

# OFC announcement - Upland messaging

2024 will see the biggest upgrade to farming schemes since the start of the agricultural transition; we are backing our farmers by: increasing payment rates by 10%, making schemes more flexible and easier to access, and publishing detailed information to give farmers greater certainty.

## Our vision

- Upland and moorland farmers will continue to farm on their land, supported by actions that also improve our natural environment.

### Moorland

- We recognise the unique challenges that upland and moorland farmers face. We have taken, and will continue to take, action that ensures upland and moorland farmers have access to funding that supports environmental action in their areas in England, alongside the production of sustainable food.

### Grassland

- Farmers who keep livestock and/or have grassland on their farm will continue to produce sustainable food, coupled with actions that also support our natural environment.

## What's new

### Moorland

- We have developed a new and expanded moorland offer, introducing 5 new actions, which will more comprehensively and fairly reward the actions taken in moorland settings. For example, one new action, low grazing on moorland, pays farmers to maintain low livestock density on moorland which aims to support and enhance moorland habitat alongside farming, and we are also introducing a new action on managing non-peat moorland soils for flood and drought resilience.
- In addition, we are looking to introduce new capital items for wildfire management and for people to map their moorlands, which will help with identifying sensitive habitats and features thereby allowing people to better plan their grazing and restoration works.

### Grassland

- Historically, we have paid much higher prices for actions involving creating or restoring habitats and features, and lower prices to maintain them. Farmers and land managers have told us that they feel that those who have already undertaken the 'creation' or 'restoration' activities are at an unfair disadvantage.
- We're re-balancing the payments for 'creation' and 'maintenance' actions, in particular for grassland habitats, so that those who have already made changes are not disadvantaged. For example, the price for maintaining species rich grassland will increase on 1 Jan 2024, from £182 to £646.
- Moving forward we will be paying for the costs of creating a grassland habitat in full, up front, as a separate capital grant offer. This will enable us to increase regular payments, as above.

## What has improved

- In 2023, after feedback from farmers and stakeholders, we identified 5 pairs of actions where the prices were different for lowland and upland farmers. We reviewed the payment rates and agreed to pay the same rate to everyone.

- Where upland and lowland payment rates have been made equal, we are combining the actions to make the scheme simpler, for example on woodland pasture
- We are improving the existing offer by:
  - ensuring payments more accurately reflect costs incurred by moorland farmers through the introduction of stepped payment rates for grazing actions, and increasing payments for rewetting peat.
  - making it more flexible, providing farmers with a range of payments for different stocking densities, for the first time.
  - Existing capital items will continue to be available, for example to support the restoration and management of upland peat and natural flood management.