

FARMING AND PROPERTY BULLETIN – MAY 2021

SCHEME ROUNDUP!

Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship Deadlines



A reminder that both BPS and CSS Annual Revenue Claims should be submitted by midnight on the 17th May (without penalty).

- Claimants have until the 31st May to make certain changes to CSS Annual Revenue Claims (without penalty) so long as the original claim was submitted on time.
- Claimants have until the 11th June to submit supporting documents to the BPS Claim and make certain changes.

Countryside Stewardship Inspections

The RPA has provided information on inspections this year, especially those that commenced on 1st January 2021. Agreements that commenced prior to this date will be under EU inspection rules and regulations. Those starting on or after 1st January 2021 will have UK domestic rules apply. For these agreements, the RPA have changed 'Inspection' to 'Environmental Outcome Site Visit' and two approaches will be taken:

- 1) **Whole Agreement** – it will look at all the options in the agreement and an assessment will be made against the environmental outcomes found.
- 2) **Campaign** – this will look at certain options which have been chosen for the year. For 2021 the following 'Campaign Options' have been chosen:
 - a. Buffer Strips – SW1 (4-6m buffer strips) and SW4 (12-24m watercourse buffer strips).
 - b. Grassland Options – GS1 (Take field corners out of management), GS2 (Permanent Grassland with very low inputs), GS7 – Restorations towards species-rich grassland and GS17 (Lenient grazing supplement)
 - c. Boundary Options – BE3 (Management of Hedgerows)

Countryside Stewardship Mirror Agreements

Those with Countryside Stewardship Agreements which expire on 31st December 2021 should have been contacted by the RPA by now with the offer of a 'Mirror Agreement'. This will include Agreements which originally started in 2016 and were extended for one year in 2021 and those that started in 2017 and are due to expire at the end of this year

The 'Mirror Agreements' will be for a further five-year period instead of the previous one year extensions.

The new Agreement will 'mirror' the current one and start on 1st January 2022. They are being offered under domestic regulations and subject to the new 2022 Countryside Stewardship Manual.



It will not be possible to add, remove or replace options in a Mirror Agreement. If the Agreement holder wishes to do this then they need to apply for a fresh Countryside Stewardship Agreement by the 31st July 2021 if they want it to follow on and commence 1st January 2022.

If you think you may be eligible for a Mirror Agreement but haven't yet been offered one do contact the RPA and enquire.

Once the offer has been made Agreement holders have 20 working days to reply to the Offer and return the signed Acceptance Form.

Financial Discipline Refund

Most BPS Claimants should have received a small Financial Discipline refund recently. The RPA are due to complete this process by the end of the month.

Forestry Woodland Creation Grant Closing Soon!



The application window for Forestry England's new woodland creation scheme will close on 1st June 2021 and landowners are urged to apply in time. The Forestry England Woodland Partnership was launched in March, and is aimed at landowners including public bodies, environmental groups and farmers, offering an annual, guaranteed rent in return for a long-term lease on land of at least 50 hectares.

The Forestry England Woodland Partnership is viewed as a chance to diversify landholding and farming businesses and requires limited financial investment and no forestry expertise as Forestry England will design, plant and manage every site as part of the nation's forests.

As part of the Nature for Climate Fund to support the government's tree planting commitment, the scheme aims to create significant new areas of high-quality, biodiverse woodlands across England.

A new brochure giving details of the partnership benefits and the application process is now available to download on the Forestry England website www.forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation.

New Hedge Planting Grant

A new £500,000 Farming Hedgefund is available for farmers in England to plant new hedges, hedgerow trees and gap planting.

The Tree Council is leading 'Close the Gap', a partnership project, to promote hedgerows over the next year and is asking farmers to get involved to stop biodiversity decline, tackle climate change and preserve the character of the English countryside.

'Close the Gap' will also provide durable tree ties for farmers to "leave their mark" by tagging selected trees in their hedges to protect them to grow into mature hedgerow trees for the future.

As well as grants, farmers can access management information and advice for new and existing hedgerows.

It is hoped that surveying hedgerows – or allowing others to – with a new 'Healthy Hedgerows' app will, with a few questions, give management options for each hedge surveyed, helping farmers plan and manage their network of hedgerows in a quick and easy manner.

Close the Gap is funded by the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The fund is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Farmers wishing to register interest in Close the Gap hedgerow grants or find out more should send an email to farmhedgerows@treecouncil.org.uk or phone **Emily Stacey at FWAG on 07854 323 349**.

