

# Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 – Commons Verifiable Standards

*Verifiable standards and guidelines for classification of failures of:*

**Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 - Commons**

**Version 1.0**

\*This document should be used in conjunction with the Habitat Wales Penalty Matrix to define the Severity, Extent and Permanence of penalties.

Habitat Wales Scheme 2025 – Commons  
Verifiable Standards



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**Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government**

Version 1.0

<b>Requirement - General</b>			
<p>Take management responsibility and control for the entire contract land to enable the obligations of the contract to be fulfilled. The Contract boundary must be physically delineated.</p> <p>Maintain a minimum of 80% active graziers on the contract land throughout the contract period.</p> <p>Options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Management of Stocking Levels (Standard Stocking and Flexible Stocking) – Must maintain a daily stocking diary (on a spreadsheet) of livestock movements on and off the contract land.</li> <li>2) Closed Winter Period – Must maintain a stocking diary (on a spreadsheet) detailing livestock movements off the contract land for the start of the closed winter period and when the livestock have been moved back onto the contract land.</li> </ol> <p>Maintain a record (on a spreadsheet) of members' details and other active graziers on the contract land.</p>			
<b>Description of Breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Where no physical boundary exists and the boundary has not been marked appropriately.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1 Rectifiable 2 Permanent</b>

<p>A minimum of 80% active graziers has not been maintained throughout the contract period.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - less than 80% but more than 75%.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - less than, or equal to 75% but more than 50%.</p> <p><b>High</b> - less than or equal to 50%</p>	<p><b>Extent 4</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b></p>
<p>Management of Stocking Level Options – Inadequate stocking diary maintained.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Closed Winter Period Option – Inadequate stocking diary maintained.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> – failure to accurately record details of one movement of animals.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> – failure to accurately record more than one movement of animals.</p> <p><b>High</b> – No records or not made available on request.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p> <p><b>Extent 4</b> - (No records or records not made available on request – High breach only).</p>	<p><b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b></p>
<p>A record of members’ details and other active graziers has not been maintained.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> – A record of all members and active graziers has been kept but discrepancies found (at the time of inspection).</p> <p><b>Medium</b> – Records available but does not have details of all members and active graziers.</p> <p><b>High</b> – No records or not made available on request.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p> <p><b>Extent 4</b> - (No records or records not made available on request – High breach only).</p>	<p><b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b></p>

## Requirement – Common Land Code

Retain all existing traditional boundaries including earth banks, dry stonewalls, hedges and slate fencing.

Retain all archaeological and historical features including earth works, standing stones, hill forts, burial mounds, hut circles, sheepfolds and grouse butts.

Retain all geological sites and rock features including cliff, rock outcrops, scree and shingle.

Do not install any new drainage or ditching or modify/reopen any existing drainage or ditching.

Do not cut or remove any peat or sediment unless the applicant has the rights to do so.

Do not cause rutting of the land through the inappropriate use of machinery.

Burning is only permitted in accordance with Heather & Grass burning regulations. Do not burn blanket bog. Consent is required from National Resources Wales (NRW) before undertaking any burning on SSSIs, SACs or SPAs.

Maintain all existing native woodland and scrub, ponds, scrapes, rivers and streams.

Ploughing, cultivation or reseedling is not permitted except on existing improved grazing or cultivated land.

Applications of lime, inorganic and organic fertiliser (including manure or slag) are not permitted except on existing improved grazing or cultivated land.

Comply with legal requirements relating to existing public rights of way that are on the land, including avoiding obstructing them. Access must be allowed on foot to all land identified as available for such access on the maps prepared under the Countryside Rights of Way Act, 2000.

Comply with the requirements on supplementary feeding on all contract land.

Certain sections of these verifiable standards are also subject to specific cross compliance requirements. Reference to these requirements will be listed against the breaches.

Description of Breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that existing traditional boundaries have not been retained.	<b>Low</b> – Up to 50m <b>Medium</b> – 50-100m <b>High</b> – 100m +	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>

Evidence that archaeological and historical features including earth works, standing stones, hill forts, burial mounds, hut circles, sheepfolds and grouse butts have not been retained.	<p><b>Medium</b> – where damage has occurred does not affect the integrity of the feature.</p> <p><b>High</b> – destroyed, removed or damage affecting the integrity of the feature.</p>	<b>Extent 4</b>	<p><b>Permanent</b>  <b>Rectifiable 1</b>  <b>Rectifiable 2</b></p>
Evidence that geological sites and rock features including cliff, rock outcrops, scree and shingle have not been retained.	<p><b>Medium</b> – where damage has occurred does not affect the integrity of the feature.</p> <p><b>High</b> – destroyed, removed or damage affecting the integrity of the feature.</p>	<b>Extent 4</b>	<p><b>Permanent</b>  <b>Rectifiable 1</b>  <b>Rectifiable 2</b></p>
Evidence of inappropriate supplementary feeding	<p><b>Minimum W/L</b> – evidence of supplementary feeding but no damage</p> <p><b>Medium</b> – evidence of supplementary feeding and damage to habitat land e.g. poaching nitrification of soil</p> <p><b>High</b> - Unsuitable supplementary feeding where there is damage to habitat land which cannot be restored to its original condition by the end of the growing season.</p>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<p><b>Rectifiable 1</b>  <b>Rectifiable 2</b>  <b>Permanent</b></p>
Evidence that burning has taken place and not carried out in accordance with Heather and Grass Burning Regulation (2008) and the Heather and Grass Burning code	<p><b>Measurable</b> – Evidence of burning on area up to and including 1ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> – Evidence of burning on area greater than 1ha in size.</p>	<b>Measurable</b>	<p><b>Rectifiable 1</b>  <b>Rectifiable 2</b>  <b>Permanent</b></p>

