

SSSI
Data Exchange Project
2005/06
A Report on the Area and Condition of SSSI
land under agri-environment agreements



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1. Executive Summary

This report provides information on the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) on land under:

- The Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS);
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) Schemes; and
- The Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES).

The data show how much land under these Agri-environment (AE) Schemes is in 'target' condition¹ and illustrate changes in the area of SSSI land under agreement between 2002/3 and 2005/06 up until March 2006 (see Figure 1 in Annex 1). It also gives details of annual expenditure on agreements.

Key messages

- **Investment in the SSSI land through these three Schemes has risen from £21.6m in 2002/3 to £28m in 2005/06 (29.6 %)**
- **The total area of SSSI land within these Schemes has risen from 426,100 ha in 2002/3 to 634,589 ha in 2005/06 (32 %)**
- **The total area of land within these Schemes meeting the target condition has risen from 218,506 ha in 2002/3 to 445,593 ha in 2005/06 (104%)**
- **The Schemes are delivering improving value for money.**
- **SSSI land under ESA, WES and CSS agreements has improved in condition from last year.**
- **Total expenditure on ESA Schemes was £69.8m in 2005/06. £10m of this was spent on SSSI land.**
- **Total Expenditure on CSS was £117.4m in 2005/06. £8.8m was spent on SSSI land.**

These are explained in more detail in Section 4

The Report has been compiled jointly by English Nature (EN) and the Rural Development Service (RDS) and data are shown in the accompanying spreadsheet. Later in the year, it is intended to prepare a second version of this Report which will incorporate data from the Forestry Commission England Woodland Grant Scheme and the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme. It is also intended to represent the data to reflect the new Natural England Area Team boundaries.

2. Introduction to the SSSI Data Exchange Project

- 2.1 A joint project between RDS and English Nature was initiated in 2001 to bring together data relating to the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) under Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), Environmentally

¹ For reasons of clarity the SSSI PSA term "favourable" is replaced with the term "target" throughout this report. Target condition is defined as comprising the sum of the JNCC common standards conditions: Favourable Maintained, Favourable Recovered and Unfavourable Recovering.

Sensitive Areas (ESA) Schemes and Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES) management. The data can be used to:

- Show the area and proportion of SSSI land in target condition (used to inform the Government's PSA target of bringing 95% of the SSSI series by area into target condition by 2010);
- Facilitate the targeting of the new Environmental Stewardship (ES) Scheme (and WES and its successor Scheme) within SSSIs; and
- Develop models for planning resource requirements within RDS and English Nature (and now for Natural England) at national and local levels.

2.2 The work has been undertaken as a collaborative project between English Nature and RDS over the last six years. Each year the data has been collated and summarised in a spreadsheet. This report describes the background to the work and provides a summary of the key findings. It presents the data as at 31 March 2006, and makes direct comparisons with the data presented in the 2003 Baseline Report. (Work had been done in the previous year, but this was a trial to assess the ease with which the data could be collated. The Report in 2003 was the first year in which the accuracy of the data was assured, and consequently has been used as the baseline from which comparisons have been made in subsequent years.) The data in the spreadsheet show:

- How much land under these Agri-environment (AE) Schemes is in 'target' condition;²
- Changes in the area of SSSI land under agreement between 2002/3 and 2005/06 up until March 2006 (see Table 2 in Annex 1);
- Details of annual expenditure on agreements.
- Delivery of the Schemes by Region, County and English Nature Area Team; and
- Renewal dates for Agreements.

The spreadsheet will be placed on the Natural England Intranet. In the meantime if you need a copy, please contact Louise Amos

These annual datasets can be used in planning future work, and in informing the development of a trajectory for reaching the PSA target.

2.2 There are some caveats that need to be taken into account when considering the data. These caveats are set out in Annex 2.

2.3 The spreadsheet can be useful in a variety of ways:

- At the local level, it can be used to monitor the progress of agreements towards target condition.

² For reasons of clarity the SSSI PSA term "favourable" is replaced with the term "target" throughout this report. Target condition is defined as comprising the sum of the JNCC common standards conditions: Favourable Maintained, Favourable Recovered and Unfavourable Recovering.

