



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

ACRES

Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme

Specification for ACRES Tranche 2

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The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
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For more information on the ACRES scheme, visit www.gov.ie/ACRES

Abbreviations

ACRES: Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme
ARCs: Activities Requiring Consent
BISS: Basic Income Support for Sustainability
CP Team: Co-operation Project Team
CP Zone: Co-operation Project Zone
CSA: Critical Source Area
EH: Eligible Hectare
FSP: Farm Sustainability Plan
GAEC: Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition
GLAM: Generic Land Management
GPC: Grant and Premium Category
IACS: Integrated Administration and Control System
LAs: Landscape Actions
LESS: Low Emission Slurry Spreading
LIG: Low Input Grassland
LIPG: Low Input Peat Grassland
LPIS: Land Parcel Identification System
LU: Livestock Unit
MEA: Maximum Eligible Area
NHA: Natural Heritage Area
NMS: National Monuments Service
NPIs: Non-Productive Investments
NPWS: National Parks and Wildlife Service
OSi: Ordnance Survey Ireland
PIP: Pollution Impact Potential
pNHA: Proposed Natural Heritage Areas
SAC: Special Area of Conservation
SMR: Statutory Management Requirement
SPA: Special Protection Area
UAA: Utilisable Agricultural Area

ACRES Co-operation Approach

The ACRES Co-operation approach introduces a qualitative aspect whereby land included in the scheme will be assessed using results-based scorecards. Scores will range from 0-10, with incentives, in the form of Non-productive Investments (NPIs) and/or Landscape/Co-operation Actions (LAs) in place to increase scores and thereby improve the landscape being farmed. This, along with the introduction of a Farm Sustainability Plan, will help achieve the underlying principle of the new ACRES framework of “the right action in the right place”.

There are eight identified CP zones, which comprise of land parcels that have been identified as being of high nature value. Any land parcel that intersects with the CP Zone map layer in ACRES GLAM is regarded as a CP parcel and the entire area of the parcel is considered to be part of the CP Zone.

ACRES Contract lands and land eligible for ACRES payments

Only LPIS parcels declared in the applicant’s 2023 BISS application will be eligible as ACRES contract lands.

It is mandatory for each ACRES CP applicant to include all owned forage land parcels as declared on the 2023 BISS application in their ACRES contract.

Commonage is a mandatory action for all ACRES participants. All commonage parcels declared on the farmer’s 2023 BISS application whether owned, leased or rented must also be included in ACRES contract.

ACRES CP applicants may also include forage parcels within the CP zone that were declared as rented or leased on their 2023 BISS application as ACRES contract lands. These parcels may be eligible for results-based payments once those parcels were claimed on the applicant’s 2023 BISS application and will continue to be farmed and claimed in the applicant’s BISS application for each year of the ACRES contract. If a results-based scorecard is submitted for a rented or leased CP forage parcel in year 1, that parcel is considered ACRES contract land.

Results-based scorecards

In 2024, once ACRES CP applicants have been approved as ACRES CP participants in the scheme, the CP team will assess the CP LPIS parcels for each ACRES CP participant. The CP TEAM will delineate all forage CP parcels (crop codes LIPP, THM and Permanent pasture) that have an Eligible Hectare of greater than zero within the CP zone, into Fields. They will also identify the appropriate results-based scorecards that will be used by the advisor to score those fields.

All results-based scorecards must be submitted by an approved ACRES advisor by the deadline date assigned by DAFM in Year 1 of the ACRES contract and any subsequent years that scorecards must be submitted. It is mandatory for a scorecard to be submitted in year 1 for each owned forage CP land parcel/field that was declared on the participant’s 2023 BISS application and is still declared on the 2024 BISS application.

If the applicant wishes to include any CP parcel that was declared as rented or leased on their 2023 BISS application, in the ACRES contract, a scorecard must also be submitted for these parcels/fields by the assigned date in Year 1.

Any parcels/fields scored in year 1 must also be scored in years 3 & 5 or in years 2 and 4 of the ACRES contract.

When any results-based scorecard is submitted for an ACRES participant, all remaining results-based scorecards must be submitted for that participant within 14 calendar days. Failure to submit scorecards for all contract lands within the specified time period may result in penalties or exclusion from the scheme.

Scorecard guidance

For detailed guidance on how to use scorecards, download the ACRES Scorecards Guidance document on www.gov.ie/ACRES. You can also download the relevant scorecard tip sheets for further assistance.

Unable to access a field to submit a scorecard for Health and Safety reasons

In cases where it is not possible for health and safety reasons to access a parcel for scoring (for example, in the case of Islands with no ferry service), details of these cases can be emailed to DAFM (email addresses below) with the subject line clearly stating ‘**Access issues due to Health and Safety Reasons**’. The following details are required:

- Business ID of ACRES participant
- ACRES Stream (ACRES CP or ACRES General)
- Parcel Number
- Scorecard Type
- Field identifier (for ACRES CP)
- Issue/reason parcel can't be accessed due to Health and Safety

Where DAFM is notified of these cases before the submission of scorecards deadline and DAFM is satisfied that the field(s) are inaccessible for health and safety reasons, no penalty will be applied for the non-submission of these scorecards. However, where no scorecard is submitted for a parcel, this parcel will be ineligible for a results-based payment in ACRES.

Email addresses:

ACRES General: acres@agriculture.gov.ie.

ACRES Co-operation: acrescp@agriculture.gov.ie

Unable to open and submit scorecard using AgriSnap

If you have issues opening or submitting a scorecard using the AgriSnap app, see page 16.

Average weighted score for the holding

The results-based scores for CP parcels in year 1 are the Baseline Scores. An average weighted score will be assigned to the holding for all non-commonage CP forage parcels that are scored in year 1. An average weighted score will also be assigned to the holding for the CP forage parcels that are scored in year 5. Where the average weighted score for the non-commonage CP lands on the holding has decreased by more than 10% over the 5-year period, then penalties will apply as set out in the Penalty schedule in ACRES Terms and Conditions.

Ring-fencing rule

Total funding allowance for ACRES CP participants over 5-year contract	Maximum funding available per annum for CP results-based payments and general actions where applicable
€52,500	€7,000

The **core payment** to an ACRES CP farmer is a combination of ACRES results-based scorecard payments and General Actions and this cannot exceed €7,000 per annum.

At application stage, to ensure that General Actions are not chosen at the expense of results-based scorecards on both non-commonage owned lands within the CP Zone and on all owned/leased/rented commonage land (irrespective of whether it is a CP or non-CP parcel), funds are ring-fenced. The ring-fencing calculation will determine if General actions will be eligible for payment and how much money

an ACRES CP participant can receive for General actions in each year of the ACRES contract. The only action the ring-fencing rule doesn't apply to is Conservation of Rare Breeds.

If General actions are applied for and approved, payment will be limited by the calculation of the ring-fencing rule as set out in the approval of the contract.

The ring-fenced calculation is based on:

- A rate of €145/ha (claimed area) for **ALL** owned/rented/leased commonage parcels declared on 2023 BISS application
- A rate of €300/ha (claimed area) for **owned forage CP** parcels declared as Permanent Pasture (PP), Low Input Permanent Pasture (LIPP) or Traditional Hay Meadow (THM) on 2023 BISS application

It is the responsibility of both advisors and farmers to check what funding is available for General actions before the submission of the FSP and ACRES application.

Where funding is available for payment on General Actions after applying the ring-fencing calculation, ACRES CP applicants may choose actions from the full list of General Actions. However,

- The only General action that can be selected on a CP forage parcel that was declared as Permanent Pasture, Traditional Hay Meadow or Low Input Permanent Pasture on 2023 BISS application is Traditional Dry Stone Wall Maintenance.
- Conservation of Rare Breeds and Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) are considered whole farm actions so these can also be chosen at Farm Level.
- All General actions can be selected on eligible parcels located outside of the CP zone or on arable CP parcels once the parcels comply with the site requirements for the actions as set out in the ACRES specifications.

The ring-fenced calculation

Any land parcel that intersects with the CP Zone layer as indicated on GLAMS is regarded as a CP parcel and the entire area of the parcel is considered to be part of the CP Zone. All LPIS parcels that intersect the CP Zone are identified on the ACRES GLAM.

Funds available for payment of General actions for ACRES CP applicants is calculated as follows:

€7,000 **minus** (Total claimed area of owned/leased/rented commonage declared on 2023 BISS multiplied by €145 **plus** Total claimed area of CP parcels declared as owned Permanent Pasture, LIPP and THM on 2023 BISS multiplied by €300)

Example A:

Farmer with 43 ha of land declared on 2023 BISS:

- a. 5 ha (Claimed area) commonage
- b. 8 ha (claimed area) of owned CP zone land declared as permanent pasture
- c. 30 ha of privately owned land outside of CP zone

Funds available for payment from General actions = €7,000 minus (a. x €145 + b. x €300)

5 x €145= €725 (Commonage at a rate of €145/ha)

8 x €300= €2,400 (Grassland at a rate of €300/ha)

Total: €3,125

€7,000 less €3,125 ring-fenced for Commonage and CP zone results-based payments leaves €3,875 of funding available for general actions. LESS and Conservation of Rare Breeds are considered whole farm

actions so can also be chosen at farm level. The only action that can be chosen on CP parcels declared as owned Permanent Pasture, LIPP and THM on 2023 BISS is Traditional stone wall maintenance.

All General actions can be chosen on the remaining LPIS parcels once they meet the requirements for the respective actions.

Example B:

Farmer with 53 ha of land declared on 2023 BISS:

- a. 26 ha commonage
- b. 17 ha of owned permanent pasture in CP zone
- c. 10 ha of privately owned land outside of CP zone

Funds available for payment from General actions = €7,000 minus (a. x €145 plus b. x €300)

26 x €145= €3,770 (Commonage at a rate of €145/ha)

17 x €300= €5,100 (Grassland at a rate of €300/ha)

Total: €8,870

This exceeds the cap of €7,000, there will be no funding available for this participant for any general actions with the exception of Conservation of Rare Breeds. This applicant could apply for Conservation of Rare Breeds. However, the payment for results-based scorecards and Rare Breeds will not exceed €7,000 in any year.

Funding available to ACRES CP participants

The payments for ACRES CP applicants are limited to €52,500 over the 5-year contract period (except in exceptional circumstances). This can be drawn down for results-based scorecards, General actions, NPIs, LAs and Landscape Bonus Payments.

The funding available to an ACRES CP participant is broken down as follows:

- Maximum of €7,000 available for the core payment i.e results-based scorecard payments and all General Actions (if allowed after ring-fencing rule)
- Where an ACRES participant receives the maximum core payment of €7,000 for each year of the contract, then there will be a maximum of €17,500 available over the 5-year ACRES contract period for Landscape actions, Non-Productive Investments and Landscape Bonus payments.
- Where an ACRES CP participant's core payment claim is less than €7,000 per annum, the shortfall between what was claimed in core payments and the €7,000 limit will be available to the participant for additional NPIs and LAs as long as the overall scheme limit of €52,500 is not exceeded.

Payment rules

An ACRES CP applicant will never be paid more than €7,000 per annum for a combination of results-based scorecard payments and General Actions. There is flexibility to the amount that can be paid to an ACRES participant in any one year for NPIs and LAs once certain conditions are met:

- The overall payment limit of €52,500 will not be exceeded
- There is at least €7,000 available for each remaining year of the contract (to cover the maximum core payment allowed)

Note: All NPIs and LAs applied for will be screened by the CP teams before being approved by DAFM. A full list of NPIs along with the specification document and payment rates is available on www.gov.ie/ACRES. The specification document and payment rates for LAs in each CP Zone will be made available at a later date.

ACRES General Tier Structure

Tier 1 Priority Access	Tier 1. Priority Environmental Asset	Mandatory/relevant actions
	Private Natura sites Grassland	If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of land within the Natura (SAC/SPA) mapped area in 2022, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the ACRES General approach. To be considered for priority access, one of the actions a. or b. must be selected on an area intersecting the Natura mapped area. a. Low Input Grassland b. Extensively Grazed Pasture
	Private Natura sites Tillage	If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of land within Natura (SAC/SPA) mapped area in 2022, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the ACRES General approach. To be considered for priority access, one of the actions a. b. or c. must be selected on an area intersecting the Natura mapped area. a. Unharvested cereal headlands b. Winter bird food c. Environmental management of arable fallow
	Commonage	If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of commonage land declared on the 2022 BPS, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the ACRES General approach.
	Geese and Swans	If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of land within the Geese and Swan mapped area in 2022, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the ACRES General approach if they select the Geese and Swans action.
	Breeding Waders	If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of land within the Breeding Wader hotspot mapped area in 2022, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the ACRES General approach. To be considered for priority access, one of the actions a. b. or c. must be selected on an area intersecting the Breeding Wader Hotspot mapped area. a. Low input grassland b. Extensively grazed pasture c. Environmental management of arable fallow
	Catchments identified as having High Status Water objectives	If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of land within the High-Status Water objective mapped area in 2022, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the ACRES General approach. To be considered for priority access, at least one of the actions a. to h. which are deemed appropriate as identified in the Farm Sustainability Plan, must be selected on an area intersecting the High-Status objective mapped area. a. Riparian buffer strips or zones - Grassland b. Riparian buffer strips or zones - Arable c. Management of intensive grassland next to watercourse d. Planting trees in riparian buffer zones e. Planting a new hedgerow f. Low input grassland g. Extensively grazed pasture h. Environmental management of arable fallow
	Conservation of Rare Breeds	If an applicant selects the Conservation of Rare Breeds action and shows proof of membership of breed society at the time of application, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the ACRES General approach.
	Organic Farmers	If an applicant is registered with and approved as an organic operator by one of the Organic Control Bodies by the closing date for applications under the relevant Tranche of ACRES, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the ACRES General approach.

Tier 2 Priority Access	Tier 2 Environmental Asset/Action	Mandatory/relevant actions
	Vulnerable Water Areas The vulnerable areas are defined as catchment areas to waterbodies identified as Areas for Action which have significant agricultural pressures	If a participant has at least 0.5 ha of land within the Vulnerable Water mapped area in 2022, he/she may be eligible for Tier 2 priority entry to the ACRES General approach. To be considered for priority access, at least one of the actions a. to h. which are deemed appropriate as identified in the Farm Sustainability Plan, must be selected on an area intersecting the Vulnerable Water mapped area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Riparian buffer strips or zones - Grassland b. Riparian buffer strips or zones - Arable c. Management of intensive grassland next to watercourse d. Planting trees in riparian buffer zones e. Planting a new hedgerow f. Low input grassland g. Extensively grazed pasture h. Environmental management of arable fallow
	Holdings that have a whole farm stocking rate exceeding 130 kg livestock manure Nitrogen per hectare (NPH) or holdings with over 30 hectares of arable crops in 2022	If an applicant (whether beef, dairy or sheep) has a whole farm stocking rate exceeding 130 kg livestock manure (NPH) in 2022 or has greater than 30 hectares of arable crops in 2022, he/she may be eligible for Tier 2 priority entry to the ACRES General approach. To be considered for Tier 2 priority access, at least one of the listed actions a. to f. must be selected. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Minimum tillage (min 10ha) b. Catch crops (min 6ha) c. Over winter stubble (min 4ha) d. Grass margins - Arable (min 500m) e. Grass margins - Grassland (min 500m) f. Low input peat grassland (min 0.5ha)
	Native Woodland Establishment scheme or Agro-forestry scheme	If an applicant is a participant in the Native Woodland Establishment Scheme or GPC 11 – Agro-forestry by the closing date for applications under the relevant Tranche, he/she may be eligible for Tier 2 priority entry to the ACRES General approach.
	Tree planting	If an applicant adopts at least one of the tree planting actions a. to c., he/she may be eligible for Tier 2 priority entry to the ACRES General approach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Tree planting (min 100 trees) b. Planting trees in riparian buffer zones (min 10 trees) c. Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards (min 0.18ha)

Tier 3 Access	Tier 3. General Actions	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barn Owl nest box • Brassica fodder stubble • Catch crops • Commonage • Conservation of rare breeds • Coppicing of hedgerows • Environmental management of arable fallow • Extensively grazed pasture • Geese and swans • Grass margins - Arable • Grass margins - Grassland • Laying of hedgerows • Low emissions slurry spreading • Low input grassland (results-based) • Low input peat grassland (results-based) • Management of intensive grassland next to a watercourse • Minimum tillage • Planting a new hedgerow • Planting a traditional orchard • Planting trees in riparian buffer zones • Tree planting • Over winter stubble • Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments - Arable • Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments - Grassland • Riparian buffer strip – Arable • Riparian buffer strip – Grassland • Riparian buffer zone – Arable • Riparian buffer zone – Grassland • Ryegrass seed-set as winter food for birds • Traditional dry stone wall maintenance • Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards • Unharvested cereal headlands • Winter bird food plot • Winter bird food strip 	

This tiered structure combined with the ranking and selection criteria is designed to ensure the targeted and prioritised delivery of environmental benefits. The Farm Sustainability Plan will inform the most appropriate selection of actions in all cases.

ACRES Application Procedure

The role of the Farm Sustainability Plan (FSP) in ACRES

The completion and submission of a Farm Sustainability Plan (FSP) on the Generic Land Management (GLAM) is compulsory for all ACRES applications. This requires both field and desk assessments of the farm holding **prior** to action selection.

The FSP has two key purposes:

- (i) to select the most appropriate actions for a farm
- (ii) to help ensure no negative environmental impacts (this is a legal requirement under Directive 92/43/EEC)

In order to complete an FSP, the ACRES advisor must complete (i) a desktop review of the landholding and (ii) a field assessment to identify the environmental priorities/risks on the holding and to check fields for suitability for the various actions/options.

The actions are selected and drawn on the map to complete the FSP, which in addition to the other requirements as set out below, forms the ACRES application when submitted.

(i) Desktop review procedure

The ACRES advisor must examine the farm holding and geo-spatial data (environmental layers) in ACRES FSP to identify which (if any) of the mapped layers it occurs within. See **Table 1** below for guidance on the right action in the right place.

The ACRES advisor must refer to site suitability requirements and guidance under each action specification.

Addressing water quality and critical source areas (CSAs)

When creating an FSP, the ACRES advisor should consider risks to water quality and identify CSAs on the holding. Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) maps are a tool to help highlight these risk areas.

Maps identifying PIP risk rankings for two pollutants – phosphate and nitrate are available on GLAM to assist ACRES advisors in targeting actions to the areas where they will be most effective.

Before selecting actions, the desk check followed by the field assessment should help answer some questions:

1. What pollutant is potentially a pressure on this farm?
2. What are the optimum protection/mitigation options?
3. Where do the protection/mitigation actions need to be implemented?

Table 1. Putting the right action in the right place

Areas Prioritised for Water Quality	Pollution Potential layers	Impact Actions to consider
<p>All FSPs for ACRES should consider risks to water quality. Carry out desk check using PIP maps and OSi water layers to identify potential Critical Source Areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIP-Phosphorus critical source area • PIP- Phosphorus focussed delivery flow paths • PIP- Phosphorus focussed delivery flow points 	<p>Riparian buffer strips or zones - Grassland Riparian buffer strips or zones - Arable Management of intensive grassland next to watercourse Planting trees in riparian buffer zones Planting a new hedgerow</p> <p>Other actions that may also be suitable: Grass margins – Arable and Grassland Minimum tillage Tree planting</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIP-Nitrate critical source areas 	<p>Low input grassland (results-based) Extensively grazed pasture Environmental management of arable fallow Management of intensive grassland next to watercourse</p> <p>Other actions that may also be suitable: Low emission slurry spreading Catch crops Winter bird food plot Tree planting</p>

Biodiversity	Species	Appropriate actions
Habitat for birds/ protected species	Geese and Swans https://birdwatchireland.ie/geese-return-for-the-winter/	Geese and swans
	Breeding waders https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/curlew/	Environmental management of arable fallow Low input grassland Extensively grazed pasture
	Barn Owl https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/barn-owl/	Barn Owl nesting box Grass margins – Arable Grass margins – Grassland Winter bird food Low input grassland Extensively grazed pasture Over winter stubble Unharvested cereal headlands Ryegrass seed-set as winter food for birds
	Chough https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/chough/	Low input grassland Extensively grazed pasture Over winter stubble
	Hen Harrier https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/hen-harrier/	Winter bird food strips Planting a new hedgerow Coppicing of hedgerows Laying of hedgerows Grass margins – Arable/Grassland Low input grassland Extensively grazed pasture Brassica fodder stubble Unharvested cereal headlands Over winter stubble Ryegrass seed-set as winter food for birds
	Grey Partridge https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/grey-partridge/	Winter bird food strips used with Grass margins – Arable Planting a new hedgerow Coppicing of hedgerows Laying of hedgerows
	Yellowhammer https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/yellowhammer/	Over winter stubble Grass margins – Arable/Grassland Planting a new hedgerow Coppicing of hedgerows Laying of hedgerows Ryegrass seed-set as winter food for birds Winter Bird Food
	Twite https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/twite/	Extensively grazed pasture Low input grassland (with late meadow bonus)
	Whinchat https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/whinchat/	Extensively grazed pasture Low input grassland (with late meadow bonus)

	Lesser horseshoe bat https://vincentwildlife.ie/species/lesser-horseshoe-bat	Coppicing of hedgerows Laying of hedgerows Planting a new hedgerow Tree planting Planting trees in riparian buffers
Biodiversity layers	Appropriate actions	
Private Natura Grassland	Low input grassland Extensively grazed pasture	
Private Natura Tillage	Environmental management of arable fallow Unharvested cereal headlands Winter bird food	
Known Annex 1 Grasslands	Low input grassland The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) has defined 31 types of grassland habitat of conservation importance in Europe – these are listed in Annex 1 of the Directive. Six of these grassland habitats of European importance occur in Ireland. Where these have been previously surveyed and thereby known to occur, these are mapped in the layer called Annex 1 grasslands. The action that should be used here is the Low Input Grassland scorecard. Note: as per Natura 2000 sites, parcels that fall under this layer may be scored without needing to meet the 3 criteria listed in the Low input grassland specification on page 62.	
Climate layer		
Designated raised bog 500m buffer	Low input peat grassland	
Historic sites and monuments		
NMS - sites and monuments	Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – Arable and Grassland	

(ii) Field assessment procedure

Guided by the actions you have deemed appropriate from the desktop review, walk the holding and assess for any environmental risks taking account of current land use, land topography, condition of watercourses and existing landscape features.

(a) All FSPs should address water quality as a priority when selecting actions.

If the farm has a critical source area, walk the farm to verify any flow path or identify where there is any risk of sediment or nutrient entering a watercourse and select appropriate actions to address this.

(b) On grassland, the grassland decision assessment (page 19) will help guide you to choosing the most appropriate actions.

(c) Identify whether hedgerow rejuvenation actions are appropriate. The following video also provides useful information in this regard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnVNxZZBcrs>

(d) Refer to the detailed ACRES specification for each action to assess site suitability requirements.

(e) Take relevant baseline photographs with Agrisnap which applies to the following actions: Low input grassland, Low input peat grassland, Winter bird food plot and Extensively grazed pasture. These will provide baseline evidence on the suitability of the site chosen.

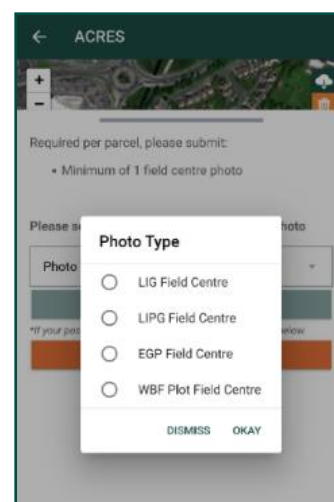
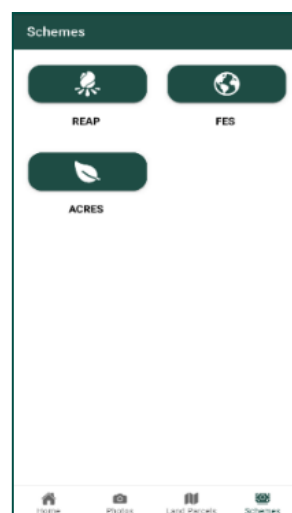
Where it is not possible to take a geotagged photo in the relevant parcel(s) due to land being flooded and inaccessible, then the geotagged photo does not have to be submitted for this parcel(s). However, at least one geotagged photo must be taken in at least one parcel on the holding and submitted using Agrisnap before the closing date for ACRES Tranche 2 applications. The exception outlined above only applies where land is inaccessible due to flooding.

Where possible, please take a photo, from a nearby safe location, of the affected land/parcels and retain as part of your records for reference. While it will not be necessary to submit this photo as part of the application process, it may be required subsequently to show basis for availing of the above exception.

Login to AgriSnap (two factor authentication required)

- Login with SSO/AgFood username and password
- Add mobile number to receive One Time Password (OTP)
- SMS text message received with OTP
- Enter OTP from SMS
- Login Complete

Once logged into AgriSnap, choose ACRES in schemes and choose the photo type you wish to submit.



Take photo from a central field position, or across the central representative area showing approximately ¼ sky and ¾ field. Ensure you are 10 meters within the field boundary



Note: To prevent issues with login attempts in the field, login can be completed whilst in an area of good coverage (at home/office) and the AgriSnap app will remain active in the background for several hours, unless the user intentionally logs out.

If you have logged in but enter an area of poor coverage, the AgriSnap app will automatically go into offline mode, which retains almost all functionality. Pictures taken and sent in offline mode are stored within the app until you return to an area of good coverage and will then send. Otherwise, you can wait until returning to an area of good coverage before sending the photos.

If the AgriSnap app is freezing between photos, it is possible there are too many photos being stored within the app. There is now a batch delete option and we advise that you delete images previously taken or submitted. In the “Your Photos” tab, you can filter for photos based on the Parcel ID, Date or Scheme. Select photos by touching them and the photo will highlight in green. Select multiple photos and press the delete (bin) icon in the top right of the screen and you will receive a warning message. Press Yes to delete photos or No if you are unsure if the photos have been previously submitted.

Remember: photos deleted from the app will NOT be retrievable.

Unable to open and submit scorecard using AgriSnap

In cases where an advisor is unable to submit a scorecard using AgriSnap, they should first consult the AgriSnap FAQ document that is available at the following link:

www.gov.ie/ACRES - A description of the AgriSnap app, its use and where to download it

Where advisors are still unable to open and submit a scorecard using AgriSnap, they are requested to contact DAFM (email addresses below) with the following details, with the subject line in the email clearly stating ‘**Issue with AgriSnap**’:

- Business ID of ACRES participant
- ACRES Stream (ACRES CP or ACRES General)

- Parcel Number
- Scorecard Type
- Field identifier (for ACRES CP)
- Issue/reason scorecard can't be submitted using the AgriSnap App

Where DAFM is notified of a technical issue with AgriSnap App or GLAM that has prevented an advisor from submitting a scorecard, it will be recorded by DAFM and once the issue is resolved, the advisor will be notified and will need to submit the scorecard through GLAM. This may also occur in parcels where there is a heavy growth of vegetation preventing access to a field, so the advisor is unable to open the scorecard within the field. The period where a scorecard could not be submitted due to the notified technical issue would be excluded from any potential penalty calculation for Late submission of scorecards.

Email addresses:

ACRES General: acres@agriculture.gov.ie

ACRES Co-operation: acrescp@agriculture.gov.ie

(iii) Farm plan assimilation and completion (office)

Once the desk top review and field assessment are completed, actions can be selected and mapped on GLAM to complete the FSP. This FSP can then be submitted on GLAM as a mandatory part of the ACRES application process. All actions chosen as part of the FSP on GLAM will be populated on the ACRES system. To complete the application on the ACRES system in AgSchemes, relevant documents must be uploaded and the Terms and Conditions reviewed and agreed to, before final submission of the application.

(iv) Submission of soil sample results

The fourth element of the FSP promotes more sustainable use of fertilisers, which mainly addresses climate and water quality priorities.

All participants joining the ACRES scheme, both Co-operation and General, must have soil samples taken on their farms. These results can be used to target soil management and farming practices to achieve economic and environmental sustainability on their farms.

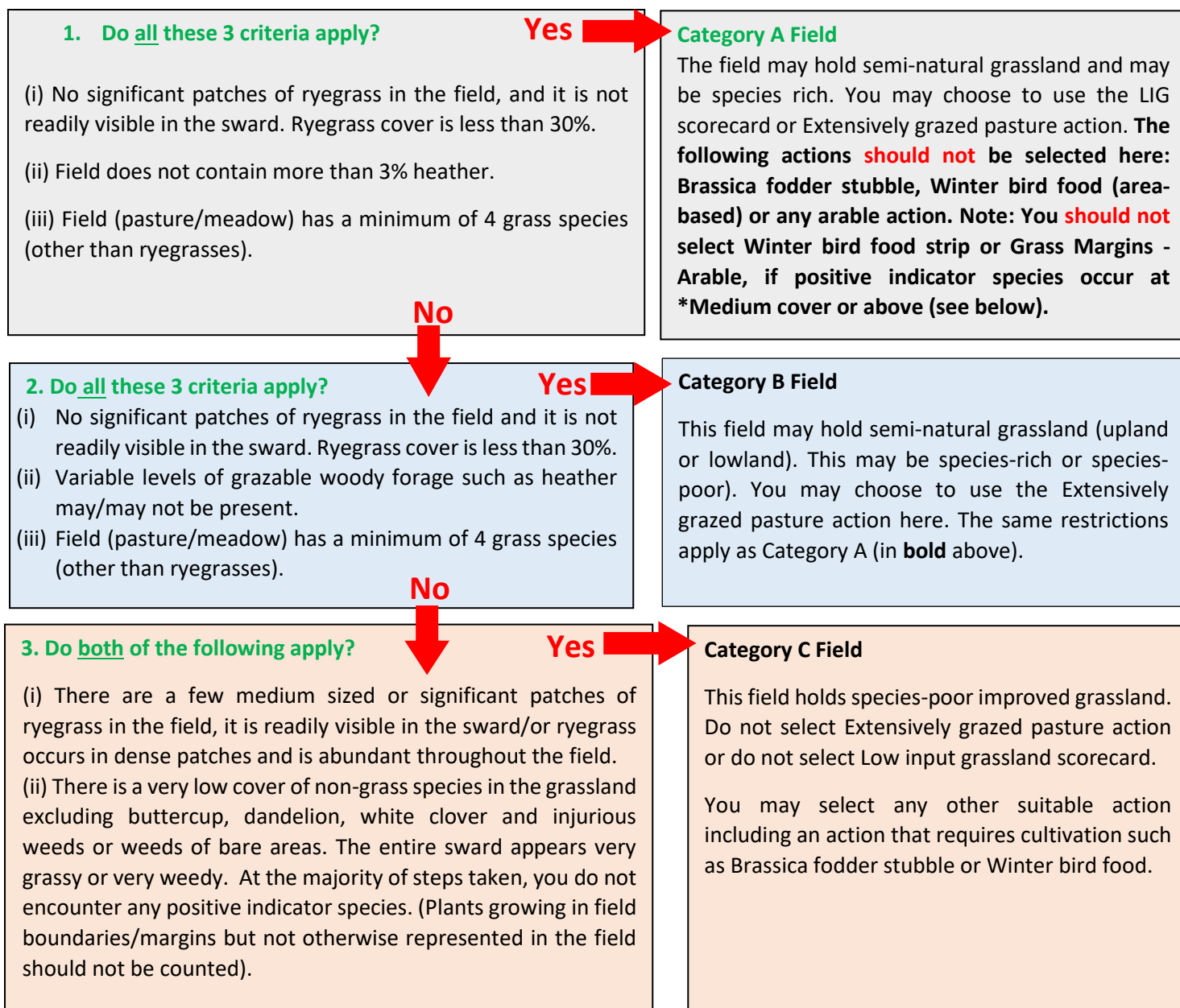
Requirements for soil sampling

1. Non-commonage land declared on the applicants **2024 BISS application** (whether owned/leased/rented) must be sampled and analysed. At least one analysis per every **five hectares** of land up to 40 hectares is required. The maximum area for any individual soil sample is 5ha.
2. Commonage lands must not receive/be allocated chemical N and/or chemical P in ACRES. There is no requirement to soil sample these lands.
3. Lands not in receipt of applied chemical or organic fertiliser may be exempt from soil sampling (e.g. mountain land and rough grazing). In these cases, a declaration outlining why these lands have not been sampled must be submitted by an approved ACRES advisor (See **Appendix 8**).

4. Soil analysis undertaken for this purpose shall be carried out by laboratories that have obtained INAB/ISO standards, ISO/IEC 17025:2017 accreditation. Accreditation to compatible standards by other States, such as UKAS in UK, is also acceptable.
5. Only samples taken on or after the **01/01/2022** will be considered valid for Tranche two participants.
6. Samples taken must contain Standard Regulatory Nutrient results including pH, Morgan's P and K, at a minimum.
7. Valid soil samples from other schemes e.g. Soil Sampling Programme, Nitrates Derogation, will be acceptable for ACRES.
8. Valid soil sample results or Soil sample exemption forms must be uploaded on the ACRES system by **15 May 2025**. Failure to submit soil analysis may result in termination from the ACRES scheme and clawbacks of monies previously paid.
9. A farm map must be retained by the applicant, clearly indicating the location of individual fields and the soil sample locations so that these can be used for identification purposes.
10. Recommendations arising from soil sampling results should be implemented by the farmer following a discussion with their advisor.

See **Appendix 7** for Soil Sample Guidelines and **Appendix 8** for Soil Sample Exemption Template.

Grassland/pasture field decision tree



Procedure

- Choose a representative area of the field and carry out a **W**-shaped walk across it.
- During the **W** walk, tick all positive indicator present. Use your Plant Identification key to help you. Not all positive indicators will be in flower at the same time, so look for leaves as well as flowers.
- Do not conduct your **W** on field margins, near the gate, water troughs, supplementary feeding sites or drains.

Very high	You encounter multiple different positive indicators with every step taken (and in between steps).
High	You encounter a positive indicator with every step taken
*Medium	You encounter a positive indicator with every two to three steps taken.
Low	You can take several steps (up to 10) without encountering any positive indicators at all. You have to search for them.
Very low	You can walk across much of the field without encountering any positive indicators at all.

ACRES requirements

This specification must be used in the preparation of all ACRES plans for Tranche 2

- Actions (excluding Barn owl nest box) must only be selected on LPIS parcels with an Eligible Hectare greater than zero. ACRES actions cannot be selected on forestry parcels.
- Commonage is the only mandatory action in the ACRES scheme. All owned, rented and leased commonage lands that are declared on the applicant's 2023 BISS application, must be included in the ACRES contract.
- Conservation of Rare breeds and Low emission slurry spreading are applicable to the whole farm. Conservation of Rare breeds and Low emission slurry spreading are selected at holding level and are not linked to a LPIS.
- Any LPIS parcel(s) that is split for area actions will receive a new LPIS number once digitised in the 2024 BISS application. Several split parcel actions can be selected on each existing LPIS and other actions can be selected in the remaining area. **Note: When splitting parcels, do not create a parcel that is less than 20 metres wide. Parcels less than 20 metres wide will not be digitised and consequently will not be deemed eligible as split parcels (all actions on the parcel may also be deemed ineligible). Participants should note that where a fence is erected to delineate the boundary of a split parcel, this fence cannot be used as part of the fencing requirements for the follow actions: Coppicing of hedgerows; Grass margins – Grassland; Laying of hedgerows; Planting a new hedgerow; Planting a traditional orchard; Riparian buffer strip– Grassland; and Tree planting.**
- In Natura parcels where erecting a new fence is listed as an activity requiring consent for that specific SAC/SPA, split parcels can only be created where an existing defined field boundary is already present.
- For linear actions, it is the drawn length on GLAM that will be taken as the claimed length. If you need to allow for gaps or ineligible lengths, you can do so by only drawing the line for the action along the length that will be entered into the scheme **or** leave the line shorter at one end to allow for gaps along the drawn length.
- Participants must ensure they have control of the lands where ACRES actions are chosen, for the duration of the ACRES contract whether owned, leased or rented.
- Advisors/farmers must ensure that the area, feature and/or linear units entered for payment in ACRES are suitable for the action to be carried out.
- All ACRES General actions except Commonage must be chosen on enclosed lands that the farmer has sole control of for the duration of the contract.
- All scorecards (i.e. Grassland, Low Input Peat Grassland, Peatland, Scrub and Woodland, Commonage and all bespoke Co Operation zone scorecards) may be subject to change

throughout the duration of the ACRES contract. Up-to-date scorecards, scorecard guidance and scorecard tip sheets are available at www.gov.ie/ACRES.

- All scorecards (CP results-based scorecards and scorecards for General actions) for each holding must be submitted within **14** days of initiating the first scorecard. The last day for submission of scorecards to the Department is **31 August** each year.
- The ACRES Hedgerow requirement applies to specific area-based actions outlined in this specification document. While there is no requirement to cut hedges in ACRES parcels, where a farmer chooses to trim them, the hedgerows in an ACRES LPIS cannot be cut below 1.8 metres in height. For full details and further guidance on the **Hedgerow requirement, see page 24.**
- It is a core requirement of certain area-based actions that when a watercourse is present on or adjacent to the parcel, bovines are not permitted to access the watercourse. Where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when bovines are present (drinking points are not permitted). Watercourses applicable to this requirement are defined as any body of water that is marked on GLAM as OSi Water line and Water single stream line. If this is in a Natura 2000 designated site, fencing of the watercourse is not mandatory.
- Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS II, TAMS 3, any DAFM Capital investment Scheme or any EU/National funded agri-environmental scheme from 01 January 2018, this fence cannot fulfil the fencing requirement for the following ACRES actions: Coppicing of hedgerows; Grass margins – Grassland; Laying of hedgerows; Planting a new hedgerow; Planting a traditional orchard; Riparian buffer strip/zone – Grassland; Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards and Tree planting.
- 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. In this case, each action is required to have its own fence.
- For a fence to be considered stock proof and fit for purpose, it must consist of suitable stakes and wire that is appropriate to the livestock type.
- A permanent fence is a stockproof fence fit for purpose consisting of permanent stakes and wire that must remain in situ.
- Works on capital investment items must not commence until notification of commencement of the contract has been issued.
- Land drainage or reclamation work is not allowed on parcels selected for area-based actions. However, if existing drains become blocked, they may be repaired with as minimum disturbance as possible to the vegetation and soil cover.
- Any activity that is mandatory under GAEC and/or SMR requirements cannot be fulfilled using an ACRES action. ACRES actions are in addition to GAEC and/or SMR mandatory requirements.

- 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.
- Receipts for work carried out must be retained for the duration of the contract and for three months after the end of the ACRES contract.
- Records must be maintained annually for the duration of the contract and for three months after the end of the ACRES contract.
- Participants in the Organic Farming Scheme should refer to **Appendix 6** for eligible ACRES actions.
- Where more than one margin type is taken on the same LPIS parcel, they cannot overlap on each other but can be placed side by side. For example, Winter Bird Food and Grass Margins - Arable can be selected side by side to provide the feed and nesting habitat for Grey Partridge.
- Where farmers have designated lands: Special Protection Areas (SPA) or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), certain activities known as Activities Requiring Consent (ARCs) or Notifiable Actions are attached to that site and are included as a schedule to the S.I. www.npws.ie/protected-sites. The site-specific information on the NPWS website for Natura 2000 sites i.e. SAC and SPA sites, is currently under review. If you require up-to-date information about a Natura 2000 site, please refer to the Statutory Instrument on the NPWS website, or email natureconservation@housing.gov.ie.
- If an ACRES participant wishes to undertake Activities Requiring Consent/Notifiable Actions on an ACRES parcel, they should ensure that they obtain consent by contacting acres@agriculture.gov.ie
- Tillage actions can only be undertaken on Natura parcels where they have been declared as arable on the 2022 BPS.
- Crop codes for grassland, tillage and arable are defined as set out in the 2023 BISS Terms and Conditions.
- Care must also be taken to ensure that the proposed treatment of trees and/or other plant species, (i.e. felling, lopping, coppicing, pollarding, pruning, cutting, thrashing, or spraying) is consistent with the provisions of the Forestry Act 2014.
- 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 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.

- Certified seed must be used for the establishment of Brassica fodder stubble, Catch crops, Environmental management of arable fallow, Geese and Swans (arable), Grass margins – Arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – Arable, Riparian buffer strips/zones – Arable, Unharvested cereal headlands and Winter bird food. All seed labels and receipts for these actions must be retained. Farm-saved seed is not permitted. It is recommended that ACRES participants, particularly tillage farmers, should consider buying seeds that are tested under the Higher Voluntary Standard (HVS). The seeds that meet this standard have been tested free of blackgrass, sterile brome and wild oats.

Hedgerow requirement in ACRES area-based actions

Hedgerows are the dominant habitat on most Irish farms; however, the quality of many hedgerows is poor. Good quality hedgerows provide multiple benefits, including crop protection, shelter and shade for livestock, improved biosecurity, water quality protection, carbon sequestration, pollen and nectar for bees and other pollinators, nesting, chick rearing and feeding resources for birds, and important foraging habitat for mammals including all Irish bats.

Hedgerows are critically important as wildlife habitats and act as vital nature corridors connecting habitats throughout the landscape.

A mix of escaped hedgerows (side trimmed only) and topped hedgerows over 1.8 metres in height, with a wide base and some thorn trees left to mature along the hedgerow, will have the greatest benefit for biodiversity.

Requirement for hedgerows

This requirement only applies to the LPIS where an ACRES area-based action(s) is located.

There is no requirement to cut hedgerows in ACRES parcels. However, if they are being managed by cutting during the course of the contract, the following rules apply:

If existing hedges are greater than 1.8 metres in height, cutting/trimming is permitted once they are not cut below 1.8 metres from ground level (or top of bank where applicable). If existing hedges are less than 1.8 metres, do **NOT** cut or trim. The only exceptions are roadside hedgerows, hedgerows on external farm boundaries, newly established hedgerows (less than 10 years old), hedgerows that were recently coppiced or laid, and hedgerows located in Breeding Wader hotspot mapped areas.

List of actions that Hedgerow requirement applies to:

Brassica fodder stubble (rotated)
Catch crops (rotated)
Environmental management of arable fallow
Extensively grazed pasture
Geese and Swans
Low input grassland
Low input peat grassland
Management of grassland next to a watercourse
Minimum tillage (rotated)
Over winter stubble (rotated)
Riparian buffer zones - grassland and arable
Winter bird food plot (area-based)

For actions that are rotated, the hedgerow requirement pertains to the LPIS parcel in which the ACRES action is undertaken in any given year.

Additional guidance on hedgerow management

If cutting, you should not cut all hedges on the farm in any one year. For hedgerows that are managed by top trimming, it is advisable to cut these in an A shape which allows the base and sides to receive more light, and result in a denser structure valuable for wildlife. Where possible, leave at least one thorn tree uncut within each hedgerow.

It is also advisable that escaped hedges (i.e. hedges that were never topped and have developed into a treeline) should only be side trimmed and not topped.

Good quality hedgerows will greatly enhance the benefits of other linear actions such as Grass margins, Winter bird food strips, Unharvested cereal headlands and Ryegrass seed-set.

Threats to hedgerows

Over-trimming: Hedges lose base vegetation, gaps form, hedge slowly dies, especially hedges cut to the same point repeatedly.

Neglect: Overtime hedges lose the vegetation at their base and turn into a line of trees.

Close ploughing: Damages tree and hedge roots leaving them more vulnerable to disease, drought and other threats.

Spray drift: Affects the plants, insects and animals that live in a hedge.

Disease: Can have a terrible impact on our hedgerow tree species.

Direct removal: Even when replacement hedges are planted, it's a very long time before they are as valuable as a mature hedge.

Example of a good environmentally beneficial hedgerow



Example of an over-trimmed hedgerow



Minimum/maximum units, completion deadlines and payments rates for ACRES General actions

Action	Margin widths	Minimum	Maximum	Completion Deadline	Payment Rate
Barn Owl nest box		1 box	2 boxes	31 July 2024	€36.48/unit/yr
Brassica fodder stubble		0.5 ha	10 ha	31 July each year	€120/ha/yr
Catch crops		0.5 ha (6 ha Tier 2)	20 ha	15 September each year	€173.20/ha/yr
Commonage (results-based) ¹					Results-based up to €220/ha
Conservation of rare breeds ²		0.1 LU	20 LU		€200/LU/yr
Coppicing of hedgerows		10m*	400m	31 December 2025	€2.87/m/yr
Environmental management of arable fallow		1.5 ha	5 ha	31 March (cultivation) 15 September (catch crop)	€1,047/ha/yr
Extensively grazed pasture		0.25 ha	8 ha		€250/ha/yr
Geese and swans		***	**		€205/ha/yr
Grass margins - Arable	3m	10m* (500m Tier 2)	2500m	31 August 2024	€0.38/m/yr
	4m				€0.51/m/yr
	6m				€0.76/m/yr
	8m				€1.01/m/yr
Grass margins - Grassland	2m	10m* (500m Tier 2)	2500m	15 May 2024	€1.00/m/yr
	3m				€1.10/m/yr
	6m				€1.37/m/yr
Laying of hedgerows		10m*	400m	31 December 2025	€5.47/m/yr
Low emissions slurry spreading		50m ³	**		€1.20/m ³ /yr
Low input grassland (results-based) ³		0.25 ha	10		Results-based up to €400/ha/yr
Low Input peat grassland (results-based) ³		0.25 ha (0.50 ha Tier 2)	10		Results-based up to €400/ha/yr
Management of intensive grassland next to a watercourse		0.5 ha	5 ha		€502/ha/yr
Minimum tillage		0.5 ha (10 ha Tier 2)	50 ha		€40/ha/yr
Over winter stubble		0.5 ha (4 ha Tier 2)	50 ha		€86/ha/yr
Planting a new hedgerow		10m*	750m	31 March 2025	€5.29/m/yr

Planting a traditional orchard		1 Orchard (10 trees)	1 Orchard (10 trees)	31 March 2025	€27.49/tree/yr
Planting trees in riparian buffer zones		10 trees	200 trees	31 March 2025	€3.18/tree/yr
Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments - Arable		1	10	31 August 2024	€209/unit/yr
Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments - Grassland		1	10	29 February 2025	€125/unit/yr
Riparian buffer strip – Arable	3m	10m*	**	31 August 2024	€0.38/m/yr
	4m				€0.51/m/yr
	6m				€0.77/m/yr
	8m				€1.02/m/yr
Riparian buffer strip – Grassland	1.5m	10m*	**	15 May 2024	€1.30/m/yr
	3m				€1.71/m/yr
	6m				€2.11/m/yr
Riparian buffer zone – Arable		0.04 ha	2 ha	31 August 2024	€1,242/ha/yr
Riparian buffer zone – Grassland		0.04 ha	2 ha	15 May 2024	€1,530/ha/yr
Ryegrass seed-set as winter food for birds		10m*	2500m	1 June each year	€1.37/m/yr
Traditional dry stone wall maintenance		10m*	4000m		€0.76/m/yr
Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards		0.18 ha	0.5 ha	31 March 2025	€5,028/ha/yr (Max €2,514/yr)
Tree planting		10 trees (100 trees Tier 2)	300 trees	31 March 2025	€6.21/tree/yr
Unharvested cereal headlands	12m	10m *	1500m		€1.26/m/yr
	21m				€2.20/m/yr
	24m				€2.52/m/yr
	30m				€3.15/m/yr
Winter bird food plot		0.25 ha	3 ha	15 May each year	€1,000/ha/yr
Winter bird food strip	6m	10m*	2500m	15 May each year	€0.98/m/yr
	8m				€1.31/m/yr

¹ Participation payment set at €50/ha on the first 20 hectares irrespective of results-based score. The results-based payment rates are inclusive of this participation payment. Commonage parcels less than or equal to 10 hectares, which are not scored, may be paid €120/ha.

² Breeding females that produce a registered offspring above the basic eligibility requirements will be paid an additional payment of €75 per maternal LU equivalent for each progeny registered up to the overall maximum payment ceiling

³ Participants may apply for a late meadow bonus payment of €50/ha

* Must be in a single continuous length

** Up to overall maximum payment ceiling

*** At least 50% of the total Geese and Swan mapped area (under arable or grassland in 2023) or 19 ha (whichever is lower)

Private Natura

Objective

To incentivise extensive farming practices that help improve/maintain the ecological integrity of EU designated sites and protect the animals and plants which occupy them.

Background

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level.

The legal basis on which SACs are selected and designated is the [EU Habitats Directive](#), transposed into Irish law by the [European Communities \(Birds and Natural Habitats\) Regulations 2011 \(S.I. No. 477 of 2011\)](#), as amended. The Directive lists certain habitats and species that must be protected within SACs. Irish habitats include semi-natural grasslands, raised bogs, blanket bogs, turloughs, sand dunes, machair (flat sandy plains on the north and west coasts), heaths, lakes, rivers, woodlands, estuaries, and sea inlets. The 25 Irish species which must be afforded protection include Salmon, Otter, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Bottlenose Dolphin and Killarney Fern.

Ireland is required under the terms of the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) to designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the protection of:

- Listed rare and vulnerable species
- Regularly occurring migratory species
- Wetlands especially those of international importance

The terrestrial areas of the SPA network include inland wetland sites important for wintering waterbirds and extensive areas of blanket bog and upland habitats that provide breeding and foraging resources for species including Merlin and Golden Plover. Coastal habitats including Machair, which are important for species including Chough and breeding Dunlin, are also represented in the network. Agricultural land represents a share of the SPA network ranging from extensive upland areas where hedgerows, wet grassland and scrub offer feeding and/or breeding opportunities for Hen Harrier to the intensively farmed coastal polder land where internationally important numbers of swans and geese occur.

Eligibility requirements

If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of land within the Natura (SAC/SPA) mapped area in 2022, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to ACRES General.

For grassland designated sites, one of the actions a. or b. must be selected on an area intersecting the Natura mapped area.

- A. Low input grassland
- B. Extensively grazed pasture

For tillage designated sites, one of the actions a. b. or c. must be selected on an area intersecting the Natura mapped area.

- a. Unharvested cereal headlands
- b. Winter bird food
- c. Environmental management of arable fallow

The specifications for the relevant actions above must be followed.

Note

- In Natura parcels where erecting a new fence is listed as an activity requiring consent for that specific SAC/SPA, split parcels can only be created where an existing defined field boundary is already present.
- If an applicant has under 0.5 hectares of Natura land, they can still choose from the appropriate ACRES actions listed above on that area, but they will not be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry.
- For Natura 2000 sites, parcels may be deemed eligible for Low input grassland without needing to meet the three field eligibility requirements listed in the specification for that action.
- On tillage Natura 2000 sites, the parcel must have been declared as arable on the 2022 BPS for any tillage actions to be selected.
- In situations where NPWS or an EU LIFE/EIP project have specific management requirements that differ from or place additional requirements than the requirements outlined in the ACRES action specification, then these management requirements will take precedence over the ACRES requirements.
- Where farmers have designated lands: Special Protection Areas (SPA) or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), certain activities known as Activities Requiring Consent (ARCs or Notifiable Actions) are attached to that site and are included as a schedule to the S.I. www.npws.ie/protected-sites. The site-specific information on the NPWS website for Natura 2000 sites i.e. SAC and SPA sites, is currently under review. If you require up-to-date information about a Natura 2000 site, please link to the Statutory Instrument on NPWS website, or email natureconservation@housing.gov.ie.
- If an ACRES participant wishes to undertake Activities Requiring Consent/Notifiable Actions on an ACRES parcel, they should ensure that they obtain consent by contacting acres@agriculture.gov.ie

Breeding Waders

Objective

To help increase the breeding success of farmland waders through the provision of safe undisturbed nesting and chick rearing habitats.

Background

National and regional numbers of farmland breeding waders have suffered severe declines over recent years, namely Lapwing, Redshank, Snipe and Curlew. This is due mainly to a loss of habitat because of agricultural intensification and afforestation which has led to an increase in predation rates. Without intervention, the populations of some of these species are facing extinction. Breeding waders depend largely upon extensive farming systems, such as extensive grazing of upland commonages, lowland wet grasslands or machair grassland to breed successfully and maintain their populations. In landscapes with arable farming, lapwing is particularly attracted to spring tillage fields for nesting, where the broken ground provides excellent camouflage from aerial predators.

Note: In situations where NPWS or any relevant EIP have specific management requirements that differ from or place additional requirements above the requirements outlined in the ACRES action specification, then these management requirements will take precedence over the ACRES requirements.

Eligibility requirements

1. If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of land within the Breeding Wader hotspot mapped area in 2022, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to ACRES General.
2. To be considered for priority access where grassland parcels are applicable, **Low Input Grassland** or **Extensively Grazed Pasture** must be selected on an area intersecting the Breeding Wader Hotspot mapped area.
3. To be considered for priority access where arable parcels are applicable, **Environmental Management of Arable Fallow** must be selected on an area intersecting the Breeding Wader Hotspot mapped area.
4. Low Input Grassland, Extensively Grazed Pasture and Environmental Management of Arable Fallow can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is on split parcel, it must be digitised out and marked on the map submitted and the split of parcel must contain the breeding wader hotspot mapped area.
5. The specifications for the relevant actions must be followed, except for the Hedgerow requirement outlined on page 24.

General Actions

Barn Owl Nest Box

Objective

This action provides safe and secure artificial nesting sites for Barn Owls in suitable locations.

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](#).

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 2**. Other actions that should be considered to complement this action are Grass margins – Grassland; Grass margins – Arable, Low input grassland, Winter bird food, Over winter stubble, and Unharvested cereal headlands.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Brassica fodder stubble, Catch crops, Coppicing of hedgerows, Environmental management of arable fallow, Extensively grazed pasture, Geese and swans, Grass margins – arable, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Low input grassland, Low input peat grassland, Management of intensive grassland next to a watercourse, Minimum tillage, Over winter stubble, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Riparian buffer zone – arable, Riparian buffer zone – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food plot, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. Install new Barn Owl/Kestrel nest box(es) by 31 July 2024.
2. A minimum of one nest box and a maximum of two may be applied for.
3. The location(s) of the nest box/es must be clearly marked on the map submitted. The box(es) must be maintained in the same position for the duration of the contract.
4. Nest boxes must be placed at least 3 metres above ground level.
5. 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 Barn Owl nest box guidance document.
6. If rodenticides are used, you must implement an Integrated Pest Management 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](#)
7. While 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), this does not apply to Kestrel boxes.
8. 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, as described in additional guidance, 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 Nest Box Guidance document.
- In order to monitor populations, you can register your nest box/es with BirdWatch Ireland at [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.
- Two people should always be present when installing/maintaining a Barn Owl box (one person to hold the ladder).

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.

Brassica Fodder Stubble

Objective

To provide vital winter foraging resources for farmland birds, including finches and buntings, amongst the weedy stubbles of a brassica fodder crop. For livestock farmers, this measure provides a cost-effective home-grown winter feed which reduces the reliance on imported concentrates.

Background

The intensification and specialisation of agriculture has led to a reduction in habitat diversity in the modern landscape which, in turn, has contributed to a decline in farmland birds. This action helps to increase habitat heterogeneity on farms. The residual weedy stubble during and after the crop has been grazed, provides a vital food source and cover for seed eating farmland birds.

Site suitability

This action is suitable for improved grassland and arable land only.

The following mandatory pre checks must be carried out.

1. Desk check to inform the locations where this action is not suitable: NPWS designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs), grassland fields adjacent to a river SAC, Annex 1 Grasslands.
2. A field check must also be done to assess the suitability of the chosen parcel.
If the field (a) holds semi-natural grassland or (b) is identified as a field at moderate/higher risk of surface run-off or soil erosion, this action must not be selected.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Minimum tillage, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

1. Establish a fodder brassica or fodder root crop using non-inversion techniques (ploughing is not allowed) on a suitable field before 31 July each year. Certified seed must be used.
2. This action can only be selected on a full LPIS parcel(s) in year 1. However, the entire area of the parcel does not have to be entered for the action. The LPIS selected must be marked on the map submitted. If you do not wish to deliver this action on the entire parcel, then you must enter the area to be delivered for each LPIS chosen.
3. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.5 hectares and the maximum area for payment is 10 hectares.
4. There are mandatory non cultivated vegetated buffers and lie back baseline requirements in GAEC 4 and GAEC 6 that apply to this action.
5. No herbicides or insecticides are permitted once crop is sown.

6. The crop must be grazed, but only after 15 October. Make sure that grazing does not generate poaching or soil erosion.
7. Where a watercourse is present on or adjacent to the parcel, bovines are not permitted to access the watercourse. Where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when bovines are present (drinking points are not permitted.) Watercourses applicable to this requirement are defined as any body of water that is marked on GLAM as OSi Water line and Water single stream line. If this is in a Natura 2000 designated site, fencing of the watercourse is not mandatory.
8. Harvesting with machinery is not permitted.
9. After grazing, the stubble must be left undisturbed until 1 March.
10. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.
11. This measure can be rotated each year once the area(s) sown is at least equal in size to the contract area(s) established in year one. The LPIS parcel(s) and area for this action must be declared each year of the contract on the participant's BISS application. ACRES participants may change the location of this action to a parcel(s) other than what was declared for ACRES on their annual BISS application by giving advance notice to the Department before the annual establishment deadline.

Additional guidance

- Sheep or weanlings are recommended for light grazing. Introduce the crop gradually and either strip graze or block graze the crop. Once the leaf is eaten, the animals should be moved on (leaving the stem/stubble intact) to prevent any poaching damage to the soil. Avoid any poaching damage if supplementary feeding is being carried out.
- It is recommended to sow kale before mid-June. Stubble turnips and forage rape are faster growing and can be sown later into July. The earlier the sowing, the greater the yield of herbage.
- Seeds are small and perform better in a firm seed bed. Sow to just 1-2cm deep and roll it afterwards to firm up the bed.

Catch Crops

Objective

To establish a catch crop that will reduce nutrient leaching and help prevent soil erosion in the autumn/winter period.

Background

Catch crops generate a large mass of herbage which helps protect the soil from exposure to heavy rainfall during the winter period. This reduces the potential of soil erosion and surface run-off while also increasing water infiltration.

Catch crops utilise residual nutrients in the soil following the harvest of a cereal or oilseed crop, thus maintaining soil biology, preventing leaching of soluble nutrients while also helping to protect water quality. With their vigorous root systems, these crop species condition and break up the soil, making it more friable for ease of cultivation, while the residual herbage that remains greatly enhances the organic carbon content and structure of the soil.

Site suitability

This action is only applicable on LPIS parcels declared as tillage crop in the 2024 BISS application. If rotated in subsequent years, it must be claimed on tillage parcels.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Minimum tillage, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

1. Establish a catch crop using non-inversion techniques (ploughing is not allowed). The crop must be sown using certified seed before 15 September each year.
2. This action can only be selected on a full LPIS parcel(s) in year 1. However, the entire area of the parcel does not have to be entered for the action. The LPIS selected must be marked on the map submitted. If you do not wish to deliver this action on the entire parcel, then you must enter the area to be delivered for each LPIS chosen.
3. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.5 hectares. If selected as a priority action, the minimum area to be delivered is 6 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 20 hectares.
4. When sowing the catch crop, the under sowing or sowing of a grass crop is not permitted.
5. A main cereal crop cannot be undersown with catch crop species.
6. The seed mixture must comprise at least two species using the monoculture seed rates from the prescribed list set out in **Table 1**. There is no maximum in terms of the number of species that can be used, but at least 100% of a full sowing rate must be reached. You must not have any more than one species at 60% of a full sowing rate in the mix.
7. The catch crop must remain in situ from the date of sowing to 1 January annually.
8. After 1 January, light grazing or incorporation is permitted. Participants should ensure grazing only takes place on parcels where soil erosion is not considered to be an issue. Intensive strip grazing/zero grazing is not permitted.

9. Where a watercourse is present on or adjacent to the parcel, bovines are not permitted to access the watercourse. Where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when bovines are present (drinking points are not permitted). Watercourses applicable to this requirement are defined as any body of water that is marked on GLAM as OSi Water line and Water single stream line. If this is in a Natura 2000 designated site, fencing of the watercourse is not mandatory.
10. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.
11. This measure can be rotated each year once the area(s) sown is at least equal in size to the contract area(s) established in year one. The LPIS parcel and area for this action must be declared each year of the contract on the participant's BISS application. ACRES participants may change the location of this action to a parcel(s) other than what was declared for ACRES on their annual BISS application by giving advance notice to the Department before the annual establishment deadline.

Table 1. List of prescribed Catch Crop species

Catch Crop species	Monoculture seed rate (kg/ha)
Buckwheat	50kg
Crimson Clover	15kg
Berseem Clover	15kg
Balansa Clover	15kg
Squarrosa Clover	15kg
Forage /Fodder Rape	8kg
Mustard (White)	15kg
Mustard (Brown)	7kg
Oats	100kg
Black Oats	60kg
Phacelia	8kg
Sunflower	20kg
Rye	150kg
Tillage Radish	10kg
Vetch	30kg
Leafy Turnip	8kg
Peas	80kg
Beans	140kg
Linseed	30kg
Red Clover	20kg
Fodder Radish	10kg
*Kale/rape hybrid	8kg

*Note: The kale/rape hybrid is classified as one species; another species will be required to meet the minimum requirement of at least two species in the mix.

Examples of Catch Crop mixes

Two-way mix (kg/ha)		= 110% of a full sowing rate
Forage rape	4.8kg (60%)	
Tillage Radish	5kg (50%)	

Three-way mix (kg/ha)		= 100% of a full sowing rate
Tillage Radish	4kg (40%)	
Linseed	12kg (40%)	
White Mustard	3kg (20%)	

Seven-way mix (kg/ha)		= 108% of a full sowing rate
Forage rape	1.6kg (20%)	
Leafy turnip	1.6kg (20%)	
Linseed	6kg (20%)	
Fodder radish	1.2kg (12%)	
Crimson clover	1.8kg (12%)	
Sunflower	2.4kg (12%)	
Vetch	3.6kg (12%)	

*Non-brassica four-way mix (kg/ha)		= 100% of a full sowing rate
Phacelia	2kg (25%)	
Vetch	7.5kg (25%)	
Berseem clover	3.75kg (25%)	
Black oats	15kg (25%)	

**A non-brassica catch crop mix is particularly suitable where oil-seed rape is part of the crop rotation.*

Additional guidance

It is recommended that ACRES participants, particularly tillage farmers, should consider buying seeds that are tested under the Higher Voluntary Standard (HVS). The seeds that meet this standard have been tested free of blackgrass, sterile brome and wild oats.

Commonage – Natura and Non-Natura

Objective

To incentivise farmers to help ensure that habitats on commonage lands are maintained/restored to good condition through appropriate management practices.

Background

Commonage or common land is land owned jointly by several individuals, or by one individual, but over which others have the right to graze or cut turf. Commonage generally tends to be less productive farmland but is highly beneficial from an environmental point of view as it can contain a mosaic of peatland, heath and upland grass. This is a result-based measure which means that all Commonages greater than 10ha will be assessed qualitatively using a scorecard, such that the payment received is linked to the quality of the environmental outcomes delivered. By doing so, the biodiversity, climate and water quality benefits of this High Nature Value land are better recognised and valued.

Requirements for all Commonages

1. Participation in the ACRES commonage measure will be mandatory for all commonage land (owned/leased/rented) declared on the applicant's 2023 BISS application.
2. To be eligible for Tier 1 priority access to ACRES, an applicant must have at least 0.50 ha of commonage land declared on the IACS system in 2022 and continue to farm this land at the time of making the ACRES application.
3. To be eligible for payment on the commonage lands, the applicant must maintain an individual minimum appropriate grazing livestock enterprise by 31 December 2024 and every year of the contract thereafter, subject to point 7 below. This minimum stocking rate is as defined in the Commonage Management Plan process in GLAS.
4. Participation in this measure will mean that participants are bound by any recommendations and conditions set out as part of a commonage management group or commonage farm plan and agree not to hinder or object to any proposed habitat restoration work that may be proposed following consultation with all relevant stakeholders.
5. In areas where a Cooperation Project Team is in place, the commonage assessment may identify activities which should be carried out on the commonage such as more targeted grazing, removal of invasive species, restoration of peatland hydrology, temporary fencing or specific actions such as riparian buffers. Additional payments will be made available for participants engaged in these actions.

Commonage parcels greater than 10 Ha and those <=10 Ha that are results-based scored

6. An approved ACRES commonage assessor will be assigned to each commonage greater than 10 Ha, to deliver an assessment and resulting score for each individual commonage.
7. Following the results of this assessment, individual shareholders minimum ewe equivalents of appropriate grazing livestock may be revised or alternatively a maximum ewe equivalent may be set, in order to maximise the habitat quality of the land in question.

Commonages parcels less than or equal to 10 Ha that are not results-based scored

8. In the case of commonages which are less than or equal to 10 hectares, each shareholder on these commonages must submit an individual commonage plan, known as the Commonage Farm Plan (CFP), covering their individual activity on the commonage i.e. different ACRES advisors may submit a CFP on behalf of individual shareholders.
9. In a Commonage Farm Plan(s), the ACRES advisor must clearly state all activities which are required to be carried out on the commonage in terms of habitat restoration, vegetation control etc. The advisor must also clearly set out within the 5-year CFP when and where any of these activities will be undertaken on the ACRES commonage map accompanying the CFP. Note: Department approval may be required for some of these activities.
10. The CFP must be in accordance with requirements to be specified by DAFM and be submitted before payment can be approved on the commonage parcels in question.

Conservation of Rare Breeds

Objective

To conserve the genetic diversity of native breeds that are at risk of extinction.

Background

This action endeavours to retain and where possible, increase populations of specific rare breeds to ensure their long-term survival.

To be eligible for this action you must be a member of the relevant breed society at the time of application and remain a member for the duration of the ACRES contract.

Eligible livestock species

Cattle	Horses and Ponies	Sheep & Goats
Kerry	Connemara Pony	Galway
Dexter	Irish Draught	Old Irish Goat
Irish Maol (or Moiled)	Kerry Bog Pony	
Droimeann		

Other breeds may be considered for inclusion under this action in future tranches.

The maximum number of livestock units that can be claimed annually for the cattle, sheep and goat breeds and the Kerry Bog Ponies is 20. The maximum number of livestock units for Connemara & Irish Draught Horses that can be claimed for annually is 10.

Payment will be made in arrears based on the monthly average livestock units of owned registered animals over the previous recording year.

Note: The maximum number of livestock units for payment across all breeds is 20.

Breeding females that produce a registered offspring above the basic eligibility requirements will be paid an additional payment of €75 per maternal LU equivalent for each progeny registered up to overall maximum payment ceiling.

Example

Number born and registered above the basic requirement	Additional payment for each registered progeny above basic requirements
1 Dexter Calf	€60 (€75 x 0.8LU)
1 Connemara foal	€60 (€75 x 0.8LU)
1 Galway lambs	€7.5 (€75 x 0.1LU)

Livestock units for consideration for payment are calculated as follows:

Bovines under 1 year old	0.40 LU
Bovines 1 but less than 2 years old	0.70 LU
Bovine male, 2 years and over	1.00 LU
Suckler cow and bovine female, 2 years and over	0.80 LU
Equines over 6 months of age	0.80 LU
Sheep/Goats over 6 months of age	0.10 LU

Note: *The above livestock unit equivalents apply when an animal is kept for a full year.*

Livestock passports and where applicable, pedigree certificates issued by the relevant breed society, must be in the participants own name or where in joint names, at least one of the persons must also be on the herd number used when applying for this measure.

Requirements

To be eligible for the Conservation of Rare Breeds action participants must:

1.	Be a member of a recognised breed society for the duration of the contract.
2.	From at least one of the breeds selected, produce at least 1 offspring that is registered with the relevant breed society before the end of year 3 of the contract.
3.	Register all progeny from a purebred mating with the relevant breed society when seeking a rare breed payment on an animal.
4.	Maintain an up-to-date monthly record of all registered animals owned by you.
5.	Have at least 0.10 LU eligible for payment each year

Documents required for payment

1.	Proof of membership with relevant breed society
2.	Identification documents and certificates issued by the relevant breed society for each registered animal
3.	Complete Rare Breeds annual record declaration.

Requirements for the different types of livestock to be eligible for payment

Bovine

1.	All females between 6 months to 2 years of age will be considered for payment.
2.	An adult female(s) (over 2 years of age) must be mated to a purebred male of the same breed at each mating. Breeding females must produce at least 1 registered offspring before the end of the contract, otherwise there will be full clawback.
3.	All bulls between 6 months to 2 years of age will be considered for payment.
4.	Bulls greater than 2 years of age up to a maximum of 1 bull per 5 cows will be considered for payment (1 bull considered for payment if 1 to 5 cows, 2 bulls if 6 to 10 cows etc.).

Equine

1.	All equines must have an equine identification document and the holding must be registered with DAFM as an Equine premises i.e. equine premises registration number.
2.	All registered females and entire males between 6 months and 3 years of age will be considered for payment.
3.	An adult female (s) (over 3 years of age) must be mated to a purebred male of the same breed at each mating. Breeding females must produce at least 1 registered offspring before the end of the contract, otherwise there will be full clawback.
4.	Entire adult males greater than 3 years of age that have met the inspection requirements within their studbook up to a maximum of 1 stallion per 5 mares will be considered for payment (1 stallion considered for payment if 1 to 5 mares, 2 stallions if 6 to 10 mares etc.).

Additional guidance

- For the improvement of the equine breeds, all adult males and females should be presented for inspection for classification in accordance with the rules of the breeding programme for the respective breed. The results of the inspection should be entered in the animal's identification document.

Ovine/Caprine

1.	All females over 6 months of age will be considered for payment.
2.	An adult female (s) (over 1 year of age) must be mated to a purebred male of the same breed at each mating. Breeding females must produce at least 2 registered offspring before the end of the contract, otherwise there will be full clawback
3.	Males under 1 year of age are not eligible for payment.
4.	Males over 1 year of age will be considered for payment up to a maximum of 1 male per 5 adult females (1 ram considered for payment if 1 to 5 ewes, 2 rams if 6 to 10 etc.).

For contact details of bovine, equine and ovine/caprine societies, see **Appendix 12** of this Specification document.

You can also visit the Department's Animal Breeding webpage at www.gov.ie/animalbreeding (scroll down the page to the PDFs of Recognised Breed Societies): This page provides contact details of all registered breed societies recognised by the Department (which includes those for the rare breeds). This list is kept updated as the Department is notified of changes.

Coppicing of Hedgerows

Objective

Coppicing is a method of rejuvenating a hedgerow. Cutting a hedge at the base may seem like a drastic measure, but from each cut stump several new shoots will grow and will have the effect of thickening the hedge from the ground up. Overtime the coppiced hedgerow, when well managed, will support biodiversity, enhance the visual landscape and its lifespan will be extended.

Background

Many hedgerows that have been cut to the same point for years lose vigour and lose the density of branches at their base, reducing their environmental benefits and result in hedgerows becoming more and more gappy over time. When there are too many gaps and when the remaining stems are too gnarled and rotten at the bottom, rejuvenation by coppicing is possible. However, this needs serious consideration as it will be years before they will produce flowers and berries or provide nesting for birds. A correct assessment of rejuvenation options is essential.

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 coppicing and for ongoing maintenance.

Note 2: Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS II, TAMS 3, any DAFM Capital investment Scheme or any EU/National funded agri-environmental scheme from 01 January 2018, this fence cannot fulfil the fencing requirement for Coppicing of hedgerows.

Hedgerow suitability

Choose a hedge that:

- has been cut to the same height for years, under 2m, and is slowly dying.
- has large stems (more than 15cm diameter) that are widely spaced.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Brassica fodder stubble, Catch crops, Environmental management of arable fallow, Extensively grazed pasture, Geese and swans, Grass margins – arable, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Low input grassland, Low input peat grassland, Management of intensive grassland next to a watercourse, Minimum tillage, Over winter stubble, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Riparian buffer zone – arable, Riparian buffer zone – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food plot, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. The location and lengths selected for coppicing must be identified on the selected LPIS parcels and marked on the map submitted. A minimum continuous length of 10 metres must be delivered. The maximum length for payment on a holding is 400m.
2. Carry out coppicing works between 1 September and end of February. This action must be completed by 31 December 2025.
3. Individual mature trees within the selected hedgerow, must be retained and not coppiced.
4. To encourage vigorous re-growth from the base of the plant, cut the stems down to a maximum of 10cm above ground level (or from top of bank) at an angle so water can run off. Cut out competing vegetation like bramble, briars and ivy.
5. If there are gaps present (that won't be filled by regrowth from the coppiced hedgerow), infilling of new plants must take place at four plants per metre. Plants must be of Irish Origin or Irish Provenance and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators. All plants purchased for infilling must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) for the duration of the contract. Any plants that die must be replaced during the next dormant season. See **Table 1** for hedgerow species for infilling.
6. All newly coppiced hedgerows in a grass or tillage field must be protected from livestock with a permanent fence, from the time the hedgerow is coppiced. However, where the coppiced hedgerow bounds a public road or watercourse, fencing is not required on the road or water body side as long as the hedgerow is not being damaged by livestock. The fence must be stockproof and fit for purpose.
7. Grass and competing vegetation **must** be controlled.

Table 1.

Hedgerow species for infilling
Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)
Dog Rose (<i>Rosa canina</i>)
Gelder 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

- 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 to 6 cm at an angle using a small chainsaw.

- Remove all cut branches and debris from the immediate site after completion of the work.
- Where possible fence at least 1 metre out from the coppiced hedgerow.
- Compostable film over the cut stumps may be considered as vegetation management is important for the coppiced hedgerow to develop.
- Infilling with light whips is difficult as they do not compete well with the existing root structure. It is advisable to purchase stronger plants for infilling.

Environmental Management of Arable Fallow

Objective:

To create a bare fallow field each spring for declining ground nesting birds and in the autumn, to provide a catch crop to absorb residual nutrients.

Background

Lapwing populations have been in sharp decline over a long number of years due to the disappearance of suitable breeding habitats. They prefer to nest in bare ground or in short vegetation. The nest generally comprises a scrape in the ground lined with variable amounts of plant material. Lapwings like to have a good view from the nest to spot predators. This measure provides a rough, uneven surface for lapwing to nest undisturbed by agricultural operations.

The fallow field also provides cultivated uncropped areas which provide opportunity for rare arable plants to establish while also generating areas of less densely vegetated ground as habitat for insects such as bumblebees, solitary bees and hoverflies.

Each autumn, you must sow a catch crop which will utilise residual nutrients in the soil and prevent leaching of soluble nutrients and sediment, thus protecting water quality.

Site suitability

This action is only applicable on LPIS parcels declared as an arable crop (except for temporary grassland, grass seed and grass meal) on the 2023 BISS application.

This action has annual spring and autumn requirements.

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

1. Environmental management of arable fallow can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is on split parcel, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted.
2. The minimum area to be delivered is 1.5 hectares and the maximum area for payment is 5 hectares.
3. The action must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.
4. The under sowing or sowing of grass crops is not permitted.
5. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.

6. Where necessary the action must be protected from livestock using a fence that is fit for purpose. Where no fence is required, the boundary of the fallow area must be clearly identified with visible posts/markers if no natural boundary feature exists.
7. Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the parcel.
8. The fallow area cannot be used as a storage site for bales, farmyard manure etc.

Spring requirements - create a bare fallow field

9. Create a field of bare ground by shallow cultivation on or before 31 March each year. Maintain a rough, uneven surface in the field.
10. From 31 March, the field must be left fallow with no machine operations or grazing until after 1 July.

Autumn requirements - sow a catch crop

11. Establish a catch crop in the fallow field using non-inversion techniques (ploughing is not allowed). Certified seed must be used.
12. The crop must be sown before 15 September each year.
13. The seed mixture must comprise at least two species using the monoculture seed rates from the prescribed list set out in **Table 1**. There is no maximum in terms of the number of species that can be used, but at least 100% of a full sowing rate must be reached. You must not have any more than one species at 60% of a full sowing rate in the mix.
14. The catch crop must remain in situ and un-grazed until 1 January.
15. After 1 January, light grazing or incorporation is permitted. Participants should ensure grazing only takes place on parcels where soil erosion is not considered to be an issue. Intensive strip grazing/zero grazing is not permitted.
16. Where a watercourse is present on or adjacent to the parcel, bovines are not permitted to access the watercourse. Where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when bovines are present (drinking points are not permitted). Watercourses applicable to this requirement are defined as any body of water that is marked on GLAM as OSi Water line and Water single stream line. If this is in a Natura 2000 designated site, fencing of the watercourse is not mandatory.
17. Repeat spring requirements above.

Table 1. List of prescribed Catch Crop species

Catch Crop species	Monoculture seed rate (kg/ha)
Buckwheat	50kg
Crimson Clover	15kg
Berseem Clover	15kg
Balansa Clover	15kg
Squarrosa Clover	15kg
Forage /Fodder Rape	8kg
Mustard (White)	15kg
Mustard (Brown)	7kg
Oats	100kg
Black Oats	60kg
Phacelia	8kg
Sunflower	20kg
Rye	150kg
Tillage Radish	10kg
Vetch	30kg
Leafy Turnip	8kg
Peas	80kg
Beans	140kg
Linseed	30kg
Red Clover	20kg
Fodder Radish	10kg
*Kale/rape hybrid	8kg

*The kale/rape hybrid is classified as one species; a further species will be required to meet the minimum requirement of at least two species in the mix.

Examples of Catch Crop mixes

Two-way mix (kg/ha)		= 110% of a full sowing rate
Forage rape	4.8kg (60%)	
Tillage Radish	5kg (50%)	

Three-way mix (kg/ha)		= 100% of a full sowing rate
Tillage Radish	4kg (40%)	
Linseed	12kg (40%)	
White Mustard	3kg (20%)	

Seven-way mix (kg/ha)		= 108% of a full sowing rate
Forage rape	1.6kg (20%)	
Leafy turnip	1.6kg (20%)	
Linseed	6kg (20%)	
Fodder radish	1.2kg (12%)	
Crimson clover	1.8kg (12%)	
Sunflower	2.4kg (12%)	
Vetch	3.6kg (12%)	

*Non-brassica four-way mix (kg/ha)		= 100% of a full sowing rate
Phacelia	2kg (25%)	
Vetch	7.5kg (25%)	
Berseem clover	3.75kg (25%)	
Black oats	15kg (25%)	

**A non-brassica catch crop mix is particularly suitable where oil-seed rape is part of the crop rotation.*

Additional guidance

It is recommended that ACRES participants, particularly tillage farmers, should consider buying seeds that are tested under the Higher Voluntary Standard (HVS). The seeds that meet this standard have been tested free of blackgrass, sterile brome and wild oats.

Extensively Grazed Pasture

Objective

To maintain and enhance the sward structure of extensively managed lands to benefit a range of invertebrates, birds and other species.

Background

This action will encourage farmers to maintain environmentally friendly operations and farming systems on selected parcels. Lands that are extensively grazed with low inputs provide a greater environmental return in terms of biodiversity, soil structure and water quality. Such extensively grazed parcels also benefit pollinators and are important in the maintenance of the rural landscape.

Site suitability

This action is only allowed in an enclosed pasture field(s) that contains:

- (a) At least four grass species (excluding ryegrasses) **or** a mosaic of acid grassland and heath with varying levels of grazable woody forage plants e.g. heather.
- (b) Less than 30% ryegrass content.

Selected LPIS parcels must have been declared as low input permanent pasture, permanent pasture or traditional hay meadow on the 2023 BISS application.

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

1. This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is selected on split LPIS, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted. Parcels must have a defined field boundary from the commencement of the contract i.e. hedgerow, drain, watercourse, fence etc. In Natura parcels where erecting a new fence is listed as an activity requiring consent for that specific SAC/SPA, split parcels can only be created where an existing defined field boundary is already present.
2. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.25 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 8 hectares.
3. A geotagged photo taken from the centre of the parcel must be submitted as part of the FSP and ACRES application using the Agrisnap app, giving a clear representation of each parcel selected. A minimum of one photo per parcel must be supplied.
4. There must be a grazing enterprise of owned livestock on the holding. Evidence of livestock ownership must be shown on the Animal Identification and Movement System (AIMS) each year for the duration of the contract.
5. The parcel must be maintained by grazing to maintain a diverse sward with open vegetation i.e. many grass and flower species present, and scrub/briars not coming to dominate.

6. Ploughing, cultivation, reseeding, or any drainage works (including modifying existing drainage channels) are not permitted.
7. The parcel cannot be mown or topped between 15 March and 1 July.
8. Maximum nitrogen application is 40kg/ha as inorganic or organic fertiliser per year however, low to no nitrogen application will lead to the most diverse sward.
9. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except to spot treat or weed wipe to control noxious and invasive species. These plants can also be controlled by topping but this is only permitted after 1 July in localised areas.
10. Rushes can be controlled by topping, grazing, or weed wiping/spot spraying. Boom spraying herbicides is not permitted. Rush management must not take place until after 1 July.
11. Where a watercourse is present on or adjacent to the parcel, bovines are not permitted to access the watercourse. Where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when bovines are present (drinking points are not permitted). Watercourses applicable to this requirement are defined as any body of water that is marked on GLAM as OSi Water line and Water single stream line. If this is in a Natura 2000 designated site, fencing of the watercourse is not mandatory.
12. Supplementary meal feeding may take place on these parcels, provided meal troughs are moved to avoid poaching and are not located in close proximity to waterbodies and/or field drains.
13. Supplementary feeding of forage to livestock is not allowed except for feeding hay to sheep, provided feeding points are moved to avoid poaching and are not located in close proximity to waterbodies.
14. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.
15. This action must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.

Additional guidance

- Check the parcel for breeding birds before operating machinery (topping, spreading fertiliser etc) or carrying out other activities which may disturb breeding birds or damage their nests. The main breeding season runs from mid-March until mid-July, but it can start earlier and finish later, depending on the species, location and the weather.

Geese and Swans

Objective

To promote the production of an undisturbed foraging area to support overwintering geese and swans.

Background

A large influx of waterbird species fly from northerly regions into Ireland for the winter each year. These include Whooper Swan, Greenland White Fronted Goose, Barnacle Goose and Brent Goose. They arrive in Ireland during the month of September and forage on coastal grasslands, offshore islands and wetlands before gearing up for the return journey north, to breed.

Site suitability

- To be eligible for Tier 1 priority access, the applicant must have at least 0.50 hectares of land, as declared on their 2022 BPS, within the mapped Geese and Swan area and select the Geese and Swans action.
- To be eligible for the Geese and Swans action, the applicant must commit to at least 50% of the total Geese and Swan mapped area on the farm or 19Ha (whichever is lower), based on their 2023 BISS application.
- The GLAMS system indicates the area under the Geese and Swans layer on each LPIS parcel. When calculating the 50% requirement, it is only the area under the mapped layer in arable or grassland LPIS parcels that should be taken into account. Commonage parcels or CP forage parcels are not included in the calculation.
- Where the Geese and Swans layer intersects with a parcel, the entire parcel is eligible to be chosen for this action.
- Each participant must ensure they commit to selecting enough land (Eligible Hectares) to deliver the minimum requirement eligible for payment (as stated above in bullet point No.2).

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Note: While the Geese & Swan action can be delivered on either a grassland or tillage parcel, this does not prevent the farmer from converting a tillage parcel to grass or vice versa, once they continue to deliver either the grassland or tillage specification as set out below.

Requirements

1. This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel(s). Where the action is on a split parcel, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted. If selecting on a split parcel, the area selected must contain the Geese and Swan mapped layer. The minimum requirement of at least 50% (of the Geese and Swan mapped area under arable or grassland LPIS parcels) or 19ha, must be delivered each year of the contract to be eligible for payment.
2. Do not disturb birds during periods of occupancy. Field operations requiring the use of machinery should only be undertaken, if necessary. If hedge cutting is planned for these fields, this must only take place between 1 September and 31 October. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.
3. This action must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.
4. Where a watercourse is present on or adjacent to the parcel, bovines are not permitted to access the watercourse. Where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when bovines are present (drinking points are not permitted.) Watercourses applicable to this requirement are defined as any body of water that is marked on GLAM as OSi Water line and Water single stream line. If this is in a Natura 2000 designated site, fencing of the watercourse is not mandatory.

Requirements specific to grassland parcels

5. Ensure that there is an average sward of between 5cm and 12cm in height in place by 1 October. Any mown material must be removed.
6. Close off parcels from livestock and machinery from 1 October to 31 March in each year of the contract (except for hedge cutting which can take place up until 31 October).

Requirements specific to tillage parcels

7. Establish an annual winter cereal crop by 15 October or a catch crop by 15 September using certified seed. The specification below for catch crops must be adhered to.
8. The crops must remain in situ until 31 March of the following year. Catch crops cannot be grazed by livestock before 31 March.

Requirements for Catch crops

9. Establish a catch crop using non-inversion techniques (ploughing is not permitted).
10. The crop must be sown before 15 September each year.
11. The under sowing or sowing of a grass crop is not permitted.
12. The seed mixture must comprise at least two species using the monoculture seed rates from the prescribed list set out in **Table 1**. There is no maximum in terms of the number of species that can be used, but at least 100% of a full sowing rate must be reached. You must not have any more than one species at 60% of a full sowing rate in the mix.
13. The catch crop must remain in situ from the date of sowing to the 31 March annually.

14. After 31 March, light grazing or incorporation is permitted. Participants should ensure grazing only takes place on parcels where soil erosion is not considered to be an issue. Intensive strip grazing/zero grazing is not permitted.

Table 1. List of prescribed Catch Crop species

Catch Crop species	Monoculture seed rate (kg/ha)
Buckwheat	50kg
Crimson Clover	15kg
Berseem Clover	15kg
Balansa Clover	15kg
Squarrosa Clover	15kg
Forage /Fodder Rape	8kg
Mustard (White)	15kg
Mustard (Brown)	7kg
Oats	100kg
Black Oats	60kg
Phacelia	8kg
Sunflower	20kg
Rye	150kg
Tillage Radish	10kg
Vetch	30kg
Leafy Turnip	8kg
Peas	80kg
Beans	140kg
Linseed	30kg
Red Clover	20kg
Fodder Radish	10kg
*Kale/rape hybrid	8kg

*The kale/rape hybrid is classified as one species; a further species will be required to meet the minimum requirement of at least two species in the mix.

Examples of Catch Crop mixes

Two-way mix		= 110% of a full sowing rate
Forage rape	4.8kg (60%)	
Tillage Radish	5kg (50%)	

Three-way mix		= 100% of a full sowing rate
Tillage Radish	4kg (40%)	
Linseed	12kg (40%)	
White Mustard	3kg (20%)	

Seven-way mix (kg/ha)		= 108% of a full sowing rate
Forage rape	1.6kg (20%)	
Leafy turnip	1.6kg (20%)	
Linseed	6kg (20%)	
Fodder radish	1.2kg (12%)	
Crimson clover	1.8kg (12%)	
Sunflower	2.4kg (12%)	
Vetch	3.6kg (12%)	

*Non-brassica four-way mix		= 100% of a full sowing rate
Phacelia	2kg (25%)	
Vetch	7.5kg (25%)	
Berseem clover	3.75kg (25%)	
Black oats	15kg (25%)	

**A non-brassica catch crop mix is particularly suitable where oil-seed rape is part of the crop rotation.*

Additional guidance

It is recommended that ACRES participants, particularly tillage farmers, should consider buying seeds that are tested under the Higher Voluntary Standard (HVS). The seeds that meet this standard have been tested free of blackgrass, sterile brome and wild oats.

Grass Margins - Arable

Objective

To provide a habitat for pollinators, support wider biodiversity including ground nesting birds like Grey partridge, 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 grass margins in an arable setting provides an important habitat which acts as a refuge for wildlife and a corridor to help connect habitats across a landscape. These grass 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

1. This action should not be chosen on species rich semi-natural grassland fields.
2. It may be selected along a field boundary or, in large arable fields, a grass margin down the middle is recommended to help populations of beneficial predatory arthropods.
3. In landscapes where Grey Partridge is a conservation target, establishing strips of winter bird food side by side with this action provides the food and safe nesting habitat this species critically needs.
4. As a watercourse protection measure, a field margin appropriately placed along a flow delivery path in addition to selecting a Riparian buffer strip closer to the watercourse may be more beneficial.
5. Arable grass margins and Grey Partridge Grass Nesting Margins established in GLAS already benefit from a significant reduction in nutrients and increased botanical diversity. Where possible these should be retained.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. Establish either a 3, 4, 6, or 8 metre grass margin before 31 August 2024 by sowing a suitable seed mix as outlined below. Only one margin width can be selected across the holding. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. If selected as a priority action, the minimum length to be delivered is 500m. The maximum length for payment is 2,500m.

2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. The margin(s) must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.
3. Sow a seed mix outlined in **Table 1** below, using certified seed, at a rate of 15kg/ha (1.5g/m²).
4. Soil cultivation cannot be carried out within the margin once established.
5. The margin must be managed annually by either mulching or mowing. This management must only take place after 31 August and before 15 January. Livestock are not permitted to access the margin. Where livestock are present, the arable grass margin(s) must be protected using a fence that is fit for purpose.
6. Chemical or organic fertiliser or lime cannot be applied to the margin.
7. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious/invasive weeds.
8. Field margins established under the former GLAS Arable Grass Margin action and Grass Nesting Margin established under the GLAS Grey Partridge Action can continue to be managed under the new ACRES scheme and must not be ploughed to re-establish a new margin. The margins must be over-sown with the grass mix in **Table 1** below and managed as above.

Additional guidance

- Where margins are cut, it is recommended to remove offtakes.
- Wide margins on a few target fields across the farm is better than narrow margins on all fields. Wider field margins support a greater abundance of biodiversity.
- Where being considered as a watercourse protection measure, it is recommended to place the measure in an area that intercepts a high risk PIP-P overland delivery flow path. The EPA PIP-P maps should be used to help identify any potential flow paths.
- Sunny, south facing margins are best for pollinators however some north facing margins are important as hibernation sites, so consider providing both.
- Avoid sites that have persistent weed problems, are shady, are remote or difficult for you to access and manage or sites used for regular machinery access, turning or storage.

Recommendations for Grey partridge

- Establish a winter bird food strip along the field boundaries so that they lie directly adjacent to grass margins.
- Winter bird food strips in conjunction with grass margins should not be sown adjacent to mature, semi-mature tree lines or near woodland.

Table 1.

Species Mix for sowing
Cocksfoot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> 10 kg/ha
Timothy <i>Phleum pratense</i> 4 kg/ha
Red Clover <i>Trifolium pratense</i> 1 kg/ha

Grass Margins – Grassland

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 declared as grassland on the 2023 BISS application. 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.

Note: Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS II, TAMS 3, any DAFM Capital investment Scheme or any EU/National funded agri-environmental scheme from 01 January 2018, this fence cannot fulfil the fencing requirement for Grass Margins - Grassland.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. Create a grass margin by 15 May in year 1 by erecting a permanent stock proof fence 2, 3, or 6 metres out from the field boundary. Only one margin width can be selected across the holding. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. If selected as a priority action, the minimum length to be delivered is 500m. The maximum length for payment is 2,500m.
2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.
3. To create a grass litter layer, you cannot cut or graze the margin between 15 May Year 1 and 31 August Year 2.

4. From year 2 onwards you must cut the margin between September and February 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.
5. Chemical or organic fertiliser or lime cannot be applied to the margin.
6. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious/invasive weeds.
7. Margins must be stock proof and fenced with permanent stakes and wire appropriate to the livestock type and exclude all livestock from the margin, with the exception of September if the margin is managed by grazing.
8. The margin(s) must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.

Additional guidance

- 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.
- When margins are cut, it is recommended to remove offtakes to reduce the overall fertility of the margin.



Photo: Small mammal holes in 1m² of rough grass margin where there is a litter layer >7cm deep.
Photo credit: The Barn Owl Trust

Laying of Hedgerows

Objective

To rejuvenate hedgerows so their ability to support biodiversity, store carbon and maintain structure is enhanced.

Background

Many hedgerows that have been unmanaged for years lose vigour and offer low environmental benefits. Rejuvenation of these hedgerows through laying can allow them to better support biodiversity in the future. Such measures over time will increase the availability of blossoms and berries in the landscape and will provide important nest sites for birds. It also improves the structure of the hedgerow and when incorporated into the overall hedgerow management cycle on a farm, can extend the lifespan almost indefinitely.

Hedgerow suitability

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

Some hedgerows are not suitable for laying. The ideal hedgerow for rejuvenation by laying is one that has grown up and has got thin at the base but there is still at least one stem every half metre which are on average 3cm to 10cm in diameter. When the hedgerow is brought back to the base by laying in this case, the rejuvenated hedgerow will develop a dense base and any gaps can be infilled. Refer to **Additional guidance** section below for instructions on how to properly lay a hedgerow.

Note: Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS II, TAMS 3, any DAFM Capital investment Scheme or any EU/National funded agri-environmental scheme from 01 January 2018, this fence cannot fulfil the fencing requirement for Laying of Hedgerows.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Brassica fodder stubble, Catch crops, Coppicing of hedgerows, Environmental management of arable fallow, Extensively grazed pasture, Geese and swans, Grass margins – arable, Grass margins – grassland, Low input grassland, Low input peat grassland, Management of intensive grassland next to a watercourse, Minimum tillage, Over winter stubble, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Riparian buffer zone – arable, Riparian buffer zone – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food plot, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. The location and lengths selected for laying must be identified on the selected LPIS parcels and marked on the map submitted. A minimum continuous length of 10 metres must be delivered. The maximum length for payment on a holding is 400m.
2. Carry out laying works between 1 September and end of February. This action must be completed by 31 December 2025.
3. **Laying cannot be carried out using heavy machinery.**
4. If there are gaps present (that won't be filled by regrowth from the laying of the hedgerow), infilling must take place at four plants per metre. Plants must be of Irish Origin or Irish Provenance and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators. All plants purchased for infilling must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) for the duration of the contract. Any plants that die must be replaced during the next dormant season. See **Table 1** for hedgerow species for infilling.
5. All newly laid hedgerows in a grass or tillage field must be protected from livestock with a permanent fence, from the time the hedgerow is laid. However, where the laid hedgerow bounds a private laneway, public road or watercourse, fencing is not required on the lane/road or water body side as long as the hedgerow is not being damaged by livestock. The fence must be stockproof and fit for purpose.
6. Grass and competing vegetation **must** be controlled.

Table 1.

Hedgerow species for infilling
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

- Hedge Laying is a skilled craft. If works are not being carried out by a professional, upskilling on the technique of laying a hedgerow is advised.
- Method for hedgerow laying:
 - a. Stems are cut at the base 70-80% of the way through keeping the cuts as low as possible to the ground.
 - b. 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 one's previously laid to knit together.
 - c. 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 to 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) to give stability.
- Make 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.
- Where possible, fence at least 1 metre out from the laid hedgerow.
- Trim growth after 3 or 4 years if getting a lot of vertical growth but light trim the top only.
- Infilling with light whips is difficult as they do not compete well with the existing hedge. It is advisable to purchase stronger plants for infilling.
- **It is recommended to leave any cherry, crab apple, mountain ash, whitebeam and occasional whitethorn mature and grow tall above the laid hedgerow.**



Photo: Example of hedgerow laying

Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS)

Objective

To improve the recycling of organic fertiliser and to contribute to reduced nitrous oxide emissions, ammonia emissions and odours.

Background

The method and timing of slurry application are two main factors that determine the utilization efficiency of these nutrients by the growing crop, whether grass or arable. Using low emission technology improves the utilisation efficiency of slurry compared to the traditional splash-plate. Other benefits include, reduced phosphorus run-off, a wider window of opportunity to apply slurry, reduced tainting of the grazing sward and reduced smell from slurry spreading.

Eligibility

Holdings must have a grassland stocking rate of less than 100Kg Nitrogen per hectare from grazing livestock manure prior to export of livestock manure from the holding in year of application and each year of the contract.

Requirements

1. Holdings must have a grassland stocking rate of less than 100Kg Nitrogen per hectare from grazing livestock manure prior to export of livestock manure from the holding in the previous calendar year to be eligible for payment for this action. If exceeded, the action is ineligible for the entire contract.
2. **All** the slurry applied on the farm (produced and/or imported) must be spread by one or a combination of the following methods for each year of the contract.
 - a) Band spreading
 - b) Injection systems
 - c) Trailing shoe
3. All slurry must be spread in compliance with Statutory Instrument 113 of 2022 European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2022.
4. Pig slurry is not eligible for payment under this action. Only slurry produced on the holding (excluding pig slurry) is eligible for payment.
5. Retain and provide if requested, documentary evidence to confirm the spreading method used and the volumes spread on the holding. For example, a calculation of slurry produced, imported, spread and/or a receipt from the contractor or other evidence as required.
6. To be eligible for this action, the minimum volume of slurry that must be applied on the holding each year of the contract using one of the above listed methods is 50 cubic metres.
7. Farmer must submit a completed annual slurry declaration return to ACRES section, DAFM, Johnstown Castle, Co Wexford.

Low Input Grassland (LIG)

Objective

To reward farmers for farming grassland extensively which maximises the other services the field provides to nature, water quality and climate. This is a result-based measure which means that fields are assessed qualitatively such that the payment received is linked to the quality of the environmental outcome delivered.

Participants have the opportunity to apply for a late meadow bonus payment (€50/ha) on meadows cut between 1 July and 31 August.

Background

Permanent pastures that are extensively grazed and managed using low fertiliser and herbicides inputs sustain a greater variety of plants and wildlife and have better soil structure, reduced risks to water quality and act as a carbon sink, helping to mitigate against climate change.

Fields are assessed through questions on a scorecard and given a quality score, which reflects their ecological integrity. The scorecard is comprised of positive and negative results indicators which are surrogates for measuring the total biodiversity present. Threats or risks to the ecological integrity or the future conservation quality of the field are also assessed, with negative marks awarded where risks are found.

Field suitability requirements

Selected LPIS parcels must be declared as Low input permanent pasture, Permanent pasture or Traditional hay meadow on the 2023 BISS application.

To select this action, the 3 criteria below must be met. If the field is a designated SAC/SPA or Annex 1 Grassland, the 3 criteria below do not need to be met to select this action.

1. The field(s) must be extensively managed with low inputs of chemical and organic fertiliser
2. The cover of ryegrass must be low (<30%) and the field must not contain more than 3% heather.
3. The field (pasture/meadow) must have a minimum of four grass species, excluding ryegrasses.

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Payment requirements

1. This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is applied to a split LPIS, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted. Parcels must have a defined field boundary from the commencement of the contract i.e. hedgerow, drain, watercourse, fence etc. In Natura parcels where erecting a new fence is listed as an activity requiring consent for that specific SAC/SPA, split parcels can only be created where an existing defined field boundary is already present.
2. A geotagged photo taken from the centre of the parcel must be submitted as part of the FSP and ACRES application using the Agrisnap app, giving a clear representation of each parcel selected. A minimum of one photo per parcel must be supplied.
3. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.25 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 10 hectares.
4. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.

Field assessment requirement

5. Fields must be scored by an approved ACRES advisor between 1 June and 31 August in years 1, 3 and 5 of your contract using the ACRES Grassland scorecard (See **Appendix 3**).
6. Participants can declare that scores recorded in years 1 and 3 can be used to form the payment claim in years 2 and 4, however, there will be the option to score all LIG fields in years 2 and 4 as indicated on the BISS application.
7. A geo-tagged photograph submitted via the AgriSnap App giving a clear representation of the scored field, must accompany each scorecard.
8. Indicator species occurring in the boundaries and margins, but not otherwise represented in the main part of the field cannot be counted.
9. Participants must arrange with the advisor a suitable assessment date. In order for fields to be scored, they cannot be recently mown as there needs to be sufficient vegetation cover to score so payments can be made.

Note: All scorecards for each holding must be submitted within **14** days of initiating the first scorecard. The last day for submission of scorecards to the Department is **31 August** each year.

The following specification for late meadow bonus payment refers to parcels that are mown for hay or silage. The entire LPIS must be suitable for mowing and committed to the late meadow bonus payment if chosen.

Requirements to qualify for late meadow bonus payment in Low Input Grassland

1. Meadows must be closed-up with no grazing or machinery operations to take place for at least 6 weeks prior to cutting.
2. The earliest date meadows may be cut for hay/silage is 1 July and the latest date to qualify for the bonus payment is 31 August.
3. A request will be sent to all LIG participants annually. If applicable in any year of contract, those cutting the whole parcel as a late meadow can make a claim by submitting a Geo-tagged photograph(s), via the AgriSnap App, giving a clear representation of the mown meadow. The photo must be submitted to DAFM on the **date of mowing or within 5 days after mowing** activity (but must be prior to significant grass re-growth).

Low Input Peat Grassland (LIPG)

Objective

This is a climate mitigation action which rewards farmers for sensitive management of grassland on peat soils in order to help reduce CO₂ emissions. This action is results-based and is targeted at grassland next to raised bog SAC habitats.

Participants have the opportunity to apply for a late meadow bonus payment (€50/ha) on meadows cut between 1 July and 31 August.

Background

The natural transitional area around raised bogs (lagg zone) is vital for supporting raised bog ecosystems. Raised bogs provide a range of ecosystem services, including biodiversity, clean water and carbon storage. Pressures from land use in these transitional zones have altered the ecosystem, resulting in the loss of these important ecosystem services. The grassland on peat scorecard incentivises farmers with land in these transitional zones to help restore these important ecosystems and the services they provide.

The scorecard is a series of questions which are answered by the surveyor for each field being scored. The result is a rating for the field on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent). A large portion of the score is based on the condition of the peat soils. The wetter the peat, the less carbon is emitted and hence, the higher the score. For instance, 50% of the points on the Wet Grassland scorecard are based on how wet the soil is. If you want to increase the wetness of your peaty plots, think about slowing the flow of water off the field. Points are also awarded for biodiversity – high cover of native meadow species such as meadowsweet, bird's-foot trefoil and common knapweed, will earn you more points. Points can be lost if threats exist, such as excessive poaching, dumping, scrub encroachment and/or risks to watercourse(s).

Field suitability requirements

To select this action, the field(s) must intersect the Designated Raised Bog 500m buffer map and have been declared as Low input permanent pasture, Permanent pasture or Traditional hay meadow on the 2023 BISS application.

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Payment requirements

1. This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is applied to a split LPIS, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted. Parcels must have a defined field boundary from the commencement of the contract i.e. hedgerow, drain, watercourse, fence etc.
2. A geotagged photo taken from the centre of the parcel must be submitted as part of the FSP and ACRES application using the Agrisnap app, giving a clear representation of each parcel selected. A minimum of one photo per parcel must be supplied.

3. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.25 hectares. If selected as a priority action, the minimum area to be delivered is 0.5 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 10 hectares.
4. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.
5. Where a watercourse is present on or adjacent to the parcel, bovines are not permitted to access the watercourse. Where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when bovines are present (drinking points are not permitted.) Watercourses applicable to this requirement are defined as any body of water that is marked on GLAM as OSi Water line and Water single stream line. If this is in a Natura 2000 designated site, fencing of the watercourse is not mandatory.

Field assessment requirements

6. Fields must be scored by an approved advisor between 1 June and 31 August in years 1, 3 and 5 of your contract using the ACRES Low Input Peat Grassland scorecard (See **Appendix 4**)
7. Participants can declare that scores recorded in years 1 and 3 can be used to form the payment claim in years 2 and 4, however, there will be the option to score all LIPG fields in years 2 and 4 as indicated on the BISS application.
8. A geo-tagged photograph submitted via the AgriSnap App giving a clear representation of the parcel, must accompany each scorecard.
9. Indicator species occurring in the field margins/boundaries, but not otherwise represented in the main part of the field cannot be counted.
10. Participants must arrange with the advisor a suitable assessment date.

Note: All scorecards for each holding must be submitted the within **14** days of initiating first scorecard. The last day for submission of scorecards to the Department is **31 August** each year.

The following specification for late meadow bonus payment refers to parcels that are mown for hay or silage. The entire LPIS must be suitable for mowing and committed to the late meadow bonus payment if chosen.

Requirements to qualify for Late Meadow Bonus Payment in Low Input Peat Grassland

1. Meadows must be closed-up with no grazing or machinery operations to take place for at least 6 weeks prior to cutting.
2. The earliest date meadows may be cut for hay/silage is 1 July and the latest date to qualify for the bonus payment is 31 August.
3. A request will be sent to all LIPG participants annually. If applicable in any year of contract, those cutting the whole parcel as a late meadow can make a claim by submitting a Geo-tagged photograph(s), via the AgriSnap App, giving a clear representation of the mown meadow. The photo must be submitted to DAFM on the **date of mowing or within 5 days after mowing** activity (but must be prior to significant grass re-growth).

Management of Intensive Grassland Next to a Watercourse

Objective

To help reduce soil erosion and compaction, while also helping to protect water quality from nutrient and sediment run-off from grassland swards.

Background

Reducing stocking density and fertiliser inputs on improved grassland will help protect water quality in areas deemed to be at high risk. Reducing surface runoff may also help reduce sediment and nutrient losses to watercourses. This action is targeted to grasslands next to a watercourse where there is potential for nutrient and sediment loss, and/or erosion of the banks of a watercourse(s). It could also be used to buffer sensitive habitats that are under potential threat from excess nutrients.

Site suitability requirements

1. Only holdings that had a whole farm stocking rate of 100Kg Nitrogen per hectare from grazing livestock or above in 2022 can select this action.
2. Select on a parcel(s) contiguous to any watercourse(s) marked on GLAM as OSI Water line or Water single stream line.
3. The parcel must be declared as grassland on 2023 BISS application and for the duration of the contract.

This action is recommended in areas identified as a high-risk area for phosphorous and Nitrogen loss to water as indicated on the EPA Pollution Impact Potential – Phosphorous (PIP-P) maps and Nitrogen (PIP-N) maps Rank 1-3.

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

1. This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is on a split parcel, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted.
2. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.5 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 5 hectares.
3. Parcel(s) must be stock proof for the duration of the contract.
4. Grazing is not permitted from 1 October to 15 March.
5. No reseeding or drainage works are permitted for the duration of the contract.
6. Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the parcel.
7. Where a watercourse is present on or adjacent to the parcel, bovines are not permitted to access the watercourse. Where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when bovines are

present (drinking points are not permitted.) Watercourses applicable to this requirement are defined as any body of water that is marked on GLAM as OSi Water line and Water single stream line. If this is in a Natura 2000 designated site, fencing of the watercourse is not mandatory.

8. Fencing must be fit for purpose - appropriate to the livestock type.
9. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious/invasive weeds. Invasive weeds can also be controlled by topping but this is only permitted after 1 July in localised areas.
10. No machinery operations are permitted from April to June each year. The selected parcel(s) can be cut for hay or silage but only after 1 July.
11. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.
12. This action must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.

Minimum Tillage

Objective

To contribute to climate by reducing carbon emissions, to help improve soil structure, and to protect water quality from nutrient and sediment run-off.

Background

Minimum tillage means sowing a crop without inverting the soil i.e. the soil cannot be ploughed. Minimum tillage has many advantages for both the farmer and the land. It can save fuel and time for the farmer. It reduces damage done to the soil by rain, helps prevent the breakdown of soil structure and reduces the formation of a hard pan in the soil. This measure also protects archaeological monuments within the topsoil and subsurface of the soil. The use of min-till techniques including direct drilling offer significant climate benefits by reducing the carbon emissions that are associated with conventional ploughing operations.

Site suitability

Payment for this action is only applicable on the establishment of a tillage (cereal/break) crop. This action should be considered in poorly draining areas particularly in critical source areas where focussed delivery of surface runoff to watercourses occurs.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS are:

Barn Owl nest box, Brassica fodder stubble, Catch crops, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Over winter stubble, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

1. Establish a tillage crop using minimum tillage or direct drilling equipment i.e. the crop must be sown without inverting the soil (the soil cannot be ploughed).
2. This action can only be selected on a full LPIS parcel(s) in year 1. However, the entire area of the parcel does not have to be entered for the action. The LPIS selected must be marked on the map submitted. If you do not wish to deliver this action on the entire parcel, then you must enter the area to be delivered for each LPIS chosen.
3. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.5 hectares. If selected as a priority action, the minimum area to be delivered is 10 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 50 hectares.
4. This action must be delivered on the next crop establishment following approval into the scheme and for all subsequent years of the contract.
5. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.

6. This measure can be rotated, if necessary, once the area(s) delivered is at least equal in size to the contract area(s) established in year one. The LPIS parcel and area for this action must be declared each year of the contract on the participant's BISS application. ACRES participants may change the location of this action to a parcel(s) other than what was declared for ACRES on their annual BISS application by giving advance notice to the Department before the annual establishment deadline.

Over 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. Over winter stubbles with green cover make a viable foraging habitat for insects and hares throughout the autumn and winter while also assisting in the capturing of excess nutrients after harvesting.

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. Furthermore, the retention of green cover on stubbles lessens the risk of soil erosion and nutrient leaching during the winter while also promoting carbon sequestration making it an important water and climate enhancing measure.

Site suitability

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.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Minimum tillage, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

1. Following the harvest of a cereal crop, oilseed rape or linseed (but not maize), one of the two options below must be implemented in line with the requirements set down in SI No 113 of 2022 (as amended).

Option A: To provide a food source for birds, leave stubbles in situ until at least 1 February of the following year

OR

Option B: Conduct shallow cultivation to encourage the emergence of a green cover within 14 days following harvest and leave in situ until at least 1 February of the following year. Ensure the requirements set down in SI No 113 of 2022 (as amended) are adhered to.

2. This action can only be selected on a full LPIS parcel(s) in year 1. However, the entire area of the parcel does not have to be entered for the action. The LPIS selected must be marked on the map submitted. If you do not wish to deliver this action on the entire parcel, then you must enter the area to be delivered for each LPIS chosen.
3. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.5 hectares. If selected as a priority action, the minimum area to be delivered is 4 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 50 hectares. Where necessary, the area selected should consider requirements under SI No 113 of 2022 (as amended).
4. Livestock must be excluded from the date of harvest to 1 February.
5. No pre-harvest desiccants are permitted except for on oil seed rape. No post-harvest herbicides are permitted up to 1 February.
6. Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the stubble.
7. Grazing or topping of the stubble is not permitted from the date the crop is harvested to 1 February of the following year.
8. The stubbles must remain in situ until 1 February of the following year.
9. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.
10. This measure can be rotated each year once the area(s) delivered is at least equal in size to the contract area(s) established in year one. The LPIS parcel and area for this action must be declared each year of the contract on the participant's BISS application. ACRES participants may change the location of this action to a parcel(s) other than what was declared for ACRES on their annual BISS application by giving advance notice to the Department before the annual establishment deadline.

Additional guidance

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

Planting a New Hedgerow

Objectives

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

Background

Mature 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

Planting new Hedgerow action is not permitted on NPWS Designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs), Breeding Wader Hotspots, and within archaeological monument buffer zones. Ensure the site is suitable for hedgerow establishment. 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.

Note: Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS II, TAMS 3, any DAFM Capital investment Scheme or any EU/National funded agri-environmental scheme from 01 January 2018, this fence cannot fulfil the fencing requirement for Planting a new Hedgerow.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Grass margins – arable, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a traditional orchard, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. Plant the contracted length of the new hedgerow by 31 March 2025. To be eligible for this action the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. The maximum length for payment is 750m.
2. The location and length must be identified on the LPIS parcels and marked on the map submitted. 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 in a double row using species from **Table 1** 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) for the duration of the contract.
6. All newly planted hedgerows in a grass or tillage field must be fenced off and protected from livestock with an appropriate permanent fence. This fence may need to be moved out further as the hedgerow grows and expands.
7. Grass and other competing vegetation must be controlled around the plants annually to aid establishment.
8. Failed or dead plants must be replaced in the following planting season.

Additional guidance

- Plant native species that already grow in the local area. Plants should be of native provenance where possible.
- In a bid to enhance environmental benefit, it is recommended to incorporate a number of species into the new hedgerow where possible (with no one species making up more than 85% of the total).
- Plant one tree at least every 50m from the Tree species (**Table 2** below) and let mature without cutting. Alternatively, leave a hedgerow species (**Table 1** below) mature into a tree every 50 metres. These should be protected with a tree guard or shelter.
- 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.
- If you want a hedgerow with a wide base that will always be managed by topping, prune thorn species (except holly) down to 2 to 3 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.

Table 1.**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 2.**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>)
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 a Traditional Orchard

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 must be established within agricultural parcels with an MEA on the applicants 2022 BPS application.

Traditional Orchard is not permitted on NPWS Designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs) and on archaeological monuments.

Note: Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS II, TAMS 3, any DAFM Capital investment Scheme or any EU/National funded agri-environmental scheme from 01 January 2018, this fence cannot fulfil the fencing requirement for Planting a Traditional Orchard.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Grass margins – arable, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. Create an orchard of at least 0.05 hectares by planting 10 traditional fruit trees from **Table 1** before 31 March 2025. Trees can only be planted during the dormant season (October to March).
2. The location of the orchard must be identified on the LPIS parcel selected and marked on the map submitted.
3. The orchard must be fenced off from livestock with a fit for purpose permanent fence. However, grazing inside the fence 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.
4. Trees must be spaced at least 5 metres apart.
5. Plants must be purchased from DAFM registered professional operators.
6. All trees purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport which must be retained for the duration of the contract.

7. Pesticides are not permitted except for the spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds.
8. Grass and other competing vegetation must be controlled around the trees until they become established.
9. Failed or dead trees must be replaced during the next planting season.

Additional guidance

- It is advisable that the trees have their own roots or have been grafted onto vigorous rootstocks (MM106 or MM111).
- Where necessary, trees should be supported with a suitable stake and secured with a suitable tie. 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 duration of the contract.

Table 1. List of tree varieties for planting a 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 in Riparian Buffer Zones

Objectives

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

Site suitability

This action can only be selected on a Riparian Buffer Zone-Grassland or Riparian Buffer Zone-Arable whole parcel or split parcel.

Tree planting options are not permitted in NPWS designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs), landscapes targeted for breeding waders such as curlew, or within an archaeological monument buffer zone.

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 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.

If choosing Planting trees in Riparian buffer zone action, it is best to plant small groups of trees that are less than 0.1 hectare. If trees are planted in a group under 0.1 hectare, they would not count towards the 1ha cumulative total.

When establishing wooded buffers, tree planting density should be kept sufficiently low to allow establishment of ground storey vegetation. Refer to **Diagram 1** below.

There may be areas on the farm where planting would meet specific objectives of the National Afforestation Programme, please refer to www.gov.ie for more information.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer zone – arable, Riparian buffer zone – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

1. Select a Riparian buffer zone where tree planting will benefit water quality. For trees to be eligible for payment, the Riparian buffer zone must meet all eligibility requirements as set out in the specification.
2. Select the Riparian buffer zone(s) for planting trees by drawing one point on the zone. Then enter the number of trees that will be planted on the chosen zone(s) in the quantity box provided.
3. The minimum number of trees to be delivered is 10 and the maximum number that can be delivered is 200.
4. Planting of trees must be completed by 31 March 2025.
5. Plants must be of Irish Origin or Irish Provenance and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators.
6. All plants purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) for the duration of the contract.
7. Purchased trees must be a minimum of 60cm in height.
8. Plant at least 2 species from **Table 1** 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 2** for clearance distance for overhead lines.
10. Fit each tree with a staked tree shelter, minimum 75cm in height, and protect trees from livestock damage with appropriate fencing (livestock are not permitted to access a Riparian Buffer Zone - Grassland or Arable).
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 and remove any weeds/grass that may be growing within the shelter.
12. Failed or dead trees must be replaced during the next dormant season.
13. There must not be more than 200 trees planted per hectare. For example, in 0.1 hectares, the maximum trees to be planted is 20. The minimum spacing between trees is 2 metres.

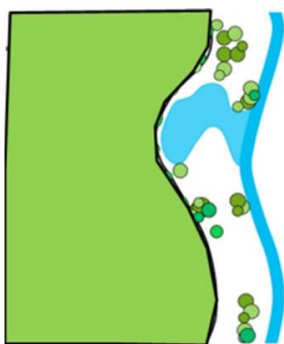
Additional guidance

- Plant native species that already 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 so plants are planted on a weed-free area (less than 1 metre 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.
- Spacing will depend on the direction of the watercourse as planting needs to avoid over-shading the stream/river. See examples below
- Unmanaged riparian areas are very susceptible to non-native invasive species e.g. Himalayan balsam, Giant hogweed. Monitor the riparian buffer and carry out

appropriate management/removal of non-native invasive species where necessary.

- In arterial drained catchments, 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.

Diagram 1.



Planting trees in a Riparian Zone should comprise of single trees or small groups of suitable native riparian species of trees and shrubs strategically planted and maintained for bank stabilisation, dappled shading and as a food source for aquatic life.

Planting small clusters of trees to achieve 20% cover is recommended. Trees can be planted in groups of 5 to 10 trees with 2.5m spacing between the trees and 10m spacing between the groups.

Table 1.

Native species

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 2. 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.	

Protection and Maintenance of Archaeological Monuments - Arable

Objective

To enhance and maintain visible archaeological monuments as landscape features and protect their historical value in a tillage parcel.

Background

All known archaeological monuments in the state are marked on maps on the National Monuments Service website and can be found at the following link:

[Historic Environment Viewer \(arcgis.com\)](https://historicenvironmentviewer.arcgis.com)

Only monuments on the GLAM mapping system are eligible for this action.

Site suitability

All monuments entered for this action must be within agricultural parcels with an Eligible hectare on the applicant's 2023 BISS application and declared as arable crop (except for temporary grassland, grass seed and grass meal) in 2023.

Monuments **must be visible** on the selected LPIS parcel(s).

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Grass margins – arable, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food strip.

Note: Any proposed works to a Recorded Monument that involves digging/ground disturbance must be notified in advance to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for their consideration.

Under no circumstances should burning take place on or near the monument, as this can also cause damage to underlying archaeological deposits.

Requirements

1. Establish a 10m wide grass margin around each monument by sowing a grass seed mix by 31 August 2024 using certified seed. The action must be carried out on at least one monument. The maximum number for payment is 10.
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.

3. 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.
4. Soil cultivation cannot be carried out within the margin once established.
5. Machine operations are not permitted once the margin has been established. However, topping or mowing is permitted once it doesn't cause damage to the monument.
6. The margin must be maintained as grass by mowing or strimming to prevent woody growth for the duration of the contract.
7. Pesticides are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds
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 is permitted provided that no damage is caused to the monument. Where there is a risk of damage or poaching the site must be fenced off.

Additional guidance

- In the case of bracken, the ideal method is the manual cutting and crushing 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.

Protection and Maintenance of Archaeological Monuments - Grassland

Objective

To enhance and maintain visible archaeological monuments as landscape features and protect their historical value.

Background

The aim of this option is to control certain types of re-seeded or quickly colonising trees and invasive woody plants and other problematic plants around a visible archaeological monument.

All known archaeological monuments in the state are marked on maps on the National Monuments Service website and can be found at the following link:

[Historic Environment Viewer \(arcgis.com\)](https://historicenvironmentviewer.arcgis.com)

Only monuments on the GLAM mapping system are eligible for this action.

Site suitability

All monuments entered for this action must be within agricultural parcels with an Eligible hectare on the applicant's 2023 BISS application.

Monuments **must be visible** on the selected LPIS parcel(s). Monuments on commonage are not eligible for this action.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Brassica fodder stubble, Coppicing of hedgerows, Environmental management of arable fallow, Extensively grazed pasture, Geese and swans, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Low input grassland, Low input peat grassland, Management of intensive grassland next to a watercourse, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Riparian buffer zone - grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food plot, Winter bird food strip.

Note: Any proposed works to a Recorded Monument that involves digging/ground disturbance must be notified in advance to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for their consideration.

Under no circumstances should burning take place on or near the monument, as this can also cause damage to underlying archaeological deposits.

Requirements

1. The location of the monument(s) selected for this action must be indicated on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. The action must be carried out on at least one monument. The maximum number for payment is 10.
2. Manage vegetation on and around all monuments initially by 29 February 2025 and annually thereafter.
3. Remove all encroaching vegetation (excluding established healthy trees) on/near the monument. Roots of plants must not be removed.
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, whins, rhododendron, laurel and other individual plants should be removed by cutting at the base and treating the stump with an appropriate herbicide to prevent re-growth.
6. Larger trees should be pruned to above head height to open up access to the site or monument. Pollarding of trees is allowed.
7. Management of vegetation must NOT be carried out between 1 March and 31 August annually. The one exception to this rule is the cutting or thrashing (flailing) of bracken and ferns which can be carried out in the middle of June.
8. Cut down dead or unstable trees: Cut as close as possible to ground level, leave the stump in place and replace the root plate in the existing depression.
9. Felled or dead trees must be cut into pieces where they fall, and these should remain in situ as a habitat for invertebrates.
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 the 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 must be fenced off and allowed to recover, before grazing resumes.

Additional guidance

- In the case of bracken, the ideal method is the manual cutting and crushing 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.
- After woody vegetation has been removed, maintain the visibility of the monument by strimming ground cover within 3m of the exterior of the monument.

Riparian Buffers Strips/Zones - Arable

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. This action has options for linear buffer strips and area-based buffer zones.

Site suitability

1. Riparian buffer strips or zones - Arable can only be created adjacent to small streams, surface drains, rivers, lakes or ponds.
2. The riparian buffer strip and zone - Arable can only be selected on LPIS parcels declared as an arable crop (except for temporary grassland, grass seed and grass meal) and Riparian Zone on the 2023 BISS application.

When choosing locations for Riparian Buffers, it is recommended that they are targeted to areas on the farm identified in the EPA Pollution Impact Potential-Phosphorus (PIP-P) maps as high risk (Rank 1-3) and verified on the ground as a flow delivery point or pathway for surface runoff to an adjacent watercourse. The Riparian Buffer Zones are particularly important here to create a targeted wide buffer in these high-risk areas.

Note 1: Where a Riparian buffer strip is created in a parcel, bovines are not permitted to access any OSI Water line or single stream line watercourse at other locations in the parcel (drinking points are not permitted).

Riparian buffer strips

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Grass margins – arable, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food strip.

Riparian buffer zones

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

Riparian buffer strip - Linear

1. Establish a 3, 4, 6 or 8 metre grass riparian buffer strip(s) by sowing a seed mix from **Table 1** below by 31 August 2024 using certified seed.
2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Participants can choose different strip widths within the same LPIS.
3. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. The Riparian buffer strip width is measured from the top of the bank or from the edge of an existing boundary (ie. hedgerow, treeline, stone wall or earthen bank) into the field. Where scrub is present, the margin width can be inclusive of scrub.

Riparian buffer zone - Area

4. Establish a riparian buffer zone area by sowing a seed mix from **Table 1** below by 31 August 2024 using certified seed.
5. This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is selected on a split LPIS, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted.
6. To be eligible for this action, the minimum area to deliver is 0.04 hectares and the maximum area for payment is 2 hectares.
7. When creating a Riparian Buffer Zone - Split parcel, it must extend at least 20 metres out from the watercourse or boundary feature at the widest point along the zone.
8. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.

Requirements which apply to both options

9. The Riparian buffer is in addition to any mandatory baseline requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding.
10. The buffer must be established using non-inversion techniques (ploughing is not permitted).
11. Soil cultivation cannot be carried out within the buffer once established.
12. Livestock are not permitted to graze the buffer.
13. The seed mix must contain at least three grass species, of which Cocksfoot must make up a minimum of 40%. Seed labels and receipts must be kept for the duration of the contract.
14. Chemical or organic fertilisers cannot be applied to the buffer.
15. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious/invasive weeds.
16. Cutting is permitted but cannot take place between 1 March and the 31 August annually. Offtakes can be removed.
17. Riparian Buffer strips established under the former GLAS Arable Grass margins action can continue to be managed under the new ACRES scheme. These should not be ploughed to re-establish a new margin as they already benefit from a significant reduction in nutrients and increased botanical diversity. After cutting in year one, these can be over-sown with the grass mix and managed as above for Riparian Buffer Strip/Zone action.

Additional guidance

- Grass should be cut in the first two years to encourage a dense sward.
- As a build-up of nutrients can occur over time, some buffers will require more frequent management to maintain functionality. In spatially targeted buffers where there is a high risk of overland flow, cutting and removal of vegetation at least once annually will be necessary.
- The use of heavy machinery should be avoided within 2 metres of the bank.
- Riparian areas are very susceptible to non-native invasive species e.g. Himalayan balsam, Giant hogweed. Monitor the riparian buffer and carry out appropriate management/removal of non-native invasive species where necessary.

Table 1.

Grass mix for sowing Riparian buffers – Arable 25-30kg/ha
Meadow Fescue (<i>Festuca pratensis</i>)
Timothy (<i>Phleum pratense</i>)
Cocksfoot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>) at least 40%
Smooth Meadowgrass (<i>Poa pratensis</i>)
Red Fescue (<i>Festuca rubra</i>)
Perennial Ryegrass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>)

Riparian Buffer Strips/Zones - Grassland

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. This action has options for linear buffer strips and area-based buffer zones.

Site suitability

1. Riparian buffer strips or zones - Grassland can only be created adjacent to small streams, surface drains, rivers, lakes or ponds.
2. The Riparian buffer strip and zone - Grassland can only be selected on LPIS parcels declared as grassland and Riparian Zone on 2023 BISS application.
3. Riparian buffer strips/zones – Grassland action is not permitted on NPWS Designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs).

When choosing locations for Riparian Buffer it is recommended, they are targeted to areas on the farm identified in the EPA Pollution Impact Potential-Phosphorus (PIP-P) maps as high risk (Rank 1-3) and verified on the ground as a flow delivery point or pathway for surface runoff to an adjacent watercourse. The Riparian Buffer Zones are particularly important here to create a targeted wide buffer in these high-risk areas.

Note 1: Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS II, TAMS 3, any DAFM Capital investment Scheme or any EU/National funded agri-environmental scheme from 01 January 2018, this fence cannot fulfil the fencing requirement for Riparian Buffer Strips/Zones - Grassland.

Note 2: Where a Riparian buffer strip is created in a parcel, bovines are not permitted to access any OSI Water line or single stream line watercourse at other locations in the parcel (drinking points are not permitted).

Riparian buffer strips

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food strip.

Riparian buffer zones

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

Riparian buffer strip - Linear

1. Erect a permanent fence to create a 1.5, 3 or 6 metre riparian buffer strip by 15 May 2024.
2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Participants can choose different buffer strip widths within the same LPIS.
3. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10 metres. The Riparian buffer strip width is measured from the top of the bank or from the edge of an existing boundary (ie. hedgerow, treeline, stone wall or earthen bank) into the field. Where scrub is present, the margin width can be inclusive of scrub.

Riparian buffer zone - Area

4. Erect a permanent fence to create a Riparian buffer zone area by 15 May 2024.
5. This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is being selected on a split LPIS, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted.
6. To be eligible for this action, the minimum area to be delivered is 0.04 hectares and the maximum area for payment is 2 hectares.
7. When creating a Riparian buffer zone - Split Parcel, it must extend at least 20 metres out from the watercourse or boundary feature at the widest point along the zone.
8. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.

Requirements which apply to both options

9. The Riparian buffer is in addition to any mandatory baseline requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding.
10. The Riparian buffer strip(s) and zone(s) must be fenced off and stock proof for the duration of the contract to exclude all livestock.
11. Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the Riparian buffer.
12. Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious/invasive weeds.
13. Cutting is permitted but cannot take place between 1 March and 31 August.

Additional guidance

- An access point into the buffer strip/zone is permitted to keep it managed.
- As a build-up of nutrients can occur over time, some buffers will require more frequent management to maintain functionality. In spatially targeted buffers where there is a high risk of overland flow, cutting and removal of vegetation at least once annually may be necessary.
- The use of heavy machinery should be avoided within 2 metres of the bank.
- Riparian areas are very susceptible to non-native invasive species e.g. Himalayan balsam, Giant hogweed. Monitor the riparian buffer and carry out appropriate management/removal of non-native invasive species where necessary.

Ryegrass Seed-Set as Winter Food for Birds

Objective

To create a ryegrass margin that can be used by farmland birds as a critical feed source during the autumn and into late winter. The ability of ryegrass to retain seed right into March, bridges the late winter hungry gap for numerous bird species such as yellowhammers, grey partridge, buntings and skylarks while also benefiting invertebrates and small mammals.

Background

Winter is a period when seed-eating farmland birds often struggle to find an alternative source of food as other seed-bearing plants become exhausted of seed, especially approaching January and into February. Intensive agriculture practices coupled with changes in cropping patterns have contributed to declining bird populations across Europe. This is particularly acute in grassland dominated landscapes that often lack arable cultivations and over winter stubbles which are commonly used as winter food sources for birds.

Research shows that perennial ryegrass can produce an abundant supply of late winter seed for birds provided it is not defoliated after May. It was found that ryegrass plots retained significant seed and sustained greater bird usage into late winter when compared to unharvested cereal crops which were depleted of seed by mid-January.

Site suitability

This action can only be selected on grassland parcels that have greater than 50% ryegrass.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip - grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. Fence off a 10-metre wide ryegrass dominant margin(s) by 1 June along a field boundary. The margin can be grazed or used for silage but must be closed off from 1 June each year until 1 March of the following year to allow the grass to flower and set seed in the autumn.
2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. The maximum length for payment is 2,500m.
3. If the margin is used for silage, it must be harvested by 31 May.

4. The margin must be fenced and protected from livestock (even when the field is only used for forage cutting purposes). Temporary fencing is allowed but must be fit for purpose and remain in place until 1 March of the following year.
5. No grazing or fertilizer application is permitted during the period 1 June to end of February.
6. This action must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.

Additional guidance

- Ideally, the margin should be situated adjacent to a hedgerow which allow birds to nest in the hedgerow and forage in the adjoining ryegrass sward.
- Once the closed period has expired (i.e. after 1 March), bring the land back into production by removing the thatch of over winter vegetation by cutting and removal, or by grazing.

Traditional Dry Stone Wall Maintenance

Objective

The objective of this action is to maintain the network of traditional freestanding dry-stone walls which enhance the visual landscape 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.

Eligible walls suitable for this action

1. Walls built with mortar are not eligible for this action and mortar must not be used in their repair.
2. While trees and shrubs are often found growing along stone walls, only stone walls that are visible and accessible for maintenance are eligible for this action. Walls that are inaccessible due to scrub on or against them are not eligible for payment and should not be selected unless the scrub has been removed to enable repair and maintenance of the wall. Scrub must not be removed between 1 March and 1 September.
3. Due to its habitat value, a stonewall covered in by a hedgerow should not be selected for this action.
4. 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 maintenance.
5. Internal wall lengths must only be counted once and must be maintained on both sides.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Brassica fodder stubble, Catch crops, Coppicing of hedgerows, Environmental management of arable fallow, Extensively grazed pasture, Geese and swans, Grass margins – arable, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Low input grassland, Low input peat grassland, Management of intensive grassland next to a watercourse, Minimum tillage, Over winter stubble, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Planting trees in riparian buffer zones, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Riparian buffer zone – arable, Riparian buffer zone – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food plot, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. The minimum continuous length of stone wall for maintenance is 10 metres and the maximum payable length is 4,000 metres.
2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Stone walls eligible to be paid at the full rate should be identified as Traditional Dry Stone Wall Maintenance-Internal on GLAM. Stone walls only eligible to be paid at half rate should be identified as Traditional Dry Stone Wall Maintenance-Boundary on GLAM.
3. Maintain traditional freestanding dry-stone walls by replacing stones that have fallen off the top of the wall and by repairing gaps within the wall. Walls that have fallen or partly collapsed must be rebuilt in the same style as other walls in the locality.
4. All walls entered for this action must be maintained from the commencement of the contract to the end of the contract. To claim the full rate for any external stone walls, the farmer must have control over both sides and these must be selected as Traditional Dry Stone Maintenance-Internal on GLAM.

Additional guidance

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.

Tree Belts for Ammonia Capture from Farmyards

Objective

To capture ammonia emissions from livestock housing or uncovered slurry stores by directing the emissions into the tree belt and through the main canopy.

Background

Using Low Emission Slurry Spreading equipment and ensuring all slurry storage is covered greatly reduces ammonia emissions. To further reduce losses, a suitably located and managed shelterbelt woodland can provide benefits in terms of ammonia recapture. Planting small woodland blocks strategically located downwind of an ammonia source (e.g. livestock or poultry housing or uncovered slurry stores) optimises ammonia recapture. Together with greenhouse gas recapture, these shelter belts sequester carbon, support biodiversity and screen farm buildings to enhance the visual appearance of the landscape.

Site suitability

The tree belt must be sited adjacent to livestock housing or a slurry storage facility.

Tree belts are not permitted on NPWS designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs), Breeding Wader Hotspots, semi-natural grasslands, Annex 1 grasslands and within archaeological monument buffer zones.

Sites should be suitable to establish the chosen tree species, should be reasonably sheltered and have no requirement for additional drainage.

Note 1: Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS II, TAMS 3, any DAFM Capital investment Scheme or any EU/National funded agri-environmental scheme from 01 January 2018, this fence cannot fulfil the fencing requirement for Tree Belts for Ammonia Capture from Farmyards.

Note 2: 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 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.

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Requirements

1. This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is selected on a split LPIS, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted.
2. The minimum depth of shelterbelt is 30 metres. The minimum parcel area is 0.18 hectares and maximum area for payment is 0.5 hectares (which includes the area of tree belt planted and the perimeter fencing).
3. Planting of the tree belt must be completed by 31 March 2025.
4. The tree belt must be fenced off to protect from livestock at least 1.5 metres out from the perimeter trees.
5. Purchased trees must be a minimum of 60cm in height and planted at a minimum of 3 metre spacing between each tree in the main canopy. See **Diagram 1** below.
6. Minimum number of trees is 1 per 10m² of tree belt area.
7. Plants must be of Irish Origin or Irish Provenance and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators.
8. All trees purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) for the duration of the contract.
9. Plant at least 3 species from **Table 1** below of which not more than 25 per cent of the total trees planted to be Scots pine.
10. Grass and competing vegetation must be controlled around the trees annually as required.
11. Planting cannot take place within the vicinity of overhead wires (see **Table 3** below), within 20 m of railway line(s) or within 60 m of neighbouring dwellings. The maximum distance from the livestock shed to the tree belt is 50m.

Additional guidance

- Plant the tree belt according to the prevailing wind direction. If the prevailing wind is southwest, the shelterbelt should be planted to the northeast of the building/slurry store. The distance from the livestock shed to the tree belt should be 10-20m.
- Trees in the main canopy should contain a mix of species at 3m x 3m spacing. No one species should make up more than 60% of the mix. See Tree species for main canopy in **Table 1**. It is advisable to have at least one evergreen conifer in the mix. The main canopy should be open at the front (along the front facing the building) to allow air to enter.
- Ideally, a dense backstop should be planted surrounding the main canopy on 3 sides. The trees should be a mix of species from the backstop list below in Table 1 to create a thick barrier. Spacing in the backstop should be 2m apart. The backstop should be at least 3 rows deep and planted diagonally to create a good barrier.
- Create a weed-free area, <1m in diameter, at each planting position so the newly planted trees are free from competition. Control competing vegetation around each tree (while the tree is dormant) annually which is particularly important in the first 4 years to aid establishment.
- It is recommended that the tree belt is protected with appropriate rabbit fencing.

- Fencing should consist of 3 strand barbed wire or appropriate sheep fencing to effectively exclude all livestock.
- Plants 60cm to 90cm should be used with larger plants around 90cm in height preferable.

Table 1.

Tree species for the main canopy			
Common name	Scientific name	Common name	Scientific name
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Bird cherry	<i>Prunus padus</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Whitebeam	<i>Sorbus aria</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Irish whitebeam	<i>Sorbus Hibernica</i>
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Rock whitebeam	<i>Sorbus rupicola</i>
Black poplar	<i>Populus nigra</i>	Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	Grey willow	<i>Salix cinerea</i>
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	Bay willow	<i>Salix pentandra</i>
Tree species for the backstop			
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>

Table 2. Examples of tree densities

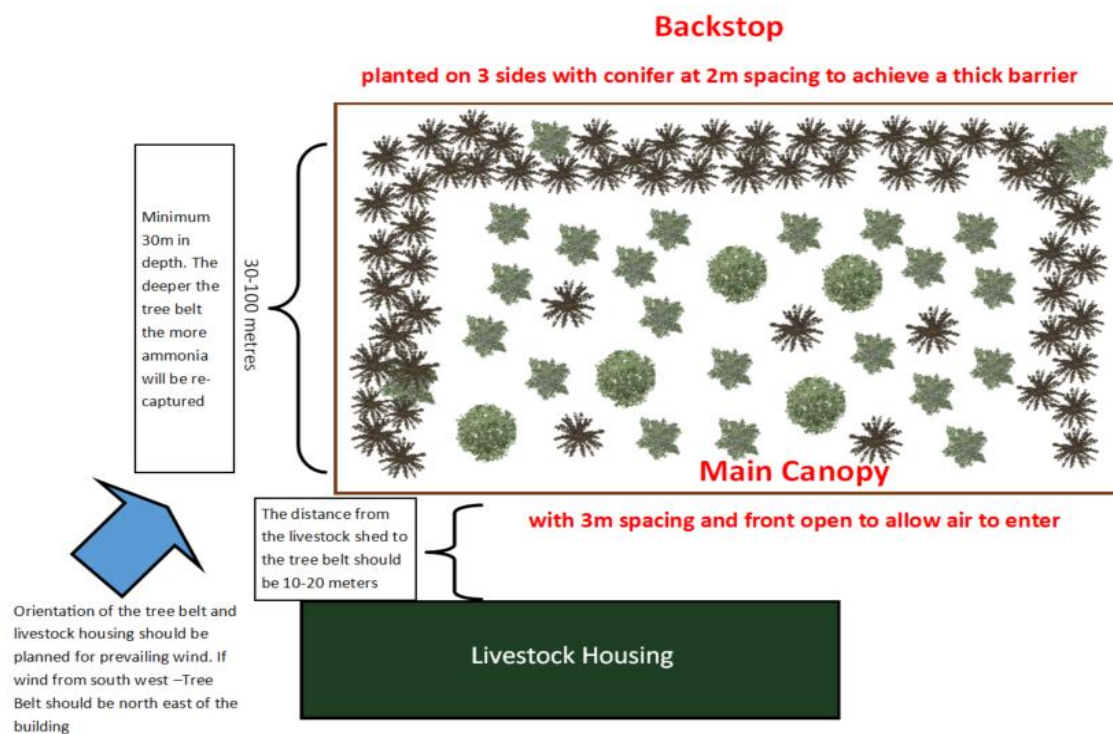
Area selected for Tree Belt	Quantity of trees (Minimum Requirement) 1/10m ²	Quantity of trees 2m × 2m spacing in backstop and 3m × 3m spacing in main canopy
0.18 Ha 1,800 m ²	180	Example: 60m × 30m belt measured by perimeter fencing Backstop = 3 rows = 6m depth (on 3 sides) Area = 99 × 6 = 594m ² No. trees = 594 ÷ 4 = 148 trees backstop Main canopy = 21m depth (30-9) and 45m width (60-15) Area = 45 × 21 = 945 No. trees = 945 ÷ 9 = 105 trees main canopy
0.3 Ha 3,000m ²	300	Example: 100m × 30m belt (measured by perimeter fencing) 198 trees main canopy and 208 trees backstop
0.5 Ha 5,000 m ²	500	Example: 100m × 50m belt (measured by perimeter fencing) 387 trees main canopy and 268 trees backstop

Table 3: 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.	

Diagram 1.

Optimum Tree Belt design



Tree Planting

Objective

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

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 encompasses planting in rows, groups or parkland, which can have multiple benefits on farms when strategically located.

Site suitability

Tree Planting action is not permitted on NPWS Designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs), Breeding Wader Hotspots, semi-natural grasslands, Annex 1 grasslands and within archaeological monument buffer zones.

Sites should be suitable to establish the chosen tree species and should be reasonably sheltered and have no requirement for additional drainage.

Note 1: Where a fence has been grant aided under TAMS II, TAMS 3, any DAFM Capital investment Scheme or any EU/National funded agri-environmental scheme from 01 January 2018, this fence cannot fulfil the fencing requirement for Tree Planting.

Note 2: 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 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.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Grass margins – arable, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Unharvested cereal headlands, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. Planting of trees must be completed by 31 March 2025.
2. Select the LPIS parcel(s) for the tree planting action by drawing one point on the map. Then enter the number of trees that will be planted on the chosen parcel(s) in the quantity box provided.
3. The minimum number of trees to be delivered is 100 where this action is taken as a priority action and 10 where it is taken as a general action. The maximum number that can be delivered is 300 trees.
4. Do not plant in the vicinity of overhead wires, within 20m railway lines and within 60m of a neighbouring dwelling house. See **Table 2** for clearance distance for overhead lines.
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) for the duration of the contract.
7. Purchased trees must be a minimum of 60cm in height.
8. Plant at least 3 native tree species from **Table 1** below, of which not more than 25 per cent of trees planted to be Scots pine.
9. Maintain at least 4 metre spacing between each tree.
10. 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.
11. If using individual barbed protectors (see **Note 2** below) for parkland or rows, the staked tree shelter and fencing is not required.
12. Grass and competing vegetation must be controlled around the trees annually. It will be necessary, from time to time, to lift the tree shelter and remove any weeds/grass that may be growing within the shelter.
13. Failed or dead trees must be replaced during the next dormant season.

Additional guidance

- Trees can be planted in either rows, groups or parkland.
- Plants 60cm to 90cm should be used. Larger plants, 75cm to 90cm placed in a 1.2m tree shelter, is preferable.
- Trees should be pit 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).
- For pit planting, a spade is used to dig a hole and the tree roots placed in the centre. Soil is placed around the tree and firmed in, ensuring that it is upright and straight.
- Fence should be placed at least 1m out from tree to prevent damage by livestock.
- See further guidance on species selection and soil type in **Appendix 11**.

Suggested planting options

Row(s)

Plant trees in a row along a field boundary/farm passageway or along electric fence boundaries. Alternatively, plant a number of rows of trees within a pasture or arable field. If planting multiple rows, maintain at least 12m between the rows to allow for continued grazing or crop production.

Group(s)

Plant trees in groups at desired locations on the farm maintaining at least 4m spacing. The maximum individual area where a group of trees can be planted is 1 hectare.

Parkland

Plant individual trees dispersed throughout a pasture maintaining a distance of 12 metres between individual trees.

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

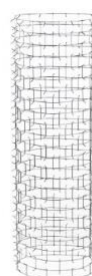


Table 1.

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>	Wych elm	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>
Bird cherry	<i>Prunus padus</i>		

Table 2: 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.	

Un-harvested Cereal Headlands

Objective

To provide a vital food source for seed-eating farmland birds by establishing an open structured cereal headland that is left un-harvested throughout the autumn and winter.

Background

Winter is a period when seed-eating farmland birds can struggle to find food to survive as changes in cropping patterns to winter sown crops and the lack of suitable green stubbles has limited their feeding options. Research has shown that un-harvested cereal headlands and cereal stubbles are two habitats that are heavily relied on by many farmland birds for winter feeding. Species such as reed bunting, tree sparrow, linnet and goldfinch prefer to forage on seeds from un-harvested crops while yellowhammer, skylark and grey partridge like to pick grains and nibble on broad-leaved weeds that are found in open cereal stubbles.

Reduced insecticide and herbicide use on un-harvested cereal headlands encourages the presence of a range of invertebrates including sawflies and plant bugs which are important food sources for the chicks of pheasants and partridges.

Site suitability

This action should only be planted in soils suitable for establishment of a cereal crop.

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Grass margins – arable, Grass margins – grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Winter bird food strip.

Requirements

1. Establish a headland by sowing a cereal crop using the recommended sowing rate for a commercial crop. Certified seed must be used.
2. Select either a 12 metre (m), 21m, 24m or 30m wide unharvested cereal headland. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Only one margin width can be selected across the holding. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. The maximum length for payment is 1,500m.
3. The crop must NOT be harvested and must remain in situ until 1 February.
4. Pre sowing weed control is permitted.

5. Once the crop is sown, no herbicides, pesticides or pre harvest desiccants are permitted on the headland(s) selected for this action. Only the spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds with herbicides is allowed.
6. The headland cannot be used for turning machinery or as a storage site for bales or farmyard manure.
7. Where necessary the action must be protected from livestock using a fence that is fit for purpose. Where no fence is required, the unharvested cereal headland(s) must be clearly identified with visible posts/markers.
8. This action must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.

Additional guidance

- It is recommended to position the margin adjacent to an existing field boundary, grassland margin, hedgerow, or woodland, thus providing cover and refuge for foraging birds.
- Do not select the margin where problem weeds may be an issue eg. sterile brome, black grass, wild oats.
- No or low nitrogen fertilizer is preferable.

Winter Bird Food

Objective

To provide a tailored food source for farmland birds throughout the autumn and winter.

Background

The scarcity of food throughout the winter period generates a serious challenge for the survival of many farmland birds. The establishment of a winter bird food crop, which is specifically tailored to support the eating habitats of numerous farmland species, has proven to be effective in reversing declining bird populations across Europe. These spring-sown winter bird food mixes provide a concentrated seed source so even small areas can have a tremendous impact by supporting a diverse range of bird species.

Site suitability

This action is suitable for improved grassland and arable land only.

The following mandatory pre checks must be carried out.

1. Desk check to inform the **grassland** field locations where this action is not suitable: NPWS designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs) and Annex 1 Grasslands.
2. The field check must also be done to assess the suitability of the chosen parcel.
If the grassland field (a) holds semi-natural grassland or (b) is identified as a field at moderate/higher risk of surface run off or soil erosion, this action must not be selected.

In landscapes where grey partridge is a conservation target, establishing strips of winter bird food side by side with grass margins, provides the food and safe nesting habitat this species critically needs.

Winter bird food plot

The only other actions that can be selected on the chosen area for this action (full LPIS or split of parcel) are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Laying of hedgerows, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance.

Winter bird food strip

Actions that can be selected on the same LPIS or split of parcel are:

Barn Owl nest box, Coppicing of hedgerows, Grass margins-arable, Grass margins-grassland, Laying of hedgerows, Planting a new hedgerow, Planting a traditional orchard, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – arable, Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments – grassland, Riparian buffer strip – arable, Riparian buffer strip – grassland, Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds, Traditional dry stone wall maintenance, Tree planting, Unharvested cereal headlands.

Requirements

Winter bird food plot

1. The winter bird food plot can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is selected on a split parcel, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted.
2. A geotagged photo, taken from the centre of the parcel, must be submitted giving a clear representation of each parcel selected.
3. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.25 hectares. The participant can establish a number of plots around the farm but the maximum area for payment is 3 hectares. The minimum parcel size is 0.25 hectares.
4. There must be 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. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 24, applies to this action.

Winter bird food strip

6. Establish a 6- or 8-metre-wide winter bird food strip along a field boundary. Only one margin width can be selected across the holding. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m and the maximum length for payment is 2,500m.
7. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.

Requirements which apply to both options

8. Where necessary the action must be protected from livestock using a fence that is fit for purpose. Where no fence is required, the boundary of the winter bird food must be clearly identified with visible posts/markers if no natural boundary feature exists.
9. Establish the winter bird food crop by 15 May 2024 using the following mix:
 - At least one or more of these cereals: spring oats/triticale/wheat/barley
 - At least two or more of the following: linseed, oil-seed rape, phacelia, fodder radish, mustard, spring vetch, lucerne, chicory or birds-foot trefoil

The winter bird food crop must be established by **15 May** each year for the duration of the contract.

10. Use appropriate seed rates to ensure there is successful establishment of the crop. Certified seed must be used. Farm-saved seed is not permitted.
11. Once the crop is sown, pesticides are not permitted. Only the spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds with herbicides is allowed. Pre sowing weed control is permitted.
12. 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.
13. Harvesting of the crop is not permitted and must remain in situ until 1 March of the following year.

14. The winter bird food action must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.

Additional guidance

- Do not select sites for winter bird food near dwelling houses, schools, or public amenities.
- 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.
- The application of fertiliser will be necessary to get good establishment in some sites in line with requirements above. Apply lime and fertiliser on the same day as sowing. This is necessary to create sufficient growth to smother annual weeds and produce plenty of seed.

Table 1: List of prescribed species for Winter Bird Food

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

Note: To ensure successful establishment of the Winter bird food crop, the minimum seed rate should be at least one third of the monoculture rate (see **Table 1** 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 2** below.

Table 2: Examples of Winter Bird Food mixes (kg/ha)

Example 1: Three-way mix		Example 2: Four-way mix	
Spring Oats	50kg	Spring Triticale	45kg
Linseed	17kg	Linseed	12.5kg
Mustard	5kg	Chicory	2.5kg
		Bird's Foot Trefoil	3kg

Recommendations for Grey Partridge

1. Ideally, establish a Winter bird food strip alongside an arable Grass margin.
2. Winter bird food strips in conjunction with Grass margins should not be sown under tall trees or adjacent to areas of woodland.
3. If sowing a Winter bird food strip in Grey Partridge areas, it is advisable to have the crop sown by 15 April each year.
4. Use spring wheat as the cereal in the mix and avoid phacelia.

Appendix 1: Barn Owl nest box

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](#).

Exterior Barn Owl nest box



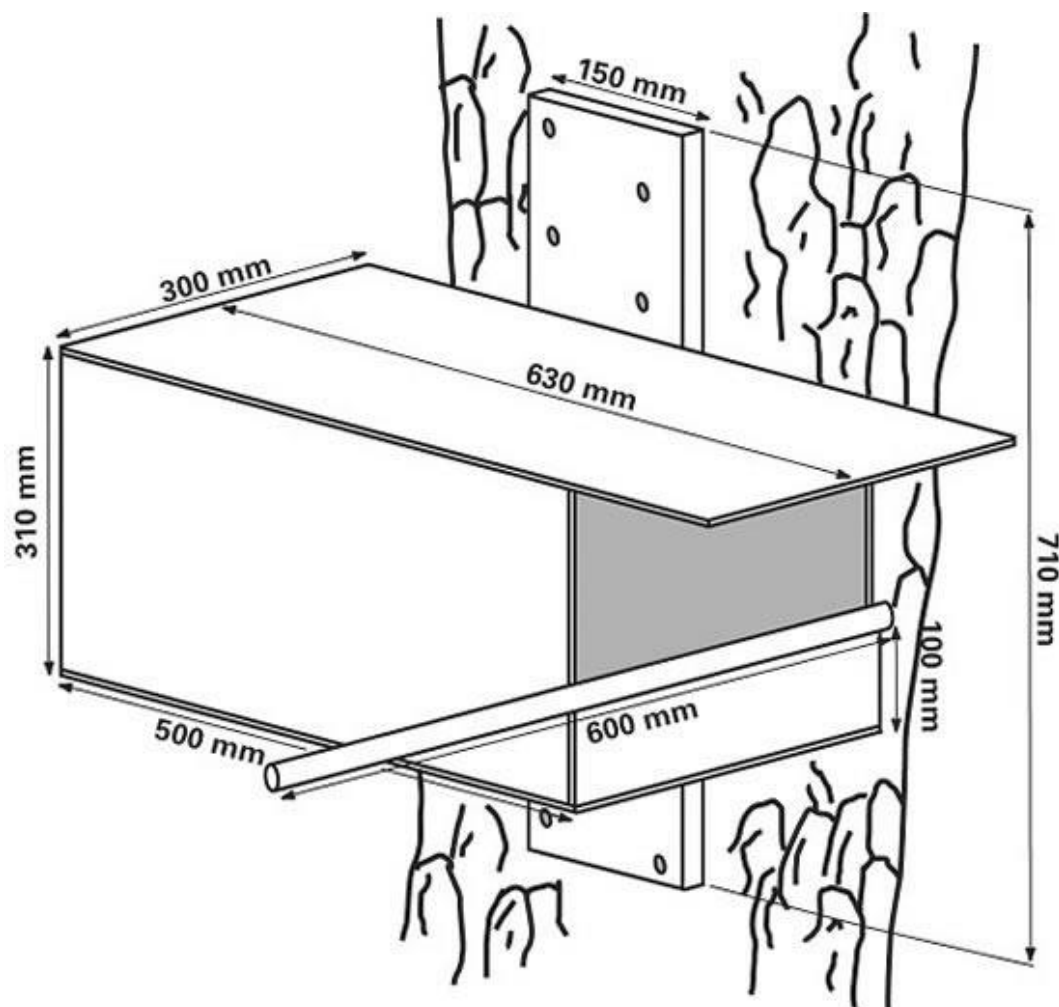
Exterior Barn Owl nest boxes are best situated on large trees with a clear view of the front of the box from the surrounding land. Ideally the box should be situated out of prevailing weather conditions, around 4 to 5 metres high, on a bare trunk so low hanging branches won't block the view of the box 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 2: Kestrel nest box

The Kestrel nest box below (RSPB Design - <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/nestboxes/nestboxes-for-owls-and-kestrels/kestrel-nestboxes/>) 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 3: ACRES Grassland Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <h1 style="margin: 0;">ACRES</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Grassland SCORECARD</h2> </div> <div style="flex: 2;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <div>Farmer name:</div> <div>Surveyor:</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <div>Field number:</div> <div>Survey date:</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div>Business ID:</div> </div> </div> </div>																		
Dominant grassland type: Wet grassland <input type="checkbox"/> Dry grassland <input type="checkbox"/>	Soil type: Mineral soil <input type="checkbox"/> Peat soil <input type="checkbox"/>	Total Score: (A+B) /100																
A Ecological integrity		Total score A (sum of A1 to A6) /90																
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 60%;"> <p>A1 What is the number of positive indicators in the field? Tick all positive indicators present below.</p> <p><i>Note all positive indicators present as you walk a "W" through the field.</i></p> <div style="display: flex;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>Positive indicators: (tick those present)</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 50%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & Stitchworts <input type="checkbox"/> Bird's-foot-trefoil <input type="checkbox"/> Carlina thistle <input type="checkbox"/> Cowslips & Primrose <input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights <input type="checkbox"/> Forget-me-nots <input type="checkbox"/> Heathers <input type="checkbox"/> Kidney vetch <input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds <input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle </div> <div style="width: 50%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lady's smock (Cuckooflower) <input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort <input type="checkbox"/> Louseworts (Common & Marsh) <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh cinquefoil <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh marigold <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh pennywort <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh thistle <input type="checkbox"/> Meadowsweet <input type="checkbox"/> Meadow thistle <input type="checkbox"/> Mints (all) </div> </div> </div> <div style="flex: 1;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Orchids <input type="checkbox"/> Ox-eye daisy <input type="checkbox"/> Purple loosestrife <input type="checkbox"/> Ragged robin <input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (Devil's-bit & field) <input type="checkbox"/> Sedges <input type="checkbox"/> Self-heal & Bugle <input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (Common & Sheep's) <input type="checkbox"/> Small rushes (Spike, Woodrushes, Heath) </div> <div style="flex: 1;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum & Branched mosses <input type="checkbox"/> Tormentil (Common & English) <input type="checkbox"/> Umbels large (and/or Common Valerian, Common hogweed) <input type="checkbox"/> Umbels small (Pignut, Yarrow, Wild carrot) <input type="checkbox"/> Vetches & Vetchlings <input type="checkbox"/> Violets (all species); Harebell <input type="checkbox"/> Wild Thyme <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Composites (Cat's ear, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goat's beard - not Dandelion) <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Flag Iris <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (Hay rattle) </div> </div> </div> <div style="width: 35%;"> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Low: 0-4</td> <td style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 2px;">0</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">High: 9-12</td> <td style="background-color: #006400; color: white; padding: 2px;">20</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Medium: 5-8</td> <td style="background-color: #ffa500; color: white; padding: 2px;">10</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Very high: 13+</td> <td style="background-color: #006400; color: white; padding: 2px;">25</td> </tr> </table> </div> </div>			Low: 0-4	0	High: 9-12	20	Medium: 5-8	10	Very high: 13+	25								
Low: 0-4	0	High: 9-12	20															
Medium: 5-8	10	Very high: 13+	25															
<div style="display: flex;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>A2 What is the cover of all positive indicators (listed above) throughout the entire field?</p> </div> <div style="flex: 2;"> <p><i>Cover is the proportion of the field taken up by all positive indicators present.</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Low: None present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all.</td> <td style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Moderate: You encounter a positive indicator with every few steps taken.</td> <td style="background-color: #ffa500; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">High: You encounter positive indicators with every step taken.</td> <td style="background-color: #006400; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">20</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Very high: You encounter multiple different positive indicators with every step taken (and in between steps).</td> <td style="background-color: #006400; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">25</td> </tr> </table> </div> </div>			Low: None present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all.	0	Moderate: You encounter a positive indicator with every few steps taken.	10	High: You encounter positive indicators with every step taken.	20	Very high: You encounter multiple different positive indicators with every step taken (and in between steps).	25								
Low: None present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all.	0																	
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Very high: You encounter multiple different positive indicators with every step taken (and in between steps).	25																	
<div style="display: flex;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>A3 What is the combined cover of negative indicators/weeds throughout the plot? (tick if present)</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 50%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Docks (NOT small sorrels) <input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (Creeping & spear) <input type="checkbox"/> Perennial Rye-grass <input type="checkbox"/> Ragwort <input type="checkbox"/> Nettles </div> </div> </div> <div style="flex: 2;"> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.</td> <td style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">-20</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward.</td> <td style="background-color: #ffa500; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">-10</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Low <5%: None present or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, overall cover should be less than 5%.</td> <td style="background-color: #006400; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">5</td> </tr> </table> </div> </div>			High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.	-20	Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward.	-10	Low <5%: None present or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, overall cover should be less than 5%.	5										
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Low <5%: None present or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, overall cover should be less than 5%.	5																	
<p>A4 Vegetation Structure. Note: If grassland is primarily grazed use A4(a) (including marsh fritillary suitability assessment); OR, if grassland is cut for hay or silage, use A4(b). Refer to the guidance for sward quality details.</p>																		
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>A4(a) What is the vegetation structure in grasslands which are PRIMARILY GRAZED?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Over-grazed: Sward short throughout with little variation in height of vegetation. Few plants in flower.</td> <td style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">-10</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Moderate (over-grazed): Mostly short vegetation. >50% of field has short sward with occasional to frequent patches of tall vegetation.</td> <td style="background-color: #ffa500; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Good: Field sward medium height throughout with positive indicators flowering. Areas of taller and/or shorter sward also occur.</td> <td style="background-color: #006400; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">25</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Moderate (under-grazed): Mostly tall vegetation. 50-75% of field has tall sward. Litter and dead vegetation occurring.</td> <td style="background-color: #ffa500; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">15</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Under-grazed: Rank vegetation present throughout the field.</td> <td style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">-10</td> </tr> </table> </div> <div style="width: 4%; text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">OR</div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>A4(b) What is the vegetation structure in grasslands which are CUT FOR HAY or SILAGE?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Poor structure: No field margins present. Field topped right up to the field boundary OR short sward throughout.</td> <td style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">-10</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Moderate structure: Narrow field margins and/or headlands present (>1m) OR medium height sward throughout (20-30cm). At least 20% of grass in sward with flowering heads.</td> <td style="background-color: #ffa500; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">15</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Good structure: Field margins and/or headlands at least 2m wide OR tall sward height throughout (>30cm). At least 50% of grass in sward with flowering heads.</td> <td style="background-color: #006400; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 2px;">25</td> </tr> </table> </div> </div>			Over-grazed: Sward short throughout with little variation in height of vegetation. Few plants in flower.	-10	Moderate (over-grazed): Mostly short vegetation. >50% of field has short sward with occasional to frequent patches of tall vegetation.	10	Good: Field sward medium height throughout with positive indicators flowering. Areas of taller and/or shorter sward also occur.	25	Moderate (under-grazed): Mostly tall vegetation. 50-75% of field has tall sward. Litter and dead vegetation occurring.	15	Under-grazed: Rank vegetation present throughout the field.	-10	Poor structure: No field margins present. Field topped right up to the field boundary OR short sward throughout.	-10	Moderate structure: Narrow field margins and/or headlands present (>1m) OR medium height sward throughout (20-30cm). At least 20% of grass in sward with flowering heads.	15	Good structure: Field margins and/or headlands at least 2m wide OR tall sward height throughout (>30cm). At least 50% of grass in sward with flowering heads.	25
Over-grazed: Sward short throughout with little variation in height of vegetation. Few plants in flower.	-10																	
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Good structure: Field margins and/or headlands at least 2m wide OR tall sward height throughout (>30cm). At least 50% of grass in sward with flowering heads.	25																	

A5 Marsh Fritillary suitability assessment in primarily grazed grassland Numerous patches (at least quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		A6 Field boundary quality. Assess the quality of the WORST 30m of field boundary in the field. Refer to guidance document for details. What is the dominant field boundary in this field? Dominant: <input type="checkbox"/> Hedgerow <input type="checkbox"/> Treeline <input type="checkbox"/> Earth bank <input type="checkbox"/> Stonewall <input type="checkbox"/> Drainage ditch <input type="checkbox"/> Wire fence Also present: <input type="checkbox"/> Hedgerow <input type="checkbox"/> Treeline <input type="checkbox"/> Earth bank <input type="checkbox"/> Stonewall <input type="checkbox"/> Drainage ditch <input type="checkbox"/> Wire fence		
		Poor: Wire fence only or very poor quality field boundary present. 0	Moderate: Moderate field boundary quality. 5	Good: Good field boundary quality. 10
B Threats & pressures			Total score B (sum of B1 to B6) /10	
B1 Is there any evidence of damaging activities to habitat, vegetation, or archaeology? High: Damage occurring across a large area ($\geq 21\%$) or of a serious nature if confined. -30 Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area ($\geq 6-20\%$) or of a moderate nature if confined. -20 Low: Damage occurring across a small area ($\leq 5\%$) or of a minor nature if confined. -10 None: No damaging activities. 0 Damaging activities: (tick relevant damage & describe in comments) <input type="checkbox"/> Damage from supplementary feeding <input type="checkbox"/> Quarrying <input type="checkbox"/> Boundary damage <input type="checkbox"/> Damage to archaeological features <input type="checkbox"/> Burning <input type="checkbox"/> Removal of mature scrub/trees <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate herbicide use <input type="checkbox"/> Dumping <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):			B2 What is the level of risk to the quality of natural water bodies within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants? The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance). High: -25 Low: -5 Moderate: -15 None: 0	
B3 What is the extent of bare soil & erosion? High: Excessive areas of bare soil within the body of the field. Bare soil may also be extending out significantly from the main feed sites and/or water troughs, where poaching evident. Significant rutting and soil disturbance caused by vehicle/tractor access. -20 Moderate: Bare soil mainly along regularly used stock routes or congregation areas, with minor soil loss occurring at a few points. Bare soil may extend a short distance beyond the main feed site and/or water points. Minor rutting and soil disturbance caused by occasional vehicle/tractor access may be present. -10 Low: Bare soil more or less restricted to regular stock paths, 'pinch' points & small congregation areas. No soil loss. 10				
B4 What is the cover of non-native invasive species? High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings. -20 Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present. -10 Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering. -5 None: No non-native invasive species present. 0 Non-native invasive species: (tick if present) <input type="checkbox"/> Rhododendron <input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan balsam <input type="checkbox"/> Cotoneaster <input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan knotweed <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese Knotweed <input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan honeysuckle <input type="checkbox"/> Giant Hogweed <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):				
B5 What is the extent of spreading immature scrub? (This can be brambles, seedlings, scrub and trees generally lower than 1m in height and with a stem diameter of <5cm. Do not include established scrub). High: >25% of the field has immature scrub cover, some well-established saplings may be present. Field is likely to show few signs of active management, such as signs of recent grazing or signs of livestock. -20 Moderate: Cover of immature scrub in patches or individuals with overall cover of between 11-25% with particularly briars/brambles coming in. -10 Low: Small patches of immature scrub or individual seedlings of immature scrub with overall cover of less than 10%. Grass growth easily seen underneath the scrub. 0				
B6 What is the cover of bracken? High: Very dense stands of bracken covering over half or more of the field, forming closed canopy. -20 Moderate: Bracken forming dense stands covering parts of the field, mostly forming closed canopy. -10 Low: Bracken absent or some scattered fronds and none forming closed canopy. Can include some isolated small patches or some larger patches on steep slopes. 0				
Common management recommendations to pick from: <input type="checkbox"/> Continue current management of this high quality grassland. <input type="checkbox"/> Control the occurrence and spread of invasive species. Consult with CP team regarding solutions. <input type="checkbox"/> Control the occurrence and spread of encroaching scrub, supporting actions are available. <input type="checkbox"/> Control the occurrence and spread of encroaching bracken. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider reducing fertiliser inputs. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider using supporting actions to slow or impede the flow of drains. <input type="checkbox"/> Use stock to graze field more evenly. <input type="checkbox"/> Improve stock management, supporting actions e.g. Fencing / drinking facilities are available. <input type="checkbox"/> Move feeders / troughs regularly and keep away from drains and rivers. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider establishing a field margin. <input type="checkbox"/> Field boundaries - reduce cutting. <input type="checkbox"/> Field boundaries - consider planting gaps with suitable native species. <input type="checkbox"/> Field boundaries - continue current management of high quality boundaries. <input type="checkbox"/> No management advice. <input type="checkbox"/> Other management advice.				

