

UTASS Briefing: 17th March 2023.

BPS 2023

The BPS application window has now opened with a deadline of **15th May 2023** to make an application without late penalties. UTASS will be contacting all members who have used us in the past to make an appointment. This is the last year of the scheme. Farmers will need to submit a BPS application this year in order to receive delinked BPS payments from 2024 onwards: those delinked payments will be based on the average from the 2020-22 reference period.

COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP MID TIER & WIDLIFE OFFERS

The RPA are streamlining the online application process. More information is expected after the application window opens on 21st March. Applications will be accepted up to the middle of August for agreements to start on 1st January 2024. It is now planned that the middle element of Environmental Land Management (ELM) will be a continuation/development of Countryside Stewardship (CS+) that will sit seamlessly with SFI. The prescriptions for Mid Tier and Wildlife packages are not flexible but are rather more attractive after the payment increases of the last two years. The Wildlife Offer includes an Upland Offer: last year it had 9 options and 3 supplements but this may change when the details are issued.

COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP CAPITAL GRANTS

Capital grants cover 4 groups:

- Boundaries, trees and orchards
- Water quality
- Air quality
- Natural flood management

There is no limit on value with 3 years to complete the work. Grants are now available on land designated as SSSI in either a CS or HLS agreement. The scheme may be closed with six weeks warning if it looks like being over-subscribed. The grant rates for Standard Costs have in most cases been substantially increased having been severely eroded though the passage of time and recent inflation.

ANIMAL HEALTH

Farmers can now register for the SFI Animal Health and Welfare Review <https://apply-for-an-annual-health-and-welfare-review.defra.gov.uk/apply/register-your-interest> There are set payments for different species (sheep £436, beef cattle £522) for your vet to carry out a review. The review is designed to tackle endemic diseases such as BVD wormer effectiveness in sheep as well as improve welfare and increase productivity.

For further advice and assistance please call UTASS 01833 641010.

Richard Betton.