



# Customer Survey – Environmental Stewardship agreement holders

Final report



April 2011

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# Background to Environmental Stewardship

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- Natural England is the administrator of the Environmental Stewardship (ES) scheme.
- ES is a government scheme open to all farmers, land managers and tenants in England which offers financial rewards for on-going good stewardship of their land and management of it to improve the quality of the environment.
- There are two levels of ES:
  - Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) = the basic underlying scheme open to all farmers and land managers in England. ELS agreements last five years.
  - Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) = a targeted and competitive scheme that is only available to farmers and land managers in particular areas of the country, or with particular high priority features on their holding. It involves more complex environmental management requiring support and advice from Natural England's local advisers, to develop a comprehensive agreement that achieves a wide range of environmental benefits over a longer period of time. HLS agreements last ten years.

# Background to the survey / Methodology

- Ipsos MORI was appointed in 2010 to conduct customer insight research with Natural England's customers.
- Ipsos MORI has previously carried out surveys with Natural England's customers in 2008 and 2009.
- While in previous years, other types of customer (such as volunteers, local authorities and people receiving wildlife services) were also included in the research, fieldwork for this year (2011) has been targeted at only ES agreement holders.
- 350 telephone interviews were conducted with Environmental Stewardship agreement holders between 21<sup>st</sup> February and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011.
- One question has been retained from the 2009 survey on satisfaction with quality of service and these results are quoted in this report. The 2009 survey used the same telephone methodology to interview 200 ELS and 150 HLS customers between 5<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009.

# Sample profile

- The sample was provided from Natural England’s customer database. Quotas were set on ELS / HLS holders, as well as region, as below:

| <b>Audience</b>     | <b>Target</b> | <b>Number of interviews achieved</b> |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| ELS                 | 230           | 230                                  |
| HLS                 | 120           | 120                                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>350</b>    | <b>350</b>                           |
| East Midlands       | 39            | 39                                   |
| East of England     | 41            | 41                                   |
| London & South East | 43            | 43                                   |
| North East          | 15            | 15                                   |
| North West          | 34            | 34                                   |
| South West          | 90            | 90                                   |
| West Midlands       | 51            | 51                                   |
| Yorkshire & Humber  | 37            | 37                                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>350</b>    | <b>350</b>                           |

# Sample profile

- Respondents were also asked to indicate the size of their business, using the following question:

**Q. Would you say your business was... large scale, medium scale or small scale?**

- Responses to the question were as follows:

| <b>Audience</b> | <b>Number of interviews achieved</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Large scale     | 30                                   | 9                     |
| Medium scale    | 145                                  | 41                    |
| Small scale     | 173                                  | 49                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    | <b>350</b>                           | <b>100</b>            |

# Analysis of data

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- Because a sample, rather than the entire population of ES agreement holders, was interviewed, the survey findings are subject to sampling tolerances, or a margin of error. These margins of error enable us to calculate whether the difference between two percentages are statistically significant, that is they represent a true difference in the population, or if they are potentially just a result of interviewing a sample (as opposed to the entire population).
- The sampling tolerances are shown on slide 8 while the variance required between the results for different sample sizes, for the change to be statistically significant, are shown on slide 9.
- Throughout the report, we refer to ‘net scores’. These illustrate the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions and provide a useful means of comparing the data for a number of variables. In the case of a “net satisfaction” figure, this represents the percentage who are satisfied, minus the percentage who are dissatisfied. For example, where 84% are satisfied and 7% are dissatisfied, the “net satisfaction” figure is 77%.
- Where results do not sum to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of “don’t know” categories.
- In order to provide context to the results of this research, comparative data from two similar surveys with public body customers is presented on slide 14.

# Sampling tolerances

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## Overall statistical reliability

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Size of sample on which survey result is based

*Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels*

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**10% or 90%**

**30% or 70%**

**50%**

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$\pm$

$\pm$

$\pm$

---

350

3

5

5

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# Comparing different samples

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## Overall statistical reliability

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### *Size of samples compared*

### *Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels*

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|  | <b>10% or<br/>90%</b> | <b>30% or<br/>70%</b> | <b>50%</b> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 350 (2011) versus 350 (2009)                           | 4                     | 7                     | 7          |
| 230 (ELS) versus 120 (HLS)                             | 7                     | 10                    | 11         |
| 175 (large/medium-scale farm) versus 173 (small scale) | 6                     | 10                    | 11         |

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# Strategic priority analysis scoring

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- Questions 4, 5 and 6 of the survey asked respondents to give a score of between 1-5, where 1 = negative response and 5= positive response. Where this was used to measure importance, 1 = not at all important to 5 = very important, and for satisfaction 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied.
- This system was used to allow the calculation of a mean response for each statement for use in the strategic priority analysis (slides 30-40).
- Where used in bar charts, the figures represent the following scales (it should be noted that the responses allocated to codes 2-4 were not read out to respondents but these are our interpretation of the responses given):
  1. = not at all important
  2. = not very important
  3. = neither important nor unimportant
  4. = fairly important
  5. = very important

– and

  1. = very dissatisfied
  2. = fairly dissatisfied
  3. = neither satisfied not dissatisfied
  4. = fairly satisfied
  5. = very satisfied

# Overall satisfaction

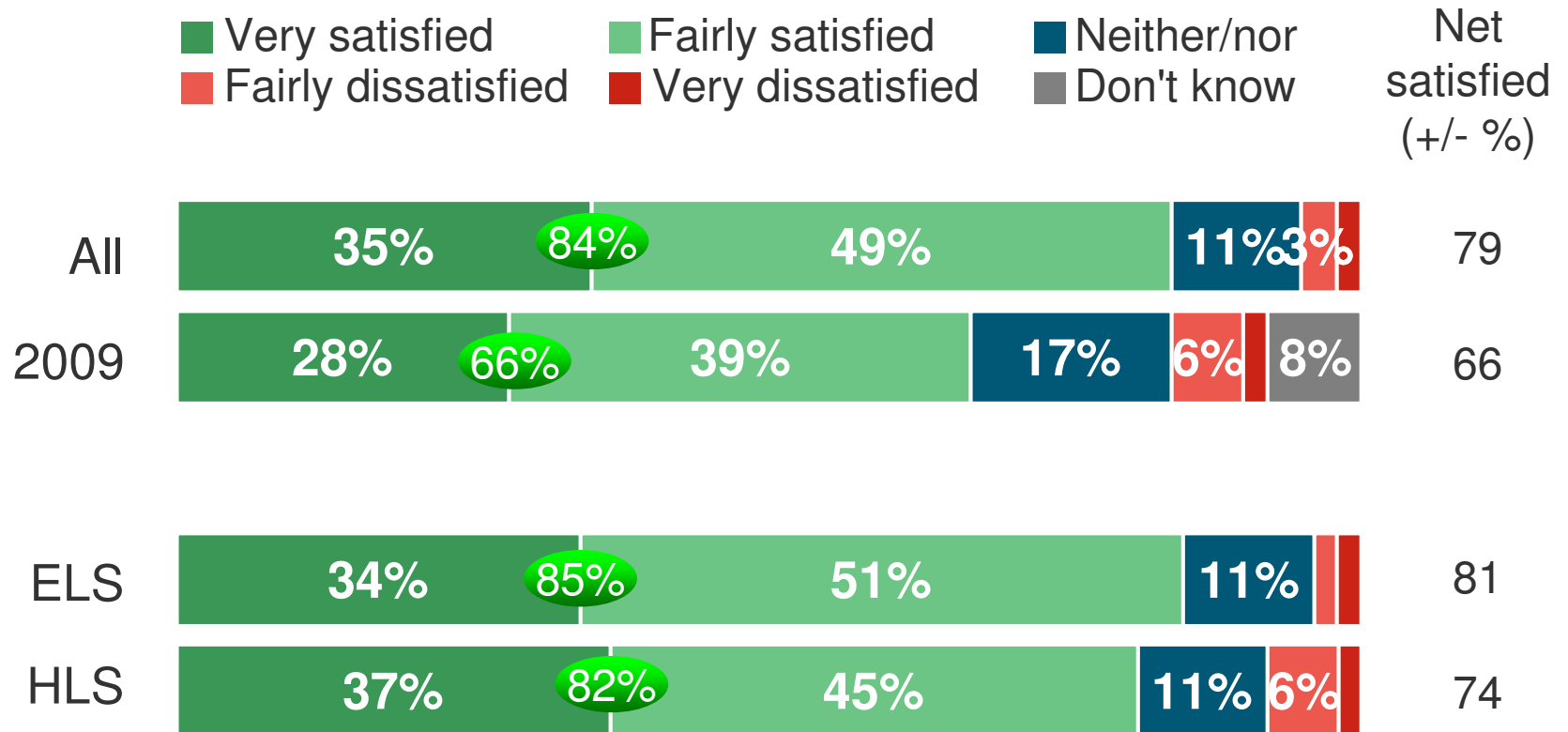
# Overall satisfaction

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- Results are very positive with regards to overall satisfaction; the vast majority of environmental stewardship holders (84%) are satisfied with the quality of service they receive from Natural England while only 5% are dissatisfied.
- Moreover, more than a third (35%) are very satisfied. Overall satisfaction has increased almost 20 percentage points since 2009, when two thirds (66%) were satisfied and 8% were dissatisfied.
- Scores for entry level and higher level stewardship holders are broadly similar with no significant differences in the levels of satisfaction between them.
- However, those who find it easy to access Natural England's services are more likely to be very satisfied than those who find it difficult (42% vs. 16%). There are also differences based on how customers run their business; those who do not regularly use the internet to manage their business are more likely to be very satisfied with the overall quality of service than those who do (41% vs. 31%).
- Due to the nature of the audience being surveyed in this research and the specific nature of the service being delivered to them, it is difficult to provide direct comparisons to other studies. However, on slide 14 we have provided details of two similar studies to add context to the results. Both of the surveys included were in relation to a service provided by a public body to professionals/businesses. The results show that Natural England's findings fall in-between the ratings of these other services, and indicate that there remains scope for improvement in the view that customers hold towards the administration of the environmental stewardship scheme.

# Overall satisfaction

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of the service you receive from Natural England? Are you ...

