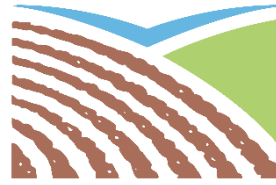




**NORTH DEVON  
COAST**  
Areas of Outstanding  
Natural Beauty

Westcountry



**FWAG**  
SouthWest



Rivers Trust

## North Devon Coast AONB

# ELMS ADVOCACY PROJECT

Understand farming in North Devon Coast AONB – gain feedback from farmers – advocate for ELM and CS – recommendations for the ‘Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme’



Lead Author  
Contributors

Sabine McEwan (FWAG SW)  
Dave Valder (WRT), Will Thorne (FWAG SW), Anastasija Savchenko (FWAG SW Placement Student)

Date  
submitted

31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

## Executive Summary

This is the final report for the North Devon Coast AONB ELM Advocacy Project, funded by Defra and the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB), delivered jointly by FWAG SW and Westcountry Rivers Trust. The aims of this project were to gather information to then make recommendations of how the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FIPL) could best be developed by the AONB.

### Aim 1: Provide baseline insight into farming in the North Devon Coast AONB

Methodology: We mapped publicly-available and NA AONB datasets.

#### Outcomes

Land Use: 74% of the AONB is grassland, 8% is arable land, >0.1% woodland and 0.1% non-agricultural land.

Uptake of Agri-environment schemes: Up to 29% of the AONB are within an agri-environment scheme, including Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship.

Designations: 16.9% of the AONB is designated as SSSI and there are 25 scheduled monuments.

Priority habitats: 4% of the AONB are mapped as priority habitats, of which 11-66% (depending on habitat type) are in agri-environment schemes.

### Aim 2: Gain feedback from farmers

Methodology: We conducted an online survey (27 responses) and 20 1:1 follow-up phone interviews.

#### Outcomes:

Please note that the survey respondents are likely to already be engaged with environmental issues and may therefore give skewed results.

Who took part? The respondents/interviewees were mainly beef and sheep farms, some dairy and arable, a lot of which were involved with tourist operations. About half of farms rely on agricultural income to 50-100%.

Agricultural Transition Plan: Most farmers were aware of the plan but didn't know the details. 52% of respondents will see a big effect, requiring major changes with the gradual withdrawal of BPS. Strategies for adjusting to the loss of BPS varied widely, 41% are planning to go into CS/wait for ELM. 80% of respondents are either already in CS or are planning to apply this year. 60% of respondents are interested in providing public access if there was funding.

Advice needs: Advice needs are varied, covering business advice, agronomic/livestock advice and environmental advice. 47% of survey respondents prefer to receive advice from independent advisers. Interviewees showed appetite for specific habitat management advice, particularly in improving conservation on their marginal land.

Farmer Groups: Almost 90% of all survey respondents either are already in a farmer group or are interested in joining one.

Role of the AONB: The survey showed there is appetite for the AONB to take a coordinating role – coordinating advice, farmer groups and landscape-scale conservation, as well as providing direct advice. Almost all interviewees were keen on having a point of contact in AONB, to signpost to trusted specialist advisers and to coordinate advice across the AONB.

### Aim 3: Promote farmer and landowner awareness of the Agricultural Transition Plan and Countryside Stewardship & recruit farmers for NAAONB farmer workshops

**Methodology:** We delivered 3 online seminars on ATP and CS, and sent the booking information to 16 interested farmers for the NA AONB workshops.

#### **Outcomes:**

Whilst approximately 8 survey respondents were interested in attending our online seminars and were sent the zoom information, sadly, fewer turned up on the day.

### Aim 4: Make recommendations on potential delivery for 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' (FIPL)

**Methodology:** We analysed the quality and usefulness of available mapping data, online survey and farmer interview results and conducted calls with 4 advisers.

#### **Recommendations**

##### FIPL overall

- Run the FIPS programme focusing on the AONB area, but with fuzzy edges around the area, especially areas upstream that are affecting the AONB. Also work with Biosphere reserve
- Join FIPL delivery with existing projects / funding streams in the area
- Focus on conservation work that CS can not currently fund (meadow restoration, detailed soils advice, business advice)
- Access to good quality (mapping) data will be key for a successful delivery of FIPL.
  - Ask DEFRA to provide access to up-to-date holding and land-use information from the RPA
  - The priority habitat layer is incomplete – survey the area to update the habitat layers to better target conservation of habitats already in good condition and restoration of those with potential.

##### Provide point of contact within the AONB

- Provide some direct advice (particularly help landowners with extending rights of way and manage existing rights of way in a better way)
- Work with advisers and farmers in the area to set up a list of trusted advisers
- Signpost farmers to trusted advisers – continuity is key
- Coordinate landscape-scale conservation

##### Create farmer group(s) and provide advice

- Create an AONB-wide group (fuzzy edges) with a steering group off farmers
- Create sub-groups where there is demand to run more specific events/discussion groups
- Use the adviser network to deliver such workshops
- Advice needs are varied, so provide a whole range of workshops as well as 1:1 advice. Include business advice with an environmental focus.
- Keep farmers updated on information coming from DEFRA regarding ATP
- Help farmers get ready for ELM and with CS Uptake

# Introduction

## Contract Aims and Methodology

This is the final report for the North Devon Coast AONB ELM Advocacy Project, funded by Defra and the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB). This project covered the area of North Devon Coast AONB. The table below summarises the aims of the project and the methods used to achieve those aims.

Aim 1: Provide baseline insight into farming in the North Devon Coast AONB

Methodology 1: Baseline mapping of publicly-available AONB datasets

Aim 2: Gain feedback from farmers on:

- Views and intentions on CS uptake, and the transition from BPS to ELM
- Advice needs
- Attitude to farmer cluster groups
- The potential role of the AONB going forward

Methodology 2: Online survey and 1:1 follow-up phone calls

Aim 3: Promote farmer and landowner awareness of the Agricultural Transition Plan and Countryside Stewardship & recruit farmers for NAAONB farmer workshops

Methodology 3: Online seminar series on ATP and CS. Promotion of the NA AONB workshops via the survey.

Aim 4: Make recommendations on potential delivery for 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' (FiPL)

- What role the AONB could have
- Engagement / relationship building model with farmers
- How to establish farmer clusters / groups that can work collaboratively across the area with others to improve and enhance the environment of the AONB

Methodology 4: Analysis of mapping datasets, online survey results, farmer 1:1 phone interviews and adviser 1:1 phone calls

## Delivery team

The project was delivered mainly by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG SW) and Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT). However, as FWAG SW secured several projects across South West England's protected landscapes (East Devon AONB, part of Dorset AONB, Blackdown Hills AONB, Quantock Hills AONB, Exmoor National Park and Cranborne Chase AONB), some aspects of this work were developed and delivered in cooperation with partner organizations or consultancies such as Robert Deane of Rural Focus, George Greenshields at Ecologic Consultancy, Gavin Saunders and the Hill Farming Network.

