



Rural Payments
Agency

Countryside Stewardship: Woodland Tree Health Grant Manual (from 8 February 2022)

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Countryside Stewardship: Woodland Tree Health Grant Manual (from 8 February 2022)

Find out how to apply for the Woodland Tree Health grant for Countryside Stewardship.

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).

1 Introduction

The Woodland Tree Health grant is part of Countryside Stewardship. It's a capital grant under which you can apply for support for Woodland Tree Health Restoration and/or Woodland Tree Health Improvement.

This manual applies to Woodland Tree Health agreements starting from 8 February 2022. It explains what you need to do to apply for a Woodland Tree Health grant and any additional requirements and processes which you must follow.

If you are a land manager, you can apply for a Woodland Tree Health grant to support one or both of the following:

- the restocking of trees after tree felling to manage infection from certain tree diseases or pests
- the removal of diseased trees and infected rhododendron.

Woodland Tree Health grant manual

This manual explains what you need to do to apply for the Woodland Tree Health grant element of Countryside Stewardship ('the Scheme'). It also explains the additional requirements and processes that you must follow if your application is successful.

For information about the other elements of [Countryside Stewardship](#) on GOV.UK. Search for 'Countryside Stewardship: How to apply'.

Countryside Stewardship scheme overview

The main priority for Countryside Stewardship is to protect and enhance the natural environment, in particular:

- increased biodiversity, improved habitat and expanded woodland areas
- improved water quality
- improved air quality

Other outcomes supported are:

- protection against flooding and coastal erosion

- maintaining the historic environment
- improved landscape character
- climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Countryside Stewardship supports Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan 'for our country to be the healthiest, most beautiful place in the world to live, work and bring up a family'. It also supports Defra's Strategic Objective of 'a cleaner, healthier environment, benefitting people and the economy'.

Countryside Stewardship gives incentives for land managers to look after their environment and is made up of the following elements:

- Higher Tier agreements for land that requires more complex management tailored to the individual site and now includes woodland maintenance
- Mid Tier agreements that provide a range of options and capital items that together help to deliver a broad range of environmental benefits
- four Wildlife Offers that provide a simpler set of options to help improve the wildlife on farms
- Capital Grants that provide grants for boundaries, trees and orchards, water quality and air quality
- Woodland Management Plan grant to help create a UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) compliant 10 year woodland management plan
- Facilitation Fund which supports individuals who bring together groups of farmers, foresters and land managers to improve the environmental outcomes in their area
- Countryside Stewardship Protection and Infrastructure grant which provides grants for woodland infrastructure.

Woodland Tree Health and Woodland Management Plan grants are not competitive.

If you are eligible for the grant and there is sufficient budget, RPA (supported by a Forestry Commission Woodland Officer) will approve your application.

More information

You can find more information about [Countryside Stewardship](#) along with [Countryside Stewardship forms](#) on GOV.UK.

Our new approach to tree health and biosecurity is set out in the [Tree Health Resilience Strategy](#). You can find more information about [tree pests and diseases](#) on GOV.UK.

Agricultural Transition

We will continue to offer Countryside Stewardship agreements in 2023 and 2024.

Countryside Stewardship will eventually be replaced with three new schemes that reward the delivery of environmental benefits: the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery. This will follow piloting involving farmers and land managers. By 2025, we will have fully introduced our three new environmental land management schemes.

Signing up to a Countryside Stewardship agreement now will put you in the best possible position to join future schemes. What's more, it will give you a viable, long-term source of income for providing environmental benefits as Basic Payment Scheme payments are reduced. Anyone in a Countryside Stewardship agreement that started on or after 1 January 2021 will be able to end their agreement early, at agreed points, where they have secured an agreement in one of our environmental land management schemes.

Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot

You can apply for CS Woodland Tree Health capital grants on land parcels in a SFI pilot standards agreement.

Sustainable Farming Incentive 2022

We will launch the first round of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) in 2022.

When it opens, farmers who are eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) will be eligible for SFI. Land parcels already in a CS Capital Grants agreement will be eligible for SFI in 2022 provided they meet the respective scheme eligibility requirements. You can also apply for CS Capital Grants on land entered into SFI in 2022.

Important information

Woodland support grants are provided under domestic legislation.

You may need to keep evidence and provide it when requested. Check [Countryside Stewardship grants](#) (known as the grant finder) for the evidence and record-keeping requirements of grants before you apply for them.

Accessibility improvements

We have made a number of changes to improve accessibility as part of our ongoing aim to provide a high quality service to all our customers. You will see some small changes in the Countryside Stewardship application annexes and forms as a result, but the way they work and the data required remain the same.

Countryside Stewardship Woodland Tree Health Grant Agreement

A Woodland Tree Health grant agreement comprises of:

1. the Countryside Stewardship [Annex 1 Terms and Conditions](#)
2. an Agreement Document (which sets out Agreement Holder specific details)
3. the supplementary documents referred to in the Agreement Document.

Mandatory parts of the Woodland Tree Health Grant Manual

The [Annex 1 Terms and Conditions](#) refer to the mandatory elements of this manual that Agreement Holders must comply with.

The mandatory sections of this manual are:

- Section 2: Scheme overview
- Section 3: Who can apply
- Section 6: Scheme requirements and procedures
- Section 7: Agreement Management

Be aware of fraud

Fraudsters may target farmers who receive subsidy payments and we're aware that in the past some customers have received emails, texts and telephone calls claiming to be from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) or the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Links to a fake website designed to look like an authentic RPA or Defra online service are sometimes included in the message.

We do not send emails or text messages with links to websites asking you to confirm your personal details or payment information. We strongly advise anyone who receives such a request not open the link, and delete the item.

As fraudsters may target farmers who receive subsidy payments, remember:

- never discuss your bank account details with someone you do not know
- we will not ask you to make a payment over the phone
- delete any emails or texts you do not believe are genuine, and do not open any links unless from our main email addresses which are:
- ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk
- rpa@notifications.service.gov.uk
- FETFEnquiries@rpa.gov.uk
- FETFClaims@rpa.gov.uk
- FTF@rpa.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
- Action Fraud (the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cyber-crime) on 0300 123 2040

2 Scheme overview

You must read and meet the requirements detailed in this section as these are mandatory for all Woodland Tree Health grant agreement holders.

Woodland Tree Health grants are available under Countryside Stewardship. You can submit an application for a Woodland Tree Health grant at any time of the year. If you accept an offer for a grant, you will enter into an agreement with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA).

Read [Countryside Stewardship: How to apply](#) for guidance and information on other woodland capital grants available as part of Countryside Stewardship.

2.1 Capital items available

19 capital items are available through the Woodland Tree Health grant. The online [Countryside Stewardship grants](#) tool (known as the grant finder) gives a description and essential requirements for each capital item. This includes eligibility and evidence requirements.

