

Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier Webinar - Thursday 31st March 18.30pm - 20.00pm (and Tuesday 8th March 12.30pm - 2.00pm)

#	Question	Answer(s)
1	How much land do you have to include in your CSS if you have a Schedule Monument on your farm ?	You would need to include the land parcel in which the SM is located. As regards other land, there is no minimum area, although if applying for a Wildlife Offer you will need to ensure you are able to include enough options/area to meet the requirements e.g. 3% of the land entered.
2	We have 2 Holdings that are quite a distance apart. 1 application or split into 2?	You can apply for one Mid Tier application per SBI per year. A 1-1 clinic can help you decide what options would suit you best.
3	We are all grassland but do rent ground out to others for arable. Can we go for the lowland grassland option ?	Yes, it is at your discretion as to what land is included in an application. Unless you have management control of the arable land, this should be omitted.
4	The areas indicated, are they for the amount of for example field margins or for the whole field?	Option payments are per hectare of option area, so you would just be paid on the area of field margin rather than the whole field.
5	Is walling included in capital grants?	Option BN12: Stone wall restoration is available under Mid Tier and Capital Grants: https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/stone-wall-restoration-bn12
6	Is it correct that you can now apply for water quality options now if you are in medium priority or high priority?	Yes, you can now apply for water quality options in medium priority areas. Where Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) approval is required for an option you need to complete CSF - Request for advice or support and approval for Countryside Stewardship' form . The completed form should then be forwarded to your regional CSF email address before 20th May 2022.
7	Are small streams and ditches part of water quality initiatives?	Yes, there are options such as buffer strips and capital items such as fencing which would be appropriate to tackle water quality issues.
8	We are in our 3rd year of a mid tier option, can we apply for capital grants?	Yes, provided you have claimed for all the existing capital items in your agreement
9	How difficult is it to put land into stewardship that I rent but do not claim BPS?	In certain circumstances, it is possible for a land parcel to be used by one Single Business Identifier (SBI) to claim BPS and that same land parcel to also be included in a Countryside Stewardship application submitted by someone else under their SBI. This is known as 'dual use'. Where security of tenure is not guaranteed for the duration of the Countryside Stewardship (CS) Mid Tier it will be necessary to complete a Countryside Stewardship Land Ownership and Control form. .
10	Is there any dry stone walling grants?	Yes, See Question 8
11	Is lime spreading a grant option?	It is not an option, but there may be lime spreading restrictions in other land management option prescriptions.
12	A previous tenant on my holding had registered it as organic in the late 1990s and was paid for this conversion. Approximately 10 years ago it was taken out of organic by this same tenant. I am a new tenant on the holding, can I obtain financial support to convert the holding back to organic?	You would need to discuss with RPA whether funding would be eligible.
13	Can a SSSI go into a mid tier agreement?	All land that is eligible for Countryside Stewardship that is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) must be included in your application. It would be advisable to discuss it with your local Natural England Advisor who may encourage you to enter Higher Tier, if there are complex options that may be required which are unavailable in Mid Tier.
14	Can I restore a track way through a SM field?	Historic England should be consulted to determine if this is possible.
15	Are there companies who will come to your farm and assist and advise on making applications?	Yes there are environmental consultancies and land agents who could help. There are Natural England funded 1 to 1 consultancy sessions available to advise farmers concerning the CS application process. In exceptional circumstances these sessions can take place on farm.

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16	Have we got to wait until we've got a mid tier agreement until we speak to the CSSF officer about an application?	CSF officers are exceptionally busy during the CS application window. You may contact your CSF officer as early as possible, but if you are seeking CSF approval for a water quality option you need to complete a CSF - Request for advice or support and approval for Countryside Stewardship' form . The completed form should then be forwarded to your regional CSF email address before 20th May 2022.
17	What is the process for getting written approval to include a priority species option?	The last date to provide Natural England (NE) with evidenced requests to make changes to the Priority Habitats Inventory (PHI) for this year's CS applications was 28 February 2022. If you have parcels that you think should be on the PHI as certain priority habitat types which are not shown as such on MAGIC, contact NE by emailing habitatinventories@naturalengland.org.uk . NE can provide details of the evidence required to support requested changes to the PHI.
18	How do you contact your CSFO?	Link to the contact details for CSF Officers: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/catchment-sensitive-farming-reduce-agricultural-water-pollution
19	Can I enter wild flower margins from an old HLS scheme into a new mid tier scheme if they are in a good state?	Yes you can, but they will need to meet the requirements of the CS option AB8 - Flower-rich margins.