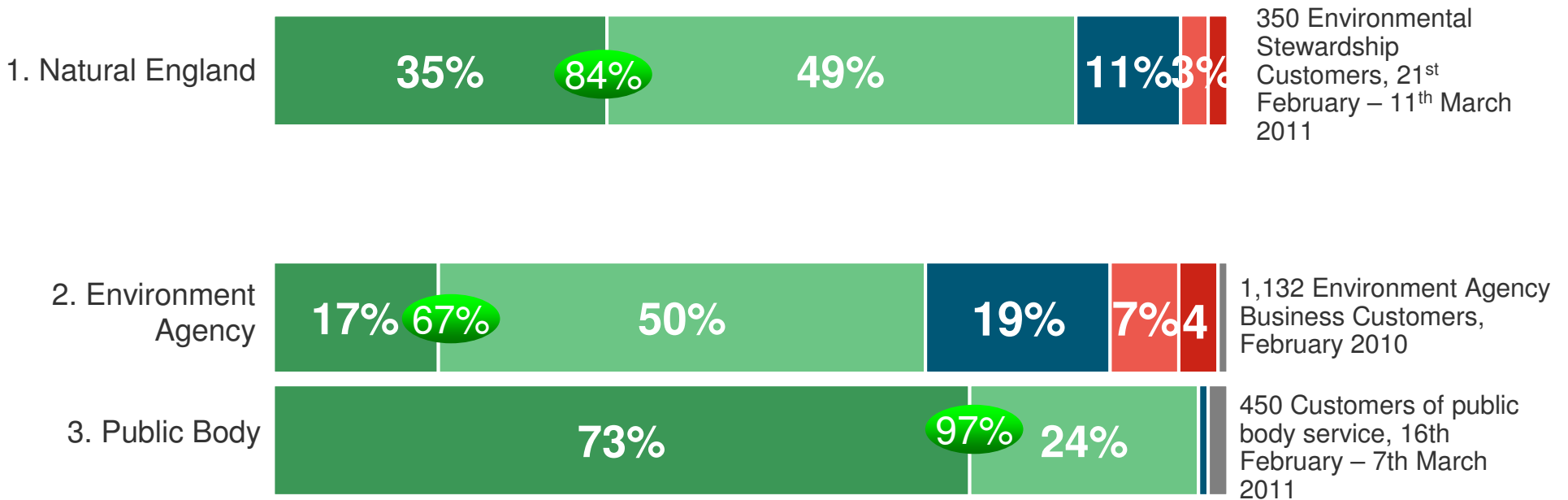
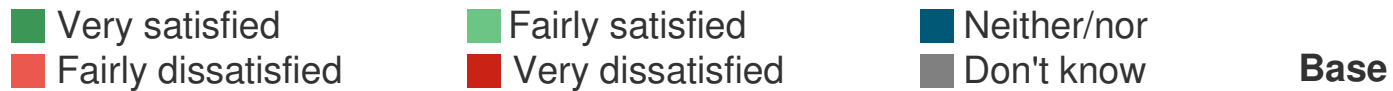


Base: 350 Environmental Stewardship Customers; 120 HLS and 230 ELS holders, 21<sup>st</sup> February – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011; 350 Agri-environment agreement holders, 5<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009

Source: Ipsos MORI

# Comparative data

1. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of the service you receive from Natural England? Are you..
2. Now, considering everything we have covered so far, where 1 is very poor and 10 is excellent, what score would you give the Environment Agency in terms of the quality of service you receive from them? very dissatisfied (scores of 1+2), fairly dissatisfied (scores of 3+4), neither/nor (scores of 5+6), fairly satisfied (scores of 7+8), very satisfied (scores of 9+10)
3. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided to your organisation in the last 12 months?



# Importance of service factors

# Important factors of service

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- When asked about a range of aspects of service, customers rate all factors as being important to some extent; most net important scores (percentage of those stating something is not important removed from the percentage who feel it is important) are in the range 80 – 90%.
- Out of all factors asked about, some specific aspects of staff contact are considered most important in judging Natural England's overall performance; the **ease of getting hold of someone who can help** is seen as the most important factor (+90%), closely followed by the **helpfulness of staff** (+87%) and the **efficiency with which staff deal with enquiries** (+87%).
- The **continuity of staff**, while still considered important, is given the lowest net important rating (+60%). **How well staff understand customers' businesses** (+76%) and **how well staff keep them updated and informed on progress of their application, claim or query** (+74%) are also seen as relatively less important compared to other factors.

# Differences between sub groups

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- It is important to note that ELS and HLS agreement holders have slightly different priorities in some respects; ELS customers are more likely to rate a simple application process as being important (net score of +88% vs. +77% for HLS), while HLS consider continuity and helpfulness of staff as more important than ELS (higher by 34 and 9 percentage points respectively).
- Those who have a medium or large scale business are more likely to feel that the **speed and accuracy of payments** and the **helpfulness of staff** are more important than those who own small businesses (92% vs. 83%; 91% vs. 84%).
- Large business are also more likely to give a high importance rating to the continuity of staff (90% vs. 67% medium and 62% small). This is likely to be related to the scheme they are involved in as the majority of large farms (56%) are HLS holders, whereas the majority (around two thirds) of medium and small farms are ELS holders.

# Importance of factors - summary

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| Factor   | Net importance | Factor   | Net importance |
|--|----------------|--|----------------|
| The ease of getting hold of someone who can help you     | 90             | The simplicity of the application process  | 84             |
| The helpfulness of staff                                 | 87             | The efficiency with which staff deal with and resolve any problems or complaints             | 82             |
| The efficiency with which staff deal with your enquiries | 87             | How well staff understand your business  | 76             |
| The speed and accuracy of payments                       | 86             | How well staff keep you updated and informed on progress of your application, claim or query | 74             |
| The quality of information and correspondence            | 85             | The continuity of staff (e.g. continuity of the same adviser)                                | 60             |

# Importance of staff contact

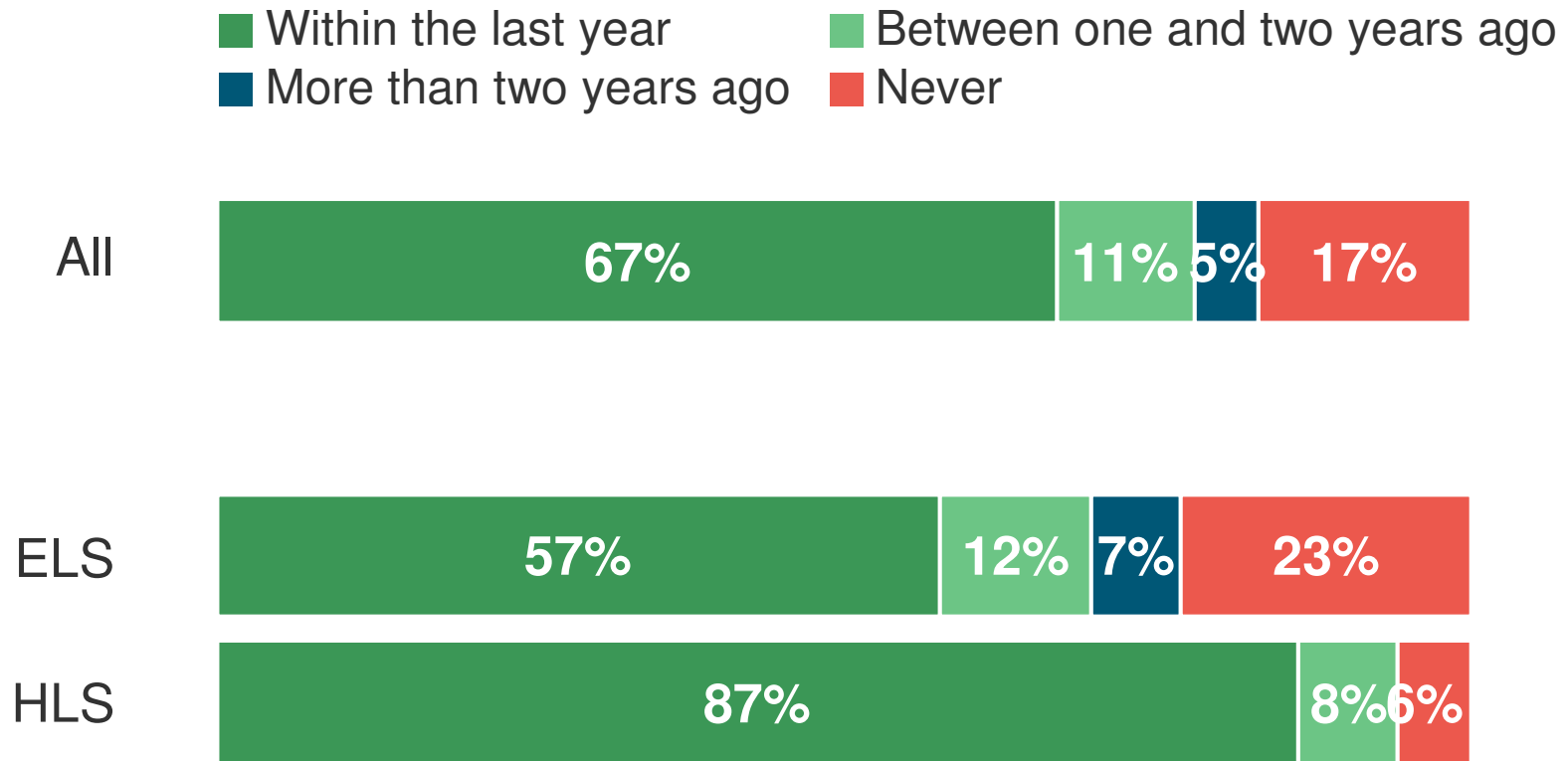
19

- As some of the aspects of service are related to contact with staff, perceptions of these factors are affected by the level of contact respondents have had with Natural England. For example, those who have never tried contacting Natural England would not be able to give an opinion on their satisfaction with the ease of getting hold of someone you can help. Therefore some of these questions were only asked of those who have tried to make contact with Natural England at some point.
- Two thirds (67%) of respondents have tried to contact Natural England within the last year and only one in six (17%) have never done so. Higher Level Stewardship holders are more likely to be in regular contact than Entry Level holders; nearly nine in ten (87%) have attempted to contact Natural England in the past year, compared to less than three in five (57%) Entry Level Stewardship holders.
- Organisations that do not regularly use the internet to manage their business (predominantly smaller farms) are also less likely to have tried to get in touch (23% say they never have, compared to 13% of businesses that do regularly use the internet).

# Contact with Natural England

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How recently, if at all, have you tried to contact anyone at Natural England in relation to Environmental Stewardship?



Base: 350 Environmental Stewardship Customers; 120 HLS and 230 ELS holders,  
21<sup>st</sup> February – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011

