

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

SCHEME PRESCRIPTIONS

SOUTH DOWNS 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 ON THE CHALK

1. Maintain grassland and do not plough, chain harrow, roll, level or re-seed the land. No form of cultivation is allowed.
2. Graze with cattle or sheep or both but avoid poaching, under-grazing or over-grazing. Within 18 months of the start of the agreement agree a grassland management plan with the Project Officer which you must implement.
3. Do not cut grass for hay or silage or top the grass before 1 July.
4. Do not apply organic or inorganic fertiliser.
5. Do not use fungicides or insecticides.
6. Do not apply herbicides except to control nettles, spear thistle, creeping or field thistle, curled dock, broadleaved dock or ragwort. Weeds – such as those mentioned above – must be controlled. If herbicides are used they may only be applied by means of a weed wiper or by spot treatment with a knapsack sprayer. Herbicides may also be used for the treatment of stumps of cleared scrub.
7. Do not apply lime, slag or any other substance to reduce the acidity of the soil.
8. Do not install any new drainage system or substantially modify any existing drainage system.
9. Maintain any existing ditches by mechanical means, not sprays. Do not fill in any ditches. Spoil must be levelled after allowing to dry.
10. Restrict supplementary feeding of livestock to areas agreed in advance.
11. Protect and maintain dewponds and ponds.
12. Maintain stockproof walling and hedges in a stockproof condition using traditional materials.
13. Any weatherproof field barns which you own or for which you are responsible must be maintained in a weatherproof condition using traditional materials.
14. Do not damage or destroy any feature of historic interest.
15. Obtain written advice on siting and materials before constructing buildings, roads or any other engineering operations which do not require planning permission or prior notification determination by the Local Planning Authority.
16. Obtain written advice on the management of scrub or proposals to plant any new woodland. You must agree a scrub management programme with the Project Officer which you must implement.
17. You must abide by the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water, Soil and Air, published by the Department (references PB 0587, PB 0617 and PB 0618) as amended from time to time.

TIER 2 – PERMANENT GRASSLAND IN THE RIVER VALLEYS

18. Maintain grassland and do not plough, level or re-seed the land. Do not use a chain harrow or roller between 31 March and 1 July. No other form of cultivation is allowed.
19. Graze with cattle or sheep, or both but avoid poaching, undergrazing or overgrazing. Within 18 months of the start of the agreement agree a grassland management plan with the Project Officer which you must implement.
20. Do not cut grass for hay or silage or top the grass before 1 July.
21. Do not apply organic or inorganic fertilisers.
22. Do not use fungicides or insecticides.
23. Do not apply herbicides except to control nettles, spear thistle, creeping or field thistle, curled dock, broadleaved dock or ragwort. Weeds – such as those mentioned above – must be controlled. If herbicides are used they may only be applied by means of a weed wiper or by spot treatment with a knapsack sprayer. Herbicides may also be used for the treatment of stumps of cleared scrub.
24. Do not install any new drainage system or substantially modify, to bring about an improvement, any existing drainage system.
25. Maintain existing ditches by mechanical means, not sprays. Do not fill in any ditches. Spoil must be levelled after allowing to dry.
26. Where ditch water levels are within your control you must ensure that:
Between 31 March and 1 October the ditches contain at least 30cm (12") of water and that the water level is not more than 60cm (24") below grassland level and;
Ditches at no time dry out completely.
27. Restrict supplementary feeding of livestock to areas agreed in advance.
28. Do not apply lime, slag or any other substance to reduce the acidity of the soil.
29. Protect and maintain ponds and reedbeds.
30. Maintain stockproof walling and hedges in a stockproof condition using traditional materials.
31. Any weatherproof field barns which you own or are responsible for must be maintained in a weatherproof condition using traditional materials.
32. Do not damage or destroy any feature of historic interest.
33. Obtain written advice on siting and materials before constructing buildings, roads or any other engineering operations which do not require planning permission or prior notification determination by the Local Planning Authority.
34. Obtain written advice on the management of scrub or proposals to plant any new woodland. You must agree a scrub management programme with the Project Officer which you must implement.

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35. You must abide by the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water, Soil and Air, published by the Department as amended from time to time.

TIER 3A – REVERSION OF ARABLE LAND TO CHALK GRASSLAND

Once under chalk grassland you must observe prescriptions 1-17.

