



# Countryside Stewardship – tips for 2019 scheme

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Key elements of England's Countryside Stewardship opened for applications this week. Alice De Soer at the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) explains what's new and gives tips on applying.

## Choose which Countryside Scheme is best for you

Countryside Stewardship (CS) offers a range of schemes that aim to provide a financial incentive to manage and improve the environment.

These include: **Higher Tier, Mid Tier, four Wildlife Offers** (Arable, Lowland Grazing, Upland and Mixed Farming) and the **Hedgerows and Boundaries Capital Grant**.

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- **Higher Tier and Mid Tier** are competitive, meaning applications are scored, but the **Wildlife Offers** are not and an agreement is guaranteed.
- **Higher Tier** is more demanding and focuses on top priority environmental sites such as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**.
- **Mid Tier** incorporates a wide range of environmental types and capital items.
- The four **Wildlife Offers** have a simplified application process, with a limited number of management options. Agreements are for five years from 1 January 2020.
- The **Hedgerows and Boundaries Capital Grant** has 12 capital items, with a maximum grant of £10,000 and agreements lasting two years.

## Funding guarantee for CS agreements

HM Treasury has confirmed that, even with a “no deal” Brexit, funding is guaranteed for CS agreements signed by 31 December 2020 for the life of the agreement, provided they offer “good value for money” and are “in line with domestic strategic priorities”.

## Make sure you and your land are registered

- To apply, you and your land must be registered with the [www.gov.uk/rural-payments](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments).
- Sign in and check that your email address is correct, you have “submit” permission for “Countryside Stewardship (Applications)” in “Give access to this business” and that your land is shown correctly on the digital maps (“view land”) – it must be linked to your Single Business Identifier (SBI).
- To register land, for example a farmyard, use an [RLE1 form](#).

## Updating land use

- The “land use” screen is available after signing in at [www.gov.uk/rural-payments](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments).

- The land use declared should reflect the position on the ground as at 15 May 2019 – it is used for both CS 2019 applications and the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS).
- Take care when updating land use as it could affect eligibility of options included in a CS application.

## No double-funding

From 1 January 2019, there are 19 CS options (listed in the CS manuals) that cannot be declared as Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) for BPS.

They can be in the same land parcel as an EFA, but cannot overlap. This does not affect CS hedge management options which can still be used as EFA hedges.

## Request an application pack or start an application online

- To request a **Higher Tier** initial application pack, phone the RPA (03000 200 301) by 31 March 2019. Apply via post or email, by the application deadline of 3 May 2019.
- For **Mid Tier**, request an application pack online at [www.gov.uk/rural-payments](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments) by 31 May 2019. From the Countryside Stewardship Applications screen, click on “Request a Mid Tier application pack”. A pack is automatically generated and emailed but may take up to 24 hours to arrive. Once generated, it is also available to download at [www.gov.uk/rural-payments](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments). Update the documents electronically, save the changes and email the application to [ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk) (or post to the RPA) by the 31 July 2019 application deadline.
- You can apply online for all four **Wildlife Offers** at [www.gov.uk/rural-payments](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments) and they can be combined with the **Hedgerows and Boundaries Capital Grant**. Submit your application by 31 July 2019.
- The **Hedgerows and Boundaries Capital Grant** can also be applied for online at the same site. If applying on paper, request an application pack by 31 March 2019. The application deadline is 3 May 2019.

### CS 2019 – key points

- Choose which CS scheme is best for your business – read the [guidance online](#)
- Make sure you and your land are registered on [www.gov.uk/rural-payments](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments)

- Submit Mid Tier and Wildlife Offer applications by 31 July 2019
- Apply for the Hedgerows and Boundaries Capital Grant and Higher Tier by 3 May 2019

### New single point of contact

Countryside Stewardship delivery was transferred to the RPA in October 2018 and from 18 February there is now a single point of contact for all CS 2019 applications and queries:

- Email: [ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk)
- Phone: 03000 200 301
- Address: RPA, Countryside Stewardship, PO Box 324, Worksop, S95 1DF (this address is not the same as for BPS)

### More information

Read more about the schemes and how to apply on [the government website](#). There is a Countryside Stewardship grants finder tool to help choose options.