



A guide to using Natural England resources in agriculture courses

www.naturalengland.org.uk



Introduction

Natural England provides a range of information and resources, among which there is valuable information that will be relevant to agriculture courses.

This guide is written for agriculture lecturers working in land-based colleges. It will help you to:

- Make the most of the work of Natural England.
- Describe the role of Natural England in Environmental Stewardship, Catchment Sensitive Farming and the Energy Crops Scheme.
- Access resources from the Natural England website.

The guide contains the following sections:

- **Natural England Overview** outlines the remit of Natural England.
- **Environmental Delivery Schemes** describes the main environmental delivery schemes which Natural England helps to manage including Environmental Stewardship, Catchment Sensitive Farming and the Energy Crops Scheme.
- **Other aspects of Natural England's work** looks at SSSIs, NNRs and the role of Natural England in implementing the Natural Environment White Paper and wildlife management and licensing.
- **Natural England resources** highlights some of the key publications that Natural England produce, and describes ways of accessing resources on the Natural England website.

Natural England Overview

Natural England is a government agency, responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Its remit is:

“To ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.”

Natural England was established by the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006* and brought together work earlier carried out by organisations including English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service.

Natural England’s work includes:

- managing the EU’s agri-environment schemes, in particular *Environmental Stewardship* but also, for example, *Catchment Sensitive Farming* and the *Energy Crops Scheme*
- designating National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Beauty and notifying Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- designating and advising on the management of National Nature Reserves, and having direct management responsibility for many
- conserving the natural environment and reducing the decline in biodiversity
- increasing opportunities for people to enjoy the natural world
- enforcing associated legislation such as wildlife management and licensing, heather and grass burning and the hedgerow regulations.

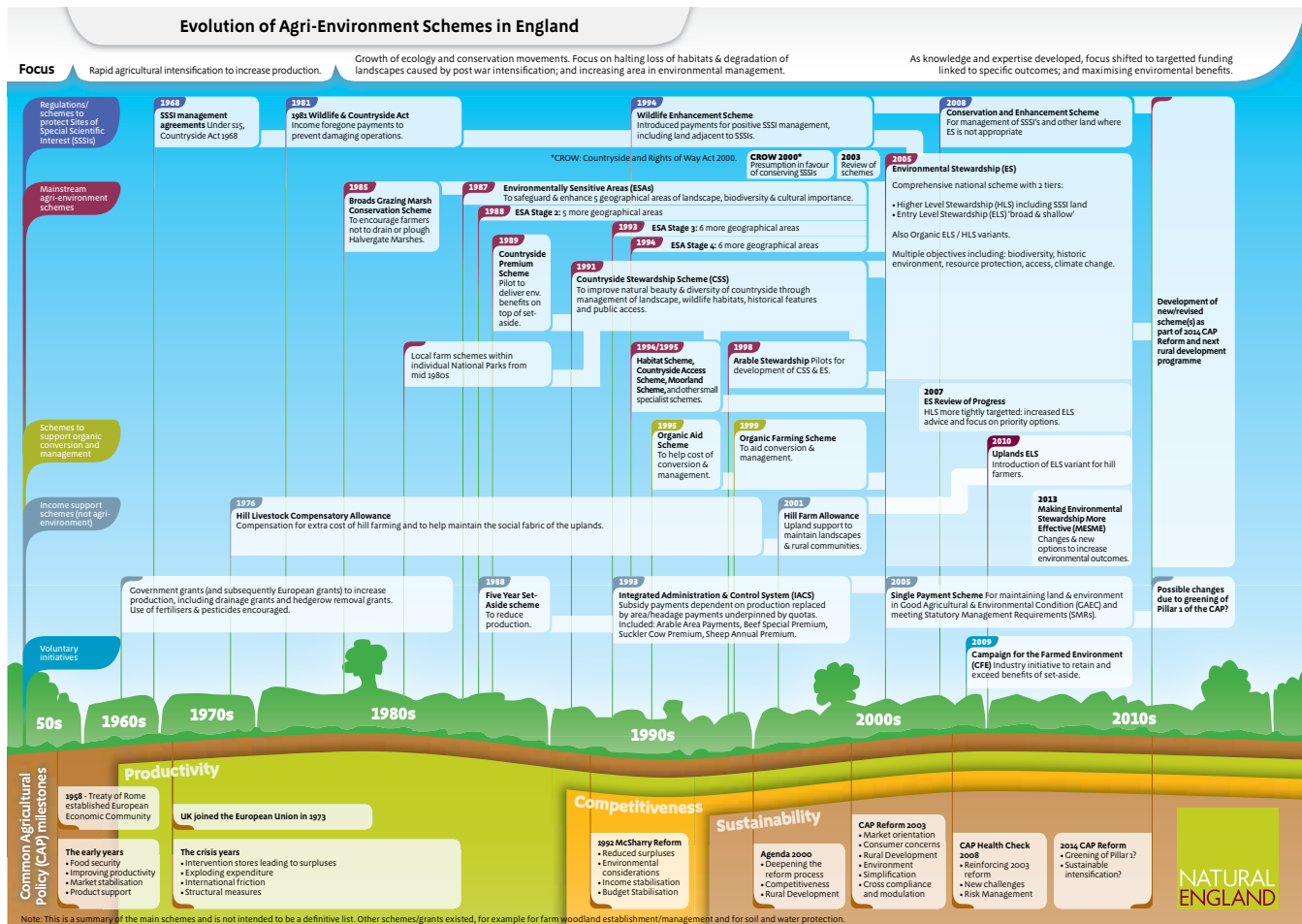
Natural England is committed to providing ‘practical advice, grounded in science’ and to do this conducts and commissions an extensive range of research projects.

