

Welcome to the Upstream Thinking Newsletter

FOWEY CATCHMENT EDITION - FEBRUARY 2021

We're really pleased to be underway with the next round of the Upstream Thinking Project (UST) in the Fowey catchment.

This round runs until 2025. As before, the rationale for this project is to improve water quality in the Fowey catchment.

We will work with farmers and landowners in different ways to achieve this and you can find out what is available on the following pages.

Contact Us

In the Fowey catchment the project is delivered by **Westcountry Rivers Trust**.

Please contact **Ben Bennett**

benb@wrt.org.uk

07498 877724

for more information.

What's on offer?

Upstream Thinking Grants:

2021 application window is now open, and we already working with over 20 farmers and landowners covering more the 2000Ha in the Fowey catchment.

Previous successful applications have funded ditch and pond restoration, water course and hedge fencing, yard improvements, guttering and tanks, tracks, gateway resurfacing, culverting, water trough infrastructure and habitat creation.

Grants are up to £20,000, with the average around £3,000 at a 50% rate, with the scale offered depending on the assessed need.

Revenue payments under £5,000 are also available for trials and innovations that can lead to improved water/ soil management and quality.

These include (but are not limited to) subsoiling/ aeration, minimum tillage/ zero tillage, cover crops, herbal lays.

If you would like to discuss any of these or have your own ideas, please get in touch with Ben.

What's on offer?

Post-harvest scheme:

Free advice on identifying areas on farm that could benefit from rough ploughing/cultivating fields that are going to be left bare during the winter with no post-harvest plan.

WRT has commissioned a local contractor to help with rough ploughing/ cultivating in high-risk areas in the Fowey catchment.

Last year we identified over 110ha at high risk of soil erosion and run-off. This scheme has proven to be extremely beneficial and we hope to develop the scheme this year with new innovations.

If you would like advice and help for 2021 post-harvest stubble or protecting soils when growing maize, please contact Ben for more details or advice.

Confidential farm advice and farm plans:

Free visit from a farm advisor to offer advice on management of nutrients, soil, pesticides, yard infrastructure, watercourse management, NVZ's, and habitats.

Pesticide Amnesty Scheme:

Are you a farmer or landowner in Devon or Cornwall?

If so, we can offer collection and safe disposal for old obsolete products.

Please contact **info@wrt.org.uk** to see if you are eligible for our **free and confidential** pesticide amnesty scheme available in our Upstream Thinking catchments.

Countryside Stewardship applications:

Free on farm advice and support with applications to the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, Mid and Higher Tiers.

Mid-February application window opening.

Please get in touch with Ben.

Ben Bennett Fowey's Senior Farm Advisor

Ben brings over 15 years' experience working in the agricultural / environmental sector.

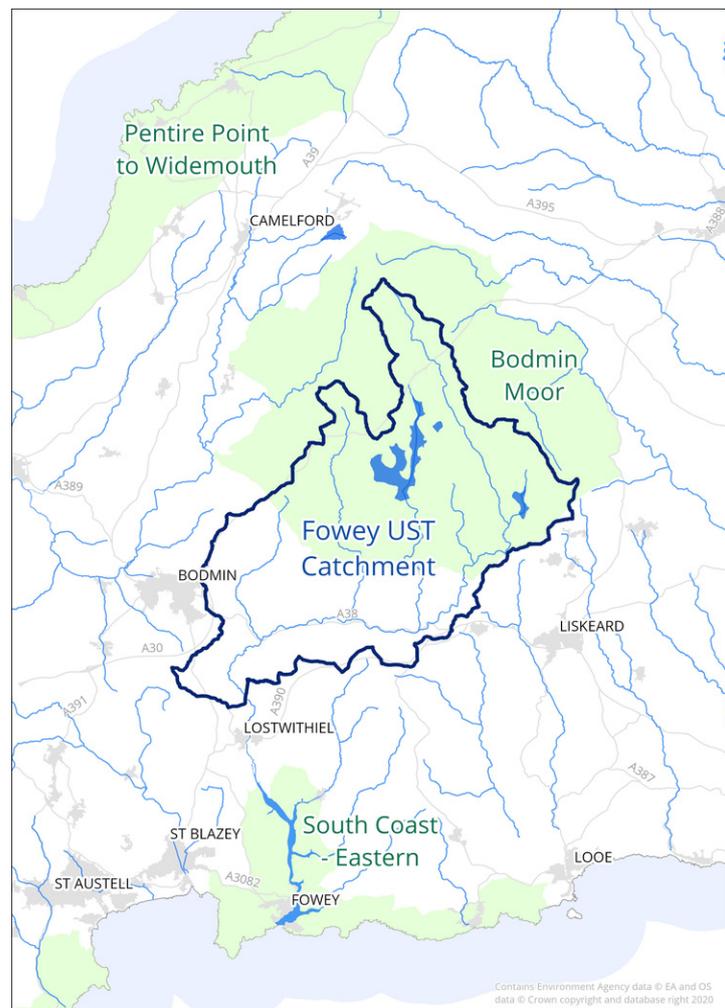
He is a firm believer that the two can and should go hand in hand.

