



Farming Matters

Issue 4 Spring 2019

Welcome to the spring edition of 'Farming Matters', Eden Rivers Trust's newsletter to update our Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund farmer groups and stakeholders on recent and forthcoming events and meetings, relevant projects and news and tips of topical interest.

Our two farmer groups join 98 other Natural England Facilitation Funds working collectively to deliver greater benefits for soil, water and wildlife at a landscape scale.

New members are always welcome. If you know of anyone who farms in the Leith/Lowther or Petteril areas who might be interested in joining our farmers' groups, please get in touch!

by **Andy Dyer**
Senior Farming
and Conservation Officer



News

Welcome to the new ERT team

The past six to nine months have seen a few changes within the team here at ERT, with a new Head of Conservation, a River Restoration Manager and two Farming and Conservation Officers all now in post.

By now you will all hopefully have met or spoken to myself and Sarah and one of our aims in 2019 is to get out into the catchment to keep members of the Facilitation Fund groups up to date with what is happening.

News continues on next page >>

cover photo: Rod Ireland

Events

2019 events for your diary. Check the ERT website for more details nearer to the event, or call Andy/Sarah for info/book your place:

March

FYM and Slurry Testing Workshops

April

DEFRA ELM consultation Phase 2

FYM and Slurry Testing Workshops

May and June:

Countryside Stewardship Scheme Workshops

September

Soils Event- GPS, SOYL etc.

November

GIS Mapping, N-Trading, Ecosystem Services Workshop

Just a reminder, ideas for events come from you - give us your ideas and we can make them happen!

Book your place

01768 866788

office@edenrt.org

Spreading the water management message

A prolonged drought in 2018, following on from a very challenging winter, particularly for those farming in the uplands of Cumbria, has meant that farmers, landowners and advisors in the Eden catchment have had to face challenges that have not been faced for generations.

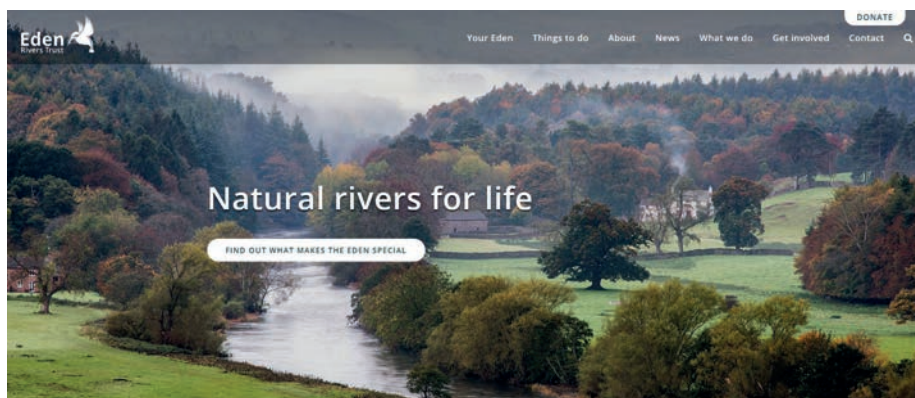
If we are to experience such extremes of climate and weather in the future then a better understanding of water retention measures on farm, coupled with an increased knowledge of water as a valuable resource will be very important.

Therefore, this year we are trying to increase the number of articles appearing in local media to help inform the wider farming community of these issues and promote events which may be of interest.

We have also revamped our website, adding more information about sustainable farming and an events page where you can find events for farmers.

More information will be added throughout the year.

Take a look at the new site at: edenrivertrust.org.uk



Event report: Demystifying grants for the next generation

For many years now, we have worked closely with farmers throughout the catchment so they can better understand how their businesses can benefit from support and advice.

In return, they have accessed our contacts, industry knowledge and expertise gained from working with key organisations and stakeholders in the environmental sector on a daily basis.

As funding from Central Government will remain an essential component of a farm's finances for the short- to medium-term, we believe that we need to equip the next generation of farmers NOW with the knowledge and business skills required to secure funding that will help them create financially and environmentally sustainable farm businesses.

