



Agri Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES)

Draft Specification for Tranche 1

August 2022



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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 Conditions
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
NPIS: Land Parcel Identification System
LU: Livestock Unit
MEA: Maximum Eligible Area
NHA: Natural Heritage Areas
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 Project

There are two elements to the ACRES scheme:

1. ACRES General offering a range of actions for individual farmers (both targeted and general)
2. ACRES Co-operation Project (CP) which is available to farmers in defined high priority geographical areas who opt to undertake measures, as well as bespoke farm, landscape and river catchment measures. Farmers participating in this option will have the assistance of a Local Cooperation Project Team (CP Team) who will assist with the implementation of the scheme at local level.

Farmers who choose to participate in the ACRES scheme will have only **one** ACRES contract – either ACRES General or ACRES Co-operation Project with the relevant application to be prepared and submitted by an approved ACRES advisor.

The computer system used to create and submit the ACRES Farm Sustainability Plan and ACRES application will inform the ACRES advisor whether a farmer can apply for ACRES General or ACRES Co-operation Project. The information below relates only to ACRES CP applicants.

ACRES Co-operation Project

The ACRES Co-operation Project uses a qualitative approach whereby all forage land included in the scheme will be assessed using results-based score cards with incentives in place to increase scores and improve the landscape being farmed.

Results-based payments will be available on forage land that is located within the CP zone and on commonage land. All forage land within the predefined CP zone will be identified according to three main habitat types: Grassland, Peatland and Woodland/Scrubland (see **Appendix 3, 9 and 10**). Each habitat type has a corresponding score card which can be used to assess the ecological integrity of the habitat. CP Teams may also design additional bespoke score cards or have variations to existing score cards for certain land types/conservation targets within their respective CP zone.

A list of relevant Non-Productive Investments (NPIs) and Landscape Actions (LAs) will be available to each CP zone in each year of the contract. An ACRES CP participant can undertake non-productive investments and/or landscape actions on an annual basis. Any proposed non-productive investment or landscape action must be submitted in advance to the participant's Co-Operation Project team for screening and approval before any work is undertaken. The participant must comply with the conditions set down in the approval of NPIs and LAs by the Co-operation Project team and with the Terms and Conditions of ACRES.

Applicants with land in more than one CP zone

There will be applicants who will have land in more than one of the 8 CP zones.

Where an applicant has land in more than 1 CP zone, that applicant is assigned to the CP team where the largest proportion of their lands are located. All lands located within any of the CP

zones may be eligible for results-based payments, non-productive investments, and landscape actions.

Applicants with land both inside and outside the CP zone

Due to the fragmented nature of Irish farms, there may be ACRES CP applicants who will have land inside and outside of the 8 CP zones. Applicants may choose from the full list of general actions on the lands that are located outside the CP zone and from a defined list of general actions on land located within the CP zone. ACRES CP applicants can only choose Conservation of Rare Breeds, Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) and Traditional Dry Stone Wall Maintenance as general actions on land within the CP zone.

In quarter 1 and quarter 2 of 2023, for each approved ACRES CP participant, the CP teams will assess all Land Parcels in the CP Zone that were declared in each ACRES CP applicant's 2022 BPS and they will identify the land parcels/fields that are eligible to be scored using Results Based Score cards and eligible to potentially receive Results based payments.

It is mandatory for each ACRES CP participant to include all owned forage land parcels as declared in 2022 BPS application in their ACRES contract if the CP team identify that land as being eligible to be scored using Results Based Score card and eligible to receive Results based payments.

CP applicants may also include rented or leased forage parcels within the CP zone for Results based payments once those parcels were claimed in the applicant's 2022 BPS and will continue to be farmed and claimed in the applicant's BISS application for each year of the ACRES contract.

A score card must be submitted by the ACRES advisor in Year 1 of the ACRES contract for each owned forage land parcel/field that has been identified by the CP Team to be scored and for each rented or leased land parcel/field that is being included in the ACRES contract. A score card must also be submitted for these parcels/fields in years 3 & 5 of the ACRES contract. Failure to submit score cards for all contract lands may result in penalties or exclusion from the scheme.

Payments for ACRES CP participants will be prioritised in the following order:

1. All commonage
2. CP zone results-based payments
3. General actions

At application stage to allow advisors plan for the amount of funding that could be available for general actions on the farm, funding available to ACRES CP applicants will be ring fenced for Commonage and ACRES CP zone lands that may be eligible for results-based payments.

The ring-fenced payment is based on a rate of €145/ha (claimed area) for owned/rented/leased commonage parcels on 2022 BPS and a rate of €300/ha (claimed area) for owned forage parcels declared as Permanent Pasture (PP), Low Input Permanent Pasture (LIPP) and Traditional Hay Meadow (THM) on 2022 BPS.

Max annual payment for ACRES CP participants	Annual fund available for Non-Productive Investments and Landscape Actions	Fund for CP Results based payments and general actions where applicable
€10,500	€3,500	€7,000

Funds available for payment from General actions

= €7,000 **minus** (Total claimed owned/leased/rented commonage area declared in 2022 BPS multiplied by €145 **plus** Total claimed area declared as owned PP, LIPP and THM in 2022 BPS that is within the CP Zone multiplied by €300)

Example A:

Farmer with 43 ha of land declared in 2022 BPS:

- a. 5 ha commonage
- b. 8 ha of owned forage declared as permanent pasture in CP zone
- 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 available for general actions. All 29 actions are available to the participant on the 30 ha outside the CP Zone. LESS and Conservation of rare breeds can be selected as whole farm actions but the only action that can be selected on a parcel within the CP zone is Traditional Dry Stonewall Maintenance.

Example B:

Farmer with 53 ha of land declared in 2022 BPS:

- 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 general actions for this participant.

AECM General Tier Structure

	Tier 1. Priority Environmental Asset	Mandatory/relevant actions
Tier 1 Priority	Private Natura sites Grassland	If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of land within the Natura (SAC/SPA) mapped area in 2021, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the general scheme. 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 2021, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the general scheme. 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. Environment Management of Arable Fallow
	Commonage	If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of commonage land declared on the 2021 BPS he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the general scheme.
	Geese and Swans	If an applicant has at least 0.5 ha of land within the Geese and Swan mapped area in 2021, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the general scheme 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 2021, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the general scheme. 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 2021, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the general scheme. 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 new hedgerow f. Low input grassland g. Extensively grazed pasture h. Environmental management of arable fallow
	Conservation of Rare Breeds	If an applicant selects 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 general scheme.
	Organic Farmers	If an applicant is registered with and approved as an organic operator by one of the Organic Control Bodies and holds a licence at the time of application, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to the general scheme.

Tier 2 Access	Tier 2 Environmental Asset/Action	Mandatory/relevant actions
	Vulnerable Water Area 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 2021, he/she may be eligible for Tier 2 priority entry to the general scheme. 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 new hedgerow f. Low input grassland (results-based) 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 2021	If an applicant (whether beef, dairy or sheep) has a whole farm stocking rate exceeding 130 kg livestock manure (NPH) in 2021 or has greater than 30 hectares of arable crops in 2021, he/she may be eligible for Tier 2 priority entry to the general scheme. 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 Agro-forestry GPC 11 at the time of application, he/she may be eligible for Tier 2 priority entry to the general scheme.
	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 general scheme <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 0.18 ha)

Tier 3	<p>Tier 3. General Actions</p> <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 margin arable • Grass margin 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 wintered stubble • Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments- arable/grassland • Riparian buffer strip – arable • Riparian buffer strip – grassland • Riparian buffer zone – arable • Riparian buffer zone – grassland • Ryegrass seed set 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
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ACRES Application Procedure

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

The completion 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, when submitted forms the ACRES application.

(i) Desktop review procedure

The ACRES advisor must examine 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 a 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

ACRES Co-operation Project (CP)	Appropriate actions
Co-operation Project Zone	For forage land that falls inside the mapped boundary in any of the 8 Cooperation Project areas, the only actions that may be selected are Traditional Dry Stone Wall Maintenance, Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) and Conservation of Rare Breeds. For land outside the CP areas, the guidance on the remainder of this table is applicable.

Areas Prioritised for Water Quality	Pollution Impact Potential layers	Appropriate actions
High Status Objective Water Areas Vulnerable Water Areas All FSPs for ACRES must consider risks to water quality. Carry out desk check using PIP maps and OSI water layers to identify potential Critical Source Areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIP-Phosphorus critical source area • PIP- Phosphorus focussed delivery flow paths • PIP- Phosphorus Focussed Delivery Flow Points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIP-Nitrate critical source areas 	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 new hedgerow Other actions that may also be appropriate Grass margins – arable and grassland Minimum Tillage Tree Planting Low input grassland (results-based) Extensively grazed pasture Environmental management of arable fallow Management of intensive grassland next to watercourse Other actions that may be appropriate Low Emission Slurry Spreading Catch crops Winter Bird Food Plot Tree Planting

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 margin – grassland Grass margin- arable Winter bird food Low input grassland Extensively grazed pasture Over winter stubble Unharvested cereal headlands Ryegrass seed set 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 new hedgerow Coppicing of hedgerows Laying of hedgerows Grass margins grassland and arable Low input grassland Extensively grazed pasture Brassica fodder stubble Unharvested cereal headlands Over winter stubble Ryegrass seed set for birds
	Grey Partridge https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/grey-partridge	Winter Bird Food strips used with Grass margins – arable Planting new hedgerow Coppicing of hedgerows Laying of hedgerows
	Yellowhammer https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/yellowhammer	Over winter stubble Grass margins arable and grassland Planting new hedgerow Coppicing of hedgerows Laying of hedgerows
	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 new hedgerow Tree planting Tree planting 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 score card. Note: as per Natura 2000 sites, parcels that fall under this layer may be scored without needing to meet the 4 criteria listed in the Low input grassland specification on page 59.
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.

