



February 2021



**A clear solution
for farmers**

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

In The Field

Track Management

Another wet winter has meant water appearing in springs and fields where it may not be welcome. Maintaining soil cover through winter crops, cover crops or grass cover all helps to reduce soil erosion and run-off from the field. Tracks may also have been an issue in the wet weather becoming water logged and rutted. CSF has teamed up with Action for River Kennet (ARK) and ADAS to put on a virtual meeting to discuss track location and maintenance to keep your tracks passable and stop muddy run-off reaching the watercourse.

Log on : Wednesday Mar 17, 2021 04:00 PM London Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82798726755>

Meeting ID: 827 9872 6755

Please do let me know if you are intending to join us.

**Get in touch with your local
Catchment Sensitive Farming
Officer (CSFO)**



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In this newsletter...

There are updates on **pesticides in drinking water** and **the agricultural transition**, a case study on **Integrated Pest Management** and details on **reducing agricultural emissions of ammonia**. There is also information on the **Countryside Stewardship** scheme, which opened on 9th February- please find further details on the NEW Capital Grants Scheme and Mid Tier options at the link below.

CSFO's will continue to provide **advice to farmers in high priority areas**. We are focussing our advice on the areas which will have the most impact and may signpost to other sources of support where available. Due to Covid-19, **we continue to handle advice and visits remotely**, and will review this in line with other government departments as circumstances evolve. It is important that requests for CSFO approval are received as early as possible so we can provide the best advice and support in the circumstances. Please check the last page of this newsletter for key information about this process, and for the **deadlines for requesting support from your local CSFO**.

For more information on Countryside Stewardship, see the **manuals** on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-get-paid-for-environmental-land-management>

Pesticide update

We are still seeing bentazone and now also metazachlor in a groundwater source used for drinking water supply in the Kennet. It's therefore really important to always follow the product label and sometimes to take steps beyond this to minimise the risk to groundwater. The Voluntary Initiative (VI) has produced Water Protection Advice Sheets for pesticides which can pose a particular concern to water. We would encourage you to check whether you use the pesticides included and consult the advice sheet when necessary. Some examples of things to consider before applying plant protection products are listed below:

- Consider a non-chemical alternative, such as a cultural control
- Check your sprayer for leaks and repair before use
- Calibrate your application equipment to make sure you apply accurately
- Choose the appropriate application rate
- Take extra care when filling the sprayer, rinsing packaging or disposing of old packaging, to avoid spills in the farmyard
- Avoid applying if rain is forecast, which could wash the pesticide down out of reach of the weeds and into groundwater.

Please make sure you know whether you're farming in a sensitive area, like a drinking water Safeguard Zone, a drinking water Source Protection Zone or a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone. You can check against the location of your farm on MAGIC – <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>, or the Environment Agency's Check for Drinking Water Safeguard Zones and Nitrate Vulnerable Zones map – <https://environment.data.gov.uk/farmers/>.

Visit <https://voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/resources/wpas/> to download the Water Protection Advice Sheets with specific advice and measures for key pesticides.

If your sprayer filling area is not up to scratch please do contact CSF regarding the possibility of specialist advice or a Countryside Stewardship capital grant to improve your pesticide handling area.



Sprayer/applicator load/wash down area £40/M²

The path to sustainable farming

The Agricultural Transition Plan (2021-2024) will transform the way farmers in England are supported, in the most significant change to farming and land management in 50 years.

Over the next 7 years these changes will move English farmers (the term 'farmers' refers to; farmers, tenants, landowners, land managers, growers and foresters) away from the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and towards an arrangement where Defra will pay farmers to improve the environment, improve animal health and welfare, and reduce carbon emissions. There will be support aimed at paying for sustainable farming practices, creating habitats for nature recovery and making landscape-scale change such as establishing new woodland and other ecosystem services. Some options will be universally open to all farmers and land managers, while others will be more targeted at a smaller number of large projects. There will also be significant grants made available to support farmers to reduce their costs and improve their profitability, to help those who want to retire or leave the industry, and to create new opportunities and support for new entrants coming into the industry.

