

# The purgatory of purdah

*Purdah* /'pʊ:də/ "The practice in certain societies of screening women from men or strangers, especially by means of a curtain"

"The period leading up to an election, during which government departments generally refrain from making any new announcements."

**If I were King I'd ban caravans; but I'd probably ban purdah first. I'd ban caravans because of the unnecessary space they take up and the grid lock that seems to ensure (plus I like tents better). I'd ban purdah because of the information vacuum that it causes, and the hearsay and disarray that takes the place of well consulted, communicated and structured schemes and policies. But perhaps I am wrong, perhaps it's not the caravans fault that they clog up the A303 maybe it's the cars that tow them or maybe even the people that drive them. As for purdah can a process ever really be to blame when a process is dreamt up and undertaken by people, yes actual people capable of thinking and decision making?**

On 12 June we were just breathing a sigh of relief on the submission of the last batch of nearly 200 BPS claims from CLM HQ when Natural England announced (via social media) that Expressions of Interest (EoI) for the new Higher Tier of Countryside Stewardship needed to be submitted by 30 June. So NE allowed us less than three weeks to research, complete and submit a form which is a prerequisite of entering CSS on 1 January 2016.

ES option	Rate/ha (£)		CSS Option	Rate/ha (£)
EE3	400	6m margins	SW1	353
EF2	450	Wild Bird Seed Mix	AB9	690
EF4	450	Pollen & Nectar Mix	AB1	511
EF6	120	Overwinter Stubble	AB2	84
EF13	360	Fallow Plots	AB5	524
EB3	42/100m	Hedge management	BE3	16/100m
EK3	150	V. Low Input Grass	GS2	95
HK15	130	Target Features Grass	GS13	90
HF12	475	Enhanced Wild Bird seed	AB9	640
HE10	485	Enhanced Gras margin	AB8	539
HK10	255	Wintering Wading Birds	GS10	157

In addition, calls for projects under both Countryside Productivity and the Growth Programme both closed in June. It's a good job the purdah curtain seems still to be draped over LEADER or we may well have been dealing with those applications in very short order too.

The alternative to blaming a "process" for grant opportunities coming and going like snow in summer is that it is part of some wider conspiracy, to control the number of applicants at the same time as being able to show commitment to the rural economy. It's a bit like using GOV.UK; is it simply the camel born from a committee designing horses or is information buried within its ether on purpose? Anyway, ours is not to reason why (is it??). We are here to tackle these challenges and even embrace them.

So we have submitted a raft of EoIs for farms that have HLS agreements ending in 2016 and for farms not already in Stewardship and now turn to Mid-Tier which will be open by the

time you read this. Details of this strand to CSS are secreted on GOV.UK (albeit the fairly vital "Terms and Conditions" section is worryingly void of information). All of CSS, including Mid-Tier will be competitive with only the highest scoring applicants offered an agreement which will last five years.

Payment rates under CSS as compared to ES are something of a mixed bag. Whilst most of the grassland have gone down in value quite significantly, several arable options have increased in value. It is however worth noting that while it is permissible to use some of these options to fulfil EFA requirements doing so will lead to a significant reduction in the value of each option.

Applications will be scored against the Statement of Priorities taking into account proposed management options and the total cost of the agreement. This will be done on a parcel by parcel basis, in addition to the basic scoring element there will be a score based on collaboration

applications, Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO) endorsement and incorporating the "Wild Pollinator Package".

Applicants to Mid-Tier will need to request an application pack and Historic Environment data from Natural England and then complete a Farm Environment Record (FER). Higher-Tier applicants will also require a baseline evaluation of Higher Tier agreements (BEHTA).

Applications must be submitted by 30 September with new agreements starting on 1st January.

So just as the lengthy log-jam of caravans is soon forgotten when pulling up to a campsite basking in the sunlight and promise of what lies ahead, the purgatory of purdah is already a distant memory now we finally have a new process to engage with. Fortunately for some farmers in the South East they don't need to worry about their subsidy journey, that's my problem and all I need to know is where they want to go.



by **ANTHONY WESTON**  
Partner, CLM  
01892 770339  
@anthonyweston



- Basic Payment Scheme
- Farm and Estate Management
- Farm Business Consultancy
- Rent Reviews
- Environmental Stewardship
- Ecological Surveys



Call us on **01892 770339** or email [info@c-l-m.co.uk](mailto:info@c-l-m.co.uk)  
[www.c-l-m.co.uk](http://www.c-l-m.co.uk)