



**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, and 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](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk)

[farmingadvice.org.uk](http://farmingadvice.org.uk)

## August 2021 – Issue 66

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# Key dates

Below are details of recent and forthcoming key dates that you should be aware of.

<b>1 August</b>	For any land located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to tillage land on shallow or sandy soils except where crops will be sown on or before 15 September. ( <a href="#">SMR* 1</a> )
<b>1 September</b>	You can cut or trim hedges and trees from this date. ( <a href="#">GAEC** 7a</a> and <a href="#">GAEC 7c</a> )
<b>1 September</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to grassland on shallow or sandy soils. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )
<b>1 September</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to tillage land. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )
<b>15 September</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )
<b>16 September</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to tillage land on shallow or sandy soils that have been sown with crops on or before 15 September. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )
<b>1 October</b>	You can burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land in upland areas from this date. ( <a href="#">GAEC 6</a> )
<b>1 October</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to tillage land on soils that are not shallow or sandy. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )
<b>15 October</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to grassland on soils that are not shallow or sandy. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )

FAS has produced a handy, printable, one-page poster of all the cross compliance dates for 2021, which you can access and download [here](#).

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

\* SMR = Statutory Management Requirement

\*\* GAEC = Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition

# How can FAS help you?

## Free and confidential advice

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).

FAS provides **free, confidential** advice on cross compliance requirements, some aspects of the Water Environment (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.

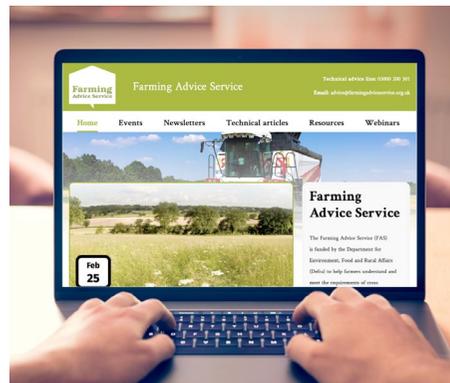
The advice given to individual farmers must be **confidential** – that is, FAS **must not** disclose any personal or individual information, or data it obtains during its advisory activities.

## 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](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk)



# Water abstraction: have your say on the proposed water resources charge from April 2022

*On 18 August, the Environment Agency launched a consultation on the charge proposals that have been developed and are due to take effect from April 2022. This article includes a link to the consultation documents and the online survey where you can submit your views.*

The Environment Agency wants to reform its water resources charging scheme so it's fairer, works better for business and the environment and is financially sustainable. They would like your views to understand the impacts and benefits of the proposals outlined in the consultation.

The consultation closes at 11:45am on 10 November 2021. Please click [here](#) for more information about the consultation and the link to complete the survey.





## Future Farming Resilience Fund is open

*The Future Farm Resilience Fund is designed to provide tailored business support to farmers and land managers during the early years of the agricultural transition period. In this article, FAS provides an overview of the scheme and a link to the contact details for the organisations that will be delivering the support.*

Following a competition launched in March, £10.7 million of funding has been awarded to 19 organisations to support farmers and land managers who are in receipt of Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments. The free support will be available from August this year through to March 2022 and any farmer or land manager currently in receipt of BPS is eligible to apply.

The Government is urging farmers to sign up to the scheme, which aims to deliver direct benefits to farmers and land managers by enabling them to:

- understand the changes that are happening as a result of the agricultural transition period;
- identify how, what and when you may need to adapt your business model;
- access tailored support to address these changes.

The scheme will focus on assisting farmers and land managers to make the right decisions for themselves, their families and their business through effective discussion and planning. The scheme will signpost the wider support available, including wellbeing. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has [published a video](#) featuring three farmers, who received advice in the pilot scheme which took place last year, sharing their experience.

The contact information for the organisations and the regions and sectors they are covering can be found [here](#).

To keep up to date with the details of the scheme, please subscribe to [Defra's Future Farming blog](#) and sign up to [Defra's e-alerts](#).