Appendix 4: ACRES Low Input Grassland on Peat Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

ACRES Low Input Grassland on Peat SCORECARD		Farmer name:	Surveyor:																								
		Field number:	Survey date:																								
		Business ID:																									
Dominant grassland type: Wet grassland <input type="checkbox"/> Dry grassland <input type="checkbox"/>		Soil type: Mineral soil <input type="checkbox"/> Peat soil <input type="checkbox"/>																									
		Total Score: (A+B+C) /100																									
A Ecological integrity		Total score A: (sum of A1 to A4) /40																									
A1 What is the number of positive indicators in the field? Tick all positive indicators present below. <i>Note all positive indicators present as you walk a 'W' through the field.</i>		Low: 0-4 0 Medium: 5-8 5 High: 9+ 10																									
Positive indicators: (tick those present) <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & stitchworts</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Lady's Smock</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Mints (all) or Purple loosestrife</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Birdsfoot trefoil</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Lesser spearwort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Orchids (all)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Devils bit scabious</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Louseworts (common & greater)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Oxeye daisy</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Marsh cinquefoil</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Ragged robin</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Forget-me-nots</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Marsh marigold</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Selfheal or Bugle</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Heathers/Ling</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Marsh pennywort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Sphagnum & Branched mosses</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds (Common & Greater)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Marsh thistle or Meadow thistle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (Sheep & Common)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Meadowsweet</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Small Rushes (Woodrush Spike rush, Heath rush)</td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & stitchworts	<input type="checkbox"/> *Lady's Smock	<input type="checkbox"/> *Mints (all) or Purple loosestrife	<input type="checkbox"/> Birdsfoot trefoil	<input type="checkbox"/> *Lesser spearwort	<input type="checkbox"/> Orchids (all)	<input type="checkbox"/> *Devils bit scabious	<input type="checkbox"/> *Louseworts (common & greater)	<input type="checkbox"/> Oxeye daisy	<input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights	<input type="checkbox"/> *Marsh cinquefoil	<input type="checkbox"/> *Ragged robin	<input type="checkbox"/> *Forget-me-nots	<input type="checkbox"/> *Marsh marigold	<input type="checkbox"/> Selfheal or Bugle	<input type="checkbox"/> Heathers/Ling	<input type="checkbox"/> *Marsh pennywort	<input type="checkbox"/> *Sphagnum & Branched mosses	<input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds (Common & Greater)	<input type="checkbox"/> *Marsh thistle or Meadow thistle	<input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (Sheep & Common)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle	<input type="checkbox"/> *Meadowsweet	<input type="checkbox"/> Small Rushes (Woodrush Spike rush, Heath rush)	<input type="checkbox"/> Tormentil (Common & English) <input type="checkbox"/> *Umbels large (Angelica, Valerian, Hogweed) <input type="checkbox"/> Umbels small (Pignut, Yarrow & Wild carrot) <input type="checkbox"/> Vetches/vetchlings <input type="checkbox"/> Violets (all), Harebell <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow composites (Cats ears, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goats-beard) - not dandelion <input type="checkbox"/> *Yellow flag iris <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (Hay rattle)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & stitchworts	<input type="checkbox"/> *Lady's Smock	<input type="checkbox"/> *Mints (all) or Purple loosestrife																									
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<input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle	<input type="checkbox"/> *Meadowsweet	<input type="checkbox"/> Small Rushes (Woodrush Spike rush, Heath rush)																									
A2 What is the combined cover of all positive indicators (listed above) throughout the field? (Cover is the proportion of the field taken up by all positive indicators present)		Low: Only a couple of individual plants present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all. 0 Moderate: Positive indicators occur every few steps. 5 High: You encounter a positive indicator with every step taken. 10																									
A3 What is the combined cover of negative indicator species and/or agricultural 'weeds' throughout the field? Tick if present: <input type="checkbox"/> Docks (NOT small sorrels) <input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (Creeping & spear) <input type="checkbox"/> Perennial Rye grass <input type="checkbox"/> Ragwort <input type="checkbox"/> Nettles		High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward. -20 Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward. -10 Low <5%: None or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, cover should be less than 5%. 0																									
A4 Vegetation Structure. Note: If grassland is primarily grazed , use A4(a); if grassland is cut for hay or silage , use A4(b)		A4(b) What is the vegetation structure in grasslands which are CUT FOR HAY OR SILAGE ?																									
A4(a) What is the vegetation structure in grasslands which are PRIMARILY GRAZED ?		Poor structure: No field margins present. Field topped right up to the field boundary OR short sward throughout. 0																									
Over-grazed: Sward short throughout grazeable area with little variation in height of vegetation. >75% very short. Few flowering plants. -10		Moderate structure: Narrow field margins and/or headlands present (>1m) OR medium height sward throughout (20-30cm). At least 20% of grass in sward with flowering heads. 10																									
Moderate (over-grazed): Mostly short vegetation. 25-50% of field has short sward with occasional to frequent intermediate patches. 5		Good structure: Field margins and/or headlands at least 2m wide OR tall sward height throughout (>30cm). At least 50% of grass in sward with flowering heads. 20																									
Good: >50% of field with sward having variety of taller and/or shorter sward with medium height sward throughout with positive indicators flowering. 20																											
Moderate (under-grazed): 25-50% of field has tall sward. Litter and dead vegetation occurring. Grazing largely confined to a few easily accessible, palatable areas. 10																											
Under-grazed: Rank vegetation across much of the site, litter accumulating, scrub encroaching. -10																											
A5 Marsh Fritillary suitability assessment in primarily grazed grassland		Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout? Numerous patches (at least quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>																									
AgriSnap photo taken: <input type="checkbox"/>																											

B Hydrological integrity (carbon capture)			Total score B: (sum of B1 to B3) /50		
B1 What is the cover of wetland indicators? <i>Total cover of species marked with an * and in bold text in A1. Also include cover of rushes and Purple moor-grass. (See A2 for guidance on cover assessment)</i>			Low: 0	Moderate: 10	High: 20
B2 What artificial drainage features are present? <i>Include both internal and perimeter drains. Natural and modified watercourses are excluded from assessment.</i>	Functional: Drains predominantly free flowing (though may be dry at the time of survey), largely unvegetated and unblocked.	-15			
	Part-functional: Drains present but flow is predominantly impeded (by vegetation/dams).	0			
	Non-functional: Drains absent or present but non-functioning. No flow, highly vegetated and/or water level in drain <30cm from top of the drain.	15			
B3 What is the water table level in the drain? <i>Include both internal and perimeter drains. Natural and modified watercourses are excluded from assessment. The assessment of effect of drain on field gets more weighting.</i>	Low: Water level typically > 1m below drain surface. Drains having significant effect on water-table of field.	-15			
	Moderate: Water level typically <1m but ≥30cm below drain surface. Drains having a moderate effect on water-table of field.	0			
	High: Water level typically <30cm below surface of drain. Assume highest water table if no drains present. Drains having minor to no effect on water-table of field.	15			
C Threats & pressures			Total score C: (sum of C1 to C6) /10		
C1 Is there any evidence of damaging activities to habitat, vegetation, or archaeology?			C2 What is the level of risk to the quality of natural water bodies within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants? <i>The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance).</i>		
High: Damage occurring across a large area (≥21%) or of a serious nature if confined.			-30		
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area (≥6-20%) or of a moderate nature if confined.			-20		
Low: Damage occurring across a small area (≤5%) or of a minor nature if confined.			-10		
None: No damaging activities.			0		
Damaging activities: (tick relevant damage & describe in comments)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Damage from supplementary feeding			<input type="checkbox"/> Quarrying		
<input type="checkbox"/> Damage to archaeological features			<input type="checkbox"/> Boundary damage		
<input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate herbicide use			<input type="checkbox"/> Burning		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Removal of mature scrub/trees		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Dumping		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):		
			High: -25	Low: -5	
			Moderate: -15	None: 0	
C3 What is the extent of bare soil & erosion?					
High: Excessive areas of bare soil within the body of the field. Bare soil may also be extending out significantly from the main feed sites and/or water troughs, where poaching evident. Significant rutting and soil disturbance caused by vehicle/tractor access.			-20		
Moderate: Bare soil mainly along regularly used stock routes or congregation areas, with minor soil loss occurring at a few points. Bare soil may extend a short distance beyond the main feed site and/or water points. Minor rutting and soil disturbance caused by occasional vehicle/tractor access may be present.			-10		
Low: Bare soil more or less restricted to regular stock paths, 'pinch' points & small congregation areas. No soil loss.			10		
C4 What is the cover of non-native invasive species?					
High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.			-30	Non-native invasive species: (tick if present)	
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.			-20		
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.			-10		
None: No non-native invasive species present.			0		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Rhododendron		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan balsam		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Cotoneaster		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan knotweed		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese Knotweed		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Giant Hogweed		
C5 What is the extent of spreading immature scrub? <i>(This can be brambles, seedlings, scrub and trees generally lower than 1m in height and with a stem diameter of <5cm. Do not include established scrub).</i>					
High: >25% of the field has immature scrub cover, some well-established saplings may be present. Field is likely to show few signs of management, such as signs of recent grazing or signs of livestock.			-20		
Moderate: Cover of immature scrub in patches or individuals with overall cover of between 11-25% with particularly briars/brambles coming in.			-10		
Low: Small patches of immature scrub or individual seedlings of immature scrub with overall cover of less than 10%. Grass growth easily seen underneath the scrub.			0		
High: Very dense stands of bracken covering over half or more of the field, forming closed canopy.			-20		
Moderate: Bracken forming dense stands covering parts of the field, mostly forming closed canopy.			-10		
Low: Bracken absent or some scattered fronds and none forming closed canopy. Can include some isolated small patches or some larger patches on steep slopes.			0		
C6 What is the cover of bracken?					
Common management recommendations to pick from:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Continue current management of this high quality grassland.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Control the occurrence and spread of invasive species. Consult with CP team regarding solutions.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Control the occurrence and spread of encroaching scrub, supporting actions are available.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Control the occurrence and spread of encroaching bracken.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider reducing fertiliser inputs.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider using supporting actions to slow or impede the flow of drains.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider raising watertable to restore peat soil, supporting actions are available.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Use stock to graze field more evenly.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve stock management, supporting actions e.g. Fencing / drinking facilities are available.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Move feeders / troughs regularly & keep away from drains and rivers.					
<input type="checkbox"/> No management advice.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Other management advice.					

Appendix 5: Noxious and invasive species

Noxious weeds

A noxious weed is a plant species which has been designated by a statutory authority as one that is injurious to agriculture, horticulture, habitats/ ecosystems and humans or livestock. They are usually injurious to human or animal health. Noxious weeds can be native or introduced. A native species may not pose a threat when growing in a natural forest type situation, but becomes a problem with changing landscape; e.g. clearance to cultivation. They are usually plants, which multiply aggressively and without any natural control such as herbivores or soil or climatic conditions.

Examples of noxious species include Ragwort, Thistle, Dock, Common Barberry, Male Wild Hop, Spring Wild Oat.

Alien invasive species

Alien Invasive species are species that have been introduced (deliberately or accidentally) by humans and have a negative impact on the economy, wildlife or habitats of Ireland and Northern Ireland. After habitat loss, invasive species are the second biggest threat to biodiversity worldwide, and the biggest threat on islands.

Examples of invasive species include New Zealand Bur, Great Maple, Daisies, Montbretia, European Rabbit, Reed Grass, Common Pitcher Plant, Canada Goldenrod, Cotoneaster, Himalayan Knotweed, Evergreen Oak, Holm Oak.

Further details on invasive species can be found at www.invasives.ie

Appendix 6: Interaction between Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) and ACRES

ACRES action	Organic Farming Scheme
Barn Owl nest box	Allowed along with OFS payment
Brassica fodder stubble	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Catch crops	Allowed along with OFS payment
Commonage	Allowed - there is no OFS payment on commonage
Conservation of rare breeds	Allowed along with OFS payment
Coppicing of Hedgerows	Allowed along with OFS payment
Environmental management of arable fallow	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Extensively grazed pasture	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Geese and Swans	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Grass margins - Arable	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
Grass margins - Grassland	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
Laying of hedgerows	Allowed along with OFS payment
Low emission slurry spreading	Allowed along with OFS payment
Low input grassland	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Low input peat grassland	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Management of intensive grassland next to a watercourse	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Minimum tillage	Allowed along with OFS payment
Over winter stubble	Allowed along with OFS payment
Planting a new hedgerow	Allowed along with OFS payment
Planting a traditional orchard	Allowed along with OFS payment
Planting trees in Riparian buffer zones	Allowed along with OFS payment
Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments - Arable	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for 0.1 hectares
Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments - Grassland	Allowed along with OFS payment
Riparian buffer strip - Arable	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
Riparian buffer strip - Grassland	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
Riparian buffer zone - Arable	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Riparian buffer zone - Grassland	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Ryegrass seed-set for birds	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
Traditional dry stone wall maintenance	Allowed along with OFS payment
Tree belts for ammonia capture from farmyards	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Tree planting	Allowed along with OFS payment
Unharvested cereal headlands	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the headland
Winter bird food plot	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the LPIS parcel
Winter bird food strip	Allowed but only where OFS payment is foregone for the area of the margin
ACRES Co-Operation Project (non-commonage) lands receiving results-based payments	Allowed but ACRES payment rate reduced by €250/ha

Appendix 7: Guidance on soil sampling

1. A soil corer is essential for accurate sampling to facilitate taking a sample at the desired depth of 100mm.
2. Soil sampling equipment should be clean and free of rust or old soil residues to avoid contamination. Galvanized, bronze or brass corers should not be used as they can affect micronutrient testing.
3. Divide the farm into suitable areas based on land type and cropping. At least one analysis per **five hectares** of land is required up to 40 hectares. If there are a number of different soil types in a parcel, it is recommended reducing the area to two hectares for accurate analysis. The maximum area for any individual soil sample is 5ha.
4. Different samples should be taken for different soil types.
5. Prepare a farm map/plan and indicate where each sample was taken, e.g. field 1, field 2 etc.
6. Samples should be taken in a W pattern across the field. Any unusual spots such as gateways, troughs, feeding points, dung or urine patches, hedges, or places where lime has been stored should be avoided. See **Figure 1**.
7. At least 20 soil cores should be taken per sample. Soil boxes should be clearly labelled to correspond with the soil sampling map.
8. It is not recommended to soil sample under extreme conditions e.g. saturated soils and extremely dry soils.
9. Soil sampling should not take place for 3 to 6 months on land that has received P&K.
10. When submitting your soil samples for analysis they should clearly indicate where the soil sample was taken, the cropping history, and soil texture (sand, loam, clay, or peat)

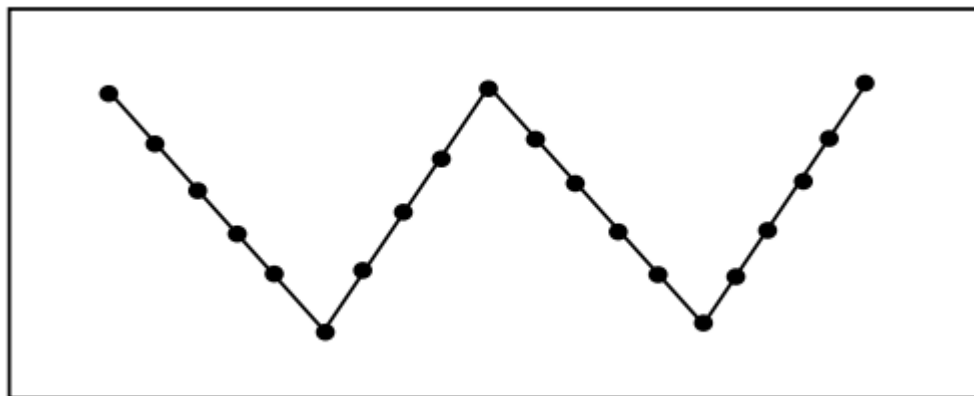


Figure 1 Soil sampling using a W pattern

For more detailed information on soil sampling and nutrient planning, consult your advisor or follow the link to access the Teagasc Green Book, Major & micro nutrient advice for productive agricultural types at: [2020 - Major & micro nutrient advice for productive agricultural crops - Teagasc | Agriculture and Food Development Authority](#)

Appendix 8: Soil sample exemption template

Note: The deadline for submission of the soil sample exemption declaration is **15 May 2025**. This form must be submitted on the ACRES system by an approved ACRES advisor. Soil sample exemptions will not be accepted by post or email.

Please declare the LPIS parcel(s) that is exempt from soil sampling and provide a valid reason for this exemption

LPIS Parcel	Area of LPIS exempted	Reason for exemption from sampling

Applicant Details	Agent Details
Name: _____	Agent Name: _____
Herd No: _____	Agency: _____
	Agent Number AGT: _____
	Signature: _____

**Eastát Chaisleáin Bhaile Sheáin, Co. Loch Garman,
Y35 PN52**

Johnstown Castle Estate, Co Wexford, Y35 PN52

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Appendix 9: ACRES Peatland Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

ACRES Peatland SCORECARD		Farmer name:	Surveyor:
		Field number:	Survey date:
		Business ID:	
Which of the following best describes the plot? <input type="checkbox"/> Wet heath <input type="checkbox"/> Dry heath <input type="checkbox"/> Blanket bog <input type="checkbox"/> Raised bog <input type="checkbox"/> Mosaic of heath & bog <input type="checkbox"/> Mosaic of heath & grassland			Total Score: (A+B+C) /100
A Ecological integrity			Total score A: (sum of A1 to A3) /60
A1 What positive indicators are present in the field? Tick all positive indicators present below. Note all positive indicators present as you walk through the plot.			
<div> <div>Low: 0-2 0</div> <div>Moderate: 3-5 5</div> <div>High: 6+ 10</div> </div>			
Positive indicators:	Moss layer: <input type="checkbox"/> Branched mosses <input type="checkbox"/> Non-crustose bushy lichens <input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum mosses <input type="checkbox"/> Liverworts	Grass/herb layer: <input type="checkbox"/> Bog asphodel <input type="checkbox"/> Sundews <input type="checkbox"/> Bog bean <input type="checkbox"/> White-beaked sedge <input type="checkbox"/> Bog cotton <input type="checkbox"/> Black bog rush <input type="checkbox"/> Lousewort	Shrub layer: <input type="checkbox"/> Bell heather <input type="checkbox"/> Bilberry <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-leaved heath <input type="checkbox"/> Bog myrtle <input type="checkbox"/> Ling heather <input type="checkbox"/> Western Gorse
A2 What is the combined cover of all positive mosses, liverworts & lichens (listed above) throughout the field? Cover is the proportion of the field taken up by all positive mosses, liverworts & lichens indicators present.			
<div> <div>Low: ≤10% cover across the field 0</div> <div>Moderate: 10-30% cover across the field 10</div> <div>High: 30% cover across the field 20</div> </div>			
A3 What is the vegetation structure ?			
Over-grazed: Vegetation height is uniformly low. Little or no heather present on wet heaths. Often lacking moss and dwarf shrub layer.			-15
Moderate (over-grazed): Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have low uniform vegetation, although not throughout.			10
Good: Sward in good condition; abundant grass and sedge-like vegetation on blanket bog with hummock, hollow, and pool complexes. On heath, all stages of heather/shrub growth present, mostly >30cm. Mix of bog and/or heath vegetation at various heights throughout. Well-structured vegetation with all three layers (moss, sedge/herb, and shrub) well represented.			30
Moderate (under-grazed): Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have rank vegetation although not throughout.			15
Under-grazed: Rank sward. Purple moor-grass/mat-grass and rank senescent heather dominating. Litter cover high, thatch forming in large continuous patches. Poorly developed ground layer.			-10
B Hydrological integrity (carbon capture)			Total score B: /20
B1 Surface hydrology and artificial drainage features:			
Significantly altered bog/heath hydrology: Frequent widespread free-flowing drains on plot with notable effect on surrounding vegetation of bog/heath. >20% of plot affected.			-30
Moderately altered bog/heath hydrology: Free flowing drains in plot with notable effect on surrounding vegetation of bog/heath. <20% of plot affected.			-15
Slightly altered bog/heath hydrology: Drains present in plot although are somewhat impeded and little effect on surrounding bog/heath.			0
Moderately intact bog/heath hydrology: Bog/heath surface largely intact, although some evidence of historic disturbance (cutting, drainage, erosion channels) across any part of plot. Vegetation and hydrology largely recovered/stabilised.			10
Intact bog/heath hydrology: Intact bog/heath surface, no evidence of past drainage or disturbance across plot.			20
C Threats & future prospects			Total score C: (sum of C1 to C5) /20
C1 Is there any evidence of damaging activities to habitat, vegetation, or archaeology?			
High: Damage occurring across a large area (≥21%) or of a serious nature if confined.			-30
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area (≥6-20%) or of a moderate nature if confined.			-20
Low: Damage occurring across a small area (≤5%) or of a minor nature if confined.			-10
None: No damaging activities.			0
Damaging activities: (tick relevant damage & describe in comments)			
<div> <input type="checkbox"/> Damage from supplementary feeding <input type="checkbox"/> Quarrying <input type="checkbox"/> Damage to archaeological features <input type="checkbox"/> Burning <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate herbicide use <input type="checkbox"/> Dumping <input type="checkbox"/> Boundary damage <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): <input type="checkbox"/> Removal of mature scrub/trees </div>			

C2 What is the level of **risk to the quality of natural water bodies** within, adjacent to and down-stream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants?

The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance).

High: -25 Moderate: -15 Low: -5 None: 0

C3 What is the extent of **bare soil & erosion**?

High: Excessive areas of bare soil within the body of the field. Bare soil may also be extending out significantly from the main feed sites and/or water troughs, where poaching evident. Significant rutting and soil disturbance caused by vehicle/tractor access.	-20
Moderate: Bare soil mainly along regularly used stock routes or congregation areas, with minor soil loss occurring at a few points. Bare soil may extend a short distance beyond the main feed site and/or water points. Minor rutting and soil disturbance caused by occasional vehicle/tractor access may be present.	-10
Low: Bare soil more or less restricted to regular stock paths, 'pinch' points & small congregation areas. No soil loss.	10

C4a Are **non-native invasive species** present?

Present: -10 Absent: 0

Non-native invasive species: (tick if present)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rhododendron | <input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan balsam |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cotoneaster | <input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan knotweed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese Knotweed | <input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan honeysuckle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Giant Hogweed | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-sown conifers | |

C4b What is the cover of **non-native invasive species**?

High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.	-20
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.	-10
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.	-5
None: None present.	0

C5 Is there any evidence of **damage due to turbary activity**?

High: Active peat cutting and associated works > 10% of the field affected. High proportion of bare peat due to peat extraction. Sausage machine cutting taking place in any part of the field (regardless of the extent).	-30
Moderate: Active peat cutting (mechanical cutting from face-bank, hand cutting, milling etc.) and associated works < 10% of the field affected.	-10
Low: No evidence of peat cutting during the most recent season. Vertical face of bank has no bucket marks and has clear signs of weathering. Spreadlands revegetating.	10

C6 What is the **cover of bracken**? (refer to CP team if 'moderate' or 'high')

High: Very dense stands of bracken covering over half or more of the field, forming closed canopy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate: Bracken forming dense stands covering parts of the field; mostly forming closed canopy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low: Bracken absent or some scattered fronds and none forming closed canopy. Can include some isolated small patches or some larger patches on steep slopes.	<input type="checkbox"/>

C7 What is the extent of **spreading immature scrub**? (refer to CP team if 'Moderate' or 'High')

High: Gorse dominated scrub occurring throughout the site or concentrated in large areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate: Small areas of gorse dominated scrub occur occasionally throughout the site.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low: Little or no scrub present.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Common management recommendations to pick from:

- ☐ Continue current management of this high quality peatland.
- ☐ Control the occurrence and spread of invasive species. Consult with CP team regarding solutions.
- ☐ Control the occurrence and spread of encroaching scrub, supporting actions are available.
- ☐ Consider using supporting actions to slow or impede the flow of drains.
- ☐ Consider raising watertable to restore peatland, supporting actions are available.
- ☐ Use stock to graze field more evenly.
- ☐ Improve stock management. You may wish to avail of supporting actions e.g. Fencing / drinking facilities.
- ☐ Move feeders / troughs regularly and keep away from drains and rivers.
- ☐ No management advice.
- ☐ Other management advice:

Appendix 10: ACRES Scrub and Woodland Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

<h1 style="margin: 0;">ACRES</h1>	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Scrub/ Woodland SCORECARD</h2>	Farmer name: Field number: Business ID:	Surveyor: Survey date:
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Habitat type: <input type="checkbox"/> Scrub <input type="checkbox"/> Woodland	Scrub: Areas that are dominated by at least 50% cover of shrubs, stunted trees or brambles. Woodland: Canopy generally greater than 5m in height, or 4m in the case of wet or bog areas.	Soil type: <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral soil <input type="checkbox"/> Peat soil	Total Score: (A+B+C) <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 1.2em;">/100</div>
---	---	--	--

<h3 style="margin: 0;">A Ecological integrity</h3>	Total score A: (sum of A1-S or A1-W) <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 1.2em;">/100</div>
--	--

Typical SCRUB species: (tick those present) <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Alder</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Bracken</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Whitethorn (hawthorn)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ash</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Bramble</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Willow</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Birch</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Hazel</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Guelder rose</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Blackthorn</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Elder</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Bog myrtle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Gorse/Furze</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alder	<input type="checkbox"/> Bracken	<input type="checkbox"/> Whitethorn (hawthorn)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ash	<input type="checkbox"/> Bramble	<input type="checkbox"/> Willow	<input type="checkbox"/> Birch	<input type="checkbox"/> Hazel	<input type="checkbox"/> Guelder rose	<input type="checkbox"/> Blackthorn	<input type="checkbox"/> Elder		<input type="checkbox"/> Bog myrtle	<input type="checkbox"/> Gorse/Furze		Typical WOODLAND species: (tick those present) * = non-native species <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Beech</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Scot's pine</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Spanish chestnut</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Holly</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Spruce</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Hornbeam</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Oak</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Sycamore</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Spindle</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Rowan</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> *Horse chestnut</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> *Beech	<input type="checkbox"/> Scot's pine	<input type="checkbox"/> *Spanish chestnut	<input type="checkbox"/> Holly	<input type="checkbox"/> *Spruce	<input type="checkbox"/> *Hornbeam	<input type="checkbox"/> Oak	<input type="checkbox"/> *Sycamore	<input type="checkbox"/> Spindle	<input type="checkbox"/> Rowan	<input type="checkbox"/> *Horse chestnut	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Alder	<input type="checkbox"/> Bracken	<input type="checkbox"/> Whitethorn (hawthorn)																										
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<input type="checkbox"/> Oak	<input type="checkbox"/> *Sycamore	<input type="checkbox"/> Spindle																										
<input type="checkbox"/> Rowan	<input type="checkbox"/> *Horse chestnut	<input type="checkbox"/> Other																										

A1 Score either A1-S OR A1-W

A1-S for SCRUB dominated plots: Sa Which description best describes the diversity & structure of the SCRUB present?	Total score A1-Sa: <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 1.2em;">/100</div>	A1-W for WOODLAND dominated plots: Wa Which description best describes the woodland CANOPY layer ?	Total score A1-W: (sum of A1-Wa to A1-Wc) <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 1.2em;">/100</div>
---	---	--	---

<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td>Poor: Gorse dominated scrub.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #c00000; color: white;">40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate: Two native species from table above present.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #ffa500; color: white;">60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good: Three native species from table above common throughout plot.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #008000; color: white;">80</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very good: Four or more native species from table above common throughout plot. Variation in vegetation height and structure throughout.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #008000; color: white;">100</td> </tr> </table>	Poor: Gorse dominated scrub.	40	Moderate: Two native species from table above present.	60	Good: Three native species from table above common throughout plot.	80	Very good: Four or more native species from table above common throughout plot. Variation in vegetation height and structure throughout.	100		<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td>Poor: Native woodland with frequent non-native (conifers or deciduous) trees present.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #c00000; color: white;">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate: Native woodland with occasional non-native (conifer or deciduous) trees present.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #ffa500; color: white;">30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good: Native woodland with no non-native (conifer or deciduous) trees present.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #008000; color: white;">70</td> </tr> </table>	Poor: Native woodland with frequent non-native (conifers or deciduous) trees present.	0	Moderate: Native woodland with occasional non-native (conifer or deciduous) trees present.	30	Good: Native woodland with no non-native (conifer or deciduous) trees present.	70	
Poor: Gorse dominated scrub.	40																
Moderate: Two native species from table above present.	60																
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Poor: Native woodland with frequent non-native (conifers or deciduous) trees present.	0																
Moderate: Native woodland with occasional non-native (conifer or deciduous) trees present.	30																
Good: Native woodland with no non-native (conifer or deciduous) trees present.	70																

