



**A clear solution  
for farmers**

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

## *Recap: Soil Management with Philip Wright 20<sup>th</sup> July 2016*

*There can be no life without soil and no soil without life; they have evolved together.” - Charles E. Kellogg, USDA Yearbook of Agriculture, 1938*

Farmers, students and advisers from across the Nene and Welland catchments and further afield gathered at The Willow Brook Farm Shop, Helpston Heath to discuss all things soil management.

The event, which ran as a breakfast meeting, kicked off with a presentation by Philip Wright, of Wright Solutions.

Philip trained in Agricultural Engineering gaining an Honours Degree in 1979. Philip was Technical Director of Simba International (now Simba Great Plains), the UK leading manufacturer of cultivations machinery. During this time Simba won many design awards, including 3 Silver and 1 Gold Award by the Royal Agricultural Society of England. Philip advises Farmers, Agronomists and Machinery Manufacturers both within and outside the Agricultural Industry in UK, Western Europe, Russia, Ukraine and the Southern Hemisphere.

Philip covered a range of topics, including visual indicators of good and bad soil structure, and how to prevent structure damage. The effects of trafficking and subsoiler leg geometry principles were also covered, as well as how to get the most from cultivations. Remedial options for compaction reduction, cover crops and the benefits of getting roots down and the effects of movement of water and nutrients were covered in detail. A short summary of Philip's presentations can be found on the River Nene Regional Parks Website by following



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RIVER NENE REGIONAL PARK  
INSPIRED SPACES



River Nene Regional Park Community Interest Company



The Business Exchange . Rockingham Road . Kettering . United Kingdom . NN16 8JX  
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the following link: <http://www.riverneneregionalpark.org/publications/brochures-downloads/csf/cultivations-soil-structure-csf-helpston-2016.pdf>

Also speaking at the event was Doctor Felicity Crotty, Soil Biologist at the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, based in Loddington, Leicestershire. The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust research new and innovative methods of sustainable farming, including recent direct drill and cover crop trials. Felicity shared results of recent studies from the mixed farm at Loddington, showing the range cover crop mixes and the benefits each one has to the soil. Felicity also explained the key factors effecting earthworm distribution, including vegetation cover, soil moisture and pH. She demonstrated the benefits of having good soil biology, and the benefits that earthworms can bring to soil health. The audience heard how earthworm burrowing, feeding and casting improves soil structure, porosity, aeration and water infiltration, and decreases soil bulk density. We also heard how earthworm abundance is positively correlated with infiltration rate and soil moisture, and earthworm abundance is negatively correlated with surface runoff and soil erosion.

Before the group went outdoors, we heard from Julia Beeden, Peterborough City Councils Flood & Water Management Officer, on The Werrington Brook Project, an improvement programme which aims to holistically improve the sub-catchment of the River Welland during a 5-7 year partnership programme of community-focused works. The proposed plans include physical works to a series of brooks that flow into the River Welland, focusing on Marholm Brook, Werrington Brook, Cuckoo's Hollow and their interaction with Brook Drain and Paston Brook. The programme will not only involve physical works to the river, but will also explore how the local community and businesses can work together to reduce pollution. Farmers at the event were introduced to the project, which also aims to tackle rural diffuse pollution.



During the field walk, the group learned about practical methods of analysing soil structure and health, including the use of cover crops with deep rooting species such as oil radish, and the importance of carefully setting up machinery specific to field conditions before use. The group studied both an arable field, and a permanent grass field.



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Unfortunately due to the warm weather bringing forward harvest many interested farmers were unable to attend the event but we are planning on hosting a second one later in the year for those who couldn't attend.

The event, funded by The Nene and Welland Catchment Sensitive Partnership, which is the local Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) project to the location of the event is funded by DEFRA and RDPE is one of a number of events run across the catchments to provide farmers with free of charge advice and guidance on topics of interest in an aim to reduce point source and diffuse pollution from agriculture, as well as improving and retaining agricultural productivity.

The local partnership covers the Nene and Welland catchments and provides farmers within these catchments with free advice to reduce water pollution from agriculture. Farmers can also get advice on the new Mid-Tier Countryside Stewardship scheme which replaced Environmental Stewardship in 2015, and potentially an uplift in their score by engaging with their local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Philip, Felicity and Julia who spoke exceptionally well at the event. Also a thank you to the RNRP team and those who helped with the set up and organisation of the day. A big thank you is needed for Robin Morton and the team at The Willow Brook Farm Shop for allowing us to use your café for the morning and providing fantastic hospitality, as well as allowing us to demonstrate on your land.



For more information on Catchment Sensitive Farming, or to suggest topics for upcoming events, please contact your local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer, Georgina Wallis on 07921 941734/ 01536 526438 or email [georgina@rnnp.org](mailto:georgina@rnnp.org)



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