

# Environmentally Sensitive Areas

## SCHEME PRESCRIPTIONS

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### SUFFOLK RIVER VALLEYS 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 as grassland and do not plough, level or re-seed. Selective seeding is allowed to repair damaged swards, but use appropriate long-term seed mixtures which must be previously agreed with the Project Officer.
2. Graze with livestock other than pigs or poultry but avoid poaching, undergrazing or overgrazing.
3. If you cut the grass for hay or silage, graze the aftermath.
4. Do not increase your existing application rates of inorganic or organic fertiliser and, in any case, do not exceed 250 kg of total nitrogen per hectare per year. 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 a watercourse.
5. Do not use fungicides or insecticides.
6. Do not apply herbicides except to control nettles, spear thistle, creeping or field thistle, curled dock, broad-leaved dock, ragwort or bracken. Infestations of these weeds must be controlled either by cutting or by herbicides. Apply herbicides by wick applicator or by spot treatment. Where bracken cannot be controlled by mechanical means then asulam must be used.
7. Do not install underdrainage or mole drainage or use a sub-soiler. Do not improve or substantially modify your existing drainage system so as to bring about improved drainage.
8. Maintain existing ditches and dykes (including banks and margins) in rotation over the period of your agreement by mechanical means, not sprays. Spoil must be levelled, after allowing to dry out, but must not be used to fill low areas.
9. Maintain trees, pollarded willows, ponds and reedbeds using traditional methods.
10. Do not remove any hedges, banks or parts thereof. Maintain all hedges using traditional methods and materials. All stockproof hedges must be kept in a stockproof condition. **The Department will make a supplementary payment if you agree in writing with the Project Officer a programme to restore your non-stockproof hedges. This may involve replanting, laying, coppicing, gapping and back-fencing. Payment will be calculated on the basis of the length of hedge restored in each year.**
11. Do not damage, destroy or remove any feature of archaeological or historical value or interest. Obtain written advice on the management of known and important archaeological sites and historical features on land covered by your agreement.
12. Obtain written advice on siting, design and materials before constructing buildings or roads or carrying out any other engineering or construction works which do not require planning permission or prior notification determination by the local planning authority.
13. Obtain written advice on the management of scrub or reedbeds.
14. Dispose of sheep dip safely. Do not spread sheep dip where it may affect areas of nature conservation value.
15. 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 0587) as amended from time to time.

#### TIER 2 – LOW-INPUT GRASSLAND

*Observe prescriptions 2 - 15 (Tier 1) plus additional prescriptions set out below:*

16. Maintain grassland and do not plough, level or re-seed the land. You may use a chain harrow or roller but no other form of cultivation is allowed.
17. Where the land lies on the flood plain or is inherently wet you must ensure that water levels:

- (i) are maintained at not more than 45 cm (18") below marsh level between 31 March and 31 October
  - (ii) provide at least 30 cm (12") of water in the bottom of the ditches between 31 October and 1 March;
  - (iii) begin to be raised no later than 1 March in order to achieve the required summer freeboard as early as possible.
18. Do not carry out any form of mechanical operations between 1 April and 16 July.
19. Where the land lies on the flood plain or is inherently wet, do not graze between 1 April and 1 May. From 1 May until 15 May, do not exceed a grazing density of 1 Livestock Unit (LU) per hectare.
20. Do not top the sward or cut for hay or silage before 16 July.
21. Do not apply any organic or inorganic fertilisers or manure.
22. Do not apply lime, slag or any substance to reduce soil acidity.
23. Restrict supplementary feeding of livestock to areas agreed in advance.
24. Within two years of the start of your agreement you must agree in writing a plan of ditch/dyke management and implement it thereafter.

## MARSHLAND SUPPLEMENT

*Observe prescriptions 16-24 (Tier 2) plus additional prescriptions set out below:*

- 25. Begin to raise your water level to winter level no later than 1 November and maintain at marsh level so as to create field wetness or occasional shallow pools between 1 January and 30 April.
- 26. Do not graze with livestock between 1 November and 15 May.

## WATER LEVEL SUPPLEMENT

*(available on Tiers 2 & 2A)*

- 27. Agree in writing with the Project Officer and implement an In-field Water Management Plan including the creation, re-instatement and management of ditches and foot drains.
- 28. Maintain ditch water levels within 15cm (6 inches) of marsh level from 15 March until 30 June.
- 29. Begin to raise ditch water levels to the maximum summer level no later than 1 March.
- 30. From 1 May until 30 June do not exceed a grazing density of 1 LU per hectare.
- 31. Do not graze with sheep until 1 June.

## TIER 3 – ARABLE REVERSION TO GRASSLAND

- 32. Cease arable production and establish a grass sward within 12 months of the start of the agreement. 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.

- 33. During the first 12 months of the agreement do not apply any of the following without obtaining prior approval:
  - (i) organic or inorganic fertilisers;
  - (ii) lime, slag or any substance designed to reduce soil acidity;
  - (iii) pesticides.
- 34. From the start of your agreement you must follow all the Tier 1 prescriptions from 7 onwards. After the 12 month period you must also follow the remaining guidelines in Tier 1 except you must not apply more than 125 kg/ha of nitrogen per year and must use no more than 90 kg/ha of nitrogen in any one application.
- 35. On grassland reverted from arable, do not exceed an annual average stocking level of 1.4 LU per hectare.

## BUFFER STRIP SUPPLEMENT

*(available on Tiers 1 & 3):*

- 36. Do not apply inorganic fertiliser or other agricultural chemicals to a 6 metre strip adjacent to all boundaries alongside hedgerows of watercourses of land under agreement.

## FEN TIER

- 37. Agree in writing with the Project Officer and implement a Fen Management Plan.
- 38. Do not apply any inorganic or organic fertiliser.
- 39. Do not apply lime, slag or any substance to reduce acidity.
- 40. Do not use any pesticides, fungicides, insecticides or herbicides.
- 41. Do not damage or destroy any feature of historic interest.
- 42. 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 0587) as amended from time to time.

## WOODLAND TIER

- 43. Retain any woodland, copses or groups of trees. Agree in writing with the Project Officer and implement a programme to maintain and enhance the conservation and landscape value of non net-income generating woodland. All farm woodland on or adjacent to your agreement land must be entered into this woodland tier. Other woodland not on or adjacent to your agreement land may be entered at the discretion of the Department. Seek written consent from the Project Officer before planting any woodland.

## PUBLIC ACCESS TIER

- 44. Make the access route available for public access at no charge.
- 45. Maintain a free passage over the access route.

46. Do not erect new fences on or adjacent to the access route without the prior written approval of the Department.
47. Keep the access route and fields crossed by it free of litter and other refuse.
48. 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.
49. Agree with the Department in writing in advance the public liability insurance cover which you will maintain for the duration of the access agreement.
50. Provide and maintain adequate means of entry to the access route.
51. Affix and maintain appropriate signboards and waymarking.
52. 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.
53. Agree with the Department in writing whether the riding of horses or cycles may be permitted on the access route.
54. 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.

