



Specifications for the Agri-Environment Options Scheme and Natura 2000 Scheme

6 April 2011

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Additional New Hedgerow Establishment

For this action you must plant new hedgerows from the list below on your land.

The linear length (metres) you are going to plant must be identified on the boundary of the LPIS plots and marked on the map.

A minimum continuous length of 30 metres must be planted.

The maximum length that can be claimed for payment over the contract period on any holding is 200m.

This action cannot be selected on LPIS parcels selected for Traditional Hay Meadow, Species Rich Grassland, Wild Bird Cover, Green Cover Establishment or Minimum Tillage.

Requirements:

- The species you plant should ideally come from Irish sources of native seed and must come from the list of Native Hedgerow Species below.
- Plant in the first dormant season after receiving approval in writing of your acceptance into the scheme and in any event before end of March 2012.
- There must be 6 plants per metre (in two rows of 3 plants per row).
- Choose species that are suitable to the site.
- Do not plant in very wet or frosty conditions.
- New hedgerow must be protected from grazing animals. If there are grazing livestock (cattle or sheep) on the holding at any time during the AEOS contract there must be a fence in place.
- Where a fence is being put in place it must meet Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine specifications (S148)

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingschemesandpayments/farmbuildings/farmbuildingspecifications/pdfversions/S148March2011.pdf>

- Aftercare is essential for the newly planted hedge to become established. Trim back spindly top growth of hawthorn to encourage growth from the base. Grass and weeds must be controlled.
- Replace failed or dead plants at the appropriate time.

When you are choosing the species, you should think about what your hedgerow is for. A multi-species hedge will have more wildlife and look better, but if you want it to be stockproof it will need to be made up mostly of thorny species — at least 80%.

As hawthorn/whitethorn, blackthorn, guelder rose, rowan/mountain ash, whitebeam, wild cherry trees and apple trees are potential carriers of diseases that are harmful to plants in the wider environment, it is mandatory that producers of these plants are registered and inspected by the Horticulture and Plant Health Division of DAFM to ensure their freedom of these diseases. To check if your supplier is properly registered, either email planthealth@agriculture.gov.ie or call 01-5058885. These plants should only be purchased from registered producers. Alternatively, if your local supplier is not the producer of these plants it is important that they were sourced from a registered grower.

Native Hedgerow Species

Species	Characteristics	Sites
Blackthorn or Sloe	Quick growing shrub, forming an impenetrable stockproof barrier when well established. Throws out root suckers requiring regular management. Excellent plant for gapping hedgerows. Stands up well to cutting. Can be propagated from rooted suckers. Tends to become bare at the base.	Blackthorn does well on heavy and sandy soils. Salt tolerant, suitable for coastal and exposed situations.
Briars, Blackberry	Briars often provide extra stockproofing in a hedge. The flowers and fruit provide a wide range of food for wildlife. Blackberry is an important bee plant in Ireland. Briars left unchecked will encroach out into fields by means of tip rooting and should be controlled.	
Crab Apple	A good hedge can be made with crab; it is less impenetrable than Hawthorn or Blackthorn. Should be mixed with other species. Provides good wildlife habitat and has high amenity value.	Suited to free draining fertile soils, will not thrive in heavy cold clays. Crab apple occurs intermittently in hedgerows and where present should be retained and allowed develop to maturity.
Dog Rose	Dog Rose and other related rose species are a common constituent of hedgerows scrambling through trees and shrubs. Their blossoms and fruit (hips) have high amenity value and are an important source of food for wildlife. Where present they should be retained.	
Elder	A ragged, gnarled, small tree common in hedgerows with greyish corky bark and branches containing a soft pith. The white flowers are followed by bunches of purplish fruits. Flower and fruit provide food for a wide range of wildlife species.	
Elm	Wych Elm is a rare native now only encountered in mountain glens in the North West. English elm was reintroduced in Norman times. Elm never attained the importance in hedgerows here as in England. It was originally planted as an ornamental parkland tree. Despite the ravages of Dutch Elm Disease, it is often encountered in hedgerows as suckers that may eventually succumb to the disease. Where present, it should be retained.	

Gorse (Furze or Whin)	Abundant in drier parts of Ireland. Does not form a good stockproof barrier on its own. Should be cut back hard when it gets leggy and thin at the base. Gorse should not be laid but trimmed in late Winter.	Gorse does well on poor light soils. Will grow on very dry and exposed sites where other species cannot thrive. It is salt tolerant and suitable for coastal and exposed sites.
Guelder Rose	Handsome hedgerow shrub with high amenity value. Large vigorous shrub with lobed maple like leaves which colour richly in Autumn. The white flowers produced in June and July are followed by crimson fruits, which are eaten by birds.	
Hazel	Hazel is very suitable to coppice and lay. It has high amenity and wildlife value: an important early source of pollen for bees. The coppiced stems have many uses.	Hazel does well on loams and mildly acid soils. Not tolerant of wet situations. Good choice for free-draining limestone soils.
Ivy	<p>Ivy is a native evergreen plant with high wildlife value: it provides habitat for insects and nesting sites for birds. It flowers late in the Autumn and is the last important nectar and pollen plant available to insects. The black fruits, which ripen in spring, are eaten by birds and small mammals, in particular by pine martins. Ivy is not a parasitic plant: the small rootlets put out by the climbing shoots help the plant to adhere to its support: they have no penetrative powers. In trees, ivy clings to its host, it does not feed on it, and while the tree is in good health the ivy will be a secondary plant and although ascending the trunk and branches can do no harm. Should the tree decline for any reason and fail to leaf the ivy will take over as is often seen on elm that has succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease.</p> <p>Where necessary ivy should be managed. Ivy may be allowed to develop on some trees within a hedgerow but controlled on others or allowed to grow unchecked for many years and controlled when the growth becomes too heavy. On sound walls ivy is harmless and in fact beneficial, keeping them dry in winter and cool in summer. Walls that are very weak can be pulled down if a weight of ivy has bushed out at the top of the wall and then becomes heavy with snow or rain and susceptible to the pull of strong winds. Clipping obviates this possibility and the life of many walls could be prolonged by a well-managed ivy cover. Ivy covered walls should be clipped over in late Spring. If required ivy can be removed from trees and walls by cutting the stem just above ground level and making a second cut at least 10 cm. above the first cut. The resultant detached section of stem should be removed.</p>	

Holly	Slow growing evergreen with high amenity value. Forming a tough stockproof barrier. Good plant for gapping. Susceptible to frost damage.	Holly will grow on clay soils, sands and gravel. Very tolerant of shade. Will not grow on wet sites. Both male and female plants are required to produce berries.
Spindle-tree, Pegwood	Vigorous green stemmed hedgerow shrub occasionally a small tree. The wood is very hard and was used in former times to produce wooden skewers and clothes pegs. The small greenish flowers are followed by eye catching scarlet 4-lobed seed capsules: Spindle or Peg wood is a strikingly beautiful shrub in winter.	
Whitethorn (Hawthorn)	Ubiquitous native hedge plant tough, hardy and fast growing. Withstands hard cutting and lying. Displays great variation in flower hue at blossom time. An important source of pollen and nectar for invertebrates; major bee forage plant.	Tolerant of most soils except where very wet. Does not thrive at high elevations. Susceptible to Fire Blight disease; should not be planted near tree\shrub nurseries or commercial orchards.
Willow	Willow is a native tree, the many species hybridise readily. The tree is fast growing, producing heavy wood. The plant lends itself to laying. Willows make poor stockproof hedges yet have high wildlife and amenity value. The male flowers, catkins, are an early source of pollen for bees.	Useful for wet sites where species choice is limited. Will tolerate flooding. Can be propagated from hardwood cuttings.
Woodbine, Honeysuckle	Woodbine is a climbing shrub scrambling through hedgerow trees and shrubs. It has high amenity value. The fragrant flowers provide nectar and pollen for insects and are followed by crimson berries readily eaten by birds.	