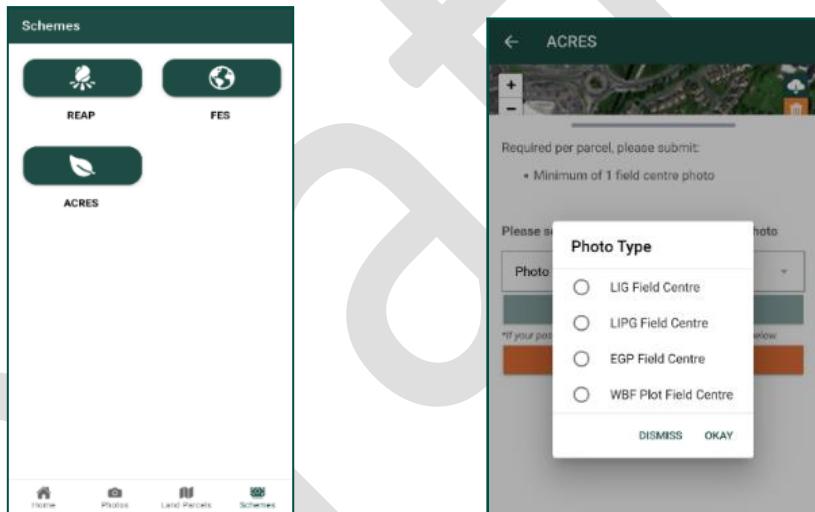
- (a) All FSPs should address water quality as a priority when selecting actions.
If the farm has a critical source area, walk the farm to verify any flow path or identify where there is any risk of sediment or nutrient entering a watercourse and select appropriate actions to address this.
- (b) On grassland, the grassland decision assessment 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.

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 $\frac{1}{4}$ sky and $\frac{3}{4}$ 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.

(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.

(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.

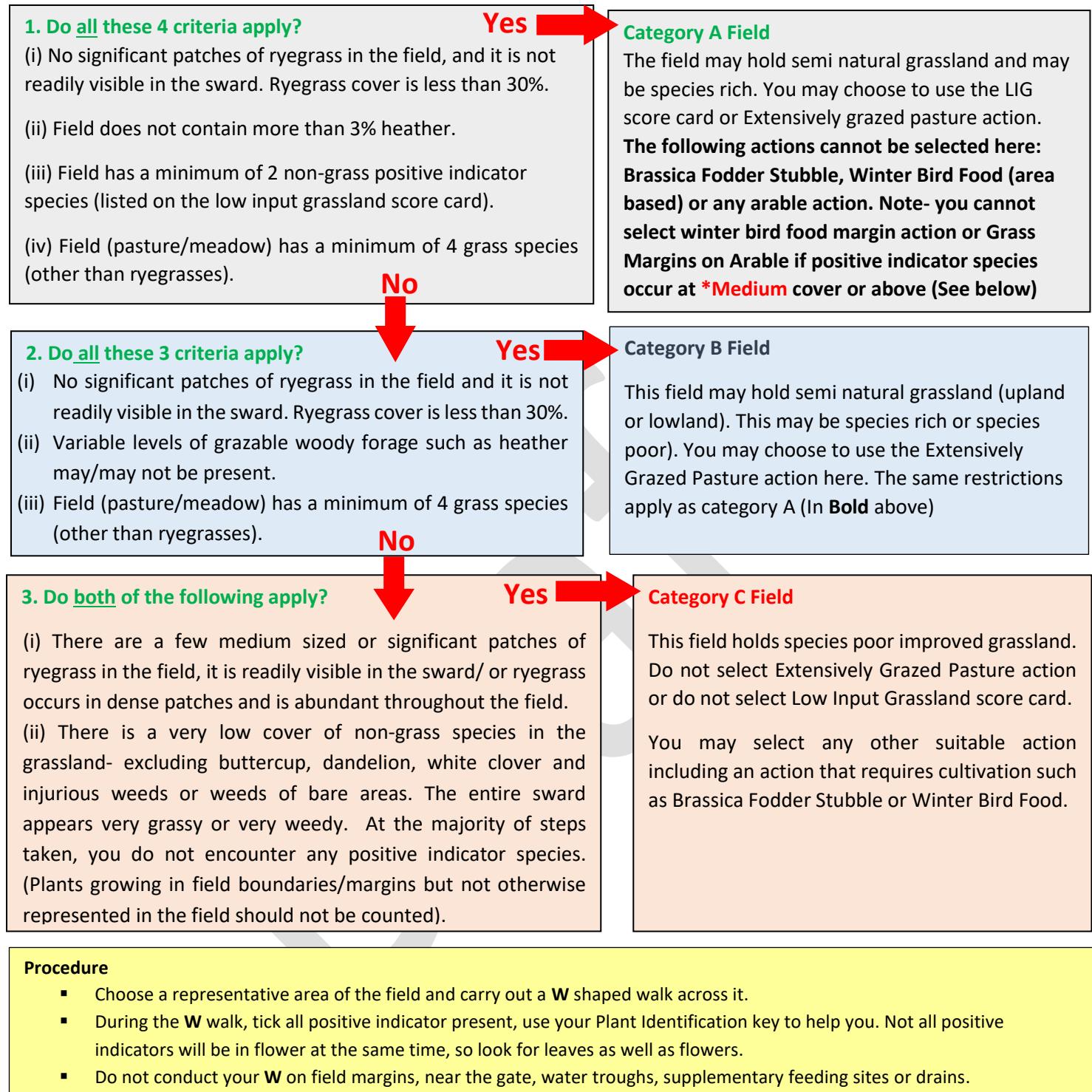
Requirements for soil sampling

1. All non-commonage land declared on the applicants **2023 BISS application** (whether owned/leased/rented) must be sampled and analysed. At least one analysis per **five hectares** of land is required up to a maximum of **eight samples** per holding.

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 Member 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 one 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 must be uploaded on the ACRES system by the **15 May 2024**. 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



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 1

- Actions (excluding Barn Owl Nest Box) must only be selected on LPIS parcels with an MEA greater than 0.
- 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 not linked to LPIS.
- Any LPIS parcel(s) that are split for area actions will receive a new LPIS number once digitised in the 2023 BISS application. Several split parcel actions can be selected on each existing LPIS and other actions can be selected in the remaining area.
- Participants must ensure they have control of the lands 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 actions except Commonage must be chosen on enclosed lands that the farmer has sole control of for the duration of the contract.
- The ACRES Hedgerow requirement applies to area-based actions outlined in the specification. Where it applies, hedgerows in that LPIS cannot be cut below 1.8 metres in height. For full details and further guidance on the hedgerow requirement, see page 20.
- It is a core requirement of certain area 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 a modern 1:5,000 scale OSi map. If this is in a Natura 2000 designated site, fencing of the watercourse is not mandatory.
- 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 or SMR requirements cannot be fulfilled using an ACRES action. ACRES actions are in addition to GAEC 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.
- Entrants 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 Margin - Arable can be selected side by side to provide the feed and nesting habitat for Grey Partridge.
- Other than the protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments action, no other ACRES actions can be delivered on the site of a National Monument or the surrounding buffer.
- 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 NPWS website, or email at 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 2021 BPS.
- Crop codes for grassland, tillage and arable are defined as set out in 2022 BPS Terms and Conditions.
- Note: 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 1946.

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 hedgerow over 1.8 metres in height with a wide base, a mix of woody species for an extended pollen and nectar season, and some 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. 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
Geese and swans
Extensively grazed pasture
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. It is good practice to cut on a minimum 3-year cycle leaving at least one third of the hedgerows uncut each year to flower and bear fruit. If not already doing so, it is advisable to cut hedgerows 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 mature tree within each hedgerow. This management is recommended along all linear actions as it will greatly enhance the benefits of 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 of July 2023	€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 2024	€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	10 ha		€200/ha/yr
Geese and swans		n/a (0.5 ha Tier 1)	**		€205/ha/yr
Grass margins - Arable	3m	10m* (500m Tier 2)	2500m	15 May 2023	€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 2023	€1.00/m/yr
	3m				€1.10/m/yr
	6m				€1.37/m/yr
Laying of hedgerows		10m*	400m	31 December 2024	€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
Planting a new hedgerow		10m*	750m	31 March 2024	€5.29/m/yr
Planting a traditional orchard		1 Orchard (10 trees)	1 Orchard (10 trees)	31 March 2024	€27.49/tree/yr

Planting trees in riparian buffer zones		10 trees	200 trees	31 March 2024	€3.18/tree/yr
Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments - Arable		1	10	31 May 2023	€209/unit/yr
Protection and maintenance of archaeological monuments - Grassland		1	10	31 May 2023	€125/unit/yr
Riparian buffer strip – Arable	3m	10m*	**	31 May 2023	€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*	**	31 July 2023	€1.30/m/yr
	3m				€1.71/m/yr
	6m				€2.11/m/yr
Riparian buffer zone – Arable		0.04 ha	2 ha	31 May 2023	€1,242/ha/yr
Riparian buffer zone – Grassland		0.04 ha	2 ha	31 July 2023	€1,530/ha/yr
Ryegrass seed set as winter food for birds		10m*	2500m	01 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 2024	€5028/ha/yr (Max €2514/yr)
Tree planting		10 trees (100 trees Tier 2)	300 trees	31 March 2024	€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

² Breeding females that produce a registered offspring above the basic eligibility requirements will be paid an additional payment of €75 per progeny registered up to 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

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 2021, 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.

