

# **Support for Care Farming Through the Rural Development Programme for England**

## **A review and look forward**

**An RDPE Network & National Care Farming Initiative Joint Project**

**September 2010**



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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas

## **Executive Summary**

### **Background**

Care farming has been defined, by the National Care Farming Initiative, as “the therapeutic use of farming practices”. These practices may involve engagement with growing crops or contact with farm animals and there has been growing interest in this area of work both in the UK and across Europe and the evidence of its benefits.

No information, however, had been gathered regarding support to these farms which had been provided under Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). It was against this backdrop therefore that the National Care Farming Initiative, in partnership with the RDPE Network, undertook a joint project to examine the take-up, challenges and way forward for such farms under the RDPE.

The purpose of the project was to identify practical examples where RDPE funding has been used to support care farmers to expand and diversify their business. For example, where funding has paid for capital works such as disabled toilet facilities or wheelchair access or where subsidies have paid for visits by vulnerable groups, for instance through the Higher Level Stewardship educational access scheme, or where there are barriers to accessing this funding and there is potential for the RDPE to do more for care farmers.

### **Methodology**

Through analysis of the Regional Implementation Plans (RIPs), four different English regions were selected (South West, East of England, West Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside). Semi-structured telephone interviews with representatives from both delivery organisations (one in each region) and care farms (five in each region) were undertaken. The interviews with delivery organisations explored the opportunity for supporting care farms through RDPE measures and where RDPE had actually supported care farming. The interviews with care farmers ascertained their familiarity with regional/local business support agencies and their awareness, pursuit and experiences of RDPE funding.

The farms included in the study were not intended to provide a representative sample of those operating in each area. Rather, they constituted representatives of the main types of care farm (in terms of clients) generally encountered across the country as a whole.

The analysis of these interviews has provided the basis for the findings in this report and, where possible, boxed illustrations are used to highlight the points made. Narrative summaries of all interviews were written up, but for confidentiality reasons these are not being published.

### **Findings**

Half the care farmers contacted had explored the possibility of getting funding under RDPE and most of these had made contact with an adviser and had made an application. There was also a good level of knowledge regarding the main organisations charged with delivery of RDPE measures (such as the Regional Development Agencies, Natural England and Business Link), suggesting that the profile of these agencies as sources of assistance to care farms has been successfully established.

A number of challenges were recognised that may prevent more care farms accessing RDPE funding including lack of time, lack of experience in putting together funding bids and complexity of the business model (i.e. difficulty in identifying the “market”, or who will pay for their proposed services). Although mainstream RDPE funding for care farms tends to be focussed on capital grants and specialist labour/training, their biggest problem is paying for revenue costs, i.e. finding a “commissioner” who is prepared to pay for clients to attend the farm regularly. Finally, care farms may encounter differences in how the RDPE is interpreted in their area which can have implications on their eligibility for funding.

There were however some clear opportunities. The delivery organisation contact officers were often either knowledgeable or generally supportive of care farms, and on the surface care farming “hits the right buttons” to be a supportable activity, such as “the rural economy”, “business start up”, and “improving quality of life”. Care farmers themselves were very positive about accessing funding under certain areas of the RDPE, particularly the environmental subsidies through Natural England (already being accessed) or social enterprise funding (future potential). A number of care farms had also accessed Leader funding for capital works such as building renovations, disabled toilets and wheelchair access, which had helped them to get their projects off the ground by having appropriate facilities in place to encourage commissioners to use their services.

Interestingly, the RDPE’s farm diversification measures were some of the least accessed by care farmers and some of the delivery officers were dubious of their eligibility. There are a number of reasons for this, including the proviso that the new diversifying enterprise is led by a member of the farm family, which rules out care farming developments with off-farm leadership seeking on-farm location where the farm income benefit takes the form of rent.

### **Development Opportunities**

Due to the diversity amongst existing or would-be care farmers, a prescriptive approach to the provision of RDPE support for care farming is neither appropriate nor feasible. Nevertheless, the various RIPs under which the RDPE is being operated suggest three opportunities (which may overlap and are not necessarily equal in financial support) from which care farmers could hope to benefit:

- Local Action Groups (LAGs)/Leader approach
- Environmental management
- Social enterprise development

For this to be effectively achieved requires flexibility in application to be built in to programmes and willingness on the part of delivery organisations to display adaptability in matching enquiries with appropriate sources of support.

Outside of RDPE, care farming is promoted among mainstream farmers as a way to capitalise on their assets, skills and new market opportunities, but the eligibility rules for the RDPE’s farm diversification measure restricts uptake.

We also suggest three ways in which benefit from the RDPE to care farming might be developed:

### **1. Utilising Existing Resources**

There is a case for using existing resources within organisations to help care farmers to develop their projects in the terms in which RDPE programmes are formulated. This could be undertaken by outside partners with large resource capabilities. For example there are examples of national charities such as the Salvation Army or Barnados which have developed care farming projects.

### **2. Facilitation & Mentoring**

The development of a national mentorship scheme to support care farmers in selecting appropriate RDPE programmes to approach, and to identify which officers might assist with the application process. This could be undertaken by a national/regional project officer and would enable care farmers to present their projects in the terms in which RDPE programmes are formulated and help RDPE delivery organisations to recognise the congruence of care farmers' motivation and purposes with the objectives of the schemes they are operating.

### **3. Regional Groupings**

The formation of groups of care farmers in particular regions to prepare collaborative or joint approaches for RDPE assistance should be encouraged. This may help enhance the take-up of certain programmes and could also build on "best practice" where a care farmer has been particularly successful.

If, as may be anticipated, there is to be a specific expectation that future 'rounds' of European funding will offer encouragement to 'social farming', then the experience gained from the current application of the RDPE should mean that this country is well prepared to respond positively.

