

Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee

EPC(2) 13-06(p2)

Date: 11 October 2006

Venue: Committee room 2, Senedd

Title: Targeting and Monitoring of Tir Gofal

The Committee has requested a paper on the targeting and monitoring of Tir Gofal.

Targeting

At the Royal Welsh Show the Minister announced that a Tir Gofal application window would open in November. The Minister said that applications from farmers whose land is designated because of its special value for nature conservation and biodiversity, including designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, would be particularly welcome since the Welsh Assembly Government is keen to maximise the contribution of Tir Gofal to meeting the Assembly Government's wider objectives as set out in the Wales Environment Strategy action plan relating to halting the loss of biodiversity.

The application window will open on 20th November 2006 and all applications received on or before the 20th will be regarded as being received on that day and will be selected randomly. Application packs will include an addressed envelope which must be returned to the Welsh Assembly Government's office at Ffynnon Las. Applications will not be accepted at other offices nor will those delivered by hand.

In order to give effect to the emphasis on biodiversity gain, applications from farmers whose land includes a SSSI or a SAC will be awarded 10 additional points under the scoring scheme and for each application accepted from a farmer whose land does not include a designated site two will be accepted from those whose land does.

It is the intention to accept around 700-750 applications from this round and to offer around 300 agreements a year. There is a need to manage the number of applications accepted, since processing too large a number would not give the flexibility needed to develop the scheme in the light of the recommendations from the review to be undertaken in 2007 of land management schemes being set up as part of the new RDP.

Monitoring

There are two aspects of monitoring. Compliance monitoring is currently undertaken by CCW but will pass to the Rural Inspectorate for Wales after 16th October. Environmental monitoring is

undertaken by ADAS Wales Ltd on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. The aims of the monitoring programme are to assess the extent to which the objectives of Tir Gofal are being achieved. The major part of the monitoring programme is botanical assessment to assess the condition of vegetation before and through the duration of farms' participation in the scheme. The maintenance prescriptions considered within the first year of resurvey are semi-improved grassland, acid grasslands and marshy grasslands.