

Supporting guidance for Habitat Mosaic Management

This is an old version of the page

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

Introduction



Areas of high conservation value often consist of a variety of different wildlife habitats. This option is designed to fund the management of these habitat mosaics.

If the area you intend to manage is predominantly one habitat type, such as species-rich grassland or wetland, then it should be managed under the specific option for that particular habitat.

If the site is a mosaic of traditional semi-natural habitats then this option is likely to be more suitable.

The range of habitats that can be included in a habitat mosaic includes:

- species-rich grassland that has not been agriculturally improved, or is reverting from agricultural improvement; this document – [Guide to types of species-rich grassland](#) – describes the grassland habitats
- wetland and wet grassland
- scrub and tall-herb communities
- coastal habitats
- heath (please note that if the site contains more than 25 per cent heath, the ground should be entered under the Moorland Management option)
- pockets of woodland, wood pasture and parkland trees

Many species of wildlife require a mosaic of different habitats. They may feed in one habitat but rely on another for shelter. Examples include black grouse, great crested newt, adder, lapwing and song thrush.

You will need to design a management regime that suits the requirements of your habitat mosaic, prioritising the most important habitat or species if necessary. Knowledge of the past management regime will help to inform what management has worked for the site. You should draw up a management plan with advice from a suitably qualified advisor.

This [option](#) will support the maintenance of habitat mosaics lying below the hill dyke. If you wish to include land above the hill dyke in your application you should explain why you consider this land to be habitat mosaic rather than moorland. You should provide either a Phase 1 habitat map of the area, including species lists and target notes and showing the extent of the different habitats, or a map of the National Vegetation Classification communities. Land previously managed as moorland should continue to be managed as moorland.

Grazing

Grazing is essential to maintain many of the different habitats found within a habitat mosaic. Grazing harvests the year's growth and keeps the sward open and free of excess litter so that new seedlings can become established. At the same time, the trampling, dunging and defoliation of stock all contribute to creating a variety of features, including tussocks, flower heads, short swards and small patches of bare earth.

Different habitats have varied requirements and sensitivities. The grazing plan should be based on a site survey which assesses the extent of the different habitats and their grazing requirements.

Certain habitats are more sensitive at certain times of the year. For example:

- species-rich grassland habitats are vulnerable to heavy selective grazing in the summer, particularly by sheep
- woodland / scrub regeneration and heather are vulnerable to grazing damage in the winter when more palatable vegetation is in short supply
- wetland and bog habitats are vulnerable to excessive poaching, particularly in the winter months
- the nests of wading birds are vulnerable to trampling by livestock between early April and early June

This guide – [Conservation grazing of semi-natural habitats](#) – will help you to determine the aims of grazing and the ideal stocking rates for the site. You can also consider the current stocking rate, how well that meets the needs of the range of habitats present, and how and what adjustments may be needed.

You must submit a grazing plan, following the template below, with your application. The plan needs to detail what grazing will be carried out, as well as describing the site and the objectives for management. The plan should specify the number and type of stock for the different seasons.



[Grazing Management Plan \(MS Word, Size: 135.6 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Grazing-Management-Plan-AECS-December-2015.docx> [Plan template]

It can be difficult to set appropriate stocking levels where there are different habitat requirements and weather can have a significant impact from year to year. As a result, you may need to modify your grazing plan during the contract if it is not fulfilling the site requirements. You can do this by seeking approval (in writing) from the case officer to change the plan.

Other management

Habitat mosaics will often support a wide range of valuable features such as dead wood, bare earth, habitat piles, varied grass swards, leaf litter, open bracken and scrub.

Management work can be carried out to enhance the features found on habitat mosaics. Examples of funded capital items that may benefit habitat mosaics include:

- [Pond Creation for Wildlife](#)
- [Creation of Wader Scrapes](#)
- [Cutting of Rush Pasture](#)
- [Wetland Creation – Field Drain Breaking](#)
- [Wetland Creation – Pipe Sluices](#)
- [Restoration of Species-rich Grassland](#)

Scrub



Areas of scrub significantly add to the diversity of habitat mosaics sites and can be of particular benefit to insect species, amphibians and reptiles.

However, the extensive spread of scrub on grasslands and heath of conservation interest is generally undesirable. Appropriate grazing management should help prevent scrub colonisation. Additional manual scrub control may be necessary.

Scrub control is funded as separate capital items:

- [Control of Scrub or Woody Vegetation – Primary Treatment – Light Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub or Woody Vegetation – Primary Treatment – Intermediate and Heavy Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub – Follow-up Treatment](#)
- [Control of Scrub or Woody Vegetation – Removal from Site of Cut Vegetation](#)

Weed control

Particular weed species, such as dockens and creeping thistle, can be a problem in grassland habitats. These should be controlled where they are having an adverse effect on the conservation value of the habitat.

Pernicious weeds can be chemically spot-treated but this should be agreed (in writing) with your case officer in advance.

Bracken

The spread of bracken gradually smothers ground vegetation, resulting in the loss of areas of species-rich grassland, heath and other habitats. Where possible, bracken control should be undertaken whilst a reasonable range of wildflowers and grasses remain beneath the bracken.

If the ground vegetation has been completely replaced with dense bracken litter, it may be necessary to take advice about how to encourage the ground vegetation to regenerate. As a last resort it may be necessary to purchase a suitable seed mix to re-seed the area, once the bracken litter has been dispersed by livestock trampling.

Open bracken can be a valuable part of the habitat mosaic and can provide good habitat for ground-nesting birds and reptiles such as adder. Bracken on south-facing slopes is an important element of pearl bordered fritillary butterfly habitat and care should be taken when controlling bracken where this species is present.

Bracken control can be undertaken as part of your plan and separate funding is available for this.

- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Manual](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Mechanised or Chemical](#)
- [Follow-up Treatment of Bracken – Mechanised or Chemical](#)

Supplementary feeding

Supplementary feeding is not normally allowed since the semi-natural vegetation is generally destroyed at feeding sites and the nutrients in the feed have a fertilising effect when they are passed on to the site in dung. If supplementary feeding in winter is permitted on your site, it should be carried out in areas where

there will be no damage to the conservation interest of the vegetation. Take care to avoid excessive poaching around the feeding areas.

Further information

- [Grassland management guide \(SNH\)](#)
- [Grasslands booklet \(SNH\)](#)
- [Guide to conservation grazing \(SAC\)](#)
- [Land management for butterflies \(SAC\)](#)
- [Grassland Gems: Managing Lawns and Pastures for Fungi \(Plantlife\)](#)
- [Management of grasslands for insects \(Buglife\)](#)
- [Reptile Management Handbook \(Amphibian and Reptile Conservation\)](#)
- [Amphibian Management Handbook \(Amphibian and Reptile Conservation\)](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change	Previous text	New text
Introduction	Changes to the guidance.	If the site is a mixture of high wildlife value habitats then this option is likely to be more suitable.	If the site is a mosaic of traditional semi-natural habitats then this option is likely to be more suitable.
		<p>The range of habitats that can be included in a habitat mosaic include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • species-rich grassland, unimproved grassland and semi-improved grassland • wetland and wet grassland • scrub and tall-herb communities • coastal habitats • heath pockets of woodland, wood pasture and parkland trees 	<p>The range of habitats that can be included in a habitat mosaic includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • species-rich grassland that has not been agriculturally improved, or is reverting from agricultural improvement; this document – Guide to types of species-rich grassland – describes the grassland habitats • wetland and wet grassland • scrub and tall-herb communities • coastal habitats • heath (please note that if the site contains more than 25 per cent heath, the ground should be entered under the Moorland Management option) • pockets of woodland, wood pasture and parkland trees
		<p>Many species of wildlife require a mosaic of different habitats. Examples include black grouse, great crested newt, adder, lapwing and song thrush.</p> <p>Habitat mosaics sometimes have complex management requirements designed to achieve a range of objectives. Care should be taken to design a management regime that is appropriate to the site. In some cases it may be necessary to prioritise the most important habitats or species.</p> <p>Finding out about the past management history of a site will help inform what management has worked for that site. It is generally recommended that management for these sites is drawn up in conjunction with a suitably qualified adviser.</p>	<p>Many species of wildlife require a mosaic of different habitats. They may feed in one habitat but rely on another for shelter. Examples include black grouse, great crested newt, adder, lapwing and song thrush.</p> <p>You will need to design a management regime that suits the requirements of your habitat mosaic, prioritising the most important habitat or species if necessary. Knowledge of the past management regime will help to inform what management has worked for the site. You should draw up a management plan with advice from a suitably qualified advisor.</p> <p>This option will support the maintenance of habitat mosaics lying below the hill dyke. If you wish to include land above the hill dyke in your application</p>

			<p>you should explain why you consider this land to be habitat mosaic rather than moorland. You should provide either a Phase 1 habitat map of the area, including species lists and target notes and showing the extent of the different habitats, or a map of the National Vegetation Classification communities. Land previously managed as moorland should continue to be managed as moorland.</p>
Grazing	Changes to the guidance.	Appropriate grazing is essential to maintain many of the different habitats found within a habitat mosaic.	Grazing is essential to maintain many of the different habitats found within a habitat mosaic. Grazing harvests the year's growth and keeps the sward open and free of excess litter so that new seedlings can become established. At the same time, the trampling, dunging and defoliation of stock all contribute to creating a variety of features, including tussocks, flower heads, short swards and small patches of bare earth.
		The appropriate stocking rate for a site is dependent on the range of habitats and aims of management. This guide on conservation grazing will help determine ideal stocking rates for the site.	This guide – Conservation grazing of semi-natural habitats – will help you to determine the aims of grazing and the ideal stocking rates for the site. You can also consider the current stocking rate, how well that meets the needs of the range of habitats present, and how and what adjustments may be needed.
		A grazing plan needs to detail what grazing will be carried out and as well as describing the site and the objectives for management. The plan should specify the number and type of stock for the different seasons.	<p>You must submit a grazing plan, following the template below, with your application. The plan needs to detail what grazing will be carried out, as well as describing the site and the objectives for management. The plan should specify the number and type of stock for the different seasons.</p> <p>Grazing Management Plan (updated Word template)</p>
Supplementary feeding	Changes to the guidance.	Requirements for supplementary feeding should be described in the grazing plan where this is required. Feeding should be carried out in areas where there will be no damage to the conservation interest of the site. Care should be taken to avoid excessive poaching in areas of habitat around the supplementary feeding areas.	Supplementary feeding is not normally allowed since the semi-natural vegetation is generally destroyed at feeding sites and the nutrients in the feed have a fertilising effect when they are passed on to the site in dung. If supplementary feeding in winter is permitted on your site, it should be carried out in areas where there will be no damage to the conservation interest of the vegetation. Take care to avoid excessive poaching around the feeding areas.

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