

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

SCHEME PRESCRIPTIONS

ESSEX COAST ESA

NB. If you carry out any work contrary to the scheme's objectives, for example the destruction of features such as walls, buildings or hedges, or the ploughing of valuable grassland, shortly before applying to join or rejoin the scheme, the Department is likely to reject your application.

The Department may modify the prescriptions set out below, to introduce additional requirements or amend existing ones, where this will help to protect and/or enhance habitats and species which are of importance within the designated area. Such modifications may be made for the lifespan of the agreement or from time to time, by means of a written agreement with you which will form part of your ESA agreement for the term specified.

TIER 1 – PERMANENT GRASSLAND

1. Maintain permanent grassland. Do not plough, level or reseed. Cultivate only with a chain harrow or a roller.
2. Graze with cattle, sheep or horses or cut the grass and remove the cuttings. Where the grassland is grazed, avoid poaching, overgrazing or undergrazing. Wilt and turn any grass cut for silage before removal.
3. Do not increase your existing application rates of inorganic fertiliser and do not apply more than 90 kg nitrogen per hectare in any one application.
4. Do not increase your existing application rates of organic fertiliser and, in any event, do not apply more than 30 tonnes per hectare per year. Do not apply slurry, pig or poultry manure or sewage sludge.
5. Do not apply organic fertiliser within 50 metres of a spring, well or borehole that supplies water for human consumption or within 10 metres of any watercourse.
6. Do not apply lime, slag or any other substance designed to reduce soil acidity.
7. Do not apply fungicides or insecticides.
8. Control infestations of stinging nettles, spear thistle, creeping or field thistle, curled dock, broadleaved dock or ragwort.
9. Do not apply herbicides except to control the weeds named above.
10. Apply herbicides only by means of a wick applicator or by spot treatment.
11. Do not install any new land drainage system or modify any existing land drainage system so as to bring about improved drainage.
12. Maintain ditches and dykes for which you are responsible (including margins and banks) in rotation and carry out any necessary management by mechanical means, not pesticides. Spread spoil thinly away from the ditch edge.
13. Agree in writing with the Project Officer measures to exploit any opportunities for retaining water in ditches and low areas.
14. Do not infill existing natural depressions or low areas.
15. Retain and manage hedges. Retain and, where necessary, manage individual and small groups of trees.
16. Obtain written advice on the management of woodland and scrub and on any proposals to plant new woodland.
17. Do not apply pesticides or fertiliser on land within 1 metre of any hedge.
18. Retain and where necessary manage ponds and reedbeds.
19. Obtain the Department's prior written approval if you wish to construct any new ponds.
20. Dispose of sheep dip safely. Do not spread sheep dip where it may affect areas of nature conservation value.
21. Do not damage, destroy or remove any feature of archaeological or historic value or interest.
22. At the start of your agreement obtain written advice on the management of known archaeological and historic features on your land. Where standard advice on agricultural management is provided this should be implemented within 12 months. Where more specific advice is required this should be obtained within the first 12 months, and appropriate advice implemented within two years of the start of your agreement.
23. Obtain written advice on siting, design and materials before constructing buildings or roads or carrying out any other engineering or construction works that do not require planning permission or prior notification determination by the Local Planning Authority.

24. You must abide by the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Soil, Air and Water, published by the Department (references PB 0617, PB 0618 and PB 0585) as amended from time to time.

GRAZING MARSH SUPPLEMENT (available on Tiers 1 and 3)

Observe prescriptions for either Tier 1 (1-24) or Tier 3 (50-54), and Tier 2A (34-35) plus prescriptions set out below:

25. Agree in writing with the Project Officer a programme of measures to maximise water retention on site in ditches and low areas.
26. During the period 1 April to 15 May do not exceed a stocking level of 0.75 LU per hectare. Alternatively agree a Marsh Management Plan (MMP) which will specify areas and periods where stocking rates will apply, water management requirements, restrictions on fertiliser use and cultivation and other management to enhance the overall environmental benefit.
27. Do not top or cut for hay or silage before 1 July, unless as part of a MMP, and graze the re-growth.
28. Do not increase your existing application rates of inorganic nitrogen fertiliser and in any event, do not exceed an application of 50 kg nitrogen per hectare per year unless some variation is agreed within the overall total as part of an MMP or in conjunction with a Wildfowl Pasture Supplement.

WILDFOWL PASTURE SUPPLEMENT (available on Tiers 1, 2A and 3)

Observe prescriptions for either Tiers 1 (1-24), 2A (33-42) or 3 (50-54), plus prescriptions set out below:

29. Maximise water levels on site through a plan agreed in writing with the Project Officer.
30. By grazing with livestock or cutting produce a short lush sward with a maximum height of 8 cm in early October. A proportion of the area should be cut or grazed to 5-6 cm. If you choose to cut, at least three cuts are recommended between July and October and the cuttings must be removed or be short enough to avoid forming a mulch on the surface.
31. Apply 50 kg/ha nitrogen in September each year. Do not apply any fertiliser within 10 metres of field boundaries.
32. Allow wildfowl to graze undisturbed.

