



# **ACRES Co-operation Non-Productive Investments Specification**

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**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara**  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas

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## Non-Productive Investments Introduction

Non-Productive Investments (NPIs) are actions that are available to the farmer to address environmental issues on the farm, directly contribute to environmental objectives or increase the farmers capacity to improve field scores through management. NPIs are applied for by the farm advisor in an NPI-Annual Works Plan (AWP) or by the Co-operation Project (CP) team in a Landscape Action -Annual Works Plan (LA-AWP) through the GLAMS mapping system maintained by the Dept. of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM). The NPI actions are screened by the CP Team and either approved or rejected. **Authorisation for approved NPI actions is from the date of issue of the NPI-AWP Approval letter.** DAFM reserves the right to carry out inspections, audits, assessments, research, monitoring, and evaluation at reasonable times for NPIs on lands farmed by participants which can include after the ACRES contracts ends.

The Local Action Plan for each CP region outlines the environmental assets and associated objectives and targets. Funding will be prioritised for actions that contribute to the delivery of those objectives and targets. Where an action applied for, does not address farm-level issues that have been identified in the scorecard assessments and/or does not benefit any Local Action Plan objectives or targets, it may be rejected. Non-Productive Investments differ from Landscape Actions (LAs) in they are generally smaller in scale and are standalone actions on a single farm. A separate document outlining details and requirements for Landscape Actions will be available.

### Funding for NPIs, LAs and Landscape Bonus Payments

- I. The total maximum budget for an ACRES CP participant over the 5-year contract is €52,500 (5x €10,500).
- II. A maximum budget of €7,000 per year is available for ACRES CP Core Payment. 'Core Payment' is the sum of all ACRES CP results- based payments plus ACRES General Action payments.
- III. An additional NPI/LA fund of €17,500 (€3,500 x 5) is available for NPIs/LAs/Landscape Bonus over the 5-years of the contract.
- IV. Where a farmer does not claim up to the maximum €7,000 core payment ceiling in any year of the ACRES contract, the balance of unclaimed funds are added to the total NPI/LA/Landscape Bonus fund for that participant. This ensures that farmers who don't achieve a score of 8, but who were restricted on payments they could receive from ACRES General actions due to the ring-fencing rule (and organic farmers who only receive reduced payment for scores of 8/9/10), will have the ability to get the full €52,500 ACRES payment over the 5-year contract.
- V. Where NPI's are approved, payment will be limited to the remaining fund ceiling for that participant. The total maximum Budget of €52,500 will not be exceeded.
- VI. Maximum ceilings for Registered Farm Partnerships shall be the maximum outlined above multiplied by the number of holdings, up to a maximum of 3.

There are 3 categories of NPIs available to ACRES CP participants.

Section 1 NPI Habitat and Wildlife Support

Section 2 NPI Infrastructure, Section 3 NPI Scrub/Track (Burren/Aran CP Zone only)



\*These NPIs are only available to select on a NPI Annual Works Plan for ACRES CP participants in the Burren Aran CP Zone that are managed by the Burren Aran CP Team.

\*\*Allowable Parcels is an overall summary as guidance only. There will be more specific rules and validations that will apply depending on scorecard type and will be detailed in site suitability for each NPI.

NPIs will not be delivered on the following.

- Intertidal areas
- Saltmarshes
- Marram grass dunes
- Sea cliffs
- Mountain cliffs
- Scree Slopes
- Caves
- Reedbeds
- Permanent natural watercourses
- Juniper Scrub
- Yew woodlands
- Mineral Flushes

NPIs will be extremely restricted within broadleaved woodland, machair, Annex 1 Grassland and Limestone pavement areas. In most cases NPIs in these areas will be restricted to the control of invasive species.

Part of the screening process for certain actions will involve notification in advance to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage, if proposed works involves digging and/or ground disturbance and if located within the Zone of Notification of an Archaeological Monument.

**The following general conditions apply to the delivery of all NPIs.**

Biosecurity protocols:

- Vehicles and personnel involved in the delivery of any NPI must take care to prevent the spread of animal diseases, particularly if they are coming from another farm. Footwear should be cleaned and disinfected.
- Plant and Machinery coming from another farm must have their wheels or tracks disinfected.
- Do not import any materials, e.g., hardcore or fill from sites which may be infested with invasive plant species, e.g., Japanese Knotweed.

**Anyone involved in activities in any watercourse** should observe the **'Check, Clean and Dry'** protocol once they leave the river (or lake) and before visiting any waterway again. All wet gear (boots, clothing, and equipment) should be checked for any silt or mud, plant material or animals before being thoroughly cleaned and finally dried. Disinfectant or hot water should be used to clean all equipment, and this should be followed by a minimum 48 hour drying period (preferably longer up to a week).

[https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Crayfish\\_leaflet.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Crayfish_leaflet.pdf)

### Health and Safety:

The participating farmer is responsible for the safe delivery and operation of NPIs. They must ensure that potential hazards/ risks are assessed and that appropriate measures are taken to address identified risk.

### Derogations:

Derogations from the specifications in this document can be considered by the CP team. Unless a derogation has been granted in writing from the CP team, the participant must not deviate from the specifications. If the participant or their advisor believe that a derogation is required, they should contact their local Project Officer.

### Duration of Commitment:

Unless otherwise indicated, all actions must be maintained in place until the end of the ACRES 5-year contract. Where due to unforeseen circumstances the retention of an action creates undesirable risks, it can be considered for withdrawal and removal by contacting ACRES CP in writing or by emailing [acrescp@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:acrescp@agriculture.gov.ie).

### Authorisation of NPI actions:

All proposed actions are screened by the CP team to ensure that they do not pose a risk to the environment. Screening is applied for the proposed specific location only. **Actions are only approved for the specific location for which they were approved. Delivery elsewhere is unauthorised and if found on inspection will be rejected and clawback of payment will apply.** Installation or construction of an investment cannot commence until written approval has been issued to the applicant(s). The commencement of construction or the installation of investment work prior to approval may be deemed as ineligible.

All NPIs must be newly created actions, therefore only NPI's installed or established after the issue of approval will be eligible for payment.

Only deposits/expenditure paid on or after the date of submission of an application are considered eligible expenditure.

### Double funding

Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil any part of the requirement of an ACRES NPI action.

Entrants in the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) should refer to Appendix 4 showing interaction between NPI actions and OFS, as OFS payments may be foregone where specific NPI actions are claimed on the same parcel to avoid double funding.

The same fence cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement where an applicant has chosen to select two actions in the same parcel or same location and each action incorporates a fencing element. Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs or any other ACRES action that requires a fence cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of any of the following ACRES NPI actions as they all have their own requirement for a fence within

that action: NPI Field Margin 3m, NPI Hedge Rejuvenation, NPI Planting New Hedgerows, NPI Planting Traditional Orchard, NPI Planting Trees, NPI Riparian Margin, NPI Riparian Margin (Sheep fencing), NPI Small Woodland 160/300 trees and NPI Wild Bird Cover Strips

An applicant cannot get paid for more than one of the following Fencing NPI actions along one length: Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire

### Conditionality

Any activity that is mandatory under GAEC and/or SMR requirements cannot be fulfilled using an ACRES NPI action. ACRES NPI actions are in addition to GAEC and/or SMR mandatory requirements. Fencing NPIs or Riparian Margin NPIs cannot be used to satisfy any mandatory requirements on applicable watercourses. Any margin implemented as an NPI must be in addition to any mandatory baseline requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding.

### Eco Scheme

Actions such as tree planting and new hedgerows, that are undertaken as commitments of the ECO scheme, can be located in the same parcel as the equivalent ACRES action. However, they must be placed in separate locations and easily identifiable.

### Completion of Work and Claims for Payment

The claim for payment can only be made online. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI- Annual Works Plan.

A claim for payment can only be submitted once NPIs are completed/established/installed as per specification and by any completion date applicable.

Any unclaimed NPIs from an NPI-AWP are no longer active but can be reapplied for in subsequent application windows. Once a participant receives their NPI- AWP Approval letter, they have until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December the following year to submit their claim for payment.

The following Table 1. outlines certain NPIs that are time sensitive. If the NPI-AWP is approved **(by the issue of NPI-AWP Approval Letter)** on or before 15th May, it is taken that the applicable NPI will be delivered in that year, unless withdrawn before the date specified below for the action or before any notification of inspection. If approval is issued after 15th May, that NPI can only be delivered the following year and the same rules of withdrawal apply.

**Table 1. Time Sensitive NPIs**

NPI	NPI AWP Approval Date - NPI delivered in the year of approval	NPI AWP Approval Date - NPI delivered in the year following approval	Deadline to withdraw NPI action
NPI Bracken Strimming	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	15th June
NPI Bracken Mechanical	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	15th June
NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	30th June
NPI Wild Bird Cover Strip	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	30th June
NPI Winter Stubble	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	30th September



### Geotagged Photos

Geotagged photos may be requested during the duration of the contract to support claims for payment or verify compliance. Area Monitoring System (AMS) may also be used to verify delivery of certain ACRES NPI actions.

### Receipts

Where actions require a new purchase and/or contractor, receipts from suppliers and contractors must be retained by the participant for the duration of the ACRES contract and for twelve months after the date of submission of any claim for payment. A copy of the receipt may be requested for upload or by the Co-operation Project team when certifying the action for payment. Receipts will have to be made available if requested as part of an inspection. All NPIs must be newly created actions, therefore only NPI's installed or established after the issue of approval will be eligible for payment.

Only deposits/expenditure paid on or after the date of submission of an application are considered eligible expenditure.

### Certified seed

Certified seed must be used for the establishment of grass margin in NPI Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Arable Land and NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot and Strip. All seed labels and receipts for these actions must be retained. Farm-saved seed is not permitted.

### NPIs interactions with ACRES General Actions

- NPIs cannot be applied for on LPIS parcels with area-based ACRES General actions and certain linear/point actions.
- All NPIs can be applied for on LPIS parcels with the following ACRES General actions: Barn Owl Nest Box, Coppicing of Hedgerows, Laying of Hedgerows, Protection and Maintenance of Archaeological Monuments - Grassland and Traditional Dry Stone Wall Maintenance.

**Table 2. Minimum units, payment rates and maximum payable per NPI-AWP**

ACRES NPI Action	Units	Minimum to be delivered	Maximum units payable per NPI-Annual Works Plan	Payment Rate	Maximum Payment per NPI-Annual Works Plan	Maximum Units Payable per 5-year ACRES Contract
<b>NPI Habitat/Wildlife Support</b>						
NPI Barn Owl/Kestrel Nest Box	Box	1	6	€294.40	€1,766.40	6
NPI Bat Boxes	Box	3	15	€56.43	€846.45	15
NPI Bracken Strimming	Hectare	0.01	2	€835.44	€1,670.88	
NPI Bracken Mechanical	Hectare	0.01	6	€242.76	€1,456.56	
NPI Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Arable Land	Unit	1	10	€299.91	€2,999.10	10
NPI Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Grassland	Unit	1	10	€133.71	€1,337.10	10
NPI Field Margin 3m	Metre	10	500	€5.45	€2,725.00	500
NPI Hedge Rejuvenation	Metre	10	200	€18.88	€3,776.00	
NPI Planting New Hedgerows	Metre	10	300	€23.10	€6,930.00	
NPI Planting Traditional Orchard 10 trees	Orchard	1	2	€1,302.61	€2,605.22	2
NPI Planting Trees	Tree	3	120	€31.17	€3,740.40	
NPI Repair of Traditional Stone Wall 2 sides	Metre	10	1000	€3.03	€3,030.00	
NPI Repair of Traditional Stone Wall 1 side	Metre	10	500	€1.59	€795.00	
NPI Riparian Margin Tree planting	Tree	10	120	€13.93	€1,671.60	
NPI Riparian Margin	Metre	10	1000	€5.50	€5,500.00	
NPI Riparian Margin (Sheep fencing)	Metre	10	1000	€9.48	€9,480.00	
NPI Rodenticide Free Rodent Control	Unit	1	6	€272.06	€1,632.36	6
NPI Small Woodland 160 trees 0.05Ha	Woodland (160 trees)	1	2	€1,247.48	€2,494.96	2
NPI Small Woodland 300 trees 0.09Ha	Woodland (300 trees)	1	2	€2,309.20	€4,618.40	2
NPI Swallow Boxes	Box	3	12	€29.32	€351.84	12
NPI Swift Boxes	Box	3	9	€134.04	€1,206.36	9
NPI Wader Scrapes	Scrape	1	5	€265.28	€1,326.40	5
NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot	Hectare	0.25	3	€1,286.00	€3,858.00	
NPI Wild Bird Cover Strips	Metre	50	400	€5.41	€2,164.00	
NPI Winter Stubble	Hectare	0.04	50	€119.42	€5,971.00	

ACRES NPI Action	Units	Minimum to be delivered	Maximum units payable per NPI-Annual Works Plan	Payment Rate	Maximum Payment per NPI-Annual Works Plan	Maximum Units Payable per 5-year ACRES Contract
<b>NPI Infrastructure</b>						
NPI Culverts	Unit	1	10	€476.22	€4,762.20	
NPI Fencing Barbed Wire	Metre	10m	1000	€2.60	€2,600.00	
NPI Fencing Permanent Electric	Metre	10m	1500	€1.52	€2,280.00	
NPI Fencing Sheep Wire	Metre	10m	1000	€3.44	€3,440.00	
NPI Installation of Gates	Unit	1	10	€185.61	€1,856.10	
NPI Installation of Heritage Gates	Unit	1	10	€496.61	€4,966.10	
NPI Mobile Cattle Feed Troughs	Unit	1	6	€59.22	€355.32	
NPI Mobile Feed Storage Bins	Unit	1	4	€175.20	€700.80	
NPI Pasture Pumps	Unit	1	10	€289.04	€2,890.40	
NPI Rainwater Catchers	Unit	1	2	€716.84	€1,433.68	
NPI Solar Electric Fencer Unit	Unit	1	6	€257.50	€1,545.00	6
NPI Solar Pumps	Unit	1	2	€1,852.50	€3,705.00	2
NPI Water Storage Tanks	Unit	1	4	€798.66	€3,194.64	4
NPI Water Troughs	Unit	1	10	€290.66	€2,906.60	
<b>NPI Scrub/Track NPI Burren Aran CP Zone only</b>						
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	Hectare	0.01ha	0.5	€14,784.90	€7,392.45	
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Med	Hectare	0.01ha	1	€9,550.55	€9,550.55	
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	Hectare	0.01ha	2	€4,022.16	€8,044.32	
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Scattered	Hectare	0.01	6	€480.97	€2,885.82	
NPI Strip 2m Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	Metre	1m	1000	€2.69	€2,690.00	
NPI Strip 2m Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	Metre	1m	1000	€0.96	€960.00	
NPI Strip 4m Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	Metre	1m	1000	€5.28	€5,280.00	
NPI Strip 4m Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	Metre	1m	1000	€1.82	€1,820.00	
NPI Track Re-Surfacing Gravel	Metre	10m	1000	€2.99	€2,990.00	1000

## SECTION 1 NPI Habitat and Wildlife Support

### Barn Owl/Kestrel Nest Box

#### Objective

This action provides safe and secure artificial nesting sites for Barn Owls in suitable locations. To secure a safe food source for nesting Barn Owl and Kestrels, Rodenticide Free Rodent Control NPI is encouraged in conjunction with this action.

#### Background

The Barn Owl is the most threatened species of owl in Ireland and is on the Red list of 'Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland'. Barn Owl populations have been affected by changes in land use, the loss of suitable prey-rich habitat and nest sites, and the increased use of rodenticides. There can be significant benefits for Barn Owl and other wildlife by providing safe and secure nesting sites in the form of nest boxes in suitable locations, creating and enhancing habitat and reducing the risk of secondary poisoning through best practice rodent control measures.

#### Site suitability

Although Barn Owl nest boxes can be provided on any farm which has a suitable location, nest boxes are of most value in areas where Barn Owls are more abundant and where there may be less nest sites available. These areas are shown on the Barn Owl suitability map in the Barn Owl nest box guidance document available [HERE](#).

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare  $\geq 0$ .
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On CP Parcels, this action can be selected on fields with any scorecards assigned or submitted.
- Barn Owl nest box/es must not be located within 500m of a motorway or dual carriageway and must be below 300m in altitude (altitude above sea level). **These restrictions do not apply to Kestrel boxes.**
- Outside of these areas, nest box/es for Kestrel can be provided as an alternative to Barn Owl nest box/es. A design template for a kestrel nest box is shown in Appendix 3.
- Where Bat Boxes are installed in the same parcel/farmyard as Barn Owl Nest Boxes, ensure they are not facing each other to reduce the risk of predation.
- Although boxes might be attached to suitable large trees commonly found at some types of archaeological monuments (e.g. ringforts), they should never be attached to the fabric of the monuments themselves, particularly monuments which are masonry structures (e.g. castles, churches etc).

#### Requirements

1. Install new Barn Owl/Kestrel nest box(es) by 31 July in the year following year of approval.

2. The location(s) of the nest box/es must be clearly marked on the map submitted. Each box applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained in the same position for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. Nest boxes must be placed at least 3 metres above ground level.
4. Barn Owl/Kestrel nest boxes can be placed indoors or outdoors and therefore must be of suitable design informed by the location/s selected. See Appendix 1/Appendix 2 and The Barn Owl Action guidance document [HERE](#).
5. If rodenticides are used, you must implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to rodent control on your farm. Their use must be justified and used in accordance with EU Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR) and product labels and records maintained regarding their use. Information on use of Rodenticides can be found [HERE](#)
6. Once in place, the nest box/es must not be approached. It is an offence to cause disturbance to a breeding pair or at the nest site. Essential maintenance described in the [Barn Owl Action guidance document](#), is permitted during the month of December only.

### **Additional guidance**

- The Barn Owl is very sensitive to disturbance - their presence may be discrete and visiting the nest box at any time of the year can cause detrimental disturbance. Although the main nesting period is March to August, they can nest at any time of the year.
- If essential maintenance of the nest box is required to ensure the nest box remains suitable for Barn Owl (e.g. removing sticks from the nest box or securing it in position), this should be carried out in the month of December only, unless the circumstances warrant immediate action. Please refer to the Barn Owl Action Guidance document available [HERE](#)
- In order to monitor populations, you can register your nest box/es with [BirdWatch Ireland Barn Owl Survey](#). This information will be kept confidential and will help to monitor the uptake of nest boxes and to understand the health of Barn Owl populations across the country.
- These are large nest boxes so it is important to take all necessary safety precautions when installing/maintaining a Barn Owl box.
- Wood preservative products containing creosote should not be used on nest boxes. Exterior nest boxes require exterior grade FSC approved plywood as outlined on guidance document.
- Other NPIs that should be considered to complement this action include: Field Margins, Winter Stubble, Riparian Margins and Rodenticide Free Rodent Control.
- A video on the importance of buildings for supporting wildlife can be found on [BirdWatch Ireland](#).

