

ELMS and the Upper Beult Farmer Cluster

1. Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)

2. Local Nature Recovery (LNR)

3. Landscape Recovery (LR)

Sustainable Farming Incentive

As we are beginning to understand, the first tranche of ELMS is the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). This is more or less the direct replacement of the Basic Payment (BPS) and is aimed at the individual farm level. The payments are directed at improving the sustainable management of different land parcels and features on the farm. The farmer can choose which parcels or features to apply the funding to, and choose from three different levels, depending on the extent they want to manage that asset for nature.

From within the cluster, Charlie Chantler and Hugh Richards have both been involved in the pilot, and the process of dividing up features and land parcels and selecting which payment rates each one could fit into was quite time consuming! However, Charlie has said that as he already managed his land fairly sensitively, the payment rates for his land under SFI has come out similar to BPS.

We now also have a little more detail on the two other elements of ELMS, both of which lend themselves to larger land areas and a joined up approach between a number of farms. This is where the farmer cluster approach starts to come in handy!

Local Nature Recovery

The Local Nature Recovery (LNR) is a kind of Countryside Stewardship 2.0, individual farms can apply, but there will be huge benefit for collaboration between farmers applying as a larger block, with a coordinated approach able to yield better results. You can still enter into Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreements, but gradually the option will be available to move these into LNR agreements.

In a similar way to CS, the LNR is about increasing wildlife friendly habitats to boost biodiversity, increase carbon storage, hold water in the wider landscape for longer – all things also termed Nature Based Solutions (NBS). More specific examples of LNR actions could be, arable farms managing feeding, shelter, and breeding areas for farmland birds, whilst farms with rivers and streams may be paid to restore and buffer riparian habitats.

An important element for farmers in Kent, where there is a huge amount of housing development, is that further farm income may be gained through biodiversity net gain from the same land. From 2023 developers will have to provide a net gain of 10% wildlife habitat when they develop a site, so they will be looking for shovel ready options. Detail of how this will sit alongside claims under LNR and SFI are yet to come out, but there is certainly an interest in approaches combining government and private funding.

How could the Upper Beult Cluster respond?!

- The First LNR agreements will be from 2023, could we consider a joined up approach to restoring the river Beult and it's riparian habitat? Or creating a network of Turtle Dove friendly habitat?



Landscape Recovery

The last element of three pillars of ELMS is about large scale land use change, for the restoration of ecosystems which can help to deliver on targets around things like climate change and flooding. The initial projects will look on priority habitats such as river and streams, which again puts the river Beult in the picture.

These project areas have to be more than 500 ha of continuous area and in our neck of the woods, would need a number of landowners working together to be eligible. Most people assume this is targeted at the larger individual land owners in less productive areas, however there could be scope to utilise the cluster approach, particularly for things like rivers and streams.

Eligibility for LR

The first round of projects will be focused on 2 themes:

- recovering and restoring England's threatened native species – we envisage the projects under this theme would recover priority habitats, habitat quality and species abundance
- restoring England's streams and rivers: improving water quality, biodiversity and adapting to climate change – these projects could restore water bodies, rivers, and floodplains to a more natural state, reduce nutrient pollution, benefit aquatic species, and improve flood mitigation and resilience to climate change

Landscape Recovery is open to any individuals or groups who want to come together to deliver large (500 – 5000 ha) scale projects.

Any individuals or groups who think they can deliver the ambitious impact we are seeking will be able to submit bids for development funding. This means that:

- all land types will be eligible, including land inside or outside protected areas, as well as common land
- the land could be under any management control or current use – including farming, forestry, managed as individual holdings, estates or by public bodies
- public bodies will need to apply in collaboration with other land managers – for example, with neighbouring landowners or tenants
- the land could be already part of existing agri-environment schemes, as well as those not involved in any scheme. (We would not be able to pay for activity already being undertaken through or incompatible with any existing scheme agreements. We will work with land managers to develop and test the process for exiting Higher Level Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship agreements early – without penalty – so they can enter Landscape Recovery to enable enhanced delivery of outcomes.)
- we will also welcome applications submitted by a facilitator working on behalf of a group of land managers

