



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE, DOCUMENT

# Habitat Wales Scheme 2025: rules booklet

Explains the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 and eligibility requirements.

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# Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 – Individual farming businesses

## Supporting the rural economy and transition to Sustainable Farming Scheme

The Programme for Government sets out our commitments to continue supporting farmers to produce food in a sustainable way, whilst taking action to respond to the climate emergency and to help reverse the decline in biodiversity. Funding support for farmers, land managers and associated rural sectors is delivered through a flexible framework of support, with schemes – including the Habitat Wales Scheme (HWS) - delivering towards the following themes:

- farm scale land management
- on farm environmental improvements
- on farm efficiency and diversification
- landscape scale land management
- woodland and forestry
- food and farming supply chains

The framework is designed to both support action in response to the challenges and opportunities available and to inform the continuing development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme, which will reward farmers for the work they do now to lower their carbon footprint, improve the environment and produce food in a sustainable way.

Further information on the themes and schemes being developed are available at: **Wales Rural Network** (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/>) and **Rural Grants and Payments** (<https://www.gov.wales/rural-grants-payments>).

## Section A: introduction

This document provides guidance for farm businesses who intend to apply for the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025.

Farmers perform an extremely important role in helping to look after the countryside and wildlife. Managed sensitively, farmland can support a range of environmentally important flora and fauna.

Semi-natural areas (habitats) are largely defined by the plants and wildlife they support and often have not been subject to cultivation or reseeded in recent years. They may have had low levels of physical disturbance, such as chain harrowing, or low levels of nutrient input from organic manures or inorganic fertilisers. Such areas can include lowland and upland grasslands where they contain less than 25% improved agricultural grass species and/or white clover.

This document provides details of the rules that will apply to the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025.

Details on how to apply and claim for the Habitat Wales Scheme payments will be published within the Single Application Form (SAF) 2025 rules booklet next year.

Applying and claiming for the HWS 2025 will be via the SAF 2025. No expression of interest application is required.

You will have the option to claim just the parcels with the habitats you can manage in line with the scheme requirements. There is no requirement to manage all habitat on your holding.

**The Data Confirmation Form on RPW online provides details of the habitat areas and classifications for your farm. The form allows you to check the**

**information we hold and amend and confirm the details on your farm ahead of the opening of the scheme. The Data Confirmation Form will be available until 6 December 2024. Further information can be found at** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>) **Sustainable Farming Scheme: data confirmation guidance | GOV.WALES** ([https://www.gov.wales/sustainable-farming-scheme-data-confirmation-guidance?\\_gl=1%2A1r29pzf%2A\\_ga%2ANjl2Mjg5NjczLjE2OTM0Njg0MTM.%2A\\_ga\\_L1471V4N02%2AMTcyOTY4Nzc4NS4yMC4wLjE3Mjk2ODc3ODUuMC4wLjA.\)](https://www.gov.wales/sustainable-farming-scheme-data-confirmation-guidance?_gl=1%2A1r29pzf%2A_ga%2ANjl2Mjg5NjczLjE2OTM0Njg0MTM.%2A_ga_L1471V4N02%2AMTcyOTY4Nzc4NS4yMC4wLjE3Mjk2ODc3ODUuMC4wLjA.)))

The Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 provides a payment per hectare for eligible land and is available to all eligible agriculture producers across Wales. The scheme is not available to multi-grazier commons.

The aims of the scheme are to:

- maintain support for the management of habitat land in 2025 before the introduction of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) Universal Layer in 2026
- bring additional habitat land, not currently under paid management, into sustainable land management practices

By maintaining and bringing more land into management, the scheme will contribute to our Sustainable Land Management objectives:

1. To produce food and other goods in a sustainable manner
2. To mitigate and adapt to climate change
3. To maintain and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide, and
4. To conserve and enhance the countryside and cultural resources and promote public access to and engagement with them, and to sustain the Welsh language and promote and facilitate its use. In doing so, meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and to contribute to achieving the well-being goals

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in section 4 of the Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015.

## Section B: eligibility

**You are eligible to apply if:** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

- you are registered with the Welsh Government and have been issued with a Customer Reference Number (CRN).
  - Please refer to the Welsh Government website for the how to register guidance or call the RPW Customer Contact Centre on 0300 062 5004
- you are:
  - a farmer carrying out agricultural activity
  - have at least 3ha of eligible agricultural land in Wales, registered with RPW **or**
  - be able to demonstrate over 550 standard labour hours

Agricultural Activity is defined as:

- the production, rearing or growing of agricultural products including harvesting, milking, breeding animals and keeping animals for farming purposes
- maintaining an agricultural area in a state which makes it suitable for grazing or cultivation without preparatory action going beyond usual agricultural methods and machineries
- carrying out a minimum activity on agricultural areas naturally kept in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation. In Wales, agricultural areas naturally kept in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation are defined as areas of saltmarsh and sand dunes. The minimum activity required is that the area is grazed to a minimum average annual stocking density of 0.01 to 0.05 livestock units per hectare, or the control of non-native invasive weeds and scrub

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We will check you are carrying out agricultural activity via the SAF 2025. If we are unable to verify your eligibility, you must submit documentary evidence by 31 December 2025 for us to consider whether you are eligible or not. Further details and guidance will be available in the SAF 2025 Rules Booklet.

We will also verify you have at least 3ha of eligible agricultural land. If we are unable to verify the land, you must submit documentary evidence to verify the 550 standard labour hours eligibility criteria by 31 December 2025. Further details and guidance will be available in the SAF 2025 Rules Booklet.

You are not eligible if you are:

- an Equestrian (including grazing of horses)
- a Forester (including woodland only owners)
- a group of farmers (including Producer Organisations)

If you meet the eligibility criteria and wish to participate in the scheme, for the habitats which you claim on, you must follow the Universal Code for Habitats and the relevant Habitat Classification Management Actions set out in this booklet from 1 January to 31 December 2025.

## Eligible land

For the land to be considered eligible under this scheme, it must be:

- in Wales
- under your management control from 1 January to 31 December 2025
- registered within the Welsh Government Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) as of 31 December 2024.
- a minimum eligible parcel area of 0.1ha

The minimum claim area for the scheme is 0.1 ha of eligible habitat.

There is no upper limit to the area of land that can be included in the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025, although tapering of payments will be applied where larger areas have been claimed.

Land is under your management control if:

- you are the owner occupier
- you are a tenant who has “exclusive occupation” under either the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995 with a Farm Business Tenancy and / or a Full Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 tenancy
- you are a tenant with an unwritten tenancy with the same level of control as the above
- ‘Sole Grazier’ common land registered as a field parcel with RPW.

If you do not have management control for 12 months covering 1 January to 31 December 2025, you must make arrangements to extend your tenancy to cover this period if you want to bring rented field parcels into the scheme.

If it is found when processing your claim for payment, you do not have management control of the land for which you want to claim for the whole calendar year, this land will be removed from your claim and penalties may apply

You must follow the Universal Code for All Habitats and the relevant Habitat Classification Management Actions set out in this booklet from 1 January 2025 to be eligible to claim.

## Ineligible land

- land located outside Wales
- common land with multiple graziers
- field parcels subject to shared grazing



- field parcels being used by another farm business to claim scheme payments (e.g. BPS).
- non-agricultural land e.g., permanent caravan sites, golf courses
- field Parcels less than 0.1 ha
- Woodland over 0.1 ha (Not previously supported under HWS 2024)
- land where the applicant does not have management control from 1 January to 31 December 2025

## **Section C Habitat: classifications**

**The habitat classifications of land eligible for this scheme are:**

1. Coastal Saltmarsh
2. Coastal Sand dune and Shingle beach
3. Lowland and Coastal heath
4. Enclosed Wetland and Marshy grassland
5. Enclosed Semi-natural Dry Grassland (Grazed and Hay Meadow management options)
6. Upland Open Habitats
7. Dense Bracken
8. Woody Habitats
9. Existing woodlands (In HWS 2024)

## **Section D: designated sites**

Management required on land designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) Ramsar and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) on farms entering the

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Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 must adhere to **one** of the following three options where it is applicable to your situation on any individual designated site on the holding:

1. If you have **not** had any SSSI consent, a Glastir Advanced contract, a management agreement or management scheme agreed with NRW since 1 January 2020, you must adhere to the management requirements of the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025.
2. If you did **not** participate in the **Habitat Wales Scheme** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)2024, you must choose to:

**Either:**

Adhere to the management requirements of the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025

**Or:**

Adhere to any of the management actions within a NRW SSSI consent, management agreement or management scheme you have had since 1 January 2020.