With this in mind, we spent an afternoon with two groups of Level 3 Advanced Diploma Agriculture Students at Newton Rigg College, helping them understand how Countryside Stewardship grants work and the variety of schemes on offer Water Capital and Hedgerow and Boundary grants.

We discussed the role of Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers (CSFO), and how catchments differ in priority ... and what this means in terms of levels of engagement with Natural England in particular.

Working with Catchment Sensitive Farming

We continue our very active engagement with our two CSFO's (Chris Turner and Susan Kenworthy), assisting them more generally to support group members who are planning CS Mid-Tier Water Capital applications.

This has included running workshops signposting farmers to handbooks, talking about how there might be a requirement to submit a planning application as part of the process, and how to access the information required to complete RLE1 forms.

We are also very fortunate to have been selected to be part of the Defra Environmental Land Management (ELM) engagement programme.

ELM will ultimately replace the two current key areas of agricultural support:

- Basic Payment Scheme, and
- Environmental Stewardship.

The aim of ELM is that farmers will be able to help design their own scheme, focusing on, and earning an income stream from what their farm business delivers in terms of "public goods".

We have held one meeting already with Defra and a group of local farmers, and we have a further meeting planned for April to continue this process. More details to follow.

Report: Farmers Meetings

A number of events and meetings have been held with the aim of informing the farming community about potential regulatory changes and current issues - some jointly between the two facilitation funds and one with The Cumbria Farmer Network.

We held a couple of well attended meetings in conjunction with John Stalker of the Environment Agency with the aim of delivering advice and guidance on the Farming Rules for Water and SSAFO.

As a result of these meetings, we have achieved a far greater understanding of how the new Farming Rules for Water will be applied and monitored and what evidence is key for compliance.

The presentation at the meeting covered all aspects of the rules, but particularly highlighted issues that can lead to point source and diffuse pollution from agricultural operations that will, as a consequence, impact on water quality within the catchment and the group area.

Engagement with John Stalker, the Senior Environment Officer (Agriculture), Cumbria & Lancashire was seen as very positive by those who attended.

If you were unable to attend one of our events and would like to know more about how these rules and regulations may impact your business, please contact either Andy or Sarah on 01768 866788.

Eden Valley Mineral Water Company visits

Two site visits were undertaken to the Eden Valley Mineral Water Company at Armathwaite, which included a tour of the site as well as viewing a presentation by the Manager for Water about the company's history, the history of water extraction on the site, their concerns about nitrates in their boreholes and the environmental impact of the site and its products.

These meetings were an ideal opportunity for group members to engage with a local company (with international presence as part of the Mitsubishi Group) which has boreholes sunk into the same aquifer as many of the group, hear first-hand about the company's concerns and how the pressures in their industry are in many ways similar to those facing a lot of farm businesses.

New NFM handbook for farmers

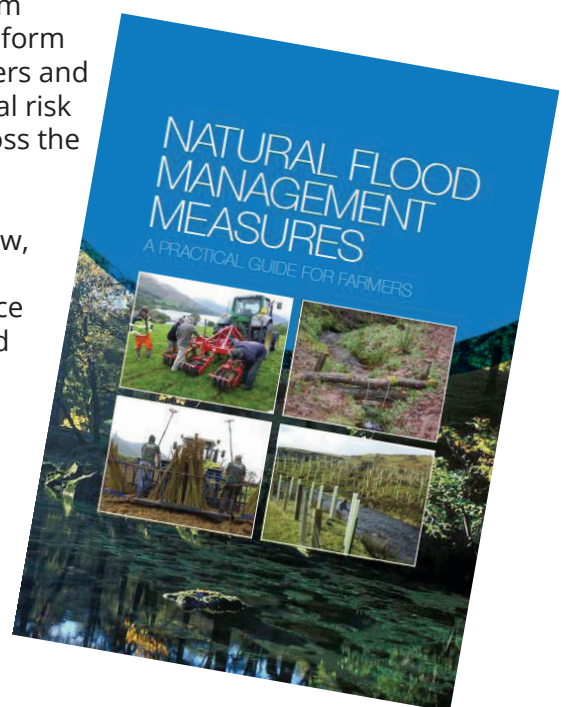
Natural Flood Management (NFM) has been a hot topic since Storm Desmond, with a growing realisation that hard engineering in the form of concrete flood barriers cannot do the job by themselves. Farmers and landowners are potentially well-placed to help reduce the potential risk of flooding to low-lying towns and cities by installing features across the landscape using natural materials.

