

# Environmental Stewardship Update

Farming for a better environment

January 09 Issue 2

## ELS breaks through the 5 million hectare barrier

England's natural environment received a Christmas gift when the number of hectares in Entry Level Stewardship (ELS), including Organics (OELS), went through the 5 million hectares barrier late in December. This is great news and reflects the positive contribution from 37,000+ farmers who have signed up for the scheme.

But the celebrations won't last long as we need the numbers to rise even further. There is more funding available under Environmental Stewardship (ES) and if we don't spend it, we won't reach Defra's target of getting 70% of available land into agri-environment schemes. The scale of the task is now clear – to fully commit available funds means bringing a further 1 million ha into ELS by March 2011.

We know that the farming calendar gets very busy from April onwards, so we want to have a recruitment drive between now and Easter. Our starting point is to make contact with farmers who have previously contacted us about ELS, but not followed up that initial contact. We are also analysing uptake patterns on a regional basis to better target the drive. But we can't do this alone – please can you also help by encouraging your members to join the scheme by clicking [here](#) or ringing us on **0300 060 1112 for ELS** or **0300 060 1113 for (O)ELS**.

As well as increasing uptake we want to celebrate ELS in 2009 and feature up-front the farmers who are changing the face of our countryside for the better. Watch this space!

**Natural England's website is being updated from 1 February - the web links in this issue will be live from this date.**

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.

**There has never been a better time to join ELS – find out why on page 3**

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# AE Schemes: Facts and Figures

The table below gives the scheme uptake statistics at 31 Dec 2008

Scheme	Area (ha)	% of UAA	No. of Agreements	Annual Budget
CSS	442,321	4.8	12,032	£81.8m
ESA	502,516	5.4	7,781	£41.9m
ELS	4,724,592	50.9	35,034	£130.4m
OELS	299,325	3.2	2,267	£38.7m
Standalone HLS*	50,652	0.5	286	£8.2m
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,019,406</b>	<b>64.8</b>	<b>57,400</b>	<b>£301m</b>
<b>Total HLS</b>	<b>290,754</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,886</b>	<b>£55.8m</b>

\* Most land in HLS is already accounted for in ELS or (O)ELS

## UELS: a smooth transition for farmers



Gathering the flock, Yorkshire Dales. © Natural England.

In December, Defra announced details of the new Upland ELS (UELS) and transitional arrangements to smooth the transition from the Hill Farm Allowance (HFA) to the new scheme. Key points are:-

- UELS will be launched early in 2010 with the first agreements active from 1 July 2010.
- HFA payments will continue for a further year with the final payment being made in March 2010. This means that the negative impact on farmers' cash flow will be much reduced, as long as farmers apply early to join UELS

- The needs of classic scheme holders are also being addressed. An Uplands Transitional Payment will run from 2011 for *those* farmers with land still in an ESA or CSS agreement *and* who successfully claim HFA in 2010.

### The Stakeholders' role

Getting UELS right has not been easy and Defra and Natural England couldn't have done it without the advice – both critical and creative – that stakeholders provided. Now the NFU, CLA and others have welcomed the new arrangements. Lets build on your input and together make sure that implementation in 2010 is a success too.

### How UELS will work

- UELS is a new strand of ES, designed specifically for upland farmers. It will work alongside the other strands of ES
- UELS builds on, and operates like, ELS but enables upland farmers to receive a higher payment in return for further simple, yet effective, environmental management.
- Like ELS, farmers will obtain points by meeting a series of requirements and selecting from a menu of land management options.
- Unlike the HFA, which excluded dairy farmers and very small holdings, UELS will be open to all farmers and land managers in the Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDA) , providing they meet the scheme requirements.
- We aim to get 80% of the SDA under UELS management.

# Focus on the Entry Level Scheme

## How do I qualify for ELS entry?

### There has never been a better time to join ELS

And here are some reasons why:-

- ELS is available to all farmers and landowners in England.
- 99.9% of applications are approved
- The payments are a reliable source of income independent of fluctuations in farm prices and costs
- 34,000 farmers already in ELS agreements can't be wrong!
- You can even join on-line

Click [here](#) for more information on ELS or call **0300 060 1112 for ELS** or **0300 060 1113 for (O)ELS**.



