

OCFC

Ock Catchment
Farmer Cluster



Ock Catchment Farmer Cluster Agreement

The Ock Catchment Farmer Cluster (OCFC) is intended to enable local farmers and landowners to collectively deliver benefits primarily for the Ock's freshwater environment at the landscape scale. It also encompasses the terrestrial environment and must enable members to maintain a commercially viable farming system. Appendix 1 details the Terms of Reference for the OCFC.

This Agreement details how the OCFC will operate and sets out procedures for dealing with any disputes or disagreements. **Nothing within the Agreement should be construed as creating a legal partnership and it does not create a legally binding agreement between signatories.**

This Agreement was made between the Facilitator, Chair and OCFC Members (listed below) on 22 December 2022 and will be updated at regular intervals to reflect new membership.

- (1) The OCFC Facilitator: Adam Bows, Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT)
- (2) The OCFC Chair: Tom Allen-Stevens, Wicklesham Estates, Faringdon
- (3) The OCFC Members:

A J Matthews and son
Berners-Allsopp Estate
Blanchard Enterprises
Brook Cottage Farm
Dews Meadow Farm LTD
Diana Martin
H Walker & Son
Hendred Farm Partnership
James Thornycroft, Priors farm
K B Berry & Son
Kingston Hill Farm Ltd
Leigh-Pemberton Farm
J. H. Prior & Son
R.D. Sharp & Partners
RG & HN Benson
Warborough Farm
Wicklesham Estates

Tom Matthews
Fra Woodd
James Blanchard
Dianne Godfrey and David Godfrey
Harry Bowler
Diana Martin
Neil Walker / Simon Thomas
Julian Gold
James & Sylvia Thornycroft
Becci Berry
David Christensen
Edward-Leigh Pemberton
Tony Prior
Robert Sharp
Robert Benson
Tony Ruane
Tom Allen-Stevens

1. Duration of Agreement

This Agreement shall be effective from date of signing until 31 May 2026

2. Purpose of the Group

The overall aim of the OCFC is to create a leading demonstration landscape showcasing the most effective and innovative measures for protecting the freshwater and terrestrial environment and delivering related ecosystem services within the Ock including:

- enhanced biodiversity
- clean water
- flood risk reduction
- natural habitat connections
- water resource protection
- carbon sequestration

The OCFC aims to achieve this by using well-evidenced measures developed and tested in [Water Friendly Farming](#)¹ to reduce the impact of rural land use on freshwaters and enhance the Ock's farmed landscape, helping to restore a diverse and joined up landscape whilst maintaining profitable farms. The OCFC aims to achieve the following target outcomes:

- Create new freshwater habitats
- Enhance terrestrial and freshwater assets
- Restore lowland fens
- Identify and enhance natural wildlife corridors
- Create and enhance woodland and hedgerow habitats
- Preserve and improve species-rich meadows and grasslands
- Improve viability of the Ock's charismatic native species
- Reduce the impact of diffuse pollution from agriculture
- Reduce flood risk to villages and towns including Abingdon
- Improve resilience of the Ock's water resources; and
- Secure the capital funding and revenue income to achieve these outcomes

This will include, but not be limited to, OCFC members undertaking the following actions where appropriate to their farm business:

- Attending training events and disseminating knowledge
- Creating and restoring habitats, with a particular focus on the freshwater environment
- Improving water quality through on-farm measures to tackle diffuse pollution
- Reducing flood risk by implementing Natural Flood Management techniques
- Enhancing terrestrial habitats to create and strengthen a network of wildlife corridors
- Improving environmental performance to address climate destabilisation; and
- Developing environmental baselines and participating in ongoing monitoring

The project will commence with the core farms and additional membership will be by invitation. New members will be required to sign the group agreement.

3. Roles and responsibilities

¹ <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/research/water-friendly-farming/>

3.1 Facilitation

It is agreed that Adam Bows, in his capacity as Catchment Officer at FHT, will act as facilitator and work with the OCFC Steering Group and OCFC members to identify and co-ordinate the activities needed to meet the cluster's aims and objectives. The facilitator will lead meetings and support the cluster by providing it with relevant skills and expertise required to secure outcomes to be identified in an OCFC plan. The facilitator will also help to identify and secure funding to enable the group to operate.

3.2 Chairman

It is agreed that Tom Allen-Stevens will act as the Chair for the OCFC. They will act as a figurehead for the OCFC, represent other members and work with the facilitator to identify and develop projects.

3.3 OCFC Members

It is agreed that the OCFC Members share their varied experience and expertise of managing land and pool ideas to enable all members of the Cluster to benefit through the sharing of information and good practice and attend meetings as necessary to support networking and promote cooperation.

All OCFC members will use their best will and endeavours to participate in projects that deliver the purposes of the cluster as set out in the plan.

