



CHILTERN'S
CONSERVATION BOARD



HERITAGE
FUND

Nature's recovery farmers leading the way

A case study of the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster

What's broken?

Wildlife populations in the Central Chilterns have declined and the natural environment has been degraded. A lack of joined-up, long-term land management planning and support on the ground have helped to accelerate this change, resulting in large parcels of valuable habitat becoming broken into smaller fragments, disconnected from each other.

Farmers say that:


- Being blamed for declines in wildlife is hugely demotivating
- Agri-environment schemes have just not been working for them so they don't engage
- They often don't feel supported or valued by conservation organisations
 - There has been insufficient conversation, motivation and support for farmers to work together with conservation organisation
 - The support that is available is disjointed, sporadic and not focused on farmer's aspirations for their land and businesses
 - The support available is remote, with limited opportunities to build lasting relationships, provide real inspiration for change or have a little fun along the way

- There are few reasons to actually get together, have a beer, work up ideas and deliver things together.

Many farmers ask questions such as:

- How do I balance wildlife and what my business needs?
- What wildlife is on my farm, what does it need and how can I plan it into the way we farm?
- Where can I get professional advice and ideas?
- Where can I go to get my ideas funded?
- How can I find the time or expertise to turn my ideas in action and deliver meaningful projects?
- How do I find out what my neighbouring farmers are doing and work together to join our ideas up?
- How do I know if what I am doing is working? Do we have any more birds, butterflies and plants living on our farm?
- Is there help to monitor, recognise success and celebrate what we achieve?





“Before the Central Chilterns Farm Cluster was established, take-up of Countryside Stewardship in the Chilterns was very low - conservation projects had come and gone and we didn't have a way of helping our farmers understand the wildlife on their farms and how best to look after it. Other farmer clusters are doing great work by providing training through Natural England's Facilitation Fund. We also want to do more and find ways to really excite, engage and enthuse our farmers. We therefore set out to offer the end to end support needed to deliver projects and to help farmers collaborate to achieve environmental improvements on their farms.”

Kath Daly, Countryside Officer, Chilterns Conservation Board

What could the future look like?



Motivated farmers:

- Say how proud they are about the habitat they have created and tell a story about wildlife thriving on their farms to whoever will listen!
- Now have and recognise fantastic wildlife including breeding farmland birds, more butterflies, pollinators and more diverse grassland and arable field margins
- Lead their own workshops for others on how to manage their farms for wildlife
- Look forward to the cluster meetings where they get to know other farmers and share ideas.

Showcasing farming's role in Nature's Recovery:

- Farmers share stories about how they have worked together to connect their hedgerows, field margins and woodland and how they have better managed chalk grassland and semi improved grassland
- Springwatch 2030 is filmed from a single Chilterns farm showcasing the thriving farmland wildlife.

Scale of delivery:

- Hundreds of miles of field margins and hedgerow are planted and better managed along with woodland and grassland
- High levels of engagement with Environmental Land Management (ELM) so furthering progress towards the aims set out in the government's 25 Year Environment Plan for environmental improvement
- Every farmer in the Chilterns has access to a fully supported Farmer Cluster
- AONBs report on the impact they have made by rolling out similar projects rolled out across all protected landscapes to help nature's recovery.

Increased investment:

- Farmers access a wide range of funding to help support their farms and to deliver wildlife, carbon and sustainability projects.

Changing the landscape of farming:

- Farmers report how their yields have increased and farms become more profitable with better quality soils

and an increase in carbon sequestration

- Farmers report on how working with wildlife has helped their businesses and how much more they have enjoyed farming since being members of a Cluster group.

Better partnership working:

- All conservation organisations report how they have developed genuine partnership approaches to supporting farmers
- Farmers say what a difference ecologists and volunteers have made to their farms and how they respect them and welcome them onto their farms.

Farmers sit back and say 'we have created more, bigger, better and better connected habitats and landscapes; we made that happen and it all started with a pie and a pint on a cold wet, February evening...'



“The Chilterns landscape provides a unique setting for my farm. I love hearing birds singing in my hedges, seeing the fritillaries flying in my field margins and my orchids coming into flower.