### **Further information**

The Barn Owl nest box guidance document prepared by BirdWatch Ireland contains all the information you need on nest boxes (including an instructional video, design plans and information on the construction, installation, placement, and monitoring of nest boxes), how to identify if your farm is suitable for this action, information on rodent control measures and contact details for advice relating to this action.

Further information is available on Farming for Nature website [here](#).

# Bat Boxes

## Objective

To provide roosting sites for bats by installing bat boxes (3 boxes per location).

## Background

There are nine species of bat established in Ireland and all are protected under both Irish and EU legislation (Wildlife Act and Habitats Directive respectively). Bats are protected because of the important ecological services they provide and their role as indicators of the health of an ecosystem. A single bat can consume up to 3,000 insects per night as well as pollinate plants and disperse seeds. While bats are common in our nocturnal landscapes, they are threatened by insensitive developments, night lighting and habitat loss. Old traditional farm buildings with nooks, crannies and gaps in the roof slates can be used by bats. The installation of bat boxes provides bats with a location for roosting in areas where appropriate roost sites may not be present.

## Site Suitability

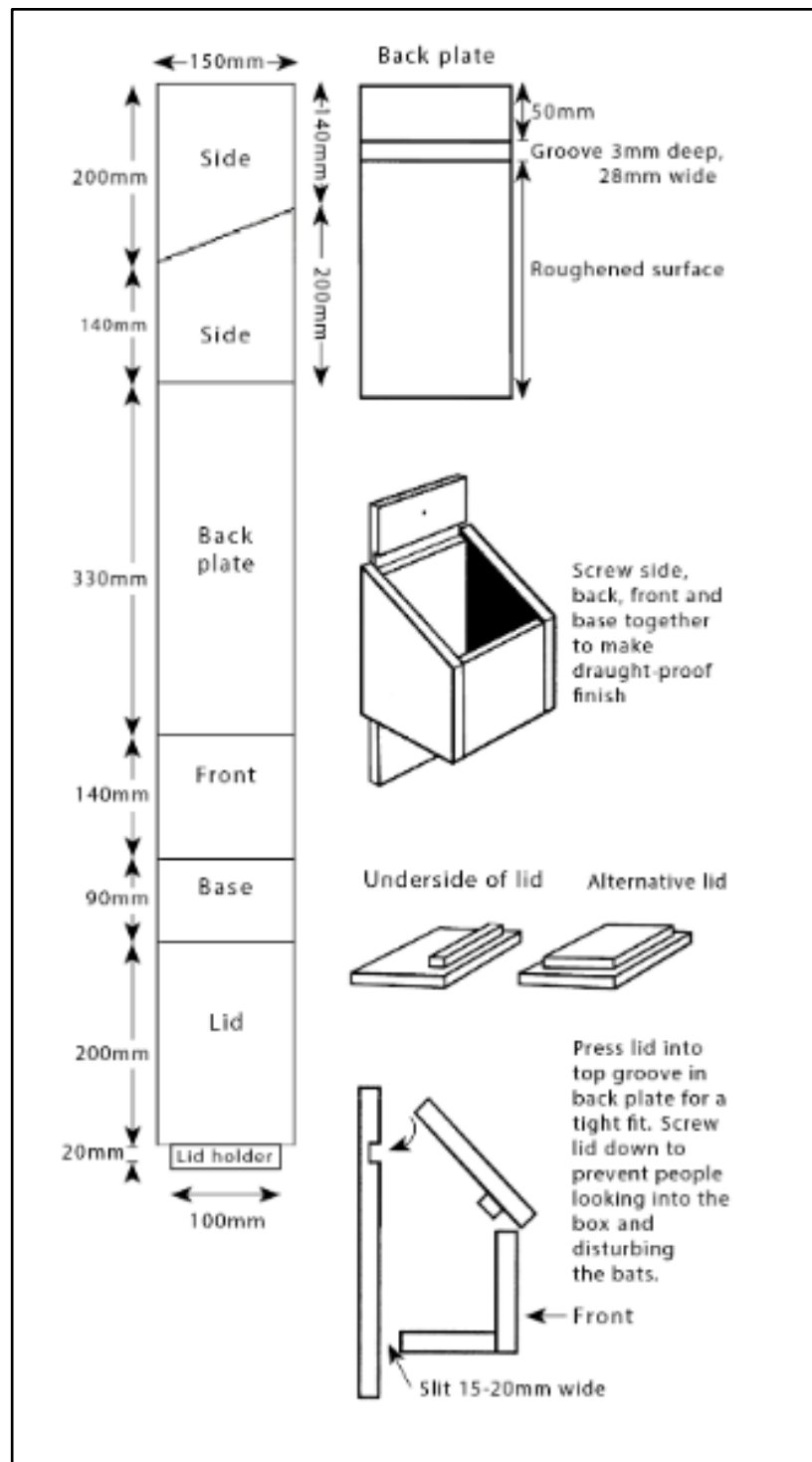
- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare  $\geq 0$
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On CP Parcels, this action can be selected on fields with any scorecards assigned or submitted.
- Boxes should be located near areas where they feed, around woodlands, hedgerows, treelines and farm buildings.
- Where Bat Boxes are installed in the same parcel/farmyard as Barn Owl Nest Boxes, ensure they are not facing each other to reduce the risk of predation.
- If installing externally on farm buildings, install close to the eaves of the building, on a south-facing wall and if possible close to a hedgerow or treeline. Locations should be 6m clear of obstacles such as branches.
- Although boxes might be attached to suitable large trees commonly found at some types of archaeological monuments (e.g. ringforts), they should never be attached to the fabric of the monuments themselves, particularly monuments which are masonry structures (e.g. castles, churches etc).

## Requirements

1. Install new bat boxes in groups of at least three bat boxes per tree, post or building. The boxes in each location must face different directions. New bat boxes can be applied for annually up to the maximum. Each 3 boxes applied for is only eligible for NPI payment once and once claimed must be maintained in the same position for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
2. The location(s) of the bat boxes must be clearly marked on the map submitted. Each point drawn on the GLAM map represents 3 Bat Boxes.
3. Boxes must be installed at least 4m above ground level.
4. Bat boxes can be purchased through retailers or can be made. Box plans can be downloaded from appropriate CP websites. See design measurements and specifications in Figure 1. and 2 below. Note: this is a minimum specification, the use of

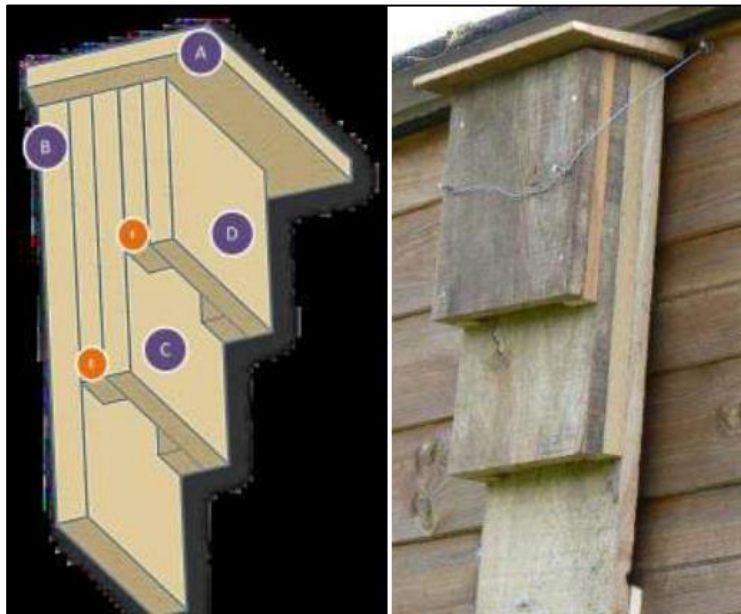
higher standard materials e.g. woodcrete is permitted. If you are making your own boxes use, untreated, unpainted timber (such as Duraply). The finished product must be well constructed and draught free.

5. Repair or replace damaged boxes as required throughout the remainder of the contract.



**Figure 1.** Example of bat box dimensions

Source: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds



Part	Quantity	Size (mm)
Roof (A)	1	250 x 160 x 20
Back (B)	1	450 x 200 x 20
Centre (C)	1	330 x 200 x 20
Front (D)	1	210 x 200 x 20
Centre Rails (E)	2	330 x 20 x 20
Front Rails (F)	2	210 x 15 x 15
Stand-offs (optional)	2	200 x 20 x 20

**Figure 2.** Example of Kent bat box dimensions. The only critical measurement is the width of the crevices for bats emerging/re-entering, which should be between 15 – 20mm. Other measurements are approximate. Timber should be approximately 20mm thick.

Source: Bat Conservation Ireland. Bats and Bat Boxes. Guidance Notes for Agri-environmental Schemes.

#### Additional Guidance

- Do not place boxes near artificial lighting that are not dark sky friendly. If lighting is nearby, it should be max power 150W or LED equivalent, be on a sensor/timer and have a hood to only shine the light downward. See [www.mayodarkskypark.ie](http://www.mayodarkskypark.ie) for additional information.
- If installing on a mature tree, select a height above 4m where there are no branches for a 1-meter radius around and install 3 boxes facing different aspects.
- If installing within farm buildings, ensure there is a constant opening and that it is present in a dark shed where there is no constant, artificial light source.
- Once the boxes are installed, they should not be opened again. Observing the boxes at dusk will give an indication if the box is occupied.
- Bat Conservation Ireland has a [guide to using bat boxes on the farm](#) as part of agri-environmental schemes.
- A video on the importance of buildings for supporting wildlife can be found on [BirdWatch Ireland](#).
- The design measurements and specifications above were obtained from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) [“Build a bat box”](#) initiative.
- If you are in an area where Lesser Horseshoe bats are known to occur, please contact the local CP team.



# Bracken Strimming

## Objective

To control the spread of Bracken by strimming in areas where there is a risk of it replacing high quality grassland or dry heath habitats.

## Background

Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is a common fern in the Irish countryside, easily recognised by its tall, bright green fronds which can reach over 1.5m in height and turn brown in Autumn. Bracken was originally a woodland species which has spread into many other habitats. It tolerates a range of soil types from very acidic to very alkaline. Under certain conditions, such as where there has been heavy grazing or fires, Bracken can become dominant and where it does so; it can shade out the native vegetation leading to the loss of rare and protected heath, bog and high-quality grassland habitats.

Where Bracken comes to dominate the vegetation, it can lead to the loss of protected habitats, loss of grazing land, it can be poisonous to livestock, and it can provide a refuge for ticks which can transmit Lyme's disease.

## Site Suitability

- This action can only be delivered on parcels with an Eligible Hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard. However, there will be restrictions to its approval on fields assigned with the Rough Grazing scorecard and within identified 'raptor zones'.
- Areas of dense Bracken that pose a threat to protected habitats, grazed habitats, to livestock or public health should be targeted for control.
- Can also be used to control areas of dense Bracken at key locations where it is interfering with access or recreational use. Management of Bracken for access purposes is restricted to within 100m of existing access points to reduce the potential tick burden in these locations and reduce the spread of ticks.
- Areas of Bracken that support woodland plants, e.g. Bluebells or ferns of ecological interest should be retained.
- This action is not recommended on steep slopes as Bracken can stabilise the surface and any removal or management of Bracken in these areas can lead to increased erosion risk.
- Due to potential environmental effects, Bracken Strimming selected on an area greater than 1ha may not be approved.

## Requirements

1. The areas selected for Bracken Strimming must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.

2. All Bracken within the target area must be strimmed at least twice in the one calendar year, firstly between May 1<sup>st</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup> and the second 6 weeks later but no later than July 31<sup>st</sup>.
3. If approval for this action is issued before 15th May, it is taken that this action will be delivered in the year of approval unless withdrawn before 15<sup>th</sup> June or before any notification of inspection. If approved after May 15th the NPI can only be delivered the following year and the same rules of withdrawal apply.

### **Additional Guidance**

- Strimming /Cutting are the preferred control methods in May or early June on young fronds that have not fully unfurled.
- Follow up treatment is required and should be considered in at least two consecutive years. If there is no commitment to follow up treatment Bracken will recover, and the initial treatment will be wasted.
- Where Bracken is generally stunted, scattered, or naturally limited (e.g., growing along subsoil confined fissures and unlikely to spread out to form closed canopy stands), it is generally not considered a real problem needing direct control.
- Treatment type will vary depending on terrain and health & safety considerations.
- Work with care; Bracken is carcinogenic to humans, and it is also associated with a high occurrence of ticks and can increase the likelihood of transmission of Lyme disease. To reduce the risk, you should avoid entering areas of mature Bracken particularly from August to October (both months inclusive).
- On sites where Bracken is mixed with Brambles or other scrub, cutting other vegetation with a flail cutter the previous winter may facilitate access for treatment of Bracken later in the year.

# Bracken Mechanical

## Objective

To control the spread of Bracken by mechanical methods (chain harrow, machine cutting, rolling, or bruising) in areas where there is a risk of it replacing high quality grassland or dry heath habitats.

## Background

Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is a common fern in the Irish countryside, easily recognised by its tall, bright green fronds which can reach over 1.5m in height and turn brown in Autumn. Bracken was originally a woodland species which has spread into many other habitats. It tolerates a range of soil types from very acidic to very alkaline. Under certain conditions, such as where there has been heavy grazing or fires, Bracken can become dominant and where it does so; it can shade out the native vegetation leading to the loss of rare and protected heath, bog and high-quality grassland habitats.

Where Bracken comes to dominate the vegetation, it can lead to the loss of protected habitats, loss of grazing land, it can be poisonous to livestock, and it can provide a refuge for ticks which can transmit Lyme's disease.

## Site Suitability

- This action can only be delivered on parcels with an Eligible Hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP forage parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard. However, there will be restrictions to its approval on fields assigned with the Rough Grazing scorecard and within identified 'raptor zones'.
- Areas of dense Bracken that pose a risk to protected habitats, grazed habitats, to livestock or public health should be targeted for control.
- Areas of Bracken that support woodland plants, e.g. Bluebells or ferns of ecological interest must be retained.
- Can also be used to control areas of dense Bracken at key locations where it is interfering with access or recreational use. Management of Bracken for access purposes is restricted to within 100m of existing access points of existing access points to reduce the potential tick burden in these locations and reduce the spread of ticks.
- This action is not recommended on steep slopes as Bracken can stabilise the surface and any removal or management of Bracken in these areas can lead to increased erosion risk.
- The use of vehicles for Bracken control should not be used within the external perimeter of an Archaeological monument and Bracken Strimming should be selected instead.
- Due to potential environmental effects, Bracken Strimming selected on an area greater than 1ha may not be approved.

## Requirements

1. The areas selected for Bracken Mechanical must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.
2. All Bracken within the target area must be rolled/bruised using mechanical equipment at least twice in the one calendar year, firstly between May 1<sup>st</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup> and the second 6 weeks later (no later than July 31<sup>st</sup>).
3. If approval for this action is issued before 15th May, it is taken that this action will be delivered in the year of approval unless withdrawn before 15<sup>th</sup> June or before any notification of inspection. If approved after May 15th the NPI can only be delivered the following year and the same rules of withdrawal apply.

## Additional Guidance

- Bracken bruiser is more effective on fronds that are fully developed in June.
- Follow up treatment is required and should be considered in at least two consecutive years. If there is no commitment to follow up treatment Bracken will recover, and the initial treatment will be wasted.
- Where Bracken is generally stunted, scattered, or naturally limited (e.g., growing along subsoil confined fissures and unlikely to spread out to form closed canopy stands), it is generally not considered a real problem needing direct control.
- Treatment type will vary depending on terrain and health & safety considerations.
- Work with care; Bracken is carcinogenic to humans, and it is also associated with a high occurrence of ticks and can increase the likelihood of transmission of Lyme disease. To reduce the risk, you should avoid entering areas of mature Bracken particularly from August to October (both months inclusive).
- On sites where Bracken is mixed with Brambles or other scrub, cutting other vegetation with a flail cutter the previous winter may facilitate access for treatment of Bracken later in the year.

# Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Arable Land

## Objective

To enhance and maintain visible cultural heritage sites as landscape features and protect their historical value in a tillage parcel.

## Background

All archaeological monuments recorded by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland are marked on maps on the National Monuments Service website and can be found at the following link: [Historic Environment Viewer \(arcgis.com\)](https://www.arcgis.com).

The aim of this option is to protect cultural heritage sites, including archaeological sites, from damage associated with scrub growth and erosion.

Any proposed works to a Recorded Monument that involves digging and/or ground disturbance must be notified in advance to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage. Under no circumstances should burning take place on or near the monument, as this can cause damage to underlying archaeological deposits.

## Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare  $\geq 0$ .
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- All monuments entered for this action must be within LPIS parcels declared as an arable crop.
- Only sites identified as NMS-Sites and Monuments on the GLAM mapping system are eligible for this action.
- Monuments must be visible on the selected LPIS parcel(s).
- Monuments on commonage parcels are not eligible for this action.
- Other sites of cultural heritage significance, when identified as such in the relevant Local Area Plan, can be applied for as an NPI by the CP teams.

## Requirements

1. Establish a 10m-wide grass margin by sowing a grass seed mix using certified seed around the external perimeter of the selected monument by 31st August of the year following year of approval or by 31 December in the final year of the ACRES contract.
2. The location of the monument(s) selected for this action must be indicated on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Each individual monument is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the duration of the ACRES 5 year contract.
3. Monuments selected must be visible in the landscape – monuments which have been completely levelled or otherwise removed in the past but are still listed by the NMS as archaeological sites, are not eligible for payment.

4. The margin must extend from the external outer boundary of the monument. The margin must be established by light cultivation (min-till) techniques – i.e., no ploughing is permitted.
5. Soil cultivation cannot be carried out within the margin once established.
6. The margin must be maintained as grass by mowing or strimming to prevent woody growth for the remainder of the ACRES contract. Mowing is permitted once it does not cause damage to the monument. Extreme care is required here.
7. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted on the monument and grass margin except for the spot treatment of noxious and invasive species.
8. Where there is encroaching vegetation (excluding established healthy trees) on/near the monument, this must be controlled but not between 1 March and 31 August annually. Note roots of plants cannot be removed.
9. Grazing by livestock throughout the year is permissible around the monument(s) but care should be taken in the autumn and winter months to ensure no damage is caused to the monument(s). Where there is a risk of damage or poaching, the site can be fenced off with temporary, non-intrusive posts and allowed to recover, before grazing resumes.

#### **Additional Guidance**

- In the case of encroaching Bracken, the ideal method is the manual cutting of growing fronds which causes the gradual starvation of the rhizome system. Cutting or thrashing is best done around the middle of June and again six weeks later for at least three successive years.

# Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Grassland

## Objective

To enhance and maintain visible cultural heritage sites as landscape features and protect their historical value.