<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td>Poor: Shrub layer absent or consists of non-native species.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #c00000; color: white;">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate: Shrub layer present.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #ffa500; color: white;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good: Well developed shrub layer present.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #008000; color: white;">15</td> </tr> </table>	Poor: Shrub layer absent or consists of non-native species.	0	Moderate: Shrub layer present.	10	Good: Well developed shrub layer present.	15		<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td>Poor: The field layer is absent or consists of non-native species.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #c00000; color: white;">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate: Field layer present with low level of species and structural diversity.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #ffa500; color: white;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good: Field layer supports good diversity of native species, with mosses, ferns and herbs present.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #008000; color: white;">15</td> </tr> </table>	Poor: The field layer is absent or consists of non-native species.	0	Moderate: Field layer present with low level of species and structural diversity.	10	Good: Field layer supports good diversity of native species, with mosses, ferns and herbs present.	15	
Poor: Shrub layer absent or consists of non-native species.	0														
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Moderate: Field layer present with low level of species and structural diversity.	10														
Good: Field layer supports good diversity of native species, with mosses, ferns and herbs present.	15														

<h3 style="margin: 0;">B Hydrological integrity (carbon capture)</h3>	Total score B: <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 1.2em;">/0</div>
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B1 To what extent are there any artificial drainage features within the plot?	
---	--

Drained woodland: Frequent widespread free flowing drains affecting >20% of the plot.	-30
Partly drained woodland: Free flowing drains affecting <20% of the plot.	-15
Historic drainage evident: Drains present but flow is impeded.	-5
No drainage: No artificial drainage within plot.	0

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C Threats & pressures		Total score C: (sum of C1 to C4) /0	
C1 Is there any evidence of damaging activities to habitat, vegetation, or archaeology?			
High: Damage occurring across a large area ($\geq 21\%$) or of a serious nature if confined.	-30	Damaging activities: <i>(tick relevant damage & describe in comments)</i>	
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area ($\geq 6-20\%$) or of a moderate nature if confined.	-20	<input type="checkbox"/> Damage from supplementary feeding <input type="checkbox"/> Quarrying <input type="checkbox"/> Damage to archaeological features <input type="checkbox"/> Burning <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate herbicide use <input type="checkbox"/> Dumping <input type="checkbox"/> Boundary damage <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): <input type="checkbox"/> Removal of mature scrub/trees	
Low: Damage occurring across a small area ($\leq 5\%$) or of a minor nature if confined.	-10		
None: No damaging activities.	0		
C2 What is the level of risk to the quality of natural water bodies within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants? <i>The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance).</i>			
High:	-25	Moderate:	-15
Low:	-5	None:	0
C3 What is the extent of bare soil & erosion?			
High: Excessive areas of bare soil within the body of the field. Bare soil may also be extending out significantly from the main feed sites and/or water troughs, where poaching evident. Significant rutting and soil disturbance caused by vehicle/tractor access.	-20		
Moderate: Bare soil mainly along regularly used stock routes or congregation areas, with minor soil loss occurring at a few points. Bare soil may extend a short distance beyond the main feed site and/or water points. Minor rutting and soil disturbance caused by occasional vehicle/tractor access may be present.	-10		
Low: Bare soil more or less restricted to regular stock paths, 'pinch' points & small congregation areas. No soil loss.	0		
C4 What is the cover of non-native invasive species?	High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.	-20	Non-native invasive species: (tick if present)
	Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.	-10	<input type="checkbox"/> Rhododendron <input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan balsam <input type="checkbox"/> Cotoneaster <input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan knotweed <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese Knotweed <input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan honeysuckle <input type="checkbox"/> Giant Hogweed <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
	Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.	-5	
	None: No non-native invasive species present.	0	

Common management recommendations to pick from:

- ☐ Continue current management of this high quality scrub/woodland field.
- ☐ Control the occurrence and spread of invasive species. Consult with CP team regarding solutions.
- ☐ Consider using supporting actions to slow or impede the flow of drains.
- ☐ Consider raising watertable to restore peat soil, supporting actions are available.
- ☐ Use stock to graze field more evenly.
- ☐ Improve stock management. You may wish to avail of supporting actions e.g. Fencing / drinking facilities.
- ☐ Move feeders / troughs regularly and keep away from drains and rivers.
- ☐ No management advice.
- ☐ Other management advice:

Appendix 11: Further guidance on Tree Planting

Native Irish trees

Species	Characteristics	Remarks
Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>)	Suitable for wet sites. Fast growing nitrogen-fixing tree. Suitable broadleaf for even the wettest sites	Minor forest species. Coppices freely and can be used in mixtures on less fertile sites. Valuable shelter tree
Silver birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>), Downy birch (<i>Betula pubescens</i>)	Pioneer species suited to very acid soils and peats. Fast growing, hardy species, withstands exposure and frost well	Very attractive small tree. Minor forest species. Young trees coppice freely. May be used as a soil improver. Can be mixed into shelterbelts
Sessile oak (<i>Quercus petraea</i>), Pedunculate oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	Suited to well-aerated deep fertile loams. Will grow well on heavier soils. Slow growing, long lived tree	Major forest species. Very high amenity and wildlife value
Mountain ash (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)	Suitable for lowland and hill acidic sites. Will tolerate alkaline sites. Hardy tree suitable for exposed sites.	Minor forest species. Native tree. Offers good support for wildlife. Widely used amenity tree
Whitebeam (<i>Sorbus aria</i>)	Suitable for most fertile mineral soils. Attractive amenity tree suitable for shelter	Minor forest species. Native tree. Tolerant of exposed and coastal sites
Wild Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)	Suitable for fertile deep well-drained mineral soils. Preference for slightly acid soils; will grow on deep loams over limestone	Major forest species. May suffer from bacterial canker and aphid attack
Goat willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>) Grey willow (<i>Salix cinerea</i>) Bay willow (<i>Salix pentandra</i>)	Useful species for wet sites and streamsides. Fast growing, useful for conservation and amenity. Willow can be used in a variety of ways as a shelterbelt	Minor forest species. Attractive tree when grown as a standard tree
Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)	Hazel can grow as a small tree with a single stem but is more frequently found as a multi-stemmed shrub. It has high amenity and wildlife value	Hazel is very suitable to coppice and lay
Scots pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)	Scots pine is suited to light soils with fairly free drainage. It is a hardy species which is tolerant of frosts.	Forest species. Grows well in a mixture with other species particularly oak and birch.

Example of Tree Planting mixtures

Scenario	Example of Planting Mixture
<p>Scenario 1</p> <p>Dry Mineral Soil</p> <p>(i.e. podzols, brown podzols & brown earths)</p>	<p>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 parts of the plot and away from any watercourses adjoining or crossing the plot. The remainder of the Birch planted in pure groups. (Changes + or – 25% for each species as required. A maximum of 25% Scots Pine may be planted)</p>
<p>Scenario 2</p> <p>Wet Mineral Soil</p> <p>(i.e. gleys)</p>	<p>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 plot. (Changes + or – 25% for each species as required).</p>

Appendix 12: Rare Breed Societies

Cattle	
<p><u>Kerry</u> Kerry Cattle Society Ltd G.R. Hilliard (Secretary) Cahernane Killarney Co Kerry Phone: 064-6631840 Email: secretary@kerrycattle.ie Web: www.kerrycattle.ie</p> <p><u>Irish Maol (or Moiled)</u> Seamus Holmes (Secretary) Irish Moiled Cattle Society c/o Clonarl Killygordan Co Donegal F93 D53V Email: secretary@irishmoiledcattlesociety.com Web: www.irishmoiledcattlesociety.com</p>	<p><u>Dexter</u> Irish Dexter Cattle Association CLG Ballyhasty Cloughjordan Co Tipperary E53 HX85 Phone: 087 – 6381199 Email: office@dextercattlesociety.ie Web: Dexter Cattle Society </p> <p><u>Droimeann</u> Droimeann Cattle Society Ltd Church Cross Skibbereen Co Cork Phone: 087 – 2571330 Phone: 071 – 9620406 Email: info@droimeanncattlesociety.com Web: www.droimeanncattlesociety.com</p>
Horses and Ponies	
<p><u>Connemara Pony</u> Connemara Pony Breeders Society Secretary CPBS Offices The Showgrounds Clifden Co Galway Tel: 095 – 21863 Email: enquiries@cpbs.ie Web: www.cpbs.ie</p> <p><u>Kerry Bog Pony</u> The Kerry Bog Pony Co-Operative Society Furrymelia East Barna Co Galway Email: Info@kerrybogpony.ie Web: www.kerrybogpony.ie</p>	<p><u>Irish Draught</u> Horse Sport Ireland Beech House Millennium Park Naas Co Kildare Phone: 045 - 850800 Email: info@horsesportireland.ie Web: www.horsesportireland.ie</p>
Sheep and Goats	
<p><u>Galway</u> Galway Sheep Breeders Mr Tom Murphy Shralea, Creagh, Ballinasloe, Co Galway Tel: 090 9644233 Email: info@galwayssheep.ie Web: www.galwayssheep.ie</p>	<p><u>Old Irish Goat</u> The Old Irish Goat Visitor Centre Murrevagh Mulranny Co Mayo F28 X213 Phone: 087 – 2071641 Email: info@oldirishgoatsociety.com Web: www.oldirishgoatsociety.com</p>

Appendix 13: ACRES Rough Grazing Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

ACRES Rough grazing SCORECARD		Farmer name: _____ Field number: _____ Business ID: _____	Surveyor: _____ Survey date: _____																																								
		Total Score: (A+B) /100																																									
A Ecological integrity		Total score A: (sum of A1 to A7) /90																																									
A1 What is the number of positive indicators in the field? Tick all positive indicators present below. <i>Note all positive indicators present as you walk a 'W' through the field.</i>																																											
<div> <div>Low: 0-4</div> <div>0</div> <div>Moderate: 5-8</div> <div>5</div> <div>High: 9+</div> <div>10</div> </div>																																											
Positive indicators: (tick those present) <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & Stitchworts</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lady's smock (Cuckooflower)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Orchids</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum & Branched mosses</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Bird's-foot-trefoil</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ox-eye daisy</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Tormantil (Common & English)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Carline thistle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Louseworts (Common & Marsh)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Purple loosestrife</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Umbels large (Angelica, Valerian, Common hogweed)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Cowslips & Primrose</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh cinquefoil</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ragged robin</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Umbels small (Pignut, Yarrow, Wild Carrot)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh marigold</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (Devil's-bit & field)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Vetches & Vetchlings</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Forget-me-nots</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh pennywort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sedges</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Violets (all species); Harebell</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Heathers</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh thistle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Self-heal & Bugle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Wild Thyme</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Kidney vetch</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Meadowsweet</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (Common & Sheep's)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Composites (Cat's ear, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goat's beard - not Dandelion)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Meadow thistle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Small rushes (Spike, Woodrushes, Heath)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Flag Iris</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Mints (all)</td> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (Hay rattle)</td> </tr> </table>				<input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & Stitchworts	<input type="checkbox"/> Lady's smock (Cuckooflower)	<input type="checkbox"/> Orchids	<input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum & Branched mosses	<input type="checkbox"/> Bird's-foot-trefoil	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort	<input type="checkbox"/> Ox-eye daisy	<input type="checkbox"/> Tormantil (Common & English)	<input type="checkbox"/> Carline thistle	<input type="checkbox"/> Louseworts (Common & Marsh)	<input type="checkbox"/> Purple loosestrife	<input type="checkbox"/> Umbels large (Angelica, Valerian, Common hogweed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Cowslips & Primrose	<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh cinquefoil	<input type="checkbox"/> Ragged robin	<input type="checkbox"/> Umbels small (Pignut, Yarrow, Wild Carrot)	<input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights	<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh marigold	<input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (Devil's-bit & field)	<input type="checkbox"/> Vetches & Vetchlings	<input type="checkbox"/> Forget-me-nots	<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh pennywort	<input type="checkbox"/> Sedges	<input type="checkbox"/> Violets (all species); Harebell	<input type="checkbox"/> Heathers	<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh thistle	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-heal & Bugle	<input type="checkbox"/> Wild Thyme	<input type="checkbox"/> Kidney vetch	<input type="checkbox"/> Meadowsweet	<input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (Common & Sheep's)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Composites (Cat's ear, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goat's beard - not Dandelion)	<input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds	<input type="checkbox"/> Meadow thistle	<input type="checkbox"/> Small rushes (Spike, Woodrushes, Heath)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Flag Iris	<input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle	<input type="checkbox"/> Mints (all)		<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (Hay rattle)
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A3 What is the combined cover of negative indicators/weeds throughout the entire field? <i>(tick if present)</i> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Docks (NOT small sorrels)</td> <td>High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.</td> <td>-20</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (Creeping & spear)</td> <td>Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward.</td> <td>-10</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Perennial Rye-grass</td> <td>Low <5%: None present or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, overall cover should be less than 5%.</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ragwort</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Nettles</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				<input type="checkbox"/> Docks (NOT small sorrels)	High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.	-20	<input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (Creeping & spear)	Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward.	-10	<input type="checkbox"/> Perennial Rye-grass	Low <5%: None present or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, overall cover should be less than 5%.	0	<input type="checkbox"/> Ragwort			<input type="checkbox"/> Nettles																											
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A4 Vegetation Structure. Note: If grassland is primarily grazed use A4(a) (including marsh fritillary suitability assessment); OR, if grassland is cut for hay or silage, use A4(b) . Refer to the guidance for sward quality details.																																											
<div> A4(a) What is the vegetation structure in grasslands which are PRIMARILY GRAZED? </div> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Poor: All vegetation short (overgrazed) / Tall & rank (undergrazed).</td> <td>-10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Suboptimal: Tall vegetation cover is patchy. No areas with distinct tussocks. Grassy areas dominate field. Little variation in the height of vegetation. Dead standing leaves rare. OR Uniform vegetation height throughout the field.</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good: Tall/medium and short vegetation throughout. May contain frequent tall tussocks or frequent sharp-flowered or jointed rush. Some grass/sedge dominated areas also occur.</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very good: Tall and medium and short vegetation throughout. Tussocks throughout. Some tall dense soft rush, some areas of shorter sharp-flowered rush and some grass/sedge dominated areas.</td> <td>40</td> </tr> </table>				Poor: All vegetation short (overgrazed) / Tall & rank (undergrazed).	-10	Suboptimal: Tall vegetation cover is patchy. No areas with distinct tussocks. Grassy areas dominate field. Little variation in the height of vegetation. Dead standing leaves rare. OR Uniform vegetation height throughout the field.	10	Good: Tall/medium and short vegetation throughout. May contain frequent tall tussocks or frequent sharp-flowered or jointed rush. Some grass/sedge dominated areas also occur.	25	Very good: Tall and medium and short vegetation throughout. Tussocks throughout. Some tall dense soft rush, some areas of shorter sharp-flowered rush and some grass/sedge dominated areas.	40																																
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<div> A4(b) What is the vegetation structure in grasslands which are CUT FOR HAY or SILAGE? </div> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Poor structure: No field margins present. Field topped right up to the field boundary OR short sward throughout.</td> <td>-10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate structure: Narrow field margins and/or headlands present (> 1m) OR medium height sward throughout (20-30cm). At least 20% of grass in sward with flowering heads.</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good structure: Field margins and/or headlands at least 2m wide OR tall sward height throughout (>30cm). At least 50% of grass in sward with flowering heads.</td> <td>20</td> </tr> </table>				Poor structure: No field margins present. Field topped right up to the field boundary OR short sward throughout.	-10	Moderate structure: Narrow field margins and/or headlands present (> 1m) OR medium height sward throughout (20-30cm). At least 20% of grass in sward with flowering heads.	10	Good structure: Field margins and/or headlands at least 2m wide OR tall sward height throughout (>30cm). At least 50% of grass in sward with flowering heads.	20																																		
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A5 Marsh Fritillary suitability assessment in primarily grazed grassland <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Numerous patches (at least quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious?</td> <td>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>No <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout?</td> <td>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>No <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>				Numerous patches (at least quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>																																		
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A6 Field boundary quality. Assess the quality of the **WORST 30m** of field boundary in the field. Refer to guidance document for details.

Poor: Wire fence only or very poor quality field boundary present.	0
Moderate: Moderate field boundary quality.	10
Good: Good field boundary quality.	20

What is the **dominant field boundary** in this field?

☐ Hedgerow ☐ Earth bank ☐ Treeline
☐ Drainage ditch ☐ Wire fence ☐ Stonewall

Also present:

☐ Hedgerow ☐ Earth bank ☐ Treeline
☐ Drainage ditch ☐ Wire fence ☐ Stonewall

A7 Scrub diversity & structure

Low: No scrub or isolated leggy gorse bushes.	0
Moderate: Single-species scrub (often Gorse) with diverse height and irregular edge. One or two other wood plant species may be present. Base sparsely vegetated. Suitable nesting area for small birds.	5
High: Scrub with a mix of several woody plant species of varied heights throughout. Highly structurally diverse with some compact inaccessible areas.	10

B Threats & future prospects

Total score B
(sum of B1 to B6) **/10**

B1 Is there any **evidence of damaging activities** to habitat, vegetation, or archaeology?

High: Damage occurring across a large area ($\geq 21\%$) or of a serious nature if confined.	-30
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area ($\geq 6-20\%$) or of a moderate nature if confined.	-20
Low: Damage occurring across a small area ($\leq 5\%$) or of a minor nature if confined.	-10
None: No damaging activities.	0

Damaging activities: (tick relevant damage & describe in comments)

☐ Damage from supplementary feeding ☐ Quarrying ☐ Boundary damage
☐ Damage to archaeological features ☐ Burning ☐ Removal of mature scrub/trees
☐ Inappropriate herbicide use ☐ Dumping ☐ Other (please specify):

B2 What is the level of risk to the **quality of natural water bodies** within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants?

The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance).

High:	-25	Low:	-5
Moderate:	-15	None:	0

B3 What is the extent of **bare soil & erosion**?

High: Excessive areas of bare soil within the body of the field. Bare soil may also be extending out significantly from the main feed sites and/or water troughs, where poaching evident. Significant rutting and soil disturbance caused by vehicle/tractor access.	-20
Moderate: Bare soil mainly along regularly used stock routes or congregation areas, with minor soil loss occurring at a few points. Bare soil may extend a short distance beyond the main feed site and/or water points. Minor rutting and soil disturbance caused by occasional vehicle/tractor access may be present.	-10
Low: Bare soil more or less restricted to regular stock paths, 'pinch' points & small congregation areas. No soil loss.	10

B4 What is the cover of **non-native invasive species**?

High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.	-30
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.	-20
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.	-10
None: No non-native invasive species present.	0

Non-native invasive species: (tick if present)

☐ Rhododendron ☐ Himalayan balsam
☐ Cotoneaster ☐ Himalayan knotweed
☐ Japanese Knotweed ☐ Himalayan honeysuckle
☐ Giant Hogweed ☐ Other (please specify):

B5 What is the extent of **spreading immature scrub**?

(This can be brambles, seedlings, scrub and trees generally lower than 1m in height and with a stem diameter of <5cm. **Do not include established scrub**).

High: >40% of the field has immature scrub cover, some well-established saplings may be present. Field is likely to show few signs of management, such as signs of recent grazing or signs of livestock.	-20
Moderate: Cover of immature scrub in patches or individuals with overall cover of between 20-40% with particularly briars/brambles coming in.	-10
Low: Small patches of immature scrub or individual seedlings of immature scrub with overall cover of less than 20%. Grass growth easily seen underneath the scrub.	0

B6 What is the cover of **bracken**?

High: Dense stands of bracken covering over half or more of the field, forming closed canopy.	-20
Moderate: Bracken forming dense stands covering parts of the field, mostly forming closed canopy.	-10
Low: Bracken absent or some scattered fronds and none forming closed canopy. Can include some isolated small patches or some larger patches on steep slopes.	0

Specific field management advice/comments to farmer:

June 2023 | ACRES Rough grazing Scorecard | Page 2 of 2



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

Appendix 14: ACRES Winterage Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

ACRES Winterage SCORECARD		Farmer name:	Surveyor:
		Field number:	Survey date:
		Business ID:	Total Score: (A+B+C) /100
A Grazing & Stock Management		Total score A: (sum of A1 to A5) /65	
A1 What is the grazing level? <i>(relates to the most recent winter grazing period, but also covers any summer grazing).</i>	Under-grazed	Significantly below: Grazing largely confined to a few easily accessible, palatable areas but even these are poorly grazed with plenty of forage left. Less palatable areas not or barely grazed at all, generally with high levels of litter accumulating. Areas of rank vegetation present with negligible signs of grazing.	-25
		Below optimum: Less than half of the grazeable area in field fairly well grazed, e.g. some easily grazed, palatable areas well grazed but others with plenty of forage left and grazing levels elsewhere negligible or relatively low.	-5
		Slightly below: More than half of grazeable area in field well grazed, e.g. palatable areas well grazed but rest only fairly well grazed at best.	0
		Generally good: Generally good over the majority, but still slightly below optimum in some areas, which may be as a result of a lack of a 'light summer graze' to maintain richer areas.	10
		Optimum: Sward in good condition throughout, with good structure and an abundance of plants in flower.	15
	Over-grazed	Slightly above: Slightly above optimum but otherwise good. Applies mainly to fields grazed tighter than recommended during a 'light summer graze'. Some of the more palatable areas grazed out rather than 'topped' but flowering plants still obvious over much of the field.	5
Above optimum: Signs of heavier grazing evident but patchy in distribution. Applies mainly to fields with a tradition of regular and/or light, summer grazing periods where there is a lack of 'green land' on farm. Sward may be short in more palatable areas but flowering heads of plants typical of a winterage should be common on less grazed areas.		-5	
Significantly above: Sward short throughout with little variation in height of vegetation. Relatively few herbs or grasses seen in flower during May/June/July as grazed off. Site looks 'grassy' rather than 'flowery'. Most flowering herbs are low growing, rosette plants (e.g. daisies). Bare soil visible in areas.		-35	
A2 What is the litter level? <i>(this complements the A1 grazing level assessment).</i>	Low <10%: Litter rare, being very sparse and scattered across the grazeable area.	20	
	10-25%: Mostly just present in some less palatable or more remote grazeable areas.	15	
	>25-50%: Thatch forming some continuous patches but still mostly in the less palatable areas.	10	
	>50-75%: Thatch and/or dead-standing vegetation frequent, forming large, continuous patches.	5	
	High >75%: Litter dominant, forming a more or less continuous layer across most of the grazeable area.	0	
A3a Is there damage at feed sites and/or water troughs? <i>(see guidance to aid with assessment).</i>	Low: Low impact (if any) associated with supplementary feed sites and/or water troughs.	15	Comments:
	Low-med: Impact between Low & Medium.	10	
	Medium: Medium impact associated with supplementary feed sites and/or water troughs.	5	
	Med-high: Impact between Medium & High.	0	
	High: High impact associated with supplementary feed sites and/or water troughs.	-5	
A3b Have round bales of silage been fed in the field? <i>(see guidance to aid with assessment).</i>	No: 0	Yes: -60	If yes; please note the location and level of silage feeding in the comment box, and consult with CP team if needed for additional advice on assessment.
A4 Is there damage* at natural water sources? <i>*Where relevant, also assess the level of risk to the quality of natural water bodies within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants - the 'source-pathway-receptor' model should inform the assessment (see guidance).</i>	None present: No natural water sources/water bodies present.	15	
	No damage/risk: No associated damage/risk present.	15	
	Low: See guidance to inform assessment.	10	
	Moderate: See guidance to inform assessment.	5	
	High: See guidance to inform assessment.	-10	
A5 What is the extent of bare soil and erosion?	Low: Bare soil more or less restricted to regular stock paths, 'pinch' points & small congregation areas. No soil loss.	0	
	Low-med: Extent between Low & Medium.	-5	
	Medium: Bare soil mainly along regularly used stock routes or congregation areas, with minor soil loss occurring at a few points. Bare soil may extend a short distance beyond the main feed site and/or water points. Minor rutting and soil disturbance caused by occasional vehicle/tractor access may be present.	-10	
	Med-high: Extent between Medium & High.	-15	
	High: Excessive areas of bare soil within the body of the field. Bare soil may also be extending out significantly from the main feed sites and/or water troughs, where poaching evident. Significant rutting and soil disturbance caused by vehicle/tractor access.	-20	

B Plant Species that can Threaten Grazed Habitats

Total score B:
(sum of B1 to B5) /30

B1 What is the extent of spreading immature scrub?

(the % cover of immature scrub should be assessed across the grazeable area of the field, and based on the extent of immature scrub that would be suitable for removal).

Low ≤2%: Cover of immature spreading scrub negligible overall (≤2%); may occur as a few scattered individuals or a couple discrete patches. Low threat posed to species-rich grazeable areas.	15
3-5%: Cover of immature spreading scrub between 3-5%.	10
6-10%: Cover of immature spreading scrub between 6-10%.	5
11-15%: Cover of immature spreading scrub between 11-15%.	0
16-25%: Cover of immature spreading scrub between 16-25%.	-5
High >26%: Cover of immature spreading scrub >26%. Very high impact on species-rich grazeable areas.	-15

B2 What is the impact of/threat from bracken?

Low: If present, generally scattered and short (<0.5m high), and/or restricted to soil filled grikes. Not forming large, closed canopy stands, i.e. very few dense patches >2x2m in body of field.	5
Low-med: Impact between Low & Medium.	0
Medium: Cover of dense, closed canopy stands up to 10% of the assessment area. Average height about 0.75m, with any taller stands restricted to small patches or to a few pockets of deeper soil. Scattered, open-canopy stands otherwise, with less impact on the wider assessment area.	-5
Med-high: Impact between Medium & High.	-10
High: Cover of dense, closed-canopy stands exceeding more than 20% of the assessment area. Stands usually tall with an average height of 1m or more (waist height), often with a significant bracken litter layer beneath and a suppressed, modified ground flora (more grassy in appearance).	-15

B3 What is the impact of/threat from Molinia? (Purple moor-grass)

Low: Molinia present as a natural part of vegetation (e.g. in association with flushes, limestone heaths). Targeted, light summer grazing preventing it from forming dense stands with a thick litter layer.	5
Low-med: Impact between Low & Medium.	0
Medium: Molinia may be common over more than half of the assessment area but less than 25% of the Molinia has a significant layer of litter beneath (litter patchy & discontinuous). Or, Molinia occurs in discrete pockets/veins, generally with a thick litter layer which is suppressing the growth of other grasses and flowers on approx. 5-10% of the overall grazeable area.	-5
Med-high: Impact between Medium & High.	-10
High: Molinia common over more than half of the assessment area with old leaves forming a thick litter layer across more than half of the Molinia area, visibly suppressing the surrounding flora.	-15

B4 What is the cover of weed species present due to management practices?

Low: Weeds absent or rare across the field. Some may be present in very localised and confined areas (e.g. wall bands, shelter spots). Cover of weeds negligible overall.	5
Low-med: Weeds occasional. Generally restricted to wall bands, shelter spots and/or around feeders/water troughs where they may be quite common. Weeds occasional at old, disused silage feed sites. Cover of weeds negligible within body of field.	0
Medium: Weeds relatively common along wall bands, by shelter spots and occasionally extending 5-10m out from these. Weeds may still be relatively common on, and extend out from, old silage feed sites, but are decreasing. Weeds can occur as scattered individuals throughout the field or located in a few patches. Cover of weeds <2% of grazeable area.	-5
Med-high: Cover of weeds outside of wall bands, shelter spots and current feed sites between 2-10% of the grazeable area. Significant cover of weeds still associated with old feed sites.	-10
High: Weeds obvious throughout the field or numerous, large dense patches present. Cover of weeds >10% of grazeable area.	-15

B5 What is the cover of non-native invasives?