## Introduction

There is a growing awareness of the value that farms have in supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. In the United Kingdom this is known as “Care Farming”, although in some other European countries, particularly Italy and Ireland, the term used is “Social Farming”. The concept is gathering momentum and strength in the UK, through a group of practitioners that identify themselves as “care farmers”.

Interest in the use of farms as social and therapeutic environments is growing across Europe with networks and schemes being clearly established in countries such as Belgium and Holland.

There are also 3 pan-European schemes:-

- COST Action 866 in Green Care & Agriculture<sup>1</sup> has brought together researchers and scientists from across Europe to discuss research needs, and a Conceptual Framework to assist in describing and defining the sector has been developed as one of the outcomes;
- The “Farming for Health” Community of Practice<sup>2</sup> allows European practitioners to share experiences;
- The recently developed European Network for Rural Development (EN RD) National Rural Network (NRN) driven thematic initiative on social farming seeks to establish a grouping which will improve the opportunities to support social farming initiatives through the Rural Development Programmes in each member state;

It is against this backdrop that the RDPE Network and the National Care Farming Initiative (details below) have undertaken a joint project to better understand how care farms have been supported through the RDPE and feed into the social farming thematic initiative.

The RDPE Network is a requirement of the European Rural Development Regulation, its role being to support the delivery of the programme through:

- Providing tools and opportunities for those involved in RDPE to share their ideas, practice and experience;
- Operating across the four axes and linking information at EU, UK, national, regional and local levels;
- Working with existing information exchange mechanisms and networks, to avoid duplication and maximise joint opportunities.

More information on the RDPE Network can be found on their website at:

<http://www.rdpnetwork.org.uk/>

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<sup>1</sup> European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research.

See [http://w3.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=181&action\\_number=866](http://w3.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=181&action_number=866)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.farmingforhealth.org/>

The National Care Farming Initiative seeks to raise the awareness and credibility of care farming in the UK. It arranges conferences and practitioner networking events, provides a website resource and provides a voice and support services for care farmers around the UK. It is a partnership of four organisations: Harper Adams University College, The Arthur Rank Centre, The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society at University of Essex.

More information on the National Care Farming Initiative can be found on their website at: [www.ncfi.org.uk](http://www.ncfi.org.uk)

## **Outline of the Rural Development Programme for England**

The Rural Development Programme for England is jointly funded by the EU through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and HM Treasury. RDPE is delivered regionally across eight regions in England. As part of the identification of priorities each region has written a Regional Implementation Plan (RIP) that sets out how the RDPE will be used. More information is available at this link: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/plans.htm>

The RDPE 2007-2013:

- Has a budget of £3.9 billion
- £3.3 billion of the total is allocated to agri-environment and other land management schemes. This funding helps farmers to manage the land more sustainably and deliver important outcomes on biodiversity, landscape and access, water quality and climate change
- Some £600 million has been made available to make agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable and to enhance opportunity in rural areas
- 5% of the EU funds within the RDPE - a minimum of £105m across the country - are allocated through a mechanism known as Leader, or Axis 4. The Leader approach is not a scheme, fund or set of objectives, but is a method of harnessing local knowledge to enable a “bottom up”, community led approach to the delivery of RDPE funding in rural areas. The approach can be used to deliver a range of programme objectives, and helps achieve integration.

*Further information on the RDPE can be found in Appendix 5 , Table 2 on page 30, “RDPE Axes & Measures”.*

Part of RDPE is delivered through the Leader approach. This approach is implemented through Local Action Groups (LAGs), which represent public and private partners and local interest groups. Each LAG has a Local Development Strategy (LDS), which sets out the priorities for action in their areas, including selection criteria for local projects to be supported through RDPE funding. For further information – <http://www.rdpnetwork.org.uk/your-network/local-action-groups>

The example in the box below describes a care farmer who originally accessed LEADER+ funding and found the experience positive, leading him to submit another application under the RDPE funding.

Throughout the report we present eight other illustrations in this format to demonstrate our findings.



### ***“Benefitting from Leader” - Houghton Court, a care farm in Herefordshire***

Begun in October 2003, the Houghton Project was inspired by the work that project leader Tim James-Moore undertook in Bristol with a scheme of city farms. This rural farm is used to benefit and enrich the lives of many people who are often referred to as the fringe groups in society, including those with physical and learning disabilities, those with mental health problems and disaffected and excluded youth.



Tim has received Leader money in the past and is currently putting together a bid for further funding totalling around £30,000. This bid will include a disabled ladies toilet and also to replace an ageing poly-tunnel with a greenhouse. He would also like to refurbish a barn to help with a carpentry project. He is relatively optimistic about the bid as he has been successful in the past and is aware of delivery officers who can advise and assist. He feels that the Leader money is a better fit for him, rather than the Rural Enterprise Grant, as he highlights the rural services aspect rather than farm diversification. It is also more attractive as Leader will fund 50% of costs rather than the 40% funded under other RDPE schemes.



## **Approach**

Before the study, little was known about the support which had been provided through RDPE to care farms and the range and degree was often anecdotal and unquantified.

To undertake the study we selected a cross-section of care farms taken from the National Care Farming Initiative’s database, reflecting the main groups assisted: people with learning difficulties, disaffected young people and people with mental health needs.

Due to the regional nature of RDPE delivery and the resource limitations to this project the number of regions contacted was limited to four. The decision about which regions to contact was made after the RIPS were collected and analysed.

In these four different regions (South West, East of England, West Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside) we undertook the following:

- Structured telephone interviews with identified representatives from RDPE delivery organisations, including Regional Development Agencies and Natural England. The interviews explored the opportunity for supporting care farms through RDPE measures and identifying practical examples where RDPE has supported care farming.
- A telephone survey of 20 care farmers to ascertain their familiarity with regional/local business support agencies and the awareness, pursuit and experiences of RDPE funding.