Alternative water source for bovines

Cattle (bovines) must not have access to any watercourses on the farm. You must provide an alternative water supply and drinking troughs (nose pumps are acceptable).

The maximum number of water troughs that can be claimed for payment over the contract period is 10.

For the purpose of this action, a watercourse is defined as any watercourse that is shown on an OSI map. The location and number of troughs must be marked on the map.

Requirements:

- There must be an OSI watercourse or watercourses on the land.
- All watercourses must be fenced.
- There must be a cattle enterprise on the holding.
- The cattle must not be allowed access to any watercourses on the farm.
- Water troughs must be provided for the grazing animals in fields adjoining the watercourse(s) in question.
- There must be at least one trough per field or plot. Water troughs can be located in fields that are not adjacent to the watercourse but were previously served by animals going to the watercourse.
- Water troughs must be located at least 5m from the watercourses.
- The watercourses must be fenced to Department specification 'S148' and the troughs and water supply installed by the 1st of June following the start of the contract.
- The fencing, the troughs and the water supply must remain in place and must be maintained in good order for the duration of the contract.

Arable Margins

For this Action, you must maintain a 3 metre wide margin along a full LPIS parcel boundary or boundaries. You must mark the area where you are doing this on the map.

This action cannot be selected on LPIS parcels selected for Traditional Hay Meadow, Species Rich Grassland, Wild Bird Cover, Green Cover Establishment or Minimum Tillage.

Farmers who apply for a Nitrates derogation or the Organic Farming Scheme cannot apply for this action.

Requirements:

- The 3 metre wide margin can be established by allowing natural regeneration or the establishment of a rough grass margin.
- The margins must remain for the duration of the contract.
- No soil cultivation may be carried out within the margin when it is established.
- The margin must be mown at least once per year – but not before 15th August – and off-takes removed. Alternatively the margins can be lightly grazed after 15th August.
- Pesticides (including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, slug pellets and growth regulators) must not be applied to field margins except to spot spray noxious weeds.
- Chemical and/or organic fertilisers must not be applied to the margins

Broadleaved Tree Planting

For this action you must plant trees from the list below. You must choose suitable species and planting sites and you must prepare the soil properly. The choice of suitable species, planting sites and soil preparation is critical to the successful establishment of trees.

A minimum of 10 trees must be planted and the maximum number of trees that can be claimed for payment over the contract period is 25.

This action cannot be selected on LPIS parcels selected for Traditional Hay Meadow, Species Rich Grassland, Wild Bird Cover, Green Cover Establishment or Minimum Tillage.

Planting must take place within a LPIS number. You must mark on the map the location and the number of trees to be planted. All planting must be done in the first dormant season after you receive written approval that you have been admitted to the scheme and in any event before the end of March 2012. Trees cannot be planted in new hedgerows that are being put in place for the Additional New Hedgerow Establishment action.

Requirements:

Tree planting must be carried out as follows:

Location: Trees must be planted in suitable sites. Consider planting groups of trees at the intersection of plots. Trees planted in these adjoining field corners will cause less disruption to your farming activity and will provide maximum wildlife and landscape value when they are mature.

What to plant: Once the planting sites are selected, the most suitable tree species should be chosen from the list.

- The use of native tree species must be prioritised in order to contribute to the conservation of Irish genetic resources.
- Plant species from the list that will compliment species already growing on the land.
- Consider the physical conditions of each site e.g. soil type, drainage, exposure etc., and choose species that will succeed in such sites. Remember there is a tree species that will succeed on most sites.
- Trees must be spaced at least 6m apart. The planting distance should be considered in the context of the ultimate height of the tree, providing sufficient space to grow and develop naturally.

- Choose species for the use and size of each site. Consider the ultimate height the tree will grow.
- Do not plant within 10 metres of overhead wires.
- Avoid sites adjoining railway tracks, too near to buildings etc.

Fencing: Where trees are planted in groups stock must be completely excluded from the new plantings. Individual trees should be protected from browsing animals. All fencing must comply with Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food fencing specifications, 'S148'.

Weed Control: It is essential to control growth of grass and weeds around the young trees until established. Grass and weeds can be controlled by treading/cutting or by the use of suitable herbicides or mulches.

Planting: Bare rooted trees should be planted during the dormant season, normally late October – end of March but not when the ground is frozen or waterlogged.

Trees that fail to establish must be replaced.

Further information can be obtained from <http://www.enfo.ie/>.

What size of tree to plant:

The action provides for the planting of two tree types. You can plant a mix of both types if you wish. Both types are costed separately.

Standard Tree:

These trees are at least 2 metres in height with a stem circumference of c. 6–10 cm. They must be planted in the dormant season. Each tree will require a strong stake and suitable tree tie for support until it gets established.

Transplant or Whip:

This tree type is generally bare-rooted, younger and smaller. At a minimum these bare rooted transplants should be around 1,000–1,200mm in height (strong whips) with a good fibrous root system. A whip is a transplant, normally bare rooted, that does not require a stake when planted.

They must be planted at least 3m apart.

A minimum of 25 must be planted and the maximum number that can be claimed for payment is 50.

As hawthorn/whitethorn, blackthorn, guilder rose, rowan/mountain ash, white beam, wild cherry trees and apple trees are potential carriers of diseases that are harmful to plants in the wider environment, it is mandatory that producers of these plants are registered and inspected by the Horticulture and Plant Health Division of the Department of Agriculture,

Fisheries and Food to ensure their freedom of these diseases. To check if your supplier is properly registered, either email planthealth@agriculture.gov.ie or call 01-5058885. These plants should only be purchased from registered producers. Alternatively, if your local supplier is not the producer of these plants it is important that they were sourced from a registered grower.

NATIVE BROADLEAF TREES

SPECIES	OPTIMUM SITE	CHARACTERISTICS	REMARKS
Alder	Common alder is a very hardy accommodating species suitable for wet sites. Good wildlife species.	Fast growing nitrogen-fixing tree. Suitable broadleaf for even the wettest sites	Minor forest species. Common Alder is a native tree. Coppices freely and can be used in mixtures on very infertile sites. Valuable shelter tree
Ash	A very exacting species demanding good soil conditions, preferably sheltered, moist well drained fertile loams best.	A fast growing species.	Major forest species. Native tree.
Birch	Pioneer species suited to very acid soils and peats.	Fast growing, hardy species, withstands exposure and frost well. Useful as a nurse crop in mixtures but must be kept under control or it will smother a slower growing tree species	Very attractive small tree. Minor forest species. Native tree. Young trees coppice freely. May be used as a soil improver. Can be mixed into shelterbelts
Hawthorn/Whitethorn	Most fertile free draining soils.	Mostly grown as hedgerow tree. Very attractive tree if grown singly as standard.	Tree of the woodland fringe. Good tree to mix with other species. Interesting in form, flower, leaf and fruit.