None: No non-native invasive species present.	0
Red valerian only: Only red valerian present.	0

Main weed types (tick): ☐ Docks ☐ Ragwort ☐ Thistles ☐ Perennial Rye-grass ☐ Nettles ☐ Other weeds

Slight/Low. -5 Moderate. -10 Severe/High. -20

Non-native invasives (tick if present): ☐ Cotoneaster ☐ Traveller's-joy ☐ Red valerian ☐ Other (specify):

C Ecological & Site Integrity

Total score C:
(sum of C1 + C2) /5

C1 Does the field retain its ecological integrity, in terms of the typical plant communities present? (see guidance to inform assessment)

Typical flora	5
Very slightly modified	0
Slightly modified	-5
Moderately modified	-15
Significantly modified	-25

C2 Is there any evidence of damaging activities to habitat, vegetation, or archaeology? (note the location, & consult with CP team if needed for additional advice on assessment)

Damaging activities: (tick relevant damage & describe in comments)

☐ Quarrying ☐ Burning

☐ Dumping

☐ Boundary damage

☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Damage to archaeological features

☐ Removal of mature scrub/trees

None: No damaging activities.	0
Low: Damage occurring across a small area (≤5%) or of a minor nature if confined.	-5
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area (≥6-20%) or of a moderate nature if confined.	-15
High: Damage occurring across a large area (≥21%) or of a serious nature if confined.	-25

Comments:



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

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Appendix 15: ACRES Coastal Grassland Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

ACRES Coastal grassland SCORECARD		Farmer name:	Surveyor:																																												
		Field number:																																													
		Business ID:	Survey date:																																												
Primary habitat type: (tick relevant box) Dry dunes <input type="checkbox"/> Wet dunes <input type="checkbox"/> Salt marsh <input type="checkbox"/>		Total Score: (A+B) /100																																													
A Ecological integrity		Total score A: (sum of A1 to A6) /95																																													
A1 What is the number of positive indicators in the field? Tick all positive indicators present below. <i>Note all positive indicators present as you walk a 'W' through the field.</i>																																															
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Low: 0-4</td> <td>0</td> <td>High: 9-12</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medium: 5-8</td> <td>5</td> <td>Very high: 13+</td> <td>25</td> </tr> </table>				Low: 0-4	0	High: 9-12	10	Medium: 5-8	5	Very high: 13+	25																																				
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Positive indicators: (tick those present) <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & stitchworts</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sea beet</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Tormentil (Common & English)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Birdsfoot trefoil</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lichen spp.</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sea lavender</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Violets (all), Harebell</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Common stork's bill</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh pennywort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sea milkwort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Water mint</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Creeping willow</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Mosses</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sea or Buckhorn plantain</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> White/purple composites (e.g., Sea aster, Sea mayweed, Daisies)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Crowberry</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Orache</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sedges</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Wild carrot</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Orchids</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Small Rushes (Woodrush, Spike rush, Heath rush)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Wild thyme</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Heathers/Ling</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Parsley water-dropwort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Speedwell</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow composites (Cats ears, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goats-beard) - not dandelion</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Juniper</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Restharrow</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Spurry</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (Hay rattle)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Kidney vetch</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (Devil's-bit & field)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Stonecrops</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Scurvy grass</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Thrift</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sea arrowgrass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				<input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & stitchworts	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort	<input type="checkbox"/> Sea beet	<input type="checkbox"/> Tormentil (Common & English)	<input type="checkbox"/> Birdsfoot trefoil	<input type="checkbox"/> Lichen spp.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sea lavender	<input type="checkbox"/> Violets (all), Harebell	<input type="checkbox"/> Common stork's bill	<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh pennywort	<input type="checkbox"/> Sea milkwort	<input type="checkbox"/> Water mint	<input type="checkbox"/> Creeping willow	<input type="checkbox"/> Mosses	<input type="checkbox"/> Sea or Buckhorn plantain	<input type="checkbox"/> White/purple composites (e.g., Sea aster, Sea mayweed, Daisies)	<input type="checkbox"/> Crowberry	<input type="checkbox"/> Orache	<input type="checkbox"/> Sedges	<input type="checkbox"/> Wild carrot	<input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights	<input type="checkbox"/> Orchids	<input type="checkbox"/> Small Rushes (Woodrush, Spike rush, Heath rush)	<input type="checkbox"/> Wild thyme	<input type="checkbox"/> Heathers/Ling	<input type="checkbox"/> Parsley water-dropwort	<input type="checkbox"/> Speedwell	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow composites (Cats ears, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goats-beard) - not dandelion	<input type="checkbox"/> Juniper	<input type="checkbox"/> Restharrow	<input type="checkbox"/> Spurry	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (Hay rattle)	<input type="checkbox"/> Kidney vetch	<input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (Devil's-bit & field)	<input type="checkbox"/> Stonecrops			<input type="checkbox"/> Scurvy grass	<input type="checkbox"/> Thrift			<input type="checkbox"/> Sea arrowgrass		
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<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Low: You can take up to 10 steps without encountering any positive indicators. You have to search for them.</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate: You encounter a positive indicator with every two to three steps taken.</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High: You encounter a positive indicator with every step taken.</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very high: You encounter multiple different positive indicators with every step taken (and in between steps).</td> <td>30</td> </tr> </table>				Low: You can take up to 10 steps without encountering any positive indicators. You have to search for them.	0	Moderate: You encounter a positive indicator with every two to three steps taken.	10	High: You encounter a positive indicator with every step taken.	20	Very high: You encounter multiple different positive indicators with every step taken (and in between steps).	30																																				
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A3 What is the combined cover of negative indicators/weeds throughout the field? Tick if present: <input type="checkbox"/> Docks (NOT small sorrels) <input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (Creeping & spear) <input type="checkbox"/> Perennial Rye-grass <input type="checkbox"/> Ragwort <input type="checkbox"/> Nettles																																															
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>High: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.</td> <td>-20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field and not limited to previous feeding sites, trackways, field boundaries, water troughs and gateways. Readily visible in the sward.</td> <td>-10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low: Scattered or small clumps of weeds/negative indicators. Where present at gateways, water troughs, field boundaries and along well-used trackways, this cover should be less than 5% and the weeds should not extend into the main body of the field.</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very low: Absent, or scattered individuals or very small patches in the plot.</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </table>				High: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.	-20	Moderate: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field and not limited to previous feeding sites, trackways, field boundaries, water troughs and gateways. Readily visible in the sward.	-10	Low: Scattered or small clumps of weeds/negative indicators. Where present at gateways, water troughs, field boundaries and along well-used trackways, this cover should be less than 5% and the weeds should not extend into the main body of the field.	0	Very low: Absent, or scattered individuals or very small patches in the plot.	10																																				
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A4 What is the vegetation structure in dune and grazed saltmarsh habitats?		A5 Marsh Fritillary suitability assessment in primarily grazed grassland																																													
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Poor: Most of plot is short sward (<10cm); with less than a third of the area supporting longer vegetation.</td> <td>-10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate: Vegetation is dense and tall throughout, with less than a third of the area composed of shorter sward (<10cm).</td> <td>-5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good: A balance of shorter (<10cm) and taller vegetation is present in the site, with neither dominating over more than two-thirds of the area. Mediterranean saltmarshes should be considered good if dominated by rushes.</td> <td>15</td> </tr> </table>		Poor: Most of plot is short sward (<10cm); with less than a third of the area supporting longer vegetation.	-10	Moderate: Vegetation is dense and tall throughout, with less than a third of the area composed of shorter sward (<10cm).	-5	Good: A balance of shorter (<10cm) and taller vegetation is present in the site, with neither dominating over more than two-thirds of the area. Mediterranean saltmarshes should be considered good if dominated by rushes.	15	Numerous patches (at least quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>																																							
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		Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
A6 What is the extent of bare substrate?																																															
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Assessment</th> <th>Type</th> <th>Bare soil extent</th> <th>Score</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="3">Poor:</td> <td>Fixed dunes</td> <td>>25%</td> <td rowspan="3">-10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Machair</td> <td>>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Salt Marsh</td> <td>>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3">Moderate:</td> <td>Fixed dunes</td> <td>10-25%</td> <td rowspan="3">-5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Machair</td> <td>5-25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Salt Marsh</td> <td>5-10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3">Good:</td> <td>Fixed dunes</td> <td><10%</td> <td rowspan="3">15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Machair</td> <td><5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Salt Marsh</td> <td>Natural distribution of pans & creeks with up to 5% bare substrate elsewhere.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Assessment	Type	Bare soil extent	Score	Poor:	Fixed dunes	>25%	-10	Machair	>25%	Salt Marsh	>10%	Moderate:	Fixed dunes	10-25%	-5	Machair	5-25%	Salt Marsh	5-10%	Good:	Fixed dunes	<10%	15	Machair	<5%	Salt Marsh	Natural distribution of pans & creeks with up to 5% bare substrate elsewhere.																
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B Threats & pressures		Total score B (sum of B1 to B5) /5	
B1 Is there any evidence of damaging activities to habitat, vegetation, or soil?		B2 What is the level of risk to the quality of natural water bodies within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants? <i>The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance).</i>	
High: Damage occurring across a large area ($\geq 21\%$) or of a serious nature if confined.	-30	High:	-25
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area ($\geq 6-20\%$) or of a moderate nature if confined.	-20	Moderate:	-15
Low: Damage occurring across a small area ($\leq 5\%$) or of a minor nature if confined.	-10	Low:	-5
None: No damaging activities.	0	None:	0
Damaging activities: (tick relevant damage & describe in comments)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Damage from supplementary feeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Trampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Built structures	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coastal stabilisation work	<input type="checkbox"/> Reclamation	<input type="checkbox"/> Sand extraction	
<input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate herbicide use	<input type="checkbox"/> Dumping	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Artificial ponds	<input type="checkbox"/> Silage storage		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle tracks		
B3 Artificial drainage features within plot.	Drained grassland: Frequent widespread free flowing drains or dug ponds within plot affecting $>20\%$ plot.	-20	
	Partly drained: Free flowing drains or dug ponds within plot affecting up to 20% plot.	-15	
	Past drainage: Drains present but flow is impeded.	-5	
	No drainage: No artificial drainage or dug ponds within plot.	5	
B4 What is the cover of non-native invasive species (excluding <i>Spartina anglica</i>)?			
High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.	-20	Non-native invasive species: (tick if present)	
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.	-10	<input type="checkbox"/> Red Valerian	
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.	-5	<input type="checkbox"/> Beach Rose	
None: No non-native invasive species present.	0	<input type="checkbox"/> New-Zealand flax	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Sea-Buckthorn	
B5 What is the extent of spreading immature scrub? <i>(This can be brambles, seedlings, scrub and trees generally lower than 1m in height and with a stem diameter of $<5\text{cm}$. Do not include established scrub).</i>	High: $>25\%$ of the field has immature scrub cover, some well-established saplings may be present. Scrub along field boundaries may be encroaching onto the field. Field is likely to show few signs of management, such as recent grazing, or signs of livestock.	-20	
	Moderate: 11-25% cover of immature scrub in patches or individuals. Some spread of scrub from field boundaries may be evident, particularly briars/bramble.	-10	
	Low: $<10\%$ of small patches of immature scrub or individual seedlings of encroaching scrub. Grass growth easily seen under the scrub.	0	

Common management recommendations to pick from:

- ☐ Continue current management of this high quality grassland.
- ☐ Control the occurrence and spread of invasive species, supporting actions are available.
- ☐ Control the occurrence and spread of immature scrub.
- ☐ Consider using supporting actions to slow or impede the flow of drains.
- ☐ Consider alternative to ring feeders.
- ☐ Consult the CP team about control of rabbit population.
- ☐ Use stock to graze plot more evenly.
- ☐ Improve stock management. Supporting actions may be available e.g. fencing / drinking facilities.
- ☐ Move feeders / troughs regularly.
- ☐ Tourist damage, burning/litter/dumping/ vehicle tracks. Consult with CP team regarding solutions.
- ☐ Reduce fertiliser inputs.
- ☐ No management advice.
- ☐ Other management advice.



Appendix 16: ACRES Chough Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

<h1 style="margin: 0;">ACRES</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Chough</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">SCORECARD</h3>	Farmer name: _____ Field number: _____ Business ID: _____	Surveyor: _____ Survey date: _____ Total Score: (A+B+C) /100
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A Ecological integrity	Total score A: (sum of A1 to A5) /90
A1 What is the number of positive indicators in the field? Tick all positive indicators present below. <i>Note all positive indicators present as you walk a 'W' through the field.</i>	Low: 0-5 0 Medium: 6-8 10 High: 9+ 20
Positive indicators: (tick those present)	
<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 33%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Armeria (<i>Sea thrift/Sea pink</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & stitchworts <input type="checkbox"/> Birdsfoot trefoil <input type="checkbox"/> Carline thistle <input type="checkbox"/> Cowslips & Primrose <input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights <input type="checkbox"/> Forget-me-nots <input type="checkbox"/> Heathers <input type="checkbox"/> Kidney vetch <input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds <input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle </div> <div style="width: 33%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lady's Smock (<i>cuckoo flower</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort <input type="checkbox"/> Louseworts (<i>Common & Marsh</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh cinquefoil <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh marigold <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh pennywort <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh thistle <input type="checkbox"/> Meadowsweet <input type="checkbox"/> Meadow thistle <input type="checkbox"/> Mints (<i>all</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Orchids </div> <div style="width: 33%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Oxeye daisy <input type="checkbox"/> Purple loosestrife <input type="checkbox"/> Plantain (<i>Buck's horn or sea</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Ragged robin <input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (<i>Devil's-bit & field</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Sedges <input type="checkbox"/> Selfheal & Bugle <input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (<i>Sheep & Common</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Small Rushes (<i>Woodrush Spike rush, Heath rush</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum & Branched mosses <input type="checkbox"/> Tormentil (<i>Common & English</i>) </div> <div style="width: 33%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Umbels large (<i>Umbels large and/or common valerian and/or common hogweed</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Umbels small (<i>Pignut, Yarrow & Wild carrot</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Vetches/vetchlings <input type="checkbox"/> Violets (<i>all</i>), Harebell <input type="checkbox"/> Wild thyme <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow composites (<i>Cats ears, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goats-beard</i>) - not dandelion <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow flag iris <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (<i>Hay rattle</i>) </div> </div>	
A2 What is the combined cover of all positive indicators (<i>listed above</i>) throughout the field? <i>(Cover is the proportion of the field taken up by all positive indicators present)</i>	A3 What is the combined cover of negative indicators/weeds throughout the field? <i>Tick if present:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Docks (<i>NOT small sorrels</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (<i>Creeping & spear</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Perennial Rye-grass <input type="checkbox"/> Ragwort <input type="checkbox"/> Nettle <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Low: None present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all. 0	High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward. -20
Moderate: You encounter a positive indicator with every few steps taken. 10	Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward. -10
High: You encounter positive indicators with every step taken. 20	Low <5%: None or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, cover should be less than 5%. 0
A4 Vegetation structure	A5 Landscape elements
Low: Sward height uniformly tall (>20 cm) throughout site OR large unvegetated areas. 0	Low: Absence of, earth mounds, stone walls, exposed rock, scree. 0
Moderate: Sward height 10 - 20 cm throughout site (occasionally <10cm). Small patches of bare soil. 15	Moderate: Occasional occurrence of earth mounds, stone walls, exposed rock and/or scree. 10
Good: Sward is < 10 cm in height, many areas < 5 cm. Occasional to frequent small patches of bare soil. 30	Good: Regular occurrence of earth mounds and/or exposed rock 20
B Threats & future prospects	Total score B: (sum of B1 to B6) /10
B1 Is there any evidence of damaging activities to habitat, vegetation, or archaeology?	B2 What is the level of risk to the quality of natural water bodies within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants? <i>The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance).</i>
High: Damage occurring across a large area (≥21%) or of a serious nature if confined. -30	High: -25 Low: -5
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area (≥6-20%) or of a moderate nature if confined. -20	Moderate: -15 None: 0
Low: Damage occurring across a small area (≤5%) or of a minor nature if confined. -10	
None: No damaging activities. 0	
Damaging activities: (tick relevant damage & describe in comments)	
<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 33%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Damage from supplementary feeding <input type="checkbox"/> Damage to archaeological features <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate herbicide use </div> <div style="width: 33%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Quarrying <input type="checkbox"/> Burning <input type="checkbox"/> Dumping </div> <div style="width: 33%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Boundary damage <input type="checkbox"/> Removal of mature scrub/trees <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ </div> </div>	

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B3 What is the extent of bare soil & erosion?

High: Excessive areas of bare soil within the body of the field. Bare soil may also be extending out significantly from the main feed sites and/or water troughs, where poaching evident. Significant rutting and soil disturbance caused by vehicle/tractor access.	-20
Moderate: Bare soil mainly along regularly used stock routes or congregation areas, with minor soil loss occurring at a few points. Bare soil may extend a short distance beyond the main feed site and/or water points. Minor rutting and soil disturbance caused by occasional vehicle/tractor access may be present.	-10
Low: Bare soil more or less restricted to regular stock paths, 'pinch' points & small congregation areas. No soil loss. OR Bare soil mainly along regularly used routes or areas with minor soil loss occurring at a few points.	10

B4 What is the cover of non-native invasive species?

Non-native invasive species: (tick if present)

High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.	-30	<input type="checkbox"/> Rhododendron	<input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan balsam
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.	-20	<input type="checkbox"/> Cotoneaster	<input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan knotweed
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.	-10	<input type="checkbox"/> Hottentot fig	<input type="checkbox"/> Himalayan honeysuckle
None: No non-native invasive species present.	0	<input type="checkbox"/> Giant Hogweed	<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese Knotweed
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	

B5 What is the extent of spreading immature scrub?

(This can be brambles, seedlings, scrub and trees generally lower than 1m in height and with a stem diameter of <5cm. Do not include established scrub).

High: >25% of the field has immature scrub cover, some well-established saplings may be present. Field is likely to show few signs of management, such as signs of recent grazing or signs of livestock.	-20
Moderate: Cover of immature scrub in patches or individuals with overall cover of between 11-25% with particularly briars/brambles coming in.	-10
Low: Small patches of immature scrub or individual seedlings of immature scrub with overall cover of less than 10%. Grass growth easily seen underneath the scrub.	0

B6 What is the cover of bracken?

High: Dense stands of bracken covering over half or more of the field, forming closed canopy.	-20
Moderate: Bracken forming dense stands covering parts of the field, mostly forming closed canopy.	-10
Low: Bracken absent or some scattered fronds and none forming closed canopy. Can include some isolated small patches or some larger patches on steep slopes.	0

Common management recommendations to pick from:

- ☐ Continue current management of this high quality grassland.
- ☐ Control the occurrence and spread of invasive species. Consult with CP team regarding solutions.
- ☐ Control the occurrence and spread of immature scrub.
- ☐ Consider alternative to ring feeders, if necessary.
- ☐ Use stock to graze field more evenly.
- ☐ Improve stock management. Supporting actions may be available e.g. Fencing / drinking facilities.
- ☐ Move feeders / troughs regularly.
- ☐ Tourist damage, burning/litter/dumping/ vehicle tracks. Consult with CP team regarding solutions.
- ☐ Reduce fertiliser inputs.
- ☐ No management advice.
- ☐ Other management advice:

Appendix 17: ACRES Breeding Wader Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

<h1 style="margin: 0;">ACRES</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Breeding wader</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">SCORECARD</h3>	Farmer name: _____ Field number: _____ Business ID: _____	Surveyor: _____ Survey date: _____
Total Score: (A+B+C) /100		

A Ecological integrity	Total score A: (sum of A1 to A5) /60
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A1 What is the number of **positive indicators** in the field?
 Tick all positive indicators present below.

Note all positive indicators present as you walk a 'W' through the field.

<input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort <input type="checkbox"/> Louseworts (common & marsh) <input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & stitchworts <input type="checkbox"/> Birdsfoot trefoil <input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights <input type="checkbox"/> Forget-me-nots (all) <input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds <input type="checkbox"/> Lady's Smock (cuckoo flower)	<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh cinquefoil <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh marigold <input type="checkbox"/> Mints (all) <input type="checkbox"/> Orchids <input type="checkbox"/> Oxeye daisy	<input type="checkbox"/> Ragged robin <input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (Devil's-bit & field) <input type="checkbox"/> Sedges <input type="checkbox"/> Selfheal & Bugle <input type="checkbox"/> Small Rushes (Woodrush, Spike rush, Heath rush) <input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (Sheep & Common) <input type="checkbox"/> Tormental (Common & English)
<input type="checkbox"/> Vetches & vetchlings <input type="checkbox"/> Violets (all), Harebell <input type="checkbox"/> Wild thyme <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow composites (Cats ears, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goats-beard) - not dandelion <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (Hay rattle)		

<p>A2 What is the combined cover of all positive indicators throughout the field? (listed above) Cover is the proportion of the field taken up by all positive indicators present.</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Low: None present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #f0f0f0;">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate: Positive indicators occur every few steps.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #ffcc00;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High: You encounter positive indicators with every step taken.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #008000;">10</td> </tr> </table>	Low: None present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all.	0	Moderate: Positive indicators occur every few steps.	5	High: You encounter positive indicators with every step taken.	10	<p>A3 What is the combined cover of negative indicators/weeds throughout the field? Tick if present: <input type="checkbox"/> Docks (NOT small sorrels) <input type="checkbox"/> Ragwort <input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (Creeping & spear) <input type="checkbox"/> Nettle</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #ff0000;">-5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #ffcc00;">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low <5%: None or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, cover should be less than 5%.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #008000;">5</td> </tr> </table>	High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.	-5	Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward.	0	Low <5%: None or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, cover should be less than 5%.	5
Low: None present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all.	0												
Moderate: Positive indicators occur every few steps.	5												
High: You encounter positive indicators with every step taken.	10												
High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.	-5												
Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward.	0												
Low <5%: None or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, cover should be less than 5%.	5												

<p>A4 What is the quality of vegetation structure for Breeding wader: sward height?</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Poor: Long (>15cm) >70% of field mostly tall vegetation.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #ff0000;">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate: Short (<5cm) >70% of field mostly short vegetation, with occasional patches of tall vegetation.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #ffcc00;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High: Mosaic (5-15cm) >70% of field. Areas of taller and/or shorter sward occur.</td> <td style="text-align: right; background-color: #008000;">20</td> </tr> </table>	Poor: Long (>15cm) >70% of field mostly tall vegetation.	0	Moderate: Short (<5cm) >70% of field mostly short vegetation, with occasional patches of tall vegetation.	10	High: Mosaic (5-15cm) >70% of field. Areas of taller and/or shorter sward occur.	20	<p>A5 Marsh Fritillary suitability assessment in primarily meadows (or grazed grassland).</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> Numerous patches (at least quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious? </td> <td style="width: 10%;"> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> </td> <td style="width: 10%;"> Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout? </td> <td style="width: 10%;"> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> </td> </tr> </table>	Numerous patches (at least quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Poor: Long (>15cm) >70% of field mostly tall vegetation.	0										
Moderate: Short (<5cm) >70% of field mostly short vegetation, with occasional patches of tall vegetation.	10										
High: Mosaic (5-15cm) >70% of field. Areas of taller and/or shorter sward occur.	20										
Numerous patches (at least quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>								

A6 Choose the **single most dominant type of rush** present in the field
 (for dense rush: answer A6a; for sparse rush: answer A6b)

A6a Level of **DENSE RUSH**:

High >50%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in swards.	-10
Moderate 30-50%: Dense clumps of rush, either scattered throughout or confined to one area.	0
Low 10-29%: Dense clumps of rush, either scattered throughout or confined to one area.	5
Very low <10%: Dense clumps of rush, either scattered throughout or confined to one area.	15

OR

A6b Level of **SPARSE RUSH**:

High >70%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in swards.	0
Moderate 30-70%: Scattered throughout or confined to one area.	5
Low <30%: Scattered throughout or confined to one area.	15

B Wet features & hydrology	Total score B: (score B1) /15
---------------------------------------	--

Poor: No accessible wet features for foraging birds.	-10
Limited: Wet features rare. Or if present, too dry and/or over vegetated and/or too steep.	0
Good: Wet features present, but plot could be improved by increasing the amount /quality.	10
Excellent: Features of appropriate slope, wetness and vegetation cover	15

C Threats & pressures

Total score C:
(sum of C1 to C7) /25

C1 Is there any **evidence of damaging activities** to habitat, vegetation, or archaeology?

High: Damage occurring across a large area ($\geq 21\%$) or of a serious nature if confined.	-30
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area ($\geq 6-20\%$) or of a moderate nature if confined.	-20
Low: Damage occurring across a small area ($\leq 5\%$) or of a minor nature if confined.	-10
None: No damaging activities.	0

Damaging activities: (tick relevant damage & describe in comments)

- ☐ Damage from supplementary feeding
 ☐ Quarrying
 ☐ Boundary damage
☐ Damage to archaeological features
 ☐ Burning
 ☐ None
 ☐ Other (please specify):
☐ Inappropriate herbicide use
 ☐ Dumping

C2 What is the level of risk to the quality of natural water bodies within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants?

The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance).

High:	-25	Low:	-5
Moderate:	-15	None:	0

C3 What is the cover of **non-native invasive species**?

High: Abundant, some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.	-20
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.	-15
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.	-5
None: No non-native invasive species present.	0

Non-native invasive species: (tick if present)

- ☐ Rhododendron
 ☐ Himalayan balsam
☐ Cotoneaster
 ☐ Himalayan knotweed
☐ Giant Hogweed
 ☐ Himalayan honeysuckle
☐ Japanese Knotweed
 ☐ Other (please specify):

C4 What is the extent of **spreading immature scrub**?

(This can be brambles, seedlings, scrub and trees generally lower than 1m in height and with a stem diameter of $< 5\text{cm}$.)

Do not include established scrub which is scored separately in C5.

High: $> 5\%$ of the field has immature scrub cover, some well-established saplings may be present.	-10
Moderate: Cover of immature scrub in patches or individuals with overall cover of between 1-5%.	0
Low: Small patches of immature scrub or individual seedlings of immature scrub with overall cover of less than 1%.	5

C5 What is the extent of **established scrub $> 1\text{m}$ in height** occurring?

High: Scrub covering $> 5\%$ of field.	-10
Moderate: Scrub covering 1-5% of field.	-5
Low: Scrub covering $< 1\%$ of field.	0
None: No scrub present.	5

C6 Trees $> 1\text{m}$ in height present?

High: Tree(s) $2+\text{m}$ in height.	-10
Moderate: Tree(s) 1-2m in height.	-5
Low: No trees present.	5

C7 Machinery operations between 15th March - 30th June

Machinery operations identified.	-60
No machinery operations identified.	10

Common management recommendations to pick from:

- ☐ Aim to provide a stocking rate of no more than 1.0LU/ha during the breeding season of 15th March to 30th June annually.
☐ Control encroaching and established scrub. Control the occurrence and spread of immature scrub.
☐ Removal of trees where necessary.
☐ Installation of temporary predator exclusion fences.
☐ Liming of plots to control soil acidity.
☐ Installation of wader scrapes and the reprofiling of ditches.
☐ Other management advice:

Appendix 18: ACRES Corncrake Scorecard

(Scorecards may be subject to slight refinements. Visit www.gov.ie/ACRES for up-to-date scorecards)

ACRES Corncrake SCORECARD		Farmer name:	Surveyor:																																																			
		Field number:	Survey date:																																																			
		Business ID:	Total Score: (A+B+C) /100																																																			
A Ecological integrity		Total score A: (sum of A1 to A5) /35																																																				
A1 What is the number of positive indicators in the field? Tick all positive indicators present below. <i>Note all positive indicators present as you walk a 'W' through the field.</i>																																																						
<div> <div>Low: 0-4</div> <div>0</div> <div>Medium: 5-12</div> <div>5</div> <div>High: 13+</div> <div>10</div> </div>																																																						
Positive indicators: (tick those present) <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh cinquefoil & Marsh marigold</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ribwort plantain</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Umbels large (<i>Angelica</i>, <i>Common hogweed</i>)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh pennywort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (<i>Devil's-bit & field</i>)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Umbels small (<i>Pignut</i>, <i>Yarrow</i>, <i>Wild carrot & Cow parsley</i>)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Meadow buttercup (<i>not Creeping</i>)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sedges</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Violets (<i>all</i>), <i>Harebell</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Meadowsweet</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Selfheal & Bugle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow composites (<i>Cats ears</i>, <i>Hawkweeds</i>, <i>Hawkbits & Goats-beard</i>) - not dandelion</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Mints (<i>all</i>)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Small Rushes (<i>Woodrush</i>, <i>Spike rush</i>, <i>Heath rush</i>)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow flag iris</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Orchids</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (<i>Sheep & Common</i>)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (<i>Hay rattle</i>)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Oxeye daisy</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (<i>Marsh</i>, <i>Meadow & Carline</i>)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ragged robin</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Tormentil (<i>Common & English</i>)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Red clover</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & stitchworts</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Birdsfoot trefoil</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Common valerian (<i>not Red valerian</i>)</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lady's Smock (<i>cuckoo flower</i>)</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh cinquefoil & Marsh marigold	<input type="checkbox"/> Ribwort plantain	<input type="checkbox"/> Umbels large (<i>Angelica</i> , <i>Common hogweed</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh pennywort	<input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (<i>Devil's-bit & field</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Umbels small (<i>Pignut</i> , <i>Yarrow</i> , <i>Wild carrot & Cow parsley</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Meadow buttercup (<i>not Creeping</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Sedges	<input type="checkbox"/> Violets (<i>all</i>), <i>Harebell</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Meadowsweet	<input type="checkbox"/> Selfheal & Bugle	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow composites (<i>Cats ears</i> , <i>Hawkweeds</i> , <i>Hawkbits & Goats-beard</i>) - not dandelion	<input type="checkbox"/> Mints (<i>all</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Small Rushes (<i>Woodrush</i> , <i>Spike rush</i> , <i>Heath rush</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow flag iris	<input type="checkbox"/> Orchids	<input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (<i>Sheep & Common</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (<i>Hay rattle</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Oxeye daisy	<input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (<i>Marsh</i> , <i>Meadow & Carline</i>)		<input type="checkbox"/> Ragged robin	<input type="checkbox"/> Tormentil (<i>Common & English</i>)		<input type="checkbox"/> Red clover			<input type="checkbox"/> Bedstraws & stitchworts			<input type="checkbox"/> Birdsfoot trefoil			<input type="checkbox"/> Common valerian (<i>not Red valerian</i>)			<input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights			<input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds			<input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle			<input type="checkbox"/> Lady's Smock (<i>cuckoo flower</i>)			<input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort		
<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh cinquefoil & Marsh marigold	<input type="checkbox"/> Ribwort plantain	<input type="checkbox"/> Umbels large (<i>Angelica</i> , <i>Common hogweed</i>)																																																				
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<input type="checkbox"/> Lady's Smock (<i>cuckoo flower</i>)																																																						
<input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort																																																						
A2 What is the combined cover of all positive indicators throughout the field? <i>(listed above) Cover is the proportion of the field taken up by all positive indicators present.</i>		A3 What is the combined cover of negative indicators/weeds throughout the field? <i>Tick if present:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Docks (<i>NOT small sorrels</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Thistles (<i>Creeping & spear</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Perennial Rye grass <input type="checkbox"/> Ragwort <input type="checkbox"/> Nettle <input type="checkbox"/> Other																																																				
Low: Only a couple of individual plants present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all.		High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.																																																				
Moderate: Positive indicators occur every few steps.		Moderate 5-25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward.																																																				
High: You encounter positive indicators with every step taken.		Low <5%: None or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, cover should be less than 5%.																																																				
A4 Marsh Fritillary suitability assessment in primarily meadows (or grazed grassland). Numerous patches (at least Yes <input type="checkbox"/> quarter of the field), or majority of field with Devil's Bit Scabious? No <input type="checkbox"/> Is the Devil's Bit Scabious present from ankle to knee height throughout? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		A6 What is the combined cover of all large rushes throughout the field? High: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Moderate: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward. Low: None or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, cover should be less than 5%.																																																				
A5 What is the overall % cover of grasses throughout the field? High: >75% of field. Moderate: 50-75% of field. Low: <50% of field.		High: >25% of field. Moderate: 5-25% of field. Low: <5% of field.																																																				
B Structure & functions		Total score B: (sum of B1 to B6) /55																																																				
B1 What is the sward density & structure ? <i>Select one based on dominant cover. Large rush cover should be considered 'Very heavy'</i>																																																						
<table border="1"> <tr> <td> No general or weak density characterised by a thin 'wispy' appearance. Plant flowering heads largely absent or very close to the ground. </td> <td> Moderate density characterised by thin appearance or heavy grazing. Herb layer poor or very short. Few flowering heads at appropriate levels. </td> <td> Balanced vegetation density across the plot - not too heavy nor thin. Often herb rich to 20 cm and easily permeable at ground level. Grasses and herbs a balanced mix. </td> <td> Moderate density characterised by grassy appearance and/or some rank or thatched undergrowth. Often herb poor with grass dominating at ground level. </td> <td> Heavy or very heavy sward structure characterised by very grassy appearance or rank thatched undergrowth at the base. Usually associated with abandonment or excessive fertiliser and reseeding of grass, e.g. reseeded fields. </td> </tr> <tr> <td>-10</td> <td>5</td> <td>10</td> <td>5</td> <td>-10</td> </tr> </table>				No general or weak density characterised by a thin 'wispy' appearance. Plant flowering heads largely absent or very close to the ground.	Moderate density characterised by thin appearance or heavy grazing. Herb layer poor or very short. Few flowering heads at appropriate levels.	Balanced vegetation density across the plot - not too heavy nor thin. Often herb rich to 20 cm and easily permeable at ground level. Grasses and herbs a balanced mix.	Moderate density characterised by grassy appearance and/or some rank or thatched undergrowth. Often herb poor with grass dominating at ground level.	Heavy or very heavy sward structure characterised by very grassy appearance or rank thatched undergrowth at the base. Usually associated with abandonment or excessive fertiliser and reseeding of grass, e.g. reseeded fields.	-10	5	10	5	-10																																									
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B2 What percentage of the field contains the optimal vegetation height for corncrake?
(20-50cm -ankle to knee)

Low: <25% of field.	-10	High: 50-75% of field.	5
Moderate: 25-50% of field.	0	Very high: >75% of field.	10

B3 Does the field contain an early & late cover plot?

Yes:	5	No: Skip B4 & B5	0
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B4 What is the area of early & late cover in the field?

<500m ² or <5% of total field area.	0
500-1000m ² or >5% of total field area.	5
>1000m ²	10

B5 What is the percentage of characteristic species in the early & late cover plot?

<25% of plot	0
25-50% of plot	5
>50% of plot	10

Tick if present:

- ☐ Yellow Flag Iris
 ☐ Large Umbellifers
 ☐ Reed Canary Grass
☐ Nettles
 ☐ Meadowsweet
 ☐ Early and Late Cover Crop Mix

B6 What additional features are present in the field that would benefit corncrakes?

Tick all features present:

- ☐ Rocky outcrop or unmown headland covering >5% of plot
☐ 5-20% Reeds cover within the plot
☐ Other

No features	0
1 feature present	5
>1 feature present	10

C Threats & future prospects

Total score C:
(sum of C1 to C4) **/10**

C1 Is there any evidence of damaging activities to habitat, vegetation, or archaeology?

High: Damage occurring across a large area (≥21%) or of a serious nature if confined.	-30
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area (≥6-20%) or of a moderate nature if confined.	-20
Low: Damage occurring across a small area (≤5%) or of a minor nature if confined.	-10
None: No damaging activities.	0

Damaging activities: (tick relevant damage & describe in comments)

- ☐ Damage from supplementary feeding
 ☐ Quarrying
 ☐ Boundary damage
☐ Damage to archaeological features
 ☐ Burning
 ☐ Removal of mature scrub/trees
☐ Inappropriate herbicide use
 ☐ Dumping
 ☐ Other (please specify):

C2 What is the level of risk to the quality of natural water bodies within, adjacent to and downstream of the field due to pressures relating to flow, sediment, nutrients or other pollutants?

The source - pathway - receptor model should inform the assessment (see guidance).

High:	-25	Low:	-5
Moderate:	-15	None:	0

C3 What is the cover of non-native invasive species?

High: Abundant, some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.	-20
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.	-15
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.	-5
None: No non-native invasive species present.	0

Non-native invasive species: (tick if present)

- ☐ Rhododendron
 ☐ Himalayan balsam
☐ Cotoneaster
 ☐ Himalayan knotweed
☐ Giant Hogweed
 ☐ Himalayan honeysuckle
☐ Japanese Knotweed
 ☐ Other (please specify):

C4 Machinery operations & mowing/grazing between 15th May - 15th August

Machinery operations and mowing/grazing identified.	-60
No machinery operations and mowing/grazing identified.	10

Common management recommendations to pick from:

- ☐ Control encroaching and established scrub.
☐ Creation of Early and Late Cover (ELC).
☐ Conservation Friendly Mowing (including delayed mowing).
☐ No management advice.
☐ Other management advice: