

# Countryside Stewardship 2021



The Countryside Stewardship scheme will shortly be open for applications with new Agreements starting on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022. Why should Island farmers consider joining the scheme?

With the Government's new policy on farming 'The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024' land management will be strongly focused on the environment alongside food production. As the Basic Payment Scheme is phased out, late 2024 will bring the start of Environmental Land Management (ELM). For many, perhaps most, farm income from ELM will go some way towards replacing BPS. The message is clear. To bring Island farms in line with the 'sustainable farming' policy, agri-environment schemes will become the norm.

Should farmers delay joining the Stewardship scheme this year and wait for ELM? The short answer is no unless the farm's finances can forego environmental payments for several years. Defra will want the roll out of ELM to be successful so those farmers already in Stewardship will be obvious candidates. It is important to note that Defra has stated that when the ELM begins...

*'...we will make sure there is a smooth transition for those in existing agri-environment schemes.'* and

*'...Anyone in a Countryside Stewardship agreement that starts after January 2021 who secures a place in the Environmental Land Management scheme will be able to withdraw and transfer to the new scheme with no penalty at agreed exit points.'*

But what can a Stewardship agreement offer in 2021? Details have yet to be released but it will be an upgrade of the 2020 scheme. As a guide, Mid-Tier in 2020 offered:

26 options for arable fields, from £84/ha for overwinter stubbles to £640/ha for unharvested cereal headlands.

14 options for grasslands, from £95/ha for grasslands receiving very low inputs to £440/ha to buffer watercourses. Supplements could add up to a further £85/ha (e.g., haymaking).

Hedgerow management offered £8/100m for each side.

Numerous capital works, from hedgerow restoration (up to £12.80/m) and planting (£11.60/m) + fencing to 30 items related to safeguarding watercourses, upgrading slurry stores, management of pesticides and improving the farmyard e.g., concrete yard renewal (£27.14/m<sup>2</sup>).

Various payments were also offered for ponds, trees, and orchards.

The Higher Tier extended the number of land management options and capital works. Below are extracts from last year's manual.

### Sample of arable options

Code	Option Name	Option Payment Rate
AB1	Nectar flower mix	£511/ha
AB2	Basic overwinter stubble	£84/ha
AB3	Beetle banks	£573
AB4	Skylark plots *(£9 per plot, minimum 2 plots /ha)	£18/ha *1
AB5	Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew	£524/ha
AB6	Enhanced overwinter stubble	£436/ha
AB7	Whole crop cereals	£495/ha
AB8	Flower-rich margins and plots	£539/ha
AB9	Winter bird food	£640/ha
AB10	Unharvested cereal headland	£640/ha
AB11	Cultivated areas for arable plants	£532/ha
AB12	Supplementary winter feeding for farmland birds ** (for every 2 ha of winter bird food)	£632/tonne *2
AB13	Brassica fodder crop	£100/ha
AB14	Harvested low input cereal	£266/ha
AB15	Two year sown legume fallow	£522/ha

### Sample of Grassland options

Code	Option Name	Option Payment Rate
GS7	Restoration towards species-rich grassland	£145/ha
GS8	Creation of species-rich grassland	£267/ha
GS9	Management of wet grassland for breeding waders	£264/ha
GS10	Management of wet grassland for wintering waders and wildfowl	£157/ha
GS11	Creation of wet grassland for breeding waders	£406/ha
GS12	Creation of wet grassland for wintering waders and wildfowl	£310/ha
GS13	Management of grassland for target features	£90/ha
GS14	Creation of grassland for target features	£253/ha
GS15	Haymaking supplement	£85/ha
GS16	Rush infestation control supplement	£73/ha
GS17	Lenient grazing supplement	£44/ha

If you are considering joining Stewardship this year and have questions about the scheme, or just need some general advice as to what might fit your farming operation, please call Mark Simmons on 07851 093532 or email [mark.simmons@iow.gov.uk](mailto:mark.simmons@iow.gov.uk) Why wait?