

A Successful Solution

It's official – Catchment Sensitive Farming is a success!

The initial country-wide project was due to end this spring, but has been so effective that Defra has committed to a further three years of funding.



The extension of funding means that a new Bassenthwaite CSF officer will be appointed in the near future.

Following Karen Austin's departure from the post last August, Shirley Muir has been holding the reins. Shirley explained past achievements would be furthered and expert advice on soil analysis, nutrient budgeting and manure management plans will continue.

"The capital grant scheme will also run again this year for farms in the priority area and we will soon be sending a letter to farmers with details about this," she explained.



Bassenthwaite Catchment Sensitive Farming to Continue

In the meantime, anyone wanting further information on Catchment Sensitive Farming and target areas for capital grants should contact Michael Graham tel: 07770 700830.

www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf

Science and Solutions Conference

Farmers' significant contributions to the protection of Bassenthwaite Lake were highlighted at a 'science made simple' gathering in Keswick.

Organised by the Bassenthwaite Lake Restoration Programme, the idea was to give a down-to-earth summary of the lake's problems and solutions. (*Further information overleaf.*) The role of catchment sensitive farming was emphasised.

High levels of phosphate in the lake were highlighted. Shirley Muir spoke about Bassenthwaite's CSF work, explaining how farmers have reduced the amount of phosphate applied as fertiliser.

Over 800 fields have been sampled and it was found that three-quarters already had sufficient levels of phosphate. This means in many cases farmers need only apply nitrogen fertiliser, saving up to 28% on their fertiliser bill - while helping to protect the lake into the bargain.

CSF's success is down to the support of 95% of the area's farmers. To date, 77 farms have received help with soil sampling and nutrient budgeting.

"With Defra's continued support, we can carry on working with our farmers to make sure the changes they have made can be sustained, as well as reaching to others in the area," said Shirley



Or email Michael on michael.graham@environment-agency.gov.uk



The England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI) is delivered in partnership by Natural England, the Environment Agency and Defra.



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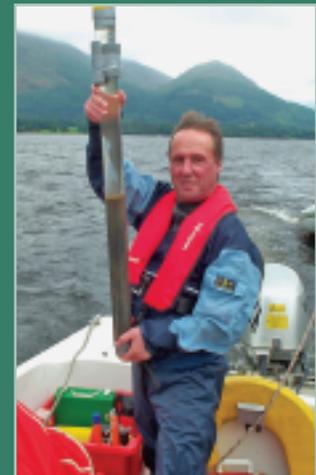
A packed Keswick gathering in February confirmed the event was an excellent way of explaining, in easy-to-understand language, the problems facing Bassenthwaite Lake and what is being done to solve them.



Science

Scientists explained the monitoring techniques used to measure levels of phosphate and sediment in the lake, rivers and streams, which harm natural ecosystems and lead to algal blooms.

Fine sediment on the lake bed prevents rare vendace fish from spawning. Bassenthwaite and Derwentwater are the only two places in England where the endangered species survive, but they may not have bred in Bassenthwaite for several years.



Solutions Phosphates in the lake come from 'point sources', such as sewage treatment works, and 'diffuse water pollution' that runs into rivers and streams across Bassenthwaite's catchment area. Phosphate levels in the lake are beginning to decrease, say experts, and this may be due to a number of factors:

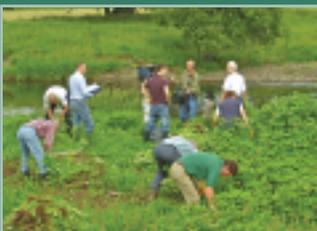
A phosphate stripper was installed at the Keswick sewage treatment works.



Farmers play an important role in reducing diffuse water pollution. CSF has supported farmers in soil testing and reducing the amount of phosphates applied as fertiliser to land.



Invasive weeds like Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed are controlled. They can cover large riverside areas, leaving winter soil exposed and vulnerable to erosion.



'Hotspots' of sediment or soil loss on the fells and along rivers were identified and used to target schemes to fence riverbanks. This excludes stock and allows re-vegetation, which protects banks from erosion.



The Forestry Commission is helping to reduce soil erosion by making some changes to the way it manages its woodlands, such as continuous cover forestry. On particularly sensitive areas they are removing the need for clear felling by thinning the woodland and relying on the trees to self-seed and regenerate.



The National Trust implements woodland projects to stem soil erosion. Fencing ghylls, such as at Watendlath, and woodlands like Keskadale allows new trees to grow and woodland to re-establish.



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