportant' or 'very unimportant'. See Figure 40.

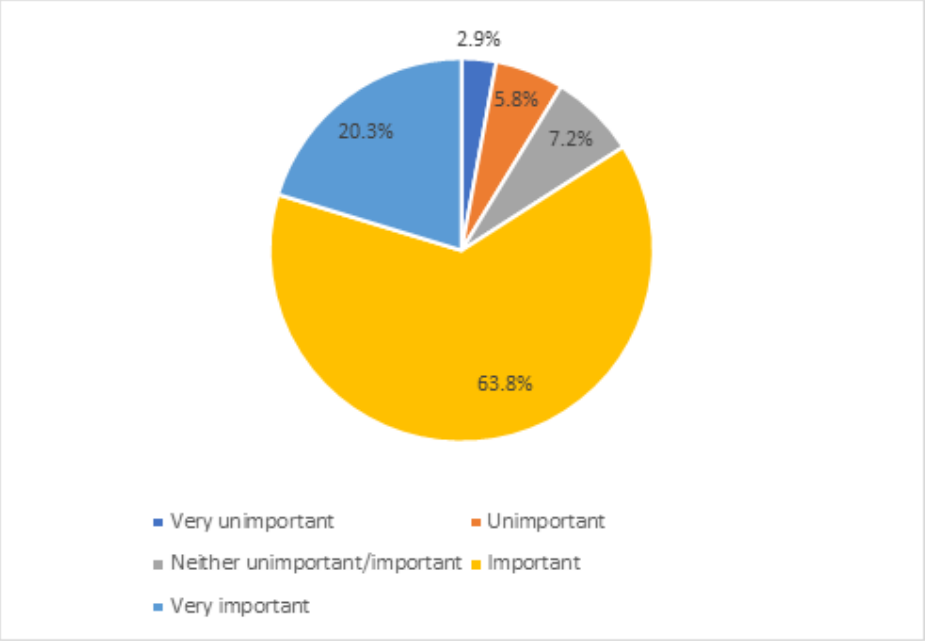

Figure 40: How important to you has being a member of your CSFF group in providing a forum to discuss and address issues relating to changes in agricultural policy and support? (n=69)

Participants were asked whether they have engaged in conversations on the topic of changes in agricultural policy and support at their CSFF meetings. Over 80% (57 respondents) stated that they had, with 11.6% stating they had not. Of the 57 who had discussed the topic, 34 respondents (59.6%) felt it had improved their business's ability to '*adapt to the situations arising from changes in agricultural policy and* support'. 33.3% responded to this statement with '*somewhat*', and 7% stated that it had not.

On the specific topics of climate change and agricultural support, ten of the telephone interviewees have been, or will in the future be involved in these types of discussion. Interestingly, one said that these topics had been '*deliberately avoided*',

> *Would love to [but it has been] a slow burn with the group - was poorly attended and then loads then few. But now over half attend now so don't rock the boat. [GM15]*

For the remainder, the focus is on wildlife and conservation, and these respondents are happy with this. As for the collective voice, with discussion based around consensus, there was a mixed response. Either this does not appear to be possible because there are not enough active members, or it is not seen as important. In only a few cases were the interviewees prepared to say that the CSFF group was a safe space to discuss issues with a wide range of opinions; others mentioned that this was sometimes the case but the 'safe space' did not extend to all of the issues the groups discuss. Whilst the idea of a safe space was something respondents believed would be beneficial, this would take time as trust and confidence needed to develop. At present, most of the CSFF groups are too new and still in the development phase. However, as the next section examines, this could happen in the future.

The next section looks at future collaborations.

5.5 Future Collaborations

As part of the closing questions, participants were asked whether they would like to continue the collaborations that had been established under the CSFF. The overwhelming majority of respondents (91.3%) stated that they would, with 7.2% responding with 'don't know' and just 1.4% stating 'no'.

The telephone interviews reinforced this view, with a strong feeling from all 18 interviewees that it would be beneficial to keep their collaborations going. However, there were some concerns as to how this would happen once funding had ended. Several groups were thought to have enough contacts to make it work, and a few had looked at alternative sources of funding. Only two interviewees provided examples of how this may happen: in one group in East Devon, members pay per hectare for membership; another group in the South East had a similar model of subscription. Other groups had already begun discussing the future and seeing if they might incorporate their group with other organisations in their area such as AONBs or National Parks.

Wrapped up in the issue of the future was the need to establish a better working relationship with the RPA. Several group members mentioned that the current fixed view of what could and could not be included according to the regulations implemented by the RPA was hampering the development of the group. The constraints mentioned included the limit per event, and the need to be more adventurous in order to meet the challenges of nature recovery.

5.6 Summary

The aim of Task 3 was to determine whether being a member of a CSFF group helped maintain a collective bonding for social resilience and wellbeing, with particular reference to COVID-19 over the past 2 years. An online survey yielded 69 responses and this was supplemented by 18 telephone interviews with CSFF members.

The survey revealed that CSFF groups had remained active over the past 2 years with almost all participants attending at least one event/talk or discussion. However, there was a clear difference between those groups established before February 2020 and those starting at or after this point. For the latter finding the most appropriate type of event was difficult, whereas for those established CSFF groups it was possible to seek agreement amongst the membership as to appropriate events to arrange.

Whatever the age of the CSFF group membership was 'important' (55%) or 'very important' (25%) to members. The most common benefit was 'access to advice and support' (90%) but access to resources, other opportunities and information about changes to agricultural policy/support were all supported by 67% of respondents.

Communication within CSFF group between members was 'frequent' (22%) or 'very frequent' (12%) for participants of the online survey. A similar level of communication with the facilitator was recorded. This suggests quite a high level of engagement, far higher than for those not involved in farming or the general public. There was little if any evidence of communication between CSFF groups.

Presence on a steering group or being involved in the delivery or organising of events is a key reason for regular and frequent contact with those in your CSFF group. A key reason for communicating was the gaining and sharing of knowledge concerning CS delivery (80% saying it was either 'important' or 'very important'). In the interviews this was seen as helping the CSFF group function successfully and accumulating or enriching knowledge of the members. The key area for knowledge exchange concerned biodiversity (58% of online survey participants). Knowledge about policy changes was also felt to be important, and received ahead of those not in CSFF groups, but this was also acknowledged as being changeable and uncertain at the time of the online survey and telephone survey.

In terms of wellbeing, the most positive responses from the online survey were concerning CSFF membership and the links to a positive attitude towards the individual's farming and environmental management. While the average of all the statements concerning received a mean response that was greater than three, meaning that collectively respondents 'agree' more than they 'disagree', the lowest level of agreement was for statements concerning stress management and social isolation. This would suggest there were not key factors in either joining or engaging in CSFF groups.

The telephone survey explored this in more depth and revealed that there are a broad range of benefits arising from CSFF groups, and that only some of these relate directly to CS itself. However, these benefits are not felt by all participants, sometimes because they existed prior to CSFF group membership, and sometimes because needs were met elsewhere. The most supported aspects of wellbeing concerned the impact CSFF group membership has on positively impacting environmental issues and undertaking activities that are deemed worthwhile, including feeling part of a community and developing a collective voice.

The impact on business impacts COVID-19 was not felt to be important by the majority of online respondents with most recording little specific impact. It is clear that COVID-19 did impact how groups functioned, particularly new groups, with most returning to a regular pattern of meetings over the past year or so. Climate change was seen as a key topic by two-thirds of online survey respondents, even if just over half of the groups had covered these topics. This suggests a broader range of topics for many CSFF groups than AES

delivery, particularly how it relates to wildlife and conservation. An even higher proportion, 84%, saw discussing agricultural policy and support as more important.

However, the age of the group seems to be important when considering the broadening of topics discussed with some feeling that they were too young to cover such topics, even if they themselves supported the idea. Therefore, whilst the idea of a safe space was something respondents believed would be beneficial, this would take time as trust and confidence needed to develop. At present, most of the CSFF groups are too new and still in the development phase but this could happen in the future. This suggests that the over the last two years, the CSFF has played a key role regarding changes in agricultural policy support and climate change.

The last two years have clearly been challenging for CSFF. Some groups have risen to this challenge and appear to be strengthened, increasing contact through social media and hosting events as and when they were able. On the other hand, other groups have effectively been dormant whilst unable to meet face-to-face, resulting in group members becoming more disengaged. Nevertheless, there remains the general feeling that group members were receiving information ahead of those who are not in CSFF groups.

The overwhelming view of the participants was for CSFF to continue and it is clear that they are committed to its delivery and development. However, wrapped up in the issue of the future was the need to establish a better working relationship with the RPA. Several group members mentioned that the current fixed view of what could and could not be included according to the regulations implemented by the RPA was hampering the development of the group. The constraints mentioned included the limit per event, and the need to be more adventurous in order to meet the challenges of nature recovery.

The next chapter looks at the use of technology by facilitators within CSFF.

6. Task 4 – Review of how CSFF use technology by CSFF Facilitators

6.1 Introduction and background

The analysis in this section reviews how CSFF groups have used technology over the past two years, both in terms of technical support (e.g. GIS or online tools) and/or collaboration support (e.g. Zoom or other platforms). The intention was to see how this could be supported, and if it was found to be beneficial to the development of collaboration, how this could be sustained.

As with Task 3, an online survey was developed on the JISC platform, and targeted at all CSFF facilitators, past and present. The survey questions explored the potential of technology to provide technical assistance and support collaboration, as well as discussing the possible format of such support in the future. Questions with Likert scale responses were developed, alongside open questions which allowed respondents to outline how the CSFF did or did not provide for certain aspects of social support and wellbeing.

The online survey was open to CSFF facilitators for a period of three weeks, commencing in mid-February 2022. Recruitment was primarily through direct email requests to facilitators, and supplemented via promotion on social media platforms. A total of 41 responses were obtained.

A series of telephone surveys were undertaken with 19 CSFF facilitators, self-selected from the online survey. The qualitative data was coded for analysis in NVivo, and the Likert scale answers imported to Excel.

6.2 About your role and your CSFF group

The initial questions concerned the frequency of use of specific virtual communication tools, such as email and Zoom but not including telephone, in particular those used prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. before February 2020), and since then (i.e. in the last two years).

When asked which communication tools were used before February 2020, some of the offered tools had never been used at all by the CSFF facilitators (Webex and Google Meet). Many other tools had also never been used by the majority of respondents, with 97.3% stating '*never*' for MS Teams, 92.1% for Skype, 86.5% for Facebook Messenger and 82.5% for Zoom. WhatsApp had never been used by 42.1% of respondents. E-mail was the most

widely used tool, with 56.1% of respondents using it '*very frequently'* and a further 31.7% using it '*frequently'*; nobody responded with '*never'* for email. See Figure 41.

However, the telephone interviews with facilitators revealed that some group members did not have access to emails at all. In at least two cases, this was true for the majority of the CSFF group. In such instances, facilitators had to use letters, posters and telephone calls in order to communicate with group members. Indeed, these methods were commonly used by many facilitators with the virtual communication tools supplementing these more traditional methods of communication.

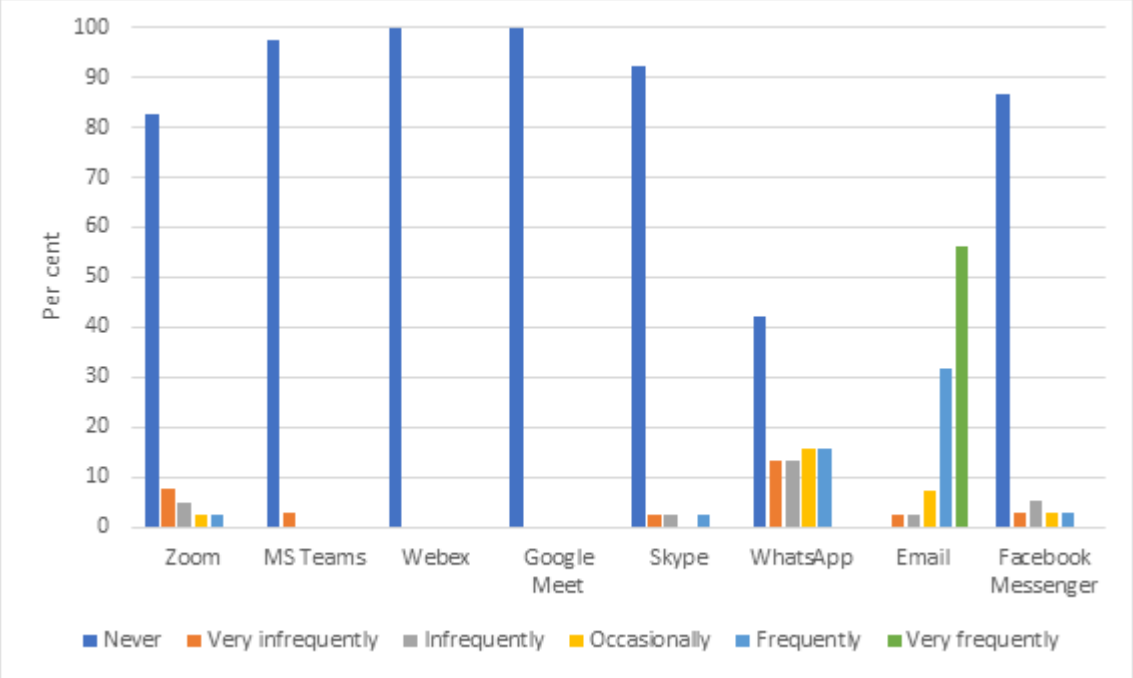

Figure 41: Which of these communication tools did you use before February 2020 to support and enable continued communication and collaboration between your CSFF group members? (n=37-41)

Respondents were also able to offer other examples of communication tools which they used. The most widely cited example was that of 'telephone/mobile', occurring on thirteen occasions. The use of 'letters/post' was referenced on ten occasions, with a further five instances of 'text messages' and one instance of 'Facebook group'.

The telephone interviews reinforced the finding that email was the most used communication tool but there were some clear exceptions where telephone calls, newsletters, letters and posters were very much the core approach, as these quotes illustrate:

> *Entirely actual meetings, posted notices and phone calls. Occasionally posters in local marts. Only emails were between admin person and myself. [FT7]*
>
> *Some members don't have smart phones, many can't use a computer. Email those we can, some receive letters. Met face to face when they could. [FT18]*

In another case, a series of one-to-one meetings was used to help establish the network and gather core baseline data:

> *One to one visits to farmers in the 9 months it took to set up. I got baseline data from questionnaire I gave to everyone. It ensured our targets were aligned with our group members. [FT17]*

The justification for these different approaches was that the facilitator was responding to what would work best for the group. In some cases, there was consultation about social media but in others it was clear that the majority used word of mouth or more traditional approaches. Facilitators are clearly flexible and adaptable, with some operating different systems for different CSFF groups, so that the '*farmers are generally happy*'.

When respondents were then asked what communication tools had been used 'in the last two years', there was a notable shift in the frequency of use for some of these (Figure 42).

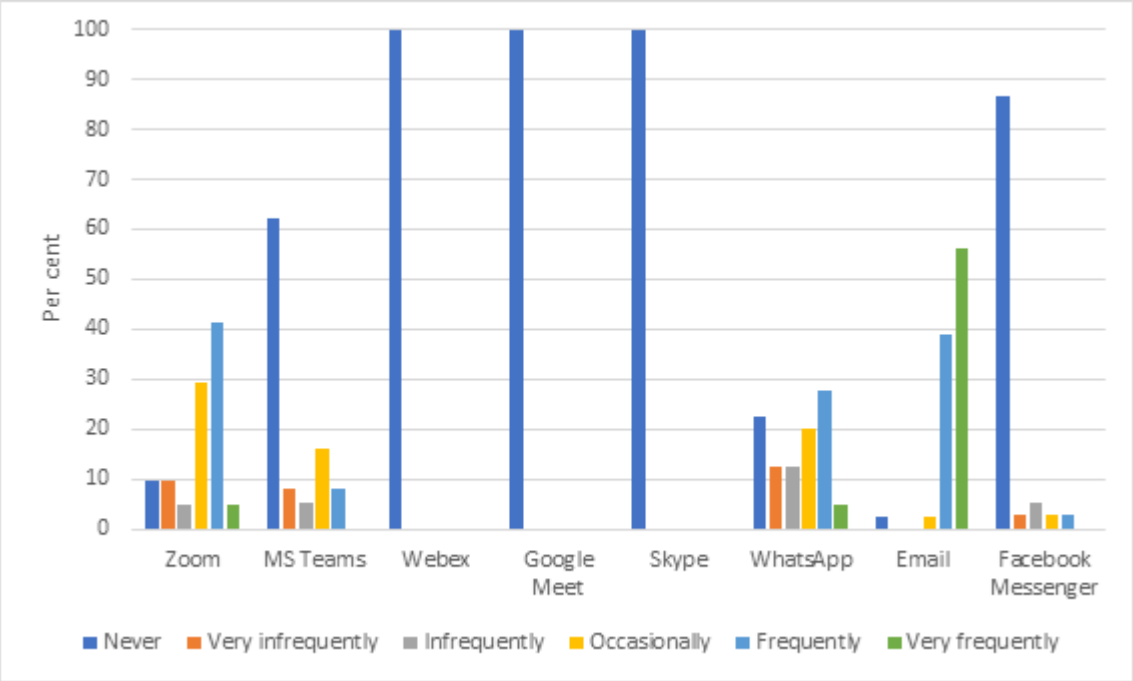

Figure 42: How frequently have you used the following applications to support and enable continued communication and collaboration between your group members in the last two years? (n=37-41)

Whilst Webex and Google Meet were still not used by any of the respondents, this was now also joined by Skype, as the use of other online tools became more prevalent. The use of WhatsApp observed a reduction in those who '*never*' used it from 42.1% to 22.5% and an increase in those who used it '*frequently*' from 15.8% to 27.5%. MS Teams still had a majority of people who had '*never*' used it (62.2%), although this was notably lower than the 92.1% who had never used it prior to February 2020. Zoom observed the greatest change in use, from over 80% '*never*' using it prior to February 2020, to only 9.8% never using it in the last two years. Nearly 50% of respondents in total cited using Zoom either '*frequently*' (41.5%) or '*very frequently*' (4.9%). Both email and Facebook Messenger were used with a similar frequency in the last two years as they were prior to the pandemic. Respondents again offered examples of other communication tools that were used. As with the period

before February 2020, the use of ‘telephone/mobile’ was most widely cited, with 12 occasions, with ‘letters/post’ being referenced six times. Use of ‘text messages’ was mentioned four times and ‘Facebook group’ once.

The telephone interviews revealed that the facilitators found that some groups took to using virtual tools well, given time. One facilitator wondered if this was because they were using them to keep in touch with family members. However, this was not true of all groups; another facilitator described their CSFF group as *'tech phobic'*, with one third of the group not having access to email and only using computers irregularly. The low uptake of some events organised during the pandemic caused some facilitators to lose the motivation to organise further events.

As a result, most of the groups with limited technological access were paused during the pandemic. Of the groups with regular email access, some were paused while others embraced the technology.

> *I could still use emails. Delivery of workshops changed to zoom rather than face to face. [FT1]*

Moreover, it was difficult for some areas to hold virtual events as there was inconsistent access to broadband in that area:

> *It didn't really. [Location] hasn't got good Wi-Fi, [and] people struggle to get online for Zoom and Teams. Set up a WhatsApp group to communicate. [FT3]*

Where they were held, the quality of online events was not felt to be the same as in-person events; for example, changes to the group dynamic meant it was difficult for people to have informal conversations. However, it was possible to record sessions so that people could watch them back in their own time. Facilitators also appreciated being able to invite individuals to speak from all over the UK.

> *Started on Zoom events not face-to-face. No furlough at FWAG and kept pushing through, this was a key decision in maintaining the group’s activity. Asked RPA [for permission] to continue as a distanced group and still claim. Learnt quickly and farmers did too. Has been revolutionary thing as they can re-listen to events or have on in the background. Do Teams as well, or Google Meet, if the speaker prefers this. [FT12]*

For the most part, these changes were received with enthusiasm and a positive approach, perhaps as there were few others options available to keep in touch. As one facilitator pointed out, the risk of contracting COVID-19 was low as they were in sparsely populated areas and largely outside. However, should group members have fallen ill, the impacts would be significant, as there was no one else to do their farm work. Therefore, in most cases, online events were seen as ‘*something rather than nothing’*. For others, it opened up new opportunities and they believe this is something they will keep going:

> *Will keep doing this - great to get together but short sharp training it can work well as no need to shower, eat and drive. Farmers took to this well without any concerns really. [FT19]*

The overall impact was mixed. For a few respondents it added to what the group had already established, and seemed to help them expand their networks. For most, however, it was a tough period for both facilitators and group members, with difficult moments, such as:

We expected 20-30 but got 2 or 3. [FT11]

[The pandemic] had an impact but knew each other already. Some [time] fishing around for what works. All know [technology] is a useful tool but not a replacement for face-to-face. WhatsApp is snappy and great. [FT5]

All telephone interviewees were asked about the use of technology to arrange online events. This seemed to work best where email and WhatsApp were used in combination, to help people choose popular topics and speakers, and to help promote the event. In such cases, the use of Zoom, Google Meet or Teams to host events seemed to function well. However, some events had few attendees and on some occasions the technology appeared to be a barrier to participation.