3. If you had a Habitat Wales Scheme grant award in 2024 **and** previously had a consented Glastir Advanced contract, you must continue with the management consented in the Glastir Advanced contract.

If you need to alter your management from the documented contractual or consented actions (SSSI consent since 1 January 2020, NRW management agreement, management scheme, Glastir Advanced contract or Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 Universal Code for All Habitats and the relevant Habitat Classification Management Actions) you must give notice in writing to NRW to seek consent to do so.

## Section E: identified habitat land

The Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 habitat land and classifications identified for your farm will be presented to you on the Interactive map via RPW Online. The habitat map will be available via RPW Online from 19 December 2024.

The habitat land included on the Interactive map will be available for you to select to manage from 1 January and claim payment on the SAF 2025, this will include the following:

If you have submitted a Data Confirmation form by 6 December 2024, a status will be assigned to each parcel on the map, the statuses are:

**Confirmed** – the habitat shown on the map was reviewed as part of data confirmation and the mapping has been confirmed by RPW

**Submitted** – the habitat shown on the map was reviewed as part of data confirmation and reflects the mapping on completion of the form, any changes have not yet been confirmed by RPW

**Not reviewed** – The habitat shown on the map has **not** been reviewed as part of data confirmation

If you have not submitted a Data Confirmation form or not reviewed a parcel on the data confirmation form, we will present habitat on each parcel that:

- has been identified through existing habitat layers as identified by published maps on 'DataMapWales'
- was previously under a habitat option in a Glastir Entry and/or Advanced contract

This will include designated sites greater than 0.01ha and woodland habitats previously supported under HWS 2024, where applicable.

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Once data confirmation closes there will be no opportunity to amend the habitat details presented on the habitat map.

There will not be an option on the SAF 2025 to amend the habitat areas presented. The areas available for claim will be the area populated on the SAF and included on the habitat map from 1 January 2025.

## Section F: scheme requirements

You will be required to maintain the land as per the requirements against the habitat classification as detailed in Annex A from 1 January 2025.

The habitat area and classifications for your farm will be pre-populated on your SAF 2025 map.

**Please note:** You will have the option to claim just the parcels with the habitats you can manage in line with the scheme requirements. You can do this via the SAF 2025 by making a claim for the Habitat Wales Scheme against the relevant field parcel.

If you have a habitat area within a larger field parcel of improved land, you must be satisfied that all the habitat area can be managed in line with the relevant management requirements to claim it.

If your existing agricultural practices prevent you from managing the habitat area(s) according to scheme requirements, you should not claim on these parcels. Should you want to include and claim these field parcels, you must manage them according to the requirements.

## Regulatory requirements

Semi-natural areas (habitats) cannot be agriculturally improved, regardless of whether they are under paid management or statutory designation, without a screening decision under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Wales) (EIA) Regulations 2017.

Trees and woodlands are similarly safeguarded under the Forestry Act (1967) and the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

## Scheme breaches

You must meet the requirements of the Universal Code for all habitats and the relevant habitat classification management actions as detailed in Annex A on all land where you claim Habitat Wales Scheme. You must meet all requirements from 1 January 2025 – 31 December 2025.

We may identify breaches of requirements from administrative checks or on-the-spot inspections and you will be notified via your RPW Online account if breaches are found.

Scheme breaches are assessed against Verifiable Standards relating to the scheme requirements and a penalty matrix is used to determine the level of penalty to be applied.

Both the Verifiable Standards and the Penalty Matrix will be published on the Welsh Government website before 31 December 2024.

## Section G: payment rates

The payment rates for 2025 are:

### Payment rates

Habitat Classifications	Payment per Ha
Coastal Saltmarsh	£69
Coastal Sand dune and Shingle beach	
Lowland and Coastal heath	
Enclosed Wetland and Marshy grassland	
Enclosed Semi-natural Dry Grassland (Grazed and Hay Meadow management options)	
Upland Open Habitats	
Woody Habitats	
Dense Bracken	
Existing woodlands (In HWS 2024)	£62

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## The maximum claim value will be capped according to the following:

Area	Claim Value
0 – 200 ha of eligible habitat land	100% of the payment rate
200 -400 ha of eligible habitat land	50% of payment rate
400 ha + of eligible habitat land	10% of payment rate

In reaching any tapering threshold, the highest payment rate will be maintained first.

For example, an applicant with a whole farm holding area of 500 ha submits a claim with 300 ha of habitat land, comprised of 250 ha of Upland Open Habitats and 50 ha of Existing Woodlands (In HWS 2024).

Claim Value	
200 ha at £69/ha	£13,800
50ha at 50% of £69 / ha	£1,725
50ha at 50% of £62	£1,550
Total claim offer	£17,075

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## Section H: land in other schemes

### Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)

Land on which you claim BPS is eligible for the Habitat Wales Scheme.

**Please note:** The Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 does not include requirements to take land out of production, i.e. stock exclusion. As such, land previously stock excluded under an EU Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme for Wales 2014 – 2020 scheme (e.g. Glastir Advanced) and entered into the Habitat Wales Scheme will not be eligible for BPS in 2025 if it remains stock excluded. BPS eligibility requirements in relation to trees / ineligible features will still need to be met.

### Organic Conversion Scheme

Land currently in an Organic Conversion Scheme contract running until 2028 is eligible to apply for the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025.

### Organic Support Payment

Land eligible for the Organic Support Payment is eligible to apply for the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025.

### Woodland Creation schemes

Land afforested under any of the following schemes is **not** eligible for the Habitat Wales Scheme:



- Glastir Woodland Creation: including Glastir Woodland Creation Premium, Glastir Creation Maintenance and Glastir Creation Premium
- Woodland Creation Grant or Small Grants Woodland Creation: including Woodland Creation Maintenance and Woodland Creation Premium

Any afforested areas under these schemes at the time of the claim will be deducted from any available Habitat areas available to claim for.

## Growing for the Environment

Habitat land included in HWS 2025 will not be eligible for support through the Growing for the Environment scheme.

## Double funding

You must not claim for the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 on land if you are receiving funding for the same purpose from any other source. This would be considered double funding for the same land.

If it is established you are receiving funding from another source for the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025, this could result in financial penalties and the recovery of payment of your Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 claim.

## Cross Compliance

Cross Compliance is a set of compulsory requirements which applies to all your agricultural land. You are responsible for cross compliance for the entire scheme year.

You must keep land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC)

and meet a range of Statutory Management Requirements (SMR).

Details of Cross Compliance requirements are available on the Welsh Government website: [Cross compliance 2024 | GOV.WALES](https://www.gov.wales/cross-compliance-2024)  
(<https://www.gov.wales/cross-compliance-2024>)

## Section I: Universal Code for All Habitats

### Rules Applicable to all Habitat Land

These rules apply to all semi-natural areas regardless of whether you are managing habitat as part of the Habitat Wales Scheme 2025.

All habitat is defined as:

**Semi-natural grassland:** Any vegetation which has a composition of less than 25% sown agricultural species as per the [Environmental Impact Assessment \(Agriculture\) \(Wales\) \(EIA\) Regulations 2017](https://www.gov.walesnull) (<https://www.gov.walesnull>).

If land contains less than 25% cover of ryegrass and white clover or other agriculturally sown species, then it is subject to the EIA regulations. Land falling within this definition is classed by the regulations as semi-natural and an EIA Screening Application must be made prior to any improvement works commencing on the land.

Even if you do not claim on an area of habitat, you will still be required to undertake an EIA screening if the land is deemed semi-natural and you wish to improve the land.

You are reminded that if you are planning to undertake, or have undertaken

a project on semi-natural land or a large-scale restructuring on your holding, then it is necessary to complete an EIA. screening application

**Woodlands and trees:** All woodlands and trees are considered habitat, regardless of whether they are eligible for payments under the scheme.

If you intend to fell more than 5m<sup>3</sup> of timber per calendar quarter you must apply for a felling licence under the Forestry Act (1967).

If you intend to carry out a forestry project which exceeds the thresholds set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, you must seek consent under those regulations to carry out the project.

## **Rules Applicable to all habitats which you claim on**

**In order to benefit the habitats you wish to claim, you agree to:**

### **Maintain an activity diary**

An activity diary will need to be kept for each parcel of land included in the claim.

### **Maintain a grazing diary**

A grazing diary will need to be kept for habitat classifications 1, 2 and 6.

The grazing diary will need to include a record of all livestock that enter or are removed from the habitat during the year. This grazing diary needs to be available at inspection.

## **Protect and retain all veteran trees and mature in-field and hedgerow trees**

Retain and maintain all existing mature trees, in-field and veteran trees across all areas of the farm unless they are a dangerous tree\*, except where they present a danger to the public and prior approval for their removal has been received from the Welsh Government or Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

### **You must:**

- retain all in-field and veteran trees
- prevent damage to trees from livestock or machinery
- retain standing dead trees where safe to do so (where not a demonstrable hazard).
- ensure pruning or lopping is undertaken appropriately with a clean cut
- fallen dead timber should be either retained in situ or removed to a nearby shady location.
- follow any specific requirements for trees related to a specific habitat type

\*A dangerous tree is one where there is a real and immediate danger, rather than a perceived danger. If you are challenged, you will need to provide evidence that the trees were dangerous, for example, through an accredited arboriculturist's report or photographic evidence.

### **You must not:**

- plough/roll under the crown/canopy to protect the root system
- fertilise under the crown/canopy
- lime under the crown/canopy
- spray or allow drift of Plant Protection Products under the crown/canopy.
- slant additional trees within 5m from the edge of the tree canopy

- supplementary feed beneath the canopy of/or near any veteran trees
- store machinery or materials beneath in-field veteran trees

**In order to benefit the habitats you wish to claim, you agree not to:**

### **Damage habitat land**

Damage is defined as causing a loss of the vegetation type typical of that habitat. Examples of actions which could cause damage are over or under grazing, poaching by livestock or rutting by farm machinery or other vehicles or illegal felling of trees.

See *Recommended stocking densities* table.

**Recommended stocking densities:** This stocking rate table is only for guidance and should be read in conjunction with the management aims, requirements and outcomes:

<b>Habitat classification</b> ( <a href="https://www.gov.walesnull">https://www.gov.walesnull</a> )	<b>Specific habitats that can or will be present within the habitat classification</b>	<b>Recommended maximum stocking rates</b>
Coastal saltmarsh	Coastal saltmarsh	0.4 LU per ha between 1 March and 15 July Up to 1.0 LSU per ha for the rest of the year
Coastal Sand Dune and Shingle Beach	Sand dune	0.1-0.3 LU/ha/yr

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Habitat classification ( <a href="https://www.gov.wales">https://www.gov.wales</a> )	Specific habitats that can or will be present within the habitat classification	Recommended maximum stocking rates
	Shingle beach	<b>NO GRAZING</b>
Lowland and Coastal Heath	Lowland and Coastal Heath	0.2 - 0.5 LU 1 April - 30 June 0.1 - 0.25 LU 1 July - 31 October 0.0 - 0.1 LU 1 November - 31 March
Enclosed Wetland (Bog, Fen, Flush/Mire) and Marshy Grassland	<b>Enclosed Wetlands:</b> Lowland Bogs Fens Flush/mire	More than 50% Purple Moor Grass ( <i>Molinia</i> ) graze from 1 April – 31 October between 0.30 LU/ha - 0.20 LU/ha Less than 50% Purple Moor Grass ( <i>Molinia</i> ) graze from 1 April – 31 October between 0.01 LU/ha - 0.05 LU/ha
	Marshy Grassland	0.2-0.4 LU/ha/yr
Enclosed Semi-Natural Dry Grassland (Acid, Neutral, Calcareous, Calaminarian)	Acid grassland	0.2-0.4 LU/ha/yr
	Calcareous grassland	0.25-0.4 LU/ha/yr
	Neutral grassland	0.5-0.7 LU/ha/yr
	Calaminarian grassland	0.25-0.4 LU/ha/yr
Upland Open Habitats	Upland acid grassland	0.3 - 0.5 LU/ha/yr

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<b>Habitat classification</b> ( <a href="https://www.gov.walesnull">https://www.gov.walesnull</a> )	<b>Specific habitats that can or will be present within the habitat classification</b>	<b>Recommended maximum stocking rates</b>
	Montane heath	0.02 - 0.03 LU/ha
	Wet heath	0.05 - 0.10 LU/ha/yr
	Dry heath	0.10 - 0.15 LU/ha/yr
	Flush (wet hollows)	<0.05 LU/ha/yr
	Upland peatland (can comprise one or more of blanket bog, wet heath and flush)	<0.05 LU/ha/yr <0.02 LU/ha where restoration has taken place
	Calcareous grassland	0.25-0.4 LU/ha/yr
	Scrub (including scattered and less dense bracken)	See applicable underlying habitat recommended maximum
	Woodland	Upland <0.02 LU/ha Lowland <0.05 LU/ha
Dense Bracken	Dense bracken	0.1 LU/yr
Woody Habitats	Traditional orchards	0.75 LU/ha/yr

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Habitat classification ( <a href="https://www.gov.walesnull">https://www.gov.walesnull</a> )	Specific habitats that can or will be present within the habitat classification	Recommended maximum stocking rates
	Scrub (including scattered and less dense bracken)	See applicable underlying habitat recommended maximum
	Wood pasture	See applicable underlying habitat recommended maximum
Existing Woodland (HWS 2024)	Existing Woodland (HWS 2024)	Upland <0.02 LU/ha Lowland <0.05 LU/ha

## Agriculturally improve habitat land

Agricultural improvement involves management that leads to an increase in agricultural species such as rye grass and white clover. Habitat land must not be agriculturally improved during the life of the claim, irrespective of whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening consent has been received.

## Plough, cultivate or re-seed habitat land

Roll or chain harrow on habitat land between 15 March and 15 July.

Details of rolling and chain harrowing on habitat land must be recorded in the Activity Diary.

Install new drainage or modify existing drainage on habitat land or within 100m of a wetland habitat where the ditch or drain would intercept water running



towards the wetland. Wetlands are habitats that have water at or close to the surface most of the year.

Mole drainage is also not permitted.

Clear ditches between 1 March and 31 August on habitat land. Routine maintenance may be carried out on existing drainage as follows:

- vegetation and silt may be cleared, leaving vegetation along one side of the ditch
- deepening, widening of ditches or laying drainage pipes and infilling ditches is not permitted.
- field drains may be maintained to the original standard as long as this does not damage the habitat.
- details of ditch clearance on habitat land must be recorded in the Activity Diary

Carry out any earth moving activities on habitat land, including cutting peat and infilling natural hollows.

Extract rock, scree, sand, shingle, gravel, clay or peat from habitat land or rivers.

Apply slurry, inorganic fertilisers, organic fertilisers, farmyard manure, basic slag, calcified seaweed, sewage sludge, waste-paper sludge or other off and on-farm wastes (including sheep-dip) on habitat land. Farmyard manure may be spread only where permitted by a specific Habitat Wales Scheme Habitat Classification Management Action.

**Apply lime on habitat land**, except where permitted by a specific Habitat Wales Scheme Habitat Management Classification Action.

Store manure, silage or other farm wastes on habitat land.

Cause or allow:

1. any new invasive non-native species (INNS) to establish.
2. and any new or existing INNS to spread into or within or from the area (this includes preventing INNS from spreading through inaction), to ensure that the extent of INNS within the habitat does not increase while the area is in the scheme.