His expertise and knowledge will provide you with simple, practical low-cost solutions that can benefit your business and the environment. Guidance is also available on SSAFO compliance, Codes of Good Agricultural Practice and Farming Rules for Water that were introduced in 2018.

When COVID restrictions allow he will be holding a series of workshops relating to water quality and management on farms.

These will be hands on workshops with practical demonstrations e.g., accessing soils types and structure, practical management of dirty water etc. and of course, a Cornish pasty. There will also be visits to the South West Water's treatment works at Restormel to demonstrate how the water is cleaned and how pollution incidents affect the operation.

Ben already knows many of the farmers and landowners in the catchment, but if you don't know him, please give him a call for a chat to find out more about what WRT and UST can offer you.



Farming Is Changing – At a Glance

Key changes for 2021:

- Reduction in Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments.
- Removal of greening rules.
- Additional support through schemes and grants (funded through the BPS reductions) to help farmers invest in environmental and productivity improvements.
- Enhancements to existing schemes (Capital Item only grant increased max of £20,000).
- Improvements to cross compliance.
- National Pilot of Environmental Land Management for up to 5,500 farmers who want to be involved in the co-design for new schemes.
- Support to build resilience during the early years of the transition.

For free and confidential advice on any of these issues, please contact Ben



Countryside Stewardship: Latest News

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) provides financial incentives for farmers and land managers to look after their environment. It can provide considerable financial incentives for landowners, particularly for capital works in the yard and the wider holding.

This can be further boosted by an annual income for land management. With the pending decreases in BPS payments farm business, income will take a hit and if you are not currently in any CS scheme it is advisable that you apply to help offset these reductions (see E.L.M.S section below).

It has been announced by the RPA that the following will now apply to existing Countryside Stewardship schemes:

- The RPA are now responsible for Countryside Stewardship
- Mid and Higher tier applications will be open until 2023
- Expiring HLS agreements, Mid-tier, and Higher tier are typically given the option to extend on a yearly basis
- Any agreements that have not expired before 2025 will be given the option to enter into the new ELMs (Environmental Land Management Scheme) without penalty
- The application window opens mid-February. There have been a number of administrative changes to the Scheme this year and it is recommended that you order your pack as soon as possible.

The Grant Scheme has a number of options as listed below:

What does a Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement offer?

Name	Length of agreement	What it covers
Higher Tier	5, 10-year (and in some cases 20-year) agreements	Full range of options, supplements and capital items for environmentally significant sites, commons and woodlands Largely focused on expiring HLS agreements that require re-negotiation and new capital works, and on woodland management
Mid-Tier	5 years	Provides a mixture of revenue payment options, supplements and capital items to achieve simple and effective environmental benefits
Wildlife offers	5 year revenue only agreements	Lowland farming, mixed, upland and arable. Quick and simple to apply for. They are not scored, meaning that you will get an agreement if you make a valid application
Capital grants	2 year capital only agreements	Capital items to deliver specific environmental outcomes, including hedgerows and boundary improvements, delivery of water and air quality objectives and planning for more complex Higher Tier agreements Also includes woodland creation grants, woodland tree health grants and the development of woodland management plans

Get in touch via wrt.org.uk/project/upstream-thinking-3/

A few top tips

- Make sure all your fields, yards and hedges are registered and correctly mapped to be eligible for funding as soon as possible.
- Don't wait for your bespoke application pack before planning your application. The packs can often take time to arrive and sample application forms are available online.
- Apply for your pack as early as possible.
- Check all application maps on arrival.

Be aware some Capital items and annual options will need early approval by the local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer for eligible high risk priority farms. Typically you will need to have been in touch with the CSFO by mid-March.

- Permissions: A number of items require permissions etc. such as Planning, EA, County Council etc. It is essential that this process is commenced as soon as possible.
- Farm Wildlife Package: These specific combinations will bring you bonus points and are well worth considering in your application as each application is scored.
- Get in touch: free on farm advice and support with applications to the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, Mid and Higher Tiers. Contact us as soon as possible to secure this support.



Reduction in BPS payments and the new Environmental Land Management scheme (E.L.M.S)

Over the past 50 years, we have seen a rapid decline in our environment, while at the same time our country is already experiencing the effects of climate change. One in six properties are at risk of flooding and in the last five years, the Met Office has recorded the five highest temperatures on record. Insect and bird populations are under threat and in decline, ladybirds alone have declined by 44% and birds such as the once common tree sparrow have declined by 95%. Worryingly large swathes of South West agricultural land is showing high levels of soil degradation, which has direct effects upon farming/farm efficiency, whilst also impacting on the wider public by increasing flood risk etc.



The government has set out plans to phase out direct payments as it introduces a new Environmental Land Management (E.L.M.S.) scheme. Defra will be phasing out Direct Payments starting in 2021. It has been confirmed that by 2024 BPS payments will be halved for the majority of farmers and landowners, with the reductions continuing to phase out until 2028. The money that is freed up will enable a new system that rewards farmers and other land managers for delivering public goods that improve the environment. The intention is that E.L.M.S. will be phased in as direct payments to farmers are phased out – and fully up and running by 2024.

New grants to farmers, foresters and growers will be rolled out over the transition years so that they can invest in equipment, technology and infrastructure that will help their businesses to prosper while improving their productivity and enhancing the environment. These changes will be made over a seven-year transition period, to give farmers time to adapt and plan for the future.

The new Environmental Land Management scheme aims to support the recovery of wildlife, improve air and water quality, reduce flooding and drought, and mitigate climate change.

The E.L.M. scheme will consist of three elements:

<p>Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)</p>	<p>Supporting approaches to farm husbandry that deliver for the environment, such as actions to improve soil health, hedgerows and integrated pest management.</p>
<p>Local nature recovery</p>	<p>Paying for actions such as creating, managing or restoring habitats, natural flood management and species management.</p>
<p>Landscape recovery</p>	<p>Focusing on landscape and ecosystem recovery through projects looking to achieve large-scale forest and woodland creation, peatland restoration, or the creation and restoration of coastal habitats, such as wetlands and salt marshes.</p>

Initially, farmers will be paid on an income foregone basis – The SFI aims to bridge the gap in farm incomes as basic payments are wound down and the E.L.M. scheme is fully implemented. Eventually, though, payments will “go beyond” compensating farmers for lost income as they undertake environmental work on their land. Although the monetary value of ‘environmental gain’ is yet to be confirmed Defra’s test and trials and pilot scheme, along with the co-design of the ELM scheme with farmers, land managers and stakeholders will best inform payments.

New and existing Countryside Stewardship agreements will best prepare farmers and land managers for the transition to the Sustainable Farming Incentive component of the Environmental Land Management scheme.

If you would like to know more about Countryside Stewardship and how it could work for your farm please get in touch with Ben.