Certain aspects of Natural England’s work have an important impact on farmers.

- They manage the agri-environment schemes which provide important sources of funding (see pages 4-7)
- They manage the Catchment Sensitive Farming Scheme which addresses water quality issues (see page 8)
- They provide advice and guidance on funding opportunities for farmers with Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and manage National Nature Reserves (NNRs) (see pages 9-11)
- They enforce certain legislation including wildlife licensing and help implement aspects of government policy such as the Natural Environment White Paper (see pages 11-12)
- They provide a range of valuable resources which may be relevant to agriculture lecturers and students (see pages 12-15)

Environmental Delivery Schemes – funding, training and advice

The agri-environment schemes have evolved over the last 25 years. They provide funding for farmers who manage their land in ways that improve the environment.



Natural England currently run several funding and training schemes, mostly aimed at farmers and land managers. These include Environmental Stewardship, Catchment Sensitive Farming capital works programme, the Conservation Enhancement Scheme for SSSIs and the Energy Crops Scheme.

The Natural England website has information on environmental delivery schemes at: www.naturalengland.org.uk/grantsfunding/findagrants/default.aspx

The Agri Environment Pages of the Natural England web site will be updated regularly with news for farmers about changes to agri environment schemes on offer due to CAP reforms. Policy news on CAP reform developments can be found at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/farm-manage/cap-reform/>

* This illustration is not available for commercial purposes.

Environmental Stewardship

Natural England provides information about the funding that is available for a range of farm habitat management options through **Environmental Stewardship**. The scheme builds on and replaces the earlier Environmental Sensitive Areas (ESA) Scheme and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS).

The objectives of Environmental Stewardship include:

- wildlife conservation (biodiversity)
- maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality and character, by helping to maintain important features, such as traditional field boundaries
- protection of the historic environment, including archaeological features and traditional farm buildings
- promotion of public access and understanding of the countryside
- natural resource protection – if ES is taken up across large areas of the countryside, it will help to improve water quality and to reduce soil erosion and surface run-off.

Environmental Stewardship has four strands:

- Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) is a points-based scheme that gives farmers a number of options for managing their land in an environmentally-sensitive way such as hedgerow management, ditch management and skylark plots.
- Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) is similar to ELS but targeted at organic farms.
- Uplands Entry Level Stewardship (UELS) is similar to ELS but targeted at hill farms.
- Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) supports individually tailored agreements including more complex types of land management, several of which involve restoring or creating habitats such as woodland, species-rich grassland and margins.