### **Use herbicides or insecticides except to:**

1. spot treat and control injurious weeds or invasive non-native species such as spear thistle, creeping thistle, curled dock, broad-leaved dock, ragwort, Japanese knotweed, rhododendron, Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed
2. to control invasive vegetation on historic features and traditional buildings and farm structures.

Before carrying out the use of herbicides or insecticides, you must ensure this will not harm or destroy any desirable native species of flora or fauna by checking for records or evidence of them first.

Construct tracks, roads, yards, hardstanding or any new structures on habitat land, except where permitted by a specific Habitat Wales Scheme action.

Burn vegetation, grassland or any cut material on habitat land, except as part of an agreed grass and/or heather burning plan or where this will damage the habitat or where it would be too dangerous to do so, e.g. steep or wet ground.

Supplementary feed on habitat land, except for existing hardstanding feeding areas and the provision of licks or blocks to enable coarse forage to be utilised, or where required specifically for the welfare of livestock. Adverse weather conditions and meeting the nutritional demands of heavily pregnant animals are likely to trigger a need for the provision of supplementary feed. Supplementary feeding must be carried out in such a way that avoids causing damage to the habitat vegetation, soil and watercourses. Damage includes overgrazing,

nutrient enrichment, excessive trampling of vegetation, soil poaching by grazing animals, rutting by vehicles used to transport feed, soil erosion and water pollution.

Store materials, vehicles, trailers or machinery on habitat land. Exemptions to the above conditions may apply where they are required to deliver towards specific environmental benefits required within the Habitat Wales Scheme.

## Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a whole farm approach to pest management that maximises productivity whilst minimising negative impacts on the environment. IPM is a coordinated and planned strategy for the prevention, detection and control of pests, undesirable vegetation species and diseases.

You must record any pest management in the activity diary and state why IPM could not be followed if synthetic pesticides are used. Any pesticide use should be confined to minimal spot spraying, as described under herbicide and insecticide use.

There are a number of useful IPM plan templates available, which can be used for HWS 2025 such as: **IPM – NFUonline** (<https://www.nfuonline.com/ipm/>) and **Home | IPM Decisions** (<https://www.ipmdecisions.net/>).

## Undesirable vegetation control

Undesirable vegetation includes injurious weeds under the Weeds Act 1959, invasive native species, such as bracken, invasive non-native species (INNS), such as *Rhododendron ponticum*, and other undesirable vegetation, such as soft rush and nettles. Please refer to the table below for the acceptable control management, the maximum extent, correct timings and which broad habitat

classifications where control may be applied.

<b>Vegetation type</b> ( <a href="https://www.gov.walesnull">https://www.gov.walesnull</a> )	<b>Acceptable control management</b>	<b>Maximum extent to manage</b>	<b>When to manage</b>	<b>Permissible in HWS habitat classifications</b>
Injurious weeds (Weeds Act (1959))	Topping (not mowing) Spot treatment  Weed wiping	N/A	1 <sup>st</sup> May to 31 <sup>st</sup> August	1 to 10
Invasive native species (e.g. bracken)	Cutting Topping Mowing  Bruising Cattle/pony grazing	N/A	May to August	1 to 10
Invasive non-native species (INNS) (e.g. <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> )	Cutting Topping Mowing  Bruising Cattle/pony grazing  Spot treatment  Weed wiping	N/A	All year round	1 to 10

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<b>Vegetation type</b> ( <a href="https://www.gov.walesnull">https://www.gov.walesnull</a> )		<b>Acceptable control management</b>	<b>Maximum extent to manage</b>	<b>When to manage</b>	<b>Permissible in HWS habitat classifications</b>
Other undesirable vegetation	Soft rush	Topping (not mowing) Cutting (not mowing)	30%	1 January – 14 March and 16 July – 31 December	1, 3, 4, 5a and 6
	Other e.g. nettles	Topping (not mowing) Cutting (not mowing)	30%	May to August	1, 3, 4, 5a and 6

## Section J: habitat classifications and management actions

1. **Coastal Saltmarsh** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)
2. Coastal Sand Dune and Shingle Beach
  - a. Sand dunes
  - b. Sand Dunes and Shingle Beach
3. Lowland and Coastal Heath
4. Enclosed Wetland and Marshy Grassland
  - a. Enclosed Wetland - Lowland Bogs, Fens and Flush/Mire
  - b. Marshy Grassland
5. Enclosed Semi-natural Dry Grassland (Grazed and Hay Meadow management options)
  - a. Managed as Grazed Pasture

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- b. Managed as Hay Meadow
- 6. Upland Open Habitats
- 7. Dense Bracken
- 8. Woody Habitats
  - a. Traditional Orchards
  - b. Scrub
  - c. Wood Pasture
- 9. Existing Woodlands (In HWS 2024)

Each Habitat Classification and its Management Actions will be made up of and illustrate the following:

- **description** – A description of the habitat classification, such as where it may be found and the native species it usually contains
- **aims** – short descriptive long-term ‘vision’ for the habitat
- **requirements** – specific activities which **you agree to do or not do** on a particular habitat type and which you can be inspected against. A further set of **obligatory general habitat rules** to prevent loss and damage of **all** existing semi-natural habitats is contained in a ‘**Universal Code for Habitats**’ for ease of reference.
- **measurable outcomes** – are longer-term desired outcomes of what sympathetic management should achieve. An explanation of the desired measurable outcome is included.
- **management recommendations** – a set of management **recommendations provided to guide** the farmer to achieve the aims and required outcomes e.g. standard sustainable grazing levels, livestock type and timings for the habitat, vegetation management etc.
- **potential derogations** – likely scenarios beyond the farmers control where the measurable outcome requirement may be relaxed e.g. extended periods of extreme weather – drought, frozen ground etc. If a derogation for a specific scenario to your business is not listed, you can still request one for your situation. **Any** derogation request must be made through your RPW Online account and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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# 1. Coastal saltmarsh

## Description

Saltmarsh is made up of salt tolerant vegetation which is within the tidal range. This vegetation includes pioneer saltmarsh plants such as Samphire and Common cord grass on the boundary with the sea/tidal river which will be covered by the sea almost daily. The mid marsh will have common saltmarsh-grass and should also support a range of salt tolerant plants such as sea aster, sea spurrey and sea plantain, this part of the marsh will only be inundated on the spring tides. The upper marsh can include plants Sea rush and Sea milkwort and also plants with lower salt tolerance which may also grow inland such as Red fescue, Creeping bent and Autumn hawkbit. At these upper limits of the tidal range the saltmarsh may only be inundated by the sea just a few times a year. Saltmarsh also provides important habitat for birds, fish and invertebrates.

## Aims

- to achieve a variety of saltmarsh vegetation types which will reflect the position of the vegetation within the tidal range
- coarse/tall grasses or stands of grasses with thick layer of 'thatch' (dead grass) do not dominate.

## Requirements

**In order to benefit this habitat you agree to:**

- avoid widespread overgrazing and undergrazing.

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## **In order to benefit this habitat you agree not to:**

- modify any creeks, pans, hollows or interfere with any natural and dynamic changes such as changes due to storms
- cut rushes between 15<sup>th</sup> March and 15<sup>th</sup> July or cut or top more than 30% of rush or other undesirable vegetation species in any one year (see Undesirable Vegetation Control in the Universal Code for All Habitats)
- plant any new trees
- allow the area to be poached (gateways, feeding and watering areas are acceptable provided that poached and bare areas are less than 5% cover)
- construct tracks, roads, yards, hardstanding or any new structures on habitat land, except simple bridges to allow creek crossing.

## **Management recommendations**

- see recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats
- maintain the saltmarsh by extensive grazing with livestock, including cattle grazing where possible, and exclude grazing when necessary to achieve the aims (above). See recommended stocking densities table
- In the mid and upper marsh encourage/create or maintain:
  - A diverse sward with a range of herbaceous species should be present and able to flower and produce seed.
  - A range of vegetation structures which can include both fine mosaics or larger patches of tall/short vegetation.

