Organic Entry Level Stewardship Handbook

Is this the right handbook for you?
This is the Handbook to use if you are interested in starting a new agreement at the Organic Entry Level of Environmental Stewardship (OELS). It provides details of the scheme, the application procedure, and the rules that apply to farmers and other land managers who join.

This Handbook will apply to all OELS agreements starting on or after 1 October 2008. If this applies to you, this Handbook - including all the rules and requirements that it contains – will form a part of your agreement.

OELS agreements starting before 1 October 2008 will continue to be governed by the previous (first) edition of the OELS Handbook, published when the scheme was launched in 2005.

If you do not have any land that is registered as organic (including in conversion) then you should use the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) Handbook instead of this one.

If you are considering making an application for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS), you should use the Higher Level Stewardship Handbooks in addition to this one. You should also discuss your situation with Natural England before making an HLS application.

What are the changes from the first edition?
The first edition of this handbook was printed in 2005, when OELS was first launched. Since then, OELS has successfully been taken up by many farmers across England. We have learnt from their experiences and reviewed the scheme in 2007 identifying changes to improve the scheme. The introduction of the Rural Development Programme (England) in 2007 also necessitated certain changes. The main changes are:

- the removal of some options and amendments to the management prescriptions for others;
- the replacement of the Good Farming Practice requirement with cross compliance;
- clarification of the rules relating to agreement amendments, including transfer of land from one land manager to another;
- within ELS the lower payment rate (£8 per ha) now applies to land parcels of 15 ha or more within the Moorland Line (previously this applied to parcels of this size within the Less Favoured Areas);
- clarification of the handling of agreements involving Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), following the formation of Natural England.
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Brown text - used for information relating solely to conventional land, eligible for ELS.
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Section 1
Introduction and general information

1.1 Background

1.1.1 What is Environmental Stewardship?
Environmental Stewardship (ES) is an agri-environment scheme that provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England who deliver effective environmental management on their land. The scheme is intended to build on the recognised success of the Environmental Sensitive Areas (ESAs) Scheme and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS).

Its primary objectives are:

- wildlife conservation (biodiversity);
- maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality and character, by helping to maintain important features, such as traditional field boundaries;
- protection of the historic environment, including archaeological features and traditional farm buildings;
- promotion of public access and understanding of the countryside; and
- natural resource protection – if ES is taken up across large areas of the countryside, it will help to improve water quality and to reduce soil erosion and surface run-off.

Within the primary objectives it also has the secondary objectives of:

- genetic conservation
- flood management.

Through meeting these objectives, ES will:

- support the adaptation of the natural environment to climate change; and
- enhance the contribution of agriculture and land management to climate change mitigation, for example by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and providing and protecting carbon storage.

ES has three elements:

- Entry Level Stewardship
- Organic Entry Level Stewardship
- Higher Level Stewardship.

Entry Level Stewardship (ELS)
ELS is a ‘whole-farm scheme’ open to all farmers and land managers in England. It is non-competitive; provided you agree to deliver enough land management options on your eligible land and meet all scheme conditions, you will automatically be guaranteed an agreement. There is a separate Entry Level Stewardship Handbook.

Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS)
OELS has the same design as ELS, but is open to farmers who manage organic land and who are not receiving aid under the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) or the Organic Aid Scheme (OAS).
Farmers who manage a combination of organic and conventionally managed land can apply for OELS on their organic land and ELS on their conventional land, as part of one combined agreement. This OELS Handbook provides all the information that you need to do so.

ELS and OELS are designed to be simple to administer; they aim to encourage large numbers of farmers and land managers across England to deliver simple yet effective environmental management.

**Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)**

HLS aims to deliver significant environmental benefits in high priority situations and areas. It will normally be combined with ELS or OELS options, to form a comprehensive agreement that achieves a wide range of environmental benefits across the whole farm.

HLS is discretionary and competitive. It concentrates on the more complex types of management, where agreements need to be tailored to local circumstances.

To apply for HLS you will need a separate HLS application pack, available from a Natural England office (see Appendix 1 for contact details). Natural England will make an initial assessment of the potential for HLS on your farm before issuing an application pack.

**1.1.2 ES in the wider context**

ES management builds on the cross compliance requirements of the Single Payment Scheme (SPS). It is a condition of joining ES that you observe cross compliance requirements across your holding, regardless of whether you are claiming under the SPS. Further information on the relationship between ES, the SPS (managed by the Rural Payments Agency - RPA) and cross compliance can be found at section 1.5.1.

Figure 1 - The relationship between Environmental Stewardship and the Single Payment Scheme.

**1.1.3 What are the key features of OELS?**

- You will receive a payment of £60 per hectare per year for all the OELS eligible land you enter into the scheme. (Note that land parcels of 15ha or more within the Moorland Line are not eligible for OELS - see section 1.2.3).

