

# [Press release: Countryside Stewardship opens for 2017](#)

From today (10 March 2017) farmers and land managers can apply for the Mid Tier and Higher Tier of Countryside Stewardship. This is a targeted scheme which funds projects to:

- restore habitats
- improve water quality and woodland
- reduce flood risk
- protect landscapes
- provide year-round food and shelter for pollinators, birds and other wildlife

Improvements have been made to the application process this year to make it easier to apply, including simplifying evidence requirements for claims and applications wherever possible. Additional support and advice is also available from Natural England.

Countryside Stewardship grants will be offered to those who propose to make the best environmental improvements within their local area.

The Mid Tier of Countryside Stewardship offers 5-year agreements for environmental improvements in the wider countryside, such as reducing diffuse water pollution or improving the environment for birds, pollinators and farm wildlife.

Higher Tier specifically focuses on environmentally important sites, including commons and woodlands, where the more complex management requires support from Natural England or the Forestry Commission, including tailoring of options.

Application packs can be requested from Natural England by calling 0300 060 3900.

Those thinking of applying for the Higher Tier, including woodland improvement, will need to have submitted an initial application by 5 May 2017. Higher Tier application packs will need to be requested by 13 April so that Natural England can send out the maps and evidence requirements in time for farmers and land managers to develop their application.

Mid Tier applications need to be submitted by 30 September 2017. Mid Tier application packs will need to be requested by 31 July.

Natural England will contact everyone who has a Higher Level Stewardship or Entry Level Stewardship agreement expiring this year to let them know which scheme they will be most suited to and what support is available.

See the main [Countryside Stewardship](#) page for more information, including guidance material.