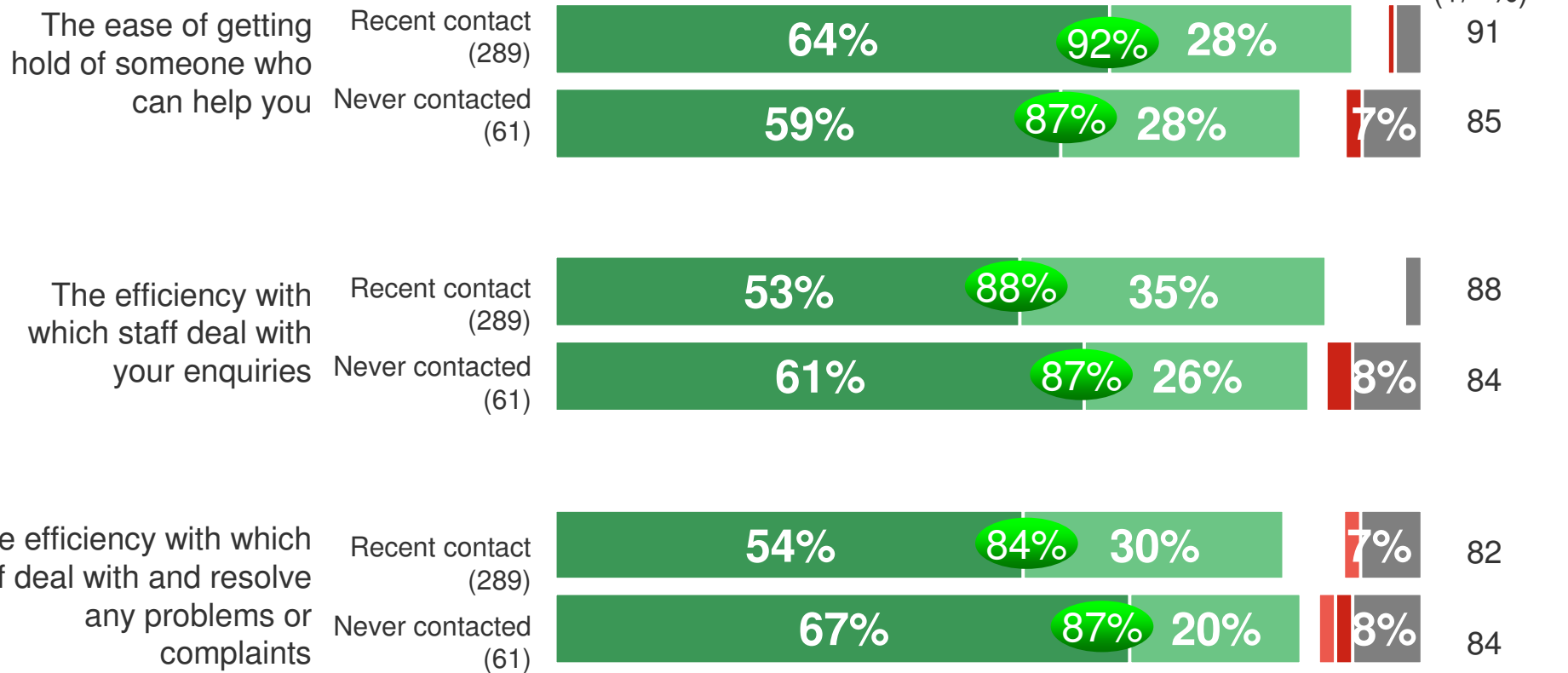
Source: Ipsos MORI

# Importance of contact factors

For each factor, please say how important or not you believe it to be in judging Natural England's overall performance in delivering the scheme.

When judging importance, please use a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 = not at all important and 5 = extremely important.

■ 5 = Extremely important  
 ■ 4  
 ■ 2  
 ■ 1 = Not important  
 ■ Don't know  
 Net important (+/- %)



Base: 350 Environmental Stewardship Customers, 21<sup>st</sup> February – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Source: Ipsos MORI

# Satisfaction with service factors

# Levels of satisfaction

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- Overall, environmental stewardship holders have high levels of satisfaction with the service provided by Natural England. In all but one factor (simplicity of the application process), the majority are satisfied and, in all but two cases (simplicity of the application process and the usefulness of handbooks), less than one in ten are dissatisfied.
- The factors with highest levels of satisfaction are **speed and accuracy of payments** (44% very satisfied), **helpfulness of staff** (33% very satisfied) and the **competence of staff** (31% very satisfied).
- Some possible areas for improvement could be around the process of applying for environmental stewardship; dissatisfaction is highest with the **usefulness of handbooks** (14% dissatisfied) and the **simplicity of the process** (19% dissatisfied).

# Levels of satisfaction

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- ELS holders are more likely to be satisfied than HLS holders with the **simplicity of the application process** (50% vs. 37%). This is a particular issue for HLS holders, with almost one in four (23%) being dissatisfied. Large-scale businesses are also more likely to be satisfied (net score of +40% vs. 24% of medium/small businesses), perhaps because of the additional support or resources they are able to draw on in order to ease the process.
- ELS are also more likely to be satisfied with the **usefulness of the handbooks** (62% vs. 51%). Large-scale farms, on the other hand, are most likely to feel that handbooks are not useful to them (27% are dissatisfied).
- HLS holders are more likely than ELS holders to be satisfied with the **continuity of staff**. However, this is likely to be a result of a lack of contact that ELS holders have with staff, as 30% respond 'don't know' to this question. Large-scale farms are most likely to be dissatisfied with the continuity of staff they deal with (20% vs. 7% of smaller farms).
- HLS holders are also more likely to be satisfied with **how well staff have explained the detail and terms of the final agreement** to them than ELS holders (82% vs. 62%).

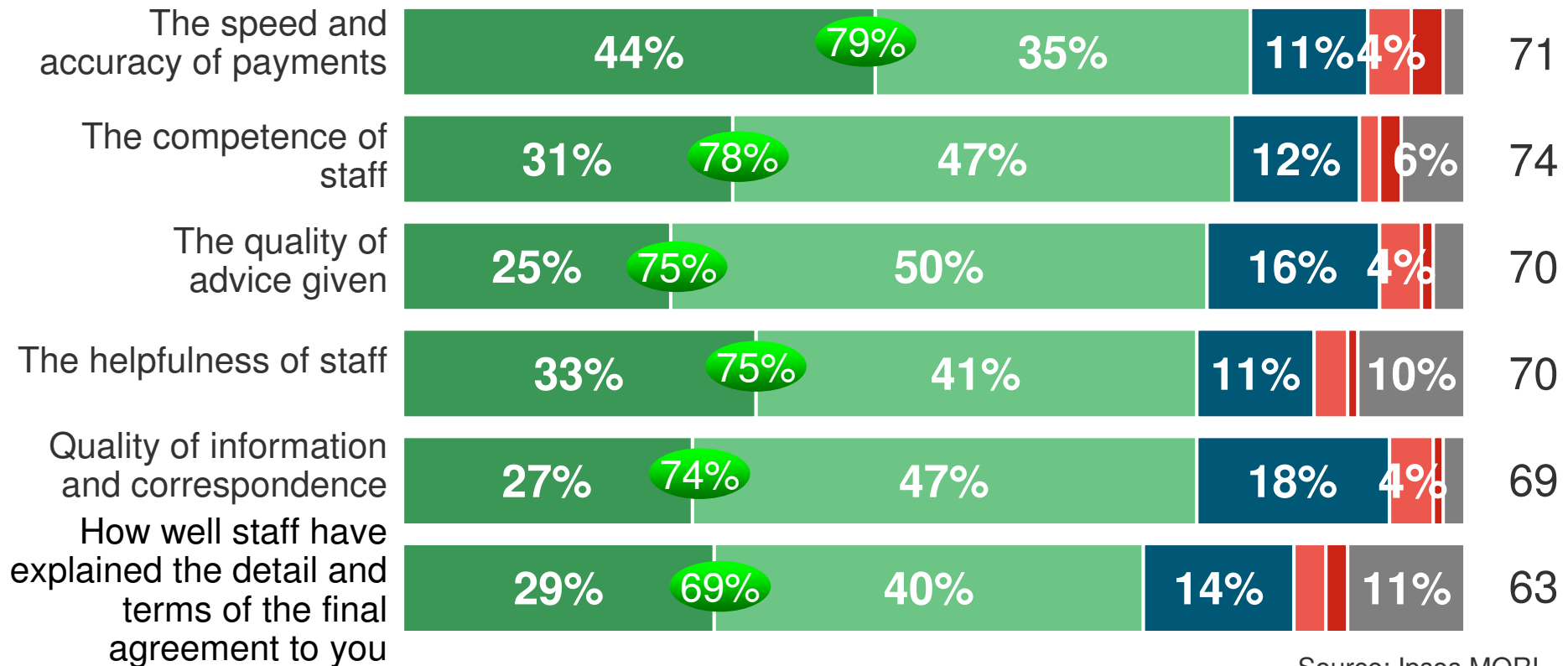
# Satisfaction with factors - 1

Please also tell me, how satisfied or not you are with each particular aspect of the service provided by Natural England.

When determining satisfaction with the service please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very dissatisfied and 5 = very satisfied.

■ 5 = Very satisfied ■ 4 ■ 3 ■ 2 ■ 1 = Not satisfied ■ Don't know

Net satisfied (+/- %)



Base: 350 Environmental Stewardship Customers, 21<sup>st</sup> February – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Source: Ipsos MORI

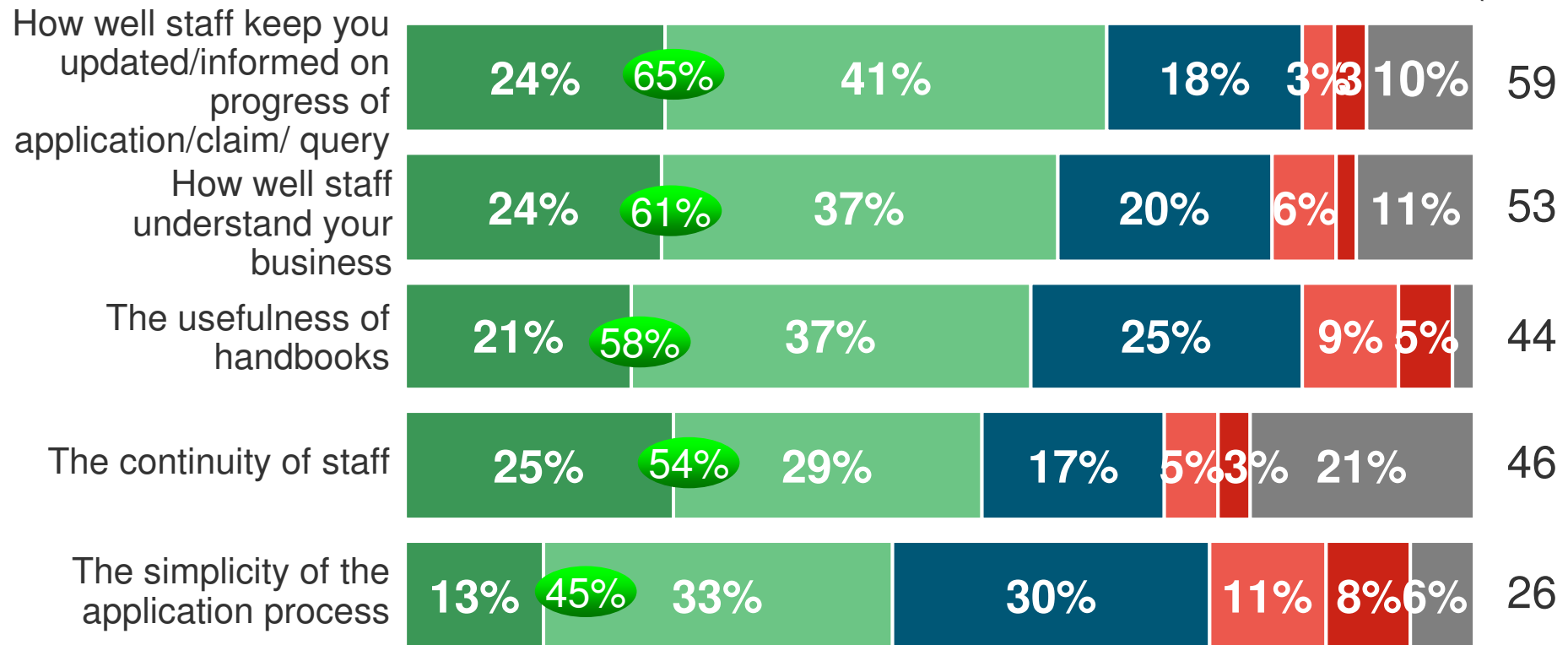
# Satisfaction with factors - 2

Please also tell me, how satisfied or not you are with each particular aspect of the service provided by Natural England.

