

Severn Trent Environmental Protection Scheme

Applications open from
1st November - 31st January

WONDERFUL ON TAP

**SEVERN
TRENT**

Farming for clean water

STEPS grants up to £50,000
available in your area

STEPS (Severn Trent
Environmental Protection
Scheme) provides

AND
LINC

Working with

A guide to STEPS

WONDERFUL ON TAP

**SEVERN
TRENT**

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Welcome to STEPS

Hello and welcome to this year's grant programme, **Severn Trent Environment Protection Scheme®** (STEPS).

Thank you to everyone across our region who has engaged with us over the last year. It's been an amazing year, with a 23% increase in applications for **STEPS®**. Whilst this has meant that we've been unable to support some applications, it has been fundamental in helping us protect our water environment.

Successful grants have helped fund a wide range of projects from cover crops, to fencing, to pesticide wash down areas, and biofilters, as well as more innovative ideas developed by farmers themselves.

STEPS® is part of Severn Trent's wider **Farming 4 Water®** catchment management programme, and offers a range of options for farmers to select from, enabling infrastructure investment and land management improvements. It's a voluntary scheme which is funded by Severn Trent and delivered in partnership with local Wildlife Trusts, River Trusts, the Woodland Trust, The Wye and Usk Foundation as well as South Staffordshire Water.

New for 2019-20

This year, we're excited to have grown the scheme to allow a focus on improving biodiversity across our region. The new options include hedgerow and woodland planting, pond management plans, and wildflower meadow creation. You also have the opportunity to bring your own ideas to life, through the biodiversity innovation option.

We know that biodiversity is such an essential part of the farm and wider environment. Therefore you'll be able to apply for these items on top of the existing £5000 match-funding that is available for items which target water quality.

We hope you're as enthusiastic as we are about our new and improved STEPS.

We're expecting another popular year, so I'd recommend getting in touch as soon as possible with your Agricultural Advisor. They are here to support and guide you with your application. Working together we know is a great start to achieving a successful grant application.

We look forward to hearing from you, and thank you again for your support.



Dr Jodie Rettino



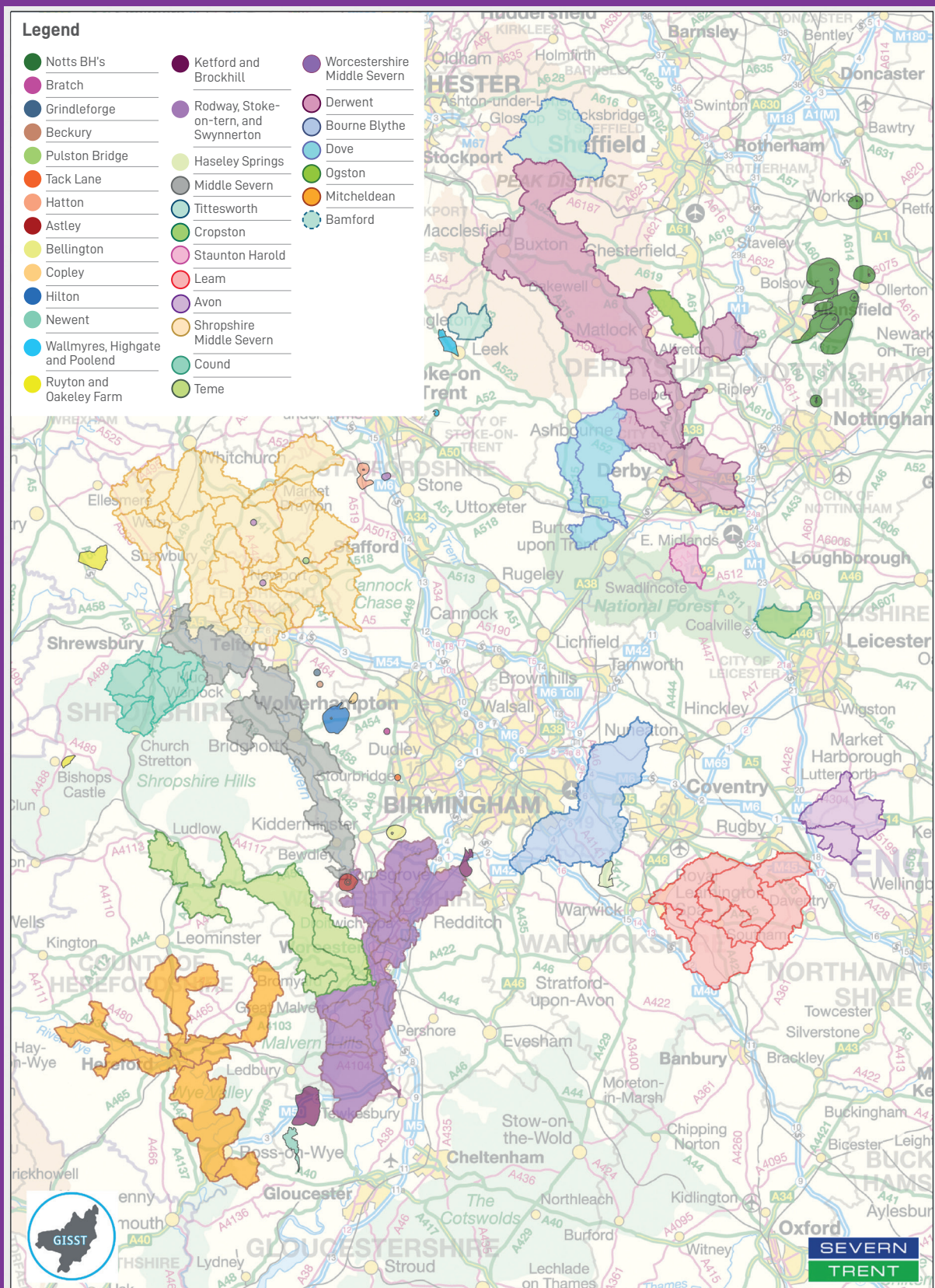
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Our grant programme is part of our ongoing commitment to protect our plant, soil, biodiversity and water environment. At the same time supporting the productive sustainable use of these valuable resources.