## **Measurable outcomes**

- to achieve shorter vegetation between 15 cm and 5 cm tall that covers at least 20% of the mid and upper marsh and stands of vegetation greater than



15 cm tall cover at least 30% of the marsh

## Potential derogations

Derogations for grazing levels could be considered if there are high levels of wild geese grazing on the marsh producing a very short turf over a wide area.

Ungrazed saltmarsh should not, generally, be grazed if it has been left ungrazed for over 20-30 years.

Ungrazed saltmarsh is acceptable where it forms part of a recognised management plan produced to bring about beneficial environmental outcomes.

Un-grazed saltmarsh is acceptable where access by livestock has become impractical, for example where access is not possible due to creeks.

## 2. Coastal sand dune and shingle beach (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

### Description

Sand dunes are natural coastal landforms and ecosystems located above the high tide mark. Sand dunes form where a beach is big enough to allow the sand to dry out between tides and onshore winds are strong enough to blow the sand inland. Dunes are naturally dynamic systems which are constantly changing in response to changes in rain, wind and sand supply. Since dunes can only form in locations where environmental conditions are suitable, they cover a relatively small total area in Wales. Dunes towards the back of the system, away from the shoreline, may contain heathers.

Shingle habitats can vary from bare and mobile in high energy coastal areas to

stable and vegetated where the shingle has become stable allowing plants to colonise over successive years. Shingle vegetation where it occurs, should remain unmodified and the shingle substrate is allowed to function in a dynamic way when conditions allow.

## **Aims**

All sand dune systems are different, however, there should be a range of dune types from the strandline at the seaward edge, changing in a mosaic of mobile dunes through to semi-fixed dunes with dune grasslands and where conditions allow, damp dune slacks. Sand dunes are predominantly managed through grazing, which maintains a varied sward height where a variety of native plant species, including flowering herbs, are frequent, agricultural species such as ryegrass are absent or at low cover and where native animals and fungi can thrive.

## **Requirements**

### **In order to benefit these habitats, you agree to:**

Maintain a sward with a range of heights, including both short (below 5 cm) and tall (above 15 cm) areas.

### **In order to benefit these habitats, you agree not to:**

- graze shingle beach
- plant any new trees or shrub species
- allow the area to be poached (gateways, feeding and watering areas are acceptable provided that poached and bare areas are less than 5% cover)

- cut or top rushes or other undesirable vegetation species (see Undesirable Vegetation Control in the Universal Code for All Habitats)
- permit scrub to spread
- control or attempt to control rabbits **within sand dunes and shingle beaches**
- remove sand or any other aggregate material from sand dunes or shingle
- carry out dune remobilisation work (including re-profiling)
- re-profile the shingle structure, including any ridges
- use or permit vehicles or craft for sporting or recreational activities
- create sea defences or coast protection works

## Measurable outcomes

- To achieve at least 10% bare ground/sand/pebbles.
- No increase in the area or distribution of tree/scrub.

## Management Recommendations

### a) sand dunes

- **See recommended stocking densities table** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>) in the Universal Code for All Habitats.
- Manage by grazing with cattle and or ponies (sheep should ideally only be used in winter) to maintain a varied sward height.
- In wet hollows (dune slacks) maintain a biodiverse sward with less than 70% cover of grasses.
- Mowing can be used when grazing is not an option for practical reasons, or used to encourage stock into a previously un-grazed area. Cut material should be removed off-site.
- Where ragwort is prevalent, spring grazing with sheep can be useful to

reduce the flowering and spread of ragwort, but it must be closely monitored.

## b) Sand dunes and shingle beach

- Allow natural and dynamic coastal changes, such as changes due to storms or windblow
- Contingency planning to access shingle areas by vehicles may be required under emergency circumstances.

## Potential derogations

To permit any of the 'do nots' for health and safety, and human and animal welfare reasons.

## 3. Lowland and coastal heath (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

### Description

Lowland heath is characterised by dwarf shrubs such as heather which ideally should cover >25% of the ground. It is generally a product of light grazing and, sometimes, controlled burning, on poor soils and may occur as dry heath on mineral soil (with heather and bell heather) or wet heath (with cross-leaved heath and *Sphagnum* mosses) on shallow peat.

Coastal heaths are normally found within 500m from the sea and as a result of salt spray they support coastal species such as spring squill amongst the heather. Lowland heathland provides habitat for a range of plants, birds, reptiles and invertebrates adapted to these poor soils, rough vegetation and varied structure. Coastal heath may merge into cliff-top maritime grassland or

elsewhere into meadow, bog, fen, native woodland or upland and these connections are particularly welcome.

## **Aims**

Lowland heath should have a range of micro-habitats including small patches of bare ground, rock outcrops, grass, scrub, bracken, flush etc. The heath will be managed to maintain dwarf shrub cover, with a varied age/height structure across the landscape.

## **Requirements**

### **In order to benefit these habitats, you agree to:**

- Remove livestock if conditions become too wet in order to prevent poaching and compaction.

### **In order to benefit these habitats, you agree not to:**

- plant any new trees
- permit scrub, brambles or trees to spread (see Undesirable Vegetation Control in the Universal Code for All Habitats)
- allow the area to be poached (gateways, feeding and watering areas may be acceptable provided that poached and bare areas are less than 5% cover)
- burn areas of flush, maritime or wet heath
- graze between 1st November and 31st March on wet peatlands. Where wet peatland forms part of a larger parcel and stock cannot be excluded, the overall stocking rate should be reduced to ensure that the wet peatland is not over grazed or poached. Where wet peatland is enclosed or forms the

majority of the parcel, stock should be excluded between 1 November and 31 March

## Measurable outcomes

- heather, bell heather, cross-leaved heath, or western gorse will collectively make up >25% of ground cover
- leaf litter will not form extensive patches and is less than 50% cover overall.
- where *Sphagnum* (bog moss) is present, there will be frequent patches covering at least 5% of the ground.
- Bare ground will make up no more than 5% of the ground area and is scattered around the site.

## Management recommendations

- see recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats
- scrub / tree growth to be <5% of ground cover. Tree growth on crags or rock outcrops would not be included within the 5%
- graze to create a varied structure of dwarf shrubs (heather, cross-leaved heath, etc). The dwarf-shrubs should vary from young to pioneer, to old and degenerate
- graze cattle, ponies instead of or in conjunction with sheep to maintain the balance of dwarf shrubs and reduce leaf litter
- mowing of firebreaks, to control planned burns of dry heath and to safeguard from accidental fires or arson, is an acceptable form of management
- cutting dry heath, providing it is part of an ongoing 10-year rotation, is acceptable management
- rolling, bruising or cutting bracken is acceptable management

## Potential derogations

To permit any of the 'do nots' for health and safety and human and animal welfare reasons.

## 4. Enclosed Wetland (Bog, Fen, Flush/Mire) and Marshy Grassland (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

### Description

Bog, fen, and mire communities comprise a range of wetland habitats, such as lowland raised bogs, blanket bogs, reedbeds and swamp communities, over deep peat (generally more than 40 cm). They also include flushes, which can occur on shallow peats (>5 and <40cm peat) or mineral soils.

Marshy grassland comprises a variety of native marshland plant species. Rushes and purple moor-grass are often the main dominant species, along with a variety of sedges, herbs, and grasses, which provide habitat for a range of native animals, including invertebrates.

### Aims

Marshy grassland will be managed through grazing to maintain a varied sward height where a variety of native marshland plant species are frequent and able to flower and produce seed, rushes and purple-moor-grass are not overly dominant, and where native animals (including invertebrates) can thrive.

Bog, fen and mire communities will be managed to maintain a range of micro-habitats including small patches of bare ground, rock outcrops, grass, scrub,

bracken, flush etc., managed for dwarf shrub cover, with a varied age/height structure and combination of native heather species, sedges rushes, bog-mosses and swamp vegetation growing in standing water.

Unimproved grasslands enclosed with bog, fen and mire communities to be managed in line with the habitat they are enclosed with.

## Requirements (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

### In order to benefit these habitats, you agree to:

- Remove livestock if conditions become too wet, to prevent poaching and compaction.