## Context

UK agri-environment policy is entering a period of fundamental change. It is shifting from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to the Environmental Land Management scheme (E.L.M). DEFRA published an 'Agricultural Transition Plan' (ATP) in November 2020, introducing the proposed elements of the new E.L.M scheme.

Under the CAP farmers received an area-based payment called Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). Farmers receiving such payments were required to maintain Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) and Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) on eligible land. In addition, farmers could, on a voluntary basis, enter into Countryside Stewardship agreements with individual payments rates for different environmental options and capital items.

The ATP sets out plans for a gradual reduction of direct BPS payments from 2021 until 2024/25. It also offers a lump sum payment of BPS for farmers who wish to leave the sector. CS will remain open until E.L.M is fully

rolled out. E.L.M will be split into three component, all based on the delivery of public goods. The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) component of E.L.M will be open to all farmers, to help them contribute to important environmental, climate change and animal health and welfare outcomes. The Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery components will be aimed at those who want to go further to achieve outcomes in a local area or at landscape and whole-ecosystem scale. Farmers and land managers will have flexibility in how to deliver under each component. Payment rates for these actions have not yet been set though rates for the SFI pilot have been published.

Within the ATP it is recognised that farmers and landowners in Protected Landscapes are providing huge environmental, social and cultural benefits but that farming profitably without direct payments will often be challenging. Therefore, a 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' (FiPL) programme is proposed to provide advice and funding for those in Protected Landscapes to lay the ground for E.L.M as well as to provide funding for public access and engagement, infrastructure and environmental enhancement.

This project is one of a suite of CS/E.L.M Advocacy projects funded by DEFRA through an agreement secured nationally by the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB). The aim of the projects is to raise awareness and understanding of the plans for E.L.M with farmers and landowners across all 44 of England's AONBs and National Parks. Specifically, the projects aim to a) build on Protected Landscapes' existing networks and increase farmer/land manager engagement in the discussion about the ATP, and b) create an evidence base for the roles Protected Landscapes could fulfil in E.L.M as it is rolled out.

## Baseline insight: mapping farming in North Devon Coast AONB

Mapping was conducted to gain a baseline insight of farming in North Devon Coast AONB. Publicly available datasets and a dataset provided by the NA AONBs were mapped (visually) and summary figures were extracted.

### Farm / holding data

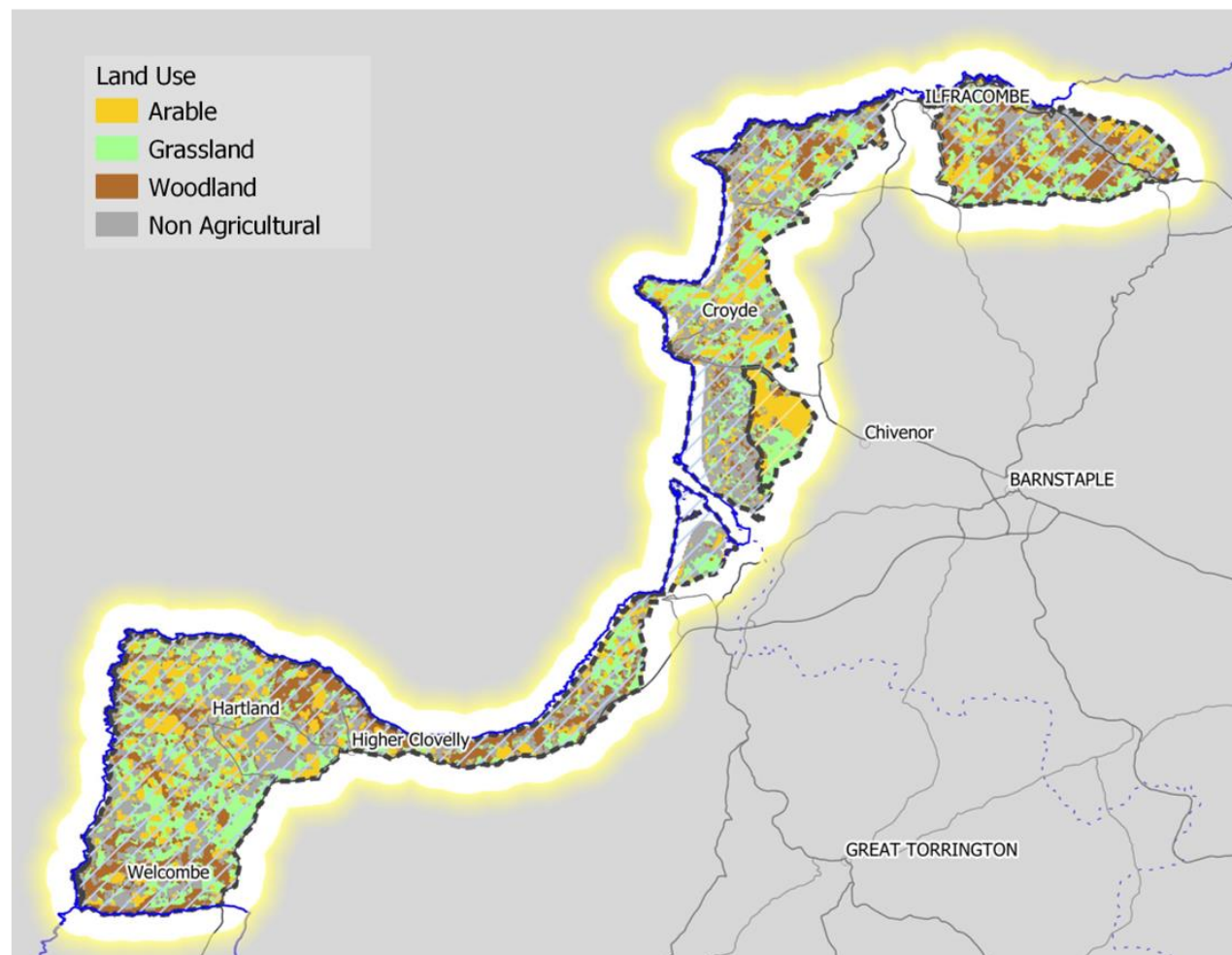
Such data is not publicly available as shapefiles. The EA holds rural land registry data for 2015 BPS recipients, but that needs a specific licencing agreement for specific projects. Land App allows the user to view holding outlines and field boundaries, but those can only be printed with agreement of the landowner, and have often been found to be out-of-date. As the AONB's are expected to deliver FIPLS on behalf of DEFRA, they could try to request up-to-date RPA data on land holdings and contact details as this would be crucial for FIPLS delivery.

## Mapping: Land Use (RPA Crop Map of England 2018)

This dataset shows the main land cover data from 2018 in small hexagons (0.41ha) rather than field parcels. The dataset shows a wide range of land-use codes, which we combined into arable, grassland, woodland and non-agricultural land. We then calculated land cover for the North Devon Coast AONB. Unfortunately, temporary and permanent grassland are grouped together as grassland. The distinction between those is important in terms of likely species diversity, eligibility for CS and potential ELM options as well as carbon storage. The AONBs should try to request up-to-date RPA data on parcel-based land use codes (for BPS recipients) as this would be crucial for FIPL delivery to allow a more targeted delivery. Permanent grassland could be targeted for example for species surveys to identify species-rich grasslands and those with potential to be restored to species-rich grassland and to update the priority habitat maps.



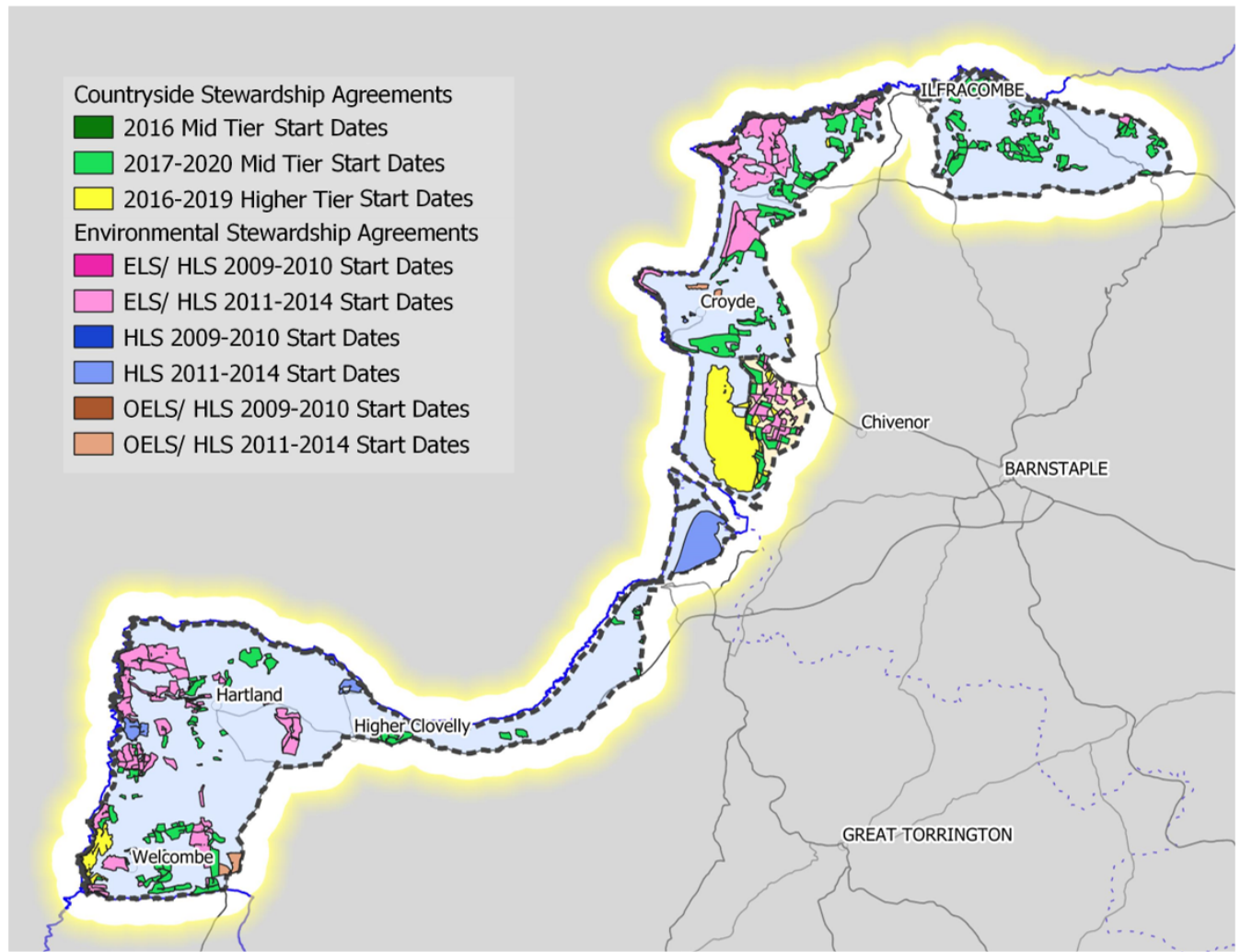
Land-use in North Devon Coast AONB and Heritage Coast	
<b>Arable Land</b>	
Area (ha)	1527
%	8.60%
<b>Grassland (temporary and permanent)</b>	
Area (ha)	13261
%	74.37%
<b>Woodland</b>	
Area (ha)	854.7
%	<0.1%
<b>Non-agricultural Land</b>	
Area (ha)	1785
%	0.10%



## Mapping: Natural England Dataset - Agri-environment Scheme Uptake

This dataset shows areas that are in agreements, split by Environmental Stewardship (up to 2014 start dates) and Countryside Stewardship (started from 2016 start dates) agreements, type and start date up to 2020. We have mapped those agreements that are likely still to be in place, including HLS agreements that technically already expired but may have been offered and extension, and CS (Mid Tier and Higher Tier) agreements which would have finished in 2020 and could have been re-applied for with a start date for 2021. This dataset gives a business name for each agreement, but no further holding details. We calculated summary statistics on number of agreements, type of agreements, size of agreements, % coverage of the AONB. The dataset does not show the usage of individual options or capital items. Whilst those maps and summary statistics are an interesting baseline understanding, it would make more sense to look at those in detail on a mapping programme when planning FIPL delivery.

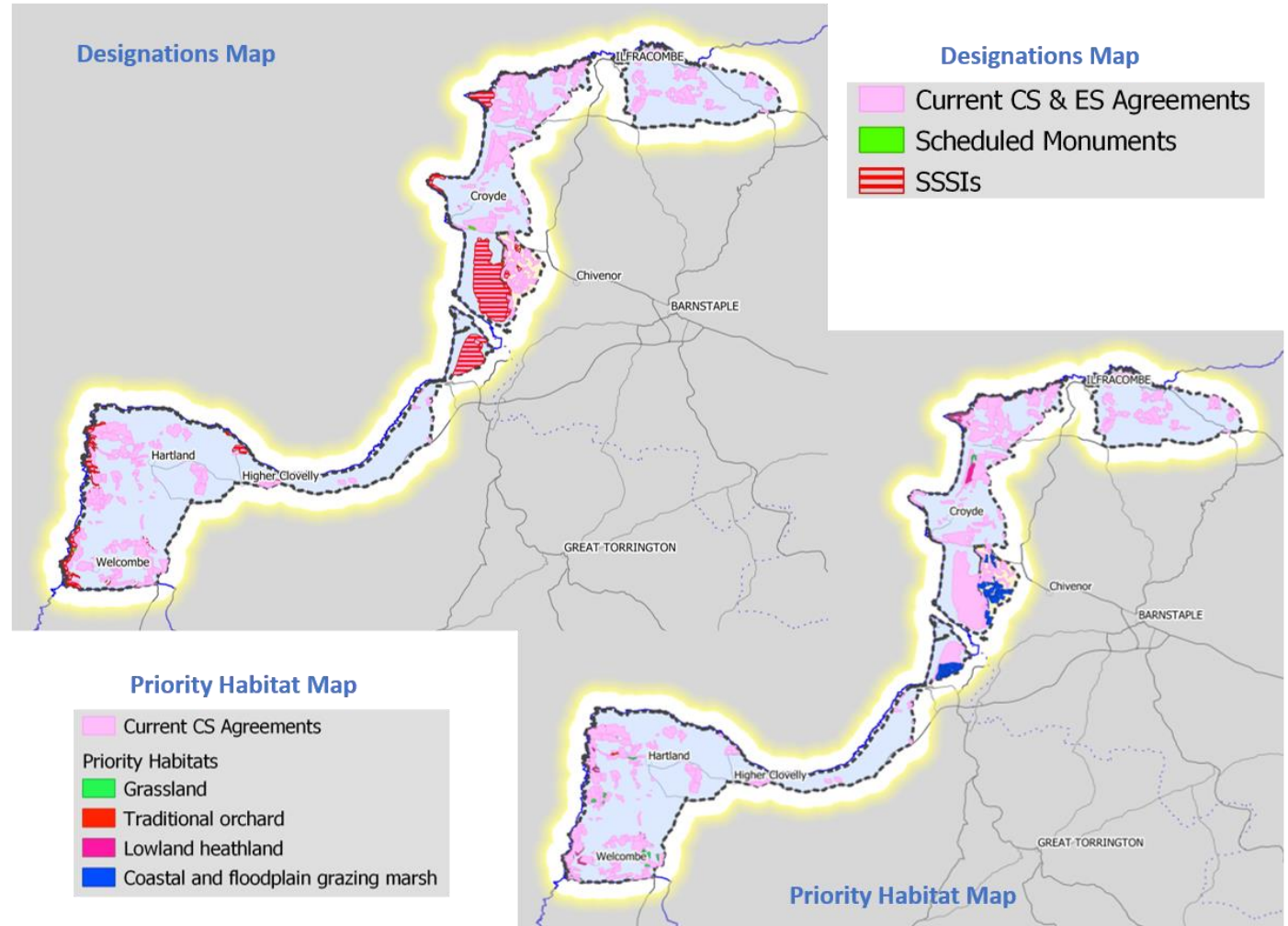
North Devon Coast AONB and Heritage Coast			
Agri-environment scheme		Data	
Countryside Stewardship (from 2016 onwards)	Mid Tier 5-year agreements	<b>MT 2016 start (might have reapplied for 2021)</b>	
		no. of agreement holders	6
		ha in agreements	678.02
		median ha per agreement	38.62
		<b>MT 2017- 2020 start dates</b>	
		no. of agreement holders	46
		ha in agreements	1636.78
		median ha per agreement	26.09
		% of areas in agreements	9%
		% of area in agreements or likely to be (including 2021 start dates)	13%
	Higher Tier 10-year agreements	<b>HT start dates from 2016 to 2019</b>	
		no. of agreement holders	7
		ha in agreements	768.85
% of areas in agreements		4%	
Environmental Stewardship (last year of start dates 2014)	<b>HLS (2009 to 2014 start dates, many HLS have been extended)</b>		
	no. of agreement holders	20	
	ha in agreements	2094.53	
	median ha per agreement	68.51	
	% of areas in agreements	12%	



## Mapping: Magic Map Dataset - Priority Habitats and Designated Sites

This data can be downloaded from Magic Maps and includes shapefiles for designations such as Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Scheduled Monuments, and priority habitats. We focused on the designations and priority habitats that are currently relevant for agri-environment scheme delivery. We then calculated designations/priority habitat areas for North Devon Coats AONB and % of those in existing agri-environment agreements.

Designations	SSSI	
	ha per area	3006
	% of the AONB	16.9%
	ha SSS in CS/ES agreements	701.0
	% SSI in CS/ES agreements	3.9%
Designations	Scheduled Monuments	
	number in area	25
	number in CS/ES agreements	2
	% in CS/ES agreements	8%
Priority Habitats	Traditional Orchards	
	ha per area	28.5
	% per area	0.2%
	ha in CS/ES agreements	3.33
	% in CS/ES agreements	11.7%
	Grassland (lowland meadow, purple moor grass and rush pasture, calmarian, lowland dry acid grassland)	
	ha in the AONB	54
	% per area	0.30%
	ha in CS/ES agreements	27.5
	% in CS/ES agreements	50.9%
	GS9 and GS10 Wet grassland (coastal flood plain grazing marsh)	
	ha in the AONB	377.03
	% per area	2.11%
	ha in CS/ES agreements	250.6
	% in CS/ES agreements	66.5%
	Lowland heath	
ha in the AONB	252.4	
% per area	1.4%	
ha in CS/ES agreements	75.8	
% in CS/ES agreements	30.0%	