Farming in the Chilterns is a huge honour, but with this comes a significant responsibility to play my part to help our local wildlife to thrive.

Farmers are being asked to do more to look after our wildlife, soils and water as well as reduce our carbon footprint. For many of us this is daunting; my farming neighbours know how to produce food but struggle to know where to start on these new challenges.

The cluster has really helped us better understand the wildlife on our farms and how we can help it to thrive; we have a support team we trust and the resources on offer are invaluable, getting expert advice, help designing projects, accessing funding and ongoing monitoring.

The power of the cluster really comes through opportunities to work together on projects at scale. We each form a small part of the wider Chilterns jigsaw and by working together are making a big impact.

I hope that in the future every farmer in the Chilterns has access to a similar support package. What a difference that would make.”

Ian Waller, Chair of the Central Chilterns Farm Cluster and LEAF Demonstration Farmer



What is the Central Chilterns farmer cluster?

Yellowhammer, one of a number of Chilterns farmland birds the Farmer Cluster is working together to support

Ownership: Our 18 farmers are passionate people who, with the right support, can drive change for wildlife whilst improving their businesses.

Engage, excite, enthuse: The cluster has found ways to engage, excite and enthuse farmers and to help them better understand and care about the wildlife on their farms. Farmers have been supported to help make informed decisions about how to benefit wildlife and the wider environment and to celebrate success together.

End-to-end support: Farmers are offered support to see things through, from initial idea to complete delivery in collaboration with the Chilterns Conservation Board and over 50 partners, specialists and suppliers.

Hands-on help: Practical help starts with lots of time on farms, getting to know the farmers and their aspirations before helping to support delivery. Help ranges from initial advice or visits to better understand the farm and can lead to carrying out surveys, securing funding, completing forms, weighing up options, planning work, engaging contractors and identifying suppliers. Support also includes introducing skilled volunteers and experts who can help with long term monitoring to capture the difference our farmers' work has made.

People and relationships: Farmers don't want advisors who are just interested in one rare species, a patch of special habitat they spotted when poring over maps of their farms or their own organisational priorities; support for the Central Chilterns farmer cluster focusses on the whole farm. Farmers don't want lots of advisors all arriving at the farm gate so the farmer cluster helps organise the right people at the right time when farmers are ready.

Making things happen and getting results: The first step is often to get on with simple changes that don't take long or cost a lot of money but that farmers are interested in. Seeing real results from simple ideas makes a massive difference.

Not a flash in the pan - Sustained grant funding over five years from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster has enabled a more adaptive and long-term approach that provides a full range of advice and hands-on support for farmers.

“We're seeing loads of birds as well, such a good feeling. Also had neighbours and walkers along the footpath noticing a big difference on the farm”

Adam Penny, Farmer



Real focus on exciting, engaging and enthusing farmers - their farms and their wildlife



Celebrate the wildlife on their farms and help to understand what's about



Getting stuff done and keeping things going



End-to-end support package from initial ideas to delivery to monitoring



Having time to get to know farmers and their farms - muddy boots not maps and emails



Opens the door to expert and volunteer help



Developing projects collaboratively and challenging engagement across cluster



A single point of contact to filter and funnel information



Fun, banter, competitive, engaging, WhatsApp not emails

As a farmer, how is the approach **different?**

Our cluster has ...

Opened my mind...to the wildlife that calls my farm home and how important my farm is

Made me laugh...with other farmers I didn't know that well before

Challenged me...to do my bit for wildlife and think what else might I be able to do

Reassured me...seeing Nick and Harriet a lot on the farm or on the end of a phone

Supported me...to design and deliver projects on my farm I wouldn't have done before

Got me started...with lots of simple projects and given me the kit and advice on how to do them

Encouraged me...with loads of passionate and skilled volunteers helping me see the impact of what I am doing

Set me up...detailed long term plans for my farm I can work on and get funded

Informed me...experts giving me the advice I need when I need it

Nudged me...with a bit of friendly competition with my neighbours

Helped me...find suppliers, get hold of equipment and engage contractors

Open my eyes...to the bigger picture and changes to how farming is supported

Helped me...to stop and take notice of wildlife on my farm

But it hasn't...