### In order to benefit these habitats, you agree not to:

- plant any new trees
- allow the field to be poached (gateways, feeding and watering areas are acceptable provided that poached and bare areas are less than 10% cover)
- on marshy grassland cut or top more than 30% of soft rush or undesirable vegetation species in any one year (see Undesirable Vegetation Control in the Universal Code for All Habitats)
- permit scrub to spread
- graze enclosed wetland between 1<sup>st</sup> November and 31<sup>st</sup> March

## Measurable outcomes

- **sensitive grazing will achieve areas of marshy grassland with a varied sward height where, during the summer period (1<sup>st</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> August), at least 75% of the grassland (excluding rushes) is between 10**

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**cm and 50 cm** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

- dead matter /leaf litter (dead material not attached to living plants) will not form extensive patches and is below 20% cover overall
- managing through sensitive grazing, will achieve a varied sward structure with less than 10% scattered bare ground caused by stock poaching. Small areas of poaching in gateways and around watering troughs will be accepted.

## Management recommendations

- see recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats.
- maintain a varied **vegetation structure** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>) with open patches, where species such as heather, sedges and western gorse are no higher than knee height and dwarf shrubs vary from young to pioneer to old and degenerate
- none of the key taller components (i.e. taller grasses, sedges and rushes) should cover more than 75% of the ground (with the exception of small patches of c. 20 x 20m)
- on areas of bog water levels should lie close to the surface all year round to support ongoing peat accumulation.
- on shallow peat, maintain bog moss (Sphagnum) cover of greater than 10% of ground cover
- where present, invasive native species (e.g. bracken) should not cover more than 5% of the enclosure.
- invasive non-native species (e.g. conifers, Rhododendron, Himalayan balsam and Japanese Knotweed) should not be present
- on bog, fen and mire (enclosed wetlands) - no grazing between 1<sup>st</sup> November and 31<sup>st</sup> March.

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### **a) Enclosed wetland - lowland bogs, fens and flush/mire**

- see recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats
- graze the habitat with cattle, ponies or sheep to:
  - o Limit the spread of scrub
  - o Prevent taller grasses (including Molinia), rushes and sedges from becoming overly dominant; and,
  - o Maintain or improve the balance of smaller sedges and wetland herbs and mosses.
- where area has more than 50% Purple Moor Grass (Molinia) graze from 1 April – 31 October between 0.30 LU/ha - 0.20 LU/ha
- wet peatlands with an already mixed cover of layers and species will only require very light grazing, with no grazing in winter
- aim for a varied vegetation structure with frequent open patches no higher than knee height.

### **b) Marshy grassland** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

- See recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats.
- Top a third of the area of marshy grassland in any one year, for example where the sward has become too overgrown. The cut material should be removed, where it will not damage the habitat or it would not be too dangerous to do so, e.g. steep or wet ground.
- Hay meadow management can be used as an alternative to pasture management – follow timings of cutting and aftermath grazing under ‘Enclosed Semi-natural dry grassland – Hay meadow’. Cut material should be removed from the grassland.

## Potential derogations

For enclosed wetland, where the land is so waterlogged that it is not possible to safely graze the site, the measurable outcomes do not apply. The restrictions would continue to apply to all areas of enclosed wetland, whether grazed or not.

## 5. Enclosed **semi-natural dry grassland**

(<https://www.gov.walesnull>) **(acid, neutral, calcareous, calaminarian grasslands)**

### Description

A range of acid, neutral, calcareous or calaminarian (metal-rich grasslands, associated with former metal mine workings), mostly enclosed, semi-improved and unimproved grasslands. These grasslands have a suite of less agriculturally productive grasses and wildflower assemblages associated with the particular grassland's soil conditions. These grasslands occur across a range aspects and altitudes, from up to the limit of enclosure to coastal grasslands. Where they occur above the upper limit of enclosure, they should be managed under Habitat Classification 6 – Upland Open Habitats.

**a) managed as grazed pasture** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

**Aims** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

Maintain the grassland by grazing, to achieve a varied sward height where a variety of native plant species (including herbs) are frequent and able to flower and produce seed, and where native animals (including invertebrates) and

grassland fungi can thrive. Agricultural species such as ryegrass and white clover should be absent or at low cover.

## Requirements

### In order to benefit this habitat, you agree to:

- remove livestock if conditions become too wet, to prevent poaching and compaction
- graze at stocking densities which avoid overgrazing and undergrazing

### In order to benefit this habitat, you agree not to:

- plant any new trees
- allow the field to be poached (localised poaching around gateways, feeding and watering areas is acceptable provided that poached and bare areas make up less than 5% cover overall)
- apply lime on **acid, calcareous or calaminarian** grassland
- cut or top more than 30% of soft rush or other undesirable vegetation species in a field parcel in any one year (**see Undesirable Vegetation Control in the Universal Code for All Habitats**) (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

Permit scrub to spread

## Measurable Outcomes (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

- grazing will achieve a varied sward height where at least 75% of the grassland is between 5 cm and 20 cm **between 15 May and 31<sup>st</sup> August** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)
- grazing will achieve a sward height where 75% of the grassland is between 2

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cm and 10 cm between 1 September and 31 October

- dead material will not form extensive patches and is less than 10% cover overall
- bare soil will make up no more than 5% of the ground area, scattered around the field
- coarse/tall grasses will not dominate, apart from in patches covering no more than 5% of the grassland.
- depending on the grassland type, the sward will include a minimum of 3 indicator herbs, such as lesser birdsfoot trefoil, knapweed, thyme, mouse eared hawkweed, tormentil and heath bedstraw, as well as grasses, such as meadow foxtail, crested dogstail and sheep fescue

### **Management recommendations** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

- see recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats
- neutral grassland is ideally grazed with cattle or horses rather than sheep
- apply lime if necessary to maintain a soil pH of between 5.5 and 6.5 on **neutral grasslands**

### **Potential derogations** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

To request a moratorium on sward height requirement due to prolonged period of adverse weather conditions e.g. drought, frozen ground and snow cover.

## **b) Managed as hay meadow** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

### **Aims**

The grassland is maintained by cutting and removing hay and grazing the aftermath growth to maintain a varied sward height where a variety of native plant species (including flowering herbs) are frequent, and where native animals (including invertebrates) and grassland fungi can thrive. Agricultural species such as ryegrass and white are absent or at low cover.

### **Requirements**

#### **In order to benefit this habitat, you agree to:**

- remove livestock by 15 May
- cut and remove a hay crop once every year between 7 July and 30 September
- it is acceptable to make hay or haylage but not silage.
- the cut material must be removed from the meadow, even if spoiled by rain
- remove livestock if conditions become too wet, to prevent poaching and compaction

#### **In order to benefit this habitat, you agree not to:**

- apply any inorganic or organic fertilisers such as slurry, sewage sludge, chicken manure or fish meal, except a light dressing of farmyard manure (no more than 12t/ha), which can be applied no more often than once every two years.

- plant any new trees
- cause or allow the spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) or injurious weeds
- allow the field to be poached (localised poaching around gateways, feeding and watering areas is acceptable provided that poached and bare areas make up less than 5% cover overall)
- apply lime on **acid** grassland
- permit scrub to spread (see Undesirable Vegetation Control in the Universal Code for All Habitats)
- begin grazing the aftermath until at least four weeks after the hay cut.

### Measurable outcomes (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

- to achieve a sward height after cutting **where 75% of the grassland is between 2 cm and 10 cm** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>) until 31<sup>st</sup> October
- if spring grazing, from 1 March, achieve a sward height where 75% of the grassland is above 5 cm
- dead material will not form extensive patches and is less than 10% cover overall
- bare soil will make up no more than 5% of the ground area, scattered around the field

### Management recommendations

- turn hay/haylage at least twice before removal.
- apply lime if necessary to maintain a soil pH of between 5.5 and 6.5 on **neutral grasslands**
- **on neutral grassland**, ideally graze with cattle or horses rather than just sheep.
- the sward should include a minimum of 3 indicator herbs characteristic of the grassland type

## Potential derogations (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

To request a moratorium on sward height requirement due to prolonged period of adverse weather conditions e.g. drought, frozen ground and snow cover.