”

Priority catchment map

View it online at stwater.co.uk/steps



Our team

All of our team have an farming background, most have agricultural degrees, are BASIS qualified, and some have FACTS qualifications. Some of the team are also farmers, with farms located in our region.

North Warwickshire, Derbyshire (Dove)

Surface water catchments:

Whitacre, Bourne and Blythe, Dove

Groundwater catchments:

Haseley Springs

Una McBride

Phone number: 07811 847161

Email: Una.Mcbride@severntrent.co.uk

South Warwickshire/Northamptonshire

Surface water catchments:

Avon & Leam

Groundwater catchments:

N/A

Marion Perrett-Pearson

Phone number: 07970 944834

Email: Marion.Perrett-Pearson@severntrent.co.uk

Peter Bowman

Phone Number: 07711 169635

Email: Peter.Bowman@severntrent.co.uk

Shropshire (Shrewsbury to Bewdley)

Surface water catchments:

Middle Severn

Groundwater catchments:

Oakeley Farm, Ruyton , Hilton, Grindleforge, Copley, Beckbury

Geoff Jordan

Groundwater catchments: Oakeley Farm, Ruyton , Hilton, Grindleforge, Copley, Beckbury

Phone number: 07800 961684

Email: Geoff.Jordan@severntrent.co.uk

Geoff Howe

Groundwater catchments: N/A

Service water catchments: Middle Severn (South Staffs region only)

Phone number: 07866 670349

Email: Geoff.Howe@severntrent.co.uk

Shropshire (North of Shrewsbury)

Surface water catchments:

Shropshire Middle Severn

Groundwater catchments:

Stoke-on-Tern, Rodway, Swynneton, Pulston Bridge, Hatton

Ben Young

Phone number: 07789 903028

Email: Ben.Young@severntrent.co.uk

Cath Edwards

Phone Number: 07508 091799

Email: Cath.Edwards@severntrent.co.uk

Our team and our partners

Shropshire/Worcestershire (Ludlow to Worcester)

Surface water catchments: Teme

Groundwater catchments: Astley, Bratch

Emma Abbott

Groundwater catchments: Astley, Bratch

Phone number: 07909 000680

Email: Emma.Abbott@severntrent.co.uk

Jess Nott

Groundwater catchments: Astley

Phone number: 07498 540405

Email: Jess.Nott@severntrent.co.uk

Kate Singleton

Groundwater catchments: N/A

Phone number: 07432 454964

Email: Kate.Singleton@severntrent.co.uk

Worcestershire & Gloucestershire

Surface water catchments:

Worcestershire Severn

Groundwater catchments:

Ketford, Brockhill, Ketford, Brockhill,
Bellington, Newent, Tack Lane

Susan Bamber

Groundwater catchments: Ketford, Brockhill,
Bellington, Newent, Tack Lane

Phone number: 07921 676664

Email: Susan.Bamber@severntrent.co.uk

Emily Williams

Groundwater catchments: Ketford, Brockhill

Phone number: 07498 959818

Email: Emily.Williams@severntrent.co.uk

Shropshire

Surface water catchments:

Shropshire Middle Severn and Middle Severn

Groundwater catchments:

Oakeley Farm, Ruyton, Hilton, Grindleforge,
Copley, Beckbury

Helen Campbell

Phone number: 07399 493118

Email: Helen.Campbell@severntrent.co.uk



Herefordshire/Gloucestershire (Mitcheldean to Leominster)

Surface water catchments: Mitcheldean (River Wye)

Groundwater catchments: N/A

Abi Croshaw

Surface water catchment: downstream of
Mordiford, including lower Wye

Phone number: 07990 068941

Email: Abi@wyeuskfoundation.org

Mike Williams

Surface water catchment: upstream of
Mordiford, including upper Wye, Lugg & Frome

