

## Environmental Land Management Pilot

### **What is Environmental Land Management for?**

We aim to design and administer schemes in a way that:

- will support farming and the countryside to make a significant and widespread contribution to environmental goals, including by reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- is trusted by the sector
- attracts wide participation – we want to increase participation rates in Environmental Land Management schemes from the current 30% in agri-environment schemes to more than 70% of farmers by the end of the transition, with even higher participation in the Sustainable Farming Incentive
- supports a sustainable and vibrant sector

Our Environmental Land Management scheme will introduce a new approach to paying for public goods, with:

- more choice and control for farmers
- a greater focus on outcomes and the main practices and interventions that support them, rather than the bureaucracy and prescription that was required under EU schemes
- a fairer, more supportive and effective approach to compliance.

We will pay for delivery of land management actions that contribute to:

- clean air
- clean and plentiful water
- thriving plants and wildlife
- reduction in and protection from environmental hazards
- mitigation of and adaptation to climate change
- enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment

Our new approach will be made up of three component parts, which taken together will achieve the outcomes we are aiming for:

Sustainable Farming Incentive  
Local Nature Recovery  
Landscape Recovery

### **National pilot, tests and trials**

We are developing these schemes in close collaboration with farmers, running tests and trials including around 3,000 farmers and land managers; and running a national pilot for up to 5,500. This will help us to develop, in collaboration with farmers, schemes that work for their users and deliver the intended outcomes for the sector, the environment, biodiversity and climate change.

From 2021 to 2024, we will provide a range of options to help farmers manage their land sustainably and prepare to take part in our new schemes from 2024 onwards, these will include:

- extensions to Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship will be available for those who already have an agreement that is achieving positive environmental outcomes, and who wish to continue their agreement
- new Countryside Stewardship agreements will be available for those farmers who want to undertake a wider range of more ambitious environmental activities and receive capital payments
- the National Pilot will be available for up to 5,500 farmers who want to be involved helping us to learn and co-design the full ambition for our new schemes

- early elements of Sustainable Farming Incentive will be available to all farmers in receipt of Basic Payment Scheme payments, from 2022 onwards

We will increase the amount of funding available for delivery of environmental outcomes in each year of the early transition, using funding released from Direct Payment reductions, as we move towards roll-out of our Environmental Land Management schemes.

From 2021 onwards, we will also start preparing Landscape Recovery, to help us start delivering ambitious outcomes, and to help us test and improve the design of the scheme. This will include some ambitious Landscape Recovery projects to achieve landscape-scale transformational change, starting from 2022. We will publish details of our plans for these projects and how to get involved in 2021.

We are developing our Environmental Land Management offer in partnership with farmers and other partners. We are doing this through a series of tests and trials, which are already underway, and through a National Pilot which will start in 2021.

There are around 70 tests and trials underway involving 3,000 farmers. These have been designed to look at individual elements of our future schemes (e.g. how best to construct land management plans, how best to use advisers in a safe space to test and fail). We will be starting some new tests and trials in 2021 and will publish information in early 2021 about how to take part.

Through the National Pilot we will be able to test how all elements of Sustainable Farming Incentive work together and develop the real-world operation. The learning from the pilot will be fed directly into scheme design and implementation planning for the roll out of the full schemes in 2024.

### **Scheme description**

Through the National Pilot we intend to learn about:

- real world operation of our Environmental Land Management schemes – for example, how they work for farmers and how far are they capable of delivering on our environmental ambition
- processes and systems – i.e. the administrative tools, business processes and IT systems that support the schemes – we will be aiming to make this work much better for participants than existing schemes, for example by providing timely decisions and payments, with a clear explanation of the basis of each payment
- cross cutting issues – for example, how do farmers feel about the new Environmental Land Management schemes, and are there simpler ways to achieve our aims?

Not all elements of the three components of our Environmental Land Management offer will be fully formed at the start of the National Pilot – we will be learning and developing as we go, whilst carefully safeguarding and improving our ability to make timely payments and decisions through existing schemes and the pilot. We will be learning and experimenting to see what works best and improving our approaches and systems. This could mean, for instance, that we stop doing something if we find it does not work or is unhelpful, or that we introduce new elements during the pilot to see if they help address the issues we find.

We will also be continuously improving all digital and operational services throughout the agricultural transition, to make sure they work as well as possible for our farmers.

### **Structure of the National Pilot**

The pilot will test all three components of our Environmental Land Management offer, but with entry staggered over time to enable us to iterate and improve the scheme as we learn more.

We will be publishing more information about the pilots and inviting expressions of interest for the first round of pilots early in 2021. At that time, we will provide more information about the plans for Sustainable Farming Incentive and Local Nature Recovery pilots.

## **Eligibility**

We will recruit a broad range of participants representing all types of farmers likely to be eligible for the three components of our Environmental Land Management offer, including different farm types, horticulturists and foresters. We will also take account of other considerations, such as size of holding; whether they are tenants, landowners, commoners or other types of land tenure; geography; level of digital access; and experience of farming/agri-environment schemes.

Places in the National Pilot will be limited. We will share details of eligibility and how to get involved when we launch the pilot in 2021. Our current plan is that:

- recruitment into the National Pilot will be staggered in three phases, to allow us to test improved prototypes as we go
- we intend to involve over 1,000 farmers in phase 1 of the pilot; scaling up to around 5,500 in total by the end of phase 3, with the pilot progressively evolving and extending the range of participants over the 3 years

Participants will enter into National Pilot agreements, which would last until the pilot ends. So, people who join early would be in the National Pilot longer than people who join later, and they would all finish together when the National Pilot ends in late 2024. We expect that participants will apply to transfer to the full scheme once available, but that will be the participants' choice.

## **Payments**

Participants will be paid a competitive rate for taking part in the National Pilot. Payments will cover the cost of delivering land management actions, and time spent actively contributing to pilot learning. Further details are still to be confirmed and these will be made available before we seek expressions of interest for participation in the National Pilot.

## **Timings**

We will begin recruiting for the National Pilot from early 2021 and operate on the ground from late 2021 until late 2024.