



Dear Colleagues,

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP HANDBOOKS: 2ND EDITION

As you may be aware, Natural England undertook a review of progress of Environmental Stewardship (ES), the results of which were published earlier this year and are available at:

<http://defraweb/erdp/schemes/es/es-report.pdf>

Some of the recommendations made as part of the review of progress will be implemented soon, and in order to reflect these changes Natural England has revised the Environmental Stewardship handbooks. The second edition handbooks can be downloaded at:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/planning/grants-funding/es/default.htm>

From a historic environment perspective, the main changes in this edition of the handbook are:

- An increase from 15 to 20 working days for HER FEP consultations
- Requirement to append the HER maps to the farmer's agreement contract and extension of scheme cross-compliance conditions to all features marked on those maps
- Removal of the Historic Environment section of Part 3 of the FEP (all information formerly captured in this section is now included in either Part 2 of the FEP or as part of the standard HER response template)
- Increased use of the eFEP, which will allow FEP surveyors to copy and paste the HER consultation response spreadsheet directly into the FEP
- Clarification of rules regarding metal-detecting on land entered into ES
- Changes to some HLS options, FEP features and the way in which field boundaries are recorded
- A change from quarterly to monthly application windows

The second edition handbooks will be used for all applications for Environmental Stewardship from 1st October 2008. However, a temporary transition period will exist whereby applications currently underway will continue to be bound by the first edition handbooks. This may result in you receiving requests from FEP surveyors for HER consultation responses using either the first edition (15 working day deadline) or second edition (20 working day deadline) template letter. We would hope that this transition will be complete by December 2008, whereupon all applications will be bound by the second edition handbooks, namely the 20 working day deadline for HER consultation responses.

In addition to the changes reflected in the second edition handbooks, the review of progress recommended a number of more significant changes that will be made to Environmental Stewardship during the next two years. These proposed changes include a review of the payment rates for HER consultation responses, which is due to take place next year. Future editions of the handbooks will reflect these changes.

Please feel free to contact your local Natural England office or Elaine Willett (Rural Development Officer, ALGAO:England) on 07733 301615 or elaine.willett@hertscc.gov.uk should you have any questions.

All the best,

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