...patronised me

...been dry and boring

...blamed me for anything or told me everything I am doing is wrong

...bombarded me with lots of requests or complicated things

...said no to ideas or ignored our concerns

...rushed me to do things I am not ready to do or forced me to enter schemes I'm not comfortable with

...told me what I must do

...made me stop farming the way I do

...made me fill in lots of forms

...let me sit back and do nothing

...left me with no idea on what to do next

...made me feel like I am on my own

...left me with no idea if what I am doing is working

“Must have seen a thousand small birds out there on the seed today. I've never seen numbers like that before”

David Knight, Farmer



“This evening’s dusk saw a wonderful display of bats at Promised Land. You could even hear their wing beats when they flew close.”

Elizabeth Turner, Farmer

“Knowing that ELM is going to be introduced in the next few years we wanted to make sure the cluster offered us a leg up, help us adapt to change and be comfortable with issues such as carbon sequestration and soil health. We want this approach to put us at the forefront of conservation in the coming years and make the most of opportunities to do more.”

Ian Waller, Chair of the Central Chilterns Farm Cluster and LEAF Demonstration Farmer

Keeping birds going through the hungry gap with supplementary feed helps them start the breeding season in better condition.

Our journey so far...



Autumn 2018

- Gather insight, lots of conversations and farm walks identifying issues and establish what's not working with the status quo
- Develop a support package for the Central Chilterns and looking at other examples for inspiration
- Apply for funding as part of a National Lottery Heritage Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme

Winter 2018/19

- Inaugural farmer cluster meeting at The Gate pub in Bryants Bottom
- 10 farmers join the group
- First winter surveys for farmland birds by the team of 15 volunteers as part of GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count
- Workshop with Bucks Owl & Raptor Group (BORG) – Cluster members agree owl box installation and monitoring project

Spring 2019

- National Lottery Heritage Funding confirmed
- Cluster session with the Marlborough Downs Farmer Cluster
- Word spreads and cluster membership grows to 16 farmers
- Farmers discuss and agree key objectives:
 - Better understand wildlife on farms
 - Collaborate and work together
 - See group as a leg up to adapt to future change

Summer 2019

- Getting first Whole Farm Plan written and new Countryside Stewardship agreement for Old Callowdown Farm
- Phase 1 roll out of owl box installations
- First spring farm bird surveys completed by the specialist volunteer team
- Hedgerow management workshop held at Hampden Bottom Farm

Autumn 2019

- Farmland bird management session held and bird survey results discussed
- Farmers agree a supplementary feeding and bird ringing project
- Cluster membership grows to 18 farmers covering 6,500 hectares





Winter 2019

- Supplementary feeding project is rolled out on all 18 farms
- Second year of winter farm bird surveys are undertaken
- Phase 2 owl box project roll out
- First winter farmland bird ringing project introduced on three farms
- Pollinator workshop held and farmers accept the challenge to plant 3.1km of new field margins

Spring 2020

- 3.1km pollinator margin challenge project starts
- Farm signage project agreed by farmers
- Major new capital works contracts for chalk grassland scrub management, hedgerow planting, stock fencing, hedge laying, new stock pen and grassland creation let

Summer 2020

- Now actively delivering specific projects on eight farms
- New farm signs designed, printed and installed on all 18 farms
- First year of owl box monitoring and ringing



Autumn 2020

- Whole Farm Planning for wildlife workshop delivered
- Farmers discuss and agree Whole Farm Plan and carbon self-assessment projects
- 20 Longworth traps and scales bought to support new Small Mammal survey project in partnership with the Buckinghamshire Mammal Group
- 400 reptile refugia donated by Atkins Global to support new Amphibian/ Reptile survey project in partnership with BMERC

Winter 2020/21

- Whole Farm Plans commissioned across all 18 farms
- Funding secured for a new cluster-wide carbon self assessment project from Rothschild Foundation
- Second year of supplementary feeding rolled out and 36 species recorded on feeder counts
- Owl box installations phase 3. 52 boxes now made and installed by volunteers
- Third year of winter farm bird surveys by volunteers who have walked 175 km to date!
- Bird ringing continues with Hughenden Ringing Group, now five farms and 339 birds ringed including 19 Corn Bunting and 93 Yellowhammer
- Small mammal and amphibian/ reptile survey project agreed by farmers across 18 farms

What does farmer-led mean?

