



October 2021

Downs & Harbours update

Working with farmers to improve water & air quality

Local Catchment Sensitive Farming update

The busy harvest period has hopefully drawn to a close for most, offering a brief breather before the following crop preparations. August delivered a dismal drizzle of rain with very little sunshine. Combine this with a wet winter, several late frosts and a spring drought adds to an already challenging time for farmers. The past couple of years have caused hefty strains and challenges in the farming sector with weather extremities and knock-on effects with covid restrictions, to name a few. To deliver some light, there are lots of emerging and existing funding opportunities which may benefit you and your farm business.

This issue will cover Portsmouth Water's incentives, schemes and offers which are already proving popular within the catchment. The new Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has funding available to farmers and land managers who wish to deliver a project that contributes to climate, nature, people or place. Further details within the newsletter.

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Portsmouth Water's Incentives, Schemes and Offers

Portsmouth Water has several grant schemes available to farmers and land managers in the groundwater catchments across the East Hampshire and Arun & Western Streams area.

Portsmouth Water has funding for the schemes until 2025. Grants of up to £10k per financial year per holding are available.



Nutrient & Soil Testing Support

Portsmouth Water are offering grants to help measure your soil indices, soil mineral nitrogen and organic manures to make the most of your nutrient inputs to reduce the risk of over applications of costly and valuable nutrients. Planning nutrient applications is a vital farm management tool to ensure that applied nutrients (in terms of either bagged fertiliser or manures) match the crop demand to optimise yield and minimise environmental losses.

Soil Mineral Nitrogen Testing

Grants are available to cover 100% of the costs of Soil Mineral Nitrogen (SMN) testing to help farmers better inform their nutrient planning in relation to Nitrogen fertiliser inputs. We are keen to engage with and support your existing agronomist or advisers to provide this service. Portsmouth Water also have a list of suppliers who can provide this service.

Slurry & Manure Analysis

Portsmouth Water are also offering grants to cover slurry and manure analysis to reduce wasteful losses of valuable nutrients into waterways and groundwaters. For reliable fertiliser planning it is important to know the nutrient content of manures that are applied to land, so that this can be taken into account when looking at fertiliser requirements. Undertaking analysis can enhance the efficiency of which slurries are used and can ensure you are optimising the use of your manures on farm.

For more information visit our website at <https://www.cleanwaterpartnership.co.uk/r>

To apply please discuss with your agronomist or adviser and get in touch with Beth Fairley (Portsmouth Water Catchment Management Officer) to discuss grant support.

Capital Grant Scheme

The Capital Grant Scheme will directly assist farmers (and other land managers) in sensitive areas, namely Source Protection Zones (SPZ), by part-funding capital items to reduce the risk of nitrate (and other) losses to groundwater.

Funding is available to support a range of capital items, up to 50% of the costs as agreed for (capped at £10K per holding per year), items include but not limited to:

- Precision farming equipment
- Specialist drills
- Precision slurry applicators e.g. dribble Bar
- Pesticide Handling Areas & treatment e.g. biobeds or biofilters

Farmers and land managers can also suggest alternative capital items for reducing nitrate pollution risk. Examples of items which could be eligible for funding include GPS and other equipment to apply nitrogen more accurately.

For further information please refer to the Scheme Handbook at: <https://www.cleanwaterpartnership.co.uk/grant-scheme>

Please contact Beth Fairley to check your eligibility.

For further information...

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Catchment Trials

There are several trials being undertaken in the catchment this year by Portsmouth Water in partnership with Catchment Sensitive Farming. These include:

- Herbal ley for hay making trial
- Undersowing maize trial
- Soil Carbon trial

Herbal ley trial - The use of diverse leys in hay/haylage production

The Downs and Harbour area hosts phosphate and nitrate water quality issues, and SSSI sites such as Chichester Harbour have failing condition largely due to nitrates. There are a significant number of equine establishments influencing land use contributing to these pressures. In previous years, local workshops for horse owners explaining associated environmental issues have had low attendance. This trial aims to increase equine engagement through focus on how a healthy environment supports a healthy horse.

A 4-year trial will be delivered on two farms using 3 tailored seed mixes to investigate and build an evidence base for use of low/zero nitrogen input leys, and highlighting the impact on:

- Soil health
- Soil nutrient management
- Hay nutritional value
- Economics

Comparisons between different low/zero input leys and conventional leys will be evaluated.

I'm pleased to say we held an equine engagement workshop last month which had over 30 horse/landowners in attendance and received some very positive feedback. The workshop explained water quality issues in the catchment and introduced our local trial. We also had two guest speakers, Fiona Watkins, The Horse Nutritionist and Stuart Myers from Equiculture.

We plan to run a series of workshops next year which will focus on the benefits of herbal leys to both the buyers and growers of horse hay, with the first year of trial data being reported on.



Equiculture demonstrated how by using the natural behaviours of horses combined with best practice land management practices can create a sustainable, healthier environment for horses.