The final area of discussion was around the overall impact on the CSFF groups in terms of their composition and the lessons learnt. In most cases, the facilitators had not noticed a difference across the group, and made an extra effort to look out for those who had not been so active.

No real change to nature of group or size, same core members and same marginal. [FT5]

Not really, the hard to reach group do have phones and they have wanted to keep in touch and found ways to do it. Reaching out is key and they are learning to stay in touch. Can work out who might be 'hard to reach' and try and make contact. Not having staff in furlough was a key factor in this. [FT12]

The final point about staffing was key. For those facilitators linked organisations that did not furlough staff, e.g. some FWAG associations, they prioritised the continuation of activities, connecting with groups and learning what worked. Where there were staffing challenges as a result of furlough, this was obviously more difficult. Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine if facilitators were linked to an organisation or local authority or if they were independent. However, as far as we were able to ascertain most facilitators were linked in some way to an organisation.

Keeping group members engaged mainly involved a return to the tried and tested pre-pandemic methods, with the addition of the newly learnt technology. Most of the technology used was learnt ‘on the job’, but some were keen to learn more about its potential as these quotes illustrate:

Definitely. There are some social media tools I'm not familiar with, that some farmers might be using that the groups are not. If we're trying to reach different demographics, we should understand social media better, to tap into what farmers are tapped into. [FT8]

Yes, I set up a Mail Chimp thing for newsletters, put it down in the CSFF time - learning how to do it, but [RPA] wouldn't pay for it ... mixed messaging. Support with that would've been brilliant, a hole in the funding. [FT13]

For others, technology is felt to be a little redundant now, or the farming group are not ready for it due to poor Wi-Fi, for example.

The next section looks at the use of technology and different tools in the development of CS applications.

Technology for completing CS applications

Respondents were asked about their use of tools when completing their Countryside Stewardship applications. Again, a comparison was made between pre-February 2020 and the last two years. Respondents were able to select multiple options for both time periods. In both instances, 'MAGIC[4]' was the most commonly cited, with 35 (84.4%) selecting it prior to February 2020, and 28 (68.3%) in the last two years. The options 'QGIS/Open Source[5]', 'Catchment Explorer[6]' and 'Arc GIS/ESRI[7]' reported similar response rates for both time periods, with 'The Land App[8]' exhibiting an increase in response numbers from seven to fifteen between the two time periods. Full results are presented in Figure 43.

Figure 43: Which of the following tools have you used in completing Countryside Stewardship applications or preparing for ELM in the last two years?

Participants were then asked which was the main tool that they currently used. 'MAGIC' was the most commonly used (39%) with 'QGIS/Open source' the second most common, accounting for 19.5%. 'The Land App' and 'Arc GIS/ESRI' both accounted for 17.1% of responses. Respondents were also able to offer examples of other tools which they have used when completing stewardship applications or in preparation for ELMs. Other examples of GIS software were given, as well as Ordnance Survey mapping data, Google Earth,

[4] MAGIC is the Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre that holds various government data sets linked to the delivery of Defra objectives.
[5] QGIS/Open source refers to GIS operating systems that are free to all users without needing a licence.
[6] Catchment Explorer is the GIS data system operated by the Rivers Trust as part of the Catchment Approach
[7] ARC GIS/ESRI are GIS systems and operating systems that require a licence
[8] The Land App is a privately developed GIS operating system aimed at aiding the delivery of environmental management.

SciMap, Landis.org, Flood Map. Some facilitators developed their own tools by collecting data from CSFF members and developed spreadsheet software to show options and payment rates and from this evaluate different options and present them to CSFF members.

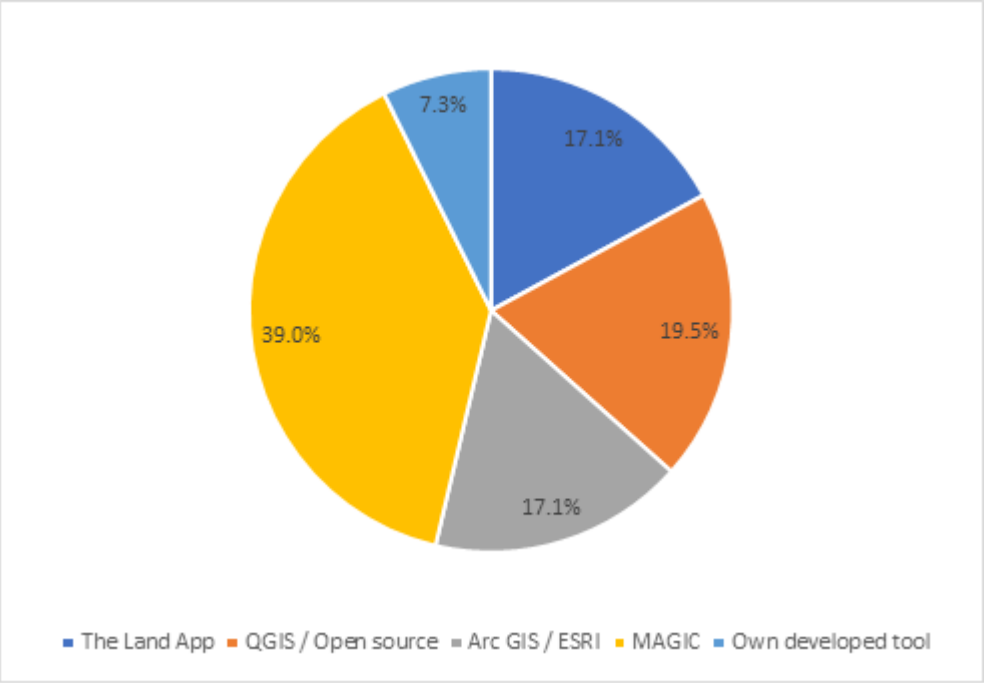

Figure 44: Which of these tools is the main one you currently use?

During the telephone interviews, facilitators were asked a similar question and given an opportunity to respond as they wished. There was a strong response among the fourteen who were directly involved in CS applications for gov.uk (ten), MAGIC (eight) and LandApp (six).

The overall view of MAGIC is that it is excellent, with the clarification that some of the data is perhaps less relevant. However, the fact that it is constantly updated is seen as a positive.

> *Use MAGIC a great deal, it is the key one really environmental and historic. Has all the data I need alongside my own. Some of the datasets we are not sure what they are or what they refer to - the climate sensitivity and SSSI protection layers. Are they relevant, can't use this with farmers. Some duplications e.g. bird priority areas in two places and some layers don't tie up between species. Have our own guide to use MAGIC and keep it updated. [FT19]*
>
> *MAGIC - is extremely good, maintained national dataset and up-to-date. You can check when it was updated on meta data, better than commercial or LRC data. [FT14]*
>
> *MAGIC-brilliant as it shows the benefit of field parcels as part of the whole, you can link up and have the layers. it is the one place for accurate and up-to-date information on government priorities and has the admin boundaries and protected landscapes. [FT12]*

Although the Gov.uk website is used more often than MAGIC, fewer positive comments were made about it, and navigation of the website seems to be a key challenge.

Gov website is great as long as you know how to navigate it, give links that go straight to page, rather than need for endless scrolling. FT3]

Miss having an HLS manual in paper that you can take to farmer. Find it difficult to find things on website even though I'm using [it] regularly. [FT4]

Used to using it because using it almost daily, but farmers find it incredibly awkward, need links up sleeve to email/message so they can find things directly. A minefield to get lost in. [FT13]

As noted in the online survey, some search the term they are looking for and look for the Gov.uk link. The Defra blogs are welcomed, especially as they are linked to e-alerts. The LandApp is the only non-Defra source that was listed in the survey. Some noted that:

LandApp - was clunky at start but developing fast so more useful. Has its own frustrations. [FT5]

LandApp is becoming more relevant. Problem is not with tech, but clarity of [Defra] programmes. [FT16]

LandApp is great and comes with great support. [FT15]

Although other sources exist, none were specifically mentioned in the survey. Some of the larger land agency firms have also developed their own internal processes.

The facilitators rarely use just one tool, with many using a combination of MAGIC and Gov.uk as the core starting points and supplementing these with other programmes. MAGIC also seems to be the most up-to-date and reliable source in relation to preparing CS applications.

6.3 Continued use of technology

A series of questions was asked pertaining to the respondents' anticipated use of technology amongst their groups in the future. Nearly 30% states they anticipated using virtual tools '*very frequently'* with 17.1% stating '*somewhat frequently'*. Just 4.9% stated '*never*' and 14.6% '*very infrequently'*. See Figure 45.

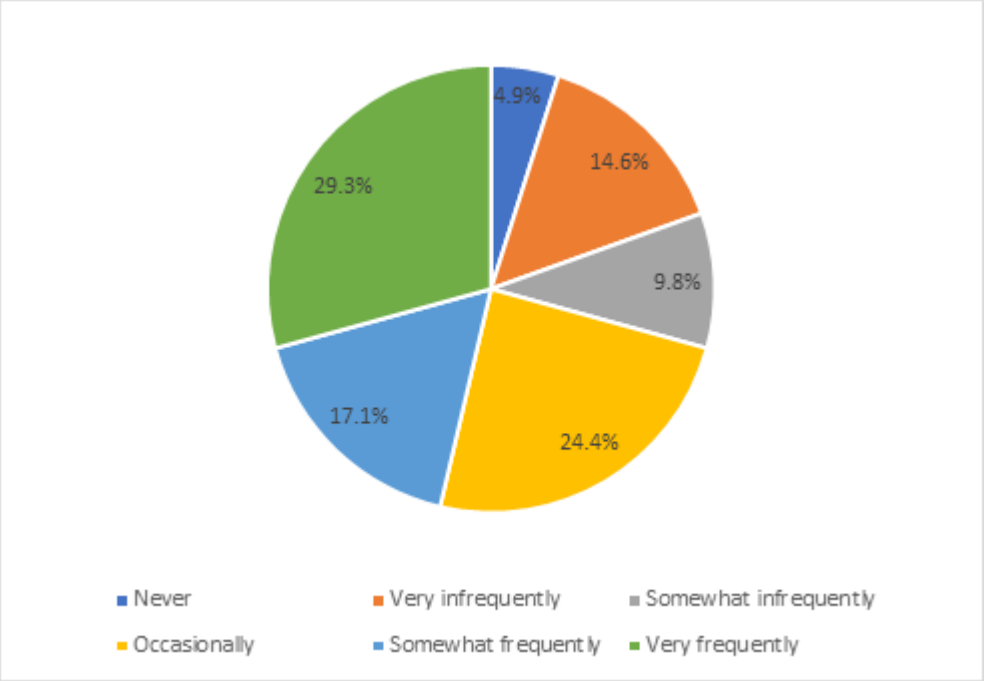

Figure 45: How regularly do you anticipate that you will be continuing to use some virtual tools to communicate with your CSFF group members? (n=41)

The general merits of virtual tools were considered, and participants were asked in what ways they felt these might be valuable as a method of communication. The most popular response, cited by 31 of the 41 respondents was '*to give updates on changes in agricultural policy/support*', closely followed by '*to host events with expert speakers in another region',* which was selected by 30 respondents. '*To meet with a steering group'* was selected by 23 respondents and '*other'* was selected by six respondents. Multiple selections were possible. Of the '*other'* suggestions offered, many of the comments related to benefits associated with reduced travel and/or engagement with groups that were not local, rather than engagement with specific 'experts'. One comment stated that the use of virtual tools was not viable at the present time due to poor connectivity.

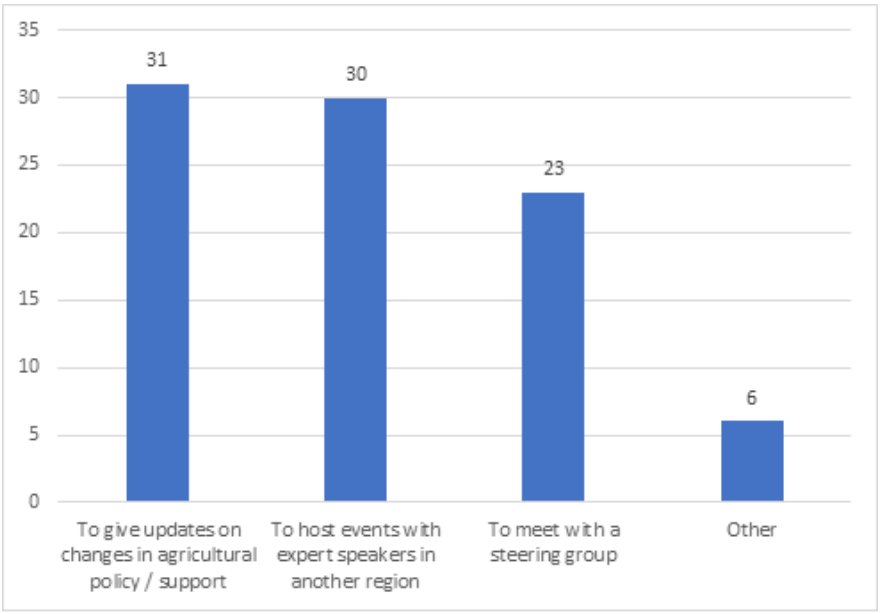

Figure 46: In which of the following ways do you think virtual tools could be valuable as a method of communication (n=41)

Specific benefits of virtual tools were explored, with facilitators being asked what they considered the 'benefits of virtual tools as a facilitator running a CSFF group'? Being able to '*invite speakers from across the globe'* was the most common response, being selected by 25 respondents. A further 23, selected '*Asynchronous access to events',* with 19 selecting '*require fewer administrative tasks'*. There were seven comments offered as '*other'* which included the ability to conduct short meetings, the benefits of being able to re-access recordings and enabling meetings to occur if face-to-face is not an option. Again, there were comments related to virtual tools not being viable at the present time due to poor connectivity.

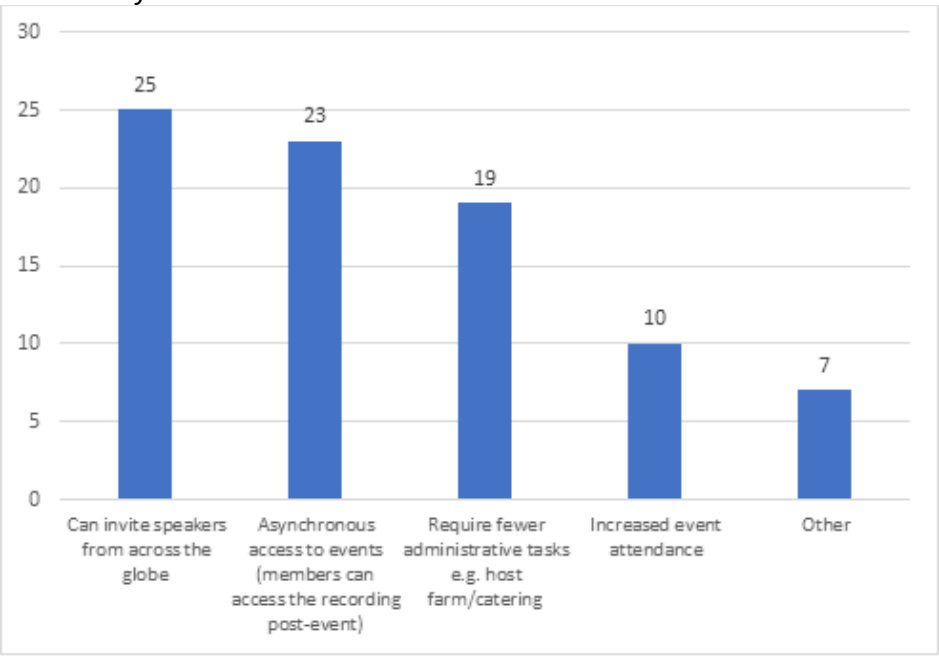

Figure 47: What do you see as the benefits of virtual tools as a facilitator running a CSFF group? (n=41)

Disbenefits associated with virtual tools were also explored, with facilitators being asked what they considered to be 'the drawbacks of virtual tools as a facilitator running a CSFF group?' Three statements were selected by over 80 per cent of respondents. These were: '*Fewer chances for informal knowledge exchange / support at events*' by 38 (92.7%); '*Members may have poor internet access'* by 36 (87.8%); and '*Members may not be familiar with the platform*' by 34 (82.9%). There were 18 instances where other drawbacks were offered. These examples mainly related to the 'social' aspect of face-to-face meetings, which is subtly different from the most commonly selected response mentioned above. The 'social' aspect covers a range of characteristics as evidenced by the following quotes:

> *"Harder to get really good discussion going and gauge the feeling in the room."*
>
> *"…many farmers are not interested in virtual events they prefer to get together face to face as farming is a lonely occupation much of the time."*
>
> *"Main drawback of virtual events is the reduced social aspect, getting the group together physically and reinforcing the group bond."*

Other drawbacks offered include reduced attendance levels with online events, challenges related to the integration of new members and lack of event accessibility for some.

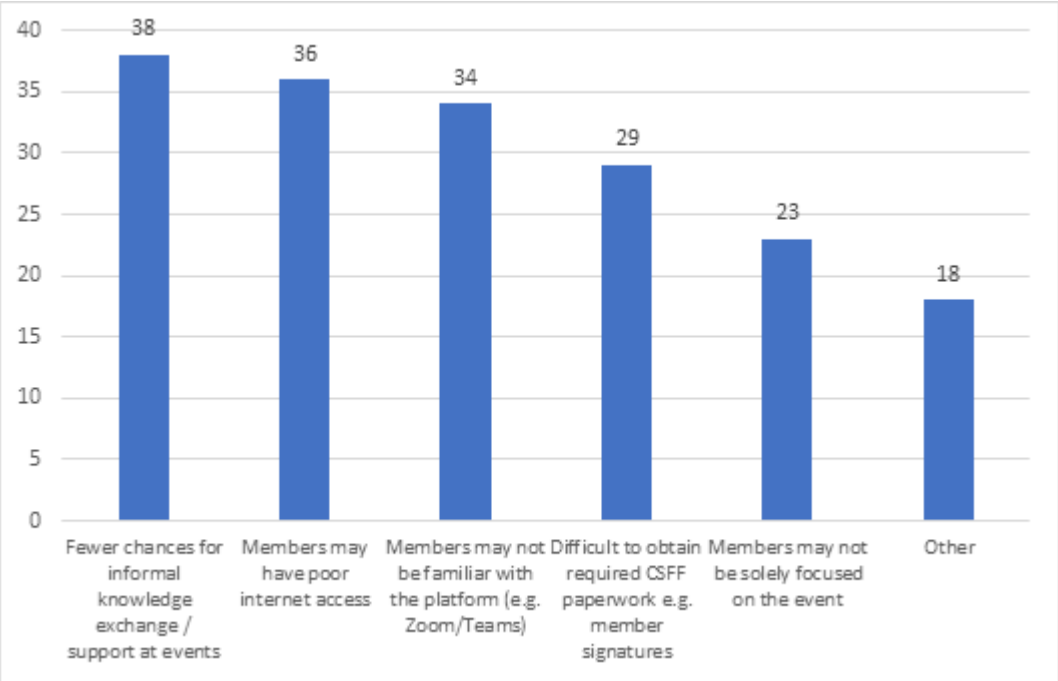

Figure 48: What do you see as the drawbacks of virtual tools as a facilitator running a CSFF group? (n=41)

Facilitators were asked whether, over the last two years, they had managed to maintain any face-to-face meetings. Almost all (97.4%) of respondents stated that they had managed this, with just 2.6% unable to. Where face-to-face meetings had occurred, just over half (57.9%) were field/outdoor events only, with the remainder being both indoor *and* outdoor events.

Facilitators were asked whether, over the last two years, they had attempted to conduct any 'hybrid' events – that is, a mix of face-to-face and online events. The majority of respondents had not attempted such events (76.9%), with 15.4% stating that they had.

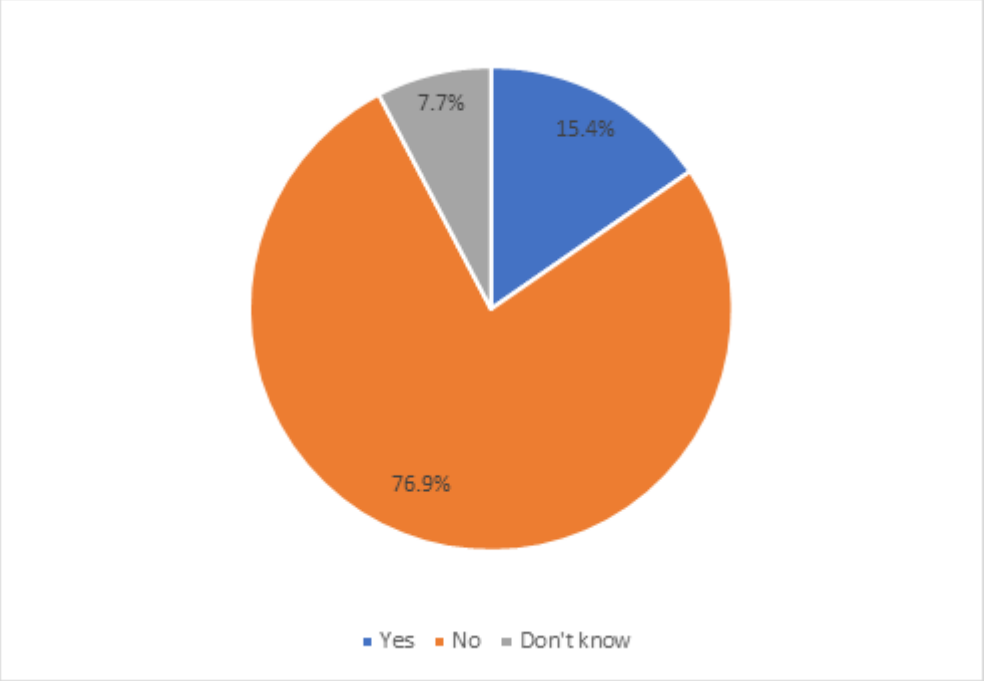

Figure 49: Over the last two years, have you attempted to conduct any 'hybrid' (i.e. a mix of F-2-F & online) events? (n=39)

Of the instances where a hybrid event had been conducted, the most common event type was that of a '*speaker online at face-to-face meeting'*, with four examples. There were two instances where there was a combination of '*online and face-to-face attendees contributing to a discussion'* and one instance each of '*Online attendees watching recording of field visit'* and '*Online attendees listening to face-to-face discussion'*.

