



Rural Payments  
Agency

March 2020

# An update from the Rural Payments Agency

## Including:

- Countryside Stewardship applications – including scheme updates for 2020
- Basic Payment Scheme applications – including scheme updates for 2020
- What's new in the Rural Payments service
- Main application and claim dates for 2020
- Preparing for 2020



Go to [www.gov.uk/rpa](http://www.gov.uk/rpa) for scheme information



# Before you apply in 2020

We'll publish all the information you need on GOV.UK by the appropriate opening date. For BPS, search for 'BPS 2020', for CS, search for 'Countryside Stewardship', and for ES, search for 'Environmental Stewardship' at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## Get ready in the Rural Payments service

Whether you're a farmer or agent and intend to apply or claim online, or use a paper form, make sure you're ready by following the steps below.

To open the service we recommend you use the latest version of Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Firefox

1. **Sign in to the Rural Payments service:** if you're a new customer, you need to verify your identity before you can register in the service - call us on 03000 200 301 or use GOV.UK Verify.

If you're an existing customer, make sure you can sign into the Rural Payments service at [www.ruralpayments.service.gov.uk](http://www.ruralpayments.service.gov.uk). You may need to reset your password if you get a message to say that your Customer Reference Number (CRN) is incorrect. Onscreen Help will guide you through this step by step. If you still have difficulties, call us.

To help keep your information secure, you should change your password regularly.

2. **Check your personal and business details are up to date:** we'll use email to contact you in the first instance. If you email us, we can only accept emails from email addresses that are registered in the service – and make sure you include the scheme and brief description in the subject title. For example, 'Countryside Stewardship – additional evidence'. This will help your email reach the correct department quickly.
3. **Check your permission levels for CS and BPS:** check that you have set permission levels for your business. You, and your agent if you have one, must have the correct level of permissions for your business for each of the schemes that you intend to apply for, and claim against. For CS, check 'Countryside Stewardship (Applications)', and 'Countryside Stewardship (Agreements)' for submitting annual revenue claims. Read more information about permissions in the appropriate CS or BPS 'How to apply' guidance, which will be published on GOV.UK when applications and claims open.

4. **Check your digital maps:** It's important that you check your digital land maps before you start an application or claim to make sure that they are accurate. If you then need to update your land information, send us an RLE1 form as soon as you can (you can only send these to us by post), so that we can complete your request before you submit your application or claim.

You can find more information about 'Digital maps in the Rural Payments service' on GOV.UK. This includes what to do if you do not agree with any updates that have been made to your digital maps.

**If you intend to apply using a paper form, you should still register in the Rural Payments service to make sure we have your most up-to-date personal and business contact details, and to check your digital maps. If you need help to register for the service, call us on 03000 200 301.**

## What's new in the Rural Payments service for 2020?

- Pop ups: you'll see these when you sign into the service. We'll use them to let you know when the service is unavailable; and for other important messages.
- Request a Higher Tier application pack: request a pack online and it will be emailed to you.

## Use the Rural Payments service to:

Action	Dates
Transfer land	30 Jan to 15 May
Transfer BPS entitlements	30 Jan to 15 May
Update land use	11 Feb to 9 June
Add and delete commons rights	12 March to 9 June

## Main application and annual claim dates

The key dates timeline for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Environmental Stewardship (ES) is now available on GOV.UK

### Countryside Stewardship applications

#### Mid Tier and Wildlife Offers

2020 11 Feb Open	2020 30 Jun (Midnight) Mid Tier only - request an application pack online	2020 31 Jul (Midnight) Applications close
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#### Higher Tier

2020 11 Feb Open	2020 31 Mar (Midnight) Request an application pack online	2020 1 May (Midnight) Initial applications close
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#### Hedgerows and Boundaries

2020 11 Feb Open	2020 1 May (Midnight) Applications close
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Request an application pack online for Mid Tier or Higher Tier using the Rural Payments service. The pack will be emailed to you.

For CS Hedgerows and Boundaries, and CS Wildlife Offers, you can apply online using the Rural Payments service. You don't need to request an application pack.

If you cannot get online, you can request a paper application by calling us on 03000 200 301. The closing date for requesting a paper pack is:

- Mid Tier and Wildlife Offers by 31 May
- Higher Tier by 31 March

Countryside Stewardship capital grant schemes are open all year round.

#### Basic Payments Scheme applications

#### Countryside Stewardship revenue claims

#### Environmental Stewardship revenue claims

2020 12 Mar Open	2020 15 May (Midnight) Close (without penalty)	2020 9 June (Midnight) Close (late application penalty applies)
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## Countryside Stewardship

We will continue to offer Countryside Stewardship agreements in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Countryside Stewardship will eventually be replaced with the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. This will follow trialling and testing, and a national pilot involving farmers and land managers. The full ELM scheme will be in place from 2024.