The '[Path to Sustainable Farming](#)' sets out more detail on the changes, and what they will mean for farmers. This document also sets out the proposed consultation with farmers, land managers and other stakeholders to finalise the design and operation of the future system to ensure they work for everyone.

By 2028, our aim is that all farmers will be:

- running sustainable businesses that do not need to rely on public subsidy
- managing their whole business in a way that delivers profitable food production and the recovery of nature, fusing the best modern technology available today with the rediscovery of the traditional art of good farm husbandry
- able to access public money to help them deliver environmental and animal welfare outcomes on the land they manage and to help their businesses become more productive and sustainable
- meeting clear, relevant and outcome-focused legal standards that champion UK food internationally, prevent environmental harm, protect biosecurity and protect animal welfare

The key changes include:

- Introducing the Environmental Land Management scheme to incentivise sustainable farming practices, create habitats for nature recovery and establish new woodland to help tackle climate change.
- Investing in improving animal health and welfare as part of our sustainable farming approach. This will initially focus on controlling or eradicating endemic diseases amongst cattle, pigs and sheep.
- Direct Payments will be reduced fairly, starting from the 2021 Basic Payment Scheme year, with the money released being used to fund new grants and schemes to boost farmers' productivity and reward environmental improvements.
- Launching a Farming Investment Fund, which will support innovation and productivity. This will open for applications next year and will be used to offer grants for equipment, technology and infrastructure for the future.
- Simplifying and improving existing schemes and their application processes further from January 2021 to reduce the burden on farmers, and we will take a modern approach to regulation, cutting unnecessary red tape for farmers and working together with industry to design a more targeted regulatory system.

These measures apply to England only. Now we have left the EU each UK administration has the flexibility to develop agricultural policy suited to their own unique circumstances

Farming is changing and CSF is here to help. For advice and support for your farm, get in touch with your local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer.

Countryside Stewardship Tips

Applying for a new Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement can appear a challenging prospect. However, in light of the Agricultural Transition Plan, a CS agreement can hold you in good stead for Environmental Land Management which can be swapped into once available. Furthermore, CS provides a guaranteed income and can help improve farm resilience.

To make the application process as smooth as possible we have highlighted some key tips. Please note that the CS scheme is owned by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) who will review applications for final decisions. This article may help by providing advice for your application.

Registering Land

All land where CS options and capital items are applied must be registered on the rural land registry, which can easily be done by completing the [RLE1 form](#). This sometimes catches farmers out where applying for CS capital items in the farmyard.

High priority water quality options & capital items

Some options and capital items such as roofing can only be used in areas targeted for the reduction of water pollution from agriculture. To find water quality information for your land, you can use [MAGIC map](#) and discuss with your local CSFO in order to maximise local water quality priorities and boost your score.

Business Viability Test

For capital total expenditure over £50,000, the RPA will need to carry out a business viability test. This can be evidenced by an accountant to confirm the farm business has the resource required to deliver the proposed works.

Evidence

Some options and capital items will require evidence included in your application or on request from the RPA. Use the [Grant Finder Tool](#) to check what these are. Some evidence must be gathered before you start works and others will be gathered during the agreement. It is important a record of all evidence is kept in case requested at a later date.

Compatibility

Check the grant finder tool for each option and capital item to ensure it is compatible with the BPS land use code it is being applied to.

Watercourse buffer and cover crops (SW4/SW6)

When completing the application do not miss the tick box for 'run off/soil erosion risk' under the correct field parcel for these options.

Rotational Land

This applies to options such as cover crops that will be rotated over the 5 years to different fields. Make sure when you complete your application you include all land that rotational CS options will be rotated into.