Facilitators were asked whether they felt it was '*important to support events which are a mix of face-to-face and online'*? Nearly 50% of respondents were unsure about this, and similar response rates were given for 'yes' (23.1%) and 'no' (28.2%).

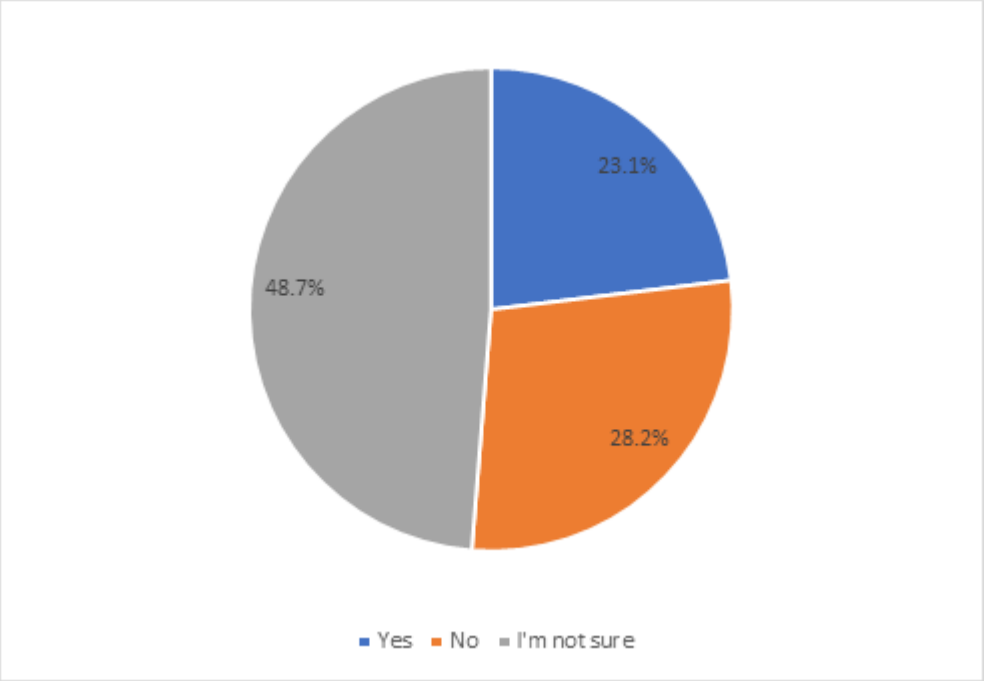

Figure 50: Do you think it is important to support events which are a mix of face to face and online? (n=39)

Very few facilitators (two) had tried hybrid meetings, and those that have had a mixed experience:

> *Tried in both ways. Me being somewhere else, but I don't hear what was being said so not doing that again. Did a talk to some in room and some on line via a screen share and had questions. Worked really well. Need someone to handle sound and drop out etc and have less connection but works OK. [FT5]*

> *Yes tried, difficult and not easy to recall a successful one. [FT12]*

Facilitators were then asked whether they had attended any RPA drop-in webinars since February 2020. 80% of respondents stated that they had attended at least one, with 20% stating they had not attended any. For some, while originally a good idea, webinars have become less attractive. One respondent said they went once and did not go back as they *'lost the will to live'*. For those who felt positive about webinars, their attendance was important as it was a good way to hear from others, share knowledge and network.

The benefits are seen as:

> *Having the opportunity to get instant feedback on questions is a valuable opportunity. [FT1]*

> *Having faces and people representing the RPA and NE in a way that gave a voice to the organisations and individuals delivering stuff on the ground - a gamechanger in influencing how things work, fed back constructively on challenges and potential. [FT16]*

But there are some aspects of these sessions that are not well liked:

Launched the new scheme and repeated the RPA line and [they] have no idea how the decisions impact on our lives. Just repeat the guidelines. [FT5]

It made me not want to be a facilitator. [FT10]

Facilitators had questions about [payment] claims and they wouldn't be able to answer. [FT4]

The consensus is that there is potential for such drop-in sessions to be valuable, but they have to facilitate a two-way conversation. There remains an appetite for continued support as these quotes illustrate:

Yes, it's always valuable to have the opportunity for training, particularly coming into it as a new facilitator. The day at FarmEd gave a good opportunity for training and understanding the role of facilitators and methods that people have used to engage. [FT1]

Yes, always need for it. Could do with being better managed i.e. time management so people don't moan and waste time. [FT2]

Yes ... most of my training and support comes through other facilitators and their experience. [FT6]

Absolutely, that's what was missing at the beginning. Should be a training package that's offered as facilitators start - mentoring, so new facilitators can be taught, they shouldn't be in the dark. [FT9]

Respondents were then asked whether they felt that the offer of such events was something they would like to see continued. Nearly three-quarters (72.5%) stated they would like to see this continued, with 22.5% unsure. The remaining 5% responded negatively. See Figure 51.

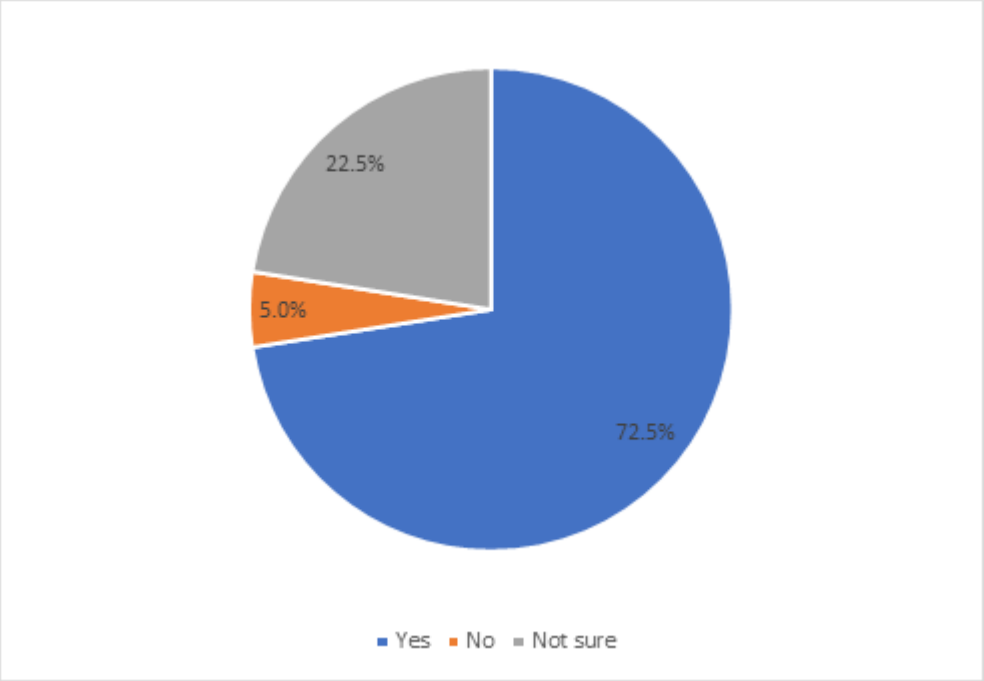

Figure 51: Is this offering [RPA facilitator drop-in webinars] something you would like to see continued for facilitators? (n=40)

The telephone interviews revealed that many facilitators now feel comfortable using online tools, but are aware there are further options out there for engagement in webinars, for example. Some people relied on YouTube to help them get set up on Zoom/Teams initially, and there might be room for further development here. One or two facilitators had strong preferences, for example, '*Teams hates me and I can never get it to work*'.

Most of the facilitators see a role for more technology in the future, so things will not go back to the way they were pre-pandemic. This might include the advertisement of training events or other events from outside the group, or the continued use of WhatsApp:

> *WhatsApp has been good, particularly with things like soil sampling. Useful for questions about indexes. People use the group when facilitator initiates. [FT3]*

Only in two cases was it clear that technology would not be used in the future, and in both cases, it was not used during the pandemic either.

The most likely purpose for technology in the future is for short meetings of less than an hour – e.g. some online training – and during the winter months when it is dark and there is less to see during face-to-face meetings. The opportunity to hear speakers whom they might not otherwise hear is useful, and it increases the access for some people as they do not have to worry about changing clothes or travelling to a meeting. Noted disadvantages are the lack of interaction and the challenge of asking questions.

6.4 Accessing information

Regarding ***'Agricultural Support and Policy Changes'***, respondents were asked where they obtained information on this topic (multiple selections were possible) and then what was their main source. Nearly all (40 respondents; 97.6%) stated that they obtained information from the 'Gov.uk website', with 'Defra email updates/webinars' being selected by 35 respondents (85.4%). 'Defra blogs' (24; 58.5%) and 'wildlife trust or eNGO' (20; 48.8%) were the next most common. Full response details are provided in figure 6.5.

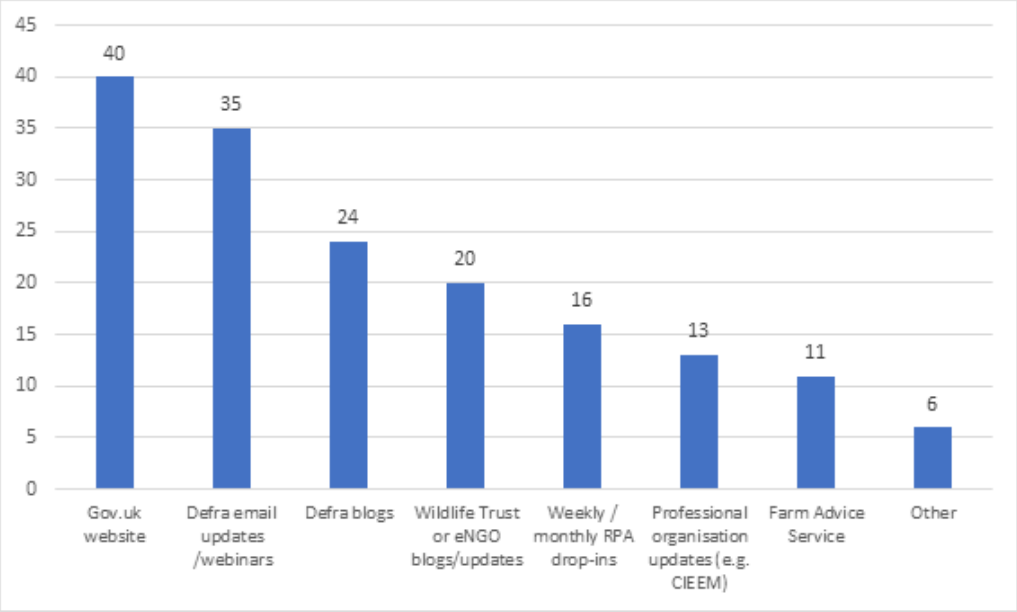

Figure 52: On the topic of Agricultural Support and Policy Changes...Please select any sources of information you have accessed regarding from this list (n=41)

Just over one-third (34.1%) stated that the 'gov.uk website' was their main source of information, with a further 29.3% stating that 'Defra email updates/webinars' was their main source. Full details of responses can be found in Figure 53.

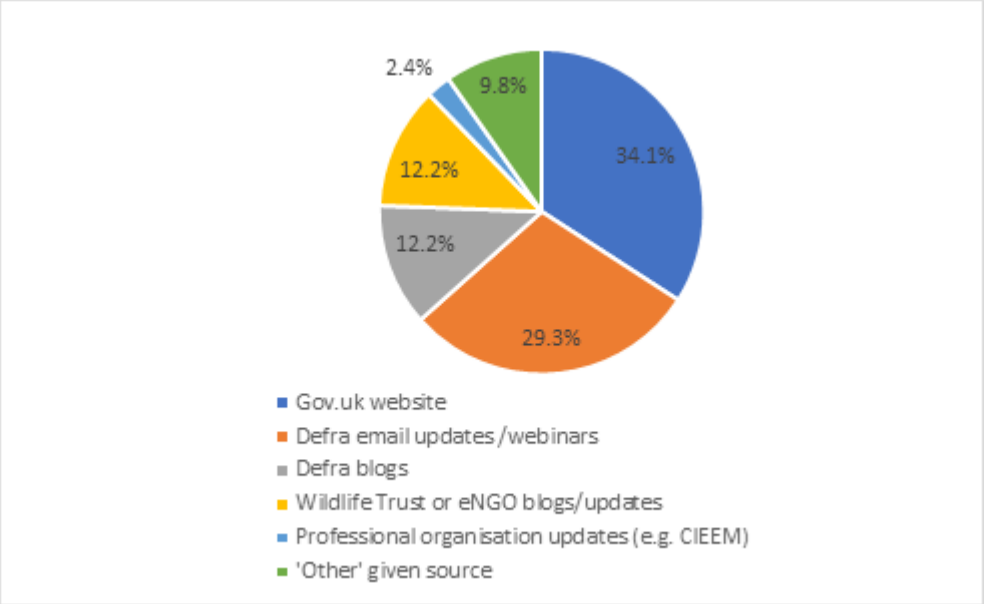

Figure 53: Agricultural Support and Policy Changes: main source of information? (n=41)

The telephone interviews confirmed this emphasis on Gov.uk and Defra blogs and e-alerts. The only other examples mentioned were FWAG newsletters or material from AHDB and Twitter. The example of the Gov.uk and Defra sources is clear from these quotes:

> *I've always used [Gov.uk and Defra] as they are the official sources. Private companies provide info to suit someone so I veer way as you don't know their angle, [prefer to] look for independent resources. [FT2]*
>
> *[Gov.uk is the] horses' mouth, Defra information is terrible in the way it is filed and updated. Gov.uk is a pain and not by date order so can be looking at old data. [FT14]*
>
> *Gov.uk is a national website but it is very text heavy. Use Key words to search but is clunky, but generally works OK. [FT19]*

Some facilitators talk to each other to check or verify links, and then share the best in newsletters. Others use a central hub at county or National Park level. They all recognise that this is a key time for sharing information and generally the blogs and e-alerts are welcomed, especially given the challenges of the main government website. Each facilitator seems to work out what is best for them and their group members.

Regarding *'**Climate Change'***, respondents were asked where they obtained information on this topic (multiple selections were possible) and then what was their main source. Two sources, 'professional organisation updates' and 'wildlife trust or eNGO blogs/updates', were equally popular, both being selected by 19 respondents (46.3%). The next most popular selection was 'other', with 16 responses. Examples offered included a range of popular, specialist or trade literature, and general internet research.

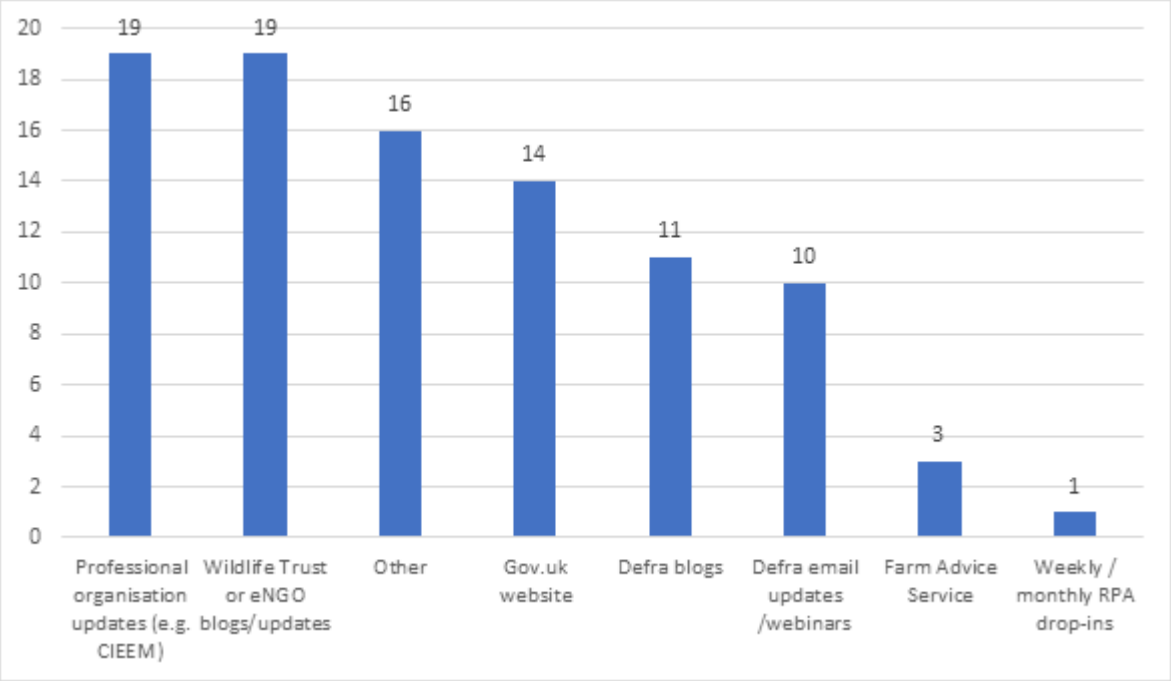

Figure 54: On the topic of Climate Change... Please select any sources of information you have accessed regarding from this list. (n=41)

The main source of information was primarily split between two categories – 'Wildlife Trust or eNGO blogs/updates' and 'other' and accounted for 32.4% and 27% of responses respectively. Full results are presented in Figure 55.

The telephone interviews found that Twitter was a source of information for some (three), but recognising that information from social media cannot always be trusted, people also sought support for the opinions found there through other sites such as the IPCC. For many, it is not currently a CS priority (seven), so it has not been necessary to seek out the information yet.

The most useful sources are those that translate the material in a way that is relevant to the CSFF group members, and this is a challenge to find:

> *Accessing reliable info just on farming side of things is difficult - lots of opinion, not so much data/evidence/science. [FT8]*

> *Conflicting info on carbon capture methods. [FT10]*

Whilst recognised as important, it would seem that the issue of climate change is not covered by all groups. Those that do cover it are looking for material that is relevant to the majority. For example, one group wanted to look at carbon auditing and now have a good contact:

> *Very useful ... farmers now understand that what they're doing is just as good as planting trees ... Use Farm Carbon Toolkit for carbon auditing which allows farmers to compare their soils depending on what they've put on their land. [FT3]*

> *Most of that information is shared internally within the WT network - specialists disseminate information across the movement. [FT16]*

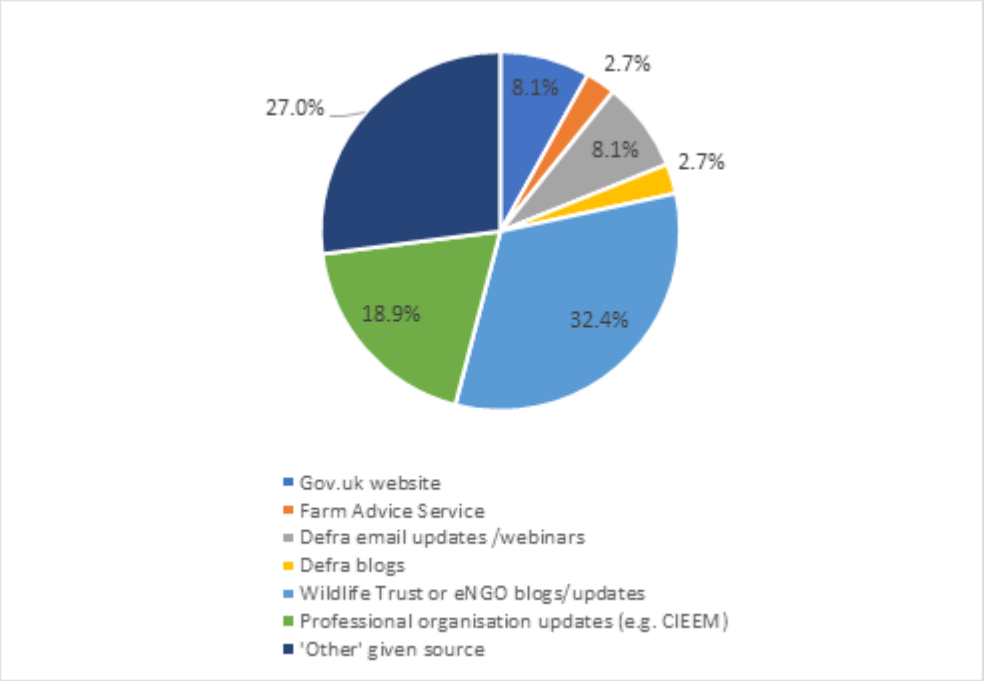

Figure 55: Climate change: main source of information? (n=37)

Regarding the *'**Delivery of CSFF'***, respondents were asked where they obtained information on this topic (multiple selections were possible) and then what was their main source. The most popular information source was the 'gov.uk website', selected by 29 respondents (70.7%). The next most popular sources – 'Defra email updates/webinars' and 'weekly/monthly RPA drop-ins' – were similarly popular, and were selected by 19 and 18 respondents respectively. Many of the 'other' responses offered related to sourcing information from other CSFF groups. Full results are presented in figure 6.9.