- For land undergoing conversion to organic status, conversion aid top-up payments are also available; £175 per hectare per year for two years for improved land and £600 per hectare per year for three years for top fruit orchards (see Section 1.2.6).

- In return for these payments, you will be required to meet a ‘points target’, based on your farm size, by delivering 60 points worth of simple land management options per hectare from a selection of options. You will automatically receive 30 points per hectare for entering the organic land into the scheme, to reflect the inherent environmental benefits delivered through organic farming. The remaining 30 points will be made up from your chosen management options (see section 3).
You will earn 3 points per hectare by completing a 'Farm Environment Record (FER)'. This is a mandatory requirement to record the environmental features on your land. You must then retain these features for the duration of the agreement.

You can choose from a wide range of options (eg hedgerow management, low input grassland, buffer strips and options to protect soils), covering most farming types (see Section 3). Each option will earn points towards your 'points target'.

You have the flexibility to decide how much of each option to have and where to put them, until you have chosen enough to reach your points target.

If you agree to deliver enough options on your eligible land to meet your points target and meet all the scheme conditions (see sections 1.2 - 1.5), you will be guaranteed entry into the scheme.

There are monthly start dates. Your agreement will start on the next monthly start date after the application is processed, unless you choose a later start date.

Agreements will last 5 years. Your agreement with Natural England will be legally binding and you will be required to fulfil your obligations for the full term of your agreement. You will incur a penalty if you withdraw from the scheme early or breach the terms of your agreement (see Section 5). There is no penalty for transferring into HLS.

Payments will be automatic, with no claims required until the fifth year. You will receive a payment every 6 months, equivalent to half your annual payment.

Payments for capital works are not available in OELS or ELS.

OELS across England is administered by Natural England from its Incentive Schemes Services (ISS) office at Crewe (see Appendix 1 for contact details). The scheme is straightforward in design, to enable you to apply without the need for guidance from Natural England advisers or independent agents.

In order to qualify for OELS, you must:

- not be receiving aid under either the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) or the Organic Aid Scheme (OAS) on the land you wish to enter into OELS. However, transfers from OFS or OAS into OELS may be permitted in certain circumstances (see Section 1.4.5);

- register the land you want to put into OELS with an Organic Inspection Body (OIB) before an application is made (see Section 1.1.5), and maintain this for the full duration of your agreement. If you change OIBs you must register your land with a different OIB before you de-register from your existing one, so that there is continuity of registration for the full duration of your agreement;

- farm your organic land in accordance with organic standards (further guidance on this is contained in sections 1.1.5 and 1.1.6 of this handbook) for the full duration of your agreement; and

- submit copies of the current, valid certificates of registration issued by your OIB and the accompanying schedules for all of your organic land with your application and with your final year claim. These will need to be in the name(s) of the person(s) applying for OELS.

To qualify for conversion payments, the land must not previously have been converted to full organic production, it must be registered as 'in conversion to organic farming' with an OIB and be in its first year of conversion when an application is made. You must complete the conversion of all field parcels included in your agreement and attracting conversion aid top-up payments by the fifth anniversary of the start date of your agreement.

1.1.4  What are the key features of ELS?
If you also manage conventional land you will be expected to enter this land into ELS as a combined OELS/ELS agreement. ELS is largely the same as OELS, but with the following differences:

- You will receive a payment of £30 per hectare per year for all the land you enter into ELS (see Section 1.2.8), with the exception of land parcels of 15ha or more within the Moorland Line, for which you will receive £8 per hectare per year.
You will be required to deliver 30 points worth of management options per hectare (or 8 points per hectare on land parcels of 15ha or more within the Moorland Line) from a selection of options.

For combined OELS/ELS agreements, you will be required to meet an OELS points target for your OELS eligible land, based on your organic area, and a separate ELS points target for your ELS eligible land.

The list of ELS management options is largely the same as for OELS, but some additional options are available which are unsuitable for organic systems, e.g. conservation headlands (see Section 3 for details).

1.1.5 What are the standards for organic farming?
For food to be sold as ‘organic’, it must be produced in accordance with specified European Union (EU) standards established by Council Regulation (EEC) No.2092/91 (Council Regulation No.2834/2007 after 1 January 2009). These are the organic standards referred to in the later sections of this handbook. In the UK, private Organic Inspection Bodies are responsible for ensuring that these standards are complied with. In order to apply for aid under OELS, you will need to be registered with one of these bodies. A full list can be obtained from Defra's website at www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic. Section 1.5.11 of this handbook provides further information. Should the EU standards be revised, you will also need to meet any additional requirements that may be introduced for the duration of your OELS agreement. Further information on organic standards can be obtained from the Organic Inspection Bodies or from Defra's website.

1.1.6 Where can I find further advice on conversion to organic farming?
If you are considering converting to organic production and would like to receive advice or information before making your application, you should contact the Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS) helpline on 0800 980 0048 or visit www.naturalengland.org.uk/planning/farming-wildlife/ocis. You can arrange for a free visit by an adviser experienced in organic production and marketing, who will provide impartial advice that is relevant to your business. This service is only available to farmers thinking of converting land to organic production and existing organic farmers thinking of converting additional land for an entirely new organic enterprise.

