



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 31 st March 2021	<u>Item</u> 4
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ELM ADVOCACY AND FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES PROGRAMME - UPDATE

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Summary

This paper updates members on the recent small programme of advocacy for the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme, and the forthcoming 3 year 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' funding programme from Defra.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note and comment on the update.

Background

ELM Advocacy

In the closing weeks of 2020, the National Association for AONBs secured a contract with Defra to deliver a programme of advocacy for the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. Each AONB team was awarded £7,500 towards farmer engagement on ELM and on the current Countryside Stewardship scheme as a route into ELM. Three training sessions for AONB and National Park staff were run before Christmas. We were asked to encourage farmers to book onto NAAONB online webinars during March. Unfortunately the first of these was cancelled due to staff sickness and the second was also cut as information on schemes had not been forthcoming from Defra. The third planned webinar is scheduled for 23rd March, and a verbal update on this will be given at the meeting.

We opted to deliver the advocacy work with in-house capacity from the team rather than contract the work out. As well as raising the knowledge levels of members of our team on the topic and using their contacts to best effect, by this means we have achieved the highest number of bookings onto the webinars from the Shropshire Hills (65) of any AONB or National Park. Thanks are due to partner organisations locally who have helped to promote this.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme announced in the Agricultural Transition Plan on 30th November is still in preparation by Defra and we await further information before being able to set this up. It is a 3 year programme for AONBs and National Parks to be delivered across two elements:

(A) Farm level projects to diversify incomes, prepare for our Environmental Land Management offer and create more green jobs.

- Support for farmers for delivering environment/landscape outcomes. Examples might include peat restoration, planting woodland, hay meadow restoration, creation of heathland and scrub, moorland management, enhancement of wetlands, and dry-stone wall repairs
- Support to farmers on areas such as carbon capture, business planning, and skills development including apprenticeships

(B) Wider infrastructure investment and projects supporting farmers and rural economies

- Infrastructure, such as better access, clearer and simpler signage, dedicated cycling/electric bike access – to attract more diverse groups of visitors (to farm businesses, camping barns, etc.) as well as creating jobs (e.g. expansion of landscape rangers supporting farmers and visitors)
- Strengthened public engagement with landscapes to attract more, and more diverse, visitors, improving mental health outcomes and better disabled access; walking routes to better connect landscapes.

Apart from this, no written information has been provided to date. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

List of Background Papers

2 pages on Farming in Protected Landscapes pp44-45 in the Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024>

Winter 2021 Farming with nature video, commissioned by NAAONB
<https://youtu.be/JQNU3vqLom8>

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

None