Evidence that new drainage or ditching has been installed or existing drainage or ditching modified.	<b>Low</b> – Up to 50m <b>Medium</b> – 50-100m <b>High</b> – 100m +	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that peat or sediment has been removed where the applicant does not have rights to do so.	<b>High</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of rutting caused by inappropriate use of machinery.	<b>Low</b> – Up to 1ha <b>Medium</b> – 1-3ha <b>High</b> – 3ha +	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that native woodland and scrub, ponds, scrapes, rivers and streams have not been maintained.	<b>High</b>	<b>Extent 4</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that inappropriate ploughing, cultivation and/or reseeded has been carried out.	<b>Measurable</b> – Up to and equal to 1ha. <b>High</b> – Greater than 1ha	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that lime, inorganic or organic fertiliser has been applied to contract land.	<b>Measurable</b> – Up to and equal to 1ha <b>High</b> – Greater than 1ha	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that legal requirements relating to existing PRow under the provisions of the CRow Act 2000, are not being complied with.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b>

## Requirement – Management of Stocking Levels

### Standard Stocking Level Approach

The maximum stocking levels will be calculated on a quarterly basis and will be specified in your contract. The Grazing Association will commit to keeping on or below the quarterly maximum stocking levels on every day during the quarter. These stocking levels are not an average, but a maximum ceiling, which cannot be exceeded on any day. The quarterly periods are as follows:

- 1 January to 31 March
- 1 April to 30 June
- 1 July to 30 September
- 1 October to 31 December

### Flexible Stocking Level Approach

In order to demonstrate that the flexible stocking requirements are met, the Grazing Association must complete a forward stocking schedule. The Grazing Association must commit to not exceeding the maximum number of LUs stated in the forward stocking schedule on any day on that contract land.

Description of Breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that the maximum stocking levels have been exceeded.	<b>Low</b> – either, less than 3% of prescribed total LUs or up to 5 LUs (whichever is the lowest number of LUs). <b>Medium</b> – either, greater than 3% and less than 5% of total prescribed LUs or greater than 5 and less than 15 LUs (whichever is the lowest number of LUs). <b>High</b> – either, more than 5% of total prescribed LUs or more than 15 LUs (whichever is the lowest number of LUs).	<b>Extent 4</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>

## Requirement – Management of Stocking Levels

### Closed Winter Period Option

The Grazing Association must undertake to ensure the removal of all livestock from the contract land for a pre-specified continuous period between 1 November and 31 March each year. In the event that the Grazing Association wishes to change the closed period start date in subsequent years then they must notify the Welsh Government of the new date in writing at least 30 days before the stock free period is due to begin.

Description of Breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that all stock were not removed from the contract land during the contractual 90 day Closed Winter Period.	<p><b>Low</b> – up to 5 LUs.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> – greater than 5 and less than 15 Lus.</p> <p><b>High</b> – more than 15 Lus.</p>	<b>Extent 4</b>	<p><b>Rectifiable 1</b></p> <p><b>Rectifiable 2</b></p> <p><b>Permanent</b></p>
Evidence that the Welsh Government were not notified at least 30 days prior to any changes to the agreed stock free period.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 4</b>	<p><b>Rectifiable 1</b> – less than 30 days but notification before the start of the stock free period.</p> <p><b>Rectifiable 2</b> – notification during the agreed stock free period.</p> <p><b>Permanent</b> – not received, received after the agreed stock free period finishes or identified by Welsh Government before any notification has been made.</p>



**Requirement – Notifications of potential changes to contract**

Welsh Government must be informed within 30 days of any sale or transfer of land in the Contract or where the Grazing Association no longer meet the 80% Active Grazier requirement.

Description of Breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Contract requires sales and transfers to be notified within 30 days.	<b>Low</b> - Notification received, but not within 30 days. <b>Medium</b> - Notification not received.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Failure to notify the Welsh Government of changes to the Grazing Association membership within 30 days of falling below this level	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 4</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1</b> <b>Rectifiable 2</b> <b>Permanent</b>

## Additional Management Payments

<b>Option 400 Additional Management Payment – Stock Management</b>			
Comply with the stock management plan in your contract.			
<b>Description of Breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence the stock management plan has not been complied with	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1 Rectifiable 2 Permanent</b>

<b>Option 401 Additional Management Payment – Mixed Grazing</b>			
A minimum of 30% of the livestock units (LUs) must be grazing cattle in each calendar year A minimum of 15% of the livestock units (LUs) must be grazing sheep in each calendar			
<b>Description of Breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence the minimum livestock units have not been adhered to	<p><b>Low</b> - either, less than 3% of prescribed total LUs or up to 5 LUs (whichever is the lowest number of LUs).</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - either, greater than 3% and less than 5% of total prescribed LUs or greater than 5 and less than 15 LUs (whichever is the lowest number of LUs).</p> <p><b>High</b> - either, more than 5% of total prescribed LUs or more than 15 LUs (whichever is the lowest number of LUs).</p>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1 Rectifiable 2 Permanent</b>

**Option 411 Additional Management Payment – Reduce Stocking**

Comply with the grazing plan in the contract detailing the additional stock reduction required.

<b>Description of Breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence the grazing plan has not been complied with	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable 1 Rectifiable 2 Permanent</b>