Countryside Stewardship:
An overview

www.gov.uk/rpa/cs

Protecting the natural environment for future generations
Countryside Stewardship
How it works

1. Choose the scheme and options you want to apply for

2. Request your application pack or start your online application

3. Gather your evidence and request any approvals, endorsements, consents and permissions

4. Complete and submit your application and any supporting information

5. If your application is successful, an agreement offer will be made, which you can accept and return

Undertake the agreed management works and submit your claim in the Rural Payments service
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Introduction

What is Countryside Stewardship?

Countryside Stewardship offers a range of schemes that provide financial incentives to farmers, foresters and land managers to look after and improve the environment.

The Countryside Stewardship schemes include Mid Tier, Higher Tier and Wildlife Offers - a list of schemes is described on page 2. Within these schemes, you can choose from a range of options covering multi-year agreements, capital items or a mix of both.

Most of the schemes are competitive. This means that if you decide to apply for Countryside Stewardship, depending on which scheme you apply for, your application will be scored against other applications. This is because applications are assessed to determine which ones offer the best results for the environment in your local area, and the best value for money.

If your application includes organic conversion and organic maintenance options, they will not be scored. However, other options on your application will be scored.

The four Wildlife Offers, and capital grants for Woodland Management Plans and Woodland Tree Health are not scored.

What are the benefits of Countryside Stewardship?

The main benefits of the scheme are detailed below. However, there are ‘Statement of Priorities’ which sets out which environmental benefits are important (a priority) to local areas.

If your application includes several priorities, it will score more highly than if it includes only one.

Wildlife and nature: restoring habitats, providing food and nesting places for birds, insects and other animals creating areas for rare flowering plants and managing hedges.

Pollinators: providing pollen and nectar sources, providing nesting places, and making sure the right resources for wild pollinators are where they are most needed.

Water/flooding: making water cleaner, reducing the risk of flooding by encouraging changes to farming practice (such as crop management), improving farm infrastructure, and creating woodland.

Woodland: funding tree health, the creation of new woodland and supporting the management of existing woodland, and developing management plans.

Countryside Stewardship also helps to improve the historic environment, landscape character, genetic conservation, educational access, and reduce the effects of climate change.
Wildlife offers are not scored; if you meet the specified requirements, you will be offered an agreement.

If your application for any of these schemes is successful, your agreement will start on 1 January 2020. Most multi-year agreements are for 5 years.

**Capital Grants** - these are typically for 1 or 2 years.

**Hedgerows and Boundaries:** capital grant to restore existing farm boundaries, and provide benefits to the environment and landscape.

**Woodland Management Plans:** a one-off payment to support the production of a UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) compliant 10 year woodland management plan.

**Woodland Tree Health:** one-off payment to restock or improve woodland due to tree health problems.

**Woodland Creation Grant:** a 2 year capital grant to plant and protect young trees.

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**Which Countryside Stewardship scheme is right for me?**

Countryside Stewardship is made up of the following schemes.

**Higher Tier** – Multi-year agreements and certain standalone capital items for the most environmentally important sites, including commons and woodlands. These are usually in places that need complex management, such as restoring habitats, and improving woodland.

**Mid Tier** – Multi-year agreements and capital items that focus on widespread environmental issues, such as reducing water pollution or improving the farmed environment for farmland birds and wild pollinators. Also includes water capital grants.

**Wildlife Offers** – Multi-year agreements with a range of highly targeted and effective options. They support wildlife by creating sources of nectar and pollen for insect pollinators, winter food for seed-eating birds and improved habitats. Four different offers are available tailored to specific farming practices. They are quick and simple to apply for using the Rural Payments service.
Countryside Stewardship

Protecting the natural environment for future generations

Also available

- **Woodland Management Plans**
  - Short-term capital grants for plans to manage woodland.
  - Non-Competitive

- **Woodland Tree Health**
  - Short-term capital grants for the improvement and restoration of woodland.
  - Non-Competitive

- **Woodland Creation**
  - Short-term capital grants to aid the creation of new areas of woodland.
  - Competitive

Key

- Online
- Paper
- Self Serve
- Email
- Key dates

Countryside Stewardship Key Dates for applications

**Higher Tier**
- More complex and bespoke management for high priority environmental and woodland sites.
- Competitive

**Mid Tier**
- Multi-year agreements for environmental benefits in the wider countryside.
- Competitive

**Wildlife Offers**
- Targeted options aimed to suit specific farming practices, designed to be simpler to apply for.
- Non-Competitive

**Hedgerows and Boundaries**
- Short-term capital grants to restore existing boundaries and bring environmental and landscape benefits.
- Competitive