OCIS is only available to farmers and growers who have not benefited from OCIS advice in the last 5 years, who farm more than 10 ha or the enterprise they are considering converting provides more than 50 per cent of the farm income.

Advice is also available from the Organic Inspection Bodies (details of which can be obtained from the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic) and from independent consultants. You should consider carefully the financial implications for your business of going organic and you may well need training if your enterprise is to succeed. A number of colleges offer courses in organic agriculture and horticulture; details are available from the OCIS helpline.

1.2 How the OELS scheme works

1.2.1 Who is eligible to apply?

Private landowners and land managers
OELS and ELS are open to all farmers and land managers who are:

- freehold owners;
- tenants; or
- contractual licensees.

You must have management control of the land for the entire 5 years of your agreement. If you are not certain to have management control lasting 5 years, you must make a countersigned application with the person who undertakes to carry on your agreement if your management control of the land ceases. Further guidance on countersigned applications is provided in section 1.3.1.
It is imperative that the name of the signatory to the OELS agreement matches that on the organic licence and associated schedules. If you are a tenant or grazier who holds the license then you must be the agreement holder, or at the very least a counter-signatory to the agreement. It is the responsibility of the license holder to maintain registration for the entirety of the agreement.

**Public bodies and their tenants**
The underlying principle of eligibility is that payment should not be given for any work that is required by statutory duty, through payment from Exchequer funds or grant aid from any other public body, or any other form of legally binding obligation.

Crown bodies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) are not eligible for ES agreements. This includes those that are Trading Funds or that otherwise do not receive funding direct from the Exchequer. Crown bodies include all government departments and their executive agencies. These include the Ministry of Defence, the Forestry Commission, the Crown Estate, the Duchy of Lancaster, Forest Enterprise and the Royal Parks. NDPBs are public bodies that have a role in the processes of national government but are not a government department or part of one. These include the Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage, and the National Forest Company.

Other public bodies, including local authorities, national park authorities and public corporations, are not eligible for OELS, but are eligible for HLS.

Parish councils and former college farms are not considered to be public bodies.

Tenants of public bodies with security of tenure for the term of an agreement are eligible for OELS, except where the works fall within the remit of the landlord as part of their normal duties or are a requirement of their tenancy agreement.

A list of NDPBs and other public bodies can be found on the Cabinet Office website at: www.civilservice.gov.uk/other/agencies/index.asp.

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<td>Tenants of public bodies</td>
<td>Eligible</td>
<td>Eligible</td>
<td>Ineligible where the landlord is expected to carry out the work as part of their normal duties, or it is a requirement of the tenancy agreements.</td>
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**1.2.2 What will I be required to do if I apply?**
In applying for - and being accepted into - OELS or OELS/ELS, you will be agreeing to:

- identify, map and retain your Farm Environment Record (FER) features (see section 2.3.4 Step 5);
- deliver the options that you select in your application form in accordance with the management requirements set out in Section 3; and
- adhere to all the scheme terms and conditions contained in this handbook, in particular to follow cross compliance requirements throughout your farm, and to comply with the other additional requirements contained in section 1.5.

**1.2.3 Should I apply for OELS, ELS or both?**
Which element you apply for will depend on the type of land that you manage.
You should apply for an ELS-only agreement if:

- all your land is farmed conventionally; or
- you are applying for an agreement on common land (see section 1.3.4); or
- all of your land is in parcels of 15 ha or more within the Moorland Line (see section 1.1.4).

If you are applying for ELS only you should refer instead to the ELS Handbook.

You should apply for an OELS-only agreement if:

- all your land is organic (including land in conversion); and
- none of your land is in parcels of 15 ha or more within the Moorland Line.

You should apply for a combined OELS/ELS agreement if:

- you have a combination of both organic and conventional land; or
- your land is registered organic but some is in land parcels of 15 ha or more within the Moorland Line.

When making a combined OELS/ELS application, you will have one points target for your organic land, which you will have to achieve with organic options on that land, and another target for your conventional land, which you will have to achieve with conventional options on that land. In effect, you will be applying for OELS on your OELS-eligible land and for ELS on your ELS-eligible land, but these will be managed as a single agreement.

Where hedges or ditches separate organic and conventional land, the side of the boundary facing the conventional land should be entered into ELS and the other side into OELS. Stone walls in the same situation may be entered into either scheme.

1.2.4 What land can I enter into the scheme?

Please note that this and subsequent sections of this handbook refer to the land. Land for the purposes of this handbook is all the OELS (and where relevant ELS) eligible land (as defined below) and associated field boundaries registered on the Rural Land Register (RLR) and submitted as an OELS/ELS or OELS application. Your application may include land registered under more than one holding number.

