

DEFRA ENVIRONMENTAL LAND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM TEST

Summary: To present an update on the Board's ELM Test

Recommendation: That the report be noted

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

Background

1. In June 2018 Defra invited the submission of proposals/ideas to test and trial building blocks or processes to help design the future Environment Land management System (ELMS). The Board submitted three proposals based on the Farming and Rural Development proposal developed and discussed since the 2017 Farming Forum:
 - a. Design of an environmental land management scheme tailored for a particular landscape with devolved local delivery using the Cotswolds as a pilot
 - b. Researching and piloting the need for local payment rates and options to achieve outcomes in the Cotswolds.
 - c. Combining environmental land management and rural development into a single scheme
2. Only one of the three proposals, Researching and Piloting the need for Local Payment Rates and Options to Achieve Outcomes in the Cotswolds, has been accepted by Defra with a number of requested modifications
3. It has taken over a year with final adjustments made to the Board's proposal over the summer. Defra have now confirmed the test and in September issued a contract with the Board to deliver the test with a start date of 1st September 2019. The contract has been signed and we are now delivering the test. An outline of the agreed test is attached as Appendix 'A'.
4. The initial signal that Defra was confirming the test was received in early August. This gave officers enough confidence to produce and send a tender document to a number of consultants/contractors to deliver the core of the test for the Board. The tender included a clear caveat that the test would only commence on receipt of a contract from Defra. Once the contract with Defra had been signed, we were able to confirm Red Kite Environment, based in Stonehouse, as delivering the test.
5. The budget agreed with Defra for the test is £29,900 and covers the cost of the consultants/contractors, workshop venue hire, refreshments and travel costs. Board staff costs could have been included but Defra required that any staff time was backfilled. This is not practical as it would involve backfilling a few staff days spread over six months and providing supporting time sheets, contracts, etc. Staff travel and subsistence costs are included.

6. An inception meeting with Mark Connelly, Land Management Officer and Peter Seccombe and Charlie Falzon from Red Kite Environmental took place on 7th October.
7. The core of the test revolves around four workshops across the Cotswolds with farmers and land managers. The dates for the four workshops are 7th and 8th January (two each day, morning and evening). At the time of writing, locations for the workshops are being confirmed. To ensure a range of farmers and land managers representing different types of farm and land are invited to the workshops, the Board will help collate an invitation list using the Farming Forum database, landowners and managers involved with the Cotswold Grassland Project, etc. and by enlisting the help of FWAG, the NFU, Natural England, Forestry Commission and other organisations such as Pastures for Life. Invitations to the workshops are to be issued shortly.
8. To help design the workshops and accompanying questionnaire a pilot workshop was held on 22nd November (point 4. on the attached outline). Ten farmers, land managers and foresters participated in the discussion and there has been some very useful follow up correspondence via email.
9. Three other ELMS Test and Trials are being delivered in the Cotswolds by FWAG in the Upper Thames Catchment, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the Foundation for Common Land. All the test and trial leads are liaising to co-ordinate activity.
10. The Board's test has a deadline to complete by the end of February with the submission of the final report to Defra.

Supporting paper:

Appendix 'A' - Outline of the Board's ELMS Test.

Test to research new and innovative ideas and the need for local payment rates and options/themes to achieve national and local outcomes in the Cotswolds.

By the end of February 2020 work with a range of farmers, land managers, advisers and agencies to discuss and identify new and innovative approaches and applicant requirements to achieve national and local outcomes through ELMS in the Cotswolds. This could include business advice, local payment rates and land management advice.

1. Appoint consultant/contractor by end of September 2019.
2. Contact NE and FC, requesting information on option uptake by the end of October
3. Using the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018 – 23, the Cotswolds NCA Profile and the 6 principles of the 25 Year Environment Plan to identify the national and local priorities and objectives for the Cotswolds by the end of October.
4. Hold initial discussions with 10 farmers, land managers and advisers to help inform and design the workshops and questionnaire by the end of November.
5. By the end of January 2020 hold 4 independently facilitated workshops across the Cotswolds with 80+ farmers and land managers to:
 - a. Identify new and innovative ideas and mechanisms and how they could be measured
 - b. Identify local payment rates and local advice and guidance.
 - c. Test the inclusion in the Land Management Plan (LMP) of an assessment of the needs of the business to optimise ELMS delivery. This could include infrastructure, equipment, training and diversification opportunities

for ELMS to effectively deliver outcomes for the agreed national and local priorities for the Cotswolds and the 25 Year Environment Plan.

6. Circulate a questionnaire based on 'a' to 'c' above to farmers and land managers unable to participate in the workshops using a platform such as SurveyMonkey during December 2019 and January 2020 and collate results for inclusion in the draft report by the end of January.
7. Using the results from the workshops, hold follow up small group, 1:1 meetings and telephone interviews with 15 farmers and land managers to develop detail and explore more sensitive topics and business needs by the end of January.
8. Collate the results of the initial discussions, workshops, questionnaires, small group and 1:1 meetings and produce a draft report by the end of January 2020.
9. Review the test and recommend any changes required for further iterations by the end of January*.
10. Submit final report and recommendations to Defra and NAAONB by the end of February 2019.
11. Run further iteration(s) with associated recommendations in 2020.

*Other areas of England are very likely to have the same issues as the Cotswolds. This test can easily be replicated. The Board would be happy to replicate this test in other AONBs, National Parks or other areas during 2020