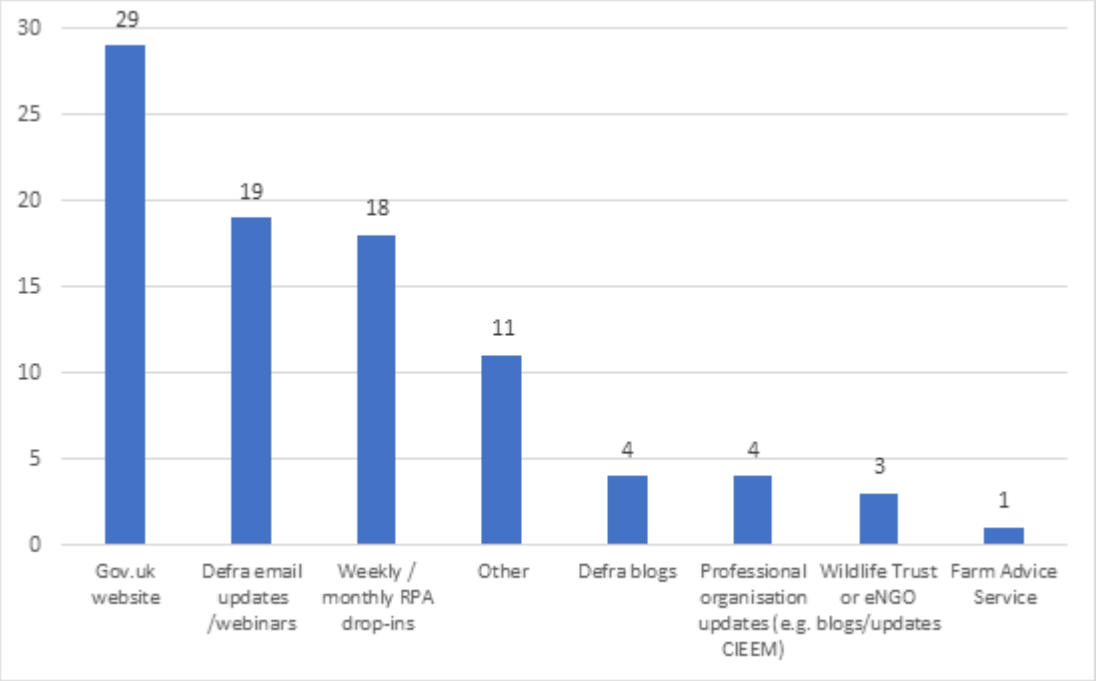

Figure 56: On the topic of Delivery of CSFF... Please select any sources of information you have accessed regarding from this list (n=41)

The 'gov.uk website' was the most common main source of information concerning delivery of CSFF (30.8%) with 'weekly/monthly RPA drop-ins' the second most common (28.2%). Full responses are presented in Figure 57.

The CSFF information on gov.uk is considered less useful than that which was previously available on Huddle. Huddle was seen as a great way to share things with and between facilitators. A Microsoft Teams page has been set up to provide a similar platform now Huddle is no longer used, but there is not as much engagement and it is not used by as many facilitators, largely because there is not facility for an exchange between facilitators and the information it contains is available elsewhere (e.g. gov.uk).

The gov.uk website remains the go-to place, but often people found it took a while to find the information they required. E-alerts with direct links to information were appreciated, as were the blogs. Facilitators also mentioned a range of other websites they would access for information on specific things, such as the Woodland Trust (for funding), policy updates e.g. from FWAG, Farm Carbon Toolkit and other NGOs.

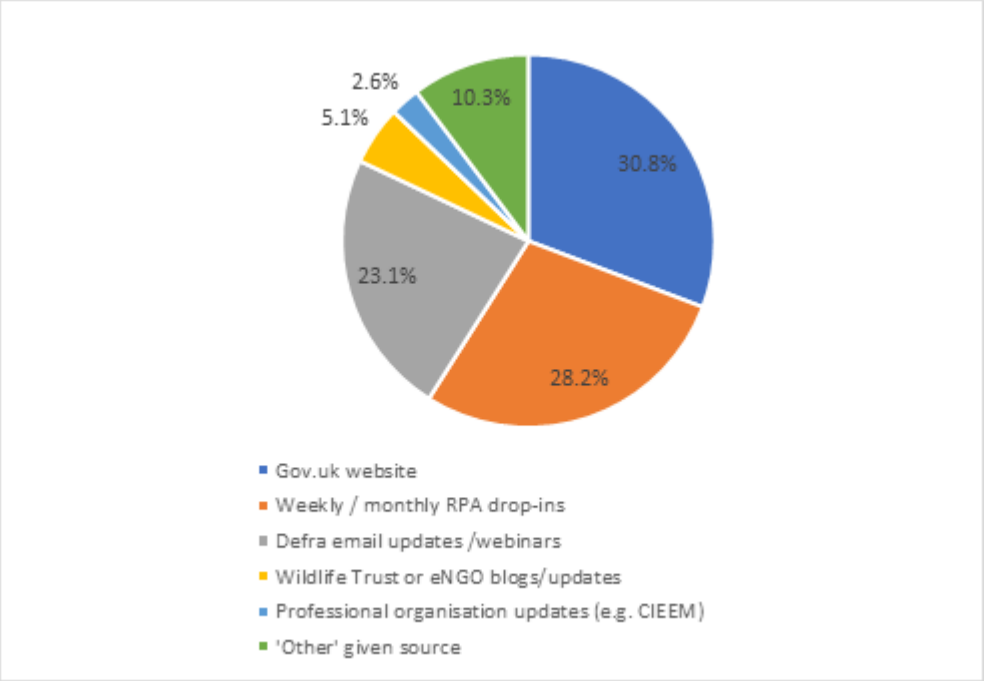

Figure 57: Delivery of CSFF: main source of information? (n=39)

As indicated earlier, there were mixed feelings about gov.uk in the telephone interviews, with some accessing the website several times before finding the right page. This quote from a new facilitator sums up the thoughts of others:

> *Gov.uk so confusing. As a brand new facilitator, not having the opportunity to speak to anyone meant I was in completely in the dark, the first year was horrible. Gov.uk about FF is so ridiculously confusing, needs people to explain it to you, didn't understand it properly until chatting it through with other facilitators. [FT9]*

In terms of other topics, facilitators like to read around subjects and they tend to have a range of sources they go to, such as: research from groups like the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH); catchment-based material on issues like natural flood management; agro-ecological material on soil health; AHDB material on a range of issues; and material from the environmental NGOs.

6.5 Collaboration Hub

A series of questions was posed relating to a potential collaboration hub, aimed at supporting CSFF facilitators and other similar roles that may be developed under the Environmental Land Management programme and associated schemes.

Facilitators were asked whether a collaboration hub would be attractive to them in their role. Just over 50% stated that it would be, with the remaining 47.5% responding with '*maybe, I would need to know more first*'. None of the respondents replied '*no'* to this suggestion. The same was true of the 19 telephone interviewees, with all expressing support.

Facilitators were then asked, from a series of options, which features would be most attractive for a national collaboration hub, with multiple selections being possible. The most commonly selected feature was '*examples of good practice'* (33 respondents; 80.5%), with '*weekly/monthly updates from Defra/RPA'* the second most common, being selected by 31 respondents. '*'How to' guides and similar support'* and '*collaboration opportunities'* were also popular features, with 29 and 27 selections respectively. Full responses are presented in figure 58. Examples of other features included sharing of documents from other groups to provide ideas, regional sub-hubs for geographic areas, and opportunities for in-person meetings to take place.

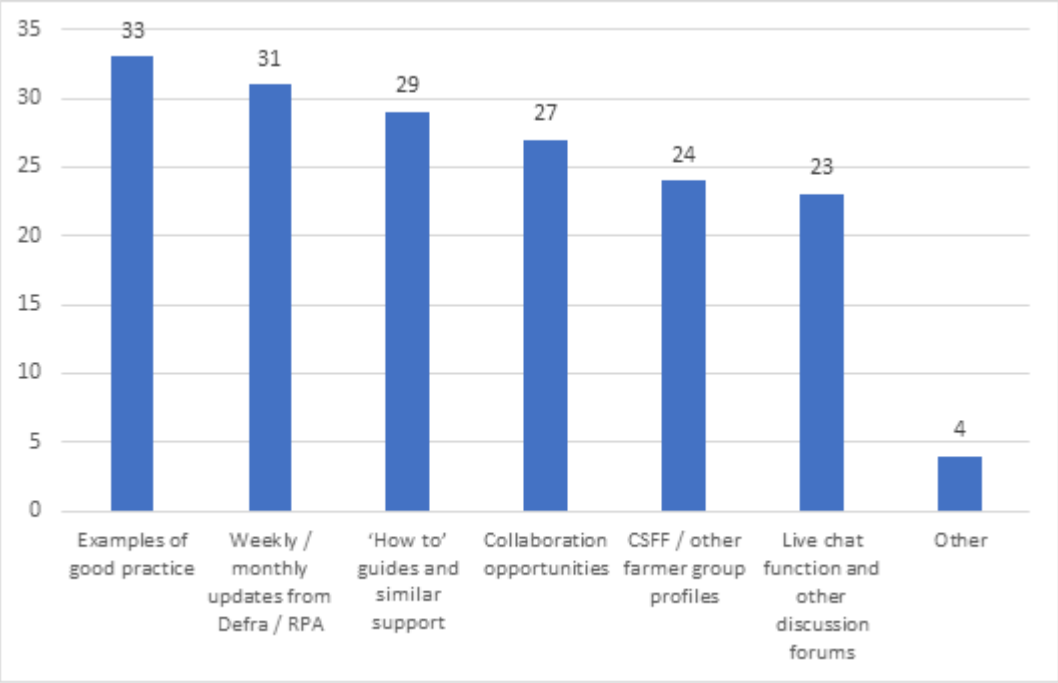

Figure 58: Which of the following features would be most attractive to you for a 'national collaboration hub'? (n=41)

All of the respondents in the telephone interviews indicated that they would be interested in a collaboration hub, as outlined in the project. Suggestions for the hub included ideas for events, case studies, links to resources, a blog, and links to other groups and organisations.

> *Some sort of place for that info to be stored and ideas to be shared would be valuable. [FT1]*
>
> *[Sounds like it] fills a gap that isn't there at the moment. Use it to share experiences with others who are new. [FT5]*
>
> *There would be value in it ... Having a hub would have the info there and save time. [It] would be good for group members too. [FT10]*

The structure of a collaboration hub was explored, and facilitators were asked, from a range of options, what they felt might be the most important attributes of a hub. That the hub should '*contain a range of material from a number of organisations*' was the most commonly selected attribute (32; 78%), with *'neutral and not run by any single organisation*' and *'funded*

and supported by government agency/agencies' the joint second most common selection (21; 51.2%). Full responses are presented in figure 6.19. Other examples of attributes offered were: that it should be designed from the bottom-up by farmer group advisers; it should be independent and have accredited membership; it should have a dedicated telephone number to access assistance.

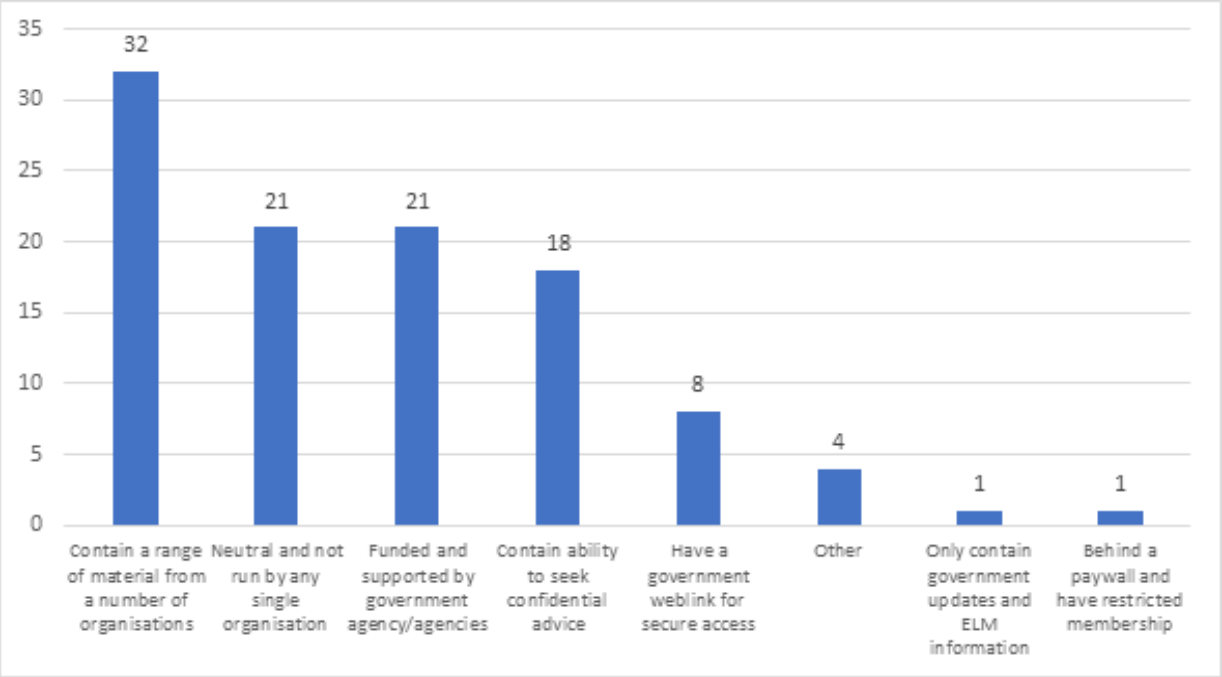

Figure 59: Such a 'Collaboration Hub' could be structured and supported in a number of ways in order to ensure that content is kept up-to-date and relevant. Which of the following attributes do you consider to be important concerning a potential national hub? (n=41)

Land Management 2.0 (LM2.0) was mentioned by three people. Facilitators would not have the capacity to run it themselves, but they could help populate something hosted by LM2.0 or a similar organisation. The features mentioned by the telephone interviewees included:

- regional events linking CSFF groups in a wider area
- topics covering woodland, ELMs
- a list of providers on different subjects
- reports and examples from different groups
- sharing ideas, always need good ideas
- details on the new scheme
- direct line to RPA and some FAQs
- Case studies
- Ability to interact with other facilitators

To aid collaboration, it would be helpful to be able to share examples of what works, and in what setting. Some facilitators are already in contact with each other, and find this helpful, but this is not true of all. There is a sense of isolation among some facilitators, and those that are not currently in contact with others would find the opportunity to be so, useful. The wider networks offered by some AONBs and National parks are welcomed as they currently help address this isolation.

The mention of a one-stop-shop for facilitators was found to be attractive for the telephone interviewees. Some felt this has been needed for some time, since the CSFF transferred to the RPA. It could cover large issues, such as 'what is meant by 'landscape scale'', and how this relates to nature recovery and carbon. Linking up with strategic priorities, such as those set out in the Environment Act and the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies, was noted as being important for the future of CSFF.

There were mixed responses regarding how the collaboration hub should be run. Some can see a clear role for the RPA and NE, as this would enable official information to be included on issues such as ELMs and the running of CSFF. However, others felt that some distance from official bodies would be beneficial, especially as the number of locally-based staff within NE able to speak directly to the group has been reduced over the past few years. Others suggest the hub should be independent, based around someone who understands farming, or '*a group run by CSFF facilitators for CSFF facilitators*'. It was noted that some informal clustering had taken place bit in these examples part of the benefit was that they were local and /or small, so part of the benefit was people within them know each other.

While there is support for the idea of a collaboration hub, no clear view appears from the research. However, it is clearly an idea that warrants further attention. In terms of other similar collaboration hubs, mention was made of professional organisations like the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) who are well respected, run reasonable training for members, have a strong regional model and conferences as well as online information. Several people said the end product should not be complex or expensive, but that some charge might be helpful as you value something more if you pay for it. Others felt it should be free, but had no examples to offer that they felt would fit what had been discussed. Given the development of CSFF, the driver for hub creation needs to be related to the operational need; for example, the focus of collaboration with the LNR aspect of ELMs. If this is to be widespread, then the development of a widely available high-quality collaboration hub that has collective support could be pivotal to the success of the scheme.

In the final comments, facilitators raised a number of more general points. The most frequent ones were:

- Face-to-face events are hugely important for several reasons, including learning, engagement and mental health;
- Providing food/refreshments allows group members to justify the time they spend off-farm at the event, as they would usually take a break from their farm work for lunch or dinner. Organising an event around lunch or dinner encourages people to attend and to stay and share knowledge;
- Knowledge in the farming community is under-valued and under-used, and this is exacerbated when meetings are held online as this knowledge is not suited to virtual environments;
- Important to correctly pin down the 'how' of knowledge sharing, especially when it is online. It is essential to noting that not everyone owns a computer or smartphone, and for those that do, access to broadband in rural areas is patchy, meaning it is not possible for everyone to access webinars.

Finally, several respondents raised questions over how the groups will continue when funding ends, and also how they can achieve more physical, on the ground, results compared to merely discussions.

6.6 Summary

Task 4 was based on the responses of 41 facilitators to an online survey with a further 19 telephone interviews with a self-selecting sample of CSFF facilitators. The findings show a clear growth in the use of virtual communication tools over the past 2 years with a growth in the use of WhatsApp and Zoom. However, the telephone interviews with facilitators revealed that some group members did not have access to emails at all. As a result, some facilitators rely on posters, phone calls and letters. Indeed, these methods were commonly used by many facilitators with the virtual communication tools supplementing these more traditional methods of communication.

This confirms CSFF members as a heterogenous group in terms of communication, with the role of the facilitator to determine which combination works best. Initially it is clear that a range of one-to-one meetings and other communications are required. Facilitators are clearly flexible and adaptable, with some operating different systems for different CSFF groups. However, the place of online communication tools has grown with groups becoming more confident, perhaps because they were using them to keep in touch with family members during the pandemic.

For those that used these tools the impact was positive and they will continue to use them, but it was a case of trial and error for the facilitators. Resourcing this process was a key point, with this less likely if staff were furloughed during the pandemic.

In terms of assisting the completion of CS applications, the key resource remains MAGIC, this was confirmed by both the online survey and the telephone interviews. This is now supplemented by a range of other GIS resources such as The Land App, Catchment Explorer and other open source options. Some facilitators have developed their own tools combining spatial data from CSFF members holdings and spreadsheets of CS options. Gov.uk is recognised as a key resource but not without its challenges in terms of accessing the right information.

In terms of continued use of technology and communication tools, issues of connectivity were seen as a major barrier. However, where they are well established it is clear that they will be retained and extended. Disbenefits were identified, largely in terms of reducing the opportunity if informal knowledge exchange and reducing social interaction.

Interaction between facilitators was seen as important and largely an unfulfilled opportunity. This was one reason for attending the RPA drop-in session, as well as remaining up-to-date about the CSFF programme. However, a number felt this had become a vehicle for RPA to report to facilitators rather than an exchange. The need for an opportunity to hear from others, share knowledge and network remains. The development of the local networks and an CSFF facilitator event at Farm Ed were mentioned. The majority would welcome similar

events in the future, suggesting there is a need for this aspect of facilitator support and networking.

Accessing information is important for facilitators with gov.uk the main resource, followed by Defra emails and blogs as well as other organisation outputs important. Facilitators showed themselves to be committed to collecting the most up-to-date information to pass on to CSFF group members. This included information on climate change and changes to agricultural policy, as well as CS delivery.

There was widespread support for the idea of a collaboration hub and this is idea warrants further attention. However, there was no clear consensus on the format other than it should have some connection to Defra/Natural England in order to remain relevant but have some form of autonomy and identity (run by facilitators for facilitators). The issue of how it would be resources was only an area for further investigation with responses ranging from 'free' to 'cost efficient'. The need to connect with ELM and the development of LNRS was understood by most facilitators.

There is clearly concern among facilitators as to how CSFF groups will continue when funding ends, and a desire for them to be able to achieve more interventions on the ground. CSFF and similar approaches need longevity; many have built up momentum, but now do not see a future with agreements being only 3 years in duration. Overall, CSFF is seen to be important and it has potential, particularly as farmers are increasingly isolated and fragmented. Indeed, it is one of the only approaches that specifically tailors positive environmental interventions at a landscape scale and has a local 'identity'. The groups provide a space in which people can connect and feel their knowledge and experience is valued. This is vital in encouraging farmers and land managers to change their practices and to collaborate in environmental measures

7. Conclusions and forward look

The Phase 4 review of CSFF groups was orientated around 4 main objectives:

- Task 1: to map the spatial coherence of all CSFF groups and test their potential to restore and create habitat at scale
    - This task updated and extended the spatial coherence approaches used in the previous three evaluations of CSFF.
    - It also refreshed the CSFF WebMap by overlaying the PHI, Natural Capital, National Habitat Network and other data layers.
    - The CSFF coverage was assessed at a range of levels in order to analyse the spatial coverage and the potential gaps and opportunities this provides.
- Task 2: Test whether the incidence of agreement non-compliance (breaches) is lower when the CS agreement holder is a member of a CSFF Group
    - Using RPA inspection reports to assess if CSFF members were more compliant with regulations as a result of CSFF participation.
- Task 3: Capture qualitative examples concerning the resilience and wellbeing of CSFF group members
    - Using an online survey and telephone interviews to assess whether membership of a CSFF group helped maintain social resilience and wellbeing, where issues such as COVID, change in agricultural support and climate change were considered.
- Task 4: Review how groups have used technology
    - Using an online survey and telephone interviews to assess how CSFF groups use technology for technical support (e.g. GIS or online tools) and/or collaboration support (e.g. Zoom or other platforms) over the past two years when the Covid-19 pandemic restricted in person meetings.