Pedunculate Oak	Well-aerated deep fertile loams. Will do well on heavier soils	Slow growing, long lived tree.	Major forest species. One of our few native broadleaved trees. Very high amenity and wildlife value
Rowan	Suitable for lowland and hill acidic sites. Will tolerate even alkaline sites	Hardy tree suitable for exposed sites. Widely used amenity tree	Minor forest species. Native tree. Offers good support for wildlife
Sessile Oak	Tolerates less fertile and lighter textured soils than <i>Q. robur</i>	Oaks will not produce good timber on excessively drained or sandy soils	Major forest species. Native to Ireland. Now designated as Irish national tree
Whitebeam	Most fertile mineral soils.	Attractive amenity tree also suitable for shelter	Minor forest species. Native tree. Tolerant of exposed and coastal sites
Wild Cherry	Fertile deep well-drained mineral soils. Preference for slightly acid soils but will do well on deep loams over limestone.	Fast growing, light demanding, requiring considerable space. The only commercial broadleaved tree with attractive blossoms	Major forest species. Native tree. May suffer from bacterial canker and aphid attack
Willow	Useful species for wet sites and streambanks.	Fast growing useful for conservation and amenity but rarely for timber production. Willow can be used in a variety of ways as a shelterbelt system	Minor forest species. Native tree. Attractive tree when grown as a standard tree.

Conservation of Animal Genetic Resources (Rare Breeds)

If you rear animals of the following species you can choose this action:

The maximum number of livestock units that can be claimed for annual payment is 10.

Cattle:

Kerry

Dexter

Irish Maol (or Moiled)

Horses and ponies:

Connemara Pony

Irish Draught

Kerry Bog Pony

Sheep:

Galway

Payment will be made on the average livestock units (LU) of registered animals per year.

Livestock units for consideration for payment are calculated as follows:

Cattle below 6 months	0.4 LU
Cattle 6 months to 2 years	0.6 LU
Cattle over 2 years (including cows)	1.0 LU
Equines over 6 months of age	1.0 LU
Ewe (+/- Lambs at foot)	0.15 LU
Ewe Lamb (6 months - 1 year of age intended/kept for breeding)	0.10 LU
Ram	0.15 LU

The above livestock units equivalents apply when an animal is kept for a full year.

Payment under this action will be made at the end of the recording year based on the monthly average over the recording year. Monthly records must be kept in the prescribed manner on the Rare Breed Record Sheet.

General Requirements

- You must be a member of an approved breed society and you must remain a member of the breed society for the period of the contract.

- You must maintain an up-to-date monthly record of all registered animals on the holding and submit a copy with your payment claim.
- All female progeny from a purebred mating must be registered with the relevant breed society.
- All male calves from a purebred mating must be birth-notified and/or registered (as appropriate) with the relevant breed society. All male lambs and foals must be registered with the relevant breed society.
- To qualify for payment, registered adult females must have produced registered offspring at least once in the previous 2 years.
- All animals eligible for payment must be clearly identified on the Rare Breeds Record Sheet.

Documents needed when you apply for payment:

- You must provide evidence of registration/birth notification, as appropriate, and identification of the animal for which you are claiming payment;
- You must declare the average livestock units eligible for payment by submitting a copy of the completed Rare Breeds Records and other documentary proof as may be required by the Department to substantiate the payment claim.

Requirements for the different types of animal:

Cattle

- All females less than 2 years of age will be considered for payment.
- An adult female (over 2 years of age) must be mated to a purebred male of the same breed at each mating and must have produced offspring at least once in the previous 2 years to qualify for payment.
- All males less than 3 years of age will be considered for payment.
- Males over 3 years of age up to a maximum of 1 bull per 5 cows will be considered for payment.

Horses and ponies

- All horses and ponies must have a passport (this is a legal requirement).
- All registered females and males between 6 months and 3 years of age will be considered for payment.
- An adult female (over 3 years of age) must be mated to a purebred male of the same breed at each mating and must have produced registered offspring at least once in the previous 2 years to be considered for payment.

- All breeding stallions over three years of age will be considered for payment.

Sheep

- All females between 6 months of age and one year of age will be considered for payment.
- An adult female (over 1 year of age) must be mated to a purebred male of the same breed at each mating and must have produced offspring at least once in the previous 2 recording years to be considered for payment.
- Males under 1 year of age are not eligible for payment.
- Males over 1 year of age will be considered for payment up to a maximum of 1 ram per 5 adult ewes.

Breed Societies:

<p>Kerry Cattle Society of Ireland</p> <p>Ms. Raymonde Hilliard, Secretary, Cahernane, Killarney, Co. Kerry. 064 31840</p> <p>email: secretary@kerrycattle.ie web: www.kerrycattle.ie</p>	<p>UK Dexter Cattle Society</p> <p>Mrs Yvonne Froehlich, Secretary Dexter Cattle Society, 1st Floor RASE Offices Stoneleigh Park Warks CV8 2LZ Tel: 02476 692300 email: secretary@dextercattle.co.uk web: www.dextercattlesociety.co.uk</p>
<p>Irish Moiled Cattle Society</p> <p>Ms. Jane Light, Secretary, Irish Moiled Cattle Society, 7 The Terrace Martinstown Dorchester Dorset DT2 9JY 0044 1305 889828</p> <p>email: mjlight@bun.com web: www.irishmoiledcattlesociety.com</p>	<p>Galway Sheep Breeders Society</p> <p>Mr. Tom Murphy, Assistant Secretary, Shrilea Creagh Co. Galway 090 9644233</p> <p>email: teamurphy@eircom.net</p>

Connemara Pony Breeders Society

Ms. Niamh Philbin,
Secretary,
The Showgrounds,
Clifden,
Co. Galway
095-21863

email: enquiries@cpbs.ie

web: www.cpbs.ie

The Irish Horse Board

Beech House
Millennium Park
Osberstown
Naas
Co. Kildare

email: ihb@ihb.ie

web: www.irishhorseboard.com

The Kerry Bog Pony Co-Operative Society

Ms Sinead Byrne
Secretary
The Kerry Bog Pony Co-Operative Society
Carricleas House
Carlow Road
Kilcullen
Co. Kildare

email: info@kerrybogpony.ie

web: www.kerrybogpony.ie

Conservation of Animal Genetic Resources

Rare Breeds Record Sheet

	Identification number of offspring produced				
Identification number of Breeding female	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5

Animal type/month (first column month to start at commencement of contract)	Number of animals at end of each month of the calendar year														
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Ave	LU ¹	Total LU
Bovines:															
Cattle < 6 months															
Cattle 6 months-2 years															
Breeding Female > 2 years (see footnote 2)															
Males >2 < 3 years															
Bulls > 3 years (see footnote 3)															
Equines:															
Males and Females > 6 months –<3 years.															

Breeding Females > 3 years (see footnote 2)																
Stallion > 3 years (see footnote 3)																
Ovines:																
Females 6 months – 1 year (intended/kept for breeding).																
Breeding females > 1 year. (see footnote 2)																
Rams > 1 year (see footnote 3)																
Total LU for payment																

1. LU conversion equivalents for the various stock types are provided in text above.
2. Breeding female animals must have produced offspring at least once in the 2 previous recording years.
3. Adult males: Include at max 1 bull per 5 cows: 1 ram per 5 ewes (male ovines < 1 year not eligible): all stallions can be included.

Note: For equines, birthday is as per January 1st

Note: If there are more than 8 Breeding Females to be listed, use a separate sheet and attach to the annual record sheet.

Coppicing of Hedgerows

If you have suitable old, neglected field boundary hedges you can choose this action.

