



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural  
Development: Europe investing in rural areas

# Countryside Stewardship: An overview



[www.gov.uk/rpa/cs](http://www.gov.uk/rpa/cs)

**Countryside  
Stewardship**

Protecting the natural  
environment for future  
generations

# Countryside Stewardship

## How it works



**Choose the scheme and options you want to apply for**

**1**



**Request your application pack or start your online application**

**2**



**Gather your evidence and request any approvals, endorsements, consents and permissions**

**3**



**Complete and submit your application and any supporting information**

**4**



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

**5**



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

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# Introduction

## Countryside Stewardship

Protecting the natural environment for future generations

### What is Countryside Stewardship?

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

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

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

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

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

### What are the benefits of Countryside Stewardship?

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

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

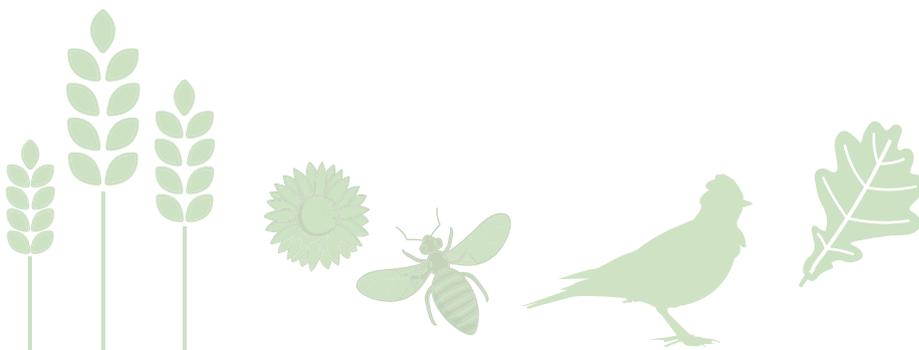
**Wildlife and nature:** restoring habitats, providing food and nesting places for birds, insects and other animals creating areas for rare flowering plants and managing hedges.

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

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

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

Countryside Stewardship also helps to improve the historic environment, landscape character, genetic conservation, educational access, and reduce the effects of climate change.



## Which Countryside Stewardship scheme is right for me?

Countryside Stewardship is made up of the following schemes.

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

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

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

Wildlife offers are not scored; if you meet the specified requirements, you will be offered an agreement.

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Countryside Stewardship

## Countryside Stewardship

Protecting the natural environment for future generations

### Higher Tier

More complex and bespoke management for high priority environmental and woodland sites.  
Competitive



### Mid Tier

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



### Wildlife Offers

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



You can do these together

### Hedgerows and Boundaries

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



### Also available

#### Woodland Management Plans

Short-term capital grants for plans to manage woodland.  
Non-Competitive



#### Woodland Tree Health

Short-term capital grants for the improvement and restoration of woodland.  
Non-Competitive



