

Natural England Commissioned Report NECR091

Attitudes to Uplands Entry Level Stewardship

First published 22 February 2012

www.naturalengland.org.uk



Foreword

Natural England commission a range of reports from external contractors to provide evidence and advice to assist us in delivering our duties. The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England.

Background

Uplands Entry Level Stewardship (UELS) was introduced in July 2010. It is a new strand of the Environmental Stewardship Scheme for farmers and land managers with at least one parcel of eligible land in a Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA).

The four objectives of the research were:

- To assess the awareness of and attitudes towards UELS among farmers and land managers in the Severely Disadvantaged Areas.
- To identify the factors affecting uptake of UELS in general and of particular options within the scheme.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of targeted UELS advice and support.
- To evaluate the above on the basis of: previous participation in an agri-environment scheme; region; farm type; tenancy/ownership and farm size.

The methodological approach adopted included a telephone survey of 804 UELS agreement holders and eligible non-agreement holders and 40 more in-depth face-to-face interviews with a cross-section of UELS agreement and non-agreement holders.

The main aim of this report is to contribute to the evidence base required to monitor and evaluate the implementation of UELS.

It concludes, that UELS is seen in a positive light as a mechanism to help maintain the environmental benefits delivered by existing low intensive farming systems in the uplands. These farming systems are currently under threat from either a lack of active management in unproductive areas, or more intensive management on the more productive land and UELS is helping to maintain existing environmentally beneficial practices. The challenge now is for UELS to go beyond simply maintaining current farming systems and to encourage agreement holders to take up options that may require some changes to their management practices in order to enhance environmental outcomes. To achieve this aim, advice to farmers needs to focus more on maximising the environmental potential of the farm.

This report should be cited as:

Countryside and Community Research Institute. 2012. *Attitudes to Uplands Entry Level Stewardship*. Natural England Commissioned Reports, Number 091.

Natural England Project Manager - Lesley Blainey, Natural England, Alverton Court, Crosby Road, Northallerton, DL6 1AD lesley.j.blainey@naturalengland.org.uk

Contractor - Jane Mills, Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI), jmills@glos.ac.uk

Keywords - agri-environment scheme, UELS, attitudes, farmers, land managers, telephone survey, interviews, advice provision, scheme uptake, options, management practices, environmental benefits

Further information

This report can be downloaded from the Natural England website: www.naturalengland.org.uk. For information on Natural England publications contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0845 600 3078 or e-mail enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk.

This report is published by Natural England under the Open Government Licence for public sector information. You are encouraged to use, and re-use, information subject to certain conditions. For details of the licence [[see here](#)]. If any information within the report such as maps or data cannot be used commercially this will be made clear within the report.

ISSN 2040-5545

© Natural England and other parties 2012

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank the Natural England and Defra Steering Group, Lesley Blainey, Andrew Cooke, Emma Clare, Rebecca Brione, Lindsey Clothier and David Devaney for their support and assistance through all stages of the research.

Thank you also to the telephone interview team at the Royal Agricultural College and particularly Sally Storey and Bridget Petty for managing the telephone interviewing so efficiently and delivering to a tight timeframe.

Also a particular thanks to John Walden and others at the Foundation for Common Land for helping the research team to identify commons who had not yet signed a UELS agreement in order to seek their views on the scheme.

Finally, the researchers are indebted to the farmers (and farming families) who took part in the survey for their time, information and views, without whom this report would not be possible.

The research team were:

Project Leader: Jane Mills

Peter Gaskell
Chris Short
Will Manley
Carol Kambites
Nick Lewis
Mike Clark
Nigel Boatman, Fera

List of acronyms

Abbreviation	Full title
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CCRI	Countryside and Community Research Institute
CLA	Country Land and Business Association
CSS	Countryside Stewardship Scheme
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
ELS	Entry Level Stewardship
ES	Environmental Stewardship
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
ETIP	ELS Training and Information Programme
EU	European Union
EWGS	English Woodland Grants Scheme
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
HFA	Hill Farming Allowance
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship
LFA	Less Favoured Area
NE	Natural England
NFU	National Farmers Union
NVZ	Nitrate Vulnerable Zone
RPA	Rural Payments Agency
RSPB	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SDA	Severely Disadvantaged Area
SLR	The Standard Labour Requirement
SFP	Single Farm Payment
SPS	Single Payment Scheme
SSSIs	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
UELS	Upland Entry Level Stewardship

Summary

Introduction

The main aim of this report was to contribute to the evidence base required to monitor and evaluate the implementation of Uplands Entry Level Stewardship (UELS) which was introduced in July 2010. This is a dedicated upland strand of the Environmental Stewardship Scheme for farmers and land managers with at least one parcel of eligible land in a Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA).

The four objectives of the research were:

- To assess the awareness of and attitudes towards UELS among farmers and land managers in the Severely Disadvantaged Areas.
- To identify the factors affecting uptake of UELS in general and of particular options within the scheme.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of targeted UELS advice and support.
- To evaluate the above on the basis of: previous participation in an agri-environment scheme; region; farm type; tenancy/ownership and farm size.

Methodology

The methodological approach adopted was a telephone survey of 804 UELS agreement holders and eligible non-agreement holders and 40 more in-depth face-to-face interviews with a cross-section of UELS agreement and non-agreement holders.

The sampling strategy followed the general approach taken by Defra in its Uplands Farm Practices Survey (Uplands FPS). The Uplands FPS took as its sampling unit all Single Payment Scheme (SPS) claimants who had land in the Less Favoured Area (LFA) subject to the following size thresholds to ensure that the survey was restricted to farms that were more upland in character. To be included in the survey, businesses had to have:

- at least 20 hectares of LFA land and at least a third of their total land area contained within the LFA; or
- at least 5 hectares of land entirely within the LFA.

The population was further reduced to exclude businesses that were claiming the Upland Transitional Payment (UTP), a compensatory payment for those with existing “classic” agri-environment agreements (Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) or Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) agreements), or had missing information. The population was then divided into two groups based on whether or not they had a UELS agreement by 19th December 2010. As UELS agreements on common land are not identified within the SPS database a separate sampling frame was constructed for common land.

Respondents to the agreement, non-agreement and common land telephone surveys were asked if they were willing to take part in a more in-depth survey, which formed the sample population for the face-to-face interviews. The face-to-face, semi-structured interview guide was designed to explore in more depth the issues raised in the telephone survey. The low response rate for the non-agreement holder telephone survey means caution should be taken when interpreting these results at the regional level.

Key findings

Awareness of UELS

There appears to be a high level of awareness of UELS amongst upland farmers. Only 9% of the non-agreement holders surveyed had never heard of UELS. The findings suggest that this high level of awareness was achieved through the proactive approach adopted by Natural England in sending letters to all potential participants and the extensive media coverage.

Attitudes towards UELS

Scheme implementation

The telephone survey identified that around 77% of all agreement holders thought that the scheme was easy to implement and did not interfere with the smooth running of the holding (66%). The majority of agreement holders appeared able to meet their points target easily without many changes to existing farm practices and acknowledged the scheme's endorsement of good farming practice.

Scheme payments

The majority of agreement holders thought that the payments for the scheme were generous or sufficient (66%), although some felt that the payments did not cover the costs of the work involved (24%), particularly in relation to the boundary maintenance options.

Option choices

Most options were chosen on the basis of requiring the least amount of management change or assisting with boundary maintenance work, rather than maximising the environmental potential of the farm. The mandatory options (UX1-UX3) were considered as good farming practice and equivalent to implementing cross-compliance measures. Few options were mentioned as causing significant land management changes or practical difficulties. The options mentioned most frequently as requiring significant changes and therefore greatest additionality were: UL21 No cutting strips in meadows; EF1 to 11 Arable land; UJ12 Winter livestock removal next to watercourses; EK1 to 4 Grassland outside SDA; and UL17 No supplementary feeding on moorland. Two thirds of the respondents had one or more options in their UELS agreement that continued options in previous agri-environment schemes.

Environmental effectiveness

Most survey respondents felt that UELS was effective in meeting its environmental objectives (82%). UELS was viewed as a means of supporting the continuation of existing farming systems that were already producing environmentally beneficial outcomes and which were threatened by current socio-economic pressures. However, of the commons interviewed, nearly half of respondents felt the UELS was ineffective in providing the environmental improvement stated in the scheme's literature. Reasons for this related to comparison with HLS agreements which often sit alongside UELS common land agreements and are considered to have a greater impact on the environment and to the misconception that UELS limits stocking rates, causing undergrazing.

Common land agreements

A number of specific issues in relation to common land agreements were raised. Around 50% of landowners were taking a proportion of the UELS payment and a third of these did not have any involvement in implementing the agreement, which caused resentment among some agreement holders. Also inactive graziers who no longer received HFA payment and were not included in UELS agreements felt they were losing out.

Factors affecting uptake

Smallholdings

A high proportion of non-agreement holders appear to be farms of a very small size (53%). Also a high proportion of non-agreement holder respondents derived their income from non-agricultural sources only (30%) and they are less likely to have claimed the HFA payment. Thus, it would appear that a large proportion of those not joining UELS are part-time or lifestyle farmers. A number of these believed they were ineligible for the scheme.

Other reasons cited for not joining UELS related to perceived concerns about the levels of paperwork involved (16%) and the economic impact of the scheme on the farm business (15%).

Tenure

A recent Defra report suggests that farms with tenancy agreements (of at least one year) are more likely to participate in UELS than owner occupiers¹. As landlords can enter their land into an UELS agreement, tenants risk financially losing out on UELS compared to the situation under HFA. It would appear that many landowner/tenant partnerships have responded constructively to this situation. In the agreement holder telephone survey those who needed landlord consent to join had little difficulty in gaining it and only around 5% had experienced difficulties. Nonetheless, there is evidence that problems with the landlord/tenant relationship have occurred in some situations. The telephone survey results indicated that around one quarter of the non-agreement tenants perceived potential difficulties in gaining the consent of their landlord should they wish to apply. In particular, conflicts appear more likely to arise where there are short term lets or annual grazing licences although the number of face-to-face interviewees who had experienced these conflicts were small.

Advice and support

A high proportion of agreement holders (84%) had received advice when preparing their application. Whilst for many the paperwork associated with the application was considered daunting (46%) and needed simplifying (27%) and was also a factor in deterring some potential participants from applying (16%), a high proportion of agreement holders (71%) found the scheme easy to join and were undeterred by the paperwork, in part due to the extent of advice and support potential applicants received.

The general view of the advice provision was positive, particularly the advice received from private consultants. Natural England, as a delivery agent and key advice provider, was also felt by agreement holders to be delivering good quality advice both via the helpdesk (88% rated good) and Natural England events (88% rated good). The experience of non-agreement holders of the advice offered by the NE helpdesk was more negative, with 40% of non-agreement holders rating the quality of the advice from this source as poor, although rating highly the advice from NE project officers (73%). This implies that such a group would benefit most from a more personal, one-to-one advisory approach. The Natural England scheme booklet as a source of advice was largely well received and considered an improvement on the literature from previous schemes.

Some (20%) of the advice received by agreement holders influenced option choices and particularly encouraged the uptake of EL 1-5 Grassland and moor inside SDA. However, often the advice focused on identifying options that had minimal impact on the existing farm management practices, rather than maximising the environmental potential of the farm.

¹ Uptake of Uplands ELS and the Uplands Transitional Payment: Initial monitoring results July 2010 to January 2011. Defra Agricultural Change and Environment Observatory Research Report No. 26

A fifth of agreement holders lacked familiarity with their options, reflecting in some cases a low degree of engagement with the application process. In some situations applicants were happy to take on-board the advisors recommendations and simply rubber stamp the application. This sometimes resulted in a lack of understanding of the requirements which led to frustrations about the prescriptions being too inflexible and interfering with farm management.

Conclusions and recommendations

The awareness of UELS in upland areas is high. Commercial landowners with larger areas of SDA land rather than smallholders or lifestyle farmers are more likely to enter into a UELS agreement. A number of non-agreement holders with small or very small farm sizes, believed they were ineligible for the scheme.

Recommendation 1

If it is considered desirable to attract more small holders to increase the overall level of uptake, consider focusing promotional material specifically at smallholders. Also clarify the eligibility criteria for small farms or those not previously eligible for the HFA payment. Furthermore, recognise that smallholders may have different advice needs compared to the larger, more commercial farms. This will involve more effort for smaller gains, unless farmers in areas of particularly low uptake are targeted, where the cumulative effect of bringing in smallholders will have an impact.

Around half of the non-agreement holders did not perceive any difficulties in gaining landlord consent should they decide to apply for UELS, although a quarter did envisage difficulties in obtaining such consent. It appears that some landlords are deterred from allowing tenants to claim on UELS land believing that they have to commit to a 5 year rental agreement.

Recommendation 2

If it is considered desirable to increase the level of uptake on rented SDA land, consider further clarification of the guidance for applicants on landlord consent for those with shorter tenancy agreements. Also consider focusing existing guidance on non-farming landlords who may be less aware of their management control obligations under UELS.

UELS is mostly considered by agreement holders as effective in meeting its environmental objectives and many of the options selected are thought to help maintain existing environmentally beneficial farming practices. There is evidence that many applicants tend to focus on the points threshold and ease of implementation when selecting options, rather than considering the environmental benefits. Only a small proportion of options were cited as requiring significant land management change. Significantly, 20% of agreement holder respondents lacked familiarity with their options which may impact on the achievement of the scheme's environmental outcomes and potentially increases the risk of a breach of their agreements.

Recommendation 3

If it is felt that the environmental benefits of UELS need increasing, there is scope to further encourage those with previous agreements to take-up new options and to encourage the uptake of those options requiring greater management. This could be achieved through targeted advice and support and the re-design of the menu of options (split lists). Additional advice provision and/or awareness raising may be helpful in addressing agreement holders familiarity with their options.

Advice provided by advisors is highly rated, but there is evidence that in some cases the agreement holders were disengaged from the application process and in the selection of their options. This is reflected in the fact that 20% of agreement holders were unfamiliar with their options.

Recommendation 4

If it is considered desirable to increase agreement holder's understanding of the environmental objectives of the scheme, consider further guidance and encouragement of advisors to engage agreement holders more fully in the option choices. In particular, consider improved training and guidance for independent and ETIP² advisors, possibly working with professional organisations, such as Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV).

Although not a widespread occurrence, there is some evidence that a number of landowners and some inactive graziers are withholding their consent for entry of commons into UELS.

Recommendation 5

If it is considered desirable to increase the overall uptake of UELS common land agreements then Natural England should consider providing clearer guidance on the interactions between graziers (active and inactive) and landowners, with clear examples of what is and is not acceptable within the spirit of the scheme.

Some commoners with no previous experience of agri-environment schemes are deterred from entering UELS due to the perceived complexity of establishing an appropriate commoner's association.

Recommendation 6

If it is considered desirable to increase the uptake of UELS common land agreements for those common with no previous experience of agri-environment schemes, then consider providing more support and guidance and a framework outlining the requirements of a commons association and draft internal agreements.

There was evidence of a misunderstanding of some option requirements and particularly in relation to supplementary feeding in adverse weather conditions, following an exceptionally harsh winter.

Recommendation 7

If it is considered desirable to improve agreement holder's satisfaction with their UELS agreements, consider clarifying the situation that supplementary feeding is permitted in adverse weather conditions.

The scheme payments were largely considered sufficient, but there was some concern over the payment rates for the boundary works, especially as agri-environment schemes can inflate contractors' rates and there is a shortage of skilled labour which also leads to inflated prices. There was evidence that stone wall maintenance options EB11 and UB11 were being used for restoration rather than simply maintenance work.

Recommendation 8

If it is considered desirable to improve agreement holder's satisfaction with their UELS agreements, consider clarifying in scheme documentation that options EB11 and UB11 are for maintenance rather than restoration of stone walls.

The UELS scheme booklet was well regarded and considered an improvement on previous scheme's documentation. One potential area for improvement is greater clarification of the interaction between UELS and ELS and HLS options.

² ELS Training and Information Programme

Recommendation 9

If it is considered desirable to improve the application process for applicants with existing ES agreements, consider clarifying the interaction between UELS and ELS and HLS in scheme documentation.

In several cases both in the telephone survey and face-to-face interviews, options were not entered into the agreement or options in previous agreements removed because the points target had been met.

Recommendation 10

If it is considered desirable to improve the environmental outcomes of UELS, then in the longer term, consider rewarding those who exceed their points target in order to achieve greater environmental gains.

In conclusion, the UELS scheme was seen in a positive light as a mechanism to help maintain the environmental benefits delivered by existing low intensive farming systems in the uplands. These farming systems are currently under threat from either a lack of active management in unproductive areas, or more intensive management on the more productive land and UELS is helping to maintain existing environmentally beneficial practices. The challenge now is for UELS to go beyond simply maintaining current farming systems and to encourage agreement holders to take up options that may require some changes to their management practices in order to enhance environmental outcomes. To achieve this aim, advice to farmers needs to focus more on maximising the environmental potential of the farm.

Contents

Acknowledgements	1
List of acronyms	ii
Summary	iii
Introduction	iii
Methodology	iii
Key findings	iv
Conclusions and recommendations	vi
1 Introduction	1
Background to the Uplands Entry Level Stewardship scheme	1
Evaluation of farmer attitudes to UELS	1
Report structure	2
2 Methods	3
Development of the methodology	3
Telephone survey sampling framework	3
Face-to face interviews sampling framework	7
Data analysis	7
3 Telephone survey results	9
Telephone survey response rates	9
General farm characteristics	10
Awareness and motivations	18
Option choices	23
Experience of UELS	34
Advice and support	39
4 Face to face interview results	49
Awareness of UELS	49
Motivations for joining UELS	50
Reasons for not joining UELS	52
Attitudes towards UELS	52
Agreement holders' views on points/payments	53
Increase in agreement holder's environmental knowledge	54
Agreement holders' views on environmental effectiveness of UELS	54
Agreement holders' view on tenure issues	55
Agreement holders' option choices	56
Reasons for agreement holders not taking up other options	59
Experience of advice and support with application process	60
5 Common Land UELS Agreements	64

	General information about the common land	64
	Awareness and motivations	66
	Motivations for joining	66
	Overall experience of UELS	69
	Experience of advice and support	71
	Face-to-face interviews with common land agreement holders	73
6	Discussion of findings	77
	Comparison of agreement holder and non-agreement holder key	77
	Awareness of UELS	78
	Motivations for joining UELS	78
	Attitudes to UELS	79
	Tenure issues	79
	Common land issues	80
	Option choices	80
	Environmental effectiveness and additionality	81
	Advice and support	82
7	Conclusions and recommendations	84

Appendices

Appendix 1 Agreement holder and non-agreement holder telephone survey questionnaire	87
Appendix 2 Options considered in analysis	103
Appendix 3 Reasons for not entering options into agreement	104
Appendix 4 Telephone survey results	107

List of tables

Table 2.1 Distribution of UELS agreement holders and non-agreement holders by region as of 19 th December 2010	4
Table 2.2 Telephone survey sampling frame based a sample of 960	6
Table 2.3 UELS common land agreement holder sample	6
Table 3.1 Telephone survey sample	9
Table 3.2 Information sources raising awareness about UELS	18
Table 3.3 Reasons for joining UELS (%)	19
Table 3.4 Importance of scheme payments and encouraging wildlife in decision to join UELS	20
Table 3.5 Views on applying for UELS	21
Table 3.6 Reasons for not applying for UELS	21
Table 3.7 Changes on farm leading to possible reconsideration of applying	22
Table 3.8 Other farmers' views on UELS	23
Table 3.9 Familiarity with options in UELS	24
Table 3.10 Options previously undertaken as part of everyday management (%)	25
Table 3.11 Options undertaken in previous AES or as part of everyday management	26
Table 3.12 Options undertaken within a previous agri-environment scheme	27
Table 3.13 Options complement/interact with existing AES (% with existing AES) (%)	28
Table 3.14 Options complimenting or interacting with existing AES agreements on the farm	29
Table 3.15 Options requiring significant land management changes (% of familiar with existing AES)	30
Table 3.16 Options requiring significant changes in land management and were difficult to implement	31
Table 3.17 Experienced difficulties in implementing options (%)	32
Table 3.18 Reasons for implementation difficulties encountered	33
Table 3.19 Options not chosen for specific reasons	34
Table 3.20 Impact of UELS on workload	35
Table 3.21 Sufficiency of UELS payments (%)	36
Table 3.22 Environmental effectiveness of UELS	37
Table 3.23 Agreement holders' attitudes to UELS (%)	38
Table 3.24 Sources of advice and support	40
Table 3.25 Quality of main sources of advice	41
Table 3.26 Those familiar with options by source of advice	42
Table 3.27 Option choices influenced by advice	42
Table 3.28 Extent to which advice changed choice of options	42
Table 3.29 Options included due to external advice	43
Table 3.30 Follow-up advice or support to help with UELS implementation	43
Table 3.31 Sources of follow-up advice	43

Table 3.32 Quality of follow-up advice (%)	44
Table 3.33 Suggested changes to improve UELS – Agreement holders	44
Table 3.34 Further comments on UELS – Non-agreement holders	48
Table 4.1 Face-to-face interview sample	49
Table 5.1 UELS common land agreement holder sample	64
Table 5.2 Previous agri-environment scheme experience	65
Table 5.3 Commons grazing rights	65
Table 5.4 Was gaining consent from the landowner straightforward?	65
Table 5.5 Commons where landowners receive proportion of UELS payment	65
Table 5.6 Comparison of landowners taking proportion of UELS payment against involvement in agreement implementation (%)	66
Table 5.7 Sources of information	66
Table 5.8 Reasons for joining UELS	67
Table 5.9 Views of other common land associations	67
Table 5.10 Options undertaken previously and land management changes and practical difficulties	68
Table 5.11 Impact of UELS on workload	69
Table 5.12 Proportion of Common land UELS activities undertaken by commoners and contractors	69
Table 5.13 Sufficiency of payments	69
Table 5.14 Environmental effectiveness of UELS	70
Table 5.15 Agreement holders' attitudes to common land UELS	70
Table 5.16 Number of meetings attended to develop UELS agreement	71
Table 5.17 Sources of advice and support	72
Table 5.18 Quality of main sources of advice	72
Table 5.19 Extent to which advice changed choice of options	72
Table 6.1 Comparison of agreement holder and non-agreement holder key characteristics	77
Appendix 2:	
Table A Options considered in analysis	103
Appendix 3:	
Table B Reasons for not entering options into agreement	104
Appendix 4:	
Table C Farm type by upland region (agreement holders and non-agreement holders) (%)	107
Table D Farm size (SLR) by upland region (%)	108
Table E Area of SDA land on sample holdings by upland region (%)	109
Table F Main sources of household income by upland region (%)	110
Table G Enterprise mix on SDA land (%)	111
Table H Age of the main decision maker by upland region (%)	112
Table I Previously receiving HFA payment by upland region (%)	113

Table J Percentage of sample with land rented by upland region (%)	114
Table K Ease in gaining landlord consent by region (%)	114
Table L Agreement holders and non-agreement holders renting out land in SDA by region (%)	115
Table M Discussed UELS with other farmers (%)	116
Table N Advice sought when preparing application (%)	118

List of figures

Figure 2.1 Upland Regions	5
Figure 3.1 Sample and population distribution by upland region	10
Figure 3.2 Farm type (agreement holders and non-agreement holders)	11
Figure 3.3 Farm size (SLR)	12
Figure 3.4 Area of SDA land on sample holdings	12
Figure 3.5 Main sources of household income	13
Figure 3.6 Enterprise mix on SDA land	14
Figure 3.7 Age of the main decision maker	15
Figure 3.8 Agreement holders and non agreement holders previously claiming HFA payment	15
Figure 3.9 Percentage of sample with land rented	16
Figure 3.10 Ease in gaining landlord consent	17
Figure 3.11 Agreement holders and non-agreement holders renting out all or some of their land in SDA	17
Figure 3.12 Discussed UELS with other farmers	22
Figure 3.13 Advice sought when preparing application	39

1 Introduction

Background to the Uplands Entry Level Stewardship scheme

- 1.1 Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) is the most basic strand of the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ES) a scheme administered by Natural England (NE) to reward farmers and land managers for the delivery of environmental and landscape benefits. The broad objectives of ELS include protection of habitats and biodiversity, maintenance of landscape character, conservation of historic buildings and features, protection of natural resources, such as soil and water, and genetic conservation. It is intended that these measures will also deliver benefits to rural communities and help mitigate the effects of climate change on the natural and managed environment. For entry to ELS, participating farmers choose from a range of environmental management options, each of which earns them a number of points to meet a threshold value based on farm size. The farmer receives a fixed annual payment for each hectare of land entered into agreement. ELS is voluntary and non-competitive and there is no minimum farm size for qualification. It has a whole farm approach; with farmers and landowners rewarded for continuing with and/or adopting beneficial farming practices.
- 1.2 Uplands ELS (UELS) was made available in July 2010 to include a dedicated upland strand for farmers and land managers with at least one parcel of eligible land in a Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA). A range of new management options appropriate for upland regions are included to widen the scope of agreements on upland farms and holdings. In addition, there are set mandatory requirements that all agreement holders must follow and a higher points threshold. Uplands ELS provides farmers with higher payment levels than ELS, in recognition of the challenges of upland land management and the additional requirements and points total needed. All land that is farmed within SDAs is eligible for UELS, although payments cannot be received for land with existing Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) or Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) agreements. Farmers with land in these schemes may be able to claim an Upland Transitional Payment (UTP) to compensate for the loss of HFA payments until these agreements expire or enter land not under these schemes into UELS. Existing ELS and Organic ELS (OELS) can be replaced with UELS, and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements can be amended to include UELS.

Evaluation of farmer attitudes to UELS

- 1.3 The main aim of this research project is to contribute to the evidence base required to monitor and evaluate the implementation of UELS. The project aims as set out in the tender specification are:
 - to assess the awareness of and attitudes towards UELS among farmers and land managers in the Severely Disadvantaged Areas;
 - to identify the factors affecting uptake of UELS in general and of particular options within the scheme;
 - to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted UELS advice and support; and
 - to evaluate the above on the basis of: previous participation in an agri-environment scheme; region; farm type; tenancy/ownership and farm size.
- 1.4 The methodological approach adopted included a telephone survey of 804 UELS agreement holders and eligible non-agreement holders and 40 more in-depth face-to-face interviews with a cross-section of UELS agreement and non-agreement holders.

Report structure

- 1.5 The remainder of this report is divided into five sections. Section 2 provides details of the methodological approach adopted. The results of the telephone survey are presented in Section 3 and the findings from the face-to-face interviews are provided in Section 4. Section 5 presents the findings specifically relating to UELS common land agreements. The results of the telephone survey and face-to-face interviews are drawn together and discussed in the final section which also presents some conclusions and implications for policy change.

2 Methods

Development of the methodology

2.1 The basic framework for the methodology was outlined in the project specification, and was subsequently refined and developed by CCRI after consultation with the project steering group as the study progressed. The key stages in the research process were:

- devising the sampling framework;
- telephone survey of UELS agreement holders and non-agreement holders;
- face-to-face interviews with UELS agreement and non-agreement holders; and
- data analysis.

Telephone survey sampling framework

2.2 The aim of the telephone survey was two-fold:

- to obtain a statistically representative pattern of the general attitudes to and awareness of UELS in SDAs, factors affecting uptake, selection of options and general views on advice and support provision; and
- to inform the selection of the cross-section of farms required for the in-depth face-to-face interviews.

Sampled population

2.3 The sampling strategy followed the general approach taken by Defra in its Uplands Farm Practices Survey (Uplands FPS) (Defra, 2009)³. The Uplands FPS took as its sampling unit all Single Payment Scheme (SPS) claimants who had land in the Less Favoured Area (LFA), subject to certain thresholds (see below). For this research project the sampling frame was required to identify SPS claimants with land in the SDA but also to identify:

- Businesses eligible for UELS who had joined the scheme (Agreement holders); and
- Businesses eligible for UELS who had not joined the scheme (Non-agreement holders).

2.4 The sampling frame needed to exclude businesses that were not eligible for UELS, as they were claiming the UTP.

2.5 As no single database existed to provide the required information Defra, had to merge data from four different datasets to provide the sampling frame:

- 2010 Single Payment Scheme (SPS) claimants;
- June Survey Register;
- UELS agreement holder list; and
- 2011 UTP recipients.

³ Defra Agricultural Change and Environment Observatory (2009) The Farm Practices Survey 2009: The Uplands and other Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) Survey Report, DACEO Research Report No. 16.

- 2.6 In 2010 there were 12,390 SPS claimants with land in the SDA. This figure was reduced to 9,546 by applying the size thresholds that were also applied to the Uplands FPS in order to reduce the survey burden on farmers where LFA land was not a significant part of their farm area and to exclude very small land holdings. To be included in the survey, businesses had to have:
1. at least 20 hectares of LFA land and at least a third of their total land area contained within the LFA; or
 2. at least 5 hectares of land entirely within the LFA.
- 2.7 This ensured that the survey was restricted to farms that were more upland in character.
- 2.8 The population was further reduced to 7,494 when businesses which were claiming UTP or had missing information were excluded. The population was then divided into two groups based on whether or not they had an UELS agreement by 19th December 2010 (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Distribution of UELS agreement holders and non-agreement holders by region as of 19th December 2010

Upland region	UELS agreement holder	% of total	Does not have a UELS agreement	% of total	Total
Northumberland and North Pennines	606	44	761	56	1,367
Lake District	251	28	633	72	884
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	375	34	716	66	1,091
North York Moors	140	37	240	63	380
Peak District	274	20	1,083	80	1,357
South Pennines	210	22	742	78	952
Welsh Borders	109	19	457	81	566
South West Moors	221	25	676	75	897
Total	2,186	29	5,308	71	7,494

Source: Defra and Natural England figures

- 2.9 Uptake of UELS appears to be greatest in the Northumberland and North Pennines and North York Moors regions and lowest in the Welsh Borders and South Pennines and Peak District regions.

Sample stratification

- 2.10 It was important for the purposes of this evaluation to obtain good coverage of both UELS agreement and non-agreement holders. Adoption or non-adoption of UELS provided the first level of stratification. The Uplands FPS recognised that each of the upland regions in England (See Figure 2.1) has its own unique characteristics and agricultural practices can vary between regions. Location according to upland region provided the second level of stratification.

