



April 2017

Dear colleagues

Countryside Stewardship 2017

Since the 2017 window opened in March, many ALGAO members have reported the arrival of Countryside Stewardship consultations. So far numbers have been variable, with some members receiving good numbers and others only a few.

Some members have reported the arrival of Higher Tier consultations. These will be for Woodland-only application, Mixed applications or as part of Natural England staff collating data to inform pipelining of standard Higher Tier Expressions of Intent.

This year ALGAO members should be asked for HEFERs on all Higher Tier Woodland-only applications. As part of this we will be given the opportunity to create SHINE records and advise on their management. We will not be asked to comment on Scheduled Monuments, which will remain Historic England's responsibility. The change means the process will be formalised through the SHINE website/HEFER process, rather than relying on direct consultations from Forestry Commission staff. This change was made just before the 2017 window opened and as yet there has not been an opportunity to update the 2016 Service Standard. However, Natural England, the Forestry Commission, Historic England and ALGAO are currently exploring the possibilities for updating the service standard.

As with last year, ALGAO members will be directly consulted by the Forestry Commission on application for woodland creation/new planting (outside the SHINE website/HEFER process).

Thanks to everyone who has been raising queries through the *contact section of the SHINE website* (<https://www.myshinedata.org.uk/contact>). Please do contact the SHINE team in this way. It is likely Linda Smith will respond to the majority of HER queries raised. Linda Smith is working part-time as SHINE adviser throughout the window and will respond to the majority of the queries, with responses being issued as soon as possible.

In the last update I mentioned the two *SHINE training videos* created by Exegesis, one for Historic England and one for ALGAO members. The c.40 minute ALGAO training video is now available through the 'Training' section of the SHINE website (which can be reached via a new tab on the left hand side of the screen, once you have signed in). Please do watch it and let me have any feedback. It is probably worth noting that ALGAO members can view the ALGAO video, but not the Historic England one.

Post-Brexit agri-environment scheme

It has been suggested that the future of agri-environment schemes post-Brexit will be discussed will be on the agenda for the next Agri-environment stakeholders group (AESG) meeting. With this in mind, I would like start drawing together views on how the historic environment might be included in future schemes, with the aim of developing an overall ALGAO approach. If any ALGAO member

would like to provide ideas in advance of the next AES meeting, please do send them to me. I will use any comments received to provide feedback to Natural England and DEFRA during the meeting. I am hoping we will be able to discuss the future of agri-environment schemes at our next Countryside Committee meeting, but this will need to wait until a Secretary to the committee is in place. Please do let me know if you are interested in taking on the Secretary role.

Scheduled Monuments removed from cultivation under Higher Level Stewardship

Over the last year or so ALGAO has received a number of reports of land managers who removed Scheduled Monuments from cultivation as part of Higher Level Stewardship agreements considering returning them to cultivation. In most cases, it appears options and payments on offer under Countryside Stewardship (compared to those on offer under Higher Level Stewardship) are playing a role in the discussions, alongside conversations about the loss of class consent for sites that have been out of cultivation for 10 years. We are aware of one case that has escalated to a high level within Natural England and has involved a Member of Parliament. If any ALGAO member is aware of a land manager considering returning a Scheduled Monument to cultivation, I would be very interested to hear more. If we can work together to collate information on a range of cases, I may be able to raise it as an issue at a future AESG meeting.

Updated ALGAO Countryside Advisers contact list

A copy of the most recent ALGAO Countryside Advisers contact list is attached. This includes an updated list of historic environment contacts within Natural England. Please note that some of the Natural England contacts are historic environment specialists, while others are contacts for signposting or very general queries.

If this is the first email you have received about from ALGAO about countryside matters, it is because someone has suggested including you in the Countryside Advisers contact list. If you would like to be removed from it or think someone should be added, please do let me know.

This update covers all the new information available at the present time, but I will let you have further details as soon as they become available.

Best wishes

David

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