Any field parcels entered into the scheme must be entirely within England. Field parcels that are either partly or entirely within Scotland or Wales are not eligible for OELS or ELS.

Land entered into the scheme must be registered on the RLR and must be part of the farmed environment. This means:

- all your farmed land. OELS and ELS are whole-farm schemes, so your application must include all the eligible farmland that you occupy and manage; and
- other non-farmed land. You may also enter other land that does not contribute to your farming system but which nevertheless is considered to be part of the farmed environment. For example, large blocks of woodland, parcels of scrub, disused mineral sites and neglected areas.

Entering such additional areas into OELS (or OELS/ELS) will increase the whole-farm area and therefore the points target that must be delivered, as well as the overall payment.

Placing options on these land types may, however, be difficult, inappropriate or impossible. Where this is the case, you will have to locate additional options elsewhere to meet your points target. Where such land covers a large proportion of your holding, you may find it difficult to deliver enough options to reach your points target. If this is the case, you may prefer to exclude some of these areas from your application (although you will not receive payment for the excluded area).
1.2.5 What land must be excluded from my application?
The following land must not be included:

- developed land and hard standing (including permanent caravan sites and areas used for permanent storage). Note though that although this land will not contribute to the points threshold, you can earn points on developed land where it contains an environmental feature that is recorded in your FER and which can be managed under an appropriate option. Typically this would be a traditional farm building managed under the option for maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings;

- significant areas (1 ha or more) of standing and running water, with the exception of intertidal habitats;

- land that is already subject to another scheme or obligation that is incompatible with ES (see section 1.4); and

- common land (which can enter ELS but only as a stand-alone agreement separate from an agreement on your other land - see section 1.3.4).

1.2.6 Which parts of my holding are eligible for conversion aid top-up payments?
Under OELS, you may also apply for conversion aid top-up payments on:

- top fruit orchards planted with pears, plums, cherries and apples (excluding apples and pears used to produce cider or perry). In order to be eligible under this land category, at the time of application the trees must be evenly planted in blocks to a minimum density of 80 trees per hectare. There is no minimum or maximum size of block; and

- improved land (defined as land that has been ploughed or has received artificial fertiliser in the 20 years ending on the date of application to OELS), which is not:
  - a top fruit orchard, or
  - planted with mature trees or shrubs or planted to woodland or coppice, unless it is used for grazing or keeping livestock.

The following areas/features are not eligible for conversion aid and must be excluded from your top-up calculations:

- Top fruit orchards used to produce alcoholic drinks. These are excluded on the basis that they do not contribute to the Government's overall target of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption. Fruit that is used to produce non-alcoholic drinks is eligible.

- Unimproved land. This is excluded because, in general, the management practice on such land will not be significantly affected by organic registration.

- Rivers, streams and ponds.

- Outbuildings.

- Land planted with mature trees or shrubs or land planted to woodland or coppice (but you may include forage areas within woodland if they are used for grazing or keeping livestock).

- Land in its second year of conversion when the application is submitted.

Acceptance will be guaranteed providing the land is:

- registered as 'in conversion' to organic farming with an Organic Inspection Body before making an application under OELS;

- in its first year of conversion when your application is submitted;

- has not been the subject of an agreement that has previously provided for the payment of conversion aid; and

- has not been previously converted to full organic production at any time since 10 August 1993.

It is possible to combine conversion payments with another OELS option, provided that both the conversion requirements and the option prescriptions can be met.
With the agreement of your Organic Inspection Body, you may choose to convert different parcels of land in stages over a number of years. For details of how to phase conversions within OELS, see section 4.7.

Conversion aid is only paid as part of an OELS-only or OELS/ELS agreement, and is not available separately. So if you apply for conversion aid top-up payments as part of your OELS-only or OELS/ELS application and your application is rejected because you are unable to meet or exceed your points target(s), conversion top-ups will not be paid.

1.2.7 Restrictions on applications including conversion aid
The amount of money available for conversion aid is determined in advance, and Defra may temporarily suspend applications for conversion aid to avoid budgetary overspend. In addition, we need to ensure that the money available is distributed between the different organic sectors, so as to avoid oversupply of a particular organic product/commodity (and the consequent effect on prices). To do this we may need to suspend applications for conversion aid from particular sector(s) if there is unusually heavy demand.

We will, in all cases, give farmers what we consider to be reasonable notice that applications for conversion aid will not be accepted. This will not, however, affect the £60 per hectare ongoing payment under OELS, for which applications will continue to be accepted.

1.2.8 What payments will I receive?

- OELS-eligible land: a flat-rate payment of £60 per hectare per year.
- ELS-eligible land outside the Moorland Line and ELS-eligible land within the Moorland Line in parcels smaller than 15 ha: a flat-rate payment of £30 per hectare per year.
- ELS-eligible land within the Moorland Line in parcels of 15 ha or more: a flat-rate payment of £8 per hectare per year. This rate reflects the relatively lower impact on costs of participation in ES in moorland areas.

