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| To Chairs and Key Contacts of the Rural and Farming Network | Ergon House  17 Smith Square  London SW1P 3JR | T 08459 335577  helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk) |

4 July 2013

Dear colleague,

# TRANSITION TO THE NEW RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ENGLAND

1. We have discussed the importance of clarity on the Rural Development Programme offer for the transition year of 2014 before the new programme starts in 2015.

2. I am pleased to be able now to let you know what Ministers intend to offer for 2014.

3. Ministers want to offer a package of Rural Development Programme support in the transition between programmes in 2014 that reflects the likely need to target funding more in the new programme and that avoids building up excessive commitments now.

4. We have yet to agree at the EU level the detailed rules about the actions we will be able to support in 2014.  However, subject to that we are now planning towards delivering the following:

* new Higher Level Stewardship agri-environment agreements costing about £26m a year.  That includes offering Higher Level Stewardship agreements to those with eligible expiring old style ‘classic’ agreements and new agreements for Sites of Special Scientific Interest, other high priority cases and to meet Water Framework objectives including those related to Natura 2000 sites;
* Uplands and organic Entry Level Stewardship. We also plan to offer Entry Level Stewardship for land coming out of ‘classic’ schemes in 2014 that does not qualify for HLS.  This will cost about £4m per year.  This will ensure a smooth transition for areas that have been under environmental management for a long time;
* catchment sensitive farming capital projects and advice of up to £14m, including for Water Framework Directive-related action on Natura 2000 sites;
* up to £0.5m to fund essential one-off capital investments for forestry grants; and
* making available up to £1m to potentially continue some existing strategic projects.

We have already said that we will make available up to £3 million of RDP funding in 2014 to help maintain Leader local delivery capacity and expertise from the current programme.

5. We will also in 2014/15 provide continued support through the Campaign for the Farmed Environment, which is already proving, through partnership and voluntary action, that the sector is fully willing and able to take responsibility for the farmed environment.

6. The external Working Group is meeting on 18 July. I would like to suggest that we run through this package and discuss the implications and how best to involve the Programme Monitoring Committee. We will provide a paper setting out the plan in a bit more detail. We can also catch up on development of the new programme and plans for continuing discussions on that over the summer.

7. Please get in touch with me if you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of this before 18 July.

Yours sincerely,



**Andrew Robinson**

Programme Director

Rural Development Programme

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