Phone Number: 07920 441215

Email: mike@wyeuskfoundation.org

Staffordshire Derbyshire

Surface water catchments: Tittesworth

Groundwater catchments: Highgate, Poolend
and Wallmyres

Adrian Rochford

Phone number: 07423 437961

Email: Adrian.Rochford@severntrent.co.uk

Tina Bardill

Phone Number: 07384 815880

Email: Tina.Bardill@severntrent.co.uk



Derbyshire

Surface water catchments: Upper and Lower Derwent, Ogston

Groundwater catchments: N/A

Margaret Baile

Phone number: 07789 903652

Email: Margaret.Baile@severntrent.co.uk

Leicestershire

Surface water catchments:

Cropston, Staunton Harold

Groundwater catchments: N/A

Louise Richmond

Phone Number: 07713 333192

Email: Louise.Richmond@severntrent.co.uk

Nottinghamshire Boreholes

Surface water catchments: N/A

Groundwater catchments: Boughton, Bestwood, Rufford, Amen Corner, Budby & Budby Forest, Clipstone, Clipstone Forest, Chequer House

Phil Billings

Phone Number: 07784 924584

Email: Phil.Billings@severntrent.co.uk

Our team and our partners

Our Partners

We have an exceptional way of working with partner organisations across the region. By utilising our partners skills and expertise, it allows us to work with and support our local farming community to provide access to schemes and programme grants that will ultimately help to protect and improve the quality of the local environment.



South Staffs Water



The Wye & Usk Foundation



**WOODLAND
TRUST**



**Shropshire
Wildlife Trust**



**Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust**



Warwickshire



Nottinghamshire

How the grant scheme works

Grants are available up to the value of £5,000 per catchment per year, with the ability to spread grant funding over 2 years (up to £10,000) for pesticide handling and treatment areas.

The scheme runs annually and farmers can apply every year, as long as they meet the criteria for funding as detailed on page 11 of this guide. Applicants who apply, or who have applied, for items which address the priority water quality issue in a catchment, may also apply for items which address biodiversity - on top of the £5000 match funded grant.

How the grant scheme works

The scheme offers farmers and land managers, both owners and tenants, financial and technical support, to invest in tailored solutions to help tackle diffuse water pollution and to protect and maintain biodiversity and the natural environment.

There are a wide variety of options to choose from. Items which address water quality include watercourse fencing, buffer strips and pesticide handling areas. Additionally, options for biodiversity are specifically aimed at enhancing biodiversity on your farm.

We've awarded over 1300 grants to farms across our region with projects ranging from cover crops, to fencing, to pesticide wash down areas, and biofilters. We even have an option for farmers to submit an innovative idea, specially developed for their farm business.

How to apply for a grant

1

Is your farm in a priority catchment?

Do you farm, or have land in a priority catchment in the Severn Trent Region? See the map on page 4 of this brochure, or view it online at stwater.co.uk/steps

Each of our surface or groundwater priority catchments is affected by a particular pollutant, for example pesticides, nitrate or bacteria. Options which are particularly useful in addressing the pollutant risks of your catchment are highlighted, and are considered priority items.

To reflect this, inclusion of one or more of the priority items within your application will increase the likelihood of your application scoring favourably in our competitive screening process. Your Agricultural Advisor will notify you of any other priorities in your catchment.

Additionally STEPS grants are available in Severn Trent 'priority Source Protection Zones' (SPZs) located around the selected drinking water boreholes listed opposite:

How the grant scheme works

Amen Corner	Hatton
Astley	Highgate
Beckbury	Hilton
Bellington	Ketford
Bestwood	Newent
Boughton	Oakeley Farm
Bratch	Poolend
Brockhill	Pulston Bridge
Budby	Rodway
Budby Forest	Rufford
Chequer House	Ruyton
Clipstone/ Clipstone Forest	Stoke on Tern
Copley	Swynnerton
Grindleforge	Tack Lane
Haseley Springs	Wallmyres

2

Choose your options

Find details of the grant options available in the accompanying booklet or go online at stwater.co.uk/steps

Our Agricultural Advisors are available to help and assist you in the process. You can call them to arrange an appointment to suit you, or chat to them on the phone.

3

Make your application

Apply online by January 31st. Simply go online and fill in the easy application form at - stwater.co.uk/steps

All applications are assessed by the end of February and we aim to let all applicants know the outcome of their application within 6 weeks.

4

Assessing your application

The grant scheme is a competitive process and all our applications are assessed and reviewed based on the farms individual circumstances and the options you choose to apply for. We assess everyone's application and look at every farm's individual circumstances.

5

We'll be in touch

Once you submit your application, we'll acknowledge receipt. Then once every application has been assessed, we will notify every one of the outcome of their application.

If successful, this letter specifies the items and grant amount that has been awarded to you, so it is important to keep it.

You'll also receive two copies of your STEPS agreement, which you need to sign and then send one copy back to us.

6

Complete the work

Once you have returned your signed agreement to us you're free to get on with the work.

After completing your work, let your Agricultural Advisor know, and they will supply you with a claim form. You'll need to submit photographs, receipts or invoices to show that the work was completed.

