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Policy

Countryside Stewardship: the new agri-environment-climate scheme in England

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ENRD Contact Point Rural Development workshop

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CAP Pillar 2 in England: 2014-20

**Countryside
Stewardship**
£3.1bn

(including
legacy agri-
environment
& forestry
schemes)

**Countryside
Productivity**
£140m

Grants for
farming and
forestry
businesses.

**Growth
Programme**
£177m

Grants for
other rural
businesses

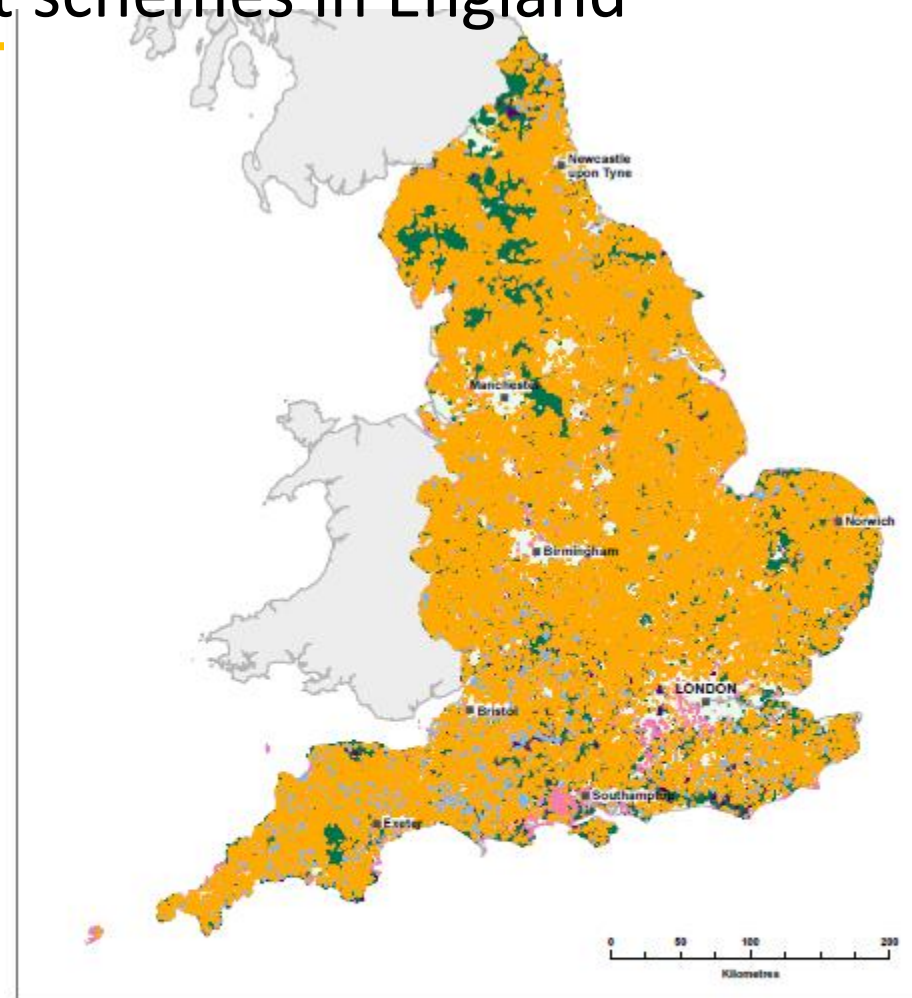
**LEADER
Groups**
£138m

Community-
led delivery of
rural grants

Evolution of agri-environment schemes in England

Agri-environment schemes first introduced in England in 1985

- Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) in 1985
- Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) in 1991
- Environmental Stewardship (ES) in 2005
- Countryside Stewardship (CS) in 2015



MAGiC

Environmental Stewardship Agreements (England)

Source: Defra

Scheme	
Entry Level plus Higher Level Stewardship	Organic Entry Level Stewardship
Entry Level Stewardship	Organic Entry Level plus Higher Stewardship
Higher Level Stewardship	

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Countryside Stewardship: Objectives

• AECM:	2,521,000 ha	28% UAA
• Organic:		
– Conversion	7,000 ha	0.08% UAA
– Maintenance	250,000 ha	2.8% UAA
• Forest-Environment:	90,000 ha	6.9% FOWL

- Flood management
- Historic environment
- Landscape
- Genetic Conservation
- Educational Access



Investments

- 10 agri-env-climate
- 11 organic farming
- 15 forest environ-climate
- 16 cooperation

Design for Countryside Stewardship

- A single multi-annual scheme - integrates the previous Environmental Stewardship, England Woodland Grant and Catchment Sensitive Farming Schemes.
- Aims to deliver positive environmental management and outcomes across all land types in England - lowland, upland, forest, agricultural, organic, arable, coastal.