The farms included in the study were not intended to provide a representative sample of those operating in each area. Rather, they constituted representatives of the main types of care farm generally encountered across the country as a whole.

Following the initial interviews, further leads were suggested and two extra Regional Development Agency representatives were interviewed in the North West and North East. These RIPs seemed more supportive of social enterprise and innovation – although the National Care Farming Initiative directory showed that there were few care farms in these areas.

A list of all those who were spoken to can be found in Appendix 2 and 3 at the back of this report. These contact details are publicly available through the regional directory of care farms on the NCFI website at [www.ncfi.org.uk](http://www.ncfi.org.uk) and on the individual RDA websites.

## Summary of Findings

### Awareness

Some specific questions were asked in order to assess the extent of care farmers’ knowledge concerning the RDPE and the main organisations responsible for its delivery in the regions. The results are summarised in the table below.

**Table 1: Care Farmers’ Awareness of RDPE**

(Numbers of respondents)

Question	Yes	No	Unclear/Not sure
Have you heard of RDPE?	12	4	4
Do you know about RIPs?	5	13	2
Do you know where to get help with RDPE?	12	7	1
Have you looked into RDPE funding?	10	10	0
Have you contacted anyone about RDPE funding?	8	12	0
Have you applied for RDPE funding?	8	12	0
Do you know about other applicants?	5	15	0

Question	Yes	No	Unclear/Not sure
Have you heard of Business Link?	16	1	3
Have you heard of RDA?	17	3	0
Have you heard of Natural England?	18	2	0

*People's perception & understanding of funding mechanisms can sometimes be unclear so exact figures should be treated with caution.*

Half the care farmers contacted had explored the possibility of getting funding under RDPE and most of those had made contact with an adviser and had made an application (or more than one).

There was a good level of knowledge regarding the main organisations charged with delivery of RDPE measures and indeed with regard to the RDPE itself. This suggests that the profile of these agencies as sources of assistance to care farms has been successfully established.

The different familiarity with RDPE may be attributable to the different directions from which the care farming principals had approached the business. Those beginning from a position within farming and then moving to incorporate a care enterprise perhaps being more likely to be aware of funding streams supporting rural development (including environmental stewardship) than those moving into farming specifically in order to establish a care enterprise (who might be more likely to appreciate sources intentionally focused on educational and/or social care). From our phone interviews, a broad range of funding bodies had been approached by the respondents.

It is also possible that the familiarity with the RDPE may be masked by the deliberately varied modes through which it is applied (grants; training; local action groups) or targeted (farm diversification; social enterprise). For example: a care farmer who claimed that the RDPE had provided nothing suitable for care farmers was full of praise for an operation called 'Sowing SEEDS'; yet 'Sowing SEEDS' is actually the LAG. (An illustration on this appears on page 12)

### **How RDPE has supported care farming to date**

The format in which care farms present themselves prohibits formulation of universal or off-the-peg programmes of support. To expect bespoke or made-to-measure assistance to be provided for so small a sector of activity is equally unrealistic. Accordingly, the most reasonable expectation should be for the accommodation of care farming developments within the framework of generic provision made under the RDPE for farm diversification, social enterprise or new business development. For this to be effectively achieved requires flexibility in application to be built in to programmes and willingness on the part of delivery organisations to display adaptability in matching enquiries with appropriate sources of support.

Nevertheless, the various RIPs under which RDPE regional priorities are identified suggest three main types of scheme (which may overlap and are not necessarily equal in financial support) from which care farmers could hope to benefit:

- **Local Action Groups (LAGs)/Leader approach**
- **Environmental management**
- **Social enterprise promotion**

## Local Action Groups (LAGs)/Leader approach

Schemes operated under RDPE through Local Action Groups and using the Leader approach are valued for their flexibility. Several of the care farmers interviewed had made successful applications under such schemes. Difficulties might arise from the desire for local community involvement in project appraisal, and the view that care farming beneficiaries might be thought (erroneously) not to be represented in the locality or to be characteristically urban rather than rural (e.g. drug abusers).

### *“How a LAG can deliver RDPE” - Sowing SEEDS*



Sowing SEEDS covers the Community Partnerships Executive North Dorset (CPEND) area of North and East Dorset and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), who have secured £2.85 million to improve the economic wellbeing of the area with funding available until the end of 2013. The funding is being delivered through a Local Action Group. This is part of the Local Action for Rural Communities (LARC) Funding Programme supported by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) through the RDPE, and Wiltshire Council is acting as the accountable body.



The fact that Sowing SEEDS is an integral part of the RDPE is not given a heavy emphasis. This means that the beneficiaries of its services can be unaware of the role that RDPE has played in supporting their work. In one instance a care-farmer praised Sowing Seeds for their assistance and contrasted their impact with the RDPE which had not been heard of!

## Environmental management

Environmental management programmes are represented by the stewardship schemes operated by Natural England. In particular, support for care farming (especially where there is an educational dimension) is potentially available via the Higher Level scheme. The applicability of the stewardship schemes, however, may be limited by the small-scale nature of the farming operations that some care farms represent, albeit that the opportunities for therapeutic benefit from the farming practices may be large.

Two national schemes provide funding for a small number of care farms to host educational and environmental visits. These are outlined in the illustrations overleaf, with a practical example also given.

### ***“Benefitting from Environmental Management Schemes” - Uncllys Farm, a care farm in Worcestershire***

John & Linda Iles have been based on a 13 acre tenant farm in Worcestershire for the last five years. They are relative newcomers to care farming and have been contracted to provide day placements for up to 6 people from Worcestershire Drug and Alcohol Abuse Team (DAAT). The farm is in the heart of the Wyre National Nature Reserve and through the Wyre Community Land Trust that John set up, he now manages over 250 acres of contract grazing with support from Natural England mainly through Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) schemes.