You can find the payment rates and details about using supplements in Section 5 How it works.

2.2 Agreement period

Agreements are for a maximum of 2 years. During this period, you must complete all capital works. You then have a further 3 months from the end of the agreement to submit your payment claim. You must maintain any capital items funded through the scheme in the same condition and specification set out in your Woodland Tree Health grant agreement, for 5 years from the date of final payment (durability period).

2.3 How applications are assessed

Woodland Tree Health grants are not competitive.

If you are eligible for the grant and there is sufficient budget, RPA (supported by a Forestry Commission Woodland Officer) will approve your application.

2.4 What the grant cannot pay for

The grant cannot be used to pay for the cost of any of the following:

- any capital works initiated before the agreement start date
- planning application fees or other transactional fees
- agent fees or other advisory fees
- meeting legal requirements, including planning conditions

3 Who can apply and what land is eligible

You must read and meet the requirements detailed in this section as these are mandatory for all Woodland Tree Health grant agreement holders.

The Woodland Tree Health Grant is open to land managers who are either:

- an owner occupier
- a tenant
- a landlord
- a licensor.

3.1 Eligible Land

3.1.1 What land can be entered into the scheme

Land must meet the definition of woodland. Woodland is defined as an area of land that:

- is at least 0.5 hectares
- has an average width of at least 20 metres
- is under groups/lines of trees that are, or will reach, at least 5 metres in height and with a crown cover of more than 20% of the ground area.

There is no area threshold for the woodland tree health improvement part of this grant although the works under the agreement must be worth at least £500.

There is a minimum agreement size of 0.25 hectares and a minimum woodland block size of 0.1 hectares for applications for the woodland tree health restoration grant.

3.1.2 Ineligible land

The following land is not eligible for the scheme:

- developed land and hard standing (including permanent caravan sites and areas used for permanent storage)
- land that is already part of another obligation which is incompatible with Countryside Stewardship
- any land parcels which are not entirely within England. Parcels that are either partly or entirely within Scotland or Wales are not eligible for Countryside Stewardship
- land where you do not have management control for the period of the agreement and you are not able to have an application countersigned by the landowner (read section 3.2)
- land within the HS2 (High Speed Two) route safeguarding zone.

3.2 Management Control

You must have control of the land and all activities needed to meet the requirements of the capital items selected for the full period of the agreement (2 years) and for the subsequent 5 years from the date of final payment (see section 2.2 Agreement period for the obligation to maintain capital items).

If you do not, you must get the written consent of all other parties who have management control of the land and activities for the full agreement and durability periods.

3.2.1 Tenants

If you occupy land under a tenancy, including the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986, the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995 (a Farm Business Tenancy) or equivalent, and you are applying for an agreement in your own name, this land is eligible if you have:

- security of tenure for at least 2 years from the start of the CS Woodland Tree Health agreement. The land is not eligible if you do not have this minimum period of tenure
- management control of the land for 5 years from the start of the CS Woodland Tree Health agreement. If you do not have management control for 5 years from the start date of the agreement, you must get the counter signature of your landlord as part of your application

- control of all the activities over the land to meet the scheme requirements for the chosen capital items
- the agreement of your landlord before you apply.

It is your responsibility to check that by joining Countryside Stewardship you do not breach the terms of your tenancy agreement. If the landlord takes over a Countryside Stewardship agreement from you once your tenancy has ended, they must be eligible to do so. For example, they must not be an ineligible public body.

3.2.2 Landlords

If you are a landlord and can show that you keep management control over the land and activities, you can apply for an agreement on land that you have let to a tenant.

Dual use is where the applicant for this grant is different to the applicant for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). Dual use for this grant is possible in limited circumstances, for example when you are replacing young trees on land under a woodland maintenance or farm woodland agreement and which is also eligible for BPS.

For more information read [Guidance on woodland grant schemes and BPS: operations note 42](#).

As the agreement holder, you must give your tenant a copy of the Countryside Stewardship agreement. We may ask you to provide evidence to show that you have done this. It is your responsibility to make sure that your tenant does not breach the terms of the agreement.

3.2.3 Partnerships

If you are in a business partnership, you can apply for Countryside Stewardship. The person submitting the application must have the appropriate permission levels in the [Rural Payments service](#) (see section 4.3 Register with the Rural Payments service for more information).

3.2.4 Licensors

If you are a licensor, you can apply for a Countryside Stewardship agreement. It is your responsibility to make sure that the licensee does not breach the terms of the Countryside Stewardship agreement.

You must make sure that the licensee is aware of the requirements of the agreement, as relevant to the licence, and include these in the licence agreement.

3.2.5 Licensees

If you are a licensee, you may be eligible in certain circumstances if you can demonstrate full management control of the land for the period of the agreement.

3.2.6 Land owned by public bodies

Land owned or run by a public body is in general not eligible for Countryside Stewardship. If you are a tenant of a public body, you will need to check with your landlord if the land is eligible for Countryside Stewardship. Countryside Stewardship cannot pay for any environmental management that is already required through:

- payment from EU and Exchequer funds
- grant aid from any other public body
- any other form of legally binding obligation including tenancies.

This means that Crown bodies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) are not eligible for the scheme. This includes those that are Trading Funds or do not receive funding direct from the Exchequer. Crown bodies include all government departments and their executive agencies. These include, for example:

- Ministry of Defence
- Forestry Commission.

NDPBs are public bodies that have a role in the processes of national government but are not a government department and are not part of one. These include:

- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Historic England
- National Forest Company.

Parish councils and former college farms are not considered to be public bodies and so are eligible to apply for Countryside Stewardship.

The following table provides more detailed eligibility requirements for public bodies.

Body/Organisation	Eligibility	Comments
Government departments, executive agencies and NDPSs (for example, Ministry of Defence, Forestry Commission)	Ineligible	Not applicable
Other public bodies (for example, local authorities, National Park authorities and public corporations)	Eligible	Provided the work does not form part of their obligations as a public body.
Parish Councils and former college farms	Eligible	Not applicable
Tenants of eligible public bodies	Eligible	Ineligible where the work is already a requirement of the tenancy agreement. The public body must countersign the application if the tenant does not have security of tenure for the full terms of the agreement.

Body/Organisation	Eligibility	Comments
Tenants of ineligible public bodies	Eligible	Ineligible where the work is already a requirement of the tenancy agreement. Tenants must have security of tenure for the full term of the agreement, as the public body cannot countersign the application.

3.3 Land receiving other funding or other agreements

You cannot use this grant for capital works which you are required to carry out under other legally binding obligations (including private contractual obligations) or for which you are receiving (or have received) funding from other sources. For example, work might be required as part of a tenancy agreement or grant schemes such as:

- Environmental Stewardship
- England Woodland Creation Offer
- Tree Health pilot
- other grants within Countryside Stewardship
- Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme
- Farming Recovery Fund
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Inheritance Tax Exemption.

