



# A clear solution for farmers

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

## Infrastructure improvements in Bassenthwaite

Ashness Farm, Borrowdale, Cumbria

### Bassenthwaite Lake (34)

CSFO: Susan Kenworthy

### Farm Description

Ashness Farm is a traditional Lake District hill farm tenanted by Ann Cornthwaite & her son Henry from the National Trust.

This 750 acres farm comprises 550 acres of freehold fell and a further 200 acres of in-bye pasture, meadow and intake – including 50 acres of lakeshore land at Stable Hills. A further 109 acres were taken in 2008 for grazing and silage.

Stocking includes a herd of 12 Belted Galloways plus followers and a bull. 250 breeding ewes of which around 210 are Herdwicks with the rest comprising Cheviot and Texel crosses. Anne has an ESA scheme which runs until 2013. Through this she has restored many stone walls and maintains low fertiliser inputs on the land.

Ann also runs a very popular bed and breakfast.



Open feeding area to the right, pig barn to the left



### Pollution Issues

- Poor storage facilities for FYM & dirty water.
- Limited separation of clean and dirty water.
- Wet muck is scraped out of shed every day and placed in an uncovered yard and spread when required. Effluent from this FYM escapes down the yard into an open ditch .
- Sheep dipping facilities are poorly situated and have the potential result in pollution.
- Annual rainfall of 3300mm is not unusual and causes major runoff diffuse water pollution from agriculture (DWPA) issues. Runoff through the back of a pig barn had been escaping down the bank into a near by beck. School groups visiting the steading were walking through the runoff.
- A Manure Management Plan was not in place and nutrient levels in the fields were unknown.
- Sediment from farm track was washing down into the beck during storm conditions.



Unfenced beck being eroded by stock access



Uncovered midden gathering large volumes of rainwater

## Pollution Solutions

A Nutrient Management Plan and a Manure Management Plan were drawn up by independent advisors contracted by CSF. These plans identified high and low risk areas for spreading and particularly fields which don't need P applications. It outlined the fertiliser application rates and ratios required and when the best time for the Cornthwaites to spread their muck was.

An Infrastructure report supported by the National Trust identified areas for improvement on the farm steading. In particular provision of a new roofed muck yard with tank to collect the effluent & a roofed livestock gathering area. Mrs Cornthwaite will then be able to store her manure through the winter months and then apply to the land over the optimum period between March and May. An CSF Capital grant application based on this report was approved in June 2009, allowing the Cornthwaites to reclaim up to 60% of the cost of the improvements.

Further improvements include the re-location of sheep dipping facilities, drainage system from pig barn to tank to collect runoff. Cross drains will be inserted under the track when the farm enters the High Level Stewardship Scheme in 2013.

## Farmer Engagement and Motivation

Mrs Cornthwaite has supported CSF since its beginning 2006 and has always proactively addressed the issue of runoff on her farm. She has also taken part in an EA audit where she discussed the working relationship she has with the NT and will be the subject of a BBC radio Cumbria Farming Programme on Catchment Sensitive Farming.

Ashness Farm is located in the honey pot area of the Lake District for tourism and the Crossthwaite's successful B& B allows them to understand the value of well managed natural resources to the wider economy.

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