A great chair - led by a farmer who knows the group, cares passionately about wildlife, has great vision, is very well respected, knows the local patch, has lots engagement outside meetings and makes sure the cluster stays on track and is fun

Farmers make the decisions - supported by expert advice delivered on their farm by the Chilterns Conservation Board, over 50 partners and many skilled volunteers

Pie and pint meetings - time for 'banter and a beer' with time to relax and discuss ideas over a beer

WhatsApp not email - communication is informal, little and often and contains important info but also images, updates, farmers sharing little victories, wildlife sightings and lots of light-hearted banter

Some friendly competition - prizes, pride and recognition for what's been achieved from number of survey records to species found on their farms

Working together - on small scale projects, easy-to-deliver, lots of reasons to do things and to work together for a bigger impact.



A farm-wide advisory package at Penn Street Farm

Farmer Will Lee is keen to establish a long-term ecological and business plan for his farm and to support wider plans for the estate looking at farming, soils, wildlife, woodland and landscape.

The Chilterns Conservation Board has commissioned a package of expert advice to help Will:

- o Produce a farm-wide hedgerow plan including options for new hedgerow trees
- o Consider how to manage a network of farm ponds
- o Complete a farm-wide carbon self-assessment audit
- o Create a Whole Farm Plan to set out options for a new Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

“Farming will change dramatically in the next couple of years and I want to make sure we are well-placed to adapt. Getting a range of expertise and advice through the Cluster is really helping me to understand what can be done and how it might work best for us, as well as our wildlife.”

Will Lee



The glue that holds it together

The Chilterns Conservation Board's remit to enhance and conserve the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty places it in a perfect position to support the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster.

The flexibility of the funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership has given a real energy and focus to the cluster and has been a great catalyst to get work up and running.

“In the Chilterns and across the UK our wildlife is under immense pressure and we know that urgent action must be taken to reverse nature's decline. The independent Landscapes Review, published in September 2019, set out how protected landscapes have a key role in delivering Nature Recovery Networks - beautiful, wildlife-rich and accessible landscapes that provide benefits for the environment, people and communities.

We are embracing this approach by working in partnership with farmers and landowners. Our work with the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster is already showing how - just two years into a five-year National Lottery Heritage Fund supported project - farmers can deliver huge impact, with multiple benefits, on a landscape scale, when provided with effective funding and support.”

Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive,
Chilterns Conservation Board



Harriet Bennett, Land Management Officer, Chalk Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership



Nick Marriner, Landowner Engagement Officer, Chalk Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership

Between them, Harriet and Nick work to support the cluster by:

- Connecting farmers at cluster meetings, organising speakers, keeping communications flowing
- Being the face at the farm gate to provide 1:1 support for farmers on a range of issues including permissions for works, buying materials, letting contracts, and hands on management of contractors
- Recruiting volunteers, setting up surveys, sharing results and helping interpret findings
- Delivering collaborative projects with partners and commissioning professional advice
- Setting-up baseline habitat condition surveys
- Working with partners such as Chiltern Rangers to recruit volunteers and organise work parties to provide help with practical tasks
- Applying for and securing additional funding including helping with Countryside Stewardship applications
- Promoting and celebrating the work of the cluster to a wider audience via social media, newsletters, partners blogs, community presentations, walks and talks
- Making sure farmers' views are heard in wider strategic work such as Defra's Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot.

Restoring hedgerows at Promised Land Farm

As part of the cluster, farmer Deborah Bartlett has been focussing on a farm-wide hedgerow restoration project including:

- Hedgerow condition survey and management report which identified many hedges in need of management, protection from cattle and identifying new ways of connecting hedgerows
- Chilterns Conservation Board provided funding and worked-up a plan with Deborah, drew-up tender documents and then let contracts for planting, fencing, and coppicing including:
 - o 170m gapping-up existing hedgerow
 - o Coppicing of 1,565m hedgerow
 - o Installing 2,550m new stock fencing to protect hedgerows.

Neighbouring farms to Promised Land have hedgerows in good condition so the project is providing much needed wider landscape-scale habitat connectivity.