The HLS scheme subsidises bringing unused land back into production. The care farm helpers are part of the team carrying out estate management work and the subsidies pay for materials and tools. HLS has also part funded the costs for an education centre which is used when hosting visits as part of the



educational component of the HLS. John feels that the HLS is a very well-supported scheme, mainly due to the good network of Natural England advisors who are able to give very comprehensive advice. He is also in the process of applying for a Rural Enterprise Scheme grant towards 40% of the costs of setting up a juice processing facility on the farm.

### ***“Stewardship Schemes”***

**Natural England** provides Higher Level Environmental/Organic Stewardship farmers with money to host Educational Access “farm visits” – typically primary school groups but also Women’s Institute, art class and higher education groups. Under what are 10 year agreements, farmers receive a “base payment” of £500 (provided they do at least four visits per year) plus £100 per visit - up to a usual maximum of 25 visits per annum. In total, around 400,000 people make farm visits each year (50% are schoolchildren), costing around £1m per annum.

A visit is a group of at least six people for two hours, and has to have some learning experience - with encouragement of it being outdoors. Care farming is deemed eligible for funding, but the number of people and months involved means not many meet the minimums above - only 2-3 are funded by this initiative. Those that do are paid in units of £100, under individually negotiated agreements. Care farmers are said to get a better financial deal by working with, and getting support from, their local authorities.





### *“Let Nature Feed Your Senses”*

**Let Nature Feed Your Senses** is one of three national flagship projects under Natural England’s “Access to Nature” programme, which is ultimately funded by the Big Lottery’s Changing Spaces programme. The aim of the programme, which is administered by Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) and the Sensory Trust, is to get 10,000 disabled or disengaged individuals onto farms and nature reserves over 3.5 years – in order to encourage a lifelong love of nature, food and farming and to see the links between all three. Among the 77 farms and nature reserves currently being funded are 7-8 care farms and 4-5 city farms.

Under the scheme, each site is expected to host 4 visits per year; of around 12 people each, for 2-3 hours. Eligible beneficiaries are: anyone with mental or physical disability; those who live in the 10% most deprived areas; anyone over 65; and anyone under 24 who has a disability, is from an area of high social deprivation or attends a school without access to the countryside. Regional seminars/training events are held every few months to support the sites.

### **Social Enterprise**

A third option for care farms is to consider becoming a social enterprise – a business model that is supported by several RFPs and has greater resonance with delivery organisations than care farming. However, social enterprises may face difficulties in presenting convincing business plans that demonstrate commercial viability. The most testing challenge is to prepare convincing projections of income streams that rely upon purchases of care farms’ services that are largely controlled (directly or indirectly) by local authorities or other public bodies. It may be that there is a need for additional specialist guidance in preparation of such business plans under these conditions.

An example of a care farm operating as a social enterprise is outlined overleaf:

### ***“Benefits of Social Enterprise” – Clinks Care Farm, Norfolk***

Clinks Care Farm, a tenancy of Norfolk County Council, has been run as a social enterprise since its formation in 2009. Its manager, Doeke Dobma, is a very well-informed and active care farm operator and has known about social enterprises for years. (Around 10 years ago he had a job promoting them for the Shaw Trust). Indeed his other care farm, in Suffolk might be a social enterprise too, but there he is in a partnership with a host farmer.



Among Clinks’ social objectives is to create employment opportunities for those facing barriers in the open labour market due to their disability or mental health.

“It has definitely helped us being a social enterprise,” says Doeke. And successes with two recent funding bids illustrate why.

Firstly, the development of social enterprises and care farms is a specific goal in his LAG’s LDS, and Doeke is on the verge of securing a £50,000 grant from it to build a “log cabin” for the care farm. Secondly, with promotion of social enterprises also a government priority, it may also have been a factor in helping him secure a Department of Health Innovation Bid.



Care farms need to be prepared to fit in with other people’s agendas, says Doeke. Some people have the wrong and negative idea of them, but he has got funders to see care farming through a different lens, furthering their agendas for example of “valuing people” and “promoting social inclusion”.

### **Care Farming & Farm Diversification?**

Farm diversification schemes are targeted at existing farm businesses and reflect the public policy objective of reducing farms’ dependence for income on agricultural commodity production. The end view of farm diversification is the enhancement of farming families’ income, so these schemes can sometimes be specified to require that the new diversifying enterprise is led by a member of the farm family. This proviso rules out diversifications where the farm income benefit takes the form of rent and can therefore restrict care farming developments with off-farm leadership seeking on-farm location. Farm diversification schemes may also require that the farm operation should be financially viable as a farm and thus presume a scale or size of farm (as pre-requisite for inclusion in the scheme) that is beyond that required to provide opportunities for participation in farming practices necessary for a successful care farm.

All the regions that we consulted provide special schemes to support farm diversification projects. Understandably, given the historical background, these schemes require evidence that a viable farm business exists and that any new enterprise will sustain continued involvement of the farming family.

Unfortunately these qualifying requirements may be drawbacks in the context of care farming in England. Many care farms are established on small-scale holdings of land. Where a care-focused enterprise is based on a large-scale farm, the care business principal may not be a family member.

Hence, although it may seem obvious that approaches from care farmers to RDPE delivery organisations should be guided in the direction of farm diversification funding almost as a matter of course, it may be that support from Local Action Groups or Social Enterprise development schemes would actually be more easily adaptable to their circumstances. During the course of the interviews with care farmers, no specific examples were found of care farms that had been successful in applying for grants purely through farm diversification funding schemes, although some had applied for this funding and been turned down.

## **Challenges & Opportunities**

From this project four types of challenges have been highlighted which prevent more care farms accessing RDPE funding – but offer stakeholders potential opportunity for development. These relate to care farmers themselves; their knowledge and skills; the RDPE’s funding programme and its regional variations.

