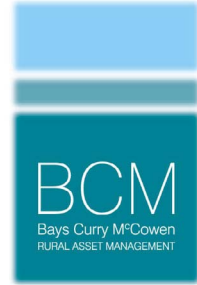


PRESS RELEASE



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Government Let Down Farmers Again, This Time Over Stewardship

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Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) are essentially on hold for the time being and Europe is being blamed for this funding crisis. Essentially the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), which was meant to go in front of the European Parliament (EP) last year, was postponed. It is now not likely to go in front of the EP until the spring of this year, and it then will take several months for the consultation process to reach a conclusion.

Tom Tyrwhitt-Drake of Bays Curry McCowen (BCM) says, "The Government yet again has failed to secure the funds necessary for our farmers and land managers. Seemingly there has been a lack of impetus from DEFRA together with typical 'Eurocracy' which continues to strangle our rural businesses. As usual it is the those with the greatest needs who will miss out, and not just farmers but the English countryside will also suffer because of it." "It would appear that in 2006 DEFRA's single achievement was to change the title "England Rural Development Programme" (ERDP) to the current "Rural Development Programme for England" (RDPE)!!"

The advice being given to farmers is to APPLY ANYWAY for ELS, OELS and HLS. The outcome will be that applicants will only receive a "provisional " agreement, rather than a full agreement with Natural England. The idea behind this is that agreement holders are entitled to payment as normal, but as and when the EP has made any changes to the scheme rules, or to options, it holds the right to change applicants' options or even withdraw them. This could result in farmers having to cancel their schemes completely. However David Milliband is confident that as Europe accepted the schemes in 2005, there is no reason why they should change the rules in 2007.... Are you as confident as he is?!

For more information on any of these schemes contact Tom Tyrwhitt-Drake on 01962 763902. or by e mail at ttdrake@bcm.co.uk

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