



Alt Crossens Catchment Update

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Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Policy paper

Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force Chair's report: government response

Published 29 June 2023

- Government recognise the “vital role that lowland peat soils play in producing food for our nation and supporting our rural economies”
- Government intends to take forward action **on all recommendations**
- Assess legal implications of raising water levels to preserve peat soil carbon
- Irrigation and mulching to explored as alternative practices to raising water table to preserve lowland peat
- Public money to support wetter modes of farming on lowland peat, including SFI & CS
- Invest in water storage management: £10 million Water Management Grant - funding more on-farm reservoirs away from peat soils and better irrigation equipment
- Supportive of Peatland Code - and the aim to include paludiculture in future

Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force

- £5 million **Paludiculture Exploration Fund** projects awarded in June 2023
- £5.45 million **Lowland Agricultural Peat Small Infrastructure Pilot** (bids went in 31 Oct):
 - projects to enable more control of water levels for preservation and rewetting of lowland peat
whilst
seeking to not increase the risk of flooding to communities, business, and infrastructure.
- £2.2 million **Lowland Agricultural Peat Water Discovery Pilot** (bids went in 31 Oct)
 - peatland water management to preserve peat soil carbon and support continued agriculture
 - plans that identify how water table within lowland agricultural peat soils can be raised to enable:

EITHER

a **mosaic approach** to improving the condition of lowland peat, which includes:
(i) wetter farming (farming with higher water levels through paludicultural crops or traditional crops),
(ii) peat restoration where possible
(iii) potentially some continued traditional farming on drained soils

OR

b) **wetter farming alone**

Water Level Management Board

- **Environment Agency will support the local community in efforts to form a new Internal Drainage (or Water Level Management) Board.**
- **The required Advisory Group of local stakeholders will be reformed in early 2024.**
- **The Advisory Group will guide the process of writing a business case for Ministerial approval.**
- **For more information on how you can be involved please speak to Rob Ide from Environment Agency.**

Citizen Science Monitoring Programme



- We are looking for volunteers to join our Citizen Science programme to monitor river water quality and river insect life in the Alt and Crossens catchment
- Help us better understand river health to assess what measures are needed to improve it
- If interested – or know someone who is - please email: farming@merseyrivers.org

Water Friendly Farming Information



Water Friendly Farming Hub

The Mersey Rivers Trust have developed an online hub for farmers or anyone who has an interest in farming and the environment. It has information on water friendly farming practices, sources of funding, case studies and useful links.

Visit the Hub...



HOME ABOUT NEWS PROJECTS GET INVOLVED



Water Friendly Farming

Welcome to the Mersey Rivers Trust Water Friendly Farming Hub

FARM FUNDING AND TRAINING ROUNDUP AUGUST 2023



Below is a list of upcoming events, webinars and funding available to support your farm business, and help you to get the best out of your land and livestock. Read on to find out more about what's on offer this month...

New grants to fund improved calf housing

Defra has published guidance on new calf housing grants, which will be open for applications later this summer. Cattle keepers will be able to access grants of between £15,000 and £500,000 to co-fund new and upgraded calf housing. In time, Defra will extend the offer to include grants for adult cattle, pig and poultry housing. This expands the range of grants already on offer through the Farming Transformation Fund, which currently includes support for improvements to slurry, water, management and productivity. Read the new post on the Defra Farming blog to find out more about the new infrastructure grant and who can apply.



<https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2023/07/26/introducing-animal-health-and-welfare-infrastructure-grants/>

Webinar

Understanding wood pastures and agroforestry

Catch up on the Forestry Commission's webinar with Natural England that explores the benefits of agroforestry and how you can introduce more trees and woodland into the farmed landscape.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j61F297CFE>

Newsletter produced every 2 months with latest updates about funding, training and new policy announcements

You can also join the email distribution list by sending an email to:

farming@merseyrivers.org

Let us know what you would like to see on the Hub or in the newsletter

Future Water Resources Events & Guidance

Farm Visits?

- Rainwater harvesting and water storage solutions
- On-farm winter storage reservoir and abstraction arrangements
- Other ?

Summary Guidance Notes ?

- Funding and grants
- Water efficiency measures
- Abstraction licensing
- Licence trading and licence co-operatives
- Winter storage reservoirs
- Trickle irrigation
- Paladiculture and lowland peat water level management
- Other?

What topics you would like to covered at next engagement workshop in March 2024 ?

Panel Q & A and Discussion



Abstraction issues to be considered (1)

Abstraction from peat catchments

Lowland Peat Strategy Action Plan

New grants to manage peat land differently coming along

Peat important for carbon sequestration

Updated Abstraction Licensing Strategy to consider effects on peat

Planning permission for water storage reservoirs

No specific planning policy in West Lancs Council

Visual impact concerns have been raised for some previous applications

Planning policy in Sefton Council uncertain

Guidance on water storage reservoirs in Alt-Crossens would be welcomed

Constraints around water storage reservoirs

Capital cost – grants available for 40% of capital

Can farmers/growers share a water storage facility ?

Infrastructure needed to connect storage to irrigators

Can ponds be used for farm water storage?

Can water be transferred from storage across catchment boundaries?

Can rivers/canal/drainage system be used to connect water storage reservoir to irrigators?

Abstraction issues to be considered (2)

Limited reliable supply of water in drought

Enforcement of illegal abstraction & impoundment

Consider sharing of licensed volumes between farmers?

Consider switching to groundwater in some areas?

Co-operative licensing sharing could be considered for some areas?

More flexibility in abstraction licences within a defined area?

What incentives could be given to switch to trickle irrigation?

Abstraction Licensing Issues

Concern about a “use it or lose it” policy elsewhere

Licensing policy for water storage reservoir abstraction

Can abstractors have a combined spray irrigation and trickle irrigation licence for flexibility?

High cost of switching from spray to trickle irrigation licence

Licensing policy for groundwater – is there any available?

Improved water management ideas

**Better
integrated
management
of water in
catchment**

**Can UU store more
stormwater to reduce
flood risk and make it
available in drier
weather to support
flows/levels?**

**Use of nature-based solutions to
store flood water and release the
water in drier weather to support
flows/levels**

**Future role of a Water Level
Management Board under
Environment Act 2021?**

**Better co-ordination across UU, Highways Authorities and local
authorities to manage water in times of flood and drought**

**Potential groundwater licence trading between UU and some
farmers/growers to optimise use of water resources?**