## Background

All archaeological monuments recorded by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland are marked on maps on the National Monuments Service website and can be found at the following link: [Historic Environment Viewer \(arcgis.com\)](https://www.nms.ie/en/monuments/historic-environment-viewer).

The aim of this option is to protect cultural heritage sites, including archaeological sites, from damage associated with scrub growth, erosion, and poaching.

Any proposed works to a Recorded Monument that involves digging and/or ground disturbance must be notified in advance to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage. Under no circumstances should burning take place on or near the monument, as this can cause damage to underlying archaeological deposits.

## Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > or = 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- All monuments entered for this action must be within agricultural parcels.
- This action can be considered on fields with any scorecard assigned or submitted.
- Only sites identified as NMS-Sites and Monuments on the GLAM mapping system are eligible for this action.
- Monuments must be visible on the selected LPIS parcel(s).
- Monuments on commonage parcels are not eligible for this action.
- Other sites of cultural heritage significance, when identified as such in the relevant Local Area Plan, can be applied for as an NPI by the CP teams.

## Requirements

1. The action must be carried out by managing vegetation on the selected monument by the end of February the year following year of approval or by 31 December if approved in the final year of the ACRES scheme.
2. The location of the monument(s) selected for this action must be indicated on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Each individual monument is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the duration of the ACRES contract.
3. Monuments selected must be visible in the landscape – monuments which have been completely levelled or otherwise removed in the past but are still listed by the NMS as archaeological sites, are not eligible for payment.
4. All works must be done with hand tools (e.g., with a saw, slash hook, secateurs and/or pruning shears) or handheld power tools (e.g., with a chainsaw/brush cutter/trimmer). Tractors or diggers or other machinery cannot be used to cut or remove vegetation.

5. Small trees and plants like Gorse/Furze Whins, Rhododendron, Cherry Laurel and other individual plants should be removed by cutting at the base and treating the stump or stem treating with an appropriate herbicide to prevent re-growth.
6. Larger trees should be pruned to above head height to open access to the site or monument. Pollarding of trees is allowed.
7. Management of vegetation must NOT be carried out between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> August annually. The one exception to this rule is the cutting or thrashing (flailing) of Bracken and ferns which can be carried out when Bracken emerges (May) and six weeks later in the middle of June.
8. Remove dead or unstable trees: Cut as close as possible to ground level, leaving the stump in place. Contact CP team if there is any risk of damage occurring to the monument during the removal of dead or unstable trees.
9. Felled or dead trees must be cut into pieces where they fall and be removed from the monument. These can provide a habitat for invertebrates if left on the ground, but this should not be on the monument.
10. The killing or removal of well-established ivy or trees, whose root systems have invaded the fabric of masonry structure, is not permitted.
11. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except for spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds. All herbicides must be systemic.
12. Any fallen masonry discovered during work must be left untouched.
13. New shoots of woody plants which become established in the walls of a structure must be removed provided this does not damage or de-stabilise the monument.
14. The interior of masonry monument(s) must be inaccessible to livestock. Ensure that new vegetation does not take hold within the structure, in the absence of grazing. This should not involve any degree of ground disturbance.
15. Grazing by livestock throughout the year is permissible around the monument(s) but care should be taken in the autumn and winter months to ensure no damage is caused to the monument(s). Where there is a risk of damage or poaching the site can be fenced off with temporary, non-intrusive posts and allowed to recover, before grazing resumes.

### **Additional Guidance**

- This action should be prioritised on monuments where active management is required for their long-term conservation.
- In the case of Bracken, the ideal method is the manual cutting of growing fronds which causes the gradual starvation of the rhizome system. Cutting or bruising is best done around the middle of June and again six weeks later for at least three successive years.
- After woody vegetation has been removed, maintain the visibility of the monument by strimming ground cover within 3m of the exterior of the monument.



# Field Margins

## Objective

To create a wildlife corridor that can provide habitat for overwintering predatory invertebrates, hunting ground for birds of prey such as Barn Owl and Kestrel, and to help protect water quality from nutrient and sediment run-off.

## Background

Severe declines in biodiversity have been well documented for many groups including plants, invertebrates, birds, and mammals due to intensification of agricultural practices. The creation of a rough grassland field margin provides an important habitat which acts as a refuge for wildlife and a corridor to help connect habitats across a landscape. These field margins can also play a role in protecting water quality by reducing nutrient load, intercepting nutrients and sediment runoff, and slowing overland flow.

## Site suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0
- This action is available on non-CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, and Annex 1 Grasslands.
- This action should not be selected on peatlands.

**Note:** Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

## Requirements

1. Create a grass margin by erecting a permanent stock proof fence 3m out from the field boundary in a grassland parcel. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m.
2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Each margin applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. The fence must be erected to create the grass margin by 15<sup>th</sup> May of the year following year of approval or by 31<sup>st</sup> December if approved in the final year of the ACRES contract.
4. To create a grass litter layer, do not cut or graze the margin from when the margin is created by erecting the fence until 31<sup>st</sup> August the following year.
5. In the second year after the grass margin is created you must cut the margin between September and December but not below 10cm to ensure the litter layer is retained. Alternatively, margins may be managed by grazing, but this can only take place during the month of September and ensure that no poaching occurs, and the litter layer remains.
6. Chemical or organic fertiliser or lime is not permitted in the field margin.

7. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious/invasive weeds.
8. Do not disturb the integrity of the existing hedgerow or field boundary when creating the field margin.
9. Fencing for Field Margins must not limit public access along right of ways.

#### **Additional Guidance:**

- This NPI should be targeted to boundaries that are not adjacent to a water course. See Riparian Margins NPI for margins adjacent to water courses.
- Appropriate management to create this essential litter layer is to allow the grasses to grow tall over summer in year one by not cutting or grazing so that this grass will then collapse in the autumn. Fresh grass will grow up through this and the following summer most of the first year's growth will have died back and formed a litter layer.
- Depending on the height of the litter layer after year one you may need to cut higher than 10cm.
- Do not install in close proximity to a badger sett.
- It is recommended to leave an access point when erecting fence to facilitate management of margins. When margins are cut, it is recommended to remove offtakes to reduce the overall fertility of the margin.
- This action will have greater benefits if used to link up existing habitats on the farm such as hedgerows and wooded areas.
- A field margin strategically placed in an area prone to runoff and erosion further up a slope may be beneficial in addition to a Riparian Buffer Strip or Zone closer to the watercourse.

**Picture 1:** Small mammal holes in 1m<sup>2</sup> of rough grass margin where there is a litter layer >7cm deep.



Source: The Barn Owl Trust.

## Hedge Rejuvenation

### Objective:

To improve and fill in hedges that have been damaged or mismanaged so that the structure of the hedge is enhanced, improving biodiversity and carbon storage. The stock proof element and shelter for animals will be improved by this measure.

### Background:

Hedgerows are an important habitat in the Irish landscape. Hedges have a wide range of benefits including shelter for both livestock and crops, biodiversity through producing seeds and pollen and nesting habitats, water filtration, carbon sequestration and wildlife corridors.

A good quality hedge will be greater than 1.8 metres in height and have a wide base with a mixture of species to extend pollen and nectar season and it will contain some mature trees to improve biodiversity.

**Note 1:** External farm boundaries CANNOT be entered for this action and will not be paid unless the external farm boundary adjoins a public road, watercourse or water body. You must have control of both sides of the hedgerow for ongoing maintenance.

**Note 2:** Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of this ACRES NPI.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On CP Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned/submitted: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Coastal, Winterage, Peatland, Corncrake or Chough.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, Annex 1 Grasslands or Breeding Wader Hotspots.

### Requirements:

1. The location and lengths selected for this NPI must be identified on the selected LPIS parcels and marked on the map submitted. A minimum 10 metres must be delivered. Each length applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
2. Coppicing or laying works must only be carried out between 1<sup>st</sup> September and 28<sup>th</sup> February.
3. This action must be completed by 28<sup>th</sup> February of the year following year of approval or by 31 December if approved in the final year of the ACRES scheme.

4. Laying cannot be carried out by use of heavy machinery.
5. If there are gaps present (that won't be filled by regrowth from the laying or the coppicing of the hedgerow), infilling must take place at four plants per metre.
6. Plants must be of Irish origin or Irish provenance. All plants purchased for infilling must be purchased from DAFM registered professional operators, have accompanying plant passports and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) and receipts(s). Any plants that die must be replaced during the dormant season. See Table 3. for hedgerow species for infilling.
7. All newly laid or coppiced hedgerows in a grass or tillage field must be protected from livestock with a permanent fence from the time the works are completed. However, where the laid/coppiced hedgerow bounds a private laneway, public road or watercourse, fencing is not required on the lane/road or waterbody side as long as the hedgerow is not being damaged by livestock.
8. Grass and competing vegetation must be controlled.
9. The newly rejuvenated hedge must be maintained and protected for the remainder of the contract.

**Table 3. Tree and Shrub species suitable for infill planting.**

<b>Hedgerow species for infilling</b>
Blackthorn ( <i>Prunus spinosa</i> )
Dog Rose ( <i>Rosa canina</i> )
Guelder Rose ( <i>Viburnum opulus</i> )
Hawthorn/Whitethorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> )
Hazel ( <i>Corylus avellana</i> )
Holly ( <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> )
Spindle ( <i>Euonymus europaeus</i> )
Alder Buckthorn ( <i>Frangula alnus</i> )

### **Additional Guidance:**

#### **Coppicing:**

- A hedge with gaps, with too few stems to lay, too large to lay (>15cm diameter) or too short (less than 2.5 metres tall) can be coppiced.
- It is important to cut as low to the ground as possible, just above the soil to produce new shoots. A circular saw can bring down the height of the hedge but after that the vegetation will have to be cleared with a slash hook and the stump cut down to 4-6cm using a small chainsaw.
- Compostable film over the cut stumps may be considered as vegetation management is important for the coppiced hedgerow to develop.

#### **Hedgerow laying:**

- Hedges that are established but are thin at the base with minimum 1 stem for every half meter that are on average 3-10cm diameters can be laid with any gaps being infilled.
- Hedge laying is a skilled craft. If works are not carried out by a professional, attendance at a specialist training course is advised, contact the CP team for more information.

- Method for laying a hedgerow:
- Stems are cut at the base 70-80% of the way through keeping the cuts as low as possible to the ground.
- A long thin hinge allows this stem to be twisted and best positioned to lay it over, ideally at an angle of 45 degrees and always running up a slope. The laid stems are woven into the ones previously laid to knit together.
- Very important the heel or stub is cut off at a sloping angle near the ground to encourage regrowth from the ground and allow water run-off.
- Laid stems should be secured to prevent rocking and damage from strong winds especially on exposed sites. Cut stems are secured to posts driven into the hedge bank interwoven with suitable rods (hazel/willow).
- Make the cuts in the stems higher up to form the hedgerow into the shape you want, and this will also cause regeneration from these points.
- Always lay the stems uphill to get better transpiration and ensure the hedge lives.
- Don't lay hedgerows directly down on the line of the cut base. Roll the stems back slightly from the ground cuts to allow light in which will encourage better rejuvenation at the cuts.
- Trim regrowth after 3 or 4 years if getting a lot of vertical growth but light trim the top only.

#### **Infilling:**

- Infilling with light whips is difficult as they do not compete well with the existing root structure. It is advisable to infill with stronger plants to ensure survival.

#### **General:**

- It is recommended to avail of specialist training prior to undertaking hedge rejuvenation.
- Species selection should be guided by what is growing at similar locations on the farm or nearby sites. Use the opportunity to increase the species diversity in the hedge.
- If cutting, you should not cut all hedges on the farm in any one year. It is good practice to cut on a minimum 3-year cycle leaving at least one third of the hedgerows uncut each year.
- It is advisable to cut the hedges in an 'A' shape which allows the base and the sides to receive more light resulting in a denser structure valuable for wildlife.

# Planting New Hedgerows

## Objective

This measure aims to enhance the visual appearance of the countryside, support biodiversity on farms and protect water quality.

## Background

Hedgerows provide an important wildlife habitat with greater benefits where they extend or link existing hedgerows or woodland habitats. A hedgerow over 1.8 metres in height that has a wide base, a mix of woody species for an extended pollen and nectar season, and has some mature trees, will have the greatest benefit for biodiversity. Hedgerows also have additional benefits for water quality when strategically positioned to help reduce soil erosion and sediment run off.

Where the Planting a new hedgerow action is taken on a farm boundary, the applicant must have control of and access, to maintain both sides.

## Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On CP Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Coastal, Winterage, Corncrake or Chough.
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, Annex 1 Grasslands or Breeding Wader Hotspots.
- Ensure the site is suitable for hedgerow establishment (see additional guidance)

**Note:** Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of this ACRES NPI.

## Requirements:

1. Plant the contracted length of the new hedgerow by 31 March of the year following year of approval or by 31 December in the final year of the ACRES contract. To be eligible for this action the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. Each length applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
2. The new hedge must not be placed against an existing hedgerow or stone wall or under the shade of a treeline/woodland.
3. The new hedge must consist of at least 5 plants per metre planted in a double staggered row from the list of hedgerow species listed in Table 5 below.



4. Plants must be of Irish Origin or Irish Provenance and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators.
5. All plants purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) and receipts(s).
6. All newly planted hedgerows must be protected from livestock with an appropriate permanent fence.
7. Grass and other competing vegetation must be controlled around the plants annually to aid establishment.
8. No use of pesticides or herbicides are permitted after planting within 1.5m of the hedge. Spot treatment of noxious weeds is allowed.
9. Failed or dead plants must be replaced in the following planting season.
10. The hedge and fence must be maintained for the remainder of the ACRES contract.

### **Additional guidance**

- It is recommended to plant a mix of at least 3 species from the Hedgerow species outlined in Table 4. below. No one species should make up more than 85% of the total. If hedgerow species other than Whitethorn cannot be sourced, then plant one tree at least every 30m from the Tree Species (Table 5 below) and let mature without cutting and protect with a tree guard or shelter. Plant native species that already grow in the local area.
- Prepare the ground along a 1.5m wide strip to provide good soil conditions and as little competition from other vegetation as possible.
- Take care of roots before planting by keeping them always covered, especially when it is sunny or windy avoiding opening more than one bag of plants at a time and water regularly until planted.
- Where a hedge is being planted to intercept the flow of water along a pathway between a critical source area and a watercourse you should create a bund/ berm/ bank at least 1 m wide and 30 cm high. Plant the hedge on the downslope side of the new bank.
- If you want a hedgerow with a wide base that will always be managed by topping, prune thorn species (except Holly) down to 3 to 5 cm with a sloping cut to leave a sharp point. In subsequent years, carry out a second pruning after the first growing season. This should be done when the plants are dormant during the winter period. Repeat the process again after the second growing season by cutting each of the stems (except Holly) back down approximately 3 cm above the previous cut. This will help achieve a dense bushy growth at the base. Compostable film or plastic will be essential for controlling competing vegetation in nutrient rich areas.
- Whitethorn and Holly do not tolerate very wet soils and whitethorn will not thrive at high elevations. Blackthorn is more suited to heavy soils and for coastal exposed sites. Take note of what hedge and tree species are thriving in hedgerows in the locality. If planting a hedgerow to help reduce overland flow, ensure the hedgerow will not be flooded or become overwhelmed in heavy rain events. Planting further up a slope or on a slightly raised bund may be an option to consider.
- Take great care using a strimmer to control competing vegetation as the young hedge can be seriously damaged.
- The fence may need to be moved out further as the hedgerow grows and expands.

**Table 4. Hedgerow species for planting**

Blackthorn ( <i>Prunus spinosa</i> )
Dog Rose ( <i>Rosa canina</i> )
Guelder Rose ( <i>Viburnum opulus</i> )
Hawthorn/Whitethorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> )
Hazel ( <i>Corylus avellana</i> )
Holly ( <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> )
Spindle ( <i>Euonymus europaeus</i> )
Alder Buckthorn ( <i>Frangula alnus</i> )

**Table 5. Tree Species (0.6 -0.9 metres high)**

Bird Cherry ( <i>Prunus padus</i> )
Crab Apple ( <i>Malus sylvestris</i> ) If possible, Mc Griggors (Crab) Cavan Sweet (Crab) Lough Key (Crab)
Goat Willow ( <i>Salix caprea</i> )
Holly ( <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> )
Grey Willow ( <i>Salix cinerea</i> )
Rowan ( <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> )
Wild Cherry ( <i>Prunus avium</i> )
Hawthorn/Whitethorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> )
Irish Whitebeam ( <i>Sorbus Hibernia</i> )
Sessile oak ( <i>Quercus petraea</i> )
Pedunculate oak ( <i>Quercus robur</i> )



## Planting Traditional Orchards

### Objective:

To support biodiversity and help ensure the survival of traditional Irish apple varieties.

### Background:

While apple trees have been grown in Ireland for many centuries, the native genetic pool has been significantly altered to incorporate a number of modern varieties. This measure endeavours to conserve the authenticity of traditional apple tree varieties while also sustaining their heritage, by only growing trees that were once common to Irish soils.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On CP Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland and Rough Grazing.
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, Annex 1 Grasslands or Breeding Wader Hotspots.
- This action is not suitable on fields with more than 7 positive indicators on the scorecard. This action is not suitable for wet fields.

**Note:** Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of this ACRES NPI.

### Requirements:

1. Create an orchard of at least 0.05ha by planting 10 traditional fruit trees from Table 6.
2. Trees must be planted by 31 March of the year following year of approval or by 31 December in the final year of the ACRES contract.
3. The location of the orchard must be identified on the LPIS parcel selected and marked on the map submitted. Each orchard applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
4. Trees should be supported with a suitable stake and secured with a suitable tie.
5. The orchard must be fenced off from livestock. The fencing must be stockproof, fit for purpose and be undertaken with permanent stakes and wire.
6. Grazing the orchard with sheep is permitted provided that no damage is caused to the trees. If damage is being caused by rabbits/hares, measures to prevent further damage must be taken by the erection of a rabbit-proof fence or tree guards.
7. Trees must be spaced at least 5 metres apart. Trees must not be planted in a single row.
8. All plants purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) and receipts(s).
9. Pesticides or herbicides are not permitted except for the spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds.

10. Grass and other competing vegetation must be controlled without herbicide, around the trees until they become established.
11. Failed or dead trees must be replaced during the next planting season.

**Additional guidance:**

- Apples should be grafted onto MM106 or MM111 rootstocks.
- Tying and staking must be monitored and adjusted when necessary to prevent the main stem twisting.
- To aid establishment, the root zone should be kept weed free (at least within a one-metre radius) for the remainder of the contract.
- The use of low nitrogen chemical or organic fertiliser is permitted at the time of planting.
- Apples require at least two compatible varieties for pollination purposes.

**Table 6: List of Heritage varieties for Planting Traditional Orchard**

Aherne Beauty	Ecklinville Seedling	Martins Seedling
An Cailin ban	Eight Square	Mrs Perry
Appletown Wonder	Eves Apples of Ireland	Munster Tulip
April Queen	Farrell	Pêche Melba
Ard Cairn Russet	Finola Lee	Rawley's Seedling
Ballinora Pippin	Frank's Seedling	Red Brandy
Ballyfatten	Gibbon's Russet	Reid's Seedling
Ballyvaughan Seedling	Gibby's Apple	Richardson
Bardsey Island	Glenstal Cooker	Rose Hogan
Barnhill Pippin	Golden Royal	Ross Nonpareil
Beauty of Ballintaylor	Greasy Pippin	Sam Young
Belvedere House	Green Chisel	Scarlet Crofton
Blood of the Boyne	Harvest Eve (Culleton)	Sheep's Snout Red
Bloody Butcher	Honeyball	Sovereign
Brady	Horses Head	Strippy
Brown Crofton	Irish Molly	Sweet William
Buttermilk Russet	Irish Peach	Thompson's Apple
Cabbage Stalk	Irish Pitcher	Turkey Willouby
Cavan Rose	Keegan's Crab	Uncle John's Cooker
Cavan Strawberry	Kemp	Valentine
Cavan Sugarcane	Kerry Pippin	White Crofton
CavanWine	Kilkenny Pearmain	White Moss
Clearheart	Kiltoghert Blossom	White Russet
Councillor	Knights Templar	Widow's Friend
Custard Scarlet	Lady's Finger	Yellow Clare
Davy Apple	Leitrim Red	Yellow Pitcher
Dick Davies	Leixlip	
Dockney	Lough Tree of Wexford	

**Crab Apples**

Cavan Sweet (Crab)

Lough Key (Crab)

Mc Griggors (Crab)

# Planting Trees

## Objective

To encourage the planting of native trees on farms where they will have multiple benefits while offering flexible planting options to suit the holding.

**The planting of trees under this action does not contribute to the planting of trees as part of an Eco scheme for Pillar 1 payments.**

## Background

Planting trees on farms can sequester carbon, support biodiversity, help reduce soil erosion and sediment loss, and recover leached nutrients. They also contribute to increase water retention, provide shelter and shading for livestock when mature, and enhance the visual appearance of the farm landscape. This action includes two planting options Rows and Groups.

1. Rows: The row option is planting of native trees in rows at least 4m apart e.g., along a field boundary/farm passageway or along electric fence boundaries, within a pasture or arable field along a riverbank for stabilisation, or to provide dapple shade to rivers. The row option is available on peatland habitats but is restricted to low numbers and planting is not permitted in open heath or blanket bog habitats.
2. Groups: The group option is planting native trees in small groups at desired locations on the farm maintaining at least 4m spacing. The group option is not available in peatland habitats.

## Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On CP Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Peatland and Scrub/Woodland.
- Where there is a peatland scorecard, this action is restricted to small numbers of trees (the row option) planted along watercourses to help stabilise riverbanks and prevent erosion or in small glens or gullies along upland streams.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, Annex 1 Grasslands or Breeding Wader Hotspots.
- Tree Planting action is not permitted on blanket bog, raised bog or heath, potentially high scoring grasslands, Breeding Wader Hotspots, Annex 1 grasslands and within archaeological monument buffers.
- Sites should be suitable to establish the chosen tree species, should be reasonably sheltered and have no requirement for additional drainage.
- Sites must be below 300m altitude.

**Note 1: The planting of trees in any area greater than 0.1 hectare which has tree crown cover of more than 20 per cent of the total area, or the potential to achieve this cover at maturity is considered a forest. To remain in line with the Amendment of Forestry Act 2014 under Animal Health and Welfare and Forestry (Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022) which facilitates planting of native trees in areas not less than 0.1 hectare and not greater than 1 hectare**

**without an afforestation licence, the total cumulative area of forest that can be planted on a holding is limited to 1 hectare. This would apply to the combination of all tree planting actions in ACRES General/ACRES CP that could be considered forests depending on planting layout and density i.e. Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Tree planting and Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards.**

**Note 2:** Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of this ACRES NPI.

### **Requirements**

1. Trees must be planted by 31<sup>st</sup> March of the year following the year of approval or by 31 December in the final year of the ACRES contract.
2. Select the LPIS parcel(s) for the tree planting action by drawing one point on the map. The minimum number of trees to be delivered is 3. Each point drawn on GLAM NPI-Annual Works plan represents an application for 3 trees. They are only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained in the same location for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. Do not plant in the vicinity of overhead wires, within 20m of railway lines and within 60m of a neighbouring dwelling house. See Table 8. for clearance distance for overhead lines.
4. Plants must be of Irish Origin or Irish Provenance and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators.
5. All plants purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) and receipts(s).
6. Purchased trees must be a minimum of 60cm in height.
7. Plant at least 3 native tree species from Table 7. below, of which not more than 25 per cent of trees planted to be Scots pine.
8. Maintain at least 4 metres spacing between each tree. If planting multiple rows, maintain at least 12m between the rows to allow for continued grazing or crop production.
9. Fit each tree (except Scots Pine and Holly) with a staked tree shelter, minimum 75cm in height (see Note 1 below) and fence trees off with appropriate fencing to protect from livestock. If using individual barbed protectors (see Note 2 below), the staked tree shelter and fencing is not required.
10. Grass and competing vegetation must be controlled around the trees annually.
11. Failed or dead trees must be replaced during the next dormant season.

### **Additional Guidance**

- Trees should be pruned annually to restrict them to a single leader.
- Fence should be placed at least 1m out from tree to prevent damage by livestock.
- Trees should be planted between November and March. Bare root trees should be planted as soon as possible after delivery.
- Planting holes for container grown plants should be three times as large as the root ball of the young tree.

- Soak the root ball before planting, tease out some roots from the root ball to loosen it before planting.
- A small amount of well-rotted farmyard manure or low nitrogen fertiliser can be mixed in with the soil used to backfill the planting hole.
- Bare root trees can be slit, or pit planted. Trees should be planted in a vegetation free area. Clear the area prior to planting so plants are planted on a weed free area (less than 1 metre in diameter).
- Do not use a strimmer or herbicide to control competing vegetation, there is a serious risk of damaging the young tree.
- Use a mulch to suppress grass and other vegetation around the young tree. Two layers of corrugated cardboard covered by bark chips will suppress grass and weed growth for a growing season.

**Table 7. Species for Tree Planting Rows & Groups**

Common name	Scientific name
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Strawberry tree	<i>Arbutus unedo</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i> Where possible, Mc Griggors (Crab) Cavan Sweet (Crab) Lough Key (Crab)
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Burren Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Common Whitebeam	<i>Sorbus aria</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Irish whitebeam	<i>Sorbus hibernica</i>

**Table 8. The required clearance distance depends on the voltage of the overhead line**

Power line type	Clearance distance (from centre of line)
Low voltage (230/400V)	5 m
10 kV and 38 kV	10 m
110 kV	31 m
220 Kv	34 m
400 Kv	37 m
Note: All trees must be outside their falling distance from line support structures.	

**Note 1.**

**Tree shelter guidance**

Tree shelters create a micro-climate for trees which encourages better establishment, higher survival rates, allows for planting of smaller trees and contributes to greater root development. They are designed to last a minimum of 5 years, boosting chances of survival and healthy growth through the early stages of establishment. Use 1.2m tree shelters but if fallow or red deer are known to graze in the area, 1.5-1.8 metre tree shelter is required. Do not fasten guards to the tree itself or allow guards to cause damage to the growing tree.

**Tree Shelter**

Height 75cm (minimum)

Diameter 73-105mm (minimum)

Ties x 2 to support to stake

Flared Rim to minimise stem abrasion

Twin Wall construction

UV stabilised propylene



**Note 2.**

**Barbed protector guidance**

Barbed livestock protectors have spikes protruding which discourages animal from pushing or rubbing up against them. They provide effective protection against cattle, deer, pigs, goats and sheep. They are placed around the tree, to fully protect the developing tree from grazing animals. They should be a minimum 1200mm high but preferably 1600mm high if protecting against cattle.

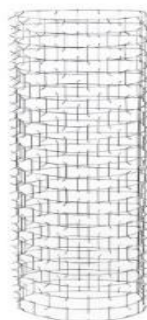
**Barbed protector**

Height 1.2 metres (minimum)

Diameter 0.32 metres

Rebar x 3 to secure

Galvanized steel



## Repair of Traditional Stone Walls (1 side and 2 sides)

### Objective

To repair freestanding dry stonewalls where they have fallen into disrepair. An intact network of traditional stone walls enhances the visual landscape, enables effective grazing management and are an important part of our cultural heritage.

### Background

Dry stone walls are walls built using stones that sit comfortably without the use of mortar and constructed in a style traditional to the locality. In addition to their agricultural contribution as stockproof boundaries and shelter to livestock, these also act as nature corridors, which provide protection to wildlife and are significant habitats for both flora and fauna.

### Site suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare >0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This NPI must not be selected on the same walls that are included in the ACRES general action Traditional Dry Stone Wall Maintenance.
- This action is to be targeted at stonewalls that have fallen into disrepair and is not for the maintenance of fully intact stonewalls.
- This action can be used for the maintenance of traditional stonewalls on farms where their maintenance can be considered a priority i.e. small farms or farms where there is little scope for alternative works to be carried out on priority habitats. Refer to local action plan of CP Team. If these criteria are not met, this action may be rejected by the CP team to prioritise funds for other actions.
- This action should not be applied for on machine-built 'boulder walls'.
- Walls must be repaired in a traditional style and must not be repaired using large machine placed boulders in the 'boulder wall' style.
- Walls built with mortar are not eligible for this NPI action and mortar must not be used in their repair.
- All stone walls which are to be repaired as an NPI must have sufficient fallen and dislodged stones in the direct vicinity of the wall.
- While trees and shrubs are often found growing along stone walls, only stone walls that are visible and accessible and in need of repair are eligible for this action. The only exception to this is where removal of scrub is approved by the Burren Aran CP Team.

Select this option on stone walls that require active stone wall repair. If sections of the wall over 20m have fallen into full disrepair and require additional funds, contact the CP project team to discuss options.

## Requirements

1. External farm stone walls entered for this action are payable at half rate except for external stone walls that front onto a public roadway, private laneway or water body where the farmer has control over both sides of the wall for repair.
2. Internal wall lengths must only be counted once and must be maintained on both sides.
3. Stonewalls eligible to be paid at the 2-side rate should be selected as Repair of Traditional Stone Wall 2-side with the location and length marked on the map submitted.
4. Stonewalls to be paid at the half rate should be selected as Repair of Traditional Stone Wall 1 side with the location and length marked on the map submitted.
5. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. Each length applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
6. All sections of wall mapped for repair must be repaired to a solid, secure and stock proof standard; unstable sections should be knocked and rebuilt.
7. Repair work must be done in the style that is consistent with the existing wall and be evenly topped-off.

## Additional guidance

- Stones used to repair walls should be fallen stone from the existing wall. If additional stone is required, it must not be taken from other walls or from within the Zones of Notification around any archaeological sites or monuments.
- The stone used should not be an integral part of a protected habitat type, limestone pavement or earth-fast stone for example should not be used. Fallen and loose scattered stones may be used.
- Where there are mature trees along the wall, these must be retained, though suspended side branches may be cut back to facilitate wall repair.
- Embedded, 'earth-fast' stones must not be extracted from underlying archaeological walls if present.
- Stones used to repair walls should not be taken from within the zones of notification around archaeological monuments.
- Stone should not be removed from other stonewalls or built structures. Any old structures within walls - stiles, pickets/ sheep passes, marker stones, should be retained.
- When applying pesticides and fertiliser, a one-metre margin left along the selected wall is beneficial as it will allow the development of a nature corridor for flora and fauna. If using herbicides to control noxious and invasive weeds, they should be applied by spot treatment only.



## Riparian Margin and Riparian Margin (Sheep fencing)

### Objective

To help protect water quality by intercepting the loss of sediment and nutrients from soil surfaces after they have been mobilised. This measure also takes small areas out of production, thereby reducing the nutrient load while also supporting biodiversity.

### Site suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On CP forage Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Coastal, Winterage, Peatland, Scrub/Woodland, Low Input Peat Grassland, Corncrake, or Cough.
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, Annex 1 Grasslands or Breeding Wader Hotspots.
- Riparian margin can only be created adjacent to small streams, surface drains, rivers, lakes and ponds.

**Note:** Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of this ACRES NPI.

### Requirements

1. Erect a permanent fence to create a 3m riparian margin by 31<sup>st</sup> May in the year following year of approval or by 31 December in the final year of the ACRES contract. Select Riparian Margin if opting for post and wire fencing for bovines/equines or select Riparian Margin (Sheep fencing) if sheep fencing is required to create the margin.
2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Each margin applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained in the same location for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. Riparian margin width is measured from the top of the bank or from the edge of an existing boundary (i.e. hedgerow, treeline, stone wall or earthen bank) into the field. Where scrub is present, the margin width can be inclusive of scrub.
4. The Riparian margin is in addition to any mandatory baseline requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding.

5. If selecting Riparian Margin sheep fencing the lowest line of the sheep wire mesh must be 100mm above ground level to allow adequate clearance for wildlife.
6. The Riparian margin must be fenced off and stock proof to exclude all livestock and maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
7. Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the Riparian margin.
8. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious/invasive weeds.
9. Cutting is permitted but cannot take place between 1 March and 31 August.

#### **Additional guidance**

- An access point into the margin is permitted to allow for stock and agricultural management/maintenance.
- The use of heavy machinery should be avoided within 2m of the bank.
- Riparian margins are very susceptible to non-native invasive species e.g., Himalayan balsam, Giant hogweed. Monitor the riparian margin and carry out appropriate management/ removal of non-native invasive species where necessary.
- The fence should be placed at least 1m out from any riparian margin trees planted to prevent damage by livestock.

## Riparian Margin Tree Planting

### Objectives

To protect water quality by enhancing nutrient uptake while also supporting biodiversity. In some situations, new riparian margins will benefit from the planting of appropriate tree species to enhance erosion interception and provide improved bank stability. Tree roots and canopy's will intercept subsurface and aerial pollutant pathways.

### Site suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On CP forage parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland or Rough Grazing Scorecards.
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.
- This action is not available on Blanket Bog.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, Annex 1 Grasslands or Breeding Wader Hotspots.
- Sites should be suitable to establish the chosen tree species, should be reasonably sheltered and have no requirement for additional drainage.

### Note:

**The planting of trees in any area greater than 0.1 hectare which has tree crown cover of more than 20 per cent of the total area, or the potential to achieve this cover at maturity is considered a forest. To remain in line with the Amendment of Forestry Act 2014 under Animal Health and Welfare and Forestry (Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022) which facilitates planting of native trees in areas not less than 0.1 hectare and not greater than 1 hectare without an afforestation licence, the total cumulative area of forest that can be planted on a holding is limited to 1 hectare. This would apply to the combination of all tree planting actions in ACRES General / ACRES CP that could be considered forests depending on planting layout and density i.e. Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Tree planting and Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards.**

### Requirements

1. Riparian margin tree planting can only be selected where Riparian Margin or Riparian Margin Sheep Fencing NPI have been selected.
2. Select the location for Riparian Margin Tree Planting by drawing on the map. Each point drawn on GLAM will represent 10 trees. They are only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained in the same location for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. The minimum number of trees to be delivered is 10.
4. Planting of trees must be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March of the year following year of approval or by 31 December in the final year of the ACRES contract.
5. Plants must be of Irish Origin or Irish Provenance and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators.

6. All trees purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) and receipts(s).
7. Purchased trees must be a minimum of 60cm in height.
8. Plant at least 2 species from Table 9. below.
9. Do not plant in the vicinity of overhead wires, within 20m of railway lines and within 60m of a neighbouring dwelling house. See Table 10. for clearance distance for overhead lines.
10. Fit each tree with a staked tree shelter, minimum 75cm in height, and ensure trees are protected from livestock damage with appropriate fencing (the riparian margin will be fenced off to protect from appropriate livestock as a requirement under Riparian Margin or Riparian Margin Sheep Fencing NPI).
11. Grass and competing vegetation must be controlled around the trees annually. It will be necessary, from time to time, to lift the tree shelter/guard and remove any weeds/grass by hand that may be growing within the shelter.
12. Failed or dead trees must be replaced during the next dormant season.

### Additional guidance

- When planting trees in Riparian Margin, tree planting density should be kept sufficiently low to allow establishment of ground storey vegetation. Planting small groups of 10 trees with 2.5m spacing between the trees and 10m spacing between the groups is recommended.
- Plant species that have already been shown to grow in local riparian areas. Plants should be of native provenance where possible.
- Trees should be pit planted in a vegetation-free area. Clear the area prior to planting to ensure planting is undertaken on a weed-free area (less than 1m in diameter).
- For pit planting, a spade is used to dig a hole and the tree's roots placed in the centre. Soil is placed around the tree and firmed in, ensuring that it is upright and straight.
- Unmanaged riparian areas are very susceptible to non-native invasive species - e.g. Himalayan balsam, Giant hogweed. Monitor the riparian margin and carry out appropriate management/removal of non-native invasive species where necessary.
- In arterial drained catchments, Office of Public Works (OPW) require certain banks to remain free of trees. Contact OPW if unsure whether this may apply to your farm or to seek guidance on channel width.

**Table 9. Native Species for Riparian Margin Tree Planting**

Common name	Scientific name
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Grey willow	<i>Salix cinerea</i>
Bay willow	<i>Salix pentandra</i>

**Table 10. The required clearance distance depends on the voltage of the overhead line**

<b>Power line type</b>	<b>Clearance distance (from centre of line)</b>
Low voltage (230/400V)	5 m
10 kV and 38 kV	10 m
110 kV	31 m
220 kV	34 m
400 kV	37 m
Note: All trees must be outside their falling distance from line support structures.	

# Rodenticide Free Rodent Control

## Objective

To give an alternative method (to rodenticide) of rodent control for farmers around the farm while also encouraging the nesting of Barn Owls using the 'Barn Owl Boxes' NPI. The aim is to cease or reduce the need for the use of rodenticide on a farm which can cause secondary poisoning in predators which feed on rodents such as Barn Owls, Kestrels, Long-eared Owl, Red Kite, and Hen Harrier.

## Background

The use of rodenticides has been linked with to the declining numbers of Barn Owls and can affect other species including Otter, Hen Harrier, and Kestrel. Barn Owls and Kestrel are priorities in parts of the CP areas. This NPI is designed to reduce the risk of secondary poisoning of these species.

The first step in addressing rodent related problems is to reduce access to food sources and the adoption of an Integrated Pest Management strategy. This action will support the farmer to achieve effective rodent control using appropriate traps while preventing accidental and secondary poisoning. While this action is particularly applicable on farms where the Barn Owl box NPI is selected, it is available on all farms.

## Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > or = 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.