Coppicing is a way of rejuvenating hedgerows where the tree stems are cut back to 10 cm from ground level. Dormant buds on the cut stumps will regrow and eventually develop into a reinvigorated hedgerow. The linear length (metres) you are going to coppice must be identified on the boundary of the LPIS plots and marked on the map.

Requirements:

- A minimum continuous length of 30 metres must be coppiced.
- A maximum of 1,500 metres may be planned for coppicing over the 5 year duration of the contract.
- The coppicing may be carried out with a chainsaw or circular saw between 1st September and 1st March.
- In each full calendar year of your contract, you must coppice at least one fifth and not more than a quarter of the total length of hedgerow selected in your application
- New growth that emerges from ground level must be protected until it is established.
- Only broadleaf species are suitable for coppicing, conifers do not usually grow back from cut stumps.

Species that will regenerate when coppiced include:

Alder	Hawthorn	Oak	Sycamore
Ash	Hazel	Poplar	Willow
Birch	Holly	Sweet Chestnut	

New Grassland Habitats

For this action on grassland parcels you must establish and maintain a fenced margin of 2.5 metres wide along a full LPIS parcel boundary or boundaries. The margin must be established and fenced to Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine fencing specifications, 'S 148', by the 1st of June following notification in writing of acceptance into the scheme, and must be maintained for the duration of the contract.

A maximum of 1,500 metres on the holding can be claimed for payment over the contract period.

This action cannot be selected on LPIS parcels selected for either Traditional Hay Meadow, Species Rich Grassland, Wild Bird Cover, Green Cover Establishment or Minimum Tillage.

Farmers who apply for a Nitrates derogation or the Organic Farming Scheme cannot apply for this action

Requirements:

- In the case of hedgerow field boundaries, the margin must extend 2.5 metres from the external boundary of the hedgerow.
- The margin must be fenced to Department specifications, S148, to keep livestock out.
- You must not apply fertilisers or pesticides (including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, slug pellets and growth regulators) within the margin.
- Noxious weeds must be controlled — these can be spot-sprayed.
- The margin must be maintained in GAEC. It can be mowed or lightly grazed at least once a year, but not before 15th August. If it is grazed, the animals must be grazed for the minimum time required to control the vegetation. The margin must not be damaged.

Green Cover Establishment from a sown crop

For this action, *Green Cover* is defined as a sown crop established with light soil cultivation after the harvesting of a cereal or other tillage crop, and maintained according to the requirements of Statutory Instrument 610 of 2010 (the Nitrates Regulations).

If you select this action the only other actions you can select on this LPIS parcel are Copping of Hedgerows, Laying of Hedgerows or Stone Wall Maintenance.

Requirements:

- As soon as possible after harvesting a crop and not later than 1 October, you must establish a green cover crop annually on the same full LPIS parcel by light cultivation (shallow grubbing and rolling — ploughing is not allowed) and sowing a specified seed mix. Slurry or fertiliser must not be applied to the stubble/ground after harvesting the crop.
- You must devote at least 4 hectares to this action.
- Ploughing down of this cover crop later must be in line with the requirements of Statutory Instrument 610 of 2010 (the Nitrates Regulations).

You can use the following crops:

Cover Crop Species	Seed Rate kg/Ha
Buckwheat	10 - 15
Forage Rape	5 - 7
Mustard	7 - 12
Oats (Black Oats)	75 - 100
Phacelia	5 – 10
Rye	70 - 90
Vetch	50 - 75
Oats	75

Laying of Hedgerows

Farmers with suitable hedgerows may choose this action. The linear length (metres) you are going to lay must be identified on the boundary of the LPIS plots and marked on the map.

A minimum continuous length of 15 metres must be undertaken and a maximum of 1,000 metres on the holding can be claimed for payment over the contract period.

Hedgerow laying involves cutting part of the way through selected stems, bending them over at an angle of 70–80 degrees and fixing the branches and stems to stakes driven into the hedgerow bank. There are many different ways of hedgerow laying. You should choose the most suitable and effective one. You can find more information on the Internet at these sites:

<http://www.crann.ie/>

<http://www.hedgelaying.ie>

<http://www.teagasc.ie/>

Requirements:

- Make a cut angled downward (with a billhook, axe or saw) about three quarters of the way through the stem. Then lay the stem over.
- Cut off the heel or stub at a sloping angle near the ground. This will encourage re-growth from the ground and it will also prevent injury to livestock and allow water run-off. A long, thin tongue or hinge allows the laid stem to be twisted and put in the best position.
- Laid stems need to be secured to prevent them being damaged by livestock rubbing or pushing against the hedge or by strong winds. You should fix them to posts driven into the hedge bank interwoven with suitable rods (hazel/willow) to give stability.
- In each full calendar year of your contract, you must lay at least one fifth of the total length of hedgerow you put in your application.

Min-Till (Minimum Tillage)

Min-Till (minimum tillage) means sowing crops without inverting the soil. The soil cannot be ploughed. You can choose this action on tillage land if you undertake to establish crops by this method on the same full LPIS plots in each year of your contract. You must mark the LPIS parcels on the map.

A minimum area of 4 hectares must be delivered.

If you select this action the only other actions you can select on this LPIS parcel are Copping of Hedgerows, Laying of Hedgerows or Stone Wall Maintenance

Riparian Margins

You can choose this action if you have watercourses on your land, but you cannot choose it on commonage. A watercourse is any watercourse that is shown on an OSI map. You must establish and maintain a fenced-off margin of a set width along the watercourses you choose and you must show them on the map. You must choose the width of the margin when you apply for AEOS. The margin width is option from the top of the bank. You can choose from four widths:

- 3 metres
- 5.5 metres
- 10.5 metres
- 30.5 metres

You can choose more than one of these widths, but only on separate LPIS parcel boundaries adjoining stretches of the watercourse.

This action cannot be selected on LPIS parcels selected for Traditional Hay Meadow, Species Rich Grassland, Wild Bird Cover, Green Cover Establishment or Minimum Tillage.

Farmers who apply for a Nitrates derogation or the Organic Farming Scheme cannot apply for this action.

The area must be permanently fenced to Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine fencing specifications, 'S148', to prohibit livestock access from the outset of the AEOS contract, unless your river is a designated SAC and fencing is not allowed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. You should provide suitable entry points for maintenance, and for fishing as necessary.

Maintenance Guidelines:

- Allow vegetation to develop naturally within the margin.
- You can mow it and remove the grass, but not before 15th August.
- Do not apply fertiliser or pesticide.
- Noxious weeds must be controlled — these can be spot-sprayed.
- Vegetation such as alder and scrub should be controlled so that they do not close across the channel canopy.
- This area must be kept in GAEC.

Slurry Spreading (Use of New Technologies)

You can choose this action if you recycle all slurries (whether they are produced on your farm or imported) back onto your land by any of these methods:

- Band-Spreading,
- Injection Systems and the
- Trailing Shoe.

You must carry out this commitment for each year of your contract.

Minimum of **100m³** slurry applied.

Requirements:

- All slurry must be managed and spread in compliance with Statutory Instrument 610 of 2010 (the Nitrates Regulations).
- When you apply for this action you must declare the volume of slurry produced and/or imported and spread.
- All of the slurry spread on the farm must be spread using one or a combination of the methods mentioned above by 1st July each year. You must provide documentary evidence to confirm the use of the spreading method used for each year of the contract for example a calculation of slurry produced, imported and spread, a receipt from your contractor or other evidence as required.

