Water Margins in Grassland Fields

This is an old version of the page

Date published: 9 January, 2017

Date superseded: 31 January, 2017

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 and the physical condition of watercourses.

Water margins immediately adjacent to still or running water, including ditches which may be dry for part of the year, can help improve water quality by preventing soil erosion, intercepting surface water run-off and improving soil structure.

Water margins can provide cover and food for birds and small mammals, as well as flowers for pollinating insects. They are also important for connecting habitats.

Eligibility

Any grassland adjacent to still or flowing water (e.g. rivers, burns, ditches or lochs) with an existing water margin, or where you propose to create a new water margin, is eligible.

You can manage **any** width of margin, but the following **minimums** apply (along the entire length of the margin):

Location of water margin	Minimum width of water margin*
Adjacent to a watercourse with a bed width (less then or equal to 1.2 metres)	3 metres
Adjacent to a watercourse with a bed width (greater than 1.2 metres)	6 metres
Adjacent to still water	12 metres

* The minimum width applies from the top of the bank.

Spatial targeting

Map of target area – Water Margins in Grassland Fields (PDF, Size: 1.1 MB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/72748-SRDP-Update-Dec2016---Water-margins-in-grassland-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 here.

Application requirements

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

Complete the template below to describe all your water margins.

If you do not intend to graze or cut your margin you must include approval from Scottish Natural Heritage or RPID with your application.

Water Margins – summary table (MS Word, Size: 17.8 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/
aecs___review_2016___updated_watermargin_management_summary_table_to_use_2017___december_1.docx

Management requirements

This option **must** be maintained at the same location(s) and extent for the duration of your contract.

For water margins of at least three metres and less than six metres

- you must exclude all livestock
- if cutting, you must not cut before 15 August and you must remove cuttings

For water margins of at least six metres, or wider

- you must cut and / or graze the area subject to payment, unless you have prior approval not to
- if cutting, you must not cut before 15 August and you must remove cuttings
- if grazing, you must not graze the water margin or associated banking between 1 May and 15 August, or between 1 May and 15 September if the land is within a bathing water catchment
- do not carry out supplementary livestock feeding

For all water margins

- do not allow the land to become poached or vehicle tracked
- do not plough, cultivate or use the area for regular vehicle access or storage
- do not spray, except for the spot-treatment of injurious weeds (requires prior written notification) or treatment of invasive species (requires prior written approval)
- do not apply fertiliser, farmyard manure or slurry
- you must maintain a diary

Payment

You can claim £123.42 per hectare per year.

The maximum eligible width of a margin is 18 metres.

The maximum width you can claim is 18 metres next to a watercourse. This is because only activity which is in excess of legal requirement (e.g. GAEC / GBRs) is eligible for payment. The eligible area for this option will start from the edge of the two metre strip required under GAEC. This will mean that if you manage a 20-metre wide margin from the top of the bank of a watercourse, only 18 metres of the margin (20 metres minus 2 metres) will be eligible for payment.

Inspections

The inspectors will check:

- the margin is in a grass field
- the margin is at least the appropriate minimum width for the bed width of the watercourse

For water margins of at least three metres and less than six metres

- that all livestock has been excluded
- if cutting, it must not have been cut before 1 August and cuttings have been removed (with the exception of topping to aid establishment during the first year)

For water margins of six metres or wider

- you must cut and / or graze the area, unless you have prior approval not to
- if grazing, you must not graze the margin or associated banking between 1 May and 15 August, or between 1 May and 15 September if the land is within a bathing water catchment
- 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). You are only required to cut the margin from the top of the bank
- do not carry out supplementary livestock feeding

For all water margins

- that there has been no ploughing, cultivation, storage,
- that the area has not become poached or vehicle tracked
- that 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

Note

If you choose to apply for this option over the same area of land that you are allocating as an Ecological Focus Area to meet your Pillar 1 greening requirements, there may be an issue of double funding.

Additional guidance

Supporting guidance is available for this option.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Application requirements	Additional text added regarding permission to not graze or cut your margin
	Updated water margins summary table added
Spatial targeting	Addition of targeting map

Previous versions

Previous versions of this page

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