We'll then reimburse you for the amount agreed in your offer and agreement letter.

Dedicated support and advice

To help you get the best out of what's on offer, our local Agricultural Advisors are available to help you.

Terms and Conditions

Your personal data and environmental information

1. By participating in the scheme, you agree to provide STW with the necessary personal and farm business data in order to comply with the scheme's requirements, and to meet our audit parameters. Any data used for our own audit purposes is totally anonymous. For further details, please, read the Privacy Policy on our website: stwater.co.uk/help-and-contact/legal/privacy/

2. In the event that we receive a request for information under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 ("EIR"), we may be required to disclose information to third parties that you have provided to us, to the extent that it is environmental information as defined under the EIR.

The Severn Trent Environmental Protection Scheme (STEPS) is part of Severn Trent's Farming 4 Water catchment management programme.

The scheme is a grant programme solely covered by Severn Trent and provides a wide range of options to farmers for infrastructure investments and land management items.

These Terms and Conditions are here to help applicants understand the requirements and conditions of the grant funding that can be awarded.

All applicants accept that they are familiar with the Terms and Conditions outlined in this document and will comply with them.

If applicants have any queries in relation to their application they should speak to their local Agricultural Advisor (contact details at the front of this handbook), or email; farming4water@severntrent.co.uk before submitting their application.

In the event that there are any changes to these Terms and Conditions, they will be publicised immediately on the Severn Trent Water website and an updated version of the document available for download. You will also receive a soft copy via email where possible.

The following abbreviations will be used throughout the Terms and Conditions:

'STW' shall mean Severn Trent Water Limited.

'STEPS' shall mean Severn Trent Environmental Protection Scheme.

'SPZ' shall mean Source Protection Zone.

'Objective' shall mean a specific action required to be completed in association with a particular scheme.

'Farm' or **'Holding'** shall mean all the production units that are under the control of the applicant farmer/land owner.

'Farming Activity' shall mean dairy farming; livestock production; cultivation of fodder and tillage crops, and the growing of horticultural crops.

'Eligibility' shall mean essential criteria which must be fulfilled to allow a STEPS contract to be agreed.

'Application' shall mean an application for a STEPS support scheme prepared and submitted by land owner/manager.

'Watercourse' shall mean all rivers, streams, ditches, drains, cuts, culverts, dykes, sluices, and passages through which water flows, but excluding any pipes owned or used by STW or any other water or sewerage undertaker.

'EA' shall mean Environment Agency.

'Building control regulation' shall mean the most up to date regulations as outlined by your local council or Local Authority.

The STEPS grant scheme Terms and Conditions

1. Criteria for funding

- You must be aged eighteen or over, on the date you submit your application.
- You must be the owner or leaseholder of the farm.
- Applications may be submitted by a 3rd party on behalf of the landowner, however you should declare this on the application, and provide confirmation that the landowner's permission has been obtained.
- Grants will only be available to farmers and landowners who farm, or have land within a STW drinking water abstraction catchment, and/or farm within one of STW's priority SPZs.
- For details on priority catchments, the map is available on page 4 of this brochure.
- Size of farm: arable farms must be a minimum size of 5 hectares; grassland farms must have a minimum size of 3 hectares
- You must be farming on the land that is being entered into the scheme.
- Any evidence of 'double funding' will result in the cancellation of your agreement and withdrawal of any potential funds.
- Where funding has already been released, you will be required, and agree, to refund it and we (STW) will take the necessary action to recoup the funds, including any legal costs.

- Any applicant or application found to be fraudulent will be rejected and the applicant disqualified from future STW programmes and schemes.
- STW may reject applications if they are not likely to benefit water quality, biodiversity or the environment.
- The submission of a valid application does not guarantee entry to STEPS.
- Once offered a grant, applicants can't change their capital works, or amend their agreement unless given permission by STW.
- Contracts are non-transferable except in the case of:
 - Certified serious illness of applicant
 - Death of the applicant
 - Long term professional incapacity of the applicant.
- Each STEPS item specifies particular criteria to be met, in order to be included in an application.
- We cannot fund any item or work which is a regulatory requirement.'
- Biodiversity options may only be selected where the application also includes an item which addresses a priority water quality issue in the catchment, i.e. one that addresses the key pollutant in a catchment. Applicants who have previously successfully applied for one of these items do not need to do so again should they wish to select a biodiversity item.

2. Supporting evidence for applications

Mandatory supporting evidence is required in order to successfully assess your application, as outlined below:

- Brief description of the farm enterprise
- An overview of the work planned and the environmental reason for undertaking this work
- Forecast timescales for completion of the project
- Photographs of site prior to commencing infrastructural work
- Farm maps which display farm boundary and site location of scheme(s) chosen
- Dated quotes for items applied for under 'Farmer innovation'.

Our Agricultural Advisors will be available to support with the application process but are not responsible for the submission of your application.