1. Firstly, care farmers lack the time to keep informed, or make detailed investigations of, funding opportunities. Like many other farmers, they work long hours, can be isolated or hard to contact, and their regular clients and rural location can make it hard for them to attend funding/networking events. Virtual or internet-based support and guidance may therefore be the most useful form of assistance. As one care farmer said to us: “Ever since we started around 5 years ago we have wanted to sit down and look at wider funding opportunities, but we have never found the time.”

In common with other farmers, some care farmers, and especially those with a more commercial background, have also come to expect EU and government funding programmes to come to them with help, rather than to have to search and investigate funding opportunities themselves.

2. Moving onto care farmers’ knowledge and skills, our survey revealed they had a moderate level of awareness of the RDPE. This may be explained by the fact that most care farmers – or their relatives, staff or volunteers - have some knowledge of pursuing and making funding bids from other employment. That said many lack the expertise for writing detailed business plans, as is required by larger funding applications (and as backup to RDPE bids) – an area where many have turned to outside consultants for help in the past.

But care farms vary greatly, and those that are administratively well organised, or are part of a larger organisation and have the back-up of a head office, are able to take pursuit, submission and administration of funding bids in their stride. One such interviewee dismissed her funding contracts’ administrative requirements as a “walk in the park”. She said: “It’s part and parcel of our work; we build it into activities ... if you know your client and what the planned work covers, it’s easy.”

For the majority however, having the time to get to grips with European funding is hard – even for those better resourced. One described the RDPE application process as “tortuous” while others commented on the relative ease and more favourable terms of funding schemes operated by, for example, charitable trusts and Natural England. In praise of the latter, one care farmer said it only required him to produce three quotes to secure 80% of the costs (£55,000) for building a new classroom.

3. Our detailed discussions across delivery organisations suggest several factors might hamper the chances of care farms securing RDPE funding. First, as RDPE is a strategically driven funding programme, some contact officers voiced the idea that care farms should co-ordinate activities or come together with a single application - as mainstream farmers are now doing e.g. for marketing.

Although one such grouping of care farms does indeed exist, it is unique in the UK and we believe the diversity of care farms, in terms of clients etc., and their more scattered nature and smaller scale, limits the potential for such joint bids and co-operative working.

Also, not all care farmers have a good knowledge of, or think of themselves as, social enterprises. Yet, since social enterprises are widely supported under the RDPE, and have a far higher profile than care farming, this could be a way for them to adapt and get support.

Related to this is the RDPE’s steer towards funding capital costs rather than revenue costs (apart from its assistance with short-term inputs of specialist staff and during a business’s start-up phase etc.) Although care farms do need some accommodation and infrastructure, these tend to be relatively modest and have often been resolved at their start up.

A far greater issue for care farms is getting funding for their clients to attend, but with which RDPE cannot help. With this in mind, one care farmer described the support available from RDPE as “irrelevant” to his needs. Yet if care farming were to receive the greater government recognition it desires, it would then be seen as a statutory activity and not eligible for any RDPE funding.

4. Finally, care farms may find differences in how the RDPE is played out in their local area – and this has implications on their eligibility for funding. On some issues we found a consistent view across regions. For example, support for ‘diversification into non-agricultural activities’ (Measure 311) is said to be for existing farmers rather than new farmers (as some care farms are).

On other issues, care farms look likely to encounter differences between regions. At its simplest level, some RIPs provide better hooks for care farming – as in the North-East, which gives strong support for the development of micro-enterprises and social enterprises, and innovative pilot projects in areas of identified need.

We have also found evidence of officers interpreting eligibility for RDPE funding differently. Here are four examples – all of which have definite implications for care farms.

- One contact said project beneficiaries should come from rural areas, whereas another said what mattered was where the business was based.

- It is unclear whether a care farmer can be funded under support for “basic services” (Measure 321), although one region is considering such an application.
- We were told the requirement that bids must be “from a member of the farming household” is being interpreted differently between RDAs.
- One contact officer said to get money for farm diversification required no RDPE or other money to have been received before - nor even any farm diversification undertaken before; and he acknowledged that interpretation can vary between regions.

## **Other issues facing care farmers**

It is clear from this exercise that there are a number of issues of viability and diversity facing care farmers that, while not directly relevant to RDPE and the aims of this report, are worth mentioning.

Many of the care farmers interviewed cite one of the biggest problems as securing clients and accessing commissioners who have a budget to pay for their services. Historically, care farm start ups have succeeded because they are run by highly motivated pioneers and, in many cases, success has come “accidentally” – a chance encounter with an individual who is prepared to champion this sort of service and holds the purse-strings. These larger/long term viability issues facing the sector may be greater than opportunities available under RDPE funding.

There is also the issue of diversity within the sector. The care farms are often very different in their set-up and how they run, and they fall between funders with no one department engaging with them coherently. At one end are existing commercial farms where a new care-based enterprise is being developed, either under the leadership of the farming principal or a member of their family. At the other are independent organisations (e.g. charities) or groups of people or individuals wishing to acquire a farm to help their chosen client group.

The farms would do well to embrace this diversity rather than aim for uniformity through a limited range of business models. Among the 20 care farms contacted in this report, they have all been able to access a very wide variety of funding sources rather than all fighting over the same pot. This has allowed their services to develop appropriately to their own skills set and also to the needs of their clients.

## **Lessons for the future**

The authors suggest three proposals for promoting the sector, and offer some examples of where this has been happening.

### **1. Utilising existing resources**

We believe that there is a case for using existing resources within organisations to help care farmers to develop their projects in the terms in which RDP programmes are formulated.

One possibility that might contribute to this is the identification of appropriate organisations or individuals with the experience and skills required to facilitate successful applications or bids for financial support on behalf of care farms. This may be through raising awareness of care farming to farm business advisors or consultants or possibly encouraging large national charities, such as Barnados or the Salvation Army (both of which have examples of care farms as part of their portfolio) to

undertake the business planning. This could be done in partnership with a motivated farmer, or the land could simply be rented out as a separate project.

