

Press release

NPWS announces call for new Farm Plan Scheme participants to benefit nature

From [Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage \(/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/\)](/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/).

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- the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Farm Plan Scheme supports farmers and land managers to deliver actions that benefit habitats and species in areas of European and Irish importance for biodiversity
- the scheme has grown significantly in recent years as a result of increased funding and is expanding further in 2023
- Minister Noonan invites interested landowners to submit applications by 4 August 2023

The NPWS has today (Friday 9 June) announced a new call for applications to the NPWS Farm Plan Scheme. The deadline for applications is 10am on Friday 4 August 2023.

The Farm Plan Scheme was launched in 2006 to support farmers and land managers to:

- deliver actions that benefit habitats and species in Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which are known collectively as Natura

2000 sites

- support farmland biodiversity more generally
- provide a platform for the trial and development of new conservation approaches that can then be applied more widely

Over the past 15 years, approximately 900 Plans have been delivered covering a variety of nature interests, from highly threatened birds such as Corncrake and Curlew and other species of conservation concern, to habitats such as species-rich grasslands, eskers, coastal dunes, fens and turloughs. Currently there are around 350 active Farm Plans across the country.

Malcolm Noonan, Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, has welcomed today's call for applications from landowners to join the Scheme:

"I am very pleased to announce the opening of a new call for applications to the NPWS Farm Plan Scheme in 2023. This new call builds on the additional funding I have allocated to the scheme each year since 2020, and the many wonderful new farm plans which are now in operation across the country as a result.

"The Farm Plan Scheme supports and rewards farmers and land managers to deliver positive farm management on some of Ireland's most important sites for biodiversity. The scheme has led to the creation of new solutions for nature conservation on farmland and delivers real benefits on the ground via direct action and positive changes in related policies. The scheme contributes as a significant part of Ireland's wider efforts through agri-environmental schemes to address biodiversity loss. I greatly encourage eligible parties to get involved in this excellent scheme and make an application. I look forward to seeing a new group of farmers and land managers working with us to farm for nature in the coming years."

How to apply

NPWS is prioritising plans that can be described under the following three headings:

Applications must be made using the NPWS Farm Plan Scheme application form. The application form is available via:

- the NPWS website: <https://www.npws.ie/farmers-and-landowners/schemes/npws-farm-plan-scheme> (<https://www.npws.ie/farmers-and-landowners/schemes/npws-farm-plan-scheme>)
- contacting the Agri-Ecology Unit directly for an application form - email agri.ecology@npws.gov.ie (<mailto:agri.ecology@npws.gov.ie>)
- plans that will deliver the Conservation Objectives of sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Natural Heritage Areas
- intervention plans for sites where there is a need to intervene and address the management of a particular area of land in agreement with the landowner (this is typically led by NPWS)
- research and Innovation plans, aimed at advancing knowledge and testing new methodologies to inform wider application

Who can apply

- those managing lands in sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Natural Heritage Areas
- those managing lands that support habitats and species of conservation concern

Important note: the double funding of measures on the same parcels of land by other agri-environmental schemes (such as ACRES or LIFE Projects) is not permitted, that is, it is not possible to pay for the same measure under two schemes on the same parcel of land.

As the budget is limited, it is likely not possible to accept all applicants and NPWS reserves the right to select plans it deems most worthy (for example, where the need for conservation action is the greatest, or where a plan offers a significant opportunity for

learning to inform improved practice and/or policy). A list of targets that have been prioritised in the NPWS Farm Plan Scheme is included in the NPWS Farm Plan Scheme application form.

Notes

An overview of the NPWS Farm Plan Scheme can be found in the book titled 'Farming for Nature: the role of results-based payments', which can be accessed online in PDF format. <https://www.npws.ie/news/farming-for-nature-book>
(<https://www.npws.ie/news/farming-for-nature-book>).

For more information, go to <https://www.npws.ie/farmers-and-landowners/schemes/npws-farm-plan-scheme>. (<https://www.npws.ie/farmers-and-landowners/schemes/npws-farm-plan-scheme>).

The current call for applications is open until Friday 4 August 2023.

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