TIER 2A WET GRASSLAND

Observe prescriptions 1-24 (Tier 1) plus additional prescriptions set out below:

33. Agree in writing with the Project Officer a programme to:

EITHER

maintain water levels in ditches and dykes at not less than 45 cm (18 in) below mean field level during the period 1 March to 30 April and for as long as possible thereafter before allowing natural drawdown to occur;

OR

maximise water retention and create areas of surface water in dykes, ditches, creeks and low areas during the period 1 March to 30 April and for as long as possible thereafter before allowing natural drawdown to occur;

AND

retain as much water as possible in ditches and dykes during the period 1 September to 31 December. Water levels should begin to be raised by 1 January to meet the higher levels required on 1 March.

34. Do not carry out any mechanical operations on the land during the period 1 April to 30 June.
35. Graze with cattle or sheep or both and avoid poaching, overgrazing or undergrazing. Horses may also be grazed but only in association with cattle or sheep or both.
36. During the period 1 April to 15 May do not exceed a stocking level of 0.75 Livestock Units (LU) per hectare.
37. Do not top the grass or cut it for hay or silage before 1 July.
38. Restrict supplementary feeding of livestock to areas agreed in advance with the Project Officer.
39. Do not increase your existing application rates of inorganic fertiliser and, in any event, do not exceed 50 kg nitrogen per hectare per year.
40. Do not increase your existing application rates of FYM and, in any event, do not apply more than 12.5 tonnes per hectare per year.
41. Do not apply FYM during the period 1 April to 30 June and, outside this period, apply it only in a single dressing.
42. Within two years of the start of the agreement, agree with the Project Officer a programme for the management of ditches and dykes for which you are responsible.

TIER 2B MARSHLAND

Observe prescriptions 1-24 (Tier 1) plus additional prescriptions set out below:

43. Do not carry out any mechanical operations on the land during the period 1 January to 15 July.
44. Graze with cattle or sheep or both and avoid poaching, overgrazing or undergrazing. Remove all cattle during the period 1 November to 15 May.
45. Do not top the grass or cut it for hay or silage before 16 July.
46. Restrict supplementary feeding of livestock to areas agreed in advance with the Project Officer.
47. Do not apply any organic or inorganic fertiliser.
48. Within two years of the start of your agreement, agree with the Project Officer a programme for the management of ditches and dykes for which you are responsible.

49. Agree in writing with the Project Officer a programme to:

EITHER

maintain water levels in ditches and dykes at not more than 45 cm (18") below mean field level throughout the year. In addition, create conditions of field wetness and surface splashing during the period 1 January to 30 April;

OR

maintain areas of surface wetness and high ditch water levels throughout the year. In addition create areas of surface water over the field in low areas, creeks and foot drains and maximise water in dykes and ditches during the period 1 January to 30 April before allowing natural drawdown to occur.

TIER 3 REVERSION OF ARABLE TO PERMANENT GRASSLAND

50. Cease arable production from the start of your agreement. Within 12 months of the start of your agreement establish a permanent grass sward. Agree in writing with the Project Officer before purchase the seed mix to be used. Seed of native origin and local provenance should be used wherever the Department considers it appropriate.

51. During the first 12 months of the agreement do not apply any of the following without the Department's prior written approval:

organic or inorganic fertiliser;

lime, slag or any substances designed to reduce soil acidity;

fungicides, insecticides or herbicides.

52. From the start of your agreement observe Tier 1 prescriptions (2 and 11-24).

53. After the first 12 months observe all the remaining Tier 1 prescriptions except that, in any one year, apply no more than 125 kg nitrogen of inorganic fertiliser per hectare per year. Organic fertiliser levels remain as in Tier 1.

54. On grassland reverted from arable do not exceed an annual average stocking level of 1.4 Livestock Units LU per hectare.

ACCESS TIER

55. Make the access route available for public access at no charge.

56. Maintain a free passage over the access route.

57. Do not erect new fences on or adjacent to the access route without the prior written approval of the Department.

58. Keep the access route and fields crossed by it free of litter and other refuse.

59. Exclude bulls from the access route and fields crossed by it, except for bulls which:

do not exceed the age of 10 months; or

are not of a recognised dairy breed and are at large in any field or enclosure in which cows and heifers are also at large.

60. Agree with the Department in writing in advance the Public Liability Insurance cover which you will maintain for the duration of the access agreement.

61. Provide and maintain adequate means of entry to the access route.

62. Affix and maintain appropriate signboards and waymarking.

63. Do not permit any of the following activities on the access route or on fields crossed by it: camping, caravanning, lighting of fires, organised games or sports, riding of motor vehicles (except those used for agricultural operations on the land) without the Department's prior written approval.

64. Agree with the Department in writing whether the riding of horses or cycles may be permitted on the access route.

65. If you wish to apply for temporary closure of the access route you must agree this with the Department in writing in advance. Where temporary closure is permitted you must post signs giving notice of the intended closure and the reasons for it at each entry point to the access route at least two weeks in advance of the date of closure.