20	Are you aware of any CS options that would pay for the effects of beavers being introduced by a neighbouring landowner?	No
21	One of our fields is being taken over by the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust as a wildflower meadow. How do we refer to this on our CS application form?	Provided you have management control of the meadow, you could include it in a CS application form.
22	Would option GS2 be one of the best options for an all permanent pasture farm?	Yes, but you may wish to consider GS1 as well and if any parcels have been cultivated and reseeded within the last 5 years they would be eligible for GS4 - legume and herb-rich sward
23	What restrictions are on the land that is put in mid tier? eg mowing land slurry, fertilisers?	You would need to check option prescriptions as regards any restrictions. For restrictions that apply as a whole, check the Terms and Conditions in the CS Manual.
24	I've just planted a new hedge, can I claim	No, unless it is included in the capital works for a live CS agreement. Provided it is part of a CS agreement, the easiest way is to generate a capital claim form is on your Rural Payments site and complete and submit the form on-line. You will need to send RPA photographic evidence of the work carried out.
25	Can you create an apple orchard that isn't already registered under magic?	It is not possible under mid tier. There is a orchard creation option under Higher Tier (BE5).
26	What can we claim for new rights of way, if anything	There are currently no options for new permissive access.
27	Is there a list of which CS options will conflict with SFI standards?	Yes it can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-an-sfi-standards-agreement-interacts-with-other-funding-schemes
28	Could you be in CS and Landscape recovery?	No, but you are able to drop out of a CS agreement and go into ELM (Landscape Recovery) without any penalties.
29	How can I make up BPS payments if not by Countryside Stewardship?	There is no direct substitute for the BPS payments.
30	I am awaiting an offer on a mirror mid tier should I accept or go on to SFI in June 22 if applicable.	There is no reason why you can do both, provided options do not overlap and you are double funded for carrying out the same activity.

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31	We are currently in HLS and are switching to mid tier next year. We have a lapwing field in HLS but there doesn't appear to be an equivalent in Mid Tier; is that correct? It's a real shame to lose that area for the lapwing but we have to go to practices that are funded.	Option AB5: Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew may be suitable. The link will take you to the option prescription to help decide whether this will be suitable for you. https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/nesting-plots-for-lapwing-and-stone-curlew-ab5
32	We've been in HLS; we want to switch to CS-do you think we are better off with mid tier or higher tier?	It is hard to say without comparison of the HLS agreement with potential CS options. Some CS options are better paid but it will depend on the type of options in your agreement. The deadline for requesting a CS 2022 Higher Tier application packs closed on 31st March and therefore your only option for this year's application round is the CS Mid Tier.
33	We are only a 33ha farm , are there minimum areas for the options ?	Depends on the option used e.g. minimum area for AB9 - winter bird food is 0.40 ha. However there is no minimum area regarding the amount of land entered into a CS Mid Tier scheme.
34	Can you do the Farm Wildlife Options as well as Mid Tier?	Not on the same land parcels.
35	Hi wildlife offer is for 5 years , do you have to re-seed every year ?	It will depend on the option. E.g. winter bird food AB9 will need to be reseeded either every year or every other year. Whereas options such as AB8 - flower rich margins and plots should last the full five years of the agreement if established well.
36	If I have a Mirror Mid Tier Agreement can I apply for Capital Grants on the land? Or how do I add Capital Grants to a Mirror Mid tier.	You could apply for a Capital Grants scheme on the land.
37	We are currently in an Entry level plus Higher level Stewardship scheme which ends 30/9/24, can we take out another to cover hedgerow restoration, pond restoration and extending woodland?	You can apply for a CS Capital Grants scheme on your land provided existing capital items have been claimed. Hedgerow restoration and pond restoration could be included, but woodland edge on arable land (WD3) is not available under a Capital Grant scheme.
38	For Boundary Grants do the hedges need to be mapped on LIPIS correctly?	All hedges being included in a new Countryside Stewardship (CS) application under options BE3 (Management of hedgerows), BN5 (Hedgerow laying) or BN6 (Hedgerow coppicing) should be correctly show on your rural payments digital maps.
39	Does BN6 and BN7 apply to the length of the whole hedge or as in the case of BN7 do the gaps in the hedge need to be measured and BN7 applies to the measured gaps. Can you have BN6 and BN7 on the same hedge and also can you apply for fencing against a hedge (FG1)?	You would need to determine what length of the hedge requires gapping up (BN7) and what length needs coppicing (BN6), as you cannot have both options on the same length of hedge. If you are applying for a Capital Grant application, you cannot have fencing (FG1) against the hedge. Fencing against a hedge would be available in a Mid Tier application.
