

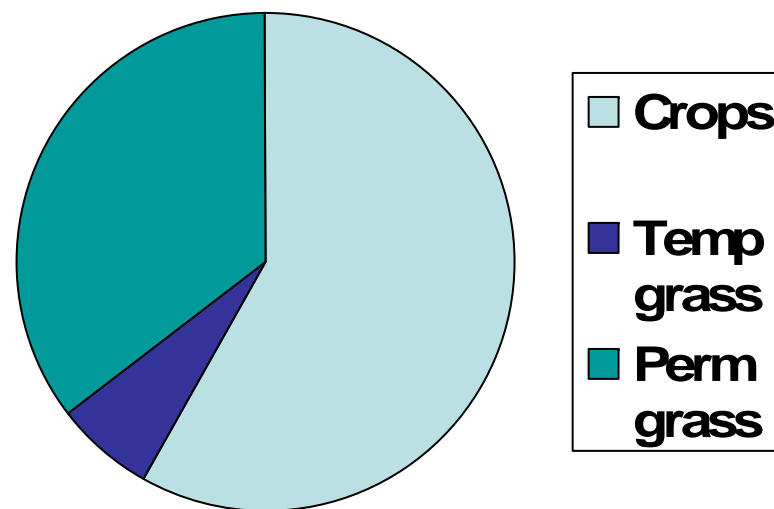
Farming and conservation: profitable partners?

(Subtitle... farmers could do with a
bit of moral support)

Agriculture in Leicestershire

- Soil type influence
- 106,000 ha arable
- 95,000 combinable crops or SAS
- 77,000 ha grass, mainly permanent
- 122,000 cattle
- 314,000 adult sheep

Leicestershire relative agricultural land areas



Is everything rosy down on the farm?

- Farming incomes – especially in livestock and dairy sectors, under continued pressure
- Arable some recovery following better grain prices, also energy crop prospects
- High grain prices impact back onto livestock sector

Farm Incomes 2006

Net Farm Income (return to farmer and spouse, per farm)

Cereals £27,900

Dairy £19,700

Lowland Beef and Sheep £7,700

Nearly one in three farmers has an income less than 60% of national average wage

Growing recognition that biodiversity needs more than 'islands'



Decoupled support for agriculture

- Public understanding slow to move on, perception of butter or grain mountains
- Removal of direct support since 2005 – Single Payment Scheme with cross compliance
- UK farming not viable at current prices without continued support - but this not likely to be there in future
- Increasing importance of agri-environment schemes
- Diversification to keep the business going, but does not overcome fundamental lack of agricultural profitability

Public perceptions

- ‘Factory’ or organic farming – 2 extremes
- ‘Pumped full of antibiotics and hormones’
- ‘Land poisoned by artificial fertilisers and pesticides’
- Most farms are in the middle
- Farms do not have to be organic to support a wide range of biodiversity

Responsible agriculture can deliver environmental benefits



Agri-environment schemes

- Existing Countryside Stewardship Schemes run their course
- Entry Level Stewardship – broad and shallow; flat rate £30/ha or £60/ha for OELS; farmer chooses options for points
- Higher Level Stewardship – competitive but similar to CSS – options more a negotiated process with Natural England
- Funding difficulties restricting HLS uptake

Entry Level Stewardship

- Objectives: conservation – wildlife and historic environment, landscape, resource protection (soils, water)
- Nearly 4 million ha now in ELS
- ‘Easy’ options locally; boundaries esp hedges, soil, manure, nutrient and crop protection plans (margins, low input grassland)