For land undergoing conversion as part of an OELS agreement, the following conversion aid top-up payment rates apply:

- £175 per hectare per year, for the first 2 years of your OELS agreement for areas of improved land.
- £600 per hectare per year, for the first 3 years of your OELS agreement for areas of top fruit orchards (defined as pears, plums, cherries and apples, excluding apples and pears used to produce cider and perry).

Subject to section 4.9, the payment rates you receive for OELS and ELS will remain the same for the duration of your agreement.

1.2.9 How and when will I be paid?
If you are accepted, you will receive a payment every 6 months of your agreement. Each 6 monthly payment will be half of your annual payment and each of these payments will be made automatically apart from the final payment.

Towards the final year of your agreement you will be sent a form to claim for the remaining payment. When making this final claim, you will need to sign a declaration to confirm that you have complied with the terms of your agreement throughout the five years and submit copies of that year’s current, valid certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules for all the organic land comprising your organic unit.

Following the introduction of a new EC regulation, all payments made after 15 October 2008 have to be made directly into your bank account and payments by cheque will not be available. If the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) do not have your bank details please contact them and request a Bank Details registration form (see Appendix 1 for contact details). If you do not provide bank details to enable payment to be made direct to your account, RPA will not be able to pay you.

1.2.10 How is the scheme inspected and monitored?
RPA conduct an inspection programme, visiting a percentage of agreements every year to assess compliance with the scheme requirements. If your agreement is selected for inspection you must assist the inspector with their work. See section 1.5.7 for details.

Natural England and Defra manage a monitoring programme to assess the environmental and economic impacts of the scheme. By applying to join the scheme you are agreeing to co-operate with any scheme monitoring.
1.2.11 Will my details be made public?
The data controller is Natural England, Northminster House, Peterborough, PE1 1UA.

Your information will be stored and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. This Act gives you, as an individual, the right to know what data we hold on you, how we use it, with whom we share it and that it is accurate.

The data will be used for administering and analysing applications/agreements/claims under ES. It will be circulated and discussed in confidence with those persons or organisations helping Natural England to assess and monitor the application/agreement/claim. Some information will be shared with other grant distribution bodies and government departments, to enable them to detect fraudulent applications/agreements/claims and to co-ordinate the processing of complementary applications/agreements/claims. To do this, we may have to discuss applications/agreements/claims with third parties or disclose information about funding decisions.

As participation in this scheme involves expenditure of public money and there is public interest in how the money is spent, Natural England in line with European Regulations makes information about applications/agreements/claims publicly available, for example on a website at: www.natureonthemap.org.uk. Details disclosed include, but are not limited to, your name, the name and address of your farm or business, postal town/parish, first part of your post code, grid references, the total area under agreement, the payments you receive, the location of fields, details of the environmental features and management options they contain and details of Defra inspections (see section 1.5.7). On request, copies of individual agreements will be made available.

Natural England or its appointed agents may use the name, address and other details on your application form to contact you in connection with occasional customer research aimed at improving the services that Natural England provides to you.

We will respect personal privacy, whilst complying with access to information requests to the extent necessary to enable Natural England to comply with its statutory obligations under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

1.3 What if I do not have full control over the land?

1.3.1 What if I do not own some or all of the land?
If you are a tenant or contractual licensee you must ensure that by joining and participating in OELS you do not breach the conditions of your tenancy/licence. If you do not have sufficient control over the management of the land, or if your tenancy/licence has less than 5 years to run, even if you are expecting a further extension, your landlord/the landowner must agree to take over the OELS agreement in the event of your control lapsing. They must countersign your application to this effect.

If you need to make a countersigned application you must discuss the proposal with the relevant person (eg the freehold owner, your landlord, the person whose land you farm) and complete section 2 of the application form. The relevant person will have to sign the declaration at section 2 to confirm that they will ensure that your agreement commitments are fulfilled, if for any reason you cease to have control over the land during the 5 years of your agreement.

If you have more than one tenancy/licence with less than 5 years to run, you will need to complete a supplementary land ownership and control form (NE-LOC) for each additional tenancy/licence. These forms are available from your Natural England ISS office (see Appendix 1 for contact details) and are also available for you to download from the Natural England website at: www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/forms/agrienv/default.htm.

1.3.2 What if I own land which is let to a tenant or licensee?
If your tenant(s) or licensee(s) have a long term tenancy/licence they may wish to apply for OELS. Where your tenant/licensee does not have management control for 5 years you will need to countersign their application.

If you set up a tenancy/licence during the course of an OELS agreement, you should notify the tenant/licensee(s) of the OELS agreement and your obligations under that agreement. It will be your responsibility to ensure that they do not breach the terms of your agreement. It may be appropriate to transfer the agreement to the tenant or set up a joint agreement (see section 4).
1.3.3 Partnerships and trusts
If you are a partnership, trust, or similar, you can make an application, but Natural England will not become involved in any disputes between individuals and you must comply with the following conditions:

- All members of the partnership/trust must appoint a signatory to make an application on their behalf and that person must agree to take full responsibility for the agreement.
- The signatory must sign any amendment and claim forms, where these are necessary.
- The signatory must take on the responsibility for delivery of the whole agreement.
- The signatory will receive all the payments and must be responsible for paying back any grant, if there is a breach of the agreement.