40	Is the 20th May deadline for CSFO approval just for Mid Tier or does that apply to Capital Only applications too?	The deadline of 20th May for CSFO approval applies to mid tier, but not the Capital Grants scheme as this has a rolling deadline.
41	Are existing Field corners and 6m buffer strips in an old HLS scheme allowed into a new Mid Tier CS?	The field corner option on arable land is no longer available in the CS Mid-Tier, but the buffer strips could be included provided they meet the CS prescriptions.
42	Is a Tumulus a Scheduled Monument?	It depends on the individual site. You can check its status on MAGIC maps or by contacting Historic England.
43	I have Permanent pasture next to a SSSI and I can not improve with Clovers and flowers for a Legume rich meadow? Is this correct?	You are not prohibited from establishing GS4 - Legume and herb-rich sward, but this option is only available on permanent grassland that has been cultivated and resown in the last five years.
44	If you have a priority habitat on your farm, do you have to include it as part of your mid-tier application? Or is this just an option?	It is your choice whether you include a Priority Habitat in your mid-tier application but bear in mind inclusion would enhance the score of your application for this discretionary grant.
45	Remind how to get the 1 to 1	Please call 07593 449868 or email bookings@chrisseabridge.co.uk to book a place.

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46	Is the stocking density for mid tier and higher tier the same?	Depends on the option used.
47	I have traditional orchards in HLS, finishing this year, do they need to be re authorised again for Mid Tier?	You will need to check that they are shown as Priority Habitat on MAGIC maps and also request approval for inclusion in the application by contacting the RPA before 31st May.
48	If you enter part of your farm into Mid tier wildlife offers next year can you apply to add more the following year?	The additional land would be treated as a new application.
49	Can I apply for a wildlife offer if I've been in ELS/HLS?	Yes
50	Is it clear when you need CSFO approval?	Yes, the manual lists the options requiring CSFO approval.
51	Can you plant ahead of your agreement starting. eg AB8 plant in August this year if conditions are perfect, ahead of agreement starting in Jan 2022?	You can at your own risk, but bear in mind that CS Mid -tier is a competitive scheme and you are not guaranteed an agreement.
52	Also we have a herbal ley that we planted last year and would like to include it in our GS4 application. Is that possible?	Yes provided it meets the prescription for GS4
53	Is the ELS scheme similar payments to CS?	No, ELS was a flat £30/ ha on the whole farm. CS payments vary depending on the individual option and is based on the area entered into that option.
54	Are the New ELMS scheme same as CS payments?	It is likely the ELM scheme will encompass similar CS grant options, but details of ELM payments have not been published.
55	Are there any regulations that apply to all agreements e.g. hedge trimming?	Yes, you will not be able to cut more than 50% of hedges on land entered into the scheme with the exception of hedges that have to be trimmed annually for safety reasons e.g. roadside hedges
56	I am not currently in a stewardship scheme, what is the impact on BPS?	CS is a completely separate scheme and there is no link between CS payments and BPS payments.
57	I currently have perm grassland but with higher costs of feed, I was to plough and grow corn to feed on a rotation.....does rotation ploughing fit?	CS schemes can be integrated into a mixed farming scenario. However by ploughing up permanent grassland, you will be unable to use options relating to this landuse such as GS2. Also bear in mind that you may be required to request a screening decision from Natural England under the EIA - Agricultural Regulations.
58	If you apply for a BPS do you need to reapply for a sustainable farming incentive in June or later?	SFI is a separate scheme to BPS and will have a separate application procedure that will open after the BPS claim window closes.
59	My ELS/HLS agreement ends in February 2023. I would like to apply for CS with a 2023 start date but it seems that there is no opportunity to apply until next year and I will then have 10 months with no payment. Is there a chance that the Mid-Tier CS will soon have a rolling start date like the Capital Grants scheme?	We are not aware that a rolling window for Mid-tier CS will be introduced at the moment.
60	How can you transfer into ELMS if necessary?	If you are successful in securing a place in one of the Environmental Land Management schemes, you can terminate your Countryside Stewardship agreement early without penalty, at the end of an agreement year, so you can participate in the new Environmental Land Management schemes.
