

News story: New Countryside Stewardship Offers open for applications

The Countryside Stewardship scheme has opened for farmers and land managers to request 2018 application packs today (15 January).

Four simpler, and quicker to apply for, offers are being introduced this year to complement the existing Higher Tier and Mid Tier offers and open up the scheme to even more farmers and land managers. Unlike existing offers, all landowners who make a valid application for any of the four new packages will be guaranteed funding through the scheme.

This application window is an opportunity for farmers new to Countryside Stewardship (CS), or those coming out of previous stewardship agreements, to sign up for an agreement that will be guaranteed for its lifetime, to protect wildlife, boost biodiversity and deliver environmental benefits for their local communities.

Earlier this month, Environment Secretary Michael Gove outlined government plans to replace existing farm subsidies outside the EU with a new system of public money for public goods. Ahead of this, the new CS offers are an opportunity for even more farmers to establish positive environmental practices on their land and prepare for the future.

The RPA and Natural England have been tasked with simplifying the scheme, to save farmers time and cut down on paperwork. As part of this, farmers applying for the new CS Offers who meet the eligibility requirements will be able to get an agreement to deliver as few as 3 options, or as many as 7 up to 14, depending on the offer applied for. The new CS Offers are a chance for those who've been put off the scheme in the past to look again at what's on offer and what they might be able to achieve on their land.

The government has made clear its intention to go on supporting farmers for many years to come to deliver public goods, in terms of producing high quality food, boosting biodiversity and making our countryside a safe haven for our iconic wildlife.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

We've seen farmland birds recover in numbers and biodiversity boosted on farms signed up to Countryside Stewardship agreements, however we have listened to those who said the schemes had become too complicated. The new Countryside Stewardship offers available this year are much simpler to apply for and cover a full range of different farm types, so farmers can deliver environmental benefits wherever and whatever they farm.

My message to farmers who've been put off Countryside Stewardship in the last few rounds is to take another look and see what's on offer this year. We've listened to farmers and we've simplified the offering to create a universal scheme to appeal to farmers new to stewardship and those coming out of ELS so they can continue the good work on their farms.

Farmers and land managers have until 31 May to request a paper application pack. Farmers intending to apply online this year will be able to create their Online Arable Offer application pack from 20 February. See further details of the new [Offers for Wildlife](#).

Applicants can request more information on all the Offers available from Natural England Enquiries Team by telephone: 0208 026 1089; email: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk; or writing to:

Enquiries,
Natural England,
County Hall, Spetchley Road,
Worcester,
WR5 2NP

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Guidance: Hedgerows and boundaries grant: Countryside Stewardship

Updated: Grant now closed for applications.

The hedgerows and boundaries grant closed for applications on 30 April 2018.

Use the manual to understand:

- the payments you could receive
- scheme requirements including record keeping and inspections
- agreement management – such as making claims

Collection: Wildlife Offers: Countryside Stewardship

Updated: Application deadline extended to 31 August 2018.

Apply for grants to help wildlife thrive on your farmland

These 4 new [Countryside Stewardship](#) Offers are open for applications:

- Arable Offer
- Lowland Grazing Offer
- Mixed Farming Offer
- Upland Offer

How the Offers benefit the environment

They support wildlife by creating:

- sources of nectar and pollen for insect pollinators
- winter food for seed-eating birds
- improved habitats, especially for farmland birds and pollinators

How the Offers work

Each Offer has a set of options and minimum requirements. You need to meet these requirements to be eligible for funding. Each option has a payment rate and a specific benefit for wildlife.

The Offers are not competitive and will give an annual payment for 5 years.

You need a Single Business Identifier (SBI) reference number to apply. You'll have an SBI if you've [registered as a customer with the Rural Payments Agency \(RPA\)](#).

You're limited to one application for each SBI you have for this round of Wildlife Offers.

The application deadline has been extended from 31 July to 31 August 2018.

If you did not request an application pack by 31 May 2018, you will not be able to apply this year.

[Guidance: Annex 8 of Mid Tier and new Countryside Stewardship Offers for Wildlife manual](#)

Updated: Application deadline extended to 31 August 2018.

The Countryside Stewardship Offers for Wildlife are open for applications.

Read this guidance to understand the requirements for agreements which will start on 1 January 2019.

For specific guidance on applying for the 4 Offers see:

- [Arable Offer](#)
- [Lowland Grazing Offer](#)
- [Mixed Farming Offer](#)
- [Upland Offer](#)