Signing up to a CS agreement now will put you in the best possible position to join ELM. What's more it will give you a viable, long-term source of income for providing environmental benefits as BPS payments start to reduce. If you are successful in securing a place in ELM, then we will let you terminate your Countryside Stewardship agreement early, without penalty, at the end of an agreement year so you can enter straight into ELM.

### Updates to the scheme for 2020

The following updates have been made to the scheme for 2020.

- Request a CS Higher Tier application pack online using the Rural Payments service
- More options are available under the Wildlife Offers – read Section 5 of the CS Mid Tier manual for 2020
- Eligibility requirements for the Wildlife Offers and Scheduled Monuments have changed – read Section 5 of the CS Mid Tier manual for 2020.
- Email your application (initial application for Higher Tier) without signing the form (no need to print and scan the form). Check you have the correct permission level to submit an application and a valid business email address registered against your Single Business Identifier (SBI) in the Rural Payments service.

There may be further updates made to the scheme. We will update GOV.UK as soon as we have the details. We will send you an agreement offer (if you are successful), which will direct you to any updated information on GOV.UK. You must read this before entering into your agreement.

### Claims

Remember that if you have a CS agreement that contains multi-year options, submit a CS revenue claim for every year of your agreement - this includes agreements starting on 1 January 2020. Use the Rural Payments service to submit your claim.

#### Reminder for Countryside Stewardship capital claims

- You must complete all capital works within 2 years of the agreement start date.
- We must receive all claims for payment, supporting documents and evidence no later than 3 months after the agreement end date. Claims received after this date will not be accepted.

Depending on the items you're claiming for, supporting documents and evidence you must send to us may vary. Read information about each item in 'Countryside Stewardship grants' on GOV.UK.

#### Countryside Stewardship revenue claims

From 12 to 31 March updates will be made to the Rural Payments service. If any of the following apply, you should submit your online claim from 1 April.

- Land parcels that have not been registered to you, for example where a parcel has been split.
- Your agreement is being amended.
- You were an online customer who transferred to a paper claim in 2019.

#### Environmental Stewardship annual claims

We will only send you a paper form in 2020 if we do not hold a valid email address for you. Emailing forms is quicker which means you'll have more time to complete your claim.

Email your completed form to us. Make sure you include 'Environmental Stewardship claim form' in the subject title.

## Basic Payment Scheme for applications in 2020

The Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), greening, and young and new farmer payment will continue to operate for the 2020 scheme year.

If you applied online in 2019 we'll send you an email inviting you to apply online in 2020.

If you claimed on paper in 2019, we'll send you a paper form. If you have an agent, your paper form may be sent to them if they hold the correct permission level of BPS 'Submit'.

### Updates to the scheme for 2020

The following updates have been made to the scheme for 2020.

- Young farmer payment: if you're applying for the young farmer payment for the first time, you must send us a Basic Payment Scheme 'Young and new farmer application' form and 'Accountant or Solicitor' certificate. If you applied for the payment in previous years, and you were assessed as eligible for the young farmer payment in 2019, you don't need to send us another form or any evidence unless there's been a change to the structure of your business. In which case, you must send us another 'Basic Payment Scheme Young and new farmer application form' and 'Accountant or Solicitor' certificate.
- Penalties for over-claiming land: the Government plans to make simplifications to the penalties for over-claims. Updated guidance will follow in due course.

More information about these updates will be available in the 'Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2020', which will be published on GOV.UK when applications open.

## Contact us



### Email us

ruralpayments  
@defra.gov.uk



### Call us

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



### Write to us

**(CS customers)**  
Rural Payments Agency  
PO Box 324  
Workshop  
S95 1DF

**(BPS customers)**  
Rural Payments Agency  
PO box 352  
Workshop  
S80 9FG

For ES customers, address  
details are split by county.  
Read more about ES  
addresses on GOV.UK – go to  
[www.gov.uk/guidance/  
environmental-stewardship](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-stewardship).

## Be aware of fraud

Search 'RPA fraud information' at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and find out how to protect you and your information, and what to do if you suspect an attempted fraud.



- We won't call you or send you emails or texts asking you to confirm your personal details or payment information.
- Never discuss your bank account details with someone you don't know.
- We won't ask you to make a payment over the phone.
- Delete any emails or texts you don't believe are genuine.
- Don't open any links unless from our main email addresses
  - [ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk)
  - [rpa@notifications.service.gov.uk](mailto:rpa@notifications.service.gov.uk)
  - [ruralpayments@rpa.emails.com](mailto:ruralpayments@rpa.emails.com)
  - [rdpenetwork@defra.gov.uk](mailto:rdpenetwork@defra.gov.uk)
- Be cautious about what information you share externally, particularly on social media.

If you suspect an attempted fraud or feel you have been the subject of fraud, you can contact:

- RPA's Fraud Referral Team on 0800 347 347 or [FraudInConfidence@rpa.gov.uk](mailto:FraudInConfidence@rpa.gov.uk)
- Action Fraud (the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cyber-crime) on 0300 123 2040.