



Farming
Advice Service

Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter

Thank you for continuing to subscribe to our monthly newsletter. We hope we are providing you with a valuable service, but welcome any feedback or suggestions on topics you would like to see covered in future editions.

Contact us

FAS technical advice line: 03000 200 301

advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

www.farmingadvice.org.uk

*We would be grateful if you could spare a few moments to complete this **short survey** about the new layout of the FAS newsletter*

April 2021 – Issue 62

Key dates

How can FAS help you?

Forestry England launches woodland creation scheme for landowners

The agricultural transition plan: existing and future farm support schemes

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones – a reminder of the rules for spreading organic manures and manufactured nitrogen fertilisers

Water abstraction reminders

Sign up to FAS services

Key dates

Below are details of the key dates that you should be aware of.

30 April	This is the deadline for submitting a Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier or Capital Grant application for an agreement starting on 1 January 2022. (GOV.UK)	31 May	The deadline for making certain changes to a Countryside Stewardship revenue claim that was submitted before midnight on 17 May (without a penalty) is midnight on 31 May. (GOV.UK)
30 April	If you are in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), this is the date by which you must have recorded the number of 'specified' livestock kept on your farm during the previous calendar year and calculated the amount of nitrogen they produced. You must also record the number and type of livestock in a building or hardstanding during the previous storage period. (SMR* 1)	1 June	This is the closing date for applications to Forestry England's woodland creation scheme. More information can be found on their website .
1 May	You must not carry out hedge or tree coppicing, or hedge laying from this date. (GAEC** 7a and GAEC 7c)	11 June (midnight)	This is the deadline for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> submitting supporting documents and making certain amendments to BPS applications (without a penalty as long as the BPS application was submitted by 17 May); submitting late BPS applications - this will be subject to a late-claim penalty. (GOV.UK)
17 May (midnight)	This is the deadline for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> submitting Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) 2021 applications (without a penalty) (including young and new farmer applications); transferring land (online if possible) to the BPS 2021 claimant (land must be at their disposal by this date); transferring BPS entitlements (online if possible); submitting young and new farmer application for new entitlements. (GOV.UK) 	11 June (midnight)	This is the deadline for submitting late Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship revenue claims (with a penalty). (GOV.UK)
17 May	The deadline for submitting Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship revenue claims (without a penalty) is midnight on 17 May. This is also the deadline for transferring entitlements and to have the land at your disposal. (GOV.UK)	30 June	This is the deadline for requesting a Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier application pack online. Information on how to request application packs is on GOV.UK . Online applicants for Wildlife Offers do not need to request an application pack; applications can be made online directly through the Rural Payments service . View ' How to apply online for the Wildlife Offers ' at GOV.UK for further guidance.
28 May	If you are unable to access the online application, this is the deadline for calling the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) to request a paper application pack for Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier, including Wildlife Offers, starting on 1 January 2022. Online applicants for Wildlife Offers do not need to request an application pack; applications can be made online directly through the Rural Payments service . View ' How to apply online for the Wildlife Offers ' at GOV.UK for further guidance.	30 July	This is the deadline for the RPA to receive paper and online Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier applications, including Wildlife Offers.

* SMR = Statutory Management Requirement

** GAEC = Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition

Key dates

In case you missed them...

-
- 1 March** You must not cut or trim hedges or trees from this date, but you can carry out hedge and tree coppicing, and hedge laying from 1 March until 30 April. Fruit and nut trees in orchards, or trees acting as windbreaks in orchards, vineyards, hop yards or hop gardens are not included in the ban. ([GAEC 7a](#) and [GAEC 7c](#))
-
- 1 April** You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land, other than in upland areas, from this date. The burning season for land not in an upland area is from 1 November to 31 March. ([GAEC 6](#))
-
- 16 April** You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium in upland areas from this date. The burning season for upland areas is from 1 October to 15 April. ([GAEC 6](#))
-
- 28 April** If you hold a winter or all-year-round abstraction licence (the authorised period of abstraction does not fall wholly between 1 April to 31 October), the Environment Agency will have asked you to report your water abstraction return for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 by 28 April 2021. ([GAEC 2](#))
-

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, please visit the [Guide to cross compliance in England 2021](#), the [Rural Payments Agency key dates 2021](#) and [BPS 2021](#) pages of [GOV.UK](#)

How can FAS help you?

