

Royal Forestry Society welcome for ELM Commitment

Tuesday 9 January, 2024

The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) welcomes the commitments from the new Environment Secretary, Steve Barclay, to bring the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) and the Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG) into new Environmental Land Management (ELM) Schemes.

The RFS also welcomes the uplift in grants to support woodland management, and hopes it will bring more woods into management.

RFS Chief Executive Christopher Williams said: "We welcome the certainty that [EWCO](#) and the [WCPG](#) will continue into ELMs.

"There is still some way to go before we can say that woodland managers are getting as good a deal as our farmers from the grant schemes. It is however good to see more grants to support woodland management and agroforestry. We hope these will be sufficient to incentivise more land managers to implement best practice in managing their trees and woods."

"We still need further commitments to develop and support training and upskilling. This is essential to ensure we have the workforce in place to manage our woodlands now and in the future. Those skills will give us a thriving forestry sector which can help address challenges such as climate change."

Speaking at the Oxford Farming Conference, Steve Barclay also announced a number of upgrades to the schemes. He stated: "We will take a phased approach to the transition of EWCO and WCPG into ELM schemes, to allow a smooth transition, with no gap in offering grants to applicants for woodland creation. The future ELM woodland creation offer will largely mirror the EWCO offer."

"Additionally, we will expand tree health support in Countryside Stewardship, using learning from the Tree Health Pilot. The current Tree Health Pilot grants will continue until transition into ELM, ensuring that there is no gap in support."

He also promised a review of rates for the England Woodland Creation Offer and related forestry grants alongside the new ELM.

New within the woodland management offer will be actions to improve resilience, flood and drought mitigation. There will be support to manage our most precious woodland habitats, wildfire management, provide educational and public access. Alongside will be new capital items for restocking, coppicing and ride creation.

To support Agroforestry, Mr Barclay announced a suite of in-field actions across various tree densities to encourage more trees in the farmed landscape, alongside agricultural production.

Some improvements such as improved payment rates in Countryside Stewardship have already been announced. There are also promises to improve offers on wood pasture and species management, including the impacts of deer and grey squirrels.

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