7.1 Spatial coherence of CSFF groups and potential to restore and create habitat at scale (Task 1).

As a result of their bottom-up and organic development, CSFF groups vary greatly in size, predominant business types of members and landscape area of their location, which frequently determines local environmental objectives and the focus of each group's activities. However, recording developments and changes in group dynamics regarding membership and CSFF group land area over time allows detailed monitoring of the related uptake of AES agreements and correlated impacts on natural capital and priority habitats. Some key points are:

- **CSFF membership** continues to grow, as recorded in previous evaluations, but this simple descriptive analysis hides localised variations;

- The Phase 4 analysis revealed previous unrecorded fluctuations in membership within CSFF groups, and some overlap between groups;
- Analysis noted changes in the number of members and group areas, however, current CS data collection does not support analysis at such a granular level (see section 2.2). This creates a degree of uncertainty and there would be in understanding what is happening in terms of CSFF membership in more detail.
- The accuracy of any future CSFF evaluation would be greatly assisted by complete and up-to-date references of land parcels held within CSFF groups. It is suggested that this could be achieved by members being obliged to supply an accurate and up to date record of all the Rural Land Register (RLR) parcel references belonging to their holding and to notify of any changes in these.
- **CSFF and AES** have a strong connection, with a very high proportion of CSFF group members (84.02%) being currently engaged in AES agreements. This is complemented by 61% of all land within CSFF groups being under management options, slightly exceeding Defra's goal to bring 60% of England's agricultural soil under sustainable management through AES schemes by 2030 (GOV.UK, 2022).
- While fluctuations to CSFF groups' membership have been observed, even if a group member leaves, any AES agreement in place on their land still continues to contribute towards environmental benefits through active land management. Therefore, staying in agreement is more important than remaining a CSFF member.
- **CSFF and Natural Capital** are connected, with CS agreements within the CSFF groups protecting a significant area of land that is recognised in the NCIs. However, the picture for individual NCIs is mixed, with many seeing reductions in the overall area supported.
- **CSFF and PHI -** about 30% of total PHI area is covered by CSFF groups but there is significant variation across PHIs. The total area of PHI within CSFF groups under AES agreement comprises 71.52%, with areas of most individual priority habitats within CSFF groups under AES agreement comfortably exceeding 50%. Transition of these areas into new ELM schemes is particularly important.
- **Spatial analysis** revealed considerable variations in the spread of CSFF groups across England for both environmental and administrative geographies, as might be expected from a largely bottom-up and organic emergence of CSFF groups.
    - At **local authority** level there is wide variation in CSFF group coverage, with several counties, and many districts and unitary authorities having no CSFF groups whilst others have over 10%.
    - **Priority Habitats** show a wide variation in CSFF group coverage, with highest levels found in grassland and upland habitats (lowland calcareous grassland, 27%) and lower levels in coastal, wetland, woodland and lowland heath habitats (mudflats, 0.14%).
    - Analysis by **National Character Area** identified a number of areas with low CSFF group coverage (Thames Valley, Essex and North Kent, Merseyside and parts of Lancashire, the Humberhead Levels and Humber Estuary, and moorland areas in Cornwall). Some had over 20% covered by CSFF groups including Pevensey Levels (37%) and Cheviots (42%).
    - **Agricultural Landscape Type** confirmed higher levels of coverage in the uplands (11.71%) relative to lowland, more intensively farmed areas (SE mixed 3.82%).

- For **protected landscapes**, the overall coverage is higher than the national average but there is wide variation amongst both the suites of AONBs and National Parks, from The Broads 0.2% to the South Downs 29%.
- Similarly, there was variation in coverage within **Nature Improvement Areas** (five with no CSFF group coverage and Marlborough Downs at 55%), **Local Nature Partnerships** (12 with none or very little and 6 with over 10%), and **NE regions** (West Anglia 1.46% to Wessex 8.92%).

7.2 Comparing incidences of agreement non-compliance (breaches) between CSFF group members and non-CSFF holdings (Task 2)

The intention here was to access data from RPA inspection reports to assess how compliance levels compared between those within CSFF groups and those not in CSFF groups. This involved reviewing the frequency, type and cause of non-compliance. The task was dependent on receiving a viable sample from the RPA covering CSFF and non-CSFF group members, and the related details on compliance issues.

However, a viable sample was not possible due to the small number of CSFF group members and participants that were inspected. It might be worthwhile revisiting this analysis at a later date, perhaps using a longer timeframe and a more detailed discussion with the RPA, including type of breach, as to the possible parameters of the data request.

7.3 Resilience and Wellbeing among CSFF group members (Task 3)

An online survey yielded 69 responses and this was supplemented by 18 telephone interviews with CSFF members. CSFF group membership was shown to be 'important' (55%) or 'very important' (25%) to members. The most common benefit was 'access to advice and support' (90%) but access to resources, other opportunities and information about changes to agricultural policy/support were all supported by 67% of respondents.

In terms of wellbeing, the most positive responses from the online survey concerned CSFF membership and the links to a positive attitude towards the individual's farming and environmental management. The most supported aspects showed CSFF group membership is felt to positively impact environmental issues and lead to the undertaking of activities that are deemed worthwhile, including feeling part of a community and developing a collective voice. From this it is fair to conclude that CSFF groups play a key role in developing the confidence of land managers concerning aspects of AES delivery and development.

It is clear that COVID-19 impacted how groups functioned, particularly new groups, with most returning to a regular pattern of meetings over the past year or so. Climate change was seen as a key topic by two-thirds of online survey respondents, yet just over half of the groups had covered this topic. This suggests many CSFF groups cover a broader range of topics than

AES delivery alone, particularly topics related to wildlife and conservation. An even higher proportion, 84%, saw discussing agricultural policy and support as more important. Older groups were more likely to discuss these topics, suggesting groups develop at different speeds, and certain topics better suit 'mature' CSFF groups.

There was almost universal desire for CSFF to continue and it is clear that the CSFF groups are committed to its delivery and development. However, wrapped up in the issue of the future was the need to establish a better working relationship with the RPA. Several group members mentioned that the current fixed view of what could and could not be included according to the regulations implemented by the RPA was hampering the development of the group. The constraints mentioned included the limit of attendees per event, and the need to be more adventurous in order to meet the challenges of nature recovery.

7.4 Review of how CSFF use technology by CSFF Facilitators (Task 4)

Task 4 was based on the responses of 41 facilitators to an online survey with a further 19 telephone interviews with a self-selecting sample of CSFF facilitators. The findings show a clear growth in the use of virtual communication tools over the past two years, with a growth in the use of WhatsApp and Zoom. However, this does not suit all CSFF groups. As a result, some facilitators rely solely on posters, phone calls and letters. Indeed, these methods were commonly used by many facilitators, with the virtual communication tools supplementing these more traditional methods of communication.

CSFF members are a heterogenous group in terms of communication, with the facilitator determining which combination works best for their group. Initially it is clear that a range of one-to-one meetings and other communications are required. Facilitators are clearly flexible and adaptable, with some operating different systems for different CSFF groups.

For those that used virtual tools the impact was positive and they will continue to use them, but it was a case of trial and error for the facilitators. Resourcing and supporting this transition was a key point, and this might still be beneficial for some CSFF groups and could be a useful topic for knowledge exchange.

The major issue for further development was a lack of connectivity. However, where these tools were well established it is clear that they will be retained and extended. Disbenefits were largely felt in terms of reducing the opportunity for informal knowledge exchange and social interaction.

In terms of assisting the completion of CS applications, the key resource remains MAGIC; this was confirmed by both the online survey and the telephone interviews. This is now supplemented by a range of other GIS resources such as The Land App, Catchment Explorer and other open source options.

Interaction between facilitators was seen as important and largely an unfulfilled opportunity; while several attempts have been made to offer and develop this, none have been successful across the breadth of CSFF groups. There was widespread support for the idea

of a collaboration hub and this is idea warrants further attention. However, there was no clear consensus on the format other than it should:

- have connections to Defra/Natural England in order to remain relevant
- include a form of autonomy and identity (run by facilitators for facilitators)
- have connections with ELM and the development of LNRS
- be resourced efficiently and not be a 'burdensome cost' to CSFF groups.

Understandably, there is concern among facilitators as to how CSFF groups will continue when funding ends. There is also a desire for them to be able to achieve more interventions on the ground. Overall, CSFF is seen to be important and is one of the only approaches that specifically tailors positive environmental interventions at a landscape scale and has a local 'identity'.

7.5 Suggested next steps

The following suggestions are aimed at developing and optimising the benefits of a natural capital approach within CSFF groups, allowing further and deeper integration within agri-environment schemes and other policy developments:

- **There is continued evidence, supported by previous evaluations, among CSFF group members that participation is leading to significant knowledge sharing,** and there are examples of this leading to changes in management activity. There is a desire to continue with and participate in CSFF 'style' groups, as they are seen as worthwhile and valued, with almost universal support for their continuation being expressed by participants.

- Tasks 3 and 4 highlighted that limited funding periods mean that **funding for a number of CSFF groups funding has recently ceased** and while these groups were included in the current analysis at the specific request of the client, future evaluation should take into account the resulting impact on the contribution of CSFF groups on natural capital and priority habitats, and could consider examining longer term impacts of group functions such as training, knowledge exchange or social/peer support in landholder's environmental decision making.

- The findings have shown that CSFF groups are able to play a significant role in managing habitat types, supporting the objectives of administrative areas and protected landscapes**.** CSFF group members feel strongly that the groups are worthwhile and provide a forum for influencing environmental behaviour. **On this evidence one approach to achieving a further net increase or enhancement of natural capital assets is to increase the number of CSFF groups** and associated AES agreements. Having established an approach for gathering ecological evidence in Phase 3, that suggests that CSFF group member agreements contain better options and are more effectively implemented than those in non-CSFF group AES agreements, this needs to be continued in current AES and future ELM schemes. CSFF is one of the only approaches that specifically tailors positive environmental interventions at a landscape scale and has a local 'identity'. Of particular importance

are: the facilitators' provision of guidance, advice and training for landholders; their position as a liaison to Natural England strategic policy aims; and the groups' role as peer support networks.

- **The opportunities for CSFF group expansion should be considered and prioritised based on local need and their match with strategic policy objectives**. The spatial analysis provides a baseline for this exercise because it shows the potential for CSFF to make an enhanced contribution to a range of environmental outcomes via targeted attempts to initiate the development of CSFF groups in areas of low uptake. Some analysis as to why there is low take up might be valuable. The more detailed analysis of opportunities for new, expanded or linked CSFF groups provides a wide range of examples of ways in which variations in coverage could be addressed.

- Task 2 highlighted a number of data issues, while Task 4 revealed a desire among facilitators to be more active in developing interventions. It would be useful to **develop a mechanism whereby the CSFF groups themselves can identify, record and measure a baseline within an England-wide framework** and allow a range of local actions linked to CS options, to increase natural capital. Subsequently, this could be used as an active monitoring tool to record the benefit of working at a landscape scale.

- **Future evaluations might want to consider a greater emphasis on comparing various CSFF group metrics** to comparable data across the rest of the country to further establish if CSFF groups are succeeding in maximising the impact of AES schemes by bringing larger areas under active management. The fact that the Defra aim of AES scheme coverage of 10% or more has already been achieved within the CSFF groups supports this conclusion.

- Furthermore, to overcome future data issues, it would be beneficial to **collect spatial details on the location and landscape context of actions/outcomes at parcel and sub-parcel level,** to contribute to the accurate assessment of natural capital levels and the status of ecological networks. Implementing these changes in data collection and management will reduce the degree of uncertainty in how effective CSFF groups are in AES delivery.

- **Initial asset condition has a considerable effect on the uplift and value** of management options, and should be included in any baseline assessment of asset stocks. These factors all need to be described in the CSFF group baseline and monitoring tools should be developed for the whole group to use.

- The accuracy of **future analysis would be greatly assisted by complete and up-to-date references of land within each CSFF group**. This is important in order to understand how CSFF groups change and develop over time both in terms of membership and area under AES agreement. It is suggested that this could best be achieved by CSFF members being obliged to supply an accurate record of all the RLR parcel references belonging to their holding and notify of any changes in these. It would be useful to understand land managers' motivations for both joining and leaving CSFF groups.

- **Communication approaches varied widely during the pandemic;** while some groups struggled, others – led and supported by the facilitator – embraced new approaches to remain in contact with each other. As a result, **the range of tools open to a facilitator has broadened, and will remain so in the future.** The choice as to which is used should remain within the CSFF group but with support and training offered centrally. In terms of assisting with AES applications, MAGIC remains a vital resource and should be maintained and updated regularly.

- **As groups evolve and strong links are developed between members, it seems that groups are more confident to tackle more sensitive topics such as climate change** and how land management can adapt to this. The findings here are supported by Prager (2022) in that collaboration takes time to be embedded. Also, the desire to focus more on land management actions increases, with less interest in the standalone discussion of topics. **Consequently, consideration should be given to supporting the continuation of CSFF groups**. While there are examples of groups evolving into privately funded discussion groups, this does not seem likely to be a model that all will embrace. A range of options might need to be considered, perhaps building in some local accountability through bodies such as National Parks, AONBs and other appropriate bodies. The analysis at different scales suggests that some of these bodies have been far more successful than others at encouraging and supporting CSFF groups.

- Tasks 3 and 4 observed that facilitators had varying degrees of connection with a range of organisations. These need to be examined in more detail, but it would appear that **CSFF groups with strong links to an advisor, e.g. FWAG or body such as a National Park or Local Nature Partnership are in a good position to begin to access other funding,** such as carbon credits, biodiversity net gain or water quality funding. By working together, a CSFF group could leverage further funds for appropriate land management activity, which might be more attractive to potential investors.

- **The establishment of a collaboration hub warrants further consideration,** based on the expressed need of those responding to the online survey and interviews. The focus should be on connecting facilitators, sharing best practice and event ideas, linking into current policy opportunities and securing a sustainable legacy from all CSFF groups. There is potential to include some social indicators here along the lines of Mills et al (2021).

- Whatever the future for CSFF, the driver needs to be on the operational need. **If there is a focus on collaboration in the LNR component of ELMs, then the CSFF groups provide an excellent starting point.** In order for collaboration to become widespread, the availability of a range of suitably trained facilitators – either supported by NGOs, public bodies or self-employed – and the development of a widely available, high-quality collaboration hub that has collective support could be pivotal to future success.

- **The issue of collaboration is seen as central to landscape scale nature recovery by group members and facilitators**, with a focus on bottom-up groups that develop organically within the CSFF framework. In this sense, collaboration is critical to the development and success of the Local Nature Recovery and Landscape

Recovery elements of ELM. It is clear from the analysis of CSFF groups, e.g. by PHI and NCA, that the picture is very varied. Targeted action may be required to increase CSFF group coverage in underrepresented geographies. Linking the current CSFF group provision to MAGIC and habitat network mapping sites, including LNRS, would seem to be a logical and useful start in this process.

- **Scheme transition** is a key factor, and urgent attention should be paid as to **how to facilitate the successful transition of the large proportion of ES and CS agreements within CSFF groups into follow-up schemes.** This should include how to encourage the setting up of more ambitious agreements, noting the incentives suggested by Franks (2019), to build on the increased experience of AES agreement holders and the environmental benefits they have delivered.
- Finally, **funding for most CSFF groups will expire in the next year or so**. As a result, **serious consideration needs to be given to the sustainability and evolution of existing CSFF groups**, noting the findings of this report.

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Appendix 1: CSFF group membership

See Excel spreadsheet available on the project page at **http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/**

Appendix 2: AES membership within Facilitation Funds

See Excel spreadsheet available on the project page at **http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/**

Appendix 3 & 3a: Natural capital contribution and PHI coverage by Facilitation Fund group & NE Area

See Excel spreadsheets available on the project page at **http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/**

Appendix 4 & 4a: PHI coverage and by NE/EA administrative boundaries

See Excel spreadsheets available on the project page at **http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/**

Appendix 5: Spatial analysis of CSFF group coverage – data tables

Table 1: Local authorities and CSFF group coverage

Local authority	Total area (ha)	CSFF area (ha)	% of LA under CSFF
Amber Valley District (B)	26543.79	0	0
Barking and Dagenham London Borough	3779.93	0	0
Barnet London Borough	8674.83	0	0
Barrow-in-Furness District (B)	13207.53	0	0
Basildon District (B)	11044.59	0	0
Basingstoke and Deane District (B)	63381.72	0.25	0
Bexley London Borough	6428.65	0	0
Birmingham District (B)	26779.11	0	0
Blaby District	13046.87	0	0
Blackpool (B)	4315.08	0	0
Boston District (B)	39779.27	0	0
Bracknell Forest (B)	10938.42	0	0
Braintree District	61170.80	0	0
Brent London Borough	4323.26	0	0
Brentwood District (B)	15312.40	0	0
Bromley London Borough	15013.49	0	0
Broxbourne District (B)	5144.23	0	0
Camden London Borough	2178.93	0	0
Cannock Chase District	7888.26	0.28	0
Canterbury District (B)	31857.80	0	0
Castle Point District (B)	6369.85	0	0
Charnwood District (B)	27904.23	0	0
Chelmsford District (B)	34299.73	0	0
Cheltenham District (B)	4659.61	0.01	0
Chiltern District	19634.82	0	0
City and County of the City of London	314.94	0	0
City of Bristol (B)	23542.52	0	0
City of Derby (B)	7803.11	0	0
City of Kingston upon Hull (B)	8149.74	0	0
City of Leicester (B)	7334.21	0	0
City of Nottingham (B)	7461.36	0.17	0
City of Peterborough (B)	34343.79	0	0

Local authority	Total area (ha)	CSFF area (ha)	% of LA under CSFF
City of Plymouth (B)	8436.98	0	0
City of Westminster London Borough	2203.00	0	0
City of Wolverhampton District (B)	6943.67	0	0
Colchester District (B)	34677.32	0	0
Coventry District (B)	9863.91	0	0
Crawley District (B)	4497.12	0.13	0
Croydon London Borough	8649.44	0	0
Dacorum District (B)	21247.64	0	0
Dartford District (B)	7631.04	0	0
Daventry District	66560.05	0	0
Doncaster District (B)	56855.13	0	0
Dover District	32078.11	0	0
Ealing London Borough	5554.43	0	0
East Cambridgeshire District	65172.04	0.02	0
East Hertfordshire District	47566.92	0	0
Elmbridge District (B)	9633.43	0	0
Enfield London Borough	8220.02	0	0
Epping Forest District	33898.41	0	0
Epsom and Ewell District (B)	3407.92	0	0
Erewash District (B)	10963.00	0	0
Fenland District	54735.54	0	0
Folkestone and Hythe District	36546.73	0	0
Fylde District (B)	18262.88	0	0
Gravesham District (B)	10495.88	0	0
Great Yarmouth District (B)	18242.09	0	0
Greenwich London Borough	5044.19	0	0
Hackney London Borough	1904.90	0	0
Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough	1715.41	0	0
Haringey London Borough	2959.84	0	0
Harlow District	3053.79	0	0
Harrow London Borough	5046.33	0	0
Hart District	21526.51	0	0
Hartlepool (B)	9834.67	0	0
Havering London Borough	11445.73	0	0
Hertsmere District (B)	10112.82	0	0
Hillingdon London Borough	11570.05	0	0
Hounslow London Borough	5658.54	0	0

Local authority	Total area (ha)	CSFF area (ha)	% of LA under CSFF
Isles of Scilly	2284.94	0	0
Islington London Borough	1485.67	0	0
Kensington and Chelsea London Borough	1238.38	0	0
Kettering District (B)	23348.99	0	0
Kingston upon Thames London Borough	3726.12	0	0
Knowsley District (B)	8650.01	0	0
Lambeth London Borough	2724.93	0	0
Leeds District (B)	55170.65	0	0
Lewisham London Borough	3531.70	0	0
Lincoln District (B)	3569.03	0	0
Liverpool District (B)	13353.37	0	0
Luton (B)	4335.25	0	0
Maldon District (B)	42805.95	0	0
Manchester District (B)	11564.82	0	0
Medway (B)	26906.37	0	0
Merton London Borough	3762.47	0	0
Middlesbrough (B)	5455.36	0	0
Newham London Borough	3857.81	0	0
North East Lincolnshire (B)	20266.25	0	0
North Hertfordshire District	37538.23	0	0
North Lincolnshire (B)	87568.46	0	0
Northampton District (B)	8077.19	0	0
Norwich District (B)	4055.42	0	0
Oadby and Wigston District (B)	2352.61	0	0
Oldham District (B)	14234.49	0	0
Oxford District (B)	4560.29	0	0
Reading (B)	4039.80	0.1	0
Redbridge London Borough	5644.22	0	0
Reigate and Banstead District (B)	12914.39	0	0
Richmond upon Thames London Borough	5876.12	0	0
Rochford District	26306.31	0	0
Rugby District (B)	35355.73	0	0
Runnymede District (B)	7804.07	0	0
Rushcliffe District (B)	40923.15	0	0
Rushmoor District (B)	3904.50	0	0
Salford District (B)	9719.73	0	0

