
INFORMATION FOR NEW LAND OWNERS & MANAGERS

CALU FACTSHEET

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INTRODUCTION

If you are new to managing land, perhaps taking on a farm or smallholding for the first time, there is plenty of support and guidance available through Farming Connect. You can find out how to register for the service by telephoning 08456 000 813. The monthly magazine, Gwlad, provides up to date information on agriculture and rural affairs from the Welsh Assembly Government. It is also available on-line at www.wales.gov.uk/gwlad

There are many issues the new land manager needs to consider; here we aim to provide a basic checklist to get you started. For further information on each of the topics, contact your local Welsh Assembly Divisional Office, or CALU.

Land ownership and management

- Check what you have – make sure your property is registered with the Land Registry (www.landregistry.gov.uk). If not, register it.
- Is the land registered as an agricultural holding – does it have a holding number (often referred to as CPH number – County Parish Holding)? If not, register and obtain a number from your local Welsh Assembly Government Divisional Office. You will need it to claim the Single Farm Payment (if eligible) and to apply for agri-environment support.
- If the land is hedged and/or fenced, who has ownership according to the deeds to the land? Who is responsible for maintenance?
- Check with the Land Registry and local planning authority for any wayleaves/rights of way /easements/permissions/restrictions etc affecting the property.
- Make sure you know if your land is in a National Park – special planning and land management restrictions may apply (www.nationalparks.gov.uk)
- If you've moved into a traditional property, check if the house and / or any outbuildings are listed as historic buildings with CADW (www.cadw.wales.gov.uk). If so there will be prescriptions affecting any modifications you may wish to make.
- Check if there are any statutory land management designations in place, e.g Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)- check with Countryside Council for Wales (www.ccw.gov.uk).
- Find out if there are any non-statutory nature conservation sites present on your land. These are normally referred to as County Wildlife Sites or Sites of Importance of Nature Conservation. The Biodiversity Officer or County Ecologist at the Local Authority can advise on these.
- Check if the land is subject to an agri-environment agreement such as Tir Gofal or Tir Cynnal. These agreements place restrictions on how the land is managed.
- If your land is in Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) you must not apply more nitrogen fertiliser than your crops require. This includes organic manure and manufactured fertilisers. Find out if your farm is in a NVZ and more about the NVZ rules by looking at the maps on the Welsh Assembly Government website www.wales.gov.uk. You can see printed versions at Welsh Assembly Government or local council offices.
- Has the land been certified for organic production? The organic licence is held by the land manager, but if it has been organic under the previous owner/tenant there may be no need for a conversion period. You might not be eligible for conversion support if this has been paid on the land to a previous land manager. Check with organic Certification Bodies and your Divisional Office.



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig: Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Get to know your land – the practicalities

- Make sure you know the **altitude** of your land (height above sea level). If you have slopes, what aspect do they have – which direction do they face? Look at the trees to see whether there is a strong prevailing wind deforming them in the same direction. Find out the average **rainfall**. Rainfall maps are available – try the local reference library.
- What is the **soil type**? Is it acidic, alkaline or neutral? Is the **soil texture** sand, clay or loam? What is its status in terms of major nutrients such as phosphorous (P) and potash (K)? A soil test is relatively cheap but an invaluable guide to what the land can produce.
- Are there indications about **soil structure**? Is the land free-draining or is there standing water? You can take a soil sample with an auger or spade to examine the soil profile (its horizons or layers - of topsoil, sub soil etc) and to look for evidence of compaction. There are also simple ways of counting the average number of **earthworms** in your soil. A high worm population suggests a healthy soil. In a rich fertile soil there may be more than 500 worms per square metre, in a poor soil less than 100.
- How has the land been **used in the past**? If grassland, what kind of plants are growing? Plants like rushes & sedges indicate wet & waterlogged land. Nettles and docks indicate poorly managed agricultural land. **Traditional hay meadows** and pastures are very valuable for their botanic diversity and should not be ploughed – look out for wild flowers and a variety of grasses and broad-leaved herbs in the sward. Rye grasses and white clovers usually mean that the land has been 'improved' for agricultural use. If in any doubt, call in a consultant to survey your grassland.
- If the land has been cropped, what **kind of crops** have been grown? You may need to ask a neighbour, and then take the opportunity to check what all your neighbours are growing. Is land in the neighbourhood primarily used for livestock or cereals, fruit or vegetables? Don't be afraid of doing something different – but make sure you have as much information as possible before going ahead with new plans.
- There are restrictions on changes you can make to hedgerows and to the volume of timber you can fell. Approvals and licences may be required if you want to remove hedges or fell trees. Check with your local planning authority and the Forestry Commission before starting any work.
- If you are planning changes to the management of the land, a consultant or advisor is highly recommended. All land represents a habitat for plants and animals and for major changes an **Environmental Impact Assessment** (EIA) will be required.
- If you are going to keep farm livestock, register as a keeper with your local Animal Health Office. To keep some species, for example Wild Boar, you will need a licence. Whatever stock you intend to keep, ensure you have stock-proof boundaries and appropriate housing in place before bringing them on to the land. Quarantine all new stock brought on to the land before allowing them to mix.
- What services and buildings are available on the land? For crops and livestock, water is a pre-requisite. Is there a mains supply or a bore-hole? If the land is bounded by a stream, do you have riparian rights? Do you have extraction rights? This needs to be checked with the Environment Agency.
- Get copies of the codes of Good Agricultural Practice covering soil, air and water from your Divisional Office or download them from the Welsh Assembly Government website <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/farming/codesofgoodagripractice/>