



Douglas Green Consulting Ltd

SPRING NEWSLETTER

Included in this issue:

- Countryside Stewardship – is it right for you?

Welcome to the spring edition of the Douglas Green Consulting Ltd newsletter.

With BPS finally behind us, now maybe a good the time to look towards the future and explore the opportunities available for securing additional income during a time of transition.



Countryside Stewardship Opportunities

Change is afoot!

DEADLINE: 31ST May 2019

With BPS 2019 now safely behind us and the ongoing uncertainty of Brexit, now may be a pertinent time to consider support scheme opportunities for your business in the future.

With the challenges faced by commercial agriculture, additional income sources could be a welcome bonus.

Indications are that BPS will start to be phased out from 2021. There will be a de-linked degressive transitional payment between 2021 and 2027 after which it will cease to exist.

The likelihood is that a reference year will be used to determine what your reducing entitlement will be from 2021 onwards, but we do not know which year this is likely to be.

New Opportunities

A new Environmental Land Management Service (ELMS) will be introduced so that as BPS payments reduce, farmers can opt to enter environment management options and receive payments for this instead.



To date no timescale has been given for the start of the ELMS scheme and the risk is that there may be a period of time between BPS finishing and the ELMS scheme opening where no support payments will be available.

To counter this income deficit we would recommend that clients look at applying for a Countryside Stewardship agreement either this year or next year to ensure some environmental payments during the transition period.

DEADLINES ARE TIGHT!

- You must apply for an application pack **before 31st May 2019**
- Completed applications for CS must be submitted **prior to 31st July 2019**

Countryside Stewardship often comes with a bad reputation for delayed payments, late contracts and poor communication. But for many, a Countryside Stewardship agreement can provide money for activities that are already being carried out on farm. This results in additional income, with minimal disruption to farming operations.

With agricultural margins remaining tight, any income sources should not be rejected without first being considered.

Countryside Stewardship is environmentally focused, with the aim of enhancing and protecting the natural environment for future generations. The scheme is competitive, so each application will be scored on the benefits it brings to the surrounding environment.



HIGH SCORING KEY PRIORITIES

- **Wildlife and nature** – restoring habitats, providing food and nesting materials for birds, hedge management and creating areas for rare flowering plants
- **Pollinators** – providing pollen and nectar sources
- **Water/flooding** – improving water quality, reducing flooding risk, improving infrastructure
- **Woodland** – creating woodland and improving tree health



Countryside Stewardship Schemes

Within Countryside Stewardship there are a range of different schemes:

Higher Tier Scheme

This is a competitive scheme for complex, bespoke environment management projects at high priority sites. We are already past the application deadline for the current year.



Mid Tier Scheme

These are 5 year agreements which offer a range of options with the aim of protecting and enhancing the natural environment, in particular the diversity of wildlife and water quality.

The Mid Tier schemes offer:

- **Management options:** These are multi-year grants with payments made every year for 5 years
- **Capital items:** A range of 2 year grants for specific capital works

For those in water quality priority areas, this scheme also includes water capital grants (previously known as Catchment Sensitive Farming Grants).

The scheme offers a range of management options including taking out unproductive field corners, buffering in field ponds, permanent grass with very low inputs (you may have steep land that lends itself to limited inputs), legume rich swards, taking poor performing fields/areas out of production (this option may sometimes offer a better return for these areas than cropping!) and hedgerow management. Many of these options may already have been implemented on farm.

DEADLINES ARE TIGHT!

- You must apply for an application pack **before 31st May 2019**
- Completed applications for CS must be submitted **prior to 31st July 2019**

If your application includes water capital grants you must have approval for your scheme from your local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer by this date too!



Douglas Green Consulting Ltd

The Mid Tier Scheme is competitive and putting together an application can be complicated, especially if you are claiming for a range of capital items. Your application needs to demonstrate that it offers the best results for the environment in your local area.