#### Woodland Creation

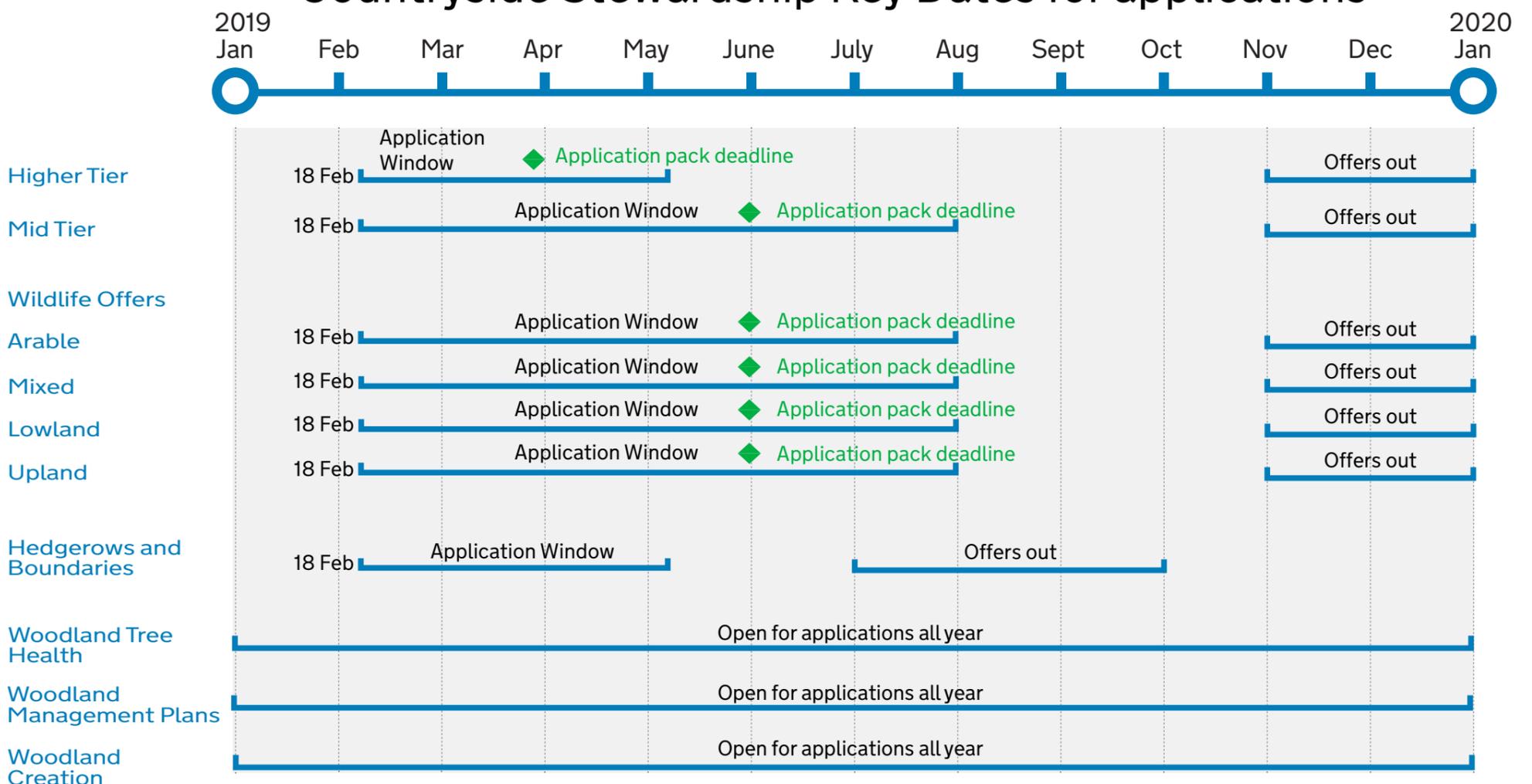
Short-term capital grants to aid the creation of new areas of woodland.  
Competitive



### Key

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

## Countryside Stewardship Key Dates for applications



## Helping you choose the right scheme

	Higher Tier	Mid Tier	Wildlife Offers: Arable Mixed Farming Lowland Grazing Upland	Hedgerows and Boundaries	Woodland Management Plans	Woodland Tree Health	Woodland Creation
Funding type	Competitive	Competitive	Non-competitive	Competitive	Non-competitive	Non-competitive	Competitive
Scheme overview	Top priority environmental sites (such as SSSI's) and woodland that need bespoke management.  Speak to a Natural England adviser or Forestry Commission officer first.	Wide range of agreement types, including capital options, to suit a wide range of environment types.	Range of agreement options.  Not suitable for land with schedule monument or SSSI.	Farmer or land manager wants to restore existing farm boundaries, and bring environmental and landscape benefits to the land.	Payment to support production of UKFS 10 year woodland management plan.	Payment to restock or improve woodland due to tree health problems.	Capital grant to plant and protect young trees.
Duration	5 years, potentially more depending on the type of management.  Capital grants 2 years	5 years  Water capital grants 2 years	5 years	2 years	2 years	2 years	2 years
Applications	Between 18 Feb / 3 May	Between 18 Feb / 31 July	Between 18 Feb / 31 July	Between 18 Feb / 3 May	Open all year	Open all year	Open all year
Application pack request deadline	31 Mar	31 May	31 May	31 Mar	Open all year	Open all year	Open all year
Agreements/ Offers	1 Nov to 31 Dec	1 Nov to 31 Dec	1 Nov to 31 Dec	1 July to 30 Sept	All year	All year	All year