The latest handbooks for each strand are available from:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/45001>



Farmer standing in a farmland bird headland

HLS options

Examples of HLS management options include:

- Grassland management options such as *maintenance and restoration of traditional water meadows*, and for *maintenance, restoration and creation of species rich, semi-natural grassland, wet grassland for waders and wildfowl and other target features as well as enhanced strips for target species*
- Margins and headlands such as *floristically enhanced grass margins, enhanced wild bird seed mix plots, fallow plots for ground-nesting birds, unharvested, fertiliser-free conservation headlands, reduced herbicide cereal crop preceding overwintered stubble and cultivated fallow plots or margins for arable plants*
- *Specific fodder crops and low-input cereals*
- Other management options for woodland, heathland, moorland, ponds and wetland
- A range of items designed to support the management options or to have positive impacts in their own right on the environment – these are listed as capital items in the scheme handbooks and include *boundary restoration (hedges and walls), fencing, scrub management, orchard tree planting* and much more.



Farmers gathered around a pollen and nectar mix strip

Educational visits to farms

A number of farms offer educational access as one of their HLS options – and in some cases from the earlier Countryside Stewardship scheme.

Educational access allows the farm to be used as an 'outdoor learning resource to provide the opportunity to understand and experience the links between farming, conservation and food production'. Farmers receive a base payment of £500 from Natural England plus funding of £100 per visit, provided they host at least 4 visits per year. They are likely to have received some training on how to host educational visits. Visits will be offered free to attendees if the payments are being claimed from Natural England. If no payments are being claimed, then a site is able to charge visitors.

To find nearby farms which allow educational access on the Natural England website go to 'Our work' > 'Enjoying the natural environment' > 'Places to enjoy' > 'Access to farms' > 'Educational access'. Here you can search for farms in your county or region:

<http://cwr.naturalengland.org.uk/educational-access.aspx>

Note that the kind of access will depend on when the farmer joined the scheme. **HLS agreements signed after November 1st 2010** can offer free educational visits for:



Young people building a river dipping platform on a farm

- Schoolchildren up to the age of 16 – if you have schoolchildren in your group
- Care farming – if, for example, you have post-16 students with learning difficulties.
- Farms involved can only claim for between 4 and 25 visits per year.

HLS agreements signed before November 1st 2010 can include college and adult students as well and allow more than 25 educational visits per year. When you search for farm to visit, check the 'Access end date' – the agreement will have been signed 10 years before this date.

If you carry out a visit the farmer may ask you to complete a visit form to confirm that the visit has taken place. Note that an industry code of practice on preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact during visits is available from www.face-online.org.uk/CodeofPractice.

Catchment Sensitive Farming

Catchment Sensitive Farming is the main funding and advice mechanism to address the **Water Framework Directive 2000** – an EU directive which became part of UK law in 2003 through The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003. The Directive provides a framework for protecting lakes, streams and rivers and estuaries as well as aquifers and coastal waters.

The Catchment Sensitive Farming scheme aims to reduce agricultural pollution of rivers, groundwater and other aquatic habitats. It is run in partnership by Natural England, Defra and the Environment Agency. It operates in priority river catchments that cover almost half the agricultural land in England.

You can download a map of the priority catchments from:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/csf/cgs/catchments.aspx

Assistance takes two forms:

- Capital grants of up to £10,000 for eg roofing over manure or slurry stores
- Training, information and advice.

A network of Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers provide training, information and advice and help farmers to apply for grants. You can find a list of the officers at:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/csf/contacts.aspx

Natural England provides a number of publications about the scheme including *A guide to Catchment Sensitive Farming* and *Working towards Catchment Sensitive Farming*. These are available from the catalogue at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/45002>

