

Farmer bulletin

November 2021



The Nutrient Management Scheme progress update

Poole Harbour Agricultural Group (PHAG) invites you to a farmer meeting to hear directly from the team involved on the progress of the Scheme. Alongside the farmers involved, the NFU, Catchment Sensitive Farming and Wessex Water will be on-hand to update you on the progress made over the past 16 months and we'll discuss the Scheme proposals and recent trial. We would really welcome your input and for you to ask questions so that we ensure the Scheme is tailored to work for the farm businesses within the catchment. Three meetings are arranged across the catchment and we hope you will be able to attend one, and do bring your farming neighbours. Please contact the NFU SW Regional office to book a place and allow us to cater for numbers: **01392 440700** or **south.west@nfu.org.uk**

Frampton village hall
Tuesday 7th December
12.30 for 12.45 start

Light lunch provided

Furzebrook village hall
Tuesday 14th December
7pm for 7.15pm start

Moreton village hall
Thursday 16th December
7pm for 7.15pm start

Summarising the PHNMS Trial

The trial of the Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme (PHNMS) had a cross-section of farmers from the catchment involved over the spring/summer; it was crucial to understand how a scheme based on nutrient trading between farmers can really work. The Q&A sessions were invaluable to get the perspective of a variety of farm businesses across the catchment on how the scheme can work for everyone and it has given us more information than we originally hoped.

The main headline was about preventing the scheme becoming complex; it must address the issues but be operable by farmers and there must be a farmer benefit to doing it.

It's crucial that we take time with each stage to make sure the scheme works for everyone involved, most importantly for you, the farmers. We are now moving towards a larger-scale pilot phase based on the trial experiences and the regulatory imperative.

There was a lot of discussion about the Nutrient Leaching Tool (NLT): all parties agree that having a tool that farmers are happy to use and the regulator will accept is simply imperative for a functioning scheme. Analysis we commissioned by the University of Hertfordshire showed that the NLT is currently the only tool available which meets the regulatory requirements. However, the analysts raised concerns around its usability and accuracy, which was backed up by many of the comments from farmers in the recent trial.

Next steps:

- A group of the trial participants are working with the Environment Agency to develop the NLT for the next stage of the scheme, using feedback from those who trialled the tool.
- Farm advisors from Catchment Sensitive Farming and Wessex Water are working with the trial farmers to validate and verify the data gathered using the NLT, and to look at the nutrient balancing of all the farmers involved in the trial with the possibility of trading surplus nitrogen with Wessex Water. The PHNMS team is also investigating another Nutrient Accounting Tool for comparison.



Prioritising farmer suggestions for improving the NLT

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Defra's visit to the catchment



Wakely Cox talking to the group about his farm

In October, PHAG invited a group of over 20 Defra and Environment Agency staff to Poole Harbour catchment. The group was taken to Holes Bay to see the nutrient issues in the harbour whilst the algae was in full bloom, before visiting Wessex Water's Wastewater Recycling Centre in Wareham to discuss the additional Nitrogen removal treatment taking place there. The visit finished at Wakely Cox's farm, where PHAG had the opportunity to demonstrate how their business decisions are influenced by a changing landscape of environmental policy.

The visit stressed that for the agricultural sector to drive environmental improvements, a reliable Nutrient Accounting Tool that works for both farmers and the regulators is key. There were also discussions about how payments from multiple sources for public goods, such as nutrient reduction or carbon sequestration, should work together to ensure there is a fair system that provides a sustainable future for agriculture.

There has been a lot of positive feedback following the event, with the farm visit being the highlight of the day for many and sparking important conversations within the right circles. A main takeaway from the day was that Poole Harbour's farming community is driving innovation in this area.

Becoming a legal entity

Poole Harbour Agricultural Group is in the last stages of becoming a Community Interest Company (CIC).

Why a CIC?

- As a legal entity, PHAG can take ownership of PHNMS and the Directors can make farmer-led decisions for the scheme.
- The Directors will not be financially liable for the operation of the scheme.
- Any profit is invested back into the local community.



John Hote: Pedigree Suffolks enjoying the morning sun

Approval of the scheme

Poole Harbour Agricultural Group is working with the Environment Agency to make sure that the Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme meets all the necessary requirements to be an approved scheme as set out in the Poole Harbour Consent Order Technical Recommendations.