## Where can I read more about these schemes?

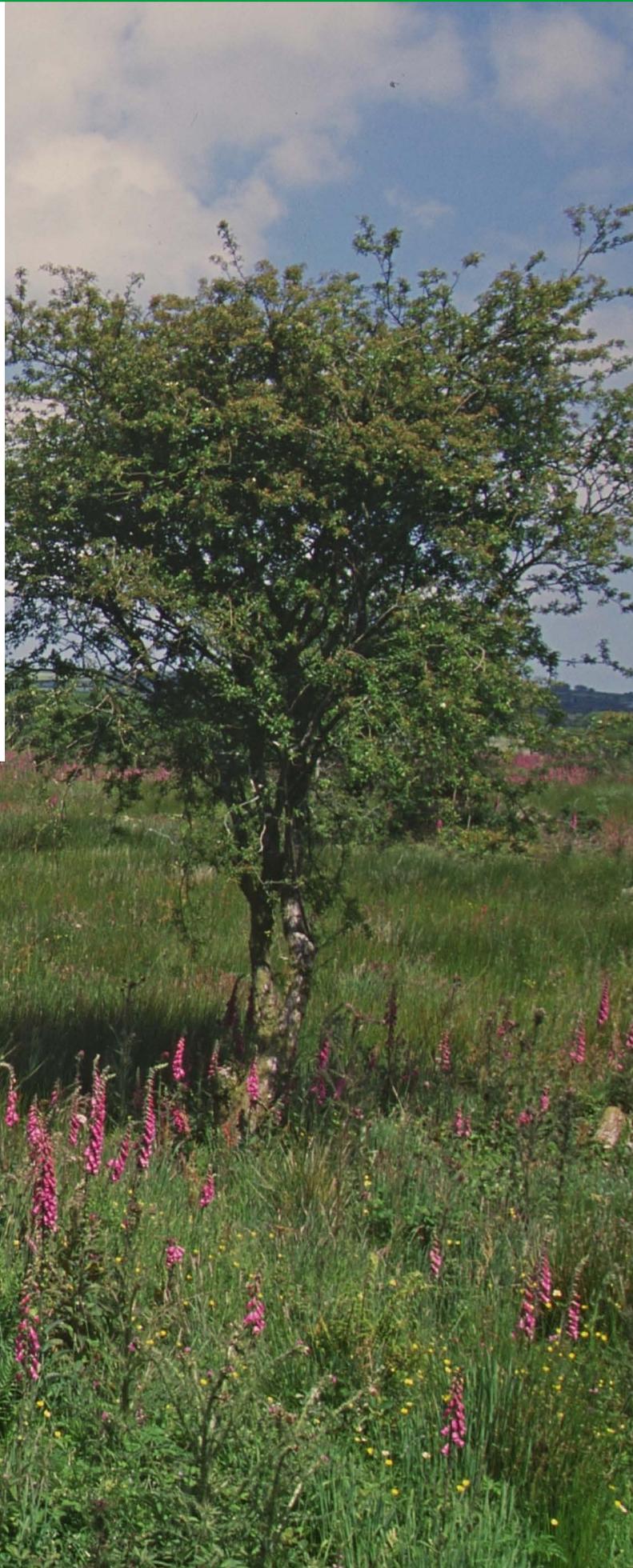
Information on all schemes is available on GOV.UK – search for ‘Countryside Stewardship’.

## What do I do next?

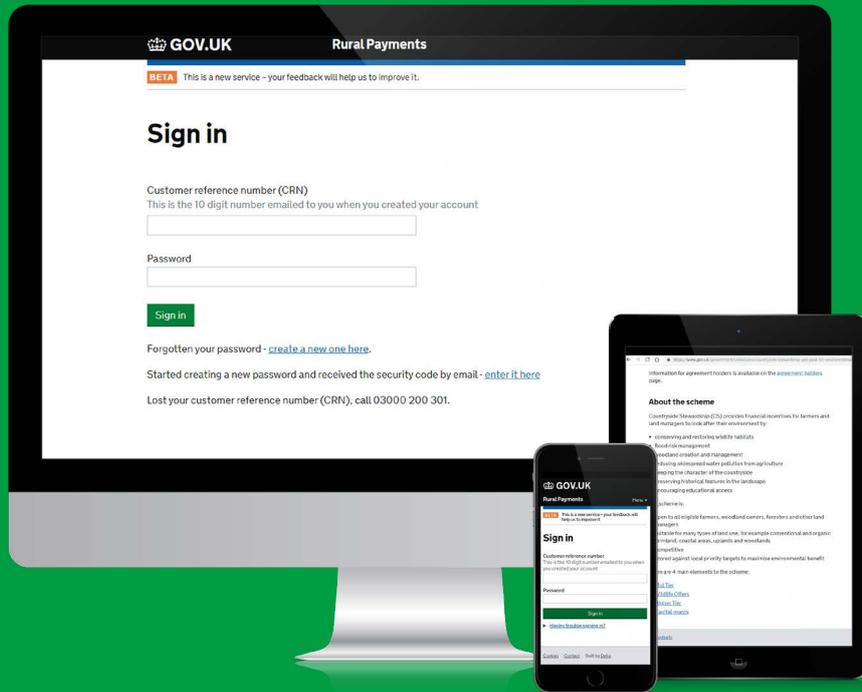
Read the information in the table of schemes and decide which is best for you and your business. You can read more information about the schemes on GOV.UK – search ‘Countryside Stewardship’.

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

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



# Are you and your land registered?



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

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

## Contact us



### Visit our website

For more information about the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, go to [www.gov.uk/rpa/cs](http://www.gov.uk/rpa/cs)



### Email

[ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk)  
Please quote your single business identifier (SBI) for all enquiries



### Call us

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



### Write to us or send evidence to support applications to

Rural Payments Agency (CS)  
PO Box 324  
WORKSOP  
S95 1DF  
Please quote your single business identifier (SBI) for all enquiries.

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