



A clear solution for farmers

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

Diversion of field and road run-off

Great Cressingham Fen

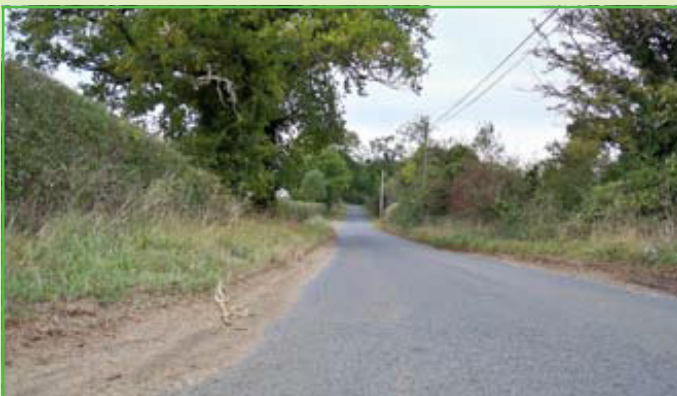
Little Ouse (Thefford) Catchment (10)

CSFO: Eric Popp

Great Cressingham Fen is a [14ha SSSI / SAC] located in a small side-valley of the River Wissey. It is considered to be one of the best remaining examples of calcareous spring-fed valley-fen in west Norfolk. It has retained the full series of vegetation types, which range from dry unimproved grassland on the highest slopes, through wet, species-rich fen grasslands where springs emerge to tall fen vegetation in the valley bottom. The site supports a very large number of plants including several uncommon species. (www.english-nature.org.uk/citation/citation_photo/1000561.pdf)

The Fen is privately owned and has a current condition assessment of 'unfavourable no change.'

The South Pickenham Estate is a 2932ha arable and livestock business with strong



Water and suspended sediment flows down this road, pools at the lowest point and has previously spilled off the road to the right of this image and into GCF.



GCF, the surrounding land and direction of water flow.

environmental credentials. As part of an existing HLS agreement they reverted to grassland an unproductive field corner directly over the road opposite the western end of the fen. The present estate manager is a keen supporter of CSF.

Pollution Issues

In times of heavy or prolonged rainfall, water runs off the fields bordering the road. It flows down the road and roadside drainage ditches, pools at the lowest point on the Estate side and then spills over the road into the fen.

This process has previously flushed quantities of nutrient rich soil sediment into the fen. Over time, this could potentially alter the soil chemistry and delicate balance of plant communities found within the Fen.

At immediate risk of damage is the receiving area of unimproved neutral grassland, commonly found on the higher, drier margins of such site sites.

Pollution Solution

The owner of Great Cressingham Fen is currently in talks with Bev Nichols (Natural England Responsible Officer) about entering his land bordering the fen on both sides into environmental stewardship. CSF advice has been identified as one of the potential remedy mechanisms to reduce the effect of agricultural run-off into the fen and I advised Bev on what help the CSF initiative can be in this matter.

I also arranged a meeting at the Fen with the Estate manager, Bev Nichols and Adrian Sewell (Highways Engineer, Norfolk County Council).

After discussing the problems, it was decided that a quick and appropriate solution to help prevent future road wash incidents would be to cut a channel through the hedge bank on the Estate side of the road. This would allow water running down the road and that already in the roadside ditch, to flow away from the fen and into the grassland field corner.

The road bank modification was a quick and inexpensive task. The work was done by South Pickenham Estate several months ago [Photo 2] at no cost to CSF. Through involvement in this project the Estate have strengthened their ties with NE and Catchment Sensitive Farming and significantly improved the chances of the Great Cressingham Fen SSSI moving into improving condition. The Fen owner was not directly involved, but is known to take a keen interest in the environmental health of the site.



Cutting this gap in the hedge bank on the opposite side of the road from GCF should channel any running water into the grassland field corner beyond.

Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO)

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