Species-rich Grassland

Farmers can participate in this action by identifying suitable non-Natura 2000 (not SAC or SPA or commonage) grassland habitats on their farm. These must be full LPIS grassland parcels that have not been cultivated in the last 8 years. The maximum area for payment is 10 hectares.

If you select this action the only other actions you can select on this LPIS parcel are Coppicing of Hedgerows, Laying of Hedgerows, Stone Wall Maintenance or Water Trough installation.

Where the species rich grassland is situated within a designated Natura 2000 site farmers can choose to be paid for this action rather than Natura.

Farmers participating in the Organic Farming Scheme or availing of a Nitrates derogation cannot apply for this action.

There are different kinds of species-rich grasslands.

Species-rich Wet Grasslands with or without rush cover

These grasslands occur on flat or sloping ground in upland and lowland areas on wet or waterlogged mineral or organic soils that are poorly drained or occasionally subjected to seasonal flooding. They are distributed throughout Ireland.

The grassland must have a dense root mat. It must contain at least 5 “positive” indicator species. Examples are given in the list below; this list is not exhaustive and may be supplemented by species approved by NPWS. They must be reasonably prominent throughout the plot — in other words they must be easy to find, for example not just in a patch or a corner or along a river. It must not have more than 20% altogether of the “negative” indicator species in the list.

Positive Indicators	Negative indicators
Angelica	Bog Cottons
Carnation Sedge	Common Dandelion
Common Marsh Bedstraw	
Cuckoo-flower	Ground elder
Devil’s-bit Scabious	Perennial or Italian Rye-grass

Forget me Knot	Reeds
Greater Birds foot trefoil	Stinging Nettle
Hairy sedge	White Clover
Horsetails	
Iris	
Lesser Spearwort	
Marsh Bedstraw	
Marsh Foxtail	
Meadow Foxtail	
Meadow Sweet	
Meadow Vetchling	
Mosses	
Orchids	
Purple Moor Grass	
Ragged Robin	
Rough stalked Meadow Grass	
Smooth Stalked meadow Grass	
Common bent Grass	
Creeping Bent Grass	
Timothy	
Yorkshire Fog	
Rushes	
Sedge species	
Silverweed	
Sneezeworth	
Water mint	
Yellow Iris	
Yellow rattle	

Species-rich Dry Grasslands

a) Dry calcareous and neutral grasslands

These grasslands are usually found on free-draining mineral soils. They are not widely distributed and are largely confined to the steep slopes of esker ridges and moraines in the midlands and other areas with shallow or rocky limestone soils.

The grassland must contain at least 5 “positive” indicator species. Examples are given in the list below; this list is not exhaustive and may be supplemented by species approved by NPWS. They must be reasonably prominent throughout the plot — in other words they must be easy to find, for example not just in a patch or corner. It must not have more than 20% altogether of the “negative” indicator species in the list.

Positive Indicators	Negative indicators
Carline Thistle	Agrostis species (Bents)
Common Bird's-foot-trefoil	Bog Cottons
Common Knapweed	Common Dandelion
Cowslip	Cocksfoot
Crested Dog's-tail	Ground elder
Downy Oat Grass	Perennial or Italian Rye-grass
Fairy Flax	Reeds
Field Scabious	Stinging Nettle
Harebell	Tall Rank Grasses
Kidney Vetch	White Clover
Lady's Bedstraw	
Marjoram	
Mosses	
Mountain Everlasting	
Orchids: e.g.	
Bee orchid	
Early Purple orchid	
Pyramidal orchid	
Origanum	
Oxeye daisy	
Quaking grass	
Selfheal	
St John's Wort	
Sweet-Vernal-grass	
Rough stalked Meadow Grass	

Smooth Stalked meadow Grass

Common bent Grass

Creeping Bent Grass

Timothy

Wild Carrot

Yellow Rattle

Yellow-wort

b) Dry-humid acid grasslands

This kind of grassland occurs on free-draining acid soils that may be dry or humid but not waterlogged. The soil is usually mineral-rich or peaty.

The grassland must contain at least 5 “positive” indicator species. Examples are given in the list below; this list is not exhaustive and may be supplemented by species approved by NPWS. They must be reasonably prominent throughout the plot — in other words they must be easy to find, for example not just in a patch or a corner or along a river. It must not have more than 20% altogether of the “negative” indicator species in the list.

Positive Indicators	Negative indicators
Common Bent grass	Bog Cottons
Creeping Bent Grass	Common Dandelion
Bitter Vetch	
Common Milkwort	Ground elder
Common Mousear	Perennial or Italian Rye-grass
Devil's-bit Scabious	Reeds
Dog Violet	Stinging Nettle
Fescues	White Clover
Fungi (Earth Tongues, Waxcaps etc)	
Heath Bedstraw	
Heath Grass	
Heath rush	
Heath Speedwell	
Lousewort	
Mosses	
Orchids	

Ribwort Plantain
Sheep's Sorrel
Sweet-Vernal-grass
Rough stalked Meadow Grass
Smooth Stalked meadow Grass
Timothy
Tormentil
Violet
Wood rush
Yarrow

Species-rich grassland must be managed as follows:

Fertilisation:

No artificial fertiliser, slurry, farmyard manure or other organic material can be applied.

Grazing:

Traditional grazing practices must be maintained. The stocking density and grazing regime must be such as to conserve the ecological integrity of the habitat.

Topping:

Grasslands may not be topped until after July 15th.

Drainage:

Planned maintenance of existing drains is permitted.

Supplementary feeding may not take place on these parcels.

Use of Herbicides:

The use of herbicides is not permitted. However, where mechanical control of noxious weeds and/or rushes is not feasible, spot-treatment with herbicide is allowed.

Burren LIFE - Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP)

Participants in the BFCP who also participate in AEOS must comply with the requirements of the BFCP for species rich grassland paid for in AEOS.

Traditional Dry Stone Wall Maintenance

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. You cannot choose this Action on commonage.

A maximum of 4000 metres on the holding can be selected.

The linear length (metres) to be maintained must be identified on the LPIS parcels and marked on the map.

Walls selected for maintenance that have fallen or partly collapsed must be rebuilt in the same style as other walls in the locality.

Traditional Hay Meadow

For this action, you must have whole grassland LPIS plots with at least 3 grass species (other than Ryegrass).

Only parcels that have not been cultivated in the past 8 years are eligible.

The maximum area for payment is 10 hectares.

If you select this action the only other actions you can select on this LPIS parcel are Coppicing of Hedgerows, Laying of Hedgerows, Stone Wall Maintenance or Water Trough installation.

Where the species rich grassland is situated within a designated Natura 2000 site farmers can choose to be paid for this action rather than Natura.

Farmers participating in the organic farming scheme or availing of a Nitrates derogation cannot apply for this action

Requirements:

- **Fertilisation:**
 - The annual nitrogen application is restricted to 30 kgs/ha.

- **Grazing:**
 - Follow traditional grazing practices. These parcels may not be grazed from 1st April until after the hay is cut each year.

- **Mowing:**
 - Meadows for conservation may not be cut until after 15th July.

Where, because of bad weather or for other reasons, the hay cannot be saved, you can make silage but you must turn it at least twice before collecting it to let the seeds disperse.

Wild Bird Cover

You can choose this action if you grow a specific Wild Bird Cover crop seed mix in a whole LPIS parcel for every year of your contract. The LPIS parcel(s) you choose must be shown on the map. You cannot do this on short term rented lands, Natura 2000 designated lands or commonages, or on lands where waders breed at high concentrations.