“ We are a very small farm and wouldn't know where to start in working out what's best for our hedges. I would never have found the time or money to develop the project so thanks Harriet and CCC for making this happen. It will be great for our wildlife and for our farm. ”

Deborah Bartlett

Cluster chair, Ian Waller taking time out to share the cluster's work with Marian Spain, Chief Executive Officer, Natural England.



What results are we seeing?

18 farmers
engaged across **6,500 hectares**



Supported by **50 experts**, specialists and contractors working together

3.1km of pollinator margins created

£3.71 additional spend on Nature's Recovery triggered by every £1 invested*

18 Whole Farm Plans written

101 days of volunteer time, equivalent to over £15,000 in kind support



52 owl boxes made and installed by volunteers at BORG

30 active volunteers supporting monitoring

Landscape-scale conservation planned, delivered & monitored

286 species recorded on botanical surveys of arable reversion chalk grassland and arable margins on one farm



400 reptile refugia donated by Atkins Global and many recycled from Cluster farms as part of survey project in partnership with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Record Centre



20 Longworth traps purchased

for small mammal surveys with Bucks Mammal Group



23 tonnes of supplementary food provided for farmland birds via 51 Perdex feeders

50 GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count visits, 175 miles walked and 86 species recorded

Coordinate engagement across local conservation organisations, specialist interest groups and experts

339 birds ringed with Hughenden Ringing Group



More than **600 Skylark** recorded on one farm

Over **20,000 new hedge whips planted** along 4,000m of new hedgerow

1,565m of hedgerow coppiced

3,440m of new fencing to manage stock and protect habitats

33.5 hectares of chalk grassland managed

4.4 hectares of flower-rich meadow created

4.6 hectares of planting to provide winter birds with food



*estimated

Supporting Old Callowdown Farm into Countryside Stewardship

Landowner Eleanor Cave approached the Chilterns Conservation Board and joined the cluster to get help and advice on how best to manage the farm - and its Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Lodge Hill - for wildlife. Working in partnership with Natural England and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre (BMERC), the Chilterns Conservation Board commissioned SSSI and whole farm management plans, resulting in a successful Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship agreement starting at the beginning of 2020.

Key highlights:

- 1,700m hedge planting, laying and management
- 33.5ha restoration of grassland
- 1.6ha new flower-rich pollinator margin
- 4.1ha winter bird food margin planted
- Delivery of SSSI chalk grassland management plan:
 - o 8 weeks of scrub clearance
 - o Installation of new water piping and cattle drinking troughs
 - o New stock fencing
 - o New stock handling pen
 - o Introduction of cattle grazing from spring 2021
 - o Baseline habitat assessment in place

“We were excited when we bought the farm but we only realised what a really special place it was once we properly got to know it. Getting into Countryside Stewardship and managing a SSSI felt daunting but having a team of experts hold my hand through the process has made a huge difference. I can't believe what we have achieved.”

Eleanor Cave



The Farmer Cluster has also been supported by a ground-breaking new partnership between the Chilterns Conservation Board and Chiltern Rangers looking to engage new and under-represented audiences with conservation as part of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership. Cluster farmers have welcomed volunteer work parties from local community groups from High Wycombe and across the central Chilterns to carry out hedgerow planting, wildlife surveys, tree planting and supporting the new reptile surveying project.

