

UPDATE

CLM
NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2022OUR SERVICES FARM BUSINESS & ESTATE MANAGEMENT • PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
• SUBSIDIES & GRANTS • LAND SALES & ACQUISITION • NATURAL CAPITAL AND ECOLOGY

SFI opens – but weigh up options

Farmers can now apply to take part in the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), with Defra having ditched the traditional-style application window.

Defra began accepting applications from June 30 and will do so at any time throughout the year, with agreements lasting for three years and payments made quarterly.

But debate is raging as to how accessible and desirable the scheme will be to many farmers.

Defra secretary George Eustice has told English farmers they will receive the “vast majority” of funds released from the Basic Payment Scheme over the next three years.

But Jeremy Moody of the CAAV warned last month that the new schemes would be “an option not salvation” for many, predicting that more than half of the money saved by scrapping BPS would be diverted to the less than 5% of English farmland which took part in the large-scale Landscape Recovery Scheme.

Though open to all farms, SFI simply wouldn’t compensate many for the loss of BPS, added Mr Moody.

Given the sums don’t look particularly generous for the SFI, it’s still worth considering entering a Countryside Stewardship scheme (CS), which is more of a known



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quantity, will give a guaranteed income for five years, and will act as a “bridge” to later schemes, says CLM director Kevin Jay.

“It’s getting late for entering an application for a scheme which begins next year (the application deadline for a five-

year CS agreement starting on 1 January 2023 is 31 July 2022), but the scheme will be open to new applicants until 2023 (for agreements starting in 2024), while Defra continues to roll out its new environmental land management schemes.

“Whether farmers choose to enter an environmental scheme or not, it’s important to re-focus on costs,” adds Mr Jay. “Many have driven spending down as far as possible, but in this tough inflationary period, with diesel and fertiliser prices sky-rocketing, it’s worth taking another look to see if there are any additional savings that can be made anywhere else in the business.”

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Buyers on hunt for viticulture land

If you have a plot of land that might appeal to grape growers, it could command a big price premium, says Matthew Berryman



MATTHEW BERRYMAN

Land suitable for grape-growing is selling for record prices in the counties bordering London, as the changing climate and booming appetite for English wine fuels demand.

Buyers are prepared to pay up to £25,000/acre for top quality ground suitable for the endeavour. The South-East is the epicentre of the wine industry, with a lot of people chasing a relatively few suitable acres in this part of the world.

Many spots in Sussex, Surrey and Kent offer ideal soils and weather, meaning the best land can sell for more than double the value of good arable farmland.

There's a concentration of vineyards in the South-East which means that, as well as great growing conditions, there's a critical mass when it comes to essential elements such as the harvest workforce.

While Sussex, Surrey and Kent are seen as "fashionable" locations – and a particularly picturesque location can drive property prices up further – the appetite to acquire such land is also strong in Hampshire, Essex and Suffolk.

Lots of global money is being invested in UK viticulture and overseas investors often prefer to make their acquisitions relatively close to Gatwick or Heathrow.

We are seeing less bought by 'hobbyists' these days, though. The buyers are either already serious players looking to expand or have decided that the only way to be successful is to start big.

As the wine industry expands, aspiring grape growers and winemakers could also increasingly look to rent land, too.

Agreeing the terms of a lease can involve complex negotiations as the lessee may well want a

period of occupation of 30-plus years, which is far longer than the lessor is instinctively comfortable with, but with rent levels at about £300-£400/acre, it dramatically reduces the capital outlay required to kickstart a project.

Trade body Wine GB reckons the area under vine has more than doubled in the past decade, with the varieties Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier accounting for the majority of plantings.

Although the total area is still relatively small, at about 10,000 acres, it estimates there are about 800 vineyards in England and Wales.

Sought-after viticulture land:

- Chalky
- Free draining
- South-facing
- Less than 300ft above sea level
- Opportunities to develop tourism enterprises
- Supportive local planning policies

‘Winnie-the-Pooh wood’ chosen to celebrate Platinum Jubilee

The East Sussex location that inspired the ‘100 Acre Wood’ in Winnie-the-Pooh has been named as one of a national network of ancient woodlands chosen to celebrate The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.

The iconic spot on the Buckhurst Estate, owned by the 11th Earl De La Warr, (pictured), was revealed by HRH The Prince of Wales as one of an ‘ancient canopy’ of 70 woods and 70 trees celebrating Her Majesty’s 70 years of service.

The location that inspired one-time local resident, the author A.A. Milne, is a diverse, wildlife-rich, spot dating back to before 1600. It now has a mix of species including ash, beech, oak, silver birch, sweet chestnut, cherry, rowan, whitebeam, Scots pine, Douglas fir and larch.