An example of how this has worked is outlined in the illustration below:

### ***“How facilitation can assist when making applications” – Boscawen Farm, Devon***

Boscawen is a 50-acre working farm which offers work and training opportunities for the benefit of adults with learning disabilities. The farm is part of ‘Let Nature Feed Your Senses’ and is also applying for the Natural England Entry Level Stewardship programme with assistance from the local Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. An application for support under farm diversification provisions of the regional RDPE is in process of submission; it is to get funding for new-build premises (educational) and also to install an egg-packing station (providing further food-chain employment).



The application process requires specialist assistance. Fortunately Boscawen Farm is part of the Robert Owen Communities charity (which specialises in dealing with adults who have learning difficulties) and is able to call on the HQ staff of the charity to help.

## **2. Facilitation & Mentoring**

The development of a national mentorship scheme to support care farmers in selecting appropriate RDP programmes to approach, and which officers might assist with the application process, would assist many aspiring care farmers in identifying appropriate RDPE funding opportunities.

Many of the farms spoken to as part of this project suggested that there is a role for more facilitation either from RDPE officers themselves or from a central care farming support point. Indeed, this is highlighted as one of the barriers to getting a new care farm project off the ground. A specific care farming support unit was a popular suggestion, with care farmers and delivery officers feeling that this may well enhance the application of RDPE funds to care farms by raising awareness among delivery organisations by helping them to recognise the congruence of care farmers’ motivation and purposes with the objectives of the schemes they are operating.

## **3. Regional Groupings**

The formation of groups of care farmers in particular regions to prepare collaborative or joint approaches for RDP assistance should be encouraged. This may help enhance the take up of certain programmes and could also build on “best practice” where a care farmer has been particularly successful.

This approach could lead to the development of care farm “co-operatives”, such as are now seen in Holland, and may in turn give the care farms strength in numbers to broker contracts with commissioners.

If, as may be anticipated, there is to be a specific expectation that future “rounds” of European RDP will offer encouragement to ‘social farming’, then the experience gained from the current application of the RDP in England should mean that this country is well prepared to respond positively.

There are two examples of such regional groupings that currently exist in England outlined in the illustrations below:

### ***“Care Farming West Midlands”***

CFWM is a social enterprise company formed in 2008. A £414,000 grant from Advantage West Midlands (AWM) in 2009 was awarded to set up 20 social enterprise care farms in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire over a three-year period. To date, seven new pilot care farms have been set up and another 25 care farms are in the pipeline. CFWM staff work closely with farmers, commissioners, carers, social workers, mental health nurses and care coordinators, service users and other service providers in promoting care farming and facilitating access to care farms through ‘taster days’ and pilot placements.



The immediate goal for CFWM is fulfilling the requirements of the AWM funding. Longer term, the aim is for care farming to be one of the range of services available to people seeking to develop their full potential or to support recovery from mental illness or substance misuse. To this end, it is essential that CFWM form a robust network of contacts across commissioners, service providers and service user advocacy and support groups. This is being established across the three West Mercia counties and will continue to develop. The purpose of these networks is varied and includes keeping up to date on the needs of service users, promoting care farming, coordinating activities with other service providers and supporting care farmers in forming their own relationships across these groups.



Similarly, but more care farmer focused, is the development of a CFWM Care Farmers Forum. The purpose of this forum is for care farmers to be able to discuss issues of interest to care farming, to share ideas and best practice, and to host presentations from other groups like Natural England.



east anglia care farming

## *“East Anglia Care Farming Group”*

The East Anglia Care Farming Group is trying to consolidate and attract new care farmers in its region. It now has a constitution, and around 15 people attend the group’s meetings that are held every few months (a further 25 are on the region’s database).

“We are a social and support network for one another – an extended family,” says its Chairwoman, Ellie Goff. Next on the group’s agenda is setting up an online forum, to encourage networking and sharing of ideas, and a ‘buddy system’, under which existing care farmers will provide support and advice to those considering, or in the early stages of, setting up.

The group hopes that in the future, with a bit of funding, it will be able to organise more events, training and other activities. “We are all in this together,” says Ms Goff. “Care farming is not easy, and it’s hard to finance in the early years. A lot of care farms will fall by the wayside without a bit of hand-holding.”



## APPENDICES

### 1. Regional implementation plan priorities & themes by region

Region	RIP themes / priorities
<b>East of England</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business efficiency</li> <li>2. New markets and products</li> <li>3. New businesses and enterprises in the rural economy</li> <li>4. Resource protection</li> <li>5. Conservation of the natural, built and historic environment</li> <li>6. Access and recreation</li> <li>7. Rural community capacity</li> </ol>
<b>East Midlands</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conserving and enhancing the environment and countryside</li> <li>2. Competitiveness, collaboration and diversification</li> <li>3. Enhancing opportunity and quality of life in rural areas</li> <li>4. Skills development</li> </ol>
<b>North East</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Micro-enterprise development</li> <li>2. Bio energy</li> <li>3. Sustainable farming and forestry</li> <li>4. Natural and cultural assets</li> <li>5. Sustainable communities</li> <li>6. Tourism and recreation</li> </ol>
<b>North West</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making agricultural and forestry more competitive and sustainable</li> <li>2. Conserving and enhancing the environment and countryside</li> <li>3. Enhancing opportunity and quality of life in rural areas</li> <li>4. Developing skills, knowledge transfer and capacity building</li> </ol>
<b>South East</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meeting UK biodiversity targets</li> <li>2. Mitigating and adapting to climate change</li> <li>3. Quality food sales</li> <li>4. Adding value to forestry products</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Rural tourism</li> <li>6. Skills development</li> <li>7. Innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration</li> <li>8. Assisting the livestock sector</li> <li>9. Leader approach</li> </ol>
<b>South West</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Skills development</li> <li>2. Sustainable rural tourism</li> <li>3. Biodiversity and landscape</li> <li>4. Social enterprise</li> <li>5. Business support</li> <li>6. Community led development</li> <li>7. Supply chain and adding value</li> <li>8. Resource management</li> </ol>
<b>West Midlands</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhancing the value of the countryside</li> <li>2. Developing a diverse and dynamic business base</li> <li>3. Learning and skills improved</li> <li>4. Creating the conditions for growth</li> <li>5. Achieving fair access to services for all</li> <li>6. Securing vibrant, active, inclusive and sustainable communities</li> </ol> <p>“Cluster priorities” for AWM Axis 1 and 3 spending (environmental technologies; food and drink; tourism and leisure; livestock industry development)</p>
<b>Yorkshire and the Humber</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rural Business start-up</li> <li>2. Rural Enterprise Investment Programme</li> <li>3. Land Skills Programme</li> <li>4. Leader</li> <li>5. Enhancing the value of the countryside</li> </ol>