If you select this action the only other actions you can select on this LPIS parcel are Coppicing of Hedgerows, Laying of Hedgerows or Stone Wall Maintenance

Requirements:

Each year of your contract, sow a seed crop mix that provides winter cover and a food source for farmland birds and other fauna. Alternatively, you can sow a combination of one and two year mixes over the contract period.

The choice of site is critical.

- The crop must be grown on suitable lands capable of producing and sustaining the crop i.e. soil and aspect that are cable of producing a cereal crop.
- The crop must be grown in the same ground for the duration of the contract.
- Consideration should be given to growing the crop adjacent to cover. For example you might put it beside hedgerows or near woodland or scrub.

The area you sow must be at least 0.5 hectares.

Plots must be a minimum of 20 metres wide and 0.5 hectares in area.

The maximum area for payment is 3 ha.

Where there are grazing livestock on the farm at any time during the course of the AEOS contract this area must be fenced or otherwise inaccessible to all livestock.

Fertiliser is allowed at a maximum of half rate for the crop prescribed in SI 610 2011.

Pre-sowing weed control can be used. After the crop is sown, you cannot use pesticides (including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, slug pellets and growth regulators).

At least two different crop types must be sown as the mix (e.g. cereals and brassicas). Half the parcel must be sown to each crop type.

Seed must be spring sown not later than May 31st.

Drilling is the preferred sowing method.

If you are broadcasting, increase the seed rates by between one third (for smaller seeds) and a half (for larger seeds).

Crops from one-year mixes must be retained from the time they become established until the following March 15th.

If you are using kale in the mix, the kale plot must be left untouched for two winters not ending before March 15th of the second winter.

No harvesting can take place.

If the eligible area on farm is split into a number of parcels, each parcel must have a LPIS number and contain Wild Bird Cover crop mix.

Wild Bird Cover Crop Mixes

Wild Bird Cover can be made up of a mix that is sown every year or a mix that is sown every other year. Recommended seed rates are lower than those for commercial crop production as a more open crop increases access for birds to fallen seeds and weeds.

One-year mixes must contain a cereal (oats, triticale) and at least one species from the following: Phacelia, oilseed rape, linseed, and mustard. An example of a one-year mix is oats and linseed. This mix is a good option on heavier, acid soils e.g. 75 kg/ha of oats and 15 kg/ha of linseed. Where brassicas are sown as part of a one-year mix, they must be sown in alternate strips to avoid the brassica dominating over the cereal.

Two-year mixes must contain kale and at least one from the following: oats, triticale, or linseed. Kale is included because it is a biennial plant; the others are annual plants and must be resown each year. Clubroot resistant varieties of Kale such as 'Caledonian' should be sown.

Examples of two-year mixes are given below:

Mix	Drilling Rates
Kale and linseed	1.5 kg/ha of kale and 15 kg/ha of

	linseed
Kale and cereal (oats, triticale)	1.5 kg/ha of kale and 75 kg/ha of cereal

Do not include brassicas (oilseed rape, mustard etc.) if using the one-year mix as a break crop between a two-year mix that includes kale.

PART II
CONDITIONS FOR CERTAIN NATURA SITES

CONDITIONS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF BLANKET BOGS, HEATHS AND UPLAND GRASSLANDS

General Provisions

The primary recommendation is to avoid farming practices that cause environmental damage and all the following recommendations are designed to meet that objective. If a practice is environmentally damaging it must be stopped or modified, but the following are general guidelines and may be superseded by specific recommendations for individual farms.

Detailed Conditions

Stocking Density

In all cases an environmentally sustainable plan must be prepared and adhered to for the total area of the farm. Sustainable optimum stocking rates must be set down by the planner following careful assessment of the environmental conservation needs of the lands.

Where the stocking levels set down by the planner require a reduction in stock this must be achieved within one year of the commencement of the plan. There can be no increase in stocking levels, no introduction of stock to new areas and no changes in stock type during the period of the plan without the prior approval of NPWS. The maximum number of sheep that may be kept on the farm as a whole must be set down in the plan. The following parameters apply:

- Where there is no damage the current stocking levels are acceptable.
- If the level of damage is moderate a stocking reduction must be prescribed by the planner at a level related to the damage and sufficient for the vegetation to recover.
- If the level of damage is severe, a stocking reduction of between 70% and 100% of ewe numbers on the damaged area must be prescribed for a specified period.

At the review of the plan, the conservation status of the areas will be reviewed. A change in the stocking levels (increase or decrease) may be appropriate depending on progress.

Stocking levels apply to Scottish Blackface sheep or similar medium sized sheep breeds. Stocking levels for cattle or other stock should be at livestock unit applicable rates taking account of the conversion rates for the various stock types. The stocking levels recommended in this document are maximum sustainable rates for year round grazing. If shorter periods of grazing are used the number of animals may be increased, though not necessarily pro rata.

Supplementary Feeding

Supplementary feeding is permitted only on areas where it is currently practised. Locations of feeding points must be specified. To reduce heavy grazing, trampling, poaching and erosion problems, “feeding points” should be moved every 3 weeks and sited on ground with least habitat and wildlife value, preferably on grassland well away from stands of heather. Feeding on steep slopes and on peaty soils should be avoided where possible. The total amount of feed used must not be increased.

Use of Fertilisers and Herbicides

Neither organic nor inorganic fertilisers nor lime can be applied on bogs, heaths or upland grasslands where they have not been used before. Fertilisers must not be used as a means of regenerating eroded areas. In the case of upland grasslands fertilisers can only be applied on the basis of the results of a soil test. Where fertilisers are being applied, the initial soil sampling should be relatively intensive with at least one sample per 2–4 ha. Target soil phosphate levels must not exceed the Index 2 level set out in this specification.

Spraying or broadcast application of herbicides must be avoided. Spot application and wipe-on treatments to eradicate docks, thistles, ragwort and similar noxious weeds may be used.

Rhododendron may be removed by cutting and herbicide treatment. Bracken control may be by rolling, cutting and/or by controlled cattle trampling in early summer. In exceptional circumstances control of bracken by herbicides may be permitted.

Water Pollution

The greatest care should be taken to observe the statutory requirements on water pollution. The hydrology of bog land areas is characterised by extremely nutrient poor surface waters, which contain flora and fauna adapted to these conditions. These species would be adversely affected by nutrient enrichment. New sheep dip sites must be listed and located away from streams and flushes to reduce the possibility of water pollution and damage to flora and fauna.

Restricted and Prohibited Practices

The following practices must not be carried out on Blanket Bogs, Heaths or Upland Grasslands:

- The areas must not be drained, ploughed, cultivated or reseeded.
- There must be no infilling or rock removal.
- Turf cutting on unexploited bogs is not permitted. Turf cutting for domestic use is permitted on existing banks.
- Planting of trees or other crops is not permitted.
- No new tracks or paths can be created.
- Burning is only allowed as a planned management practice.
- Gorse may be controlled by cutting, spot spraying or exceptionally by burning outside of the bird nesting season (March 1st to August 31st).

CONDITIONS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF SAND DUNE AND MACHAIR AREAS

The primary recommendation is to avoid farming practices that cause environmental damage and all the following recommendations are designed to meet that objective. If a practice is environmentally damaging it must be stopped or modified, but the following are general guidelines and may be superseded by specific recommendations for individual farms.

Detailed Conditions for Sand Dunes and Machairs

Description

Sand Dunes and Machairs are coastal habitats consisting of hills and hollows in which unique communities of plants and animals are found in response to the very demanding nature of the dry, windy and salty environment.

