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Gloucestershire

## Government Policy for Farming

In the Spring edition of our newsletter *Gloucestershire Views* there was an article under the title “Farm Payments: Public Money for Public Goods.” It reported on the likely shape of a new support package for farming replacing the EU Common Agricultural Policy. This would phase out direct income support based on the area of land farmed (the Basic Payment Scheme - BPS) and strengthen funding focussed on environmental protection and enhancement.

At the end of November 2020, Defra published more information about the new policy and the transition process. Transition will take seven years and will involve: completely phasing out BPS payments; closing existing agri-environment schemes and introducing Environmental Land Management; and a number of other measures.

Defra says that “through this new approach, we aim to support a vibrant and resilient agriculture sector, that enhances animal welfare and the environment, and helps enable us to meet our ambitious targets such as the protection of 30% of UK land by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050.”

You can access the full statement and a shorter booklet from the Defra website. The documents are:

- *The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024*
- *Farming is Changing*

This note is a short summary of the main points which are most likely to be of interest to CPRE members.

### **Phasing out the BPS**

Progressive reductions in BPS payments will begin in 2021. All payments will be reduced but there will be bigger reductions initially on the higher payment bands. The final BPS payments will be made in 2027. Funds saved from BPS payments will be redirected to fund Countryside Stewardship agreements and the new schemes being introduced. The same amount of public funding will be available to the farming sector, though the way it is distributed will change.

### **Lump sum exit scheme**

In 2022 an exit scheme will be introduced to help farmers who wish to retire to do so.

### **Environmental Land Management (ELM)**

The current programme of tests and trials will continue into 2021. A three-year national pilot of ELM will begin during 2021.



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Gloucestershire

There are three elements to ELM (previously described as tiers).

### Sustainable Farming Incentive

The Sustainable Farming Incentive will pay for environmentally sustainable land management actions that all farmers can undertake. Actions will be grouped into simple packages to make it as easy as possible for farmers to identify those that are best suited to their land. The incentive will be open to all farmers.

Some elements will be introduced in 2022 and will be available to all farmers in receipt of BPS, recognising the need for an early funding stream as BPS payments are reduced. More options and features will be added throughout 2022 and 2023 with all features of the scheme fully available in 2024.

### Local Nature Recovery

Local Nature Recovery will pay farmers and land managers for actions that support local nature recovery and deliver local environmental priorities, with a focus on creating, managing and restoring habitats. Local Nature Recovery agreements will be available from 2024, following the national pilot.

### Landscape Recovery

Landscape Recovery will involve bespoke agreements to support long-term land use change projects, such as peatland restoration, woodland creation and rewilding where appropriate. Pilot Landscape Recovery projects will be supported between 2022 and 2024, and the full scheme rolled out from 2024.

### Countryside Stewardship

The Countryside Stewardship scheme will continue to be available for existing and new applicants until 2024, with the last new applications being accepted in 2023. Agreements running at the end of 2024 will be migrated to ELM.

Defra say that they we want to increase participation rates in Environmental Land Management from the current 30% in Countryside Stewardship schemes to more than 70% of farmers by the end of the transition, with even higher participation in the Sustainable Farming Incentive.

### **Farmers in Protected Landscapes**

From 2021, funding will be provided through National Park Authorities and AONB Partnerships and Boards to encourage farmers and other land managers in protected landscapes to make improvements to the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access on their land.



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### **Animal Health and Welfare**

Defra is co-designing an Animal Health and Welfare Pathway with the industry, to promote the production of healthier, higher-welfare animals at a level beyond compliance with current regulations, underpinning the UK's high international reputation for animal health and welfare and future increases to regulatory standards.

### **Tree Health**

In recognition of concerns around increasing tree diseases, a new Tree Health scheme will be launched in 2024 replacing the Countryside Stewardship Woodland Capital Tree Health Restoration and Improvement grants. A pilot will be run in 2021 which will include support for felling and the treatment of diseased trees in certain situations and restocking following felling.

### **Farming Investment Fund**

From 2021, funding will be offered for equipment, technology and infrastructure that improves farm productivity and benefits the environment.

### **Slurry Investment**

A slurry investment scheme will be offered from 2022. It will help to reduce pollution from farming and contribute to the government's 25 Year Environment Plan and Net Zero commitments.

This summary is very much an outline of what is proposed. When you read the full statement, you will see that it is very thin on detail and there is clearly much to do in collaboration with the farming industry and other groups over the coming years to get the package right.

Richard Lloyd

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