To take silage if the crop has gone to seed.

## 6. Upland Open Habitats (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

### Description

Upland (land above the upper limit of enclosure) may comprise a mixture of habitats, including montane heath, upland heath, bog and flush, upland acid and calcareous grassland and unenclosed woodland, streams and lakes, all depending on the underlying terrain, substrate (rock, mineral soil, peat), base-status (acid or calcareous), groundwater regime, drainage, slope, **aspect and altitude** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>). The habitat should predominantly reflect these natural factors, as modified by low to medium grazing levels and without ploughing, reseeding or addition of artificial fertilisers.

### Aims

Maintain a mosaic of habitats on unenclosed land with a varied vegetation structure with open patches, with species such as heather, sedges and western gorse. Dwarf shrubs such as heather should vary from 'young' to 'vigorous pioneer' to 'old' and finally 'degenerate' and where 75% of the areas of wet and dry grassland have a diverse sward height between 5 and 50 cm during the summer months.



On areas of bog, water levels should lie close to the surface all year round to support ongoing peat accumulation.

## Requirements

### In order to benefit these habitats, you agree to:

- Manage the habitat through appropriate grazing with consideration of the stocking rate recommendations in the Universal Code for All Habitats.

### In order to benefit these habitats, you agree not to:

- plant any new trees without prior approval
- allow the area to be poached (gateways, feeding and watering areas are acceptable provided that poached and bare areas are less than 5% cover)
- cut or top more than 30% of soft rush or other undesirable vegetation species in any one year

## Measurable outcomes

- **where bog moss (*Sphagnum*) is present, to achieve frequent patches of bog moss covering at least 5% of the ground** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>).
- **bare ground will make up no more than 5% of the ground area scattered around the site** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>) and there must be no peat erosion.

## Management recommendations

- graze with cattle and/or ponies in preference or in conjunction with sheep.

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- minimise grazing between 01 October and 31 March (i.e. strays only). Low level pony grazing may be acceptable during these dates.
- remove self-seeded conifers and Rhododendron
- mowing of firebreaks, to control planned burns of dry heath and to safeguard from accidental fires or arson is an acceptable form of management.
- rolling, bruising or cutting bracken is an acceptable form of management.
- remove livestock if conditions become too wet, to prevent poaching and compaction.

## Potential derogations

To permit any of the 'do nots' for health and safety and human and animal welfare reasons.

## 7. Dense bracken

### Description

Dense bracken is characterised by the virtual complete absence of any other plant species; forming a thick, deep layer of dead litter material during autumn and winter and tall impenetrable shading stands of fronds during the summer.

Dense bracken has low environmental and agricultural value. It is associated with undesirable and damaging impacts including wildfire risk; harbouring parasitic tick populations impacting livestock, wildlife and human health; as well as making agricultural operations such as stock gathering more problematic.

## Aims

For the purposes of this habitat classification, dense bracken should comprise 40% to 100% of the area where it occurs (adjacent habitats with little or no bracken should not be included in the dense bracken habitat category). The bracken will be tall and dense, restricting any stock movements to paths only. There will be a deep accumulation of litter and the bracken could be impenetrable.

The long-term aim is either to enhance and restore dense bracken stands to an alternative more valuable semi-natural grassland habitat type (enclosed semi-natural grassland, unenclosed unimproved grassland or mosaic) using a hierarchy of bracken management and control activities (e.g. rolling, bruising, mowing, cattle and/or pony grazing).

And/Or:

Prepare a woodland creation management plan to be implemented following a programme of appropriate bracken management and control/suppression activities. Broadleaf woodland would be preferred to maintain the area in a semi-natural state.

## Requirements

**In order to benefit this habitat, you agree not to:**

- **apply any herbicides, insecticides or any other pesticides (except for spot/weed wipe treatment of invasive non-native species, injurious weeds or as part of a bracken control programme) (see Undesirable Vegetation Control in the Universal Code for All Habitats)**

(<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

- carry out burn management unless to create firebreaks to reduce wildfire risk
- carry out agricultural improvement.

## Measurable outcomes

- the area will remain in an unimproved state

## Management Recommendations

- See recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats
- include heavy livestock (cattle, ponies) as a component of a grazing regime
- grazing in the early spring (March to May) using heavy stock (cattle or ponies) can help to reduce the dominance of bracken
- carry out a programme of bracken management and control activities (e.g. rolling, bruising, mowing)
- follow guidance on Pearl-bordered Fritillary habitat awareness
- establishment and creation of firebreaks for wildfire prevention and risk reduction, especially on high risk and susceptible sites with a history of arson, wildfires, a burning management plan and previous managed burns.

## Potential derogations

To permit any of the 'do nots' for health and safety, and human and animal welfare reasons.

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## 8. Woody habitats

### a) Traditional orchards (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

#### Description

Traditional orchards are defined as groups of fruit and nut trees planted on vigorous rootstocks at low densities in permanent grassland and managed in a low intensity way. There are many regional variations on this theme, including apple, pear, cherry, plum, damson and walnut orchards.

Traditional orchards are similar to wood-pasture and parkland, defined by their structure rather than vegetation type, which can include trees, scrub, grassland, ponds, walls, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

Prime traditional orchard habitat consists of grazed grassland with fruit trees of varying age structure, with an abundance of standing and fallen dead and decaying wood.

#### Aims

Encourage the maintenance and/or development of a diverse habitat and landscape feature comprising standard fruit trees, species-rich grassland and traditional field boundaries.

Maintain the characteristic features of less intensively managed orchards such as dead wood and rot holes in the trees. This can support mosses, lichens and fungi as well as invertebrates, birds and mammals.

Maintain the grassland to retain or encourage species typical of neutral grassland.

Safeguard traditional varieties of fruit tree, especially those local to the area.

## **Requirements** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

### **In order to benefit this habitat, you agree to:**

- retain all the existing fruit trees, unless they are diseased or may cause harm
- prevent damage to trees from livestock or machinery
- retain all deadwood in the orchard (unless it is diseased)

### **In order to benefit this habitat, you agree not to:**

- Prune out mistletoe (sustainable harvesting is acceptable).
- Use any inorganic fertilisers. Where taking a hay cut, well-rotted farmyard manure (stored for at least twelve months) may be applied at a rate of no more than 10 tonnes/ha once every two years. No other organic fertilisers including slurry, sewage sludge, chicken manure and fish meal are acceptable.
- Use tar oil washes as these reduce the wildlife value of the orchard.

## **Measurable outcomes**

- coarse/tall grasses do not dominate, apart from in patches

## Management recommendations

- see recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats.
- manage the grassland using:
  - low intensity grazing so that mature trees are not debarked and the sward remains above 5 cm over 90% of the area **or**
  - by cutting and removing between 2 and 5 times a year
- graze at levels where no bare ground is around the base of trees.
- manage trees with the minimum of chemical inputs.
- if maintaining the grassland by cutting, aim to cut at a frequency that allows plants in the sward to flower but does not allow coarse tussocky grasses or brambles to spread. The cut material must be removed after cutting.
- lime may be applied if necessary to maintain a soil pH of between 5.5 and 6.5.
- seasonally prune the fruit trees where necessary to maintain a reasonable level of health and productivity and to prevent trees becoming vulnerable to windthrow.
- any fallen dead wood or pruned timber should be stacked in a semi-shaded location within the orchard. Only diseased wood may be removed or burnt.

## Potential Derogations

To permit any of the 'do nots' for health and safety, and human and animal welfare reasons.

## **b) Scrub (including scattered and less dense bracken)**

(<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

### **Description**

Scrub is vegetation dominated by shrubs of usually less than 5 m tall and may be a developing or climax habitat. The woody species involved are diverse, but the commonest species are likely to include blackthorn, hawthorn, European gorse and elder.

Well-managed scrub supports a range of wildlife, providing nectar, seeds, fruits, shelter and nest sites for invertebrates, birds, and mammals. It also offers suitable habitat for many flowering plants. Scrub of varied age, species and structure supports the widest range of wildlife. Scrub will include areas of blackthorn, hawthorn, rowan, and willow species.

