

Farming / Landowners & Estates Grants & Opportunities



Countryside Stewardship (CS)

The Countryside Stewardship agreements provide financial incentives for farmers to look after and improve the environment through conserving and restoring wildlife habitats, offering incentives for flood risk management, offering funds for woodland creation & management, preserving historical features and allowing public access as well as keeping the character of the countryside.

Back in September 2022, the RPA announced that farmers in England will have the option of extending their Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements for a further 5 years from 2023. Whilst keeping the existing HLS, the agreement holder can also apply for:-

- A Capital grant or a new higher tier capital only grant, which is open to applications all year round.
- A new Wildlife Offer Agreement starting 1 January 2024 which can cover the same parcel of land as an existing HLS or CS option if it can co-locate and not overlap.
- The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and again there must be room to co-locate, not overlap and or conflict.

Recent changes have resulted in a 10% increase on CS revenue payments and a 48% average payment increase to CS capital items. Early CS agreements can now be updated if beneficial. There is no longer a limit on either the maximum amount for a Capital Grant application or the amount you can apply for in each of the four groups: boundaries, trees and orchards, water quality, air quality and natural flood management.

There are many woodland support grants which are part of the CS and details of rules can be seen at www.gov.uk/rpa/cs

The government plans to build on and continue CS (Countryside Stewardship) rather than pursuing the previous plan for a new scheme called Local Nature Recovery. This means that we can expect the CS offer to be developed and improved. These developments will include more support for collaborative delivery, this is being termed 'CS Plus.'

For more information

- The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) at ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk referencing your Single Business Identifier (SBI) or telephone 03000 200301 or post to Po Box 352, Worksop, S80 9FG.
- <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/everything-you-need-to-know-about-countryside-stewardship-2023-24/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countryside-stewardship-get-funding-to-protect-and-improve-the-land-you-manage>

The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) offer in 2023.

The Sustainable Farming Incentive pays you to carry out farming activities in a more environmentally sustainable way so that you can produce food alongside environmental goods and services.

To be eligible to apply for an SFI standards agreement, the Single Business Identifier (SBI) that's applying for SFI, must be eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). The 5 ha of BPS eligible land does not set a minimum eligible area for an SFI standards agreement, as there is no minimum area.

For more information

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-full-guidance/sustainable-farming-incentive-full-guidance>
- The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) is responsible for administering SFI. They can be contacted at ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk referencing your Single Business Identifier (SBI) or telephone 03000 200301 or post to Po Box 352, Worksop, S80 9FG.

Farming in Protected Landscape Scheme (FiPL)

This scheme has now been extended to March 2025. It offers funding to farmers, land managers from the public, private and charity sector in AONB'S, National Parks and the Broads. It aims to create and improve protected landscapes by helping fund projects which support nature recovery, mitigate the effects of climate change, improve public access and understanding the landscape etc.

For more information

- <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/custodians/farming/farming-in-protected-landscapes-fipl/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-full-guidance/>

WOODLAND CREATION

For information on woodland grants and incentives available please visit www.gov.uk/guidance/create-woodland-overview

In Sussex contact the [Woodland Creation Officer Sebastian Crichton](mailto:Sebastian.crichton@forestrycommission.gov.uk) on 07884 171639 or email Sebastian.crichton@forestrycommission.gov.uk

There are a range of grants (administered by the Forestry Commission and their partners) available including:

- **Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG)**- to aid cost to produce a UK Forestry compliant woodland creation design plan for proposals of 5ha and over
- **England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO)** – to cover planting and maintenance over 10 years with additional contributions for nature recovery, water quality, reducing flood risk, Riparian buffers, close to settlements and public access.

- **Woodland Carbon Code (WCC)** – if you can demonstrate your new woodland meets this standard, you can sell carbon sequestered in your woodland in the form of Woodland Carbon Units. See www.woodlandcarboncode.org.uk
- **Woodland Carbon Guarantee (WCaG)** – incentive scheme to increase woodland planting rates to mitigate for the effects of climate change and remove CO2 from the atmosphere. Applications can be made alongside other woodland creation grants.

Partner Woodland Creation Grants

- **The Forestry England Woodland Partnership** -Offers a leasehold scheme creating new woodlands across England in partnership with private and public landowners. To be eligible you must have a minimum 50ha of land to dedicate and be able to commit to leasing your land for 60-120years.
- **Community Forest Trees for Climate Fund**-open to all landowners in any Community Forest Area
- **The National Forest** – generous support for landowners within 200 square miles of the National Forest.
- **Woodland Trust** – offers grants towards woodland and hedge creation.
- **Local Authority** -As a landowner it is always worth contacting your County Council and your local Borough/District Council to explore if they can support your tree planting or have any incentives in your area. For example: Kent County Council, sets an ambition for Kent to extend tree cover by 1.5 million new trees.

There are also grants available for maintenance and restoration of existing woodlands, please see details on the site below-:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tree-planting-and-woodland-creation-funding-and-advice>

Local Charities & Organisations

Often, local initiatives are available to help fund hedging and woodland projects E.g. Countryside partnerships, AONB'S, Sussex Lund project, Wildlife & River Trusts etc.

In South East England try this this website for local project funding and information-

<https://highweald.org/grants/>

OTHER INCOME GENERATION

BNG - Biodiversity Net Gain

BNG is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

From November 2023, it will be an obligation of all planning permissions granted to improve the environment net gain by a minimum of 10%. This is calculated using the Biodiversity Metric by a qualified ecologist.

If you're a developer/Local Planning Authority

You must try to avoid loss of valuable habitat to a piece of land you plan to do development work on. If you cannot do this, you must create habitat either on-site or off-site.

On-site means on the land your development work is on. Off-site is either your own land away from the development site, or you have bought units from a land manager.

If you cannot use on-site or off-site land, you must buy statutory credits from the government. You must provide evidence for using this option. This must be a last resort. The government will invest in habitat creation elsewhere in England.

If you're a Land Owner/Manager

You could be paid by selling biodiversity units. Suitable land must be ecologically assessed graded and registered on the National Register of net gain sites. The habitat sold must remain secure for at least 30 years and the landowner will be responsible for maintaining it.

You must be a land manager with:

- land in England
- consent to register land if you're not the landowner
- prepare a legal agreement (Conservation Covenant) for the land you're registering

If you are interested in the BNG option. It is a certainty that both developers, local authorities will be needing to get land for biodiversity net credits from somewhere! High demand and high prices are expected. It is a great opportunity to increase biodiversity whilst getting paid alongside other environmental payments.

Further information

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-biodiversity-net-gain>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sell-biodiversity-units-as-a-land-manager>