

The Andersons Centre – Latest News Update

01 November 2009

ELS Renewals Update

In 2010, nearly 14,000 Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) agreements will come up for renewal. Natural England (NE) has a target of 70% of the Utilisable Agricultural Area (UAA) in England being under an environmental agreement. Currently the area in schemes is just under 66%. Therefore, just to keep levels where they are, never mind increase them to the target figure, a high proportion of those ELS agreement holders will need to be persuaded to re-sign. NE hopes to get a renewals rate of around 90% (with a quarter of applicants renewing online).

There is a question mark over whether this rate will be achieved. The ELS has changed since it was launched in 2005, when the agreements now ending were entered into. Significantly, the loss of management plans will make it 'harder' for many businesses to reach the 30 points per hectare points total.

The fact that the scheme has changed means that those wishing to renew will not be allowed to simply 'tick a box' to sign up for a further five years. They will have to complete a new application forms plus associated maps. From December, all existing agreement holders with an ELS scheme expiring in 2010 will be sent a letter stating their agreement is due for renewal. A reply card and envelope will be included. The card will ask a number of questions – 'Do you wish to renew your ELS agreement?', 'Will you be renewing using ELS online?', 'Will an agent be handling your renewal?' and; 'Has your landholding changed since 2005?'

In February 2010, application packs are due to be sent out. However, ELS maps are generated from the RLR. If the re-mapping process is delayed (which looks likely), this timetable may slip. Those that indicate they will be using ELS online will be sent log-in details rather than the normal paper application forms. ELS Online includes a measuring tool and automatically calculates points. For more information, e-mail els.online@naturalengland.org.uk.

The application pack will also include the final claim form for the existing agreement. Normally ELS payments don't have to be claimed – they are paid automatically. But the final one of the agreement will have to be. Any new agreement cannot start until this claim is made. To prevent any gaps between agreements, both the claim and new application must be submitted to NE two months before the start of any new agreement.

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ELS Renewals Deadlines

<i>Old Agreement Ends</i>	<i>New Agreement Starts</i>	<i>Application Deadline</i>
31 st July 2010	1 st August 2010	1 st June 2010
31 st August 2010	1 st September 2010	1 st July 2010
30 th September 2010	1 st October 2010	1 st August 2010
31 st October 2010	1 st November 2010	1 st September 2010

New Environmental Stewardship handbooks (3rd Edition) will be published in February to coincide with the mailing of renewals packs.

For further information or support, please contact us

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