You must make sure that any work proposed as part of this grant does not breach the conditions of any other agreement. We will carry out checks to make sure that capital works are not funded twice from public money.

If your application is on land which is already in an Environmental Stewardship (ES) and/or English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS), Farm Woodland or Farm Woodland Premium Scheme agreement Natural England, the Forestry Commission and RPA will check it to make sure the work is compatible. However, it is your responsibility to make sure that you and the land are eligible.

3.3.1 Compatibility with Countryside Stewardship

You can apply for a Woodland Tree Health grant on land parcels which already have a Countryside Stewardship agreement. However, the grant application cannot include any work which is already required by the existing scheme or is a breach of the conditions of the existing agreement.

If you have written endorsement from a Forestry Commission Woodland Adviser or Natural England Adviser, you may:

- apply for a Countryside Stewardship Implementation Plan (PA1), Feasibility Study (PA2), Woodland Management Plan (PA3) or Woodland Tree Health grant agreement on the same land parcels
- apply for a Higher Tier capital only agreement on parcels with woodland multi-year options in place
- apply for a Higher Tier woodland agreement (WD2) on parcels already in an agreement with woodland capital items.

4 How to apply

Find out how to apply and the evidence and consents you'll need.

4.1 Application route: step by step guide

Step 1 – Before you apply

- Make sure that you and the land you wish to enter into the grant are eligible – read section 3 Who can apply and what land is eligible
- Register on the Rural Payments service, if you have not already done so – read section 4.3 Register with the Rural Payments service
- If you prefer to use an agent, you will need to authorise them to act for you – read section 4.3 Register with the Rural Payments service

Step 2 – Start to fill in your application form

- Start your application – read section 4.4 Application methods
- Choose which capital items to apply for – read section 5.3.4 Capital items
- Request approval, consents and permissions (if applicable) – read section 4.6 Other considerations

Step 3 – Gather your evidence and supporting documents

- Prepare a map to send with your application – read section 4.5 Prepare a map to accompany your application
- Get any documents you need to support your application – read sections 4.5 Prepare a map to accompany your application and 6.3 Evidence: Record keeping and site visits
- Keep photographic evidence to support your application as we may ask to see it – read sections 6.3 Evidence: Record keeping and site visits, 6.4 Photographic evidence and 6.5 Publicity requirements

- Make sure you clearly label all photographic evidence – read section 6.4.3 Clearly labelled photographs

Step 4 - Fill in and submit the application

- Fill in the remaining sections of your application form using the guidance available
- Check your application is complete before you submit – read section 4.8 Before you submit your application
- Submit your application by email or post and if you can, send us your Woodland Tree Health annex by email - read section 4.9 Submitting your application

4.2 Application deadline

You can apply for a Woodland Tree Health grant at any time. The grant is open throughout the year.

4.3 Register with the Rural Payments service

You must be registered on the [Rural Payments service](#) before you can apply for this grant. Once you're registered, you will receive a Customer Registration Number (CRN) and a Single Business Identifier (SBI). If you use an agent to apply for you, they must also be registered on the Rural Payments service and you must give them the appropriate permissions in the Rural Payments Service. You are responsible for making sure that you give the correct permissions in Rural Payments and that contact details are all correct.

Read '[Give someone else permission to act on your behalf](#)' on GOV.UK for more information on the different levels of permission.

All land parcels listed on your application must be registered on the Rural Payments service, and have a parcel reference number (in the format AA1234 5678). You will be asked to provide your parcel reference numbers when you apply. To register land, you must complete a [Rural Land and Entitlements \(RLE1\) form](#) and provide annotated maps to clearly show where the land parcels are on your holding and send this to RPA.

Read about how to do this in the RLE1 guidance on GOV.UK. You can read more information about [registering and updating your details in the Rural Payments service](#) on GOV.UK.

4.4 Application methods

You can submit your application by email or post.

The Countryside Stewardship Woodland Tree Health application form is available at Countryside Stewardship forms. If you cannot download the application form, please contact us. Use the guidance available at 'Countryside Stewardship: capital grants How to complete your Woodland Tree Health application' to help you fill in the application form.

You also need to fill in a Woodland Tree Health Annex and send this to us with your application form. Email ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk to get a copy of this.

Before making your application please read the [Annex 1 Terms and Conditions](#) of this manual.

If you submit by email, as long as the application form is sent by someone with the correct permissions (and an email address that is registered on Rural Payments for that person) you do not need to print the relevant section(s) and form(s), sign and scan the documents back into your computer.

4.5 Prepare a map for your application

You need to provide a map which shows all areas of proposed capital items with your application. If your application is successful and we offer you an agreement, the map you sent with the application will become the 'Agreement Map' so it needs to be clear, legible and meet the standards set out below in section 4.5.1 Minimum mapping standards.

How to create a map

You can create the application map yourself (as long as it meets the standards in section 4.5.1), request a map using the [Forestry Commission map request service](#) or you can contact the RPA and ask us to send you one.

The agreement map needs to reflect the details recorded in the Woodland Tree Health annex, showing:

- all land parcels
- the location of capital items applied for
- other relevant information outlined in section 4.5.1.

If you send a map that does not meet these requirements or the minimum standards outlined in section 4.5.1, we'll return it to you and ask you to send a new one.

Depending on why your map did not meet the minimum standards, it may be possible for you to amend it to meet them and then send it back to us. If you cannot amend your map to meet the minimum standards, you'll need to create a new map that does and then send it to the RPA.

You are responsible for providing updated maps if there are any changes agreed to your application.

4.5.1 Minimum mapping standards

When creating your application map (or marking capital items on the map we have provided) you must comply with the following rules:

- The map (or maps) must be based on a scale of 1:2500 or 1:5000 or for large schemes 1:10000. If you are using a GIS based map at a non-standard scale, add a scale bar to the map so that this can be used to measure lengths.
- The map (or maps) must show the whole land parcel on which the capital items to be included are located. The land parcel number must be clearly identified.
- The map (or maps) must show the location of the proposed capital works. Mark the capital extent of the items with a coloured pen including the item code(s) next to them. Planting areas should be marked as accurately as possible. It must not include areas that are already regenerating with suitable species.
- The map (or maps) must show any proposed areas of open space within the proposed planting areas
- The map (or maps) must show fence lines – stating which type of fence (code) you are applying for
- The map (or maps) should have a number (1, 2, 3, and so on). Include this map number and also the total number of maps, for example 1 of 3

You must also:

- Write your Single Business Identifier (SBI) – consisting of 9 digits, the application year and agreement title (as detailed on the application form) on the top right of the map

- Write the name of business or applicant – this should be the name (beneficiary) that is registered with us for the SBI, on the right hand side of the map
- Write a 6 figure Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference for the centre of the map on the bottom left of the map, if there are no numbered OS grid lines
- Use black ink when you write on the Agreement Map. If you make a mistake do not use correction fluid, strike through the mistake instead. If you send a map that does not meet these standards we'll return it to you to amend or ask you to send us a new one.