Local authority	Total area (ha)	CSFF area (ha)	% of LA under CSFF
Sandwell District (B)	8555.89	0	0
Sefton District (B)	20275.58	0	0
Selby District	60222.33	0	0
Sevenoaks District	37034.69	0	0
Slough (B)	3254.20	0	0
South Bucks District	14127.56	0	0
South Ribble District (B)	11461.51	0	0
Southend-on-Sea (B)	6786.41	0	0
Southwark London Borough	2991.34	0	0
Spelthorne District (B)	5116.14	0	0
St. Albans District (B)	16120.59	0	0
St. Helens District (B)	13635.88	0	0
Stevenage District (B)	2596.92	0	0
Stockport District (B)	12604.03	0	0
Stockton-on-Tees (B)	20973.08	0	0
Surrey Heath District (B)	9509.30	0	0
Sutton London Borough	4384.70	0	0
Swale District (B)	42202.83	0.02	0
Tameside District (B)	10315.43	0	0
Tandridge District	24819.46	0	0
Tendring District	36615.75	0	0
Thanet District	11246.41	0	0
Three Rivers District	8882.42	0	0
Thurrock (B)	18431.79	0	0
Tonbridge and Malling District (B)	24097.34	0	0
Torbay (B)	11946.66	0.02	0
Tower Hamlets London Borough	2157.50	0	0
Trafford District (B)	10604.48	0	0
Uttlesford District	64118.28	0	0
Wakefield District (B)	33861.97	0	0
Walsall District (B)	10397.35	0	0
Waltham Forest London Borough	3880.80	0	0
Wandsworth London Borough	3522.02	0	0
Watford District (B)	2143.04	0	0
Wellingborough District (B)	16303.65	0	0
Welwyn Hatfield District (B)	12953.69	0	0
West Lancashire District (B)	38138.02	0	0

Local authority	Total area (ha)	CSFF area (ha)	% of LA under CSFF
Windsor and Maidenhead (B)	19842.72	0	0
Wirral District (B)	25324.60	0	0
Woking District (B)	6360.36	0	0
Wokingham (B)	17896.55	0	0
York (B)	27201.48	0	0
Dudley District (B)	9795.82	0.93	0.01
City of Stoke-on-Trent (B)	9344.85	2.22	0.02
Rotherham District (B)	28653.44	4.52	0.02
Cambridge District (B)	4069.88	1.19	0.03
Mid Suffolk District	87107.06	26.87	0.03
West Suffolk District	103467.58	34.84	0.03
Tunbridge Wells District (B)	33132.89	13.86	0.04
Wyre District (B)	32877.14	11.67	0.04
Broxtowe District (B)	8009.88	4.23	0.05
Barnsley District (B)	32907.76	18.58	0.06
Harborough District	59269.20	50.86	0.09
Corby District (B)	8028.09	11.1	0.14
Warrington (B)	18238.36	31.59	0.17
Central Bedfordshire	71566.53	135.61	0.19
Bath and North East Somerset	35112.32	71.43	0.2
Kirklees District (B)	40855.17	79.71	0.2
Aylesbury Vale District	90275.32	232.25	0.26
Gosport District (B)	2760.79	7.46	0.27
Wigan District (B)	18817.10	58.82	0.31
North Somerset	39070.40	124.07	0.32
Copeland District (B)	77571.76	273.27	0.35
Hinckley and Bosworth District (B)	29735.15	144.72	0.49
Sunderland District (B)	13961.80	69.66	0.5
City of Southampton (B)	5638.52	29.18	0.52
Newcastle-under-Lyme District (B)	21095.73	109.82	0.52
Broadland District	55324.42	307.92	0.56
Redditch District (B)	5425.09	33.11	0.61
Hyndburn District (B)	7299.75	46.16	0.63
Gloucester District (B)	4082.66	30.64	0.75
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	17393.21	136.02	0.78
East Northamptonshire District	50978.73	408.96	0.8
Nuneaton and Bedworth District (B)	7895.03	63.01	0.8

Local authority	Total area (ha)	CSFF area (ha)	% of LA under CSFF
Preston District (B)	14294.48	121.23	0.85
Worcester District (B)	3327.81	32.12	0.97
Milton Keynes (B)	30862.68	308.43	1
Halton (B)	9032.15	102.45	1.13
Ipswich District (B)	4030.01	46.83	1.16
Wycombe District	32457.21	397.14	1.22
South Derbyshire District	33812.70	431.83	1.28
West Lindsey District	115765.21	1483.43	1.28
Bromsgrove District	21696.85	307	1.41
Cornwall	361206.05	5351.88	1.48
Solihull District (B)	17828.21	275.84	1.55
Cherwell District	58874.12	924.22	1.57
Mid Devon District	91289.77	1454.35	1.59
South Gloucestershire	53642.19	966.01	1.8
City of Portsmouth (B)	6013.58	118.59	1.97
Hastings District (B)	3080.11	73.42	2.38
New Forest District	77628.57	1855.24	2.39
Bradford District (B)	36641.97	880.31	2.4
Rochdale District (B)	15812.82	390.92	2.47
Sedgemoor District	60594.76	1626.61	2.68
Bolton District (B)	13979.20	405.59	2.9
South Kesteven District	94258.58	2739.28	2.91
Exeter District (B)	4788.83	142.31	2.97
Maidstone District (B)	39335.07	1168.62	2.97
Bury District (B)	9946.01	296.43	2.98
Eastleigh District (B)	8527.97	257.64	3.02
Huntingdonshire District	91254.58	2763.14	3.03
Havant District (B)	7894.62	246.43	3.12
Isle of Wight	39282.94	1224.85	3.12
South Holland District	81550.37	2621.69	3.21
Malvern Hills District	57707.10	1901.03	3.29
South Somerset District	95905.81	3193.82	3.33
Hambleton District	131122.81	4432.26	3.38
North West Leicestershire District	27932.81	946.11	3.39
Rutland	39374.89	1338.86	3.4
Ashford District (B)	58061.73	2015.65	3.47
East Riding of Yorkshire	249509.70	8830.06	3.54

Local authority	Total area (ha)	CSFF area (ha)	% of LA under CSFF
Cheshire East (B)	116635.74	4295.88	3.68
Mole Valley District	25832.10	982.84	3.8
Mendip District	73943.54	2880.13	3.9
West Berkshire	70416.94	2881.64	4.09
Dorset	252107.44	10351.86	4.11
Redcar and Cleveland (B)	25378.54	1047.24	4.13
South Norfolk District	90890.65	3819.35	4.2
Breckland District	130511.66	5574.64	4.27
West Oxfordshire District	71442.20	3161.18	4.42
Stratford-on-Avon District	97786.91	4428.27	4.53
Cheshire West and Chester (B)	94120.73	4274.07	4.54
County of Herefordshire	217970.94	10064.75	4.62
Forest of Dean District	56143.23	2636.01	4.7
Stroud District	47617.32	2254.53	4.73
North East Derbyshire District	27562.35	1312.42	4.76
Fareham District (B)	7789.67	379.8	4.88
County Durham	223261.17	11211.6	5.02
King's Lynn and West Norfolk District (B)	152690.08	8038.83	5.26
Darlington (B)	19747.57	1043.86	5.29
Shropshire	319727.54	17031.71	5.33
Eastbourne District (B)	4533.13	245.21	5.41
South Northamptonshire District	63402.32	3436.07	5.42
Warwick District	28288.23	1546	5.47
Carlisle District (B)	105611.89	5917.62	5.6
Somerset West and Taunton District	121054.30	6846.39	5.66
Babergh District	61164.01	3573.74	5.84
South Cambridgeshire District	90168.72	5639.22	6.25
Worthing District (B)	3378.31	216.78	6.42
Staffordshire Moorlands District	57584.98	3786.78	6.58
East Lindsey District	183085.72	12194.68	6.66
Bassetlaw District	63949.27	4370.54	6.83
Gateshead District (B)	14407.99	986.54	6.85
South Lakeland District	174341.32	12151.49	6.97
South Staffordshire District	40732.23	2920.47	7.17
Tamworth District (B)	3085.07	222.31	7.21
Craven District	117880.74	8507.17	7.22
Melton District (B)	48138.05	3484.86	7.24

Local authority	Total area (ha)	CSFF area (ha)	% of LA under CSFF
Lichfield District	33129.43	2404.25	7.26
Torridge District	99520.35	7385.84	7.42
Wyre Forest District	19540.37	1529.44	7.83
South Tyneside District (B)	6707.42	539.08	8.04
Rother District	51712.35	4165.14	8.05
North Devon District	110472.06	8978.72	8.13
Telford and Wrekin (B)	29031.35	2362.68	8.14
East Devon District	82267.60	6787.23	8.25
West Devon District (B)	116471.76	9717.1	8.34
Guildford District (B)	27093.12	2363.09	8.72
Teignbridge District	68008.33	6134.49	9.02
Ashfield District	10955.79	988.77	9.03
Wychavon District	66354.20	6047.85	9.11
Lancaster District (B)	65402.69	6009.1	9.19
High Peak District (B)	54025.40	5153.93	9.54
Pendle District (B)	16938.01	1639.43	9.68
Stafford District (B)	59817.22	5803.84	9.7
Waverley District (B)	34517.02	3359.53	9.73
Allerdale District (B)	131896.46	13295.69	10.08
Northumberland	507747.62	51842.34	10.21
Mid Sussex District	33402.92	3449.21	10.33
Derbyshire Dales District	79531.81	8474.6	10.66
Chorley District (B)	20290.55	2267.48	11.18
Harrogate District (B)	130912.76	14777.58	11.29
North Warwickshire District (B)	28426.15	3277.03	11.53
East Staffordshire District (B)	38998.72	4596.94	11.79
Newcastle upon Tyne District (B)	11511.78	1372.69	11.92
North Tyneside District (B)	8482.32	1014.9	11.96
Newark and Sherwood District	65183.53	7837.4	12.02
Ribble Valley District (B)	58447.15	7037.21	12.04
Scarborough District (B)	82550.50	10052.76	12.18
Mansfield District	7669.69	947.87	12.36
Chesterfield District (B)	6603.53	816.65	12.37
Bedford (B)	47640.83	5977.56	12.55
Vale of White Horse District	57866.03	7274	12.57
Ryedale District	150659.38	19212.01	12.75
North Kesteven District	92247.14	11895.51	12.9

Local authority	Total area (ha)	CSFF area (ha)	% of LA under CSFF
South Hams District	90520.07	11714.32	12.94
Eden District	215647.45	28205.63	13.08
Burnley District (B)	11068.40	1472.92	13.31
Chichester District	81241.51	10858.12	13.37
Sheffield District (B)	36793.00	4929.11	13.4
East Suffolk District	129476.59	17576.66	13.58
Swindon (B)	23009.34	3186.03	13.85
South Oxfordshire District	67852.14	9458.55	13.94
Rossendale District (B)	13804.09	1967.27	14.25
Wealden District	83619.08	12022.68	14.38
Gedling District (B)	11998.15	1828.65	15.24
Blackburn with Darwen (B)	13702.21	2182.19	15.93
East Hampshire District	51443.21	8340.8	16.21
Richmondshire District	131870.73	21385.22	16.22
Cotswold District	116452.44	19465.59	16.72
North Norfolk District	98999.10	16657.11	16.83
Tewkesbury District (B)	41497.59	7036.45	16.96
The City of Brighton and Hove (B)	8538.59	1523.44	17.84
Horsham District	53096.21	9508.83	17.91
Calderdale District (B)	36396.10	6541.17	17.97
Winchester District (B)	66106.06	13474.62	20.38
Wiltshire	325533.81	70558.42	21.67
Test Valley District	62762.18	14687.27	23.4
Lewes District	29441.27	9247.96	31.41
Arun District	22470.33	7167.01	31.9
Bolsover District	16033.46	5620.65	35.06
Adur District	4364.79	1652.65	37.86
TOTAL	**13292909.40**	**803021.64**	**6.04**

Table 2: Counties, unitary and metropolitan authorities and CSFF coverage

County / Metropolitan District / Unitary Authority (CNTY)	Area (ha)	Area under CSFF (ha)	% of Area under CSFF
Barnsley District (B) Metropolitan District	32907.76	18.58	0.06
Bath and North East Somerset Unitary Authority	35112.32	71.43	0.2
Bedford (B) Unitary Authority	47640.83	5977.56	12.55
Birmingham District (B) Metropolitan District	26779.11	0	0
Blackburn with Darwen (B) Unitary Authority	13702.21	2182.19	15.93
Blackpool (B) Unitary Authority	4315.08	0	0
Bolton District (B) Metropolitan District	13979.20	405.59	2.9
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Unitary Authority	17393.21	136.02	0.78
Bracknell Forest (B) Unitary Authority	10938.42	0	0
Bradford District (B) Metropolitan District	36641.97	880.31	2.4
Buckinghamshire County	156494.91	629.4	0.4
Bury District (B) Metropolitan District	9946.01	296.43	2.98
Calderdale District (B) Metropolitan District	36396.10	6541.17	17.97
Cambridgeshire County	305400.76	8403.57	2.75
Central Bedfordshire Unitary Authority	71566.53	135.61	0.19
Cheshire East (B) Unitary Authority	116635.74	4295.88	3.68
Cheshire West and Chester (B) Unitary Authority	94120.73	4274.07	4.54
City of Bristol (B) Unitary Authority	23542.52	0	0
City of Derby (B) Unitary Authority	7803.11	0	0
City of Kingston upon Hull (B) Unitary Authority	8149.74	0	0
City of Leicester (B) Unitary Authority	7334.21	0	0
City of Nottingham (B) Unitary Authority	7461.36	0.17	0
City of Peterborough (B) Unitary Authority	34343.79	0	0
City of Plymouth (B) Unitary Authority	8436.98	0	0
City of Portsmouth (B) Unitary Authority	6013.58	118.59	1.97
City of Southampton (B) Unitary Authority	5638.52	29.18	0.52
City of Stoke-on-Trent (B) Unitary Authority	9344.85	2.22	0.02
City of Wolverhampton District (B) Metropolitan District	6943.67	0	0
Cornwall Unitary Authority	361206.05	5351.88	1.48
County Durham Unitary Authority	223261.17	11211.6	5.02
County of Herefordshire Unitary Authority	217970.94	10064.75	4.62
Coventry District (B) Metropolitan District	9863.91	0	0
Cumbria County	718276.40	59843.71	8.33
Darlington (B) Unitary Authority	19747.57	1043.86	5.29
Derbyshire County	255076.04	21810.07	8.55

County / Metropolitan District / Unitary Authority (CNTY)	Area (ha)	Area under CSFF (ha)	% of Area under CSFF
Devon County	663338.77	52314.35	7.89
Doncaster District (B) Metropolitan District	56855.13	0	0
Dorset Unitary Authority	252107.44	10351.86	4.11
Dudley District (B) Metropolitan District	9795.82	0.93	0.01
East Riding of Yorkshire Unitary Authority	249509.70	8830.06	3.54
East Sussex County	172385.94	25754.4	14.94
Essex County	369673.19	0	0
Gateshead District (B) Metropolitan District	14407.99	986.54	6.85
Gloucestershire County	270452.85	31423.23	11.62
Greater London Authority Greater London Authority	159469.70	0	0
Halton (B) Unitary Authority	9032.15	102.45	1.13
Hampshire County	373725.79	39249.5	10.5
Hartlepool (B) Unitary Authority	9834.67	0	0
Hertfordshire County	164306.49	0	0
Isle of Wight Unitary Authority	39282.94	1224.85	3.12
Isles of Scilly Unitary Authority	2284.94	0	0
Kent County	363720.52	3198.15	0.88
Kirklees District (B) Metropolitan District	40855.17	79.71	0.2
Knowsley District (B) Metropolitan District	8650.01	0	0
Lancashire County	308284.66	20572.48	6.67
Leeds District (B) Metropolitan District	55170.65	0	0
Leicestershire County	208378.92	4626.55	2.22
Lincolnshire County	610255.32	30934.58	5.07
Liverpool District (B) Metropolitan District	13353.37	0	0
Luton (B) Unitary Authority	4335.25	0	0
Manchester District (B) Metropolitan District	11564.82	0	0
Medway (B) Unitary Authority	26906.37	0	0
Middlesbrough (B) Unitary Authority	5455.36	0	0
Milton Keynes (B) Unitary Authority	30862.68	308.43	1
Newcastle upon Tyne District (B) Metropolitan District	11511.78	1372.69	11.92
Norfolk County	550713.42	34397.87	6.25
North East Lincolnshire (B) Unitary Authority	20266.25	0	0
North Lincolnshire (B) Unitary Authority	87568.46	0	0
North Somerset Unitary Authority	39070.40	124.07	0.32
North Tyneside District (B) Metropolitan District	8482.32	1014.9	11.96
North Yorkshire County	805219.25	78367	9.73
Northamptonshire County	236699.02	3856.12	1.63

County / Metropolitan District / Unitary Authority (CNTY)	Area (ha)	Area under CSFF (ha)	% of Area under CSFF
Northumberland Unitary Authority	507747.62	51842.34	10.21
Nottinghamshire County	208689.47	15977.46	7.66
Oldham District (B) Metropolitan District	14234.49	0	0
Oxfordshire County	260594.78	20817.95	7.99
Reading (B) Unitary Authority	4039.80	0.1	0
Redcar and Cleveland (B) Unitary Authority	25378.54	1047.24	4.13
Rochdale District (B) Metropolitan District	15812.82	390.92	2.47
Rotherham District (B) Metropolitan District	28653.44	4.52	0.02
Rutland Unitary Authority	39374.89	1338.86	3.4
Salford District (B) Metropolitan District	9719.73	0	0
Sandwell District (B) Metropolitan District	8555.89	0	0
Sefton District (B) Metropolitan District	20275.58	0	0
Sheffield District (B) Metropolitan District	36793.00	4929.11	13.4
Shropshire Unitary Authority	319727.54	17031.71	5.33
Slough (B) Unitary Authority	3254.20	0	0
Solihull District (B) Metropolitan District	17828.21	275.84	1.55
Somerset County	351498.41	14546.94	4.14
South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority	53642.19	966.01	1.8
South Tyneside District (B) Metropolitan District	6707.42	539.08	8.04
Southend-on-Sea (B) Unitary Authority	6786.41	0	0
St. Helens District (B) Metropolitan District	13635.88	0	0
Staffordshire County	262331.64	19844.68	7.56
Stockport District (B) Metropolitan District	12604.03	0	0
Stockton-on-Tees (B) Unitary Authority	20973.08	0	0
Suffolk County	385245.26	21258.94	5.52
Sunderland District (B) Metropolitan District	13961.80	69.66	0.5
Surrey County	167007.29	6705.45	4.02
Swindon (B) Unitary Authority	23009.34	3186.03	13.85
Tameside District (B) Metropolitan District	10315.43	0	0
Telford and Wrekin (B) Unitary Authority	29031.35	2362.68	8.14
The City of Brighton and Hove (B) Unitary Authority	8538.59	1523.44	17.84
Thurrock (B) Unitary Authority	18431.79	0	0
Torbay (B) Unitary Authority	11946.66	0.02	0
Trafford District (B) Metropolitan District	10604.48	0	0
Wakefield District (B) Metropolitan District	33861.97	0	0
Walsall District (B) Metropolitan District	10397.35	0	0
Warrington (B) Unitary Authority	18238.36	31.59	0.17

County / Metropolitan District / Unitary Authority (CNTY)	Area (ha)	Area under CSFF (ha)	% of Area under CSFF
Warwickshire County	197752.05	9314.32	4.71
West Berkshire Unitary Authority	70416.94	2881.64	4.09
West Sussex County	202451.19	32852.73	16.23
Wigan District (B) Metropolitan District	18817.10	58.82	0.31
Wiltshire Unitary Authority	325533.81	70558.42	21.67
Windsor and Maidenhead (B) Unitary Authority	19842.72	0	0
Wirral District (B) Metropolitan District	25324.60	0	0
Wokingham (B) Unitary Authority	17896.55	0	0
Worcestershire County	174051.42	9850.55	5.66
York (B) Unitary Authority	27201.48	0	0
TOTAL	**13292909.40**	**803021.61**	**6.04**

Table 3: National Character Areas and CSFF group coverage

NCA Name	NCA Area (ha)	NCA Area Under CSFF (ha)	% of NCA Area Under CSFF
Bodmin Moor	28579.01	0.00	0.00
Charnwood	17463.54	0.00	0.00
Greater Thames Estuary	83675.07	0.00	0.00
Hensbarrow	11948.70	0.00	0.00
Humber Estuary	27950.17	0.00	0.00
Humberhead Levels	171805.26	0.00	0.00
Inner London	33011.93	0.00	0.00
Isle of Portland	1124.31	0.00	0.00
Isles of Scilly	1638.29	0.00	0.00
Lundy	451.12	0.00	0.00
Manchester Conurbation	34222.60	0.00	0.00
Melbourne Parklands	15045.41	0.00	0.00
Merseyside Conurbation	28678.56	0.00	0.00
North East Norfolk and Flegg	24651.16	0.00	0.00
North Kent Plain	84832.42	0.00	0.00
North Northumberland Coastal Plain	37669.61	0.00	0.00
Northamptonshire Uplands	101141.13	0.00	0.00
Northern Thames Basin	250999.71	0.00	0.00
Romney Marshes	36681.45	0.00	0.00
Sefton Coast	8989.02	0.00	0.00
South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland	328988.14	0.00	0.00
West Penwith	20200.94	0.00	0.00
Wirral	16516.01	0.00	0.00
Lancashire and Amounderness Plain	98593.69	4.35	0.00
Thames Valley	86062.10	6.69	0.01
Rockingham Forest	51001.44	27.98	0.05
Leicestershire Vales	71793.82	43.76	0.06
Cannock Chase and Cank Wood	72790.78	45.12	0.06
East Anglian Chalk	83870.21	85.51	0.10
Lancashire Coal Measures	40584.25	69.90	0.17
Thames Basin Lowlands	32782.56	74.90	0.23
Manchester Pennine Fringe	39294.77	101.42	0.26
Dunsmore and Feldon	70597.15	184.44	0.26
Morecambe Coast and Lune Estuary	13210.94	35.47	0.27
West Cumbria Coastal Plain	49293.25	142.20	0.29

NCA Name	NCA Area (ha)	NCA Area Under CSFF (ha)	% of NCA Area Under CSFF
Mersey Valley	44718.35	148.99	0.33
Thames Basin Heaths	118526.70	458.80	0.39
Vale of Mowbray	60633.69	299.45	0.49
The Broads	56290.46	395.73	0.70
The Brecks	101926.23	722.34	0.71
Kesteven Uplands	69003.57	557.07	0.81
Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge	27336.74	241.54	0.88
Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe	58510.33	512.40	0.88
Weymouth Lowlands	13251.03	117.84	0.89
Northern Lincolnshire Edge with Coversands	50057.68	499.14	1.00
Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges	84255.25	840.07	1.00
North Downs	137447.00	1379.79	1.00
Avon Vales	64284.65	772.60	1.20
Howardian Hills	24011.22	309.90	1.29
Oswestry Uplands	9980.85	131.28	1.32
Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent	37769.57	520.56	1.38
Central Lincolnshire Vale	81897.53	1164.94	1.42
Herefordshire Plateau	34635.22	518.19	1.50
Cornish Killas	222096.69	3405.21	1.53
Yeovil Scarplands	78579.47	1236.39	1.57
Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield	169753.18	2768.89	1.63
Northamptonshire Vales	90387.79	1565.39	1.73
South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands	214517.72	3983.68	1.86
Trent and Belvoir Vales	177604.75	3391.26	1.91
Somerset Levels and Moors	65796.94	1394.02	2.12
Carnmenellis	14328.11	304.51	2.13
Mid Somerset Hills	42092.24	895.22	2.13
Dorset Heaths	61661.75	1348.46	2.19
Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield	20471.69	452.61	2.21
Trent Valley Washlands	39375.57	910.00	2.31
Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes	48403.13	1147.75	2.37
Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe	66122.25	1607.60	2.43
Holderness	87282.00	2116.88	2.43
New Forest	73766.98	1830.98	2.48
Forest of Dean and Lower Wye	31389.35	788.27	2.51
Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau	45260.67	1167.12	2.58
Northumberland Sandstone Hills	72694.66	1877.97	2.58

NCA Name	NCA Area (ha)	NCA Area Under CSFF (ha)	% of NCA Area Under CSFF
Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds	64070.92	1676.18	2.62
Tyne and Wear Lowlands	46418.00	1248.81	2.69
Tees Lowlands	102193.54	2770.38	2.71
Midvale Ridge	44500.95	1217.65	2.74
Potteries and Churnet Valley	53136.33	1559.62	2.94
Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes	88200.82	2633.39	2.99
South Coast Plain	52245.30	1567.25	3.00
Vale of York	102082.69	3099.26	3.04
The Fens	382605.95	11788.55	3.08
South Hampshire Lowlands	38634.09	1218.12	3.15
Isle of Wight	38016.74	1224.85	3.22
Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau	88803.20	2909.26	3.28
Shropshire Hills	107987.67	3714.76	3.44
Herefordshire Lowlands	88680.05	3056.79	3.45
Chilterns	164093.63	5818.17	3.55
Devon Redlands	97403.81	3504.44	3.60
Lancashire Valleys	55423.63	2031.30	3.67
Vale of Pickering	43084.88	1698.84	3.94
Teme Valley	19298.32	805.33	4.17
The Culm	283072.28	12326.04	4.35
Cheviot Fringe	51591.15	2247.85	4.36
Black Mountains and Golden Valley	25974.42	1209.51	4.66
High Leicestershire	56874.93	2909.51	5.12
South Cumbria Low Fells	69139.61	3614.16	5.23
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands	260559.91	13892.39	5.33
Arden	143425.01	7665.94	5.34
Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands	81540.16	4380.33	5.37
Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain	366246.76	20249.29	5.53
Solway Basin	98350.39	5483.63	5.58
High Weald	174885.20	9769.30	5.59
Southern Magnesian Limestone	136762.19	7674.09	5.61
Pennine Dales Fringe	87302.50	5148.24	5.90
White Peak	52859.90	3197.22	6.05
Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase	116854.12	7187.55	6.15
Mendip Hills	30300.07	1932.85	6.38
South Herefordshire and Over Severn	51148.54	3369.73	6.59
Upper Thames Clay Vales	188999.87	13448.49	7.12

NCA Name	NCA Area (ha)	NCA Area Under CSFF (ha)	% of NCA Area Under CSFF
Cotswolds	288170.07	20906.35	7.25
Exmoor	130373.27	9761.04	7.49
North West Norfolk	80140.35	6045.84	7.54
Border Moors and Forests	127155.93	9593.84	7.54
South Devon	121079.60	9526.03	7.87
Blackmoor Vale and Vale of Wardour	78414.24	6376.26	8.13
Severn and Avon Vales	210325.77	17476.95	8.31
Low Weald	182419.94	15785.88	8.65
Yorkshire Wolds	111422.37	9665.55	8.67
Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills	62551.73	5741.32	9.18
Mid Norfolk	90881.14	8437.72	9.28
Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge	33776.50	3205.30	9.49
South East Northumberland Coastal Plain	43709.20	4290.64	9.82
The Lizard	14748.54	1449.28	9.83
Eden Valley	80956.26	8372.62	10.34
Mid Northumberland	63726.22	6740.76	10.58
Tyne Gap and Hadrian's Wall	43423.92	4631.45	10.67
Cumbria High Fells	199006.62	21387.26	10.75
Blackdowns	80807.43	8785.81	10.87
Morecambe Bay Limestones	39965.88	4413.59	11.04
Lincolnshire Wolds	84486.21	9381.85	11.10
Orton Fells	29280.55	3268.78	11.16
North Pennines	214563.39	24775.57	11.55
Mease/Sence Lowlands	32353.26	3754.84	11.61
Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill	74090.13	8798.86	11.88
Bowland Fells	37394.60	4526.34	12.10
Central North Norfolk	72035.31	8923.13	12.39
Wealden Greensand	145783.75	19124.23	13.12
South West Peak	42568.11	5605.94	13.17
Cheshire Sandstone Ridge	22041.79	3007.58	13.64
Southern Pennines	119714.70	16590.67	13.86
Dartmoor	87407.38	12771.09	14.61
North York Moors and Cleveland Hills	165881.19	26513.54	15.98
Southern Lincolnshire Edge	57040.77	9319.47	16.34
Yorkshire Dales	239983.59	39371.77	16.41
Dark Peak	86604.55	14857.80	17.16
Hampshire Downs	148912.46	25993.01	17.46

NCA Name	NCA Area (ha)	NCA Area Under CSFF (ha)	% of NCA Area Under CSFF
Sherwood	53456.71	9963.36	18.64
Marshwood and Powerstock Vales	15944.58	3080.43	19.32
Malvern Hills	8324.48	1621.36	19.48
Quantock Hills	7616.89	1666.08	21.87
Suffolk Coast and Heaths	82179.37	20621.74	25.09
Berkshire and Marlborough Downs	110985.74	31541.76	28.42
South Downs	101855.13	29015.32	28.49
Howgill Fells	10360.18	2987.38	28.84
Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs	122334.52	35619.73	29.12
North Norfolk Coast	6243.85	2026.92	32.46
South Purbeck	11850.52	4346.24	36.68
Pevensey Levels	9638.03	3574.36	37.09
Cheviots	36487.85	15445.49	42.33
TOTAL	**13045501.69**	**802541.78**	**6.15**

Table 4: AONBs and CSFF group coverage

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Area of AONB (ha)	AONB Area under CSFF (ha)	% of AONB under CSFF
Dedham Vale	9058.49	0	0
Isles Of Scilly	16830.82	0	0
Northumberland Coast	13335.25	0	0
Cannock Chase	6865.83	20.21	0.29
Howardian Hills	20420.27	170.75	0.84
Chichester Harbour	7316.20	75.32	1.03
Kent Downs	87900.44	1008.79	1.15
Tamar Valley	19649.35	332.28	1.69
Isle Of Wight	19137.05	436.94	2.28
Cornwall	96403.17	4052.55	4.2
High Weald	146173.78	8056.61	5.51
Chilterns	83830.40	4990.85	5.95
Wye Valley	32735.24	2119.99	6.48
Dorset	112933.07	9630.75	8.53
Cotswolds	204109.11	17964.89	8.8
Shropshire Hills	80829.71	7454.83	9.22
Mendip Hills	19846.97	1979.69	9.97
Blackdown Hills	36958.71	3818.2	10.33
North Pennines	198516.99	23969.31	12.07
South Devon	33973.49	4199.67	12.36
Solway Coast	12255.00	1676.73	13.68
Surrey Hills	42246.24	5972.83	14.14
Forest Of Bowland	80573.33	11613.52	14.41
North Devon	17182.75	2625.98	15.28
East Devon	26913.42	4448.72	16.53
Malvern Hills	10663.75	1770.37	16.6
Norfolk Coast	44590.88	7754.6	17.39
Lincolnshire Wolds	55898.18	9767.71	17.47
Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs	98594.78	18109.52	18.37
North Wessex Downs	173105.49	35070.25	20.26
Quantock Hills	9916.75	2088.86	21.06
Nidderdale	60117.42	12972.92	21.58
Arnside & Silverdale	7587.26	1771.3	23.35
Suffolk Coast & Heaths	44349.72	14124.8	31.85
TOTAL	**1930819.34**	**220049.74**	**11.4**

Table 5: Local Nature Partnerships and CSFF group coverage

Local Nature Partnership (LNP)	LNP Area (ha)	LNP Area under CSFF (ha)	% of LNP Area under CSFF
Birmingham & Black Country	62469.84005	0.93	0
Hertfordshire	164306.4945	0	0
London	159470.3472	0	0
Thames Gateway	80613.45637	0	0
Humber	38400.93292	4.27	0.01
Merseyside & Halton	90653.16674	102.45	0.11
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes	187356.5819	937.82	0.5
West England	151391.3807	1161.51	0.77
Kent	390828.6483	3198.15	0.82
Greater Manchester	127598.1142	1151.76	0.9
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	363622.5334	5351.95	1.47
Northamptonshire	236698.6904	3856.12	1.63
Leicestershire	215712.9045	4626.55	2.14
Berkshire	126389.635	2881.74	2.28
Great Cambridgeshire	339744.5448	8403.58	2.47
Tees Valley	81408.26609	2090.14	2.57
Plymouth	52678.02588	1465.94	2.78
Morecambe Bay	214071.4021	6443.26	3.01
South Yorkshire	155201.201	4952.06	3.19
Yorkshire West	235832.2214	7519.8	3.19
Cheshire Region	263665.533	8703.99	3.3
Hull and East Riding	257833.6206	8830.45	3.42
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole	269484.1321	10487.85	3.89
Surrey	167007.1827	6705.45	4.02
Somerset	351392.0024	14546.95	4.14
Warwickshire	225446.6772	9590.16	4.25
Greater Lincolnshire	718574.8534	30934.58	4.3
Herefordshire	217973.2875	10064.75	4.62
Bedfordshire	123542.9363	6113.17	4.95
North East England	482221.4193	24549.26	5.09
Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin	348761.7116	19394.82	5.56
Worcestershire	174051.4173	9850.55	5.66
Wild Anglia	935240.2185	55656.77	5.95
Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire	368472.6458	23910.12	6.49
North Yorkshire & York	616582.5868	40415.97	6.55

Local Nature Partnership (LNP)	LNP Area (ha)	LNP Area under CSFF (ha)	% of LNP Area under CSFF
Lancashire	326360.3029	22754.4	6.97
Staffordshire	271677.5227	19846.92	7.31
Hampshire & Wight	546064.8706	40622.48	7.44
Devon	675531.2495	52313.08	7.74
Oxfordshire	260583.9913	20814.7	7.99
Cumbria	718506.6839	59843.79	8.33
Gloucestershire	270453.9675	31423.23	11.62
Peak District	185693.5517	23944.31	12.89
South Pennines	119714.7029	16590.67	13.86
Northern Upland Chain	741762.4973	103794.56	13.99
Sussex (E & W Brighton & Hove)	383416.1877	60130.56	15.68
Wiltshire & Swindon	348542.9837	73744.45	21.16
TOTAL	**13843007.12**	**859726.02**	**6.21**

Table 6: CSFF group coverage and green belt, by local authority

Green Belt LA (GB)	GB Area (ha)	GB Area under CSFF (ha)	% GB Area under CSFF
Amber Valley	8647.91	0	0
Barking and Dagenham	527.81	0	0
Barnet	2383.61	0	0
Barnsley	22392.70	0	0
Basildon	6899.88	0	0
Bath and North East Somerset	24729.67	0	0
Bexley	1111.61	0	0
Birmingham	3729.63	0	0
Blackpool	71.93	0	0
Bracknell Forest	3839.38	0	0
Brentwood	13731.31	0	0
Bristol, City of	604.11	0	0
Bromley	7656.76	0	0
Broxbourne	2831.52	0	0
Buckinghamshire	50123.10	0	0
Cannock Chase	4821.46	0.02	0
Castle Point	2500.75	0	0
Central Bedfordshire	28202.57	0	0
Chelmsford	12825.43	0	0
Cheltenham	546.65	0	0
Cotswold	113.20	0	0
Coventry	1477.35	0	0
Croydon	2189.29	0	0
Dacorum	10628.96	0	0
Dartford	4095.30	0	0
Derby	243.53	0	0
Doncaster	23241.66	0	0
Ealing	308.75	0	0
East Cambridgeshire	1901.00	0	0
East Hertfordshire	16435.47	0	0
East Staffordshire	39.20	0	0
Elmbridge	5612.10	0	0
Enfield	3069.99	0	0
Epping Forest	31668.77	0	0
Epsom and Ewell	1560.24	0	0
Erewash	7839.44	0	0

Green Belt LA (GB)	GB Area (ha)	GB Area under CSFF (ha)	% GB Area under CSFF
Fylde	1752.64	0	0
Gravesham	7598.06	0	0
Greenwich	0.54	0	0
Hambleton	1523.73	0	0
Haringey	61.32	0	0
Harlow	464.05	0	0
Harrow	1087.74	0	0
Havering	6072.42	0	0
Hertsmere	7983.53	0	0
High Peak	3976.22	0	0
Hillingdon	4866.20	0	0
Hounslow	1224.55	0	0
Kingston upon Thames	638.40	0	0
Knowsley	4226.45	0	0
Leeds	33862.85	0	0
Liverpool	529.39	0	0
Luton	137.89	0	0
Maidstone	527.52	0	0
Manchester	1276.15	0	0
Medway	1335.13	0	0
Mendip	856.22	0	0
Mid Sussex	22.32	0	0
Newcastle-under-Lyme	9419.87	0	0
Newham	78.98	0	0
North Hertfordshire	14241.24	0	0
North Somerset	15532.41	0	0
Nottingham	736.09	0.02	0
Nuneaton and Bedworth	3243.16	0	0
Oldham	6251.61	0	0
Oxford	1268.67	0	0
Preston	656.15	0	0
Redbridge	1920.27	0	0
Redditch	1793.85	0	0
Reigate and Banstead	8765.18	0	0
Ribble Valley	1724.48	0	0
Richmond upon Thames	134.35	0	0
Rochford	11821.47	0	0

Green Belt LA (GB)	GB Area (ha)	GB Area under CSFF (ha)	% GB Area under CSFF
Rugby	20573.05	0	0
Runnymede	5797.91	0	0
Rushcliffe	16239.08	0	0
Ryedale	869.87	0	0
Salford	3369.99	0	0
Sandwell	822.46	0	0
Sefton	7313.11	0	0
Selby	19235.32	0	0
Sevenoaks	34390.59	0	0
Slough	866.56	0	0
South Derbyshire	2390.07	0	0
South Gloucestershire	23021.96	0	0
South Ribble	7612.43	0	0
Southend-on-Sea	578.76	0	0
Spelthorne	3319.02	0	0
St Albans	13144.08	0	0
St. Helens	8870.62	0	0
Stevenage	177.90	0	0
Stockport	5855.30	0	0
Surrey Heath	4188.14	0	0
Sutton	604.42	0	0
Tameside	5071.01	0	0
Tamworth	210.21	0	0
Tandridge	23298.88	0	0
Three Rivers	6718.26	0	0
Thurrock	11670.12	0	0
Tonbridge and Malling	17053.40	0	0
Trafford	3984.48	0	0
Tunbridge Wells	7129.08	0	0
Uttlesford	3809.30	0	0
Wakefield	23494.14	0	0
Walsall	3941.79	0	0
Waltham Forest	840.96	0	0
Watford	404.60	0	0
Welwyn Hatfield	10245.15	0	0
West Lancashire	31012.24	0	0
Wiltshire	6907.06	0	0

Green Belt LA (GB)	GB Area (ha)	GB Area under CSFF (ha)	% GB Area under CSFF
Windsor and Maidenhead	16467.71	0	0
Wirral	7329.56	0	0
Woking	4021.27	0	0
Wokingham	2903.05	0	0
Wolverhampton	798.71	0	0
Worcester	234.44	0	0
Wyre	684.24	0	0
York	22395.88	0	0
Rotherham	20046.25	4.52	0.02
Lichfield	15165.84	6.71	0.04
Dudley	1765.25	0.93	0.05
Broxtowe	4902.00	4.14	0.08
Cherwell	8130.55	7.84	0.1
Cambridge	973.15	1.18	0.12
Warrington	11370.36	13.81	0.12
Halton	2485.07	3.16	0.13
Stoke-on-Trent	1766.03	2.21	0.13
Hyndburn	3994.32	9.25	0.23
Lancaster	1537.78	3.78	0.25
Vale of White Horse	8087.92	24.93	0.31
Kirklees	24987.86	79.62	0.32
Stafford	11107.31	37.88	0.34
Harrogate	14490.18	55.05	0.38
Cheshire East	40132.34	161.22	0.4
Shropshire	24475.96	113.27	0.46
Wigan	10640.22	58.82	0.55
Dorset	24007.13	206.23	0.86
Staffordshire Moorlands	17380.45	174.22	1
Cheshire West and Chester	38851.25	414.37	1.07
Bromsgrove	19292.14	306.85	1.59
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	5675.81	113.41	2
County Durham	8577.33	186.65	2.18
Sunderland	3182.50	69.65	2.19
Solihull	11861.24	275.83	2.33
Wychavon	8856.27	223.07	2.52
South Staffordshire	32096.02	1038.61	3.24
Bradford	23880.65	856.11	3.58

Green Belt LA (GB)	GB Area (ha)	GB Area under CSFF (ha)	% GB Area under CSFF
Tewkesbury	5528.79	199.61	3.61
Rochdale	9923.06	377.96	3.81
Sheffield	9060.78	365.08	4.03
South Oxfordshire	15367.50	674.2	4.39
Rossendale	3121.26	140.54	4.5
South Cambridgeshire	23218.14	1116.7	4.81
North East Derbyshire	10355.82	499.9	4.83
Bury	5918.51	296.02	5
Mole Valley	19634.43	982.76	5.01
Chorley	14548.89	736.64	5.06
Bolton	7222.58	404.41	5.6
Wyre Forest	11208.84	646.29	5.77
Pendle	2043.03	155.21	7.6
Warwick	19063.74	1530.49	8.03
West Oxfordshire	1608.52	139.74	8.69
Bolsover	1079.19	93.9	8.7
North Warwickshire	17273.60	1729.89	10.01
Guildford	22623.80	2363	10.44
Burnley	1051.05	117.66	11.19
Gateshead	8518.61	965.97	11.34
Stratford-on-Avon	22350.57	2633.49	11.78
Ashfield	4521.60	581.82	12.87
Waverley	20856.41	2804.09	13.44
New Forest	4967.46	709.7	14.29
Calderdale	22814.09	3437.23	15.07
Blackburn with Darwen	5275.00	851.19	16.14
Northumberland	43530.64	7670.36	17.62
Newark and Sherwood	6276.52	1278.19	20.36
Gedling	8791.07	1793.77	20.4
South Tyneside	2350.81	534.08	22.72
Newcastle upon Tyne	3966.85	1296.83	32.69
North Tyneside	1658.91	629.96	37.97
Chesterfield	1440.51	575.58	39.96
Total	**1612969.02**	**42785.62**	**2.65**

Appendix 6: Spatial analysis of CSFF group coverage – opportunity mapping

See Excel spreadsheet available on the project page at http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/'

Appendix 7: Online Surveys – group members and facilitators

CSFF Facilitator Survey- Technology

P1. Welcome

About who we are...

The Countryside and Community Research Institute at the University of Gloucestershire, in partnership with Environment Systems Ltd and Land Use Consultants, has been asked to seek the views of farmers and land managers who are members of Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund groups about the benefits and disbenefits of being in a CSFF group.

The work, funded by Defra, is seeking to understand how CSFF groups help members of these groups maintain resilience and wellbeing over the past two years and into the future.

Upon completion of this survey, there is an opportunity to engage further and participate in a telephone/online interview. Once the project is complete, a summary report will be published on the respective project page on the CCRI website. You can find more details regarding our work by visiting: http://www.ccri.ac.uk/

Why we need your help

We need the help of CSFF group members who have experience of AE schemes. It is an opportunity for you to share your experiences of CSFF groups and help shape future schemes, such as the Environmental Land Management programme. For this Defra need to understand the benefits of collaboration and any links to resilience and wellbeing.

This survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

If you are short on time please focus on ticking the boxes. If you have a little more time, please type some text into the boxes provided so we have a little bit more detail on your responses.

P2. Consent & Data Confidentiality

- This survey is being carried out by the Countryside and Community Research Institute, who are based at the University of Gloucestershire and under contract from Defra.
- The University of Gloucestershire is the Data Controller under the Data Protection Act (2018).
- The data will be retained for six years after the end of the project.
- Data will be stored in a database on the University of Gloucestershire's secure computer network and will only be available in its original form to the research team.
- All answers are confidential and no individual will be identifiable as a result of the analysis. All of the data are protected and will only be used on this project and has been checked to meet the required standards on personal data. If you would like a summary of the results

and/or wish to take part in further surveys related to the project there is an opportunity to provide contact details at the end.

- You can read a full statement on data protection and GDPR within the University of Gloucestershire here http://www.ccri.ac.uk/data-protection/
- For more details about the project please contact Chris Short (cshort@glos.ac.uk) or Brian McDonald (Brian.McDonald@naturalengland.org.uk)

1 Are you happy with these terms and wish to continue with the survey?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

The focus of this survey is the use of technology over the past two years, but it would be good to establish what use of technology was made before then and in the future.

P3. About you and your CSFF group

2 Please state the name of the CSFF group that you facilitate.

3 Which of these communication tools did you use before February 2020 to support and enable continued communication and collaboration between your CSFF group members?

	Never	Very infrequently	Infrequently	Occasionally	Frequently	Very Frequently
Zoom						
MS Teams						
Webex						
Google Meet						
Skype						
WhatsApp						
Email						
Facebook Messenger						

A Please provide details of any other communication tools you used prior to Feb 2020 not specified above:

4 How frequently have you used the following applications to support and enable continued communication and collaboration between your group members in the last two years?

	Never	Very infrequently	Infrequently	Occasionally	Frequently	Very Frequently
Zoom						
MS Teams						
Webex						
Google Meet						
Skype						
WhatsApp						
Email						
Facebook Messenger						

A For those which you have used 'somewhat frequently' and 'frequently' please can you outline the main functions that they have performed (e.g. enable online meetings, discussions, etc.)

B Please provide details of any other communication tools you used in the last two years not specified above:

5 Which of the following tools have you used in completing Countryside Stewardship applications or preparing for ELM in the last two years? (tick all that apply)

	Use of tool	
	Used BEFORE Feb 2020	Used SINCE Feb 2020
The Land App		
Catchment Explorer		
QGIS/ Open source		
Arc GIS/ ESRI		
MAGIC		
Own developed tool		

A Which of these tools is the MAIN one you currently use?

- ❑ The Land App
- ❑ Catchment Explorer
- ❑ QGIS/ Open source
- ❑ Arc GIS/ ESRI
- ❑ MAGIC
- ❑ Own developed tool

6 Please provide details of other tools which you have used for completing CS applications or preparing for ELM which are not mentioned above?

P4. Accessing information

These questions will explore where you source information related to a range of topics.

7 On the topic of Agricultural Support and Policy Changes... Please select any sources of information you have accessed regarding from this list: (select all that apply)

- ❑ Gov.uk website
- ❑ Weekly/ monthly RPA drop-ins
- ❑ Farm Advice Service
- ❑ Defra email updates/ webinars
- ❑ Defra blogs
- ❑ Wildlife Trust or eNGO blogs/updates
- ❑ Professional organisation updates (e.g. CIEEM)
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

B Of those you have selected, which is your current main source of information?

- ❑ Gov.uk website
- ❑ Weekly/ monthly RPA drop-ins
- ❑ Farm Advice Service
- ❑ Defra email updates/ webinars
- ❑ Defra blogs
- ❑ Wildlife Trust or eNGO blogs/updates
- ❑ Professional organisation updates (e.g. CIEEM)
- ❑ 'Other' given source

8 On the topic of Climate Change... Please select any sources of information you have accessed regarding from this list: (select all that apply)

- ❑ Gov.uk website
- ❑ Weekly/ monthly RPA drop-ins
- ❑ Farm Advice Service
- ❑ Defra email updates/ webinars
- ❑ Defra blogs
- ❑ Wildlife Trust or eNGO blogs/updates
- ❑ Professional organisation updates (e.g. CIEEM)
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

B Of those you have selected, which is your current main source of information?

- ❑ Gov.uk website
- ❑ Weekly/ monthly RPA drop-ins
- ❑ Farm Advice Service
- ❑ Defra email updates/ webinars
- ❑ Defra blogs
- ❑ Wildlife Trust or eNGO blogs/updates
- ❑ Professional organisation updates (e.g. CIEEM)
- ❑ 'Other' given source

9 On the topic of Delivery of CSFF... Please select any sources of information you have accessed regarding from this list: (select all that apply)

- ❑ Gov.uk website
- ❑ Weekly/ monthly RPA drop-ins
- ❑ Farm Advice Service
- ❑ Defra email updates/ webinars
- ❑ Defra blogs
- ❑ Wildlife Trust or eNGO blogs/updates
- ❑ Professional organisation updates (e.g. CIEEM)
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

B Of those you have selected, which is your current main source of information?

- ❑ Gov.uk website
- ❑ Weekly/ monthly RPA drop-ins
- ❑ Farm Advice Service
- ❑ Defra email updates/ webinars
- ❑ Defra blogs
- ❑ Wildlife Trust or eNGO blogs/updates
- ❑ Professional organisation updates (e.g. CIEEM)
- ❑ 'Other' given source

P5. Continued use of technology

This next series of questions considers the future role that technology might play in future years among CSFF groups.

'Virtual tools' are those which we have considered in previous questions

10 How regularly do you anticipate that you will be continuing to use some virtual tools to communicate with your CSFF group members?

- ❑ Never
- ❑ Very infrequently
- ❑ Somewhat infrequently
- ❑ Occasionally
- ❑ Somewhat frequently
- ❑ Frequently

A Please provide details if necessary

11 In which of the following ways do you think virtual tools could be valuable as a method of communication

- ❑ To host events with expert speakers in another region
- ❑ To give updates on changes in agricultural policy/ support
- ❑ To meet with a steering group
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

12 What do you see as the benefits of virtual tools as a facilitator running a CSFF group?

- ❑ Asynchronous access to events (members can access the recording post-event)
- ❑ Increased event attendance
- ❑ Can invite speakers from across the globe
- ❑ Require fewer administrative tasks e.g. host farm/ catering
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

13 What do you see as the drawbacks of virtual tools as a facilitator running a CSFF group?

- ❑ Members may have poor internet access
- ❑ Members may not be familiar with the platform (e.g. Zoom/ Teams)
- ❑ Members may not be solely focused on the event
- ❑ Fewer chances for informal knowledge exchange/ support at events
- ❑ Difficult to obtain required CSFF paperwork e.g. member signatures
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

14 Over the last two years, have you managed to maintain any face-to-face events?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Don't know

A What sort of face-to-face events have you managed to maintain?

- ❑ Filed visits/ outside events only
- ❑ Both inside and outside events
- ❑ Other

i If you selected Other, please specify

ii Please explain your answer if possible

15 Over the last two years, have you attempted to conduct any 'hybrid' (i.e. a mix of F-2-F & online) events?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Don't know

A What sort of hybrid events have you attempted?

- ❑ Speaker online at face-to-face meeting
- ❑ Online attendees at field visits watching live
- ❑ Online attendees watching recording of field visit
- ❑ Online attendees listening to face-to-face discussion
- ❑ Online and face-to-face attendees contributing to discussion
- ❑ Other event mixing online and face-to-face
- ❑ Other

i If you selected Other, please specify

ii Please explain your answer if possible

16 Do you think it is important to support events which are a mix of face to face and online?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ I'm not sure

A Please explain your response

P6. Collaboration Hub

17 Have you attended any RPA facilitator drop-in webinars since February 2020?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Not sure

A Is this offering something you would like to see continued for facilitators?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Not sure

i Why is this?

18 Please provide details of any regular national, regional or local webinars/updates that you listen to:

This last set of questions considers the importance of external support and a possible 'Collaboration Hub'. By this we mean a site containing material that would support you in your role as a CSFF facilitator and other similar roles that might be developed under the Environmental Land Management programmes and schemes.

19 If a 'Collaboration Hub' was developed to be available nationally, would this be potentially attractive to you in your role as a facilitator?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Maybe- I would need to know more first

20 Which of the following features would be most attractive to you for a 'national collaboration hub'?

- ❑ Examples of good practice
- ❑ 'How to' guides and similar support
- ❑ CSFF/ other farmer group profiles
- ❑ Weekly/ monthly updates from Defra/ RPA
- ❑ Collaboration opportunities
- ❑ Live chat function and other discussion forums
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

21 Such a 'Collaboration Hub' could be structured and supported in a number of ways in order to ensure that content is kept up-to-date and relevant. Which of the following attributes do you consider to be important concerning a potential national hub?

- ❑ Neutral and not run by any single organisation
- ❑ Funded and supported by government agency/ agencies
- ❑ Contain a range of material from a number of organisations
- ❑ Only contain government updates and ELM information
- ❑ Have a government weblink for secure access
- ❑ Behind a paywall and have restricted membership
- ❑ Contain ability to seek confidential advice
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

22 Do you know of any similar collaboration hubs in existence? If so, please provide details below: (Do members participate in-person, virtually, both?)

23 Are there any other networks which you consider useful for support and information sharing in relation to your role as facilitator to a CSFF group? e.g. Local marts

24 Do you have any final comments on the use of technology in CSFF groups over the last two years and its anticipated use in the future?

25 Do you have any final comments on the CSFF more generally?

P7. Further engagement

26 As previously mentioned we are inviting respondents to participate in a more detailed telephone/online interview of 20-30 minutes. Is this something you would like to participate in?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

A Please provide your name and a valid email address: (Please note, this will ONLY be used to contact you for an interview - which you may decline should you change your mind)

P8. Survey completed

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey on technology and collaboration support in CSFF groups.

If you would like further details or would like to withdraw from the survey, please contact:

Chris Short

T: 01242 714550

E: cshort@glos.ac.uk

CSFF Group Member Survey - Resilience and Wellbeing

P1. Welcome

About who we are...

The Countryside and Community Research Institute at the University of Gloucestershire, in partnership with Environment Systems Ltd and Land Use Consultants, has been asked to seek the views of farmers and land managers who are members of Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund groups about the benefits and disbenefits of being in a CSFF group.

The work, funded by Defra, is seeking to understand how CSFF groups help members of these groups maintain resilience and wellbeing over the past two years and into the future.

Upon completion of this survey, there is an opportunity to engage further and participate in a telephone/online interview. Once the project is complete, a summary report will be published on the respective project page on the CCRI website. You can find more details regarding our work by visiting: http://www.ccri.ac.uk/

Why we need your help

We need the help of CSFF group members who have experience of AE schemes. It is an opportunity for you to share your experiences of CSFF groups and help shape future schemes, such as the Environmental Land Management programme. For this Defra need to understand the benefits of collaboration and any links to resilience and wellbeing.

This survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

If you are short on time please focus on ticking the boxes. If you have a little more time, please type some text into the boxes provided so we have a little bit more detail on your responses.

P2. Consent & Data Confidentiality

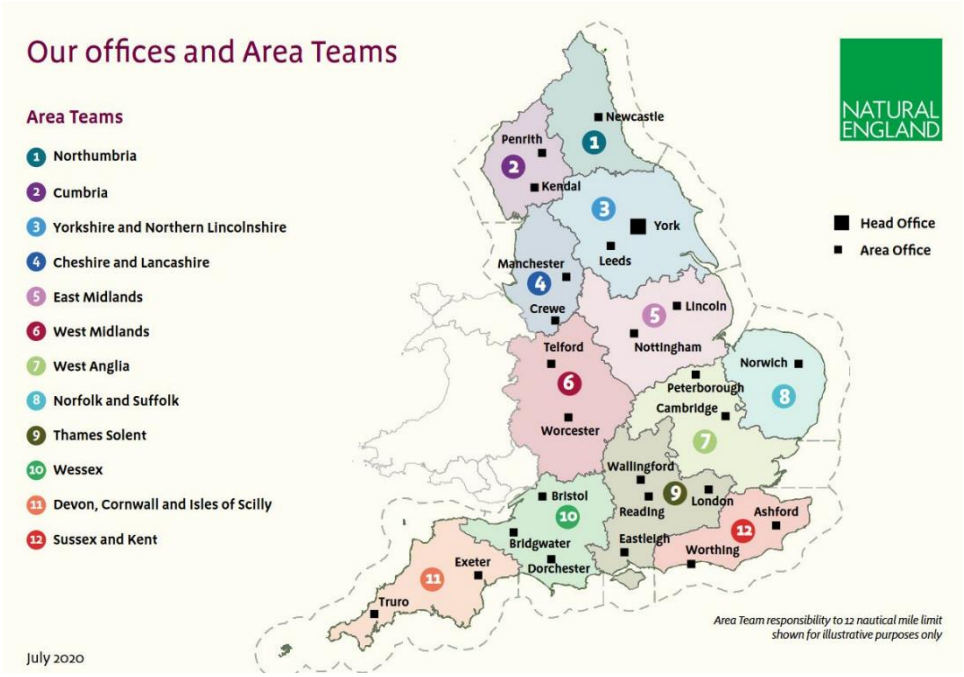
- This survey is being carried out by the Countryside and Community Research Institute, who are based at the University of Gloucestershire and under contract from Defra.
- The University of Gloucestershire is the Data Controller under the Data Protection Act (2018).

- The data will be retained for six years after the end of the project.
- Data will be stored in a database on the University of Gloucestershire's secure computer network and will only be available in its original form to the research team.
- All answers are confidential and no individual will be identifiable as a result of the analysis. All of the data are protected and will only be used on this project and has been checked to meet the required standards on personal data. If you would like a summary of the results and/or wish to take part in further surveys related to the project there is an opportunity to provide contact details at the end.
- You can read a full statement on data protection and GDPR within the University of Gloucestershire here http://www.ccri.ac.uk/data-protection/
- For more details about the project please contact Chris Short (cshort@glos.ac.uk) or Brian McDonald (Brian.McDonald@naturalengland.org.uk)

1 Are you happy with these terms and wish to continue with the survey?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

P3. About you and your CSFF group



2 In which Natural England area is your CSFF group located? (Please refer to the map above)

- ❑ Northumbria
- ❑ Cumbria
- ❑ Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire
- ❑ Cheshire and Lancashire
- ❑ East Midlands
- ❑ West Midlands

- ❑ West Anglia
- ❑ Norfolk and Suffolk
- ❑ Thames Solent
- ❑ Wessex
- ❑ Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
- ❑ Sussex and Kent

3 What is the name of your CSFF group?

4 What were the reasons you decided to join your CSFF group? (Select all which apply)

- ❑ I knew the facilitator
- ❑ It was recommended by a farmer/friend
- ❑ To obtain the uplift in CS
- ❑ To prepare for changes in agricultural policy/ support
- ❑ I have an interest in the overall aims of the CSFF group
- ❑ Visible presence of already existing group encouraged participation
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

B What was the MAIN reason you joined the CSFF group?

5 Which of the following CSFF activities have you taken part in?

- ❑ Attended events/ talks/ discussion groups
- ❑ Hosted an event or talk on my land
- ❑ Led or co-led an event or discussion
- ❑ Contributed to a steering group (or similar body within the group)

A If you selected Other, please specify

6 How important to you is being part of the CSFF group?

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither unimportant/ important	Important	Very important
Level of Importance					

7 What advantages do you see to being part of the CSFF group that are not available to non-members in stand-alone CS agreements?

- ❑ Access to more resources
- ❑ Access to more opportunities
- ❑ Access to advice and support
- ❑ Access to information about changes in agricultural policy/ support
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

P4. Relationships with other group members & individuals involved with CSFF / farming more generally

8 Please indicate how frequently you communicate with the following people outside of organised CSFF events.

	Frequency of communication					
	Never	Very infrequently	Infrequently	Occasionally	Frequently	Very frequently
Group members						
Facilitators						
People not involved in farming (e.g. ecologists)						
Public						

A For those 'frequently' and 'very frequently' please outline what the main areas of communication refer to and their importance to you.

9 How important is it for you to be able to gain and share knowledge relating to Countryside Stewardship with other group members?

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither unimportant/ important	Important	Very important
Level of Importance					

A What is the main reason for your response above?

- ❑ It will help my relationship with other members
- ❑ It will help my reputation
- ❑ It gives me a sense of accomplishment
- ❑ It will help the group function successfully
- ❑ It will help the group continue to operate in the future
- ❑ It will help the group to accumulate or enrich their knowledge
- ❑ Other

i If you selected Other, please specify

10 What information do you consider to be most valuable in your business planning / land management choices?

- ❑ Information on biodiversity
- ❑ Information on funding opportunities
- ❑ Information on future ELM schemes
- ❑ Information on business support
- ❑ All of these are equally important
- ❑ Other

A If you selected Other, please specify

11 Have you been able to access the information mentioned above through the CSFF?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Somewhat

12 Have the CSFF events/meetings allowed you to develop your skills in relation to CS delivery and outcomes?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Somewhat

13 How important do you think these skills will be in ensuring that your business can adapt to future changes in the sector?

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither unimportant/ important	Important	Very important
Level of Importance					

P5. Wellbeing questions

14 Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Response to statement					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree/ agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I'd rather not say
Group membership has allowed me to become more flexible and adaptive to change.						
Group membership means I am better able to recognise and manage the things that cause me stress						
I feel that I can share my opinions in the group						
Group membership provides me with access to a collective voice in current debates on farming and environmental management.						
The CSFF has encouraged me to develop the skills required to achieve what I want with my business / land						
Being a member of the CSFF has improved my outlook on current issues in farming and environmental management.						
I feel supported by my facilitator and / or group members.						
I feel a sense of belonging to my group.						

P6. CSFF & COVID-19 Pandemic

15 How important to you has being a member of your CSFF group in providing a forum to discuss and address the (potential) impacts of COVID-19 on your business?

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither unimportant/ important	Important	Very important
Level of Importance					

16 Have you had conversations/discussions at your CSFF meetings/events about the issue of how COVID-19 might impact your business?

A Do you feel that these conversations helped improve your ability to adapt to the situations arising from COVID-19?

i Please explain if possible

P7. Climate Change

17 How important to you has being a member of your CSFF group in providing a forum to discuss and address the (potential) impacts of climate change on your business?

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither unimportant/ important	Important	Very important
Level of Importance					

A Have you had conversations/discussions at your CSFF meetings/events about the issue of how Climate Change might impact your business?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Not sure

i Do you feel that these conversations helped improve your ability to adapt to situations arising from Climate Change?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Somewhat

A Please explain if possible

Changes in agricultural policy and support

18 How important to you has being a member of your CSFF group in providing a forum to discuss and address issues relating to changes in agricultural policy and support?

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither unimportant/ important	Important	Very important
Level of Importance					

A Have you had conversations/discussions at your CSFF meetings/events about the issue of changes to agricultural policy and support?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Not sure

i Do you feel that these conversations helped improve your ability to adapt to situations arising from changes to agricultural policy and support?

A Please explain if possible

P8. Closing questions

19 Are there any other areas in which being a member of the CSFF group has given you access to support and guidance that has been useful for your business? (please include topic, how it was covered and the help it provided you with)

20 In the future, would you like the collaborations established under CSFF to develop further and/or continue?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Don't know

21 Do you have any final comments relating to your involvement with a CSFF group? (For example, whether your membership has allowed you to prepare for changes in the sector?)

22 Do you have any final comments on the CSFF more generally? (For example, any improvements which could be made to CSFF?)

P9. Future engagement

23 As previously mentioned we are inviting respondents to participate in a more detailed telephone/online interview of 20-30 minutes. Is this something you would like to participate in?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

A Please provide your name and a valid email address: (Please note, this will ONLY be used to contact you for an interview - which you may decline should you change your mind)

P10. Survey complete

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey on resilience and wellbeing in CSFF groups.

If you would like further details or would like to withdraw from the survey,

Chris Short

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