

**West Devon Business Information Point
Bridge House
Rooms 2 & 3
25 Fore Street
Okehampton
EX20 1DL**

**www.bipwestdevon.biz
team@bipwestdevon.biz**

AGRI-BIP NEWSLETTER

Environmental Stewardship Update

Although mapping problems continue, over 6,000 farmers have now have agreements agreed for Entry Level and Organic Entry Level Stewardship. The first ELS payments will be made in early February for early entrants. Many people are now finally receiving their maps and application forms and are able to make an application.

However, there are still many farmers who are sceptical of the benefits of Entry Level and feel that these outweigh the constraints imposed upon them. Our experience from ELS Awareness Workshops and form filling clinics that assist people with their applications, is that their initial concerns soon dissipate once they understand the wide choices that are available under the Schemes. Many farmers have been put off Environmental Stewardship because they have heard it is all about hedges; not so! Once you understand the ins and outs and the flexibility within the schemes the vast majority of farmers find options that suit their farming system and can be integrated without any ill effect or constraints on their farming activities.

Feedback from the workshops has been very positive and everyone has been able to go away and make a good application. By undertaking your own application you will have considered the options carefully and developed your own 5-year plan. Some people feel the need to get outside assistance, but in the vast majority of cases this is something you can definitely do yourself, albeit with a little help from your friends at Agri-BIP should you require it.

The Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) is also attracting a high level of interest but there are a number of difficulties currently in making applications to the HLS Scheme. The first point to recognise is that HLS unlike ELS and OELS, is highly competitive. Its predecessor Countryside Stewardship, covered only 5% of the land area in England, so even if HLS doubles that area we are still looking at 10%, or 1 in 10 farms being involved in HLS. However, if you have the right farm in the right area with the right features, HLS can be a very good scheme to be involved in. The first stage of HLS is to have your farm environmental plan produced, which many organisations can assist with including the Hill Farm Project on Dartmoor, FWAG, the wildlife trusts and private consultants.

Defra continue to have computer problems with HLS agreements and have announced that they are highly unlikely to be able to deal with HLS applications any earlier than Easter of next year, which will mean that payments will not commence until the summer of 2006. There may be an argument to make an Entry Level application in the first instance whilst developing your Farm Environmental Plan to go with the HLS agreement in due course.

Agri-BIP continue to run a number of workshops for Environmental Stewardship and ELS and OELS applications. If you have yet to consider the schemes, are still confused about the options and the application process, give us a ring and if we have not got an event scheduled for your area we will schedule one for you.

Stewart Horne - Manager

Events Page

Environmental Stewardship Scheme

If you are undecided about making an application, want to know more about the schemes and how they would fit your farm and business, we are running a number of workshops across the region during the evenings.

Entry Level Scheme Awareness Workshops

These meetings are scheduled for 7.30pm unless stated otherwise:-

Wednesday 2nd November – The George Hotel, South Molton

Thursday 17th November – Beanbridge Hotel, Wellington

We are also running a series of small workshops to assist people putting together applications. We will help with the completion of the forms, maps and points calculation. These workshops start at 11.00am.

Wednesday 7th December – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Other workshops which are taking place during November and December: -

Soil Management Planning Workshops – practical sessions – 11.30am – 3.30pm

Tuesday 1st November – Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton

Wednesday 2nd November – Beanbridge Hotel, Wellington

Monday 7th November – Dartmoor Lodge Ashburton

Wednesday 23rd November – East Devon (venue to be confirmed)

Monday 5th December – East Devon (venue to be confirmed)

Friday 9th December – Ordolph Arms, Tavistock

Renewable Energies for On-Farm Profit – 7.30pm start

Thursday 17th November – Plume of Feathers, Okehampton

Farm Record Keeping and Cash Flow Planning Workshop – 10.30am – 3.30pm

Friday 4th November – Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield

Beef Profitability Workshop – 11.00am – 3.30pm

Tuesday 8th November – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Red Meat Marketing – 11.30am – 3.30pm

Wednesday 9th November – The George Hotel, South Molton

Thursday 17th November – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Tuesday 6th December – East Devon (venue to be confirmed)

Animal Record Keeping – 11.00am – 3.30pm

Wednesday 16th November – Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton

Wednesday 30th November – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Cut your overhead costs – slash your electricity bills

Tuesday 22nd November – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Book-keeping – Farm Accounts

Monday 28th November – West Devon BIP

The majority of workshops require a small charge of £10 including VAT to attend.

For more information or to book a place on one of these workshops, please call the office on

Freephone 0800 592872.

If you see an event subject that you would like in your area why not get a few of your neighbours together and we will come to you!

Internet marketing

Because the Internet and High-speed communications play an important part in marketing we have developed two workshops linking IT and marketing.

