



A clear solution for farmers

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

Priority Catchment Targeting Summary April 2011 – March 2014

River Basin District: South West
Catchment: Rivers Axe and Otter

Total Area: 713 km²

Reasons for designation

River Axe

13km of the river Axe is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SSSI and SAC were designated for the geomorphological interest, diverse communities of aquatic and marginal vegetation and fish species of European importance (Bulhead, Brook Lamprey and Sea Lamprey). The Axe catchment was selected as a priority catchment due to the contribution of diffuse pollution from agriculture to poor water quality, the unfavourable status of the SSSI and SAC and failing water quality standards under the Water Framework Directive. The main pressures on the river are sedimentation and increased phosphate levels which have an adverse effect on the ecology of the river. Catchment Sensitive Farming aims to work with farmers to promote best practice land management and reduce sediment, phosphate and nitrate losses to the river.

River Otter

The Otter catchment is underlain by regionally important aquifers that are important for public and private water supplies which are suffering from elevated Nitrate levels. A number of tributaries and stretches of the River Otter are also failing under the Water Framework Directive.

Priorities

Drinking Water Protected Area (Groundwater) – The Otter groundwater bodies are failing Water Framework Directive (WFD) standards for high levels of Nitrates.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and SSSI – The River Axe SSSI and SAC is in Unfavourable Declining condition. The river is impacted by siltation and nutrient enrichment which is affecting the plant and animal communities.

Water Framework Directive (WFD) - Good Ecological Status –

- The Yarty, Corry Brook and upper River Axe are currently failing WFD standards for nutrients and high levels of sediment affecting the biology of the river. These tributaries also have an impact on the water quality and ecology of the River Axe SAC and SSSI downstream.
- The middle and lower Otter and River Tale are currently failing WFD standards for nutrients and high levels of sediment and their effect on the ecology of the river.

Objectives

- Raise the awareness of diffuse water pollution from agriculture across the whole catchment through events and one to one specialist advice.
- Reduce the loss of sediment and associated soil-bound phosphate particles through appropriate changes in land management.
- Promote efficient use of organic manures and artificial fertiliser to reduce run-off of

nutrients to surface waters and leaching to groundwater.

- Reduce soil damage and compaction from machinery and livestock to reduce nutrient and sediment run-off from grassland and arable land.
- Reduce the connectivity between the land and surface water through the promotion of good land management practices and track management.

Delivery

Training and advice will be available in the Axe and Otter catchments between 2011 and 2014, focusing on the Target Areas shown below. Advice can include:

- Soil sampling and nutrient management
- Soil husbandry and management
- Maize agronomy and management
- Farmyard infrastructure

Workshops and events on the wildlife importance of the Rivers Otter and Axe, soil husbandry, maize, out-wintering of livestock, management of forage crops and manure and nutrient management will also be run between 2011 and 2014.

Targeting Map

