



North Devon Pioneer ELM Trial

Information for potential participants

Background

The North Devon Pioneer ELM Trial is one of 55 'Test and Trial' projects Defra have commissioned to help inform the new Environmental Land Management Scheme that will be phased in, over the next four years, to replace the existing Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship. ELM will provide farmers, foresters and other land managers with an opportunity to secure financial reward in return for delivering environmental benefits.

What the North Devon Pioneer ELM Trial will do

The project aims to trial a new way of working with farmers to deliver sustainable land management through ELM. The project will:

- Develop a process to engage local stakeholders in agreeing the priorities for what ELM should deliver in the local area, and which involves farmers and land managers in deciding how and where those priorities could be delivered, and balanced with food production.
- Help farmers evaluate the costs and benefits of alternative land management options by bringing farm business planning information together with their land management options.
- Test a Land Management Plan (LMP) template drafted by the project team (it is likely that an LMP will form the basis of future ELM agreements). We envisage that the LMP will comprise a baseline environmental assessment for the farm, identify potential environmental enhancement opportunities, and scope out what land management changes the farmer could potentially deliver.
- Cost out, for each of the participating farms, three alternative ELM scenarios, varying in the extent of 'public goods' delivered (things like clean rivers, reduced flooding downstream, more wildlife, and increased carbon storage) – a standard, a medium and a high delivery scenario. At the end of the Trial, participants will be asked to comment on which scenario they might potentially consider implementing for their farm business in the future.
- Note that this will only be a theoretical exercise, and that participants will not be required to deliver the actions identified in the LMP. You can apply to take part even if you are currently in a stewardship scheme.

Why get involved in the Trial?

1. Influence the design of ELM - by being part of this Trial you will have the chance to help Defra design the new ELM scheme, due to be piloted from next year and rolled out fully in 2024.
2. Get bespoke farm business and land management information to help inform future decision making and farm business resilience.
3. The farm planning involved in the trial could help you decide how best to take advantage of the future ELM scheme.

Note: It is clear that the Covid-19 outbreak and the need for social distancing will affect the planned delivery of this ELM Trial, but we will do as much as we can by phone or email until it is safe and practical to meet in person.

How can I get involved in the Trial, and what will it entail?

There are two options to taking part in this trial:

Option 1: Helping agree what ELM should deliver in your local area, and how this could be achieved.

This element of the Trial will take place in late June and July and we are hoping 70 farmers will volunteer to take part, spread across our four working areas (see map below).

Participating farmers will need to comment on a short document outlining the priorities for what ELM should deliver for the natural environment in their area, as identified by local stakeholders (such as the Biosphere Reserve, District Council, Environment Agency, Devon Wildlife Trust), and to provide their views on the reality of delivering those priorities in their local area (ie how and where it might be delivered). For example, the feasibility of managing permanent pasture and hedgerows for wildlife and carbon capture, or woodland planting to reduce downstream flooding.

We expect this will take 2-4 hours of your time, and you can claim up to £100 to help cover the cost of your participation in this element of the project. If you would like to make a claim, you will need to provide us with an invoice and a signed timesheet to evidence your claim for payment.

Option 2: Testing the Land Management Plan template and creating three costed ELM land management scenarios for your farm.

We are aiming to work with 28 farmers for this part of the Trial, spread across four areas (see map below), completing the land management plans and business planning elements between August and November this year.

Participating farmers will need to set aside time to show the Natural England land management adviser around the farm, and discuss what land management measures you might consider delivering under the new ELM scheme (in terms of continuing existing positive management measures as well as potential new ones). Participating farmers will also need to set aside time to work with the farm business adviser, to help them collate the necessary information on your farm business to prepare the farm business situation report.

The land management adviser will complete a Land Management Plan for the farm and draft the three ELM land management scenarios – a standard, a medium and a high delivery scenario. It is envisaged that the standard scenario will entail limited delivery of ‘public goods’, similar perhaps to what you might have delivered under ELS, while a high delivery scenario might entail, for example, creating new areas of wildlife habitat, restoring natural drainage to a floodplain meadow, and planting new woodland. One of the scenarios may be your current situation, depending on your farm business and what you do at the moment.

The farm business adviser will then cost out each of these scenarios for your farm showing your farm’s likely income from the different scenarios. The final stage of the Trial will involve asking you to evaluate which is your preferred option. You will also be asked to provide feedback on the Land Management Plan template (how well it worked for you, what could be improved etc).

Participants in this element of the trial will benefit from the preparation of a draft LMP for their farm and a farm business situation report, as well as the costing of the three scenarios for their farm. No additional payments are available.

NOTE: YOU CAN CHOOSE TO JUST TAKE PART IN OPTION 1 OR BOTH OPTIONS 1 AND 2. However the number of farms taking part will be limited to approximately 70 for option 1 and 28 for option 2. We will select farms to try and ensure a representative sample across the four project areas.

How will the results of the Trial be fed back to Defra?

The Project Team will provide regular reports to Defra together with copies of example documents (for example the Land Management Plan template). Defra will use the information we provide to help design the new ELM scheme.

Will my contribution be confidential?

To ensure that our reports reflect your views, we will want to incorporate your feedback and comments, but they will be anonymised so Defra won't know who said what. We will not include the names of participants or farms in our reports. We will produce summary descriptions of the average costs of delivering natural environment priorities to different levels (standard, medium, and high) in different project areas and different farm types.

How will we protect your personal data?

To protect your identity, and to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations, we will keep your personal data (e.g. contact details, consent form, correspondence about the study) in a password-protected file, to which only the project staff will have access. Personal data will only be used for the purposes of this study.

Where can I get further information?

Please contact the Project Land Management Adviser, Clare FitzGibbon on 07721 758647 Clare.FitzGibbon@naturalengland.org.uk or the Project Manager, Moira Manners on 07385 348564 Moira.Manners@naturalengland.org.uk. We will provide you with a short form to complete to register your interest in taking part, and are happy to discuss any queries you may have.

Deadline for registering your interest: 19th June 2020

Project partners

The Trial has been developed by Natural England with help from our project partners: North Devon Biosphere, North Devon AONB, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Devon Wildlife Trust, South West Water, National Farmers Union, National Trust, Clinton Devon Estates and Exeter University.

Project working areas

See map below

