

Press release: Farming groups given £1.7 million to boost the environment

The third round of the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund is open for applications from 1 September to 14 November 2017. The fund encourages landowners to think beyond their own fields, meadows and woodlands and consider how environmental benefits can be achieved over a wider landscape by working on projects together.

Since the scheme began, it has supported 61 groups and 1,350 land managers to improve more than 273,000 hectares of land. Improvements include enhancing wildlife habitats, planting trees and restoring rivers to their natural meanders.

To apply, groups must submit new plans for working together and sharing knowledge to improve their land and benefit their communities.

An example of a group already benefitting from funding is the Bourn Brook Facilitation Fund, which joined the scheme in 2015. Since then, 20 farms covering more than 6,500 hectares have worked together to connect local ancient woodland, improve river quality and encourage other farmers to get involved in the environmental work.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

The benefits of action to develop habitats and protect the environment can be magnified if applied on a landscape scale with groups of farmers working together. This facilitation fund will support partnership working to maximise the benefits of our Countryside Stewardship schemes to our farmed environment.

Leaving the EU creates a great opportunity to design a new agriculture policy that delivers environmental outcomes more effectively and testing partnership working in this way will help provide us with experience to inform future policy.

Chief Executive of Natural England James Cross said:

This scheme is about helping more farmers and land managers make the most of Countryside Stewardship and bring benefits for nature and people on a landscape scale. This is really exciting, a real win-win for farmers, land managers, rural communities and of course, our wildlife.

We are proud to be using the Fund to help support rural areas. By working with groups of land managers, facilitators can scale up what we can achieve and help deliver long-term outcomes for the

environment.

Across England a total of £7.2 million has been committed through the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund. Groups of land managers are improving their local environment at a landscape-scale. This builds on the principles of partnership working to deliver ambitious, evidence-based actions that will deliver for the environment, business and local communities.

See the main [Facilitation Fund](#) page for more information and how to apply.