Free and confidential advice

FAS provides **free, confidential** advice on cross compliance requirements, some aspects of the Water Framework Directive (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (such as silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil (SSAFO), and waste exemptions) and regulations on the sustainable use of pesticides. The cross compliance rules apply to you if you are a Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship claimant.

FAS updates the farming sector on relevant Government farming policy that is applicable in England and the actions that can be taken to help farmers to be compliant with regulations.

England's domestic farming legislation requires an advisory system that covers cross compliance, water protection and aspects of pesticide use. In England, this is provided by the Farming Advice Service (FAS). The advice given to individual farmers must be **confidential** – that is, FAS **must not** disclose any personal or individual information, or data it obtains during its advisory activities.

Getting in contact with the advice line

Farmers requiring telephone advice from FAS can contact the **Rural Services Helpline** on **03000 200 301** Monday to Friday between **08:30** and **17:00**. Our helpline is operating as normal and we continue to support farmers.

The Rural Services Helpline provides a single number for all **FAS, Rural Payments Agency, Animal and Plant Health Agency, Natural England and forestry** enquiries. By providing a single point of contact, the Government aims to make it simpler for farmers to access technical guidance on a range of topics, including cross compliance, agricultural payment schemes and animal health inspections.

You can also email enquiries to advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

Forestry England launches woodland creation scheme for landowners

Forestry England has launched a new woodland creation scheme that offers rent to landowners (including public bodies, environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and farmers) in return for a long-term lease. In this article, we provide eligibility criteria and details of how to apply.

The Forestry England Woodland Partnership scheme provides an opportunity to diversify landholding and farming businesses. It requires limited financial investment, no forestry expertise and guarantees regular payments. As part of the Nature for Climate Fund to support the Government's tree planting commitment, the scheme aims to create significant new areas of high-quality, biodiverse woodlands across England.

Forestry England is seeking applications from a wide range of landowners who must be able to

offer a minimum of 50 hectares for a long-term lease of between 60 and 120 years. Once a lease partnership is agreed, Forestry England will design, establish woodland on, and manage every site as part of the nation's forests including any local consultations or engagement. This means landowners will see thriving woodland established on their land without the need for capital investment or their own forestry expertise and will receive an annual rental payment for the duration of the lease.

The closing date is 1 June 2021. To be suitable for a lease partnership, sites will need to meet several criteria, including being accessible to the public.

For more information, please visit [Forestry England's website](https://www.forestry.gov.uk).



The agricultural transition plan: existing and future farm support schemes

This article provides an overview of:

- *existing farm support schemes (Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and Countryside Stewardship);*
- *future farm support schemes (Environmental Land Management scheme and its three components: Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery);*
- *changes that are expected in the agricultural transition period (2021–2027).*

This article was produced in conjunction with Alice De Soer of Rural Response. Read the full version on the [Farming Advice Service \(FAS\) website](#)



Existing farm support schemes

BPS 2021 applications

Make sure you read the Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2021 on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) as things have changed this year. The BPS 2021 application submission deadline (without a penalty) is 17 May. More information on key dates for BPS 2021 applications is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Key dates for BPS 2021 applications

18 March	BPS 2021 application window opens – those with an online account can complete and submit application forms on the Rural Payments service website. For those who do not have an online account, BP5 forms will be posted to businesses. To set up an online account, which is the quickest and easiest way to apply, phone the Rural Payments Agency on 03000 200 301.
17 May (midnight)	This is the deadline for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> submitting BPS 2021 applications (without a penalty) (including young and new farmer applications); transferring land (online if possible) to the BPS 2021 claimant (land must be at their disposal by this date); transferring BPS entitlements (online if possible); submitting young and new farmer application for new entitlements.
11 June (midnight)	This is the deadline for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> submitting supporting documents and making certain amendments to BPS applications (without a penalty as long as the BPS application was submitted by 17 May); submitting late BPS applications, this will be subject to late claim penalties.
1 January to 31 December	Land included in BPS 2021 applications must meet the eligibility rules all year.

BPS land eligibility

In addition to land being ‘at your disposal’ on 17 May 2021, it must meet the following eligibility criteria throughout 2021:

- 1) Be an agricultural area – permanent grassland, arable (including temporary grassland and fallow) or permanent crops.
- 2) Be primarily used for an ‘agricultural activity’ that is either using the land for agricultural production or maintaining it in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation. There is a ‘28-day rule’ that allows certain non-agricultural activities to be carried out on an agricultural area without the land becoming ineligible for BPS payments.