However, Natural Flood Management measures do more than slow, store or filter water - they provide habitat for beneficial insects (the type that feed on pests that destroy crops for instance), reduce soil and nutrient loss and track erosion, improve water quality and generally provide habitat corridors for a wide range of wildlife.

If you're interested in the idea of using NFM techniques, but don't know which ones would be suitable for your land, this practical guide outlines the different types of features and techniques that could be installed or implemented, along with the cost of installing and maintaining them.

Follow this link to download

[Natural Flood Management Measures: A Practical Guide](#) (PDF) or request a FREE copy by calling us on 01768 866788





Grants

With the window now open for 2019 applications for Natural England administered grants, here's our handy guide to making preparations ahead of applying

Now spring is upon us, now is the time to apply for Countryside Stewardship Scheme application packs.

The current schemes available under Countryside Stewardship (CS) are as follows:

1. **Higher-Tier CS**
2. **Mid-Tier CS**
3. **CS Offers for Wildlife**
4. **Hedgerow and Boundary Grants**
5. **Water Capital Grants**
6. **Woodland Creation**

Application packs are now available for:

- Mid-Tier CS,
- Water Capital Grants,
- Hedgerow and Boundary Grants, and the
- CS Offers for Wildlife.

Woodland Creation Grants can be applied for all year round and applicants for a Higher Tier CS must submit their initial application to Natural England no later than **13th April**.

The application window for the Hedgerow and Boundary Grant Scheme closes on the **3rd May** and Mid-Tier and Water Capital Grants will close on the **31st July**.

As with many schemes, preparation prior to submitting an application can help immensely.

Here's some useful information if you are considering submitting an application that will include elements of capital works:

Capital works for water quality under either Mid-Tier CS or a Water Capital Grant:

It is important to check if the farm is located in a High Water Quality Priority area (such as the River Eden catchment).

Other capital works such as renewing broken concrete:

These will need written approval from your local planning authority.

Installation of water storage systems:

You will need an Environment Agency approval or derogation.

Construction of a roof:

will either require planning permission or an application under permitted development rights to your local planning authority.

Having paperwork such as this in place will help reduce delays in the decision process and they should be submitted with the application.

As the CS schemes are field parcel based, then new field numbers may need to be applied for from the RPA by means of a RLE1 form.

Getting help with your application ...

As a Facilitation Fund group member, you can access help and guidance on CS from Andy and Sarah, who in turn work closely with Chris Turner and Susan Kenworthy, Natural England's Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers (CSFO) within the Eden Valley.

Group members have benefited greatly from face to face meetings with the CSFO, facilitated by us at local venues, leading to successful applications being submitted and agreements offered.

If you would like to discuss any element of the CS schemes or your suitability then please contact either Andy Dyer or Sarah Kidd at Eden Rivers Trust on 01768 866788.



The Great Farm Challenge

... or Newton Rigg students get a taste of being a Farming and Conservation Officer!



by Sarah Kidd
Farming and Conservation Officer

The Great Farm Challenge is a collaborative project, delivered by Natural England's Catchment Sensitive Farming team, the Environment Agency, and water companies including United Utilities.

Since it started, the partnership project has engaged more than a thousand agricultural students to increase awareness of water friendly farming amongst the young farming community.

With pollution (literally) on the syllabus, on the 6th February we brought The Great Farm Challenge to Newton Rigg College's Level 3 Agricultural students.

Setting the scene

The event kicked off with each partner running a station where they introduced concepts that aimed to reduce diffuse pollution and improve water quality, whilst also reducing farm costs.