## Updates from the Future Farming blog

*The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) regularly adds updates to the [Future Farming blog](#) on GOV.UK. In this article, FAS provides links to some of the recent posts.*

- Janet Hughes is the Programme Director for the Future Farming and Countryside Programme (FFCP) and has provided a summary of Defra's progress so far and what's coming next. The blog includes information on the changes made to existing schemes, how the new schemes have been tested, and plans for the future. For a summary of these updates, please read her blog post [here](#).
- Landscape Recovery Scheme is one of the three new environmental land management schemes, alongside the Sustainable Farming Incentive and Local Nature Recovery. Through the scheme, Defra plans to put in place bespoke agreements to deliver long-term, large-scale, landscape and ecosystem recovery projects. Defra has arranged three [information sessions](#) on the scheme, and the last one is on Tuesday 7 September 19:00 - 20:30. To register to attend, please click [here](#).
- In October 2021, Defra will be launching the first competition of the new Industry-led Research and Development Partnerships fund. This will be the first of three different funds to launch in Defra's new Farming Innovation Programme. The fund will aim to encourage groups of farmers, growers, businesses and researchers to get involved in collaborative research and development. For more information, including what funding is available and who can apply, please click [here](#).
- The Future Farming Advice team at Defra are responsible for making sure that people have the advice they need to support them through the agricultural transition and beyond. For an overview of the work they are doing, including some of the initial findings, please click [here](#). Information on how you can get involved in co-design research is on [page 6](#).

# Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) 2021-2024 designations and right to appeal

*Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) are areas designated as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution and account for approximately 55% of agricultural land in England. The Secretary of State is required to review NVZ designations in England at least every four years and, where necessary, revise or add to the designated NVZs. The most recent review took place in December 2020 and it was decided that the designations from 2017-2020 should remain unchanged for the 2021-2024 designation period.*

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) undertakes a review of the designated NVZ areas every four years to account for changes in water quality. The designation is based on scientific evidence to identify the areas where nitrate pollution controls are needed. On the basis of the review, the Secretary of State decided that there had been little change in patterns of nitrate pollution and so no new areas should be added to NVZs and no NVZs should be de-designated. The designation for NVZs 2021-2024 came into effect on 31 December 2020.

During the autumn Defra will be sending written notice to anyone that appears to own or occupy land falling completely or partly within an NVZ. The notice will inform farmers of their right to appeal the designation and the grounds on which an appeal can be made.

You can check if you are in a designated area by entering your postcode into the Environment Agency's [mapping tool](#). Further information regarding NVZ designation is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)



# Research request from Defra's Future Farming and Countryside Advice team

*The advice team in the Future Farming and Countryside Programme (FFCP) at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is developing its future approach to advice. It is aiming to provide farmers, foresters, growers and other land managers with the advice they need to support them through the agricultural transition period and beyond. This article includes more information on the work the team is doing and how you can get involved in the co-design of the future advice service.*

Advice plays an important role in achieving the aims of the FFCP. By helping farmers and land managers understand what payment schemes, grants, business support and legal requirements are relevant to them, their business is supported to be more productive, profitable and resilient and therefore better able to deliver benefits to the environment and health and welfare of livestock.

The aim of this work is to:

- build a comprehensive picture of what works well now;
- identify where there are problems, what needs to improve and where advice could provide a solution;
- understand what advice should be provided by Defra organisations, and what should be provided by the market.

Defra would like to involve a wide range of farmers, growers, foresters and their advisers as part of a strategic advice service project, so they can be involved in helping to co-design the future advice service.

## Ways to get involved

- **One-to-one interviews:** These will be going on until the end of September and will take about one hour. They will be in-depth, anonymous discussions about people's experience of advice.

- **Co-design workshops:** There will be small co-design workshops on 9 and 14 September, open to farmers, growers and foresters. These will involve discussions on the findings of the interviews and get suggestions for the future advice service that Defra will provide.

## The work so far:

- **Co-design workshops:** Initial workshops took place during August. Discussions were around the requirements of advice and what can be done to meet these. The two-hour sessions were split into two – the first session involved breakout groups to discuss people's requirements and possible options to meet these. In the second session the groups came together to discuss results.

If you would like to get involved in the interviews or workshops, or to find out more information about the work and what is involved, please contact [DEFRA-FFCP-Advice@defra.gov.uk](mailto:DEFRA-FFCP-Advice@defra.gov.uk).

Once Defra understands the cause of the problems, solutions can be co-designed that will support the sector, ensuring the right advice is available at the right time. Please read the [Defra Future Farming blog](#) for information on FFCP and to sign up for optional email alerts.