In addition, for OELS-eligible land:

- The signatory must ensure that all of the land parcels managed by the group to be included in the application are registered with an Organic Inspection Body before the application is submitted. Copies of the certificates and accompanying schedules for all of the land managed by the group and included in the application must accompany the application. Where the land in question is being converted to organic production a conversion plan will also need to have been agreed with the Organic Inspection Body prior to application.
- The signatory will be expected to ensure that all of the organic land covered by the agreement remains registered with the Organic Inspection Body for the entire duration of the agreement, and that all members of the group observe the scheme's general and specific organic requirements.
- The signatory will receive any conversion aid top-up payments claimed and must be responsible for paying back any top-up payments if there is a breach of the agreement concerning conversion aid (see Section 5).

1.3.4 Is common land eligible?
Common land is not eligible for OELS.

Common land is eligible for ELS, but only as a separate application covering the whole common. In this situation you should refer to the ELS Handbook instead of this one.

1.3.5 What if others hold rights over my land?
If others hold rights over your land, for example if you have let sporting rights, you should discuss your application with them. It is your responsibility to deliver the options specified in your application and to meet all the scheme conditions.

1.4 What should I do if I have another scheme or obligation on my land?
As a general rule Natural England cannot pay you for management that you, (or your landlord), are required to do under an existing scheme or obligation. The following paragraphs list the most frequently occurring alternative schemes and obligations. Please look through this section to check if any of the guidance applies to your land.

1.4.1 Single Payment Scheme (SPS)
Land receiving payments from the SPS may be entered into OELS and/or ELS. The payment will be in addition to any payment you receive for SPS.

1.4.2 Habitat Scheme
Land in a Habitat Scheme agreement may be included in your OELS- or ELS-eligible area, and hence contribute to your points target and payment. However, you may not locate any OELS or ELS options on this land. If this makes it harder to achieve your points target, you can exclude this land from your application.

1.4.3 Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS)
If you already have a CSS agreement covering some of your land, as a general rule you cannot apply for OELS on the same land. You may, however, be able to apply for OELS on the land that is not receiving funding under the CSS agreement.

Detailed rules setting out how OELS and CSS can co-exist on a single holding are given at section 2.1.7.
1.4.4 Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) Scheme
If you have a whole-farm ESA agreement, you cannot apply for OELS or ELS on that land until your ESA agreement has come to the end of its term. If you have land that is subject to a part-farm ESA agreement, you must follow the instructions at section 2.1.7.

Early transfer from CSS or ESA agreements
There are limited opportunities for early transfer from CSS or ESA agreements into OELS or ELS; mainly when OELS or ELS is to be combined with HLS. If you are considering early transfer, you should discuss this with your CSS/ESA adviser within Natural England before submitting an application. They will decide on the most appropriate course of action, taking into account the environmental benefits that can be achieved through each scheme and value for money. If you do not know who your CSS/ESA adviser is, please contact the relevant Natural England ISS office – see Appendix 1 for contact details.

1.4.5 Organic Farming Scheme (OFS)
Land covered by an existing OFS agreement cannot also be entered into an OELS agreement. It is possible to terminate an OFS agreement in order to transfer the land into OELS, but you should be aware of these two key principles:

- Land undergoing conversion to organic status within OFS cannot be transferred into OELS until the last parcel is registered as fully organic.
- All the land included in an OFS agreement should be transferred into OELS. Whilst it is possible to transfer some but not all of the land in an OFS agreement into OELS, when this is done Natural England will terminate the entire OFS agreement and take action to recover all of the OFS aid previously paid on the land parcels not transferred into OELS.

If you currently have an OFS agreement and are considering applying to join OELS, either on the land currently in the OFS or elsewhere on your holding, you should consider the following options.

OFS conversion agreements
- You can wait until the OFS agreement(s) expire, then apply to join OELS; or
- You can remain in the OFS until all of the field parcels covered by your OFS conversion agreement(s) have completed conversion, at which stage you can apply to join OELS. If you take advantage of this option, you must transfer all field parcels covered by your OFS conversion agreement(s) into OELS in their entirety, or be liable to recovery action as indicated above.

OFS phased conversion agreements
Depending on the nature of your conversion plan, it may be possible for you to take advantage of the OFS-to-OELS transfer rules, and apply to terminate an OFS phased agreement early.