Priority habitat

The table below lists options that require approval from the RPA before 28th May. To apply these options there must be the correct habitat layer (PHI) shown on [MAGIC map](#). If you believe that the PHI data is not correct, you can request a change to the dataset, which should be done as soon as possible to avoid delay, for which evidence must be provided to support the proposed change. For the request to be looked at, send details of the relevant data layer, parcel information, a species list, frequency of occurrence of species and any other supporting information to habitatinventories@naturalengland.org.uk.

Code	Option title
BE4	Management of traditional orchards
BE7	Supplement for restorative pruning of fruit trees
GS6	Management of species-rich grassland
GS9	Management of wet grassland for breeding waders
GS10	Management of wet grassland for wintering waders
SP9	Threatened species supplement
UP2	Management of rough grazing for birds
WD4	Management of wood pasture and parkland
WT3	Management of ditches of high environmental value

Planning permission and EA consent

Make yourself familiar with capital item and option requirements as some may need EA consent and/or planning permission. Make approaches as early as possible to avoid delay to your application.

Air Quality & Ammonia – Reducing Agricultural emissions

Air Quality is now fully embedded within the remit of our catchment officers alongside water. For now we are still only able to offer this advice to farms within our high priority water quality areas, but as we move ever closer to the Agricultural Transition Plan and the E.L.M scheme we hope that our remit will extend into a much wider part of the country to include the current medium priority water areas. This would encompass about 86% of the UK, as shown in the Countryside Stewardship targeting layers on [Magic Map: https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx](https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx)

The Countryside Stewardship scheme opened its door for new applications on 9 February and now includes Air Quality as an objective, with new options including tree planting and two options to reduce ammonia emissions from slurry-based livestock systems. These will complement existing options such as self-supporting and floating covers for slurry stores/lagoons, which are now also available for on-farm digestate stores to improve air and water quality.

Applications for the new options can be capital only or linked to a 5-year Mid or Higher tier CS agreement. For capital only applications the grant has been simplified and amalgamated with the previous hedgerow and boundaries grant. The grant now has three themes; boundaries, water quality and air quality, each with a new ceiling of up to £20,000 so potentially unlocking up to £60,000 of funding for farm infrastructure.

Two of the new Air quality options specifically target slurry systems in livestock housing and ammonia emissions reduction. This air quality theme will continue in the development of the E.L.M scheme (from 2024) and the Slurry Investment scheme (from 2022), which we hope to be able to tell you more about later in the year.



AQ1 Automatic slurry scraper (£2760 per passageway)

The frequent removal of slurry from livestock housing will reduce the levels of ammonia released into the air. [AQ1: Automatic slurry scraper - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)



AQ1 Low ammonia emission flooring for livestock buildings (£72/m²)

Reducing the mixing of urine and faeces on livestock housing floors and rapid removal of the urine will reduce the chemical reactions that release ammonia leading to a reduction in ammonia emissions. [AQ2: Low ammonia emission flooring for livestock buildings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

All these items need CSFO approval in Countryside Stewardship and you will need to request support from your CSFO at least 6 weeks before the application deadline. Contact your local Catchment officer to find out more or to arrange for free, expert advice on nutrient management plans and slurry/manure handling, and free soil, slurry and/or manure sampling or planting woodland for water and air quality.

For an informal initial discussion on reducing your farms ammonia emissions, please call Daniel Creech for farms in Kent and Sussex (07775 555943) or Andrew Russell (07901 512398) for other areas in the South East.

We have a range of sector-based case studies available for use here; <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5100549248909312> Two more case studies will be published in early April to cover Green bedded slurry systems and a case study on sand separation (both dairy based).

Building farm resilience: A Farmer's Perspective

Mark Chandler, who farms Petworth AHDB monitor farm, has taken on a new approach to his rotation in order to build greater farm resilience. His motivation for doing so followed a couple of tough harvests that had been impacted by bad weather and exploding black grass levels. He also noticed that resistance to chemicals was increasing and the efficacy of the pesticides he employed was noticeably declining. Indeed, when he had the flea beetles tested for resistance, he found that 100% were. Mark believes that the changes in conditions can no longer be written off as just a bad weather year but are potentially more significant, indicating longer term changes to the climate.