When determining satisfaction with the service please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very dissatisfied and 5 = very satisfied.

■ 5 = Very satisfied ■ 4 ■ 3 ■ 2 ■ 1 = Not satisfied ■ Don't know

Net satisfied (+/- %)



Base: 350 Environmental Stewardship Customers, 21<sup>st</sup> February – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Source: Ipsos MORI

# Satisfaction of those who have contacted Natural England

27

- More than half of those who have contacted Natural England are satisfied with the service they received, and fewer than one in ten are dissatisfied.
- A third (33%) are 'very satisfied' with the **efficiency with which staff dealt with their queries**. A similar proportion (30%) are 'very satisfied' with the **ease with which they could get hold of someone who could help them**. A quarter (26%) are 'very satisfied' with the **efficiency with which staff dealt with and resolved any problems or complaints**.
- HLS holders are more likely to be satisfied with the **ease of getting hold of someone who could help them** than ELS holders. More than three quarters (77%) of HLS holders were satisfied compared with three in five (61%) ELS holders.

"It's getting traceable numbers. I would like a telephone number for one person that I could consistently deal with."  
(South West, ELS)



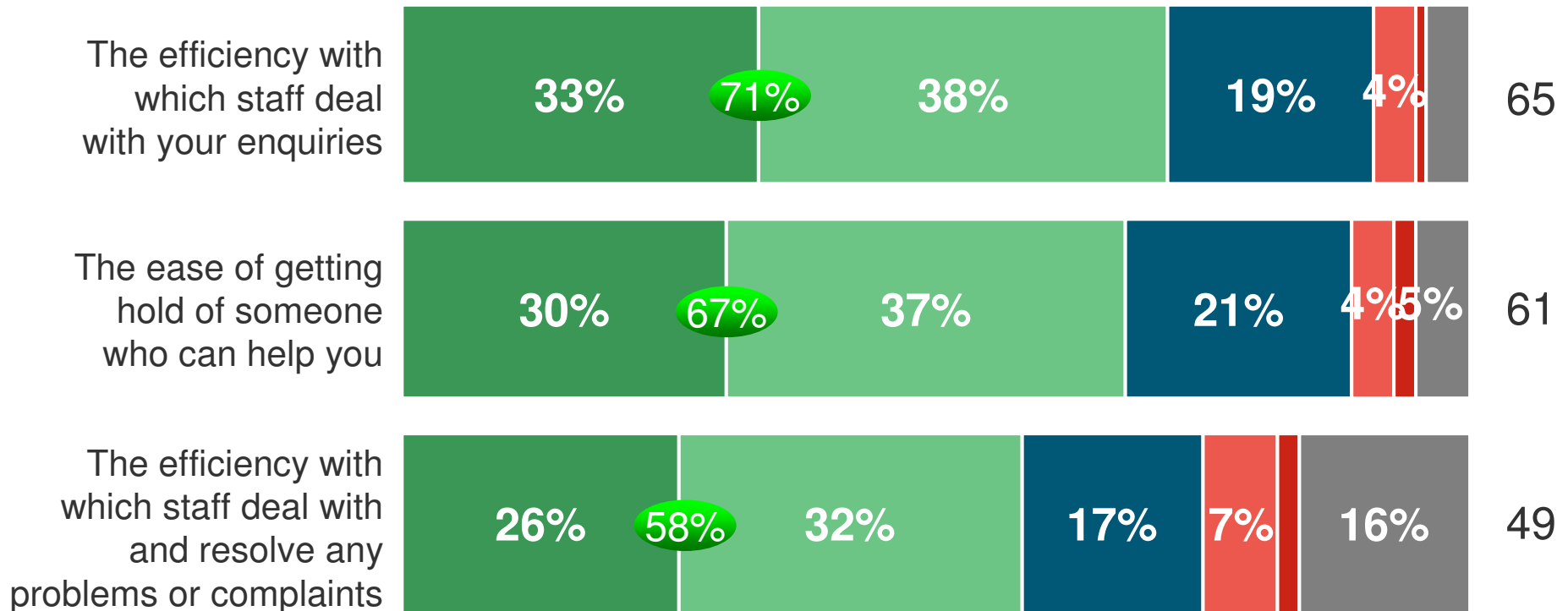
# Satisfaction with contact factors

Please also tell me, how satisfied or not you are with each particular aspect of the service provided by Natural England.

When determining satisfaction with the service please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very dissatisfied and 5 = very satisfied.

■ 5 = Very satisfied  
 ■ 4  
 ■ 3  
 ■ 2  
 ■ 1 = Not satisfied  
 ■ Don't know

Net satisfied (+/- %)



Base: All who have had recent contact with NE staff (289)

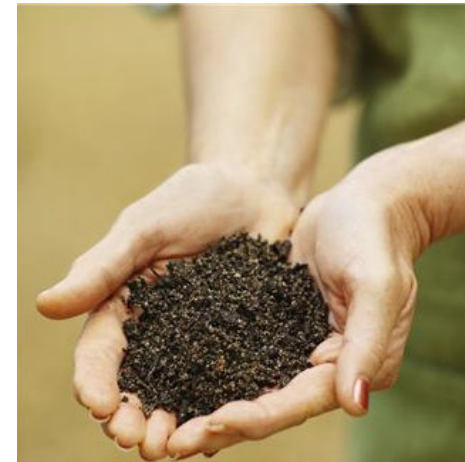
Source: Ipsos MORI

# Satisfaction with farm visits / contact (HLS only)

29

- Higher Level Stewardship agreement holders were asked about the farm visits they receive from Natural England, with the majority satisfied with all aspects.
- Nearly two in five (38%) were 'very satisfied' with the **amount of farm visits** while more than a third (35%) were 'very satisfied' with the **quality** of them.
- A quarter (26%) were 'very satisfied' with **how well staff kept in touch with them** after they had joined the scheme. One in ten (10%) were dissatisfied. Satisfaction is higher among large and medium businesses (69%) than small scale ones (46%).

“We have a lot of confidence in our advisor. We are only concerned that her job may be on the line and if she were to go, then we have lost an important point of contact. We are very happy with the service that we have had from the advisor.” (East, HLS)



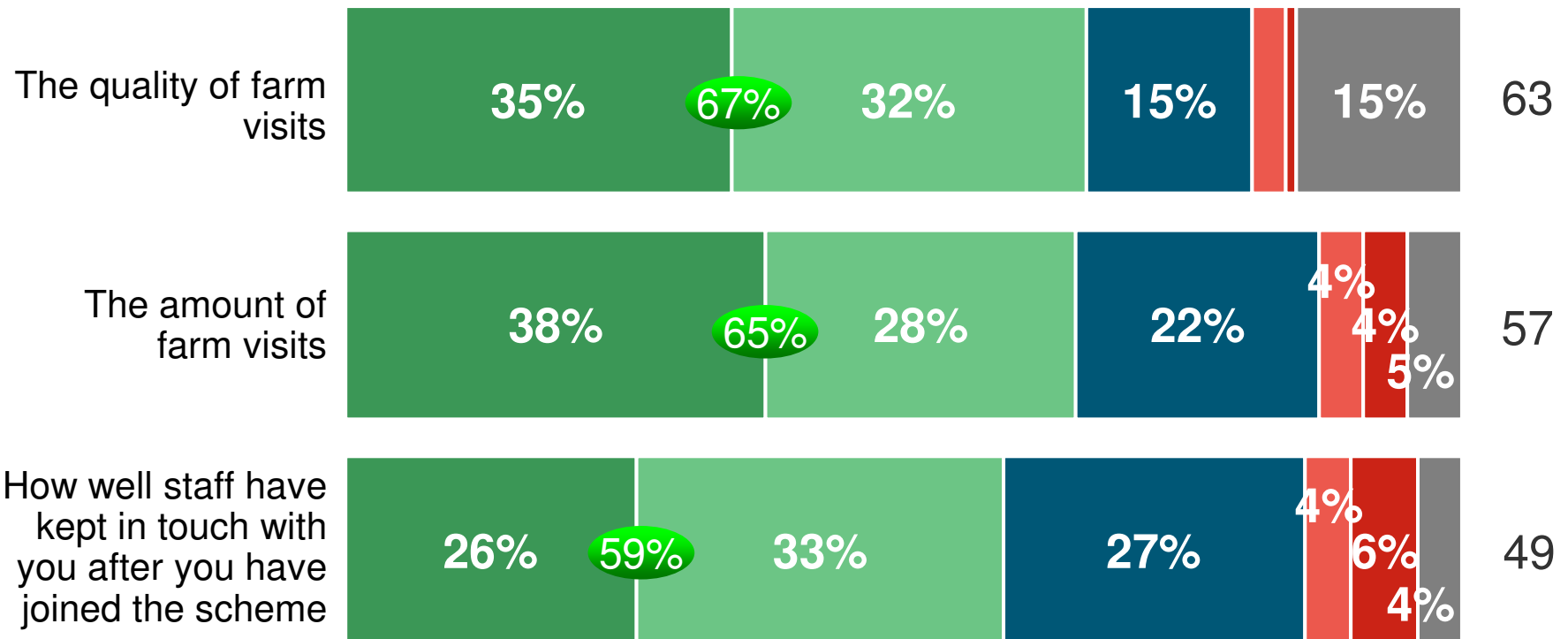
# Satisfaction – HLS

For each factor please say how satisfied or dissatisfied you are.

When determining satisfaction with the service please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very dissatisfied and 5 = very satisfied.

■ 5 = Very satisfied   
 ■ 4   
 ■ 3   
 ■ 2   
 ■ 1 = Not satisfied   
 ■ Don't know

Net satisfied (+/- %)



Base: 120 HLS Agreement Holders, 21<sup>st</sup> February – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Source: Ipsos MORI

