

## Case study: Chris Bailey, Grange Farm, Cambridgeshire



On Grange Farm, we have established margins with a wide range of flowering plants and grasses and are trying different forms of management to ensure the longevity of the flowering component. We have found that scarifying the established margin with a power harrow actually does the best job of suppressing the grasses and maintaining the wild flowers, although this is not currently permissible in Stewardship options, and should not be undertaken within the 2m cross compliance margins.

## Sources of further information

RSPB Arable Farmland Adviser:  
01767 680551  
[www.rspb.org.uk/farming](http://www.rspb.org.uk/farming)

Smiths Gore – Farm Management  
01962 857405  
[www.smithsgore.co.uk](http://www.smithsgore.co.uk)

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group:  
024 7669 6699  
[www.fwag.org.uk](http://www.fwag.org.uk)

The Game and Wildlife Conservation  
Trust: 01425 652381  
[www.gct.org.uk](http://www.gct.org.uk)

Visit [www.farmwildlife.info](http://www.farmwildlife.info) to:

- Post your questions and ideas on the discussion forum
- Read case studies of how farmers are benefiting wildlife
- Find out about events and courses in farm wildlife conservation
- Use the comprehensive list of links to other websites concerned with farm wildlife conservation



## Flower-rich margins



*How to integrate wildlife benefits  
into your farming business*

RSPB regd charity in the UK no 207076  
In Scotland no SCO 37654

## Why create flower-rich margins?

Buffer strips are one of the most popular options in Entry Level Stewardship (ELS), but **a greater range of wildlife would benefit if there were nectar-rich flowering plants in the mixtures.** In Higher Level Stewardship, the floristically enhanced grass margin option pays for the extra seed costs incurred in establishing flower-rich margins.

Flower-rich margins provide pollen and nectar for pollinating insects as well as the grassland for over-wintering insects. As such, they act much more effectively as wildlife corridors, allowing insects and other invertebrates to thrive across the farm. The more varied structure also allows a greater range of wildlife to make use of them for feeding.

They are a highly attractive feature on the farm and you may wish to site them close to public footpaths to attract the attention of the public.

As with other margin habitats, they can be created as 6m margins to cover your LERAP requirements. The cost-benefit analysis opposite shows that **creation of flower-rich margins using the ELS 6m buffer strip payment is profitable** given reduced yields in field margins and savings in fixed costs.

## What you can do

Include broad-leaved flowering plants in your grass margin mixtures – use ones which can tolerate competition from the grasses, such as ox-eye daisy, knapweed, yarrow and scabious. Avoid using tussocky grasses such as cock's-foot and timothy in these mixtures, as these grasses are more likely to out-compete the flower component.

**These mixtures are best suited to margins that receive plenty of sunlight,** where insect activity is likely to be greater. Annual cutting in the autumn, and if necessary, again before the nesting season in late winter, is useful to suppress competitive grasses.



## Economic analysis

(by Smiths Gore farm management)

The analysis compares a hectare of flower-rich margin (with the ELS payment for 6m buffer strips) and a hectare of winter wheat.

	Winter wheat	Flower-rich margin
Income from crop	£918	
Income from ELS		£400
Variable costs	-£420	-£76
Savings in fixed costs		£295
Net margin	£498	£619
Change in net margin		<b>£121</b>

### Assumptions:

Winter wheat yield: 7.65 t / ha (10% lower than average in field margin)  
Winter wheat value: £120 / tonne  
Variable costs of option spread over 5 years: £100 (seed), £99 (establishment), £135 (cutting twice in year 1, half area annually and rest every 5 years @ £30/ha), £9 (1 hour knapsack spray injurious weeds)

**For further details and help in doing your own calculations, visit [www.smithsgore.co.uk/publications](http://www.smithsgore.co.uk/publications)**