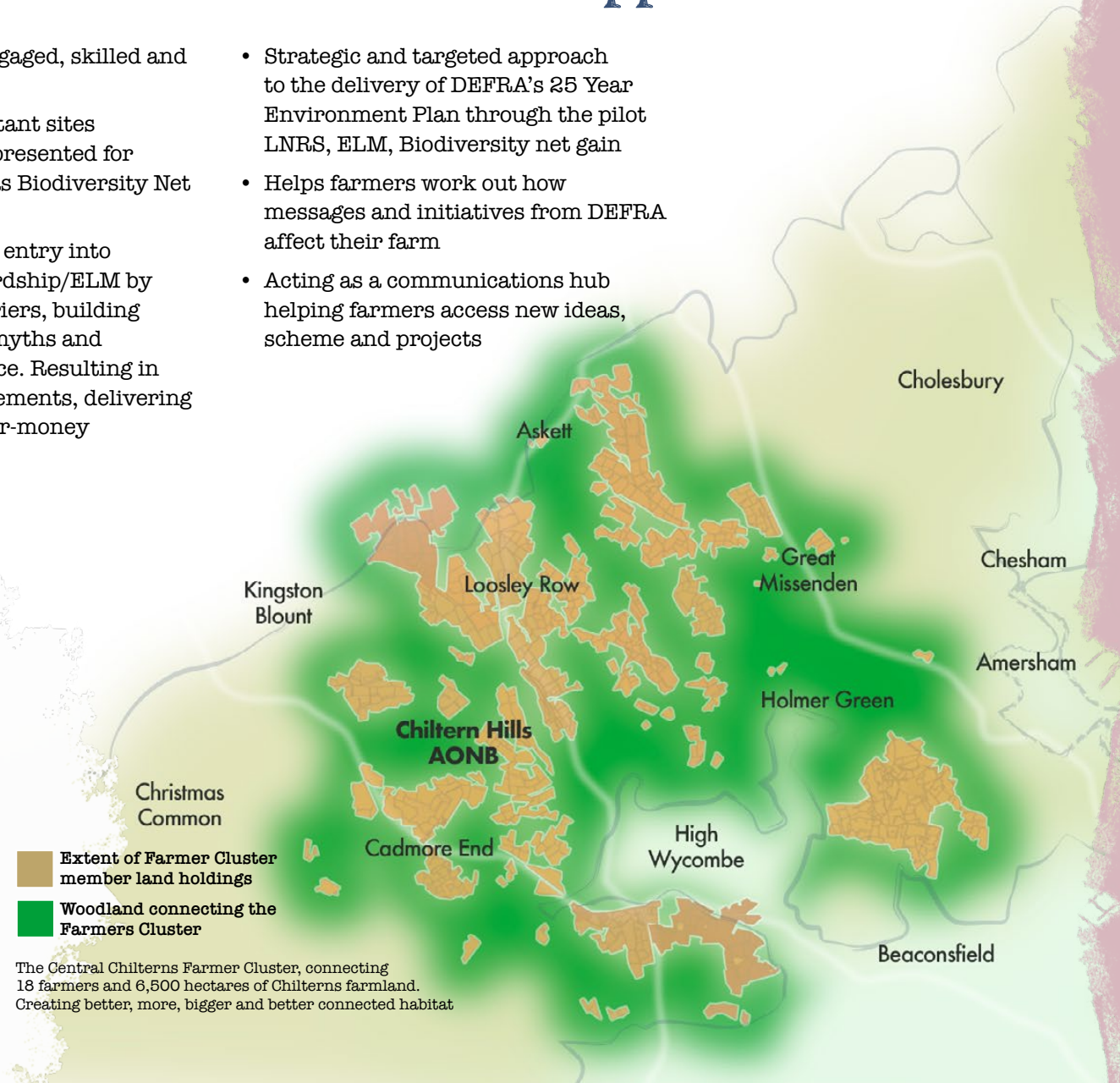
The conservation sector and DEFRA –

what's the **benefit** of this approach?

- Nature recovery work on farms in the cluster complements and joins fragmented Nature Reserves and SSSIs across Buckinghamshire's landscape
- Working at scale and connecting work with a farmland focus for the pilot Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Brokering relationships and engagement between NGOs and farmers
- A better monitored landscape – to support impact tracking and more records, new hot spots for species, populations and territories better understood
- More volunteers engaged, skilled and motivated
- Strategically important sites and projects being presented for programmes such as Biodiversity Net Gain
- Greater uptake and entry into Countryside Stewardship/ELM by breaking down barriers, building bridges, dispelling myths and rebuilding confidence. Resulting in higher quality agreements, delivering impact and value-for-money
- Strategic and targeted approach to the delivery of DEFRA's 25 Year Environment Plan through the pilot LNRS, ELM, Biodiversity net gain
- Helps farmers work out how messages and initiatives from DEFRA affect their farm
- Acting as a communications hub helping farmers access new ideas, scheme and projects

“It was fantastic to visit one of the cluster farms to announce Buckinghamshire's selection as one of just 5 pilot areas chosen by DEFRA for the development of new Local Nature Recovery Strategies and to showcase the great work of the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster. We are looking at innovative ways in which we can learn from trailblazing work like the Cluster's bottom-up engagement with, and support for, its farmers to help trigger nature's recovery.”