3. How we assess your application

- A scoring system has been used to ensure that funding will go to projects that demonstrate the greatest water quality benefit and positive impact to biodiversity. We will also take into consideration any prior engagement with a STW Agricultural Advisor, participation in other STW catchment schemes and, particularly in the case of Farmer innovation applications, value for money.
- Application forms are usually submitted through the online portal accessible through the Severn Trent Catchment Team website **stwater.co.uk/steps**
- Applications can be submitted via a paper application where the applicant has not access to an online facility or has no internet connectivity.
- Scoring is a competitive process, and not all applicants are guaranteed to receive full funding or any funding at all, even if applicants have been successful in the past.
- All applicants will be contacted regarding the outcome of their application.
- Successful applicants will be notified in writing of their grant award, with an agreement form.
- The agreement form must be signed and returned to us.
- Returning and signing the agreement form acknowledges that you are committed to the work, as per your grant application, and will abide by these Terms and Conditions.

4. Your obligations

- If successful in being awarded STEPS funding, you must return a copy of your signed grant agreement to the catchment team by the date specified on your acceptance letter. Agreements not returned by this date will be voided and the funding reallocated to other STEPS projects.
- You must inform STW of any change to a selected option and a written reason displaying your actions. You will then receive confirmation of approval. If you change the location of the STEPS capital item and do not inform STW you may not receive the allocated funding.
- All records must be kept for 5 years following entry into the scheme. Records include invoices, receipts, permits, maps, photos and consents.
- Any breach of cross-compliance noted during an on farm inspection may be reported to the EA.
- All work must comply with relevant environmental legislation, have the appropriate planning permissions, and meet the latest building control regulations and British Standards.

Terms and Conditions

- Specialist On Farm Advice (SOFA) visits are a requirement for some STEPS items. Refusal or cancellation of the visit without rearrangement will result in the STEPS application being terminated or funding withheld.

Planning permission and consents

- Written consent(s) from a relevant authority may be required with your application. You may or may not require planning permission from your local authority or relevant body – it is your responsibility to check and to apply if permission is required.
- Planning permission may be required depending on the capital scheme chosen. Consult your local planning authority or National Park authority to seek advice.
- You must enclose a copy of the consent, or the application for consent, with your application if relevant.
- In some cases, and with permission from STW, advice and consent can be received up until 15 days after the application deadline; applicants can discuss this with their Agricultural Adviser. STW won't be able to process your application until we receive these.
- All works must comply with relevant environmental legislation associated with the scheme.
- Once the scheme is complete it must be kept in agricultural use e.g. not changed to an alternative use such as residential or commercial accommodation, for a minimum of 5 years from the date of your STEPS contract.

Health and safety

- All work must comply with the relevant health and safety legislation. Please visit the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk) for further information. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that any work carried out under a STEPS agreement complies with the relevant health and safety legislation. This includes all subsequent maintenance of items which address water quality or biodiversity. The HSE may need to be notified of some construction work.
- All work must comply with all British Standards and Codes of Good Agricultural Practice.
- Capital items must be installed in accordance with Protecting our Water, Soil and Air: a Code of Good Agricultural Practice for farmers, growers and land managers (CoGap).

- Items installed under the scheme must have a minimum design life of 10 years; or have a minimum design life of 20 years if the item has to comply with The Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry, and Agricultural Fuel Oil) (England) Regulations 2010 (as amended 2013) (SSAFO).
- Biodiversity options require management throughout their lives to ensure they provide suitable habitat. Failure to appropriately maintain an item within the grant period may result in Severn Trent seeking to recoup the grant funding.

Environment Agency, Natural England, other authorities and legislation

- If your work affects any of the following you will need consent from the EA or from the relevant authority;
 - National Park
 - Listed Building
 - Scheduled Monument
 - Protected Species
 - National Nature Reserve
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest
 - Registered Parkland
 - Local Nature Reserves
 - Registered Battlefields
 - Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Special Protection Area (SPA)
 - Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
 - RAMSAR
 - Biobed/Biofilter construction and spreading of used Biomix to land.
- Before commitment to any work, you may have to seek guidance from the EA e.g. installation of a biobed on your farm holding.
- Any work carried out within 1m of the top of a river bank may require flood defence consent. Depending on the size of watercourse you should consult the EA. Telephone: **03708 506506** or email: **enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk**

5. Our (STW) obligations

- Assess applications in an unbiased manner.
- We will provide one-to-one support through our Agricultural Advisors.
- Respond to queries within 20 working days via our catchment team inbox email – **farming4water@severntrent.co.uk**
- Provide at least 7 days' notice of any planned site visit and inspection.
- We may carry out on-the-spot checks at farm level to ensure compliance with the requirements of the scheme.
- We will keep all your personal, farm and financial information confidential. See our privacy statement, at the end of these Terms and Conditions.
- This does not affect our duty to report any breaches in cross compliance to the EA.

6. Processing grant payments

- All applications for support and payment claims will be subjected to our administrative checks, and any other controls deemed necessary, before approvals or payments are made under the scheme.
- Receipts or invoices for materials purchased for the delivery of STEPS options must be retained and must be submitted with your completion and evidence of the work carried out.
- Participants must provide documentary evidence of payment. Receipts must be made out by the vendor to include the name and address of the beneficiary.
- Receipts must be dated and any materials purchased before entry to STEPS will not be accepted.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that any requested supporting documentation for the release of payments is submitted. Photographs of site must be taken and retained both before and after completion of work. (Please take both photos from same position where possible).
- The maximum payment to any participant in STEPS shall not exceed £5,000 in respect of a STEPS calendar year. This includes the option for constructing complete pesticide handling facilities.

7. Additional funding opportunities

- It is the applicant's responsibility to understand that if they decide to apply for funding from other EU funded or National Schemes, addressing similar objectives to the STEPS scheme, that they will be at risk of losing any grant awarded from STW, and also the other organisation to which an application has been made for funds. This is known as double funding.
- Double funding is defined as grant money used, from different sources to fund the same capital works at the same location. As a guide, the following schemes should be considered (this list is not exhaustive):
 - Environmental Stewardship
 - Countryside Stewardship
 - Paths4Communities
 - Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme
 - LEADER Farm Productivity Grant
 - Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Aid
 - Woodland Grant schemes
 - Energy crops.
- In relation to your claim, all paperwork must be kept for 5 years after the start of your agreement
- VAT will not be paid if you are VAT registered.
- If you are not VAT registered, your VAT can be included in the total costs provided it does not exceed the £5000 limit.

8. Breaking your agreement and participation in STEPS

Force Majeure - where an applicant is unable to continue within STEPS commitment(s) due to reasons beyond their control. The following categories of Force Majeure will be recognised (not an exhaustive list):

- Death of the participant
- Long term professional incapacity of the participant
- Expropriation of a large part of the holding if such expropriation could not have been anticipated before joining STEPS
- A natural disaster affecting the holding's agricultural land
- The accidental destruction of livestock buildings on the farm e.g. destruction of property via a fire
- An outbreak of disease affecting all or part of the livestock on the farm

- The disposal or vacation of land to satisfy a court order or legal settlement in cases of marital breakdown
- A profound change of business circumstances that makes participation financially unviable.

9. Breaching the agreement

This could result in the non-payment or recovery of the grant payable or already paid. Note that applicants are responsible for the work carried out (even if work was contracted to an external contractor). The following are classed as breaches of agreement (not an exhaustive list):

- Refusal to allow STW Agricultural Advisor access to the land for inspection on reasonable notice (7 days)
- Providing false or misleading information in relation to the grant and evidence
- Submission of a claim for capital works that are not completed or where funds have been used for an alternative purpose
- Lack of evidence of how the funds were spent or of the finished work e.g. photos
- Removal of any capital works without written consent from STW
- Change of use of a capital item, e.g. roofing over a manure storage to turn it into a grain or machinery storage (even when at the applicant's own expense)
- You are found to not meet the criteria for funding
- Not following the relevant deadlines for responding and submitting your agreement form.
- Failure to comply with the appropriate standards, planning rules and agricultural codes of practice
- Subsequent refusal of a Specialist On Farm Advisory visit (should one be required in order to be eligible for a STEPS item) after returning your signed agreement
- Failure to adhere to STEPS item requirements as specified in the STEPS brochure.'

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Will I be guaranteed entry to the STEPS following my application?

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Q What is a priority catchment?

A These are specific areas across the region where we abstract water to treat and use for drinking water. We abstract water from surface rivers, reservoirs and groundwater drinking water catchments and boreholes. These are often at risk due to specific forms of diffuse pollution from farms. In particular groundwater sources are most vulnerable to nitrate pollution while surface waters are at most risk from pesticide pollution.

Q What is the availability of a grant?

- A STW will pay the fixed costs offered in the handbook for each of the items.
- The maximum payment per application, per year, per catchment is £5000, including applications for funding of pesticide handling items over 2 years (up to £10,000).
 - Biodiversity items are excluded from the £5000 limit.
 - Only one application can be made annually, per farm business, per priority catchment. Late applications will not be funded. Please see 'Criteria for funding' (page 11) for more details.
 - You may apply for several items but they must all be submitted under one application.
 - STW cannot make additional funds available should the match funded portion of the grant be greater than anticipated. This includes where the total grant in the agreement is less than the £5000 limit.
 - There is no lower limit on the size of the grant.
 - Grants will only be available to farmers and landowners who farm within a STW drinking water abstraction catchment and/or farm within one of the STW priority 'source protection zones' (SPZs). Please contact your STW Agricultural Advisor (contact info at start of handbook) or you can email the Severn Trent Catchment Team at farming4water@severntrent.co.uk
 - The location of the STEPS items must be within the Severn Trent priority catchment. Items located outside these catchments cannot be funded.
 - We will not fund any infrastructure directly linked to a regulatory requirement.
 - We will not fund any infrastructure or project which is also receiving money from another grant scheme. An applicant can only apply for a STW grant in addition to another grant where they fund different items.
 - We will not fund the costs of any maintenance, normal wear and tear, or direct replacements of capital items.

