



Natural England
Countryside Stewardship Delivery Services
[CSDS office address]

www.gov.uk/natural-england

[Customer name]

[Customer agreement number]

[Customer address]

Dear [customer name],

Countryside Stewardship 2018: Payment claim deadline is being extended to 15 June

I am writing to let you know that the deadline for Countryside Stewardship (CS) payment claims for the 2018 claim year is being extended by one month.

This extension will only apply to CS agreement holders and CS applicants who are still waiting to receive offers of an agreement from 1 January 2018. It will not apply to Environmental Stewardship claims or Basic Payment Scheme 2018 claims; you must ensure that Natural England receives these by 15 May if you wish to avoid late claim penalties.

What this means

- If you have an existing CS agreement, you now have until 15 June 2018 to ensure Natural England receives your CS annual claim if you have not already done so. This gives you an extra month, as the original deadline was 15 May 2018.
- If you are waiting for an offer of an agreement effective from 1 January 2018 from Natural England, please note that we are working to process these as quickly as possible and are aiming to issue 2018 agreements with claim forms by 31 May where we can. The deadline for your CS annual claim is 15 June. We will provide a further update to anyone still waiting for an agreement offer by the end of May.

If your 2017 application for a CS agreement with a 1 January 2018 start date is unsuccessful you can still apply for CS for an agreement starting on 1 January 2019.

Where you can find more information

Please read the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about claiming your CS payments, sent with this letter. If you have any further questions, please contact us on 03000 200 301.

Thank you for your continuing interest in Countryside Stewardship.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Johnson
CS Operations Director | Natural England

FAQs for Countryside Stewardship agreement holders

Q. I already have my CS agreement. Does this change anything for me?

A. You now have an extra month to submit your annual claim if you need it. The previous deadline of 15 May is now 15 June 2018. This does not change the agreement which you signed with Natural England and the basis on which you claim.

Q. What if I also have an Environmental Stewardship agreement?

A. The extended 15 June deadline for making a claim **does not apply to Environmental Stewardship (ES) agreements so please ensure Natural England receives your claim by 15 May**. Penalties will apply to late ES claims and they may be rejected.

(For 2016/2017 CS agreement holders)

Q. I've checked my land on my digital maps in the Rural Payments service (www.gov.uk/rural-payments) and it is incorrect. What should I do when making a claim?

A. Your CS annual revenue claim should be completed to show the correct position on the ground as at 15 June 2018. If the land information shown on your digital maps is incorrect, you should submit an [RLE1 form](#) (search 'RLE1' at www.gov.uk) and sketch map to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) as soon as possible if you have not already done so.

Mark the RLE1 form and sketch map with 'Mapping change query'. You can find more information about checking your digital maps on GOV.UK (search 'mapping updates').

You should also provide an explanation of what land information is incorrect on your CS claim in 'Section 6: Changes to Your Claim' or in the 'Changes to your claim' section if you are claiming online.

(For agreements that are effective from 1 January 2018)

Q. I've received my agreement offer but I believe it is incorrect. What do I do?

A. When you receive your agreement, firstly carefully check the land information. Your annual payment claim should be completed to show the correct position on the ground as at 15 June 2018. If the land information shown is incorrect and is being challenged with a 'Mapping change query' RLE1 form and sketch map, you should provide an explanation of what information is incorrect in the claim in 'Section 6: Changes to Your Claim' or in the 'Changes to your claim' section if you are claiming online.

Secondly, you should also check all other agreement and option details. If you believe your agreement details are incorrect, you should provide an explanation on the claim in 'Section 6: Changes to Your Claim' or in the 'Changes to your claim' section if claiming online.

Q. I have already submitted my CS 2018 revenue claim after checking my CS agreement and believe it was accurate. Do I have to re-affirm anything or resubmit my claim?

A. No, you do not need to do anything further.

FAQs for those waiting for a CS agreement offer with a 1 January 2018 start date

Q. I haven't received my agreement offer yet, when can I expect it?

A. We aim to issue all agreements effective from 1 January 2018 by 31 May 2018 where we can. We will provide you with a further update by the end of May if it has not been possible to issue your agreement offer. If you receive an agreement offer, you will need to accept your agreement and ensure Natural England receives your annual payment claim by 15 June 2018.

