

Retention of landscape features (GAEC 7)

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

Retention of landscape features

The aim of these rules is to protect landscape features.

You must not:

1. remove or destroy* drystone or flagstone dykes, turf and stone-faced banks, walls, hedges*, ponds*, watercourses or trees* (in line, in a group or isolated) without the prior written consent of the Scottish Ministers. Consent is not required to:

- widen field entrances to enable access for livestock or farm machinery
- fell trees that are dead, diseased, damaged or insecurely rooted and are likely to cause a danger by falling over

2. trim hedges or lop branches off trees during the bird nesting and rearing season starting on 1 March and ending on 31 August except for road safety reasons. Hedgelaying* can be carried out up to and including 31 March

3. cultivate land within two metres of the centre line of a hedge unless one of the following exemptions apply:

- cultivating to establish a green cover where one doesn't already exist. A green cover excludes crops that are grown for a commercial purpose, for example arable crops including crops that are under sown with grass
- cultivating to establish a new hedge

4. apply fertilisers (organic manure, chemical or nitrogen) or pesticides within two meters of the centre link of a hedge unless one of the following exemptions apply:

- applications of fertilisers or pesticides to establish a new hedge. This applies from the time the land is prepared for planting the new hedge to the end of the hedge's third growing season
- spot application of pesticides to control injurious weeds*, invasive species* and, after prior written consent of the Scottish Ministers and / or other statutory bodies, certain other weed species.

5. alter, damage or destroy a Scheduled Ancient Monument* without prior written consent of the Scottish Ministers (known as Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC))

Further information

'Topping' is permissible within the two meter buffer strip, however Greening rules may apply if this land is also part of your Ecological Focus Area (EFA). Further details on the greening requirements can be found [here](#).

Historic Environment Scotland is responsible for safeguarding Scotland's historic environment and promoting its understanding and enjoyment.

To find out whether there are any Scheduled Ancient Monuments on your land, contact Historic Environment Scotland or search their online register.

Tel: 0131 668 8600

[Historic Environment Scotland](#)

*Explanation of terms

'Remove or destroy' does not include trimming a hedge or lopping branches off a tree.

'Hedges' means any hedge which has a length of at least 20 metres or a length of less than 20 metres where it meets another hedge at each end. Any gap of less than 20 metres is treated as being part of the hedge.

'Pond' means a small body of still water formed naturally or by artificial means. This excludes lochs, lochans, lakes or reservoirs.

'Trees' means trees with a crown diameter greater than four metres.

'Hedgelaying' means a traditional method of cultivating hedges where tall saplings are partly cut through near the base and then bent over so that they lie horizontally to make a thick barrier.

'Injurious weeds' are species specified in the Weeds Act 1959: Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare* (Savi) Ten.), Creeping or Field thistle (*Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.), Curled dock (*Rumex crispus* L.), Broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius* L.) and Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea* L.).

'Invasive species' means giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*).

'Scheduled Ancient Monument' means a monument listed in the Schedule of monuments compiled and maintained under section 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979(b).

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