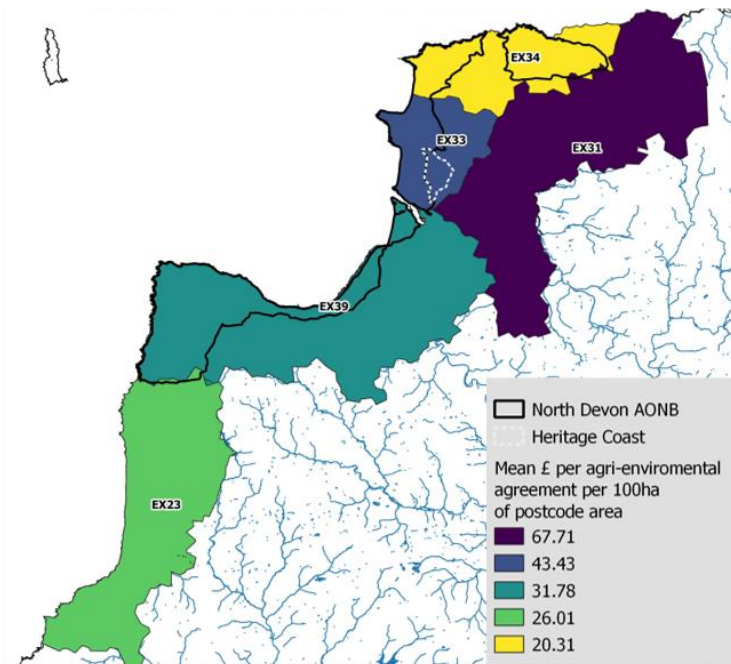
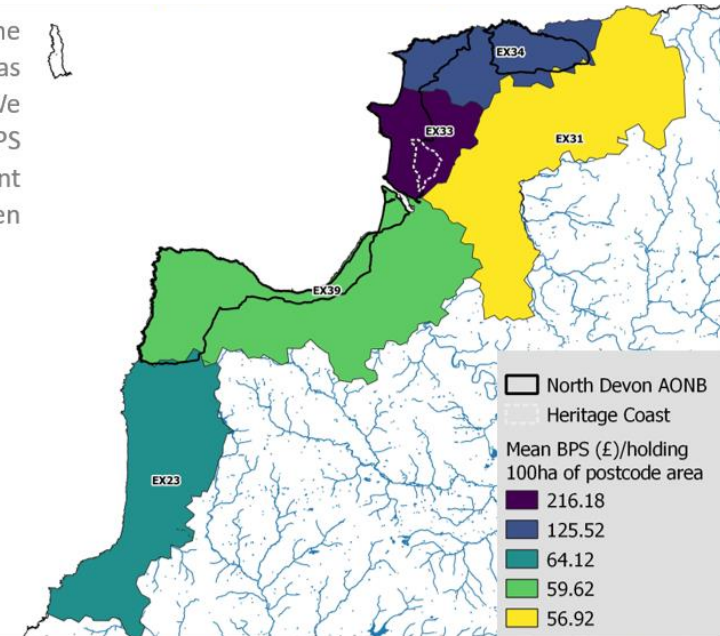
Please note that the priority habitat layers are incomplete and therefore should only be relied on for guidance. Again, the maps would be more useful on a mapping programme when planning FIPL delivery and it would be helpful to survey and update the priority habitat layer for a more targeted delivery.



## Mapping: NA AONB dataset – BPS and Agri-environment payments & recipients

This dataset was provided by the NA AONB. And, unfortunately, is not very useful for the purpose of this report. The data is shown by 4-digit postcode area. Those postcode areas are not the same size, which makes comparisons between the areas difficult. We calculated farm sizes (BPS eligible farm sizes) within those areas based on the 2019 BPS payment rate. There is such a wide range in farm sizes and therefore BPS and CS payment rates, making even a mean or median comparison between postcode areas (even when normalised by ha) very difficult.

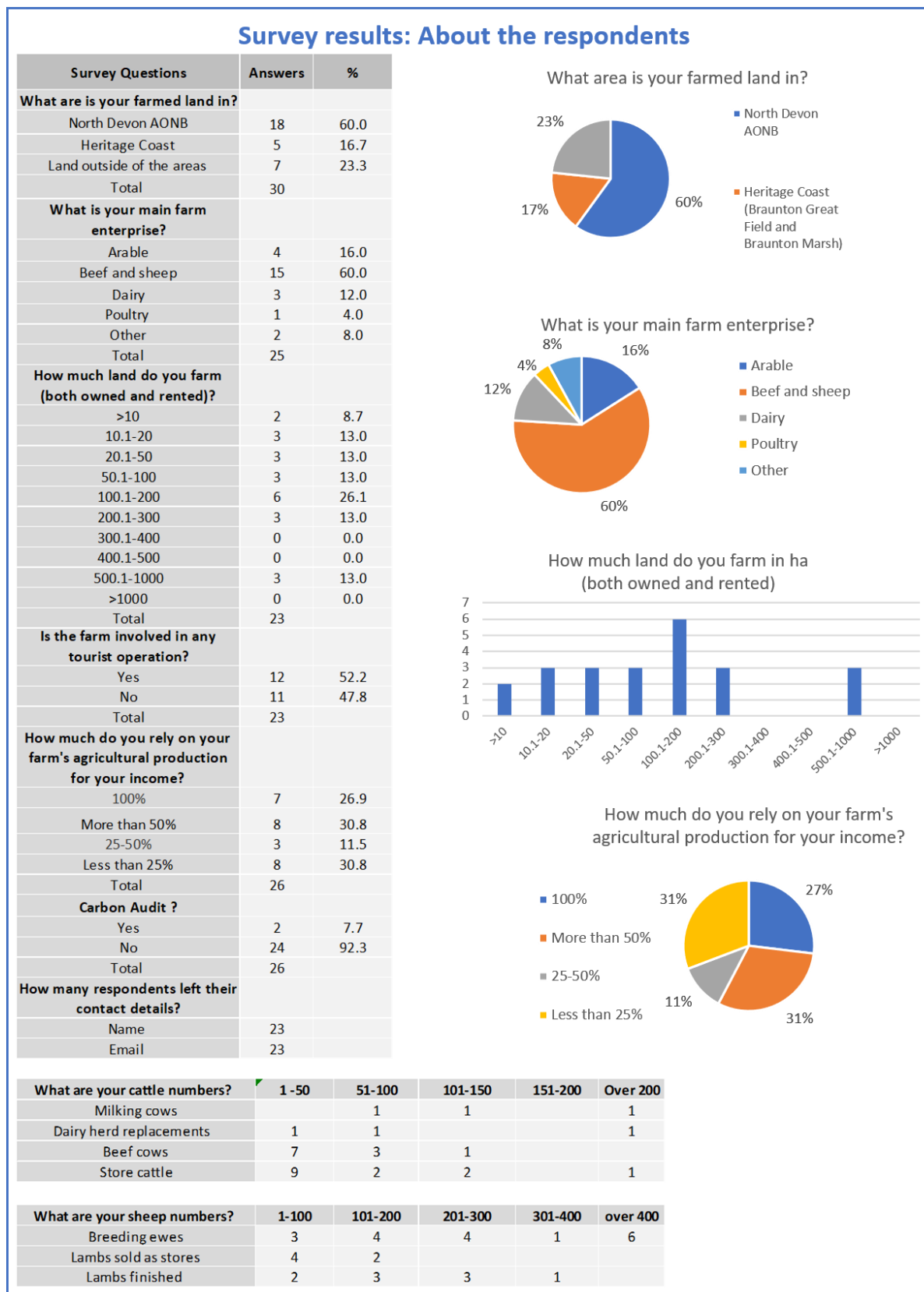
North Devon Coast AONB					
Postcode District	EX23	EX31	EX33	EX34	EX39
Postcode area (ha)	18456	25548	6451	9277	26939
Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) 2019					
No. of BPS recipients (holdings)	234	308	50	102	288
No. of BPS recipients (holdings) per 100 ha of postcode area	1.3	1.2	0.8	1.1	1.1
Mean BPS £ per holding (BPS and Greening together)	11834.9	14542.7	13946.0	11644.6	16062.7
Stdev BPS £ per holding (both BPS and greening together)	12293.9	23198.0	16677.7	12026.1	20847.6
Mean BPS £ per holding per 100ha of postcode area	64.1	56.9	216.2	125.5	59.6
Mean BPS eligible area per holding (ha)	72.7	89.3	85.7	71.5	98.7
Stdev BPS eligible area per holding (ha)	0.7	0.9	2.6	1.3	0.8
Agri-environment schemes 2019					
No. of agreements	61	92	15	36	82
No. of agreements per 100 ha of postcode area	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3
Mean £ per agreement	4801.9	8121.0	4368.4	4028.9	5473.0
Stdev £ per agreement	9400.0	15883.7	7869.4	4782.0	10311.5
Mean £ per agreement per 100ha of postcode area	26.0	31.8	67.7	43.4	20.3
Registered organic holdings 2019					
No. registered organic holdings	1	5	2	4	0



