

# Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming Winter 2023



**Isle of Wight**  
National  
Landscape

**Welcome** – The ‘smart money’ following this year’s harvest was invested into cover crops and herbal leys. As we experience yet another spell of heavy and persistent rainfall numerous ‘unprotected’ fields are awash. Eroding topsoil can be seen escaping from gateways, running down roads and filling ditches with silt. Some soils are in such poor condition the sown crop has been written off. In all fairness it was difficult to completely protect the land when the quantity of rain might be regarded as exceptional and there was no break to allow saturated ground to recover its capacity to absorb another deluge. The question is, can the recent rainfall events be correctly described as exceptional or tending towards the norm? Island farms, as has always been the case, should take the long view so every effort is made to avoid unnecessary loss of precious topsoil. It’s undoubtedly true that today’s rate of soil degradation both in the UK and overseas outstrips the rate of formation. Catchment Sensitive Farming can help you hold on to your soil – is there an any more important asset you need to conserve on your farm? Will you pass on to the next farming generation healthy, fertile soil or impoverished ‘dirt’?



A field at Atherfield protected from the elements and providing quality grazing.

## ‘Muck for Straw’ – Connecting Island Farms

Island farmers are well connected – a good thing as co-operation and communication can bring many benefits. Trades between farms such as ‘Muck for Straw’ are already in place but there is always scope to expand the network. Catchment Sensitive Farming and the NFU have been looking to further improve connectivity between farms but finding a safe and cost-effective solution has proven difficult partly because of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Databases of names and addresses must, quite rightly, be carefully protected. Fortunately, a solution has been provided by Liz Genever who has produced a ‘dating’ web site called **Carbon Dating**

<https://www.carbon-dating.farm/>

Liz is a third-generation mixed farmer from south-west Lincolnshire who recognised the power of mixed farming to improve soil health and mitigate risk in enterprises. She is an independent beef and sheep systems consultant. **Carbon Dating** was established as a response to queries Liz was getting from a range of farmers. Livestock farmers who had access to arable land outside their local area was normally due to connections through family or college friends. Without these connections, livestock farmers were struggling to find solutions for their farms. So, **Carbon Dating** wants to build connections through the country and aiming to become the go-to place for farmers who are interested in integrating livestock into arable businesses, in terms of contacts. The web site also provides information, guidance and case studies for those who wish to look further into Liz’s work.

The simplest exchanges can be where the arable farms gains carbon to improve soil health in the form of manure or digestate and the livestock farmer receives straw. Annually cultivated soil can often be depleted of carbon so muck can help improve structure, reduce erosion, give better water storage and the improved biological activity is essential to enable the availability and uptake of crop nutrients.

Making connections could also help those with grassland within a Countryside Stewardship agreement but without livestock to undertake the required grazing regime. This may provide the livestock farmer with free or low-cost grazing. Similarly, how about exchanging labour? Livestock and arable farms have different periods where extra manpower is required and there is sure to be something that can be offered in exchange between farms. There must be scope to either offer a helping hand or perhaps a machinery operation where a neighbour’s kit on one farm could do a better job than another.

### How Carbon-dating works

Once you have registered on the site you can search for other farmers on the interactive map or in the directory to see if any of them are looking for what you are offering. You can then contact them directly and start the conversation to see if it may work

Other farmers will be looking at the map and directory, so you may be contacted by

another farmer if they think your circumstance matches theirs. If you do not find anyone at first it is worth checking frequently for any updates as new people are being added all the time. Regular newsletters will also highlight new members to Carbon Dating.

**Carbon Dating** - <https://www.carbon-dating.farm/>

## The end of Cross compliance?

Well yes, Cross compliance will cease to apply as you raise a glass to the sound of Big Ben on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December. Has the rule book therefore gone the same way as the UK's membership of the EU? Not if you care to look up...

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rules-for-farmers-and-land-managers>

There you will find 12 chapters on the 'Rules for Farmers and land managers', i.e. the regulations that will continue to protect the environment and animal health and welfare. The statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency will monitor compliance in a way Defra describe as 'fair, proportionate and consistent'. One significant change is to remove the link between compliance and the farm's delinked payment.

As an example, one of the rules covers Environmental Impact Assessments when there is a change of rural land use. The EIA (Agriculture) regulation applies to a wide range of activities that some may have been considered routine. An EIA screening process may be required where 'uncultivated or semi-natural land' may be damaged by increasing its productivity or where there are changes to field boundaries. It applies to land not cultivated in the last 15 years by activities such as ploughing and applying fertilizers. A screening decision may be required where uncultivated or semi-natural land is:

- Ploughed, tine harrowed or rotovated or subsoiled.
- Re-seeded to increase productivity.
- Drained
- Cleared of more than 2ha of existing vegetation or scrub
- Subject to a change in stocking density, stock type and the grazing regime results in a more intensive farming operation.

The rules are more stringent within the Island's National Landscape (the former AONB) when it comes to moving or redistributing earth, but it seems few are likely to be shifting more than 5,000 cubic metres.

The proposed activity is not necessarily prohibited, it simply means a screening decision needs to be sought. On the Island, the most common situation seems to involve the ploughing of old pastures.

## key 2023 date (via the Farm Advisory Service)

<b>1 December</b>	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 or email in November telling you what to do. ( <a href="#">SMR**U</a> )
<b>1 December</b>	Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship 2023 payment window opens.
<b>31 December (midnight)</b>	Cross compliance, which farmers and land managers must follow if they claim certain rural payments, ends in England on 31 December 2023, but farming and land management regulations still apply. The rules farmers and land managers must follow can be found on <a href="#">GOV.UK</a> .

## 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 National Landscape, 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 Island's National Landscape.

This Newsletter is being provided to through a partnership between Natural England and the Isle of Wight National Landscape for the purpose of delivering Catchment Sensitive Farming. The Island's National Landscape 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



## Catchment Sensitive Farming

For a free advisory farm visit contact:

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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](#)



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