

Thank you – many thanks to those of you who have ordered your seed in plenty of time and been patient with deliveries! Last week's rain is ideal for seedbed preparation. If you know it's likely to be a weedy plot then use this moisture to work the seedbed down to a reasonably fine and firm surface. Leave it to green up for a couple of weeks then spray off with glyphosate just prior to drilling. Remember to get the majority of the crop's fertilizer requirement in the seedbed before drilling. Game crops have a short growing season and need easily available nutrients to help them grow.

Stewardship reminders

ELS – Extended over-winter stubbles (**EF22**) – Undesirable weed species such as blackgrass, sterile brome and wild oats can be controlled by spraying the affected areas from 15th May.

MID-TIER CS

Nectar Flower Mix (**AB1**) – rotationally cut 50% of each plot before 31st May, taking care to avoid ground nesting birds;

Enhanced overwinter stubble (**AB6**) – you can spray problem grass weeds from May 15th BUT please remember this option should not be located on fields where you know you have bad blackgrass issues.



COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP CLAIMS – The window for CS claims has been extended, along with the BPS, to the 15th June, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The forms are relatively straightforward and can be accessed through your RPA homepage > Countryside Stewardship > Countryside Stewardship Claims > then click to generate a new revenue claim. If you are starting a new CS scheme you will need to claim for everything that is being established this year, even if it won't be in place until after harvest. Follow this link for further guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/countryside-stewardship-how-to-submit-claims-online>

MID -TIER APPLICATIONS 2020 – the window for requesting a Mid-Tier application pack closes on 31st May. If you would like to apply for a Mid-Tier scheme with a start date of 1st Jan 2021 you must request a pack before this date. The completed application must then be submitted by 31st July 2020. Please contact Matt in the office if you need any assistance.

COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP WILDLIFE OFFERS

The Wildlife Offers are packages of a limited range of selected Stewardship options. There are four Offers: Arable, Lowland Grazing, Mixed Farming and Upland. The prescriptions and payment rates are the same as the rest of Countryside Stewardship, but you'll need to choose enough of them to meet a minimum level. For example, the Arable Offer asks you to have 1% of your agreement land as a nectar and pollen-providing option, and 2% as Winter bird food.

Wildlife Offers are quicker and simpler to apply for and are not competitively scored. However, unlike Mid-Tier, **no capital items are available through this route** and it is not suitable for sites with SSSIs. Online applications must be submitted by 31st July and agreements last for five years. Get in touch soon to find out more.

ELMS consultation paused

Due to COVID-19, consultation on the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) policy document is on hold with no date set yet for resumption

GWCT mixes – a request from the GWCT. If you have some decent looking GWCT mixes then please can you take a pic and send them to tim@oakbankgc.co.uk (or to Tim Furbank via WhatsApp). If you are planting this year then please consider keeping a photo diary of how they establish and develop over the next few years. As Oakbank makes a sizeable donation to the GWCT on the back of sales of these mixes, they want to promote them as widely as possible and photos are a great way of doing so!

Cover crops – it has been great to speak to so many people about cover crops for planting now or later in the summer. Please get in touch if you are thinking about putting a cover crop into fallow land or into stubbles after harvest. We have some great options available to start to regenerate your soils.



NETTLES FOR BUTTERFLIES

Stinging nettles are important food plants for dozens of insect species, including the caterpillars of butterflies such as Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Red Admiral. However, not all nettles are equal! They need large patches in sheltered spots with plenty of sun. If you have a nettle-filled glade or south-facing bank, consider creating some variety by cutting a few patches over late spring / early summer to provide the fresh growth caterpillars need. However, do be careful not to damage caterpillars already there, nesting birds or other wildlife sheltering in it



Woodland

Covid-19 Safe working protocols in the Forestry Industry

Confor and the Forestry Contracting Association have drawn up a set of consistent measures in line with government recommendations on social distancing, showing that the sector is ready to resume full working when conditions allow. Find the guidance [HERE](#) on our website.

Tree Risk Management

All landowners have a statutory duty of care to ensure (as far as is reasonably practical) that every asset, including the trees located on their land, is unlikely to cause harm. We have produced a guidance note to inform and assist your decision-making process, which is available [HERE](#) on our website. Do not hesitate to contact us with your tree risk management enquiries and needs.

Deer Initiative replaced by new Forestry England Deer Advisors

Although the Deer Initiative is no more, [Forestry England](#) has taken on the three Regional Deer Officers and the Deer Advisor. They commenced work earlier this month – virtually!

Woodland Carbon Guarantee

Farmers and land managers in England can apply for the second auction under this scheme to create new woodlands that help tackle the effects of climate change. [Here's how](#).

Refresh your memory on how the process works with this [blog post from the FC](#), published when the scheme was first launched last November.

The importance of soil carbon in forest management

An article in the latest issue of [Reforestation Scotland](#) discusses soil carbon sequestration in newly planted forests.

Xylella

In the last couple of weeks the media have highlighted how this bacterial disease could cost the [olive industry in Europe billions](#). But it is worth remembering that this pathogen can also infect [native trees](#) and [popular garden plants](#). From 21 April, [new restrictions on imports](#) of high-risk material came into force to protect against Xylella, Emerald Ash Borer and Plane canker stain.

OPM

It's the time of the year when [oak processionary moth](#) (OPM) caterpillars may be on the march. Please be vigilant! The key areas are London and surrounding counties and should you spot them, stay well clear but report them to the FC via [Tree Alert](#).