Additional guidance

- If an applicant has under 0.5Ha 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 four field eligibility requirements listed in the specification for that action.
- On tillage Natura 2000 sites, the parcel must have been declared as arable on 2021 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 at 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 2021, he/she may be eligible for Tier 1 priority entry to ACRES General.
2. To be considered for priority access on a grassland farm, **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 on a tillage or on a mixed farming enterprise, **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 20.

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 on <https://www.gov.ie> and search ACRES.

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 of July 2023.

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 the product label and records maintained regarding their use.
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 is permitted during the month of December only.

Additional guidance

- Barn Owls are 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 <https://birdwatchireland.ie> 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.
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 parcel size is 0.5hectares and the maximum area for payment is 10 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. 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.)
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 20, 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.

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. Supplementary feeding is permitted once poaching is avoided.
- 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 reduce 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 2023 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 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. The under sowing or sowing of a grass crop is not permitted.
5. The seed mixture must consist of at least 2 species from the list set out below. One species must not make up more than 75% of the mix.
6. The total amount of seed used must be at least one full seed rate when the percentages of a full seed rate of each species are added up. This allows, for example, the use of a 20% seed rate for each of five species, or any combination that adds up to at least 100%. See examples below.

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.)
10. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 20, 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.

List of prescribed Catch crops

Catch crop species	Seed rate kg/ha	Catch crop species	Seed rate kg/ha
Buckwheat	30 – 40	Rye	65 – 80
Crimson Clover	10 – 15	Tillage Radish	4 -6
Berseem Clover	10 – 15	Vetch	12 - 15
Forage/Fodder Rape	3 – 5	Leafy Turnip	4 - 6
Mustard	6 – 10	Peas	60 - 90
Oats (& Black Oats)	75 – 100	Beans	90 – 100
Phacelia	2 – 5	Linseed	5 - 8
Sunflower	10 – 15	Red Clover	10 - 15

Sample mixes (per ha)

Two-way mix:

Oats	55kg (73% of full rate)
Beans	30kg (33.3% of full rate) (=106% Meets the standard as above 100% seed rate)

Four-way mix:

Buckwheat	6kg	20%
Linseed	2kg	40%
Red Clover	2kg	20%
Radish	1kg	25% (=105% Meets the required standard as above 100% seed rate)

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 score card, 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 declared on the applicant's 2022 BPS 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 2021 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 31st December 2023 and every year of the contract thereafter, subject to point 7 below. This minimum stocking rate is as was 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.

Commonages greater than 10 Ha

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 less than or equal to 10 Ha

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 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.

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 progeny registered up to overall maximum payment ceiling.

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.).

Draft

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 so it 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, 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: 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.

Hedgerow suitability

Use the Hedgerow requirementcycle <https://hedgerowsurvey.ptes.org/hedge-management-cycle> to help decide what management is needed.

Choose a hedge which:

- is gappy and has too few stems to lay
- has stems too large to lay (more than 15cm diameter)
- is too short to lay (less than 2.5m tall)

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 2024.
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 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>Euonymous 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.

Draft

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 2022 BPS 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 parcel size 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 20, 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 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 fallow field using non-inversion techniques (ploughing is not allowed). The crop must be sown before 15 September each year.
12. The seed mixture must consist of at least 2 species from the list set out below. One species must not make up more than 75% of the mix.
13. The total amount of seed used must be at least one full seed rate when the percentages of a full seed rate of each species are added up. This allows, for example, the use of a 20% seed rate for each of five species, or any combination that adds up to at least 100%. See examples below.
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.)
17. Repeat spring requirements above.

List of prescribed Catch crops

Catch crop species	Seed rate kg/ha	Catch crop species	Seed rate kg/ha
Buckwheat	30 – 40	Rye	65 – 80
Crimson Clover	10 – 15	Tillage Radish	4 -6
Berseem Clover	10 – 15	Vetch	12 - 15
Forage/Fodder rape	3 – 5	Leafy Turnip	4 - 6
Mustard	6 – 10	Peas	60 - 90
Oats (& Black Oats)	75 – 100	Beans	90 – 100
Phacelia	2 – 5	Linseed	5 - 8
Sunflower	10 – 15	Red Clover	10 - 15

Sample mixes (per ha)

Two-way mix:

Oats 55kgs (73% of full rate)

Beans 30kgs (33.3% of full rate) = 106% Meets the standard as above 100% seed rate

Four-way mix:

Buckwheat 6kgs 20%

Linseed 2kgs 40%

Red Clover 2kgs 20%

Radish 1kgs 25% = 105% Meets the required standard as above 100% seed rate

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 2022 BPS 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 going 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.
2. The minimum area to be delivered is 0.25 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 10 hectares.
3. A geotagged photo taken from the centre of the parcel must be submitted giving a clear representation of each parcel selected.
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) at the time of application and every year thereafter 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 and should be carried out in rotation with no more than 50% of the field managed by topping or weed wiping/spot spraying in any one year.
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).
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.
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 20, 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

At least 0.50 ha of land within one of the mapped Geese and Swan areas is required to be eligible for Tier 1 priority access.

To be eligible for Geese and Swan 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).

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.

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.
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 20, applies to this action.
3. This action must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.

- 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.)

Requirements specific to grassland parcels

- 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.
- 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

- Establish an annual winter cereal crop by 15 October or a catch crop by 15 September. The specification below for catch crops must be adhered to.
- 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

- Establish a catch crop using non-inversion techniques (ploughing is not permitted). The crop must be sown before 15 September each year.
- The under sowing or sowing grass crops is not permitted.
- The seed mixture must consist of at least 2 species from the list set out below. One species must not make up more than 75% of the mix.
- The total amount of seed used must be at least one full seed rate when the percentages of a full seed rate of each species are added up. This allows, for example, the use of a 20% seed rate for each of five species, or any combination that adds up to at least 100%. See examples below.
- The catch crop must remain in situ from the date of sowing to the 31 March annually.
- 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.

List of prescribed Catch crops

Catch crop species	Seed rate kg/ha	Catch crop species	Seed rate kg/ha
Buckwheat	30 – 40	Rye	65 – 80
Crimson Clover	10 – 15	Tillage Radish	4 -6
Berseem Clover	10 – 15	Vetch	12 - 15
Forage/Fodder Rape	3 – 5	Leafy Turnip	4 - 6
Mustard	6 – 10	Peas	60 - 90
Oats (& Black Oats)	75 – 100	Beans	90 – 100
Phacelia	2 – 5	Linseed	5 - 8
Sunflower	10 – 15	Red Clover	10 - 15

Sample mixes (per ha)

Two-way mix:

Oats 55kg (73% of full rate)

Beans 30kg (33.3% of full rate) =106% Meets the standard as above 100% seed rate

Four-way mix:

Buckwheat 6kg 20%

Linseed 2kg 40%

Red Clover 2kg 20%

Radish 1kg 25% =105% Meets the required standard as above 100% seed rate

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.

Site suitability

1. This action cannot 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 15 May 2023 by sowing a suitable seed mix as outlined below. Only one margin width can be selected across the holding.
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 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 - it can be mulched or mown but this management must only take place after 31 August and before 15 January.
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.
- 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 opportunities for pollinators.

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 in 2022 BPS.

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.

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.
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 for the livestock type.
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 or 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.

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 2024.
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>)
Guilder Rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>)
Hawthorn/Whitethorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)
Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)
Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)
Spindle (<i>Euonymous 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 and whitebeam 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.

Draft

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 opportunity to apply for a late meadow bonus payment (€50/ha) on meadows cut between 01 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 score card and given a quality score, which reflects their ecological integrity. The score card 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 2022 BPS application.

To select this action, the 4 criteria below must be met. If the field is a designated SAC/SPA or Annex 1 Grassland, the 4 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 must have a minimum of 2 non grass indicator species listed on the low input grassland score card.
4. The field (pasture/meadow) must have a minimum of four grass species, as well as, or 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.
2. Geo-tagged photograph(s), submitted via the AgriSnap App taken from the centre of the parcel, must be submitted with application giving a clear representation of each parcel selected.
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 20, applies to this action.

Field assessment requirements

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 score card (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 score card.
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.

The following specification for late meadow bonus payment refers to parcels that are mown for hay or silage.

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. Geo-tagged photograph(s), submitted via the AgriSnap App, giving a clear representation of the mown meadow, must be submitted to DAFM on 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 opportunity to apply for a late meadow bonus payment (€50/ha) on meadows cut between 01 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 score card incentivises farmers with land in these transitional zones to help restore these important ecosystems and the services they provide.

The score card 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 Score card 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 or scrub encroachment.

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 2022 BPS 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 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. Geo-tagged photograph(s), submitted via the AgriSnap App taken from the centre of the parcel, must be submitted with application giving a clear representation of each parcel selected.
 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 20, 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.)

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 contracts using the ACRES Low Input Peat Grassland score card (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 score card.
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.

The following specification for late meadow bonus payment refers to parcels that are mown for hay or silage.