- You should remain in the OFS until the last parcel to be converted under your phased agreement has completed conversion; then apply to transfer all of your OFS-agreement land into OELS.
- If there is a break in the phasing of your conversion plan, you can take advantage of that break to transfer your land into OELS early and claim OELS conversion aid top-up payments on any field parcels that have yet to be converted under your new OELS agreement.
- Alternatively, you can remain in the OFS until your existing phased agreement(s) expire, and then apply to join OELS.

OFS maintenance agreements
- You can remain in the OFS until your maintenance agreement(s) expires, then apply to join OELS; or
- You can apply to join OELS, transferring all of the field parcels covered by your existing OFS maintenance agreement(s) into OELS.
**Multiple OFS conversion and/or maintenance agreements**

It is possible to terminate several OFS agreements at the same time and put all of the field parcels covered by those agreements under just one OELS agreement, providing that the two key principles set out above are adhered to.

**Transfers from OFS into OELS**

If after reading the above guidance you wish to take advantage of the OFS-to-OELS transfer rules, you must follow the steps at section 2.1.5 when making your application.

If you would prefer to remain in the OFS until your existing conversion and/or maintenance agreement(s) expire, the field parcels covered by these agreement(s) must be excluded from your OELS application. Section 2.1.6 explains how to do this.

1.4.6 **Energy Crops Scheme (ECS)**

**OELS-eligible land**

If you have land in the ECS, it must be excluded from the area of land counting towards your OELS points target and associated payment.

**ELS-eligible land**

Land in the ECS can count towards the area used to calculate your ELS points target and associated payment, but you must not locate any ELS options on land planted under the ECS (including the ECS paid area of open ground).

Where ECS planting (including paid areas of open ground) is on a part-field basis, ELS options may be located within the land parcel – provided that there is no overlap of ELS options with ECS-payable areas on the ground.

Boundaries surrounding ECS parcels may be entered into ELS boundary management options.

1.4.7 **Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS), Farm Woodland Scheme (FWS), Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS)**

Woodlands under FWPS, FWS, WGS or EWGS agreements can count towards your eligible land area. However, OELS/ELS options may not be co-located with any land, including open space, funded under those schemes.

To be included as part of your OELS-eligible area, woodland under these schemes must also be listed on your certificate of organic registration and accompanying schedules provided by your Organic Inspection Body.

1.4.8 **Hill Farm Allowance (HFA)**

Land on which you are claiming HFA is eligible to count towards your points targets, and you may put OELS and ELS management options, as appropriate, on HFA land.

1.4.9 **Scheduled Monuments**

Scheduled Monuments and other land covered by an English Heritage (EH) management agreement can count towards the area used to calculate your OELS or ELS points target and associated payment, provided that there is no overlap between the requirements of the EH agreement and the general OELS/ELS requirements (set out at section 1.5).

Similarly, you may only locate OELS or ELS options on land covered by an EH management agreement provided there is no overlap between the requirements of the EH agreement and the option prescriptions.

You should be prepared on any compliance inspection to be able to demonstrate on a parcel-by-parcel basis how the selected options do not overlap with your existing undertakings. Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that your application meets these scheme rules.

Scheduled Monuments in respect of which you are not receiving payment are eligible for OELS and ELS. You must ensure that there is no conflict between OELS/ELS management and the management requirements of the Scheduled Monuments.

1.4.10 **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**

OELS management must not conflict with the management requirements of any SSSI land included in your agreement. As the relevant authority for the management of SSSIs, Natural England will consider whether to give permission for any management options proposed on an SSSI before issuing an OELS agreement.
When giving such permission it may be necessary to amend an OELS application to ensure that it is consistent with the SSSI management requirements, by either adding/removing options from the SSSI, or adding one or two conditions to the standard option prescriptions. Where this is necessary, we will discuss it with you first.

Permissions for management activities on SSSI land granted as part of an OELS agreement are limited to the duration of that agreement, and do not transfer from one land manager to another.

Please note also the specific requirements about derogations on SSSI land at section 4.8.

**1.4.11 Protected species**
Participation in OELS will normally be consistent with the protection of species listed under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994, (European Protected Species). These include bats, otter, dormouse, natterjack toad, smooth snake, sand lizard, great crested newt and large blue butterfly. If you know that these species are present on your land, and there may be a potential conflict between OELS management and your legal obligations, you must ensure that the OELS options you select are consistent with the species protection requirements.

Advice for farmers on the conservation of protected species and their relation to OELS is available on the Natural England website at: www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/wildlife-management-licensing/habsregs.htm#BPlandmanager.

**1.4.12 Inheritance Tax/Capital Gains Tax exemption**
Land conditionally exempt from Inheritance Tax or designated as the object of a maintenance fund by HM Revenue and Customs is normally eligible for OELS/ELS. However, you must not claim for work that is a formal requirement of the undertakings agreed with HM Revenue and Customs. You will therefore need to look carefully at the relevant OELS/ELS options that are available for this land, to ensure you do not include such work in your application.

Keep a copy of a map on which you have clearly marked the boundary of any exempt or designated land, and be prepared on subsequent compliance inspection to be able to demonstrate on a parcel-by-parcel basis how the selected options do not overlap with your existing undertakings. Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure your application meets these scheme rules.