Even changes in hedge management can bring massive benefits

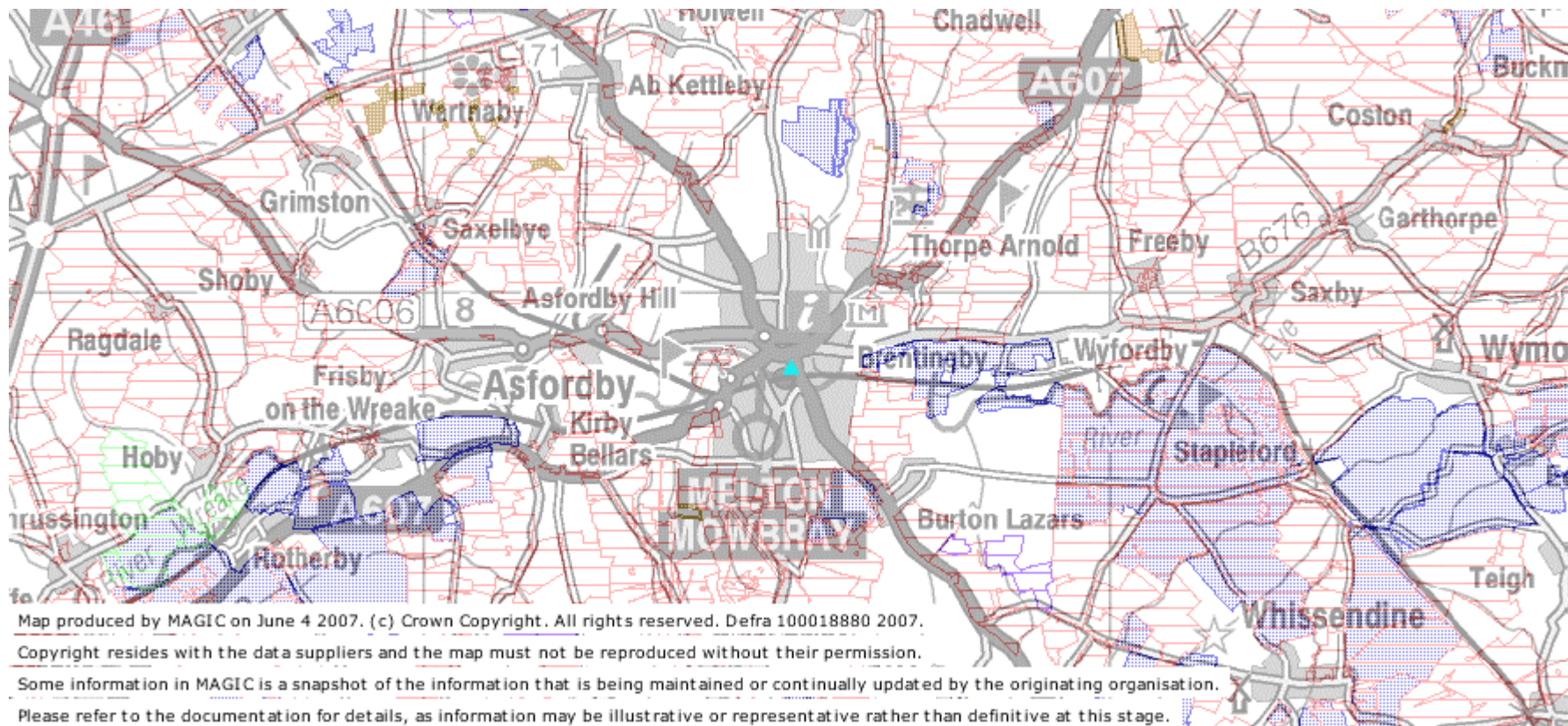




Higher Level Stewardship

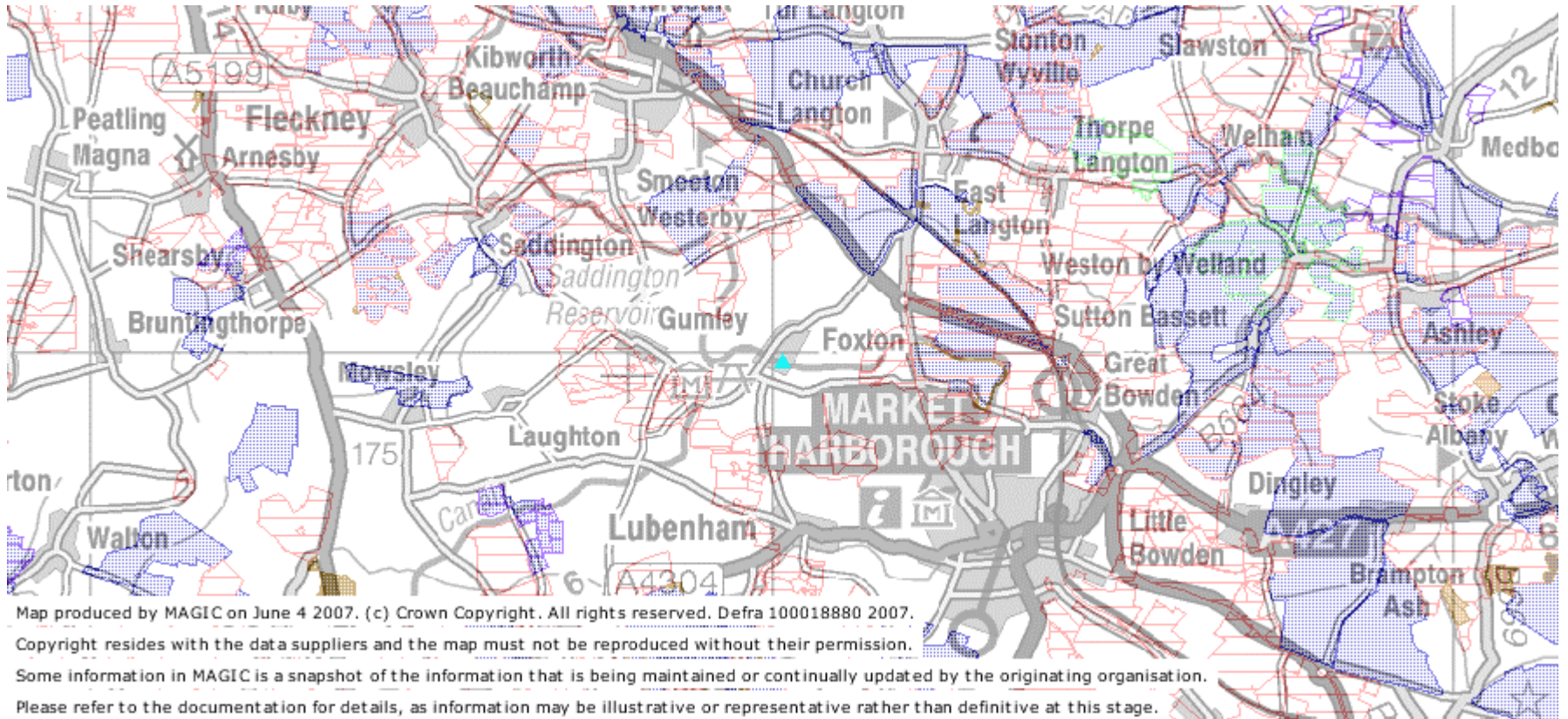
- HLS gives the opportunity to protect areas from the drive for a more 'efficient' agriculture
- Farmers rewarded for positive environmental management (same objectives as ELS) + public access; also flood protection and genetic resource protection
- Over 5,000 ha of Leics land was in CSS, its predecessor – may be less in HLS

Land in CSS / ELS / HLS - Melton Mowbray area



Source: MAGIC

Land in CSS / ELS / HLS – Foxtton area



Source: MAGIC

Supporting farmers in their environmental work

- Many farmers now feel isolated and alienated in the communities they live in
- Fighting against out of date perceptions
- Some working hard to encourage better understanding on all sides
- We would welcome your respect and recognition

A few questions....

- Where do you buy your food?
- When did you go on a farm walk, either via a group or as a family / individual?
- Have a farmer speaker to your group's meetings?
- Are you going to a Farm Sunday event?

Visiting farms – especially through Educational Access



Recognising success stories



Supporting producers managing land sustainably





Open Farm Sunday 10 June 2007

- Stanton on the Wolds
- King's Norton
- Brentingby
- Loddington
- Saltby
- Southwell, Bourne, Newark, Sleaford, Wellingborough, Kettering,

PLEASE SUPPORT US!