



oakbank

CREATING THE PERFECT HABITAT

OAKBANK E-NEWS MARCH 2025

ANA REYNOLDS

Oakbank and Velcourt are delighted to announce the appointment of Ana Reynolds to the position of Managing Director of Oakbank Game & Conservation Ltd. Ana joins us from the AHDB where she was Head of Sustainable Farming and Research, following a wealth of experience in both farming and non-farming businesses. She is a new entrant to a mixed family farm in Northamptonshire, has a law degree from Cambridge University, is a BASIS qualified agronomist and sits on the BASE UK committee and we are very excited to have acquired such a talented, personable and experienced person to be our new MD.



To scotch any rumours about impending retirement for Tim & Ian (according to Tim they are both far too young to retire!) they are both staying gainfully employed to help Ana grow the Oakbank business.

STEWARDSHIP REMINDERS

MID-TIER CS

NO MORE HEDGE OR DITCH BANK CUTTING.

NECTAR FLOWER MIX (AB1)

if you haven't done so already then these must be cut down before 30th March (and ideally cuttings removed or shredded) and any grazing livestock must be removed by 15th March.

NESTING PLOTS FOR LAPWING AND STONE CURLEW (AB5)

plot must be cultivated by 20th March.

FLOWER-RICH MARGINS AND PLOTS (AB8)

if grasses are threatening to smother the flower species, then you can cut before April.

SUPPLEMENTARY WINTER FEEDING FOR FARMLAND BIRDS (AB12)

you must keep feeding until 30th April.

CS UPDATE

RPA has confirmed **existing capital grant applications** that were put on hold will now be re-opened, which is good news. Since the announcement we have already had confirmation that several applications that we submitted prior to the hold are now being processed and approved. They also announced they will be reopening to new applications in the summer, although they intend capping all capital grants, which is extremely disappointing as it would have been far better to simply reduce the unit payment rather than cap the total. They have also announced that farmers stuck in an HLS agreement will have their payment rates increased but still no mechanism to exit early.

HIGHER TIER CS

Defra has started inviting farmers and land managers to begin the pre-application process for a new Higher-Tier Scheme. Currently, access is by invitation only.

Those not invited early can still take steps to prepare, including applying for capital grants to help produce plans to support a CSHT application e.g. implementation plans, woodland management plans, agroforestry plans, species management plans or a feasibility study. Defra will confirm details on the further rollout of CSHT, including the next priority groups to be invited, in the summer.



COVER CROPS

It is never too early to start thinking about your summer cover crop options. The new SFI options SOH2, multi-species spring-sown cover crop and SOH3, multi-species summer-sown cover crop, paying £163/ha, can be used as a valuable tool to help condition your soil. We see these as a great option if you are growing a forage rye or vining pea crop, as well as other situations. The warmer months really are the best time to grow cover crops so take every opportunity when you can. We have various mix options that we would be happy to discuss with you if you have any queries. We are also happy to discuss how these options can be used properly with an SFI on your farm.

LIVING MULCH

When drilling your spring cereals have you considered establishing a living mulch underneath the cereal crop? We have found establishing a micro clover in the spring can be one of the best times of year to get your carpet of clover growing. The idea is that this aids with plant diversity, helps condition your soil, can suppress weeds and fix some nitrogen. Not to mention the SFI payment of £55/ha under CIPM3. Why not give it a try this year in one or two of your spring cereal fields. We have experience across a large hectarage, on various soil types and will be happy to discuss the establishment options for you.

PERENNIAL CROPS

check all of your perennial crops this month to see whether they need any inputs/management. If you are not sure what you are looking for, please check with us before doing anything drastic! Miscanthus can now be flailed off ready for a glyphosate spray (if necessary) later in the month. We will be lifting miscanthus rhizomes later this month and putting them into cold store. If you are thinking of planting any miscanthus this season, then please get your order in asap. Planting time is not until mid-late April but lifting will have been finished by then, so we won't be able to lift to order.

TREES AND WOODLAND

COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP WOODLAND IMPROVEMENT GRANT WD2

The newly revised CS WD2 grant includes far wider reaching offers with regards to biodiversity improvements, such as bracken and Himalayan balsam control. Other key points to note are enhanced basic rates of £127/ha for baseline WD2 (previously 100/ha); £105/ha for WS1, deer control (previously £90/ha) and £60/ha for WS3 squirrel control (previously £50/ha).

Other new and enhanced offers which will be of interest are:

- Manage and restore ancient woodland: £275 per hectare.
- Manage native woodland and ancient semi natural woodland: £116 per hectare.
- Improve woodland resilience: £202 per hectare.
- Manage woodlands for flood and drought mitigation: £56 per hectare.
- Woodland edges on arable land: £428 per hectare.
- Management of wood pasture and parkland (lowland): £212 per hectare.
- Restoration of wood pasture and parkland (lowland): £371 per hectare.
- Creation of wood pasture: £544 per hectare.
- Management of successional areas and scrub: £276.00 per hectare (previously £88/ha)
- Creation of successional areas and scrub: £514 per hectare (previously £149.00/ha)

Whereas these were originally only applicable to priority woodlands such as ASNW or SSSI's, they will now be more widely available and the new schemes will be for a 10-year period, rather than 5. Further announcements are planned for the summer.

ASH DIEBACK BELIEVED TO BE PAST ITS PEAK IN THE SOUTH-WEST

Dr Joan Webber, principal pathologist and project leader at Forest Research, believes ash dieback has now passed its peak in the South West. She believes the environment is beginning to adapt to the disease, with 1-2% of ash trees showing signs of "very high" levels of resistance and more showing "some" resistance. Read the [BBC News Article](#).



SHOWS AND EVENTS

There is still time to book your space to our **Norfolk Spring update** on the **13th of March**.

Click the link below to get your ticket.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1229986415479?aff=oddtcreator>

SPRING NEWSLETTER

if you haven't received your copy of the Oakbank Magazine & Product Guide or would like additional copies to give to your friends/colleagues, please let us know!

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