- The sections on renewals in the spreadsheet (*under EN View, ESA View and CSS View*) can be used to plan workload and compare the success of strategies between regions or teams. Renewals data includes agreements that are due to be renewed by 2009/10. (Data for renewals are based on the first renewal date for each SSSI unit on which there is more than one agreement.)
- The spreadsheet has also informed discussion between EN and RDS local staff, enhancing joint working and coordinating efforts to meet the PSA Target; and in the future will prove a valuable source of data for Natural England. Site Units with AE Schemes not in target condition can be identified and remedial measures put in place.
- The more detailed regional data can feed into models of projected spend and delivery of target condition over time.
- At a national level the results can be used to influence funding and inform policy decisions.

2.4 Condition assessment

The spreadsheet can also assist with English Nature's data validation by ensuring teams submit new agreement data for digitising, and to check the resultant spatial data which are disseminated monthly. It is important that SSSI units covered by new or renewed agreements, set up by English Nature and RDS, are reassessed regularly. Where the agreement addresses reasons for adverse condition so that target condition will eventually be restored, the land is reclassified as being in target condition ('unfavourable recovering'). By identifying SSSI units that are not yet in target condition, the spreadsheet assists in determining exactly what remedial work remains to be done to bring them into target condition.

2.5 'Joint Character Areas' (JCA)

JCAs describe the key characteristics of different parts of the English countryside. The SSSI condition data will be useful for ES as JCAs are being used as the basis of targeting the scheme. An online map of AE scheme statistics within JCAs will appear on the Natural England website at:

2.6 Views of the Data

The spreadsheet displays different views of the data on different layers. Navigation is via the front page of the spreadsheet – see Figure 1.

Figure 1 – front page of ‘Agri-Environment schemes in England – 2005/06 Data’ spreadsheet

AGRI ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES IN ENGLAND - 2005/6 Data
 Based on a cooperate project between English Nature and the Rural Development Service (RDS) on ESA, CSS and WES data, to illustrate the contribution made by these schemes to the delivery of the PSA target to get 95% of the SSSI series by area into favourable condition by 2010. Data on SSSI condition are the latest assessments up to 31/3/06.

Data for WES, ESA and CSS is from F/Y 2005/06

Summary data sheets are included by EN Area Team, by county, by Government Region, Joint Character Area, Habitat and by ESA (for the ESA data)

CSS Land Use Condition Data

ESA Detailed Tier Condition Data

For information about any site go to SSSI data

Detailed data are included on a site by site basis
 Detailed data are included on ESA tiers

[Click here to see EN View](#)
[Click here to see ESA View](#)
[Click here to see CSS View](#)
[Click here to see County/Region Split](#)
[Click here to see JCA Split](#)
[Click here to see SSSI Split](#)
[Click here to see Broad Habitat Split](#)
[Click here to see ESALand Use](#)

[Click at the top of any page to return to this INDEX](#)

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These sheets show the headline figures and renewal dates for the agreements and can be viewed here split by EN Area Team, ESA and Government Region respectively

Splits of the data by various aggregations.

Here the amount of land in each ESA Tier can be viewed.

2.7 The data are also used in the development of financial planning models, such as English Nature’s *PSALM-95* (PSA Logical Model towards 95%) which identifies the budget required to deliver the PSA target.

2.8 The methodology for compiling the data is set out in Annex 3.

3. Results - national and regional changes between 2002/3 and 2005/06

3.1 National changes

Direct comparisons between the 2002/3, 2003/4, 2004/05 and 2005/06 data from AE agreements within SSSIs are made in Table 2 and subsequent bar charts (Annex 1). The Schemes all show increased areas, and percentage area meeting the PSA target. All of the figures quoted within this section can be seen on the ‘EN View’ layer of the spreadsheet.

Figures show increases in:

- Total agreement area within CSS holding boundaries and ESA and WES agreement boundaries;
- Area meeting the target condition within CSS holding boundaries³ and ESA and WES agreement boundaries;
- CSS and ESA agreement expenditure (capital and annual payments made to the agreement holder).