Spring lamb, © www.richardpeters.co.uk

### What is ELS about?

- ELS is the basic agri-environment scheme
- It provides simple and effective environmental management that complements existing farming operations
- ELS allows each farmer to create a practical environmental management programme that works for their farm

Acceptance is based on **a simple points per hectare calculation** across all the land you enter into the scheme. If you achieve your points target, meet the scheme conditions and agree to deliver the options you have chosen, then you will automatically receive funding.

You earn points for the land management options you agree to undertake over the life of the agreement. Each option carries a points value. With **over 50 management options** to choose from, ELS is suitable for most farm types (e.g. hedgerow management, providing wild bird cover and creating buffer strips).

In general you must achieve a total of 30 points per hectare. In return you will receive **funding of £30 per hectare per year**, for all land you enter into the scheme (a lower rate applies for land within Less Favoured Areas – check with the helpline on **0300 060 1112**) Payments for capital works are not available in ELS.

Advice for farmers and land managers is also available at farmers' workshops. For more information click [here](#).

### Worked Example:

A 100 hectare lowland holding would need 3,000 (30 x 100) points to qualify for ELS, and would receive an annual payment of £3,000

### Be ahead of the game – sign up for ELS ONLINE

Over 1200 farmers have joined ELS on line. Why not join them?

- ✓ It checks entries and adds up points as you add options
- ✓ Use the invaluable boundary measurement tool
- ✓ Easy to download software with user-friendly functions
- ✓ Easy to use by a land manager or their agent

Contact our dedicated Online Helpdesk team Team on **0300 060 1115** or by email at [els.online@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:els.online@naturalengland.org.uk)

# Notice Board



Laying a hedge in the Lancashire Style. © Natural England.

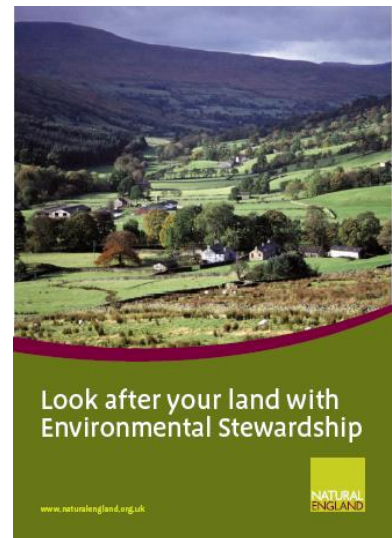
## Capital response from land owners!

In the November issue we featured a call for agreement holders to undertake additional capital works. We have had a terrific response with over 2600 individuals submitting application forms. Of these almost 2400 proposals have been approved. As a result a programme of capital works totalling £10m is in train across the countryside. To date £200,000 has been paid out for works completed. Thanks to all for making this exercise such a success – and the good news is that we are definitely going to run a similar scheme in 2009/10.

## Look after your land with ES

'Look after Your Land' is the rallying call for a new introductory booklet that will give farmers a taste of what ES can offer. It is designed as the first port of call for any farmer or land owner thinking about joining ES.

We want the booklet to be used to inspire and motivate farmers and land managers into signing up to the scheme. It features a case study for each level of the scheme, lots of images, facts and figures, along with scheme info, examples of options, how to apply and where to apply. Each Natural England regional office will receive a supply of these booklets over the next few weeks. You will also be able to access it on our website by [clicking here](#).



Herdwick ewes, Watendlath, Lake District  
© Natural England.

## £98m paid to farmers ahead of target

Natural England has paid £98 million into the rural economy ten weeks ahead of target. The funding was paid to farmers and landowners in the Classic schemes. Over 96% of claims for funding through Classic schemes received payment by the end of November, 10 weeks ahead of the regulatory requirement. Good news for Natural England and good news for farmers.

## Abbreviations used

Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS); Entry Level Stewardship (ELS); Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA); Higher Level Stewardship (HLS); Organic Entry Level Stewardship - (O)ELS; Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDA), Upland ELS (UELS).