

PRESS RELEASE



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ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP – LOOKING FORWARD TO CHANGES

DEFRA have recently released their review of environmental stewardship highlighting various changes that are to be implemented. The actual policy of stewardship has now been reviewed with member states broadening their remit to include how stewardship can mitigate climate change. With Natural England still 13% under their target of land covered by Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) they are hoping to increase the number of holdings to enter into ELS.

The review has over 100 detailed changes to ELS options and 80 for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). These changes include extending the non hedge cutting period for hedge cutting options, greater explanation on managing low input grassland, and a new option to make weedier over winter stubbles. Some of the options are designed to be broader, others are to be tightened up. Whether this will encourage farmers to join the scheme remains to be seen when the policies have been formalised.

With many farmers enjoying a rise in profits the changes may not be enough to encourage more to enter the schemes. Tom Tyrwhitt-Drake from BCM comments “We will watch with interest to see if Natural England and DEFRA have done enough to encourage those border line farmers to enter the various schemes. As a percentage of farm profit, ELS will generally be lower than when the scheme was first introduced in 2005, so they will have to make the rules broad and manageable if they want farmers to join. If they make the rules too intrusive, farmers simply won’t enter, and indeed those farmers whose schemes finish in 2010 may decide not to renew.”

For more information on Entry Level, Organic Entry Level or Higher Level Stewardship please contact Tom Tyrwhitt-Drake at BCM on 01962 763 900 or tdrake@bcm.co.uk

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