

Environmental Stewardship Update

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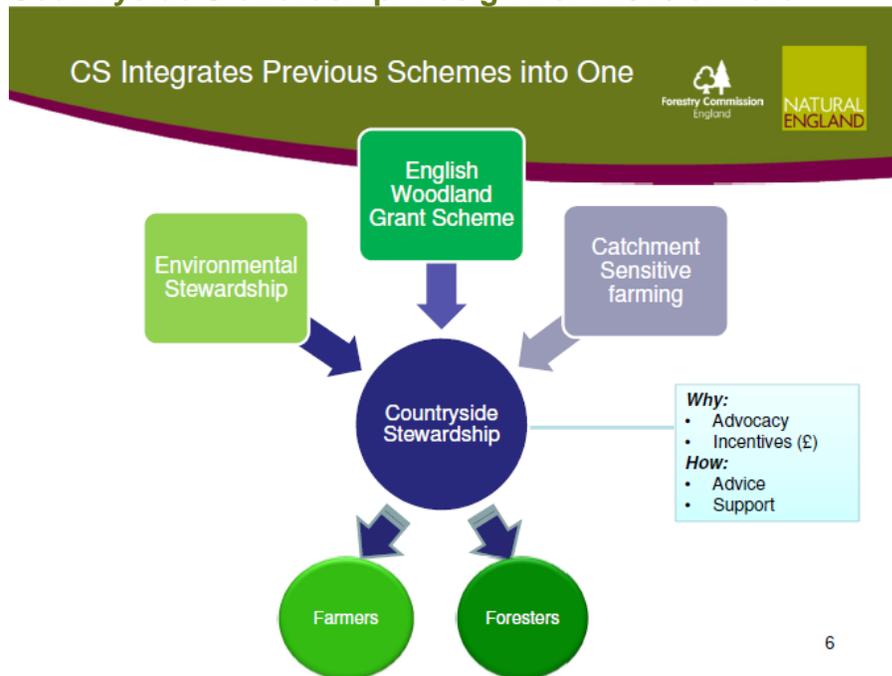
Important Environmental Stewardship Update

- New European regulations came into force on 1 January 2015 require **actual claim forms** to be submitted in respect of these schemes **each year** – relevant for land management activities.
- Claims for capital works can continue to be submitted at any time of the year.
- The claim form will be sent out from early March 2015 onwards.
- To prevent any penalties being applied to your claim, forms must be received by **15th May 2015**. Please allow sufficient time to complete the form as this deadline cannot be extended if the form needs to be returned for corrections.

Introducing Countryside Stewardship

- Part of the new rural development programme for 2014 – 2020.
- The new Defra environmental scheme until 2020, subject to final EU approval.
- A scheme that combines incentives with advice to reward land managers for looking after the countryside
- Builds on 25+ years of schemes in England
- £900m to 2020 for the rural economy (£3.1 bn with ES existing agreements)

Countryside Stewardship: Design from 2016 onward



Scheme Design 2016 onward



Countryside Stewardship	
1. Higher Tier (agri & woods)	3. Capital Grants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hedges and boundaries (Max £5K if capital only) • tree health issues • woodland management plans • woodland creation establishment (with associated multi-year agreement for maintenance where applicable) • feasibility studies • implementation plans • water quality (Max £10K)
2. Mid-Tier (agri only)	
Scheme Baseline: Cross Compliance (SMR and GAEC (may vary on woodland))	

- Voluntary
- Competitive
- Payment rates specific to individual option or capital item
- Online application process through Rural Payment System
- Will need to register with Rural Payment System.

7

Scheme Design 2016 onward



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Scheme Baseline: Cross Compliance (SMR and GAEC (may vary on woodlands))	

Higher Tier:

- Most important sites and woodlands
- NE/FC Adviser led application
- Operates like HLS – pipeline and appraisal
- Wide range of options inc capital – scope to tailor to site
- FEP replaced by a baseline survey of features to be managed
- On-going 1-2-1 support

Scheme Design 2016 onward



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2. Mid-Tier (agri only)	

Scheme Baseline: Cross Compliance (SMR and GAEC (may vary on woodlands))

- Mid Tier:**
- For widespread issues (no woodland options)
 - Customer led, competitive application process & scoring process
 - No 1-2-1 NE advisory support in most cases
 - Includes organic conversion and maintenance support
 - Fixed prescription options (capital and revenue)
 - Facilitation Fund