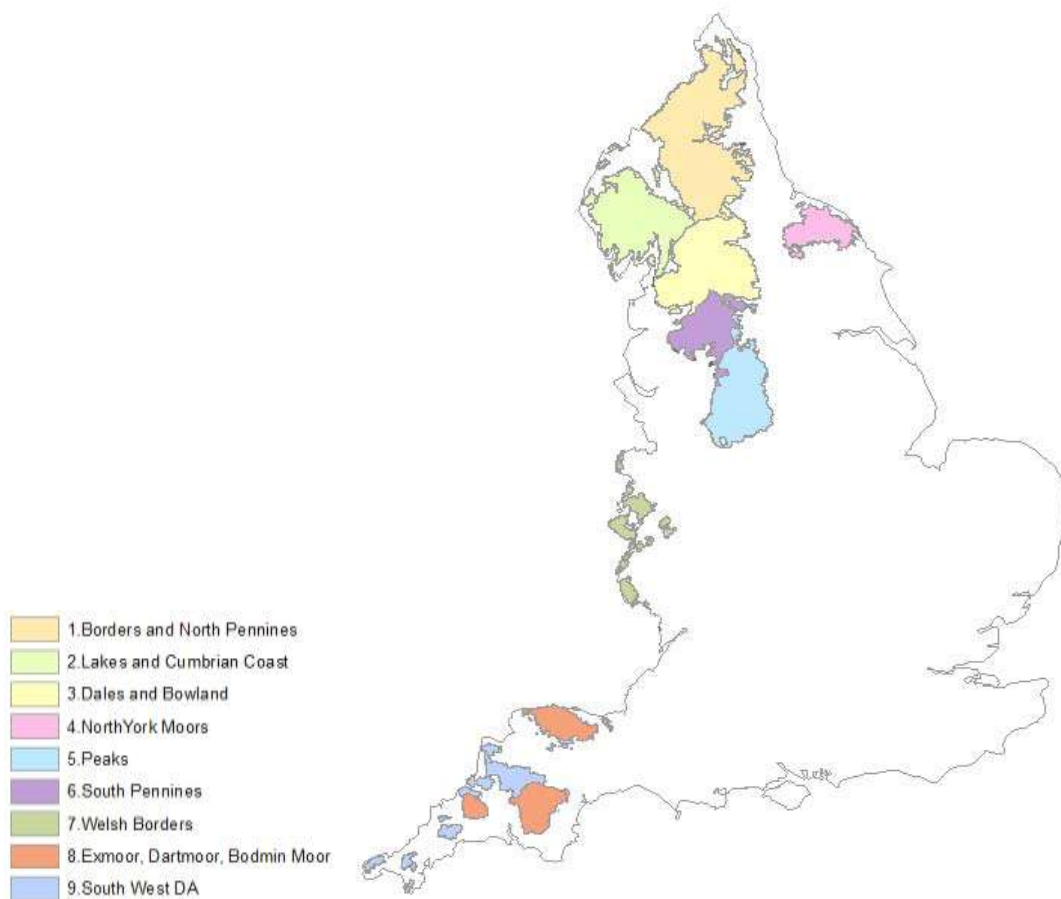


Figure 2.1 Upland Regions ⁴

Sample allocation

2.11 To investigate the awareness of and attitudes towards UELS and identify the factors affecting uptake of UELS a sample of 960 farmers was selected, equally divided (480) by agreement holders and non-agreement holders. The sample was then stratified by region with the caveat that no region fell below a minimum of 30 cases⁵ each for agreement holders and non-agreement holders. The resulting sample allocation is set out in Table 2.2.

⁴ Did not sample in 9. South West DA

⁵ For the calculation of population estimates a minimum of 30 cases is needed in the population's size to provide confidence in regional results.

Table 2.2 Telephone survey sampling frame based a sample of 960

Upland region	UELS agreement holders	Non-agreement holders	Total
Northumberland and North Pennines	85	85	170
Lake District	57	57	114
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	70	70	140
North York Moors	30	30	60
Peak District	84	84	168
South Pennines	61	61	122
Welsh Borders	36	36	72
South West Moors	57	57	114
Total	480	480	960

2.12 To cover possible non-responses, three replacement samples were selected from each region. All farm businesses were sent a letter prior to the interview giving details of the survey. Non-agreement holder farm businesses were given an opportunity to email or ring to opt out of the survey.

2.13 As UELS agreements on common land are not identified within the SPS database, a separate sampling frame was constructed for common land. In total, 31 telephone interviews were conducted with common land UELS agreement holders, representing around 29% of the total 107 UELS common land agreements signed up in mid December 2011⁶. The sample was selected from the UELS database aiming for a broad representation across the eight regions (see Table 2.3). In most instances, the interview was conducted with the Chair or the Secretary of the common land association. In a few cases it was held with the land agent who was involved in managing the agreement.

Table 2.3 UELS common land agreement holder sample

Upland region	No. of interviews
Northumberland and North Pennines	4
Lake District	5
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	8
North York Moors	1
Peak District	0
South Pennines	4
Welsh Borders	2
The SW Moors	7
Total	31

2.14 Ten telephone interviews were also conducted with common land non-agreement holders. The sample for these interviews was derived through the researchers own network and with assistance from the Foundation for Common land.

⁶ Population estimates were not calculated for common agreement holders because of the low number of respondents.

Telephone questionnaire

- 2.15 The telephone questionnaires were divided into separate sections, targeted at specific areas of the research. Thus, for the agreement holder survey, information was collected on:
- the farm business;
 - awareness of UELS and motivations for joining the scheme;
 - UELS option choices; and
 - UELS advice and support.
- 2.16 The questionnaires were designed to ensure that sufficient data was collected to address the research questions, but also contained open questions to solicit qualitative responses that could provide an insight into certain aspects of the scheme. The agreement holder questionnaire was designed to take a maximum of 20 minutes and the non-agreement holder questionnaire, a maximum of 10 minutes. A copy of the agreement holder and non-agreement telephone questionnaires can be found at Appendix 1.
- 2.17 A pilot questionnaire survey was carried out with three agreement holders. This enabled identification of any possible misinterpretation of questions, and enhanced the question sequence, length and clarity of instructions.
- 2.18 One objective of the research was to identify farmers' attitudes to individual options. Due to the large number of potential options in the scheme (ELS - 46 options, UELS - 24) the options were grouped into a small number of features and management categories. These are presented in Appendix 2. Prior to each telephone interview, the interviewer was provided with a print-out detailing the UELS options for each agreement. This enabled the interviewer to provide prompts as required.

Face-to face interviews sampling framework

- 2.19 Respondents to the agreement, non-agreement and common land telephone surveys were asked if they were willing to take part in a more in-depth survey and this formed the sample population for the face-to-face interviews. Fifty-six per cent of agreement holders, 39% of non-agreement holders and 71% of common land agreement holders agreed to a follow up interview and from these the face-to-face sample was selected with the aim of producing a cross-section of interviewees based on previous agri-environment scheme experience, tenure; land holding area in the SDA and region.
- 2.20 The face-to-face, semi-structured interview guide was designed to explore in more depth the issues raised in the telephone survey. This included landlord/tenant relationships, reasons for option choices, any practical difficulties encountered, issues of additionality, views on the advice and support received.

Data analysis

Telephone survey data analysis

- 2.21 A quantitative analysis of the telephone survey was conducted using the software package SPSS, enabling an analysis of general patterns of awareness and views of UELS and options and advice and support. The analysis provided population estimates and 95% confidence intervals for the key variables. All data are weighted according to the inverse sampling fraction⁷. Where relevant the results are presented by region, farm size, farm type, sources of income, tenure and previous agri-environment scheme experience.

⁷ This ensures that the numbers in the weighted table add up to the population total.

2.22 Where reporting answers in percentage terms, these were calculated as a proportion of the number who responded to a particular question. This means that for most questions, responses represent only a subset of the total population.

Face-to face interviews data analysis

2.23 A qualitative analysis of the face-to-face interviews was conducted using the software package NVivo. The use of this specialist software allowed the interview data to be brought into a common 'workspace' enabling themes to be identified using the software's search engine and query functions. This facilitated the development of a consistent and rigorous analytical framework and identification of common issues and important themes.

2.24 Data from both data collection exercises was combined to enable analysis at various levels:

1. *Farm level analysis* will consider: attitudes to the scheme; motivations and barriers to joining the scheme; and drivers of environmental management decision-making;
2. *Option level analysis* will consider: reasons for option choices; and practical issues for each options, such as farm management, time investment; and
3. *Scheme level analysis*: awareness of the scheme; effectiveness and impact of advice and support; and additionality factors.

3 Telephone survey results

3.1 This section presents the results of both the UELS agreement holder and non-agreement holder telephone surveys which were undertaken between 17th January and 4th February 2011.

Telephone survey response rates

3.2 As Table 3.1 shows, the target number of 480 agreement holder telephone interviews was met. This sample represents around 22% of all UELS agreement holders. In total, 731 agreement holders were contacted, with a number of refusals (126), wrong or missing telephone numbers on file (25), or those who could not be contacted despite evening calls (87). The overall success rate for this survey was 66%.

3.3 The non-agreement holder survey produced 283 responses which was below the target of 480 for this survey and represents around 5% of the eligible non-agreement population. A large number of respondents who were willing to take part in the survey (232) were not eligible for the interview as they were either currently in an Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme (ESA) or Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) and therefore had no or limited land that was eligible for UELS or had recently submitted an UELS application. The low response means that caution must be taken when interpreting the results at a regional level.

Table 3.1 Telephone survey sample

	Agreement holder survey	Non-agreement holder survey	Common land agreement holder survey	Common land non-agreement survey	Total
No. contacted	731	1,120	43	10	1,904
refusal	126	405	3	-	534
wrong number/ disconnected	25	73	3	-	101
unable to contact	87	127	7	-	221
not eligible for survey	11 ⁸	232	-	-	243
Total no. interviewed	480	283	31	10	804
Success rate (%)	66	25	72	100	42

3.4 The aim of the sample stratification was to ensure that there was a representative spread of responses across the eight upland regions. Figure 3.1 which compares the total population data (all eligible farmers in the uplands within our selection criteria) and the sampled survey data indicates that the survey broadly represented the total eligible population across the regions. A weighting factor was applied to the data to reflect the distribution of agreement holders and non-agreement holders in each region⁹.

⁸ No UELS agreement on farm

⁹ The data is weighted according to the inverse sampling fraction.

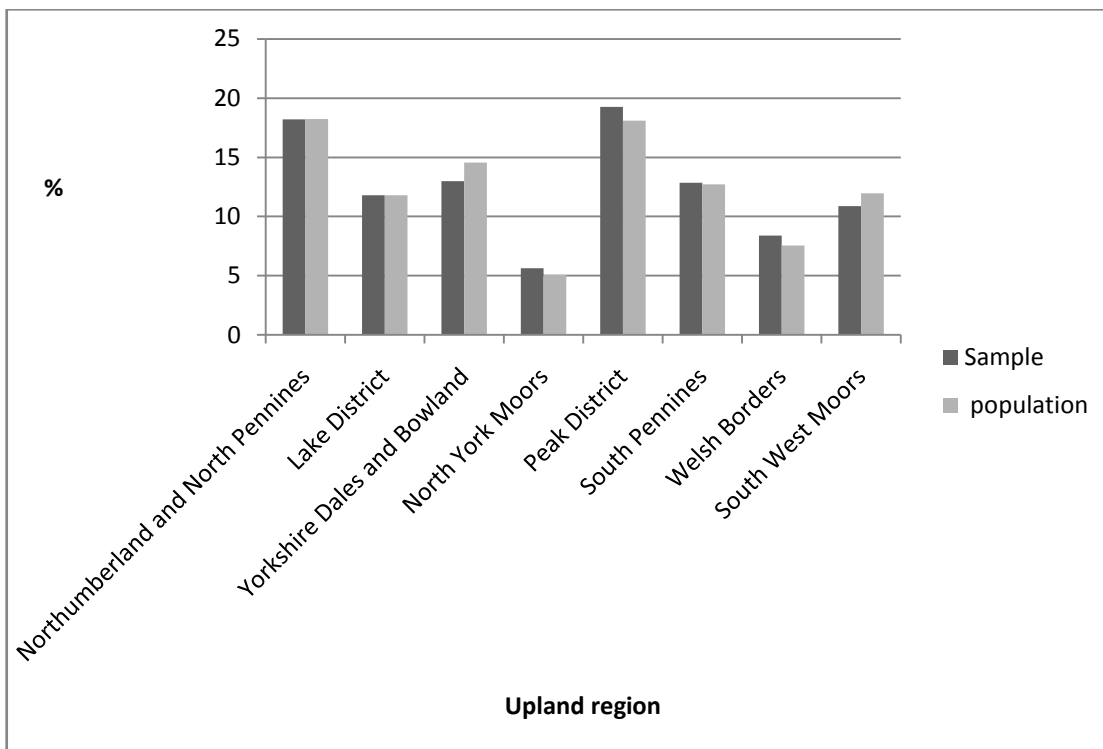


Figure 3.1 Sample and population distribution by upland region

General farm characteristics

3.5 The telephone surveys collected information on some general characteristics of the farm businesses to enable a better understanding of the businesses and farmer characteristics and to enable a comparison between those in UELS and of those who are not. This section presents the main findings, with further details provided in tables in Appendix 4.

Farm type

3.6 A breakdown of farm type¹⁰ by region for the telephone survey agreement and non- agreement holders is shown in Table 3.2. As would be expected approximately three quarters (76% \pm 4%¹¹) of the UELS agreement holders fell into the Grazing livestock category and this was broadly consistent across the regions, although the Peak District had fewer of this farm type. Only 10% (\pm 3%) of the agreement holders were classified as the Dairy farm type with a higher proportion of this farm type occurring in the Yorkshire Dales (19% \pm 10%) and South Pennines (16% \pm 9%).

¹⁰ Farms were grouped into three farm types categories based on the Defra Robust Farm Type classification. **Grazing livestock** (LFA Livestock Grazing and Lowland Livestock Grazing). **Dairy** (Dairy). **Other types** (All remaining Robust Farm Types which included Cereal, General Cropping, Mixed, Other types and Specialist Poultry.)

¹¹ Range shown for each estimate is the 95% confidence interval based on the standard error multiplied by 1.96. This means that we are 95% certain that the true value lies within the range shown.

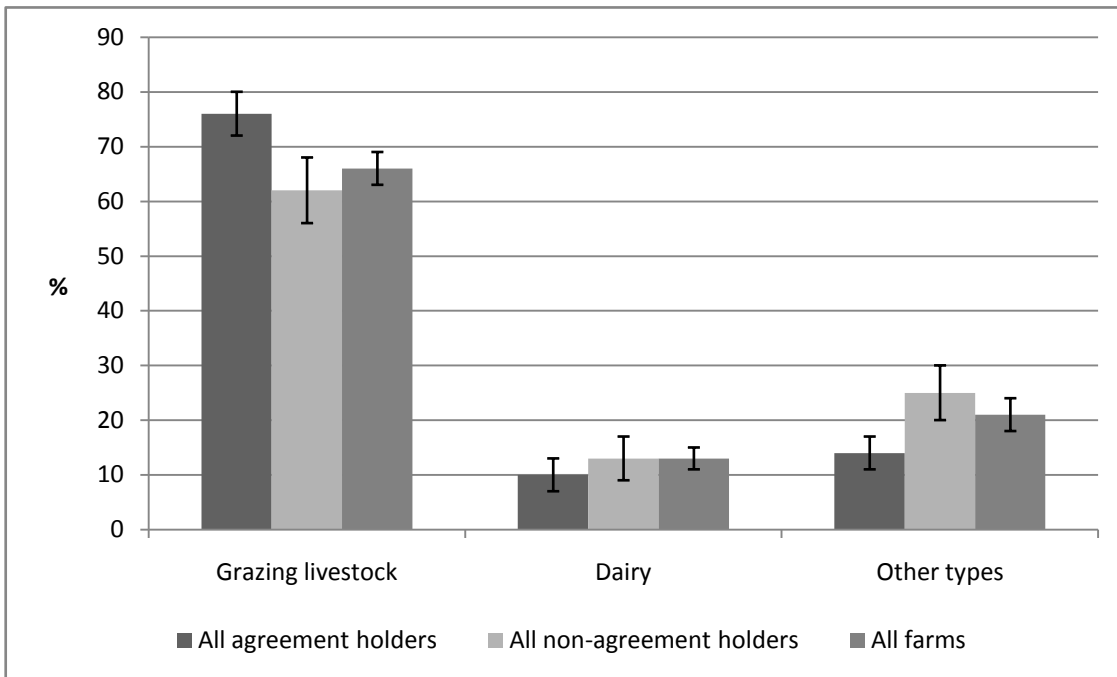


Figure 3.2 Farm type (agreement holders and non-agreement holders)

3.7 Comparing the agreement holder sample with the non-agreement sample, there was a much higher proportion of “Other” farm types in the non-agreement sample (14% ± 3% compared to 25% ± 5%). This is also the case when a comparison is made between the agreement holder survey and the total uplands farmer population (21% compared to 14%).

Farm size: Standard Labour Requirement

3.8 A high proportion (42% ± 5%) of UELS agreement respondents were classified as Small based upon the standard labour requirements (SLR) applied to June Survey returns (Figure 3.3). Agreement holders in the South Pennines stand out in particular as having a small-farm profile compared to the other regions (51% ± 14%). Around one fifth of agreement holders (22% ± 4%) were classed as medium sized (i.e. requiring at least 2 full time equivalent workers). Comparison with the total population shows that a lower proportion of UELS agreement holders were in the very small farm size category compared to the general uplands farmer population.

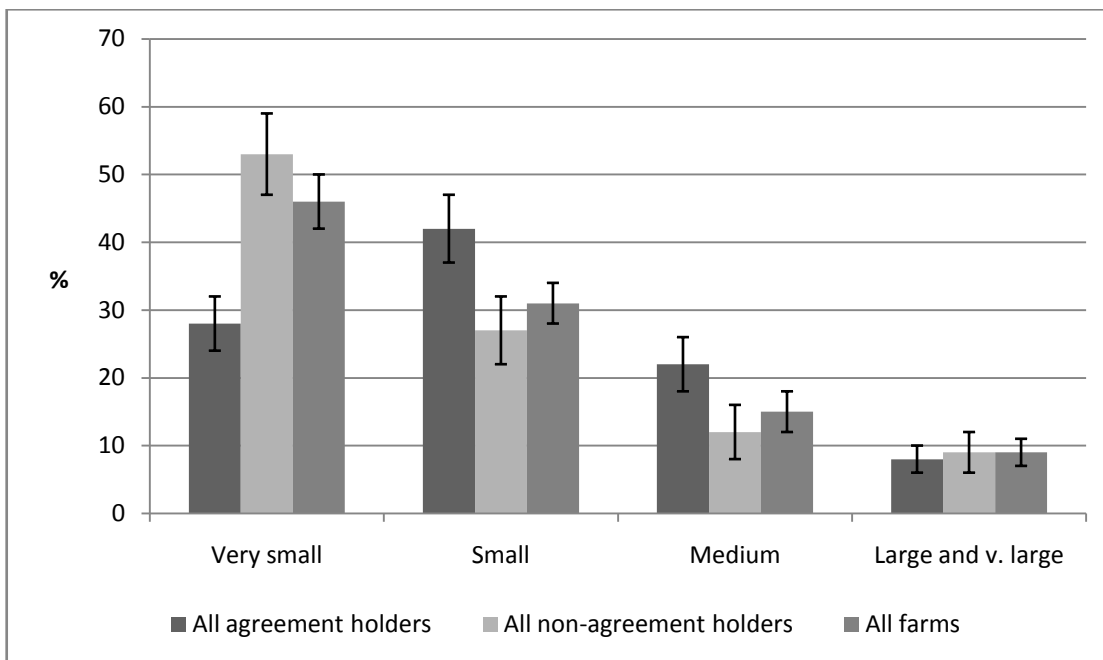


Figure 3.3 Farm size (SLR)

3.9 Comparing the agreement sample and the non-agreement sample by farm size, the non-agreement holder sample contained a significantly higher proportion of very small farms (53% \pm 6% compared to 28 % \pm 4%).

Area of land in the SDA

3.10 UELS agreement holders tended to have larger areas of land within the SDA on their farms than their counterparts without agreements. Thirty-six per cent (\pm 4%) of agreement holders had more than 100 ha of SDA land compared to 11% (\pm 4%) for non-agreement holders (See Figure 3.4). There was a tendency for non-agreement holders to have less of their land in the SDA. Thirty-five per cent (\pm 1%) of non-agreement holders had more than 50% of their land outside of the SDA compared to 18% (\pm 2%) of agreement holders.

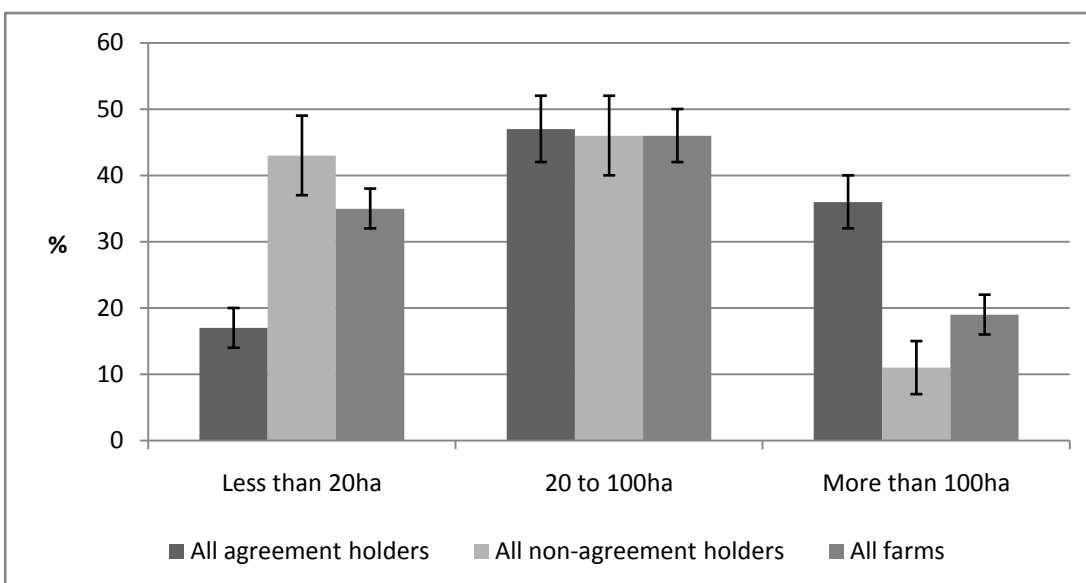


Figure 3.4 Area of SDA land on sample holdings

3.11 Comparison with the total population revealed that there was a higher proportion of UELS agreement holdings with more than 100 ha of SDA land and a lower proportion of holdings with less than 20 ha of SDA in UELS agreements than there was in the general uplands farm population.

Economics of farm business

3.12 On over half of the agreement holder farms (56% \pm 4%) the traditional agricultural enterprises were the sole source of income and this was particularly the case in the North York Moors (70% \pm 16). Only 3% of agreement holders did not have any income from traditional agricultural enterprises, with the highest proportion located in the South West Moors region (12% \pm 8%) (Figure 3.5).

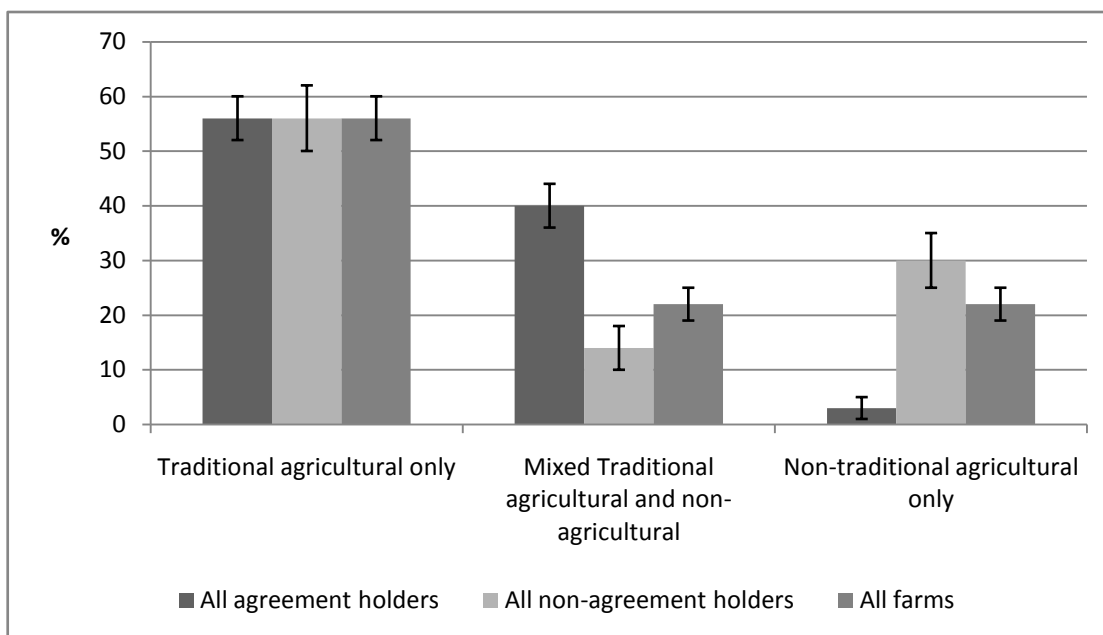


Figure 3.5 Main sources of household income¹²

3.13 Comparison between the agreement holders and non-agreement holders' income sources revealed that those with only traditional agricultural sources of income were broadly similar between the two samples. However, there was a significant difference when looking at the non-traditional agricultural only income source category (3% \pm 2% compared to 30% \pm 5%), which means a significant number of non-agreement holders had non-agricultural incomes or off-farm sources of income.

Enterprise mix on SDA land

3.14 The most common livestock combinations on SDA land were sheep and cattle (64% \pm 4%) followed by sheep only (18% \pm 3%) and cattle only (9% \pm 3%) (Figure 3.6). Some regional variations were evident, for example sheep only enterprises were important in the Lake District (24% \pm 11%) North York Moors (24%) and South Pennines (24% \pm 11%) and cattle only were important in the Peak District (23% \pm 9%).

¹² Traditional agriculture only: income from as sheep, beef, dairy, arable, horticulture, pigs and poultry enterprises
 Non traditional agriculture only: income from Other on-farm activities, off-farm employment, investments
 Mixed: combination of traditional agriculture and non traditional agriculture.

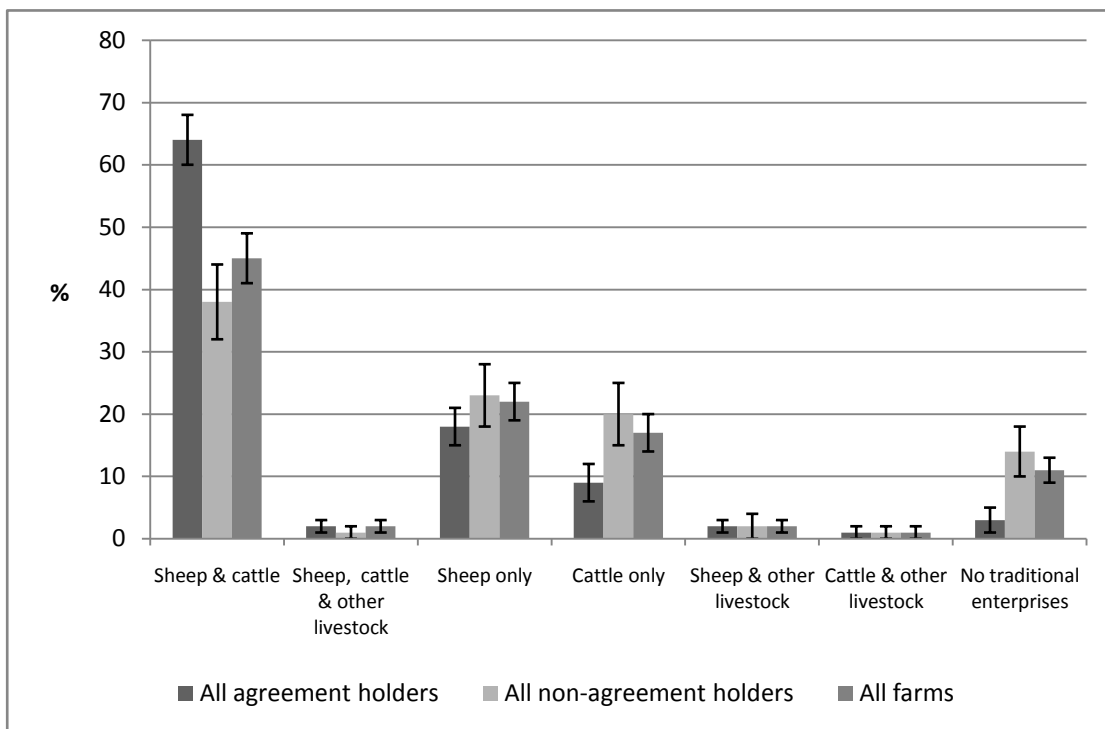


Figure 3.6 Enterprise mix on SDA land

3.15 Agreement holders were significantly more likely to have cattle and sheep combinations than non-agreement holders (64% ±4% compared to 38% ±6%). Non agreement holders were significantly more likely to have only cattle (20% ±5% compared to 9% ±3%) and not have any traditional enterprises at all (14% ±4% compared to 3% ±2%).

Farmer age

- 3.16 Over two thirds of the main decision makers on UELS agreement holdings were between 40 and 64 years old (66% ±4%) and a smaller proportion (7% ±2%) of the decision-makers were under 40 years of age. Comparison with the total population revealed that a higher proportion of UELS agreement holders were in the 40 to 54 years of age category compared to the general Uplands farmer population (Figure 3.7).
- 3.17 Comparing the agreement and non-agreement samples, there were fewer under 54 years of age decision makers in the non-agreement holders category and a higher number of those that were 55 years old and greater. It may be that older farmers are less inclined to enter into UELS agreements, especially if they are close to retirement. In both samples there was a higher proportion of younger decision makers in the Lake District region.