“I have enormous admiration for Her Majesty and it’s highly unlikely there will ever be another Platinum Jubilee,” says Earl De La Warr.

“We were therefore keen to commemorate this huge milestone. It also seemed fitting, given that last year marked both the 95th birthday of Her Majesty and the 95th anniversary of the first publication of Winnie-the-Pooh, that we applied for our wood to become part of this celebration of the nation’s natural, living heritage.

“I’m so proud to be the owner of such an iconic wood – it is a magical place which has a special place in the imagination of generations of children.

“This is a fantastic initiative which will raise awareness of treasured habitats across the UK and the importance of conserving them for

future generations,” added Lord De La Warr.

CLM Land agent Jonathan Morris, who advises the Buckhurst Estate, described the location immortalised through the adventures of Winnie-the-Pooh and Christopher Robin, the character based on AA Milne’s son, as “unique and important to our natural and literary history”.

Mr Morris added: “People love walking on the footpaths through the wood. It’s brimming with biodiversity ranging from woodland birds and several species of raptor to deer. There is a wide variety of invertebrates, flowers and fauna.

“Buckhurst is still very much a working estate,” he added. “It

produces organic meat from its herd of traditional Sussex and Longhorn cattle, and is home to the oldest registered Shetland Ponies in the world, bred by Lady De La Warr. As with all our great country estates, though, it blends a commercial approach with a strong commitment to conservation.”

The designation of the ‘ancient canopy’ is part of the wider Queen’s Green Canopy (QGC) project which is also inviting people to ‘plant a tree for the Jubilee’.

The Marquess of Abergavenny, chair of the Lord Lieutenant’s QGC’s East Sussex Planning Group, says: “The aim is to encourage the planting of millions of trees in towns, cities and the countryside across the UK. This will help the environment and support this country’s drive to curb carbon emissions.”

The Marquess of Abergavenny has planted trees at his home, the Eridge Park Estate near Tunbridge Wells, the location of one of England’s oldest enclosed deer parks.

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ADASGOLD PHOTOGRAPHY

PPP paperwork a priority

Farmers who missed the June 22 deadline to register as a user of plant production products are being urged to send Defra the paperwork as soon as possible.

Recently introduced rules mean that those using PPPs or any adjuvants must register under the Official Controls (Plant Protection Products) Regulations 2020.

Defra requires all farm businesses



using herbicides, insecticides or fungicides to register their details.

It needs the business name, the addresses where pesticides are stored, plus an estimated volume used in a typical year. Businesses that have PPPs and adjuvants applied by a third party must also register.

“The legislation, which applies to livestock as well as arable farmers, came out of the blue for many, so anyone who

hasn't done it is advised to do so as soon as possible as it is a statutory requirement,” says CLM Farm & Environment Consultant Georgina Wallis (pictured).

“You only need to register once, but if there is significant change in your business use of pesticides, you have to inform Defra.”

The form can be downloaded on the Gov.UK website, along with details of where to return it to.

And finally...

...the CLM team were out in force at The Heathfield Show on May 28.

The event, which bounced back after a two-year hiatus because of the Covid pandemic, traditionally marks one of the summer's earliest shows.

CLM's Mandy Ashdown (pictured), who's only missed one Heathfield Show since she joined the firm in 2008, says it does a great job of fostering links between town

and country.

“It offers the urban public an enjoyable glimpse of country life and gives farmers a first-hand insight into what makes their customers tick.

“For us exhibitors, meanwhile, the Show is a great opportunity to see clients. In this digital era, ever-more work is done remotely via email and, while this brings many advantages, there's no substitute for seeing someone face-to-face.

“It's a chance for us to say a big thank you to them for putting their trust in us over a cup of tea (or something stronger), a slice of cake and a burger.

“Horam-based Steve Smither did the barbecue again – he's been a butcher for over 30 years, so what Steve doesn't know about meat isn't worth knowing!”



CONTACT US

We are a 20-strong team including land agents, business consultants, planners, valuers, environmental experts, agriculturalists, ecologists and property experts. For more information about the topics in this issue, please get in touch with your existing CLM adviser or, for new inquiries, contact one of our directors.



MARK WEAVER
mark@c-l-m.co.uk
M 07836 343297



ANTHONY WESTON
anthony@c-l-m.co.uk
M 07780 711370



MATTHEW BERRYMAN
matthew@c-l-m.co.uk
M 07710 765323



KEVIN JAY
kevin@c-l-m.co.uk
M 07920 061307

Sackville House, Sackville Lane,
Hartfield, East Sussex TN7 4AW

Tel: 01892 770339

Email: info@c-l-m.co.uk

www.c-l-m.co.uk



See a two-minute video about CLM and how we can help you.