David Sutherland, Head of Climate Change and Environment Planning, Growth and Sustainability, Buckinghamshire Council



Surveying uncovers a hidden gem at Manor Farm, Bradenham

Farmer, Andrew Stubbings, has worked with the Chilterns Conservation Board on a package of surveying and practical works which have uncovered an incredibly surprising biodiverse farm:

- A botanical survey highlighted one of the largest and best examples of arable reversion chalk grassland in the Chilterns and has now been proposed as a new local wildlife site. Over 286 species were found including an exciting arable and chalk grassland assemblage with plants such as Venus's-looking-glass and Chiltern Gentian
- Bird surveys and regular ringing on site helped recognise the farm as a stronghold for breeding Corn Bunting and farmland birds in Buckinghamshire
- 750m of winter bird seed margin have been planted to support farmland bird populations along with three supplementary winter bird feeding sites
- Hedgerow surveys have been completed across the whole farm
- Work completed in partnership with the National Trust to plant 750m of new hedge, 100m gapping-up and 450m stock fencing
- An equine management plan has been commissioned to support the farmer to improve the management of grassland with grazing horses.

Ringing a BTO ring to a Yellowhammer. Hughenden Ringing Group have established a long term ringing study across 9 farms, helping better understand farmland bird trends in the Chilterns



“The cluster has really brought the wildlife on my farm to life. I have always taken an interest but all of the survey work has encouraged me to look more and inspired me to do more as well – it’s been a really exciting couple of years!”

Andrew Stubbings



“Bradenham is known for its fantastic hedges. Andrew is as passionate about them as we are at the National Trust so to work together to plant and manage the farms hedges is really exciting. The support of the cluster has helped trigger many ideas across the farm - can't wait to see the results!”

Neil Harris, Countryside Manager, National Trust

Creating a long-term solution

The Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster offers a ready-made route to engage farmers and make change happen, at scale and through an effective, proven way of working. Building relationships, creating momentum, connecting farmers' work together and making change happen, takes time.

Our approach is based on engaging, exciting and enthusing farmers and providing end-to-end support. This is not an overnight solution but an investment that will pay dividends for both farmers and the environment in the long-term.'

Build relationships, trust, confidence, capacity and a baseline

Increasing the number of hectares in active and positive management

Habitat conditions improve

Landscape-scale change and species recovery

Year 1 - 3



Year 3 - 5



Year 5



Year 10



Supporting farmers to reduce carbon emissions

A partnership between the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster and the Rothschild Foundation is supporting a cluster-wide approach to reducing carbon emissions.

Phase 1 funding in 2021 will use the Farm Carbon Toolkit to:

- Run a training workshop for all farmers in the cluster looking at where, how and why carbon is emitted and/or sequestered on farms
- Bespoke support to help each farmer complete a farm carbon self-assessment to examine the emissions, sequestration and the carbon footprint
- Full soil sample analysis from two fields per farm to assess relative soil health across the cluster
- Full report, presentation and cluster-wide carbon assessment.
- In addition to the 18 individual carbon self-assessment reports, Farm Carbon Toolkit will produce a cluster wide assessment. The first of its kind on a cluster scale, this will help show the wider impact the farmers can make on reducing carbon emissions

It is hoped that Phase 2 will lead to farmer follow-up work and collaborative projects across the cluster to deliver practical projects reducing carbon emissions.



ROTHSCHILD
FOUNDATION



Farm
Carbon
Calculator

Offering scale and real **value for money**

The Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster is a cost-effective way of supporting farmers and delivering multiple benefits for wildlife, farmers, the rural economy, in addition to improving people's health and wellbeing and broader understanding and enjoyment of the Chilterns.