## Feedback from Farmers: Online Survey

An online survey was designed using Microsoft Forms, and was conducted between 11<sup>th</sup> February and 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021, covering the area of the North Devon Coast AONB and the Heritage Coast. The survey was laid out in the following sections: Respondent / farm details, Agricultural Transition Plan & CS uptake, Advice Needs and Farm Groups.

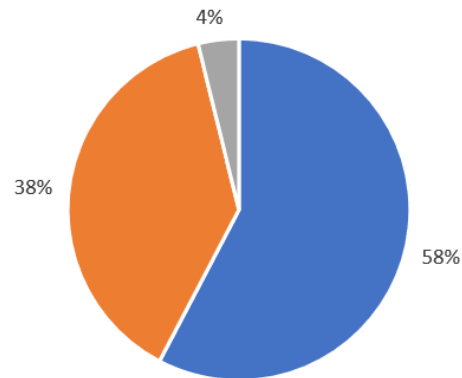
The survey was promoted through emails to existing contacts by each delivery partner, NFU newsletters and the FWAG SW website. 27 responses to the survey were received. Please note that the survey respondents are likely to already be engaged with environmental issues and may therefore give skewed results.



Survey question	Responses	%
<b>Are you aware of the Agricultural Transition Plan?</b>		
Yes I have read it	4	16.0%
I've read about it in the farming press / in an adviser briefing	5	20.0%
I'm aware of it, but don't know the details	14	56.0%
No, I was not aware of it	2	8.0%
Total	25	
<b>How much of your current turnover is reliant on Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments?</b>		
Less than 25%	15	57.7%
25%-50%	10	38.5%
More than 50%	1	3.8%
Total	26	
<b>How big an impact will the gradual withdrawal of BPS over the next few years have on your business?</b>		
Little effect	3	12.0%
Some effect, but we can absorb this	9	36.0%
Big effect, requiring major changes	13	52.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Total	25	
<b>Do you have a strategy for adjusting to the loss of BPS?</b>		
None needed	1	3.7%
Not yet, but we're working on it; we are working on it	4	14.8%
Yes, we plan to intensify to improve yields and gross margins	2	7.4%
Yes, we plan to go into CS / wait for E.L.M	11	40.7%
Yes, we plan to restructure the business and diversify	4	14.8%
Yes, we plan to reduce inputs and other costs to improve gross margins	3	11.1%
Take a lump sum payment and leave the sector	1	3.7%
Other	1	3.7%
Total	27	
<b>Is your farm in a Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement</b>		
Plan to apply in 2021	9	34.6%
Might apply subject to more information	3	11.5%
Not interested	2	7.7%
Yes in CS	12	46.2%
Total	26	
<b>If you are NOT in a current Stewardship agreement, what are the main reasons you have chosen to stay out?</b>		
Not financially worthwhile for us	3	15.0%
We're put off by the bureaucracy	5	25.0%
We didn't have advice available to help with an application	2	10.0%
Total	10	
<b>Would you be interested in information about the Slurry Investment Scheme described in the ATP when it becomes available? Systems that are SSAFO compliant with 4-months slurry storage capacity are likely to be eligible to receive funding to further increase capacity to 6 months for future proofing.</b>		
No – we have secure, 6 months storage	3	18.8%
Yes – we have less than 6 months storage	7	43.8%
No response	6	37.5%
Total	16	
<b>If the new scheme was to provide funding for public access, would you be interested?</b>		
Yes	15	60.0%
No	10	40.0%
Total	25	

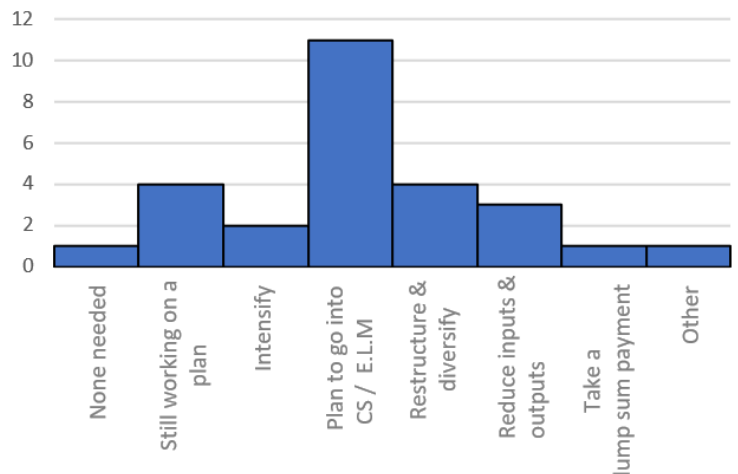
## Survey results: The Agricultural Transition Period

How much of your current turnover is reliant on Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments?

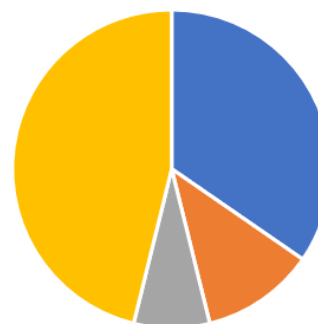


■ Less than 25% ■ 25%-50% ■ More than 50%

Do you have a strategy for adjusting to the loss of BPS?



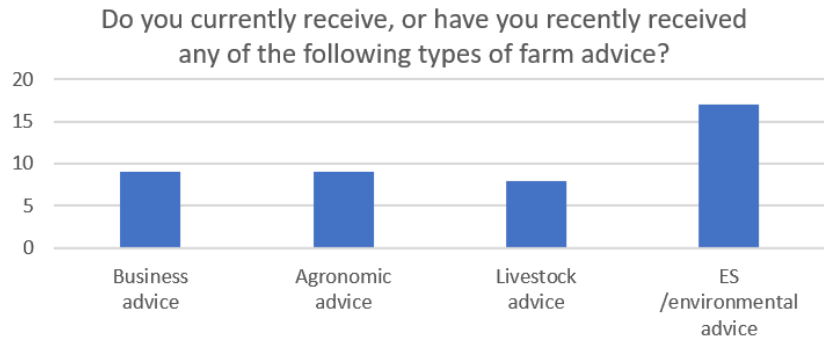
Is your farm in Countryside Stewardship (CS)



■ Plan to apply in 2021  
 ■ Might apply subject to more information  
 ■ Not interested  
 ■ Yes in CS

## Survey results: Farmer Advice

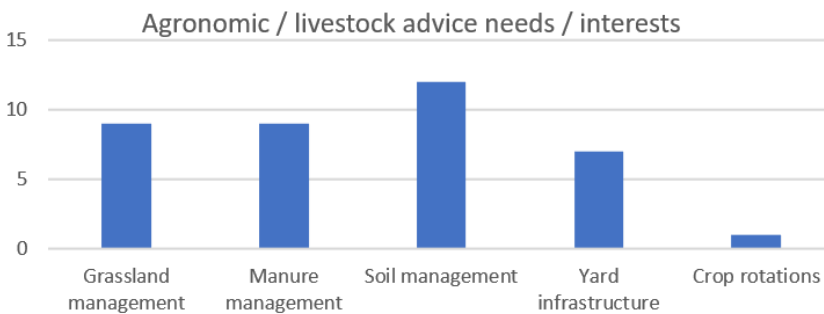
Survey question	Responses	%
<b>Do you currently receive, or have you recently received any of the following types of farm advice?</b>		
Business advice	9	20.9%
Agronomic advice	9	20.9%
Livestock advice	8	18.6%
CS /environmental advice	17	39.5%
Total	43	



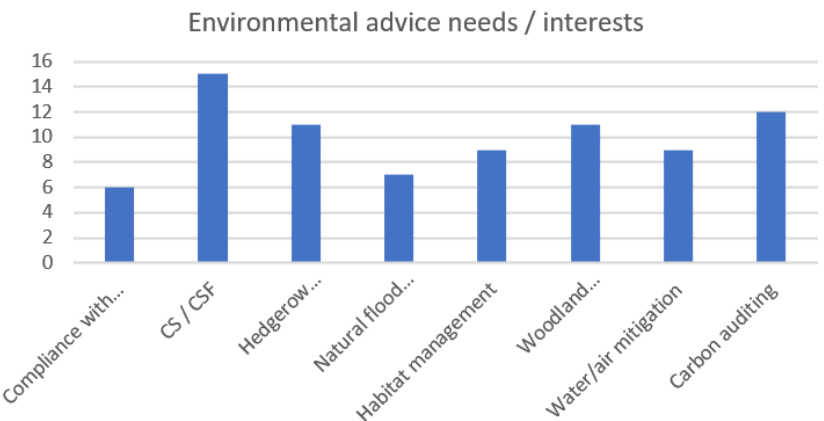
<b>What kind of business advice are you interested in / do you need?</b>		
Transition away from BPS	14	34.1%
Farm business diversification	8	19.5%
Marketing	5	12.2%
Resilience funding	5	12.2%
Succession planning	9	22.0%
Total	41	



<b>What kind of agronomic / livestock advice are you interested in / do you need?</b>		
Grassland management	9	23.7%
Reducing agrochemical use	0	0.0%
Manure management	9	23.7%
Soil management	12	31.6%
Yard infrastructure	7	18.4%
Crop rotations	1	2.6%
Total	38	

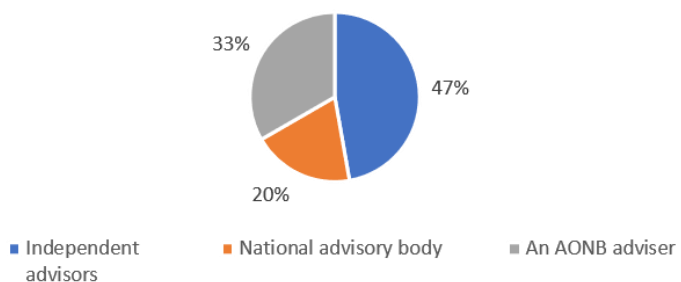


<b>What kind of environmental advice are you interested in / do you need?</b>		
(SSAFO, Farming Rules for Water, NVZ)	6	7.5%
CS / CSF	15	18.8%
Hedge / tree management	11	13.8%
Natural flood management	7	8.8%
Habitat management	9	11.3%
Woodland management	11	13.8%
Water/air mitigation	9	11.3%
Carbon auditing	12	15.0%
Total	80	



<b>Who do you / would you prefer to receive advice from?</b>		
Independent advisors	17	47.2%
National advisory body	7	19.4%
An AONB adviser	12	33.3%
Total	36	

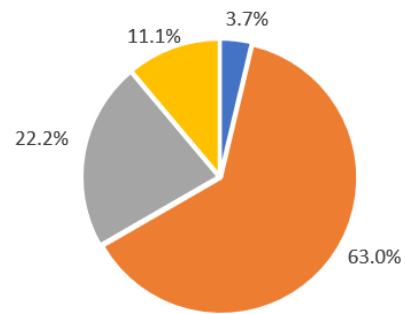
Who do you prefer to receive advice from?



## Survey results: Farmer Groups

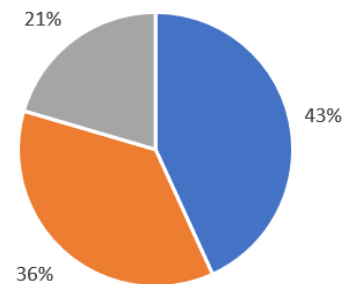
Survey question	Responses	%
<b>Are you interested in local collaboration/discussion with other farms in your area?</b>		
Yes, we are already part of a farm group	1	3.7%
Yes, we are already members of the Braunton / Torridge Headwaters Facilitation Fund	17	63.0%
We are not currently in a group but would be interested in finding out what is available / in joining one	6	22.2%
No, we are not interested	3	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	
<b>What should farm groups be based on to make them most useful?</b>		
Local geographic areas (small catchments / parishes)	19	43.2%
Farm business type (dairy group / beef & sheep group / woodland group etc)	16	36.4%
AONB-wide group or network	9	20.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	
<b>How would you like the AONB to help you in future?</b>		
Coordinate a stream-lined approach to farm advice across the AONB	11	26.2%
Coordinate farmer groups as a means to share experience	9	21.4%
Coordinate landscape-scale conservation	9	21.4%
Provide direct advice	13	31.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	

Are you interested in local collaboration / discussion with other farmers?