**You can do these together**

**Also available**

- **Woodland Management Plans**
  - Short-term capital grants for plans to manage woodland.
  - Non-Competitive

- **Woodland Tree Health**
  - Short-term capital grants for the improvement and restoration of woodland.
  - Non-Competitive

- **Woodland Creation**
  - Short-term capital grants to aid the creation of new areas of woodland.
  - Competitive

**Key dates**

- **Application Window**
  - 18 Feb

**Application pack deadline**

- **Higher Tier**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Mid Tier**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Wildlife Offers**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Arable**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Mixed**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Lowland**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Upland**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Hedgerows and Boundaries**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Woodland Tree Health**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Woodland Creation**
  - 18 Feb
  - 31 May

- **Open for applications all year**
  - Higher Tier
  - Mid Tier
  - Wildlife Offers
  - Arable
  - Mixed
  - Lowland
  - Upland

- **Offers out**
  - Hedgerows and Boundaries
  - Woodland Creation

- **Competitive**
  - Higher Tier
  - Mid Tier
  - Wildlife Offers

- **Non-Competitive**
  - Woodland Management Plans

- **Targeted options**
  - Mid Tier

- **Protection**
  - Higher Tier
  - Mid Tier
  - Wildlife Offers

- **Simpler to apply for**
  - Mid Tier

- **More complex and bespoke**
  - Higher Tier

- **Multi-year agreements**
  - Mid Tier

- **Targeted options**
  - Wildlife Offers

- **Non-Competitive**
  - Woodland Management Plans

- **Open for applications all year**
  - Woodland Creation

- **You can do these together**

- **Application Window**
  - 18 Feb

- **Application pack deadline**
  - 31 May
Helping you choose the right scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Tier</th>
<th>Mid Tier</th>
<th>Wildlife Offers: Arable Mixed Farming Lowland Grazing Upland</th>
<th>Hedgerows and Boundaries</th>
<th>Woodland Management Plans</th>
<th>Woodland Tree Health</th>
<th>Woodland Creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding type</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Non-competitive</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Non-competitive</td>
<td>Non-competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme overview</td>
<td>Top priority environmental sites (such as SSSI's) and woodland that need bespoke management. Speak to a Natural England adviser or Forestry Commission officer first.</td>
<td>Wide range of agreement types, including capital options, to suit a wide range of environment types.</td>
<td>Range of agreement options. Not suitable for land with schedule monument or SSSI.</td>
<td>Farmer or land manager wants to restore existing farm boundaries, and bring environmental and landscape benefits to the land.</td>
<td>Payment to support production of UKFS 10 year woodland management plan.</td>
<td>Payment to restock or improve woodland due to tree health problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>5 years, potentially more depending on the type of management. Capital grants 2 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>Between 18 Feb / 3 May</td>
<td>Between 18 Feb / 31 July</td>
<td>Between 18 Feb / 31 July</td>
<td>Between 18 Feb / 3 May</td>
<td>Open all year</td>
<td>Open all year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application pack request deadline</td>
<td>31 Mar</td>
<td>31 May</td>
<td>31 May</td>
<td>31 Mar</td>
<td>Open all year</td>
<td>Open all year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreements/Offer</td>
<td>1 Nov to 31 Dec</td>
<td>1 Nov to 31 Dec</td>
<td>1 Nov to 31 Dec</td>
<td>1 July to 30 Sept</td>
<td>All year</td>
<td>All year</td>
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Where can I read more about these schemes?
Information on all schemes is available on GOV.UK – search for ‘Countryside Stewardship’.

What do I do next?
Read the information in the table of schemes and decide which is best for you and your business. You can read more information about the schemes on GOV.UK – search ‘Countryside Stewardship’.

Then decide how you prefer to apply for your chosen scheme. You will need to request an application pack before the deadline (or start your application online).

Visit our blog pages at https://ruralpayments.blog.gov.uk/ check for updates and hints and tips throughout the application period (you can also bookmark these pages or set up an alert to notify you when we publish something new).
Are you and your land registered?

Not registered: call us on 03000 200 301 and we can help you.

If you are registered: sign in now and check your information is up to date. Make sure that all the land parcels you want to include in your application are registered in the Rural Payments service, and linked to your Single Business Identifier (SBI).

Contact us

Visit our website
For more information about the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, go to www.gov.uk/rpa/cs

Email
ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk
Please quote your single business identifier (SBI) for all enquiries

Call us
03000 200 301 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm, except bank holidays).

Write to us or send evidence to support applications to
Rural Payments Agency (CS)
PO Box 324
WORKSOP
S95 1DF
Please quote your single business identifier (SBI) for all enquiries.
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