# Strategic Priority Analysis

# Strategic Priority Analysis

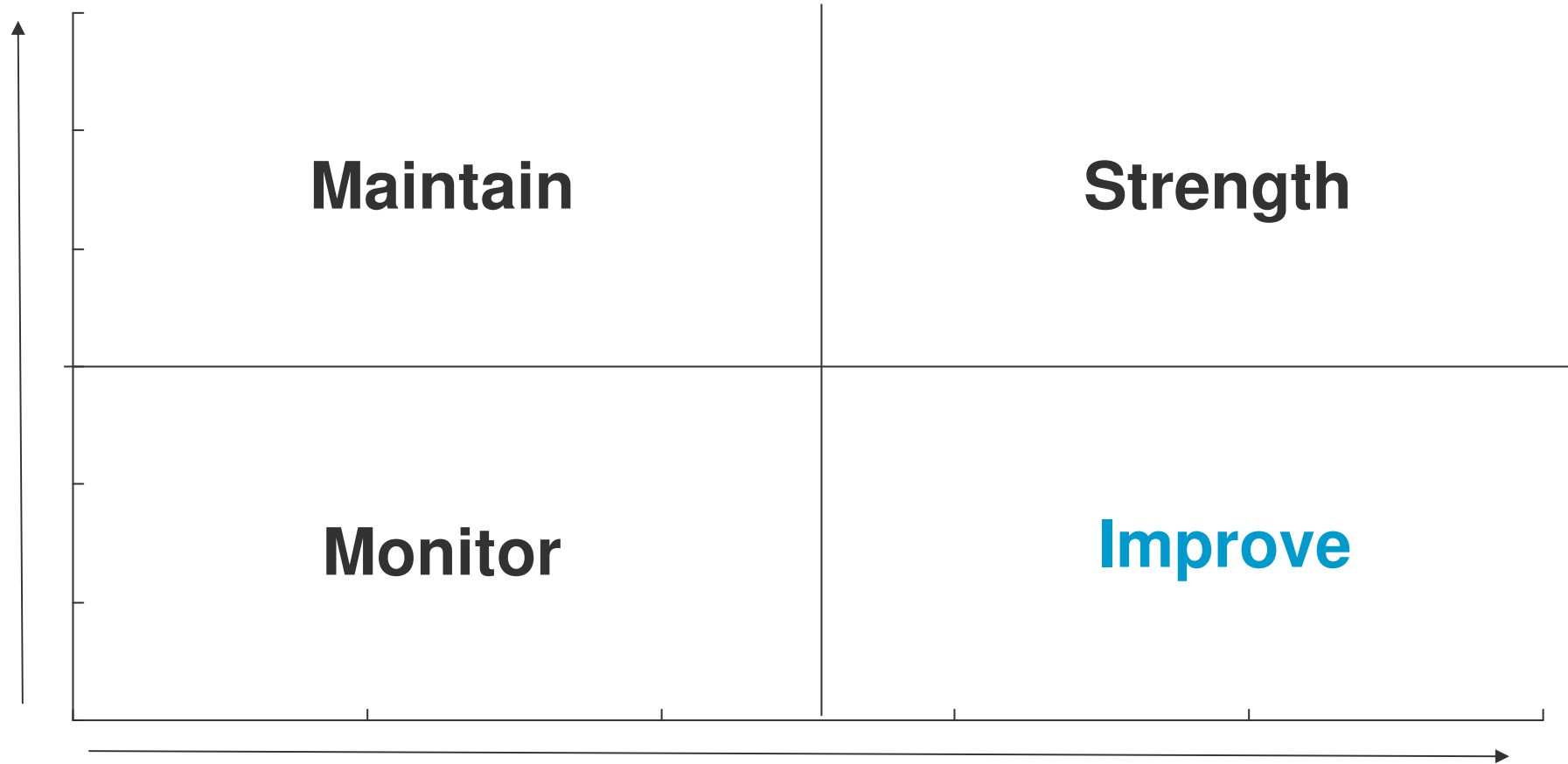
32

- Strategic priority analysis is used to assess where areas of a service could be improved, in the eyes of the customer.
- It works by measuring perceived levels of importance and satisfaction with aspects of a service, before plotting them against each other. In this instance, the mean level of importance awarded to the service aspect is plotted against the mean level of satisfaction, using the scoring method outlined in the introduction.
- To assess the importance and satisfaction of any one factor, relative to the other factors, the average (mean) importance and satisfaction scores across all factors are calculated. These are indicated by the horizontal and vertical lines on the chart.
- Factors fall either to the right or the left of the mean importance line, reflecting how important that factor is, relative to other factors. All factors falling to the right are more important than the average while those to the left are less so. Each service also falls either above or below the line of satisfaction, with those above the line indicating where levels of satisfaction are higher.
- Four quadrants are created by the lines, and each element of the service that falls into each quadrant can be analysed according to their positions (see outline chart).
- It is worth noting that factors are plotted **relative to each other**, so although some factors may fall below the line of mean satisfaction, this is set at a very high level (3.88 on a range of 1-5) and generally customers are satisfied with the service they receive from Natural England. Strategic priority analysis in this case should be used to identify areas for improvement, rather than areas of failure.

# What Attributes Drive Satisfaction?

Strategic priority analysis compares importance and satisfaction ratings on specific attributes to determine the priorities for action

Satisfaction



Importance of attributes

# Strategic Priority Analysis

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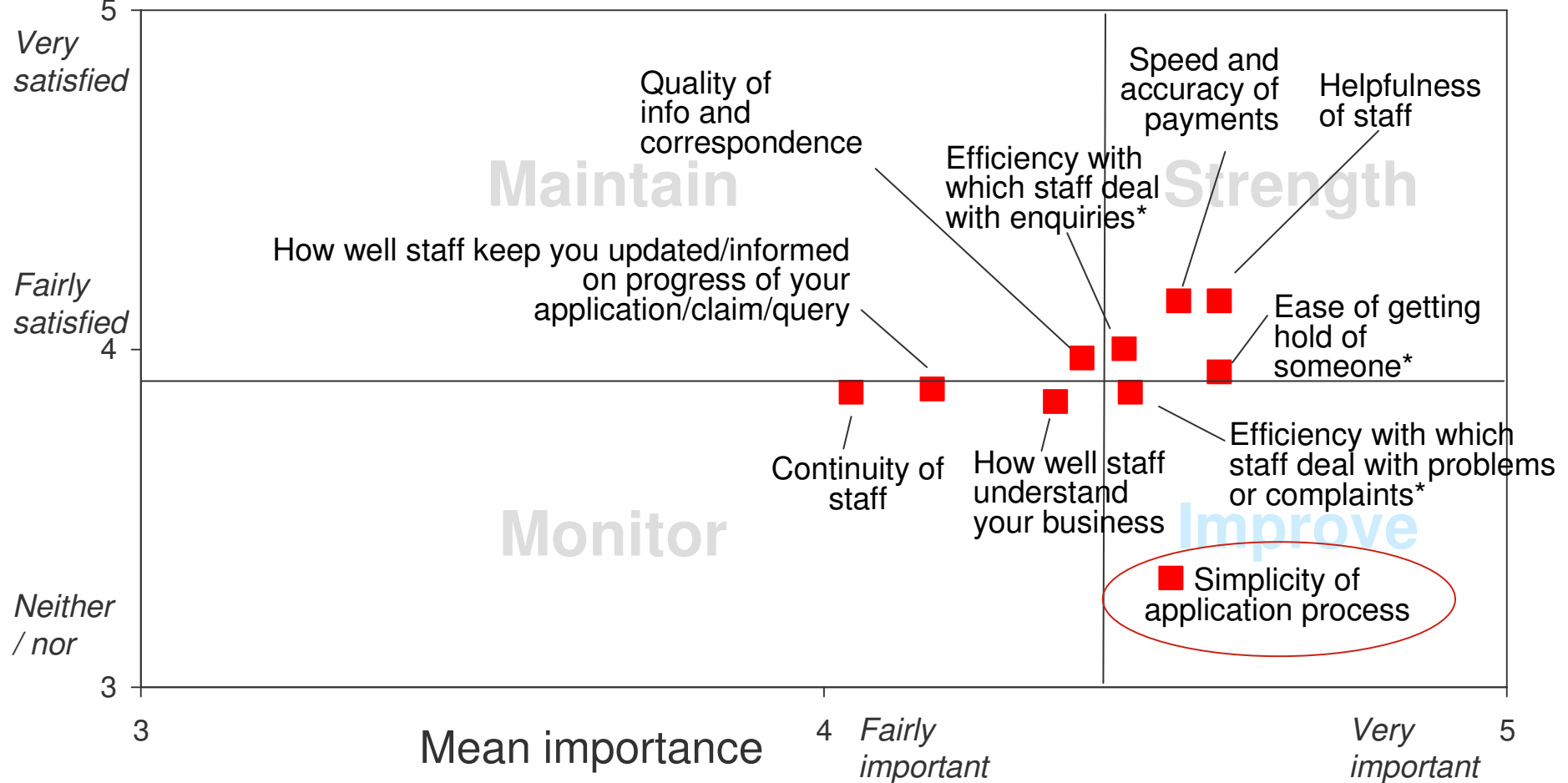
- **Speed and accuracy of payments** and the **helpfulness of staff** are key strengths of Natural England's service to ES customers. They are rated as being very important factors in influencing the overall quality of service, and respondents are very satisfied with both of them.
- **Continuity of staff, how well staff keep customers updated** and **how well staff understand customers' businesses** are seen as relatively less important areas of service but are areas in which Natural England is performing relatively well.
- The main area for improvement is the **simplicity of the application process**. This is seen as one of the more important aspects of the service, but is the area about which Natural England's customers are least satisfied.
- The **efficiency with which staff deal with or resolve problems or complaints** is one area that could be improved; while 84% feel this is important, around three in five (58%) are satisfied and one in ten (9%) are dissatisfied. However, the fact that one in six (16%) respond 'don't know' suggests that a significant proportion have not had a problem or complaint requiring action.
- Similarly, nine in ten (92%) feel it is important that it is **easy to get hold of someone who can help**, while a far lower proportion - 67% - are satisfied with their ability to do so. However, it is important to note that one in five (21%) are neutral, giving it a satisfaction score of three out of five. Moreover, satisfaction is 16 percentage points lower for ELS holders (61%) than HLS (77%), perhaps suggesting that the ability to speak to staff is a particular concern for ELS customers.

# Importance vs. Satisfaction

For each factor, please say how important or not you believe it to be in judging Natural England's overall performance in delivering the scheme.

Please also tell me, how satisfied or not you are with each particular aspect of the service provided by Natural England.

## Mean satisfaction



# Simplicity of the application process

36

This area of potential improvement is particularly highlighted in the open-ended responses from customers. Some common mentions include the length and complexity of forms and perceived irrelevance of some sections of them.

“The schemes and the forms that you have to fill in are too complicated. I have been farming for a long time and used to do all the paperwork myself. However, the stewardship forms were beyond me as they were far too complicated.” (North East, HLS)

“The changes that are happening are unavoidable. However, it does seem that some of the paperwork is more applicable to some people than others, even though it is sent to everyone whether it is relevant to them or not.” (North West, ELS)

“The whole scheme is amazingly more complicated than it actually should be. It seems difficult to plough through stuff.” (London & South East, ELS)

“They should simplify the claims and they need to be more specific to individual agreements.” (South West, HLS)

# Simplicity of the application process

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“We had to get a professional to fill out the forms. It was very lengthy and even the professional said that it was quite repetitive.” (West Midlands, ELS)

“The booklet gives you lots of situations that do not apply to a lot of farmers. It would make life a lot easier if they separated arable and livestock farming. There is a lot of information that does not apply to particular branches of farming, which tends to complicate the situation.” (East, ELS)

“Their systems need to be simplified. Their mapping systems in particular need to be improved. They need to listen more to farmers as they seem to think that they know everything.” (South West, ELS)



