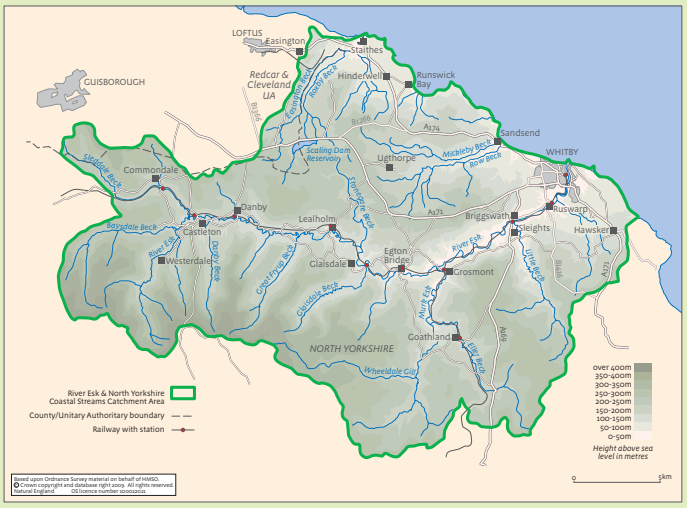
A clear solution for farmers

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

CSF helps Farmer in Esk Catchment

Little Scaling Farm

River Esk & North Yorks Coastal streams (46)
CSFO: Jonathan Payne



Farm Description

Little Scaling Farm sits within the River Esk target catchment and is a 120ha dairy unit milking 200 cows which are housed in cubicles, plus 120 followers. The main holding is around 180m above sea level and the land at Little Scaling Farm is gently sloping. Towards the western farm boundary is a steep valley which contains the Easington and Roxby Becks which flow into the sea at Staithes.

The business has recently invested in new cubical house facilities, slurry storage (concrete panel) and related slurry handing facilities. The cows are bedded on sand in the cubicles; prior to the new cubicles, the cows were bedded on straw yards. The Farm produces a significant amount of slurry due to the new cubicle house and also a small amount of FYM. There is currently around three months storage, however the River Esk catchment is not within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone so this does not pose a significant risk in terms of NVZ regulations. However due to the increased amount of slurry, the farm was seeking ways in which they could utilise the nutrients in the slurry more effectively.

Pollution Issues

The coastal streams target area within the Esk catchment suffers from increased levels of faecal contamination which have been partially attributed to agricultural diffuse pollution. The Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO) has been seeking to engage with dairy and beef enterprises within the target area to identify where diffuse pollution may be a problem and suggest ways that it could be avoided or at least minimised.

Little Scaling Farm falls within the target area identified. A visit to the farm by the CSFO highlighted that the new purpose built cubical yards and slurry store allowed for a more effective and safe way to manage the slurry. However, following discussions, the farmer highlighted that the use of sand in the new cubical house prevented the use of the umbilical slurry spreading system due to the sand, resulting in the slurry being spread by tanker and splash plate. The CSFO suggested applying the slurry using a slurry injector machine; this method means that the risk of faecal contamination entering the water course would be significantly reduced due to more accurate and timely application. Injecting also utilises the nutrients more effectively.

The CSFO also indicated that the Farmer may wish to apply for a Catchment Sensitive Farming Capital Grant for renewal of some broken up concrete in the yard to help avoid any run-off which may cause diffuse pollution.

Following the initial visit carried out by the CSFO, the farmer took advantage of the offer of a Whole Farm Appraisal (WFA) through the CSF programme. The WFA highlighted several potential areas of improvement for the farmer to consider. It recommended that a nutrient management plan backed up with soil analysis should be carried out so that the nutrients can be targeted to crop requirements, making better use of the nutrient value in the manure. It was also recommended that the FYM and Slurry be analysed.

At present the farm does not have a Stewardship agreement but since the Farmers was considering action to protect the water courses on his holding it was suggested that Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) should be considered so that the business could receive payment for this work.

Pollution Solutions

Following the CSFO visit and the WFA, the Farmer has implemented various changes to the business. This spring slurry was injected after first cut silage using a Terragator machine, providing a more accurate and timely means of applying slurry. In addition to the home farm, there is outlying land next to Boulby and Scaling dam. The Farmer says that now he is using the contractor with the Terragator he is able to apply slurry to the outlying land which has not received any for several years. This has allowed the farmer to utilise his slurry on land which requires it the most and avoid over applying to the fields closet the farm stead. Therefore the risk of manures escaping into the watercourse via run-off has been reduced. The farmer was very pleased that the outlaying land could now benefit from the nutrients in the slurry increasing his grass yield.

In addition to this the Farmer has been successful in applying for concrete yard renewal under the CSF Capital Grant Scheme and will carry this work out later in the year. This will help reduce yard runoff and allow him to keep the yard cleaner.

Following the recommendations in the WFA the Farmer is now keen to take advantage of the CSF funded soil sampling, nutrient management plan and slurry and FYM analysis. The results should give a good indication of where best to utilise the nutrients from his manures and avoid over application.

Following on from the WFA, the Farmer along with the contractor and CSFO are putting together an application for ELS for the farm, hoping to include some resource protection options including buffer strips which would help protect the watercourses. The farmer previously thought that ELS would not fit with his farming systems, however through careful selection of options, he now realises that ELS can benefit both his business and the environment.

Farmer Engagement and Motivation

Mr Abel fully engaged with CSF and utilised both the free advice and capital grant scheme available. Mr Abel highlighted that through engaging with CSF he has been able to apply his manures more effectively utilising the nutrients better, leading to a cost saving and a better method of application which suits his business. The CSF grant scheme has been a valuable tool in helping Mr Abel reduces the amount of run-off leaving the yard, therefore benefiting the watercourse. He has also held a CSF farm walk demonstrating various aspects of farm infrastructure and ways in which to reduce diffuse pollution. Mr Abel is fully committed to the CSF programme and hopes more farmers in the area will take advantage of the advice available.

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