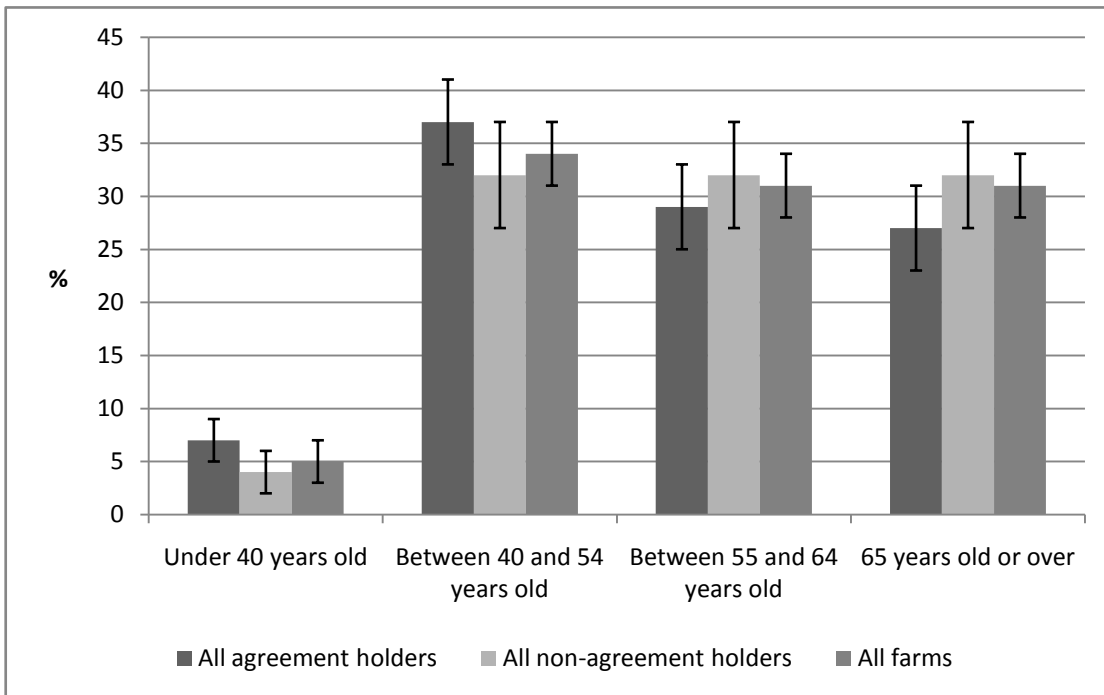


Figure 3.7 Age of the main decision maker

Previously receiving HFA payment

3.18 Most agreement holders previously received the HFA payment (85% \pm 3%) (Figure 3.8). There were lower levels of receipt in the Peak District (77% \pm 9%) and the Welsh Borders (78% \pm 14%). Of the 15% (\pm 3%) of agreement holders who did not receive the payment, this was likely to contain those who were not eligible, for example had less than 10 ha of SDA land, dairy farms, or landlords with no livestock.

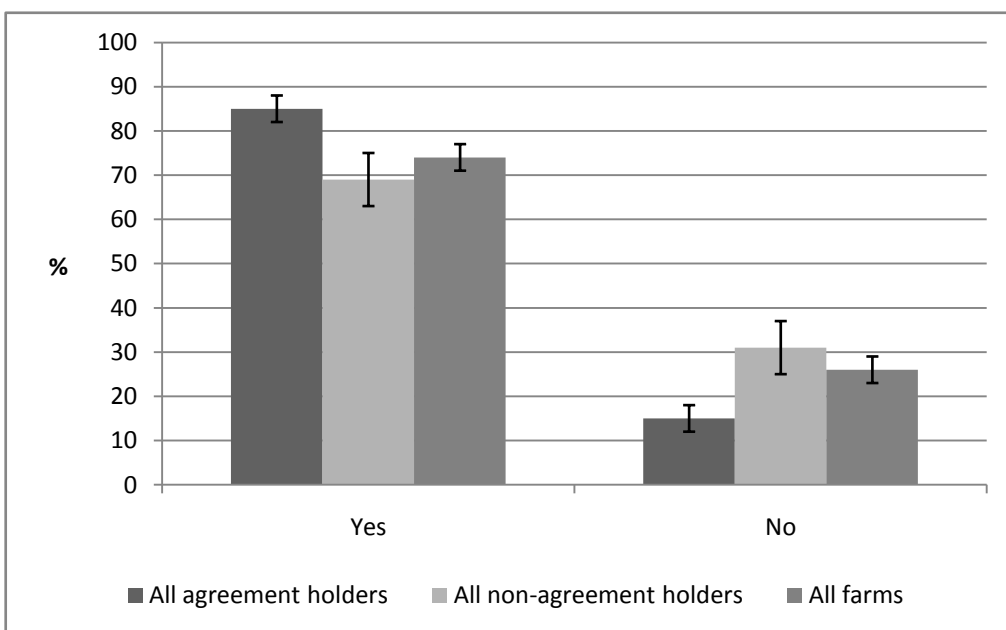


Figure 3.8 Agreement holders and non agreement holders previously claiming HFA payment

3.19 Comparing the agreement and non-agreement holders, a much higher proportion of the non-agreement holders were not previously receiving HFA payments (15% \pm 3% compared to 30% \pm 3%).

Tenure

3.20 Land tenure can potentially be an important factor in influencing farmer's entry into UELS as tenant farmers may be restricted in adopting agri-environmental schemes. There was a fairly even split between those agreement holders who rented land (51% \pm 5%) and those who did not (49% \pm 5%) (Figure 3.9). The highest proportion of agreement holders with rented land was in the North York Moors (69% \pm 16%) and the Yorkshire Dales and Bowland (63% \pm 12%) regions, whilst the region with the least amount of land rented was in the Welsh Borders region (25% \pm 14%).

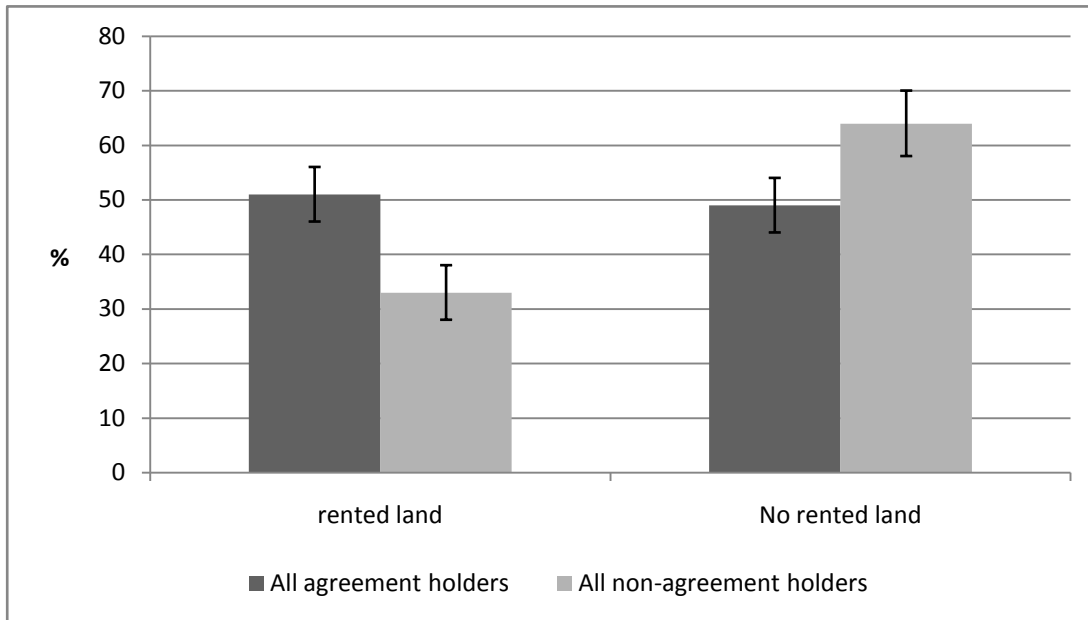


Figure 3.9 Percentage of sample with land rented

3.21 Agreement holders (51% \pm 5%) were more likely to rent land than non-agreement holders (33%).

3.22 Twenty-six percent of agreement holders needed to obtain landlord's consent to join UELS. These agreement holders were asked about the ease with which they were able to obtain landlord's consent for their UELS agreement. Most (87% \pm 6%) found that obtaining consent was easy and only 5% (\pm 4%) experienced difficulties (Figure 3.10).

3.23 Non-agreement holder tenants were also asked the ease with which they would be able to obtain the landlord's consent for an UELS agreement should they wish to apply. Of the farmers who responded to this question (n=68) a higher percentage of non-agreement holders perceived some difficulties in obtaining consent compared to the agreement holders (25% \pm 11% compared to 5% \pm 4%). However, just under half (48% \pm 12%) of non agreement tenants believed it would be easy to obtain landlord consent should they wish to apply.

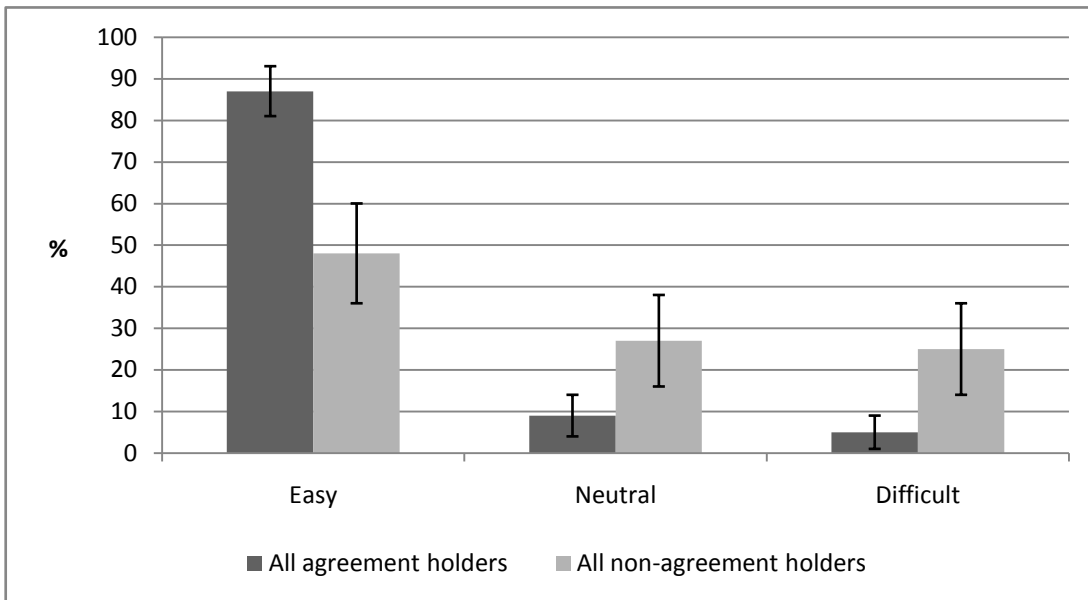


Figure 3.10 Ease in gaining landlord consent

3.24 Only 13% ($\pm 3\%$) of all agreement holders and 16% ($\pm 5\%$) of all non-agreement holders rented out land in the SDA (Figure 3.11).

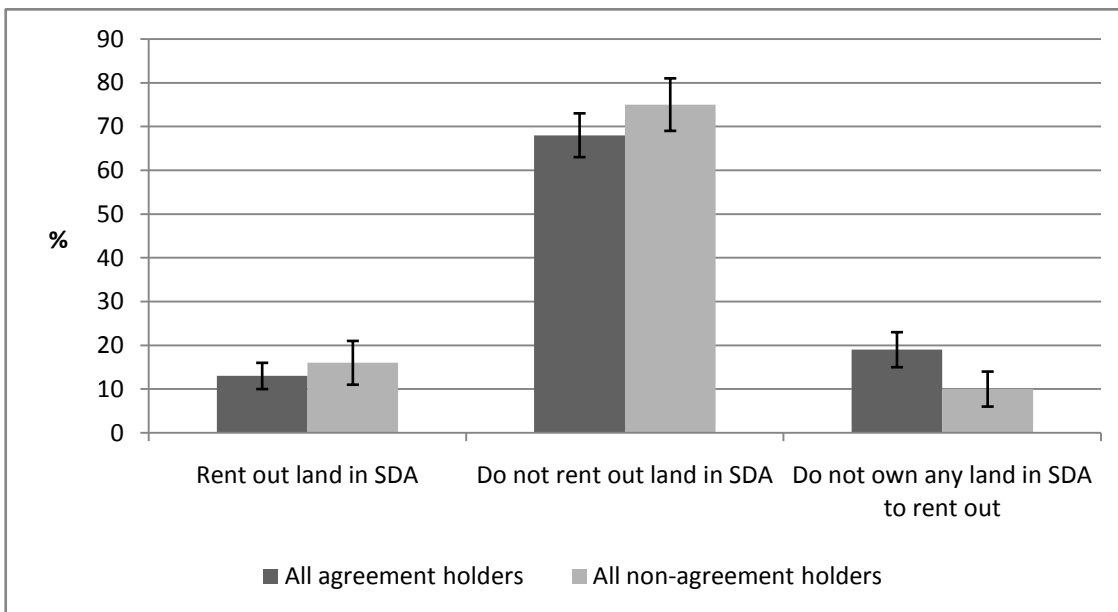


Figure 3.11 Agreement holders and non-agreement holders renting out all or some of their land in SDA

3.25 Of those agreement holder landlords renting out either some or all of their land in the SDA ($n=61$) around 62% ($\pm 12\%$) had included the tenanted land in their own agreement. The remainder had either not included the rented land in an UELS agreement or allowed the tenant to include the land in their own UELS agreement.

3.26 Around 60% ($\pm 20\%$) of non-agreement holder landlords renting out land in the SDA ($n=24$) had not yet given landlord consent for the tenant to join UELS. This means that neither the landlord nor the tenant had an UELS agreement on this land.

Awareness and motivations

Sources of information

3.27 A range of sources were cited as the primary way in which agreement holders and non-agreement holders gathered information about UELS. Around half of the agreement holders and non-agreement holders indicated that they received information from an UELS letter and leaflet (51% ($\pm 6\%$) and 47% ($\pm 9\%$)); Natural England sent a letter and leaflet to all eligible farmers. The agricultural press was also an important source of information (26% ($\pm 8\%$) and 38% ($\pm 10\%$)). Those who received information from a NE advisor were most likely to have had an existing HLS agreement or past classic scheme agreement on the farm (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Information sources raising awareness about UELS

Information source	Agreement holders		Non-agreement holders	
	(%)	No. of responses	(%)	No. of responses
UELS letter and leaflet from Natural England	51 ± 6	247	47 ± 9	108
Agricultural/Farming press	26 ± 8	120	38 ± 10	85
Visit from Natural England advisor	10	49	2	12 ¹³
Farm meeting (e.g. NFU meeting)	10	47	0	17
Farming neighbour/friend	9	43	7	18
Land Agent	6	31	2	12
Environmental organisation	6	31	0	0
Farm walk or demonstration farm	3	17	0	2
Natural England website	2	8	0	0
National/trade show	1	8	1	3
Landlord	1	3	0	0
Other	8	41	5	20

“Other” sources of information included the National Parks, Defra, and the Rural Payments Agency.

¹³ Responses too low to provide robust statistics

Motivations for joining UELS

3.28 Agreement holders were asked to rate the importance of several factors in their decision to join UELS. The primary reason given for joining the scheme was the scheme payments (94% [76% said very important]). Other important factors were improving the wildlife and environment (81%) and improving the landscape (70%) (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Reasons for joining UELS (%)

Factor	Very	Fairly	Not	No. of responses
The scheme payments	76 ±4	18 ±3	6 ±2	480
Improving the wildlife and environment	36 ±4	45 ±4	19 ±4	479
Improving landscape	28 ±4	42 ±4	29 ±4	477
Improving stock quality	23 ±4	22 ±4	55 ±5	469
Increasing efficiency	14 ±3	30 ±4	56 ±4	473
Increasing capital values	14 ±3	30 ±4	55 ±4	473

3.29 As Table 3.4 shows, agreement holders with farms of less than 20 ha and those not relying on traditional agriculture for their income were more likely to say that the scheme payments were not an important factor in their decision to apply for UELS. This group of respondents were more motivated to join UELS for environmental reasons.

Table 3.4 Importance of scheme payments and encouraging wildlife in decision to join UELS

Scheme payments (%)	Very important	Fairly important	Not important	No. of responses
Farm size				
Less than 20 hectares	63 ± 12	20 ± 10	17 ± 10	60
20 to 100 hectares	73 ± 6	21 ± 6	6 ± 3	210
More than 100 hectares	82 ± 5	14 ± 5	4 ± 3	198
Farm type: Income sources				
Traditional agriculture only	76 ± 5	20 ± 5	4 ± 2	266
Mixed	78 ± 6	16 ± 5	7 ± 4	192
Non agriculture only	56 ± 22	10 ±	34 ± 21	19
Encouraging wildlife and improving environment (%)	Very important	Fairly important	Not important	No. of responses
Farm size				
Less than 20 hectares	43 ±	40 ±	17 ±	60
20 to 100 hectares	41 ±	44 ±	15 ±	210
More than 100 hectares	30 ±	50 ±	20 ±	197
Farm type: Income sources				
Traditional agriculture only	35 ±	48 ±	17 ±	265
Mixed	38 ±	45 ±	17 ±	192
Non agriculture only	58 ±	16 ±	26 ±	19

Motivations for not joining UELS

3.30 Nine percent of the non-agreement respondents had not heard of UELS and 12% had never seriously considered applying and did not intend to. Over a third of the respondents (37%) had considered applying to UELS and may apply in the future, whilst just under a quarter (23%) had decided not to apply. Two per cent cited the landlord's resistance in countersigning the application as a reason for not applying (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5 Views on applying for UELS

Views on applying for UELS	%	No. of responses
I have considered UELS, and may apply in the future	37	105
I have considered UELS, but decided not to apply	23	64
I am currently considering applying to UELS	17	46
I have never seriously considered UELS, and don't intend to apply	12	34
I have never heard of UELS	9	21
I want to join but my landlord won't countersign my application/ has entered the land into UELS himself	2	6

- 3.31 Those non-agreement holders who had decided not to apply for UELS were asked the main reasons for not applying. Nearly one fifth (19%) perceived that they were not eligible to apply for UELS. Further analysis of this response reveals that 84% of these respondents fell into the small or very small farm type. Sixteen per cent were deterred from applying by the level of paper work involved and a further 15 per cent thought that the payments were too low to cover costs. Further responses included 'the compulsory prescriptions were too demanding' (13%) and the farmer was close to retirement (11%) (Table 3.6).
- 3.32 Reasons cited under the "Other" category related to those who were about to sell the SDA land, those who rented out the land to others and those with a dislike of external interference and inspections.

Table 3.6 Reasons for not applying for UELS

Reasons for not applying	%	No. of responses
I do not think I am eligible for it	19	19
Too much paperwork involved	16	16
Payments too low to cover costs	15	15
The management prescriptions are too demanding for mandatory requirements	14	14
Plan to retire shortly	12	12
My plans for the farm business conflict with the scheme requirements	10	10
Difficulty getting enough points	9	9
The management prescription are too demanding for the options	8	8
I cannot see the benefits to the environment	5	5
Area of land too small	5	5
Length of tenancy agreement too short	3	3
The length of the agreement puts me off	3	3
Can't get landlords consent	1	1
Other	19	19

3.33 Those non-agreement holders that had decided not to apply for UELS were asked what possible changes on their farm would make them reconsider applying to UELS in the future. Over two thirds believed that nothing would make them re-consider applying (67%). For those that suggested possible changes, a change to their tenancy situation was mentioned (11%) as was a change to a more extensive system (5%) and retirement of a key family member (4%). In the “Other” category changes mentioned included, obtaining more land and discovering they were eligible (Table 3.7).

Table 3.7 Changes on farm leading to possible reconsideration of applying

Type of change	%	No. of responses
Nothing	67	60
Changes to tenancy situation	11	10
A change to more extensive system	5	5
Retirement by key family member of the workforce	4	3
More land	3	3
Addition of family member to the workforce	1	1
Reduction in labour/contracting on the farm	0	0
Increase in labour/contracting on the farm	2	1
Other	10	9

Views of other farmers

3.34 Asking about the views of other farmers can help to reveal the general attitudes in the farming community towards Uplands ELS. Two thirds of agreement holders (65% ±4%) had discussed UELS with other farmers. This is in marked contrast to the non-agreement holders, where less than half (42% ±6%) had spoken to other farmers (Figure 3.12).

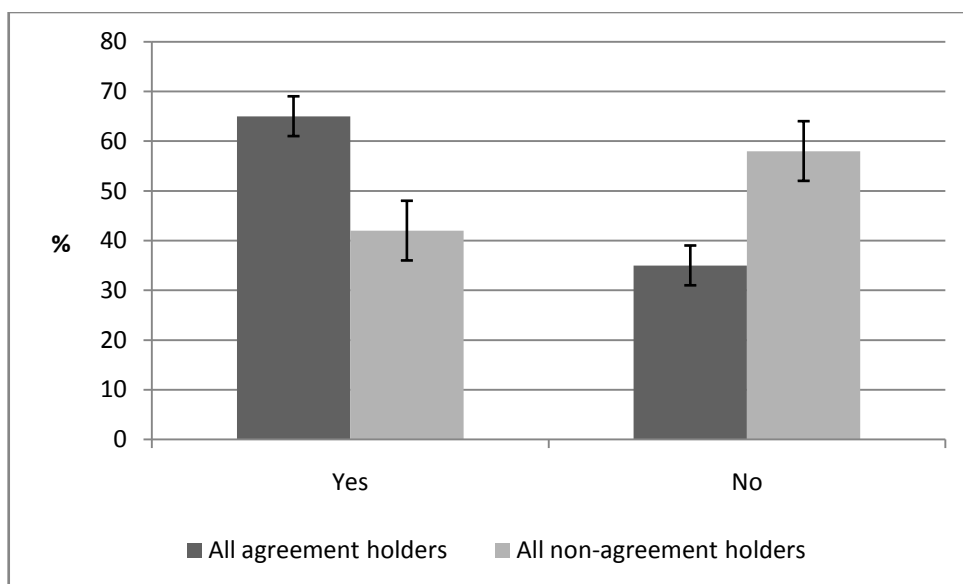


Figure 3.12 Discussed UELS with other farmers

3.35 This analysis is also interesting as it reveals the extent to which different farms are networked into the farming community. Those in the South West Moor region and with only non-agricultural sources of income were the least likely to have discussed UELS with other farmers. Conversely, the agreement holders in the Lake District, and those from tenanted farmers were more likely to have discussed UELS with other farmers.

3.36 Around half of the farmers that the agreement holders spoke to had a positive opinion of UELS (48% \pm 8%) or had mixed or neutral views about the scheme (42% \pm 9%). This would suggest that there is a generally positive opinion of UELS within the farming community. The farmers that the non-agreement holders spoke to tended to be more negative towards UELS compared to the agreement holders (17% \pm 15% compared to 7% \pm 10%) (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8 Other farmers' views on UELS

Reported views on UELS	Agreement holder (%)	No. of responses	Non-agreement holder (%)	No. of responses
Positive	48 \pm 8	145	31 \pm 8	33
Mixed/Neutral	42 \pm 9	129	52 \pm 9	57
Negative	7	24	17	17
Can't recall/Don't know	3	8	0	0
Total	100	306	100	107

Option choices

3.37 This section considers the options within the agreement holders' agreements, the extent to which the option management would have taken place anyway in the absence of the scheme (degree of additionality) and any significant land management or practical difficulties associated with the options.

Familiarity with options in UELS agreements

3.38 First, agreement holders were asked if they were familiar with the options in their UELS agreement. As Table 3.9 shows, four out of five reported that they were familiar with the options in their UELS agreement (80% \pm 4%). However, one fifth (20% \pm 4%) stated that they were unfamiliar with the options in their agreement. A lower level of familiarity was found in the North York Moors (54% \pm 19%) and South West Moors (69% \pm 13%) regions and where the agreement holder does not receive an income from traditional agricultural enterprises (60%). As UELS agreements are a legal contract with Natural England to deliver specific management, it is a cause for concern that some agreement holders are unfamiliar with their options. Reasons for any lack of familiarity may be because the scheme was relatively new or because much of the application had been completed by an external agent.

Table 3.9 Familiarity with options in UELS

Familiar with UELS and ELS options (%)	Yes	No	No. of responses
Region			
North Pennines and Borders	90 ±6	10 ±6	89
Lake District	82 ±11	18 ±11	44
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	77 ±11	23 ±11	61
North York Moors	54	46	26
Peak District	82 ±9	18 ±9	77
South Pennines	74 ±12	26 ±12	51
Welsh Borders	86 ±11	14 ±11	35
South West Moors	69 ±13	31 ±13	52
Farm type: Enterprise mix			
LFA and lowland grazing livestock	81 ±4	19 ±4	310
Dairy	86 ±11	14 ±11	38
Other types	75 ±11	25 ±11	65
Farm type: Income sources			
Traditional agriculture only	76 ±6	24 ±6	231
Mixed	88 ±5	12 ±5	183
Non agriculture only	60	40	18
Previous AES			
Previous participation	81 ±4	19 ±4	347
No participation	74 ±9	26 ±9	87
All agreement holders			
All agreement holders	80 ±4	20 ±4	435

Additionality

3.39 A question was asked to ascertain the extent to which the options selected were additional to work previously undertaken as part of everyday management. Eighty percent of agreement holders said they had one or more UELS options where they already met the management prescriptions as part of their everyday farm management. The responses are broadly evenly distributed across the regions. Twenty percent had options that were additional to activities undertaken as part of everyday management and this was particularly the case for those with non-traditional agricultural sources of income. These are likely to be hobby farmers or small holders who may be new to environmental management activities (Table 3.10).

Table 3.10 Options previously undertaken as part of everyday management (%)

Options also under everyday management (%)	Yes	No	No. of responses
Region			
North Pennines and Borders	79 ±9	21 ±9	80
Lake District	86 ±11	14 ±11	36
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	74 ±12	26 ±12	47
North York Moors	78	22	14
Peak District	83 ±9	17 ±9	63
South Pennines	81 ±12	19 ±12	38
Welsh Borders	80 ±14	20 ±14	30
South West Moors	83 ±12	17 ±12	36
Farm type: Enterprise mix			
Grazing livestock	80 ±5	20 ±5	250
Dairy	80 ±14	20 ±14	32
Other types	79 ±12	21 ±12	48
Farm type: Income sources			
Traditional agriculture only	76 ±6	24 ±6	174
Mixed	86 ±5	14 ±5	159
Non agriculture only	40	60	10
Previous AES			
Previous participation	79 ±5	21 ±5	279
No participation	86 ±8	14 ±8	64
All agreement holders			
All agreement holders	80 ±4	20 ±4	344

3.40 Table 3.11 reveals specific options most likely to have been undertaken as part of previous everyday farm management and include the boundary options, such as EB1-10 hedges (53%) and EB11 walls (55%). Those options that were most likely to be additional included: UL21 No cutting strips in meadows; EF1 to 11 Arable land; EE1 to 8 Buffer strips; EL6 Unenclosed moorland grazing; and UJ12 Soil protection. Note relatively few farmers were implementing these options that were providing additional benefits.

Table 3.11 Options undertaken in previous AES or as part of everyday management

Option	% of agreements with option	% with options as part of everyday management	% of agreements with option ¹⁴	% with options in previous AES
EB11 Walls	64	55	67	47
EB1 to 10 Hedges	44	53	48	40
UB17 Wall restoration	6	41	4	40
EL1 to 5 Grassland and moor inside SDA	78	39	77	34
EK5 Mixed stocking	15	35	18	25
UL20 Haymaking	23	34	22	18
UB11 Walls above the moorland line	28	32	30	22
ED1 to 5 Historic and landscape features	40	30	43	17
UB14 Hedge restoration	2	30	2	20
EK1 to 4 Grassland outside SDA	23	29	25	22
EC1 to 4 Trees and woodland	26	26	29	20
UD12 TFBs in remote locations	6	26	6	9
UL18 Cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland	49	22	19	8
UL23 Upland grassland for birds	2	21	2	11
UL17 No supplementary feeding on moorland	2	19	3	19
UX2 Upland grassland requirements	94	19	93	14
EE1 to 8 Buffer strips	6	16	7	19
EL6 Unenclosed moorland grazing	11	16	12	24
UJ12 Soil protection	7	16	7	20
EF1 to 11 Arable land	5	15	6	28
UX3 Moorland requirements	30	11	33	12
UL21 No cutting strips in meadows	8	10	8	6
UC22 Woodland livestock exclusion	5	0	7	4
UL22 Enclosed rough grazing for birds	2	0	2	16

Options with low numbers of occurrences removed from table

¹⁴ Only includes agreement holders identified as having previous AES agreement

- 3.41 As Table 3.12 shows, of those who were familiar with their options, just over two thirds (69% $\pm 5\%$) had UELS options which continued management that they were carrying out under a previous AES agreement. Thus the environmental benefits gained from previous schemes were continuing under UELS agreements.
- 3.42 Table 3.11 reveals that boundary options were the most frequently mentioned options that were likely to have been undertaken in previous schemes. In particular, UB15 Hedgebank restoration (57%), EB11 Walls (47%), EB1-10 hedges (40%). Other options mentioned were EL1 to 5 Grassland and moor inside SDA (34%) and EF1 to 11 Arable land (28%). Options that were most likely to be additional to those undertaken in previous agri-environment schemes included: UL21 No cutting strips in meadows; UL18 Cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland; and UC22 Woodland livestock exclusion.