In setting up the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster, the Chilterns Conservation Board has established a model that can both be replicated at scale across the Chilterns AONB, and play a pivotal role in delivering the government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

The end-to-end support package for the Farmer Cluster has been made possible through an investment of £387,500¹ spread over 5 years. Breakdown:

Staffing	£175,000
Specialist advice, consultancy and monitoring	£65,000
Equipment and material for collaborative projects	£20,000
Capital funding for contractors and materials	£125,000
Volunteer equipment and materials	£2,500

It is projected that this will trigger the release of c. £3.71 for every £1 invested:

Mid-tier Countryside Stewardship agreements (or ELM equivalent) ²	£1,000,000
Biodiversity Net Gain projects ³	£250,000
Additional grant match funding ⁴	£95,000
Direct farmer contributions	£75,000
Volunteer in-kind contribution ⁵	£15,150
Donations of equipment ⁶	£3,000
Total additional spend on Nature's Recovery	= £1,438,150


In addition, the farmer cluster has delivered £111,562 of health and wellbeing benefits for the Chilterns from volunteering⁷

As an indicative example, scaling up the approach across 5 clusters, this could support 100+ farmers covering 35,000+ hectares of farmland.

This would deliver 100+ quality, targeted and monitored Countryside Stewardship/ELM agreements⁸.

An investment, over 5 years, of c. £1.9m would generate c. £7.2m additional spend on Nature's Recovery

The Chilterns AONB Management Plan has ambitions to make this offer accessible to all farmers in the AONB.



“Scaling-up this approach across the whole of the Chilterns AONB is central to delivering Nature’s Recovery. By providing a locally brokered approach, we can make sure that investment is targeted, and we achieve landscape-scale connections that work for our farmers and their wildlife.”

Dr. Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer
Chilterns Conservation Board

1 National Lottery Heritage Fund, Chilterns Conservation Board and match funding. 2 Based on a reasonable estimate of 10 farms entering the Scheme. 3 Conservative estimate over 30 years. 4 Received with thanks from the Rothschild Foundation; HS2 Additional Projects; the Woodland Trust and Bucks Bird Club. 5 101 days of skilled volunteer time valued at industry standard rate of £150/day. 6 Received with thanks from Atkins Global. 7 Estimate at £13,125 spent on supervising volunteers over 5 years using social return on investment calculations of similar Wildlife Trust volunteering by Leeds Beckett University, Sept 2019. 8 If focused on Local Nature Recovery component of ELM.

Photo credits: with kind thanks to Alan Shearman; Andrew Stubbings; Astrid Stubbings; Daniel Hares; Fiona Waller; Lynne Lambert; Natural England; Nick Marriner; Pete Edwards; Roy McDonald.



The Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster is supported by a huge team of over 50 organisations:

Consultants and Advisors: Bernwood Ecology; Coombes Services Ltd; Freshwater Habitats Trust; FWAG East; John Morris; Ian Waller; Marek Nowakowski; Marlborough Downs Farmer Cluster; Nigel Adams; Oakbank Game & Conservation Ltd; RSK Biocensus; Sundew Ecology; Woodland Trust

Suppliers: Brights Seeds; Emorsgate Seeds; Landscape Matters; Oakbank; Perdix Feeders

Contractors: Barber Environmental; David Stocks Fencing; James Gardener; Matt Stacey; Maydencroft; Rand Contracting; RB Tree Masters Ltd

Volunteer Groups: Buckinghamshire Bird Club; Buckinghamshire Mammal Group; Bucks Owl and Raptor Group; over 30 Chilterns Conservation Board volunteers; Hughenden Ringing Group; Kitty Moss; Middle Thames Bird Conservation Trust

Partners: Atkins Global; Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust; British Trust for Ornithology; Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre; Buckinghamshire Council; Chilterns Conservation Board; Forestry England; Butterfly Conservation; Chilterns Chalk Streams Project; Chiltern Society; Chiltern Rangers; Country Land and Business Association; Farm Carbon Toolkit; Historic England; HS2 Review Group; Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust; Historic England; National Farmers Union; National Lottery Heritage Fund; National Trust; Natural England; Plantlife; Ridgeway National Trail; River Thame Conservation Trust; Rothschild Foundation; The Gate pub; UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology



For further information please contact:
Nick Marriner, Landowner Engagement Officer
nmarriner@chilternsaonb.org

chilternsaonb.org/farmercluster



chilternsaonb.org/projects/CCC

