

## Sam lands machinery supplier job

A student from Devon has landed his dream job working with a leading agricultural machinery supplier in the South West.

Eighteen-year-old Sam Cork, from Barnstaple, completed the level three advanced technical diploma in agriculture at Duchy College and is now working for Smallridge Bros Ltd, demonstrating the John Deere Agricultural Management Solutions (AMS) to farmers.

“It is a dream come true working for Smallridge’s and being able to demonstrate the latest technologies means I get to use lots of different equipment,” he said. “I’m also combining the role with working on my family’s arable and beef farm.”

Sam described the level three course he studied as “so diverse” that it has given him a “good grounding in lots of different areas of agriculture”.

“The course was great and I would highly recommend the college to anyone wanting to work in the agricultural industry,” he said. “I lived on site while I was studying and this added to the experience.”

Peter Walker, agriculture team lead, said Sam worked “very hard” during his time at the college. He said: “Sam was awarded a distinction on the course and it is always a proud moment when we hear what ex-students are achieving.”

## 870 cattle sold at Holsworthy and Exeter

Dairy auctioneers at Kivells have had a really busy few weeks, with more than 870 cattle sold at sales in Holsworthy and Exeter.

At Holsworthy Livestock Market on October 10, the top call of the day was £2,250 for an outstanding Papoose heifer selling on behalf of Martin Webber of Drewsteignton, with a spectacular average of £1,861 for first calving heifers.

Two days later at Exeter Livestock Centre, a huge entry of 234 dairy cattle including the Kingtonhills and Heratunga herds of pedigree Jerseys, which travelled down from Hereford, topped at 1,220 guineas on behalf of Messrs RM & CF Joyce.

Meanwhile the dispersal of 472 organic dairy cattle on behalf of the Gent family from West Clyst saw buyers in attendance from Southern Ireland, Wales, Hereford and every county within the South West. The “fresh milk” was in huge demand and topped at 2,200 guineas, selling to Longdon Manor Farms who purchased 46-head for their organic herd in Shropshire.

Kivells dairy auctioneer, Mark Bromell, said after the sales: “We have now sold well in excess of 1,000 dairy animals to buyers from all parts of the UK.”

For further details on upcoming dairy sales visit the website [www.kivells.com](http://www.kivells.com)

# The aspirations for Defra’s future policy are set out in Bill

**HUGH TOWNSEND**



### Background

The new Agriculture Bill passed its second reading in Parliament on October 10. It was due to go before a Public Bill Committee yesterday before moving on to the Report Stage and a final reading in the Commons, before then going before the House of Lords and is subsequently granted Royal Assent.

The Bill aims to set up the legislative framework necessary to enable the UK government to administer and regulate its own independent agricultural policy following leaving the EU.

It also sets out the aspirations for Defra’s future Environmental Land Management (ELM) Policy, which will eventually provide support to farmers/landowners, replacing the direct payments currently made through the CAP.

### Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS)

The stated aim of the new ELMS is to give support to farmers/land managers by providing “public money for public goods”. These new support mechanisms will be introduced towards the end of the seven year transition period after 2021 (during which Direct Payments will be phased out gradually) following the EU transition period from 2019 to 2021.

Trials of ELMS are expected to run from 2019 to 2022, with pilot schemes running from 2021 to 2024 so that from 2025 the new ELMS will be fully up and running in England and Wales.

### Definition of “public goods”

The government currently defines acceptable public goods as:

- (a) managing land or water in a way that protects or improves the environment.
- (b) supporting public access to and enjoyment of the countryside, farmland or woodland and better understanding of the environment.
- (c) managing land or water in a way that maintains, restores or enhances cultural heritage or natural heritage.
- (d) mitigating or adapting to climate change.
- (e) preventing, reducing or protecting from environmental hazards.
- (f) protecting or improving the health or welfare of livestock.

Notably absent is support for improving farm productivity and food production, most likely because of WTO rules which limit food production

subsidies to avoid unfair competition. However, there is pressure from some stakeholders for the government to recognise the importance of encouraging food production.

### How practically will ELMS work?

At this stage, the way ELMS will work is still being formulated by Defra and debated by the ELMS testing and trials advisory group, so there is no firm detail available as to how applying for the new ELMS will differ from the Countryside Stewardship (CSS), or what level of payments will be paid for the “public goods”.

