

# CSFF - The Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund



**SUMMARY** The Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund (CSFF) is a grant in England which provides a facilitator, which can be a person or organisation, with funding to support a local group of farmers to come together and work towards the delivery of environmental public goods at a landscape scale. The Facilitation Fund aims to enhance the implementation and outcomes of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme - England’s agri-environment scheme.

## Contract Type



PES contracts including AECM

## Public Goods

### CLIMATE REGULATION

### SOIL

### WATER

### BIODIVERSITY

## OBJECTIVES

Bring together local farmers and other land managers to

- improve the natural environment at a landscape rather than single-farm scale and
- achieve greater improvements than individual holdings could on their own

## CONTRACT DETAILS

**Participation & involved parties** Included are the Rural Payments Agency as administrators, DEFRA as the managing institution, Natural England as advising institution, local organisations/ consultants as facilitators, farmers and other land managers. There are a variety of CSFF groups across England. Latest figures state 136 groups covering >2400 land managers and >453,000 ha. The source of the funding for the CSFF is the English Rural Development Programme, drawing on the ‘Cooperation’ measure. Facilitators may be independent farm conservation consultants, or staff working for FWAG (Farm and Wildlife Advisory Groups), RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), Farmer Networks, Wildlife Trusts, and River Trusts.

**Management requirements** No specific management is required from farmers, but they will carry out management in accordance with the Countryside Stewardship Scheme option(s) they are enrolled in. There are no conditions on farmers to attend particular meetings within the series. CSFF Groups are utilised to deliver a variety of environmental public goods dependent upon the specific group’s context and, often, the remit of the facilitator’s organisation or a given topical issue. For instance, across Northern England, in 2016 the government announced a round specifically dedicated to Natural Flood Management with the aim of developing catchment-scale solutions following the impact of Storm Desmond in 2015.

## Field of action



## Basis of Payment



Hybrid

## Involved contract takers



- Individual



- Collective

**Nature of contract & payments** The contract is between the facilitator and Natural England to deliver 'one-to-many' advice. There is a written contract between funding body and facilitator which serves as the basis for payments. Groups need to consist of at least 4 holdings covering at least 2000 ha of (largely) adjoining land. Payments consist of a base payment plus a per holding element (capped at 80 members) and are used to organise group meetings and training for farmer participants. Payments are made to facilitators quarterly and in arrears, so expenditure must be claimed back and organisations must put up the initial funding to cover costs themselves. The farmer signs up to the group, but does not receive any payment and is under no obligation to enrol in an agri-environment scheme.

**Advice & support** Advice to farmers is given on a group basis rather than one-to-one. The facilitator invites specialists to speak at farmer meetings, often coupled with a farm walk on a group member's farm. If follow up one-to-one advice is needed to tailor a particular measure to the farm or to help with a funding application, this cannot be covered under the Facilitation Fund agreement.

**Environmental monitoring & control** Monitoring is not funded under the Facilitation Fund, but the facilitator may be successful in accessing additional grants to undertake monitoring or their organisation may have ongoing projects involving monitoring (e.g. River Trusts, Wildlife Trusts, National Park Authorities).

## SUCCESS FACTORS

- Three-year pre-testing phase of the approach with Game and Wildlife Conservation-Trust and Natural England
- Dedicated staff in Natural England who made the original farmer cluster idea fit with administrative requirements and subsequently launched several funding rounds
- The availability of facilitators with pre-existing farmer contacts from a diverse range of organisations who were able to set up groups and put together CSFF applications
- More progress is made where a pre-existing farmer group utilises the funding to pay for their facilitator; where groups start 'from scratch' the 3-5 year funding period is often not sufficient
- The meetings allow for local farmers to get to know each other, learn about each other's environmental interests and strengthen social capital, thus creating the basis for cooperating on agri-environmental management

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-facilitation-funding](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-facilitation-funding)  
[www.farmerclusters.com](http://www.farmerclusters.com)  
[www.tinyurl.com/yyc3mrhm](http://www.tinyurl.com/yyc3mrhm)