This was followed by a trip to Greystoke Castle Farm where the students could see the concepts applied in practice.

Applying the learning

As I'm in training, I joined in with the students to gather information from the farm visit and apply the concepts learned to formulate a reports based on a typical farm scenario.

Over the next month, teams of students will generate presentations elaborating on how certain actions a farm can take will improve water quality, and save money.

The teams will present their recommendations to a judging panel at ERT's offices in April to determine the winner of the Great Farm Challenge.

Here is a flavour of the concepts and key messages covered during the morning session:

Regulations ... part of a bigger picture

Whatever your view about regulations such as SAFFO and Farming Rules for Water, they have their place - introduced by government as a tool to help look after one of the most important resources we have, our water supplies.

Farmers play an important, yet largely unsung role in preserving our water resources for the country and its people.





Chris Turner (Catchment Sensitive Farming) discusses the finer points of soil composition and management

(In my opinion the public should know and recognise the important role farmers can, do and will continue to play in safeguarding their source of drinking water!)

The stakes are high. If this generation of farmers pollutes our grandchildren's water source they really will be in deep water.

However, farmers are quietly working to make sure this doesn't happen on a day-by-day basis, implementing the current regulations to help ensure our future water security.

With regulation comes grants

The focus on improving water quality has brought with it financial incentives through the Mid - Tier Countryside Stewardship grants for farm steadings in high priority areas.

We are fortunate that the River Eden catchment is classed as a high priority area.

It falls out of the sky, and it's free

Grants are also available for making the most of rainwater which can then be utilised on

your farm instead of racking up a water bill by using your mains supply.

Rainwater harvesting grants were introduced as harvesting rainwater from barn roofs prevents cleaner rainwater from become contaminated on yard surfaces, and then running off into water courses.

The grant reduces minor water pollution, but can also save you on inputs.

Other grants available include the renewal of concrete yards to reduce run off, timely if you are already planning to renew a yard as a grant towards the cost is a bonus!

Don't forget that there are also grants towards underground drainage and water channels which go hand-in-hand with a new yard surface.

It's what's under the surface that counts!

Chris Turner, one of our local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers delved into the good business sense of knowing what you have right under your feet.

Getting the most from your growing starts with sound soil.

Establishing soil type, and its structure to know how to work with your soil is a good starting point. Then looking into what your soil is already offering in terms of N,P,K, Ph can present opportunities to optimise its efficiency.

It grows out of the ground, but you could be growing more ...

Soil analyses can tell you if you have any shortfalls in N,P,K, Ph. With this information you can tailor your next application of lime, manufactured, and/or manure applications.

The individual requirement of the growing crop will determine any shortfalls you may have holding back your crop or grassland.

The crop requirement can vary depending on your soil type, and structure. It grows out of the ground, but by taking into account all these factors, you could be growing more.

... and it could cost you less

Soil analyses could also tell you if you are over applying N, P, K and Ph. Over application indicates unnecessary spending. Therefore you may be finding the phosphate you paid for is waving a reluctant goodbye to you as it flows down to the beck at bottom of your sandy loam hill.

Optimise your use application of nutrients and you'll get the same result ... for less money.



Borrow an aerator / sub-soiler



Don't try this at home! Newton Rigg students working on one of ERT's aerators. Thanks to Newton Rigg college for the photos.

Thanks to Levels 2 and 3 Agriculture students from Newton Rigg College, our aerators and sub-soilers have been restored to full working order ready for spring.

We have 2 sub-soilers and 4 aerators that can be borrowed by farms in the Eden catchment to help reduce soil compaction and increase infiltration of water.

To find out more / book an aerator or sub-soiler, please contact Andy Dyer andy.dyer@edenrt.org or call him on 01768 866788.

New members welcome!

If you know of anyone who farms in the Leith/Lowther or Petteril areas who might be interested in joining our farmers' groups, please get in touch with us!
Call us on 01768 866788.

That's all for this issue

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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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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas. This project has
received European Union funding under the
Countryside Stewardship Scheme's Facilitation Fund