4. Confidentiality

Each party undertakes that it shall not at any time disclose to any person any confidential information concerning the business, affairs, customers, clients or suppliers of the other party, except as permitted only:

- i. to its employees, representatives, subcontractors or advisers who need to know such information for the purposes of carrying out an agreed OCFC project.
- ii. as may be required by law, a court of competent jurisdiction or any governmental or regulatory authority.

No party shall use another party's confidential information for any purpose other than for delivery of the OCFC plan.

The obligations of confidentiality shall be continuing obligations which shall survive termination of this agreement (for whatever reason) for so long as such information does not fall into the public domain.

5. Data Protection

Where the facilitator receives any personal data (as defined by the Data Protection Act 1998) ("the Act") from OCFC members, they shall ensure that they fully comply with the provisions of the Act and only deal with the data to fulfil obligations under the agreement.

In fulfilment of obligations under the Act, the facilitator will have such systems in place to ensure:

- i. Full compliance with the Act

- ii. In particular, compliance with the principle which deals with the security of personal data and the nature and purpose for processing the data.
- iii. The data will only be held for the purpose and duration of the Agreement or provision of services and will be deleted or returned at termination,
- iv. If data is to be shared by all parties during agreement, it is the responsibility of all parties to ensure they act within the regulations as controller and processor of personal data
- v. The facilitator will use personal contact details for the purpose of delivering the project and for sending information about other events, projects or information relating to agriculture or the environment that may be of interest.

The facilitator will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all partners, contractors and agents comply with this clause where they are processing any personal data on behalf of OCFC members.

The facilitator will allow OCFC members reasonable access to such information as is necessary to ensure that it is complying with the above provisions and the Act as a whole.

6. Intellectual Property Rights

All Intellectual Property Rights and all other rights in any material created or supplied by the OCFC members in supplying the information including surveys, photographs, drawings and other illustrations shall be owned by the owner (OCFC member) of the land from which the information originates. Cluster members license all such rights to the facilitator free of charge to such extent as is necessary to enable them to make reasonable use of the materials to deliver the Agreement but not for purposes beyond the scope of the Agreement.

7. Dispute Resolution

In the unlikely event of any dispute between members over the running of the OCFC, partners will aim to resolve the issue between them with input from the Chair and the facilitator as relevant.

8 Financial Arrangements

OCFC Members are not expected to make financial contributions to the OCFC but may wish to contribute in kind.

Signature below confirms the assent of the members to this Agreement:

Signed By:	
Date:	
Please Print Name:	



Appendix 1: Ock Catchment Farmer Cluster Terms of Reference

This document sets out the background, aims, target outcomes and operation of the Ock Catchment Farmer Cluster.

1. Background

The Ock catchment is one of Britain's best freshwater landscapes, featuring many special wetland habitats including lowland Alkaline Fen and Floodplain Meadows, with important wetland plant and invertebrate species that are rare or declining. The woodland, hedgerow, pasture and field margins also provide valuable habitats and a network of wildlife corridors that complement the wetland assets. However, the area faces threats such as pollution, drainage and climate destabilisation, which mean plants and animals are still disappearing from this landscape.

Within the Ock catchment a group of enthusiastic farmers are already very actively involved in environmentally friendly land management. These individuals have formed the Ock Catchment Farmer Cluster (OCFC), a partnership facilitated by Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT) to improve the freshwater and terrestrial environment by sharing knowledge, networking and supporting access to Agri-Environmental funding schemes.

The OCFC is led by farmers for farmers. With the guidance of FHT it seeks to improve the nature and ecosystem services including clean water, biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

2. Aims

The overall aim is to create a leading demonstration landscape showcasing the most effective and innovative measures for protecting the freshwater environment and delivering related ecosystem services including:

- enhanced biodiversity
- clean water
- flood risk reduction
- natural habitat connections
- water resource protection
- carbon sequestration

This also encompasses the terrestrial environment and must enable members to maintain a commercially viable farming system with economic opportunities for the local community.

There will be a strong emphasis on using science, with the many outstanding intellectual resources in the area being partners in joint projects (e.g. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, the University

of Oxford, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and FHT). The OCFC will deploy well-evidenced measures developed and tested in [Water Friendly Farming](#)² to reduce the impact of rural land use on freshwaters (ponds, streams, lakes, rivers and ditches).