3.2 Regional Changes

Annex 4 displays the 2002/3 and 2005/6 data by Government Office regions showing that:

- CSS is the best performing scheme in that over this period from 2002/03 to 2005/06 all of the change has been positive in all of the Regions ; and in most cases the increases are greater than 10%;
- Unfortunately there are some Regions showing negative changes in some figures. For instance:
 - In the East Midlands, the area under ESA agreements has decreased by 38%; and
 - In the South East, the number of units covered by WES agreements has decreased by 19%.
- However, not all negative figures demonstrate poor performance. For instance in the North-east Region, the cost of both WES and ESA Agreements has declined, but the area in favourable condition has increased.

4. Key messages

There are several key messages that can be drawn from comparing 2002/3 data and 2005/6 data.

4.1 Investment in the SSSI land through these three Schemes has risen from £21.6m in 2002/3 to £28m in 2005/06 (29.6 %)

This is very encouraging and demonstrates that the three schemes have been successful in focussing their investment onto SSSI land.

4.2 The total area of SSSI land within these Schemes has risen from 426,100 ha in 2002/3 to 634,589 ha in 2005/06 (32 %)

Overall the average cost of all agreements is £44 per ha:

- The average cost of WES Agreements is £32 per ha.
- The average cost of ESA Agreements within SSSIs is £71 per ha.

³ Source data for CSS are holding boundaries whereas for ESA and WES data agreements boundaries are used.

- The average cost of CSS Agreements within SSSI is £ £42 per ha.

4.3 The total area of land within these Schemes meeting the target condition has risen from 218,506 ha in 2002/3 to 445,593 ha in 2005/06 (104%).

This reflects the significant progress that has been made in ensuring that agreements on SSSI land should be delivering recovering or favourable condition where possible. However, it needs to be recognized that an AE agreement can only deal with management issues on land covered by that Agreement. In many cases there will be factors away from the SSSI that are affecting the condition of the SSSI land, or issues that cannot be addressed through the Agreement.

4.4 The Schemes are delivering improving value for money.

In 2002/03, over 93,000 ha under WES were in favourable condition. In 2005/06, for a broadly similar expenditure over 200,000 ha are in favourable condition.

Similar improvements are seen under ESA and CSS where the area in favourable condition has almost doubled for broadly similar expenditure between 2002/03 and 2005/06.

4.5 Within each AE Scheme, ESA, WES and CSS agreements have improved in SSSI condition from 2004/05.

Target condition has been enhanced by:

- Tougher environmental legislation concerning factors external to the SSSI agreement.
- Negotiation of large-scale stock reductions to combat overgrazing, for example under the 2nd year of the Sheep Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (SWES) which has achieved further reductions in over-grazing.
- Putting SSSI land into the most appropriate ESA tier to provide better management.
- Addition of CSS capital items or CSS special project funding.
- WES top-up payments given to CSS agreements.

Table 1.– AE agreement renewals on SSSI land before 2010 and after 2010

		WES		ESA		CSS	
		Total	Not yet in target condition	Total	Not yet in target condition	Total	Not yet in target condition
Area for renewal before 2010	ha	245,303	75,210	44,692	15,173	112,954	32,653
	%	88%	31%	32%	34%	55%	29%
	Agreement no.	2,239		674		1,182	
Area for renewal after 2010	ha	33,914	6,218	95,667	30,834	93,835	26,056
	%	12%	18.33%	68%	32%	45%	28%
	Agreement no.	72		1,514		1,273	

