

Environmental Stewardship Update

Farming for a better environment

June 09 Issue 4

Farmers champion Environmental Stewardship at this year's Shows



Hugo James , an arable farmer from Dorset, speaks to fellow farmers at the Grasslands UK event on 7 May

Natural England's Chief Executive, Helen Phillips recently re-emphasised that agri-environment schemes must go hand in hand with viable commercial agriculture. Natural England knows that Environmental Stewardship (ES) is critical to making that partnership work for farm businesses.

We are taking this message out to farmers, and asking for feedback, at this year's agricultural trade shows. Grasslands UK and Beef Expo in May, and Cereals in June, have been a real success. The main attraction at our marquee proved to be the farmer champions who demonstrated how they make ES work for their farm business. They are passionate about ES and make great advocates when discussing the scheme with their peers.

For more news about the shows turn to page 3.

Also in this issue

[AE Facts and figures](#)

[Spotlight: ELS renewals and UELS; HLS funding doubles](#)

[Focus on ES at Trade Shows](#)

[South West Farmland Bird Initiative](#)

[Notice Board](#)

ES Update is our regular newsletter for organisations which represent the interests of farmers and land managers, and others engaged in AE schemes. Through it we let you know about changes to schemes, provide you with facts and figures and highlight good practice, success stories and emerging challenges.

AE Schemes: Facts and Figures

The table below gives the scheme uptake statistics at 31st May 2009.

Scheme	Area (ha)	% of UAA	Number of Agreements	Annual Value
CSS	431,326	4.6	11,853	£87.8 M
ESA	484,481	5.2	7,366	£40.5 M
ELS	4,723,870	50.8	35,621	£131.3 M
OELS	363,071	3.9	2,562	£38.8 M
HLS (Combined with ELS/OELS*)	<i>284,296</i>	-	<i>3,009</i>	£55.1 M
HLS (Standalone)	60,987	0.7	375	£10.0 M
Total HLS	<i>345,281</i>	-	<i>3,384</i>	<i>£65.1M</i>
Overall Total	6,063,735	65.3	57,777	£363.5 M

* Most land in HLS is already accounted for in ELS or OELS / Numbers in italics not included in overall total / UAA is Utilisable Agricultural Area, by which is meant farmland and associated land such as woodland and scrub / Annual Value: for CSS and ESA, the figures relate to the annual value of live agreements in the current agreement year. For ES, the figures relate to the first year value of the agreements (the value may vary in other years).

Spotlight: ELS renewals and UELS

What will happen in 2010, when nearly 14,000 5-yr ELS agreements come to an end?

- Towards the end of 2009 we will write to those affected providing them with an update on the renewals process. Due to changes to ES, all renewing land managers will need to complete a fresh application form and maps.
- Although we are unable to simply renew the agreement due to EC rules, we will make the process as simple as we can.
- We will also be writing to upland farmers about how they can join Uplands ELS (UELS) with details of how they can take advantage of the higher payments available.
- We have improved computerised tracking of agreements, to better monitor progress on renewals.
- The easiest way to apply will be through ELS Online, our online application service. This will be improved by the Autumn. For more information about ELS online please contact our team on 01905 362700 or 01905 362711. Or e-mail els.online@naturalengland.org.uk

HLS funding doubles

Funding for new Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements – for signing up this year - is more than double that of last year. HLS targeting (for details [click here](#)) makes our priority areas very clear and we have a clear set of 'themes' we are looking to support in the broader regions outside the target areas.

Many farms will be eligible for substantial funding to improve their local environment, and we are happy to discuss upgrading existing CSS and ESA agreements into HLS if they can deliver what we are looking for. Natural England staff are approaching some farmers and land managers directly in priority areas to discuss applications, but we are keen to hear from any farmers that can support the target area objectives or regional themes.

Focus on ES at Trade Shows

The major national agricultural shows have recently become more specialist, targeting specific sectors and attracting large numbers of farmers. These shows provide a platform for us to show how Environmental Stewardship can be adapted to suit the needs of different types of farming.