The first workshop is for tourism enterprises and the second for other farm products. Both will cover the following areas: -

- Understand technical terms of web site design and publishing
- Search Engines
- Investigate Internet Service Providers
- Website costs
- Discover Internet marketing techniques and tips
- Learn how to market your products and services using the Internet

The use of the Internet for tourism marketing has been important for farm tourism businesses for a long time. After a year like 2005 when visitor numbers were down and some businesses had been struggling to achieve high occupancy levels, now is the time to look at your marketing and more specifically the use of the Internet. Customer surveys have highlighted the importance of the Internet in influencing visitor bookings.

The workshop will examine the factors that are important if you are to make a success of the Internet as a marketing tool:-

- Should you have a website or have a presence on a third party's site?
- What are the do's and don'ts that get you noticed?
- What information should you put on the website?
- How easy should it be to contact the proprietor in order to make a booking?
- What about special offers?

1 x Day Workshops - Increase Your Visitor Numbers Using the Internet -

Thurs Nov 10th – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Mon 14th Nov - Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton

Tues 29th Nov - The George Hotel, South Molton

The second workshop is aimed at people marketing farm produce direct to the consumer, for example meat, vegetable box schemes, and will cover the points in the first workshop and will enable you to go away with some ideas of how to develop a good website.

1 x Day Workshops - Internet Marketing for On-Farm products and services

Tues 22nd Nov - The George Hotel, South Molton

Friday 25th Nov - Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton

Also in Okehampton at a date to be confirmed.

Computer Training - Mastering Microsoft Office through NEW CLAiT

Regular workshops held in Okehampton, South Molton and Heathfield, Newton Abbot. –
10.00 a.m. - 15.30 p.m

Work in small friendly groups with support from our own tutor.

Learn how to manage your information, create professional documents, calculate financial transactions and use the Internet and Email.

Wednesday 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd November at West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Thursday 3rd, 17th, 24th November at Heathfield, Newton Abbot

Thursday 1st December at the George Hotel, South Molton

Thursday 8th December at the George Hotel, South Molton

For more information or to book a place on one of these workshops, please call the office on
Freephone 0800 592872.

Energy Costs Continue to Climb

With oil continuing to be priced above \$60 per barrel energy costs continue to climb. With the energy industry deregulated it is a competitive market, with some suppliers offering good deals even when prices are rising.

If you haven't investigated alternative energy suppliers for electricity and or gas you are probably missing out on potential savings of as much **as 25%**.

Changing suppliers is not as difficult as you may think, although there have been some cases of miss selling on the doorstep.

If you would like to learn how much of a saving you can make on electricity, gas and telephone bills Agri-BIP are running a clinic on the **22nd November, at our offices in Okehampton**, just bring along an old bill and an estimate of your annual spend and we will check the alternatives and hopefully make some savings.

Inheritance Tax and Farmers

A recent judgement by the Land Tribunal has resulted in a Judge ruling in favour of HM Customs & Inland Revenue. This test case determined that Inheritance Tax Relief should only cover the agricultural value of a farmhouse and not its market value.

This is the first case of its kind and has meant that Inheritance Tax can be levied on the difference between the agricultural value and the true market value. The whole issue of Inheritance Tax is becoming more and more important as farmers diversify into non-agricultural activity i.e. warehousing, processing, tourism activities, all of which are outside of the core agricultural business. In the ruling, the judge also said that tax relief on the farmhouse is only available if the owner or their spouse farmed the land on a day-to-day basis. Obviously day-to-day basis is open to interpretation but it could affect those farmers who have scaled down their farming activity and leave the day to day running to a contract farmer or another farmer who is making the decisions on a day to day basis.

Although this ruling is open to appeal and possibly could be overturned, it has highlighted the complications that now surround agricultural property and Inheritance Tax. Early planning is vital in order to minimise your liabilities in future years. Agri-BIP would advise all farmers who are concerned about this to have early discussions with their professional advisors, solicitors, and accountants, to determine the best route for each individual business to minimise the effect that Inheritance tax can have when a business is passed from one generation to another.

Soil Management Workshops

The last few weeks have seen us start to deliver Soil Management Workshops. These have been going extremely well and farmers have been leaving the workshops armed with the knowledge and a template to enable them to create their own Soil Management Plans for ELS. These farmers now have the knowledge to complete the Single Farm Payment Management Plan Template when it is released by Defra in the next month or so.

Newsletter Distribution

A big thank you to everyone who has responded to our request for email addresses and fax numbers over the last few months.

We would still like more so please keep them coming if you have not already responded. You can email, fax or write to us at: -

E-mail: team@bipwestdevon.biz

Fax: 01837 659314

Address: West Devon Business Information Point, FREEPOST EX 1119, Okehampton, EX20 1YZ

DISCLAIMER

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Sponsored by Learning and Skills Council, The European Social Fund, Business Link, West Devon Borough Council, Dartmoor National Park Authority, and Lantra.