

# Farming Matters

Issue 1 Spring 2017

**News, tips and events brought to you by Alice & Matt, Eden Rivers Trust's farmer liaison team for group members of the River Petteril and River Lowther & Leith Facilitation Fund.**

Welcome to the first issue of our quarterly newsletter with the latest water-friendly farming and Facilitation Fund news. If there are any topics you would like us to cover next time, please let us know!

## Meet the team

**Alice** joined the trust a year ago and works as co-ordinator within the Rivers Lowther and Leith catchments.



Previously, she worked for the FWAG, Natural England and a private land agency. For the past five years, Alice has been designing and managing agri-environment schemes, including ELS/HLS and Countryside Stewardship, on a self-employed consultancy basis.

Outside work, Alice helps out on the family's upland hill farm and is a keen walker and cyclist.

**Matt** is our most recent recruit, having joined us in December 2016. He is working alongside farmers in the River Petteril catchment to deliver the facilitation fund objectives.



Matt has a wealth of knowledge of local farming systems, gained through years of working on the family farm near Kirkby Stephen. He currently manages another of the family's farms at Crosby Ravensworth as well as working for us!

Previously he was a Trainee Agricultural Consultant for a Cheshire -based firm.

Outside of work, Matt is a keen sportsman, playing rugby for Upper Eden.

## Events

**The spring/summer events programme is currently being developed.**

**With your help, we have identified topics you would like to see included:**

- Drainage – soil structure & maintaining land drains,
- Soil mapping and variable fertiliser spreading,
- Silage making – minimising losses, maximising quality,
- Cow track design,
- Rotational grazing and sward management,
- Soil health - understanding soils and interpreting analysis,
- Slurry application techniques to maximise nutrient value

**If you have ideas for further events please let us know!**

**The finalised programme will be available shortly.**

Contact us on  
**01768 866788**  
**[office@edenrt.org](mailto:office@edenrt.org)**





# Managing water to reduce costs

Together with Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE) and Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF), we recently ran an event to demonstrate how water on the farm can be successfully managed to reduce costs and protect water quality.

With rainfall around Penrith usually about 965mm (38 inches) and towards Shap up to 1520 mm (60 inches), farmers are having to deal with up to 1524 litres (335 gallons) for every square metre of open yard area.

## Keeping rainfall clean

If you can prevent rainfall from becoming 'dirty' when it falls onto stock feeding yards and manure stores (so having to be collected and treated as slurry), this could:

- Significantly save slurry spreading costs (typically £2 per cubic metre), and
- Reduce pressure on slurry storage systems.

## Seeing it in practice

A key focus of the event was a visit to Lowther Low Moor, where the use of a floating cover on a slurry lagoon:

- Avoids spreading an additional 930 m<sup>3</sup> (204,600 gallons) during the winter,
- Saves around £1800 per year

This means the lagoon has the capacity to store *throughout* the winter so you can spread when the nutrients can be made best use of by grass and other crops.

Paul Arkle talked about how using recycled clean water through rainwater harvesting systems on a

550 cow dairy farm had halved the farm's annual mains water requirement.

Chris Turner gave a summary of funding opportunities such as Countryside Stewardship Scheme (see page 4 for current funding opportunities), which can offer capital funding for items such as roofing yards and guttering which help to protect water quality on- and off- the farm.

Thanks to Anthony Errington and his son at Lowther Low Moor for kindly hosting the event.



Find out more about water-friendly farming measures you can install on your farm by downloading this leaflet from our website:

**[Water-friendly Farming leaflet >>](#)**

# Life under your feet



Understanding soil is key to improving grassland productivity & efficiency. Soil specialist, James Bretherton of AgScope told us why at our grassland event back in October.

Grassland productivity is largely under-exploited by the livestock industry at present, but, spending a bit of time to understand the structure of your soil could pay dividends.

## Healthy soils

Soil is a 'living' environment which has mineral, structural and biological components.

A 'good' soil is composed of:

- 45% Mineral,
- 25% Water,
- 25% Air and
- 5% Organic Matter.

Get the balance wrong and your crops won't thrive.

The importance of pH cannot be stressed enough to ensuring nutrient availability and a well-structured soil.

## Take a closer look at your soil

Practical assessment is essential. Dig a pit, look at the soil, smell it, see what's growing and living in it.

Does the structure allow good aerobic conditions; good root growth, are earthworms present?

Analysing your soil is key to give you the knowledge needed to make good decisions.

James recommended that land is tested every 4-5 years.

At the event, James demonstrated how to identify compaction with a spade or penetrometer and how it can severely impact on grass yield and the uptake of nutrients.

Look out for more soil management events like this coming soon.



*Think of soil as a cow's rumen. To maximise production and efficiency from your livestock, the stock need to be healthy... The same goes for soil – it must be healthy and well structured.*



## Rotational grazing in practice

The day included a visit to Robert Craigs' farm, Dolphenby, Edenhall.

Robert outlined the extended 'NZ' grazing system he implements on his farm.

The group heard how his system of rotational grazing management has seen an increase in grass yields, reduced need for fertiliser and less need to re-seed pastures.

