

DEFRA ENVIRONMENTAL LAND MANAGEMENT SCHEME CONSULTATION

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254741

Summary

This paper provides information on the current Defra consultation on the Environmental Land Management (ELM) system, highlighting questions of particular relevance to the AONB Partnership.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note and comment on the information provided.

Background

On 25th February, Defra launched a consultation on a policy document on the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) system. The link to this is in the background papers section below. Alongside this, Defra has published 'Farming for the future: Policy and progress update'. This provides detail on the Environmental Land Management scheme and our other planned schemes to support productivity, animal health and welfare. It also covers future support for innovation and research and development.

The discussion at the meeting will focus on developing answers to the following questions in the consultation most relevant to the Shropshire Hills AONB and the Partnership's remit:

6. Do you have any comments on the design principles? (see box below) **Are they the right ones? Are there any missing?**

For all elements of the ELM scheme design we will:

- a. Focus on achieving environmental outcomes, helping to deliver our 25 Year Environment Plan and net zero target. In doing so, it will help farmers, foresters and other land managers optimise the potential of their land to deliver public goods, as part of a thriving food or other land-based business;
- b. Ensure national and local environmental priorities are supported and balanced effectively;
- c. Ensure that the scheme and its underpinning systems and processes work effectively and represent maximum value for money to the taxpayer;

- d. Ensure that ELM includes actions that most farmers, foresters and other land managers could deliver and encourage delivery of outcomes at all spatial scales through collaboration as well as individual participation;
- e. Enable farmers, foresters and other land managers to have greater flexibility over how they deliver environmental outcomes;
- f. Ensure minimal complexity and administrative burden for participants and administrators, considering lessons learned from similar past initiatives;
- g. Seek to harness new technology and digital solutions where they are shown to add value and improve the scheme design and operation;
- h. Seek to continuously improve all elements of the scheme and its administration, through monitoring, evaluating, learning and innovating, while providing sufficient certainty and clarity to applicants;
- i. Consider re-using / improving existing systems and data before building new.

7. Do you think the ELM scheme as currently proposed will deliver each of the objectives? (see box below)

In summary, we recommend the strategic objectives of ELM are:

1. To secure a range of positive environmental benefits, prioritising between environmental outcomes where necessary
2. To help tackle some of the environmental challenges associated with agriculture, focusing on how to address these in the shorter term

In doing the above, ELM will provide an opportunity for farmers to derive an additional income stream through the delivery of environmental benefits as and once direct payments are phased out. The "Farming for the future: policy and progress update" sets out the other mechanisms the government proposes alongside ELM to mitigate the vulnerability of the sector in a targeted way.

8. What is the best way to encourage participation in ELM? What are the key barriers to participation, and how do we tackle them?

9. For each tier we have given a broad indication of what types of activities could be paid for. Are we focussing on the right types of activity in each tier?

10. Delivering environmental outcomes across multiple land holdings will in some cases be critical. For example, for establishing wildlife corridors or improving water quality in a catchment. What support do land managers need to work together within ELM, especially in tiers 2 and 3?

11. While contributing to national environmental targets (such as climate change mitigation) is important, ELM should also help to deliver local environmental priorities, such as in relation to flooding or public access. How should local priorities be determined?

14. As we talk to land managers, and look back on what has worked from previous schemes, it is clear that access to an adviser is highly important to successful environmental schemes. Is advice always needed? When is advice most likely to be needed by a scheme participant?

<p>List of Background Papers</p> <p>Environmental Land Management: Policy Discussion, Defra consultation at https://consult.defra.gov.uk/elm/elmpolicyconsultation/.</p> <p>Farming for the future: Policy and progress update February 2020 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-future-for-food-farming-and-the-environment-policy-statement-2020.</p>
<p>Human Rights Act Appraisal</p> <p>The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.</p>
<p>Environmental Appraisal</p> <p>The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.</p>
<p>Risk Management Appraisal</p> <p>Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.</p>
<p>Community / Consultations Appraisal</p> <p>The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.</p>
<p>Appendices</p> <p>None</p>