

# Environmental Stewardship

## Case study: Walsingham Estate Farming Ltd

The logo for Natural England, featuring the words "NATURAL ENGLAND" in a white, sans-serif font on a green rectangular background.

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<b>Name:</b>	<b>Walsingham Estate Farming Ltd</b>
<b>Region/County:</b>	<b>East of England/North Norfolk</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Little Walsingham, Norfolk</b>
<b>Farm Size/Type:</b>	<b>approximately 757 hectares of arable, grassland and woodland</b>
<b>Cropping:</b>	<b>winter wheat, OSR, winter and spring barley and sugar beet</b>
<b>Stocking:</b>	<b>beef cattle and sheep</b>
<b>Key objectives:</b>	<b>the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) options make up a multi objective agreement addressing farmland birds, resource protection, landscape, rare arable plants, bees, butterflies, a SHINE site and an important Scheduled Monument.</b>

The Walsingham Estate is situated in North Norfolk. The principal activity of Walsingham Estate Farming Limited is that of arable farming over approximately 757 ha of light to medium soils including 50 ha of grassland together with 70 ha of woodland. In addition to its farming activities the Walsingham Estate has opened two farm shops and cafe restaurants in partnership with one of its farm tenants.

The landscape is a mixture of open, undulating large scale arable fields broken up by belts of mixed woodland and linear post enclosure hedges. This offers extensive views across the 'High Norfolk' countryside with views of the coast to the north. The River Stiffkey bisects the farm forming a shallow chalk river valley with grazed pasture bordering the river. In addition, large parts of the Haverfield parkland and wood pasture, established early in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, still remain.

The majority of the farm was previously in Countryside Stewardship (CS) for the last 10 years. The CS agreement included an extensive range of grass margins as well as various arable options, such as wild bird seed plots, nectar plots, over-wintered stubbles etc and grassland management. The agreement also included an extensive network of permissive access routes across the estate which proved popular with local residents and visitors to this part of Norfolk, a series of guided walks leaflets being available in the farms shops and other local outlets.

The current ELS and HLS agreement will be able to build on the achievements of the CS agreement and further enhance the environment, landscape and historical features on the farm. The agreement contains a wide variety of arable based options such as nectar flower plots, floristic margins, cultivated plots/margins and unharvested fertiliser free conservation headlands which will continue to provide habitat for a range of farmland birds, raptors, bees, butterflies, moths, hoverflies, grasshoppers, crickets, spiders etc, as well as small mammals.

John Downing, resident agent says 'We are delighted to have been accepted into ELS and HLS following ten years in CSS, when a variety of environment work has been carried out on the farm, including hedge restoration and planting and a network of permissive walks established, which have been promoted through the Walsingham Farms Shop Partnership.

ELS and HLS will help this to continue and will particularly ensure the repair and restoration of The Greyfriars, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and will enable it to be accessible to the public once again. We have been grateful for the advice and practical help of Natural England and English Heritage in making this happen.'

The landscape will be further enhanced by restoring some arable land to parkland and the planting of parkland trees. The low input grassland helps resource protection objectives, particularly in relation to the River Stiffkey. Although not part of the HLS agreement, the permissive access has been retained by the estate and the general public may still enjoy walks around the estate.

There are several historical features on the estate including remains of a Roman road, Roman town, medieval earthworks and the Greyfriars, Franciscan Friary. The Greyfriars is possibly the most important and complete example of a Greyfriars House surviving in England but is in need of urgent repair. The site is a Schedule Monument and a Grade 1 listed building and is of national importance. Natural England is working very closely with English Heritage to ensure this site is protected and saved for future generations.

David Ward, Natural England advisor to the estate said 'I am very pleased with this multi-objective agreement. It addresses all the important features on the estate and it is a pleasure to be working with Walsingham Estate Farming Ltd who I know are very positive and keen to make this Environmental Stewardship agreement work. I feel it is a very good example of how an Agri-Environment scheme can co-exist and work successfully with a commercial farming business.

We have included a wide range of ELS and HLS options which enhances and protects the landscape, biodiversity and the historic environment. It is particularly satisfying to help protect the nationally important Greyfriars Franciscan Friary Schedule Monument. This was first established in the 14th Century and without the will and funding from Walsingham Estate and Natural England, there is a very real risk the buildings would continue to deteriorate and fall into disrepair and be lost for future generations.'

### **Where can I find out more?**

Please follow this [link](#) for the latest information on Environmental Stewardship.