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 the latest date to qualify for the bonus payment is 31 August.
3. Geo-tagged photograph(s), submitted via the AgriSnap App, giving a clear representation of the mown meadow, must be submitted to DAFM on 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, compaction, and surface 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 losses to waterbodies. This action is targeted to poor draining soils where there is potential for runoff and erosion. 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 2021 can select this action.
2. Select on a parcel(s) contiguous to any watercourse(s) as marked on a modern 1:5,000 scale OSi map.
3. The parcel must be declared as grassland on 2022 BPS 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 fenced off and 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.)
8. Fencing must be fit for purpose, fenced with permanent stakes and wire appropriate for 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 20, applies to this action.
12. This action must remain in the same location for the duration of the contract.

Draft

Minimum Tillage

Objective

To contribute to climate by reducing carbon emissions and to improve soil structure.

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 20, 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.

Draft

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) to encourage the emergence of green cover conduct shallow cultivation in line with the requirements set down in SI No 113 of 2022 (as amended). This cultivation must take place within 14 days following harvest and no later than 30 September.
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 0.5Ha. 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. Where necessary the action must be protected from livestock using a fence that is fit for purpose.
5. No post-harvest herbicides are permitted. No pre-harvest desiccants are permitted except for on oil seed rape.
6. Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the stubble.
7. Grazing or topping of the stubble is not permitted from date crop is harvested to 1 February the following year.
8. The stubbles must remain in situ until 1 February of the following year.
9. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 20, 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.

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.

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 a minimum continuous length of 10 metres of new hedgerow by 31 March 2024.
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 staggered row with a mix of at least 3 species from the Hedgerow species (**Table 1.** below). No one species must make up more than 70% of the total.
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 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.
- Plant one tree at least every 50m from the Tree species (**Table 2.** below) and let mature without cutting. They 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. Compostable film or plastic will be essential for controlling competing vegetation in nutrient rich areas.
- 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.
- After planting, prune all plants (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.

Table 1.**Hedgerow species for planting**

Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)
Dog Rose (<i>Rosa canina</i>)
Guilder Rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>)
Hawthorn/Whitethorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)
Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)
Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)
Spindle (<i>Euonymous 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), Breeding Wader Hotspots, and on archaeological monuments.

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 0.05Ha by planting 10 traditional fruit trees from Table 1. before 31 March 2024. 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 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 of Irish Provenance and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators.
6. All trees purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport and provenance declaration 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.

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

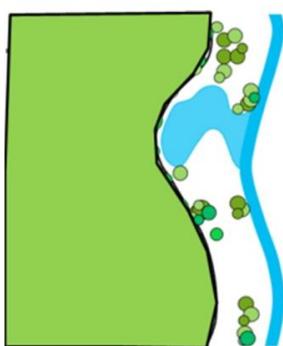
1. Select a Riparian buffer zone where tree planting will benefit water quality.
2. Select the Riparian buffer zone(s) for planting trees by drawing one point on the zone. Then enter the number of trees that will be planted on the chosen zone(s) in the quantity box provided.
3. The minimum number of 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 2024.
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 (fencing is a requirement in the Riparian Buffer Zone Grassland action, temporary fencing may be required to protect trees in the buffer if grazing an arable parcel).
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 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 riparian species

Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) Occasional	Silver birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>)
Downy birch (<i>Betula pubescens</i>)	Goat willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>)
Pedunculate oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	Rusty willow (<i>Salix cinerea</i> subspp. <i>oleifolia</i>),
Eared willow (<i>Salix aurita</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:

<http://webgis.archaeology.ie/NationalMonuments/FlexViewer/>

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

Site suitability

All monuments entered for this action must be within agricultural parcels with an MEA on the applicants 2022 BPS application and declared as arable crop (except for temporary grassland, grass seed and grass meal) in 2022.

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 at least one monument by sowing a grass seed mix by 31 May 2023. The action must be carried out on at least one monument.
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

- Where the action is selected, then all monuments on the holding should be selected.
- 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

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:

<http://webgis.archaeology.ie/NationalMonuments/FlexViewer/>

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

Site suitability

All monuments entered for this action must be within agricultural parcels with an MEA on the applicants 2022 BPS 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.

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.

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.
2. Manage vegetation on and around all monuments initially by 31 December 2023 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/stripper). 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. Remove 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

- Where the action is selected, then all monuments on the holding should be selected.
- 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.

Draft

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. Areas where Riparian buffer strips/zones can be created:

- Any area on the farm identified in the EPA Pollution Impact Potential-Phosphorus (PIP-P) maps and verified on the ground as a flow delivery point or pathway for surface runoff to an adjacent watercourse.
- The land alongside small streams, surface drains, rivers, lakes, and ponds.

Arable grass margins established along watercourses in GLAS already benefit from a significant reduction in nutrients and increased botanical diversity. Where possible these should be retained.

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) on 2022 BPS application.

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 3, 4, 6 or 8 metre grass riparian buffer strips by sowing a seed mix from Table 1 below by 31 May 2023.
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

Riparian buffer zone - Area

4. Establish a riparian buffer zone area by sowing a seed mix from Table 1 below by 31 May 2023.
5. This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is going on 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.
7. The minimum width of the Riparian Buffer Zone must be at least 10 metres.
8. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 20, applies to this action.

Requirements which apply to both options

9. The Riparian buffer width is measured from the top of the bank or from the edge of the existing vegetation (if scrub or hedge is present) into the field. The 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 AECM 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
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. Areas where Riparian buffer strips/zones can be created:
 - Any area on the farm identified in the EPA Pollution Impact Potential-Phosphorus (PIP-P) maps and verified on the ground as a flow delivery point or pathway for surface runoff to an adjacent watercourse.
 - The land alongside small streams, surface drains, rivers, lakes, and ponds.
2. The Riparian buffer strip and zone grassland can only be selected on LPIS parcels declared as grassland on 2022 BPS application.
3. Riparian buffer strips/zones – grassland action is not permitted on NPWS Designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs).

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 1.5, 3 or 6 metre riparian buffer strip by 31 July 2023.
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.

- To be eligible for this action the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10 metres.

Riparian buffer zone - Area

- Erect a permanent fence to create a Riparian buffer zone area by 31 July 2023.
- This action can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is being applied to a split LPIS, it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted.
- To be eligible for this action the minimum area to be delivered is 0.04 hectares.
- The minimum width of the Riparian buffer zone must be at least 10 metres.
- Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 20, applies to this action.

Requirements which apply to both options

- The Riparian buffer width is measured from the top of the bank or the edge of the existing vegetation (if scrub or hedge is present) into the field. The buffer is in addition to any mandatory baseline requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding.
- 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.
- Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the Riparian buffer.
- Pesticides and herbicides are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious/invasive weeds.
- 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 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 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.

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 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 the 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.

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 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 contain free draining soils and have no requirement for additional drainage.

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 going on split LPIS it must be digitised and marked on the map submitted.
2. The minimum depth of shelterbelt is 30 metres. Minimum area for payment is 0.18Ha and maximum is 0.5Ha (which includes the area of tree belt planted and the perimeter fencing).
3. Planting of the tree belt must be completed by 31 March 2024.
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 planted at a minimum 3 metre spacing between each tree.
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.
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 is to 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 will 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. Spot spray around each tree (while the tree is dormant) in the second year. Then spray/trample competing vegetation where necessary in the following 3 years.
- 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	
Aspen (<i>Populus tremula</i>)	Silver birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>)
Pedunculate oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)
Downy birch (<i>Betula pubescens</i>)	Scots pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)
Northern Red Oak (<i>Quercus rubra</i>)	Sitka Spruce (<i>Picea sitchensis</i>)
Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)
Western Red Cedar (<i>Thuja plicata</i>)	Monterey pine (<i>Pinus radiata</i>)
Douglas Fir (<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>)	Hybrid larch (<i>Larix x eurolepis</i>)
Sessile oak (<i>Quercus petraea</i>)	Mountain ash (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)
Irish Whitebeam (<i>Sorbus hibernica</i>)	
Tree species for the backstop	
Scots pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)	Sitka Spruce (<i>Picea sitchensis</i>)
Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	