4.6 Getting consent

You must check each capital item you are applying for to see if any consents are needed. You are responsible for arranging all relevant consents, permissions, exemptions and any written advice needed for your application as set out below. We may ask to see this evidence.

4.6.1 Consents

Planning consents

Your local planning authority can give you informal advice on whether a proposal needs planning consent. We will not pay you for any work you carry out unless you have all the necessary consents and permissions in place before you begin the work. There is also [general guidance on planning](#) available. In some cases, you will not be offered an agreement if these are not in place.

Felling licences

You may need permission from the Forestry Commission to fell growing trees (unless an exemption applies). Permission is given with a felling licence or with approval under a Dedication Scheme. In certain circumstances you may also need special permission from another organisation for any proposed felling. [More information is available](#).

If you're not sure if you need a licence for your Tree Health application you can speak to your Forestry Commission Woodland Officer or the nearest Forestry Commission office for guidance. You can [find details about offices and opening hours](#) online.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (including National Nature Reserves)

One-to-one technical advice for Tree Health Grants is not available from Natural England, except in relation to any land in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is contained in the application. Work on land in a SSSI will need consent and you should contact Natural England as early as possible when you are getting your application ready.

Scheduled monuments

Your local Historic England officer can provide advice on any management or changes needed to maintain or bring the monument into favourable condition. You may also need Scheduled Monument Consent from the Government (advised by Historic England) for some of the chosen work (such as fencing and gateways). In these situations you must speak to Historic England to see whether consent is needed, or how to go about works to avoid or reduce negative impacts on the Scheduled Monument.

If your proposals relate to any of the following, Historic England can advise whether they are likely to be acceptable:

- registered parks and gardens
- registered battlefields.

4.6.2 Other consents

You may need to apply for other consents even if you do not need planning consent. If you do, you must keep this evidence as we may ask to see it. Examples of areas where consent is likely to be needed includes where the work affects:

- protected species (as defined by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981)
- registered parkland
- registered battlefield
- watercourse or highway areas subject to a Tree Preservation Order – a licence may be needed for any changes to trees and hedges.

4.6.3 Other considerations

When you carry out work under the agreement, remember that you must not breach any other rules or laws, such as:

- break byelaws
- obstruct public rights of way
- block or restrict access to 'open access' land
- affect oil or gas pipelines
- breach your cross compliance requirements in relation to any other existing commitments you hold, where applicable, for example if you claim BPS payments.

4.7 Complete and submit your application

A complete application is made up of the following which you need to submit to us:

- an application form
- an application annex
- the application map as at section 4.5 Prepare a map to accompany your application
- a Countryside Stewardship: land ownership and control form, if applicable
- any other supporting documents we ask for.

The forms are available on the [Countryside Stewardship forms](#) page. You must keep evidence to show that you, the business, land and grants are eligible, and have it available on request as we may ask to see it.

You must retain any other evidence (such as photographs) set out under the management options and capital items. (Read more information at: [Countryside Stewardship grants](#) (known as the grant finder) on GOV.UK and have it available on request as we may ask to see it in support of your application.

You must check what supporting documents are required for each capital item (see sections 6.3 Evidence: Record keeping and site visits to 6.5 Publicity requirements). Your application form and the guidance received with it should also help you to identify any supporting information you need to submit.

4.8 Before you submit your application

Read this Countryside Stewardship Manual and the [Annex 1 Terms and Conditions](#) and:

- double check the details in your application form are correct
- read the declaration, undertakings and warning carefully
- sign and enter your name in block letters, your capacity (for example, sole trader, company director, agent and so on) and the date of your signature.

The party/parties that sign the paper application must have full authority and capacity to represent and bind the applicant.

Make sure any counter signatories' (for example, landlords') declarations, undertakings and signature(s) are provided (if applicable).

4.8.1 Business viability test

For applications including capital expenditure of over £50,000, you must submit a statement from a registered accountant (for example, a chartered accountant or certified accountant). This is to confirm that the business or SBI has the resources from trading profits, reserves or loans to undertake the work in the proposed agreement schedule.

Where confirmation from an accountant is needed, the accountant will need to provide a letter on headed paper which confirms at least the following:

- they are a registered accountant
- they act as the accountant for the applicant or have been contracted to act on behalf of the applicant
- they can confirm that you as the applicant have sufficient finances to complete the capital works in your application and how these funds will be sourced, (for example, savings, loan and so on)
- their understanding of the total value of the capital works in the application.

If your application includes more than £500,000 of capital items, we will also review 3 years of your relevant business accounts or other evidence. This is to confirm that you have the administrative, financial and operational capacity to meet the agreement requirements.

4.9 Submitting your application

You can email your application and supporting information to: ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk or post it to:

Rural Payments Agency (CS),
PO Box 324,
Worksop,
S95 1DF.

Title your email 'Countryside Stewardship, document type, year, SBI number', for example
Countryside Stewardship, Woodland Tree Health grant application, 2022, (SBI).

We also recommend that you:

- get proof of postage for these and any other documents you send to us
- keep a copy of your completed application form and map.

We need to send the Forestry Commission an electronic version of your application annex, so if you can, send it to us by email.

4.10 After applying

Once we receive your application we will check it to confirm that:

- it meets the eligibility requirements in section 3 Who can apply and what land is eligible
- you have filled in all the necessary details on the application form
- you have completed the map.

You can find more information about entering into an agreement at section 6.1.

5 How it works

The grant has two parts, Woodland Tree Health Restoration and Woodland Tree Health Improvement. Find out about what's available under each part of the grant.

5.1 Elements of the scheme

The Woodland Tree Health grant has 2 parts:

- Woodland Tree Health Restoration which provides support for restocking woodland after felling due to a tree health issue (5.3 Woodland Tree Health Restoration).
- Woodland Tree Health Improvement which provides support for the removal of trees and/or rhododendron infected with either *Phytophthora ramorum* or *Phytophthora kernoviae* (5.4 Woodland Tree Health Improvement).

You can apply for these grants individually or together. You will have 2 years to finish the work that is needed. We cannot pay you for any work that takes place after the 2 year period.

5.2 Assessment

A Woodland Officer will assess your site to make sure that the grant is appropriate.

We strongly recommend that you have a woodland management plan for the affected woodland.

Support to help you create a woodland management plan is available through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Please visit the [Woodland management plan grant page](#) for more information.

5.3 Woodland Tree Health Restoration

5.3.1 Summary

If you have to fell trees because of a confirmed tree health issue, this element of the grant will pay for restocking the land with trees.

Support is available if the trees to be felled have been infected with a disease or pest listed in the table below.

Tree health disease or pest	Eligibility requirements	Where to find more information
Phytophthora ramorum on either larch or sweet chestnut.	Infection must be confirmed by statutory plant health notice (SPHN)	Ramorum disease (Phytophthora ramorum) - Forest Research
Chalara (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) dieback of ash	The Forestry Commission or the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) must confirm infection	Chalara (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) - Forest Research
Sweet chestnut blight (Cryphonectria parasitica)	Infection must be confirmed by statutory plant health notice (SPHN)	Sweet chestnut blight (Cryphonectria parasitica) - Forest Research

More information about the above [pests and diseases and biosecurity](#) is available on GOV.UK. For information about how to confirm a suspected infection please contact your Woodland Officer using the [contact details](#).

5.3.2 Seasonal applications

If you submit your application in autumn or winter, we may need to wait until spring to process it so that the infection can be confirmed. We may ask you to submit photographs showing signs of the infection following budbreak to support this.

5.3.3 UKFS compliance

You must make sure any proposed restocking under Countryside Stewardship Woodland Tree Health grant meets with the [UK Forestry Standard \(UKFS\)](#).

5.3.4 Capital items

Capital items are available to support the restoration of woodland. The primary item is tree planting (TE4). To reduce the risk of introducing or spreading harmful plant pests and

diseases it's important to source biosecure planting stock (preferably grown in the UK). We would encourage the use of plants from Plant Healthy certified nurseries where possible. Plant Healthy is a certification scheme designed to make sure that people who grow and handle plants have suitable biosecurity standards in place.

You can find more information at [Plant Healthy](#).

Tree planting (TE4) is supported by a range of secondary items as detailed below.

Code	Capital items for use in Woodland Tree Health Restoration	Payment Rate	Aim	Additional notes	Mandatory or Optional
TE4	Tree planting	£1.28/tree	To supply, plant and weed young trees and protect with a 0.6m spiral guard	Spiral not needed in some circumstances – this needs to be agreed with your Forestry Commission Woodland Officer	Mandatory in order to apply for Woodland Tree Health Restoration Grant
TE5	Individual tree shelter	£1.60/unit	To protect young trees with a tree shelter	This supplement can only be used with TE4. Shelter height to be agreed with your Forestry Commission Woodland Officer	Optional

Code	Capital items for use in Woodland Tree Health Restoration	Payment Rate	Aim	Additional notes	Mandatory or Optional
FG1	Fencing	£4/m	Method of stock control, to help habitat management or protect environmental features	This item can be used with the item TE5 where appropriate and agreed with your Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.	Optional
FG2	Sheep netting	£4.90/m	Exclude sheep to protect environmental features	This item can be used with the item TE5 where appropriate and agreed with your Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.	Optional

Code	Capital items for use in Woodland Tree Health Restoration	Payment Rate	Aim	Additional notes	Mandatory or Optional
FG4	Rabbit fencing supplement	£2.50/m	Supplement to fencing (FG1) or sheep netting (FG2), or deer fence (FG9) to exclude rabbits to help protect environmental features	This supplement can only be used alongside one of the following capital items; FG1 (Fencing), FG2 (Sheep netting), FG9 (Deer fencing). This item can be used with the item TE5 where appropriate and agreed with your Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.	Optional

Code	Capital items for use in Woodland Tree Health Restoration	Payment Rate	Aim	Additional notes	Mandatory or Optional
FG5	Fencing supplement – difficult site	£1.24/m	Supplement to fencing (FG1) to cover the extra costs of fencing on a difficult site	This supplement can only be used alongside one of the following capital items; FG1 (Fencing), FG2 (Sheep netting), FG9 (Deer fencing). This item can be used with the item TE5 where appropriate and agreed with your Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.	Optional

Code	Capital items for use in Woodland Tree Health Restoration	Payment Rate	Aim	Additional notes	Mandatory or Optional
FG9	Deer fencing	£7.20/m	To protect newly created woodland from deer browsing	This item can be used with the item TE5 where appropriate and agreed with your Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.	Optional
FG10	Temporary deer fencing	£5.2/m	To protect newly created or existing woodland from deer browsing as part of a wider woodland creation or woodland management project.	When used in combination with the item FG9, the temporary fencing (FG10) must be deer proof.	Optional

Code	Capital items for use in Woodland Tree Health Restoration	Payment Rate	Aim	Additional notes	Mandatory or Optional
FG14	Badger gate	£135/gate	Provide badgers unrestricted access either side of a newly erected fence, which crosses known badger routes	This supplement can only be used alongside one of the following capital items; FG1 (Fencing), FG2 (Sheep netting), FG4 (Rabbit fencing supplement), FG5 (Fencing supplement difficult sites), FG9 (Deer fencing)	Optional
FG15	Water gates	£240/gate	Use across streams in conjunction with other stock control options to keep livestock and deer out of new planting	This item can only be used on fence lines across streams, with other stock or deer control items	Optional

Code	Capital items for use in Woodland Tree Health Restoration	Payment Rate	Aim	Additional notes	Mandatory or Optional
FG16	Deer pedestrian gate	£271.50/gate	To install a deer proof pedestrian gate within the deer fence to allow access and/or enable woodland management	When used in combination with the item FG9, the pedestrian gate (FG16) must be deer proof.	Optional
FG17	Deer vehicle gate	£344.60/gate	To install a deer proof vehicle gate within the deer fence to allow access and/or enable woodland management.	When used in combination with the item FG9, the vehicle gate (FG17) must be deer proof.	Optional
FY1	Deer high seat	£300.00/unit	To provide a safe, temporary vantage point from which to cull deer to relieve browsing pressure.	Not applicable	Optional

Code	Capital items for use in Woodland Tree Health Restoration	Payment Rate	Aim	Additional notes	Mandatory or Optional
BN12	Stone wall restoration	25.00/m	Re-build stone walls to make them stock-proof and restore their landscape value	Not applicable	Optional
BN13	Top wiring - stone wall maintenance	£3.60/m	To control stock by adding a top wire onto a stone wall	Not applicable	Optional
BN14	Stone wall supplement – stone from quarry	£44.00/m	To make sure that wall restoration can be finished where there isn't enough re-usable stone on-farm, and stone has to be sourced from an off-site quarry	Not applicable	Optional

See [Countryside Stewardship grants](#) (known as the grant finder) for full details on each capital item.

5.3.5 Payment caps

Payments under the Woodland Tree Health Restoration are subject to a cap that limits the amount that can be paid. The cap is based on the average grant per hectare and includes the cost of trees and additional capital items.

The cap depends on the type of trees planted and if the site is an ancient woodland. The cap is detailed below.

Restock tree species	Ancient woodland site	Other
Native	£3,500 per hectare	£2,750 per hectare
Non-native	£1,750 per hectare	£2,250 per hectare

For confirmation on which tree species are classed as native or non-native, please check with your Woodland Officer.

