



**A clear solution
for farmers**
CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

Priority Catchment Targeting Summary March 2012 – March 2014

River Basin District: Thames Catchment: River Beult Total Area: 490.4825 km²

Reasons for designation

The Beult catchment is a lowland river which flows almost entirely over impermeable Wealden clay and has extensive flood plains, up to 1km wide in places. Average annual rainfall is around 690mm/year. Infiltration is poor and run-off high, creating a flashy river, prone to flooding at times of high rainfall. The catchment is largely agricultural and considered to be subject to nitrate and phosphate enrichment from agricultural run-off. Land use throughout the area is incredibly varied, ranging from predominately pasture and small copses in the upper reaches to grazing meadows, drained arable land, horticulture, hops, orchards and some intensive poultry farming in the lower stretches.

Due to winter ground conditions arable land is predominantly drained and usually cultivated in autumn to prevent damage to soil structure, often leaving unprotected soils over winter. There is widespread use of organic and poultry manures throughout the arable areas of the catchment. There are also some sediment issues, predominantly on the greensand ridge to the North of the catchment, and pesticide issues have been identified in the Lesser Teise.

The River Beult suffers from eutrophication throughout the summer months, which most likely results from a combination of water company sewage works and agricultural diffuse pollution. Catchment Sensitive Farming aims to raise awareness and acceptance of diffuse pollution issues directly associated with farmland, and to promote best practice in land management for all farming sectors.

Priorities

SSSI – Type II Group A2-clay River – Status: Unfavourable recovering.

The River Beult has a characteristically diverse clay-river flora, with many emergent (water edge) plant species and a smaller number of submerged or floating plants. At the time of designation, the total for the river and banks approached 100 species, including 11 mosses and liverworts.

Invertebrate interest on the River Beult includes two nationally scarce species (a water beetle and the hairy dragonfly), sixteen species of dragonfly and damselfly and the aquatic snail.

Bare clay banks provide nesting sites for the kingfisher, which occurs regularly along the river. Thick emergent fringes also provide cover and breeding sites for birds such as reed warbler and reed bunting.

All units of the River Beult SSSI are impacted by poor water quality linked to agricultural pollution and run-off.

None of the water bodies in the Beult catchment meet the Water Framework Directive requirements for Good Ecological Potential, and are currently rated as moderate or poor.

This is primarily linked to eutrophication due to nitrate run-off and diffuse water phosphate pollution linked to soil erosion and sediment run-off. Cypermethrin is a potential issue in the Lesser Teise.

Drainage from the catchment feeds into the Bewl reservoir along with abstractions from the Teise and the Medway.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of DWPA across the whole catchment through newsletters, events, farmer discussion groups and on-farm specialist advice.
- Reduce the loss of sediment, and associated and soil-bound phosphate particles through appropriate changes in land management
- Reduce connectivity between the land and surface water, through promotion of good management practice
- Reduce inputs of fertiliser to reduce run-off to surface waters

Delivery

Delivery will continue within the 11 subcatchments for 2012-14, covering all of the Beult catchment along with the Lesser Teise. This will include cross catchment events delivering advice on poultry manure handling, equine management and water resource planning.

Unengaged farms are to be given priority for 1:1 direct training, including nutrient management planning, farmyard infrastructure, biobeds and pesticide facilities, soil husbandry, soil sampling & analysis.

All farms in the catchment with areas greater than 10ha, 520 holdings, will receive newsletters and invitations to events.

Targeting Map