61	We are currently in an old ELS/HLS Scheme that ended in 2020 but have been able to roll over into yearly agreements for the last couple of years, we would like to apply for CS but feel precluded because of the limited 1st Jan start date for CS. Our ELS/HLS has a start date of 1st April, so swopping to a CS would mean loosing 8 months payment, is there any option around this problem?	Unfortunately at present, it is not possible to start a Mid Tier/Wildlife Offer agreement straight after your ELS/HLS agreement ends in April. You could start a Countryside Stewardship Capital Grant agreement following the end of ELS/HLS as there is a rolling window for this scheme.

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62	Why can you not enter the wildlife offer if you have a SSSI?	A SSSI can require more complex management and options may be needed that are unavailable under a Wildlife Offer
63	Is there any developments with the increase payments for capital items?	We are not aware of any proposed increases at the moment.
64	We already have 15ft hedges and clover rich permanent grassland. (sheep). Is there a benefit of joining CSS?	Yes, one option could be to look at a simple Lowland Grazing Wildlife offer which could include option GS2 - Management of very low input grassland and BE3 Hedgerow Management. You would need to check the option prescriptions to ensure that you would be able to comply with the requirements.
65	Should we not be growing more food now that the Russians will not be allowed to export to us together with the Ukraine unable to export their wheat ?	We are unaware of any change in the Government's current policy. Only a small proportion of land needs to be included in a Countryside Stewardship agreement (3%), much of which is likely to be on marginal land e.g. field margins which in themselves may have benefits for the cropping e.g. supporting crop pest predators etc.
66	We are a very small farm 12 ha; this all seems to be focused on larger farms. Is there anything here for us?	There is no minimum area required to enter into a Countryside Stewardship agreement
67	Just to be clear you can apply for a capital only offer, you do not have to go into Mid Tier schemes for example. Therefore it is stand alone scheme.	Yes, you can just apply for a stand alone Countryside Stewardship Capital grant. Please be mindful of the payment caps for the three categories of £20,000 each.
68	On the last slide on the scoring it says that you have to be eligible for CS... so does it preclude you from entering in the stand alone capital grants without entering into CS?	The Capital grant is one element of Countryside Stewardship, so if you are eligible for Countryside Stewardship you are eligible for a stand alone Capital grant.
69	With the increase in fencing materials etc it should be increased.	See answer for Question 8
70	Regarding FG1 - how do you evidence this is preventing water pollution?	FG1: Fencing can be used to prevent water pollution caused by farming by excluding livestock from watercourses.
71	Are ridge and furrow permanent grass fields included?	They can be included under option HS5 - Management of historic and archaeological features on grassland. They would need to be on the HEFER or evidence provided e.g. photos.
72	Under the MAGIC Grassland option I have some pink areas marked as 'Priority Habitat Inventory - Good quality semi-improved grassland (Non Priority) (England)'. Is this a priority or not ?	No it is not Priority Habitat, but further survey work might reveal the grassland is species rich and classed as for example 'Lowland meadow'. If so, evidence should be sent to Natural England (habitatinventories@naturalengland.org.uk) for inclusion on the Priority Habitat layer on MAGIC maps. Unfortunately the deadline for inclusion under GS6 option in a Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier application this year has passed (Feb 28th).
73	Can permanent grassland be resown with permanent grass/clover/herbs ever 6-10 years?	If you are referring to Option GS4- Legume and herb-rich swards, the rules state this option can only be used on permanent grassland that has been cultivated and resown within the last 5 years.
74	How far away from the watercourse can the fence be?	There is no specific distance in the FG1 prescription, just locating the fence 'to prevent water pollution from farming'. If you also choose the riparian strip option (SW11), you will need to set the fence back to include at least a 4m wide buffer strip.
75	Can you enter into Sustainable Soil Incentive agreements, if the land is in a Mid Tier agreement?	Land parcels already in a CS agreement (including CS Capital Grants) will be eligible for the Sustainable Farming Incentive in 2022 provided they meet the respective scheme eligibility requirements and the Sustainable Farming Incentive standards chosen are compatible with the existing CS option, so you are not paid twice for carrying out the same or similar activities on the same land.
76	Are traditional orchards that are grazed classed as permanent grassland or permanent crop?	In theory they could be coded as either permanent grassland or a permanent crop on the BPS. The land coding would be influenced by the primary crop being removed from the orchard.