² <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/research/water-friendly-farming/>

3. Target outcomes

Target Outcomes	Purpose	Potential Measures	Ecosystem Services					
			Biodiversity	Clean Water	Flood risk	Connect habitats	Water resource	Carbon
Create new freshwater habitats	Focus on smaller waters which are particularly important for freshwater life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • double numbers of clean water ponds • Floodplain wetland mosaics • Re-naturalisation of floodplains e.g. restoration of watercourses and arable reversion • Un-piping drainage of spring-fed wet flushes 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enhance terrestrial & freshwater assets	Improve existing habitats for terrestrial and freshwater species and facilitate the movement of wildlife throughout the Ock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chalk stream restoration • More and improved terrestrial and freshwater Wildlife corridors e.g. Hedges, woodland, floodplain meadows and riparian buffers • Land and waterways managed for freshwater and terrestrial wildlife 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Restore lowland fens	Lowland fens and peaty pockets are a special and highly biodiverse feature of the Ock catchment, formally far more widespread.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore lowland Alkaline fens and peaty pockets through rewetting, willow scrub removal, management and protection from pollution 	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Improve the viability of the Ock's charismatic native species	The Ock is an Important Freshwater Area with populations of nationally scarce species but are often fragmented into isolated pockets and need support to thrive and expand into the wider countryside	<p>Targeted land management and potential re-introduction programmes to support viable breeding populations across the Ock of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curlew • Water Vole • Natterjack Toad • Great Crested Newt • Fen Pondweed • Pondweed Leafhopper • Brown Trout • Brook Lamprey 	✓					

Target Outcomes	Purpose	Potential Measures	Ecosystem Services					
			Biodiversity	Clean Water	Flood risk	Connect habitats	Water resource	Carbon
Reduce the impact of diffuse pollution from agriculture	The Ock's medium and large waterbodies are adversely impacted by nitrate, phosphate and sediment pollution mainly sourced from agricultural fertilisers and land management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase headwear buffer zones low input farmland Areas of arable reverted to permanent pasture and/ or woodland bunded ditches and artificial wetlands to trap sediment slurry management and stores Cover crops and low till 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduce flood risk to villages and towns including Abingdon	Land cover and how it is managed in the headwaters can influence flood risk downstream	<p>Implement Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures to hold back and temporarily store storm water in the Ock's headwaters including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field corner bunds Online temporary flood storage In-channel leaky dams and tree-hinge dams In-channel woody debris Arable reversion Wide field margins Riparian corridors and tree planting 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improve resilience of the Ock's water resources	Farm operations need secure and stable water resources. How the land is managed also influences groundwater recharge	<p>Work with partners including the Catchment Sensitive Farming team to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> farm water storage farm water recycling Cover crops and low till techniques Tree planting 		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schemes are securely funded	Farms require funding to deliver measures providing ecosystem services, with payments for public goods to maintain them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore and secure public revenue sources including joint OCFC member bids to Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Harness opportunities to work with Thames Water, TOE and private sector carbon off-setting schemes 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4. Operation

4.1 Delivery

To implement its aims and outcomes the OCFC will focus on delivery by:

1. Helping farmers to establish baselines to evaluate success
2. Running events and meetings to exchange knowledge and share best practice between members
3. Support members to bid for capital funding to deliver on-farm measures
4. Identify and help members generate revenue funding from delivering the target outcomes
5. Provide and/or signpost members to key resources for advice and management of biodiversity and water management projects
6. Working with a full range of partners including Thames Water, other private sector commercial organisations to go beyond the funding and advice already widely available through AHDB, FWAG, BBOWT and I4agri.
7. Obtaining expert guidance, access to technical specialists and training options
8. Seeking the funding necessary to robustly monitor outcomes

4.2 Management

The OCFC will be Chaired by a farmer member, managed by a Steering Group consisting of at least 3 farmer members and facilitated by FHT. The OCFC Steering Group will meet quarterly or more frequently as necessary. The OCFC will meet a minimum of quarterly, hosting a series of events on relevant topics with specialist speakers.

4.3 Communications

Information about the OCFC, its aims, activities and events will be hosted online via the [FHT website³](#) and a facebook group. Communications to the OCFC members about activities and upcoming opportunities, including relevant events and information from other partners, will be via email from the OCFC facilitator. Social media will be used to promote the OCFC activities to farmers and other stakeholders, with a logo developed to give the OCFC a discrete brand identity online and in print.

A unique aspect of the OCFC will be its focus on developing new ideas about water and how to protect it. There will be many opportunities to promote this work and demonstrate the originality and effectiveness to other land managers. Over time, the OCFC should become synonymous with innovative and effective water and wider catchment management solutions.

4.4 Collaborations

Collaboration will be actively sought with public and private sector partner organisations. A representative from the OCFC should join or report quarterly to the Ock Catchment Hosting Partnership meetings.

4.5 Finance

Funding will be sought for FHT to facilitate the OCFC and to run events including venue hire, speaker fees, catering, event materials and marketing. Expenditure under £1000 will be delegated to the FHT Project Officer. Items above this will require approval from the OCFC Chair and the FHT Director.

³ <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/>