

Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming Autumn 2023



Welcome – As the roll out of the **Sustainable Farming Incentive** is underway many will be trying to assess exactly what are the implications for their farm business. There are many options, and more to follow next year, but what will be the effects upon productivity and is there a genuine financial benefit?

For some the decision-making process will be difficult as entry into the scheme comes without support. For others, making an application on-line is impossible in the absence of a broadband connection and a degree of IT skills. This is not helpful.

In some quarters the issue of quality control has been raised and, having adopted some of the management options, where does a farmer go for help further on? We have been here before with the Countryside Stewardship Entry Level Scheme. On the face of it, £30/ha across the whole farm was most welcome. Inevitably, once assessed, it was seen to deliver very little. This is not good for farming as, whilst a short-term gain for easily obtainable finance, looks fine, any dependency results in more financial pain and disruption further down the line. Might this be the future for SFI? To farm in the long term surely stability is better than short-term gain?

Cover cropping – The **Farming Rules for Water** are very clear about not leaving bare soil...

...Land managers should plan to have established green cover by 15 October as a reasonable precaution to help prevent agricultural diffuse pollution resulting from applications to that land. Green cover means any commercial crop, green manure or cover crop. Land managers may decide on the most appropriate type of green cover, depending on their individual circumstances.

Land managers must demonstrate appropriate justifications if they are not planning for green cover to be established on land by 15 October or if they are planning to leave the land bare over winter.

Under the SFI's **SAM2 – Multi-species Winter Cover** there is an annual payment of £129/ha to protect the soil surface and provide root growth that: benefits soil structure, supports

soil biology, minimises nutrient leaching, soil erosion and runoff. The crop can be placed on the same area each year or rotated around the holding. You can even only sow parts of a field.

The only requirement is to sow at least two species from the prescribed list : brassicae, legume, grass/cereal or herb. The crop must be well established through December, January and February. Grazing is permitted but it would seem advisable to steer away some of the Island practices where the grazing pressure negates the cover value of the crop and can leave the ground heavily compacted by sheep.

In the autumn of this year a demonstration of cover cropping will be available for inspection at Heasley Manor Farm – look out for the dates on the Wight Rural Hub

<https://www.wightruralhub.co.uk/>

key 2023 date (via the Farm Advisory Service)

1 October	You can burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land in upland areas from this date. (GAEC*6)
1 October	For any land located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to tillage land on soils which are not shallow or sandy. (SMR**1)
15 October	For any land located in a NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to grassland on soils which are not shallow or sandy. (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:

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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>

For more information: [Natural England's Catchment Sensitive Farming Privacy Notice](#)



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



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