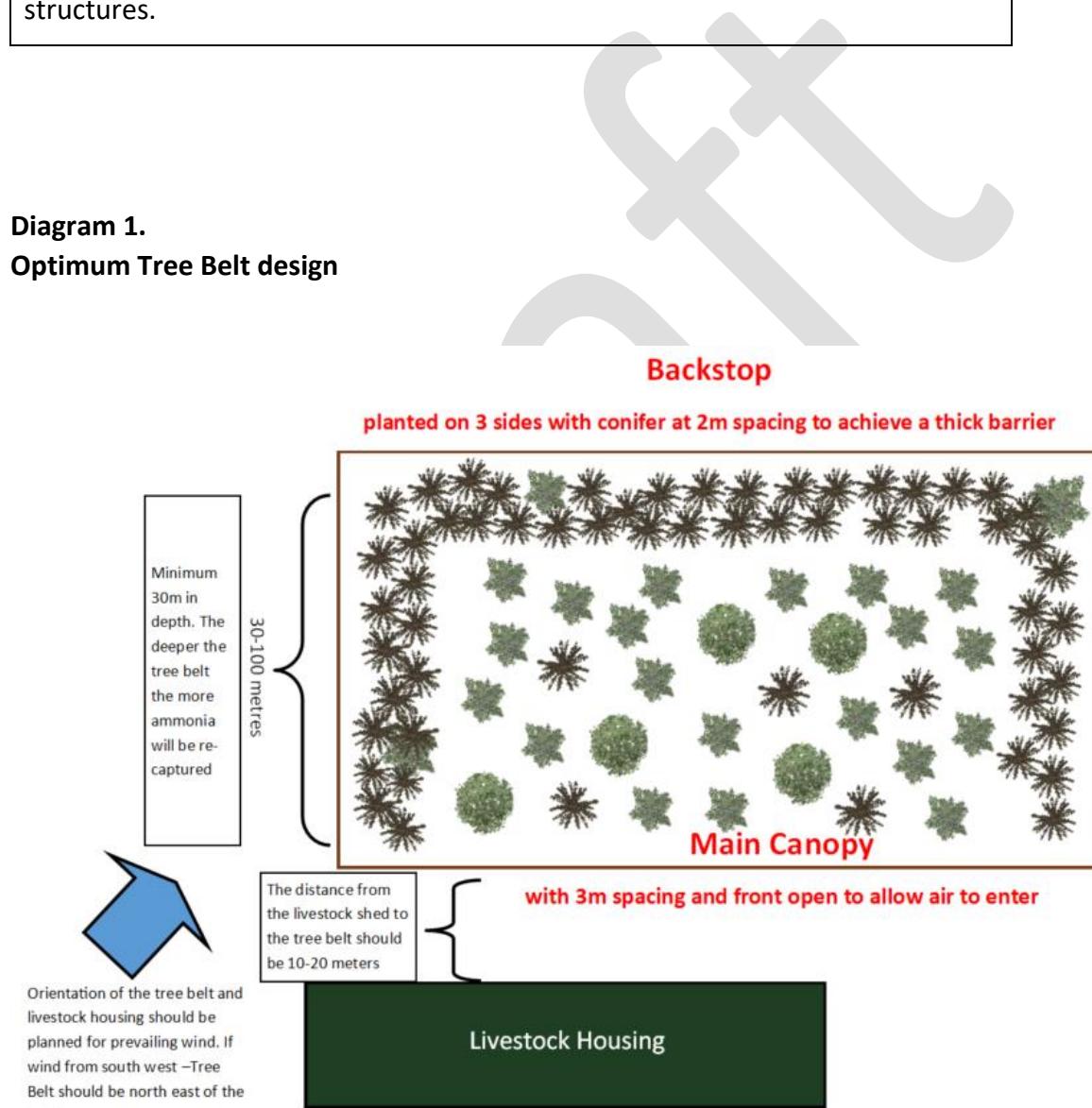
Table 2. Examples of tree densities

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	<p>Example: 60m × 30m belt</p> <p>Backstop = 3 rows = 6 m depth (on 3 sides)</p> <p>Area = $108 \times 6 = 648\text{m}^2$</p> <p>No. trees = $648 \div 4 = 162$ trees</p> <p>Main canopy = 24 m depth (30-6) 48m width (60-12)</p> <p>Area = $48 \times 24 = 1152$</p> <p>No. trees = $1152 \div 9 = 128$ trees</p>
0.3 Ha 3,000m ²	300	<p>Example: 100m × 30m belt</p> <p>234 trees main canopy and 216 trees backstop</p>
0.5 Ha 5,000 m ²	500	<p>Example: 100m × 50m belt</p> <p>430 trees main canopy and 282 trees backstop</p>

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.

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 2024.
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 and the maximum number that can be delivered is 300.
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 species from **Table 1**. below.
9. Maintain at least 4 metre spacing between each tree.
10. Fit each tree (except Scots Pine) 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 with larger plants 75cm to 90cm in a 1.2m tree shelter 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.

Suggested planting options

Row(s)

Plant trees in a row along field boundary/farm passageways, or along electric fence boundaries **or** 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 that can be planted with groups of trees is 0.9 Hectares.

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 shelter but if fallow or red deer are known to graze in the area 1.5-1.8 metre 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

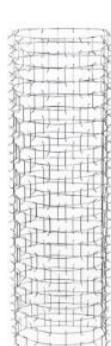
Twin Wall construction

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.

Tree species	
Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>)	Wild Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)
Silver birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>), Downy birch (<i>Betula pubescens</i>)	Goat willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>), Rusty willow (<i>Salix cinerea</i> subspp. <i>oleifolia</i>), Eared willow (<i>Salix aurita</i>)
Sessile oak (<i>Quercus petraea</i>), Pedunculate oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)
Mountain ash (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)	Scots pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)
Irish Whitebeam (<i>Sorbus hibernica</i>)	Bird Cherry (<i>Prunus padus</i>)
Aspen (<i>Populus tremula</i>)	Crab Apple (<i>Malus sylvestris</i>) Where possible, Mc Griggs (Crab) Cavan Sweet (Crab) Lough Key (Crab)
Any fruit tree of Native Provenance	

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.
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.
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 on 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 0.25ha.
12. 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.
4. Hedgerow requirement, as outlined on page 20 applies to this action.

Winter bird food strip

5. Establish a 6 or 8 metre winter bird food strip along a field boundary. Only one margin width can be selected across the holding.
6. 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

7. 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.
8. Establish the winter bird food crop by 15 May 2023 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.

9. The sowing rate must be in accordance with the recommended rates for the chosen mix to ensure the crop is delivered. See examples below.
10. Once the crop is sown, pesticides are not permitted. Only the spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds with herbicides is allowed or if required pre-sowing for crop establishment.
11. 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.

12. Harvesting of the crop is not permitted and must remain in situ until 15 March of the following year.
13. 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.
- 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: Examples of Winter bird food mixes

1. Spring Triticale (45kgs/ha) Phacelia (2kgs/ha) Fodder radish (3kgs/ha) Birds-foot Trefoil (3kgs/ha)
2. Spring Oats (38kgs/ha) Linseed (12kgs/ha) Spring Vetch (6kgs/ha) Mustard (4kgs/ha)
3. Spring Triticale (45kgs/ha) Linseed (12kgs/ha) Fodder radish (3kgs/ha) Mustard (4kgs/ha)

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 (2440mm x 1220mm)



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 (below) Barn Owl nest box, visit the Barn Owl guidance document that accompanies the ACRES specification at <https://www.gov.ie> and search ACRES.

Exterior Barn Owl nest box (2440mm x 1220mm)



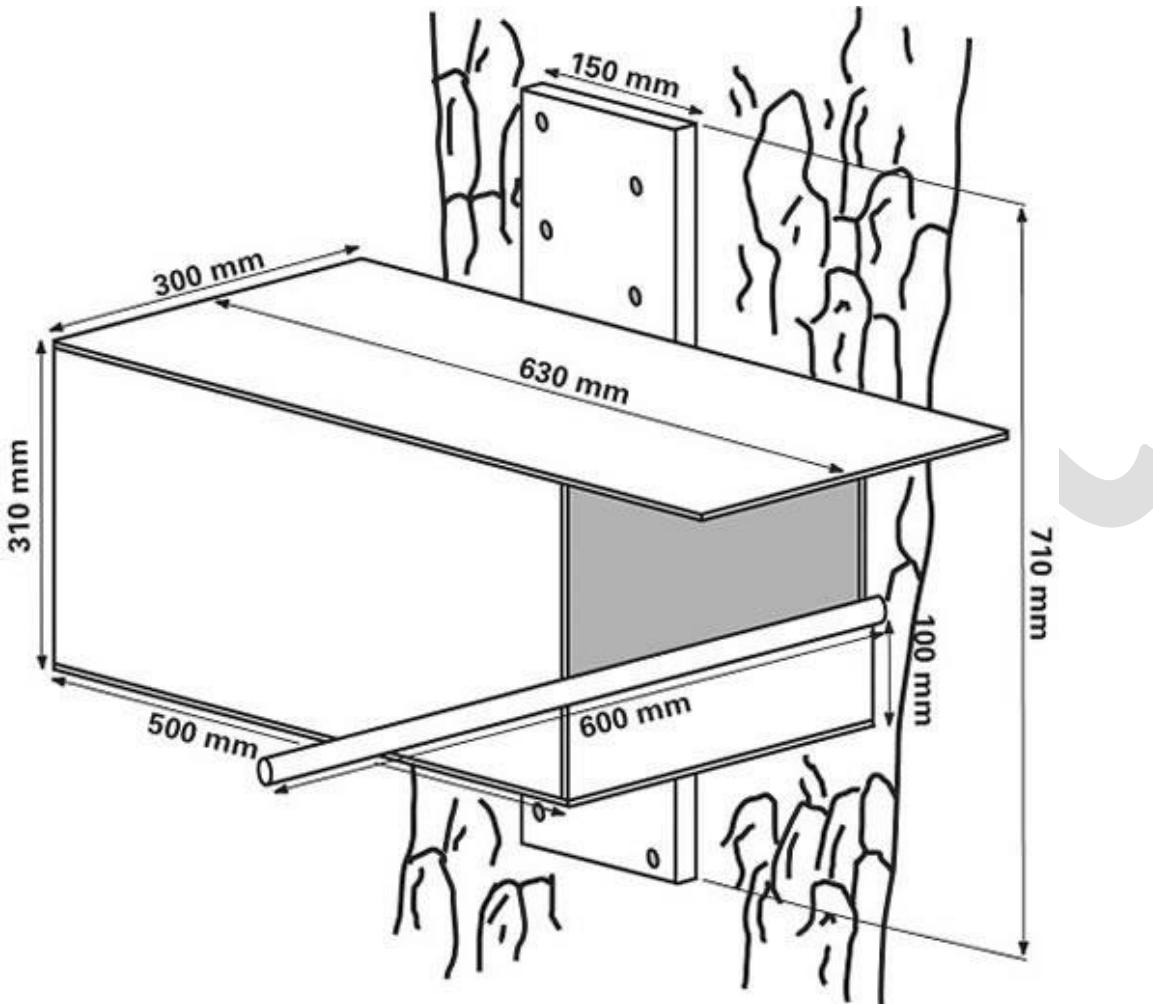
Exterior Barn Owl nest boxes are best situated on large trees with a clear view of the front of the box from the surrounding land. Ideally the box should be situated out of prevailing weather conditions, around 4 to 5 metres high, on a bare trunk so low hanging branches won't block the view of the box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

ACRES Grassland Score Card		Farmer ID: Field number:	Surveyor: Survey date:																																																							
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 <table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="4">A1 Species richness How many individual positive indicators are present in the field?</td> <td>Total score A (sum of A1 to A4) /80</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low: 0-4 0 <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Medium: 5-8 5 <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>High: 9-12 20 <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Very high: 13+ 25 <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4"> 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"/> Tormentil (Common & English)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Birds foot trefoils</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lesser spearwort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ox-eye daisy</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Umbels large (Angelica, Valerian, Common hogweed)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Carline thistle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Louseworts (Common & Marsh)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ragged robin</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Vetches & Vetchlings</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Cowslips & Primrose</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh cinquefoil</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Scabious (Devil's bit & field)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Violets (all species); Harebell</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrights</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh marigold</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sedges</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Wild Thyme</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Forget-me-nots</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh pennwort</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Self-heal & Bugle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Woodrushes, Spike rushes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Kidney vetch</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marsh thistle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sorrel (Common & Sheep's)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Composites (not Dandelion)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Knapweeds</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Meadowsweet</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum & Branched mosses</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yellow rattle (Hay rattle)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lady's mantle</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Meadow thistle</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Mints (all)</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> </td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				A1 Species richness How many individual positive indicators are present in the field?				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B Threats & pressures

Total score B
(sum of B1 to B6)

/20

B1 To what extent is the **expansion of immature scrub?** (This can be brambles, seedlings, scrub and trees generally lower than 1.5m in height and with a stem diameter of <10cm. Do not include established scrub.)

High: >25% of the field has 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

Medium: Cover of encroaching scrub in patches or individuals with overall cover of between 11-25%. Some spread of scrub from the field boundaries may be evident, particularly briars/bramble.

0

Low: Small patches of scrub or individual seedlings of encroaching scrub with overall cover of less than 10%. Grass growth easily seen underneath the scrub.

5

B2 What is the cover of bracken?

High: Very dense stands of bracken covering over half or more of the field, forming closed canopy.

-20

Medium: Bracken forming dense stands covering parts of the field; mostly forming closed canopy.

-10

Low: Bracken fronds obvious within the field, primarily scattered and mostly not forming closed canopy.

0

Very low: Bracken absent or negligible, or limited to very small patches or steep slopes.

5

B3 What is the cover of non-native invasive species?

Severe: Abundant, some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.

-20

Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.

-15

Slight: Plants scattered and mostly small and not flowering.

-5

Absent

0

Non-native invasive species:
(tick if present)

Rhododendron

Giant rhubarb

Himalayan balsalm

Japanese Knotweed

Other (please specify):

B4 What is the extent of bare soil & erosion?

High: Areas of bare and eroding soil resulting in exposure of the underlying rock seen at regular intervals along main stock paths particularly those leading to main feed sites or water points. Excessive areas of bare soil within main grazing area due to overstocking. Bare soil extending out significantly from the main feed sites. Significant rutting caused by vehicles/machinery particularly going between access gate and feeding points.

-20

Medium: Bare soil mainly along regularly used routes or areas with minor soil loss occurring at a few points. Minor rutting and soil disturbance caused during occasional vehicle access may be present. Bare soil may extend a short distance beyond the main feed site or water points.

0

Low: Bare soil more or less restricted to regular stock paths, 'pinch' points & congregation areas. No soil loss.

10

B5 Is there any evidence of **damaging activities to vegetation or soil?**

Severe: Occurring across a large area or of a serious nature if confined.

-30

Moderate: Moderate area and severity.

-20

Low: Small area affected - damage not significant.

-10

Absent: No damaging activities.

0

Damaging activities:

(describe in comments & specify source)

Quarrying

Supplementary feeding

Burning

Dumping

Herbicide

Other (please specify):

B6 Is there any evidence of **damage to water courses?**

Severe: Significant amounts of dung in and around the water source. Bare mud covering a significant proportion of the assessment area.

-20

Moderate: A small amount of dung around springs. Water in ponds/pools may be slightly discoloured due to suspended solids.

-10

Low damage: Water troughs present but their availability means that stock still use some natural water sources. Some poaching.

-5

No damage: Natural water sources rarely (or lightly) used due to adequate provision of water (in tanks or troughs).

0

Management advice / comments:

AgriSnap photo taken:



Appendix 4: ACRES Low Input Peat Grassland Score Card

ACRES Low Input Grassland on Peat Score Card

Farmer ID:

Surveyor:

Field number:

Survey date:

Dominant grassland type:

Wet grassland Dry grassland

Soil type:

Mineral soil Peat soil

Total Score:

/100
(A+B+C)

A Ecological integrity

Total score A:
(sum of A1 to A4)

/40

A1 Species richness How many individual positive indicators are present in the field?0-4 **0** 5-8 **2** 9-12 **3** 13-15 **4** 16+ **5** Positive indicators:
(tick those present)

- Bedstraws & stitchworts
- Birdfoot trefoil (Common & Greater)
- *Devils bit scabious
- Eyebrights (all)
- *Forget-me-nots
- Knapweeds (Common & Greater)
- Lady's mantle
- *Lady's Smock

- *Lesser spearwort
- *Louseworts (common & marsh)
- *Marsh cinquefoil
- *Marsh marigold
- *Marsh pennywort
- *Marsh thistle or Meadow thistle
- *Meadowsweet
- *Mints (all) or Purple loosestrife
- Orchids (all)
- Oxeye daisy
- *Ragged robin
- Selfheal or Bugle
- *Sphagnum or Branched mosses
- Sorrels (Sheep's or Common)
- Small Rushes (Woodrush Spike rush, Heath rush)
- Tormentil (Common & English)

- *Umbels large (Angelica, Valerian, Hogweed)
- Umbels small (Pignut, Yarrow & Wild carrot)
- Vetches/vetchlings (Meadow, Bitter, Tufted)
- Violets (all), Harebell
- Yellow composites (Cats ears, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goats-beard) - not dandelion
- *Yellow flag iris
- Yellow rattle

A2 What is the combined cover of all positive indicators throughout the entire field?

Very low: You can walk across much of the field without encountering any positive indicators at all.	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low: You can take several steps (up to 10) without encountering any positive indicators. You have to search for them.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medium: You encounter a positive indicator with every two to three steps taken.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>
High: You encounter a positive indicator with every step taken.	15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very high: You encounter multiple different positive indicators with every step taken (and in between steps).	20	<input type="checkbox"/>

A3 What is the cover of agriculturally favoured species throughout the entire field?High: **-20** Medium: **-10** Low: **0** Very low: **5**

Agriculturally favoured species: (tick if present)

 Docks (NOT small sorrels) Thistles (Creeping & spear) Perennial Rye grass Ragwort Nettles**A4(i)** What is the vegetation structure in grasslands which are PRIMARILY GRAZED?

Over-grazed: Sward short throughout grazable area with little variation in height of vegetation. >75% very short. Few flowering plants.	-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate: Mostly short vegetation. 25-50% of field has short sward with occasional to frequent intermediate patches.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good: >50% of field with sward having variety of taller and /or shorter sward with medium height sward throughout with positive indicators flowering.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Under-grazed: Rank vegetation across much of the site, litter accumulating, scrub encroaching.	-10	<input type="checkbox"/>

OR

A4(ii) For field closed off for hay/silage or recently topped:

Poor: No margin, field topped right up to the field boundary line. No aftermath grazing. Little or no variation in sward height.	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate: Narrow field margins present (~1m). Low number of flowering plants and vegetation structure within the field margin is poor to moderate. Some aftermath grazing providing some structural variation.	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good: Wide field margins present (2m+) and/or good headlands. Aftermath grazing takes place providing variations in height of sward; sward does not look uniform in appearance.	8	<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?** Total cover of species marked with an * and in **bold text** in A1. Also include cover of rushes and Purple moor-grass.

Very low: 0 Low: 5 Medium: 10 High: 15 Very high: 20

B2 What artificial drainage features are present? *Include both internal and perimeter drains. Natural and modified watercourses are excluded from assessment.*

Functional: Drains predominantly free flowing (though may be dry at the time of survey), largely unvegetated and unblocked. -15

Peat-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 drain? *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.*

Poor: 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

Good: 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 C5)

/10

C1 To what extent is the **expansion of immature scrub?** This can be brambles, seedlings, scrub and trees generally lower than 1.5m in height and with a stem diameter of <10cm. Do not include established scrub.

