‘Smarter Water Catchments’ in the Evenlode - Working in partnership to reduce Phosphorus in rivers

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Our region.

We supply services to over 15 million customers.

We have 30 unique Water Management Catchments within the Thames region.
Our challenge.

Uncertainty around Brexit
Maintaining ecosystem services
Localised flooding

Keeping bills affordable
Meeting WFD requirements
Value for money
We are committing to protecting and improving the water quality within our catchments.
Working in the Evenlode.

Under the ‘Smarter Water Catchments’ initiative, this trial set out to:

- Explore logistical and practical challenges of working with farmers.
- Understand the value of catchment management to our customers.
- Assess effectiveness of proposed measures at reducing Phosphorus.
- Explore opportunities for partnership working within the catchment.
Working in the Evenlode.

- Accelerate delivery across all of the sub-catchments.
- Continue monitoring of 1-3 to assess effectiveness of measures.
- Identify opportunities for new ways of working, that provide multiple benefits.
Components of the trial
1. Advice Service.

Free service provided by our local Catchment Sensitive Farming officer (CSFO) to a “manageable” number of farms:

- Make best use of existing schemes on farmers land.
- Design new farm activities to help reduce Phosphorus loss and sediment run-off.
2. No Till and Cover Crop trial.

Encourage adoption of these methods by providing farmers with access to, or funding for, alternative equipment and seed.

Highly effective at reducing P loss and sediment run-off.
3. Partnership working.

Building up relationship with the Evenlode Catchment Partnership, and supporting on local projects with multiple benefits:

• Natural Flood Management (NFM) demonstration scheme

Provides grants or annual payments for a wide range of infrastructure and farm management interventions.
Example of activities

- Buffer strips separating arable fields and watercourse.
- Farmyard renewal by concrete surfacing and installation of panels to manage runoff to watercourse.
- Two arable fields adjacent to the watercourse reverted to grassland.
- In-field buffers between arable fields.
- Fencing to limit access by sheep to the watercourse.
- Permanent pasture in fields used for the Moreton in Marsh agricultural show.
What have we learnt?
Successful engagement is key.

Foundations of the trial were established on forging strong, trusting relationships

- Advice needs to come from someone with proven experience in the field.
- Close working relationships with local catchment partners.
- Additional resources required for wider roll out.
- Changing perceptions of existing and new practises.
- Increase in education may be necessary.
Strong evidence base is the driver for investment.

We need to develop this in order to assess the effectiveness of measures

• Combination of routine & event-driven spot sample and automatic water quality data.

• Sub-catchment scale vs. field scale

• Progress trial to target the top 50 holdings by P loss risk

• Strong correlation with sediment – multi pollutant approach providing additional environmental benefits
Being flexible is necessary for success.

“One size doesn’t fit all”

• Broad range of interventions available to accommodate.

• Take advantage of new opportunities to work with local partners when they arise.

• Farmers can propose innovative measures of their own that work for them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catchment partnership success factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unlikely to succeed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent goals</td>
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<td>Withheld or missing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unproven or unsuitable</td>
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<td>Cost effective / possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affects human health or has financial penalties</td>
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<td>Disproportionate</td>
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<td>Urgent issues to solve, planned independently</td>
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Summary.

• Long-term development of strong trusting relationships with farmers and local partners is essential to participation in the scheme.

• Developing an evidence base to assess the value of the scheme to our customers is challenging but remains a priority throughout.

• Flexibility is important to fit the requirements of individual partners.
Thank you

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“Smarter Water Catchments, River Evenlode”