According to Defra’s “Health & Harmony” consultation paper, however, the intention is that the new scheme(s) will improve upon the (much criticised) CSS scheme by streamlining and simplifying the application process, having rolling monthly start dates, making monthly rather than bi-annual payments to successful claimants, and providing more support to land managers, and other suggestions are also being considered.

### Current agri-environment schemes

The existing agri-environment schemes (CSS Mid-Tier, Higher-Tier, Wildlife Offers and Capital Grants) provide bi-annual payments over a set period (usually five-ten years) for carrying out certain environmental activities such as farming in certain environmentally-friendly ways, undertaking planting specifically to improve the variety of trees, wild plants, birds and wildlife, and improving the land.

The capital grants are for work such as improving hedgerows/boundaries, restoring historic buildings, woodland grants, or for preparing an application for a Higher-Tier agreement.

Only the Wildlife Offers is non-competitive (ie, if you apply and can meet the requirements, you will receive the payment), with the other three being competitive, where not all applications are automatically successful (although some capital grants can be non-competitive).

Applications can be costly to prepare and submit but only the applications that best meet the regional environmental targets and priorities are granted an agreement.

Once granted, claims then have to be submitted each year providing fresh evidence of compliance, and subject holdings are subject to random inspections throughout the year, sometimes with only 24 hours’ notice, to check for compliance, with penalties being applied for non-compliance.

However, the scheme has

suffered from poor administration, slow response times, and in some cases crippling delays in making payments.

Whatever new agri-environment scheme is set up to replace CSS, it hopefully will rebuild farmers/land owners’ confidence that government support can be better administered, that the application process can be less onerous, and that payments will be made on time.

### Current proposals for implementing ELMS

The current proposal that seems to be gaining traction is that Land Management Plans be developed by the farmer/land manager with help from their land agent/specialist environmental advisor, and Environmental Land Management Contracts are then issued for the provision of environmental goods and services based on these.

This seems to imply that the Government is leaning towards the CLA proposal, set out in their “Land Management Contract” (LMC) document published in May 2018, which proposes that some non-competitive grants (Universal LMCs) should be available to all land managers to conserve and manage the land in an environmentally friendly way, and some competitive grants (Enhanced LMCs) offered to enhance and restore landscapes and farm holdings.

In addition, there may be a grant to provide funding to apply for an Enhanced LMC. It is expected that these LMPs would need to be developed by the farmer/land manager with some help from “specialist advisors” such as land agents/environmental consultants.

It is yet to be seen whether the Government will also provide financial support for farmers to prepare at least their initial Land Management Plans, perhaps in a similar way to the Farm Business Advice support offered to farmers following Foot & Mouth in 2001.

### Will ELMS offer appropriate financial reward for environmental and other “public goods”?

The Government states it intends to offer “fair rewards and strong incentives for participation [in an ELMS]”, however at this stage the requirements for entry and the formulas for calculating the level of payments to be made are also still to be debated and agreed.

The funding has currently only been guaranteed until 2022, but there are calls for the government to commit to a long-term budget to allow for clear business planning and investment by farmers/land managers.



Whatever support schemes are eventually made available, they will need to fit in with farm and land management business plans, and, as they cannot be compulsory, the Government will want to ensure the new schemes make financial sense for farmers to take part.

Farmers/land managers must make a profit, or there is a chance they won’t be taken up, particularly following the difficulties experienced with the existing CSS schemes.

### Feedback from other stakeholders

The feedback from lobbying groups representing landowners/farmers/environmental and wildlife groups is overall fairly positive about the principles of ELMS and the definition of “public goods” eligible for “public funds”.

There is, however, pressure for the definition to be expanded to also include “rural vitality and national health and wellbeing” and “public benefits that are delivered by sus-

tainable farming and forestry practices”, and that “supporting domestic agriculture to ensure food security and stability of food supply” should also be recognised as a public good.

All stakeholders would prefer more certainty on the funding to be provided post-2022, and highlight the difficulties for farmers/landowners planning long-term investments in their farming/environmental practices without such certainty.