FAQs Frequently Asked Questions

Q Are there any other factors that are taken into account when applications are being assessed?

- A** Yes - applications will be prioritised according to the following:
- The reduction in water pollution the items in the application will deliver i.e. the water quality benefit. This will vary between items, and between catchments, so consult your STW Agricultural Advisor for more information
 - Location of the farm within our catchments
 - Size of farm (arable farms must be a minimum size of 5 hectares. Grassland farms must have a minimum size of 3 hectares)
 - Perceived water quality benefit - Each catchment contains priority STEPS items. Your application will be prioritised if one of these are chosen. Contact your STW Agricultural Advisor for more details
 - The award of STEPS grants are not influenced by any other interaction between a farm business and STW, for example where construction may have taken place on agricultural land. STEPS grants shall not function as a means of compensation or payment for these activities
 - Past engagement with STW Agricultural Advisors
 - Attendance at STW workshops over previous years.

Q When will I get paid?

- A** Upon completion of the works, obtain a claim form from your STW Agricultural Advisor. Claim forms should be submitted to STW, accompanied by photographic evidence and valid receipts.
- All grant funding is awarded as a single payment when all works are completed.
 - STW is unable to make part payments.
 - Should an applicant be unable to install certain items in their agreement, grant funding may only be claimed for the work which has been completed.
 - Unclaimed funding either for uncompleted works or those which have not been started, cannot be held and rolled over to subsequent STEPS rounds.
 - STEPS grants for projects spanning 2 years must be claimed over 2 financial years.

The deadline for submission of evidence is March 1st.

Q What do I need to supply with my application form?

- A** You need to supply the following with your application form:
- A brief description of the farm enterprise
 - An overview of the work planned and the environmental reason for undertaking this work
 - Timescales for completion of the project
 - Photographs of site prior to commencing work
 - Farm maps which display the farm boundary, and the site location for works being undertaken
 - Dated quotes for items applied for under 'Farmer innovation'
 - Copies of your farm map(s) that display:
 - The boundary of your holding;
 - The location of the proposed scheme on your farm map, mark an 'X' on the map along with STEPS item code;
 - A national OS grid reference, or valid postcode, marked for the scheme location.

Note: If applying for a fence/track, draw the proposed line on the map. For an example map, please ask your Agricultural Advisor.

Q Will my farm be subject to STEPS inspections?

- A** Yes - inspections and checks will be carried out at a farm level by STW to ensure that all funded items have been completed as per your application. All applicants can expect a farm inspection within a 5 year period from joining the STEPS scheme.

Q Will I be guaranteed entry to the STEPS following my application?

- A** No - submission of an application does not guarantee approval. Applications are prioritised through our scoring system which recognises the likely benefit to water quality, together with other factors such as location, value for money and previous engagement with the catchment team.



How much can I claim?



Q Can I apply if only part of my farm holding falls within a STW drinking water abstraction catchment and/or within one of STW priority 'source protection zones' (SPZs)?

A Yes. However, any STEPS items (both for water and for Biodiversity) must be located within the catchment boundary. This is a competitive process and your application may not score as highly as those schemes fully in a catchment where the benefits may be greater.

Q When is opening/closing date for the application period?

A The application period is opened from November 1st until January 31st.

Q Where can I get a claim form?

A By contacting your STW Agricultural Advisor.

Q When will I be informed if my application is successful?

A Applicants will be informed within 6 weeks of the application closing date. Once written confirmation has been received, applicants may commence work on their STEPS item(s).

Q What happens if my application is unsuccessful?

A You will receive a formal letter outlining the reasons for your declined application. Depending on your application you may be encouraged to apply next year.

Q When does the work have to be completed by?

A All STEPS project work must be completed and claim forms/evidence received by STW by March 1st.

Should you be unable to complete or start the works, your application will not automatically be accepted for the following STEPS round, although you will be encouraged to reapply.

In exceptional circumstances applications may be granted a short extension however this cannot be guaranteed.

Farm management items must be completed in accordance with that specified in the handbook.

Q When will I receive funding?

A Successful applicants are entitled to claim their funds once work is completed.

Applicants are required to provide evidence of completed work by March 1st. All successful applicants will receive their funding by March 31st.

Q What happens if the work is not completed on time or the standard of work does not meet the required specifications?

A Depending on the circumstances you may not receive the funded grant money. It will affect your application for grants in subsequent years.

Q How much can I claim?

A Fixed cost pesticide handling and washdown items (specified in the brochure), may be selected up to a combined value of £10,000 in a single application. The grant will be paid to a successful applicant over two financial years.

Biodiversity items are not included in the funding limit and may be applied for in addition to the £5000, providing a priority item for water quality is also in the application or has been granted in a previous STEPS round.

Please note that second hand material including refurbished items should not be purchased under STEPS.

VAT will not be paid if you are VAT registered. If you are not VAT registered, your VAT can be included in the total costs, provided it does not exceed the £5000 threshold (Total Cost).





Why are STW funding Biodiversity options?



Q The handbook says that a STEPS item needs a specialist advisory visit. What is this and do I need one?