Table 3.12 Options undertaken within a previous agri-environment scheme

Options also under previous AES (%)	Yes	No	No. of responses
Region			
North Pennines and Borders	72 ± 11	28 ± 11	68
Lake District	57 ± 16	43 ± 16	35
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	72 ± 14	28 ± 14	40
North York Moors	72	28	11
Peak District	69 ± 14	31 ± 14	42
South Pennines	68	32	22
Welsh Borders	77 ± 15	23 ± 15	30
South West Moors	64 ± 17	36 ± 17	31
Farm type: Enterprise mix			
LFA and lowland grazing livestock	69 ± 6	31 ± 6	203
Dairy	74 ± 17	26 ± 17	27
Other types	72 ± 14	28 ± 14	40
Farm type: Income sources			
Traditional agriculture only	69 ± 8	31 ± 8	146
Mixed	70 ± 8	30 ± 8	126
Non agriculture only	52	48	6
All agreement holders			
All agreement holders	69 ± 5	31 ± 5	279

Options complementing or interacting with existing AES agreements

3.43 Around one-third of agreement holders who have an existing AE agreement said they had one or more UELS options that complimented or interacted with options under the existing AES agreements currently on their holding (30% \pm 7%). This particularly related to those who had an existing HLS agreement on their holding. There were less likely to be incidences of complementarity or interaction with existing AES schemes on Dairy farms (11% \pm 16%) (Table 3.13).

Table 3.13 Options complement/interact with existing AES (% with existing AES) (%)

	Yes	No	No. of responses
Farm Size: SLR			
Very small	30 ± 14	70 ± 14	40
Small	26 ± 10	74 ± 10	69
Medium	33 ± 15	67 ± 15	36
Large and V. Large	39	61	16
Farm type: Enterprise mix			
Grazing livestock	32 ± 8	68 ± 8	124
Dairy	11	89	15
Other types	35	65	22
Farm type: Income sources			
Traditional agriculture only	28 ± 10	72 ± 10	82
Mixed	32 ± 10	68 ± 10	81
Non agriculture only	0	100	2
Previous AES			
Previous participation	34 ± 8	66 ± 8	142
No participation	0	100	24
All agreement holders			
All agreement holders	30 ± 7	70 ± 7	166

3.44 Where options were mentioned¹⁵ as complementing or interacting with agri-environment schemes currently running alongside the UELS agreement, it was mainly in connection with existing HLS agreements. In particular, the boundary options interacted with existing agreements, such as EB11 walls (n=8) and EB1-10 hedges (n=11). Also the grassland management options: EL1-5 grassland and moor inside SDA (n=14) and the UL18 cattle grazing on upland grassland and moor option (n=7) were mentioned in this context (Table 3.14).

Table 3.14 Options complimenting or interacting with existing AES agreements on the farm

UELS option	Times mentioned	Existing AES mentioned
EA1	5	Mainly HLS
EB11 Walls	8	Mainly HLS
EB1 to10 Hedges	11	Mainly HLS
EC1-4	4	HLS and woodland scheme
ED1-5	3	HLS, National Park scheme
EF1-11	2	HLS and NPA
EK1-4	4	ESA, HLS and NPA
EK5	3	HLS
EL1 to 5 Grassland and moor inside SDA	14	Mainly HLS but with some SSSI, NPA, and WGS
EL6	1	No data
UB11	4	Mainly HLS but with NPA
UB17	1	HLS
UL18 Cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland	7	Mainly HLS but with some NPA
UL20	4	No data
UL23	1	No data
UX2	6	HLS
UX3	2	No data

Note the small numbers involved.

Options requiring significant changes in land management

3.45 Respondents were asked whether there were any options that they were doing under their UELS agreement that required significant land management changes. As Table 3.15 shows, for 21% ($\pm 4\%$) of agreement holders one or more options in their UELS agreement required significant changes in land management. UELS appears to have had the greatest impact on land use in the Welsh Borders region where a relatively high level of land management change was required (36% $\pm 17\%$) and on medium sized farms (36% $\pm 12\%$) (Table 3.26).

¹⁵ Agreement holders could mention up to 4 options each (ie Times mentioned column does not equate to the total number of agreement holders)

Table 3.15 Options requiring significant land management changes (% of familiar with existing AES)

	Yes	No	No. of responses
Region			
Northumberland and North Pennines	26 ±10	74 ±10	80
Lake District	14 ±11	86 ±11	36
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	23 ±12	77 ±12	47
North York Moors	14	86 ±18	14
Peak District	14 ±9	86 ±9	63
South Pennines	19 ±12	81 ±12	38
Welsh Borders	36 ±17	64 ±17	30
South West Moors	8	92 ±9	36
Farm Size: SLR			
Very small	7 ±5	93 ±5	103
Small	23 ±7	77 ±7	138
Medium	36 ±12	64 ±12	63
Large and V. Large	24 ±16	76 ±16	26
Farm type: Income sources			
Traditional agriculture only	18 ±6	82 ±6	174
Mixed	25 ±7	75 ±7	159
Non agriculture only	9	91 ±18	10
Previous AES			
Previous participation	21 ±5	79 ±5	279
No participation	19 ±10	81 ±10	64
All agreement holders			
All agreement holders	21 ±4	79 ±4	344

3.46 The options mentioned most frequently as requiring significant changes to land management were EF1 to 11 Arable land, UL17 No supplementary feeding on moorland, UL21 No cutting strips in meadows, UJ12 Winter livestock removal next to watercourses, and EK1 to 4 Grassland outside SDA (Table 3.16). The reasons for these options requiring significant land management were not asked but the changes were most probably due to the introduction of new management practices.

Table 3.16 Options requiring significant changes in land management and were difficult to implement

UELS option	% of agreements with option	Options requiring significant management changes %	Options where implementation difficult %
EF1 to 11 Arable land	5	17	0
UL17 No supplementary feeding on moorland	2	14	30
UL21 No cutting strips in meadows	8	14	6
UJ12 Winter livestock removal next to watercourses	7	12	7
EK5 Mixed stocking	15	10	5
UL20 Haymaking	23	10	9
EK1 to 4 Grassland outside SDA	23	9	4
EL1 to 5 Grassland and moor inside SDA	78	7	4
UC22 Woodland livestock exclusion	5	7	0
EL6 Unenclosed moorland grazing	11	4	4
UX3 Moorland requirements	30	4	2
EB1 to 10 Hedges	44	3	5
UB17 Wall restoration	6	3	0
ED1 to 5 Historic and landscape features	40	2	1
UL18 Cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland	49	2	1
UX2 Upland grassland requirements	94	2	<1
EC1 to 4 Trees and woodland	26	1	1
UB11 Walls above the moorland line	28	1	1
EB11 Walls	64	<1	4

Options removed where no responses recorded

Options identified as particularly difficult to implement

3.47 The respondents were asked whether there were any options that they were doing under their UELS agreement that they had found particularly difficult to implement on the ground. As Table 3.17 shows, only 16% ($\pm 4\%$) of the agreement holders who were familiar with their options identified options that they found particularly difficult to implement.

Table 3.17 Experienced difficulties in implementing options (%)

Options difficult to implement (%)	Yes	No	No. of responses
Region			
Northumberland and North Pennines	17 ±8	83 ±8	80
Lake District	17 ±12	83 ±12	36
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	17 ±11	83 ±11	47
North York Moors	14	86	14
Peak District	14 ±9	86 ±9	63
South Pennines	19 ±12	81 ±12	38
Welsh Borders	13 ±12	87 ±12	30
South West Moors	14 ±11	86 ±11	36
Farm Size: SLR			
Very small	12 ±6	88 ±6	103
Small	18 ±6	82 ±6	138
Medium	17 ±9	83 ±9	63
Large and V. Large	29	71	26
Farm type: Enterprise mix			
Grazing livestock	16 ±5	84 ±5	250
Dairy	21 ±14	79 ±14	32
Other types	18 ±11	82 ±11	48
Farm type: Income sources			
Traditional agriculture only	14 ±5	86 ±5	174
Mixed	20 ±6	80 ±6	159
Non agriculture only	9	91	10
Previous AES			
Previous participation	16 ±4	84 ±4	279
No participation	18 ±9	82 ±9	64
All agreement holders			
All agreement holders	16 ±4	84 ±4	344

3.48 There were very low numbers of agreement holders expressing any difficulties with their options but those options that were mentioned as causing the greatest difficulties are presented in Table 3.16. The respondents were asked to explain the difficulties encountered and the responses are provided below (Table 3.18).

Table 3.18 Reasons for implementation difficulties encountered

Option	Reasons for difficulties
No supplementary feeding on moorland (UL17)	Concerns about restrictions on supplementary feeding in adverse weather conditions
Stone wall protection and maintenance (UB11)	High labour requirement; costs of contractors; difficulties in finding skilled wallers
Hedge and ditch management (EB 1-10)	Practical difficulties associated with management prescriptions, such as hedge height and difficulties in completing work within the timeframe.
Grassland and moor inside SDA (EL 1-5)	Low fertiliser inputs requirements and extreme weather conditions affecting grass availability; and inappropriateness of grazing and harrowing dates.
Haymaking (UL20)	Inflexibility in hay cutting dates which meant having to cut in unfavourable weather conditions; and poor field choice selection as sheep required to move through the hay field to reach their feed.

3.49 Some of the reasons provided for the practical difficulties encountered with options indicate a misunderstanding of the option requirements. Concerns were expressed about restrictions on supplementary feeding in adverse weather conditions, although supplementary feeding is allowed in such conditions. Also the UB11 stone wall protection and maintenance options is a maintenance rather than a restoration option yet responses refer to the costs and difficulties of finding skilled wallers which would generally apply to wall restoration work. Also reference was made to restrictions on grazing dates, although there are only cutting, not grazing restrictions under option EL 1-5 Grassland and moor inside SDAs.

Options not chosen for specific reasons

3.50 Finally, respondents were asked to identify any options that they could have entered into their agreement but chose not to and the reasons for this choice. As Table 3.19 shows, the boundary options were the most frequently mentioned options in this respect. In particular, hedges were not entered into the agreement. Some did not agree with the management prescriptions, whilst for others the perceived costs involved were too high. The cost of repair was also a reason mentioned for not selecting the walling options. Nine respondents mentioned UL20 Haymaking due to restrictions on cutting dates and inputs. UL17 No supplementary feeding on moorland was another option mentioned by 5 respondents.

3.51 The most frequently occurring reason for not selecting options related to the points threshold (38%). There were instances where agreement holders were interested in certain options but had already exceeded their points threshold. Record keeping requirements and the costs involved in complying was a deterrent for 7 respondents in relation to ED 1-5 Historic and landscape features. Record keeping was also an issue for 5 respondents in relation to UD12 Maintenance of weather-proof buildings. Other issues related to restrictions on the intensity of management and animal welfare. All the reasons given for not selecting specific options are presented in Appendix 3.

Table 3.19 Options not chosen for specific reasons

Options	(No.)	(%)
EB 1-10 Hedges	10	12
EB 11 Walls	5	6
EC 1-4 Trees and woodland	3	4
ED 1-5 Historic and landscape features	7	8
EE 1-8 Buffer strips	3	4
EF 1-11 Arable land	2	2
EG 1-5 Range of crop types	1	1
EK 1-4 Grassland and moor outside SDA	3	4
EK 5 Mixed stocking	4	5
EL 1-5 Grassland inside SDA	4	5
UB11 Walls above the moorland line	1	1
UB14 Hedge restoration	4	5
UB17 Wall restoration	3	4
UC5 Sheep fencing around small woodlands	2	2
UD12 Maintenance of weather-proof buildings	5	6
UD13 Maintaining visibility of archaeological features on moorland	2	2
UJ12 Winter livestock removal next to watercourses	2	2
UJ3 Post and wire fencing along watercourses	2	2
UL17 No supplementary feeding on moorland	5	6
UL18 Cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland	2	2
UL20 Haymaking	9	11
UL21 No cutting strips in meadows	1	1
UL22 Management of enclosed rough grazing for birds	3	4
Total	83	100

Experience of UELS

3.52 This section explored the farmers' experiences of UELS, seeking their views on workload changes, the adequacy of payments, the environmental effectiveness of the scheme and any problems encountered.

Impact of UELS on workload

3.53 For around three quarters of the agreement holders (74% \pm 4%) the UELS scheme had not affected their workload. One in four agreement holders reported that UELS had impacted on workload (26% in total, 24% (\pm 4%) said increase and 2% (\pm 1%) said decrease) (Table 3.20).

Table 3.20 Impact of UELS on workload

UELS and workload (%)	Increase	Decrease	No change	No. of responses
Farm Size: SLR				
Very small	23 ±7	3 ±3	74 ±7	139
Small	22 ±6	2 ±2	77 ±6	191
Medium	25 ±9	4 ±4	70 ±10	89
Large and V. Large	36 ±15	0 ±0	64 ±15	37
Farm type: Enterprise mix				
Grazing livestock	23 ±4	3 ±2	74 ±5	342
Dairy	25 ±12	0 ±0	75 ±12	47
Other types	27 ±11	1 ±3	71 ±11	67
Previous AES				
Previous participation	25 ±4	2 ±2	73 ±4	381
No participation	20 ±8	2 ±3	79 ±8	97
All agreement holders				
All agreement holders	24 ±4	2 ±1	74 ±4	479

3.54 Of those who had experienced an increased in workload most of this increase was undertaken by farm labour (76%) with contractors undertaking around one fifth of the extra work (21%).

Sufficiency of payments

3.55 Respondents were asked whether the overall financial payment associated with UELS (i.e. £62/ha) was sufficient to cover the income lost as a result of changes introduced to comply with the scheme. Over two thirds of agreement holders thought that the UELS payments were either generous or sufficient (66% ±4%), with around one third reporting that they were insufficient (34% ±4%). In particular, those farms with no agricultural sources of income (100%) and the very small farms (73%) thought the payments were generous or sufficient.

Table 3.21 Sufficiency of UELS payments (%)

Sufficiency of payments (%)	Generous	Sufficient	Insufficient	No. of responses
Farm Size: SLR				
Very small	4 ±3	69 ±8	27 ±8	121
Small	5 ±3	58 ±7	36 ±7	171
Medium	5 ±5	59 ±11	36 ±11	80
Large and V. Large	0 ±0	53 ±17	47 ±17	35
Farm type: Enterprise mix				
Grazing livestock	6 ±3	59 ±6	35 ±5	302
Dairy	0 ±0	66 ±14	34 ±14	43
Other types	2 ±3	65 ±12	33 ±12	62
Farm type: Income sources				
Traditional agriculture only	4 ±2	59 ±6	36 ±6	240
Mixed	4 ±3	63 ±7	33 ±7	170
Non agriculture only	10	90	0	15
Previous AES				
Previous participation	4 ±2	59 ±5	36 ±5	340
No participation	5 ±5	70 ±10	25 ±9	86
All agreement holders				
All agreement holders	5 ±2	61 ±5	34 ±4	427

Environmental Effectiveness of UELS

3.56 When asked about the environmental effectiveness of UELS, 82% (±4%) thought the scheme was either very effective or effective in providing the environmental improvements stated in the scheme literature. The respondents in the Welsh Borders, in particular, felt that the scheme was environmentally effective (91% ±16%) as did the large farms (90% ±16%). Agreement holders in the South West Moors region were more inclined to feel that the scheme was not environmentally effective (38% ±14%) (Table 3.22).

Table 3.22 Environmental effectiveness of UELS

Environmental effectiveness (%)	Very effective	Effective	Not effective	No. of responses
Region				
North Pennines and Borders	17 ±8	65 ±11	18 ±9	78
Lake District	2 ±4	84 ±11	14 ±10	44
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	17 ±10	65 ±13	19 ±10	54
North York Moors	18 ±14	71 ±17	11 ±12	28
Peak District	6 ±6	81 ±9	13 ±8	69
South Pennines	26 ±13	56 ±14	18 ±11	46
Welsh Borders	34 ±16	57 ±17	9 ±10	32
South West Moors	13 ±10	49 ±14	38 ±14	47
Farm Size: SLR				
Very small	11 ±6	76 ±8	13 ±6	118
Small	22 ±7	56 ±8	23 ±7	154
Medium	7 ±6	76 ±9	17 ±8	80
Large and V. Large	19	71	11	27
Farm type: Enterprise mix				
Grazing livestock	14 ±4	67 ±5	19 ±5	285
Dairy	13 ±11	71 ±14	16 ±12	38
Other types	19 ±10	68 ±12	13 ±9	56
Farm type: Income sources				
Traditional agriculture only	16 ±5	69 ±6	16 ±5	224
Mixed	15 ±6	63 ±8	22 ±7	155
Non agriculture only	19 ±19	70 ±22	12 ±15	17
Previous AES				
Previous participation	16 ±4	65 ±5	19 ±4	323
No participation	12 ±7	75 ±10	13 ±8	74
All agreement holders				
All agreement holders	15 ±4	67 ±5	18 ±4	398

Attitudes to UELS

3.57 A number of questions were asked in relation to the agreement holders' attitudes to UELS and scored on a 5-point scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (Table 3.23). Those statements for which there was positive agreement related to the ease of implementing the scheme (77% \pm 4%), the ease in joining the scheme (71% \pm 4%), the efficiency with which Natural England runs the scheme (64% \pm 4%) and the scheme's ability to increase the wildlife and improve the environment on the holding (63% \pm 4%). Most disagreed with the statement that the scheme interferes with the smooth running of the holding (66% \pm 3%) and thought that this was not the case. One statement where there was a fairly even distribution between those who agreed or disagreed related to the paperwork being a problem, with 45% (\pm 4%) agreeing with this statement and 38% (\pm 4%) disagreeing.

Table 3.23 Agreement holders' attitudes to UELS (%)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (%)
It will improve the farm management of the holding	11 \pm 3	29 \pm 4	31 \pm 4	22 \pm 4	7 \pm 2	100
It will improve the landscape on the holding	13 \pm 3	38 \pm 4	25 \pm 4	18 \pm 3	6 \pm 2	100
It will increase wildlife and improve the environment on the holding	20 \pm 4	43 \pm 4	19 \pm 4	15 \pm 3	3 \pm 2	100
The payments will cover the costs of the work involved	9 \pm 3	45 \pm 4	22 \pm 4	18 \pm 3	6 \pm 2	100
It has been easy to join	20 \pm 4	51 \pm 4	9 \pm 3	13 \pm 3	6 \pm 2	100
It has been easy to implement	19 \pm 4	58 \pm 4	18 \pm 3	4 \pm 2	1 \pm 1	100
Natural England runs the scheme efficiently	11 \pm 3	53 \pm 4	21 \pm 4	11 \pm 3	4 \pm 2	100
The scheme has increased my environmental knowledge and awareness	12 \pm 3	41 \pm 4	16 \pm 3	23 \pm 4	8 \pm 2	100
It has hidden costs which I had not anticipated	5 \pm 2	14 \pm 3	24 \pm 4	46 \pm 4	10 \pm 3	100
It has interfered with the smooth running of the holding	3 \pm 2	12 \pm 3	19 \pm 4	52 \pm 4	14 \pm 3	100
The paperwork is a problem	19 \pm 4	26 \pm 4	17 \pm 3	32 \pm 4	6 \pm 2	100

Advice and support

3.58 This section of the survey asked respondents to identify their sources of information and advice and to evaluate the quality of this advice and impact on option choices.

Sources of advice

3.59 Four out of five agreement holders had received support and/or advice when preparing their UELS application (84% \pm 3%). This response was broadly evenly distributed across the regions, although more advice was sought in the Northumberland and North Pennines region and less in the Welsh Borders region. Lower levels of advice were also sought by agreement holders with only non-agricultural sources of income. In comparison with agreement holders, a much lower level of advice and support was sought by the non-agreement holders when deliberating about joining UELS (51% \pm 6%) (Figure 3.13).

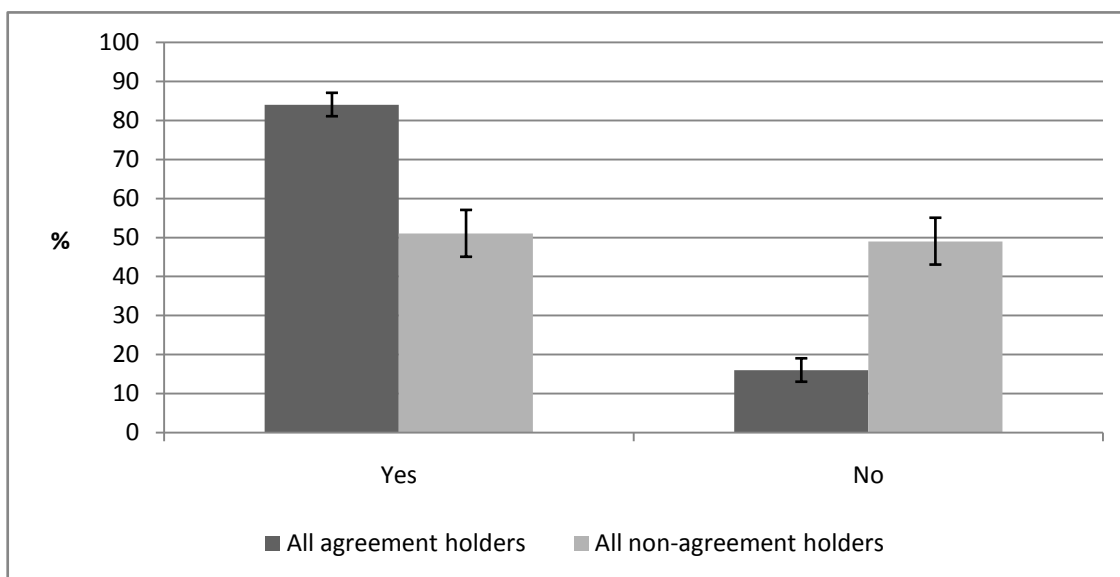


Figure 3.13 Advice sought when preparing application

3.60 In the agreement holder survey, the most frequently cited sources of advice were the Natural England helpdesk (34% \pm 8%) and land agents (21% \pm 9%). Natural England advisors were the most frequent source of advice for non-agreement holders (Table 3.24).

Table 3.24 Sources of advice and support

	Agreement holders		Non agreement holders	
	Receiving advice from source (%)	No. of responses	Receiving advice from source (%)	No. of responses
Natural England helpdesk	34	136	8	10
Land agent	21	83	13	18
Natural England event	14	55	12	16
Private consultant	11	49	5	7
FWAG	7	27	4	5
Natural England Advisor/Agent *	6	25	35	46
Local Authorities/National Park	6	27	4	2
NFU/CLA advisor	4	14	6	7
Other farmers	3	12	5	6
Wildlife Trust	1	3	0	0
RSPB	1	2	0	0
Other	7	27	10	14

* Includes those who act as agent for Natural England as part of ETIP

Quality of advice

3.61 Respondents were asked to rate the quality of the advice or support they had received when preparing their application. The majority of the agreement holders were positive about the quality of the advice. Over 80% of agreement holders rated the major sources of advice as either good or very good. The non-agreement holders were more likely to view the quality of advice they received when considering joining the scheme as poor. Due to the low number of non-agreement holders responses it is not possible to identify any significant differences between the different advice providers, other than 73% ($\pm 14\%$) of the advice from Natural England advisors was viewed as good or very good (Table 3.25).

Table 3.25 Quality of main sources of advice

Source of advice (%)	Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor	No. of responses
Agreement holders						
Natural England helpdesk	63 ±8	25 ±7	5 ±4	1 ±2	5 ±4	132
Natural England event	43 ±13	45 ±13	10 ±8	0 ±0	5 ±6	53
Land agent	68 ±10	21 ±9	8 ±6	0 ±0	3 ±4	80
Private consultant	77 ±12	16 ±10	4 ±5	2 ±4	0 ±0	50
FWAG	61	27	0	3	8	27
NFU/CLA advisors	67	20	13	0	0	14
Non- agreement holders						
Natural England helpdesk	17	34	8	17	23	10
Natural England event	20	63	6	6	6	16
Natural England advisor	37 ±14	36 ±14	11 ±9	8 ±8	8 ±8	44
Land agent	39	34	27	0	0	15
Private consultant	60	14	26	0	0	7
FWAG	36	0	40	0	25	5
NFU/CLA advisors	12	13	25	49	0	7

3.62 A comparison of the source of advice with those who stated that they were unfamiliar with the options in their agreement (see Table 3.26) shows that a higher proportion of those who were unfamiliar with the options in their agreement received advice from land agents (22% ±9%), private consultants (21% ±12%) or Natural England helpdesk (19% ±17%).

Table 3.26 Those familiar with options by source of advice

Source of advice (%)	Familiar with options in agreement		
	Yes	No	No. of responses
Natural England helpdesk	81 ±7	19 ±7	127
Land agent	78 ±9	22 ±9	75
Natural England event	89 ±9	11 ±9	51
Private consultant	79 ±12	21 ±12	45
FWAG	91	9	27

3.63 The agreement holders were asked whether the advice they had received when preparing their application led them to select options that they would not have considered. A fifth of agreement holders (20% ±9%) reported that they included options in their agreement that they would not have chosen without external advice (Table 3.27).

Table 3.27 Option choices influenced by advice

	Agreement holders (%)	No. of responses
Yes	20 ±9	74
No	71 ±5	283
Don't know	9 ±9	36
Total	100	393

3.64 Table 3.28 shows the source of advice against the extent to which the advice changed the choice of options in the agreement. Advice from private consultants (71% ±15%) and FWAG (72% ±18%) led to the highest rates of change, whilst around 50% (±9%) reported that the advice from Natural England helpdesk, Natural England events and Land Agents led to no changes in their options (Table 3.27).

Table 3.28 Extent to which advice changed choice of options

	Extent advice changed choice of options (%)			No. of responses
	Large change	Small change	No change	
Natural England helpdesk	10 ±5	40 ±9	50 ±9	119
Natural England event	12 ±9	33 ±13	55 ±14	48
FWAG	26	46	28	24
Private consultant	39 ±16	32 ±15	29 ±15	37
Land Agent	12 ±8	35 ±11	53 ±12	68

3.65 The options that would not have been chosen without external advice are presented in Table 3.29. The most frequently mentioned option was EL1-5 Grassland and moor inside SDA (n=12).

Table 3.29 Options included due to external advice

Option	No.
EL 1-5 Grassland and moor inside SDA	12
EB 11 Walls	6
UB11 Walls above the moorland line	6
EF 1-11 Arable land	5
UL20 Hay making	5
EB 1-10 Hedges	3
ED 1-5 Historic and landscape features	3
EK 1-4 Grassland and moor outside SDA	3
UB17 Wall restoration	3
UL18 Cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland	3
EA 1 FER	2
EC 1-4 Trees and woodland	2
EK 5 Mixed stocking	2
UJ12 Winter livestock removal next to watercourses	2
UL23 Management of upland grassland for birds	2
UC22 Woodland livestock exclusion	1
UD12 Maintenance of weather-proof buildings	1
UL17 No supplementary feeding on moorland	1
UL21 No cutting strips in meadows	1
Total	63

3.66 The agreement holders were also asked whether they had received any further follow-up advice or support to help with the implementation of UELS. As Table 3.30 shows, around one quarter (27% \pm 8%) had received such advice.

Table 3.30 Follow-up advice or support to help with UELS implementation

Further advice received	Agreement holders (%)	No. of responses
Yes	27 \pm 8	128
No	73 \pm 5	352

3.67 For agreement holders in receipt of follow-up advice, Natural England was the main source (58%), with land agents (13%), and other farmers (13%) playing a more minor role (Table 3.31).

Table 3.31 Sources of follow-up advice

	Receiving advice from source (%)	No. of responses
Natural England	58 \pm 11	76
FWAG	7	9
Private consultant	8	10
Land agent	13	15
Other farmers	13	18

3.68 Low numbers mean that only the Natural England follow-up advice could be rated for quality for follow-up advice. Again, the majority of respondents felt that this advice had been good or very good (91%) (Table 3.32).

Table 3.32 Quality of follow-up advice (%)

	v. Good	Good	Neither good or poor	Poor	V. poor	n
Natural England	46	45	5	0	4	303

Further comments from agreement holders

3.69 The agreement holder respondents were given an opportunity at the end of the survey to comment on any aspects of the scheme that they would like to see changed. These responses were categorised and are presented in Table 3.33. Note that many of the statements indicate an incorrect understanding of the UELS rules and prescriptions and some of the responses contradict the answers given in the structured questions.

Table 3.33 Suggested changes to improve UELS – Agreement holders

Comments	No.	%
Simplify application process and paperwork	76	27
Higher payments	58	20
Changes to options	48	17
Changes to payment intervals	19	7
Too early to comment	16	6
Scheme too complex	9	3
More flexibility	8	3
Tenancy issues	7	2
Lower points target	6	2
Common land issues	6	2
More support for smaller farmers	5	2
Lack of consistency with other schemes	5	2
Requires little change	5	2
Payments for points above ceiling	4	1
Some aspects not beneficial to environment	3	1
More advice/support required	3	1
Points system hard to understand	3	1
Mapping problems	2	1
Longer term agreements	1	0
Shorter term agreements	1	0
Total	285	100

Simplify application process and paperwork

3.70 A dominant message emerging from the comments was the need to simplify the application process and the paperwork involved with the scheme:

"I think that there are too many forms that are all a bit similar and a bit confusing. I don't think that I would have done the scheme at all without the advice." (North Pennines and Borders)

"Only problem was the initial application pack was very confusing - most of the form wasn't relevant to his farming practices - so perhaps different packs for different areas." (North Pennines and Borders)

"Simplify the system so farmers who don't have access to help, such as consultants, can still partake in it." (Lake District)

"Would say that the paperwork to join the scheme was extremely daunting and difficult and took a long time to complete correctly but I believe the process to claim is a lot simpler than with the CSS." (South Pennines).

Higher payments

3.71 Some of the comments suggested the need for higher payments. More specifically, a number of comments related to insufficient payments for capital works, such as stone walls as the following quotes illustrate:

"The capital payments are not increasing as quickly as the costs are increasing."

"Index link the payments to account for inflation over the time period of the agreement."

"Increasing walling grant to cover costs of work: at the moment it covers less than half."

"£28 provided for dry stone walling, but most people charging £40/ m so doesn't add up."

"I don't think the payments are sufficient as my livestock are my collateral and my retirement fund and the payments we get for reducing stocking don't really match that."

Changes to Options

Grazing restrictions (EL2 and EL3)	<p><i>"Sheep not allowed into pasture until after July 1st: by then the grass was too long for them to graze."</i></p> <p><i>"Some of the dates for clearing the meadows aren't suitable for us up in the hills and as we lamb late."</i></p>
Supplementary grazing (EL3 and UL17)	<p><i>"For a lot of the options you cannot feed stock on a lot of the SDA land which results in significant poaching and is detrimental to both stock and land."</i></p> <p><i>"I would change the supplementary feeding and how it is implemented, should have agreed areas where you can do this where it will minimise poaching but allow feeding to continue."</i></p> <p><i>"The options do not take seasonal change into account and therefore sometimes options cannot be adhered to - i.e. supplementary feeding during a very cold winter."</i></p> <p><i>"Allowing more supplementary feeding on very low input land as there is very extreme weather in the north of country and animals will starve in the winter months if they are not fed, also more flexibility with poaching for the same reason - farmers don't want to damage their land but have to feed their animals."</i></p>
Weed control (EL2 and EL3)	<p><i>"Would like to be able to spray, for example, once in 5 years if a field became over grown with weeds."</i></p>
Harrowing date restrictions (EL2 and EL3)	<p>EL2 <i>"There is a restriction on the dates for chain harrowing; we need to do it sooner than the dates allow really. The dates should be more area specific."</i></p> <p>EL2 and EL3 <i>"The dates for us farmers higher up aren't very good. If you can't chain harrow the fields and get the sheep's manure into the ground then when you bale up silage and hay you get lumps in the middle and lose 1/4 of the bale. This makes it hard to stay in the scheme."</i></p> <p>EL2 and EL3 <i>"Deadline for spring harrowing are very strict as are the hay cutting dates in summer and this is difficult as no flexibility for changes in weather - not even differential dates for Cornwall vs Peak District."</i></p>
Boundary length restrictions (UB14 and EL11)	<p>UB14 <i>"Limits to hedgerow restoration lengths are unhelpful and should be more."</i></p> <p>EL11 <i>"One thing I would change, the stone walling option, at the moment you can only alter, maintain and repair 50m sections, it would be much more beneficial to be able to do smaller sections as by rebuilding such a long stretch it sometimes doesn't get put back any better than it was built a hundred years ago. I think all farmers feel the same about this."</i></p>

Changes to payment intervals

- 3.72 Comments were made concerning changes to payment intervals from every six months from the start of the agreement to an annual cycle of payments made in the autumn or spring:

“The payments which were expected to be paid in July have been deferred – it’s difficult to plan your budget if this happens.”

“Need to change the structure of the payments. It was July, but is now autumn which doesn't fit in with the farm economics and expenses.”

“The payment system should change. Was told the payments would be in January or July, but it turned out to be very confusing. It’s now anywhere within the 6 month period, which isn't very helpful.”

- 3.73 These changes were introduced on 1 July 2011 for Environmental Stewardship agreements which started on or after 1 February 2007. The changes were implemented following an EU audit and were introduced to protect the UK from expensive EU fines. To help minimise the impacts of these changes on farmers all payments due during the first half of 2011 have been unaffected.

Scheme too complex

- 3.74 Some felt that the scheme was too complex:

“It could be simpler - I would have struggled to understand all the options, without the help of the land agent.”

“The UELS is too complicated - different criteria for every wall and field - during lambing I have to record every animal in every field – it’s just too complicated.”

Further comments from non-agreement holders

- 3.75 Non-agreement holders were also given an opportunity at the end of the survey to make any other comments about UELS that they regarded as relevant. These responses were categorised and are presented in Table 3.34.

- 3.76 The greatest number of comments from non-agreement holders related to the perceived restrictions of UELS on efficient agriculture:

“Limits full agricultural potential of land. On poor land needs input fertiliser to keep it viable. Agri environment schemes conflict with this.”

“There is far too much money for people who own land and do not farm. I feel that these schemes do not encourage farm activity and working farms. I believe there should be a cap on subsidies and that the distribution of money to farmers should reflect the production on the farm and the best use of the land.”

- 3.77 Other non-agreement holders were deterred from applying due to the perceived complexity of UELS and the application process:

“Could be a bit simpler...points system complicated.”

“Forms to get onto UELS are ridiculous, very difficult to fill in. The questions are confusing and misleading.”

Table 3.34 Further comments on UELS – Non-agreement holders

Comments	No.	%
Restricts efficient agriculture	20	19
Too complex	14	13
Payments too low	11	10
Considering/Will apply in future	8	7
Close to retirement	6	6
Entry requirements too high	5	5
Tenure issues	5	5
Poor communication with advisor	4	4
Dislikes external restrictions	4	4
Specific management issues	4	4
Lack of flexibility	4	4
Difficult for small farms	4	4
Concerns with paperwork	3	3
Needs help with application	3	3
Land area too small to bother	3	3
Unsure of eligibility	3	3
Can't get enough points	2	2
Hassle changing schemes	2	2
Length of agreement	2	2
Total	107	100

3.78 Some non-agreement holders suggested that the UELS payments were too low to cover loss of income, whilst others felt the points requirements were too high, particularly for smaller farms that struggle to achieve the required points. A few also mentioned tenancy issues as the quotes below explain:

“Rented land - short term - landlord won't allow a 5 year agreement which is a flaw in the system.”

“I know I need to make a decision about the scheme soon. I think it is very good if you can get the money but I'm not sure I can get enough points. I'm also worried as it means I won't be able to use fertiliser and plough the land and if I change tenants this may put new ones off.”

4 Face to face interview results

- 4.1 This section presents the findings from the 40 face-to-face interviews conducted between February and March 2011. The aim of these interviews was to provide a greater understanding of some of the issues raised in the telephone survey. As most of the interviews were with agreement holders only a limited insight into the views of non-agreement holders was obtained.
- 4.2 To capture any regional variation, interviews were conducted across all of the eight regions. Also the interviewees were selected to ensure a cross section of farms based on previous agri-environment scheme experience, the size of the SDA land and the tenure situation. The final sample is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Face-to-face interview sample

Upland regions	Agreement holders	Non-agreement holders	Common land agreement holders	Total
North Pennines and the Borders	2		2	4
Lake District	2		2	4
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	5	1		6
North York Moors	4	1		5
Peaks	2	1		3
South Pennines	4	1		5
Welsh Borders	5			5
The SW Moors	6	2		8
Total	30	6	4	40

Awareness of UELS

- 4.3 The telephone survey suggests information received in the post from NE was the most frequent way of finding out about UELS. This concurs with experience of those interviewed face-to-face. Several interviewees reported that advisors, including National Park, Natural England and FWAG officers, had been actively promoting the scheme and they were approached by them to join UELS. One interviewee received free advice and help with form-filling from an agricultural advisory business. *“Because it was free I made a phone call, but I wouldn’t have done otherwise.”* Also several of the interviewees had attended Natural England events, where UELS was discussed.
- 4.4 Generally, the scheme was thought to be well promoted and that if any farmer wanted to find out about it *“the opportunity was there.”* As one interviewee said *“I didn’t proactively look for it; it sort of proactively found me.”*
- 4.5 Much of the interviewee’s initial awareness of UELS was associated with the loss of the HFA payment. In the farming press, in particular, UELS was presented as a replacement for the HFA: *“Yes there was a lot of publicity, everyone knew about it. It was in the press that it was going to happen and it was to replace the Hill Farm Allowance, the old subsidy.”*
- 4.6 Interestingly, a smallholder who let out their land to a neighbouring farmer had received information about the scheme from NE in the post and initially thought they were not eligible as the following quote explains:

“Partly because we don’t own the livestock and partly because I thought there was a lower limit of 10 ha. Also because we weren’t receiving the HFA payment, I didn’t think we were eligible. This is because the booklet said something about UELS aimed at farmers who had previously been receiving HFA. It was only when FWAG called and asked if we had thought about transferring from ELS to UELS did I realise we could apply.”

- 4.7 Two non-agreement holder smallholders who were ineligible for HFA also thought this meant they were ineligible for UELS.

Motivations for joining UELS

- 4.8 A number of reasons for joining UELS were provided by the interviewees.

Scheme payments

- 4.9 The main motivation for joining UELS for most interviewees was the scheme payments. These were perceived as another income stream and for some farms formed part of their agri-environment scheme income which was essential for the survival of the farm business. Often the UELS payment was referred to not as extra money, but as a replacement for the income they were receiving from HFA. It was thought of as money that was rightfully theirs:

“Just money for doing what they want us to do, which is generally what we want to do.... To look after your farm which is something we want to do, really... Well it’s to help you maintain it as you should really.”

“It is helping to support costs that we would have anyway, that’s the point and that’s what it should be in my opinion. It is a scheme that supports the traditional family run hill farm to do what they have been doing for generations which is becoming difficult in the economic situation that we find ourselves in.”

“I went in to it to get my points, just to get a bit of money really. You get points the easiest way you could. There have been no problems... Put the stone walls in and a little bit of non-fertilizer on some fields and that about got me the points.”

“I honestly haven’t given it a lot of thought, just getting the money really.”

- 4.10 A number of interviewees mentioned they were receiving more under UELS than they were with HFA, whilst others believed they were receiving less because they were unable to claim on rented land, as discussed below.
- 4.11 Two of the non-agreement holders interviewed mentioned the inadequacy of the scheme payments as contributing to the reason why they had not joined UELS, although they had both previously been in agri-environment schemes (ESA and CSS). One felt that the payments for boundaries were inadequate and would only consider applying if the overall scheme payment was raised. His view was that the capital payments in previous schemes were too low. The other had calculated that it was not financially worthwhile for him to enter UELS for two reasons. Firstly, the landlord was demanding a proportion of the payment associated with UELS (around £20 per acre). Secondly, as he was unable to obtain sufficient points on his moorland area he would need to establish a number of 4 and 6 metre margins in his fields which were particularly small and would have generated £15/acre in payment, whilst costing around £25/acre.

Ease of fit

- 4.12 A dominant view amongst those interviewed was that the scheme fitted in well with what they were already doing on the farm. It was seen as having little impact on the management of the farm business, as the following quotes illustrate:

"It hasn't really changed anything at all, because I more or less did it all without being told more or less."

"I looked through it and I thought to myself 'I'm already doing it.'"

"It's all right for me because it means I can still farm it how I want to farm it, more or less. There are no restrictions on stocking. So that works very well."

{Why did you join?}

"Well it was money for old rope wasn't it because a lot of us weren't doing any different. That was good."

Natural progression from ELS

- 4.13 For those previously in ELS, the transfer to UELS was seen as a natural progression with very little change required:

"It was a natural progression from one scheme to the other. There weren't a lot of changes needed to meet the scheme requirements."

Improving boundary features

- 4.14 Several interviewees specifically mentioned using UELS to improve boundary features, such as stone walls or hedges on their farm:

"We particularly wanted to restore some of the hedges anyway. Because the hedge we chose was long we got most of our points with that."

- 4.15 For some, the payments meant that they were able to do boundary work that they would not have contemplated without the financial help. For others, it had enabled them to undertake the work over a shorter timeframe. For some there appeared to be a misunderstanding of the purpose of the stone wall protection and maintenance option which was being used as a capital works option to restore stone walls rather than simply maintain them.

Environmental objectives

- 4.16 A common theme among 'main stream' farmers, who relied on sheep and/or cattle enterprises for a significant proportion of their household income, was that UELS was an endorsement of good farming practice. The scheme was talked about in terms of *"helping to take care of the land"* and *"working within the capability of the land."*

"A certain amount of farming is about looking after the land...which farming has done for generations really...It is more than an industry is farming, it shouldn't be classed as an industry all the time I think if it [UELS] helps us stay here and supports the landscape then yes it's a good thing."

"There are a lot of farmers that have been here for generations and they really do want to look after the place, we are not all rapers and pillagers of the countryside."

"You have to know your limitations haven't you really...putting pressure on the land...We like living where we do, doing what we do."

"Anything that keeps us here is good because otherwise it would be difficult to carry on and my son would have to get another job. I'm old enough that maybe I would retire. You know, catch a few moles, wall a few gaps and let it all go to desertification."

"~~~~ had an uncle who walled all the time and he instilled in ~~~~ that it's important to keep the job tidy...We have lots of little fields and I suppose lots of people might say well it would be better

with that wall out there, you know, but it's nice to maintain them, it's part of the history of the place."

- 4.17 A number of hobby or lifestyle farmers interviewed entered UELS for the environmental objectives, seeing it as an opportunity to improve their environmental knowledge.

Reasons for not joining UELS

- 4.18 Six non-agreement holders were interviewed face-to-face and asked about their reasons for not joining UELS. There were a range of responses reflecting the individual's circumstances and highlighting the complexity of the decision-making processes involved. Three of the respondents were influenced in their decision not to join UELS by the small size of their holdings (8 ha, 8 ha and 16 ha). Another two respondents felt that the scheme payments were inadequate to meet the costs involved and another was deterred by concerns of possible restrictions placed on his dairy enterprise. Of the six non-agreement holders, three had previously been in agri-environment schemes.
- 4.19 One smallholder, who described himself as a hobby farmer and did not run the 8 ha farm as a commercial enterprise, was unaware of UELS before the interview. He thought it unlikely that he would have applied for the scheme even if he had known about it, due to his perception of the hassle or extra work that would be involved. For another smallholder of 8 ha, the holding had become largely an added asset to the bed and breakfast and holiday cottage business, and so he did not see much need for or benefit from the scheme. Also his state of health may have discouraged him from looking at new ideas. Another, who was approaching retirement and 'winding down', let out most of his land and was concerned about committing to a 5 year agreement.
- 4.20 Three of the respondents had not previously claimed the HFA payments. Two were too small to claim and another had no breeding livestock, and therefore for these respondents the loss of this payment did not act as a driver to join UELS.
- 4.21 A dairy farmer with no previous experience of AES said he was wary of agri-environment schemes in general as he thought that joining may eventually lead to restrictions on his dairy enterprise. He was particularly concerned about limits being placed on stocking rates and fertilizer applications.

Attitudes towards UELS

Positive experiences of UELS

- 4.22 The majority of interviewees had previously been in an agri-environment scheme. Over half had previously been involved in classic schemes and particularly ESA schemes. Most of these had proceeded to enter their land into HLS or ELS. The three interviewees whose previous experience related to ELS only were all smallholders. Another three interviewees had previous experiences of National Park schemes which were regarded highly.
- 4.23 UELS was held in high regard by most interviewees with the majority of agreement holders indicating a positive attitude towards the scheme. This positive attitude stemmed from the view that the scheme required few changes to existing farm management practices. A common theme emerging from the face-to-face interviews was how well the theme fitted in with agreement holders existing farming systems. It provided support for what they were already doing and helped in maintaining their current farming practices.
- 4.24 Most of the interviewees were operating low input/output livestock systems. As one interviewee explains:

“The scheme is mostly involved with not doing things, rather than doing things.”

- 4.25 Some saw that what they were being asked to do was good farm practice, particularly in relation to boundary maintenance work and livestock management.
- 4.26 Some had had to make minor changes to their management and these were seen as manageable and easily incorporated into existing farming practices. For example, one interviewee had had to delay letting his cattle out on to the grass, another two had had to restrict grazing on some fields during the winter, another referred to changes to manure spreading and another had to take steep corners out of production.
- 4.27 Interviewees were asked about the views of other farmers in the local community towards UELS. Generally, the views of other farmers appeared mixed, as the following quotes illustrate:

“I think there were mixed views, some of them were [in favour] and some weren't. It depended on how big your farm was and what the restrictions were...the smaller farmer was being penalized.”

“Obviously it wasn't as simple as ticking a box for your HFA like it was before and that went down badly with a lot of farmers. But I can see the other point of view, the public goods side, everybody has to be more accountable really. It isn't a money hand out.”

Negative experience of agreement holders of UELS

- 4.28 There were few negative comments. One third of interviewees had experienced difficulties in understanding the scheme requirements and completing the application form:
- “Filling in the application form was a huge, huge thing – a friend did help me with that.”*
- 4.29 One dyslexic interviewee had found interpretation of the complex literature difficult, although he conceded that a younger farmer might be better placed to understand the information.
- 4.30 Interpretation of the term ‘moorland line’ was another area that was subject to negative comments by one interviewee. This farmer struggled to understand the term and its application *“I just couldn't get my head round it at all...I did ring somebody up about it...I think I finished up more confused after I talked to them.”*
- 4.31 Also one lifestyle farmer who had hoped UELS would improve their knowledge of the environment and farming found that UELS *“wasn't very challenging”* and *“felt it played to the lowest common denominator.”* She felt that the heart of the scheme was in the right place, but needed to be more imaginative and more pro-active.

Agreement holders' views on points/payments

- 4.32 As with the telephone survey responses, most of the interviewees thought that the overall scheme payment was sufficient and the points allocated were about right, although two interviewees commented that payments for stone walling work fell very short of covering the costs.
- 4.33 One small sized farm (20 ha) found the points threshold difficult to reach. As they had a small area of land to play with, they felt their option choices were limited without causing unacceptable changes to their existing management practices. The feeling was that there should be greater rewards for small farms in recognition of this difficulty. In general, he thought *“the points allocations are quite well thought out, but if I hadn't had stone walls I probably wouldn't have been able to get enough points”*. In contrast, one smallholder found that he had no difficulty in achieving the points target. In fact, he would have liked to have been *“a little bit more challenged”*. For example, to be financially rewarded for putting more land into EL2, over and above the points threshold. *“It's not encouraging people to go to low inputs when they could.”*

- 4.34 One dairy farmer mentioned that because he was able to achieve most of his points with his cattle (UL18), it meant he did not have to enter two low-input fields into the scheme that were previously in ELS. He was rather bemused by this situation and felt that it perhaps ran counter to the aims of the scheme. Another interviewee, undertaking a large amount of stone walling work under UELS, had a similar experience.
- 4.35 A common theme emerging from the face-to-face interviews was the way the architecture of UELS, which is based on a points threshold for entry, could be a powerful influence on how the scheme was viewed. Quite often the discussion about reasons for entry and choice of options was contextualised in terms of points and for some interviewees it was difficult for them to look beyond the process and engage with the scheme's objectives at a broader level:
- "I went in to it to get my points..."*
- "Looking for easy points..."*
- "We had to find something to put in as we were struggling for points you see..."*

Increase in agreement holder's environmental knowledge

- 4.36 Some interviewees felt that being part of UELS and previous agri-environment schemes had increased their awareness of environmental issues, if not their environmental knowledge.
- 4.37 In several cases there appeared to be limited knowledge about the environmental objectives of the scheme. Some interviewees appeared to view UELS only as a means of maintaining farm boundaries and were less aware of the environmental objectives. One interviewee suggested that many farmers paid land agents to fill in the applications and did not really understand and in some cases, care what the environmental objectives of the scheme were. This was the case for one interviewee whose application was completed by an advisor, and where there appeared to be no deep rooted buy-in or understanding of the ecological issues relating to the UELS objectives. This often manifested itself in the frustration at the lack of flexibility of the options, particularly in relation to the impact of poor weather conditions.

Agreement holders' views on environmental effectiveness of UELS

- 4.38 Most felt that UELS would be effective in maintaining the environmental status quo on their farm and in protecting existing features, which they were already managing for the benefit of the environment. In particular, reference was made to managing hedgerows and stone walls and maintaining habitats for the benefit of birds.
- 4.39 However, one interviewee thought the scheme would be ineffective in protecting the declining bird population *"I don't think anything we do will make any difference"*. Similarly, another interviewee, who described himself as a hobby farmer, did not feel that the scheme was very relevant to helping the birds, except for the later mowing dates.
- 4.40 Another interviewee thought that the environmental objectives of the options would not be achieved because her experience of ESA suggested that the schemes are not effectively policed *"I know farmers who were never checked"*.
- 4.41 For one interviewee who was close to retirement, the environmental management as described in the ELS booklets was quite an alien concept to him and he thought that many farmers would not follow the option prescriptions *"I think a lot of them [option prescriptions] will be ignored to be honest."*

Agreement holders' view on tenure issues

4.42 Twelve of the interviewees were tenants or rented some land. Most of the tenants reported that their landlords were positive about them entering UELS, although in three cases there was concern that their entry into UELS may be negatively reflected in their future rent reviews. None of the tenants had difficulty in gaining landlord consent.

4.43 Some public bodies or commercial companies appeared happy to support their tenants to join UELS as it strengthened their environmental credentials. One tenant of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) had experienced no difficulties in obtaining agreement to join UELS. It "*ticks their boxes*" in respect of the environment. Another tenant's farm was owned by a quarry company that worked a large local quarry:

"They were quite happy to support the UELS application as the quarry is a bit of an eyesore and the farm being in UELS gives them a bit of environmental credit. The quarry company does not take a proportion of the payment."

4.44 Six of the interviewees were landlords and claiming UELS and felt that this was justified. They considered themselves 'active' landlords as they maintained boundary features on the land. In some cases, they reduced the tenant's rent in recognition that they were losing out on the HFA, in other cases an informal rental situation was in place where a non-commercial rate was already charged. These landlords felt they had a good relationship with their tenants, which was necessary to ensure that the agri-environment prescriptions were adhered to, particularly if they were also in an HLS agreement:

"I wasn't claiming HFA before, my tenant was, because they had the stock. When I started to claim UELS we deducted that from his rent. He doesn't get over-charged, he gets charged about £30/acre for the ground, which is low. But at the same time I can move his stock around which under HLS it is fairly vital to do be able to that, there is no hassle."

"We had this issue when we joined ELS and we realised then that he (the tenant) would lose out to some extent, but our ground is very useful to him because it is so close to his farmhouse at this time of year when he wants the stock close to the house, when he is lambing, that I don't think he minds losing out."

4.45 One interviewee who rented out land, had decided not to join UELS due to concerns about a lack of control over his land for the 5 year period. The landlord currently uses grazing licences on his land which gives him significant control and ensures SFP eligibility.

4.46 Three farmers felt they had lost out as they were unable to claim UELS on rented land that was under grazing licenses, although they were previously claiming the HFA payment for livestock using this land. One had summer keep where the three landlords were reluctant to commit to a 5 year lease, although the landlords themselves were not claiming UELS:

"We have 60 acres of summer keep land but can't claim UELS on that, so we feel we've lost out. Can't get UELS unless landlord agrees to sign up for 5 years. None are prepared to sign tenancy agreements for that long. We have 3 landlords and none of them are claiming UELS. It gets very complicated. For every farmer in the area there are probably 2 or 3 people they rent land off."

4.47 One interviewee who had a number of annual grazing licenses thought he was losing between £4,000-5,000 as a result of the loss of HFA payment and the landlord's refusal to consent to a UELS agreement, which is a significant portion of his farming income. Another estimated the lost at about £2,000 for the same reason. One non-agreement holder believed that he had lost around £7,000-£8,000 as a result of losing the HFA and not joining UELS. Although the landlord was happy for him to put the rented land into UELS, he had wanted a large proportion of the payments. He was frustrated that the landlord "*can just sit on his backside and not even get out of bed of a day to earn 60% of all the farmer's money*". This was also the complaint of one tenant agreement holder:

“They have reduced my rent which is fair enough, but the restrictions are really harsh and that’s not covered. When the agreement finishes I’m going to give it up. I’ve got to do all the walling as well, it’s not worth it. She’s not a farmer [the landlord] and she’s getting all that money, some of it’s in the ESA and she’s getting that as well. Really that money was for the farmer. I’ve got another 50 acres and he’s not a farmer [the landlord] and I’m not getting anything on that. I think that’s wrong. I’m doing the management and they are taking all that tax payers money away that was meant for the farmers, it is going to his pension fund.”

{Did you get the hill farm allowance?}

“Yes I got all that, but when they changed the rules I can’t get any of that. Only on the land that we own, I can get that...I don’t feel happy but there is nothing I can do about it.”

Agreement holders’ option choices

4.48 Interviewees were asked their views on specific options in their agreement. Inevitably, some options were more popular than others, and some options did not appear in any of the interviewees agreements and therefore are not discussed here. In some instances, the interviewee had to be reminded of the option requirements and this was particularly the case for the two compulsory options (UX2 and UX3).

UX2 - Upland grassland and arable requirements

4.49 Most of the interviewees had little problem with the UX2 compulsory option. They saw it as good farming practice *“It’s common sense...good farming practice, really”* and four interviewees mentioned that if you were complying with cross compliance it was fairly straightforward. As one farmer put it:

“It’s just good cross-compliance practice isn’t it? Because we do farm non-intensively, it hasn’t really had an impact on how we farm. Perhaps, you take a little more notice on where you site any feed areas, but we do that anyway to save mess.”

4.50 This farmer felt that the option was in the scheme to keep the bad farmers in order and should not be an issue if you are farming in the right way.

UX3 - Moorland requirements

4.51 As with UX2, interviewees generally felt that this compulsory option requires no management changes in order to comply.

Boundary options

EB1 - Hedge management

4.52 Two interviewees had undertaken the hedge management options in previous agri-environment schemes and were continuing with this management in UELS. One farmer had previously planted hedges under ESA and now that they were established was using the UELS to manage them.

UB14 - Hedge restoration

4.53 For one interviewee, hedge restoration of 170 m length of hedge comprised a large part of their agreement. They chose to undertake the work all in one go and it cost £1,600 for the hedge laying and £3,500 for fencing. The UELS payment for the 5 year period is £3,000 so the payments do not cover the costs in this case.

EB11, UB11 - Stone wall protection and maintenance

- 4.54 Several interviewees had restored their stone walls under previous agri-environment schemes and were using the UELS to maintain the existing walls. One farmer had restored about 4-5000 metres of stone walling under Countryside Stewardship “so all this is doing is saying you must maintain it, which is something I want to do anyway.”
- 4.55 There were mixed views about the payment rates for stone walling. One farmer who did the work himself and also employed contractors at £40/metre, thought the UELS payment rate was about right. Another felt that the payments for capital works had almost doubled from the previous scheme (ESA). However, two interviewees felt the payments were insufficient, especially if you had to purchase the stone.
- 4.56 For some interviewees, most of their points were obtained through the walling options. Many were doing this anyway, but acknowledged that it was becoming increasingly difficult due to labour shortages on the farm and that the walls would be maintained to a higher standard under the scheme. One farmer, who valued his stone walls but lacked the labour to maintain them, had put 12 km of wall into UB11 and the payment enabled him to employ contractors to maintain the walls:
- “The walling would still be to do, you have got to maintain your boundaries or things get too hard. But I think your internal walls would suffer, you know, it would get to be looking a little bit of a mess. On a family farm like this you are full time with your livestock.”*
- 4.57 One interviewee complained that some “bad” farmers who had let their farms decline were now profiting from walling options:
- “A lot of those people that have let their farms go, get money. But we, who have our walls up, get nothing.”*

UB16 - Restoration of earthbanks

- 4.58 This option was undertaken by one interviewee as it was “something we were going to do anyway” and it was useful to be “given a deadline.”
- 4.59 A specific point in relation to capital works was raised that affected small farms, in particular. Capital works such as earthbanks are started in the first year and to be cost-effective are often completed this same year. However, the total payment for the whole earthbank is not received until the end of the 5 year period. There is an issue of the time lag in recouping the costs that are paid out at the start of the agreement.

UC22 - Woodland livestock exclusion

- 4.60 One interviewee had the woodland livestock exclusion option in this agreement, which requires excluding all livestock from the woodland. However, he intends to graze the woodland for two months of the year, as he and the National Park believes it will be of benefit for the wood. He feels that there are no practical difficulties with this option, as the stock tend to avoid the woodland during the summer.

ED1 - Options for historic and landscape features

- 4.61 The two interviewees who had this option found it easy to comply with. It is just about keeping buildings in a good condition “I’ve been doing that for the last 30 years, so I’ll just carry on.”

ED 5 - Management of archaeological features on grassland

- 4.62 One interviewee was well informed about the archaeology on his farm. He talked about the rarity of the stone circle he had and the different types of field systems. However, his interest in archaeology was not a motivating factor for entering this option into his agreement:

"We had to find something to put in as we were struggling for points you see. So that was put in so we don't feed on those areas."

EK 5 - Mixed stocking

4.63 The three interviewees with this option found it straightforward to implement, requiring little or no change to their existing management practices. As one farmer explained:

"We are lucky because we haven't got a lot of stock and the grass let means that we are more flexible."

UJ12 - Winter livestock removal next to streams, rivers and lakes

4.64 The one interviewee with this option had no problems implementing it except in adverse weather conditions when they needed to bring the sheep down to the fields in the valley.

EL2 and EL3 - Permanent grassland with low inputs in SDAs

4.65 Twenty interviewees had these options in their agreement and most found them straightforward as they did not have to alter their existing management practices. The inputs on these fields were already low and easily fell within the limits.

4.66 One retired farmer who lets all his land to graziers on short term leases had focused his agreement on the low input grassland options. He felt that this had worked well as *"I can't afford fertiliser anyway"* and he may have actually exceeded his points threshold. Similarly, another interviewee had worked out that he could obtain all his points by putting his pastures into the low input grassland options. This had created no difficulties as he tries to *"avoid overgrazing and poaching, anyway."*

4.67 Again, another interviewee found this option easy to comply with. As most of the farm had received no fertiliser inputs, he could have put much more into the agreement. The only difficulty encountered was the restriction on chain harrowing after 1st April:

"Here you often can't get onto the land before 1st April. There's not a lot of allowance made for different soil conditions...That's the one downside."

4.68 One interviewee thought that weed wiping, rather than spraying might upset some farmers, although little spraying is undertaken in the SDAs. One landlord had an infestation of creeping thistles on his three fields in EL2 which the tenant suggested spraying. Having read the booklet he recognised that he could only weed-wipe and as he was only able to find one weed-wiping contractor in Herefordshire, he eventually had to borrow a weed wiping machine from a nearby farmer. It took the landlord about 30 hours to complete the work. Another interviewee mentioned having to purchase a weed wiper to comply with EL2. Neither interviewees were aware that in some cases of severe thistle infection it may be possible to obtain a derogation to spray using a boom sprayer.

4.69 One interviewee, who also assisted farmers with their UELS applications, felt that EL2 can be difficult if there is a lack of flexibility. Some farmers who have always traditionally topped, dislike the restriction on topping. Depending on the grass availability and stocking levels it may be necessary to de-stock quite dramatically to comply with EL2 in which case it is not economical. Some farmers worried about the pastures becoming too rank if they only keep sheep and do not have suitable hay meadows. He felt the option could be changed to *"do not top more than half your grassland in any one year"*. There would still be environmental benefits and the farmers would be happier about being able to rotationally top the grass.