# Differences between HLS & ELS

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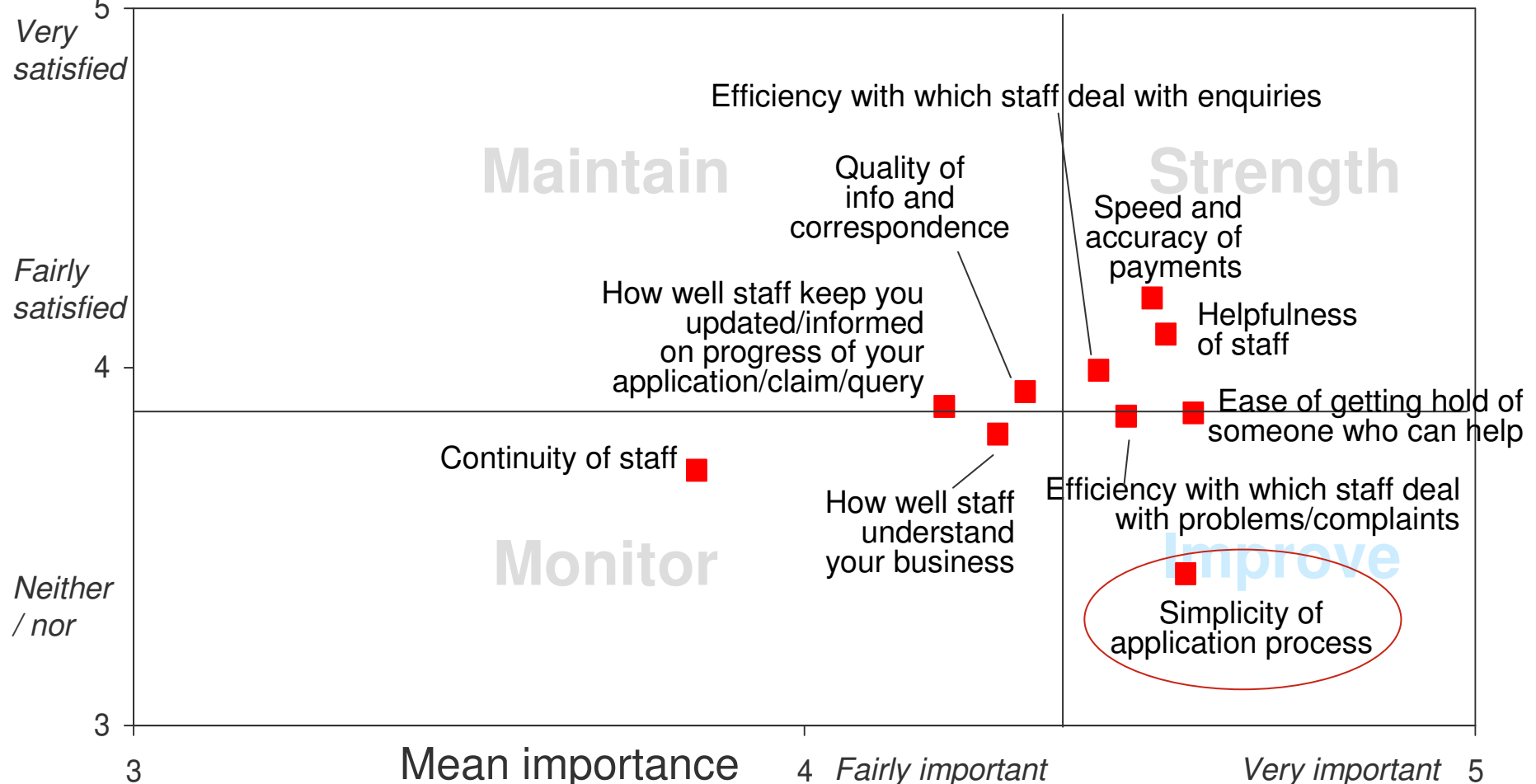
- There are a few differences between the priorities for ELS and HLS holders which are worth highlighting as they could be used to inform different strategies of communication.
- Firstly, the **simplicity of the application process** is seen as more important by ELS holders than HLS holders. This means it is a **key action area for ELS holders**, who rate it as highly important but are less satisfied. However, it is not as important for HLS holders and may therefore only be an area to **monitor**.
- Secondly, HLS customers do not all feel that Natural England staff **understand their business**. This may be an area which Natural England need to monitor to ensure that it does not become a problem area for HLS agreement holders.
- Thirdly, **continuity of staff** is deemed to be more important by HLS agreement holders than ELS, and it will be important to maintain the relatively high levels of satisfaction HLS customers have towards it.
- Overall, ELS holders are less satisfied in most aspects of service than HLS holders. This is potentially due to the lower levels of contact they have had with Natural England (a quarter – 23% - have never contacted Natural England compared with nine in ten – 87% - HLS holders who have had contact with Natural England in the past year) or another factor related to the type of scheme.

# Importance vs. Satisfaction - ELS

For each factor, please say how important or not you believe it to be in judging Natural England's overall performance in delivering the scheme.

Please also tell me, how satisfied or not you are with each particular aspect of the service provided by Natural England.

## Mean satisfaction

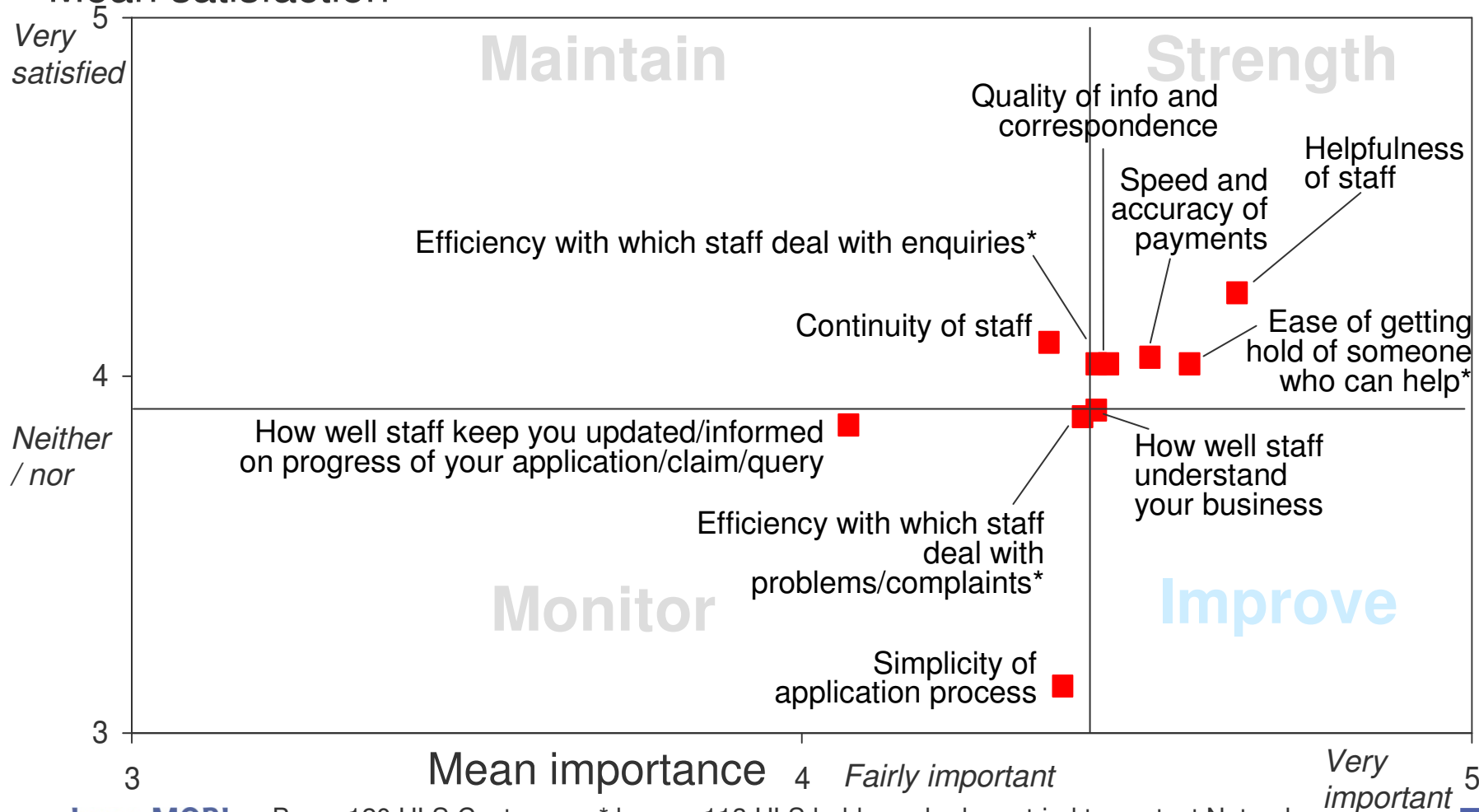


# Importance vs. Satisfaction - HLS

For each factor, please say how important or not you believe it to be in judging Natural England's overall performance in delivering the scheme.

Please also tell me, how satisfied or not you are with each particular aspect of the service provided by Natural England.

## Mean satisfaction



# Views on the continuity of staff

41

While, overall, views are positive about the continuity of staff, responses to the open-ended question do indicate that it is an area which some feel could be improved.

“Once you have your Case Worker, the environmental scheme is fine. It would help to deal with one person rather than different people.” (North East, HLS)

“I would like to see continuity and a face that we can recognise. Also, someone that knows the farm and the people that we are dealing with.” (West Midlands, HLS)

“It would be great if you could ring up and speak to the same person each time. If you could have one person who looks after your business, you could then build a rapport and have a certain level of relationship with them with regards to stewardship. Mostly, when you call up you speak to a person who is good but then you will speak to someone else next time. It means that you spend a lot of time repeating yourself and getting back on track because you are dealing with different people.” (Yorkshire & Humberside, ELS)

“The scheme and my point of contact keeps changing.” (North West, ELS)

“We had a nightmare with the maps and look through the booklets. Some contact at the application stage and someone specific to speak to would have helped.” (East, ELS)

# Communication

# Communication with Natural England

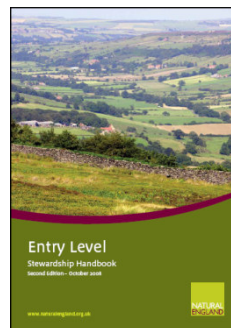
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- More than two thirds of respondents (68%) spontaneously name Natural England as the organisation with which they have an Environmental Stewardship agreement. One in five (20%) do not know.
- This represents an improvement since 2009 when just over half (53%) knew. The organisation most commonly mentioned other than Natural England is Defra, by 4%, although this is far lower than in 2009 (23%).
- HLS holders are more likely to name Natural England (77% vs. 64% of ELS holders), perhaps reflecting the greater level of contact they have had with the organisation.
- Nearly three quarters (72%) find it easy to find out about services Natural England can provide to meet their requirements.
  - ELS holders are more positive in this respect, as only one in six (16%) found it difficult compared with a quarter (26%) of HLS holders.
- When asked of the preferred method of receiving information from Natural England, there are some key differences between HLS and ELS holders; three in five (62%) HLS holders would prefer a visit from a Natural England representative, compared with two in five (39%) ELS holders. In contrast, a third (36%) of ELS holders would prefer a printed booklet compared to a quarter (25%) of HLS holders.
- Similar proportions would prefer to use the internet (32% overall), which rises to half (48%) of those who regularly use the internet to manage their business.