## 2. Care Farms Interviewed

Region	Farm Name & Address	Contact	E-mail	Telephone	Website
South West	Glevum Farm Trust The Lodge Bridgend Gloucester Gloucestershire GL19 4PN	Ed Davies	eddavies53@btinternet.com	01452 840088	<a href="http://www.levumfarmtrust.org">www.levumfarmtrust.org</a>
	Magdalen Project Magdalen Farm Winsham Chard Somerset TA20 4PA	Giles Aspinall Director	giles@themagdalenproject.org.uk	01460 30144 (ext 33)	<a href="http://www.themagdalenproject.org.uk">www.themagdalenproject.org.uk</a>
	Jamie's Farm Hill House Farm Ditteridge Box Wiltshire SN13 8QA	Ruth Carney- Fundraising Executive	ruth@jamiesfarm.org.uk	0871 237 7991	<a href="http://www.jamiesfarm.org.uk">www.jamiesfarm.org.uk</a>
	Future Roots Boys Hill Holnest Sherbourne Dorset DT9 5TP	Julie Plumley	info@futureroots.net	07970 568642 / 01963 210703	<a href="http://www.futureroots.net">www.futureroots.net</a>
	Boscawen Farm Blackwater Truro Cornwall TR4 8EZ	Debbie Evans	debbie.evans@roc-uk.org	01872 560530 / 07525 411774	<a href="http://www.roc-uk.org">www.roc-uk.org</a>

<b>Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</b>	Botton Village Farms Camphill Communities Botton Village Whitby North Yorkshire YO21 2NJ	Erwin Wennekes	erwin.botton@camphill.org.uk	01287 660871	<a href="http://www.cvt.org.uk">www.cvt.org.uk</a>
	Learning to Listen Hill Top Farm Ilton Masham Rippon North Yorkshire HG4 4JY	Rob Middleton	rob@learningtolisten.co.uk	01765 689 368	<a href="http://www.learningtolisten.co.uk">www.learningtolisten.co.uk</a>
	Greave House Farm Trust Greave House Farm New Hall Lane Stocksbridge South Yorkshire S36 4GH	Barbara Bristow	cris2189@yahoo.co.uk	0114 2888634 / 07971024181	<a href="http://www.greavehousefarmtrust.org.uk">www.greavehousefarmtrust.org.uk</a>
	Carlshead Care Farm Paddock House Farm Paddock House Lane Sicklinghall West Yorkshire LS22 4BJ	Gareth Gaunt	gareth@carlshead.co.uk	01937 582421	<a href="http://www.carlshead.co.uk">www.carlshead.co.uk</a>

<b>East of England</b>	Millennium Farm Trust 2 Oakey Field Road Thurston Suffolk IP31 3RX	Bernadette Shrubshall	chairwoman@m-f-t.org.uk	01359 230498	<a href="http://www.m-f-t.org.uk">www.m-f-t.org.uk</a>
	Rural Care (Ardeley) Church Farm Ardeley Stevenage Hertfordshire SG2 7AH	Ann De Bock	ann@churchfarmardeley.co.uk	07507 890245 / 07522 466355	<a href="http://www.churchfarmardeley.co.uk">www.churchfarmardeley.co.uk</a>
	Clinks Farm Church Road Toft Monks Norfolk NR34 0ET	Doeke Dobma	Doeke.Dobma@clinkscarefarm.org	01502 679134 / 07784 730846	Not yet available
	Willow Tree Farming Field Farm Hillington Kings Lynn Norfolk PE31 6DL	Liz Riseborough	willowtreefarming@btconnect.com	01485 600807 / 07786 853549	Not yet available
	Salvation Army Hadleigh Farm Castle Lane Benfleet Essex SS7 2AP	Shelley Carter	shelley.carter@salvationarmy.org.uk	01702 552963	<a href="http://www.hadleighfarm.co.uk">www.hadleighfarm.co.uk</a>

<b>West Midlands</b>	Farm2grow Baileys Barn Farm Cheadle Road Wetley Rocks Staffordshire ST9 0AZ	Helen Bailey	helen@farm2grow.co.uk	01782 551833 / 07766836006	<a href="http://www.farm2grow.co.uk">www.farm2grow.co.uk</a>
	The Deer Park Farm Bakers Lane Knowle Solihull B93 8PR	Tony & Heather Addison	thedeerparkfarm@hotmail.co.uk	01564 739582 / 07973 737475	Not yet available
	The Tickwood Project Tickwood Farm Much Wenlock Shropshire TF13 6NZ	Edward Dugdale	edwarddug@zen.co.uk	01952 882644	Not yet available
	Uncllys Care Farm Tanners Hill Bewdley Worcestershire DY12 2LR	John Iles	john@uncllys.co.uk	01299 403691	<a href="http://www.uncllysblog.blogspot.com">www.uncllysblog.blogspot.com</a>
	The Houghton Project Houghton Court Bodenham Hereford Herefordshire HR1 3HZ	Tim James- Moore	annie@houghtonproject.co.uk	01568 797900	Not yet available

### 3. Delivery Officers Interviewed

Region	Contact	Organisation & Address	E-mail	Telephone	Website
South West	Andy Rumming RDPE Manager	SWRDA Sterling House Dix's Field Exeter EX1 1QA	<a href="mailto:Andrew.Rumming@southwestrda.org.uk">Andrew.Rumming@southwestrda.org.uk</a>	01392 229 160	<a href="http://www.southwestrda.org.uk">www.southwestrda.org.uk</a>
East of England	Bonnie Robinson Rural Development Programme Manager	Programme for England The Rural Enterprise Hub Easton College Norwich NR9 5DX	<a href="mailto:brobinson@easton-college.ac.uk">brobinson@easton-college.ac.uk</a>	01603 731582	<a href="http://www.easton-college.ac.uk">www.easton-college.ac.uk</a>
Yorkshire & Humberside	Michael Kilroy Head of Enterprise Development	Yorkshire & Humberside Business Link 1 Capital Court Capital Business Park Barnsley Yorkshire S75 3TZ	<a href="mailto:m.kilroy@businesslinkyorkshire.co.uk">m.kilroy@businesslinkyorkshire.co.uk</a>	078096 56002	<a href="http://www.businesslinkyorkshire.co.uk">www.businesslinkyorkshire.co.uk</a>
West Midlands	Jo Jury RDPE Manager	Advantage West Midlands 3 Priestly Wharf Holt Street Birmingham B7 4NB	<a href="mailto:jojury@advantagewm.co.uk">jojury@advantagewm.co.uk</a>	0121 503 3220 or 07894 621 066	<a href="http://www.advantagewm.co.uk">www.advantagewm.co.uk</a>
North West	(a) Samantha Branwell Acting Programme Manager  (b) Adrian Banford Programme Manager	Solway, Border & Eden LAG  Cumbria Fells & Dales LAG	<a href="mailto:sambramwell@sbeleader.org.uk">sambramwell@sbeleader.org.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:adrianbanford@fellsanddales.org.uk">adrianbanford@fellsanddales.org.uk</a>	01697 349212  01768 869533	
North East	Jim Anderson RDP Specialist Advisor (Business Support)	One North East Riverside House Goldcrest Way Newburn Riverside Newcastle Upon Tyne NE15 8NY	<a href="mailto:jim.anderson@onenortheast.co.uk">jim.anderson@onenortheast.co.uk</a>	0191 2296711	<a href="http://www.onenortheast.co.uk">www.onenortheast.co.uk</a>

## **4. Author Biographies**

### **Deborah Wilcox**

Deborah Wilcox is National Coordinator for the National Care Farming Initiative based at Harper Adams University College. She has been involved with the College's reach-out work and strategy since 2003, and has a particular interest in care farming and rural social enterprise. She sits on the policy working group within COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) Action 866 in Green Care and Agriculture and has guest edited publications which have arisen from this. She is also a UK representative within the European Farming for Health Community of Practice and in 2007 she gained a Nuffield Farming Trust scholarship to study farming and care across Europe.

### **Stephen Parsons**

Stephen Parsons is an economist specialising in public policy concerning farming, the countryside and food supply. From 1997 – 2001 he directed the Marches Farm Enterprise Programme (an EU Objective 5b project) responsible for fostering entrepreneurship and diversification on farms in the Welsh border region on England. He has considerable experience of opinion research, project and policy evaluation (working for the Centre for Agri-food Marketing Studies, the Countryside Development Unit and ruralconsultancy.com at Harper Adams University College). He currently acts as an advisor to NCFI having been Vice-Chair, and has already led on two major consultation exercises of NCFI membership.

### **Robert Bullard**

Robert Bullard is a writer, researcher and freelance journalist, specialising in local government, rural and social issues. He has a background in research and agricultural economics, and since 2005 has undertaken around ten assignments as a collaborative researcher with NCFI/Harper Adams University College, investigating care farming, social enterprises and rural issues. Robert has a good knowledge of the rural policy environment, including RDAs, RDPE, LAGs, etc. He writes for the national press and has researched and written on care farming for the following magazines: Community Care, The Ecologist and Organic Life.

### **James Elliott**

James Elliott works for the Commission for Rural Communities and is the Information Officer for the RDPE Network.

James has worked for the Commission for Rural Communities for the last two years and has an extensive background in Agriculture and Land management. Having worked on the family farm in Cornwall and gaining a BSc in Land Management from the University of Reading.

**5. Table 2 - RDPE Axes & Measures**

Axis	Measure	
<b>1: Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors</b>	111	Vocational training and information for agricultural, food and forestry sectors
	114	Use by farmers and foresters of advisory services
	115	Setting up of farm management, farm relief and farm advisory services
	121	Farm modernisation
	122	Improving the economic value of forests
	123	Adding value to agricultural and forestry products
	124	Cooperation for the development of new products
	125	Infrastructure
<b>2: Improving the environment and the countryside</b>	212	Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas
	214	Agri-environment payments
	216	Support for non-productive investments
	221	First afforestation of agricultural land
	223	First afforestation of non-agricultural land
	225	Forest environment payments
	227	Support for non-productive investments (forestry)
<b>3: Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy</b>	311	Diversification into non-agricultural activities
	312	Support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises
	313	Encouragement for tourism activities
	321	Basic services
	322	Village renewal
	323	Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage
	331	Training and information for economic actors
	341	Skills acquisition for preparation/implementation of local development strategies

<b>4: The Leader approach</b> <b>Building local capacity for employment</b> <b>and diversification</b>	41	Local development strategies
	411	Competitiveness
	413	Quality of life
	421	Transnational and inter-regional co-operation
	431	Running the local action group