

## How to get the most out of an on-farm advisor visit to discuss environmental schemes (e.g. Defra's agri-environment schemes or water company environmental protection schemes)

The example here is for a Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) advisor, but could equally be useful for a Natural England advisor, a water company catchment advisor etc.

### What is the purpose of the visit?

Before the visit, ask the advisor what the purpose is, and also think about why this is beneficial for yourself/your family/your colleagues.

What are the objectives of the visit?

- To obtain approval.
- To discuss grant funding opportunities: What do they have to offer?
- For the advisor to survey the yard area and/or land to look for opportunities to deploy funded options and/or capital items.
- To find out which capital grants / options are available and suitable for your farm
- To seek advice on the best location for options / capital items.
- To understand why specific capital items / options can address catchment specific water quality issues (e.g. excess nutrients, pesticides, sediment, flooding) and/or air pollution pressures (e.g. ammonia), and how these can benefit you as the farmer.
- To understand what additional funding may be available from the same / an alternative current or future scheme (e.g. The visit is about capital items in the yard, but the advisor may also be able to advise on land management options).
- To understand if any future legislation may require you to do something that you could receive grant funding for (e.g. covering slurry store)?

### 1. Requesting a visit


If contacting the advisor for the first time provide them with an outline of the type of funding / support you are hoping for. Ask the advisor:

- How long will the visit take?
- What is the output of the visit? This could be a report, letter, recommendation

### 2. Preparing for the visit

Make a list of questions for the advisor.

Is the farmyard in a normal state? You do not want an immaculate yard, but ideally make it clear for the advisor to see what the issues are.



Why is the visit good for the farm?

What do we want to get out of the visit?



What is my sales pitch?

How can I help the advisor understand what I need?

Do your homework. This is your one opportunity to influence the advisor, who holds the purse strings! Be clear in your mind what you want. Create your sales pitch as you would to attract an investor!

- FARM SITUATION:** Outline the problem with a story. Think about your current farming system. What are you already doing voluntarily / as part of an existing scheme to reduce water pollution?
- ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION:** Make sure you can demonstrate the environmental problem that needs to be addressed. Think about the 'source – pathway – receptor' flow, [using our check list](#).
- SOLUTION:** How the funding / advice will reduce risks to the environment, help to improve both the direct area for the grant, and also benefit your farming system as a whole (e.g. rainwater harvesting will reduce dirty water from open livestock yard entering lagoon, so reduce slurry volume)?
- FUNDING NEEDS:** Why you can't do this without funding.

**Do I need any information available?**

- List of questions to ask the advisor.
- Printed out map of the yard area.
- Printed out map of the fields.
- Sizes of any buildings/areas that may need e.g. a roof, new yard concrete, slurry store
- Photos of when the problem/issue is present (e.g. photo in winter of compaction/flooded area/runoff).
- Key sales pitch points.

**Do I need to read anything in advance?**

- Read the basic scheme information.
- If this is a CSF visit: Look at the list of potential capital items that need CSF approval below. It is worth understanding what may available to you ahead of the meeting, and making a list. For example the CSF visit is planned to discuss a new cover for your silage store, but you also have some other areas that could benefit from CSF funding, such as improving your pesticide handling area.
- Check on the MAGIC website to see which water quality and air priorities your holding relates to.

**3. During the visit - checklist**

- Have my questions been answered?
- Have we looked at all relevant yard / infrastructure areas?
- Have we looked at all relevant field/woodland areas?
- Have all relevant capital items / options been discussed?
- When will I receive the report/recommendation?

## List of Countryside Stewardship capital items that need CSF approval for 2024

### Yard and track improvement works

- RP4 Livestock and machinery hardcore tracks
- RP13 Yard - underground drainage pipework
- RP14 Yard inspection pit
- RP15 Concrete yard renewal

### Rainwater harvesting

- RP17 Storage tanks underground
- RP18 Above ground tanks
- RP19 First flush rainwater diverters and downpipe filters

### Livestock

- RP20 Relocation of sheep dips and pens
- RP21 Relocation of sheep pens only
- RP22 Sheep dip drainage aprons and sumps
- RP23 Installation of livestock drinking troughs (in draining pens for freshly dipped sheep)

### Pesticide handling and disposal

- RP24 Lined biobed plus pesticide loading and washdown area
- RP25 Lined biobed with existing washdown area
- RP27 Sprayer or applicator load and washdown area
- RP28 Roofing (sprayer washdown area)

### Slurry and manure management

- RP28 Roofing (manure storage area, livestock gathering area, slurry stores, silage stores)
- RP29 Self-supporting covers for slurry and anaerobic digestate stores
- RP30 Floating covers for slurry and anaerobic digestate stores and lagoons

### Livestock housing

- AQ1 Automatic slurry scraper
- AQ2 Low ammonia emission flooring for livestock buildings
- TE4 Supply and plant a tree (for tree shelter belts)
- TE5 Supplement for use of individual tree-shelters

### Slowing water flow

- RP31 Equipment to disrupt tramlines in arable areas
- RP32 Small leaky woody dams
- RP33 Large leaky woody dams