Phasing out direct payments

The agricultural transition plan 2021-2024 confirms that direct payments are being phased out during the 7-year agricultural transition period (2021-2027). The reductions for 2021-2024 are shown in Table 2. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) have produced a [progressive reduction calculator](#) that will enable you to work out how your direct payments will be affected.

Delinking BPS payments

Defra intends to ‘delink’ direct payments from eligible land in 2024. This means that there will no longer be a requirement to remain a ‘farmer’ carrying out an ‘agricultural activity’, no need to declare eligible land annually and no further requirement for entitlements. Delinked payments will replace BPS payments once introduced.

Lump Sum Exit Scheme

Defra is proposing to offer a Lump Sum Exit Scheme in 2022. This would give the option for farmers leaving the industry or retiring from farming to choose to receive a one-off lump sum payment instead of BPS payments or the ‘delinked’ payment until 2027.



Table 2: Direct payment reductions 2021-2024

Payment band	2021 scheme year	2022 scheme year	2023 scheme year	2024 scheme year
Less than £30,000	5%	20%	35%	50%
£30,000 to £50,000	10%	25%	40%	55%
£50,000 to £150,000	20%	35%	50%	65%
More than £150,000	25%	40%	55%	70%

Countryside Stewardship applications in 2021

Applications for Countryside Stewardship (CS) grants could be submitted from 9 February 2021. You can read the guidance on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and use the [Countryside Stewardship grants](#) finder tool for details of what is required for CS management options, supplements and capital items. The key dates for CS applications are shown in Table 3. Applications for Higher Tier and Capital Grants closed on 30 April 2021.

You can request an online application pack via [Rural Payment services](#) and this will be emailed to your registered email address. For information on how to request application packs, please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Other important points to be aware of are:

- Catchment Sensitive Farming officer (CSFO) approval – some water/air quality options are only available in High Priority Areas for Water or Air Quality (these can be found at www.magic.gov.uk) and with CSFO approval. If you're including one of these options, please contact your CSFO as early as possible, but [at least 6 weeks before](#) submitting your application.
- RPA endorsement – certain management options for priority habitat/species can only be used in the Mid Tier if endorsed (see the [Mid Tier manual](#) for more details). To request this endorsement, please email the RPA (ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk) or phone (03000 200 301) by 31 May 2021.

Changes to Mid Tier for 2021

There have been a number of changes made to Mid Tier for this year's applications. These include the removal of 'double funding' (due to the removal of greening from BPS, previously some options overlapped with land declared as Ecological Focus Areas (EFA)) and environmental outcome site visits instead of inspections, for more information, please read the full article on the [FAS website](#).

For more information:

- visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for information on support via online events for Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier applications;
- visit [Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2021](#);
- look at [BPS 2021](#), which includes information to help with your application, and links to supporting guidance and forms;
- read a [blog from the RPA](#) that includes top tips and a video with Richard Wordsworth (Senior BPS adviser at the NFU) about how to prepare a BPS 2021 application;
- watch the recent [FAS webinar recording](#) that was delivered by Alice on the existing farm support schemes.

Table 3: Key dates for 2021 Countryside Stewardship applications

	Deadline to request an application pack	Deadline to submit applications	Agreement duration and start date	Scored/ranked?
Mid Tier	28 May – paper 30 June – online	30 July	5 years (capital items 2 years), starting 1 January 2022	Yes - competitive
Wildlife Offers	28 May – paper You do not need to request an online application pack and can apply online until 30 July.	30 July	5 years (capital items 2 years), starting 1 January 2022	No – guaranteed



Future schemes – Environmental Land Management

While the [agricultural transition plan 2021-2024](#) includes information on a wide range of schemes and grants, the key element of future agricultural policy in England focuses on [Environmental Land Management](#). There are three schemes under this – [Sustainable Farming Incentive](#), Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery. They are due to be fully available from late 2024.

Sustainable Farming Incentive

- **Aim:** to incentivise environmentally sustainable farming and forestry. Farmers can choose from a selection of standards, which are based on features, such as hedgerows or grassland, and decide where to apply them on their land.
- **When does the scheme start?** Expressions of interest for the initial phase of the pilot closed on 11 April 2021. The roll-out of the scheme is expected to start in 2022.
- **Who is it open to/will it be competitive?** Open to farmers and it is non-competitive.