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77	So surely unless payment rates do not increase there is a huge drop when you transfer from CS to SFI ie on GS4 £359 to @£58 Ha	We do not yet have details of the prescription for herbal leys under the intermediate level of the Grassland Standard which may be different to GS4. Also you only have to create herbal leys on 15% of the land that you enter to claim £58/ha on ALL the land that you enter into SFI.
78	When do you think the SFI application start date will be?	We do not know the exact date but it is likely to be in late spring/early summer.
79	GS4 herbal ley can't be used in parcels that show a HEFER feature or are shown as at risk of soil erosion on the FER, but AB15 can, even though they are almost the same thing. What is the rationale for this and is there any way around it ? It makes incorporating livestock into the arable rotation very difficult! If one small corner of a parcel has a HEFER feature on it, you cannot use GS4.	Options GS4 and AB15 are not almost the same thing. You are prohibited from conserving forage and/or grazing under Option AB15 whereas under Option GS4 you can graze livestock or mow a forage crop. The chance of potential damage to historical features may be greater with Option GS4.
80	If you enter a Lowland Grassland Offer with a herbal rich sward, can you enter that same field into the intermediate level of the sustainable soil incentive?	No, because you cannot receive a dual payment for the same land management option on an area of land.
81	Does the baseline requirement of only being able to cut 50% of hedges each year, still apply?	As per the CS MT manual - In any one calendar year, you must not cut more than 50% of all hedges on or bordering Agreement Land. This includes all parcels under agreement, including land parcels which have been selected for rotational options but where rotational options are not sited during that year. There is an exception for public safety, allowing road and trackside hedgerows to be cut annually or more frequently.
82	A client has a SAM which they are surrendering this autumn. They want to join an offer but cannot. Is there a way around this or should they apply for mid tier and then remove the Sam on 1/1/23 as they will no longer farm it?	A Wildlife Offer application can be made that includes a SAM. The parcel that includes the SAM must be included, but if the feature is in good condition, options may not need to be included on the parcel. If you transfer the parcel with the SAM, you should contact RPA to see if it is possible to remove it from your agreement before it begins 1st January 2023.
83	Are there any grants and at what rate for repair and maintenance of stone walls?	Option BN12: Stone wall restoration is available on Mid Tier and the Capital Grants scheme. More information can be found at https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/stone-wall-restoration-bn12
84	The requirements for the hedgerow laying capital item detail that "management control" is needed on both sides of the hedge. If the hedge is bordering a neighbouring farm, would consent from the neighbour be required and if so, what is the best way to demonstrate this to the RPA?	You would need consent from your neighbour if you do not already have management control of both sides of the hedge. A written agreement with your neighbour should be sufficient if RPA request details of consent.
85	Can you transfer from capital grants/wildlife offer and upgrade to mid-tier?	You cannot upgrade from a Wildlife Offer to a Mid-Tier agreement, but should you wish to include capital options you could apply for a Capital Grant agreement on the same land as in the Wildlife Offer and visa versa
86	Would you recommend an organic application? We produce organically but aren't registered	It is very much a business decision on your part, but you would need to be registered with an Organic Control Body to apply for organic conversion/ management options and this registration would carry a fee.
87	The application process is only easy if the web site works.... pls can you comment on this	If you are having issues with the website, I would recommend reporting these to the RPA who can assist you and if necessary improve the service.
88	Is it mandatory to use the maps provided in the pack, or can a digital mapping platform (e.g. The Land App) be acceptable?	RPA have accepted maps produced using LandApp in previous application rounds.
89	HEFER features prevent certain options such as GS4 - is there any way around this?	Unfortunately where there are historic features in a field it is ineligible for GS4.

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90	If I did not get the BPS with my land that I have recently purchased, would I still be able to apply for SFI?	No not until 2024 unless you claim BPS before this date. When the scheme launches in 2022, farmers who are eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) will be eligible for SFI. This covers most farmland in England. The RPA state that in later years, when they are ready to take on new customers not already registered for BPS, they will remove the BPS eligibility requirement, so a wider range of farmers will become eligible for SFI. They do not expect to do this before 2024
91	We have a small hay field which is having wildflower seed spread at the moment. How does that qualify in CS?	If it is classed as species-rich, it may be eligible for GS6 - management of species-rich grassland, but it would need to be on the Priority Habitat layer on MAGIC and you would need to request approval from RPA to include this option in an application. If it is not species rich (semi-improved) you may wish to include in the GS2/GS5 option.
92	We grow Miscanthus how does that qualify for CS?	There are no specific options for the miscanthus crop itself, but options may be available for surrounding hedgerows and field margins/plots.