

Grass Strips in Arable Fields

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For recent changes to this guidance, please see the [bottom of the page](#).

Aim

The aim of this option is to benefit a variety of wildlife, and help improve water quality.

Grass strips located within or at the edges of arable fields provide important cover and food for birds and small mammals, as well as flowers for pollinating insects.

They can also help improve water quality by preventing soil erosion, intercepting surface water run-off and improving soil structure.

Grass strips are also important for connecting habitats.

Eligibility

Land that is in an arable rotation, or an existing grass strip within the same parcel and immediately adjacent to the land in an arable rotation, is eligible.

You should not include areas of land covering rocks, scree, water, dense bracken etc. We will check this using the same approach we use to check land for the Basic Payment Scheme.

[Assessing your land eligibility](#)

For the purposes of this option, arable land is land which has been in crop for at least three of the past five years.

You can manage any width of grass strip you choose, but it must be at least three metres wide along the entire length.

For grass strips located adjacent to a hedge or dyke, the grass strip must start at the base of the hedge or dyke.

Spatial targeting



[Map of target area – Grass Strips in Arable Fields \(PDF, Size: 1.1 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/87332-AECS-Review---2018-map---Grass-strips-in-arable-fields.pdf> This option is available within the target area shown on this map.

You can check if this option is available on your holding using the search targeting tool which can be found on any of the following AECS guidance pages:

[AECS Home](#)

[Eligibility](#)

[How to Apply](#)

[Management Options and Capital Items](#)

[Capital Items](#)

Application requirements

You must identify on a map the location(s) of any grass strips to be managed.

Please complete the template below to describe all your grass strips in arable fields.



[Grass Strips in Arable Fields – summary template \(MS Word, Size: 131.8 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Grass-Strips-in-Arable-Fields-AECS-December-2015.docx>

Management requirements

This option must remain at the same location(s) for the duration of your contract.

- where you need to create a grass strip you must do so by 1 June in the first year of your contract
- you must cut and / or graze the area, unless you have prior approval not to
- if cutting, you must not cut before 15 August and you must remove cuttings (with the exception of topping to aid establishment during the first year)
- if grazing, you must not graze the grass strip between 1 April and 15 August
- do not carry out supplementary livestock feeding
- once the grass strip has been established, do not plough, cultivate or use the area for storage
- do not allow the area to become poached or vehicle tracked
- do not apply fertiliser, slurry or farmyard manure
- do not establish new drainage
- do not spray, except for the spot-treatment of injurious weeds (requires prior written notification) or treatment of invasive species (requires prior written approval)
- you must maintain a diary

Payment

You can claim £495.62 per hectare per year.

The maximum eligible width of a grass strip is 20 metres, but see below.

The maximum width you can claim next to a hedge is 18 metres. This is because only activity which is in excess of legal requirement (e.g. GAEC / GBRs) is eligible for payment. Under GAEC 7 you must not cultivate or apply fertilisers or pesticides within two metres of the centre line of a hedge. So for grass strips next to hedges, the eligible area under this option will start from the edge of this two metre strip. This will mean that if you manage a 20 metre wide margin next to a hedge, only 18 metres of the margin (20 metres minus 2 metres) would be eligible for payment.

There is a separate item to support creation of grass strips:

- [Creation of Grass Strips and Water Margins in Arable Fields](#)

Inspections

The inspectors will check:

- all grass strips are in place by the 1 June
- the grass strips has not been grazed or cut between 1 April and 15 August except for topping to aid establishment in the first year
- if grazing, you have not grazed the grass strip between 1 April and 15 August
- that no ploughing, cultivation or storage has occurred
- that the area has not become poached or vehicle tracked
- there has been no application of fertiliser, slurry or farmyard manure
- you have not sprayed, unless with prior written notification or approval as appropriate
- you have maintained a diary

Additional guidance

[Supporting guidance is available for this option.](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change
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Spatial targeting	Target map updated
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