4.70 One interviewee felt he had been wrongly advised, as he had two temporary grass fields in EL2 which he now finds he cannot include in his arable rotation, although he had previously been advised by a NE officer that *"it was fine, if it is not grass all the time."*

UL18 - Cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland

- 4.71 The seven interviewees with this option in their agreement had experienced no difficulties with its implementation. For those who already had cattle on their farm this was considered an easy option which required little change. One dairy farmer, with only cattle, was surprised at how easy it was to get the points and could not understand the environmental objectives of the option. As one farmer suggested:

“If you have sheep and cattle and you make hay, then UELS is generally easy to get into. If you haven't got cattle it makes it a lot more difficult and even worse if you're not doing haymaking.”

- 4.72 Some minor changes were made by one interviewee who had to divide his land into smaller fields to ensure more precise grazing and also more time was required to walk around the cattle. For another interviewee it did not take any extra time because it is *“how you would graze cattle well to get the best out of the land”*. He describes it as *“teaching Grandma to suck eggs”* but added *“not all farmers do it though.”*

UL20 Haymaking

- 4.73 The three interviewees with the haymaking option had no problems with the prescriptions. For one, it was a continuation of what they were already doing in ELS and for another, due to local conditions and the way they farmed, it did not lead to any changes in practice as weather is seldom good enough to silage before 5th July.

UL21 No cutting strip within meadows

- 4.74 For one interviewee, this option was the only extra management that they had which they were not already doing for HLS. It was added in order to make up the points and was not considered inconvenient.

Summary of issues with options

- 4.75 To summarise very few issues were raised during the interviews of difficulties experienced in implementing the UELS options. The only issues raised were:

Boundary options

- 4.76 That the total payments for boundary work are not received until the end of the 5 year period, resulting in a time lag for recouping the costs that are paid out at the start of the agreement. In order to be cost-effective some agreement holders are choosing to implement boundary work in one go but will not recoup the full costs until end of 5 year period.

EB11, UB11 stone wall options

- 4.77 That payments are too low. Some agreement holders appear to be using this option to restore, rather than maintain and protect stone walls, which is more expensive. However, costs maybe high if the agreement holder has to purchase the stone for maintenance work.

EL2 low input grassland

- 4.78 That only weed-wiping is allowed if severe thistle problem. In fact, if there is a severe thistle infestation it may be possible to obtain a derogation to boom spray.

Reasons for agreement holders not taking up other options

- 4.79 Many interviewees were able to reach their points target easily without changing their existing farming practices, and once they had reached this point did not consider other options which might require greater management changes.

- 4.80 Several interviewees felt they were limited in their choice of options, particularly those who had already restored farm boundaries, or fenced off woodlands and rivers under previous agri-environment schemes. As one farmer explained:
- “On the estate, miles and miles of hedges have been restored and 2 miles of river that runs through it and all the dingles have been fenced out and that limits your options...because you have been environmentally aware you can be penalised. It would be nice if there was something to recompensate for what has already been done. If there had not been a lot of cattle on the estate, it wouldn't have got in, you're talking 800 to 900 acres.”*
- 4.81 This concern reflects some lack of understanding of the scheme, as there are options available to maintain those features restored under previous schemes.
- 4.82 Four farmers could have taken up the hedge management options, but as they had achieved their points target chose not to. This was in part due to the experience of restrictions in previous agri-environment schemes which meant that hedges could not be kept “trimmed and tidy”. One farmer previously had his hedges in ESA and he had had some “run-ins” with the Project Officer about his hedge management practices. Another interviewee discounted the hedge management options because of problems encountered with a previous ELS agreement with thorn debris affecting their horses.
- 4.83 Any options that restricted mowing dates were not selected by one interviewee as they preferred to mow when they liked, enabling them to spread the work out according to the weather and available labour.
- 4.84 Five interviewees mentioned they could have easily exceeded their points threshold but chose not to. Conversely, four interviewees felt they were limited in the options available to them without significantly altering their existing management practices. It was suggested by two interviewees that there should be some encouragement to maximise points and to pay accordingly. One suggestion was to reward 50% of the value for exceeding the points requirements. This would create a 2 tier scheme, whereby the 1st tier gets you onto the scheme and 2nd tier rewards extra work.
- 4.85 Two farmers considered the UL20 Haymaking option but one had reached his points threshold and the other was persuaded by his advisor that there were easier options available which did not require changes to his farm practice.

Experience of advice and support with application process

- 4.86 The interviewees received advice from a variety of sources. A common theme that emerged from the interviews was the perceived complexity of the application form. Several interviewees felt that due to this complexity they were unable to complete the application form themselves and enlisted the help of an advisor, including FWAG, National Park officers, an AONB project officer, private consultants and land agents. These advisors were integral to the application process. One interviewee raised the suspicion that the complexity of the scheme was on purpose so you had to get an agent to do it...*“hopeless for someone like me to do it”*.
- 4.87 Some interviewees were more engaged in the application process with their advisors than others. One interviewee went through the form with the FWAG advisor and made notes and then on the insistence of FWAG filled the form in himself, a requirement of ETIP¹⁶. Two others left the whole application process to the land agents and only effectively rubber stamped the form, one of these

¹⁶ UELS is part of the ELS Training and Information Programme (ETIP) which was developed to ensure strong uptake of UELS, to bring in new entrants to the scheme and to improve option choice and option implementation

was also operating under ETIP. One young farmer felt slightly excluded from the discussions about his agreement with his advisors:

“Had the AONB project officer here and the NE person to discuss the agreement and sign it, but it was more of a chat between the two of them. The project officer completed the paperwork, all I did was discuss it and sign it. The way they discussed it, it seemed that they got what they wanted and were not too concerned about the impact on me. Not that big an issue, just annoying”.

- 4.88 Eight of the interviewees chose to complete the application form themselves, rather than pay someone to do it. For one, it took her at least 15 – 20 hours to identify the most appropriate options. Another, completed the application over 4 days *“me and the kitchen table and the odd phone call”*. One interviewee, who was previously in ELS, found that completing application forms got easier as you got used to it *“a little bit more trained into how people are thinking”*. He *“didn’t find anything daunting at all”*. However, he did experience some confusion between the ELS and UELS options, as it was not immediately clear that you could use ELS options to contribute to UELS. Out of all the schemes he thought that UELS was probably administered on a much more personal basis as he had received a couple of telephone calls.
- 4.89 Only one of the six non-agreement holders had received advice. This interviewee had used a land agent to look at the feasibility of joining UELS, although it became apparent that due to small field sizes and lack of options for watercourses and woods, it would be uneconomical for them to join the scheme. None of the other interviewees had sought advice and, in particular the smaller holdings may have been encouraged to join the scheme if proactively approach by NE with advice and help with form-filling.

Quality of advice and information

Natural England booklet

- 4.90 Most of the interviewees who had referred to the Natural England booklet found the guidance and option descriptions good and easy to understand *“The book is very good actually”*. One interviewee thought that the application process was similar to ELS, but the UELS was explained better. The one criticism raised by several interviewees was the need for clearer guidance on how UELS fits together with ELS and HLS.

Natural England helpline

- 4.91 Three interviewees had made use of the helpline. Two found that they had obtained a good response on the telephone. In particular, one lifestyle farmer found that they were *“extremely helpful...very friendly and didn’t make me feel a complete idiot”*. A third interviewee had a less positive experience as she was passed to four different people, none of whom could answer her query.

Natural England advisors

- 4.92 Those who used NE project officers to help with their applications also had HLS agreements on their farms. In most cases this advice was considered excellent and was particularly useful in terms of selecting the options that were compatible with HLS.

Other advisors

- 4.93 Interviewees also spoke positively about the quality of advice from FWAG and National Park officers. One lifestyle farmer specifically chose a sympathetic and trusted advisor who had more experience of working with lifestyle farmers than other farming advisors. She felt this was *“money well spent”*.
- 4.94 Several interviewees mentioned that they were happy with the advice they had received because it focused on meeting their agricultural requirements which was to get the required points with the minimum amount of disruption to their farming practice. One farmer explained the process of

completing his application form with assistance from a Land Agent who visited after contacting Natural England under the ETIP:

"I struggled with it, there was such a mix of things you could do. I didn't seem to get my head round it at all."

{Did you get any advice?}

"Yes, I must have rung Leeds and someone came out to see me...It got me where I wanted to be so I could fill the forms in and get my payment. I didn't see where I was going to get my points from but the Lass [Land Agent] sorted it out for me. I could see where I was going after that and get the forms filled in and get accepted...Maybe she was better in some ways as she just looked at getting us in, maybe someone from Natural England would have wanted me to be doing this, that and the other."

Influence of advice on option choice

4.95 Most of the interviewees chose their own options, but option choice for four interviewees was strongly guided by advisors, three of whom were Natural England agents operating under the ETIP. One interviewee left the responsibility for choosing the options and filling in the application with a Land Agent. The selection of options was points driven associated with the ease of management and minimal disruption to the farming system. The advice one interviewer received from a land agent who visited after contacting Natural England, completely transformed the selection of options. The interviewee had originally selected options which would require significant changes to farm practices, such as haymaking, but the advisor selected options that would result in little change to farm management:

"At first I filled in all the forms myself because I thought I could do it, like with the first one [ELS]...I thought it would be quite easy to do this one, but I got it wrong. So a girl did come out and give me a hand, well she made it a lot easier for me. She found a lot better options that fitted in with what I wanted to do really...She made it easier you know, because I'd sort of picked out things that were going to be harder for me to do...like hay meadows."

"That's what the girl did, that's how she worked it out. I was going to be hay making and all sorts of things. It fits in really well with what we do actually."

Suggested improvements to advice and support

4.96 A number of points were raised during the interviews as to how advice and support could be improved. One issue related to clarifying the links between UELS and ELS and also differentiating more clearly between the options where descriptions were considered to be very similar, for example with regard to supplementary feeding.

4.97 Two interviewees would like to have a better understanding of what the options are trying to achieve. One lifestyle farmer felt that the advice was too general and that more specialist advice, reviewing individual farms was required. A similar point was raised by a smallholder who would like to see advice and encouragement to do more that would benefit the environment. This might mean personalising some of the options to a particular area to allow for different soil types and different weather conditions. Another interviewee pointed out that the scheme forms needed filling in around April, which is the busiest time for hill farmers. It would be better if some of them came in the autumn.

4.98 A technical point was raised by one interviewee. He helps farmers in his area with their applications and his biggest annoyance when applying on-line is that on the printed pdf map of the agreement, the lines indicating the hedgerow options are too faint so that they all have to be marked up by hand, which is a time consuming process.

4.99 Finally, another interviewee wanted to see more involvement between Natural England and the farmers:

“We need to see Natural England involved. I know one or two farmers who have been involved in Stewardship Schemes for a few years now and they’ve never had any contact with Natural England until it’s got to the five years where you can break it...That’s too long isn’t it, five years; it can worsen or get superbly better in two years can’t it?”

5 Common Land UELS Agreements

5.1 Uplands ELS agreements are available on common land or shared grazing where there are two or more graziers. To enter the agreement the commoners are required to set up a commoners' or graziers' association and to produce an internal agreement between all those who actively manage the common or shared grazing, or will contribute to the management required under the Uplands ELS agreement. In addition, the agreement needs to be countersigned by the landowner/s.

Telephone Survey results

5.2 As there are issues specific to UELS common land agreements a separate questionnaire was designed. In total, 31 telephone interviews were conducted with common land UELS agreement holders, representing around 29% of the total of 107 UELS common land agreements in place by mid January. The sample was selected from the UELS database aiming for a broad representation across the eight regions (see Table 5.1). In most incidences the interview was conducted with the Chair or the Secretary of the common land association. In a few cases, the interview was conducted with the land agent heavily involved in the agreement.

5.3 Ten telephone interviews were also conducted with common land non-agreement holders.

Table 5.1 UELS common land agreement holder sample

Upland region	No. of interviews
North Pennines and the Borders	4
Lake District	5
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	8
North York Moors	1
Peak District	0
South Pennines	4
Welsh Borders	2
The SW Moors	7
Total	31

General information about the common land

5.4 The average area of common land within the UELS common land agreements surveyed was 1,133 ha, ranging in size from 70 ha to 3,554 ha.

5.5 Looking at the previous agri-environment scheme experience, 77% of commons had previous experience either in ELS (n=10) or a classic scheme (n=14), whilst 19% (n=6) had had no previous agri-environment experience. Twenty two per cent of the commons currently had HLS agreements running alongside their UELS agreements (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Previous agri-environment scheme experience

(n)	Previous ELS	Previous Classic scheme	No previous AES	Current HLS
Total	10	14	6	22

- 5.6 An active commoner's association/group existed before applying for UELS for 70% of the commons, whilst 30% of the commons had set up a commoner's association/group in order to apply for UELS.
- 5.7 As Table 5.3 shows, in most regions more commoners had signed the UELS agreement than actually actively exercise their grazing rights to the common. The survey results suggest that around 28% of rights holders who had signed the UELS common land agreement were not actively grazing the common land.

Table 5.3 Commons grazing rights

Regions	Rights holders on common	Actively exercise rights	Have signed agreement
North Pennines and the Borders	66	58	57
Lake District	63	52	53
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	87	60	66
North York Moors	0	4	4
South Pennines	47	17	18
Welsh Borders	35	12	28
The SW Moors	472	58	134
Total	770	261	360

Common landowners

- 5.8 The agreement holders respondents were asked whether gaining consent from the landowners was straightforward. As Table 5.4 shows, for the majority (94%), this was the case. Only two of the commons reported difficulties in obtaining the consent of their landowner to apply for UELS. In total, 18 landowners (62%) had additional involvement in the development of the agreement and 18 landowners (62%) were involved in the delivery and implementation of the agreement.

Table 5.4 Was gaining consent from the landowner straightforward?

(n)	Yes	No	Total
Total	29	2	31

- 5.9 Around 50% (n=15) of landowners received a proportion of the UELS payment (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Commons where landowners receive proportion of UELS payment

(n)	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Total	15	14	1	30

- 5.10 A comparison of landowners who were receiving a proportion of UELS payment against those who were actively involved in implementing the agreement (Table 5.6) reveals that around two thirds (67%) of those landowners who took a proportion of the UELS payment were also actively involved in implementing the agreement, whilst one third (33%) of landowners taking a payment were not involved in implementing the agreement.

Table 5.6 Comparison of landowners taking proportion of UELS payment against involvement in agreement implementation (%)

(%)	Landowner involved in implementing agreement	Landowner not involved in implementing agreement	Total
Landowner taking proportion of payment	67	33	100

Awareness and motivations

Source of information

5.11 A range of sources were cited as the primary way in which the common land agreement holders gathered information about UELS. Over half (n=20) received information from the UELS letter and leaflet (Table 5.7). The 'Other' sources of information included Natural England Project Officer, the internet, committee meetings and consultation exercises.

Table 5.7 Sources of information

	No. of responses
Cannot recall	0
Commoners' association	2
Agricultural/Farming press	5
UELS letter and leaflet from Natural England	20
Farm walk or demonstration farm	0
Farm meeting (e.g. NFU meeting)	0
Farming neighbour/friend	3
Owner of common	0
Land Agent	6
NFU/CLA adviser	2
Environmental organisation	3
Other	8

Motivations for joining

5.12 Agreement holders were asked to rate the importance of several factors in their decision to join UELS. The primary reason given for joining the scheme was the scheme payments (31 [27 said very important]). Other important factors were re-capturing HFA money (n=28) and maintaining grazing/traditional practices on the common (n=27) (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8 Reasons for joining UELS

Factor	Important (n)		
	Very	Fairly	Not
The scheme payments themselves	27	4	0
Re-capturing HFA money	23	5	3
Maintaining grazing/traditional practices on the common	18	9	3
Encouraging wildlife/ improving the environment	13	9	8
The length of the agreement	5	15	10
Knowing people who have found it to be a successful scheme	4	10	5
Improving the appearance of the landscape	2	15	14

5.13 The survey of commoners who had not yet joined UELS revealed a range of responses as to why they had not joined. For one common there was disagreement between the commoners and landowner, with the landowner demanding 40% of the UELS payment. On two commons, which had relatively small allocations of land area, UELS was considered too complicated and required forming a group and they would rather just claim on the in-bye. Formation of a formal group was also a deterrent for some of the larger commons. In particular, there were difficulties in finding someone to take responsibility as signatory on the agreement for fear of being culpable for breaches of the scheme rules. Also those who had multiple grazing rights on different commons were concerned about the complexity of being involved in several different Grazing Associations, each with its own constitution and bank account. One common explored the possibility of a Land Agent assuming responsibility for the agreement but the costs were too high, requiring most of the first year's UELS payment to cover the fees. For two other commons there had been difficulties in reaching agreement among themselves as they were applying for HLS at the same time as the UELS, which they felt hampered the whole process.

Views of other common land associations

5.14 Of those who had spoken to other common land associations about the UELS (n=20), over half (n=12) reported that other common land associations were positive about the scheme, whilst 5 had spoken to commons with negative views of UELS (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9 Views of other common land associations

	%	No. of responses
Positive	60	12
Mixed/Neutral	15	3
Negative	25	5
Total		20

Options choices

5.15 This section considers the extent to which the options undertaken in the common land agreement would have taken place anyway in the absence of the scheme (degree of additionality) and any significant land management or practical difficulties associated with the options (Table 5.10).

Table 5.10 Options undertaken previously and land management changes and practical difficulties

Option	Options in previous AES	Option as part of everyday management	Options that complement or interact with existing AES	Options requiring significant management changes	Options causing practical difficulties
EA1 FER	2	3	2	0	0
EB1 to 10 Hedges	0	0	1	2	1
EB11 Walls	1	1	0	0	0
EC2 to 4 Trees and woodland	2	0	0	0	0
ED4 to 5 Historic and landscape features	1	1	1	0	0
EK5 Mixed stocking	2	1	2	1	
EL1 to 5 Grassland and moor inside SDA	0	0	2	0	1
EL6 Unenclosed moorland grazing	3	3	1	0	0
UX1 Moorland commons and shared grazing requirements	2	3	1	3	2
UX2 Upland grassland requirements	1	2	0	0	0
UX3 Moorland requirements	3	3	0	2	2
UB11 Walls above the moorland line	0	2	1	0	0
UD13 Maintaining visibility of archaeological features on moorland	0	1	3	0	0
UJ12 Winter livestock removal next to streams, rivers and lakes	0	0	0	1	0
UL17 No supplementary feeding on moorland	0	0	0	0	0
UL18 Cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland	1	0	1	1	0

5.16 As Table 5.10 shows, 10 options were mentioned as having been undertaken in previous agri-environment schemes, these included EL6 Unenclosed moorland (n=3), UX 3 moorland requirements (n=3), EK5 Mixed stocking (n=2), trees and woodland (n=2) and EA1 Farm Environment Record (FER) (n=2).

5.17 Ten options were mentioned as being undertaken as part of everyday management, these included EL6 Unenclosed moorland (n=3), UX 1 moorland common grazing requirements (n=3) and EA1 FER (n=3). Also 10 options were mentioned as complementing or interacting with an existing AES, the most frequently mentioned was UD13 Maintaining visibility of archaeological features on moorland (n=3).

5.18 Only 6 options were cited as requiring significant land management changes and only 5 options were found to be particularly difficult to implement on the ground. These included UX1 Moorland commons and shared grazing requirements where problems were encountered in gaining the

consent of the trustees and also issues related to lack of time for detailed monitoring of shepherds.

Overall experience of UELS

Impact of UELS on workload

5.19 Respondents were asked whether the UELS agreement had changed the overall workload on the common land. The definition of 'workload' was left to the respondents own interpretation and may have included paperwork as well as changes in management practices. Sixty-two percent of common land agreement holders reported that UELS had impacted on the overall workload on the common land, (59% said increase and 3% said decrease). For 39% of the common land agreement holders UELS had not affected their workload (Table 5.11).

Table 5.11 Impact of UELS on workload

	%	No. of responses
Increased workload	59	18
Decreased workload	3	1
No change	39	12
Total	100	31

5.20 Of those who had experienced an increase in workload most of this increase was undertaken by farm labour (78%) with contractors undertaking around one fifth of the extra work (22%) (Table 5.12).

Table 5.12 Proportion of Common land UELS activities undertaken by commoners and contractors

	Commoners (%)	Contractors (%)
Increase in workload	78	22

Sufficiency of payments

5.21 Over half the common land agreement holders thought that the UELS payments were either generous or sufficient (57%) (Table 5.13). This is lower than the figure reported in the individual agreement holder survey (66%) and may reflect the more demanding nature of the common land agreements in terms of establishing and managing a group scheme.

Table 5.13 Sufficiency of payments

	%	No. of responses
Generous	7	2
Sufficient	50	15
Insufficient	43	13
Total	100	30

Environmental Effectiveness of UELS

5.22 When asked about the environmental effectiveness of the common land UELS agreement, 57% thought the scheme was either very effective or effective in providing the environmental improvements stated in the scheme literature (Table 5.14). This is much lower than the response in the individual agreement holder survey (82%).

Table 5.14 Environmental effectiveness of UELS

	%	No. of responses
Very effective	7	2
Effective	50	15
Not effective	43	13
Total	100	30

Attitudes to UELS

5.23 A number of questions were asked in relation to the agreement holders' attitudes to their common land UELS agreement and scored on a 5-point scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (Table 5.15). Those statements for which there was positive agreement related to the degree to which UELS has helped the commoners to work together to manage the common (75% agreed) and the efficiency with which Natural England runs the scheme (72% agreed). The main disagreements related to the statement that the scheme had been easy to join (42% disagreed) and the minimum stocking rate has had a positive impact on the management of the common (33% disagreed). The response to this latter statement is difficult to interpret and may suggest some misunderstanding of the statement, which refers to minimum stocking rates and not the maximum stocking rates which occur under HLS.

Table 5.15 Agreement holders' attitudes to common land UELS

(%)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
The minimum stocking rate has had a positive impact on the management of the common	23	23	20	23	10	100
The scheme will improve the landscape of the common land	16	39	26	16	3	100
It will increase the wildlife and improve the environment on the common	7	52	28	10	3	100
It has hidden costs which we had not anticipated	13	17	7	57	7	100
The payments will cover the costs of the work involved	7	50	13	23	7	100
It has been easy to join	3	52	3	19	23	100
It has been easy to implement	7	41	24	17	10	100
The agreement paperwork is a problem	23	32	19	23	3	100
Natural England runs the scheme efficiently	10	62	10	10	7	100
It has helped us to work together to manage the common	29	46	7	14	4	100

Application process

- 5.24 In Table 5.15, 55% of agreement holders found the common land UELS easy to join. This is lower than the response for individuals in a UELS agreement (71%). This probably reflects the greater complexities involved in developing a common land UELS agreement.
- 5.25 The respondents in the common land agreement holder survey were asked about the number of meetings they attended as part of the development of the UELS agreement. As Table 5.16 shows, over three quarters (77%) attended four or more meetings during the preparation of the application.

Table 5.16 Number of meetings attended to develop UELS agreement

No. of meetings	%	No. of responses
1	7	2
2 or 3	16	5
4 to 6	45	14
More than 6	32	10
Total	100	31

- 5.26 The average length of time it took from preparing the original application to starting the scheme agreement was 6 months, ranging from 2 months to 18 months. Around two thirds (67%) felt that this length of time was acceptable or understandable, particularly those whose agreements took less than 6 months to complete, whilst one third (33%) whose agreements took over 6 months to complete felt this was avoidable or unacceptable.

Experience of advice and support

- 5.27 This section asked respondents to identify their sources of information and advice for their common land UELS agreement and to evaluate the quality of this advice and impact on option choices.

Sources of advice

- 5.28 The majority of common land agreement holders had received support and/or advice when preparing their UELS application (96%). The most frequently cited sources of advice were the Natural England Project Officers (n=23) and land agents (n=7). The “Other” category consisted of the Natural England helpline and the NFU (Table 5.17).

Table 5.17 Sources of advice and support

	No.
No advice sought	2
Commoners' Association	0
Commoners umbrella group (i.e. Regional Federation Group)	0
Natural England Project Officer	23
Natural England event	0
FWAG	3
RSPB	0
Local Authorities	0
Wildlife Trust	0
Private consultant	0
Land agent	7
Other farmers	0
Other	2

Quality of advice

5.29 Respondents were asked to rate the quality of the advice or support they had received when preparing their application. The majority of the agreement holders were positive about the quality of this advice. The advice from the Natural England Project Officers (86%) and FWAG (100%), in particular, was viewed as good or very good (Table 5.18).

Table 5.18 Quality of main sources of advice

Source of advice – agreement holders	n	Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor	Total
Natural England Project Officer	23	60	26	9	4	0	100
Land agent	7	14	57	27	0	0	100
FWAG	2	100	0	0	0	0	100

5.30 The agreement holders were also asked the extent to which the advice they received had changed the choice of options in their agreement from what it would have been without the advice. FWAG advice, in particular, led to changes in the agreement option choices, whilst around 20% reported that the advice from Natural England Project Officers and Land agents led to no changes in their options (Table 5.19).

Table 5.19 Extent to which advice changed choice of options

	Extent advice changed choice of options				%
	n	Large change	Small change	No change	
Natural England Project Officer	23	61	17	22	100
Land agent	5	40	40	20	100
FWAG	3	67	33	0	100

Face-to-face interviews with common land agreement holders

- 5.31 In all there were four face-to-face interviews with representatives of common land agreements and this is supplemented by evidence from other face-to-face interviews, where the agreement holder was also involved in common land UELS agreement. We acknowledge that this is a small sample given the wide and varied nature of upland commons across England, however, the views expressed are welcome and shed some light on a range of situations.
- 5.32 All four of the UELS agreements involving common land had been prepared using land agents and/or solicitors. In part this is no surprise as the need for a legally binding internal agreement that supports the UELS agreement and lists aspects, such as the division of the payment makes the involvement of professionals necessary. The involvement of professional advisers enable a third party to facilitate the discussions between landowners and active and inactive rights holders and in most cases is more likely to ensure that an agreement is reached and that it is stable.
- 5.33 It can be deduced from the interviews conducted that agents use a range of approaches that reflect the diversity of the commons they work with. The key factors that seem to influence the approach taken are the level of activity by the landowner and other non-grazing rights holders, the presence or absence of other schemes and the number of active rights holders. As a result of these factors the agents and other professionals have developed different formulas to calculate the division of payments and content of the agreement. However, there is a possible downside because the involvement of such professionals who need to consider their time involvement carefully may lead to a streamlining of the diversity within any agreement offered. Where one agent or firm is involved in a number of agreements they develop expertise and their views may be a significant factor in shaping the thoughts of a Commoners' Association as it develops the options to be included in their agreement. This may work against those options that a particular professional does not feel is in the best interests of the commoners. As one agent interviewed expressed it:
- "We tend to avoid some options but generally there is not much choice. Sometimes need some to get to the threshold but try and avoid those with extra hassle."*
- 5.34 In most cases where common land was involved, the UELS agreement sat alongside an existing HLS agreement. In these cases the HLS was seen as the "elder and larger sibling" in respect of money, responsibility and action on the ground. In terms of preparing the UELS agreement this tended to make life simpler and more straightforward. The Commoners Associations spoken to expressed this in the following ways:
- "In terms of option choice for UELS there was virtually none at all, because their HLS overrides everything else. This applies to management change as well."*
- "Because we are in HLS, UELS is not taxing, we are high fell so no artificial management is possible meaning the options were obvious."*
- 5.35 However, this did mean that the environmental benefits and wider community benefits were also expected to arise out of HLS rather than UELS.
- 5.36 One of the key issues faced by UELS agreements on common land relates to the involvement, or not, of inactive rights holders and the subsequent division of the UELS payments. Where the HLS and UELS agreement were prepared together, this could be incorporated within the discussion and agreement of the payments at the same time. Given that there is no set formula for either scheme this can be either a help or a hindrance. In general, HLS is seen as a payment for active management, whereas UELS has a wider involvement that might include those who are still farming but not actively exercising their rights. It seems that most professionals use the presence or absence of SPS entitlements as a basis for involvement, although all rights holders have to be consulted. Any recipient would need to meet the requirements, such as having a hefted flock. On two of the four commons the division of the payments was not seen as an issue but different formulas were used from the HLS payment. In both cases this ensured that the inactive rights

holders received something from the agreement, through UELS, which left the HLS to focus more heavily on active management. In the view of those interviewed this reflects the situation as it would have been under HFA.

5.37 However, on another common where the HLS agreement had taken some 3 years to finalise, the Commoners' Association used the HLS formula as the basis for the division of UELS payments. The UELS was added to the HLS agreement a few months after the HLS agreement was signed and while this simplified the process and led to a swift agreement, the Chair of the association recognised that it was not the most appropriate. The HLS agreement was based on a complex formula based on the number of rights per commoner and number of rights used. By using this formula for the UELS agreement as well the division of the payment did not reflect the former HFA payment. Consequently, some of the commoners, especially those who exercise their rights, now receive less money through UELS than via HFA because of the way it is split up.

5.38 The experience of the Chair of the Commoners' Association is worth noting. In the words of one Chair he said the process of agreeing the UELS agreement was:

"Stressful and thankless, to the point that it is easiest to take the path of least resistance even where this does not deliver the fairest agreement. You have to take a careful line as Chair as under different options you may lose out or benefit."

5.39 Largely because of the removal of the payment cap that was present under HFA, most of those interviewed on commons tended to receive higher payments under UELS. Since rights holders see the UELS largely in terms of replacing HFA payments they received, so long as parity was achieved, most seemed to be happy with payments. As with any new scheme and under whatever formula was used there would be losers and winners.

5.40 The presence of inactive graziers is another key issue. One or two of those interviewed felt that there was insufficient guidance provided by NE as to how inactive rights holders should be dealt with within a UELS agreement. As one interviewee put it:

"As Chair of the association, I do feel let down by NE as there is little to no guidance on how to deal with inactive/active graziers. Basically you have to sort it out. The land owner has taken a payment for the heather management that he does. The inactive graziers get nothing under HLS but they do receive a pro-rata payment on UELS to reflect the loss of HFA."

5.41 While there was no example within those interviewed, each of the interviewees mentioned at some point an agreement they had heard of that had been jeopardised by inactive commoners.