## 2022 transition and funding opportunities for environmental management

*In 2021, the 'greening' requirements previously attached to 30% of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payment were removed. However, greening features can be retained and upgraded to bring benefits to your business and the environment. In this article, FAS provides information on this, and options for funding in schemes such as Countryside Stewardship.*

Many farmers will have retained land previously managed or set aside to meet greening requirements, whether for ease of management or for their environmental benefits, and will be considering how to make best use of this for the future.

The [November 2020 FAS newsletter](#) included examples of the potential benefits of retaining and upgrading greening options in 2021. For 2022, the opportunity to enter these areas into schemes to receive funding to retain or expand this environmental management, as well as retaining the environmental and business benefits they offer, may be high on many farmers' agenda.

## Examples of the potential benefits of retaining and upgrading previous greening options for funded schemes.

Previous greening option	Environmental/business benefit	Countryside Stewardship options for funding
Buffer strips and field margins – at least 1 metre wide (but those greater than 3 metres offer maximum benefits) adjacent to a field boundary, hedge or watercourse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>biodiverse buffer strips and field margins can provide a habitat for insects, so contributing to pest management and pollination;</li> <li>protection against fertiliser and plant protection product overspray; and run-off to drains, ditches and watercourses.</li> </ul> <p>Remember, under <a href="#">GAEC 1: Establishment of buffer strips along watercourses</a>, you are required to keep minimum width buffer strips between areas on which you apply inputs and the edge of water courses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">WT2: Buffering in-field ponds and ditches on arable land</a></li> <li><a href="#">WT1: Buffering in-field ponds and ditches in improved grassland</a></li> <li><a href="#">SW1: 4m to 6m buffer strip on cultivated land</a></li> <li><a href="#">SW4: 12m to 24m watercourse buffer strip on cultivated land</a></li> <li><a href="#">SW2: 4m to 6m buffer strip on intensive grassland</a></li> </ul>
Hedges or trees in a line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>protect against soil erosion;</li> <li>create shelter belts for crops and livestock;</li> <li>provide habitat for beneficial insects and other farmland wildlife.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">BN11: Planting new hedges</a></li> <li><a href="#">BN5: Hedgerow laying</a></li> <li><a href="#">TE1: Planting standard hedgerow tree</a></li> </ul>
Nitrogen-fixing crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reduce nitrogen input needs for the follow-on crop;</li> <li>reduce nitrate leaching to groundwater.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">SW6: Winter cover crops</a></li> </ul>
Fallow land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>help to address weed burden issues;</li> <li>recharge soil nutrient levels;</li> <li>can be incorporated into a mixed rotation as pasture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">AB15: Two year sown legume fallow</a></li> </ul>
Catch crops or cover crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reduce the risk of soil erosion;</li> <li>lock nitrogen into soil;</li> <li>improve soil structure;</li> <li>suppress weeds;</li> <li>promote biological activity in soil (such as earthworms);</li> <li>offer grazing opportunities in a mixed farming system;</li> <li>help protect water quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">AB13: Brassica fodder crop</a></li> <li><a href="#">SW6: Winter cover crops</a></li> <li><a href="#">GS4: Legume and herb-rich swards</a></li> </ul>

## The Sustainable Farming Incentive

For those farms with land already in Countryside Stewardship, or those looking for an alternative option, the core elements of the [Sustainable Farming Incentive](#) will be launched in 2022.

Farmers will be able to take up a Sustainable Farming Incentive agreement on land parcels covered by an existing agreement, provided the Sustainable Farming Incentive standard they choose is compatible with that existing agreement and does not result in them being paid twice for similar activities.

Within the Sustainable Farming Incentive, environmental management will be grouped into simple packages, set out as ‘standards’, with different levels of ambition; introductory, intermediate, and advanced.

For 2022 these will include:

- [improved grassland soils standard 2022](#);
- [arable and horticultural soils standard 2022](#);
- [moorland and rough grazing standard](#);
- [annual health and welfare review](#).

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) plans to open applications for the Sustainable Farming Incentive in spring 2022 and make the first payments before the end of 2022. Final versions of this initial set of standards are expected to be published by November 2021.

For more information, including indicative payment rates, visit [GOV.UK](#).

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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/](http://www.farmingadvice.org.uk/events/privacy/)