Having implemented this strategy even the oldest, permanent pasture improved significantly without the need for complete re-seeding by traditional methods.

Interested in finding out more?  
Look out for our next event!

## Borrow an aerator

Aerators reduce soil compaction when the soil is not too wet or dry, to encourage spring growth and sward recovery.

We have two aerators that you can borrow to improve your grass growth.

Book by emailing [office@edenrt.org](mailto:office@edenrt.org) or call 01768 866788





# Eden's dairy farmers lead the way

Although he only joined us in December, Matt has been busy with an exciting piece of work focused on how our catchment's dairy farmers are tackling the problem of diffuse pollution and gathering their views on where future improvements can be made.

Six 'pilot' farms were selected from different areas, stretching from Appleby to as far as the outskirts of Carlisle. This covered different land uses and allowed us to gauge a better understanding of the various challenges faced by each farm.

Surveys were carried out, focusing on how infrastructure has been designed or adapted to reduce the risk of diffuse pollution, including covering yards and silage clamps to collect clean water and understanding how machinery employed on the land helps to reduce compaction and surface run off.

Matt says:

*"Our surveys showed different mixes of techniques were used that suited each farm's environment and land type, but what remained*

*consistent was the fact that our catchment's dairy farmers are some of the most forward-thinking in the industry. Credit has to go to the farms for the way they have adapted the yards and livestock traffic around the farm to keep pollution to a minimum.*

*I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the pilot farms again for their input and involvement, without which the project could simply not go ahead."*

**Interested in finding out how your farm could benefit from some of these techniques? Give Matt or Alice a call!**

## Funding opportunities

### LEADER

Outline application by: **27 April**

Who can apply: Farmers, groups of farmers within the Fells & Dales Solway, Border and Eden areas.

Max. available grant: Capped at 40% of the eligible project costs.

Minimum grant is **£2,500 up to £142,500 (or equivalent to €200,000)**

Duration: One-off capital grant

Includes:

Equipment and machinery to improve the efficiency of the use of energy, water, fertiliser and other direct inputs, such as:

- Precision farming or new technologies, GPS variable application monitors, remote crop sensing systems;
- specialist drills to enable low or zero tillage farming to reduce impacts on soils and

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;

- Application equipment e.g. trailing shoe slurry, shallow injection, dribble bars,
- GPS · Investment in systems to improve the management of slurry and manures to reduce the reliance on artificial fertilisers

**[Find out more about LEADER >>](#)**

### Hedgerow & boundaries capital grant

Applications open: until **28 April**

Max. grant available for each farm business (SBI): **£5,000**

Duration: 2 years.

Includes: Capital funding for a range of hedge and wall restoration works including:

- hedge restoration laying £9.40/m,
- hedge coppicing £4.00/m,
- hedge gapping up £9.50/m,
- stone wall restoration £25/m

Competitive application process.

Applications linked to a Facilitation Fund group attract 10 additional points!

**[Find out more about the Hedgerow & Boundaries Grant at GOV.UK >>](#)**

### Countryside Stewardship (Mid/High Tier)

Hot off the press - applications have just opened! Includes Water Capital Grants.

**[Find out more at GOV.UK >>](#)**

# Lie of the land

Each time, we'll bring you a personal view from folk who farm the land - and we've got quite a few at ERT!

This time: Matt Jenkinson, ERT's man on the ground in Petteril, Manager of his family's farm in Crosby Ravensworth.

2016 will always be remembered for different reasons, Leicester City winning the Premier League, England's rugby stars and their 'Grand Slam' year and of course the tragic loss of some of our most cherished cultural icons.

However, for me the most important topic was our decision to leave the EU. Rightly or wrongly, we have made our bed, so let's deal with it. As a Young farmer, working in partnership with my parents on two farms in the catchment, we are going to be dealt with several major blows post 2020, however, the exciting time is going to be preparing our business for this change.

I've always been brought up, not to stand still, but to keep moving

forward. In the Agricultural industry we have to welcome change, In the coming years, with the future of funding uncertain, those farms who won't embrace changes will simply be left behind.

This in mind, we have to look to diversify, find a niche and make the most of our farmed environment. This is s Together with Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE) and Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF), we ran an event to demonstrate how water on the farm can be successfully managed to reduce costs and protect water quality.

This is something I've had to do myself as I now farm and work for Eden Rivers Trust, where I can employ my existing farming knowledge to co-incide with the aims of such a forward thinking trust.

Back to the farm, and 2016 will also be remembered for what seemed to be a prolonged growing period. In past years I've often had to get the big bale feeders out and cut into the round bales, this year however the ewes stayed in good shape until well after scanning thanks to some much welcomed rough grazing which is so often not there so late in the year.

With the ewes now all housed, ready for lambing, I find myself keeping a closer eye on the weather, waiting for the inevitable March storm coming over the horizon, just in time to hit the ewes as they lamb.

Nature will always find challenges to throw at us, but as farmers we are still here, smiling..... ish.

## That's all for this issue

If you are interested in exploring ways that you can bring water-friendly farming onto your farm, or would like some advice about potential funds and grants that you can apply for then please get in touch with us.

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