Machairs are flat, level plains over lime-rich sands which have evolved in response to a unique interruption between wind, high rainfall and historical land use. They are found only in western Ireland and Scotland.

Grazing Regime

It should be noted that on sand dunes and machairs, the objective is to maintain extensive agricultural practices, and to prevent a further increase in stock numbers. Cattle stock must be kept at the level the land can support - see also the section on Supplementary Feeding.

Cattle grazing should continue in line with traditional practices. The land should normally be grazed only in winter. However, in areas where Summer grazing has traditionally (i.e. over the previous 10 years) been practised, this can continue, provided, of course, that stock levels at all times do not exceed what the land can bear on a sustainable basis. Grazing on young and fore-dune areas should be avoided. Where conditions warrant, grazing levels must not exceed

1 Livestock Unit (LU) per hectare on a year round average and must never exceed 2 LU at any one time. This change would enable 2 LUs to be overwintered on the sand dune/ machair provided it is deemed to be sustainable by the planner.

The introduction of sheep into areas where they have not been traditionally grazed should be avoided, but areas which have kept sheep traditionally can retain them, though perhaps at a lower level.

Sustainable stocking levels

The planner should set stocking levels for each farm in the farm plan. The levels should be set below the level which causes eutrophication, overgrazing, or erosion, but still high enough to control the encroachment of coarse vegetation and scrub. Where the stock level set by the planner requires a reduction, this must be achieved within 12 months of the start of the plan. Where the stock level is to increase, this can be spread over the period of the plan, as specified by the planner. Where a conservation plan has been prepared for the SAC in question, this should be used to assist in determining where damage has occurred or is occurring, where damage is moderate, and where damage has not occurred.

Official conservation plans, when available, can be obtained from the local office of the NPWS.

Supplementary feeding

The introduction of supplementary feeding can bring additional nutrients into sand dune and machair areas, and thus bring about a very fundamental change in the vegetation of these areas. The use of silage and other feed can facilitate excessive stocking levels and may lead to pollution of groundwater. Consequently, the use of any supplementary feeds in areas where it has not been customary over the last ten years may be allowed only in consultation with NPWS.

Round-baled silage can be stored in these areas. Loose silage can only be stored where an approved effluent collection system is in place and the effluent is removed from the

machair/sand dune.

No supplementary feeding can take place on young and fore-dune areas.

In machair and grey dune areas where supplementary feed has been used over the last 10 years it may be continued, provided that

- The number of LUs fed does not increase
- The species of stock fed does not change
- The total amount of feed equivalent does not increase
- The amount of feed does not exceed 3.5 tonnes of silage or 0.75 tonnes of hay per LU
- No meals and concentrates are fed.

However, in exceptional circumstances, such as in unusually severe weather conditions (i.e., when there are heavy snowfalls or floods), and with the agreement of NPWS, feeding will be permitted. Weanling cattle may be fed small quantities of concentrates.

Cultivation, reseeding and pesticides

Ploughing, harrowing or any other form of cultivation must be avoided since this will destabilise the dune structure. Small traditional tillage plots on machairs may be retained. The bringing in of any seeds to these areas will disturb the vegetative balance on which the dune depends and must be avoided. The feeding of hay should only be from round feeders.

The fixed dune parts of sand dunes are essentially areas with low levels of plant nutrients in the soil and this has contributed to the development of their distinctive flora. These are also areas most used for grazing. However, the spreading of organic (slurry, FYM), or inorganic fertilisers must not take place, as the flora in these areas would be damaged.

On machairs, where fertiliser has not been applied in the past, none can be applied now. However, where low levels of phosphorus have traditionally been applied on machairs, this may continue, provided that the soils Phosphorus levels do not increase above their present

levels or in any event do not exceed Soil Index 2.

Pesticides and Herbicides

All spraying or broadcast application of herbicides must be avoided, but spot application and wipe on treatment to eradicate docks, thistles and similar noxious weeds can be used.

Animal Treatments

Worm doses may be used normally, but animals, which have been given pesticides, the residues of which persist in the dung must be kept off the dune for at least a week after treatment.

Dumping and infilling

The dumping of domestic or industrial refuse, farm wastes, rubble, rock, or any similar materials which could disturb the natural environment by bringing in unsuitable nutrients or unsuitable soils and seeds must be avoided.

Farming Conditions for the Conservation of River SACs

Fertiliser in River SACs

In river SACs, no **chemical fertiliser** should be applied within 2 m of any watercourse.

In river SACs, the recommended buffer strip when spreading **organic manures** is up to 10 m from streams and drains and up to 20 m from main river channels. Where SAC boundaries have been reduced to 2.5 m, the relevant buffer is that under Cross Compliance.

Notifiable Actions

Current farming activities can continue without notification unless they involve any of the following, which, as they may impact upon habitats, are notifiable actions (that is actions which would require consultation and consent in advance):

- Reclamation, infilling or drainage (other than cleaning of drains¹) within 5m of the riverbank.
- Removal of trees; reseedling of lands where this has not been practiced for 10 years or more; or afforestation.
- Ploughing or use of any pesticides where this has not been practiced for 10 years or more.
- Any use of pesticides (herbicide or insecticide) within 5 m of the riverbank.
- Intensification of current farming activity.
- Alteration of the banks, channel, bed or flow of the river.

Ploughing

A minimum uncultivated margin from watercourses of 3 m must be maintained. This will extend to 5 metres where the SAC boundary is greater than 2.5 metres.

¹ Cleaning of existing drains within SACs is not a notifiable option.

PRESCRIPTION SETTING OUT FARMING CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO WET GRASSLANDS, INCLUDING CALLOWS, WET LOWLAND GRASSLAND, FENS AND MARSHES

(Middle Shannon and Little Brosna Callows Codes SAC Codes 000216 & 000564)

Grazing

Traditional² grazing practices to be maintained. The planner shall confirm what constitutes traditional practice, which shall include the numbers and type of livestock, the species use and the seasonal grazing pattern. Sheep and/or goats are not to be introduced into areas where they have not been traditionally found. The land must not be under-grazed. Between the 10th March and the end of June a 1LU/ha stocking rate limit applies.

Supplementary Feeding

No supplementary feeding is to be introduced into areas where it was not traditionally done.

Some feeding of concentrates may be permitted by agreement with National Parks and Wildlife Service in individual circumstances. Any such permission shall be written into the plan at the time such plan is prepared.

Mowing

In areas where the corncrake prescription does not apply mowing shall not be commenced before 30th June unless the land has been managed in the past that there is little diversity of plants. Any exceptions to this must be explained in the farm plan.

“Mowing” includes topping, grass chaining or rolling.

Fertilisation

Fertilising by chemical or organic means can take place in the same way, in accordance with “Good Farming Practices”, and with no intensification, only on callows that have been traditionally fertilised in that way.

² “Traditional” means practices in use over the previous ten years

Drainage

Maintenance of existing drains shall be permitted and no other drainage works shall be embarked upon except with the prior agreement of National Parks and Wildlife Service. Any such permission shall be written into the plan at the time such plan is prepared.

Dumping, Infilling or Burning of Vegetation

No dumping or infilling shall be allowed. Disposal of agri-waste, such as spoiled hay, is considered dumping and is prohibited. The piling and subsequent burning of waste hay is permitted on site so long as it is in accordance with normal legal provisions. The importing of materials from other sites for the purpose of burning is strictly prohibited.

