

The Rt Hon David Gauke MP  
Chief Secretary to the Treasury  
HM Treasury  
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Sent via email to: [action.cst@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:action.cst@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk)



3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016



Dear Chief Secretary,

We are a group of diverse stakeholders – from farming through to conservation – who wish to help create confidence in the farming and land management community in light of the EU Referendum vote. We seek reassurance about the Government’s commitment to existing agri-environment schemes, which are part of the Common Agricultural Policy.



National Trust

The UK tax payer has invested millions of pounds of public money over the last 25 years in agri-environment schemes, providing significant public benefits, and safeguarding the natural capital that underpins our economic prosperity. This public investment – and the outcomes it has secured – will be put in jeopardy unless the Treasury acts now.



Since the referendum on EU membership, there has been uncertainty about the fate of agri-environment schemes. A hold has been placed on issuing new Countryside Stewardship agreements in England, for example, and applicants are still waiting for confirmation of Hedgerow & Boundary Grants and the new Facilitation Fund. Uncertainty about the future is preventing some farmers and land managers from applying for Countryside Stewardship, and other UK schemes. This places at risk significant environmental work which includes flood risk management and enhancing biodiversity, water quality and efforts to save rare species. Land managers and farmers need to be given confidence that they can go forward with support in place for their environmental work.



We urge you to support the funding necessary to progress with these schemes. New Countryside Stewardship agreements have a six-month break clause in them and therefore represent a low risk to the Treasury taking action now.



With this in mind, we call on the Treasury and Defra to:

1. Honour existing agri-environment schemes (e.g. Environmental Stewardship) and new agreements (e.g. Countryside Stewardship) for their contractual terms.
2. Proceed with the current Countryside Stewardship application window in England, the deadline for which is imminent (30<sup>th</sup> September 2016). This will be key to meeting a range of manifesto commitments in the coming years.



3. Keep agri-environment schemes available for new applicants until there is sufficient clarity on future policies.

These three actions will consolidate the investment made to date from public funds, and help to secure the progress made to date. They could help us to prepare for trade negotiations by demonstrating the UK's farming and environmental credentials, avoid the risk of infraction before we leave the EU and help maintain stability and certainty as we transition to a new policy in the future.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Trotter, Director for England, The Wildlife Trust

Martin Harper, Conservation Director, RSPB

Peter Nixon, Director of Land, Landscape and Nature, National Trust

Alastair Leake, Director of Policy & Head of Allerton Project, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

Trevor Hutchings, Director of Advocacy, WWF-UK

George Dunn, Chief Executive, Tenant Farmers Association

Chris Butler, Chair of the FWAG Association

Cc Mr George Eustice MP  
Cc The Rt Hon Phillip Hammond MP  
Cc The Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP