

# Environmentally Sensitive Areas

## SCHEME PRESCRIPTIONS

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### UPPER THAMES TRIBUTARIES 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 PERMANENT GRASSLAND

1. Maintain permanent grassland. Do not plough, level or reseed. Cultivate only with a chain harrow or a roller.
2. Graze with livestock other than pigs or poultry and avoid poaching, overgrazing or undergrazing. Horses may be grazed but only in association with cattle, sheep or both.
3. If you cut the grass for hay, continue to do so and graze the aftermath. Wilt and turn any grass cut for silage before removal and graze the aftermath.
4. Do not increase your existing application rates of organic or inorganic fertiliser. Do not apply any organic fertiliser within 50 metres of a spring, well or borehole that supplies water for human consumption or within 10 metres of any watercourse.
5. For a supplementary payment you may agree not to apply fertiliser on land within 6 metres of any field boundary.
6. Do not apply fungicides or insecticides.
7. Do not apply herbicides except to control stinging nettles, spear thistle, creeping or field thistle, curled dock, broadleaved dock or ragwort. Apply herbicides only by means of a wick applicator or by spot treatment.
8. Dispose of any sheep dip safely. Do not spread sheep dip where it may affect areas of nature conservation value.
9. Do not install any new land drainage system or modify any existing land drainage system so as to bring about improved drainage. Maintenance of mole drainage systems may be allowed with the Project Officer's prior written approval.
10. Maintain existing water levels. Maintain watercourses for which you are responsible (including margins and banks) in rotation and carry out any necessary management by mechanical means, not herbicides. After allowing spoil to dry out, spread it but do not use it to infill depressions.
11. Retain and, where necessary, manage ponds, lakes, fen habitats, reeds and wetland.
12. Retain hedges and stone walls and do not remove any part thereof.
13. Maintain stockproof hedges and walls in stockproof condition using traditional materials.
14. Do not apply pesticides on land within 1 metre of any hedge or wall.
15. For a supplementary payment you MAY agree a programme to restore and manage non-stockproof hedges. Payment will be calculated on the basis of every metre of hedge restored in each year.
16. Retain and, where necessary, manage all individual trees, including any pollarded willows, and small groups of trees for which you are responsible.
17. Retain any broadleaved woodland.
18. Do not plant any additional trees or woodland without the Department's prior written approval.
19. Within two years of the start of your agreement obtain written advice on the management of woodland and scrub.
20. Do not damage, destroy or remove any feature of archaeological or historic value or interest.
21. 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 of your agreement and appropriate advice implemented within two years.
22. Maintain any weatherproof traditional farm buildings for which you are responsible in a weatherproof condition using traditional styles and materials.

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.

## **TIER 1B EXTENSIVE PERMANENT GRASSLAND**

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

25. During the period 1 April to 30 June do not use a chain harrow or roller.

26. Do not top the grass or cut it for hay or silage until after 30 June.

27. For a supplementary payment you MAY agree in writing with the Department to exclude stock from specified areas where breeding waders are known to occur or where other ecological interest will benefit, between 15 March and 31 May.

28. For a supplementary payment you MAY agree in writing with the Department to carry out hay making. Do not graze after 1 March and do not cut the grass until after 10 July. The grass must be made into hay and not taken for silage. Graze the aftermath.

29. Restrict supplementary feeding of livestock to areas agreed in advance with the Project Officer.

30. Do not apply any organic or inorganic fertiliser except farmyard manure (FYM).

31. Do not exceed your existing application rates of FYM and, in any event, do not apply more than 20 tonnes of FYM per hectare in any three year period.

32. Do not apply FYM during the period 1 April to 31 May and, outside this period, apply it only in a single dressing.

33. Do not apply slurry, pig or poultry manure or sewage sludge.

34. Do not apply lime, slag or any other substance designed to reduce soil acidity.

## **TIER 2 – WET GRASSLAND**

*Observe prescriptions 1-24 (Tier 1A) and 25-34 (Tier 1B) plus additional prescriptions set out below:*

35. Agree in writing with the Project Officer and implement a grassland management plan which will cover grazing and mowing rotations and water level management.

36. Agree in writing with the Project Officer and implement a programme for ditch management.

37. Ditches should be maintained so as to allow the control of field water levels by the operation of appropriately sited water control structures. Manage field water levels so that approximately 10% of the site is covered by shallow surface splashing from

15 March to 31 May. In order to achieve surface splashing it must be possible to bring ditch water levels up to and over bank top for short periods of time. At all times of year a minimum of 30 cm depth of water must be maintained in the ditches.

38. Exclude stock from 15 March to 31 May. During June the stocking density must be restricted to 0.75 LU/ha.

39. Do not apply any organic or inorganic fertiliser (including farmyard manure).

## **TIER 3A – REVERSION OF ARABLE LAND TO EXTENSIVE PERMANENT GRASSLAND**

40. Cease arable production (including ley grassland production). Within 7 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 purchase the seed mix to be used. Seed of native origin and local provenance should be used wherever the Department considers it appropriate.

41. During the first 7 months of the agreement observe all Tier 1A Permanent Grassland prescriptions 9-24 inclusive and do not apply any of the following without the Department's prior written approval:

- i) organic or inorganic fertiliser, (except farmyard manure);
- ii) lime, slag or any substance designed to reduce soil acidity;
- iii) fungicides, insecticides or herbicides.

42. After the first 7 months observe all the remaining Tier 1A prescriptions and all the Tier 1B Extensive Permanent Grassland prescriptions.

43. During each of the 3 years following establishment of the grass sward cut the grass, remove the cut crop and graze the aftermath.

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

## **TIER 3B – REVERSION OF ARABLE LAND TO WET GRASSLAND**

*Observe prescriptions 40-42 (Tier 3A) plus additional prescriptions set out below:*

45. Agree in writing with the Project Officer and implement a grassland management plan which will cover grazing and mowing rotations and water level management.

46. Agree in writing with the Project Officer and implement a programme for ditch management.

47. After the first 7 months observe all the remaining Tier 1A permanent grassland prescriptions and all the Tier 1B Extensive Permanent Grassland and Tier 2 wet grassland prescriptions.

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

## **TIER 3C – ARABLE MARGIN BUFFER STRIPS**

*Observe prescriptions 40-44 (Tier 3A) plus additional prescriptions set out below:*

49. Establish a permanent grass sward over a width of 5-30 metres using a seed mixture agreed in writing with the Project Officer.
50. Do not apply any inorganic or organic fertiliser or pesticides on the buffer strip.
51. Agree in writing with the Project Officer and implement the appropriate management of the buffer strip which may include topping, mowing or extensive grazing.

### **ACCESS TIER**

52. Make the access route available for public access at no charge.
53. Maintain a free passage over the access route.
54. Do not erect new fences on or adjacent to the access route without the prior written approval of the Department.
55. Keep the access route and fields crossed by it free of litter and other refuse.

56. 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.
57. Agree with the Department in writing in advance the Public Liability Insurance cover which you will maintain for the duration of the access agreement.
58. Provide and maintain adequate means of entry to the access route.
59. Affix and maintain appropriate signboards and waymarking.
60. Agree with the Department in writing whether the riding of horses or cycles may be permitted on the access route.
61. 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.