Undersowing maize trial

The continual expansion of the maize growing in the south of England is bringing new challenges to water quality. The challenge for Portsmouth Water is nitrate leaching into groundwater during the Autumn/Winter months on bare ground after maize harvest. This field scale aim is to understand the benefits of undersowing maize with grass in terms of water quality as well as maize quality.

A 4ha field has been drilled with maize under the following scenarios:

1. Straight Maize
2. Maize under sown with Italian Rye Grass
3. Maize companion cropped with spring beans.



The maize was undersown end of June and the trial plots will be monitored throughout the season until harvest for N leaching. The maize yield differences will be reported on in addition to maize quality. A workshop will be held this winter to promote the findings of this trial, an invitation will be circulated closer to the time for this workshop.

Soil Carbon trial

CSF and Portsmouth Water have been working with 8 farmers that represent a diverse range of different farm management from conventional to regenerative across the East Hampshire and Western Streams catchments.

The trial has assessed a number of parameters to determine the relationship between soil carbon and nutrient retention and availability which is critical to understanding how farmers can improve soil health whilst also planning efficient nutrient applications. The ultimate aim of the trial is to determine if there is a significant link between high organic matter soils and associated regenerative practices and nutrient retention and availability. This provides a greater case for increasing regenerative practices with the potential to deliver not just carbon sequestration benefits but also water quality benefits to meet Water Framework Directives objectives, maximising the ecosystem services from these practices.

Across the cohort of farmers tested there was a good range of values showing the difference in soil type, cropping system and management type. Assessing the fields that were analysed, a few of the fields that were regularly using cover crops had high organic matter values but there was also a range across soil type. The analysis was concurrent with wider work taking place in the soil carbon project by the Farm Carbon Toolkit where those fields that are regularly using cover crops, alongside low disturbance cultivation are building soil organic matter. Regarding the use of cover crops - the addition of the Soil Mineral Nitrogen (SMN) / Additional Available Nitrogen (AAN) tests allowed the farmers to reduce the amount of applied Nitrogen due to the efficient capture from the cover crops over the winter. 2/8 farmers which were cover cropping were able to adjust their fertiliser applications by around 10% leading to a reduction in nitrous oxide emissions, improved soil health and a reduction in potential leaching loss. The other farmers were interested in the results and as such, are keen to continue to explore the possibility for AAN testing to provide an evidenced based approach for Nitrogen reduction.

We hope to work with the participating farmers this following year to add to the baseline data gathered from the first year of data collection.

Further trials

Under the Interreg Channel for Payment for Ecosystem Services (CPES) project, Portsmouth Water is undertaking further trials covering:

- Cover cropping
- Efficie-N -t 28 fertiliser
- Nitrogen fertiliser reductions



The project finishes April 2022, the final event will be held in Spring 2022 and an invitation will be circulated closer to the time. The event will display the six case study pilots including Portsmouth Water Groundwater pilot and will emphasise the mechanisms for a sustainable PES schemes, where farmers are rewarded for providing ecosystem services by protecting water quality and water resources through sustainable catchment measures.

Do you farm in or around Chichester Harbour AONB?

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has allocated £125,000 to support farmers and land managers with one-off projects that meet one or more of the national goals for **climate, nature, people, and place**; and **local priorities** for Chichester Harbour AONB.

Involvement in the Programme will not prevent you entering into future Defra schemes.

Projects outside of the AONB can also be funded, if they are part of the wider catchment.

Further details and guidance, including examples of projects can be found on the Chichester Harbour Conservancy [website](#).

Further guidance on FiPL including the contact details for other local protected landscape bodies can be found on the [.gov.uk](#) webpage.

Farming with thought to your own wellbeing

Farming is currently going through immense change and the past 12 months has added to the many challenges that farmers already face. It's not often easy to talk about mental health but there are lots of guides and resources out there to support the farming community during these challenging times. "[The Little Book of Minding Your Head](#)" booklet by yellowwellies.org offers a pocket guide to understanding mental health and stress management in agriculture, as well as providing links to sources of help.



Manure Management

It is important that you comply with the '**Farming Rules for Water**', which outlines what farmers must do to manage their land to avoid water pollution. A new regulatory position statement was released on 25 August (press release [here](#)) which affects the spreading of organic manure on agricultural land.

Your local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO) can offer help and advice on options within the programme which could help with manure management on your farm. This includes providing support for Mid Tier and Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship

applications that include high value options such as covering existing manure stores in high priority areas.

CSFO's can also commission specialist visits to look at yard and manure storage set up, including ways to reduce clean water mixing with manures. If your farm is in a high priority area, a Farm Infrastructure Audit can help to identify potential areas for improvement in the yard and support any grant applications. Please get in touch if you would like to find out more.

Further guidance is available through the NFU [here](#).



CSF works with farmers, organisations and catchment communities across England to improve the quality of air, water, and supports the use of nature-based solutions to improve sustainable water management.

Working together for a healthy environment

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



Natural England take looking after your data as seriously as we take looking after the environment. For more information about how we handle your data visit gov.uk/catchment-sensitive-farming.