4.6 Total expenditure on ESA Schemes was £69.8m in 2005/06. £10m of this was spent on SSSI land.

4.7 Total Expenditure on CSS was £117.4m in 2005/06. £8.8m was spent on SSSI land.

5 Discussion and conclusion

- 5.1 The data that accompanies this report record the condition of SSSI units under CSS, ESA and WES agreement. It can be used to identify SSSI sites that are not yet in target condition so that appropriate management can be devised to restore them to target condition. Certain caveats must be taken into account when viewing the data. These are set out in Annex 2.
- 5.2 Achieving target condition on SSSIs on sites within AE agreements must be viewed as a long-term goal. If the SSSI unit is not yet in target condition it could be due to other factors outside of AE management control. If the SSSI unit is in target condition, the AE agreement will help maintain target condition even though this may take some time to improve further. The original ESA and CSS scheme objectives predate the PSA target. Thus, especially in older agreements, SSSI condition did not have the same priority as it does now. In addition, AE agreements are not the only mechanism that can contribute to achieving target condition.
- 5.4 ES was launched in 2005 and will increasingly become the major AE delivery mechanism on SSSIs. However, ES will not cover all types of SSSI features, and accordingly, a new Scheme to replace WES will be introduced in 2007.
- 5.5 Management of SSSI sites needs to be addressed at a local level, and ES will be targeted at delivering the necessary management action on such sites. Attention will be focussed on areas of land that are not yet in target condition and are not covered by one of the existing schemes but are eligible for ES. ES agreements on SSSI land will only be entered into if they will maintain or bring about target condition, in so far as this is feasible under the options available. It is expected that expiring WES agreements will transfer to ES where management options are suited to bringing the SSSI into target

condition, or maintaining it. Where they do not expire until after 2010 (the deadline for the PSA target), ESA and CSS agreement renewals will, if possible, need to be brought forward where agreements are not delivering target condition on SSSIs and need to be remedied, and do not expire until after the PSA deadline in 2010. This applies to agreements covering 63,108 ha.

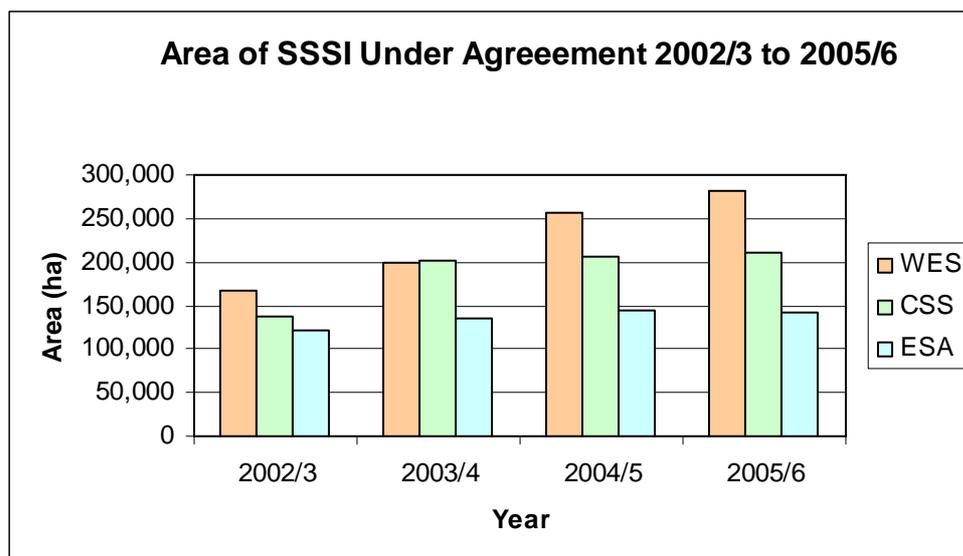
- 5.6 It is important that measures are taken to ensure that land already in target condition under existing schemes remains so. In addition, SSSIs lying adjacent to AE scheme agreement land must be identified so that appropriate management of such agreement land can make further contributions towards its target condition of the adjacent SSSI.
- 5.7 By focusing on how existing AE schemes and ES will work alongside each other to achieve the PSA target we will deliver an improved service to customers and make better use of resources. The establishment of Natural England will enable even closer working with these key land managers. In future years, data on SSSI condition will encompass land within extant ESA, CSS and WES agreements; and land in ELS, HLS and EWGS
- 5.8 The work undertaken under this project must be taken forward by Natural England.