5.4 Woodland Tree Health Improvement

5.4.1 Summary

This element of the grant is for the removal of trees and/or rhododendron infected with either *Phytophthora ramorum* or *Phytophthora kernoviae*. It is not available for the removal of trees infected with the Chalara dieback of Ash. The tree health issue needs to be verified to confirm eligibility for the grant. The table below summarises the eligibility requirements:

Tree health disease or pest	Eligibility requirement	Basis of grant	Where to find more information
The removal of immature larch (up to 25 years old) infected with <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>	Infection must be confirmed by statutory plant health notice (SPHN)	Capital item SB1 – Scrub control and felling diseased trees	Phytophthora ramorum
The removal of rhododendron that is either infected with <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> or <i>Phytophthora kernoviae</i> or at high risk to infection	The site must be subject to a SPHN or within 3 kilometres of a site with a SPHN.	Capital item SB6 – Rhododendron control.	Phytophthora kernoviae

More information about the above [Tree pests and diseases](#) and biosecurity is available on GOV.UK. For information about how to confirm a suspected infection please contact your [Woodland Officer](#).

5.4.2 Capital items

The capital items in the table below are available under this grant.

Code	Capital items for use in Woodland Tree Health Improvement	Payment Rate	Aim	Additional notes
SB1	Felling diseased trees	Between £260 and £1,680 per hectare depending on method of removal, stem diameter and % ground cover. See item guide for more information.	To remove immature trees that could spread diseases and cannot be economically felled	Applicants can cut trees manually or with a machine. Manual removal is carried out on foot, with a clearing saw or chainsaw, and machine cutting from a cab, by a tractor fitted with a flail
SB6	Rhododendron Control	Between £2,800 and £4,400 per hectare dependent on the slope of site and rhododendron height. See item guide for more information.	To support rhododendron control, reducing the amount of host species and the negative effect this can have on a site	Not applicable

6 Scheme requirements and procedures

You must read and meet the requirements detailed in this section as these are mandatory for all Woodland Tree Health grant agreement holders.

‘Agreement Holder’ means the person (whether an individual, a company or other entity) who has entered into the Countryside Stewardship Agreement as identified in the Agreement Document (in line with clause 1 of the [Annex 1 Terms and Conditions](#)).

‘Agreement Land’ is defined in clause 1 of the [Annex 1 Terms and Conditions](#). If your application is successful we will send you an agreement offer letter.

Hide all sections

6.1 Entering into an Agreement

If your application is successful we will send you an agreement offer - this offer cannot be amended. If you want to accept, you must return the signed acceptance declaration to us within 20 working days of the date of the letter. If you do not accept your offer in time, we will withdraw it.

You can withdraw your application as long as we have not sent you an agreement offer. If we have made you an agreement offer, you cannot withdraw your application, but you can reject the agreement offer.

The agreement start date will be set out in the agreement offer. Once you have accepted the offer and entered into an agreement, you cannot modify, extend or amend the agreement without our written permission.

6.2 Record keeping

You must keep all records relevant to the expenditure of the grant for at least 7 years from the end of the agreement.

6.3 Evidence: Record keeping and site visits

You must obtain and keep evidence to show that you have carried out all the requirements of your agreement to support your claim or to support a site visit (if one occurs). You must also keep evidence that you are eligible for the scheme.

Your evidence must show that:

- you are eligible for the scheme
- the activities funded under your agreement are appropriate
- the funded activity is taking or has taken place.

We need you to do this so that we can demonstrate that public money is being spent effectively and is delivering the intended results.

Record keeping is an important part of an effective farm, or woodland management system. You can use some existing farm records to meet scheme requirements, but you may also need to keep other records specifically about the management being funded.

The record keeping requirements for each capital item are published in the [Countryside Stewardship grants](#) (known as the grant finder).

6.3.1 When is evidence required?

You must keep any required evidence and supporting documents and have them available on request.

a. Evidence to support your application

You must keep evidence to show that you, the business, your land and capital items are eligible as you may have to show this if you are chosen for a site visit.

b. During the agreement period

You may need to provide evidence to show that you have carried out the required actions. Evidence may be needed:

- to support a claim. More information is set out in the following sections, and where relevant further information will be sent with the claim form covering letter
- during or after an administrative check, a site visit, or other checks as described in section 7.5 Scheme Checks and site visits.

c. After the agreement period

The Terms and Conditions explain you must keep all invoices, receipts, accounts and any other relevant documentation relating to the expenditure of the grant for at least 7 years from the end of the agreement.

6.3.2 General evidence requirements for applicants and agreement holders

It is your responsibility to get all consents, approvals or permissions that you may need due to your specific circumstances and to carry out the particular capital item. These consents, approvals and permissions must remain effective for the duration of the agreement, and records kept for 7 years from the end of the agreement.

6.4 Photographic evidence

You need to keep dated photographic evidence for capital items to support an application and any claims. You must make this available when we ask for it, for example as part of administrative record checks or during a site visit.

6.4.1 Summary

You must follow the requirements below.

a. Application stage

You need to take and retain dated photographs showing the area where works will take place. Your photographs must meet the required standards, explained below. Check the [Countryside Stewardship grants](#) (known as the grant finder) for more information.

b. Claim stage

For a partial or full claim, you must take a dated photograph after the works have been completed and send it with your payment claim. This must show the 'works completed condition'. The 'application' and 'works completed' photographs must be taken from the same position.

6.4.2 Photographic evidence quality

All photographs must meet the following standards. Requirements apply equally to digital photographs or those supplied as paper photographs.

- Quality – photographs must be in focus and clearly show the relevant capital item or environmental feature. If you send your images by email, please send as JPEG files. Digital images should not be smaller than 600 x 400 pixels and ideally the image file size no larger than 400 KB. Printed photographs must be no smaller than 15 cm x 10 cm. Photographs can be in either portrait or landscape.
- Photograph to identify the environmental feature or capital item(s) concerned - it is your responsibility to have sufficient evidence that the investment or required management has taken place. For example, more than one photograph may be needed where the feature or capital item exceeds the frame or is not clearly evident from a single photograph.
- Where possible, include a significant feature to provide authenticity, for example, ditch, fence, farm building, road, telegraph poles.
- Where possible, mark the photographed feature location, and direction from which the photograph has been taken, with an 'X' and an arrow on a copy of a map (or map extract) of the agreement area.
- Where scale or continuity is important, include a feature, or introduce one, for example a quad bike, vehicle or use a sighting pole (2m high with 50cm intervals marked in red and white). Take pictures consistently from the same spot for 'before' and 'after' photographs of the capital item.

6.4.3 Clearly labelled photographs

Use the Ordnance Survey (OS) map sheet reference and National Grid reference for the land parcel, followed by the relevant proposed or implemented capital item code, date, agreement holder name and SBI. If you are sending more than one image, also include the image number.