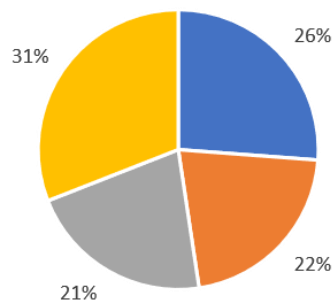
- Yes, part of a farm group
- Yes, part of Braunton / Torridge Headwaters Facilitation Fund
- Not in a group but interested
- No, not interested

How should farmer groups best be formed?



- Geographic areas
- Farm business type
- AONB-wide group

How would you like the AONB to help you in the future?



- Coordinate a stream-lined approach to farm advice
- Coordinate farmer groups
- Coordinate landscape-scale conservation
- Provide direct advice

## Feedback from Farmers: 1:1 phone calls

Dave Valder (WRT) delivered 20 1:1 calls with farmers in North Devon Coast AONB. With each farmer, the current situation of the farm was discussed, and farm maps were produced showing priority habitats / designations, CS agreements, hydrological connectivity and land cover. Tourism and public access, advice needs and the potential future role of the AONB were discussed.

### Tourism & public access

Approximately half of those interviewed were farmers / landowners but part of their business was tourism-based, running a campsite, holiday lets, tearooms etc. A few farmers would be interested in expanding access to their land in terms of rights of way, having school visits and hosting workshops for other farmers. Some explained they would like to expand right so way to choose where to allow access and reducing peoples' desire to roam. Many mentioned they would like to manage rights of way / public access better, in terms of improving signposting, fencing off vulnerable habitats, reduce the impact of dogs on habitats and livestock.

### Advice needs

The following advice needs were mentioned (approximately sorted by the number of times it came up): conservation management on marginal land, woodland creation advice, advice on pond creation and management, natural flood management advice, farm-specific habitat management advice, soil management advice, infrastructure, historic environment. All farmers said they would welcome a point of contact within the AONB. Many farmers said they would be interested in being part of farmer groups and attending workshops. With so many farmers mentioning they are happy to increase the conservation value of their marginal land, there is great potential to deliver environmental gains in the AONB through the Farming in Protected Landscape Programme.

### The role of the AONB

Almost all interviewees said it would be great to have a point of contact in the AONB to give direct advice, direct to specialist advisers, facilitate workshops and signpost to opportunities. Several farmers said the AONB has so far been distanced apart from planning but should get a foothold in the rural and environmental sector. One farmer said he would like one adviser to deal with (with continuity) as he is 'fed up with adviser transition'. Some farmers said farmer groups / facilitation funds should be run by the AONB.

## Recommendations on Farming in Protected Landscapes Delivery: Adviser Interviews

Four advisers were interviewed about what the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme could look like and what the role of the AONB could be.

### Ideas on what FIPL could look like?

Run the programme with fuzzy edges, not strictly limited to land within the AONBs as the environment does not know AONB boundaries. For example, the AONBs could benefit from beneficial work for example in upstream catchments. Every adviser stated that neighbouring AONBs / protected landscapes should work together. It would be great if FIPL could fund conservation work that CS currently cannot fund. Examples that were given were meadow restoration, detailed soils advice as well as business advice with an environmental understanding.

### How could FIPL be joined up or complemented with existing projects?

Generally, the feedback was to join up with projects in the area and fund aspects that it is difficult to get funding for otherwise.

## Should there be regional/AONB-wide advisor meetings?

Most of the advisers felt that such meetings were already happening, such as catchment partnership meetings (also including EA, NE, water companies) and meeting up at local events pre lockdown. Therefore, such meetings should be joined up with existing meetings and discuss both current delivery, future projects and triage on clients to be handed over to various projects for funding / specialist advice. A regular overview of current projects and what can/can't be funded would be very helpful so that all advisers can point farmers to the right project/advisers, this could be done in meetings or in an AONB newsletter that everyone contributes to. One adviser particularly mentioned that there should be more honest exchange rather than organisations 'bigging themselves up' and 'hogging project funding'.

## Future role of the AONB

AONB having a contact list of advisers: Consistency is key. Most farmers do not mind where advice comes from as long as it is reliable, consistent and good quality. Therefore, it would make sense to work with existing advisers in the area (as well as with land agents, contractors, business advisers etc). One adviser mentioned that a national adviser hub is being put together through the Catchment Partnerships and the Rivers Trusts nationally.

AONB forming farmer groups: Generally, farm groups would be welcome. The AONB is seen as ideal to take a coordinating role on such groups as well as on landscape-scale conservation. Everyone spoken to would be interested to run workshops to such groups and be involved. It was mentioned that, unfortunately as always the case, such groups are likely to only reach those who are already interested and engaged. Therefore, EA or regulatory presence is important to make contact to the hard-to-reach farmers and encourage them to join such groups.

If AONB provided direct advice: Opinions were mixed on this. Again, it was pointed out how important consistency is and that it could be difficult for farmers if the AONB's hired new advisers to work with. Generally, all advisers were keen to work together and triage advice to who is most suitable / has funding. Especially for landscape-scale conservation and public access, it was deemed that it would make sense for the AONBs to take a lead on this. 'It would be a shame if the AONB hired their own advisers if we have worked in partnership, a lot of the time in-kind from partner organisations, to get funding for certain projects and not get to work on those projects in the end.'

# Recommendations on Farming in Protected Landscapes Delivery: Conclusions

## FIPL Overall

- Run the FIPS programme focusing on the AONB area, but with fuzzy edges around the area, especially areas upstream that are affecting the AONB. Also work with Biosphere reserve
- Join FIPL delivery with existing projects / funding streams in the area
- Focus on conservation work that CS can not currently fund (meadow restoration, detailed soils advice, business advice)
- Access to good quality (mapping) data will be key for a successful delivery of FIPL.
  - Ask DEFRA to provide access to up-to-date holding and land-use information from the RPA
  - The priority habitat layer is incomplete – survey the area to update the habitat layers to better target conservation of habitats already in good condition and restoration of those with potential.

## Provide point of contact within the AONB

- Provide some direct advice (particularly help landowners with extending rights of way and manage existing rights of way in a better way)
- Work with advisers and farmers in the area to set up a list of trusted advisers
- Signpost farmers to trusted advisers – continuity is key
- Coordinate landscape-scale conservation

## Create farmer group(s) and provide advice

- Create an AONB-wide group (fuzzy edges) with a steering group off farmers
- Create sub-groups where there is demand to run more specific events/discussion groups
- Use the adviser network to deliver such workshops
- Advice needs are varied, so provide a whole range of workshops as well as 1:1 advice. Include business advice with an environmental focus.
- Keep farmers updated on information coming from DEFRA regarding ATP
- Help farmers get ready for ELM and with CS Uptake