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If you want to know more about CAP, more information is at the end of this leaflet.

What the icons mean

This icon: Means that this information:



is important information



hasn't been agreed yet – more information will be available later this year



CAP Reform | Introduction

Countdown

This leaflet contains more information about our new environmental land management scheme, 'Countryside Stewardship', which is part of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme for England.

Countryside Stewardship will contribute around £900 million to rural businesses to help them improve the countryside environment. It will be open to all eligible farmers, land managers, land owners and tenants. It will replace:

- Environmental Stewardship (ES)
- the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS)
- capital grants from the Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) programme

We currently plan that farmers and land managers can start applying for Countryside Stewardship from July 2015. Agreements and payments will begin in 2016.

We're planning to make water capital grants and woodland creation grants available at the start of 2015 – read page 9 for more information about these.

The scheme will be delivered by Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Rural Payments Agency.

What the scheme will achieve

The main priority for Countryside Stewardship is biodiversity. Water quality is another important priority. The scheme will also help to improve:

- flood management
- the historic environment
- landscape character
- genetic conservation
- educational access
- climate change adaptation and mitigation

It will be more targeted and focused than previous schemes. Both Higher and Mid Tier agreements (read page 4) will use the same 'targeted' approach as current Higher Level Stewardship agreements. This will encourage applicants to enter into agreements which deliver the right environmental management in the correct combinations and in the right places. It will also make sure Countryside Stewardship is good value for taxpayers' money.

Together with ongoing ES and EWGS agreements, Countryside Stewardship will be the main way of helping farmers and land managers deliver against a wide range of local, national and international environmental commitments.

The new scheme will help:

- Wildlife and nature: by restoring habitats, protecting hedges, providing food and nesting resources for birds, insects and other animals, and creating farmed areas for rare flowering plants.
- Pollinators: by providing pollen and nectar sources and nesting places. Farmers will be

The European Commission has yet to approve the Rural Development Programme. If any of the information in this leaflet changes, we will let you know.

For later information please read the December 2014 CAP Reform update
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Introduction

able to provide the right resources for pollinators where they are most needed.

- Forestry: by funding the planting of new trees and supporting the management of woodlands.
- Water/flooding – making water cleaner and reducing risk of flooding by supporting changes to farming practice (such as crop management), improving farm infrastructure and creating woodland.

Where possible, the scheme will offer the best opportunities to achieve benefits for biodiversity, water quality and flood management together.

Current Environmental Stewardship and English Woodland Grant Scheme agreements

If you already have an ES agreement which runs into 2015 or beyond, this will carry on until it ends. This is similar for EWGS agreements, though these might have to change when the new regulations come into force.

Land transfers and amendments under Environmental Stewardship in 2015 will follow a similar process to that in 2014. We are working on the detailed arrangements and will publish more information in our next leaflet.



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CAP Reform Countdown

How Countryside Stewardship works

Countryside Stewardship will have 3 main elements – Higher Tier, Mid Tier and a range of capital grants. Applications will be online.

Countryside Stewardship will be available to all eligible farmers, land managers, land owners and tenants in England. The scheme guidance will explain who is eligible to apply, and this will be published on GOV.UK in January 2015.

We currently plan that applications for Higher Tier and Mid Tier agreements (see below to find out what these are) can start in July 2015 and must be submitted by September 2015. These agreements would start on 1 January 2016 and payments would also begin in 2016. We also currently plan that some capital grants for water and woodland creation will be available in 2015.

Countryside Stewardship will have 3 main elements:

1. Higher Tier (similar to the current Higher Level Stewardship)
2. Mid Tier (which will replace Entry Level Stewardship)
3. a lower tier of capital grants, including the Hedgerows and Boundaries Capital Grants (read page 8)

These give access to funding and/or capital grants for an agreed range of environmental management actions ('options').

The proposed payment rates for Countryside Stewardship have been published alongside this update on GOV.UK at www.gov.uk/cap-reform.

The new scheme is voluntary and all applications will be processed through the new online service we are building.

You will need to apply for Countryside Stewardship schemes online. Read page 11 for more information about how to apply.