Q. In my CS application, I applied to do work in the first half of the year which I have now done. I haven't received my agreement. Will I be paid for the work I have done?

A. Once your agreement has been received and accepted you will be paid for work which is in compliance with your agreement. Your application is subject to checks during processing which, in some circumstances, make it necessary to remove certain options or capital items. As a result, we cannot guarantee that you will be paid for any work you undertake at your own risk before you accept your agreement offer.

Q. In my CS application, I applied to do work which I haven't done because my agreement hadn't arrived. Does this mean my agreement is void? If I receive an agreement now, should I accept it or reapply for next year?

A. You cannot claim for work you have not done. When you receive your CS agreement offer, please review it based on what you are able to achieve, make any necessary changes and resubmit to Natural England. You should then claim for the work you have undertaken.

Q. If I haven't received my CS agreement by the end of May 2018, it doesn't leave me very much time to do the work. What should I do?

A. Where possible, please undertake the work you have agreed to do once you have received your agreement and accepted it. If you need to make any changes to your agreement, please review it in light of what you are able to achieve, make any necessary changes and resubmit to Natural England. You should then claim for the work you have undertaken.

Q. The CS manual states that all capital works have to be completed within the first 2 years of the agreement. Can I have longer to undertake the work if I have received my agreement offer late?

A. You will still have over a year and a half to complete work and a further 3 months to claim. You should be able to complete work on the majority of items within this timeframe. If you believe you will have difficulty completing specific, high cost works, then you should notify Natural England in writing to ask if you can have a little longer to complete the works. Natural England will then consider exceptions based on the evidence.

Q. Why has it taken so long for CS agreements with a 1 January 2018 start date to be issued?

A. Strict evidence requirements, updates to land parcel data and a higher numbers of applications, have all had an impact on how quickly Natural England can offer agreements.

If your application is unsuccessful or you decide not to take up your agreement offer

If your 2017 application for a CS agreement with a 1 January 2018 start date is unsuccessful

you can still apply for CS for an agreement starting on 1 January 2019.

We have launched four new and improved Mid Tier offers for farm wildlife, designed to reduce the amount of paperwork you need to complete. Farmers and land managers interested in applying for these can search "Wildlife Offers" on GOV.UK to find out more. The deadline to request an application pack is 31 May 2018 and Natural England must receive your application by 31 July 2018.

If you decide not to take up your agreement offer, please consider applying again in 2019. Please let us know before 31 May if you would like to do so.

Deadline for submission of claims

Q. What happens if Natural England receives my claim after 15 June 2018? Am I too late?

A. Any claim received after 15 June 2018 is treated as a late claim. A late penalty will apply to any claim received after 15 June 2018.

The latest date on which Natural England can accept a late claim with penalties is 10 July 2018.

A penalty of 1% is applied for each working day the claim is received late. So, for example:

- if Natural England receives your claim on 18 June 2018, you would receive a penalty of 1% of the total value of your claim for the 2018 year
- if Natural England receives your claim on 25 June 2018, you would receive a penalty of 6% of the total value of your claim for the 2018 year
- if Natural England receives your claim on 2 July 2018, you would receive a penalty of 11% of the total value of your claim for the 2018 year
- if Natural England receives your claim on 10 July 2018, you would receive a penalty of 17% of the total value of your claim for the 2018 year

Q. If Natural England receives my annual revenue claim by 15 June 2018, can I amend it after this date without penalty?

A. No. A late penalty would apply. A penalty of 1% is applied for each working day the claim is submitted late.

Q. I have submitted my annual revenue claim already. Can I re-submit my claim if I find that I have made a mistake on it?

A. Yes, if Natural England receives an amendment to your claim by 15 June 2018, then no late claim penalty will be applied on your claim. Your claim will then be dealt with in the normal way.

If you Natural England receives an amendment after 15 June 2018, then a late claim penalty reduction will apply for each working day the claim is late.

If we discover a non-compliance in your payment claim and inform you of this or notify you on an inspection before we receive an amendment to your claim form then any errors in your claim form may be treated as breaches of your agreement.

Q. What happens if I Natural England receives my claim after 10 July 2018?

A. If Natural England receives your claim after this date, your claim will not be accepted and you will receive no payment for the 2018 claim year.

