

Press release: Natural England backs hedges and boundaries for wildlife and people

The [hedgerows and boundaries grant](#), individually worth up to £5,000, is designed to help farmers and other land managers improve important farmland boundaries.

The application window for the £5 million scheme closes on 28 April. Farmers can apply for a one-off grant towards the restoration of a range of traditional boundaries including hedgerows, dry stone walls, stone-faced banks and earth banks. Nearly 800 applicants were successful last year.

Guy Thompson, Chief Operating Officer of Natural England, said:

Hedgerows, dry stone walls and earth banks are a quintessential part of the English countryside. Not only do they perform a vital agricultural role in protecting crops and livestock from the elements, they help support a variety of wildlife. Increasingly farmland boundaries also play a major role in preventing soil loss as well as reducing pollution and flooding. I'm pleased that this grant will help to support these traditional boundaries and the wider benefits that they bring.

Payment rates are fixed for each item. These include hedge-laying or coppicing, hedgerow restoration through gapping-up, stone-faced bank repair and stone wall restoration, which can include a top wiring supplement.

Like the rest of the Countryside Stewardship scheme, the application process is competitive. Applications score more highly if the business has been in a previous Environmental Stewardship agreement or England Woodland Grant Scheme. Priority is given to smaller holdings and restoring hedges or walls is preferred to stone-faced or earth banks. More points are awarded if the application is for more than £1,000, and if the holding is part of a group receiving Facilitation Fund payments.

Grants are not available on land parcels already within Mid or Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship, a live 2016 Hedgerow and Boundary Grant, Higher Level Stewardship or Uplands Entry Level Stewardship on 31 July 2017. Land parcels in Entry Level Stewardship can be included in applications, as long as other eligibility criteria are met.

Grant offers will be made to successful applicants from July 2017. The deadline for submitting claims to Natural England is 31 December 2018.

Customers can apply by downloading an [application form](#) or by using the new online application process which is expected to be available on the [Rural](#)

[Payments service](#) from early March 2017.

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