High: >25% of the field has 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

Medium: Cover of encroaching scrub in patches or individuals with overall cover of between 11-25%. Some spread of scrub from the field boundaries may be evident, particularly briars/bramble. 0

Low: Small patches of scrub or individual seedlings of encroaching scrub with overall cover of less than 10%. Grass growth easily seen underneath the scrub. 5

C2 What is the cover of bracken? High: -20 Medium: -10 Low: 0 Very low: 5

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

Non-native invasive species:
(tick if present)

Severe: Abundant, some forming dense clumps, many seedlings. -20

Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present. -15

Slight: Plants scattered and mostly small and not flowering. -5

Absent 0

Giant rhubarb

Himalayan balsalm

Japanese Knotweed

Other (please specify):

C4 What is the extent of **bare soil & erosion?**

High: Areas of bare and eroding soil found at intervals e.g. along regularly used routes. Significant rutting caused by vehicles/animals. Excessive poaching >10% bare and eroding soil. -20

Medium: Areas of bare and eroding soil found at intervals e.g. along regularly used routes. Significant rutting caused by vehicles or animals. Excessive poaching, 1-10% bare and eroding soil in field. -10

Low: Bare soil seen only very occasionally e.g. along regularly used routes. Little or no signs of erosion seen. Some bare soil at 'pinch' points along regularly used routes (e.g. gateways, gaps in walls) is acceptable. May also be a few isolated bare patches and some damage from vehicles or animals. Very restricted in distribution. 0

C5 Is there evidence of damaging activities to vegetation/soil/water?

Damaging activities:
(describe in comments & specify source)

Severe: Occurring across a large area or of a serious nature if confined. -30

Moderate: Moderate area and severity. -20

Low: Small area affected - damage not significant. -10

Absent: No damaging activities. 0

Quarrying

Burning

Herbicide

Other

Supplementary feeding

Dumping

Animal dunging at watercourses

Management advice / comments:

AgriSnap photo taken:



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 management	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. One sample must be taken for every four hectares. If land type is different, it is recommended reducing the area to two hectares for accurate analysis.
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)

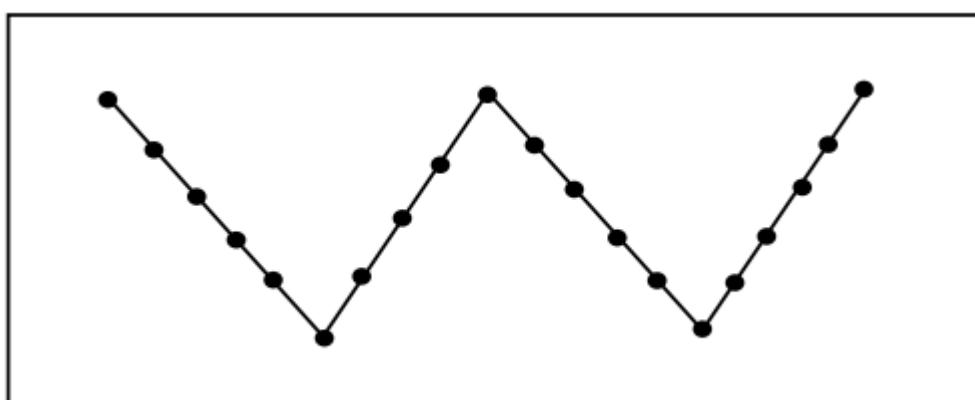


Figure 1 Soil sampling using a W pattern

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 2024**. 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

T +353 53 9163400; Lo Call 0761 06 4415

www.gov.ie/agriculture



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

Appendix 9: ACRES Peatland Score Card

ACRES Peatland Score Card		Farmer ID:	Surveyor:															
		Field number:	Survey date:															
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"/> Mosaic of heath & bog <input type="checkbox"/> Mosaic of heath & grassland		Total Score: $(A+B+C)$ /100																
A Ecological integrity																		
A1 Species richness How many individual positive indicators are present in the plot?																		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Low: 0-4</td> <td>0</td> <td>Medium: 5-6</td> <td>4</td> <td>High: 7-8</td> <td>6</td> <td>Very high: 9+</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </table>				Low: 0-4	0	Medium: 5-6	4	High: 7-8	6	Very high: 9+	10							
Low: 0-4	0	Medium: 5-6	4	High: 7-8	6	Very high: 9+	10											
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Positive indicators: (tick those present)</td> <td>Grass/herb layer:</td> <td>Shrub layer:</td> <td>Total score A (sum of A1 to A5) /55</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Moss layer: <input type="checkbox"/> Branched mosses <input type="checkbox"/> Non-crustose bushy lichens <input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum mosses </td> <td> <input type="checkbox"/> Bog asphodel <input type="checkbox"/> Bog bean <input type="checkbox"/> Bog cotton <input type="checkbox"/> Lousewort </td> <td> <input type="checkbox"/> Sundews <input type="checkbox"/> White-beaked sedge <input type="checkbox"/> Black bog rush </td> <td> <input type="checkbox"/> Bell heather <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-leaved heather <input type="checkbox"/> Ling heather </td> <td> <input type="checkbox"/> Bilberry <input type="checkbox"/> Bog myrtle <input type="checkbox"/> Western Gorse </td> </tr> </table>				Positive indicators: (tick those present)	Grass/herb layer:	Shrub layer:	Total score A (sum of A1 to A5) /55	Moss layer: <input type="checkbox"/> Branched mosses <input type="checkbox"/> Non-crustose bushy lichens <input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum mosses	<input type="checkbox"/> Bog asphodel <input type="checkbox"/> Bog bean <input type="checkbox"/> Bog cotton <input type="checkbox"/> Lousewort	<input type="checkbox"/> Sundews <input type="checkbox"/> White-beaked sedge <input type="checkbox"/> Black bog rush	<input type="checkbox"/> Bell heather <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-leaved heather <input type="checkbox"/> Ling heather	<input type="checkbox"/> Bilberry <input type="checkbox"/> Bog myrtle <input type="checkbox"/> Western Gorse						
Positive indicators: (tick those present)	Grass/herb layer:	Shrub layer:	Total score A (sum of A1 to A5) /55															
Moss layer: <input type="checkbox"/> Branched mosses <input type="checkbox"/> Non-crustose bushy lichens <input type="checkbox"/> Sphagnum mosses	<input type="checkbox"/> Bog asphodel <input type="checkbox"/> Bog bean <input type="checkbox"/> Bog cotton <input type="checkbox"/> Lousewort	<input type="checkbox"/> Sundews <input type="checkbox"/> White-beaked sedge <input type="checkbox"/> Black bog rush	<input type="checkbox"/> Bell heather <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-leaved heather <input type="checkbox"/> Ling heather	<input type="checkbox"/> Bilberry <input type="checkbox"/> Bog myrtle <input type="checkbox"/> Western Gorse														
A2 What is the combined cover of all positive mosses and lichens (<i>listed above</i>) throughout the plot?																		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Low:</td> <td>0</td> <td>Medium:</td> <td>10</td> <td>High:</td> <td>15</td> <td>Very high:</td> <td>20</td> </tr> </table>				Low:	0	Medium:	10	High:	15	Very high:	20							
Low:	0	Medium:	10	High:	15	Very high:	20											
A3 Presence of non-native species within the plot (<i>rhododendron, self-sown conifer, other alien invasive?</i>)																		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Present:</td> <td>-10</td> <td>Absent:</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </table>				Present:	-10	Absent:	0											
Present:	-10	Absent:	0															
A4 What's the combined cover of negative indicators within* the plot? (*Exclude European gorse on mineral soil, e.g. roadside.)																		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Very high:</td> <td>-30</td> <td>Medium:</td> <td>-10</td> <td>Very low:</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High:</td> <td>-20</td> <td>Low:</td> <td>0</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				Very high:	-30	Medium:	-10	Very low:	10	High:	-20	Low:	0					
Very high:	-30	Medium:	-10	Very low:	10													
High:	-20	Low:	0															
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Negative indicators: (tick those present)</td> </tr> <tr> <td> <input type="checkbox"/> Bramble <input type="checkbox"/> Rhododendron <input type="checkbox"/> European gorse </td> <td> <input type="checkbox"/> Non-native conifer (Sitka spruce or Lodgepole pine) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Nettle, Japanese knotweed, Giant rhubarb) </td> </tr> </table>				Negative indicators: (tick those present)	<input type="checkbox"/> Bramble <input type="checkbox"/> Rhododendron <input type="checkbox"/> European gorse	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-native conifer (Sitka spruce or Lodgepole pine) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Nettle, Japanese knotweed, Giant rhubarb)												
Negative indicators: (tick those present)																		
<input type="checkbox"/> Bramble <input type="checkbox"/> Rhododendron <input type="checkbox"/> European gorse	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-native conifer (Sitka spruce or Lodgepole pine) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Nettle, Japanese knotweed, Giant rhubarb)																	
A5 What is the vegetation structure ?																		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Very poor: Vegetation height is uniformly low. Little or no heather present on wet heaths. Often lacking moss and dwarf shrub layer.</td> <td>-15</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Poor: 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.</td> <td>-10</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate (high grazed): Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have tight uniform vegetation although not throughout.</td> <td>0</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate (low grazed): Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have rank vegetation although not throughout.</td> <td>5</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very 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 varying heights throughout. Well-structured vegetation with all three layers (moss, sedge / herb, and shrub) well represented.</td> <td>15</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>				Very poor: Vegetation height is uniformly low. Little or no heather present on wet heaths. Often lacking moss and dwarf shrub layer.	-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor: 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	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderate (high grazed): Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have tight uniform vegetation although not throughout.	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderate (low grazed): Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have rank vegetation although not throughout.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very 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 varying heights throughout. Well-structured vegetation with all three layers (moss, sedge / herb, and shrub) well represented.	15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very poor: Vegetation height is uniformly low. Little or no heather present on wet heaths. Often lacking moss and dwarf shrub layer.	-15	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Poor: 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	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Moderate (high grazed): Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have tight uniform vegetation although not throughout.	0	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Moderate (low grazed): Significant areas (>25%) of the plot have rank vegetation although not throughout.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>																
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B Hydrological integrity																		
B1 Surface hydrology and artificial drainage features:																		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>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.</td> <td>-30</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderately altered bog/heath hydrology: Free flowing drains in plot with notable effect on surrounding vegetation of bog/heath. <20% of plot affected.</td> <td>-15</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Slightly altered bog/heath hydrology: Drains present in plot although are somewhat impeded and little effect on surrounding bog/heath vegetation.</td> <td>-5</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>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.</td> <td>10</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Intact bog/heath hydrology: Intact bog/heath surface, no evidence of past drainage or disturbance across plot.</td> <td>20</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>				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	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderately altered bog/heath hydrology: Free flowing drains in plot with notable effect on surrounding vegetation of bog/heath. <20% of plot affected.	-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly altered bog/heath hydrology: Drains present in plot although are somewhat impeded and little effect on surrounding bog/heath vegetation.	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>	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	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intact bog/heath hydrology: Intact bog/heath surface, no evidence of past drainage or disturbance across plot.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Moderately altered bog/heath hydrology: Free flowing drains in plot with notable effect on surrounding vegetation of bog/heath. <20% of plot affected.	-15	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Slightly altered bog/heath hydrology: Drains present in plot although are somewhat impeded and little effect on surrounding bog/heath vegetation.	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>																
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	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Intact bog/heath hydrology: Intact bog/heath surface, no evidence of past drainage or disturbance across plot.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Total score B: /20																		