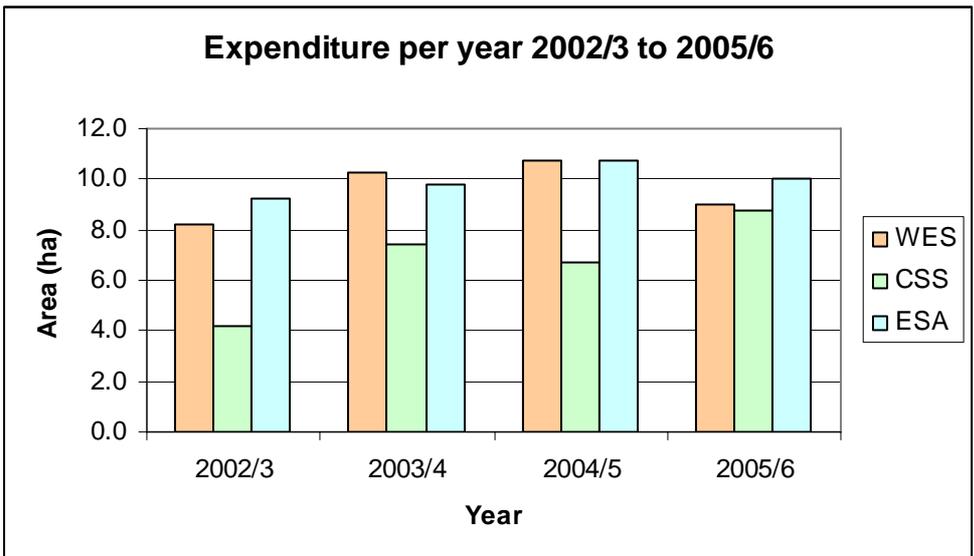
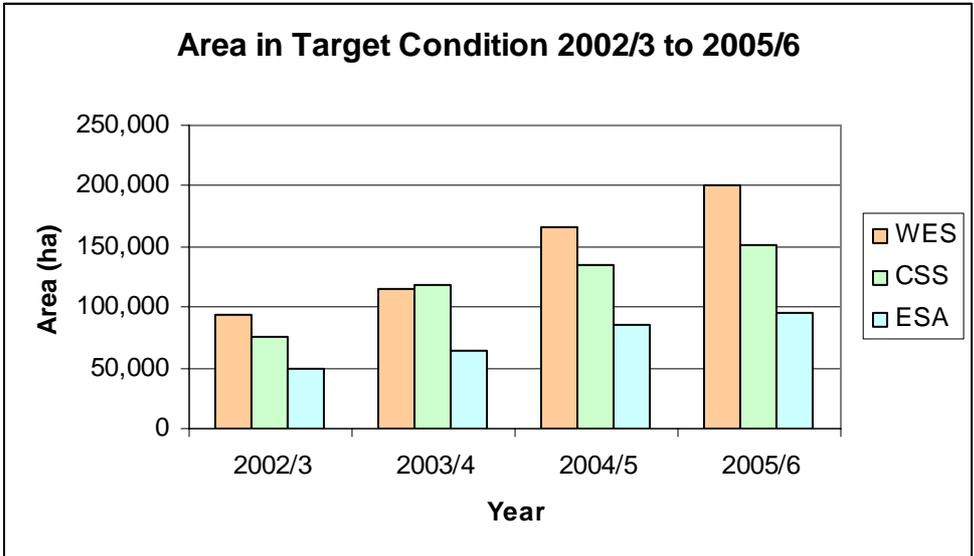
Annex 1

(I would like to see the figures below illustrated in a graph)

Table 2 - Increase (%) in overall agreement area (ha), area in target condition (ha) and expenditure (£) on AE agreements within SSSIs from 2002/3 to 2005/6

	Area of SSSI under agreement (ha)	Area in Target Condition (ha)	Expenditure (£m)
WES			
2002/3	167,221	93,652 (56%)	8.2
2003/4	200,362	115,752 (57.7%)	10.3
2004/5	255,989	166,050 (64.80%)	10.7
2005/6	282,220	200,143 (70.92%)	9.0
CSS			
2002/3	138,007	75,854 (55%)	4.2
2003/4	200,660	119,227 (59%)	7.4
2004/5	207,184	135,290 (65.3%)	6.7
2005/6	210,654	150,564 (71.47%)	8.8
ESA			
2002/3	120,872	49,000 (40.5%)	9.2
2003/4	135,686	63,323 (46.7%)	9.8
2004/5	144,583	85,118 (58.9%)	10.7
2005/6	141,715	94,886 (66.95%)	10.0





Annex 2

Caveats to the Report

There are several caveats associated with the data, which should be considered when viewing it.

