

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

SCHEME PRESCRIPTIONS

TEST VALLEY ESA and AVON VALLEY 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 1A – IMPROVED PERMANENT GRASSLAND

1. Agree in writing with the Project Officer and implement a grassland management plan which will cover grazing and mowing rotations, stocking densities, fertiliser and manure use, weed control and ditch maintenance.
2. Maintain grassland and do not plough, level or reseed the land. You may use a chain harrow or roller but no other form of cultivation is allowed.
3. Graze with cattle and/or sheep but avoid poaching, undergrazing or overgrazing. Other animals including horses may only be grazed by prior written agreement with the Department.
4. If you cut the grass for hay, or silage graze the aftermath.
5. Do not increase your existing application rates of inorganic fertiliser or organic fertiliser and in any case do not exceed 250 kg per ha of total nitrogen 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 any watercourse.
6. Do not apply any fertilisers within 5 metres of hedgerows.
7. The Department will make a supplementary payment if you agree in writing with the Project Officer to restrict application rates of inorganic or organic fertiliser to 50 kg per hectare per year of nitrogen in total.
8. Injurious weeds (spear thistle, creeping or field thistle, curled dock, broad-leaved dock and ragwort) together with nettles must be controlled.
9. Do not use fungicides, insecticides and herbicides, except to control injurious weeds and nettles by spot treatment or weedwiper.
10. Supplementary feeding of livestock must be agreed in advance in writing with the Project Officer.
11. Do not moledrain, use a sub-soiler or install any new field drainage system or substantially modify any existing land drainage system so as to improve the drainage.
12. Maintain existing watercourses and ditches in rotation by mechanical means, not sprays. After drying, spoil must be spread adjacent to the watercourse or ditch. Do not fill in any watercourses or low areas in the field.
13. Retain and manage hedges and regularly pollarded willows. Stockproof hedges must be maintained in a stockproof condition using traditional methods.
14. Maintain ponds, lakes, pools, sedgebeds and reedbeds on a rotational basis. Obtain written advice within two years of the start of your agreement on the management of these features and implement it.
15. Do not damage, destroy or remove any feature of archaeological or historical value or interest.
16. Obtain written advice on siting 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.
17. Dispose of sheep dip safely. Do not spread sheep dip where it may affect areas of nature conservation value.
18. 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 1B – EXTENSIVE PERMANENT GRASSLAND

Observe all prescriptions 1-18 (Tier 1A) plus additional prescriptions set out below:

19. Do not use a chain harrow or roller during the period 1 April to 30 June.
20. Do not top or cut the grass for hay or silage before 1 July.
21. Do not apply inorganic or organic fertiliser except for farmyard manure (FYM) produced on the farm. Do not apply slurry.
22. Do not apply more than your existing application rate of farmyard manure and, in any event, do not apply more than 12.5 tonnes of farmyard manure per hectare (5 tons per acre) per year.
23. Do not apply farmyard manure during the period 1 April to 31 May and, outside this period, apply it only in a single dressing.
24. Do not apply lime, slag or any other substance designed to reduce the acidity of the soil.

BREEDING WADER SUPPLEMENT

25. Restrict stocking densities to not more than 0.75 livestock units per hectare during the period from 1 April – 30 May on areas specified by the Project Officer to contain breeding wader birds. Stock more heavily in the summer and autumn to create an agreed sward condition for the following year. Sheep may only be grazed in conjunction with cattle.

TIER 1C – WET GRASSLAND

Observe prescriptions 1-18 (Tier 1A) and 19-24 (Tier 1B) plus additional prescriptions set out below:

26. Graze with cattle or cattle and sheep but avoid poaching, undergrazing or overgrazing. The land must not be grazed between 1 April and 31 May and during June the stocking density must be restricted to 0.75 livestock units per hectare. Stock the land in the summer and autumn to create an agreed sward condition for the following year. Do not graze with sheep from 1 September to 30 March.
27. Manage field water tables so that at least 20% of the site is covered in shallow surface water from 1st December to 31 March and shallow pools remain over at least 10% of the site until 31 May.
28. Ditches should be maintained so as to allow the control of field water levels by the operation of appropriately sited water control structures. In order to achieve the surface pools it must be possible to bring ditch water levels up to bank top for short periods of time. At all times of year a minimum of 300 mm depth of water must be maintained in the ditches.
29. No grazing must take place between 1 April and 31 May. During June stocking must be restricted to 0.75 livestock units per hectare. Sheep grazing is prohibited from 1 September to 30 March.

TIER 2A – REVERSION OF ARABLE LAND TO PERMANENT GRASSLAND

30. Cease arable production or ley grassland production. Within 12 months of the start of your agreement establish a permanent grass sward using suitable species chosen from an approved list. Agree in writing with the Project Officer before purchasing the seed mix to be used. Seed of native origin and local provenance should be used wherever the Department considers it appropriate.
31. During the first 12 months of the start of the agreement do not apply any of the following without obtaining the Department's prior written approval.
 - (i) inorganic or organic fertiliser;
 - (ii) lime, slag or any other substance designed to reduce the acidity of the soil;
 - (iii) fungicides, insecticides or herbicides.
32. Cut the grass and remove as hay, but not silage, during the first three years following grassland establishment and graze the aftermath. Do not cut the grass before 1 July.
33. From the start of the agreement follow all the Tier 1A guidelines from prescription 10, "Supplementary feeding of livestock...."
34. After the 12 month period you must also follow the remaining prescriptions in Tiers 1A and 1B, except number 7.
35. On grassland reverted from arable, do not exceed an annual average stocking level of 1.4 Livestock Units (LU) per hectare.

TIER 2B – ARABLE MARGIN BUFFER STRIPS

36. Establish a permanent grass sward over a width of 5-30 metres using an appropriate grass seeds mixture. Agree in writing with the Project Officer before purchasing the seed mix to be used. Seed of native origin and local provenance should be used wherever the Department considers it appropriate.
37. Do not apply any fertilisers or pesticides on this strip.
38. Agree in writing with the Project Officer appropriate management of the buffer strip. Normally this will involve either taking a hay crop or topping, both after 1 July. In the first years of establishment, topping to control weed growth may be permitted by agreement with the Project Officer. Where the buffer strip adjoins a grazed ley it can be grazed, once it is established, rather than cut.
39. 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

40. 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.

PUBLIC ACCESS TIER

41. Make the access route available for public access at no charge.
42. Maintain a free passage over the access route.
43. Do not erect new fences on or adjacent to the access route without the prior written approval of the Department.
44. Keep the access route and fields crossed by it free of litter and other refuse.
45. 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.
46. Agree with the Department in writing in advance the public liability insurance cover which you will maintain for the duration of the access agreement.
47. Provide and maintain adequate means of entry to the access route.
48. Affix and maintain appropriate signboards and waymarking.
49. 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.
50. Agree with the Department in writing whether the riding of horses or cycles may be permitted on the access route.
51. 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.

