

# Sustainable Farming Incentive Pilot

Dr Jane Rowling  
Calder and Colne Rivers Trust  
Farm and Rural Liaison Officer

# What is SFI?

There are 3 new schemes that will reward environmental land management:

- Sustainable Farming Incentive - Straightforward; payment for assets; broad appeal
- Local Nature Recovery - set priorities for local area; collaborative; outcomes-focused
- Landscape Recovery - Large scale landscape use change; long term planning

These schemes are intended to support the rural economy while achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and a commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. They are based on ELM principles of co-design with farmers; responding to feedback; clear, simple, fair and reasonable schemes; and the incremental release of new systems.

Through these schemes, farmers and other land managers may enter into agreements to be paid for delivering:

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

# What is Involved in the Pilot?

The main difference between **'tests and trials'** and **'piloting'** is that tests and trials focus on potential individual parts of the future scheme, whereas piloting will test a pilot version of the scheme from start to finish. By analogy, a manufacturer designing a new car might test things like the brakes and gear box separately (tests and trials), before combining them into a driveable car for road testing (piloting). DEFRA

- Work through steps to build an agreement from the following asset-based standards:
  - **Arable and horticultural: land**
  - **Arable and horticultural: soil**
  - **Farm woodland**
  - **Hedgerows**
  - **Improved grassland**
  - **Improved grassland: soils**
  - **Low and no input grassland**
  - **Waterbody buffering**
- Introductory/Intermediate/Advanced levels for all standards
- In some cases more than one standard can be applied to the same land
- 10-15 hours/month on 'learning activities' and feedback = Participation payment

# What is 'Co-Design'?

**Co-Design:**

Design involving partnership with stakeholders/customers to ensure that the final product meets their needs and is usable

- Learning from and building on user feedback
- Respecting and listening to the opinions of users
- Understanding real-world consequences of policy decisions, and using this understanding to solve problems
- Understanding the differences between individual farms and different farm types

# What is Involved in the Pilot?

## E.g. Low and No Input Grassland Standard

### Introductory level (£22/ha)

- Manage weeds and invasive and competitive species in ways that reduce herbicide impacts
- Buffer your in-field trees to protect them and provide a habitat for wildlife
- Increase botanical diversity by limiting application rates of inorganic fertiliser and manure
- Provide more habitats for wildlife by leaving some uncut margins to produce flowers and seed
- Minimise the impacts of supplementary feeding on grasslands, water courses and wildlife
- Increase habitat for farm and aquatic wildlife through rotational ditch management
- Increase biodiversity by managing grazing to leave a minimum sward height

### Intermediate level (£89/ha)

- Further increase botanical diversity by managing pasture without fertiliser, and only farmyard manure on meadows
- Improve habitat for breeding waders by managing rush, where present
- Increase available nesting, shelter and food resources by managing tall vegetation, ponds and scrub
- Increase botanical biodiversity by making field-dried hay or haylage in meadows

### Advanced level (£110/ha)

- Increase biodiversity by making field-dried hay or haylage on a greater proportion of meadows

# What is Involved in the Pilot?

## E.g. Low and No Input Grassland Standard

**Introductory:**  
No additional  
actions

**Intermediate:**  
No additional  
actions

**Advanced: Choose one of the following:**

### **Additional action 1**

This applies only: to small areas of wetland and damp grassland on your farm that can increase botanical diversity, provide feeding areas for wading birds and contribute to reducing flood risk

Actions required: blocking drains where there is potential to create or extend small wetland areas

Additional payment on top of the base payment: £127 per hectare

**or**

### **Additional action 2**

This applies only: to floodplain grasslands

Actions required: manage wet grasslands to increase botanical diversity and provide habitat for waders and wildfowl

Additional payment on top of the base payment: £127 per hectare

# Selection Process and Eligibility

- Random selection of up to 1000 farmers from categories covering mix of farms and locations
- Eligibility:
  - Phase 1: Up to 1000 farmers who receive BPS (2021)
  - Phase 2: Open to all BPS recipients (about 88,000) (from 2022)
  - Phase 3: Open to all farmers and landowners (from 2024)
- Land parcels (fields) submitted cannot already fall under another environmental scheme
- Applicant must have full management control of the land for the length of the pilot
- Land parcels must not be common land or shared grazing
- Land parcels must be entirely in England

# How to Apply

Log in to Rural Payments Service using your usual log-in details



Click 'Business Overview'



Open the SFI Pilot Expression of Interest form in the Environmental Land Management section



Select your farm type from the list and check the declaration that you meet the criteria

## Farm Type Categories

- Cereal
- General Cropping
- Horticulture
- Specialist Pigs
- Specialist Poultry
- Dairy
- Grazing Stock (LFA)
- Grazing Stock (lowland)
- Mixed
- Other eligible non-farm land type (incl. woodland)



## Environmental Land Management

### Sustainable Farming Incentive Pilot Expression of Interest

I confirm I meet the following criteria:

- I am a current BPS recipient/applicant
- I am not a public body
- I will only include land in my application:
  - that I will have management control of for the duration of the agreement
  - on which there will be no alternative funding via a multiannual agri-environmental scheme for the duration of the agreement
  - that is not common land

### Main Business Type

I have read & understood the Expression of Interest information on [GOV.UK](#) & I confirm I wish to be considered for the Sustainable Farming Incentive Pilot. I understand that registering an interest does not automatically mean I will be invited to apply. If selected to participate I will commit to the expectations of the Sustainable Farming Incentive Pilot

# Useful Resources

**SFI: DEFRA's Plans for Piloting and Launching the Scheme:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-scheme-pilot-launch-overview/sustainable-farming-incentive-defras-plans-for-piloting-and-launching-the-scheme#annex-1>

**SFI: Expressions of Interest Information:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-expression-of-interest/sustainable-farming-incentive-expression-of-interest>

**Farming is Changing Booklet:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/939683/farming-changing.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/939683/farming-changing.pdf)

**Farm Classifications in the UK:**

[http://farmbusinesssurvey.co.uk/DataBuilder/defra-stats-foodfarm-farmmanage-fbs-UK\\_Farm\\_Classification.pdf](http://farmbusinesssurvey.co.uk/DataBuilder/defra-stats-foodfarm-farmmanage-fbs-UK_Farm_Classification.pdf)

# Payments

## E.g. Improved Grassland Soils Standard

### Introductory level (£6/ha)

Identify the priority areas for soil management on your farm by carrying out a soil assessment

Protect your soil from run-off and flooding, and increase yields, by taking measures to maintain soil structure and avoid or alleviate soil compaction and poaching

When reseeding temporary grassland at high or very risk of surface run-off, soil erosion or flooding, establish grass to achieve good ground cover before winter

+ Additional actions up to £88/ha

### Intermediate level (£6/ha) All actions in the introductory level plus

Protect fields from soil erosion, maintain soil carbon and support soil biological activity by reducing tillage on temporary grassland identified as high and very high risk of surface run-off or soil erosion

+ Additional actions up to £88/ha

### Advanced level (£8/ha) All actions in the introductory and intermediate levels plus

To improve soil structure, soil carbon and soil biology and reduce flooding, produce a soil management plan

Reduce soil compaction by limiting the area of the field that is travelled on

**+ participation payment (more info in June)**

# Payments

## All Standards:

Standard	Initial base rates (first phase of pilot only)		
	Introductory	Intermediate	Advanced
Arable and horticultural land standard	£28/ha	£54/ha	£74/ha
Arable and horticultural soils standard	£30/ha	£47/ha	£59/ha
Improved grassland standard	£27/ha	£62/ha	£97/ha
Improved grassland soils standard	£6/ha	£6/ha	£8/ha
Low and no input grassland standard	£22/ha	£89/ha	£110/ha
Hedgerows standard	£16/100m	£21/100m	£24/100m
On farm woodland standard	£49/ha	+ one off payment of £100 for condition assessment and one-off payment of £25 for webinar attendance	
Waterbody buffering standard	£16/100m	£29/100m	£34/100m

# Key Dates

15 March 2021	SFI pilot expressions of interest open
11 April 2021	Deadline for expressions of interest
24 May 2021	Successful farmers will be notified by email or post
June 2021	More information on eligibility will be made available Selected farmers can then make full applications for the pilot scheme
Summer 2021	Summer 2021 - Agreements developed and confirmed
October 2021	First agreements go live
November 2021	November 2021 - First payments issued
2022	Rollout of full SFI begins
2024	Expected end of pilot and ELM to be rolled out in full

# What if there's nothing for me in the SFI pilot?

- There is nothing in the SFI pilot specifically aimed at uplands at the present time, but DEFRA anticipates adding standards for commons, shared grazing, peat soils and unenclosed uplands to future pilots, before 2024 rollout
- Larger scale Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery schemes will roll out in 2024, piloting will begin in 2022.
  - Very little info on these at the moment, but likely to have a focus on collaboration and resemble Higher Level Stewardship in responsibilities
  - May have a competitive element
- Countryside Stewardship will continue until 2024 start dates
- DEFRA now offering 5 year CS agreements to avoid everyone going into ELM at the same time in 2024, but **transferring** from CS to ELM without penalty will be possible
- Changes to CS from 2021 should mean fewer penalties, with focus on advice and support for those not meeting targets before penalties are imposed, and RPA only reducing the claim if an over-claim is made, rather than penalising.



# Contact Details

**Dr Jane Rowling**

Calder and Colne Rivers Trust  
Farm and Rural Liaison Officer

[jane.rowling@calderandcolneriverstrust.org](mailto:jane.rowling@calderandcolneriverstrust.org)

07943 470 261

[www.calderandcolneriverstrust.org/site/our-projects/farm-and-rural-liaison](http://www.calderandcolneriverstrust.org/site/our-projects/farm-and-rural-liaison)