Mark's new approach includes trialling the use of wildflower strips to promote better pest control. These in-field strips provide refuge for beneficial insects and predators which take over the job traditionally undertaken by pesticides. The strips were established in the autumn before the crop went in using GPS guidance. Buffer strips around the flower strips were left to prevent encroachment into the crop and provide clearance from the sprayer area. The weeds had to be controlled through topping, especially in year one and two to allow perennials to establish.

The CS option AB8 flower-rich margins and plots was used to help fund the flower strips. Mark is also now using the two-year legume fallow (AB15) to help combat black grass, improve the soil in the least productive areas and to act as a break crop. To further align with his farming philosophy, Mark created more habitat over the farm utilising option AB9 - wild bird cover.

In total, 16% of arable land is now out of production most of which is the lowest-performing land.

"The income we received from the CS options allows this investment, and risk, whilst we are still receiving our BPS payments" Mark said. "We believe this is all part of getting our business ready for E.L.Ms."

Mark has found that although it is still early days in terms of seeing concrete results, it is encouraging to move closer towards his aims of decreasing reliance on chemical pesticides, improving soil health and providing benefits for the wider environment.



Mark created 6m in-field flower strips, every 90m within productive arable fields based on the evidence that insects will travel up to 50m to find prey.

CSFO Approval

Are you a land agent or farmer in a high priority area for water or air quality and interested in Countryside Stewardship for 2021? If so, check whether you need to get support and approval from your local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO) before you apply by following these steps:

Step 1: Use MAGIC (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>) to check if the farm / client's holding is in a high priority (red) area and eligible for CSFO support. Identify the target pollutants for the area. Please note: Ammonia is a target pollutant across all of the high priority areas.

Step 2: Identify relevant capital items or land management options for the pollutants and whether they need CSFO approval. Some items and options in Mid Tier and Capital Grants require approval from a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO).

Step 3: If you do need CSFO approval, contact your local CSFO with the completed 'Request for CSFO Approval Form' at least 6 weeks before you intend to apply (**deadlines below**).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958853/csfo-support-and-approval-form.docx.

Natural England will not consider request forms that arrive late.

Capital Grants:

Send the completed Request for CSFO Approval form to your local CSFO by **Friday 19 March 2021**. The scheme closes for applications on 30 April 2021.

Mid Tier:

Send the completed Request for CSFO Approval form to your local CSFO by **Friday 18 June 2021**. The scheme closes for applications on 30 July 2021.

Send us an email to get updates from your local team

catchment
sensitiefarming
@naturalengland.org.uk

Catchment Sensitive Farming is a successful partnership between Natural England, Defra and Environment Agency; working together with farmers and organisations in priority catchments across England to improve the quality of our water and air.

CSF provides free expert and confidential advice, training and grant support to enable farmers to take voluntary action to improve the environment and their farm business.

Since 2006, CSF has worked with nearly 20,000 farms and helped farmers take more than 70,000 positive actions to reduce pollution. 92% of the farmers CSF has worked with are satisfied with its one-to-one advice and by working together this has contributed to a reduction in pollution in our rivers.

In 2018, as part of Defra's Clean Air Strategy, the Government committed an additional £3m to CSF, focussing on working with the agricultural industry to improve air quality.

For more information search GOV.UK for Catchment Sensitive Farming.

How do we use your data?

Your data is only used by us so we can email, call, write or text you about Catchment Sensitive Farming. This will include advice, access to grants, events and campaigns.

You can change your communications preferences by emailing us on catchmentsensitiefarming@naturalengland.org.uk

Our Information Charter is at bit.ly/naturalenglandinfo

Our Privacy Notice is at bit.ly/privacyscf

We get your data from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). You can update your contact details held by them by emailing csc@rpa.gsi.gov.uk with your SBI.

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



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas



Environment
Agency