- The figures relate to coincidence of CSS, ESA and WES agreements and SSSI land. Therefore, although ESA, CSS and WES agreements have successfully contributed to target condition of SSSIs on agreement land, environmental factors outside the control of AE schemes have also affected the condition.
- The objectives and design of these AE schemes up to 19 years ago predate the PSA target, when SSSI condition did not have the same priority as it does now. In addition, AE schemes do not only target biodiversity. Therefore, even where there is failure on the SSSI side to meet target condition on SSSIs, there are likely to be other environmental gains.
- Due to the six-year rolling programme of SSSI condition assessment, some of the condition data for SSSIs will be out of date. Thus stated condition may predate the implementation of AE schemes or may have improved since the assessment.

SSSIs can also straddle land across more than one holding, and can cross boundaries across farms that may or may not have an AE agreement. The issues relating to sites not yet in target condition may therefore lie out of the scope of an individual AE agreement.

Annex 3

Methodology

- 3.1 The data used in the spreadsheet were provided by English Nature and RDS. They relate to CSS, ESA and WES agreements that were live during the 2003, 04, 05 and 06 financial years and have Geographical Information System (GIS) digital boundaries. SSSI units within the English Nature Site Information System (ENSIS) database were analysed spatially to give habitat condition and agreement area within each AE scheme.
- 3.2 Source data are CSS holding boundaries and ESA and WES agreement boundaries. This was collected from RDS Regional Cartographic Units and English Nature area teams. Data were derived from intersecting AE agreements and SSSI units and are displayed in various spreadsheet layers.
- 3.3 CSS management data were derived from the Agri-Environment Scheme Information System (AESIS) as parcel centroids.

Annex 4

Regional changes on AE agreements within SSSIs between 2002/3 and 2003/4

'Change' indicates whether the area or cost has increased or decreased. '% Change' is colour coded as follows:

- Red - Decreased more than 10%
- Yellow – Decreased or increased no more than 10%
- Green – Increased more than 10%.

The count is of SSSIs, not units, and the numbers are different between the sum of the team totals and the total number of SSSIs. This is because some SSSIs are the shared responsibility of two teams. Similarly, in the ESA table the totals will not add up as SSSIs cover more than one ESA.)

		WES				ESA				CSS			
		2002/3	2005/6	Change	% Change	2002/3	2005/6	Change	% Change	2002/3	2005/6	Change	% Change
East Midlands	No. units	393	635	242	62%	274	183	-91	-33%	395	522	127	32%
	Area of agreements (ha)	3,670	19,460	15,790	430%	32,703	20,279	-12,424	-38%	7,064	8,163	1,099	16%
	Cost of agreements	£404,413	£618,223	£213,810	53%	£1,500,489	£1,115,039	-£385,450	-26%	£220,961	£373,006	£152,045	69%
	Area in fav/ recovering condition	2,769	13,000	10,231	370%	4,482	8,666	4,184	93%	4,626	6,413	1,787	39%
	Percent favourable/recovering condition	75%	67%	-9%	-11%	14%	43%	29%	204%	65%	79%	13%	20%
EASTERN	No. units	511	408	-103	-20%	573	581	8	1%	371	512	141	38%
	Area of agreements (ha)	11,974	12,166	192	2%	11,605	11,906	301	3%	7,581	8,258	677	9%
	Cost of agreements	£894,002	£729,101	-£164,901	-18%	£2,019,506	£2,128,144	£108,637	5%	£410,450	£606,885	£196,435	48%
	Area in fav/ recovering condition	10,408	11,266	858	8%	8,621	10,601	1,980	23%	4,688	5,564	876	19%
	Percent favourable/recovering condition	87%	93%	6%	7%	76%	89%	13%	17%	62%	67%	6%	9%
LONDON	No. units	4	14	10	250%					31	60	29	94%
	Area of agreements (ha)	25	376	351	1390%					827	1,007	180	22%
	Cost of agreements	£6,381	£9,328	£2,947	46%					£18,494	£41,391	£22,896	124%
	Area in fav/ recovering condition	25	346	321	1276%					647	839	192	30%
	Percent favourable/recovering condition	100%	92%	-8%	-8%					78%	83%	5%	7%
NORTH EAST	No. units	470	333	-137	-29%	191	194	3	2%	291	408	117	40%
	Area of agreements (ha)	36,291	39,581	3,290	9%	4,375	4,437	62	1%	27,200	33,478	6,278	23%
	Cost of agreements	£791,420	£611,376	-180,044	-23%	£665,445	£436,876	-£228,569	-34%	£616,508	£1,221,271	£604,764	98%
	Area in fav/ recovering condition	10,781	21,726	10,945	102%	3,631	3,888	257	7%	8,687	16,123	7,436	86%
	Percent favourable/recovering condition	30%	55%	25%	85%	84%	88%	4%	4%	32%	48%	16%	51%
NORTH WEST	No. units	600	554	-46	-8%	512	509	-3	-1%	433	564	131	30%
	Area of agreements (ha)	29,923	54,360	24,437	82%	26,805	34,956	8,151	30%	35,655	45,641	9,986	28%
	Cost of agreements	£1,044,658	£1,166,459	£121,802	12%	£1,035,848	£1,447,621	£411,773	40%	£997,240	£1,755,612	£758,372	76%
	Area in fav/ recovering condition	10,314	45,175	34,860	338%	5,476	25,177	19,702	360%	20,863	37,430	16,568	79%
	Percent favourable/recovering condition	34%	83%	49%	141%	20%	72%	52%	252%	59%	82%	24%	40%