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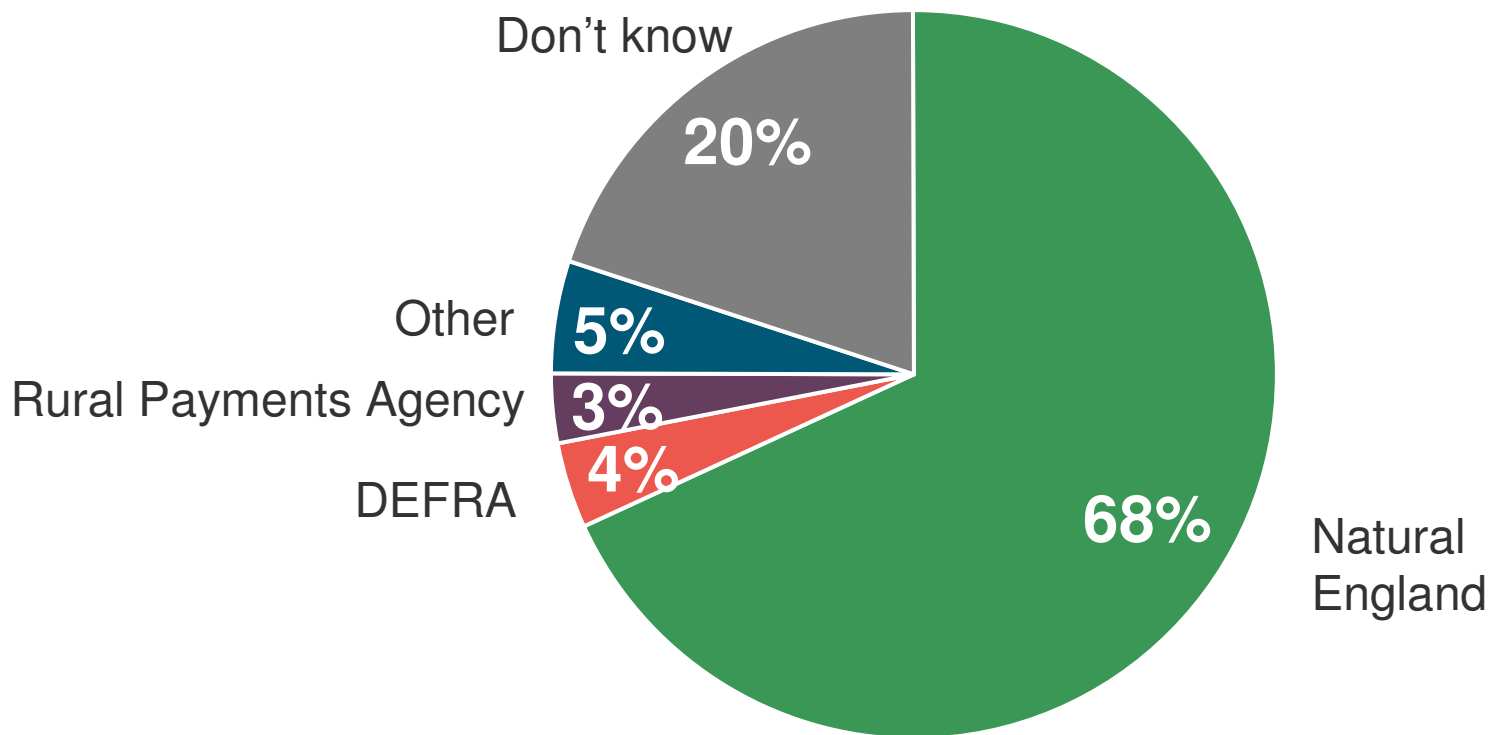
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- Three in five (58%) environmental stewardship holders regularly use the internet to manage their business.
  - Four in five (80%) working in a large scale business do so, compared to 60% of medium sized businesses and just half (52%) of those running a small scale business.
  - There are no significant differences between ELS and HLS holders regarding this.
- The majority (79%) feel the amount of information provided about the Environmental Stewardship scheme is 'about right'. One in eight (13%) feel it is too much and only 6% feel it is too little.
  - The findings in this area are similar for ELS and HLS holders.
- This supports the positive views that customers have towards the *quality* of the information and correspondence they receive, with three quarters (74%) satisfied and just six per cent dissatisfied.



# Unprompted awareness of Natural England as ES administrator

Could I firstly just check that you have received an Environmental Stewardship agreement on your land? - Which organisation is this agreement with?

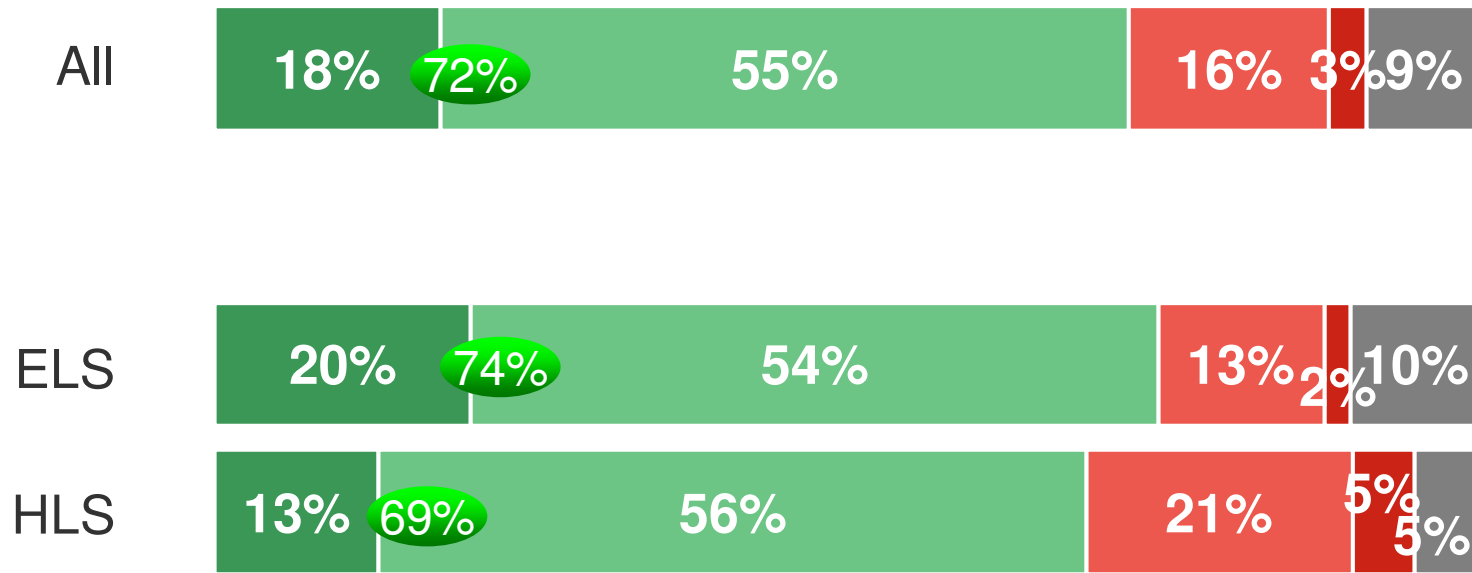


Base: 350 Environmental Stewardship Customers; 120 HLS and 230 ELS holders, 21<sup>st</sup> February – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011

# Ease of meeting requirements

How easy or difficult is it to find out about services Natural England can provide to meet your requirements? Would you say it is ...

Very easy      Fairly easy  
Fairly difficult      Very difficult      Don't know



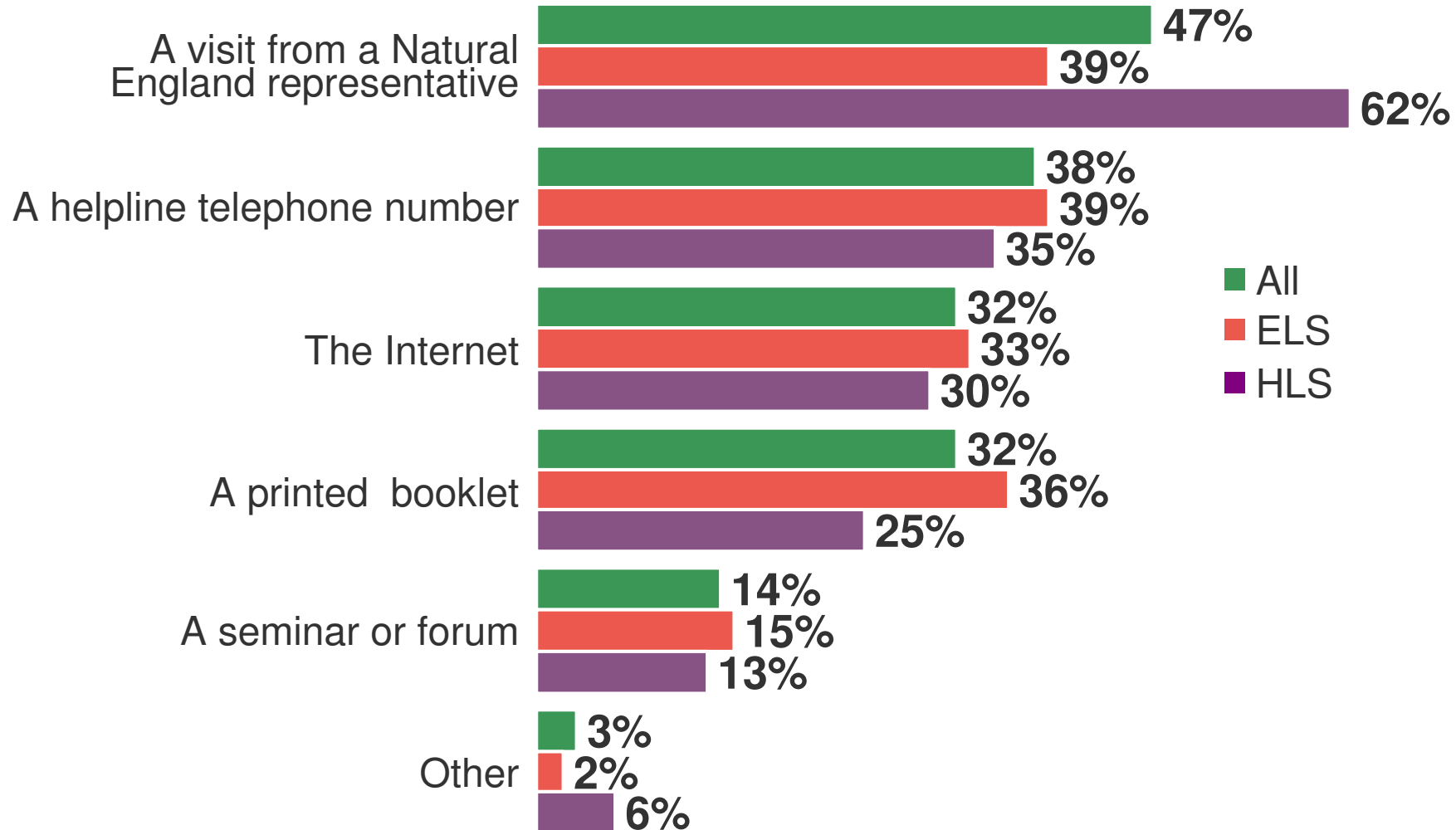
Base: 350 Environmental Stewardship Customers; 120 HLS and 230 ELS holders, 21<sup>st</sup> February – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Source: Ipsos MORI

# Sources of information

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If you need information from Natural England, would you prefer to get it from ...



Base: 350 Environmental Stewardship Customers; 120 HLS and 230 ELS holders, 21<sup>st</sup> February – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI



# Support for farm visits

Farm visits by Natural England staff are widely supported by customers. The verbatim responses support the view that those who have received visits find them invaluable, while those who have not been visited see them as a way of improving understanding of the specific challenges they face.

