



Stewardship arable offers – what's involved?

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With the online application window for the new Countryside Stewardship wildlife arable offer opening this week, Alice De Soer from the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) gives some tips on applying.

Natural England launched four new wildlife offers in January – arable, lowland grazing, mixed farming and ipland. They're designed to be quicker and easier to apply for and include a simplified package of selected Countryside Stewardship options. The wildlife offers are non-competitive: if the minimum requirements are met, a five-year agreement is guaranteed.

How to apply for a wildlife offer

Since 20 February, you can apply online for the arable offer using the [Rural Payments service \(http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments\)](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments). For 2018, the other offers must be applied for using a paper application form. Request a pre-application pack using the request form on the [government website \(http://www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) (search wildlife offers). You can't apply online if more than 100 land parcels are linked to your single business identifier (SBI), so request a paper application form.

The wildlife offers aren't available if your land: includes an site of special scientific interest (SSSI) or scheduled monument; is in an environmental stewardship agreement ending after 1 January 2019; is subject to an inheritance tax exemption with HMRC.

See also: [Handy guide to key cross compliance dates 2018 \(http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/handy-guide-to-key-cross-compliance-dates-2018.htm\)](http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/handy-guide-to-key-cross-compliance-dates-2018.htm)

What options are available under the arable offer?

There are three categories, with a total of 11 options, aimed at helping support pollinators, farmland birds and other farm wildlife. Select at least one option from each category and ensure the minimum requirement is met. The options chosen must cover at least 3% of the agreement land. The more options included, the higher the payment.

What land is eligible for the arable offer?



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Land must be registered with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), so it shows on your online digital maps. Carefully check your maps as land may have changed following the RPA's recent mapping updates. You also need "management control" of the land for the five-year term of the agreement from 1 January 2019.

To be eligible for the arable offer, the land must be "arable" – either an arable crop or temporary grassland. The land use information shown on the "Land use" screens (from "Business overview", click on "Land" and then "Land use") determines this eligibility. If you applied for BPS 2017 online these screens should be familiar – it's where land use codes and areas are entered.

Before applying, check and update the land use information to reflect the land use as at 15 May 2018. This information is used for both BPS 2018 and online arable offer applications, even though the Countryside Stewardship agreement won't start until 1 January 2019. Don't change the land use information after submitting an online arable offer application as the affected land parcels will be removed.

How to apply online for the arable offer?

Guidance on applying online is available on [the government website \(http://www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) by searching for "wildlife offers". The online application screens also have "help" links. Like BPS applications, you must be registered on the [Rural Payments service \(http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments\)](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments). Sign in and check "Permissions" (from "Business overview", go to "Give access to this business"). The person applying must have "submit" permission under "Countryside Stewardship (Applications)".

If your BPS 2018 application is submitted online first, there's a link to the Countryside Stewardship application page on the submission receipt. It can also be accessed from the "Business overview" screen (click on "Countryside Stewardship" followed by "Apply for Countryside Stewardship"). From there, you can "Create a new online arable offer application", choose which land parcels to include, answer the eligibility questions and select the options. The online system calculates the minimum option area needed and keeps a running total.

Before submitting the application, check through it (click on "View and print your application summary"). Also check the evidence checklist to see what additional information should be sent to Natural England. Submit the online application and evidence by 31 July 2018.

Summary

- Check land on your online digital maps – it may have changed recently
- Request a pre-application pack from Natural England by 31 May 2018
- Check the "Land use" is arable – remember it's used for both BPS 2018 and Countryside Stewardship applications
- Submit applications and evidence by 31 July 2018

Read more on: Business (<http://www.fwi.co.uk/business>)

Payments, schemes and grants (<http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/payments-schemes>)