



Alt Crossens Farmer Engagement

Defra Updates

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Defra Updates

January 2024 Announcements

- Increased rates for **Sustainable Farming Incentive** and **Countryside Stewardship**
 - Rates automatically uplifted for existing agreements where applicable
- 50 new actions added to Environmental Land Management schemes from summer 2024 – particularly for maintenance activities (including existing maintenance)
- More actions included for shorter length agreements of up to three years to make schemes more accessible for tenant farmers
- From summer 2024, farmers will be able to apply for Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier **and** Sustainable Farming Incentive actions **together** – through one application
- Timeline for agreements being offered will be accelerated

Defra Updates

March 2024 Budget

- £427 million farming grants announced to support investment in equipment, technology and infrastructure
 - Farming Equipment and Technology Fund - **open until 17 April 2024**
 - Improving Farm Productivity Fund Round 2 - **open until 21 March 2024** for investment in automation (and solar energy installation)
- Extension to existing scope of Agricultural Property Relief **from 6 April 2025:**
 - Will now include all ELM schemes – e.g. SFI & Countryside Stewardship (and other stewardship schemes)
 - Will include England Woodland Creation Offer and other similar schemes
 - Farmers and landowners taking part in such schemes will be eligible for Agricultural Property Relief and exempt from relevant inheritance tax

Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Policy paper

Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force Chair's report: government response

Published 29 June 2023

- Government recognise the “vital role that lowland peat soils play in producing food for our nation and supporting our rural economies”
- Government intends to take forward action **on all recommendations**
- Assess legal implications of raising water levels to preserve peat soil carbon
- Irrigation and mulching to explored as alternative practices to raising water table to preserve lowland peat
- Public money to support wetter modes of farming on lowland peat, including SFI & CS
- Invest in water storage management: £10 million Water Management Grant - funding more on-farm reservoirs away from peat soils and better irrigation equipment
- Supportive of Peatland Code - and the aim to include paludiculture in future



- 13 pilot projects funded by Defra – 2 projects in the Alt & Crossens Catchment announced in January 2024

Exploring Wetter Farming Solutions in Alt Catchment

- Led by Lancashire Wildlife Trust
- Wetter farming trial, growing Typha (bullrush). A feasibility study to identify potential areas for wetter farming on the Halsall Estate. Field scale trial.

Alt & Crossens Lowland Peat and Groundwater Project

- Led by Mersey Rivers Trust
- Develop baseline evidence of current condition of the lowland peat soils, looking at groundwater and focusing on wetter, unproductive areas of fields.
- Assessing feasibility of raising local water tables whilst ensuring sustainable farming business
- Aim is to determine if “wetter” farming is a viable option and under what conditions

Water Friendly Farming Information



Water Friendly Farming Hub

The Mersey Rivers Trust have developed an online hub for farmers or anyone who has an interest in farming and the environment. It has information on water friendly farming practices, sources of funding, case studies and useful links.

Visit the Hub...



HOME ABOUT NEWS PROJECTS GET INVOLVED

Water Friendly Farming

Welcome to the Mersey Rivers Trust Water Friendly Farming Hub

JANUARY 2024

Farming Newsletter



WELCOME!

In our newsletter this month you will find out about webinars you can attend, and recent changes to farm schemes and regulations, as well as free workshops all about the Sustainable Farm Incentive. Beed on to find out more about what's on offer this month, and you can also keep up to date with our [Farming Hub](#) online.

ELMS 2024 WEBINAR

On Friday 26th January the Farming Advice Service will be hosting a webinar for farmers to review the options and payments available through the Environmental Land Management schemes in 2024. Dafni Farming and Countryside Director, Janet Hughes, and the policy lead working on the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Jonathan Mervin, will be speaking, and staff from the RPA will be able to explain the offer and answer your questions. To register please follow the link [here](#).



BIGGEST UPGRADE TO UK FARM SCHEMES

On 4th January, the Secretary of State Steve Barclay attended the Oxford Farming Conference and gave a speech. He announced the biggest upgrade to farming schemes since the start of the agricultural revolution. The value now will be paid for 50% and 10 actions. 50 new actions are being



Newsletter produced every 2 months with latest updates about funding, training and new policy announcements

You can also join the email distribution list by sending an email to:

farming@merseyrivers.org

Let us know what you would like to see on the Hub or in the newsletter

Future Water Resources Events & Guidance

Farm Visits?

- Rainwater harvesting and water storage solutions
- On-farm winter storage reservoir and abstraction arrangements
- Other ?

Water Abtractor Group?

Future Engagement Workshops?

Summary Guidance Notes ?

- Funding and grants
- Water efficiency measures
- Abstraction licensing
- Licence trading and licence co-operatives
- Winter storage reservoirs
- Trickle irrigation
- Paludiculture and lowland peat water level management
- Other?

Citizen Science Monitoring Programme



- We are looking for volunteers to join our Citizen Science programme to monitor river water quality and river insect life in the Alt and Crossens catchment
- Help us better understand river health to assess what measures are needed to improve it
- If interested – or know someone who is - please email: farming@merseyrivers.org

Panel Q & A and Discussion

