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| Operations Note 058 | 08.02.2022 |

Historic Environment options in Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier woodland agreements

# Purpose

This note will help inform the use of Historic Environment (HE) capital items and multiannual options available on woodland parcels in Higher Tier applications 2022 onwards (Agreement start date January 2023). For these applications, 6 capital and multiannual options are newly available for woodland (WO12) land parcels. Work activity for HE features in an agreement can be covered by any combination of: the existing WD2 multi-annual prescriptions, the existing capital items, or the newly available multi-annual options and capital items.

# Context

As per the established grant application process, a Historic Environment Farm Environment Record (HEFER) will be generated for each application for Higher Tier grant support. This must cover all land parcels included within the application. The HEFER will reference the significant and surviving historic environment features (including any Scheduled Monuments (SM)) on those parcels and make suggestions for grant options to support their management.

When completing the application, applicants including woodland parcels only, should apply as “Woodland Only” agreements; if there are SMs within the woodland parcels, these must be declared in the application. Applications with SMs outside the woodland parcels (but present on the holding) should be submit as “Mixed”. Like SSSIs, any SM present on the landholding should be declared at application stage. Providing a HEFER that does not cover all land parcels included within the application will delay application processing and will jeopardise any final agreement.

Some of the work activity included in the 6 newly available options has the potential to overlap with WD2 prescriptions or other Countryside Stewardship capital items. It is important that no work is double funded – i.e., the same work on the same footprint cannot be funded twice through different options in the agreement.

# HEFERs

The HEFER is a pre-application consultation with Local Authority historic environment partners and Historic England. It gives the mandatory record of all known features added by the Local Authority Historic Environment Services onto the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE) dataset on the application parcels.

The HEFER response allows an applicant to demonstrate (and the FC to check) the requirements that:

• Only suitable multiannual options/capital items are used on or near known HE features

• All SMs on the agreement land are identified, and any ‘Essential’ management (as defined by Historic England) is considered within application processing

• They are aware of HE features to be protected from damage on the agreement land

Any work on a SM indicated to be “essential” on the HEFER must be included in the final agreement unless the FC and HE agree otherwise. The FC would still encourage the appropriate management work to SMs even where this isn’t marked as “essential”, and for any other HEFER identified features. In cases where the FC Woodland Officer or applicant doesn’t fully understand the HEFER or feels the work is inappropriate, specialist input can be requested from the FC’s Historic Environment Team via the Woodland Officer.

# Overlapping multi-annual options and capital items

To avoid double funding, it is important that there is no duplication of the same funded work activity carried out on the same area of land parcel. The newly available HE multiannual options (HS1, HS4, HS6 and HS8) and capital items (HE1 and HE3) can be applied on the same footprint and are compatible with the Woodland Improvement option WD2. However, work included within the HE multiannual options or capital items should not be included within WD2 prescriptions, or any other multi-annual options or capital items (as per figure 1):

Figure 1: double funding risks with Historic Environment multi-annual options and capital items

The FC will be able to recognise and help you avoid any potential double-funding in your grant funding proposal. This will help you ensure items/options are not used to fund the same work. The FC can also identify opportunities where HE multiannual options and capital items are complimentary to the established funding offers for woodlands. In these cases, multiannual options and capital items can be used on the same area of the woodland parcel.

For example, the newly available HE1 capital item may be used to clear vegetation and restore eroded surfaces and attract a payment based on actual cost. If the vegetation clearance elements were included in the agreed work specification (see below), that work should not be included in a specification for HE3, funded under a capital item (i.e., SB1, SB2, SB6) or the multiannual option (HS4) for scrub control, or included in the P2000 or P2007 prescriptions of WD2.

Similarly, the newly available HS4 multiannual option “Scrub control on historic and archaeological features”, may be used to reduce scrub cover and manage open space on archaeological features. This would attract an annual payment of £137 per hectare for the 5 years of the agreement to support the need for ongoing management. Alternatively, the work could be funded as capital item scrub control (i.e., SB1, SB2, SB6) in a two-year agreement, included in a specification for HE1 or HE3 (see below), or included in the P2000 or P2007 prescriptions of WD2.

# Specifications for HE1 and HE3

The capital items HE1 (Historic and archaeological feature protection) and HE3 (Removal of eyesore) require an agreed specification to be agreed with the FC during application processing. Following this agreement, you will have to supply three quotes reaching this specification before the final grant agreement can be issued.

It is advised to make your local Woodland Officer aware of any possible inclusion of HE1 and HE3 at the earliest opportunity. If required, specialist input can be requested from the FC’s Historic Environment Team via your Woodland Officer.

# Changes to Woodland Management Plans

Your WMP must support and validate your Higher Tier application. It must support the requirements you have applied for under the WD2 or historic environment multiannual options and/or explain why you need the capital items you have included in your application. Where your CS application includes historic environment multiannual options or capital items within the woodland, the work required should be declared in your WMP.

For this, you may need to make and have approved amendments to your WMP as part of the Higher Tier application processing. Whether this is possible in the required timescales will depend on the type of amendment(s) you need to make. Hence, you need to discuss any changes you wish to make (e.g., to validate the inclusion of HE feature(s) grant support) with your Woodland Officer as soon as possible.

Any work related to Scheduled Monuments may require Historic England to provide Scheduled Monument Consent. This may have been obtained during or following the FC’s WMP approval process. If proposals are new or have been altered, you may need to update any Scheduled Monument Consent granted previously.

# Sources of further advice

The [grant finder tool on GOV.uk](https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants) contains information about the capital items and multiannual options available through Countryside Stewardship grant support. Information on [how to apply can be found via GOV.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-get-paid-for-environmental-land-management), and you can make contact with your Woodland Officer via your local [[Forestry Commission office](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/access-and-opening)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/access-and-opening).

# Versions

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