In order to optimise the likely success of your application, we would strongly recommend you seek advice on what options may be most suitable for your farm and how best to put together a comprehensive application that offers environmental benefits that meet the key environmental priorities outlined.

APPLICATION SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Should you require additional support and advice concerning your application we would be happy to put you in touch with a trusted advisor who specialises in these schemes and application processes.



Wildlife Offers

These are non-competitive 5 year schemes, which are divided into 4 management offers tailored to specific farming practices:

- Arable
- Mixed Farming
- Lowland Grazing
- Upland



Each offer is subdivided into 3 categories and within each category there are a range of management options to choose from. You **must** select at least **one** management option from each category.

You are **not** restricted to the number of options chosen per category so choose as many as you feel suit your business and provide the desired environmental benefits. The more options you choose, the greater the overall payment.

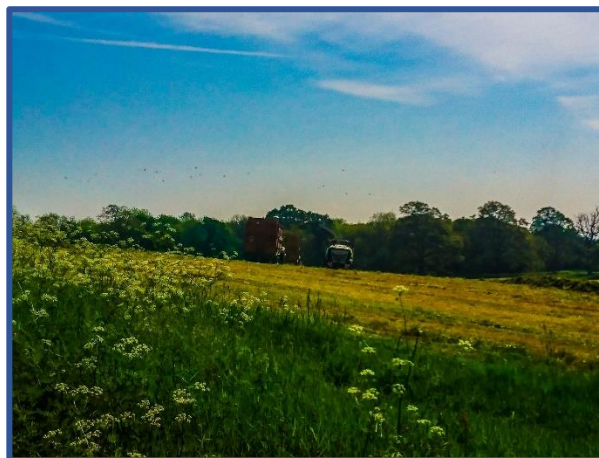
Applying for these offers is relatively straight forward and you are guaranteed to be accepted. However, the same deadlines apply and **you must request an application pack by 31st May 2019 and apply before 31st July 2019.**

Woodland Schemes

3 different grants are available within this scheme and focus on:

- Creation of new woodland
- Management of existing woodland
- Improving tree health

These are all non-competitive 2 year schemes and applications can be made at any time of year.



What else is there to consider?

Ecological Focus Areas

When compiling your Mid Tier scheme management options list, we would urge you to consider what options you are already using as your Ecological Focus Area (EFAs) for BPS. Many of the Mid Tier management options will overlap with EFA options, but dual funding is not allowed, so your EFA options **must** be different to your Mid Tier management options.

Capital Grants

In addition to the base management options a range of capital grants are also available. These include:

- Manage/maintain hedges, walls, stock fencing and gates
- Provide hard bases for livestock drinking and feeding
- Provide alternative water sources away from watercourses and ponds
- Install water storage tanks, lined bio beds and livestock troughs
- Manage yards, gates, tracks to reduce soil erosion and reduce sediment/pollution entering water courses

This may provide an excellent opportunity to secure some funding for projects that were already earmarked as necessary in order to improve the farm and local environment.

Standalone 2 year water capital grants are also available if you are in a water priority area. Grants are available up to a maximum value of £10,000.

We will be checking all our clients locations and will let you know this week if you are in a water priority catchment area. If you don't hear from us I'm afraid you are not!



Douglas Green Consulting Ltd

With the deadline looming we would strongly advise you to apply for an application pack **before 31st May 2019**. This **does not commit you to submitting an application**, but will ensure that once you have read the necessary information and management options booklets, if you decide it is the right choice for your business, you are able to submit an application by the **31st July 2019** deadline.

Do you need support applying for the relevant application packs?

Should you wish to apply for a Countryside Stewardship application pack, but are unsure of what to do, please don't hesitate to contact us and we would be happy to talk you through the process or apply for a pack on your behalf.

We can also signpost you to specialist, trusted advisors who would be happy to support you throughout the application process.

100% independent, 100% for you.

Please contact us via:

[01666 817278](tel:01666817278)

Or

douglas@douglasgreenconsulting.co.uk