Agreements

Applications will be scored to check whether an agreement can be offered. Successful applicants will get an agreement that will include:

- what they have agreed to do (management options)
- the payment rate
- the duration
- terms and conditions

Most multi-year agreements will be for 5 years. Longer agreements may be available in some exceptional circumstances. The table on the next page shows some examples.



CAP Reform | Funding available in 2015 Countdown

As well as receiving funding for existing Environmental Stewardship agreements and English Woodland Grant Scheme agreements, land managers can apply for water and woodland capital grants in 2015.

Water capital grants in 2015

We currently plan that capital grants of up to £10,000 per holding will be available to create infrastructures which will help reduce water pollution from agriculture.

We currently plan that applications can be made from 2 March to 30 April 2015. Works must be completed and claimed by 29 January 2016.

Grants for works in 2015 will be available in Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) priority catchments only. CSF advisers will be available to help farmers and land managers to submit applications and deliver capital works.

Woodland creation grants in 2015

We currently plan that applicants can apply for woodland creation grants from February 2015. Applications will be accepted for a limited time only (the closing date hasn't been decided yet).

Applications will be scored and selected competitively. They will need to be for at least 3 hectares and each planting block will need to be at least 0.5 hectares in area. The exception to this where the woodland creation is identified and accepted as part of a suite of options to address issues with water quality. Under these circumstances, applications will need to be at least 1 hectare in area, with each planting block at least 0.1 hectares in area.

We will publish more information about water and woodland creation grants in our next update in December.

Applications for these grants will **not** be made online. Application forms will be available to download from GOV.UK in the new year.



For later information please read the December 2014 CAP Reform update
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CAP Reform | Facilitation funding Countdown

We will offer 'facilitation funding' to people or businesses who help farmers, foresters and others to work together to deliver Countryside Stewardship priorities on a large scale across landscapes.

Facilitation funding will go to people and organisations that:

- can help others to work cooperatively
- have experience of environmental land management

The area of land involved must:

- cover at least 2,000 hectares, unless there is an obvious smaller environmental boundary, and
- be spread across at least 4 adjoining (or mainly adjoining) holdings

Applicants must show they have the backing of the land managers on all these farms.

When to apply



We currently plan that applications for facilitation funding can be made from early 2015. We will publish more details about the eligibility and selection criteria (as well as information about what successful applicants will be expected to do) early next year.

Applications will be assessed by a panel of representatives from Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency.

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CAP Reform Countdown | How and when to apply for Countryside Stewardship

Applications for Countryside Stewardship must be made online – those who have applied for schemes in the past will be invited to register on the new online service we are building.

In 2015 we will ask people who we think are likely to apply for Countryside Stewardship to register with GOV.UK Verify and start using the new online service we are building (if they haven't already used it to claim the Basic Payment Scheme – you only need to register once).

We will contact applicants to tell them when it's time to register.

The service is being built in stages and is being constantly improved, based on customer feedback. Improvements will continue to be made to the service – and the GOV.UK Verify – next year. To find out more, go to www.capreform.blog.gov.uk.

When to apply for Countryside Stewardship in 2015

On pages 3 and 9 we have provided some details of application and claim dates for funding in 2015. In our next update we'll tell you more about when claimants can start applying in 2015.

When to apply for Countryside Stewardship from 2016 onwards

The multi-annual application process:

- application build: January to June
- application window: June to September
- appraisal October, offers (to applicants) November to December
- 1 January start dates for agreements
- CS elements: High Tier; Mid Tier; woodland multi-annual (improvement & creation) and capital (improvement infrastructure); water only capital grants (see below)

The capital grants process:

- application window: February to April;
 - appraisal one month after that (May);
 - June onwards: agreements issued.
- CS elements: Hedgerows & Boundaries capital grant; woodland creation establishment

Rolling windows (can apply any time of the year)

- Feasibility and implementation plans; woodland management plans; woodland improvement tree health.

Water capital targeted grants are applied for through a multi-annual application route since this will be a competitive process with applications being scored against available budget. However, the terms and conditions and therefore the duration of the agreement depend on the terms and conditions applicable (a 1 year capital only offer).

