



PLANNING - GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT ORDER (GPDO) UPDATE

There have been significant changes to the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) which came into effect on 21st May 2024. These changes relate to Class Q - permitted development rights for the conversion of buildings in agricultural units into dwellings and Class R, the conversion of agricultural buildings into various commercial uses.

Class Q – Agricultural Units to Dwellings:

Under the old rules, Class Q allowed for the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses where they are suitable/reasonably necessary for conversion. The development was not allowed to extend in any way, for example adding cladding to the walls.

The new changes under General Permitted Development Order, now include:

- Buildings do not necessarily need to be “in agricultural use”, they just need to form part of an agricultural unit. For example, equestrian, commercial storage or mixed-use buildings situated on an agricultural unit could now be converted. Please note that buildings on sites solely in equestrian or commercial use would still be excluded.
- Buildings still need to be suitable for conversion and a structural report is required.
- Buildings now only need to be part of an agricultural unit since 24th July 2023, or if no longer part of one, not used for any non-agricultural purpose since that date.
- The floor limits for a dwelling have been removed. Up to 10 dwellings can be created with a combined maximum area of 1000 sq. meters. An individual dwelling now has a maximum area of 150 sq. meters.
- Extensions are now allowed to the rear of the building, onto existing hardstanding areas that have been in place since 24th July 2023. Extensions can only be single storey with a maximum depth and height of four meters. An extension cannot extend beyond a side or front of the building.
- Cladding can now be added to the development/building, therefore extending beyond the footprint of the structure.
- An agricultural building without an existing/suitable access point cannot be converted under Class Q.

Class R – Agricultural Units to Commercial:

The new changes under General Permitted Development Order, now include:

- The floor space limit has been doubled from 500 sq. meters to 1000 sq. meters.
- The use classes of the buildings can change to now include B2 (general industrial), where this is for processing raw goods (excluding livestock) and ancillary goods which are produced and to be sold on site.
- Buildings can also change under Class R to be used for providing agricultural training.

EXPANDED SUSTAINABLE FARMING INCENTIVE (SFI) OFFER - 2024

In May of this year, 102 SFI actions were published by DEFRA. It has been advised that list may increase later this year, with actions such as educational access. This summer, more endorsed actions will be added covering actions for farmland wildlife and habitats on grassland, heritage, wood pasture, orchards, coastal habitats and waterbodies.

The extended SFI offer now includes 57 options that were in Countryside Stewardship. Some of these options have a 5-year term, with the remaining actions having the standard term of 3 years.

Under the new SFI Scheme, ten actions/options have their total combined area restricted to 25% of the farm area. A further four are under review and may be included in the future. Eligibility is no longer linked to BPS, allowing new entrants to access SFI.

Area Limits:

Defra has limited the combined area of ten actions to 25% of the farmed land. The actions limited are:

- CIPM2: Flower-rich grass margins, blocks, or in-field strips
- CAHL1: Pollen and nectar flower mix
- CAHL2: Winter bird food on arable and horticultural land
- CAHL3: Grassy field corners or blocks
- CIGL1: Take improved grassland field corners or blocks out of management
- CIGL2: Winter bird food on improved grassland
- WBD3: In-field grass strips
- AHW1: Bumble Bird Mix
- AHW9: Unharvested cereal headland
- AHW11: Cultivated areas for arable plants

An additional four actions are being kept under review and may be added to the list at a future date. These are:

- AHW3: Beetle banks
- AHW5: Nesting plots for lapwing
- AHW12: Manage woodland edges on arable land
- SCR1: Create scrub and open habitat mosaics

Eligibility:

You need to have management control of the land in order to deliver the actions and to be eligible to apply for SFI Agreement. The land must be recorded and shown on the online RPA system with the appropriate land cover for each identified action.

Tenants:

Tenants are eligible to apply for a SFI Agreement without their landlord's consent. This is subject to the terms of the tenant's tenancy agreement which is in place. The tenant needs to be confident that they will have management control for the term of the SFI agreement.

Compatibility with Other Schemes:

Under the SFI Scheme you are eligible to have multiple schemes (CSS Mid-Tier) on the same parcel of land provided you are not being paid for the same action twice. The SFI scheme rules set out which of the SFI actions is compatible with Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship options.

STANDALONE CAPITAL GRANTS:

Capital Grants are 3 year agreements offering capital items to achieve specific environmental benefits within 4 groups:

- Boundaries, trees and orchards (including the former hedgerows and boundaries grant items)
- Water quality
- Air quality
- Natural flood management

There is no limit on either the maximum amount for any application or the amount you can apply for in each group. There are 70 options available. For capital items that help improve water and air quality, you may need approval from a Catchment Sensitive Farming adviser (CSFA).

If your application is successful, we will make you an agreement offer. If you accept the offer, you will enter into an agreement with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA).

Standalone Capital Grants are available with a rolling application window, meaning you can make applications at any time of year.

You can apply for a Capital Grants offer on land parcels in an SFI pilot standards agreement or in an SFI 2023/2024 agreement. The actions in your SFI pilot standards agreement or your SFI 2023/2024 agreement must be compatible with the works in a Capital Grant agreement. You can also apply for a Capital Grants agreement on land parcels which are not in your existing SFI agreement.

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