36. Cease arable or intensive grassland production. Within 12 months of the start of your agreement establish a permanent grass sward using, where practical, suitable native species chosen from an approved list. The seeds mixture to be used must be agreed by the Project Officer.
37. During the first 12 months of the agreement do not apply any of the following without obtaining prior approval:
 - organic and inorganic fertiliser;
 - lime, slag or any other substance to reduce the acidity of the soil;
 - pesticides.
38. Cut the grass and remove as hay or silage during the first 3 years and graze the aftermath. Do not cut the grass before 1 July.
39. From the start of your agreement you must follow all the Tier 1 guidelines from prescription 8 onwards.
40. After the 12 month period you must also follow the remaining guidelines in Tier 1, other than rolling and chain harrowing, which will be allowed for the first 3 years.

TIER 3B – ARABLE REVERSION TO PERMANENT GRASSLAND

Once under permanent grass you must observe prescriptions 1-17 if it is on the chalk or prescriptions 18-35 if it is in the river valleys.

41. Cease arable or ley grassland production and establish a permanent grass sward within twelve months of the start of the agreement.
42. During the first 12 months following grassland establishment do not apply any of the following without obtaining prior approval:
 - organic and inorganic fertiliser except in accordance with prescription 44;
 - lime, slag or any other substance to reduce the acidity of the soil;
 - pesticides.
43. From the start of your agreement you must follow all the Tier 1 or 2 guidelines from prescription 8 or 24 onwards.
44. After the twelve month period, you must follow the remaining guidelines in Tier 1 or 2 except that you may chain harrow and/or roll the land, providing these operations are carried out before 31 March each year. Before carrying out chain harrowing and/or rolling you must obtain the Project Officer's agreement. When the sward has been established for more than three years you may apply a nitrogen fertiliser at a maximum rate of 40kg N or 15 tonnes/ha of FYM annually. Before applying fertiliser you must consult the Project Officer.
45. On grassland reverted from arable do not exceed an annual average stocking level of 1.4 Livestock Units (LU) per hectare.

TIER 4A – WINTER STUBBLES WITH UNDERSOWING

46. Provide an area of arable stubble which must remain undisturbed until after 30 November in any year. Thereafter, a spring cereal crop must be sown which must be undersown with a grass/clover mixture. There will be no restrictions on the way the undersown crop is managed. The grass crop must remain in place until at least 30 June in the year following harvest of the cereal crop.

47. You should abide by the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water, Soil and Air, published by the Department as amended from time to time.

TIER 4B – WINTER STUBBLES WITHOUT UNDERSOWING

48. Provide an area of arable stubble, which must remain undisturbed until after 15 February in any year. Thereafter there will be no restriction on the subsequent use of the land.
49. You must abide by the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water, Soil and Air, published by the Department as amended from time to time.

TIER 4C – CONSERVATION HEADLANDS

50. Do not apply any insecticides to the strip except between 31 August and the following 1 January.
51. Do not apply herbicides to a minimum 6 metre wide strip on the edge of any field growing cereals, other than:
 - tri-alleate, diclofop-methyl, difenzoquat, flumetypal, isopropyl, benzoylpropethyl or fenoxapropethyl;
 - glyphosate provided it is applied in the pre-harvest period by spot treatment and solely for the control of couch, black bent or onion couch;
 - fluroxypyr provided it is applied by spot treatment and solely for the control of cleavers;
 - other herbicides and their method of application which may be approved by the Department.
52. You may regularly cultivate and apply herbicides to a one metre strip on the edge of the conservation headland alongside a field boundary.
53. You must abide by the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water, Soil and Air, published by the Department, as amended from time to time.

PUBLIC ACCESS TIER

54. Make the access route available for public access at no charge.
55. Maintain a free passage over the access route.
56. Do not erect new fences on or adjacent to the access route without the prior written approval of the Department.
57. Keep the access route and fields crossed by it free of litter and other refuse.
58. 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.
59. Agree with the Department in writing in advance the public liability insurance cover which you will maintain for the duration of the access agreement.
60. Provide and maintain adequate means of entry to the access route.
61. Affix and maintain appropriate signboards and waymarking.
62. 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.
63. Agree with the Department in writing whether the riding of horses or cycles may be permitted on the access route.
64. 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.