## Requirements

1. Purchase and install a self-resetting, non-toxic smart trap for control of rats.
2. This NPI is for use in farmyards or around sheds used for feed storage. Select the location on the map submitted by drawing one point.
3. Traps should be checked and maintained regularly.
4. The use of rodenticide must not be reinstated.
5. Each trap applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained in the same location for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.

## Additional Guidance

- All animal feed should be stored in sealed, rodent proof storage to discourage rodents from inhabiting the target area (See Mobile Feed Storage Bins NPI).
- These traps can be used around sheds outside of the farmyard area if the sheds or buildings are being used to store feed.
- Traps should not be installed in fields or areas away from built farm structures.
- Rats are often shy of new objects and the placement of unset traps in a new location for a week or two will increase the opportunities for catching.

- Traps should be placed in any dark hidden corner or placed adjacent to a wall since rats like to run along walls to avoid detection.
- Cage and other rodenticide-free traps can and are encouraged to be used (if necessary) in the farmyard. They do not fulfil the requirements for this action.
- Traps can be switched off if Barn Owls are known to be nesting in the vicinity.

## Small Woodland

### Background

Small woodlands on farms can sequester carbon, support biodiversity, help reduce soil erosion and sediment loss, and recover leached nutrients. They also contribute to increase water retention, provide shelter and shading for livestock when mature, and enhance the visual appearance of the farm landscape.

### Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On CP forage Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland, Rough Grazing and Scrub/Woodland.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, Annex 1 Grasslands or Breeding Wader Hotspots.
- Planting is not permitted in open heath or blanket bog habitats.
- Small Woodland action is not permitted on blanket bog, raised bog or heath, geese and swan hotspots, potentially high scoring grasslands,
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.
- Site should be free of invasive plant species.
- Sites should be suitable to establish the chosen tree species and should be reasonably sheltered and have no requirement for additional drainage.

**Note 1: The planting of trees in any area greater than 0.1 hectare which has tree crown cover of more than 20 per cent of the total area, or the potential to achieve this cover at maturity is considered a forest. To remain in line with the Amendment of Forestry Act 2014 under Animal Health and Welfare and Forestry (Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022) which facilitates planting of native trees in areas not less than 0.1 hectare and not greater than 1 hectare without an afforestation licence, the total cumulative area of forest that can be planted on a holding is limited to 1 hectare. This would apply to the combination of all tree planting actions in ACRES General /ACRES CP that could be considered forests depending on planting layout and density i.e. Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Tree planting and Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards.**

Note 2: Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of this ACRES NPI.



## Requirements

1. Planting of small woodland must be completed by 31 March in the year following the year of approval or by 31<sup>st</sup> December in the final year of the ACRES contract.
2. Select the LPIS parcel(s) for the small woodland action by drawing one point on the map to mark the location of the woodland. Each small woodland applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. There are 2 options for planting small woodland, 160 trees in an area of 0.05Ha or 300 trees in an area of 0.09Ha.
4. Trees must be planted with a spacing of 1.5m to 2m between trees. Planting rows of trees 2m apart with 1.5m spacing within the rows, will achieve the required planting density.
5. Do not plant in the vicinity of overhead wires, within 20m railway lines and within 60m of a neighbouring dwelling house. See Table 11. for clearance distance for overhead lines.
6. Plants must be of Irish Origin or Irish Provenance and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators.
7. All trees purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) and receipts(s).
8. Trees must be selected from Table 12 and purchased trees must be a minimum of 60cm in height.
9. The woodland must be fenced off from livestock. The fencing must be stockproof, fit for purpose and be undertaken with permanent stakes and wire.
10. Tree planting must be carried out between November 1<sup>st</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup>.
11. Grass and competing vegetation must be controlled around the trees annually.
12. Failed or dead trees must be replaced during the next dormant season.

## Additional Guidance

- It is recommended that at least 4 species of tree should be planted with no one species accounting for more than 50% of the total.
- Planting trees near salmonid rivers require consultation with Inland Fisheries Ireland and additional measures to reduce sedimentation to rivers, particularly during spawning seasons (November/December) and when eggs are in gravels (January-February), to protect these sensitive rivers, trees should be planted without the use of heavy machinery near sensitive watercourses to reduce possible sedimentation.
- Trees planted in small woodlands should be located near existing hedgerows, scrub areas or woodland. These areas will support colonisation by woodland species of plants, insects and other animals.
- Do not remove existing trees, scrub or hedgerow to facilitate the tree planting action. In areas that are grazed, tree guards/barbed protectors must be used.
- All field boundaries must be maintained.

**Table 11. The required clearance distance depends on the voltage of the overhead line**

Power line type	Clearance distance (from centre of line)
Low voltage (230/400V)	5 m
10 kV and 38 kV	10 m
110 kV	31 m
220 kV	34 m
400 kV	37 m
Note: All trees must be outside their falling distance from line support structures.	

**Table 12. Native Trees for Small Woodland**

Common name	Scientific name	Common name	Scientific name
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Strawberry tree	<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	Grey willow	<i>Salix cinerea</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Bay willow	<i>Salix pentandra</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	English whitebeam	<i>Sorbus anglica</i>
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i> Where possible, Mc Griggors (Crab) Cavan Sweet (Crab) Lough Key (Crab)	Whitebeam	<i>Sorbus aria</i>
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Black poplar	<i>Populus nigra</i>	Irish whitebeam	<i>Sorbus Hibernica</i>
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	Rock whitebeam	<i>Sorbus rupicola</i>
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	Bird cherry	<i>Prunus padus</i>

**Table 13. Example of Small Woodland Planting Mixture**

Scenario	Example of Planting Mixture
Scenario 1  Dry Mineral Soil  (i.e. podzols, brown podzols & brown earths)	Oak (30%), Birch (30%), Scots Pine (25%) and other native species (15%). Oak planted in predominantly pure groups, with birch scattered intimately throughout. Scots Pine planted in small pure groups, focusing on areas away from any watercourses adjoining or crossing the small woodland. The remainder of the Birch planted in pure groups.
Scenario 2  Wet Mineral Soil  (i.e. gleys)	Alder (50%), Birch (30%), Oak (15%) and other native species (5%). Alder and Birch planted in pure groups (30-40 trees), with groups interspersed alternately. Oak planted in small pure groups, focusing on the dryer parts of the small woodland.

## Swallow Nest Boxes

### Objective

Provide specialised nest boxes for swallows to nest from March to September and to contribute to farmyard biodiversity.

### Background

A common summer visitor from southern Africa from March to September. Swallows often nest inside barns, sheds and other buildings, and they forage over grazed pastures. Swallows can produce more than two or even three clutches of 4 to 5 eggs per year. Their nest is made from mud interwoven with grasses and can be reused every season. Chicks fledge after a few weeks and are fed for another week. Swallows feed on flying insects. They can be confused with swifts however they are two different bird species.

Swallows have an amber conservation status due to declines in their numbers. This is likely to be due to factors such as fewer flying insects on their breeding grounds as a result of agricultural intensification and climate change. Climate change is also likely to be causing less favorable weather conditions on the breeding grounds and on migration routes. There are less available nesting sites.

### Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare  $\geq 0$ .
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- Swallow nest boxes can only be installed inside outbuildings e.g. sheds, barns, stables on all parcels farmed by CP participants.
- Swallow boxes must not be attached to historic archaeological structures, e.g castles, churches, ringforts etc.

### Requirements

1. A minimum number of three nest boxes must be purchased and installed by 31st March in the year following year of approval or by 31<sup>st</sup> December in the final year of the ACRES contract. Each point drawn on the GLAM map represents 3 Swallow Boxes. Each three boxes applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
2. Nest boxes must be located at least 2m from the ground (preferably higher) to prevent disturbance and to keep out of reach from cats.
3. Allow birds permanent access to building during the breeding season via an open window or door.
4. In farm buildings fix the nest box wooden board vertically to the wall or beam. If positioning the nest box close to the roof leave 6cm between the nest and the roof to allow the swallow adequate space to enter and exit the nest.

5. Swallow boxes must be purchased, and the receipt must be retained by the participant. For a link to purchase suitable boxes please click on the following link: [BirdWatch Ireland ACRES](#)
6. Repair or replace damaged boxes as required throughout the remainder of the contract.

### **Additional Guidance**

- Do not install near direct artificial lights swallows prefer dark, cosy corners.
- Allow birds permanent access to building during the breeding season via an open window or door or make a small opening minimum 50mm high and 200mm wider under eaves of the building.
- The material that the box is constructed should be well insulated to protect chicks from very hot or very cold weather conditions.
- Farmers can participate in recording sightings of swallows here at [Ireland-Spring Alive](#)
- A video on the importance of buildings for supporting wildlife can be found on [BirdWatch Ireland](#).

## Swift Boxes

### Objective

Provide specialised nest boxes and lure/callers to encourage swifts to nest from April to August.

### Background

Swifts feed on flying insects. Swifts visit Ireland from Africa; they arrive in April and depart in August. Swifts are dark brown all over with a pale throat. Swifts spend most of their lives airborne, in contrast to Swallows and Martins which frequently spend time perching on telegraph wires and fences - a swift will never be seen perched. Swifts nest in small gaps in buildings; under eaves or in cavities in walls. Swifts have one brood per year of 2 or 3 eggs.

Swifts are endangered (red listed) because their population has declined by over 50% in the last 20 years. Swifts are difficult to monitor so it's unclear why their population is declining. Fewer flying insects due to habitat loss and climate change may be a factor. However, less nesting sites because of refurbishment of older building and modern building designs may also be contributing to their decline. Swifts use the same nest site every year. However, young Swifts or pairs displaced from nest sites will be seeking new nesting opportunities. Providing artificial nest boxes allows these young birds to find homes if natural nest sites are limited.

Swifts are faithful to their nest sites, if they occupy a nest box they are likely to do so for life. Boxes installed during the scheme should be made of long-life durable material and should be maintained after the end of the scheme. It is essential to install and operate a lure/caller to attract swifts to a newly installed nest box. The lure should be played between April and August each year, until such times as the boxes are all occupied by nesting pairs. Anyone using a lure is required to have a lure licence. Licence will be coordinated by the ACRES CP team.

### Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare  $\geq 0$ .
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- Swift nest boxes must be externally installed on outbuildings e.g. sheds, barns, stables in all parcels owned by CP participants.
- Boxes should not be installed close to opposing glass windows as there is an in-flight collision risk if the swifts can see through the building.
- Swift boxes must not be attached to historic archaeological structures, e.g. castles, churches, ringforts etc.

### Requirements

1. Swift boxes must be new. They must not have been installed in a previous agricultural scheme (e.g. bird boxes in GLAS).
2. Swifts nest in colonies, so a minimum of three single-entry nest boxes or one triple entry nest box must be purchased and installed at each selected location by 31<sup>st</sup> March

in the year following year of approval or by 31<sup>st</sup> December in the final year of the ACRES contract.

3. Each point drawn on the GLAM map represents 3 Swift Boxes. Each group of swift boxes applied for are only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
4. The nest boxes must be purchased new and be manufactured from wood concrete (woodcrete), woodstone or cellular magnesia cement board. Swift boxes must be purchased, and the receipt must be retained by the participant.
5. Boxes should be installed under the roof eaves and at least 5m high on a sheltered, non-south-facing wall, with a clear flight path from the entrance. Ensure boxes are at least 40cm apart.
6. A lure/caller (wall mounted speakers emitting a call to attract unpaired swifts to the box locations) is required when installing nest boxes. Callers can be integrated into the box or purchased separately but must be installed as close as possible to the installed box(es). The caller must be operational (i.e. emitting sound and connected to an electricity supply) between 1st April and 31<sup>st</sup> August. A box with an attached lure set can be purchased on the following link: [BirdWatch Ireland ACRES](#)
7. All participants installing swift nest boxes and callers will be added to a block license for caller operation by a CP team.
8. Repair or replace damaged boxes as required throughout the remainder of the contract.

### **Additional Guidance**

- Ensure proper safety procedures are adhered to during installation.
- There should be a clear flightpath in front of the nest box because the Swifts need to free-fall as they leave the nest.
- Situate swift nest boxes in shaded site away from full sun in Summer or artificial light.
- Swifts nest in colonies, so you need more than one nest box at your chosen location. You can purchase nest boxes with multiple cavities (that have a dividing wall between each nest area).
- The entrance hole should measure no larger than 29mm x 65mm, this is smaller than the standard European entry size (32mm x 65mm) due to the risk in Ireland, of Starlings gaining entry through the larger entrance.
- When operating the lure, the volume should be set to a normal bird call level. It should not cause disturbance to people or other wildlife in the area.
- Calls should be set on a timer or played at certain times of the day and not played on a 24hour loop. Recommended playing times are from dawn for approximately 3 to 6 hours and from 6pm to dark.
- BirdWatch Ireland's booklet on saving swifts with advice on installation of boxes can be accessed on the BirdWatch Ireland website, <https://birdwatchireland.ie/publications/saving-swifts-guide/>.
- Contact your local CP team for further information on ordering a nest box and caller, or they can be ordered from BirdWatch Ireland via the above link. You can also find

more information on <https://www.swiftconservation.ie> and contact Swift Conservation Ireland for further advice on nest boxes, lures and installation.

- Farmers can participate in recording sightings of swifts here at [Ireland-Spring Alive](#)
- A video on the importance of buildings for supporting wildlife can be found on [BirdWatch Ireland](#).



Picture 2: [Swift Conservation Ireland](#) Two swifts at nest box site – Copyright © Martin Leak



# Wader Scrapes

## Objective:

To create opportunities for waders to feed and to support aquatic insects through the creation of small, shallow, and often seasonal pools.

## Background:

Small, seasonal pools support a wide range of invertebrates and provide feeding opportunities for waders and other bird species alike. Wader scrapes are shallow pools which can be created to increase the area of wet feature edge. They are typically located in naturally low-lying areas. Wet flushes occur when the water table is high and/or there is low soil permeability.

## Site Suitability:

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is only available the following scorecard types: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Coastal, Peatland (restricted to cutover), Low Input Peat Grassland and Breeding Wader.
- Do not locate wader scrapes within 30m of scrub or hedgerows which could provide cover for predators.
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.

## Requirements:

1. Select the LPIS parcel for the wader scrape, each point drawn on GLAM represents one wader. Each wader scrape applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
2. Create a scrape with a minimum surface area of 48m<sup>2</sup> by the end of February in the year following year of approval or by 31 December in the final year of the ACRES contract. The wader scrapes should be no larger than 15m x 15m (225m<sup>2</sup>)
3. Works must not take place during the bird nesting season (March 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>).
4. Edges must have a gently sloping bank and soil must not be banked around the perimeter.
5. Scrapes must not be fenced off as grazing around the edges can help improve accessibility for waders.

## Additional Guidance:

- It is recommended to have a varied depth to increase biodiversity with a maximum depth of 50cm to 100cm at the centre.
- Choose naturally low-lying areas where the water table is anticipated to be near the surface and will retain water within the field. Consider the location of a scrape with

the practical management of the field in mind. Machinery access, movement of livestock and other factors should be considered.

- Additional guidance and useful waterbird identification tips and survey information can be found on [BirdWatch Ireland](#).

**Picture 3:** Example of Wader Scrape



## Wild Bird Cover Plots

### Objective:

To support pollinator species during the summer months, to provide a source of insects for small birds to feed their chicks and to supply cover and feeding opportunities for birds and small rodents during the winter. In turn this provides hunting opportunities for Barn Owl, Hen Harrier and Kestrel.

### Background

The absence of tillage from upland areas and from most high nature value farmland reduces the feeding opportunities for many species at critical times of the year. Wild Bird Cover can compensate for this by introducing small areas of high value crops to otherwise largely grazing based agricultural systems.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on both CP parcels declared as arable and on Non-CP parcels.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs or Annex 1 Grasslands.

### Requirements

1. Establish a Wild Bird Cover Plot by 30<sup>th</sup> June following approval.
2. If the NPI AWP is approved on or before 15<sup>th</sup> May, it is taken that this NPI will be delivered in the approval year, unless withdrawn before 30<sup>th</sup> June or before any notification of inspection. If approval is issued after 15<sup>th</sup> May, this NPI can only be delivered the following year and the same rules of withdrawal apply.
3. To be eligible for this action, the minimum area to be delivered is 0.25ha. The participant can apply for more than one plot around the farm annually.
4. There must be at least a 2-metre uncultivated/unsown zone between the edge of the crop and the field boundary (i.e. a hedgerow, stone wall/bank, or stream/drain). This 2m zone is not required where a mandatory buffer already exists for applicable watercourses under S.I. No. 113 of 2022 (as amended) and GAEC 4.
5. The NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is selected on a split parcel, choose NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot SP. To select on a whole parcel, Create WP and select NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot -WP.
6. The Wild Bird Cover crop must contain:
  - a. At least one or more of these cereals: spring oats/ triticale/wheat/barley
  - b. At least two or more of the following: linseed, oil-seed rape, phacelia, fodder radish, mustard, spring vetch, lucerne, chicory, or birds-foot trefoil.
7. Harvesting of the crop is not permitted and must remain in situ until 1<sup>st</sup> March of the following year.

8. Only certified seed must be used and all receipts/labels for the crops sown must be retained by the participant for the duration of the ACRES contract and for twelve months after the date of submission of any claim for payment.
9. No herbicides or pesticides can be applied post sowing. Only the spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds with herbicides is allowed. Pre sowing weed control is permitted.
10. Where necessary the Wild Bird Cover plot must be protected from livestock using a fence that is fit for purpose.

### Additional Guidance

- The location should not be adjacent to houses, schools, or public buildings.
- Triticale is the preferred cereal due to its tolerance of low soil pH, relatively infertile soils and its resistance to lodging. Triticale along with Linseed and at least two other species (Mustard, Forage Radish, Phacelia and Vetch) is the recommended mix for this NPI.
- Preparation of the soil is key. Carry out pre sowing weed control to aid good establishment. Cultivate the soil by ploughing, light cultivation, power harrowing etc. to generate a fine seedbed. Roll the plot/strip after sowing.
- To ensure crop establishment lime and fertiliser is recommended. Fertiliser can be applied up to a maximum of half the fertiliser rate for Nitrogen and Phosphorus on spring oats as described in Statutory Instrument Number 113 of 2022.
- Livestock damage to the crop may result in the crop not being certified as delivered.
- Additional guidance and useful information and courses on Ireland's farmland bird species can be found at [Biodiversity Ireland](https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/).

**Table 14. List of prescribed species for Wild Bird Cover**

Species	Monoculture seed rate kg/ha
Spring oats	150kgs
Spring triticale	180kgs
Spring wheat	180kgs
Spring barley	160kgs
Linseed	50kgs
Spring Oil-seed rape	6kgs
Phacelia	8kg
Fodder Radish	10kgs
Mustard	15kgs
Spring Vetch	40kgs
Lucerne	25kgs
Chicory	10kgs
Bird's foot Trefoil	12kgs

**Note:** To ensure successful establishment of the Wild Bird Cover crop, the minimum seed rate should be at least one third of the monoculture rate (see **Table 14** above) for each of the chosen prescribed species for a three-way mix. For a four-way mix, the minimum seed rate should be at least one quarter of the monoculture rate for each of the chosen prescribed species. See examples in **Table 15 and 16** below.