Streamside corridors created under and maintained in Glastir Entry and Glastir Advanced.

### **Aims**

Well-managed scrub supports a range of wildlife providing nectar, seeds, fruits, shelter and nest sites for invertebrates, birds, and mammals. It also offers suitable habitat for many flowering plants. Scrub of varied age, species and structure supports the widest range of wildlife. Areas of scrub will include a variety of species such as gorse, bracken, blackthorn, hawthorn, rowan, birch, bramble and willow species. This may also include streamside corridors created under Glastir and currently retained.

Scattered and less dense bracken with a ground layer is a valuable habitat for a



suite of fritillary butterfly species and provides a good habitat for nesting birds and cover for the movement of other birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles. The aim of management is to maintain the ground layer and prevent further closure of the bracken canopy. The ground layer should contain flowering plants that provide nectar and pollen resources in spring.

### **Scattered and less dense bracken is defined as:**

Bracken present where it allows free access to livestock (not restricted to paths only) with no or limited amounts/depth of decaying bracken litter with grass and other vegetation growing through.

### **Requirements**

In order to benefit this habitat, you agree to:

- retain all existing areas of native scrub on coastal slopes, riverbanks, sand dunes, limestone cliffs, valley bottoms and in the uplands. Cutting to prevent the spread of scrub is acceptable.

In order to benefit this habitat, you agree not to:

- apply any herbicides, insecticides or any other pesticides (except for spot/ weed wipe treatment of invasive non-native species injurious weeds or as part of a bracken control programme) (see Undesirable Vegetation Control in the Universal Code for All Habitats)
- **carry out burn management unless to create firebreaks to reduce wildfire risk** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

## Measurable outcomes

- scattered and less dense bracken is maintained to retain its open nature with a vegetated understorey. The development of tall, dense bracken where stock movements are restricted to paths only is avoided.
- deep bracken litter, preventing little or no other species of vegetation penetrating and growing through the litter, will not be accumulating or is reducing.

## Management recommendations

- see recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats
- if in a grassland context, graze at a rate not exceeding that set for the underlying grassland
- if the scrub is currently un-grazed, maintain/retain this management
- maintain/retain all standard trees scattered through the scrub
- if there are gaps within the scrub, then allow regeneration of trees/scrub naturally
- graze area exclusively with cattle and/or equines, or as part of mixed stocking regime to encourage crushing and bruising of bracken to maintain or expand its open nature
- follow guidance on Pearl-bordered Fritillary habitat awareness

## Potential derogations (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

To remove scrub permanently for beneficial archaeological reasons.

To remove scrub where it is spreading into a habitat of higher conservation priority, such as areas of priority grassland habitat.

## c) Wood pasture

### Description

Wood pastures are usually the products of historic land management systems and represent a vegetation structure, rather than being a particular plant community. Typically, this structure consists of large, open-grown or high forest trees at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras. Wood pastures are usually defined as having a tree cover of less than 30% that occurs as scattered individual trees. Trees may be clumped to produce a higher cover than 30% locally. There should be a minimum of 6 trees per ha scattered across the site. Many of the existing trees are of open grown character, with wide, deep crowns and short trunks.

Also included in this habitat classification are areas of *ffridd* (mid and north Wales) or *coedcae* (south Wales) which occurs at the lowland - upland interface. These areas are usually a more naturally occurring succession of tree cover over a similar mosaic of habitats to historically managed wood pasture, above.

### Aims

Successful wood pasture management should maintain the tree population and maintain or improve the condition of the ground vegetation. The aims for the ground layer will depend on the vegetation present as this may include grassland, heathland, peatland, scrub, woodland/trees and/or bracken. This habitat is particularly important for invertebrates that live in dead wood, lichens and several bird species and management should aim to deliver the resources necessary for these groups of species to thrive.

## Requirements

### In order to benefit this habitat, you agree to:

- Retain existing scattered trees and scrub.
- Retain all deadwood whether standing or on the ground.
- Ensure mature trees are not debarked by livestock and there is limited bare ground.

### In order to benefit this habitat, you agree not to:

- allow the field to be poached (localised poaching around gateways, feeding and watering areas is acceptable provided that poached and bare areas are less than 5% cover overall).
- plant trees which creates dense woodland of over 30% tree cover.

## Measurable outcomes

- existing scattered trees and scrub are retained
- all deadwood, whether standing or on the ground, is retained
- bare soil will make up no more than 5% of the ground area, scattered around the field

## Management recommendations

- see recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All Habitats
- graze at levels where mature trees are not debarked and there is limited bare ground around the base of trees (<10% of trees have bare ground

around their base)

- cattle or ponies are the preferred livestock on sites with a high proportion of heathland and/or bracken
- where the ground vegetation consists of dense bracken, grazing in the early spring (March to May) using heavy stock (cattle or ponies) can help to reduce the dominance of bracken
- a proportion of scrub is beneficial to provide flowers and fruit. Retain existing scrub unless it is spreading to cover greater than 20% of the site area
- on sites dominated by dense bracken (where there is no ground flora) it is accepted that grazing may not be possible
- consider allowing the site to naturally regenerate into woodland if there is a high level of tree colonisation in a site otherwise dominated by bracken that is very difficult/impossible to graze
- cutting or topping are acceptable, where there is particularly extensive invasion by bracken, soft rush or other undesirable vegetation species (see Undesirable Vegetation Control in the Universal Code for All Habitats)
- chain harrowing to break up dense patches of bracken litter is acceptable
- low density infill tree planting to arrive at less than 30% overall tree cover is acceptable

### **Potential derogations** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

To permit any of the 'do nots' for health and safety, and human and animal welfare reasons.

## **9 Existing Woodland (in HWS 2024)**

### **Description**

For the purposes of this scheme, existing woodlands will only comprise those in

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the Habitat Wales Scheme in 2024 that had over 0.1ha of tree canopy classed as HS07.

## Aims

To maintain existing ancient semi-natural and other semi-natural woodland.

To maintain management of woodland under a previous Glastir Advanced option.

To ensure livestock levels do not damage trees and ground flora within woodlands.

Woodland habitat is particularly important for invertebrates; small mammals, such as bats and dormice; lower plants, such as fungi, mosses, and lichens; and many bird species. Management should aim to maintain the resources necessary for these groups of species to thrive.

To consider how these woodlands can be managed for biodiversity, wood products, recreation and livestock management.

## Requirements

**In order to benefit this habitat, you agree to:** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

- adhere to any UKFS compliant management plan, where applicable
- retain all trees in woodland unless tree removal is necessary for safety reasons or managed under a Felling Licence or UKFS compliant management plan
- protect trees from damage due to cultivation, compaction, use of machinery or use of agrochemicals, including fertilisers, under the tree canopy

## **In order to benefit this habitat, you agree not to:**

- remove any deadwood, including standing deadwood, unless necessary for health and safety reasons
- knowingly cause or allow the establishment of new, or the spread of existing injurious weeds
- supplementary feed within the woodland
- use plant protection products, except for the control of invasive species or managing identified tree pests and diseases
- carry out unapproved earth moving activities within the woodland
- use the woodland for unapproved off-road vehicle activities
- construct unauthorised new tracks, roads, yards, loading bays / stacking areas or any new structures within the woodland

## **Measurable Outcomes**

- if a woodland is grazed, grazing levels will not result in debarking of mature trees, there is no poaching, ground flora is retained and there is less than 10% of trees with bare ground around their base
- open spaces within the woodland will be retained
- deadwood, whether standing or on the ground, is retained, unless removal is necessary for health and safety reasons
- in grazed woodlands, encourage native ground flora to develop through appropriate grazing levels
- natural regeneration of trees within the woodland is taking place, where appropriate.

## **Management recommendations**

- see recommended stocking densities table in the Universal Code for All

## Habitats

- ensure pruning or lopping is undertaken appropriately with a clean cut

## Potential derogations

**To permit any of the ‘do nots’ for health and safety, and human and animal welfare reasons** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>).

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