The Energy Crops Scheme

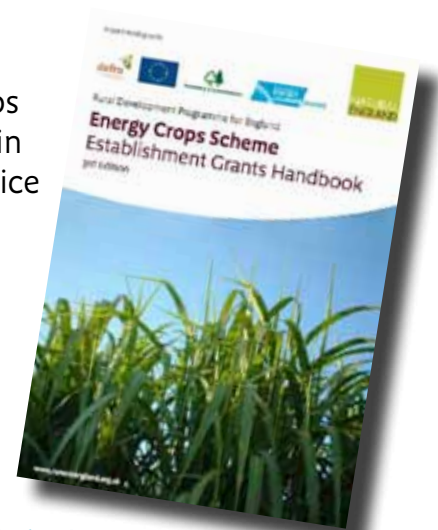
The Energy Crops Scheme aims to increase the amount of energy crops grown in England in appropriate locations. It offers grants to farmers in England for the establishment of miscanthus and short rotation coppice for their own energy use or to supply power stations.

Natural England provides a number of publications about the scheme including the *Energy Crops Scheme Establishment Grants Handbook*. These are available from the catalogue at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/43017>

Application forms and other documents are available from:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/ecs/default.aspx>



Other aspects of Natural England's work

Natural England notify Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and manage 144 National Nature Reserves (NNRs).

They are also involved in wildlife management and licensing and in implementing the Natural Environment White Paper.

SSSIs

Many SSSIs are on farms, so it's important that farmers know what their responsibilities are and how to make the best use of SSSIs on their land. Natural England provides a network of Land Management Advisors who advise farmers about management practices, sources of funding, and activities that might damage the site.

The website has guidance about how to find out whether land is designated as an SSSI, and how to give notice of activities that require Natural England's consent. See:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/information_for/sssi_owners_and_occupiers/default.aspx

Natural England also provides publications including *Sites of Special Scientific Interest: a brief guide for land owners and occupiers* and *SSSI condition assessment: a guide for owners and occupiers*. These are in the publications catalogue at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk> (Select Publications and products for > SSSI owners and managers).

Natural England manages the Conservation Enhancement Scheme which is primarily targeted at SSSIs. Under this scheme Natural England may approach land owners and offer funding to help with the costs of managing land of outstanding scientific interest to maintain it in favourable condition.

www.naturalengland.org.uk/grantsfunding/findagrant/conservationandenhancementscheme.aspx

NNRs

There are 222 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in England. Natural England directly manage 144 of them, which gives the organisation extensive experience of nature conservation management. There is a long history of offering research opportunities and other student placements. Natural England is keen to work with land-based colleges to enable NNRs, where appropriate, to be used for the purposes of study, in particular field visits, research or work placements.

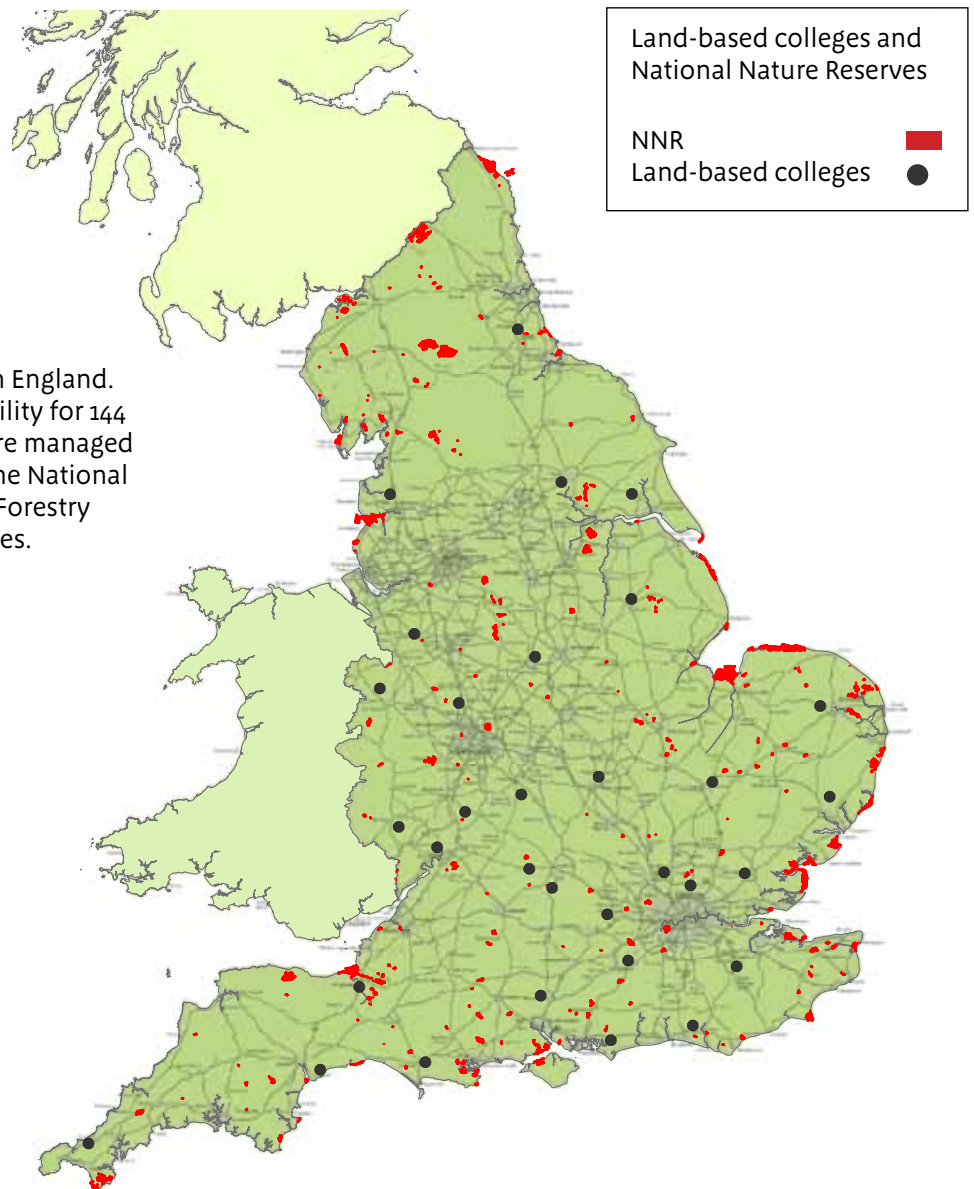
The NNR series represents the best examples of habitats across England, and all are also designated as SSSIs. Many are owned by Natural England, but others are leased or managed under an agreement. Reserve staff work closely with neighbouring farmers, graziers and other licencees, local communities and statutory and voluntary organisations to deliver a range of environmental outcomes on their reserves.

Field visits and work placements

NNRs can provide a practical resource for teaching course content – for example Newton Rigg College has been able to organise field visits for agriculture students to Moorhouse - Upper Teesdale NNR to study 'conservation management planning, habitat creation, restoration and maintenance'. The session started with a presentation delivered by the NNR Reserve Manager on how the NNR is managed in partnership with the relevant Estates and local farmers followed by a site visit to look at vegetation management of upland pasture for different kinds of birds and rare plants and an area of fell with stock exclusion and tree planting.

There may also be opportunities for work placements: for further information, contact the NNR direct.

NNRs and Land Based Colleges in England



The map displays all the NNRs in England. Natural England have responsibility for 144 of the reserves, the remainder are managed by approved bodies including the National Trust, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts, Forestry Commission and Local Authorities.

Land Based Colleges data provided by the Land Based Colleges National Consortium
Map Reference: 110463 © Crown copyright and database rights 2012 Ordnance Survey 100022021.

Contacting Natural England NNR staff

To find nearby NNRs on the Natural England website navigate to 'Countryside visitors' and then to 'Visit a National Nature Reserve (NNR)'. From here you can choose your region and browse your local NNRs, which will in many cases include a contact telephone number.

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/nnr

There are leaflets about many of the NNRs in the publications catalogue at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk>

(Select Publications and products for > Countryside visitors)

Wildlife management and licensing

In wildlife management and licensing Natural England has three main roles:

- Providing advice on wildlife management
- Issuing licences, for example to survey, kill or damage the habitat of certain protected species.
- Assisting with enforcement and inspection, especially where a licence or permit is breached.
Natural England is also the first point of contact for a member of the public wishing to report suspected poisoning of wildlife.

There are advisory leaflets at:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/advice/advisoryleaflets.aspx

Licence application forms are available from:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/licences/applicationforms.aspx

Implementing the Natural Environment White Paper

Published in June 2011, *The Natural Choice – securing the value of nature* sets out Defra's vision and 92 government commitments for safeguarding the natural environment and strengthening the connections between people and nature.

Key reforms for **Protecting and improving the natural environment** include:

- Supporting **Local Nature Partnerships** to strengthen local action. Local partnerships will engage and win the support of local people, influence local decisions and develop a local vision and priorities. If you follow the links from the website you can find a list of the successful applicants:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/grantsfunding/findagrants/default.aspx



- New **Nature Improvement Areas**, in response to the recommendations set out in *Making Space for Nature*. NIAs aim to restore and connect nature on a significant scale and are established by partnerships of local authorities, local communities and landowners and conservation organisations. A list of the 12 designated NIAs is available on the website, with details of the work they are doing, and contact details:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/funding/nia/projects/default.aspx

The white paper also proposes reforms for **Reconnecting people and nature** including action to get more children learning outdoors, 'removing barriers and increasing schools' abilities to teach outdoors'; **Growing a green economy**; and **International and EU leadership**.

Natural England resources

Natural England produces a wide range of publications and products:

- **General Publications** include handbooks and general interest publications as well as Annual Reports, etc.
- **Natural England Research Reports** detail research carried out by Natural England staff.
- **Natural England Commissioned Reports** (Technical reports) describe research commissioned by Natural England but carried out by other researchers.
- **Natural England Technical Information Notes** provide advice and information which may be targeted at specific audiences (eg farmers, advisers) or may summarise research findings.
- In addition they make available **Joint Publications** as well as **Pre Natural England Publications** from English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service.

Using the Natural England website

You can access resources on the Natural England website, via the **Publication and products** section of the website at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk>

Here you have four possible routes:

- **Publications and products about...** which organises resources by topic
- **Publications and products for...** which organises resources by audience
- **Publications by series** such as Natural England research reports or Natural England information notes
- Search the catalogue using the box in the top right-hand corner.

Publications and products about...

[Publications, maps and data](#) > [Publications](#) > [Publications and products catalogue](#) > [Publications and products about](#)

Navigating to this page will give you a range of topics such as:

- **Farming and land management** will take you to a further menu with a range of topics including agriculture and food production, Environmental Stewardship and other agri-environment schemes, and resource protection.
- **Landscape, geodiversity and earth** will take you to publications about soils, landscapes and natural areas.
- **Natural England** will take you to the organisation's annual reports, plans and reviews
- **Species** will take you to publications about individual species of birds, mammals, etc.
- **Wildlife management and licensing** will take you to publications about management and control of bird and mammal species including rodents, foxes, etc.

Publications and products for...

[Publications, maps and data](#) > [Publications](#) > [Publications and products catalogue](#) > [Publications and products for](#)

You can also browse the publications and products catalogue by audience. The most useful option is likely to be:

- **Farmers and land managers** – this section brings together resources on agriculture and food, Environmental Stewardship, Catchment Sensitive Farming, protecting soil and water, managing wildlife, and renewable energy and energy crops.
- **SSSI owners and occupiers** – this brings together relevant publications about SSSIs.

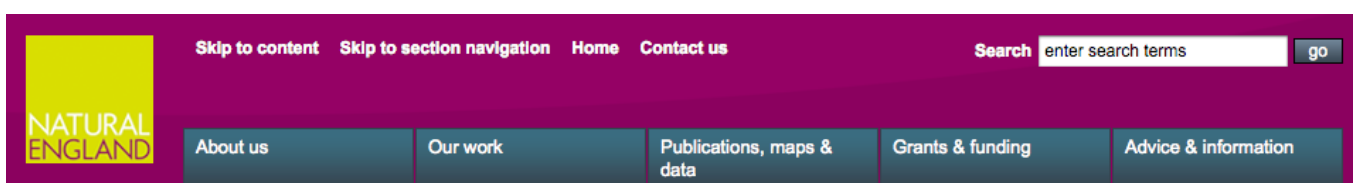
Publications by series

[Publications, maps and data](#) > [Publications](#) > [Publications and products catalogue](#) > [Publications by series](#)

You can also browse the publications and products catalogue by series such as: General Publications, Natural England Research Reports or Natural England Technical Information Notes.

Search for publications and products

You can also search the catalogue using the search box in the top right corner of the web site.



You can use this to search for publication titles or codes, or specific topics.

Publications relevant to agriculture courses

A number of these resources may be relevant to agriculture courses, including:

Agri-environment schemes

- For **environmental stewardship** the website includes the *Environmental Stewardship handbooks* as well as other guides and leaflets including *Farming for farm wildlife* (NE231 – also leaflets on birds, the historic environment and uplands). *Farming with nature: agri-environment schemes in England 2009* (NE223) describes the schemes and the outcomes they have delivered.

(Publications and products for > Farmers and land managers > Environmental stewardship)

- For **catchment sensitive farming** see *A guide to catchment sensitive farming* (CSF017) and the *CSF capital grant scheme farmer handbook* (NE319).

(Publications and products for > Farmers and land managers > Catchment sensitive farming)

- For the **energy crops scheme** see *Energy crops scheme: establishment grants handbook* (NE125).

(Publications and products for > Farmers and land managers > Renewable energy and energy crops)

Agriculture and the environment

- Publications on the impact of agriculture on the environment include *Environmental impacts of land management* (NERR030), *Integrated farming and biodiversity* (ENRR634). There are also **Technical Information Notes** on protecting water from agricultural run-off.

(Publications and products about > Farming and land management > Environmental land management)

- There are also publications about *Farming for cleaner water and healthier soil* (NE230) as well as **Technical Information Notes** on protecting water from agricultural run-off.

(Publications and products about > Farming and land management > Soil, water and protecting these resources)

- Publications on the impact of farming on climate change include *Farming and climate change* (NE308), *Carbon management by land and marine managers* (NERR026). There are also some case studies in the **Technical Information Notes** series.

Publications and products for > Farmers and land managers > Carbon management and climate change)

- Publications on sustainable farming include *A strategy for sustainable land management in England* (CA64), *The nature of food: why good food doesn't have to cost the Earth* (NE200) and *Eat the view: Promoting sustainable local products* (CA112)

(Publications and products about > Farming and land management > Agriculture and food production)

Soils

- A series of **Technical Information Notes** cover soil texture, soil sampling, and interpreting soil analysis. There are *Agricultural land classification maps* for each region.

(Publications and products about > Landscape, geodiversity and earth > Soils and soil protection)

Managing farm habitats

- A wide range of **Technical Information Notes** cover topics such as arable reversion to species-rich grassland, sward enhancement, use of lime and fertiliser, nectar flower mixtures, agricultural run-off, as well as managing wildlife such as rats, rabbits, moles and badgers. **Illustrated guides** give guidance on farming for wildlife eg hedgerows, woodland, ponds, grassland or rare plants on arable land.

(Publications and products for > Farmers and land managers > Environmental management, restoration and creation)

- A number of **Technical Information Notes** focus on arable habitats including *Arable reversion to species rich grassland* and *The conservation management of arable field margins*.

(Publications and products about > Terrestrial habitats > Arable)

- A number of publications give guidance on hedgerow restoration and management.

(Publications and products about > Terrestrial habitats > Hedgerows)

- There are also publications about other habitats including grassland, wetland, heathland and woodland.

(Publications and products about > Terrestrial habitats)

Wildlife management and pest control

- A number of **Technical Information Notes** cover **species** such as rats, mice, moles, rabbits, foxes and badgers. See, for example, *House mice: options for management and control* (TINo34) or *Moles: options for management and control* (TINo33).

(Publications and products about > Wildlife management and licensing)

Working with SSSIs

- Publications include *Sites of Special Scientific Interest: a brief guide for land owners and occupiers* and *SSSI condition assessment: a guide for owners and occupiers*.

(Publications and products for > SSSI owners and occupiers)

Front cover image: The Peak District National Park

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Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

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www.naturalengland.org.uk



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