

DEFRA ENVIRONMENTAL LAND MANAGEMENT TESTING AND TRIAL ADVISORY GROUP

Summary: The Board's Land Management Officer has been invited by Defra to be a member of the Environmental Land Management Testing and Trial Advisory Group.

Recommendation: That the report is noted

Officer Ref: Mark Connelly, Land Management Officer (01451 862006)

Background

1. The In June this year Defra invited the submission of proposals/ideas to test and trial for the future environment land management scheme. The Board submitted three proposals based on the Farming and Rural Development proposal developed and discussed since the 2017 Farming Forum:
 - Design of an environmental land management scheme tailored for a particular landscape with devolved local delivery using the Cotswolds as a pilot
 - Researching and piloting the need for local payment rates and options to achieve outcomes in the Cotswolds.
 - Combining environmental land management and rural development into a single scheme

The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) also included the Board's proposal for Farming and Rural Development in the Cotswolds AONB in their submission along with proposals for tests and trials from 11 other AONBs.

2. Subsequent to the submission deadline at the end of June, Defra established an Environmental Land Management Testing and Trials (ELM T&T) Advisory Group. Members of the Advisory group are drawn from organisations with a direct interest in and knowledge of land management such as the NFU, CLA, RSPB, FWAG, National Park Authorities, CONFOR and the Wildlife Trusts. The Board's Land Management Officer was invited to be part of the advisory group, representing the NAAONB.
3. The purpose and role of the Advisory Group is to:
 - provide insight on the programme for tests and trials – using your knowledge to identify risks and challenges with our proposals and where an additional test or trial may be needed to fill the gaps
 - help Defra to develop and refine proposals for the new scheme that we will use to conduct our tests and trials
 - support the delivery of tests and trials by providing links to appropriate farmers and land managers who operate in a real life environment.
 - support the gathering of appropriate evidence in specifically identified tests and trials.
 - support the process evaluation and monitoring of specific tests and trials which will help us refine proposals

The ELM T&T Advisory Group reports to the Testing and Trials Project Board who in turn report to Defra officials and Ministers.

Meetings to date and programme

4. The ELM Testing and Trials Advisory Group has met twice to date. The first meeting considered what a land management plan might look like in terms of scope, scale, mechanisms etc and the second meeting focussed on advice and guidance. There is a programme of four meetings in Birmingham during the autumn. The next two meetings are due to look further at the land management Plan and consider tests and trials.
5. To cover time and cost the Board can claim from Defra £250 and travel expenses for attending each meeting.

Sub-groups

6. The ELM Testing and Trials Advisory Group is looking to establish a sub-group of end-users of ELM guidance to test and refine the approach. The Group members have been asked to put forward one or two end-users that would be willing to test guidance products as they develop. The first guidance to be tested is for farmland birds for which the Cotswolds is nationally important. The Land Management Officer circulated an email to Cotswold farmers and 15 offers to help have been received and forwarded to Natural England who will be testing the farmland bird guidance.
7. The Land Management Officer will look initially to this group to test and trial future guidance etc relevant to the Cotswolds. The 11 other AONBs who put forward proposals will be contacted for wider test and trials or for areas beyond the scope of the Cotswolds such as moorland. The wider AONB family is being kept informed and involved via the NAAONBs intranet facility.

Supporting Paper(s):

None