



A clear solution for farmers

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

Demonstrating the benefits of partnership working

The Nene Catchment Partnership

Nene Catchment Partnership (D)

EM Regional Co-ordinator: Dr Robin Field

The Nene Catchment Partnership was set up in April 2009 with the Environment Agency and River Nene Regional Park Community Interest Company (RNRP), to address issues with sediment, phosphorous and pesticides in the Upper Nene and on the River Ise SSSI, the largest tributary of the River Nene. Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) approached the River Nene Regional Park, who were already funding a project called Revital-Ise, with the aim of enhancing biodiversity, improve the landscape and increase access and recreation. The CSF funding meant that the Revital-Ise advisers were able to undertake dedicated visits to discuss and address diffuse pollution issues with farmers.

In the short time the project has been up and running, over 50 1-1 advisory visits to farmers in the area have been carried out by RNRP, and Environment Agency Environment Officers who have swapped their regulatory duties for advisory ones to support the project.

Farmers are already making changes: at The Farm, Wilby, livestock were damaging the banks of the Swanspool Brook through drinking from the stream and entering the watercourse to eat the aquatic vegetation. The area is known to be home to one of the last colonies of water vole in Northamptonshire and the livestock were causing damage to the habitat. A CSF advisory visit recommended that the livestock were fenced out of the river and on the strength of this, the farmer consented to having the



One of the cattle drinking points, just after the fencing has been erected



The same point, six months later

fencing erected and the Environment Agency were able to provide the funding for the capital works. Even after only a couple of weeks, the farmer said that it had made a great difference to the river, as previously, the cattle would eat the aquatic vegetation first.

The Nene Catchment Partnership has also been able to extend and support the advice work and land management changes which had already been started by the Revital-Ise project. Revital-Ise had worked with the farmer at Dovecote Farm, Upper Heyford to restore an arable field adjacent to the River Nene to a wildflower meadow, using a HLS agreement.

This former arable field of 13.5ha was regularly flooded, washing sediment, nutrients and pesticides such as Metaldehyde into the river.



This former arable field with a crop of oilseed rape flooded three times during 2007



The site was sown in April 2008 with a native grass and wildflower mixture and already supports some of the key floodplain meadow species. It now represents 1% of floodplain meadow in the country.

During summer 2010 the Nene Catchment Partnership arranged an evening farm walk for other farmers to see the newly created wildflower meadow with a view to encouraging more of them to consider it as an option for their own land. The event was also supported by the Floodplain Meadows Partnership project and the seed manufacturer, Emorsgate Seeds. The Nene Catchment Partnership has been able to provide 1-1 support and advice to farmers following on from this event to help restore more floodplain meadow along the River Nene.

Other partners have taken the opportunity to consolidate what the Nene Catchment Partnership can offer with regard to engaging farmers in the local area by supporting the project in other ways. The Nene Catchment Partnership has been working with the Metaldehyde Stewardship Group (MSG) to help them test the stewardship approach to reducing Metaldehyde levels in the Pitsford Reservoir catchment, a sub-catchment in the project area. To compliment the Get Pelletwise promotion which MSG is undertaking, the Nene Catchment Partnership held a Metaldehyde awareness event and has offered Slug Pelleting Seminar training sessions to farmers in the catchment, which provide farmers with the qualification they need to apply slug pellets.

Anglian Water has also supported the Nene Catchment Partnership by offering a tour of the Pitsford Water Treatment Works. This has given farmers a real insight into the issues facing water companies, particularly with regard to removal of Metaldehyde. As part of their AMP5 investigations, Anglian Water have also chosen the Pitsford Reservoir catchment to pilot their modelling work, testing different scenarios to improve the quality of the water entering their treatment works. The link to the farming community which the Nene Catchment Partnership provides for them is invaluable to ensure the scenarios they are testing can actually be implemented.

In only a short time, we have seen changes to land management and to farmers attitudes towards diffuse pollution, as well as new partners wanting to offer support to the aims of the project. The Nene Catchment Partnership is without question demonstrating many of the benefits envisaged during the development of partnership working within the CSF programme.

Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO)

Dr Robin Field

River Nene Catchment Partnership

01604 237243

rfield@northamptonshire.gov.uk

www.naturalengland.org.uk/csf

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