At the recent shows – Grasslands, Beef Expo and Cereals - the Natural England marquee was exceptionally busy with farmers looking to get more information on ES. At each event we held ELS online demonstrations, as well as seminars and ‘on location’ films featuring farmers’ experiences of ES.



Visitors to the Natural England marquee at Grasslands UK trade show on 7 May

Natural England at the Shows

You can catch us at the following shows over the remainder of the year. Our teams look forward to seeing you there:

- **CLA Game Fair:** 24-26 July, Belvoir Castle.
- **Dairy Event & Livestock Show:** 16-17 September, Stoneleigh Park.
- **AgriLIVE Smithfield:** 11-12 December, Stoneleigh Park.

And for details of our wider programme of farm advice events [click here](#).

South West Farmland Bird Initiative

Pioneering project aims to turn around conditions for the ‘Arable Six’

Farmers and conservationists joined forces to help increase the population of six nationally important arable bird species - grey partridge, lapwing, turtle dove, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow and corn bunting - at the launch of a pioneering project on 30 April. The initiative will help those species of birds, plants and mammals associated with arable farmland through implementation of ‘wildlife-friendly’ land management practices using the Environmental Stewardship scheme.



Ian Boyd, one of the first farmers to join the project in the Cotswolds, said: “I am excited about the pioneering approach of the Farmland Bird Project and it should appeal to many other farmers in this area. It would be great to lead the country with a project of this kind.”

[Click here](#) for more information. The South West Farmland Bird initiative is one of several such projects that have recently started in different parts of England – good news for farmland birds and farming!

Notice Board

Classic schemes claims – don't delay, claim today!

By now CSS and ESA agreement holders should have received their annual claim form. In 2008 we paid over 90% of these claims 10 weeks ahead of deadline. This year we're hoping to do even better. To achieve this we're asking farmers to get their claim in as soon as possible, giving us the best chance of paying them as soon as we can release payments in late October. Don't forget, if an agreement holder has capital works outstanding they can submit their annual claim now and claim for the capital works later. Please remind your members that the earlier claims are submitted, the faster they will get paid.

New Environmental Stewardship options available now

Environmental Stewardship now offers revised and additional options, mostly linked to tackling soil erosion. The options include:-

- 12m wide grass strips along watercourses in ELS and OELS
- Maintenance of watercourse fencing in ELS and OELS
- Enhanced management of maize crops in ELS
- The provision of hard bases for livestock feeder and drinkers in HLS.

In addition some points allocations and payments have been increased for the existing in-field tree and mixed stocking options. [Click here](#) for full details, speak to a local adviser or call 0300 060 1115.

CES to reach the parts that other schemes can't!

Environmental Stewardship is the main way Natural England can incentivise SSSI management. ES supports environmental management across whole farm holdings, so that the SSSI management can be better integrated within the overall farm management. The switch last year to proactive HLS targeting, means that HLS is now better able to support SSSI management.

However, there are some circumstances on SSSIs where an ES agreement is not possible. To fill this gap, a new Natural England scheme - the 'Conservation Enhancement Scheme' (CES) – will come into operation on 30 June. Funded by Natural England CES is specially designed to secure favourable condition on SSSIs and on land adjacent to SSSIs which significantly affects the management of SSSIs.



CES can only be used for land management which cannot be supported through ES. The most common examples where CES can help SSSI managers will be:

- on land that is not eligible for the Rural Land Register such as open water and some geological SSSIs,
- with SSSI managers who are not themselves eligible for ES, because they do not have appropriate land tenure for EU schemes.

By comparison with ES, CES will be a modest programme, but it will help to secure favourable condition on SSSIs that would otherwise miss out under HLS. CES will be offered by invitation only, but we want stakeholders to be aware of the opportunities offered by it.

Abbreviations used

Agri-Environment (AE); Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES); Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS); Entry Level Stewardship (ELS); Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA); Environmental Stewardship (ES); Higher Level Stewardship (HLS); Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS); Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Upland ELS (UELS).