

Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming Winter 2022



Isle of Wight
area of outstanding
natural beauty

Welcome – For most, farming is a job that operates over all 365 days of the year but at least Christmas provides something of a break and perhaps time to take stock. Unfortunately, we are all waiting for the Government to provide clarity on where Environmental Land Management (ELM) is heading. The detail is critical to know. As the Basic Payment Scheme continues to slide away it would be nice to know what opportunities might be available in the coming years and how to plan for change. To a degree we are all in limbo. It is sometimes easier to accept an unsatisfactory predicament than a situation that is vague and unpredictable, as now.

Fortunately help is at hand. Navigating the changes in farming is quite a job but the Island will now benefit from the newly launched **Wight Rural Hub** which is operated by a three-person team: **Estee Phillimore** (Administrator), **Graham Biss** (Natural Enterprise) and **Robyn Munt** (Wight Farm Admin) with a steering group made up from a broad range of interests: CLA, AONB, IW grain, Agric. Secretaries, Young Farmers, NFU, Natural Enterprise and the Agricultural Society.

The hub will act as a resource to help farmers and landowners make their businesses grow sustainably. This may be by a variety of approaches such as facilitating co-operation between farmers/land managers or directing them to technical advisers and consultants who will support the business. By working as a one-stop-shop will save everyone endless time (and frustration?) wrestling with websites that can be a forest of information but difficult to navigate. Look out for the hub's seminars and other events or better still sign up via www.wightruralhub.co.uk

It is a worth pausing for a minute to consider just what sustainability covers in terms of a farm business. There are various versions of what sustainability includes, but this seems to be the one that enjoys popular acceptance:

Sustainability is made up of three pillars: economy, society, and environment.

The war in Ukraine and, before that the rising cost of inorganic fertiliser, has thrown up some interesting questions as to the sustainability and resilience of UK farming. How sustainable is your farming operation if productivity is so dependent upon, for example, external sources of fertiliser? Think about what is needed to operate the farm and what produce makes the business viable. You will probably acknowledge that every delivery vehicle coming up the track is costing you money and fewer vehicles leave the farm carrying your produce. Take away any of the components from the external inputs (fertilisers, pesticides, diesel, spares for machinery, veterinary medicines, a GPS signal and reliable Broadband etc) and would your business still operate? Is it both sustainable and resilient? On the economic side of things how does the business operate when BPS falls to zero? This is not a council of despair, but it does mean that all farms are likely to need much adjustment to operate a truly sustainable operation. The **Wight Rural Hub** has arrived not a moment too late!

From the perspective of Catchment Sensitive Farming helping to deliver a sustainable farm environment is our role. We will have a particular focus on soil quality in 2023 with a project that will cover parts of the East Yar catchment. For those who wonder what the environment has got to do with farming, consider where you would be without the rain, that makes the crops grow, sunshine for photosynthesis and the remarkable biological activity in soil to make plant nutrients available. All farms are totally dependent upon what the environment provides. Treat it without due consideration and the economy of your business will suffer.

Slurry Infrastructure grant

This grant is finally open for applications and Catchment Sensitive Farming can help with applications. In the first instance go through the Defra website

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slurry-infrastructure-grant/about-the-slurry-infrastructure-grant-who-can-apply-and-what-it-can-pay-for>

key December dates (via the Farm Advisory Service)

If you are not already receiving these useful reminders on Cross Compliance regulations, do see <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/farming-advice-service> and sign up for regular emails.

Some key dates to be aware of

1 December	If you keep sheep and/or goats, you must carry out your annual count of the animals on your holding as of 1 December, enter this into your holding register and complete the inventory by 31 December. You will receive a letter in November which tells you what to do. (SMR** 8)
1 December	Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship 2022 payment window opens.

Free Expert Advice

Via your Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer Island farmers can benefit from a completely free range of advisory visit by ADAS. Reports by these external consultants are owned by the farm and are entirely confidential. They can cover anything from an assessment of the farm infrastructure through to slurry/manure sampling and analysis and, soil & nutrient management planning. These are just examples from a list of around 30 consultancy visits.

Farming in Protected Landscapes - This grant scheme, administered by the Island's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is continuing to roll out funding for a wide range of farm-based projects. Funding will continue in 2022/23 and the next financial year. A high uptake will confirm to Defra that farmers are keen to support environmental management across the Island's landscape.

See...

<https://www.wightaonb.org.uk/farming-in-protected-landscapes/>

...where the application form can be completed or printed for posting to the AONB. 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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This Newsletter is being provided to through a partnership between Natural England and the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for the purpose of delivering Catchment Sensitive Farming. The AONB take looking after your data as seriously as we take looking after the environment. Your data is only used by us so we can email, call, write or text you about our Catchment Sensitive Farming work. This will include free advice, access to grants, events and campaigns.

We hope you want to hear from us, but you can change your preferences or mind at any time by emailing **mark.simmons@iow.gov.uk**

Please provide your contact details and tick how you would like to be contacted by the Isle of Wight for Catchment Sensitive Farming partnership or Natural England below:

- You can contact me by phone/mobile:
- You can contact me by email:
- You can contact me by post:

Natural England's Information Charter is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about/personal-information-charter>

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Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) is delivered in partnership by Natural England, the Environment Agency and Defra.