Local Nature Recovery

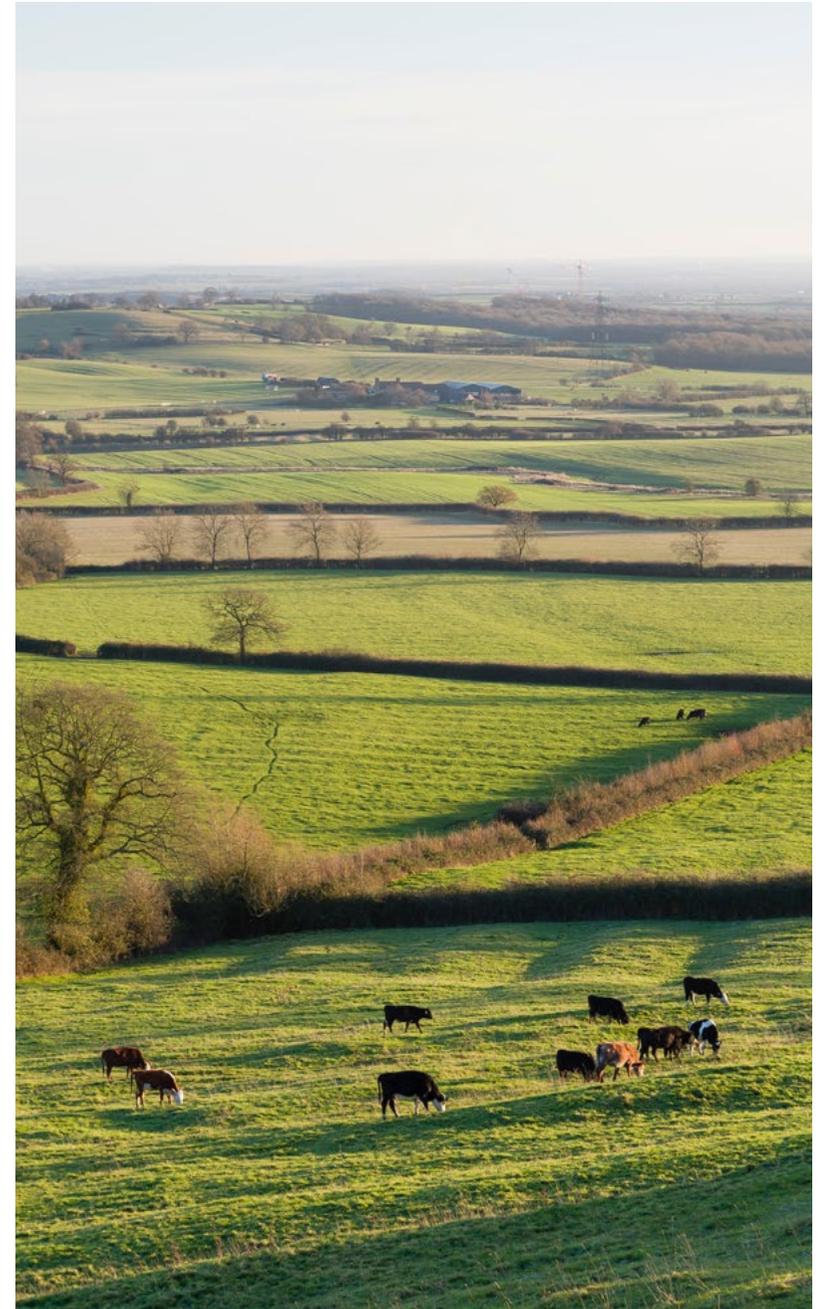
- **Aim:** to incentivise the management of land in a way that delivers locally targeted environmental outcomes. It encourages collaboration between farmers, helping them to work together to improve their local environment.
- **When does the scheme start?** The pilot will begin in 2022.
- **Who is it open to/will it be competitive?** Open to all land managers and may be competitive.

Landscape Recovery

- **Aim:** to support landscape and ecosystem recovery to deliver environmental outcomes through long-term projects. This includes wild landscape restoration, wide-scale tree planting, and peatland and salt marsh restoration.
- **When does the scheme start?** The scheme will begin piloting around 10 projects in 2022 and will launch in 2024.
- **Who is it open to/will it be competitive?** Open to all land managers and is project specific so competitive.

For more information:

- read Alice's full article on the [FAS website](#);
- sign up to [Defra's future farming blog](#), this is where a lot of information is published;
- look at the [Agricultural transition plan 2021 to 2024](#) and Defra's [Farming is Changing booklet](#);
- visit [Sustainable Farming Incentive: Defra's plans for piloting and launching the scheme](#);
- watch the recent [FAS webinar recording](#) that was delivered by Alice and Janet Hughes (Programme Director for the Future Farming) on the future farm support schemes.



Nitrate Vulnerable Zones – a reminder of the rules for spreading organic manures and manufactured fertilisers

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) are areas designated as being at risk of water pollution from agricultural nitrates. For example, from the storage and application of organic manure (including livestock manures, slurry and other nitrogen containing materials) and manufactured nitrogen fertiliser. In this article, FAS provides a reminder of the rules for spreading manure and fertiliser in an NVZ (including the pollution risks to assess before spreading), the nitrogen application limits and the record keeping requirements.



BEFORE SPREADING:

Plan the need (4-step plan)

You **must** always plan the application of organic manure or nitrogen fertiliser to your crops, including to grass, on a field-by-field basis. You should do this by thinking about how much to spread – only use as much nitrogen as your crop or soil needs and do not exceed N-max (see later). Guidance on how to work out crop need can be found in [RB209 Nutrient Management Guide](#).

Produce and follow a plan, which **must** show you have followed the four steps summarised below:

1. calculate the amount of nitrogen from the soil that is likely to become available for uptake by the crop during the growing season (the soil nitrogen supply);
2. calculate the optimum amount of nitrogen that should be applied to the crop (taking into account the soil nitrogen supply);
3. calculate the total nitrogen content of any organic manure applied and the amount of nitrogen that is likely to become available for crop uptake in the growing season in which you will apply it;
4. calculate the amount of nitrogen needed from manufactured fertiliser, taking account of the crop-available nitrogen from applications of organic manure.

Full details are available on [GOV.UK](#). You can also use the example on page 19 of the [NVZ record keeping guide](#) produced by Briony Burge (Creedy Associates) in conjunction with Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) and Wessex Water

BEFORE SPREADING:

Assess the risks

You **must not** allow any nitrogen to enter surface waters (such as rivers and ponds). Before you spread any organic manure, manufactured nitrogen fertiliser or other nitrogen containing material, you must carry out an assessment of each field. You must take into account the risk of runoff posed by the following:

- sloping land, particularly if the slope is angled at greater than 12 degrees (you can download an app to your phone to help measure this);
- if there is a lack of ground cover (for example, by crops or grass);
- if the field is near surface water (such as rivers, ponds, ditches and coastal waters);
- weather conditions and forecast;
- soil type and condition;
- if a land drain is present.

You **must not** spread organic manure, manufactured fertiliser or any other nitrogen containing material if you identify that there is significant risk of runoff getting into surface water.

In addition to the above, please remember the specific non-spreading rules for organic manure and manufactured nitrogen fertiliser to prevent pollution:

- do not spread **organic manure** or **manufactured nitrogen fertiliser** if the soil is waterlogged, flooded or covered in snow, or has been frozen for more than 12 hours in the past 24 hours;
- do not spread **manufactured nitrogen fertiliser** within 2 metres of surface water;
- do not spread **organic manure** within 50 metres of a spring, well or borehole; or within 10 metres of surface water unless you are using [precision equipment](#) or you are managing [land for specific environmental benefits](#).

SPREADING:

Remember the limits

There are limits to the amount of nitrogen from organic manure and manufactured fertilisers applied in an NVZ. These are detailed below.

Field limit:

- you **must not** apply more than 250kg of total nitrogen per hectare from all organic manures spread in any rolling 12-month period;
- the field limit does not include manure deposited from grazing animals.

Farm limit:

- you **must not** apply more than 170kg of total nitrogen per hectare from livestock manure averaged across your holding in each calendar year (1 January to 31 December)
- this limit is the loading limit and includes manure deposited by grazing livestock and by spreading.

N-max limit:

- this is the limit on the average amount of nitrogen (from manufactured fertiliser and crop available nitrogen from organic manure) that can be applied to different crop types grown on your farm – each crop type has a specific N-max limit and you can read more about this on [GOV.UK](#).

You can download a blank '[farmer completion](#)' and '[standard values](#)' tables spreadsheet from GOV.UK to help you do these calculations. The [CSF guide](#) also has useful tables to help with your calculations.

Record keeping requirements if you spread organic manure and manufactured fertiliser

There are a number of record-keeping requirements for land located in an NVZ. Here we summarise the requirements for spreading organic manure and manufactured fertiliser, but please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for more information.

Fertilisation plan (planning your nitrogen use). Before spreading, you should produce a fertilisation plan for each crop in each field to help you manage your nitrogen use. This is the same as the 4-step nitrogen plan mentioned in the previous section.

Field records. For each crop grown on each field, you must keep a record of your actual applications of organic manures and manufactured nitrogen fertilisers. You must update your field records within 1 week of sowing, spreading manure or fertiliser, or harvesting a crop. There are different record-keeping requirements for manure and fertiliser:

- when you spread **manufactured fertiliser** – record the date of spreading and the amount of nitrogen you spread;
- when you spread **manure** – record the date, area, quantity and type of manure; the method of spreading; the total nitrogen content of the manure; and the amount of nitrogen that was available to the crop.

Farm limit, field limit and N-max. You must complete a specific calculation to show you are complying with the livestock manure nitrogen **farm limit**. Your field records should demonstrate your compliance with the organic manure field limit and N max limits. You can use the standard values in the '[farmer completion](#)' and '[standard values](#)' tables spreadsheet or the tables in the [CSF guide](#) to help with your calculations. The N-max limits for each crop can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Farm risk map. A risk map is required if you spread organic manure on your land. Maps can be hand drawn and do not need to be to scale. A risk maps must show:

- the location and area of each field in hectares;
- areas with shallow or sandy soils;
- land with a slope greater than 12 degrees;
- land drains (except if they are sealed and impermeable);
- sites where you plan to use temporary field heaps to store manure;
- all surface waters (for example, streams or ponds) and land within 10 metres of them;
- all springs, wells and boreholes on your land or within 50 metres of the boundary of your land;
- all land within 50 metres of a spring, well or borehole;
- low run-off risk land (if you intend to spread to this land to reduce the amount of storage you need to provide).

The [CSF NVZ guide](#) has some examples of risk maps on pages 10 and 24.

If you require any support to understand or comply with the NVZ requirements, please contact the FAS helpline on 03000 200 301 or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk.



Water abstraction reminders



This article details information on water abstraction returns, how abstraction bills are calculated and information on why they are delayed this year. There are also links to the Environment Agency's updated irrigation prospects and managing water abstraction documents.

Delay to water abstraction annual billing for 2021 to 2022

The Environment Agency is replacing its current IT systems with new and more resilient platforms. This includes the system used to calculate water abstraction charges. Bills for the period beginning 1 April 2021 will be calculated using the new system. This will result in a slight delay in annual bills being issued. Bills for the period beginning 1 April 2021 will be issued towards the end of June 2021. If you pay by direct debit, you will receive an invoice that sets out the full amount due and the individual amounts that will be collected on each instalment date.

How water abstraction bills are calculated

The Environment Agency's scheme of abstraction charges sets out how charges are calculated. The 2020/2021 scheme is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). There will not be any changes to the 2021 to 2022 scheme when it is published.

Irrigation prospects and dry weather management

The Environment Agency has updated its irrigation prospects across England – which are generally still good across most of the country (although some areas are moderate to good or moderate), following a dry spring – see the [FAS Technical Articles page](#). The latest information on river flows and groundwater levels is on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Managing water abstraction

The Environment Agency has updated its [Managing water abstraction document](#). This is now available in an electronic format and explains the current plans and strategies related to water resources management.

For additional information on abstraction returns, please read the [March FAS newsletter](#).

Sign up to FAS services



Get the latest updates by following FAS on Twitter

Follow us on [@DefraFAS](https://twitter.com/DefraFAS) for up-to-the-minute updates on publications, events and industry information.



Subscribe to the free FAS Newsletter

If you don't already receive the FREE monthly FAS newsletter, please email bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk with '**Register for newsletter**' in the subject line. Alternatively, please visit farmingadvice.org.uk and enter your email address into the newsletter sign up box.

In line with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018, FAS has updated its privacy policy to explain how your data is kept safe.

To view the policy, please visit www.farmingadvice.org.uk/events/privacy/