

Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming Spring 2023



Isle of Wight
area of outstanding
natural beauty

Welcome – We were all waiting for details about the Environmental Land Management and on 26th January Defra announced '**How government will pay for land-based environment and climate goods and services**'. On my laptop it took more than 100 presses of the 'Page down' key to view the '**Summary of actions that will be available in SFI and CS**' so my edited highlights below may save you much time and eye strain. To view the January's announcement see...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-land-management-update-how-government-will-pay-for-land-based-environment-and-climate-goods-and-services/environmental-land-management-elm-update-how-government-will-pay-for-land-based-environment-and-climate-goods-and-services>

Agricultural support is now directed to...

*Pay farmers and land managers to provide **environmental goods and services** alongside **food production**, with one-off grants to support **farm productivity, innovation, research and development***

*...grow and maintain a **resilient, productive agriculture**... achieve our ambitious targets for the **environment and climate**.*

It seems likely that Defra have never previously suggested that *...**production methods** have been at the **expense of nature** rather than being symbiotic*'. The areas for the environmental focus are wildlife habitats, water quality i.e. agricultural pollution, flood and drought resilience, woodland creation/management and reducing carbon to address climate change.

It would be difficult to think of a more radical change of thinking from within the walls of Smith Square (or under the previous Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food) that for so long promoted a form of production now acknowledged as impacting upon wildlife.

Farmers are now needed to '**improve the natural environment, alongside food production**' with 'environmental goods and services playing a key role'.

But what exactly are the Government's environmental targets and outcomes? They list six:

- reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the economy to reach net zero by 2050
- halt the decline in species abundance by 2030 and to ensure that species abundance in 2042 is greater than in 2022, and at least 10% greater than 2030
- improve the Red List Index for England for species extinction risk by 2042, compared to 2022 levels
- restore or create in excess of 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042, compared to 2022 levels
- reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture into the water environment by at least 40% by 2038*
- increase total tree and woodland cover to 16.5% by 2050
- adapt to climate change

*Understandably the statement... 'We have increased our **Catchment Sensitive Farming offer**, which supports farmers to protect water, air and soil through tailored advice, support and grants', is welcomed by the Island's Catchment Sensitive Farming Adviser. However, there is no change for the Island as this service has been operating for many years and will continue to do so.

But where is the financial support to achieve the targets?

Payment Options

There are three different payments options that will support 'environmental goods and services'.

The **Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)** will pay to 'protect and enhance the **natural environment** alongside **food production**...support **farm productivity** (animal health and welfare...optimising **use of inputs**...better **use of natural resources**.' The six standards to be introduced will cover:

- hedgerows
- integrated pest management
- nutrient management
- arable and horticultural land
- improved grassland
- low input grassland

The idea behind SFI is to reduce costs, improve efficiency, improve the natural environment and reduce carbon/greenhouse gas emissions.

Countryside Stewardship will continue to pay towards 'targeted actions relating to specific locations, features and habitats' with **CS Plus** to 'join up across local areas to deliver bigger and better results'. Until quite recently the second component of ELM was the Local Nature Recovery' scheme. CS and CS plus will now operate to meet that scheme's function.

'**Landscape Recovery** will pay for bespoke, longer-term, larger scale projects to enhance the natural environment'. Defra will award agreements through competitive application rounds focused on the outcomes that are best delivered through these types of projects.

The first competitive round in 2022 awarded funding to 22 projects collectively covering over 40,000 hectares. Most involved groups of land managers and farmers, including tenants, working together to deliver a range of environmental benefits across farmland and rural landscapes.

CS/SFI Fortunately, SFI and CS can be stacked on the farm so both payments can be received just so long as they are paying for separate actions. Cross checks by Defra will no doubt ensure there is no double funding. The application window for the Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship applications is now underway and closes on 28th April. The Mid tier application window is 21st March through to 18th August.

Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) – This grant is now open for applications and offers a wide range of items some not previously available. These caught my eye:

- Air drill for establishing cover crops
- Direct drill 3m
- Dribble bar minimum working width 10m
- Rainwater harvesting minimum tank size 5,000 litres
- Tractor mounted stubble rake 6m
- Cameras for monitoring farmyard
- Grassland sward lifters
- Digital weather station
- Assisted steer system (retro fitted for older tractors)

- Weed wiper 2.4m
- Soil health monitor package
- Chlorophyll meter

Slurry Infrastructure grant

This grant has been substantially oversubscribed across England with five applications in the Southeast with four Hampshire farms seeking funding. There may be extra funding so it will be worth keeping up to date with Defra's publicity media.

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

Key 2023 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.

1 February - For any land located in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs), you can, from this date, apply organic manure with a high, readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to grassland and tillage land on all soil types if conditions are suitable and you adhere to the quantity restrictions for applying these manures. This is also subject to the Farming Rules for Water being complied with and there is agronomic justification. (SMR**1).

28 February - For any land located in an NVZ, this is the end date for quantity restrictions for applying organic manures with a high, readily available nitrogen content. This is subject to compliance with the Farming Rules for Water and there is agronomic **justification. (SMR 1)**

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 2023/24 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.

Catchment Sensitive Farming

For a free advisory farm visit
contact:

mark.simmons@iow.gov.uk

**Isle of Wight AONB,
Unit 8,
Branstone Industrial Park,
Branstone Farm
Branstone
Sandown
Isle of Wight PO36 0LT**

Mob: 07851 093532

www.iwcsf.org.uk

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