		WES				ESA				CSS			
		2002/3	2005/6	Change	% Change	2002/3	2005/6	Change	% Change	2002/3	2005/6	Change	% Change
SOUTH EAST	No. units	890	723	-167	-19%	406	390	-16	-4%	811	1,818	1,007	124%
	Area of agreements (ha)	13,247	15,616	2,369	18%	7,143	7,451	309	4%	12,837	47,672	34,835	271%
	Cost of agreements	£1,908,063	£1,743,849	-164,214	-9%	£900,371	£974,110	£73,739	8%	£695,950	£2,275,863	£1,579,913	227%
	Area in fav/ recovering condition	10,323	12,940	2,618	25%	5,852	6,708	856	15%	10,077	39,454	29,378	292%
	Percent favourable/recovering condition	78%	83%	5%	6%	79%	90%	11%	14%	78%	83%	5%	6%
SOUTH WEST	No. units	1625	1,714	89	5%	804	876	72	9%	1063	1,557	494	46%
	Area of agreements (ha)	23,851	52,578	28,727	120%	27,348	41,917	14,569	53%	19,776	25,380	5,604	28%
	Cost of agreements	£1,673,560	£2,139,464	£465,904	28%	£2,300,228	£2,992,103	£691,874	30%	£520,481	£1,257,666	£737,185	142%
	Area in fav/ recovering condition	17,698	40,900	23,202	131%	16,342	29,674	13,332	82%	12,909	20,292	7,382	57%
	Percent favourable/recovering condition	74%	78%	4%	5%	54%	71%	17%	31%	65%	80%	15%	23%
WEST MIDS	No. units	479	472	-7	-1%	263	227	-36	-14%	236	371	135	57%
	Area of agreements (ha)	7,012	9,575	2,564	37%	5,640	4,587	-1,053	-19%	2,746	3,201	455	17%
	Cost of agreements	£414,435	£573,602	£159,168	38%	£385,327	£292,076	-£93,251	-24%	£116,633	£195,686	£79,053	68%
	Area in fav/ recovering condition	3,548	7,001	3,453	97%	1,982	3,409	1,427	72%	1,915	2,647	733	38%
	Percent favourable/recovering condition	51%	73%	23%	44%	34%	74%	40%	120%	70%	83%	13%	19%
YORKS	No. units	957	888	-69	-7%	243	329	86	35%	523	823	300	57%
	Area of agreements (ha)	41,225	78,508	37,284	90%	5,250	16,181	10,931	208%	24,321	37,854	13,533	56%
	Cost of agreements	£1,108,248	£1,380,610	£272,362	25%	£372,320	£715,211	£342,892	92%	£578,759	£1,183,621	£604,862	105%
	Area in fav/ recovering condition	27,061	47,790	20,729	77%	2,615	6,764	4,149	159%	11,442	21,801	10,359	91%
	Percent favourable/recovering condition	66%	61%	-5%	-7%	51%	42%	-9%	-18%	47%	58%	11%	24%