**Table 15: Example 1 of Wild Bird Cover Plot Mix (kg/ha)**

Spring Triticale	50
Linseed	14
Mustard	3.75
Phacelia	2

**Table 16: Example 2 of Wild Bird Cover Plot Mix (kg/ha)**

Spring Triticale	50
Linseed	14
Forage Radish	4
Vetch	18

## Wild Bird Cover Strips

### Objective

To support pollinator species during the summer months, to provide a source of insects for small birds to feed their chicks and to supply cover and feeding opportunities for birds and small rodents during the winter. In turn this provides hunting opportunities for Barn Owl, Hen Harrier and Kestrel.

### Background

The absence of tillage from upland areas and from most high nature value farmland reduces the feeding opportunities for many species at critical times of the year. Wild Bird Cover Strips can compensate for this by introducing small areas of high value crops to otherwise largely grazing based agricultural systems.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action can only be selected on CP fields that have a scorecard submitted and is only available on the following scorecard types: Grassland and Rough Grazing
- This action is not appropriate for fields with a medium or high cover of positive indicators.

**Note:** Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of this ACRES NPI.

### Requirements

1. Establish a Wild Bird Cover Strip 9 meters in width by 30<sup>th</sup> June following approval.
2. If the NPI AWP is approved on or before 15<sup>th</sup> May, it is taken that this NPI will be delivered in the approval year, unless withdrawn before 30<sup>th</sup> June or before any notification of inspection. If approval is issued after 15<sup>th</sup> May, this NPI can only be delivered the following year.
3. There must be at least 2m uncultivated/unsown zone between the edge of the crop and the field boundary (i.e. a hedgerow, stone wall/bank). The cultivated area must be at least 6m from any surface water course.
4. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 50m. These strips can be applied for annually but there will be a maximum of 400m payable per NPI-AWP.
5. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.
6. The Wild Bird Cover crop must contain:
  - a. At least one or more of these cereals: spring oats/ triticale/wheat/barley
  - b. At least two or more of the following: linseed, oil-seed rape, phacelia, fodder radish, mustard, spring vetch, lucerne, chicory or birds-foot trefoil.
7. Harvesting of the crop is not permitted and must remain in situ until 01 March of the following year.

8. Only certified seed must be used and all receipts/labels for the crops sown must be retained by the participant for the duration of the ACRES contract and for twelve months after the date of submission of any claim for payment.
9. No herbicides or pesticides can be applied post sowing. Only the spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds with herbicides is allowed. Pre sowing weed control is permitted.
10. Where necessary the Wild Bird Cover strip must be protected from livestock using a fence that is fit for purpose.

### Additional Guidance

- The location should not be adjacent to houses, schools, or public buildings.
- Triticale is the preferred cereal due to its tolerance of low soil pH, relatively infertile soils and its resistance to lodging. Triticale along with Linseed and at least two other species (Mustard, Forage Radish, Gold of Pleasure, Phacelia and Vetch) is the recommended mix for this NPI. See Table 18 and 19 below of WBC mixtures.
- Preparation of the soil is key. Carry out pre sowing weed control to aid good establishment. Cultivate the soil by ploughing, light cultivation, power harrowing etc. to generate a fine seedbed. Roll the plot/strip after sowing.
- To ensure crop establishment one bag of Granulated lime per 100m strip is recommended. Nutrients can be applied in line with crop requirements and maximum fertiliser rates allowed for spring cereal as described in Statutory Instrument Number 113 of 2022.
- Livestock damage to the crop may result in the crop not being certified as delivered.
- The same site can be used for linear strips of Wild Bird cover for up to 3 years. Grasses should be allowed to re-establish naturally after use.
- Additional guidance and useful information and courses on Ireland's farmland bird species can be found at [Biodiversity Ireland](https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/).

**Table 17: List of prescribed species for Wild Bird Cover**

Species	Monoculture seed rate kg/ha
Spring oats	150kgs
Spring triticale	180kgs
Spring wheat	180kgs
Spring barley	160kgs
Linseed	50kgs
Spring Oil-seed rape	6kgs
Phacelia	8kg
Fodder Radish	10kgs
Mustard	15kgs
Spring Vetch	40kgs
Lucerne	25kgs
Chicory	10kgs
Bird's foot Trefoil	12kgs



**Note:** To ensure successful establishment of the Wild Bird Cover crop, the minimum seed rate should be at least one third of the monoculture rate (see **Table 17** above) for each of the chosen prescribed species for a three-way mix. For a four-way mix, the minimum seed rate should be at least one quarter of the monoculture rate for each of the chosen prescribed species. See examples in **Table 18** below.

**Table 18: Example of Wild Bird Cover Strip Mix (kg/ha). Source Hen Harrier Project**

4 way mix	kg/ha
Spring Triticale	50
Linseed	14
Fodder Radish	4
Vetch	18

**Picture 4:** Example of Wild Bird Cover Strip



**Photo Source:** Hen Harrier Project



## Winter Stubble

### Objective

To provide a winter food source for seed-eating birds that feed on spilled grains and the seeds of broad-leaved weeds.

### Background

Cited as one of the most simple but effective measures to support farmland birds, the adaption of over winter stubbles as a winter food source for birds will deliver the greatest benefit when operated on a larger scale. The switch from spring to autumn-sown cereals coupled with improved harvesting technology and pre-harvest weed control has contributed to the loss of quality weed-rich winter stubbles which is a key foraging habitat for farmland birds. Research shows that certain bird species prefer to forage on sprawling open stubbles rather than in tall, dense vegetations. Species such as skylark, yellowhammer, grey partridge, sparrow, finches and pheasant, have a stronger preference to forage on weedy cereal stubbles while linnet specialises in exploiting stubbles after oilseed rape. Over winter stubbles contain spilled grains from the previous harvest along with broad-leaved weeds that germinate post-harvest thus providing a valuable winter food supply for seed eating birds.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels declared as arable and on Non-CP Parcels.
- This action is not available on Annex 1 Grasslands in Non-CP parcels.
- This action is only suitable on stubble ground following the harvest of a cereal crop, oil-seed rape or linseed. It must NOT be selected on land following the harvesting of maize.

### Requirements

1. To deliver this action there are two options following the harvest of a cereal crop, oilseed rape or linseed (but not maize) to be implemented in line with the requirements set down in SI No 113 of 2022 (as amended).
  - a. To provide a food source for birds, leave stubbles in situ until at least 1 February the following year.
  - or
  - b. Conduct shallow cultivation to encourage the emergence of a green cover within 14 days following harvest and no later than 30 September and leave in situ until at least 1 February the following year.
2. This measure can be applied for annually. The winter stubble can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is selected on a split parcel, choose Winter Stubble SP NPI.
3. If the NPI AWP is approved on or before 15th May, it is taken that this NPI will be delivered in that year, unless withdrawn before 30th September for the action or

before any notification of inspection. If approval is issued after 15th May, that NPI can only be delivered the following year.

4. Grazing or topping of the stubble is not permitted from the date the crop is harvested to 1 February of the following year.
5. Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the stubble.
6. Livestock must be excluded from the date of harvest to 1 February.
7. No pre-harvest desiccants are permitted except for on oil seed rape.
8. No post-harvest herbicides or pesticides can be applied to the area between date of harvest and 1<sup>st</sup> February.

#### **Additional guidance**

- Barley stubble (particularly spring barley stubble) is attractive to birds more than wheat stubble.

## SECTION 2 NPI Farm Infrastructure

### Culverts

#### Objectives

To provide a safe drain crossing point for livestock, people, and vehicles to cross drains without fording them and prevent regular discharges of sediment and nutrients to watercourses via man-made drains.

#### Background

The passage of animals, people and vehicles across drains damages banks and aquatic vegetation. This increases the risk of soil particles and plant nutrients entering the drain and being transported downstream to a stream or river.

#### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- Culverts are suitable for the safe passage of livestock, people, and vehicles across lands drains with small catchments and gentle slopes. Culverts may not be able to cope with peak flows on drains with large catchments, particularly on steeper slopes. There is a risk that water may back up behind the culvert and spill out on to adjoining land or overtop the culvert.
- Culverts are not permitted on natural watercourses (incl. OSI waterline and Single Stream line) or on arterial drainage channels. The CP Team will check the suitability of the proposed culvert location and arrange for consent if required. Naturalised drains will need to be checked by the CP team.
- Proposed Culverts in close proximity to High Status Water Bodies, to known Freshwater Pearl Mussel sites or National Monuments will be visited by the CP team prior to approval.

#### Requirements

1. Install a Culvert in the selected location by placing reinforced plastic or concrete pipes with a minimum diameter of 375mm in the drain and cover with clean stone to create the crossing.
2. Dredging of channel must be minimised prior to works and must only occur in sections of the drain where the culvert is to be inserted.
3. No blasting or rock breaking is permitted for the delivery of this action.
4. The use of herbicide/pesticide for site preparation is not permitted.

5. Culverts must be monitored to ensure they are clear of debris and should be checked after heavy rainfall.
6. Each culvert applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.

### **Additional Guidance**

- It is recommended to attend Specialist Water Quality Training Courses in your area coordinated by CP Teams, which will go into detail on hydro morphological Landscape Actions and water related NPIs.
- Works should only be carried out when ground conditions are suitable for the passage of machinery. To avoid disturbance to wildlife and the loss of sediment which may impact on downstream salmonid spawning beds, works should be restricted to August and September.
- Silt traps or temporary check dams should be installed within 30 metres downstream of the culvert. These must be kept in place for at least three months after the installation of the culvert. When they are no longer needed, they must be removed and any accumulated sediment cleaned out and spread on suitable land at least 30 metres from a drain or watercourse.
- If scrub clearance is necessary, then it should occur only outside of the bird nesting season and be limited to the area around the culvert.
- A single large diameter pipe is preferable to multiple pipes with a smaller diameter.
- Any changes in livestock density or substantial change of use should be discussed with farm advisor. The passage of livestock should be controlled as the culvert could become a choke point where regular passage of stock contributes to poaching close to a drain.
- Do not import material from sites where there is a risk of infestation with invasive species.
- Excavated soil at the point of installation should be reused appropriately on the same land parcel.
- The use of crushed limestone is not recommended on bog or heath.
- Waste material should be disposed of appropriately.

## Fencing - Barbed Wire

### Objective

To increase farmer's capacity to manage grazing pressures by providing stockproof boundaries.

### Background

The lack of investment in field boundaries, particularly internal boundaries, has led to a decrease in the capacity to targeted grazing within a parcel. This can lead to very uneven distributions in grazing pressure, often resulting in overgrazing at entrances, near watering points and in areas of more palatable vegetation. This in turn leads to the over dominance of rushes and brambles in less favoured areas.

Improved fencing permits the adoption of management techniques like conservation or rotational grazing that can deliver sward improvements.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- New post and wire fencing is restricted to existing field boundaries. It is not permitted to use this NPI to divide an existing field into two or more parts. This action may be selected on Winterage scorecard fields to divide areas with different grazing requirements.
- Permanent fencing is not appropriate for sub dividing previously unenclosed areas.

**Note:** Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

The provision of fencing to protect certain NPIs is a requirement of those NPIs. It is not permitted to use the Fencing-Barbed Wire NPI to fulfil a fencing requirement of another NPI action.

It is not permitted to have two separate Fencing NPI actions claimed along the same length.

### Requirements

1. Erect barbed wire fencing which must be stockproof and be undertaken with new permanent stakes and wire.
2. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m.

3. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Each length applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
4. Fencing posts must consist of timber or alternative metal/PVC posts, it is not permitted to attach electric wire fencing directly to trees.
5. The Barbed wire fence must consist of at least two strands of barbed wire.
6. Each strand of wire must be strained tightly between posts.
7. Where a fence is along a watercourse it must be located at least 1.5 metres back from the top of the bank of the watercourse. The 1.5m set back distance for the fence must be in addition to any mandatory baseline requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding.
8. Each length applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.

#### **Additional Guidance**

- New fences should not obstruct established recreational access routes.
- Soil disturbance should be minimised in all cases and, where the fence line crosses exposed bedrock, no rock breaking or drilling should be undertaken.

## Fencing - Permanent Electric

### Objective

To increase farmers capacity to manage grazing pressures by providing stockproof boundaries. It also permits the farmer to power temporary electric fences to subdivide fields for grazing management purposes.

### Background

The lack of investment in field boundaries, particularly internal boundaries, has led to a decrease in the capacity to targeted grazing within a parcel. This can lead to very uneven distributions in grazing pressure, often resulting in overgrazing at entrances, near watering points and in areas of more palatable vegetation. This in turn leads to the over dominance of rushes and brambles in less favoured areas.

Improved fencing permits the adoption of management techniques like conservation or rotational grazing that can deliver sward improvements.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- New post and wire fencing is restricted to existing field boundaries. It is not permitted to use this NPI to divide an existing field into two or more parts. This action may be selected on Winterage scorecard fields to divide areas with different grazing requirements.
- Permanent fencing is not appropriate for sub dividing previously unenclosed areas.

**Note:** Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

The provision of fencing to protect certain NPIs is a requirement of those NPIs. It is not permitted to use the Fencing-Permanent Electric NPI to fulfil a fencing requirement of another NPI action.

It is not permitted to have two separate Fencing NPI actions claimed along the same length.

## Requirements

1. Erect permanent electric fencing which must be stockproof and be undertaken with new permanent stakes and wire.
2. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m.
3. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Each length applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
4. Fencing posts must consist of timber or alternative metal/PVC posts, it is not permitted to attach electric wire fencing directly to trees.
5. Hi tensile electric wire must be used and a minimum of one strand of wire is required. Additional strands of electric wire are permitted.
6. Each strain of wire must be strained tightly between posts.
7. Where a fence is along a watercourse it must be located at least 1.5 metres back from the top of the bank of the watercourse. The 1.5m set back distance for the fence must be in addition to any mandatory baseline requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding.

## Additional Guidance

- Soil disturbance should be minimised in all cases and, where the fence line crosses exposed bedrock, no rock breaking or drilling should be undertaken.
- Removal of scrub/vegetation should be minimised and, if prior scrub/tree removal is required to prepare the fence site, this removal may not take place during the bird nesting season (1st March-31st Aug)
- In cases where a new electric fence is installed on an existing boundary which runs close to or alongside an established recreational access route, suitable warning signs should be attached to the electric fence at regular intervals to ensure public safety.



## Fencing - Sheep Wire

### Objective

To increase farmers capacity to manage grazing pressures by providing stockproof boundaries.

### Background

The lack of investment in field boundaries, particularly internal boundaries, has led to a decrease in the capacity to targeted grazing within a parcel. This can lead to very uneven distributions in grazing pressure, often resulting in overgrazing at entrances, near watering points and in areas of more palatable vegetation. This in turn leads to the over dominance of rushes and brambles in less favoured areas.

Improved fencing permits the adoption of management techniques like conservation or rotational grazing that can deliver sward improvements.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- New post and wire fencing is restricted to existing field boundaries. It is not permitted to use this NPI to divide an existing field into two or more parts. This action may be selected on Winterage scorecard fields to divide areas with different grazing requirements.
- Permanent fencing is not appropriate for sub dividing previously unenclosed areas.

**Note:** Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

The provision of fencing to protect certain NPIs is a requirement of those NPIs. It is not permitted to use the Fencing-Sheep Wire NPI to fulfil a fencing requirement of another NPI action.

It is not permitted to have two separate Fencing NPI actions claimed along the same length.

### Requirements

1. Erect sheep wire fencing which must be stockproof and be undertaken with new permanent stakes and wire.
2. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m.

3. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Each length applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
4. Fencing posts must consist of timber or alternative metal/PVC posts, it is not permitted to attach electric wire fencing directly to trees.
5. A sheep fence requires sheep mesh topped with a single strand of wire. Each length of wire must be strained tightly between posts. The lowest line of the sheep wire mesh must be 100mm above ground level to allow adequate clearance for wildlife.
6. Where a fence is along a watercourse it must be located at least 1.5 metres back from the top of the bank of the watercourse. The 1.5m set back distance for the fence must be in addition to any mandatory baseline requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding.

#### **Additional Guidance**

- On permanent watercourses the CP team may require the fence to be up to 5 m from the top of the bank where this is needed for conservation of Otters or other wildlife.

## Installation of Gates

### Objective

Install field gates in appropriate locations to increase farmers capacity to target grazing and implement rotational or conservation grazing regimes.

### Background

The lack of investment in field boundaries, particularly internal boundaries, has led to a decrease in the capacity to target grazing within a parcel. This can lead to very uneven distributions in grazing pressure, often resulting in overgrazing at entrances, near watering points and in areas of more palatable vegetation. This in turn leads to the over dominance of rushes, brambles and rank vegetation in less favoured areas.

### Site Suitability

New gates can be installed on any existing field boundary within a land parcel in a CP zone. They will not normally be supported along new boundaries dividing an existing field. The only exceptions are where the new boundary is a new hedge or is being created as part of a riparian margin, an enclosure, or a new pond.

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- New gates must not be selected in a location where there is an existing functioning gate. However, new gates can be installed at a location where an existing gate that has fallen into disrepair.
- This action is only available on internal boundaries and existing entrances from public roads.

### Requirements

1. The location for each gate must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.
2. Each gate applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. The gate(s) must be:
  - Purchased new and made of tubular steel or wrought iron.
  - galvanised or suitably painted to protect it from corrosion.
  - a minimum of 2.4m in width.
4. The gate must be fixed to a free-standing concrete, stone or block pillar, metal post or treated timber post and capable of being opened to allow livestock access in at least one direction.
5. Existing gate pillars may be re-used for this action once the new gate is fully functioning upon completion.

6. Gates on entrances from public roads must not impeded the flow of traffic on the road when opened. They must be capable of opening inwards onto the field unless there is an adequate set back distance from the road.
7. All spoil, excess and waste materials (including old gate if applicable) must be removed from site and disposed of appropriately.

### **Additional Guidance**

- Once the hanging post is in position, hang and align the gate before securely installing the latch post. Consider using closing slots rather than holes as a gate can sag over time.
- Removal of scrub/vegetation should be minimised and if prior scrub/tree removal is required to prepare the gate site, this removal may not take place during the bird nesting season (1st March-31st Aug).
- Ground clearance beneath the gate must be low enough to prevent livestock from passing underneath but high enough to clear the ground on at least one side when opened.

# Installation of Heritage Gates

## Objective

Install heritage gates in appropriate locations to increase farmers capacity to target grazing and implement rotational or conservation grazing regimes. Heritage gates may also be installed at locations where they visually enhance the appearance of the landscape.