Most stakeholders also welcome the promise of reducing red-tape and simplification of the application process, but environmental and wildlife groups in particular also stress the importance of robust oversight of the benefits, and feel effective regulation will be key.

### Summary

ELMS will therefore most likely be the cornerstone of agricultural policy in England and Wales post-Brexit. It is

clear that after the UK transition period, farmers/land managers in England or Wales will need to apply for an ELMS to receive any Government funded financial support, and it is likely that an application will require some kind of environmental audit of their land, whether done by the farmer, or with the support of a land agent/environmental consultant.

How the application is submitted, and how much detail will be needed, is yet to be confirmed, bearing in mind that the Government’s intentions are to “simplify the 2019 Countryside Stewardship application process in England, within the rules of the implementation period” and “reduce the bureaucracy” and “any needless paperwork, which has been widely criticised”.

Hugh Townsend, FRICS, FAAV, FCI(Arb) is the land agent/surveyor expert of the WMN Farming supplement and he may be contacted on 01392 823935 or [htownsend@townsendcharteredsurveyors.co.uk](mailto:htownsend@townsendcharteredsurveyors.co.uk)

## Help for families to plan future

The Prince’s Countryside Fund is piloting a project to train professionals who work closely with farming families, to support conversations around sensitive topics such as succession planning.

The charity, established by the Prince of Wales in 2010, recognises the desperate need for farming families to plan for the future, and the lack of trained professionals that they can turn to for help.

Maddy Fitzgerald, programme manager at the Prince’s Countryside Fund, said: “The Fund’s work with farmer networks across the UK has shown a need for more staff to be trained, to help facilitate conversations around succession and planning for the future.

The workshops, delivered by Heather Wildman of Sa-



“This will ensure that there is support available for farming families to help with making difficult decisions during this period of transition. We hope that this programme helps prepare those working in the agricultural support sector, to ensure a diverse farming landscape for the future.”

The workshops, delivered by Heather Wildman of Sa-

viour Associates, will train up to 20 individuals on a one-day course in areas including:  
■ Looking at the challenges faced by farming families.  
■ Training in how to handle difficult conversations.  
■ How to structure your facilitation.  
■ Legal requirements including public liability and indemnity insurance.

The first session is being run in conjunction with Rural Support Northern Ireland and attended by representatives from that organisation, the Ulster Farmers’ Union, the Young Farmers’ Clubs and the banking sector.  
Following this pilot session, further training days will be rolled out in Wales, Scotland and England during next year.

## CLA names new director general

The CLA (Country Land and Business Association) has appointed a new director general to oversee the running of the 30,000-strong membership organisation for landowners, farmers and rural businesses.

Sarah Hendry will take over from Helen Woolley, who leaves the CLA in November after seven years as director general.

After studying modern languages at Oxford University, Sarah has spent her whole career in the civil service, mostly within Defra. She has been a director for the last 12 years and worked across a number of policy areas including water, flooding, rural development, Common Agricultural Policy reform, animal health, farming, and climate change. For the last six months that has included leading the clean-up in Salisbury after the Novichok attack.

Sarah was awarded a CBE in 2006 for her work on climate change.

Sarah said: “I am delighted to be joining the CLA, especially at such a crucial time for the rural sector. My first priority is understanding the

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CLA president Tim Breitmeyer,

membership and I’m excited about getting out and about and meeting members.

“I know from my time at Defra what an incredible contribution they make to the rural economy. I’m really looking forward to seeing it at first hand and learning more of the issues they experience.”

CLA president Tim Breitmeyer said: “Sarah is a very welcome addition to the senior team at the CLA. She brings an in depth understanding of rural issues from her time at Defra, combined with her leadership skills.

“I am confident she will build on the already strong foundations of the organisation in the years ahead.”

Sarah will join the CLA at the end of October, spending most of her first month visiting the CLA regions to familiarise herself with the membership.

South West director John Mortimer said: “We are looking forward to welcoming Sarah to the CLA and to the region. We’ll be giving her a whistle stop tour of the South West over a couple of days giving her an insight into what this diverse region has to offer. It will also be a great opportunity for her to see what the CLA is doing for its members.”

Sarah will officially take over as director general at the start of December.