Converting Arable at Risk of Erosion or Flooding to Low-input Grassland

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For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page .

Note: In September 2023, references to Scottish Natural Heritage have been updated to NatureScot.

Aim

The aim of this option is to benefit soils, water quality and wildlife by converting areas within arable fields that are prone to run-off and / or soil erosion or flooding to low-input grassland.

This will provide year-round cover, which will increase soil organic matter, improve soil structure, reduce surface run-off and protect against soil erosion.

Flowering plants within the grass will also provide pollen and nectar for invertebrates.

Eligibility

Land that has been in arable cropping for all of the last five years, or has been converted from arable to low-input grassland under a previous NatureScot or Scottish Government agri-environment scheme in the last five years, is eligible.

You should not include areas of land covering rocks, scree, water, dense bracken etc. We will check this using the same approach we use to check land for the Basic Payment Scheme.

Assessing your land eligibility

Spatial targeting

Map of target area – Converting Arable at Risk of Erosion or Flooding to Low-input Grassland (PDF, Size: 1.8 MB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/95559---AECS---Target-Map-Review-for-2021---Converting-Arable-at-Risk-of-Flooding-or-Erosion.pdf This option is available within the target area shown on this map.

You can check if this item is available on your holding using the search targeting tool which can be found on any of the following AECS guidance pages:

AECS Home

Eligibility

How to Apply

Management Options and Capital Items

Capital Items

Application requirements

You must identify on a map the locations of the area to be managed.

Management requirements

This option must remain at the same location for the duration of your contract.

- you must establish a grass sward by 1 June in the first year of your contract
- do not cut or graze the area from 1 May until 30 July
- do not plough or cultivate the area after the establishment of grass
- do not carry out supplementary livestock feeding
- do not allow the land to become poached or vehicle tracked
- do not apply fertilisers, except farmyard manure
- do not spray, except for the spot-treatment of injurious weeds (requires prior written notification) or treatment of invasive species (requires prior written approval)
- do not establish new drains
- you must maintain a diary

Payment

You can claim £284.80 per hectare per year.

There are separate capital payments to support the creation of grassland:

- Creation of Low-input Grassland to Convert Arable Land at Risk of Flooding or Erosion
- Coastal Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal
- River Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal

You can support the management of stock on a floodplain with the following management option:

- Management of Floodplains

Inspections

The inspectors will check:

- all grass swards must be in place by the 1 June
- there has been no cutting or grazing of the area from 1 May until 30 July
- that no ploughing, cultivation of the area after the establishment of grass has taken place
- that no supplementary livestock feeding has taken place
- that the area has not become poached or vehicle tracked
- there has been no application of fertiliser except farmyard manure
- you have not sprayed, unless with prior written notification or approval as appropriate
- you have maintained a diary

Note

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

Recent changes

Section	Change
Spatial targeting	Target map updated

Previous versions

Previous versions of this page

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