## Background

Heritage gates, used in conjunction with walls and fences, allow for optimised grazing management of annex habitat. They offer the additional benefit of improving the visual appeal of the landscape while also supporting local businesses and preserving local cultural heritage.

## Site Suitability

New heritage gates can be installed on any existing field boundary within a land parcel in a CP zone. They will not normally be supported along new boundaries dividing an existing field. The only exceptions are where the new boundary is a new hedge or is being created as part of a riparian margin, an enclosure, or a new pond.

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare >0.
- This action is available on Burren Aran CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards submitted: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Coastal, Winterage, Peatland, Scrub/Woodland and Chough.
- New gates must not be selected in a location where there is an existing functioning gate. However, new gates can be installed at a location where an existing gate has fallen into disrepair.
- This action is only available on internal boundaries and existing entrances from public roads.
- Heritage gates can be installed to replace existing, fully functioning field gates where there is a justifiable visual benefit in terms of landscape (i.e., along public roads and walkways) within the CP Zone.

## Requirements

1. The location for each heritage gate must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.
2. Each gate applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. Heritage gates must be designed in a style typical of the area and should only be purchased from a list of CP team approved suppliers. Contact the local CP team for contact details. The minimum size of the heritage gate is 1.2m.

4. The gate(s) must be made of steel (non-tubular) or wrought iron, suitably galvanised or painted to protect it from corrosion.
5. The gate must be fixed to a free-standing concrete, stone or block pillar, metal post or treated timber post and capable of being opened to allow livestock access in at least one direction.
6. Existing gate pillars may be re-used for this action once the new gate is fully functioning upon completion.
7. Gates on entrances from public roads must not impeded the flow of traffic on the road when opened. They must be capable of opening inwards onto the field unless there is an adequate set back distance from the road. The width of Gateways on entrances from public roads cannot be increased without the consent of the Local Authority or if appropriate the National Roads Authority.
8. All spoil, excess and waste materials (including old gate if applicable) should be removed from site and disposed of appropriately.

### **Additional Guidance**

- Retain existing stone pillars where possible. Once the hanging post is in position, align the gate before securely installing the latch post. Consider using closing slots rather than holes as a gate can sag over time.
- The top bar should not protrude excessively (>30cm) above the height of any adjoining stone walls. The height of the wall should be measured prior to ordering the gate.
- Gates must have a latch or a bolt and be capable of being fixed into a closed position by means of fastening to a free-standing pillar, post or in the case of double gates to another gate.
- Removal of scrub/vegetation should be minimised and if prior scrub/tree removal is required to prepare the gate site, this removal must not take place during the bird nesting season (1st March-31st Aug).
- Ground clearance beneath the gate must be low enough to prevent livestock from passing underneath but high enough to clear the ground on at least one side when opened.

**Picture 5:** Example of Heritage Gate



**Source:** Burren Programme

# Mobile Cattle Feed Troughs

## Objective

To support supplementary feeding of concentrate feed on remote grazing parcels where supplementary feeding of livestock can have numerous benefits for the grazing management of habitats.

## Background

To meet the nutritional requirements of livestock where grazing is required to maintain high quality habitats or for fire resilience purposes, supplementary feeding can be a necessary activity. The use of concentrate feed equipment provides an incentive to move away from outdoor supplementary feeding of forage. The feeding of silage and hay bales in ring feeders can be highly damaging to habitats and water courses. The use of concentrate feed can be a beneficial alternative as it helps provide the adequate nutrients to livestock which allows them to digest rougher vegetation present in many annex habitats.

## Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on Burren Aran CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is only available on Winterage scorecards.
- Feed troughs must not be located/used within 30m of a river, stream or floodplain, and must not be located/used within 50m of a wetland, lake, turlough or pond.
- Feed troughs should not be placed on or within close proximity of a monument or result in new or additional tracking of a vehicle or livestock near or on a monument or archaeological feature. Ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that archaeological monuments are not impacted upon.

## Requirements

1. All mobile feed troughs must be purchased new, be galvanised heavy-duty steel, and a minimum length of 2.4m single.
2. Each feed trough applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. Feed troughs can be stored in the farmyard when not in use.
4. All receipts for troughs must be retained by the participant.

## Additional Guidance

- Feed troughs are mobile and can be stored on scored parcels during the grazing period.
- They may be stored away from scored parcels in the off-season to reduce risk of theft/damage.
- Supplementary concentrate feeding should not be used to facilitate overstocking of habitats beyond their natural carrying capacity.



- Where supplementary feeding is practiced on a Winterage field, existing or old feed sites should be used where appropriate and done in line with the grazing needs of the field.
- Supplementary feeding on a Winterage should not result in overgrazing of the sward, or a prolonged grazing period that extends into the summer flowering months.

## Mobile Feed Storage Bins

### Objective

To encourage the use of mobile feed storage bins as a place to store concentrate feed on remote grazing parcels where supplementary feeding of livestock can have numerous benefits for the grazing management of habitats.

Secondary benefit is minimised feed availability to rodents in farmyards and thus lowering the need for chemical rodent control in and around farmyards which can have knock-on effects for wildlife.

### Background

The use of concentrate feed can be a beneficial practice as it helps provide the adequate nutrients to livestock which allows them to digest rougher vegetation present in many priority habitats. The use of concentrate feed equipment provides an incentive for the farmer to move away from outdoor silage or hay feeding. The feeding of silage and hay bales in ring feeders can be highly damaging to habitats and water courses.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- Feed bins should not be placed on or within close proximity of a monument or result in new or additional tracking of a vehicle or livestock near or on a monument or archaeological feature. Ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that archaeological monuments are not impacted upon.

### Requirements

1. All mobile feed bins must be purchased new.
2. Each feed bin applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. The minimum size specification for a mobile feed bin is 1 cubic metre.
4. Feed bins must be made of strong, durable PVC plastic or galvanised heavy-duty steel and fully weatherproof/ rodentproof.
5. Feed bins are mobile and can be stored on scored fields during the grazing period. They may be stored away from scored fields when not in use.

# Pasture Pumps

## Objectives

Provide a pasture pump that is capable of drawing water from a safe supply to livestock.

## Background

Having a well-installed water supply and storage system is vital for appropriate livestock management on scored fields. Pasture pumps or nose pumps provide alternative drinking points for livestock thus reducing the need for livestock access to watercourses or waterbodies.

## Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP LPIS parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- This action can be selected on any field where there is a requirement to provide drinking water to livestock with access to a water source.
- The pasture pump must be located at least 20 metres from a OSI Waterline or Single Stream line map.
- Pasture pumps should not be placed on or within close proximity to an archaeological monument. Pasture pumps must not be located at a site which would increase livestock tracking over archaeological monuments. Ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that archaeological monuments are not impacted upon.

## Requirements

1. The location of the pasture pump must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.
2. Each pasture pump applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained in that location for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. The pasture pump must be purchased new and installed in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.
4. Install a fully functioning pasture pump (i.e., a pump operated by the action of the animal accessing the water supply).
5. Where a pasture pump has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil the requirement for this ACRES Pasture Pump NPI.

## Additional Guidance

- The bed of the watercourse should not be disturbed in any circumstances. The banks of the watercourse should also not be disturbed where possible - the inlet pipe should not be buried in the bank or bed but may be secured to a vertical post or anchored with a weight if necessary.

- The pump should abstract water from a watercourse or waterbody with an adequate supply - inadequate supply can lead to environmental issues, poor quality water supply, and pump failure.
- Appropriate safety measures should be taken when working near water during the installation and maintenance of the pump. Lone working is discouraged, and personal flotation devices may be required when working beside large, deep or fast-flowing watercourses.

## Rainwater Catchers

### Objective

To utilise rainfall to provide a source of clean drinking water for cattle in remote areas, where a natural water source or mains supply are not available.

### Background

Grazing can be restricted on sites where a piped water supply is impractical and is exacerbated where a natural surface water source is unavailable. The consequent restriction on grazing may have negative impacts on biodiversity and wildfire resilience. Harvesting rainfall has been a traditional and effective mechanism for providing a supply of drinking water to livestock in fields where grazing would otherwise be impractical.

### Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare  $\geq 0$ .
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- New rainwater catchers must be located on a grassy area (species-poor) or previously scrubbed area to minimise damage to existing habitats with an abundance of wildflowers or on rocky limestone pavement areas.
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.

### Requirements

1. The location of the rainwater catcher must be identified and marked on the map submitted. Each rainwater catcher applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
2. All rainwater catchers must be newly constructed with concrete blocks and cement. Repair of existing rainwater catchers is not available as a NPI action.
3. The tanks must be constructed with a rain catching apron in the traditional manner as shown in Picture 6 below. The minimum total area of the apron and tank is  $6\text{m}^2$  and the maximum total area is  $12\text{m}^2$ .
4. Block walls must be plastered using a sand/cement screen.

### Additional Guidance

- Tank should have an adequate concrete foundation that should also form the floor of the tank. Minimum concrete depth must be 100mm.
- The side of the catching slope should be made using dry stone wall or faced with dry stone walls.
- Deviations in the standard example are possible with agreement from the CP team and would have to be outlined in any approval conditions.
- A drainage bung should be installed to allow easy emptying if the water is spoiled.

- Only loose stone gathered from the site can be used in the construction; limestone pavement cannot be lifted or used for construction material.
- There should be no removal of stone from any archaeological monuments, old walls or other built structures.
- Animal escape ramps should be considered to help young mammals or birds escape to prevent fouling of the stored water.
- Only vegetation directly under the unit should be disturbed, do not disturb or remove vegetation in the surrounding area.

**Picture 6:** Example of Rainwater Catcher



**Source:** Caomhnú Árinn

## Solar Electric Fencer Unit

### Objective

To increase farmer's capacity to manage grazing pressures by providing the ability to power electric fences in areas where a mains power supply is not feasible.

### Background

The lack of investment in field boundaries, particularly internal boundaries, has led to a decrease in the capacity to targeted grazing within a parcel. This can lead to very uneven distributions in grazing pressure, often resulting in overgrazing at entrances, near watering points and in areas of more palatable vegetation. This in turn leads to the over dominance of rushes and brambles in less favoured areas.

Improved fencing permits the adoption of management techniques like conservation or rotational grazing that can deliver sward improvements.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.

### Requirements

1. Purchase and install a new solar electric fence unit. The minimum standard is 0.4 Joule of stored energy.
2. The initial location of the solar electric fence unit must be identified and marked on the map submitted. Each unit applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. The participant must retain receipts for the Solar Fencer for the remainder of the ACRES contract and for twelve months after the date of submission of any claim for payment.
4. Where a Solar Electric Fence Unit has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil the requirement for this ACRES Solar Electric Fencer Unit NPI.

### Additional Guidance:

Solar electric fencer units/chargers are mobile equipment, they can be placed at any safe and practical location where they can be attached to an electric fence. To ensure adequate operation they should not be placed in the shade. They can be lifted and put into storage when not in use.



## Solar Pumps

### Objectives

Provide a solar-powered fixed or a mobile solar water pump unit that is capable of pumping water from a safe supply to livestock water troughs.

### Background

Having a well-installed water supply and storage system is vital for appropriate livestock management on scored fields. Water troughs provide alternative drinking points to natural water sources which can become damaged if overused by stock. Solar pumps can be a sustainable and cost-effective method of supplying water to these water storage and provisioning systems.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- The bed of the watercourse should not be disturbed.
- Water troughs supplied by Solar Pumps NPI must not be located on or within close proximity to an archaeological monument or result in new or additional tracking of vehicles or livestock on or near a monument or archaeological feature. Ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that archaeological monuments are not impacted upon.

### Requirements

1. Install a solar powered fixed or mobile pump that is capable of pumping water from a safe supply to livestock water troughs and/or a water storage tank.
2. The initial location of the solar pump must be identified and marked on the map submitted. Each solar pump applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. The solar pump must be purchased new with the system including a pump, solar panels, battery back-up, float switch and hose. There is no payment for any concrete base to mount the system on or for digging wells.
4. The participant must retain receipts displaying the serial number for the pump for the remainder of the ACRES contract and for twelve months after the date of submission of any claim for payment.
5. The pump must be available for use to supply water troughs in a CP Parcel. It must be stored on the farm holding when not in use.
6. Where a Solar Pump has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil the requirement for this ACRES Solar Pump NPI.



**Additional Guidance:**

- The pump should be suitably protected from livestock or wildlife damage.
- The pump should abstract water from a watercourse or waterbody with an adequate supply - inadequate supply can lead to environmental issues, poor quality water supply, and pump failure.
- Water troughs supplied by Solar pump NPI must not be located on or within close proximity to an archaeological monument or result in new or additional tracking of vehicles or livestock on or near a monument or archaeological feature. Ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that archaeological monuments are not impacted upon.

**Picture 7:** Example of installed Solar Pump



Source: Burren Programme

# Water Storage Tanks

## Objective

To encourage the installation of a network of clean water sources that will offer multiple benefits for livestock management on species-rich areas.

## Background

Having a well-installed water supply and storage system is vital for appropriate livestock management on scored fields. They provide alternative drinking points to natural water sources which can become damaged if overused by stock. They can be strategically installed to encourage grazing in specific areas of a plot. Water storage tanks can play a key role in storing water for these systems.

## Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > or = 0
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard. It can also be located in a farmyard, or on improved agricultural grassland (IAG) but must supply at least one water trough, which provides an environmental benefit to the farm i.e., a trough on a scored field or trough on IAG where the water course has been fenced off as part of another NPI or landscape action.
- Storage tanks should be installed at an accessible, discreet location which makes the most of the local topography (scrub, walls, hollows) while ideally minimising the visual impact.
- The machine access route must be considered when choosing a location. The tank must not be located where there is a risk of damage to habitats and/or archaeology on the route to the proposed site.
- Water storage tanks should not be placed on or within close proximity to an archaeological monument. The machine access route must be considered when choosing a location. The tank must not be located where there is a risk of damage to habitats and/or archaeology on the route to the proposed site. Ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that archaeological monuments are not impacted upon.

## Requirements

1. The initial location of the water storage tank must be identified and marked on the map.
2. All water storage tanks must be purchased new. Each water storage tank applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
3. The minimum water storage tank size permitted is 2500 Litres.
4. Storage tanks must be a potable water storage tank made from plastic or concrete. The use or reuse of old oil/water/slurry tankers or IBCs are not permitted.
5. All storage tanks must be mobile, i.e., not built from blocks on a permanent concrete base.

**Additional Guidance**

- Plastic storage tanks should be well anchored to avoid wind-blow. They should only be installed in a sheltered location and always kept partially filled.

# Water Troughs

## Objective

To facilitate the installation of a network of livestock drinking points that will offer multiple benefits for livestock management and watercourse protection by installing water troughs.

## Background

Having a well installed water supply and storage system is vital for appropriate livestock management on scored fields. They provide alternative drinking points to natural water sources which can become damaged if overused by stock. They can be strategically installed to encourage grazing in specific areas of a plot. Water troughs are an integral part of this system.

## Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard.
- Troughs should be installed at a location where they provide a direct or indirect benefit to the grazing of a scored field or protection of a water course.
- Troughs should be located away from wet or waterlogged ground which is easily poached or eroded.
- Water troughs should be located at least 20m from a drain, pond, lake or watercourse.
- Water troughs must not be located within sensitive habitats (e.g., deep peat, sphagnum lawns or mature heather) to ensure that the trough location doesn't result in additional trafficking in these areas.
- A trough requiring tractor access for installation (e.g. concrete troughs) must not be located where there is a risk of damage to habitats and/or archaeology on the route to the proposed site.
- Water Troughs should not be placed on or within close proximity to an archaeological monument. Water troughs must not be located at a site which would increase livestock tracking over archaeological monuments. Ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that archaeological monuments are not impacted upon.

## Requirements

1. The location of the water trough must be identified and marked on the map submitted. Each water trough applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be retained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
2. Trough must have equivalent to or larger capacity than 318 litres.
3. All troughs must be purchased new and made from either precast concrete or PVC plastic with a ballcock installed.
4. Troughs must not be home-made or permanently built on a concrete foundation using blocks etc. (see Rainwater catcher NPI).

5. Water troughs must be fully functional and connected to a piped supply or an adequate rainwater harvesting system. It is permitted to turn off the supply of water when animals are not present in the field.
6. Multiple troughs may be installed in a single field to increase water storage capacity and to facilitate rotational grazing systems.

### **Additional Guidance**

- Drinking troughs should sit on a solid (e.g. gravel chip), level surface in an accessible location. Water troughs should not be installed beside gateways or in field corners, the ideal location is midway along the longest side of the field as this facilitates (but does not oblige) temporary subdivision of the field for grazing management purposes.
- Troughs should not leak or overflow.
- If installing on wet ground is unavoidable, a gravel base and hardcore of gravel should be laid down up to 2m on the main accessible sides.
- Concrete troughs or large plastic may be more suitable for central locations in a field where the risk of livestock tipping over the trough is greater. Small plastic troughs are best restricted to field boundaries.
- Ballcocks should be set at the correct height to prevent overfilling and use a stop valve to shut off the water supply when stock are not in the field.
- If old water facilities (old troughs/baths etc.) are not going to be used for additional water supply, then they should be removed from the field.
- Plastic troughs should have several large stones laid in the bottom to avoid wind-blow when empty.
- Floats (rubber balls) can help prevent the freezing over of water in cold conditions.
- Water storage tanks should not be placed on or within close proximity to an archaeological monument.
- Water troughs must not be located at a site which would increase livestock tracking over archaeological monuments. Ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that archaeological monuments are not impacted upon.

## SECTION 3 Scrub / Track

The following 3 NPIs are only available to select on a NPI -AWP for ACRES CP participants in the Burren Aran CP Zone that are managed by the ACRES Burren Aran CP Team.

### Scrub Removal Areas (Hand Tools)

#### Objective

To encourage the removal of areas of scrub species which are encroaching onto or invading priority habitats. This NPI can be used by CP Teams in a Landscape Action -Annual Works Plans to remove scrub from sites where they deem necessary.

#### Background

Scrub encroachment can greatly alter local biodiversity, impact on archaeological and geological features and restrict livestock and human movement. The removal of scrub from certain species rich habitats can be vital where there is a threat to the habitat.

#### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on Burren Aran CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards submitted: Grassland, Winterage and Scrub/Woodland.
- This action can be considered on:
  - Fields with significant amounts of scrub encroaching onto areas of grassland, where the field has more than five positive indicator species;
  - Scrub interfering with the structure of walls or fences used for stock management of a priority habitat.
  - Scrub encroaching onto archaeological monuments where the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites NPI is not selected.
- Areas of mature woodland or established scrub where the ground flora has changed from grassland to woodland dominated species must not be removed.
- Where scrub removal is recommended on a Winterage field, it will be important that any proposed work is properly planned out by the farmer and the advisor in to ensure it is appropriate and permissible.

