

Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming Spring 2024



**Isle of Wight
National
Landscape**

Welcome – Peering out of the window during February might suggest the rain will never cease. Of course, it will eventually dry up although more than likely then go into a summer drought. This may be of little comfort to those who will have to redrill winter sown crops, and would like to do so, but cannot currently get onto the land. Who could not notice the climate is changing? Whilst the Island's weather may not always mean high rainfall events in the winter and hot dry summers, climate change means this pattern is more likely. What can be done to make the farming operation more resilient?

The first place to start would seem to be getting soil into the best possible condition. If during 'normal' rainfall water is sitting on the surface, do take a spade and look at the soil profile. If it's wet on top but dry below this is a clear indication that the soil is in poor shape and unable to soak up rainfall. There could be an issue with the overall structure – blocky and poorly aerated. Perhaps compaction is an issue? Whatever your findings, there are few soils that won't benefit from additional organic matter.

If your soil test pit doesn't contain a good number of earthworms, this is also indicative of a biologically poor state. It's likely, the living soil elements (bacteria, fungi, protozoa etc) are at low levels. Without these components being present will mean your crops are not receiving the full benefits of a properly fertile biologically active soil. As mentioned in the previous newsletter, it's not a good idea to leave bare soil unprotected over winter. Do take the £129/ha SFI or Countryside Stewardship payment and make cover cropping a routine operation.

General Election = New Money?

Surprise, surprise, for some reason there seems to be some new money to support farming. The overall grant budget was recently announced and said to be worth £427m. It includes:

Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) – Up to £2,000 for the 'management' element (£40/ha for up to 50ha) which could include the options:

- soil health
- moorland assessment
- hedgerows
- integrated pest management
- nutrient management
- farmland wildlife on arable and horticultural land

- farmland wildlife on improved grassland
- buffer strips

low input grassland

Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) includes 3 grants to help you buy equipment or technology to:

- improve productivity
- manage slurry
- improve animal health and welfare

Countryside Stewardship (CS) The grant to get paid to:

- increase biodiversity
- improve habitat
- expand woodland areas
- improve water quality
- improve air quality
- improve natural flood management

England Woodland Creation Grant (EWCO) - provides funding to create new woodland on areas that are at least 1 hectare.

Open: all year round.

Grant value: up to £10,200 with an additional £8,000 if the woodland is for public benefits.

Closing date: 1 January 2025.

Farming in Protected Landscapes – See below where a healthy budget is available.

key 2024 date (via the Farm Advisory Service)

28th February For any land located in an NVZ, this date is the end 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. (NVZ Guidance)

And in case you may have missed this date on New Year's Eve...!

31 December Cross compliance, which farmers and land managers must follow if (midnight) they claim certain rural payments, ends in England on 31 December 2023; however, farming and land management regulations still apply.

Also remember that during this wet weather that the **Farming Rules for Water** still apply! In particular, to avoid prosecution see below and remember the legislation includes digestate.

Circumstances in which applying organic manure and manufactured fertiliser is prohibited:

3. A land manager must ensure that organic manure or manufactured fertiliser is not applied to agricultural land if—

(a) the **soil is waterlogged**, flooded or snow covered, or

(b) the soil has been frozen for more than 12 hours in the previous 24 hours.

and...

Applying organic manure and manufactured fertiliser to agricultural land

4.—(1) A land manager must ensure that, for each application of organic manure or manufactured fertiliser to agricultural land, the application—

(a) is planned so that it does not —

(i) exceed the needs of the soil and crop on that land, or

(ii) give rise to a **significant risk of agricultural diffuse pollution**, and

(b) **takes into account the weather conditions and forecasts for that land at the time of the application.**

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 2024/25. 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.

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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:
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