5.42 The presence of previous schemes can sometimes determine the way in which the UELS agreement is shaped. On one of the four commons in this sample, which had previously been in a Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) agreement, the relationship between the commoners and the landowner was strained. The CSS agreement was signed by the rights holders only, because it was concerned with the reduction of stock with no capital works. When this ended and HLS and UELS were discussed the landowner was keen for some capital works to be included. As a result, the landowner was proactive in appointing an agent to develop the whole agreement and to ensure that their perspective was incorporated. However, within this process it was agreed that the landowner would receive nothing from the UELS payments, despite owning some of the eligible rights. The Chair of the Commoners' Association acknowledged that in this respect they were 'fortunate' as he knew of other commons where the landowner had either declined supporting entry into UELS or had requested some payment through rights they owned, or had access to under the 'surplus rights'¹⁷ entry on the commons register.

5.43 On two commons there was an issue of split rights, defined as being where 'a Common Land Register allows a grazier the right to graze their animals across more than one common'. In both cases, the active graziers agreed to only include the rights they used on particular commons, thereby each forgoing the potential UELS payments on the unused rights that existed on other commons. As one Chair of an Association put it:

"This seemed a fair situation as we all agreed that inactive rights holders should not be benefitting so we focused on those rights that each of us exercised."

5.44 However, they acknowledged that this was an issue on other commons but for the most part the UELS experience on the ground seems to be reflecting the position taken by the SPS, namely that it is not acceptable and rights are apportioned only to one common, unless there is legal evidence indicating why this should be different.

5.45 There was only one example from the remainder of the sample of a common entering UELS where there had not been an agri-environment before. In this case a Commoners' Association had to be adjusted so that it met the criteria required by UELS and the active graziers (21 in all) and the landowner had agreed how the UELS options and payments would work. This required the services of a solicitor, although the fees of an agent were considered too expensive. The most significant worries for the commoners were the delays and inaccuracies of the mapping process by RPA. As an entirely new agreement this can be a daunting process and the agents interviewed all mentioned that such delays can be significant.

5.46 Even on the three commons in the sample, which had an existing ES agreement, there were a number of comments regarding mapping issues under UELS:

"The pack and maps from the RPA was a mess, some of the options were in the wrong place, this was particularly odd as they were in the right place for the other [AES scheme] maps. It is so frustrating when you have to keep providing the same information."

"Having done the HLS agreement the mapping was better but they still included a stream as fencing and missed other bits out as well as got field numbers wrong. This all took ages to get right, about 6-8 months."

"Mapping is an issue, needed to pay the agent to check and correct this and it is still not right."

¹⁷ Surplus rights are assigned to owners of common land where the total rights available on the common (both claimed and unclaimed) are less than the overall capacity of the common. This is also the case with SPS, where the presence of surplus rights is established. These are converted to a notional land area in order for the land owner to claim entitlements.

5.47 The role of the landowner was a passive or positive one in each of the four interviews. In one case the landowner was also Chair of the Commoners Association. He recognised this as an unusual situation but was able to offer the administrative services through the estate office, and since the commoners were all on tenanted farms, it was an arrangement that seemed to work well.

“The landowner on commons should be involved, they have been sidelined in the past. An active and constructive involvement is best, they can do more of the active management.”

5.48 Overall the process was felt to be more taxing for common land and required the support and encouragement of an NE project officer as well as the services of an experienced professional in many cases.

“The presence of a good NE officer is vital, they need to understand and respect commons as they are different from other areas, offer more in terms of public goods.”

6 Discussion of findings

6.1 The aim of this section is to bring together the results of the telephone surveys and the face-to-face interviews in order to draw out the main findings in relation to farmer and farm characteristics engaged in UELS, the views expressed about awareness and motivations for joining UELS and reasons for option choices and the extent of additionality and the experience of the advice and support received.

Comparison of agreement holder and non-agreement holder key characteristics

6.2 As Table 6.1 shows there are some notable differences in the farm and farmer characteristics between the agreement holder and non-agreement holder samples.

Table 6.1 Comparison of agreement holder and non-agreement holder key characteristics

Characteristics	Agreement holder characteristics	Non-agreement holder characteristics
Farm type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer “Other” farms (14%) • More Grazing livestock farms (76%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More “Other” farms (25%) • Fewer Grazing livestock farms (62%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar proportions of dairy 	
Farm size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer very small farm size (28%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More very small farm size (53%)
SDA area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer with SDA area of less than 20 ha (17%) • Broadly similar for those with SDA areas of between 20 to 100 ha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More with SDA area of less than 20 ha (43%)
Source of income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer in non-traditional agricultural only income source category (3%) • Similar proportions drawing income from traditional agriculture only (56%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More in non-traditional agricultural only income source category (30%)
Enterprise mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer with Cattle only enterprises (9%) • Fewer with non-traditional enterprises (3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More with Cattle only enterprises (20%) • More with non-traditional enterprises (14%)
Farmer age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly more in age categories under 54 years (44%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly fewer in age categories under 54 years (36%)
Previously receiving HFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More previously receiving HFA (85%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer receiving HFA (69%)
Tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More were renting land (51%) • Small proportion of tenants experienced difficulties in gaining consent from landlords (5%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer were renting land (33%) • More tenants perceived difficulties in gaining landlord consent (25%)

- 6.3 **The telephone survey suggests that a key difference between the characteristics of the agreement holders and non-agreement holders is centred on farm size, household income source and enterprise mix.**
- 6.4 A high proportion of non-agreement holders appear to be non-traditional farms of a very small size and with a small area of land in the SDA. Also a high proportion of their income is derived from non-agricultural sources and they are less likely to have claimed the HFA payment. Thus it would appear that a large proportion of those not joining UELS are likely to be small holders or hobby farmers that are not farming commercially. Also a high proportion of non-agreement holders have cattle only enterprises. Many part-time farmers who are also working off-farm or farmers who are close to retirement often run cattle only enterprises due to the ease of management.

Awareness of UELS

- 6.5 **There appears to be a high level of awareness of UELS amongst upland farmers. Only 9% of the non-agreement holders surveyed had never heard of UELS. This high level of awareness was achieved through a promotional mail-shot and extensive media coverage.**
- 6.6 The telephone survey and face-to-face interviews show that the promotional letters from Natural England were an important source of information and highlight the effectiveness of the proactive approach adopted by Natural England in sending letters to all potential participants. Evidence from the face-to-face interviews also suggests that the proactive personal approach used by advisors in directly contacting potential participants about the scheme appears to have been effective.
- 6.7 The high level of media coverage, particularly in relation to the replacement of HFA payments with UELS, has also helped to raise awareness of the scheme. However, there is evidence from the face-to-face interviews that because some agreement holders associate the UELS as a replacement for HFA payments, UELS is viewed as a form of farm income support rather than aimed at delivering environmental objectives.
- 6.8 Whilst the awareness of the scheme is high, there does seem to be a question mark about some farmer's awareness of their eligibility. A high proportion (19%) of non-agreement holders in the telephone survey who had decided not to apply for UELS thought they were ineligible and a response from the face-to-face interviews suggests this may be particularly the case for small holdings or those who are landlords without their own livestock and were not previously claiming HFA.

Motivations for joining UELS

- 6.9 **The primary reason given for joining UELS was the scheme payments. Reasons for not joining UELS related to perceived concerns about the levels of paperwork involved and the economic impact of the scheme on the farm business.**
- 6.10 The scheme payments was the primary reasons given for joining UELS and the face-to-face interviews revealed that this response was tied up with the widely held view that the scheme payments are a replacement for their HFA money and it is therefore, rightfully theirs. A secondary reason for joining UELS related to the environmental objectives of the scheme. The responses to the telephone and face-to-face interviews would indicate that some of the smallholders or lifestyle farmers are particularly motivated to join for this reason.
- 6.11 Reasons for not joining UELS related to perceived concerns about the levels of paperwork involved, the economic impact of the scheme on the farm business and the tenancy situation. Other reasons for not joining UELS related to the particular circumstances of the farmer, such as those who were shortly to retire or to sell their land.

Attitudes to UELS

- 6.12 **The majority of agreement holders had a positive attitude towards UELS. A dominant view was that the scheme fits in well with existing farm practices and that the payments are generous or sufficient.**
- 6.13 The telephone survey identified that around 77% of all agreement holders thought that the scheme was easy to implement and did not interfere with the smooth running of the holding (66%). The majority of agreement holders appeared able to meet their points target easily without many changes to existing farm practices. Also the 'main stream' farmers often focused on the scheme's endorsement of good farming practice.
- 6.14 The telephone survey revealed that the majority of agreement holders thought that the payments for the scheme were generous or sufficient (66%), although some felt that the payments did not cover the costs of the work involved (24%). The face-to-face interviews revealed that this seems to be particularly an issue for payments related to boundary maintenance work, especially the stone walling costs. However, this concern may be misplaced as there is evidence that some agreement holders misunderstand the aim of this option, using the payments to restore rather than maintain their walls. There was also recognition that the payments received for some options required no changes to their management practices. Some felt that the payments offered were in recognition of their existing low intensity farming practices and the aim of UELS was to try to maintain this type of farming system in the uplands.

Tenure issues

- 6.15 **Many landowner/tenant partnerships have responded constructively to the tenancy situation under UELS. However, there is evidence that some conflicts have arisen, particularly in relation to short term lets or annual grazing licenses.**
- 6.16 The telephone survey identified a fairly even split between those agreement holders who rented some land (51%) and those who were only owner occupiers (49%). In contrast, there were more non-agreement holders who were owner occupiers (64%) compared to those who rented land (33%) and the reason for this is unclear.
- 6.17 As landlords can enter their land into an UELS agreement, tenants risk financially losing out on UELS compared to the situation under HFA. It would appear that many landowner/tenant partnerships have responded constructively to this situation. In the agreement holder telephone survey those who needed landlord consent to join had little difficulty in gaining this consent and only around 5% had experienced difficulties. Of the small number of agreement holders surveyed that rented out land (13%), 62% had included their tenanted land in their own UELS agreement. In this situation, the face-to-face interviews revealed that most had either reduced their tenant's rent or charged a non-commercial rate in recognition of their loss of the HFA payment, although this was not always the case.
- 6.18 There is evidence that problems with the landlord/tenant relationship have occurred in some situations. The telephone survey results indicated that around a quarter of the non-agreement tenants perceived potential difficulties in gaining the consent of their landlord should they wish to apply. The telephone survey did not ascertain the reasons for this concern but the face-to-face interviews identified particular difficulties for those who held short term lets or annual grazing licenses, although the number of interviewees affected by this issue was small. Three agreement holders interviewed face-to-face had been able to claim UELS on their own land but not those areas they rented on short term lets, which had caused some grievances.
- 6.19 A high proportion of non-agreement holder landlords in the telephone survey (60%), had not yet given consent for their tenant to join UELS, so neither they nor their tenants were claiming UELS on the SDA land. One of the reasons for not giving consent relates to the landlord's concern of committing to a 5 year rental agreement. This may reflect some misunderstanding of the UELS requirements, as the scheme does not require a 5 year rental agreement to be in place as long

as the landlord has countersigned the agreement, agreeing to take over the agreement should the tenancy end within the UELS agreement period.

Common land issues

- 6.20 **A number of specific issues in relation to common land agreements were raised. Of those landowners taking a proportion of the UELS payment (50%), around a third had no involvement in implementing the agreement which caused resentment among some agreement holders. Furthermore, inactive graziers not included in UELS agreements felt they were losing out. Also nearly a half of respondents felt the UELS was ineffective in providing the environmental improvement stated in the scheme literature.**
- 6.21 Most of the commons surveyed had little difficulty in gaining consent of the landowner to enter UELS. Around half of the landowners were taking a proportion of the payment, with two thirds of these involved in implementing the agreement. However, around one third of landowners were taking a proportion of the UELS payment with no involvement in implementing the agreement. The face-to-face interviews suggest that there is some resentment from commoners when this situation arises.
- 6.22 Another key issue faced by UELS agreements on common land relates to the involvement, or not, of inactive rights holders and the subsequent division of the UELS payments. Inactive rights holders who do not receive payments often feel aggrieved as they have also lost their HFA payment.
- 6.23 Just under a half of the commons interviewed (43%) thought that the UELS was ineffective in providing the environmental improvement stated in the scheme literature. The face-to-face interviews revealed that the reason for this response is tied up with the view that the UELS agreement requires little change to existing management. Also it relates to the fact that most common UELS agreements sit alongside HLS agreements which are considered to have a greater impact on the environment. Another reason relates to concerns about maximum stocking rate restrictions resulting in under-grazing. This latter response demonstrates some misunderstanding, as UELS does not restrict maximum stocking rates, unlike HLS.
- 6.24 The application process was felt to be more taxing for common lands and required the support and encouragement of an NE project officer, as well as the services of an experienced professional in many cases. The telephone survey revealed the average length of time from preparing the application to starting the agreement was 6 months. One of the reasons for this delay related to issues with mapping the common.

Option choices

- 6.25 **Most options were chosen on the basis of requiring the least amount of management change or assisting with boundary maintenance work, rather than maximising the environmental potential of the farm. Few options were mentioned as causing significant land management changes or practical difficulties.**
- 6.26 The mandatory options (UX1-UX3) were considered by those agreement holders interviewed face-to-face as good farming practice and equivalent to implementing cross-compliance measures. This view is also reflected in the telephone survey where these options were not regarded as causing significant land management changes or any practical difficulties. Only in the common land telephone survey was UX1 identified as causing some issues in getting consent from all those involved.
- 6.27 The face-to-face interviews suggested that most options were either selected on the basis of requiring the least amount of change to existing farming practices or assisted with boundary maintenance work. This concurs with the telephone survey which found that 80% of agreement

holders had one or more UELS options that they were already doing as part of their everyday farm management. Those for whom the management practices were most likely to be new were agreement holders with non-agricultural sources of income who are in all likelihood hobby or lifestyle farmers.

- 6.28 Few options were mentioned as causing significant land management changes or practical difficulties, reflecting the findings from the face-to-face interviews that those options presenting the least change to existing farm management practices were selected. The one option that was most frequently mentioned as causing difficulty was the restriction on supplementary feeding on moorland (UL17) due to animal welfare concerns in adverse weather conditions. These concerns, however, are misguided, as supplementary feeding is allowed in such weather conditions.
- 6.29 The option most frequently mentioned as not being entered into the agreement although it could have been chosen, was the hedge management option due to disagreements with the management prescriptions. This concurs with the face-to-face interviews which found that some interviewees were deterred from this option as the hedges could not be kept 'trimmed and tidy'.
- 6.30 One finding from the face-to-face interviews is that some interviewees felt their option choices were limited because much of the capital works had been completed under previous agri-environment schemes. However, this reflects a misunderstanding of the scheme as there are options available to maintain these features.

Environmental effectiveness and additionality

- 6.31 **Most survey respondents felt that UELS was effective in meeting its environmental objectives. UELS was viewed as a means of supporting the continuation of existing farming systems that already produced environmentally beneficial outcomes.**
- 6.32 The majority of agreement holders felt UELS was effective in meeting its environmental objectives, with 82% believing the scheme is effective in providing the environmental improvements stated in the scheme literature and 63% agreeing with the statement that the scheme would improve the wildlife and environment on their farm. However, it should also be noted that a high proportion (20%) stated they were unfamiliar with the options in their agreement, indicating some lack of engagement with and understanding of the scheme requirements.
- 6.33 This positive view of the environmental effectiveness of the scheme was also expressed by the majority of those interviewed face-to-face, but interestingly interviewees spoke about the environmental effectiveness in terms of maintaining the current status quo. The general response was that they were already undertaking low input farm management practices that benefited the environment and the scheme was helping to maintain these practices.
- 6.34 In discussions around the topic of additionality undertaken during the face-to-face interviews, UELS was often seen as an important means of support, along with the SPS, which enabled farmers to continue farming in the face of sustained financial pressures on their livelihoods. A common theme was that the UELS options were helping to maintain environmentally beneficial farming practices on farms that were threatened by socio-economic pressures. Some farmers expressed concern that if they ceased farming and the trend to larger farms managed with less labour continued, their land would not be farmed in such an environmentally beneficially way¹⁸.
- 6.35 A high proportion of agreement holders had options where the management prescriptions were already met as part of their everyday farm management. Those options that were most likely to

¹⁸ This view of the potential environmental impacts of changes to the structure of farming in the uplands has also been reported by Gaskell et al (2010) Economic and environmental impacts of changes in support measures for the English Uplands: An in-depth forward look from the farmer's perspective, Final report to the Defra ACEO programme.

have been undertaken previously and therefore had the lowest additionality value were the boundary options, specifically, UB11 Walls above the moorland (55%), EB1-10 hedges (53%), and UL18 cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland option (50%). The findings suggest that the UELS is often helping to maintain existing environmentally beneficial farm practices but is not necessarily adding value by enhancing environmental benefits.

- 6.36 However, there is evidence that the environmental benefits gained from previous schemes were continuing under UELS agreements. Just over two thirds of agreement holders had options in their UELS agreements which continued management that they were carrying out under a previous AES agreement.
- 6.37 Furthermore, around 20% of agreement holders had one or more options that required significant changes to land management and thus were more likely to deliver additional benefits to the environment. The options mentioned most frequently as requiring significant changes were:
- UL21 No cutting strips in meadows;
 - EF1 to 11 Arable land EL1;
 - UJ12 Winter livestock removal next to watercourses;
 - EK1 to 4 Grassland outside SDA; and
 - UL17 No supplementary feeding on moorland.
- 6.38 UELS has also impacted on farm workload with nearly one quarter of agreement holders reporting that their agreement had increased workload. This will have an impact on those upland farms that are already stretched in terms of labour availability.

Advice and support

- 6.39 **A high proportion of agreement holders had received advice when preparing their applications and the general view of the advice provision was positive. However, often the advice focused on identifying options that had minimal impact on the existing farm management practices, rather than maximising the environmental potential of the farm. Also one fifth of agreement holders lacked familiarity with their options, reflecting a low degree of engagement with the application process.**
- 6.40 Eighty four per cent of agreement holders had received support and/or advice when preparing their UELS application. This response was broadly evenly distributed across the region although more advice was sought in the North Pennines and the Borders region and less in the Welsh Borders region.
- 6.41 Whilst for some the paperwork associated with the application was considered daunting (46%) and needed simplifying (27%) and was also a factor in deterring some potential participants from applying (15%), a high proportion of agreement holders (71%) found the scheme easy to join and were not daunted by the paperwork, in part due to the extent of advice and support potential applicants received. Many felt unable to complete the application themselves and called on the services of an advisor for assistance. Most of this advice was rated highly in terms of quality. The quality of advice received from private consultants, in particular, was rated very highly by agreement holders (93%) and by non-agreement holders (74%).
- 6.42 Natural England as a delivery agent and key advice provider was felt by agreement holders to be delivering good quality advice both via the helpdesk (88% rated good) and Natural England events (88% rated good). The experience of non-agreement holders of the advice offered by the NE helpdesk was more negative with 40% of agreement holders using this advice source, rating the quality of the advice as poor, although they rated the advice from NE project officers highly (73%). This may suggest that this group would benefit most from a more personal, one-to-one advisory approach. The Natural England scheme booklet as a source of advice was largely well

received and considered an improvement on the literature from previous schemes. One area suggested for improvement was better clarification of the interaction between UELS and ELS and HLS options.

- 6.43 It was not possible from the telephone survey to identify whether the advice the agreement holders received was via the ETIP, as agreement holders were not necessarily aware of the programme. It can, however, be assumed that much of the advice from Natural England officers/agents and Natural England events was part of the ETIP programme. The face-to-face interviews revealed a number of land agents and FWAG advisors that were part of the ETIP and all this advice was rated highly.
- 6.44 Some (20%) of the advice received by agreement holders influenced option choices and particularly encouraged the uptake of EL 1-5 Grassland and moor inside SDA. However, often the advice seemed to focus on identifying options that had minimal impact on the existing farm management practices, rather than maximising the environmental potential of the farm. Two interviewees were allowed to take out fields that were previously in low input grassland options under ELS because they had excess points derived from other options, in one case from 12 km of walling and in the other, a dairy farm, for the cattle on grassland and moorland UL18 option.
- 6.45 Around 20% of agreement holders in the telephone survey claimed they were not familiar with the options in their agreement. The face-to-face interviews also revealed that some agreement holders had little knowledge of their options. It appears that these agreement holders were disengaged from the application process, with the application form and option choices completed by an external advisor, a number of whom were part of the ETIP. It also appears that these agreement holders had little understanding of the ecological issues related to their options. In some situations applicants were happy to take on-board the advisor's recommendations and simply rubber stamp the application. This sometimes resulted in a lack of understanding of the requirements which led to frustrations about the prescriptions being too inflexible and interfering with farm management.
- 6.46 Overall, the findings suggest that whilst agreement holders were generally satisfied with the quality of the advice they had received in preparing their applications this advice did not necessarily influence them to take up the options that would have added more value in terms of environmental outcomes.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 The aim of this section is to draw together the key findings from the survey and to identify recommendations which will enable Defra and Natural England to achieve optimal improvement in UELS within the limited resources available:

- The awareness of UELS in upland areas is high. Commercial landowners with larger areas of SDA land rather than smallholders or lifestyle farmers are more likely to enter into a UELS agreement. A number of non-agreement holders with small or very small farm sizes, believed they were ineligible for the scheme.

Recommendation 1: If it is considered desirable to attract more small holders to increase the overall level of uptake, consider focusing promotional material specifically at smallholders. Also clarify the eligibility criteria for small farms or those not previously eligible for the HFA payment. Furthermore, recognise that smallholders may have different advice needs compared to the larger, more commercial farms. This will involve more effort for smaller gains, unless farmers in areas of particularly low uptake are targeted, where the cumulative effect of bringing in smallholders will have an impact.

- Around half of the non-agreement holders did not perceive any difficulties in gaining landlord consent should they decide to apply for UELS, although a quarter did envisage difficulties in obtaining this consent. It appears that some landlords are deterred from allowing tenants to claim on UELS land believing that they have to commit to a 5 year rental agreement.

Recommendation 2: If it is considered desirable to increase the level of uptake on rented SDA land, consider further clarification of the guidance for applicants on landlord consent for those with shorter tenancy agreements. Also consider focusing existing guidance on non-farming landlords who may be less aware of their management control obligations under UELS.

- UELS is mostly considered by agreement holders as effective in meeting its environmental objectives and many of the options selected are thought to help maintain existing environmentally beneficial farming practices. There is evidence that many applicants tend to focus on the points threshold and ease of implementation when selecting options, rather than considering the environmental benefits. Only a small proportion of options were cited as requiring significant land management change. Significantly, 20% of agreement holder respondents lacked familiarity with their options which may impact on the achievement of the scheme's environmental outcomes and potentially increases the risk of a breach of their agreements.

Recommendation 3: If it is felt that the environmental benefits of UELS need increasing, there is scope to further encourage those with previous agreements to take-up new options and to encourage the uptake of those options requiring greater management. This could be achieved through targeted advice and support and the re-design of the menu of options (split lists). Additional advice provision and/or awareness raising may be helpful in addressing agreement holders familiarity with their options.

- Advice provided by advisors is highly rated, but there is evidence that in some cases the agreement holders were disengaged from the application process and in the selection of their options. This is reflected in the fact that 20% of agreement holders were unfamiliar with their options.

Recommendation 4: If it is considered desirable to increase agreements holder's understanding of the environmental objectives of the scheme, consider further guidance and encouragement of

advisors to engage agreement holders more fully in the option choices. In particular, consider improved training and guidance for independent and ETIP advisors, possibly working with professional organisations, such as Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV).

- Although not a widespread occurrence, there is some evidence that a number of landowners and some inactive graziers are withholding their consent for entry of commons into UELS.

Recommendation 5: If it is considered desirable to increase the overall uptake of UELS common land agreements then Natural England should consider providing clearer guidance on the interactions between graziers (active and inactive) and landowners, with clear examples of what is and is not acceptable within the spirit of the scheme.

- Some commoners with no previous experience of agri-environment schemes are deterred from entering UELS due to the perceived complexity of establishing an appropriate commoner's association.

Recommendation 6: If it is considered desirable to increase the uptake of UELS common land agreements for those commoner's associations with no previous experience of agri-environment schemes, then consider providing more support and guidance and a framework outlining the requirements of the commons association and draft internal agreements.

- There was evidence of a misunderstanding of some option requirements and particularly in relation to supplementary feeding in adverse weather conditions, following an exceptionally harsh winter.

Recommendation 7: If it is considered desirable to improve agreement holder's satisfaction with their UELS agreements, consider clarifying the situation that supplementary feeding is permitted in adverse weather conditions.

- The scheme payments were largely considered sufficient, but there was some concern over the payment rates for the boundary works, especially as agri-environment schemes can inflate contractors' rates and there is a shortage of skilled labour which also leads to inflated prices. There was evidence that stone wall maintenance options EB11 and UB11 were being used for restoration rather than simply maintenance work.

Recommendation 8: If it is considered desirable to improve agreement holder's satisfaction with their UELS agreements, consider clarifying in scheme documentation that options EB11 and UB11 are for maintenance rather than restoration of stone walls.

- The UELS booklet was well regarded and considered an improvement on previous scheme's documentation. One potential area for improvement is greater clarification of the interaction between UELS and ELS and HLS options.

Recommendation 9: If it is considered desirable to improve the application process for applicants with existing ES agreements, consider clarifying the interaction between UELS and ELS and HLS in scheme documentation.

- In several cases both in the telephone survey and face-to-face interviews, options were not entered into the agreement or options in previous agreements removed because the points target had been met.

Recommendation 10: If it is considered desirable to improve the environmental outcomes of UELS, then in the longer term, consider rewarding those who exceed their points target in order to achieve greater environmental gains.

7.2 In conclusion, UELS was seen in a positive light as a mechanism to help maintain the environmental benefits delivered by existing low intensive farming systems in the uplands. These farming systems are currently under threat from either a lack of active management in

unproductive areas, or more intensive management on the more productive land and UELS is helping to maintain existing environmentally beneficial practices. The challenge now is for UELS to go beyond simply maintaining current farming systems and to encourage agreement holders to take up options that may require some changes to their management practices in order to enhance environmental outcomes. To achieve this aim, advice to farmers needs to focus more on maximising the environmental potential of the farm.

Appendix 1 Agreement holder and non-agreement holder telephone survey questionnaire

UELS ATTITUDES SURVEY TELEPHONE QUESTIONNAIRE OF AGREEMENT HOLDERS

Insert Name, Contact Details and Farm Reference (UID).

Name of interviewer:

Outcome:

Preamble:

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is ... I am calling from the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester. The RAC is undertaking some research for Natural England and Defra regarding the uptake of the Upland Entry Level Stewardship Scheme and farmers attitudes towards the scheme. You should have recently received a letter about this research. The research will help Natural England to better understand the uptake of the scheme and to improve its design and delivery. Your individual response to this survey will remain entirely confidential to the research team and only amalgamated results will be reported to Natural England. Are you happy to take part in the survey? Is now a convenient time?

1. General Information about the farm business

[Interviewer] Please could you give me some general information about this business.

1. **May I first just check on your own status - are you the principal farmer/grower, partner, or a farm manager and is your job full-time? (tick one box only)**

	Full-time	Part-time
Principal farmer/grower		
Partner		
Farm Manager		
Other (specify)		

2. **Please can you tell me which age category the main decision-maker belongs to:**

65 years old or over	
Between 55 and 64 years old	
Between 40 and 54 years old	
Under 40 years old	

3. Including yourself, how many people are working on this farm? (Including working proprietors, unpaid family members, spouse)

Worker Type	Persons
Regular Full-time (30hrs+/week)	
Regular Part-time (-30 hrs/week)	
Seasonal/Casual	

4. What is the total area of land you farm as a single business?

Hectares

5. What is the total area of land you farm in the SDA?

Hectares

6. What proportion of the land that you farm is:

Tenure	%
Owner-occupied	
Rented in - Tenanted (at least 1 year)	
Rented in - Short-term agreements (less than 1 year)	
Contract / share farming	

7. Do you have:

- a) Common grazing rights which you are using Yes/No
- b) Unused common grazing rights Yes/No
- c) Is this common land in a UELS agreement? Yes/No If No, Go to Q 8.
- d) How easy was it to join the UELS common land agreement? (Very difficult/difficult/neither easy/difficult/ easy/ very easy

8. If you are a tenant (check Q 6), did you need to get your landlords consent to enter Uplands ELS?, Yes/No

- b. If Yes, how easy was it to get that consent for UELS from landlord? (very easy, easy, neither easy/difficult, difficult, very difficult)

9. Do you rent out land that is in a SDA to others Yes/No

If Yes,

- a) Did you give landlord consent for your tenant to participate in UELS ? Yes/No/Not applicable
- b) Did you include the tenanted land in your own agreement? Yes/No/Not applicable

10. Turning to the main activities of your business please could you indicate whether you have sources of income from?

Activity	yes/no
Traditional agricultural*	
Other on-farm activities	
Off-farm employment/income	

*(e.g. Sheep, beef, dairy, arable, horticulture, pigs and poultry)

10b What enterprises do you have on your SDA land that you farm?

Enterprise	yes/no
Sheep	
Cattle	
Other livestock	

11. Are you currently in any other agri-environment schemes or designations?

HLS

National Park scheme

Woodland Grant Scheme

SSSI (Wildlife Enhancement Scheme or Management Agreement)

Other (please specify)

12. Were you previously receiving an HFA payment

Yes/No/Don't know

2. Awareness and Motivations

13. From where did you gather information about the Scheme? (*tick all that apply*)

- Agricultural/Farming press
- UELS letter and leaflet from Natural England
- Visit from Natural England adviser
- Farm walk or demonstration farm
- Farm meeting (e.g. NFU meeting)
- Farming neighbour/friend
- National/trade show
- Natural England website
- Landlord
- Land agent
- Environmental organisation
- Other (please specify)

14. How important are the following factors in your decision to apply to join the scheme?

(Rank each as either: Very Important / Fairly Important / Not Important)

- a. Improving the appearance of the landscape
- b. Encouraging wildlife and improving the environment
- c. Maintaining hedgerows, walls and ditches
- d. Maintaining buildings
- e. The scheme payments themselves
- f. The length of the agreement
- g. Knowing people who have found it to be a successful scheme
- h. Re-capturing HFA money

15. Have you spoken to other farmers about the UELS? Yes/No If No Go to Q 16

- b. If Yes, were they broadly positive / negative / mixed or neutral ?

16. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following 4 statements concerning the nature of the relationship between conservation and agriculture. For each I need to record one of four options: Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree.

- a. Conservation should be an integral part of agricultural activity
- b. Conservation activity is detrimental to efficient agricultural activity
- c. Farmers should take on more responsibility for the environment
- d. Agri-environment schemes are the most effective way to make farmers take an interest in conservation

3. Option choice

17. Are you familiar with the UELS and ELS options in your agreement (including the compulsory requirements UX1-3)

Yes / No / Don't know

18. Are there any options that you are doing under your UELS agreement that you were doing in a previous agri-environment scheme. Which options are these?

Option code

19. Are there any options that you are doing under your UELS agreement that you were already doing as part of your everyday farm management.

Option code

20. Are there any options that you are doing under your UELS agreement which complement or interact with options you have in other agri-environment schemes that currently exist on your farm? Please name the option and other scheme

Option code	Other scheme

21. Are there any options that you are doing under your UELS agreement that required significant land management changes, (e.g. changing hay cutting dates, fertiliser inputs, or changes to labour input?)

Option code

22. Are there any options that you are doing under your UELS agreement that you have found particularly difficult to implement on the ground and why?

Option code	Why

23. Are there any particular options that you could have done but chose not to – why did you not choose them?

Option code	Why

4. Overall experience of the Scheme

24. Thinking about the overall impact of the scheme, please could you indicate if your UELS has changed the overall workload on your farm in the following way

- Increased workload Go to Q 24b
- Decreased workload Go to Q 24b
- No change to workload Go to Q 25

b. What proportion of this **increased/decreased** (*interviewer – select appropriate term based on response above*) workload was carried out by a) the farm and b) contractors?

	a) FARM	b) CONTRACTORS	TOTAL
All option works			100%

25. Are the financial payments associated with the Scheme sufficient to cover the income lost as a result of changes introduced to comply with the scheme? (*tick one box*)

Generous / sufficient / insufficient / don't know

26. How effective do you consider the Scheme to be in providing the environmental improvements stated in the Scheme literature? (*tick one box*)

Very effective / effective / not effective / don't know

27. Have you encountered any problems (implementation, practical, agronomic for example) with your agreement?

Yes / No

28. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the scheme

(For each Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither Agree or Disagree/Disagree/ Strongly Disagree or 'Not applicable')

- a. It will improve the farm management of the holding
- b. It will improve the landscape on the holding
- c. It will increase wildlife and improve the environment on the holding
- d. It has hidden costs which I had not anticipated
- e. The payments will cover the costs of the work involved
- f. It has been easy to join
- g. It has been easy to implement
- h. It has interfered with the smooth running of the holding
- i. The paperwork is a problem
- j. Natural England runs the scheme efficiently
- k. The scheme has increased my environmental knowledge and awareness

5. Experience of Advice and support

29. Did you receive any advice and support when preparing your UELS application from any of the following (*tick all that apply*)?

- No advice Go to Q 31
- Natural England helpdesk
- Natural England event
- FWAG
- RSPB
- Local Authority
- Wildlife Trust
- Private consultant
- Land agent
- NFU/ CLA advisers
- Other farmers
- Other (please specify)

b. If so, how good was that advice in helping you prepare a successful application?

Very good / good / poor (for each set of advice)

c. For each case, to what extent did the advice you received change the choice of options in your agreement from what it would have been without the advice? (*tick one box for each source of advice*)

Large change / small change / No change / Don't know

30. Are there any options that you have chosen that you wouldn't have chosen without that advice? Yes/No

b. Which options are these?

Option Code

31. Did you receive any follow-up advice and support to help you implement your UELS agreement from any of the following?

- No advice Go to Q 33
- Natural England
- FWAG
- RSPB
- Local Auth
- Wildlife Trust
- Private consultant
- Land agent
- Other farmers
- Other

b. If so, how good was that follow –up advice in helping you implement your agreement? (*tick one box for each source of advice?*)

Very good / good / poor / very poor (for each set of advice)

32. Is there anything in particular that you have changed in implementing your UELS agreement that you wouldn't have without that advice (e.g. sward heights)?

Yes/No

33. Finally, if you could change anything about the UELS scheme what would it be?

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey, your contribution has been very helpful and I am grateful for your assistance.

Later in the project we are planning to conduct a more in-depth but smaller study as a follow-up to this survey. Would you be willing to take part in a face-to-face interview at a time that was convenient to you to talk through some of the issues in more detail?

Yes / No

If No, that is fine, once again thank you for taking part in the survey

If Yes, so as not to disturb you during any particularly busy periods, such as lambing, between now and the end of March are there any dates when we should avoid contacting you.....

Is this the most appropriate telephone number to contact you on?

Record time interview closed

**UELS ATTITUDES SURVEY
TELEPHONE QUESTIONNAIRE OF NON-AGREEMENT HOLDERS**

Insert Name, Contact Details and Farm Reference (UID)

Name of interviewer ...

Outcome:

Preamble:

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is ... I am calling from the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester. The RAC is undertaking some research for Natural England and Defra regarding the uptake of the Upland Entry Level Stewardship Scheme and farmers attitudes to the scheme. You should have recently received a letter about this research. The research will help Natural England to better understand the uptake of the scheme and to improve its design and delivery. Your individual response to this survey will remain entirely confidential to the research team and only amalgamated results will be reported by CCRl to Natural England. Are you happy to take part in the survey? Is now a convenient time?

Firstly, please can you tell me about your previous experiences with agri-environment schemes

	tick
a) Not in UELS but in an ELS scheme	
b) Not in UELS and have never been in an agri-environment scheme	
c) Have recently applied for UELS (Finish interview)	
d) Are currently in CSS or ESA (Finish interview)	

If (c) As the questions relate to those who have not taken up UELS that is all the information we require from you. Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this survey.

If (d) As the rest of the questions we ask relate to UELS and require some knowledge of the scheme and you probably won't have thought of applying for it yet, that is all the information we require from you. Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this survey.

Insert appropriate comments on the interview here:

1. General Information about the farm business

[Interviewer] *Please could you give me some general information about this business.*

1. May I first just check on your own status - are you the principal farmer/grower, partner, or a farm manager and is your job full-time? (tick one box only)

	Full-time	Part-time
Principal farmer/grower		
Partner		
Farm Manager		
Other (specify)		

2. Please can you tell me which age category the main decision-maker belongs to:

65 years old or over	
Between 55 and 64 years old	
Between 40 and 54 years old	
Under 40 years old	

3. Including yourself, how many people are working on this farm? (Including working proprietors, unpaid family members, spouse)

Worker Type	Persons
Regular Full-time (30hrs+/week)	
Regular Part-time (-30 hrs/week)	
Seasonal/Casual	

4. What is the total area of land you farm as a single business?

Hectares

5. What is the total area of land you farm in the SDA?

Hectares

6. What proportion of the land that you farm is:

Tenure	%
Owner-occupied	
Rented-in - Tenanted (at least 1 year)	
Rented in - Short-term agreements (less than 1 year)	
Contract / share farming	

7. Do you have:

- a) Common grazing rights which you are using Yes/No
- b) Unused common grazing rights Yes/No
- c) Is this common land in a UELS agreement? Yes/No If No, Go to Q 8.
- d) How easy was it to join the UELS common land agreement? (Very difficult/difficult/neither easy/difficult/ easy/ very easy)

8. If you are a tenant (check Q 6), how easy would it be get consent for UELS from landlord? (very easy, easy, neither easy/difficult, difficult, very difficult)

9. Do you rent out land to others that is in a SDA Yes/No

If Yes,

- a) Did you give landlord consent for your tenant to participate in UELS ? Yes/No/Not applicable

10. Turning to the main activities of your business, please could you indicate whether you have sources of income from

Activity	Yes/No
Traditional agricultural*	
Other on-farm activities	
Off-farm employment/income	
<i>Total</i>	

(* e.g. Sheep, beef, dairy, arable, horticulture, pigs and poultry)

10b What enterprises do you have on the SDA land that you farm (tick all that apply)

Enterprise	
Sheep	
Cattle	
Other livestock	

11. Are you currently in any agri-environment schemes?

National Park scheme
Woodland Grant Scheme
SSSI Management Agreement
Other (please specify)

12. Were you previously receiving an HFA payment

Yes/No/Don't know

2. Awareness and Motivations

13. Which of these statements best reflect your current situation (tick all that apply)

- a. I have never heard of UELS (if (a) Go to Q13)
- b. I have never seriously considered UELS and don't intend to (go to Q14-16)
- c. I have considered UELS but decided not to apply (go to Q14-16)
- d. I have considered UELS and may apply in the future (go to Q17)
- e. I am currently considering applying to UELS (go to Q17)
- f. I want to join but my landlord won't countersign my application/ has entered the land into UELS himself. (go to Q17)

If (a), All potential applicants received a letter from Natural England about the scheme – do you recall receiving this letter?

- Where do you normally get your information from about the schemes and grants that are available?
- As the rest of the questions we ask relate to UELS and require some knowledge of the scheme that is all the information we require from you. Thank you very much for taking part in this survey, your contribution has been very helpful and I am grateful for your assistance. [Note: If they have shown an interest during the interview please signpost them to the Natural England website www.naturalengland.org.uk or helpline tel: 0300 060 1695]

14. If you have decided not to apply, what were the main reasons for your (*tick all that apply*)

- Too much paperwork involved
- Length of tenancy agreement too short
- Payments too low to cover costs
- Difficulty getting enough points
- The management prescriptions are too demanding for mandatory requirements
- The management prescription are too demanding for the options
- I cannot see the benefits to the environment
- My plans for the farm business conflict with the Scheme requirements
- The length of the agreements puts me off
- I do not think I am eligible for it
- Plan to retire shortly
- Can't get landlords consent
- Other reasons (please specify)

15. Who was the most influential in your decision to not join the scheme? (tick one box only)

- Own decision
- Media
- Leaflet
- Family
- Neighbour
- Other farmer
- Professional body
- Farmer organisation
- Other (please specify)

16. What possible changes on your farm would make you reconsider applying in the future?

- a. Nothing
- b. A change to a more extensive system
- c. Retirement by key family member of the work force
- d. Addition of family member to the workforce (e.g. son/daughter)
- e. Reduction in labour/contracting on the farm
- f. Increase in labour/contracting on the farm
- h. Changes to tenancy situation or arrangements
- i. Other (please specify)

17. From where did you first hear about the Scheme? (tick all that apply)

- Doesn't recall
- Agricultural/Farming press
- UELS letter and leaflet from Natural England
- Visit from Natural England adviser
- Farm walk or demonstration farm
- Farm meeting (e.g. NFU meeting)
- Farming neighbour/friend
- National/trade show
- Natural England website
- Landlord
- Land agent
- Environmental organisation
- Other (please specify)

18. Have you spoken to other farmers about the UELS? Yes/No If No, Go to Q19

If Yes, were they broadly positive / negative / mixed or neutral ?

19. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following 4 statements concerning the nature of the relationship between conservation and agriculture. For each I need to record one of four options: Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree.

- a. Conservation should be an integral part of agricultural activity
- b. Conservation activity is detrimental to efficient agricultural activity
- c. Farmers should take on more responsibility for the environment
- d. Agri-environment schemes are the most effective way to make farmers take an interest in conservation.

5. Experience of Advice and support

20. Have you sought advice or support on joining the UELS scheme from any of the following?

No Advice
Natural England helpdesk
Natural England event
Natural England Advisor
FWAG
RSPB
Local Authority
Wildlife Trust
Private consultant
Land agent
NFU/ CLA advisers
Other farmers
Other (please specify)

b. If so, how good was that advice in helping you make a decision about whether to enter UELS? (tick one box for each source of advice?)

Very good / good / poor / very poor (for each set of advice)

21. That is the end of the interview but before closing the interview do you have any other comments to make regarding UELS that you think is relevant?

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey, your contribution has been very helpful and I am grateful for your assistance.

Later in the project we are planning to conduct a more in-depth but smaller study as a follow-up to this survey. Would you be willing to take part in a face-to-face interview at a time that was convenient to you to talk through some of the issues in more detail?

Yes / No

If NO, that is fine, once again thank you for taking part in the survey

If YES, so as not to disturb you during any particularly busy periods, such as lambing, between now and the end of March are there any dates when we should avoid contacting you.

Is this the most appropriate telephone number to contact you on?.....

Record time interview closed.....

Appendix 2 Options considered in analysis

Table A Options considered in analysis

Code	Description
UX1	Moorland commons and shared grazing requirements
UX2	Upland grassland and arable requirements
UX3	Moorland requirements
UB4	Stone-faced hedgebank management on both sides on or above the Moorland Line
UB5	Stone-faced hedgebank management on one side on or above the Moorland Line
UB11	Stone wall protection and maintenance on or above the Moorland Line
UB12	Earth bank management on both sides on or above the Moorland Line
UB13	Earth bank management on one side on or above the Moorland Line
UB14	Hedgerow restoration
UB15	Stone-faced hedgebank
UB16	Earth bank restoration
UB17	Stone wall restoration
UC5	Sheep fencing around small woodlands
UC22	Woodland livestock exclusion
UD12	Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings in remote locations
UD13	Maintaining visibility of archaeological features on moorland
UJ3	Post and wire fencing along watercourses
UJ12	Winter livestock removal next to streams, rivers and lakes
UL17	No supplementary feeding on moorland
UL18	Cattle grazing on upland grassland and moorland
UL20	Haymaking
UL21	No cutting strip within meadows
UL22	Management of enclosed rough grazing for birds
UL23	Management of upland grassland for birds
EA 1	Farm Environment Record
EB 1-10	Hedge & Ditch management
EB 11	Stone wall maintenance
EC 1-4	Trees and Woodland
ED 1-5	Archaeology ED 1-5
EE 1-8	Buffer strips EE 1-8
EF 1-11	Arable options EF1-11
EG 1-5	Crop diversity EG1-5
EK 1-4	Lowland grassland outside SDA
EK 5	Mixed stocking
EL 1-5	Upland grassland (SDA land)
EL 6	Unenclosed moorland rough grazing

Appendix 3 Reasons for not entering options into agreement

Table B Reasons for not entering options into agreement

Q23	Reason
	(can't remember) but no incentive as already had minimum points to enter scheme
	Avoided all options with too much on-going paperwork
	enough points
	I was advised to choose only the minimum amount of points we needed
	Kept it easy to minimise change
	low inputs: no need to tie yourself into something when you have sufficient points
	maybe - but enough points
	maybe but enough points
	maybe but enough points
	More difficult to implement & did not want to commit through illness
	no need for extra points
	no need for extra points - can't remember which options
	no need for more points
	probably, but enough points
	something to do with 30% rushes...not enough grass
	too many points already couldn't pick
	yes- can't remember what though. These ones were better though.
EA 1	no difficulty getting points, so could have done more
EB 11	enough points
EB 11	enough points, this can be added later
EB 11	had enough points without
EB 11	Not enough money
EB 11	one wall in particular was very difficult to repair
EB 1-10	
EB 1-10	
EB 1-10	Didn't need the points
EB 1-10	didn't give enough points
EB 1-10	didn't want rough, high hedgerow & contractors wouldn't want to cut them, since they'd be heavy on machinery
EB 1-10	hedgerow management-didn't seem to think that it was one of his options???
EB 1-10	landlord does it and did it already
EB 1-10	Leaving hedge for two years will mean it is untidy when cut
EB 1-10	no money available for it
EB 1-10	We weren't very keen on not cutting the hedges every year as we have a lot of roadside hedges and they get too strong if you don't cut them
EC 1-4	had enough points already
EC 1-4	Record keeping too much work, and didn't need them

Table continued...

Q23	Reason
EC 1-4	woodland
ED 1-5	didn't need to get any more points
ED 1-5	doesn't see economics of it, also plans to change in the future
ED 1-5	enough points
ED 1-5	enough points, so didn't need to enter farm buildings
ED 1-5	Record keeping too much work, and didn't need them
ED 1-5	same as above
ED 1-5	traditional farm buildings expected too much
EE 1-8	reached the boundary on points - wasn't worth continuing to add options
EE 1-8	small fields, so it would mean significant areas of land being taken out of cropping
EE 1-8	too restrictive
EF 1-11	didn't need the money
EF 1-11	undersowing = problems with harvesting where they are.
EG 1-5	
EK 1-4	Didn't want low stocking density on all land wanted to target buildings and walls
EK 1-4	didn't need any more points
EK 1-4	no need for more points
EK 5	Record keeping too much work, and didn't need them
EK 5	didn't want cattle as they damage walls
EK 5	didn't need the extra points
EK 5	grazier no cattle so not an option
EL 1-5	Advice from private consultants
EL 1-5	I didn't want to have the low inputs on all the fields as I need to use fertiliser in some of them.
EL 1-5	important to feed regardless of weather and conditions
EL 1-5	none for this scheme but didn't apply to HL schemes because more trouble than they were worth
UB11	not enough money
UB14	no need for more points
UB14	So didn't feel he could satisfy requirements of annual amount to restore
UB14	Time issues
UB14	Too much work involved
UB17	more work than it's worth, and they were able to receive enough pts with EL3-4
UB17	no need for more points
UB17	worried that they wouldn't be able to find enough contractors
UC5	enough points. Didn't want to incur costs at this stage
UC5	fencing woodlands off is wasting land a bit
UD12	Record keeping too much work, and didn't need them
UD12	
UD12	no need for extra points
UD12	no need for extra points
UD12	Points already used up, why do more than need to.
UD13	in HLS - gets capital grants for this work
UD13	no need for extra points
UJ12	more than enough points so did not need to choose it
UJ12	Rare breeding option - chose not at as already had enough points without

Table continued...

Q23	Reason
UJ3	Didn't chose as found easier points
UJ3	Fencing is expensive and not worth the bother
UL17	big acreage of land for this
UL17	climate means there's not enough grass
UL17	couldn't do it, with weather it just isn't possible. Didn't want to sign up to something that wasn't welfare friendly
UL17	I haven't got this option on all fields as it is too difficult
UL17	Things were unclear at the time (i.e. as to what they would have to adhere to)
UL18	Pure Breed only, thought he had it but his breed not included. Might still do it.
UL18	Thought would be wet, problems with liver fluke
UL20	all the rest of the fertilizer options
UL20	couldn't spray for docks
UL20	date restrictions were tight
UL20	dates and fertiliser usage
UL20	difficulty arranging with the grazier
UL20	don't make hay, not cutting grass
UL20	farmers are guided by weather and therefore cannot stick to a specific date
UL20	had enough points
UL20	points on other options so didn't need complication
UL21	5-6 acres of pretty rough ground - awkward to manage
UL22	already doing with RSPB
UL22	have to keep up with fencing
UL22	no need for extra points
UX2	
UX3	Difficult to contain the fire because of growth due to under-grazing
UX3	not sure if this is the options but she referred to options about stocking density

Appendix 4 Telephone survey results

Table C Farm type by upland region (agreement holders and non-agreement holders) (%)

Upland region	Grazing livestock	Dairy	Other types	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	80	7	13	91
	±8	±5	±7	
Lake District	82	14	4	51
	±11	±10	±5	
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	75	19	6	64
	±11	±10	±6	
North York Moors	81	3	16	31
	±14	±6	±13	
Peak District	63	16	21	80
	±11	±8	±9	
South Pennines	69	12	19	51
	±13	±9	±11	
Welsh Borders	77	3	20	35
	±14	±6	±13	
South West Moors	80	2	18	54
	±11	±4	±10	
All agreement holders	76	10	14	457
	±4	±3	±3	
All non-agreement holders	62	13	25	280
	±6	±4	±5	
Uplands FPS survey	67	10	23	

Table D Farm size (SLR) by upland region (%)

Upland region	Very small	Small	Medium	Large and v. large	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	18 ±8	40 ±10	33 ±10	10 ±6	91
Lake District	25 ±12	48 ±14	15 ±10	12 ±9	51
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	16 ±9	49 ±12	27 ±11	8 ±7	64
North York Moors	36 ±17	42 ±17	13 ±12	10 ±11	31
Peak District	38 ±11	45 ±11	7 ±6	10 ±7	80
South Pennines	51 ±14	34 ±13	8 ±7	8 ±7	51
Welsh Borders	37 ±16	40 ±16	20 ±13	3 ±6	35
South West Moors	37 ±13	37 ±13	24 ±11	2 ±4	54
All agreement holders	28 ±4	42 ±5	22 ±4	8 ±2	457
All non-agreement holders	53 ±6	27 ±5	12 ±4	9 ±3	280
All farms	46 ±4	31 ±3	15 ±3	9 ±2	737

Table E Area of SDA land on sample holdings by upland region (%)

Upland region	Less than 20ha	20 to 100ha	More than 100ha	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	9	34	57	86
	± 6	± 10	± 10	
Lake District	14	50	36	52
	± 9	± 14	± 13	
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	19	40	41	63
	± 10	± 12	± 12	
North York Moors	17	67	17	30
	± 13	± 17	± 13	
Peak District	28	54	18	79
	± 10	± 11	± 8	
South Pennines	26	55	19	53
	± 12	± 13	± 11	
Welsh Borders	23	49	29	35
	± 14	± 17	± 15	
South West Moors	19	58	23	53
	± 11	± 13	± 11	
All agreement holders	17	47	36	451
	± 3	± 5	± 4	
All non-agreement holders	43	46	11	243
	± 6	± 6	± 4	
All farms	35	46	19	742
	± 3	± 4	± 3	

Table F Main sources of household income by upland region (%)

Upland region	Traditional agricultural only	Mixed traditional agricultural and non-agricultural	Non-traditional agricultural only	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	56	43	1	90
	± 10	± 10	± 2	
Lake District	59	41	0	52
	± 13	± 13	± 0	
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	58	39	3	68
	± 12	± 12	± 4	
North York Moors	70	30	0	33
	± 16	± 16	± 0	
Peak District	54	44	2	86
	± 11	± 10	± 3	
South Pennines	54	37	9	54
	± 13	± 13	± 8	
Welsh Borders	56	39	6	36
	± 16	± 16	± 8	
South West Moors	48	40	12	58
	± 13	± 13	± 8	
All agreement holders	56	40	3	477
	± 4	± 4	± 2	
All non-agreement holders	56	14	30	273
	± 6	± 4	± 5	
All farms	56	22	22	750
	± 4	± 3	± 3	

Table G Enterprise mix on SDA land (%)

Upland region	Sheep & cattle	Sheep, cattle & other livestock	Sheep only	Cattle only	Sheep & other livestock	Cattle & other livestock	No traditional enterprises	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	77	3	13	4	0	0	2	91
	±9	±4	±7	±4	±0	±0	±3	
Lake District	67	2	24	6	0	0	2	53
	±13	±4	±11	±6	±0	±0	±4	
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	67	2	19	5	6	0	0	68
	±11	±3	±9	±5	±6	±0	±0	
North York Moors	58	0	24	15	0	0	3	33
	±17	±0	±15	±12	±0	±0	±6	
Peak District	50	2	18	23	5	1	1	86
	±11	±3	±8	±9	±5	±2	±2	
South Pennines	49	2	24	13	4	2	7	55
	±13	±4	±11	±9	±5	±4	±7	
Welsh Borders	75	0	11	6	3	3	3	36
	±14	±0	±10	±8	±6	±6	±6	
South West Moors	48	5	17	14	4	4	9	58
	±13	±6	±10	±9	±5	±5	±7	±
All agreement holders	64	2	18	9	2	1	3	480
	±4	±1	±3	±3	±1	±1	±2	±
All non-agreement holders	38	1	23	20	2	1	14	283
	±6	±1	±5	±5	±2	±1	±4	
All farms	45	2	22	17	2	1	11	763
	±4	±1	±3	±3	±1	±1	±2	

Table H Age of the main decision maker by upland region (%)

Upland region	Under 40 years old	Between 40 and 54 years old	Between 55 and 64 years old	65 years old or over	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	8	41	26	26	90
	±6	±10	±9	±9	
Lake District	11	33	37	18	53
	±8	±13	±13	±10	
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	3	43	24	30	68
	±4	±12	±10	±11	
North York Moors	9	42	18	30	33
	±10	±17	±13	±16	
Peak District	5	38	35	22	86
	±5	±10	±10	±9	
South Pennines	9	20	29	42	55
	±8	±11	±12	±13	
Welsh Borders	9	19	41	31	32
	±10	±14	±17	±16	
South West Moors	4	35	37	24	57
	±5	±12	±13	±11	
All agreement holders	7	37	29	27	474
	±2	±4	±4	±4	
All non-agreement holders	4	32	32	32	278
	±2	±5	±5	±5	
All farms	5	34	31	31	752
	±2	±3	±3	±3	

Table I Previously receiving HFA payment by upland region (%)

Upland region	Yes	No	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	87	13	91
	±7	±7	
Lake District	91	9	52
	±8	±8	
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	85	15	67
	±9	±9	
North York Moors	91	9	33
	±10	±10	
Peak District	77	23	84
	±9	±9	
South Pennines	80	20	54
	±11	±11	
Welsh Borders	78	22	36
	±14	±14	
South West Moors	87	13	54
	±9	±9	
All agreement holders	85	15	471
	±3	±3	
All non-agreement holders	69	31	267
	±6	±6	
All farms	74	26	738
	±3	±3	

Table J Percentage of sample with land rented by upland region (%)

Upland region	Rented land	No rented land	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	53 ±10	47 ±10	91
Lake District	56 ±13	44 ±13	52
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	63 ±12	37 ±12	67
North York Moors	69 ±16	31 ±16	33
Peak District	46 ±11	54 ±11	84
South Pennines	37 ±13	63 ±13	54
Welsh Borders	25 ±14	75 ±14	36
South West Moors	43 ±13	57 ±13	54
All agreement holders	51 ±5	49 ±5	471
All non- agreement holders	33 ±5	64 ±6	281

Table K Ease in gaining landlord consent by region (%)

Upland region	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	91 ±10	4 ±7	7 ±9	30
Lake District	84	8	8	13
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	85	15	0	21
North York Moors	93	0	7	13
Peak District	77	17	5	19
South Pennines	71	29	0	10
Welsh Borders	100	0	0	3
South West Moors	90	10	0	11
All agreement holders	87 ±6	9 ±5	5 ±4	120
All non-agreement holders	48 ±12	27 ±11	25 ±11	63

Table L Agreement holders and non-agreement holders renting out land in SDA by region (%)

Upland region	Rent out land in SDA	Do not rent out land in SDA	Do not own any land in SDA to rent out	No. of responses
Northumberland and North Pennines	11 ±7	54 ±11	35 ±10	81
Lake District	10 ±8	73 ±12	18 ±11	50
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	11 ±8	75 ±12	13 ±9	54
North York Moors	18	57	25	28
Peak District	15 ±9	73 ±11	12 ±8	67
South Pennines	16 ±10	76 ±12	8 ±8	50
Welsh Borders	10	90	0	29
South West Moors	17 ±11	72 ±13	11 ±9	46
All agreement holders	13 ±3	68 ±5	19 ±4	405
All non-agreement holders	16 ±5	75 ±6	10 ±4	229

Table M Discussed UELS with other farmers (%)

	Agreement holders		
	Yes	No	No. of responses
Region			
Northumberland and North Pennines	73 ±9	27 ±9	91
Lake District	74 ±12	26 ±12	53
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	68 ±11	32 ±11	68
North York Moors	58 ±17	42 ±17	33
Peak District	65 ±10	35 ±10	86
South Pennines	64 ±13	36 ±13	55
Welsh Borders	53 ±16	47 ±16	36
South West Moors	45 ±13	55 ±13	58
Farm Size: SLR			
Very small	60 ±8	40 ±8	139
Small	65 ±7	35 ±7	192
Medium	70 ±10	30 ±10	89
Large and V. large	82 ±12	18 ±12	37
Farm type: Enterprise mix			
Grazing livestock	65 ±5	35 ±5	343
Dairy	77 ±12	23 ±12	47
Other types	64 ±11	36 ±11	67
Farm type: Income sources			
Traditional agriculture only	66 ±6	34 ±6	266
Mixed	67 ±7	33 ±7	192
Non agriculture only	33	67	19

Table continued...

	Agreement holders		
	Yes	No	No. of responses
Farm tenure			
Owner occupied (100%)	59 ±7	41 ±7	214
Mixed	67 ±7	33 ±7	181
Tenanted (1yr+) (100%)	81 ±9	19 ±9	68
Other	67	33	7
Participation in AES			
Previous participation	66 ±5	34 ±5	381
No participation	61 ±10	39 ±10	98
All agreement holders			
All agreement holders	65 ±4	35 ±4	480
All non-agreement holders			
All non-agreement holders	42 ±6	58 ±6	259

Table N Advice sought when preparing application (%)

	Agreement holders		
	Yes	No	No. of responses
Region			
Northumberland and North Pennines	90 ±6	10 ±6	91
Lake District	85 ±10	15 ±10	53
Yorkshire Dales and Bowland	84 ±9	16 ±9	68
North York Moors	82 ±13	18 ±13	33
Peak District	84 ±8	16 ±8	86
South Pennines	85 ±9	15 ±9	55
Welsh Borders	72 ±15	28 ±15	36
South West Moors	77 ±11	23 ±11	58
Farm Size: SLR			
Very small	77 ±7	23 ±7	139
Small	88 ±5	12 ±5	192
Medium	85 ±7	15 ±7	89
Large and V. large	88 ±10	12 ±10	37
Farm type: Enterprise mix			
Grazing livestock	86 ±4	14 ±4	343
Dairy	80 ±11	20 ±11	47
Other types	80 ±10	20 ±10	67
Farm type: Income sources			
Traditional agriculture only	84 ±4	16 ±4	266
Mixed	86 ±5	14 ±5	192
Non agriculture only	74	26	19

Table continued...

	Agreement holders		
	Yes	No	No. of responses
Previous AES			
Previous participation	85 ±4	15 ±4	381
No participation	83 ±7	17 ±7	98
All agreement holders			
All agreement holders	84 ±3	16 ±3	480
All non-agreement holders			
All non-agreement holders	51 ±6	49 ±6	283