For example, if we ask you to send 'before and after' photographs to support capital item tree planting (TE4) the images should be labelled as XX12345678_TE4_ddmmyyyy_name_SBI_1 and XX12345678_TE4_ddmmyyyy_name_SBI_2.

Save digital images under the label outlined above. Clearly write the label on the reverse of printed photographs detailing the OS map sheet reference and National Grid reference for the land parcel, the implemented capital item code, date, Agreement Holder name and SBI.

6.5 Publicity requirements

The Terms and Conditions require you to comply with all instructions and guidance relating to acknowledging and publicising the support provided. This includes using any materials or templates which are provided for this purpose.

6.6 How RPA will use and share Agreement Holder's information

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is the data controller for personal data you give to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). For information on how we handle personal data search for [Rural Payments Agency Personal Information Charter](#) on GOV.UK.

7 Agreement Management

You must read and meet the requirements detailed in this section as these are mandatory for all Woodland Tree Health grant agreement holders.

7.1 Agreement period

You can start work on or after the agreement start date. You must keep invoices for materials or works, so we can check them, for 7 years from the end date of the agreement. These must be dated on or after the agreement start date. We will reject claims and will not pay them if, during a site visit, we find that part or all of the work was carried out before, or after, the agreement period.

- You must complete all capital works within 2 years of the agreement start date
- We must receive all claims for payment no later than 3 months after the agreement end date. We will not accept claims after this date.

You may also need to apply to Natural England for Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) consent, if applicable (see section 4.6.1 Consents). Your agreement cannot start until that consent is granted by Natural England.

7.1.1 Change in circumstances

You must notify us as soon as you can if there is a change in your circumstances that might:

- Affect the amount of funding you have been or will be paid
- Prevent you from complying with the conditions of your agreement
- Prevent you from carrying out the work set out in your agreement, including preventing you from carrying out the work to the agreed standard or in the agreed timeframe
- Affect your continued entitlement to agreement funding, for example if you no longer have management control of the land parcels included in your agreement.

7.2 Amendments

You should be able to carry out the capital items under your agreement without difficulty. However, should an exceptional situation arise where you need to change the items or their time schedule, you can ask us to amend your agreement.

We will only agree to changes that are necessary to achieve the objectives of the scheme. You need written permission from us before you can amend or reschedule approved capital items. You should contact us if you would like to discuss an amendment to your agreement, before the end of the original agreement period to complete the capital items. We must agree to the request before you make any changes to the item, its location, or timing, and you may need to repay all or part of previous payments that you have received. We will write to confirm if your request is successful.

The amendment will not be valid until you have received a letter from us agreeing to the amendment and advising you of the date from which it will take effect.

7.3 Agreement Holders using own labour or contractors for capital works

7.3.1 Using own labour to undertake capital works

You can use your own labour to carry out capital works. If you do so, you will need to prepare time sheets signed by the employee and employer showing all of the following:

- the hourly rate for your labour or a farm employee's labour
- what work was carried out
- the date the work was carried out.

You must keep these records either on paper or electronically for the period of the agreement and for the 7 years following the end of the agreement. You must also produce them if we ask you to.

You must tell the employees about the agreement and its requirements. It is your responsibility to make sure that work carried out using your own labour or a farm employee's labour, does not breach the terms of your agreement. If the employee commits any breaches, you will be responsible for any payment reductions.

7.3.2 Using contractors to carry out capital works

You can employ contractors to carry out agricultural work on agreement land, or to carry out work needed under the Countryside Stewardship capital items.

You must tell the contractor about the agreement and its requirements. It is your responsibility to make sure that work carried out by contractors does not breach the terms of your agreement. If the contractor commits any breaches on the land, you will be responsible for any payment reductions.

You must keep records of the work carried out by contractors in either paper or electronic form, for the full period of the agreement and for at least 7 years after your agreement has ended. You must also produce these records if we ask you to.

7.4 Making a claim for payment

7.4.1 Summary

You can make a claim for reimbursement of capital works at any time of the year. The work must have been completed as per the terms of your agreement and you must have been invoiced or charged for the work before you can submit your claim. If you cannot demonstrate that the work is complete, your claim may be rejected.

Please note:

- the minimum value of any payment claim is £500 (an exception may be made for the final payment).
- if you have used a contractor to deliver the works, you must be able to demonstrate that the work is complete and that you have been charged or invoiced by the contractor before you can claim payment from us.
- you must send your final payment claim with supporting information (including photos) within 3 months of the agreement end date.
- late claims will not be paid
- valid claims will be paid within 2 months of receipt.

7.4.2 Submitting claims for capital items

Once the capital works are finished and you can demonstrate that the work is complete and you have been charged or invoiced you should sign into the Rural Payments service and submit a claim online. You can find [guidance on how to submit a capital claim](#) online.

You must keep evidence to show that the work is finished. Section 6.4 Photographic evidence explains the photographic evidence you need and you can find details of evidence needed for individual capital items at [Countryside Stewardship grants](#) (known as the grant finder).

We will make payments directly into your bank account. You must maintain any capital items funded through the scheme in the same condition and specification set out in your agreement for 5 years from the date of final payment see section 2.2 Agreement period.

7.5 Scheme checks and site visits

We are required to make sure that Countryside Stewardship is properly controlled, to protect public money. To support this we undertake administrative checks and site visits to monitor Agreement Holder compliance with the rules governing their agreements (and cross compliance on the whole holding) and the success of Countryside Stewardship overall.

We undertake three main checks:

- administrative record checks
- agreement monitoring visits
- physical or virtual site visits.

You must allow any UK public authority (or their authorised representatives or auditors) to access your land or premises to carry out site visits.

Unless we have reasons to suspect that you are in breach of your agreement, we will seek to agree a date and time for a site visit where possible. If not, you will be notified at least 48 hours in advance of the site visit.

You must help and co-operate with any person carrying out a site visit. Any refusal to do so or obstruction will be treated as a breach of the Countryside Stewardship terms and conditions, and you may face recovery, suspension or termination of your agreement. We may also refuse support for other Defra grant schemes for up to 2 years.

7.5.1 Administrative record checks

We will check all stages of the application and claim processes, including your application form, claim forms and, where appropriate, the nature and quality of any supporting evidence, such as receipts and farm records. This is to make sure that you meet eligibility requirements at the application stage, and that various forms and records match up during the whole agreement period.

If you do not provide records when asked, or there are discrepancies, we will treat this as a breach of your agreement. It is your responsibility to keep such records if you want to rely on this to support your claim.

As part of the administrative checks on annual claims, we select a percentage where we carry out follow-up checks of agreement holder records. Therefore, we may ask you to send us copies of your on-farm records for us to check. We may also ask you to send dated photographs for some land management options. We will give reasonable advance notice of when you should take the photographs and the final date for return of records.

7.5.2 Agreement monitoring visits

Advisers may visit you or your land to monitor environmental progress, discuss site visits (or previous visit reports), or if you ask us to visit.

