

Species-rich Grassland Management

This is an old version of the page

Date published: 14 November, 2025

Date superseded: 15 December, 2025

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

Please note the creation element of this option is currently suspended for applications.

Aim

The aim of this option is to benefit a range of species-rich grassland habitats by maintaining appropriate grazing or cutting regimes.

Careful grazing management, which makes sure that the sward is longest in the summer and shorter in the spring and autumn, will allow flowering species to set seed and germinate.

Species-rich grasslands support a wide range of flowering plants, along with pollinating bees, butterflies, moths and other invertebrates.

Eligibility

Land that has either existing species-rich grassland or is where you propose to create or restore species-rich grassland 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.

Note:

Hill and upland rough grazing land can only be considered eligible for the management and not the creation or restoration elements of this option.

The eligibility for management is subject to you having an endorsement from NatureScot before you apply – see 'Application Requirements' below.

[Assessing your land eligibility](#)

Spatial targeting

This option is available throughout Scotland.

Application requirements

You must identify on a map the locations of the species-rich grassland to be managed. Where the land proposed for management is hill and upland rough grazing you must have an [endorsement](#) from NatureScot **before you apply**. Please complete and send the [Endorsement Request Form \(MS Word, Size: 47.9 kB\)](#) to NatureScot well in advance of the closing date and using the template provided.

Along with the form you must provide evidence that target habitats are present by submitting either:

- a Phase 1 habitat survey that demonstrates the presence of the target habitats, or
- an existing National Vegetation Classification survey demonstrating the site contains the target species

You must complete a grazing plan, even if you are managing solely by cutting.

We strongly advise that you use the template below. If you choose to create your own plan, you **must** provide all information requested in the template. Failure to do so may result in your plan being deemed not fit for purpose and the option or item removed from your application.



[Grazing Management Plan template \(MS Word, Size: 258.7 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/AECS-2022---Grazing-Management-Plan---Final_1.docx

Management requirements

You must manage the same location and extent each year for the duration of your contract.

- where no species-rich grassland exists, or you wish to restore a species-rich grassland, you must either begin establishment or begin restoration of a species-rich sward by 1 June in the first year of your contract
- you must graze and / or cut the area subject to payment

If grazing:

- you must adhere to an approved grazing regime defining the livestock units and dates

If cutting:

- you must cut after 15 July
- you must manage any aftermath to avoid the build-up of matted dead plant material
- you must remove cuttings

For both cutting or grazing:

- do not plough the area, except to aid establishment when creating species rich grassland on arable land
- do not cultivate the area, except to aid establishment when creating or restoring a species-rich grassland
- do not apply fertiliser, slurry or farmyard manure
- do not apply lime, unless you have prior approval
- do not allow the land to become poached or vehicle tracked
- do not carry out supplementary livestock feeding unless with prior written approval
- 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:

- £109.56 per hectare per year for management
- £284.80 per hectare per year for creation and management (this is currently suspended for applications)

There are separate capital items to support the restoration or creation of species rich grassland:

- [Creation of Species-rich Grassland](#) (this is currently suspended for applications).
- [Restoration of Species-rich Grassland](#)

Inspections

The inspectors will check:

- where no species-rich grassland exists, or you wish to restore a species rich grassland, you have either begun establishment or begun restoration of a species rich sward by 1 June in the first year of your contract
- you have grazed and / or cut the area subject to payment

If grazing:

- you have adhered to an approved grazing regime defining the livestock units and dates

If cutting:

- you have cut after 15 July
- you have managed any aftermath to avoid the build-up of matted dead plant material
- you must remove cuttings

For both cutting or grazing:

- you have not ploughed the area, except to aid establishment when creating species rich grassland on arable land
- you have not cultivated the area, except to aid establishment when creating or restoring a species-rich grassland
- you have not applied fertiliser, slurry or farmyard manure
- you have not applied lime, unless you have prior approval
- you have not allowed the land to become poached or vehicle tracked
- you have not carried out supplementary livestock feeding unless with prior written approval
- 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 |
|--|---|
| Application requirements | Added the text you must complete a grazing plan, even if you are managing solely by cutting. Moved the grazing plan template to application requirements section from the Management requirements section. |

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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