“Just a ten minute visit by someone from Natural England would answer a lot of the questions that I have in a short space of time.”  
(Yorkshire & Humberside, HLS)

“I like the way that they come out and give a free visit because every farm is different and you can sort out problems there and then.”  
(South West, ELS)

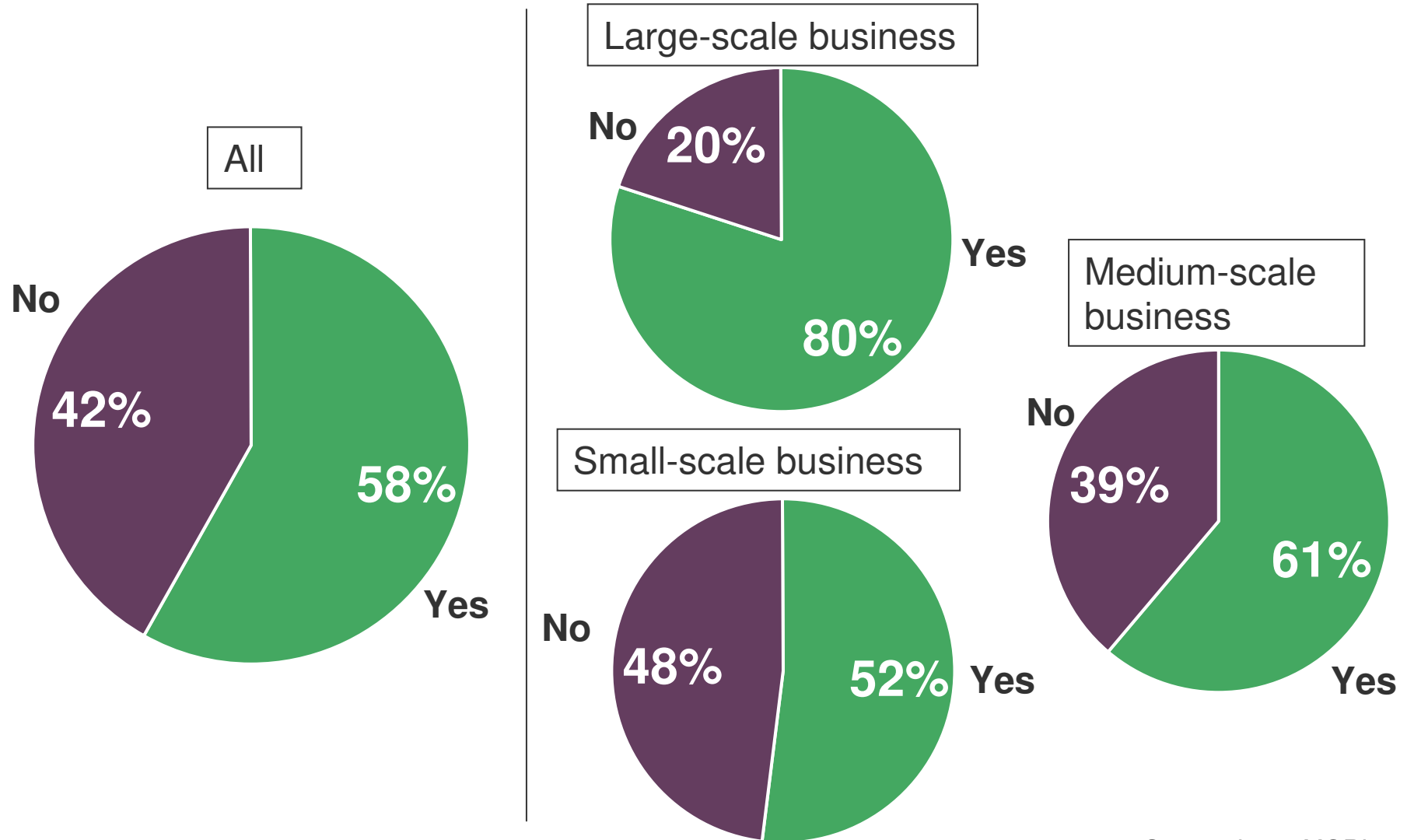
“I would like to have the advisors visit the site, so that they can see for themselves what we are trying to achieve. They could be more practical and hands-on.” (London & South East, HLS)

“Just to reinforce the fact that there is no substitute for farm visits if you want to ensure quality.” (South West, HLS)



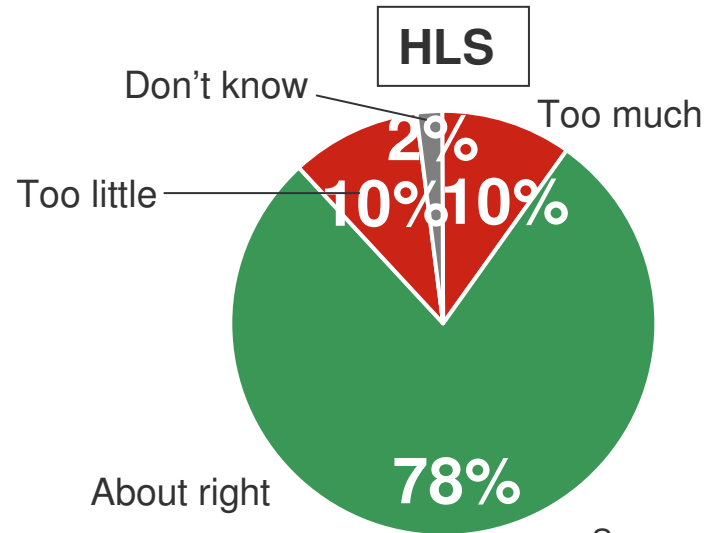
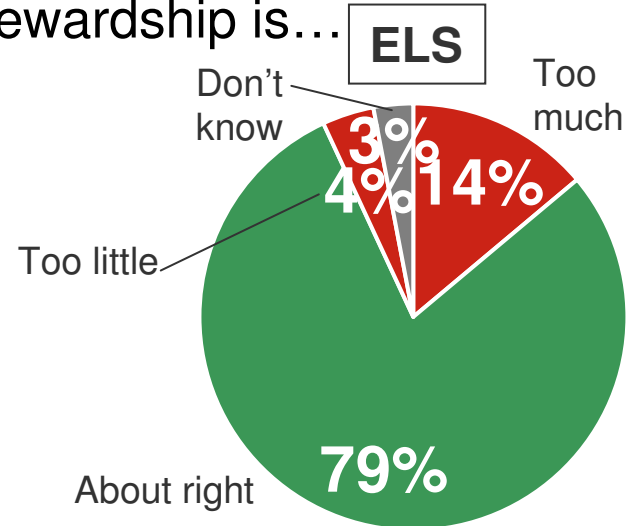
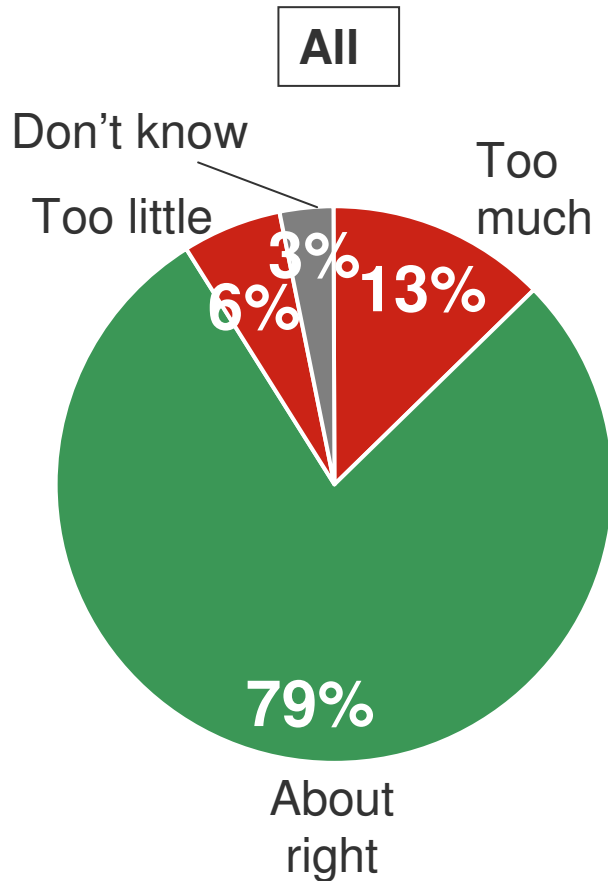
# Use of the internet

Do you regularly use the internet to manage your business?



# Quantity of information

Would you say the quantity of information you receive from Natural England in relation to environmental stewardship is...



# Other areas of importance

- The comments provided by customers highlight a few further themes that are considered important:
- In particular, the accessibility and ease of using the website is mentioned by a few respondents as they have had difficulty applying online.
- Environmental stewardship holders are also very positive about the Natural England staff they have contact with, mentioning the individuals they have a relationship with as being helpful and knowledgeable.

“Make the software more idiot-friendly when doing the application online. The help option wasn't much good. I need to speak to people.” (East, ELS)

“The online system is near useless. The online application does not work. I can't comment on what it is like because I can't get it to work.” (Yorkshire & Humberside, ELS)

“The individuals are very knowledgeable and helpful. However, the system and bureaucracy is insufferable and the time taken to get approvals and decisions is ridiculous.” (London & South East, HLS)

“I think that it depends on the individual advisors that you get. I think that we are very lucky at the moment because ours is very good.” (East Midlands, HLS)

“Keep the personal service. The guys on the ground that deal with us are really important. Also, they do not communicate with us when there is a problem with payment. It is really annoying as I end up having to chase the payment. The least they could do is pay us on time, considering the fact that we have to do all the work upfront and that they pay us in arrears.” (Yorkshire & Humberside, HLS)

# Conclusions & Recommendations

# Conclusions

- Overall, those participating in environmental stewardship schemes are very satisfied with the quality of service that Natural England provides. Satisfaction with the overall service has also increased substantially since 2009.
- Natural England is getting the basics right in delivering the environmental stewardship scheme; customers are generally satisfied with the speed and accuracy of payments.
- Customers are very positive about Natural England staff and are satisfied with the service they provide. In particular they value their helpfulness and high levels of knowledge. They would value greater continuity of staff as, where this does happen, environmental stewardship holders are very satisfied.
- Of the few areas where customers are less satisfied, the perceived complexity of the application process is one area where many have struggled and require additional help. Some find the handbooks and application process are not as applicable to their circumstance as they would like. This source of information is important given that almost half of environmental stewardship holders do not use the internet to manage their business.
- In addition, while the overwhelming majority are in agreement that it is important that problems or complaints are dealt with efficiently, a minority (around one in ten) do believe this could be improved.

# Recommendations

- Using the strategic priority analysis, speed and accuracy of payments, helpfulness of staff and the quality of information and correspondence are key strengths of Natural England's service provision. Therefore Natural England should look to maintain these successes, and promote them when communicating with customers.
- However, there is a desire among some (particularly HLS) customers for greater understanding of their business and for booklets which are more useful to their circumstances. Showing that Natural England is seeking to understand the challenges that different environmental stewardship holders face, may help engender a feeling of working together.
- Environmental stewardship holders would like to see improvements to the website. It is telling that those who do not use the internet to manage their business are more satisfied overall than those who do not. Help with online applications could be made more easily available.
- Wherever possible, customers want Natural England to try to reduce the complexity of the application process. This could be by simplifying the forms, or providing extra support for those applying.