This NPI can be used by CP Teams in a LA-AWP where it is not limited to Burren Aran CP Zone or the 3 listed scorecards above to remove scrub in the following scenarios where deemed appropriate:

- Gorse scrub which poses a high ignition risk and where an area has been identified in the Local Area Plan as a control zone for fire resilience purposes.



- Scrub encroaching onto peatland or priority habitat on scored fields.
- Scrub removal on Breeding Wader Sites

Scrub is rarely present in uniform areas in the landscape. When mapping scrub for removal a polygon must be drawn around the target area for scrub removal. To claim the payment, all of the encroaching scrub within this area must be removed. Any established scrub/mature trees that may be present within the mapped area should be left uncut/untreated. It is important to draw the polygon accurately around the target area while minimizing, within reason the areas of woodland or limestone pavement within the polygon.

In most cases, there will be a proportion of the drawn area where there is no scrub for removal. In these cases, it is important to determine the removable scrub cover within the drawn area and select the appropriate NPI on GLAM (High, Medium, Low, or Scattered). Selection must be based on percentage cover as outlined in Table 19. below. Areas which are deemed to be incorrect will be rejected by the CP team at the screening stage. If some areas are rejected after site visit, the CP team can resubmit the proposed scrub removal works as part of a Landscape Action- Annual Works Plan.

**Table 19. Percentage Removable Scrub Cover of Drawn Area**

<b>NPI Label on GLAM</b>	<b>Percentage range of scrub cover within the drawn area</b>	<b>Description</b>
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	71-100%	Most of the drawn area consists of scrub to be controlled i.e. area drawn closely around the target scrub. Note: This cover option is not to be used for regrowth or briar-only scrub.
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Med	41-70%	Scrub covers over 40% of the drawn area.
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	6-40%	Scrub cover at low levels, likely occurring as a few dense patches within an otherwise open area.
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Scattered	0-5%	Where scrub is scattered at a low density in a large open area.

### **Requirements**

1. There are four levels of scrub cover to choose from in this NPI category, Scrub Removal Hand Tools-High, Medium, Low or Scattered. The applicable option must be selected and drawn on GLAM.

2. All areas mapped on GLAM for scrub removal must have their outline marked in the field with hazard tape (i.e. visibly tied to perimeter bushes at regular intervals) for screening. As part of the screening process the CP Team will conduct a site visit for all scrub removal works.
3. The marked bushes should be cut up to and including the taped bushes on the edges of the marked area, unless specified otherwise.
4. Only scrub approved for removal can be cut or spot treated. Such scrub work, along with any relevant instructions, will be indicated on a returned NPI Annual Works Plan.
5. Scrub can only be cut outside of the bird nesting season so removal can only take place from 1 September to end of February.
6. Subsequent scrub regrowth must be controlled in the paid areas for the duration of the ACRES 5 Year contract. On organic farms the regrowth on all bushes must be cut back down to the stumps at least once in the two years following initial cutting.
7. A machine-mounted brushcutter/flail or tractor mounted hedge trimmer is not permitted for this NPI. Scrub removal requiring machine work should be discussed with the CP Team.

### **Additional Guidance**

- Hazel growing on bare limestone pavement may be retained if there is no grazing benefit for its removal.
- Brash (cut scrub) should be properly gathered and piled in suitable locations and left to rot down. Brash should be piled in large, consolidated piles where possible in order to minimise their surface area on priority habitat. Brash may also be piled underneath the canopy of mature woodland.
- Native trees such as Oak, Ash, Scots Pine, Burren Pine, Whitethorn, Mountain Ash/ Rowan, Holly, which may be present within the area of scrub, should not be cut. Where only side branches are to be cut back (on mature trees or hazel), the stumps are not to be treated with herbicide.
- Brash may be chipped and removed from site where accessible.
- Scrub should be cut as low as possible, i.e., less than 30cm/1ft above the ground when using a chainsaw/ bladed strimmer.
- If scrub is being removed from within or on an archaeological monument, all brash must be piled away from, or outside of the monument buffer zone
- If treating stumps with herbicide, ensure herbicide is applied within 15 minutes of cutting and that there is no drift onto surrounding ground and vegetation.
- Participants should follow Storage and Record Keeping Requirements for End Users of Professional use Plant Protection Products where applicable. See up to date document outlining requirements [here](#).
- All management methods described here should be carried out with due care and attention, with consideration to health and safety requirements and, by trained and competent personnel.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to be worn when using herbicides.



## Scrub Removal Strips (Hand Tools)

### Objective

To encourage the removal of scrub species in a linear manner i.e., scrub paths or scrub bands which are encroaching out from established scrub patches or to remove such scrub which is hindering livestock access to grazeable areas. The removal of scrub for the purpose of increasing the edge effect of the scrub grassland interface and to provide hunting opportunities for Hen Harriers and other birds of prey may also be desirable.

### Background

Scrub encroachment can greatly alter local biodiversity, impact on archaeological and geological features, and restrict animal and human movement. The removal of scrub from certain species rich habitats can be vital where there is a threat to the habitat. Scrub paths are linear features where the aim of the scrub removal is to link up grazable areas through patches of scrub or woodland. Scrub bands are essentially linear areas of scrub i.e., the removal of band of scrub along the edges of a mature woodland or established scrub where the established scrub and woodland are not to be removed.

### Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on Burren Aran CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On Burren Aran CP Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards submitted: Grassland, Winterage and Scrub/Woodland.
- This action can be considered on CP parcels that have:
  - Fields with significant amounts of scrub encroaching onto fields of grassland with more than five positive indicator species.
  - Scrub interfering with the structure of walls or fences used for stock management of a priority habitat.
- Areas of mature woodland where the ground flora has changed from being grassland dominated species must not be removed.
- Where scrub removal is recommended in a Winterage field, it will be important that any proposed work is properly planned out by the participant and the advisor in to ensure it is appropriate and permissible.

This NPI can be used by CP Teams in a LA-AWP where it is not limited to Burren Aran CP Zone to remove scrub in the following scenarios where deemed appropriate:

- Gorse scrub which poses a high ignition risk and where an area has been identified in the Local Area Plan as a control zone for fire resilience purposes.
- Scrub encroaching onto peatland or priority habitats on scored fields.
- Scrub removal on Breeding Wader Sites

It is important to determine the cover within the linear strip and select the appropriate NPI on GLAM (2m or 4m strip, high or low cover). Selection must be based on percentage cover as outlined in Table 20. below. Lengths which are deemed to be incorrect will be rejected by the CP team at the screening stage. If some lengths are rejected after site visit, the CP team can resubmit the proposed scrub removal works as part of a Landscape Action- Annual Works plan.

**Table 20. Percentage Cover of Scrub Strips**

<b>NPI Label on GLAM</b>	<b>Description</b>
Strip 2m Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	At least 2m wide scrub path must be cut. Over 50% of the 2m path is removable scrub. Open, grassy path needs 1m of scrub removal on both sides.
Strip 2m Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	At least 2m wide scrub path must be cut. Below 50% of the path/band is removable scrub
Strip 4m Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	At least 4m wide scrub path must be cut. Over 50% of the 4m path is removable scrub. Open grassy path needs 2m of scrub removal on both sides.
Strip 4m Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	At least 4m wide scrub path must be cut. Below 50% of the 4m is removeable scrub.

## Requirements

1. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length is 1m and at least the 2m or 4m width chosen must be delivered.
2. There are 2 levels of scrub cover to choose from in this NPI, high and low and 2 widths 2m and 4m. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.
3. All lengths mapped on GLAM for scrub removal must be marked with hazard tape to identify the plants for removal. As part of the screening process the CP Team will conduct a site visit for all scrub removal works.
4. Only scrub approved for removal can be cut or spot treated. Such scrub work, along with any relevant instructions, will be indicated on a returned NPI Plan.
5. All marked bushes must be cut, up to and including the taped bushes on the edges of the marked area, unless specified otherwise.
6. Scrub can only be cut outside of the bird nesting season so removal can only take place from 1 September to end of February.
7. Subsequent scrub regrowth must be controlled along the strips following initial removal for the duration of the ACRES 5 year contract.
8. A machine-mounted brushcutter/flail or tractor mounted hedge trimmer is not permitted for this NPI.

## Additional Guidance

- Scrub should be cut as low as possible, i.e., less than 30cm/1ft above the ground when using a chainsaw/ bladed strimmer.

- Brash (cut scrub) should be properly gathered and piled in suitable locations and left to rot down. Brash should be piled in large, consolidated piles where possible in order to minimise their surface area on priority habitat. Brash may also be piled underneath the canopy of mature woodland.
- Native trees such as Oak, Ash, Scots Pine, Burren Pine, Whitethorn, Mountain Ash/ Rowan, Holly, which may be present within the area of scrub, should not be cut once they are not blocking access along a path.
- Where only side branches are to be cut back (on mature trees or hazel), these stumps are not to be treated with a herbicide.
- Brash may be chipped and removed from site where accessible.
- If scrub is being removed from within an archaeological monument, all brash must be piled outside the boundary of the monument. Additional labour time should be factored in in these cases.
- For scrub along wall repair tasks: Scrub along an intact section of wall should not be removed unless it poses future risk to the structure of the wall. The environmental cost of removing a hedgerow must be weighed up against the need for access to the gap in the wall.
- If treating stumps with herbicide, ensure herbicide is applied within 15 minutes of cutting and that there is no drift onto surrounding ground.
- Participants must follow Storage and Record Keeping Requirements for End Users of Professional use Plant Protection Products where applicable. See up to date document outlining requirements [here](#).
- All management methods described here should be carried out with due care and attention, with consideration to health and safety requirements and, by trained and competent personnel.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to be worn when using herbicides.

# Track Re-surfacing Gravel

## Objective

To resurface, using gravel chip-only existing vehicle access tracks which aid in the farming management of parcels within the Burren Aran CP Zone.

## Background

Having good access to farmland, including vehicle access, is of great benefit to a farmer for the herding and feeding of livestock, and can be important when required to treat sick animals or to remove fallen ones. This is particularly the case where the site is very remote and extensive (e.g. Burren winterages). Over time, gravel tracks can fall into disrepair and require re-surfacing occasionally, while some existing, driven routes may never have been appropriately surfaced. In these cases, it is beneficial to repair (re-surface/surface) these tracks in an appropriate manner.

## Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on Burren Aran CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
- On Burren Aran CP Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards submitted: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Winterage, Peatland, Scrub/Woodland and Chough.
- This action must only be selected where there is an existing vehicle track route.
- Tracks should only be selected for this NPI where there is a low risk of erosion from surface water flow.

## Requirements

1. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m.
2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.
3. At a minimum, two wheel tracks (ca.50cm wide sections of the gravel track on which the wheels repeatedly pass over) must have a new cover of gravel applied along the entire claimed length. In some cases, it may be necessary to gravel the full width of the track, but this is not considered a requirement and is done at the farmer's expense.
4. Each length of track for resurfacing applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the 5-year ACRES contract.
5. All potholes must be filled in to create a level surface.
6. The track must consist of gravel typical of the local area e.g. limestone chip in limestone areas of the Burren or Aran islands.
7. Tracks must be finished with fine (maximum 3" down) limestone chip placed along the wheel tracks.
8. Bedrock must not be disturbed, with levelling of the track achieved by in-filling with gravel or loose stones.
9. Archaeological features, including the remains of old walls, must not be damaged during resurfacing of tracks.

### **Additional guidance**

- Do not import material from sites where there is a risk of infestation with invasive species.

Machinery must only travel on the route of the track where possible, minimising tracking on adjacent habitats.

**Picture 8:** Example of Track Re-surfacing Gravel



**Source:** Burren Programme



## Appendix 1:

### Interior Barn Owl nest box



#### **To build an interior Barn Owl nest box you will need:**

1. One sheet of 9mm thick 2440x1220mm interior grade FSC approved plywood
2. Approx. 6000mm (6 metres) of 25x50mm wooden batten
3. 30mm, 40mm, and 50mm wood screws

Ideally, interior nest boxes should be positioned in a quiet shed or barn, at least 3 metres off the ground. The barn/shed should have a permanently open entrance/exit. Ideally the box should face the entrance/exit. If installing two nest boxes, one can be installed at each end of the barn/shed.

**For a step-by-step guide on how to construct an interior (above) and an exterior Barn Owl nest box (next page), visit the Barn Owl guidance document that accompanies the ACRES specification [HERE](#).**

## Appendix 2:

### Exterior Barn Owl Nest Box



Exterior Barn Owl nest boxes are best situated on large trees with a clear view of the front of the box from the surrounding land. Ideally the box should be situated out of prevailing weather conditions, around 4 to 5 metres high, on a bare trunk so low hanging branches won't block the view of the box from any passing owls. It is also important to locate the box away from main roads. Do not locate the nest box within woodland as Barn Owls are an open habitat species.

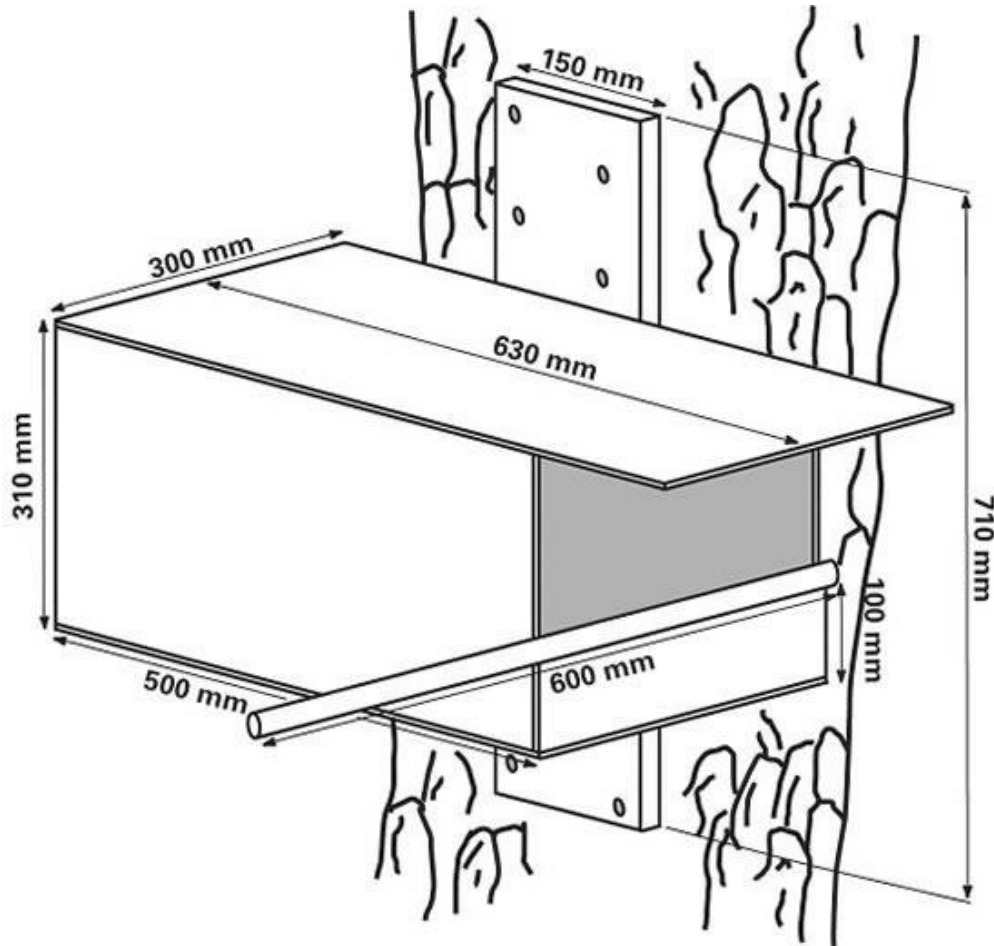
#### **To build an exterior Barn Owl nest box you will need:**

1. One sheet of 9mm or 12mm thick 2440x1220mm exterior grade FSC approved plywood
2. Approx. 6000mm (6 metres) of 25x50mm treated wooden batten
3. Approx. 2000mm (2 metres) of 50x50mm treated wooded batten
4. 30mm, 40mm, 50mm, and 70mm wood screws
5. Thick roofing felt or torch-on roofing felt
6. Weatherproof wood glue, all-weather sealant and 12mm felt nails
9. 50mm barrel door bolt or similar

## Appendix 3:

### Kestrel Nest Box

The Kestrel nest box below ([RSPB Design](#)) illustrates the required dimensions, using either 9mm or 12mm Marine ply. Roofing felt can also be used over the top and sides to provide additional protection.



Note: The small perch at the entrance. This allows the adult and young to perch outside the box.

### **Important tips**

- 1) Face the box away from the prevailing winds (generally, face the box toward the north or east).
- 2) The box can be placed in a barn, an old building or shed, or on a tree.
- 3) Put the box at least 20 feet from the ground if possible.
- 4) Put the box away from occupied houses, or any other area where people visit regularly. The quieter, the better.
- 5) Don't 'hide' the box. Make sure the box is visible to a passing Kestrel. If the box is in a tree, trim away branches at the entrance so that birds have a clear flight path to the box.



## Appendix 4:

### Interaction between NPIs and Organic Farming Scheme (OFS)

ACRES CP NPI ACTION	Organic Farming Scheme
<b>NPI Habitat and Wildlife Support</b>	
NPI Barn Owl/Kestrel Nest Box	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Bat Boxes	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Bracken Strimming	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Bracken Mechanical	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Arable Land	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for 0.1 ha
NPI Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Grassland	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Field Margin 3m	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
NPI Hedge Rejuvenation	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Planting New Hedgerows	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Planting Traditional Orchard 10 trees	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Planting Trees	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Repair of Traditional Stone Wall 2 sides	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Repair of Traditional Stone Wall 1 side	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Riparian Margin Tree planting	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
NPI Riparian Margin	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
NPI Riparian Margin (Sheep fencing)	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
NPI Rodenticide Free Rodent Control	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Small Woodland 160 trees 0.05Ha	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the woodland
NPI Small Woodland 300 trees 0.09Ha	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the woodland
NPI Swallow Boxes	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Swift Boxes	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Wader Scrapes	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot SP	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the WBC Plot
NPI Wild Bird Cover Strips	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the strip
NPI Winter Stubble SP	Allowed along with OFS payment
<b>NPI Infrastructure</b>	
NPI Culverts	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Fencing Barbed Wire	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Fencing Permanent Electric	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Fencing Sheep Wire	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Installation of Gates	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Installation of Heritage Gates	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Mobile Cattle Feed Troughs	Allowed along with OFS payment

NPI Mobile Feed Storage Bins	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Pasture Pumps	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Rainwater Catchers	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Solar Electric Fencer Unit	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Solar Pumps	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Water Storage Tanks	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Water Troughs	Allowed along with OFS payment
<b>NPI Scrub/Track</b>	
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Med	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Scattered	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Strip 2m Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Strip 2m Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Strip 4m Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Strip 4m Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	Allowed along with OFS payment
NPI Track Re-Surfacing Gravel	Allowed along with OFS payment