How and when to apply for Countryside Stewardship

Countryside Stewardship and greening: double funding

EU rules state that someone must not be paid for the same thing twice on the same piece of land (known as 'double funding').

19 Countryside Stewardship options count as double funding if they are also used to meet Ecological Focus Area (EFA) requirements for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). These options are shown in the table below.

Option code	Option title	Payment Rate £/ha *£/plot	Double-funding element	Reduced rate
WD3	Woodland edges on arable land	322	306	17
HS2	Take historic and archaeological features out of cultivation	425	334	91
SW1	4 to 6 metre buffer strip on cultivated land	553	274	79
WT2	Buffering in-field ponds and ditches on arable land	501	428	73
AB11	Cultivated areas for arable plants	532	367	165
AB5	Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew	524	428	96
AB9	Winter bird food	677	404	271
AB6	Enhanced overwinter stubble	436	428	8
AB1	Nectar flower mix	511	404	107
AB3	Beetle banks	573	428	145
AB4	Wylark plots	9*	5*	4*
SW7	Winter cover crops	114	114	0
SW3	In-field grass strips	557	463	94
SW4	12 to 24 metre watercourse buffer strips on cultivated land	512	416	96
SW12	Making space for water	646	440	206
AB8	Flower rich margins and plots	539	330	209
AB16	Autumn sown Bumblebird mix	550	404	146
AB15	Two year sown legume fallow.	522	378	144
OP2	Organic wild bird seed mixture	773	398	375

We will apply the double funding reduction where it takes place on the ground. That means that in any one year, wherever any of these options overlaps with an EFA feature, the Countryside Stewardship payment rate will be reduced (but the BPS payment won't be).

We will not be applying a 'universal' reduction like we did under Environmental Stewardship.

More information will be published in our next update.



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CAP Reform | More Information Countdown

More information about Countryside Stewardship will be published on GOV.UK – you will be able to find it by searching for 'Countryside Stewardship'.

Information describing the scheme and its main elements will be available from January 2015. For more information, call 0300 020 0301 and select the option for Natural England.

Find out more about CAP reform at www.gov.uk/cap-reform. This web page has all the latest news, as well as all the leaflets and publications we've released so far.

Regulations

The main European regulation governing Countryside Stewardship is Council Regulation 1305/2013.

Farming Advice Service

The Farming Advice Service offers advice about the greening rules and cross compliance. For more information call 0345 345 1302 or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk.

The Farming Advice Service also organises events. To see if there are events planned near you, visit www.farmingadvice.org.uk/events.

Campaign for the Farmed Environment

The Campaign for the Farmed Environment provides information on how to protect and enhance the environmental value of your farmland. Visit their website for more information: www.cfeonline.org.uk.

The National Pollinator Strategy

The Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package supports the National Pollinator Strategy (2014). This recognises that bees and other pollinators face a variety of pressures, and some are in decline or threatened. The evidence shows that this is partly caused by loss of good-quality habitats that feed and shelter them. One of the strategy's aims therefore is to expand food, shelter and nest sites across the country.

Farmers and land managers have an important role to play in this. Making simple changes to farming practice will help give pollinators access to food and shelter. Choosing land management options from the Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package will support this.

Major landowners and managers also have an important role and many of the larger ones (including the National Trust and the Defence Estates) have already committed to specific actions to help pollinators on their land.

Information about action farmers and land managers can take to help pollinators is on the Campaign for the Farmed Environment website: www.cfeonline.org.uk/campaign-themes/pollinators. Information is also available on the Bees' Needs website: www.wildlifetrusts.org/Bees-needs.

The National Pollinator Strategy is available on GOV.UK – just search for 'national pollinator strategy'.

Disclaimer/legal notice

This leaflet is our interpretation of the current regulations for the Common Agricultural Policy schemes from 2015. Only the courts can give a definitive interpretation of the law.

You may want to get independent professional or legal advice before you change anything about your business. We cannot advise you or your legal representatives on your business structure.

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