Scheme Design 2016 onward



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Scheme Baseline: Cross Compliance (SMR and GAEC (may vary on woodlands))

- Capital Grants:**
- Can be applied for on their own or used in conjunction with Higher or Mid Tier
 - Customer led applications
 - Different application windows and start dates

Multi-annual agreement duration – normally 5 years with the following exceptions:



What the agreement is for	Examples	Reason why they are longer than 5 years
Water/wetland habitats	Coastal re-alignment, wetlands, salt marsh creation, peat restoration, blanket bog	These require complex changes in water flow and retention, which have long-term impacts on the environmental conditions and land use.
Complex tenure arrangements	Upland and lowland commons	The negotiation process amongst the interested parties is often complex, contentious and time-consuming but secures significant environmental outcomes in areas of high environmental importance.
Woodland creation		Maintenance support will be for 10 years to ensure the establishment of the trees planted.

- **Advisers will not have discretion over duration.**
- Duration decided by options selected or tenure via the IT.
- Eg commons: will default to 10 years.

11

Water quality capital grants in 2016 and later

- Water quality capital grants for infrastructure work will be available as:
 - part of Mid Tier and Higher Tier agreements, or
 - standalone capital agreements.
- All applications will be assessed and scored against local priorities and those that score highest will be more likely to be accepted
- Farmers and land managers applying for these grants can get help from Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) advisers.
- If they don't speak to a CSF adviser, they may not be eligible to choose some water quality options
- For standalone capital agreements, different terms and conditions will apply and the agreement will last for one year only.
- Under Countryside Stewardship, Farmers and land managers cannot have both a standalone capital grant and a Higher or Mid-Tier agreement at the same time.
- Farmers with a water quality capital grant in 2015 must make sure that their Countryside Stewardship application for 2016 is for different works.

Pollinator Package

- Combines management options which (when done in the right combination at the right scale) provide the best outcomes for wild pollinators, farmland birds and other farm wildlife.
- Chose from groups of options for different farmland types
- apply to 3-5% of holding for Mid Tier,

- 5-10% if Higher Tier must include land previously supported (eg HLS) or where a priority farmland species is known
- Voluntary
- Gain extra Mid Tier points by using it

Facilitation Fund - 1

- Aims to encourage working at a landscape scale towards shared objectives
- Facilitation funding will go to people and organisations that:
 - can help others to work cooperatively
 - have experience of environmental land management
- The area of land involved must:
 - cover at least 2,000 hectares, unless there is an obvious smaller environmental boundary
 - be spread across at least 4 adjoining (or mainly adjoining) holdings

Facilitation Fund - 2

- Applicants must show they have the backing of the land managers on all these holdings.
- Applications will be assessed by a panel of representatives from NE, the FC and the EA.
- Anticipated budget £1.2m per annum
- Funding of between £10-50,000 per partnership, potentially

Control and Verification

- The new regulations have much tighter compliance requirements than before
- RPA have to sign-off all options as verifiable by their inspectors
- The result is an increase in the record keeping requirement for many scheme options and capital items
- Photographic evidence may be required as part of the application process (eg evidence that an option is to be applied to the right type of feature) and during the agreement eg proof of capital works being undertaken.

Countryside Stewardship in 2015

Countryside Stewardship 2015



Phased Launch

The first planned application windows are:

2015 Woodland Grant

February 2nd to end May

2015 Water Capital Grant

March 2nd to end April 30th

Facilitation Fund

March to April

- ❖ Applications will NOT be via Rural Payments.
- ❖ Guidance will be published on GOV.UK soon covering how to apply.
- ❖ Agreements will be live as soon as approved.

Key information for existing agreement holders

- Currently planned not to allow early roll over of existing agreements, will have to wait until 5 year break clause or expiry.
- One start date per year of 1 January with applications from July – September each year.
- 2016 expiring HLS agreement will have to wait until 1 Jan 2017 for a new agreement, possibly meaning no grant for a significant time.
- Defra considering “gap issue”, but it is their decision on how to resolve.
- NE to start producing an application pipeline based on expiring agreements and knowledge, and will contact people well in advance to start discussions.
- Must ensure you register with **Rural Payment System**.

More details at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/capreform-introducing-countryside-stewardship>