Integrated Scheme with following elements:

- **Higher Tier** - adviser-led multi-annual land management agreements
- **Mid-Tier** - Farmer-led self service multi-annual land management agreements
- **Hedge & Boundaries Capital Grant** - universally accessible, small scale capital grants (i.e. hedge/wall restoration)
- **Water Capital Grants** - integration of current Catchment Sensitive Farming scheme
- **Forestry Grants** - integration of current English Woodland Grant Scheme
- **Facilitation Funding** - modest support to encourage farmer collaboration and landscape-scale delivery

COMMON MENU OF c250 OPTIONS

Arable

Boundaries,
Trees &
Orchards

Coastal

Educational
Access

Grassland

Historic
Environment &
Landscape

Lowland
Heathland

Soil &
Water

Species

Uplands

Wetlands

Woodland
& Scrub



Higher Tier

Mid Tier

Capital
Grants

Forestry
Grants

Advice



Facilitation

OBJECTIVES

Biodiversity
& Wildlife

Water

Flood Risk

Landscape

Historic
environment

Genetic
Conservation

Educational
Access

Countryside Stewardship has been designed to be:

SIMPLER

- Scheme operates with common target statements, common options and prescriptions, common payments, common application window, common guidance, common IT systems, common terms and conditions, common controls and checks.
- Mid-tier and boundary capital designed to be self service for farmers
- Consolidated number of options down from 600+ to c250 without losing any of the tools needed

FAMILIAR

- Farmers already used to a two-tier land management scheme. Upper tier will mirror current HLS, mid-tier will feel like ELS-plus
- Farmers will recognise the options / prescriptions underpinning the scheme
- Farmers will know what they have to do in order to qualify for payment
- c90% of farmers in expiring HLS agreements expected to move into Countryside Stewardship

BETTER

- Key change to the scheme is that it will be more targeted
- Previously, ELS allowed farmers to choose any combination of options and they got an agreement provided they met a points threshold.
- Under Countryside Stewardship, the targeting and scoring framework will direct farmers to choose the right options needed to hit environmental priorities in their local area.

Countryside Stewardship: Targeting and Scoring

- Improved targeting & scoring is the biggest and most important change that will deliver outcomes more effectively and efficiently. The scheme will be competitive, with only the best applications being accepted into agreements.
- The targeting framework divides the country into 159 individual geographical areas (known as National Character Areas). Each area will have agreed priorities set out in a local targeting statement which reflects scheme objectives.
- Each of the options will be weighted according to their priority within each individual National Character Area. This priority reflects the contribution that each option can make to the priorities within that specific National Character Area (based on c400 separate datasets).
- Those options which deliver against the priorities for that area will receive a higher score than those which do not. For example, water quality options will be scored highly in river catchments requiring action under the Water Framework Directive; whereas arable options will likely receive a low score in upland areas.
- Farmers will be incentivised to choose the most appropriate options for their area when constructing their applications, in order to maximise their chance of getting an agreement.
- Under Higher Tier – Natural England Advisers will have crucial role in designing and brokering optimum agreements, working on the ground with farmers & land managers.

Implementation challenges?

No explicit geographical targeting or directed option choice (to ensure all have access to the scheme – no white areas)

- Will scheme targeting statements and guidance work?
- Will land managers from priority locations apply and choose the right options to address the priority issues?

Minimising delivery (including IT) and control costs has driven simplification of design

- Will this impinge on effectiveness in practice?

Is the integrated approach simply presentational?

- Forestry capital planting grant and multi-annual maintenance grant still have their own application process, within CS
- CSF capital grants have been subsumed into CS as Water Quality Capital Grants, but they still follow an annual application round with no direct link to multi-annual agreements



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Thank you for your attention

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