

WEB RELEASE FROM:

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THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE

Payment to look after them is even better

Finally, land owners are being paid by the government for the conservation benefits that many farm practices have provided for years.

Natural England is delivering a programme of financial incentives, the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) scheme, designed to help landowners manage natural resources so that they can be enjoyed now and in the future. The ELS helps the government to meet their commitment to halt and reverse the decline in farmland wildlife populations, by rewarding landowners for their care of the environment. Applications to the scheme can be submitted all year round, with agreements lasting 5 years and a payment of £30 per hectare if the contracted requirements are met.

Sarah Jordan of Hamiltons Chartered Surveyors says: "Land owners can choose from a wide range of ELS options to cover all farming types. The application process for ELS is very logical, and providing suitable options are identified and selected the scheme integrates well into the existing farming practice / business."

Because over the past few decades farmers have been encouraged to work towards ever greater efficiency, the unfortunate consequence has been a reduction in feeding and nesting opportunities for wildlife across the country, so the primary objectives of the ELS scheme are to conserve wildlife, maintain and enhance landscape quality, and protect natural resources.

Sarah continues: “It can be a great timesaver, and a way of ensuring valuable ELS points are not missed, to get a dedicated agent to do the job for you - experience shows that our fees can be recouped more than ten times over within the five years that the agreements last. Digital mapping software is used in order to accurately measure all the ditches and hedges on a farm, so the landowner can see exactly how the points criteria are to be met, and what options can be chosen to reach the targets. The application process is made as easy as possible.”