Reseeding, Reclamation or Tree Planting

No reseeded, reclamation or tree planting shall be permitted except with prior agreement with National Parks and Wildlife Service and any such agreement shall be included in the plan.

Road Construction

Construction of new roads (including culverts and bridges) is permitted only with specific agreement with National Parks and Wildlife Service. Any such agreement is to be written into the plan. The maintenance of existing roadways is not restricted.

Use of Persistent Animal Treatments

Pest control chemicals, which are persistent in the animals and leave residues in animal dung for long periods shall not be applied to animals using the site. Pour-on or injectable forms are acceptable.

Use of Herbicides

Control of noxious weeds and docks is permitted by spot spraying only. The use of herbicides for the control of other species, or control by means other than spot spraying, shall be permitted only by specific agreement with National Parks and Wildlife Service and any such agreement shall form part of the plan.

Supplementary Note (Middle Shannon and Little Brosna Callows, Codes 000216 and 000564)

Payment under the wet grassland prescription is restricted to those applicants who are eligible for payment under the Corncrake prescription (see above). The area of wet grassland, fen or marsh eligible for payment is capped at three times the area of hay meadow eligible for payment and managed by that applicant under the Corncrake habitat prescription (see above).

Priority Wild Bird Habitats

Corncrake Action (Natura 2000 designated sites for the Conservation Corncrake Habitats in the Shannon Callows)

This Action is specifically targeted at farmers in the Shannon Callows with lands in the Natura 2000 Corncrake target areas identified by NPWS.

Farmers with eligible lands within the target area must participate in this Action.

The lands must be managed in accordance with the Corncrake hay meadow prescription for the Shannon Callows outlined below.

The applicant must engage a planner to draw up a Sustainable Management and Grazing Plan (SMGP) for the site. This SMGP must be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and implemented for the duration of the contract.

The planner must consult with National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (NPWS) before drawing up the SMGP for these designated lands.

He/she must identify those Natura 2000 designated lands on the farm that are in the Corncrake habitat area and are maintained as hay meadow.

The NPWS will allocate a cutting sequence for the lands. This cutting sequence detail must be included in plan.

The planner shall walk and assess the site and consider all aspects of the farming activity on the whole farm when drawing up the SMGP for the site.

The identified area/s must be maintained as a hay meadow for the duration of the plan.

Participants in this action must follow the management requirements for corncrake habitat maintenance set out below.

Payment will only be made on submission of certificate of compliance signed by the NPWS or its agents regarding the management requirements set out below.

Management requirements FOR CORNCRAKE HABITATS (Middle Shannon Callows)

This prescription is the basis of the Sustainable Grazing and Management Plan for the corncrake areas. The corncrake areas are identified by NPWS and currently extend to some 600 ha of the SPA

The Application of this Prescription is restricted to Hay Meadows in priority callows the Middle Shannon Callows SPA. These callows have a recent history of breeding Corncrakes or where the NPWS believe there is a realistic opportunity that Corncrakes may breed in the future. This list is subject to ongoing review. Planners are advised to discuss the current situation with the NPWS before drawing up the SGMP. The current list of callows that are eligible under the prescription is shown below:

Carrowmanagh	Clonmacnoise
Tower	Coolumber
Kilmeelchon	Fahn's
Bullock Island	Drumlosh
Iniskeogh	Goravinch
Lehinch/ Reask	Long Island
Moystown	Athlone, Big Meadow
Brackagh	Bogganfin
Woodbank	Ballymacoolaghan
Kilaphort	Ragrabeg
Bishop's Island	Cogran
Baranagh	Mather's

Area of Meadows

The total area on the designated part of the farm that is managed for meadow shall not decrease during the period of the plan nor shall the area of meadow be less than the average of the preceding 5 years.

Restrictions on grazing

Grazing shall not be permitted on the designated area after 15th March.

Cutting of Meadows

The meadow shall not be cut or topped before the 10th August. The cutting dates in the 5-year farm plan shall be twice on the 10th August, twice on 1st September and once on the 15th September. The mowing must be established in consultation with NPWS, included in the Sustainable Grazing and Management Plan and implemented from the outset.

The meadows must be mown annually except when weather conditions make this impossible.

Method of Cutting of Meadows

Meadows must be cut by the “centre-out” method — see *Figure 1 below*. Details are available from the National Parks and Wildlife Service or its agents.

Mower speed should be kept at a low enough speed (e.g. 4mph.) to allow corncrakes move away. The mower must not exceed 12 feet in width.

Margins

A 2.5 metre margin must be left on both sides of the meadow when cutting to allow corncrakes to escape when mowing.

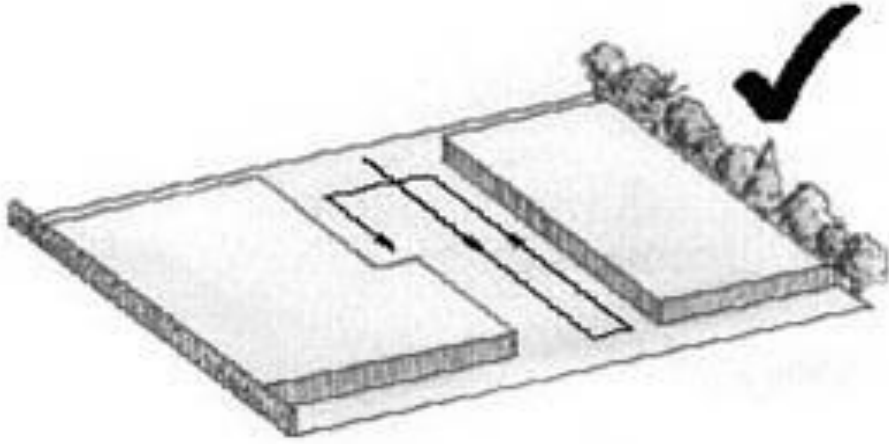
This margin can be cut any time from 15th September, unless the cutting date for the whole meadow falls on 15th September, in which case margins must be left at least a further 24 hours. The margins may be left uncut until the following year if wished but should be cut in the second year. On very narrow plots the width can be modified in consultation with NPWS or their agents.

Early/Late Cover

The planner should ensure in drawing up the plan that the designated part of the farm has a number of cover areas, which are managed so that they are under tall herb vegetation (e.g. nettles, reed, cow parsley, iris but not trees or shrubs).

Areas of cover can be mown at the same time as the rest of the meadow.

Figure 1 – Diagram of Centre Out Mowing



Appendix 1

The soil sample shall be taken and analysed in accordance with Schedule 1 of SI 610 2010.

The soil sampling procedure is set out below.

(a) The sampling area shall not exceed 4 hectares. Exceptionally, where soil types and cropping of lands were similar during the previous five years, a sample area of up to 8 hectares shall be deemed acceptable.

(b) Separate samples shall be taken from areas that are different in soil type, previous cropping history, slope, drainage or persistent poor yields.

(c) Any unusual spots such as old fences, ditches, drinking troughs, dung or urine patches or where fertiliser or lime has been heaped or spilled shall be avoided.

(d) A field shall not be sampled for phosphorus until 3 months after the last application of any fertiliser containing this nutrient (chemical or organic).

(e) The sampling pattern shown in the figure below shall be followed. A soil core shall be taken to the full 100 mm depth. 20 cores shall be taken from the sampling area and placed in the soil container to make up the sample. Ensure the container is full of soil.

(f) The field and sample numbers shall be written/attached onto the soil container.

Figure 1: Sampling pattern

