



Guidance note on whether to extend existing HLS scheme

If you have been offered an extension, here are a few pointers to consider before putting pen to paper.

Pros for extending existing HLS

- No missing out of up to a year's payment
- Arable Field Corner Management still an option, whereas no longer an option under Countryside Stewardship (CS) Mid or Higher-tier
- HLS options generally don't require the same level of record keeping that is required under CS
- If have grassland options they are generally better payers than new CS
- Can go straight to Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) if it looks better than CS

Cons against extending and in favour of moving to Mid or Higher Tier CS

- If everyone extends there could be a log-jam in 2024, which might mean entry into a new scheme is very competitive
- HLS extension only guaranteed on rolling annual basis after 2020
- CS arable options are better payers
- CS opens up capital payments
- CS 'guaranteed' payment for 5 years
- Can no longer use ELS/HLS land as EFA for greening
- If extend and have inspection, reclaims and penalties are back-dated to last inspection or (if no previous inspection) the start of the agreement.
- Lose permissive access options HN1-HN7 and woodland payments HC7-8, even if you extend
- If the ELS/HLS is not working well on the land, e.g. weed burden from non-rotational options causing problems/no allowance for access tracks around margins/existing scheme not delivering for the shoot, then changing to CS gives the opportunity to plan option layout better and to take up new options to help resolve other issues e.g. blackgrass
- CS gives you a chance to create habitat that could be key to ELMS payments – ponds/hedges/etc

How can we help?

We can help you prepare a direct financial comparison of new CS scheme compared to your existing scheme.

We can point out additional management requirements under CS

If you decided to extend we can audit your scheme to check you are compliant with the agreement you have signed up to.

For more information and details of the processes involved please call us on 01480 890686