C Threats & pressures

Total score C:
(sum of C1 to C6)

/25

C1 Is there evidence of damage due to burning?

High: Evidence of recent burning causing significant damage to moss layer (bare peat/dead hummocks). >5% of plot affected. **-30**

Medium: Evidence of some recent or historic burning, but no damage to moss layer. <5% of plot affected. **-10**

None: No evidence of any burning in plot. **5**

C2 Is there evidence of bare soil & erosion?

High: Areas of bare and eroding soil found at intervals along regularly used routes and/or evidence of sheet/rill erosion or gullyling. Significant rutting caused by vehicles or machinery. 1 to 5 % bare and eroding soil in plot. **-20**

Medium: Areas of bare and eroding soil found at intervals along regularly used routes and/or evidence of sheet/rill erosion or gullyling. Significant rutting caused by vehicles/machinery. <1% bare and eroding soil in plot. **-10**

Low: Bare soil more frequent along regularly used routes but little or no signs of erosion. May also be a few isolated bare patches caused by animals and some damage from vehicles. Very restricted in distribution and not excessive i.e. <1% of the plot. No areas larger than 0.1ha with more than 10% bare peat. **0**

None: Little or no bare soil seen over the assessment area other than isolated hoof prints. Some bare soil at 'pinch' points along regularly used routes (e.g. gateways, gaps in walls) is acceptable as long as no signs of erosion are visible. **10**

C3 Is there evidence of damage due to supplementary feeding?

High: Damage to vegetation at multiple feeding sites Or presence of feeding sites at a vulnerable location (i.e. near flushes, pools, ground water). Or >5% of area damaged. Or damage extending >30m from a feeding site. **-30**

Medium: Damage to vegetation from a single supplementary feeding site, accounting for <5% of plot and extending <30m from feeding site. No bare peat. **-10**

None: No damage to vegetation evident in plot. **0**

C4 Level of damage from turbary?

Very high: Peat cutting activities within the current season. Any evidence of sausage machine cutting. **-40**

High: Most recent cutting activities occurred last year affecting >10% of plot or within sensitive areas. Any evidence of sausage machine cutting. **-30**

Medium: Most recent cutting activities occurred last year affecting <10% of plot and not within sensitive areas. **0**

None: No peat cutting activity for >2 years. **10**

C5 Is there any evidence of damaging activities to vegetation or soil?

Severe: Occurring across a large area >50%, or of a serious nature if confined. **-30**

Moderate: Moderate area and level of severity, covering 6-50% of plot. **-20**

Low: Small area affected <5% - damage not significant. **-10**

Absent: No damaging activities. **0**

Damaging activities:
(tick any present)

Quarrying

Herbicide

Dumping

Spreading slurry

Other (please specify):

C6 Is there evidence of damage to water sources?

Severe: Significant amounts of dung in and around the water source. Bare mud covering a significant proportion of the assessment area. **-20**

Moderate: A small amount of dung around springs. Water in ponds/pools may be slightly discoloured due to suspended solids. **-10**

Low: Water troughs present but their availability means that stock still use some natural water sources. Some poaching. **-5**

None: Natural water sources rarely (or lightly) used. **0**

Management advice / comments:



Appendix 10: ACRES Scrub and Woodland Score Card

ACRES Scrub + Woodland Score Card		Farmer ID:	Surveyor:	
		Field number:	Survey date:	
Habitat type:	Scrub: Areas that are dominated by at least 50% cover of shrubs, stunted trees or brambles. Canopy generally less than 5m in height, or 4m in the case of wet or bog areas.	Soil type:	Total Score: (A+B+C)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Scrub <input type="checkbox"/> Woodland		<input type="checkbox"/> Mineral soil <input type="checkbox"/> Peat soil	/100	
A Ecological integrity				
Typical SCRUB species: (tick those present)		Typical WOODLAND species: (tick those present)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Alder <input type="checkbox"/> Bramble <input type="checkbox"/> *European gorse <input type="checkbox"/> Ash <input type="checkbox"/> Spindle <input type="checkbox"/> Whitethorn (hawthorn) <input type="checkbox"/> Birch <input type="checkbox"/> Hazel <input type="checkbox"/> Willow <input type="checkbox"/> Blackthorn <input type="checkbox"/> Elder *=non-native species		<input type="checkbox"/> *Beech <input type="checkbox"/> Scot's pine <input type="checkbox"/> Holly <input type="checkbox"/> *Spruce <input type="checkbox"/> Oak <input type="checkbox"/> *Sycamore <input type="checkbox"/> Rowan <input type="checkbox"/> Other *=non-native species		
		Total score A: (sum of A1 to A3) /80		
A1 Score either A1-S OR A1-W				
A1-S for SCRUB dominated plots:		Total score A1-S: /70	A1-W for WOODLAND dominated plots:	
Sa Which description best describes the diversity & structure of the SCRUB present?		Wa Which description best describes the woodland CANOPY layer?		
Poor: Gorse dominated scrub. Moderate: Two native species from table above present. Good: Three native species from table above common throughout plot. Very good: Four or more native species from table above common throughout plot. Variation in vegetation height and structure throughout.		Poor: Native woodland with frequent non-native (conifers or deciduous) trees present. Moderate: Native woodland with occasional non-native (conifer or deciduous) trees present. Good: Native woodland with no non-native (conifer or deciduous) trees present.	Total score A1-W: (sum of Wa to Wc) /70	
Wb Which description best describes the woodland SHRUB layer?				
Poor: Shrub layer absent or consists of non-native species. Moderate: Two native species from table above present. Good: Three native species from table above common throughout plot.		Wc Which description best describes the woodland FIELD layer?		
		Poor: The field layer is absent or consists of non-native species. Moderate: Field layer present with low level of species and structural diversity. Good: Field layer supports good diversity of native species, with mosses, ferns and herbs present.		
A2 Are any invasive species (listed) present within the plot?				
Present: -20 Absent: 0		Invasive species: (tick those present)		
A3 What's the combined density of invasive species present in the plot?				
Severe: Abundant, some forming dense clumps, many seedlings. Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present. Slight: Plants scattered and mostly small and not flowering. Absent/negligible.		-15 -10 -5 10	Cherry laurel Himalayan balsam Rhododendron Japanese knotweed Non-native conifer regeneration Other(s) (please specify):	

B Hydological integrity

Total score B:

/10

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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partly drained woodland: Free flowing drains affecting <20% of the plot.	-15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic drainage evident: Drains present but flow is impeded.	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
No drainage: No artificial drainage within plot.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>

C Threats & pressures

Total score C:
(sum of C1 to C3)

/10

C1 To what extent is there evidence of bare soil & erosion?

High: Areas of bare soil caused by land-use activities resulting in erosion. High levels of poaching & excessive areas of bare soil.	-20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate: Areas of bare soil caused by land-use activities, but not resulting in erosion.	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low: Little or no bare soil due to land-use activities observed and no evidence of erosion or poaching.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>

C2 To what extent is there any damaging activities to vegetation or soil?

Unprescribed felling of native species.	AUTOFAIL	<input type="checkbox"/>
High: There is presence of current dumping, burning or other damaging activities.	-20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate: Some evidence of historic felling. Evidence of past dumping or other damaging activities, which are not currently taking place.	-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low: No evidence of any damaging activities.	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

Damaging activities:

(tick any present & describe in comments below)

- Quarrying Herbicide
- Dumping Spreading slurry
- Burning Supplementary feeding
- Other (please specify):

C3 Is there a threat to water quality?

Severe: Significant amounts of dung in and around the water body. Obvious risk and occurrence of sediment runoff to water bodies.	-20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate: A small amount of dung around springs. Water in ponds/pools may be slightly discoloured due to suspended solids.	-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low: Water troughs present but their availability means that stock still use some natural water bodies. Some poaching.	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
None: Natural water bodies rarely (or lightly) used due to adequate provision of water (in tanks or troughs).	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

Management advice / comments:



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