



## FARMING AND PROPERTY BULLETIN 2023 – ISSUE 3

### AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEME UPDATES

#### Basic Payment Scheme

The Basic Payment Scheme for 2023 is now open and the RPA is recommending that applicants check their digital maps to ensure their accuracy – as other funding streams such as the new Sustainable Farming Incentive and Countryside Stewardship schemes work off the same data and need to be compatible with the land-use codes declared in BPS applications.

#### Delinked payments

The Basic Payment Scheme will be replaced with delinked payments from 2024. Applicants must claim, and be eligible for, BPS 2023 payments to receive delinked payments for 2024 to 2027. These will be based on average BPS payments in a reference period, which is the BPS 2020 to 2022 scheme years. Progressive reductions will be applied each year as delinked payments are gradually phased out by the end of 2027.

#### Lump Sum Exit Scheme

Applications received by the 30 September 2022 are currently being processed by the RPA. Those who have not yet heard whether their application has been accepted may want to apply for BPS in 2023 to protect them if they later find they are not eligible for the lump sum or cannot complete the transfer of their land in time.

#### Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS)

The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) is the base level scheme for farmers engaging with the Government's Environmental Land Management Schemes, with the two other major schemes now comprising enhanced Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Landscape Recovery (LR).

The SFI rewards farmers for providing public goods and attaining 'standards' of management. There are now eight different standards designed to appeal to landowners and managers who have hitherto resisted entering any schemes or who may be more restricted in the actions they can take on their land.

SFI provides an initial management payment of up to £1000 and the agreements run for three years. Those with existing CS agreements can apply for SFI actions provided they don't duplicate activity that they already receive payment for. To add additional standards to their existing agreements, participants will have to wait until the 'annual change period' towards the end of the first year of their three-year agreement.

Existing SFI standards include:

- Soil
- Moorland

New standards available from Summer 2023:

- Hedgerow management
- Integrated pest management
- Nutrient management
- Low input grassland
- Improved grassland
- Arable and horticultural land



#### Farming Equipment and Technology Fund

This fund has two parts:

- 1) Productivity and Slurry (now open and due to close 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023) – provides funding towards a wide range of innovative equipment for use in horticulture, forestry, arable and livestock farming including slurry tanks and management systems.
- 2) Animal Health and Welfare (expected to open sometime in March) – provides funding towards handling equipment and management innovations for cattle, sheep and pigs.



## FUTURE WATER SHORTAGES?

This past February was the driest in 30 years with only 45% of usual rainfall, bringing to focus an issue that is causing increasing concern for farmers and presenting a growing challenge to Government on how to adapt to this consequence of climate change.

Parts of East Anglia, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are still experiencing drought conditions and the National Drought Group, an amalgam of representatives from Government, water companies, farmers and others, has said that we are “one hot dry spell away from drought”.

Interestingly, the first theme for DEFRA’s Farming Transformation Fund was water and irrigation. The DEFRA Minister recently told the NFU AGM “in the months ahead, we will give you even more options to invest in water storage and improve irrigation. Further abstraction from depleted rivers risks affecting government goals, including biodiversity, while lower water volumes intensify the effects of pollution and weaken the resilience of ecosystems to disease and pests.

2022 saw parts of Europe experience their worst drought since 1540 and both France and Spain have started imposing restrictions on water use. Two thirds of French rivers are reported as below normal water levels with less snow melt expected which will have implications for the generation of hydroelectricity as well as the cooling of riverside nuclear power stations. Nine municipalities in France’s Var department have announced that low groundwater levels and drought mean they will not issue any building permits for the next four years.



*Historically low water levels in Germany’s Rhine (October 2022)*

Shipping on Germany’s major commercial artery the Rhine has been severely affected by lack of rain, as has food production across Europe. The fertile Po Valley in Italy received less than 40% of its usual rainfall this winter, resulting in salt water coming further inland. Farmers are moving to growing sunflowers which can survive on less water which in turn means less maize is being grown to feed livestock. The European Drought Agency mapping programme shows that much of Europe continues to experience historic shortfalls in precipitation including many parts of the UK and even Ireland.

One of the new environmental targets in England is to reduce the amount of potable water supplied to households, partly by reducing leaks and partly by increasing water efficiency. Areas of Sussex have experimented with requiring water neutrality for new housing. As part of their solution to this growing issue some UK water companies are promoting the establishment of new reservoirs, which brings with it a host of political, cultural and socio-economic arguments that result from such potentially contentious plans.

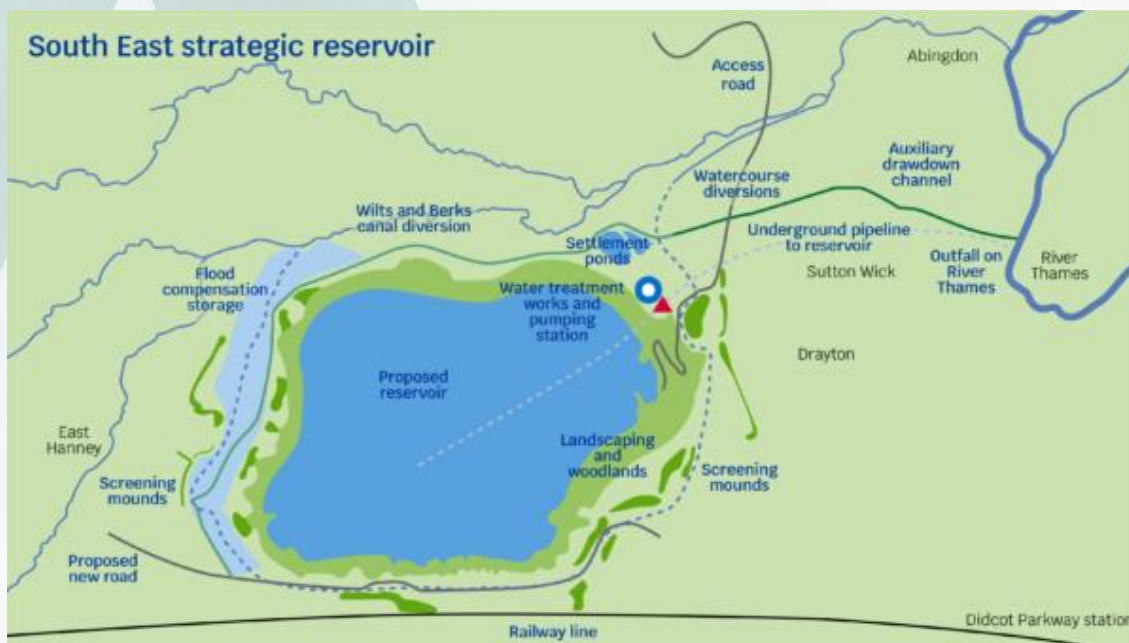
## SESRO CONSULTATION

Local readers will be aware of the consultation now being undertaken by Thames Water, Affinity Water and Southern Water around the proposed South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO). A ‘consultation’ is a compulsory part of the planning process and whilst the feedback received may influence the outcome to some extent, it is just one factor in determining the end-decision.

Thames Water published their draft Water Management Resources Plan in December 2022 which makes clear that a Strategic Reservoir is integral to their long-term planning - so less ‘Option’ and increasingly a priority. After many years of continued uncertainty, the project is moving to the stage where potentially affected landowners are being asked for access permissions so that initial surveys can be undertaken over the proposed site area.



Adkin are acting for a number of landowners in the area in coordinating a working approach to this stage in the water companies' activities. Whilst recognising that this is clearly a highly emotive subject to those of us in this corner of Oxfordshire who are directly affected - we encourage stakeholders to ensure they are professionally represented from the outset to encourage complete transparency and accountability from the water companies and statutory bodies involved.



(Image source: Ofwat.gov.uk)

## AVIAN INFLUENZA AND SHOOT PLANNING FOR THE 2023/24 SEASON

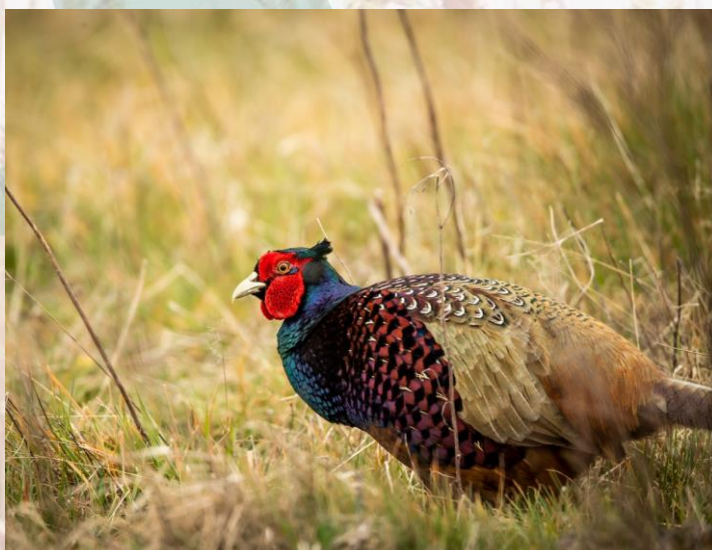
Many UK game shoots are having to remain adaptable in their planning as DEFRA and the APHA report that the risk of highly pathogenic (HPAI) avian influenza H5 in wild birds in Great Britain is still assessed as very high. A mandatory housing order for all poultry and captive birds has been in place since early November 2022 and caught-up pheasants are included in this.

There are now Avian Influenza Protection Zones (AIPZ) in areas directly affected by bird flu outbreaks which require stringent record keeping and licensing of bird, egg and poultry meat movements. The majority of AIPZs are currently in East Anglia where the UK poultry sector tends to be concentrated (the APHA produces a map showing exact locations of outbreaks [APHA Interactive Avian Influenza Disease Map \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)). No releasing of birds into the wild is allowed within the 10km protective zones.

Currently smaller scale gamekeeper run rearing activities should be relatively unaffected provided they pay attention to bio-security and follow DEFRA guidelines, which include a 21 day quarantine period for all caught-up birds, and ensuring all birds are kept indoors or in netted pens.

How the current outbreak will affect next season will depend very much on the control of AI and both UK and EU rules on egg imports and the release of birds into the wild. We will once again most likely see some restriction in the supply of eggs and chicks coming to the UK from traditional European sources.

Those UK shoots that have been able to respond to the situation by self-rearing may well be at a considerable advantage and whilst the 23/24 season looks set to go ahead at this point in time, rearing costs across the board, from poult to feed, are likely to remain at historical highs.



# REMINDER



## FORTHCOMING ADKIN SEMINAR AGRICULTURAL TRANSITION PERIOD & ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES

**MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2023 at 4.30pm**

at

**THE LOYD LINDSAY ROOMS,  
ARDINGTON,  
WANTAGE OX12 8PS**

*We do hope that you will be able to join us for an informative and interactive evening.*

*It is anticipated that the meeting will finish at around 6.00pm*

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