A Yes-some items require a bit more planning and or management in order to provide the greatest benefit to your business and the environment. Specialist advisory visits by industry experts help to provide this information and can be arranged for free by your Agricultural Advisor. If you have already had a visit from an expert e.g. through Catchment Sensitive Farming and can show that your plans are sufficient, additional visits may not be required.

Q Am I entitled to apply for grants from other organisations?

A Yes. However, grants can't be combined with other funding sources for the same capital works in the same location. This is known as 'double funding'. Failure to acknowledge this may result in both grants being reclaimed. Examples of such funding schemes include:

- Environmental Stewardship
- Countryside Stewardship
- Paths4Communities
- Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme
- LEADER Farm Productivity Grant
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Aid
- Woodland Grant schemes
- Energy crops.

Q Can the location of the STEPS capital item be changed?

A Yes, but only under certain conditions. You must inform STW of the change, and provide a written explanation for your actions with updated evidence. You will then receive a letter of approval. Depending on the item, the relevant authorities may also have to be informed (County Councils, EA, etc.) and new planning permits may have to be submitted. If you change the location of the STEPS capital item and do not inform STW you may liable to a penalty.

Q Do consents and permissions need to be given and investigated before submitting the STEPS application?

A Yes, see your STEPS handbook for reference. Written consent(s) from a relevant authority may be required with your application. You must enclose a copy of it with your application or in some cases, and with permission from STW, advice and consent can be received up until 15 days after the application deadline; applicants can discuss this with their Agricultural Adviser. STW won't be able to process your application until we receive these.

Q Can I withdraw my application after I have been successful?

A Yes - Please contact your Agricultural Advisor for advice. Written or electronic confirmation that you wish to withdraw will be required.

Q If my STEPS application is successful, will this affect further applications to the grant scheme in subsequent years?

A No. STEPS operates on an annual basis. Applications are prioritised through our scoring system which recognises the likely benefit to water quality, biodiversity and previous engagement with STW.

Q Will I receive a notification that my application has been received?

A Yes. All applicants will receive a notification that their application has been received within 2 weeks.

Q Why are STW funding Biodiversity options?

A STW recognises that water quality and the wider healthy environment are explicitly linked, therefore by improving biodiversity and taking an integrated farm management approach allows us to look at our catchments in a holistic way. We also know that farmers are very keen to protect wildlife and their habitats, and we wish to support them in doing this.

Q Is there a limit to the number/amount of biodiversity options that I can apply for?

A You can apply for a mixture of biodiversity options in each grant window up to a maximum of £5000 per application.



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What are the
water quality
priority items
for my
catchment?

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Q I understand that there is a limit of £5,000 per farm business, per year, per catchment for STEPS. Does this £5000 include biodiversity options, or are they in addition to the £5,000 limit?

A Biodiversity options are offered in addition to our existing STEPS options which primarily aim to improve water quality.

Q Can I just apply for a biodiversity option in this year's STEPS round?

A The biodiversity items within the STEPS programme are only available to farmers who also choose to apply for a water quality priority item. Or, who have previously applied for one and were successful, and have since implemented those measures.

Q What are the water quality priority items for my catchment?

A Priority items may differ across each of the priority catchments - contact your Agricultural Advisor for details of the priority items in your area.

Q I already have SOME of your priority items in place, but these have not been funded by STEPS. Am I still eligible to apply for your biodiversity options (without including options which improve water quality)?

A No. In order to access the biodiversity items, you need to have implemented an item which targets water quality and has been funded through the STEPS scheme, either in this application or in applications from previous STEPS rounds.

Q Will my farm be subject to inspection of STEPS-funded biodiversity options?

A Yes. Any prospective applications should be discussed with your Agricultural Advisor. Evidence of all work will be required, and could include invoices, maps, or "before & after" photos.

Q Will any biodiversity monitoring be required on my farm?

A Monitoring of biodiversity before, during and after item implementation is an optional service that we can provide. If you're interested in having monitoring in place on your farm, let your Agricultural Advisor know and they can discuss the options with you. Any monitoring is likely to be carried out by an external party/biodiversity specialist, and will not be available to everyone.

Q What happens if my biodiversity option does not establish, or requires re-establishment during the agreement period?

A If establishment of your item fails, it may be necessary to re-establish the sward during the agreement period. This will be at your own cost, but may be moved to a new location to aid establishment. Please liaise with your Agricultural Advisor.

Q What can I claim if my biodiversity item does not establish after 2 attempts?

A If you are subject to a 5 year agreement, you can claim for your first year costs. If you are subject to an annual agreement, you can claim for the cost of your seed. In order to claim one of these part payments, evidence must be provided of seed invoices, as well as that which shows that you have followed and sought your seed merchant/agronomists advice. You must liaise with your Agricultural Advisor throughout the agreement period.

Q What if I have an issue with a biodiversity item that is not covered within the items guidance?

A Please liaise with your Agricultural Advisor if you encounter any issues with the biodiversity item(s) that are not detailed in the guidance.



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