Results from these visits will be discussed with us and appropriate action taken.

7.5.3 Site visits

Each year, we will carry out site visits on a sample of agreements, to make sure environmental aims are being delivered and scheme aims or requirements have been met.

You must follow the requirements for the specific item, including any specifications you need to adhere to and retain any records that are required to support your claim.

If at the visit we find a breach of the rules, we may apply reductions (read Section 7.6). You can find more information on visits at [Agreement holders' information](#) on GOV.UK.

7.5.4 Cross compliance

If you receive payments for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), a CS Mid Tier or Higher Tier agreement, or an Environmental Stewardship scheme agreement, you must follow the cross compliance rules. If you do not, your payments may be reduced. Payments for a CS Tree Health Grant are not however impacted by breaches in cross compliance rules.

If you are required to follow cross compliance rules and we find a breach of these rules anywhere on your holding (including associated common land) by any of the following, we will inform the relevant body responsible:

- you
- others acting under your control
- anyone with access to the holding under the terms of an agreement including contractors, employees or family members.

The cross compliance guide changes annually, so you need to read the latest version of the Guide to Cross Compliance in England to find out about cross compliance rules.

7.6 Reductions and recoveries

7.6.1 Breaches of Agreement

If you do not meet the terms of your agreement, we may reduce or withhold your payment or ask you to repay any monies we have already paid to you.

If we find a breach, we will write to you and tell you. You'll have the opportunity to appeal if you do not agree with our findings. If a breach is confirmed, we'll work out the most appropriate action we need to take and let you know. We may apply more than one course of action depending on the breach found. We'll assess the level of breach in a fair and consistent manner, on a case-by-case basis, using the following set of criteria:

- to what extent the breach can be rectified
- the circumstances, nature and consequences surrounding the breach
- any failure to cooperate with site visits, or further investigations
- any steps taken to report a change in circumstances
- whether it is an isolated or a repeat occurrence
- whether it was intentional
- whether it was because of reckless or negligent action.

If there's a breach of your agreement or the regulations, we may:

- ask you to correct the breach

- issue a letter explaining that we've assessed the breach and what you have to do to amend your agreement.

For more serious breaches, we may:

- reduce the payments you get, or withhold part of them
- reduce or withhold money from other schemes
- recover money we've already paid.

In the most extreme cases, we may:

- end your agreement
- stop you receiving financial assistance (other than BPS) under any other scheme for up to 2 years.

In exceptional circumstances where there is reasonable suspicion of a serious breach or fraud, then we may access land and your premises without notice, using powers of entry. In these circumstances, for example as part of a fraud investigation, we may access any computer that's been used in connection with the evidence or these records.

If we find breaches during administrative checks or any site visits, we will write to tell you and you will have the opportunity to make written representations if you feel that our findings are incorrect.

In these cases, we will work out the level of reduction we need to apply, by looking at the severity of the breach and whether it is an isolated or a repeat occurrence. We may apply a reduction to your claims, unless you can demonstrate you were compliant.

A brief explanation of how breaches are assessed is set out below.

Severity

We will assess what has happened due to the breach/non-compliance and consider the objectives of the agreement or specifications that were not met. For example, constructing an item in a way that does not deliver what the item was designed for would be classed as a severe breach. As part of this assessment, we will also take into account whether the breach will have short or long-term impacts.

Re-occurrence

The assessment will depend on a number of factors, for example whether a similar event of non-compliance has been found in previous claims and whether the re-occurrence concerns the same or a similar type of work.

If we consider that a breach is so serious that it cannot be rectified, we may cancel the agreement. In serious circumstances, you may be forbidden from entering another agri-environment scheme for up to 2 years.

7.6.2 Refusal or withdrawal of support claimed

In certain cases we may refuse, or withdraw in full, the support claimed and terminate your existing agreement. We will do this if we think any of the following has happened.

- you have committed a serious non-compliance.
- you have provided false evidence.
- you have negligently failed to provide the necessary information (for instance, where we have asked for it repeatedly and there is no good reason why you have not provided it).

If we have to withdraw support for these reasons, we will terminate the existing agreement and you will not be permitted to reapply for the agreement for 2 years. We may also refuse support for other Defra grant schemes for up to 2 years. If this is the case, we will tell you and you will have the right to appeal against this decision.

7.6.3 Over-declaration of expenditure

If you submit a claim for more than the value of the costs which are eligible to be claimed, we will reduce the payment to the correct amount.

7.7 Good reason for a breach

You may be unable to meet your requirements under the agreement because of exceptional circumstances. If this happens, you must write to tell us within 8 weeks from the date on which you (or any person authorised to act for you) are able to do so.

You will need to provide written evidence to show:

- what has happened
- how the event meant they were unable to meet the scheme rules.

Good reasons for a breach may include, but are not limited to:

- the death of the Agreement Holder
- serious illness
- a severe weather event
- the accidental destruction of capital items connected to your agreement
- damage caused by criminality
- supply chain issues
- an epizootic or a plant disease affecting part or all of your crops, trees or livestock

We will consider the facts to decide whether or not the Agreement Holder is relieved of all or part of their obligations under the agreement, and whether all or part of the grant should be withheld or repaid.

If you are aware of the issue when entering into your agreement then it is unlikely to be considered a good reason for a breach.

7.8 Change of ownership

You cannot transfer your agreement.

If you sell or let, all or part of the land under your Woodland Tree Health agreement to another party, we will end the agreement on those parcels. You may need to repay all or part of the grant payments you have already received.

If, after your agreement has ended, you sell or let, all or part of the land which was previously under your agreement to another party during the 5-year durability period, you may need to repay part of the grant payments you have already received.

7.9 Disputes, appeals and complaints

If you are unhappy with a decision we have taken about your application or agreement, you can submit a complaint.

If you're unhappy with a decision we've taken or service you've had from us, you can ask us to reconsider. If you're still unhappy with the result of our decision, you can appeal.

You can email or write to us, or call us. See Contact details page [\[link\]](#) for more information.

The full guidance about [how to complain](#) is on GOV.UK. This also includes information on how to request a reconsideration or submit an appeal.

Contact details

Contact details for the Woodland Tree Health grant

Rural Payments Agency offices

Are open from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays.

Completed Countryside Stewardship application forms

Please send your completed Countryside Stewardship application forms for the Woodland Tree Health grant by email to: ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk, or by post to:

Rural Payments Agency (CS)
PO Box 324
WORKSOP
S95 1DF

Claim forms, agreement management queries or general enquiries

To request a claim form, tell us about a change of circumstances or for general enquiries you can contact us by: email: ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk or telephone: 03000 200 301

Submit a paper based claim form and any supporting evidence

If you would rather use a paper based claim form than claim for payment online, you can email your paper based claim forms to: ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk or post it to:

Rural Payments Agency (CS)
PO Box 324
WORKSOP
S95 1DF