

# Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming Autumn 2020



## Welcome

For many, the 2020 harvest will be remembered for very disappointing yields, but farming requires optimism - next year has got to be better. If you thought too much about the external forces that could affect your business, you might question the wisdom of farming at all! As you complete the harvest and establish next year's crop, what might 2021 have in store? It seems likely that Covid-19 will be with us for some time. We are all fed-up with the cancelled events that bring us together – ploughing matches, the county show, farm meetings, hedge-laying competitions and many others. But we will not despair. At some point all this will be behind us. Perhaps we now recognise just how valuable is the social element of farm gatherings. The CSF work will hope to arrange events in 2021 to continue the work of keeping our Island rivers clean, improving soil quality and making sure the air is free of agricultural ammonia.

## Environmental Land Management - ELM

Some of you may have provided feedback about the ELM Policy Discussion Document which covered the initial thinking on scheme design, progress with its development and an overview of high-level design options. The opportunity to provide comment closed at the end of July with Defra now reviewing the responses to continue their development of the policy. Further information will be published in the autumn.

The strategic objectives of ELM are:

- *To secure a range of positive environmental benefits, prioritising between environmental outcomes where necessary*
- *To help tackle some of the environmental challenges associated with agriculture, focusing on how to address these in the shorter term*

But what are the 'public goods' ELM will pay for? The list covers many of the areas Catchment Sensitive Farming addresses:

- clean and plentiful water
- clean air
- protection from and mitigation of environmental hazards
- mitigation of and adaptation to climate change
- thriving plants and wildlife
- beauty, heritage and engagement

There is of course acknowledgement that payments through ELM will provide farm income as BPS is phased out. There are three tiers proposed within the scheme.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<p><b>Attractive to farmers across the country.</b></p> <p>Adopt (or maintain) effective actions that address the environmental impacts of farming and forestry practices and enhance the environment.</p> <p>Focus on practices that are most effective when delivered at scale.</p> <p>Actions will contribute to the delivery of environmental public goods, Defra’s 25 Year Environment Plan commitments and net zero target.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p>Nutrient management  Pest management  Livestock management  Soil management  Field margins (buffer strips)  Field cover (cover crops)  Water storage/efficient water use</p>	<p><b>Target agreed priority outcomes in the most strategic locations.</b></p> <p>Encourage and reward collaboration between farmers and/or land managers to ensure successful delivery of outcomes</p> <p>Actions may be more complex for some land managers to deliver</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p>Tree, shrub and/or hedge planting and maintenance</p> <p>Habitat creation/restoration/management (including woodland, wetlands, freshwater, peatland, heathland, species-rich grassland, coastal habitat, urban green space)</p> <p>Instream/river and overland flow attenuation and diversion (natural flood management)</p> <p>Species management, for example, introduction, translocation and/or recovery and invasive species prevention/control</p> <p>Rights of way, navigation and recreation infrastructure</p> <p>Education infrastructure, events and services</p> <p>Geodiversity and heritage asset management</p>	<p><b>Focus on projects that can deliver over and above tiers 1 and 2</b></p> <p>Will focus on delivering a diverse range of environmental outcomes that make substantial contributions to our environmental commitments such as nature recovery and net zero target</p> <p>Involve collaboration at a local level and landscape scale</p> <p>Ensure projects are implemented in the most strategic locations to provide best value for people and the environment</p> <p><b>Example projects:</b></p> <p>Forest and woodland creation / restoration / improvement</p> <p>Peatland restoration</p> <p>Creation / restoration of coastal habitats</p>

Whilst ELM development continues, the Countryside Stewardship scheme will still be open for applications next year so there is no need to wait to join or continue your current involvement with agri-environment. Defra stress...

*'No one with a CS or ES agreement will be unfairly disadvantaged when we transition to new arrangements under ELM. Those entering CS agreements from 2021 will be able to end their agreement early where they have secured an ELM agreement. Until then, signing a CS agreement gives a viable, long-term source of income for providing environmental benefits.'*

The Key dates to keep in mind are:

2020 to end of 2023 - ELM scheme design

2020 to end of 2027 - ELM tests and trials

2021 to 2024 - National pilot

2024 - Full roll out of ELM scheme

2021 to 2027 - Direct Payments phased out

2024 - No new agreements under Countryside Stewardship Scheme

## Fertiliser use – how do you compare?

The Farm Business Survey, England 2018/19 provides some interesting information on farm practices. From a CSF perspective, it's encouraging to note how much more careful farmers are becoming at ensuring fertilisers are applied carefully and in the correct quantity for maximum benefit and minimal environmental impact. Remember the days when the stuff was so cheap it didn't matter where or how much was applied? Blue bags fluttered around in the breeze and the decomposing plastic can still be found lodged in hedgerows.

- 24% of farm businesses carried out **precision farming techniques** to guide fertiliser application. Usage was more likely on cereal and general cropping farms and on farms with at least some of their land within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.
- 27% of farms used **soil nutrient software packages** to help determine fertiliser applications. Usage was most common on cereal and general cropping farms and on farms with at least some of their land within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.
- 49% of farms with grass included **clover or other legumes in their grass swards**. This practice was most common on mixed and dairy farms, and on farms in the South West.
- Very few farmers (17%) use **green manures** in their arable rotations. Use was most common on cereal, general cropping and mixed farms. Farms designated as organic were also more likely to use green manures than others.
- For those farms using either clover/legumes or green manures, 71% adjusted **their fertiliser application** rates. This practice was most common on general cropping, dairy and mixed farms and on farms in the South West.
- 46% of farm businesses relied on their own non-FACTS<sup>1</sup> qualified **advice for nutrient planning**, 26% relied on independently supplied FACTS advice, and 23% received advice from their FACTS-qualified fertiliser supplier.

CSF can arrange a completely free visit by qualified external consultants to advise on soil and nutrient management planning, slurry/manure handling storage, machinery testing and calibration (fertiliser and manure spreaders), soil sampling and slurry/manure sampling and analysis. Contact us for further details.

## Catchment Sensitive Farming

For a free advisory farm visit contact:

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We hope you want to hear from us, but you can change your preferences or mind at any time by emailing us on [catchmentsensitivefarming@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:catchmentsensitivefarming@naturalengland.org.uk)

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**A clear solution  
for farmers**

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING



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