

# The COMPLETE Land Management UPDATE

Winter 2015



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## LEADER Funding

Finally back on stream LEADER can fund eligible projects at a grant rate of up to 40% providing up to £50,000 per project. The key target for the scheme is delivering projects that provide new employment with most LEADER groups aiming to spend around £20,000 to 25,000 of funding per job created.

Funding opportunities vary depending upon the LEADER group area in which a business is located however they are generally focused on the following:

- Support for increasing farm and forestry productivity
- Support for Small and Micro Enterprises and farm diversification
- Support for rural tourism
- Provision of rural services

## Basic Payment Scheme

- The Basic Payment Scheme (including greening) will be worth £181.37 per hectare for those farming in the South East. This figure is subject to Financial Discipline which is likely to be applied at a rate of 1.39%
- The Young Farmer payment is worth an additional £45.34 on up to the first 90ha of a claim, again this could be subject to Financial Discipline
- The majority of payments to be made in December 2015 and January 2016
- Claimants who claim on common land will have to wait until at least February 2016 for their payment
- Applicants to the National Reserve, those who applied for new entitlements, should hear in November whether they have been successful

Is your cropping plan for harvest  
2016 compliant with greening?

## Greening

Claimants need to ensure that they comply with the three “greening measures” **each year**; approximately 30% of the total BPS payment relates to complying with these measures, £55.72 in 2015. However it is important to note, that by not complying with the measures, claimants will risk more than this 30% from 2017 onwards. Of the three greening measures particular attention should be paid to Crop diversity and Ecological Focus Areas.

## Nitrate Vulnerable Zone Compliance

One of the most common reasons for a BPS or Stewardship claimant failing an inspection is the inability of the claimant to provide the RPA with the necessary information when it is requested. The vast majority of farms are not actually doing anything wrong on the ground but if the relevant records are not kept and the required calculations not completed then you will be penalised.

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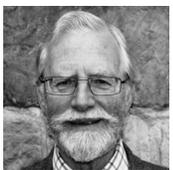
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## Environmental Stewardship ending 2016 or 2017?

### Countryside Stewardship Scheme – it is worth considering

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme is Natural England's replacement for Environmental Stewardship. Each tier of the scheme has one application deadline and all schemes start on the 1<sup>st</sup> January in the following year.

- Those with ELS or OELS agreements expiring in 2016 can apply in 2016 for a CSS agreement starting 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017.
- Those with HLS agreements expiring in 2016 or 2017 can apply in 2016 for a CSS agreement starting 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017.

Natural England has followed in the RPA's footsteps in 2015; arguably making an even worse job of launching a new scheme. That said they have already started to iron out many of the issues and it is clear that CSS can provide a useful income stream to those willing to engage. Payments are based on the area of individual management options rather than a flat rate across the farm.

**Miss out on your first opportunity to apply for CSS and miss out on agri environment income for up to 23 months!**

### RPA Inspections

If you are in the final year or approaching the final year of your stewardship scheme there is a good chance that your agreement could be inspected. Now is the perfect opportunity not only to check that you have everything in place but to assess your options looking forward – what could CSS whether it be Mid or Higher deliver in terms of income.

- When was the last time you dug your agreement out from the back of the filing cabinet?
- Is that 6m margin still as wide as when you put it in 4 or even 9 years ago?
- When was the last time you actually re-established your wild bird seed mix plots?

The older your agreement the greater the penalty can be if the RPA find something is amiss. The fact that penalties can be back dated coupled with Natural England's frankly bizarre penalty calculations means the consequences can be rather hard to swallow. We can conduct a 'health check' of your existing agreement and give you an appraisal of your options going forward.

### Cultivating Grassland?

Thinking about a change in cropping, diversifying in to vines or simply looking to reseed a tired and unproductive grass field?

- If a grass field has not been cultivated in the last 15 years or the sward now constitutes semi natural habitat then you must apply to Natural England for an Environmental Impact Screening Decision application before you make any changes to your management of the field.
- If under a stewardship agreement or for any other reason you have reverted an area that is designated as a Scheduled Monument to grass you need to check before cultivating the Scheduled area. Class Consents – those activities that you are permitted to undertaken on the Scheduled area expire after 6 years of not being undertaken therefore if you have not ploughed over a monument for 6 years or more you will need Historic England's permission before you do.

### Energy Barns and Reserve Power

Whilst growth in the renewables sector has been halted by a change in government policy there are still opportunities within the energy market for rural businesses. Electricity storage and emergency generation for use at times of peak requirement are an interesting and potentially very profitable prospect, contact one of the team if you would like to know more.