A guidance note on Environmental Stewardship for heritage properties designated under the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 (Defra, 2005) is a leaflet providing more detailed information for owners of Inheritance Tax-exempt properties and their advisers. It is available on the Defra website (www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/pdfs/es/guidance/es-inheritance-tax-heritage.pdf) or from your Natural England ISS office (see Appendix 1 for contact details).

**1.4.13 Farm assurance schemes and the Pesticide Industry Voluntary Initiative**
If you are already taking part in one or more farm assurance schemes or the Voluntary Initiative, this will not affect your eligibility to apply for OELS/ELS. You may find it easier to accumulate points towards your points target as a result of the management you are already following. This is particularly the case for assurance schemes that aim for improved environmental standards, such as the Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF) Marque.

**1.4.14 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs)**
If you are in an NVZ, you must make sure that you are fully aware of the mandatory NVZ Action Programme rules. These rules apply to the way you manage your land to minimise the risk of diffuse nitrate pollution. If your land is within an NVZ, it is your responsibility to ensure you can meet the rules of both the NVZ Action Programme and OELS/ELS. Where the rules overlap, you must meet those that are the most demanding.

Further information on the NVZ Action Programme measures and detailed maps of NVZ locations are available on the Defra Internet at www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/quality/nitrate/default.htm.

**1.4.15 The Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2006**
These regulations seek to protect environmentally important land from agricultural intensification. Land managers are required to seek approval from Natural England before carrying out any work that would intensify the agricultural use of uncultivated land or semi-natural areas, such as cultivation or increasing the amount of fertiliser added annually.

It is unlikely that OELS or ELS options will alter the status of land in relation to these regulations, but you should consider this before you apply. Enquiries about the Regulations should be addressed to the Environmental Impact Assessment Helpline on 0800 028 2140.
1.4.16 Non-farming activities on organic land
Before allowing any non-farming activities to be carried out on your organic land (e.g. caravan parks), you must contact your Organic Inspection Body to ensure that the status of your organic land will not be compromised. You will also need to ensure that the proposed activities do not conflict with the delivery of the management you have agreed to undertake on your OELS-eligible land.

1.4.17 Other obligations
You must make sure that there are no other duties or obligations on you or the land that would conflict with your OELS agreement.

1.5 Additional requirements to which you must agree

1.5.1 Cross compliance
Cross compliance, which already applies to farmers claiming under the Single Payment Scheme (SPS), will also apply to all OELS and ELS agreements starting on or after 1 February 2007 and to all Higher Level Stewardship agreements entered into on or after 1 May 2007. (All other ES agreements entered into prior to these dates remain subject to the requirements of Good Farming Practice.)

Cross compliance is a series of standards and requirements that you will have to meet as a condition of your Environmental Stewardship payments. When joining ES you will be agreeing to:

- maintain your land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) by meeting a range of standards that relate to the protection of soils, habitats and landscape features; and
- meet a range of Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) covering the environment, public and plant health, animal health and welfare, and livestock identification and tracing.

A proportion of agreement holders will be inspected each year to check for compliance with the cross compliance standards and requirements. If any non-compliance is found, it will normally be necessary to reduce your ES payments, depending on the seriousness of the non-compliance. Because cross compliance applies to a number of schemes (including Environmental Stewardship, the Single Payment Scheme and Hill Farm Allowance), any reductions due as a result of a non-compliance will be applied to payments due under each of the schemes for which you have submitted a claim.

Full details of cross compliance can be found in Single Payment Scheme: The Guide to Cross Compliance in England (Defra, 2007) and the associated publication Single Payment Scheme: Management of Habitats and Landscape Features: Guidance for Cross Compliance in England (Defra, 2007) or via the Defra cross compliance advice programme. This has a dedicated helpline (0845 345 1302), email address info@crosscompliance.org.uk and website: www.crosscompliance.org.uk.

OELS options have been designed to go beyond cross compliance requirements. For details of how OELS boundary management options and buffer strip options fit with cross compliance margins, please see the relevant option details in Section 3 of this handbook.

1.5.2 Avoidance of undergrazing
It is a requirement of the RDPE that under-grazing is avoided on holdings with OELS agreements. Stock should be distributed across your farm to ensure that under-utilisation is avoided. This is defined as where annual growth is not being fully utilised, or where scrub or coarse vegetation is becoming evident, and this is detrimental to the environmental interests of the site. Cases of suspected under-grazing will be investigated and failure to follow subsequent professional advice would be a breach of your agreement.

1.5.3 Public rights of way
As a condition of joining the scheme, you must maintain existing public rights of way on your land and abide by the relevant legislation. This means that you must meet the following requirements.
Keeping rights of way clear of obstruction
Keep rights of way clear of any obstructions, such as padlocked gates, rubbish, barbed wire, slurry, manure, electric fences, hedgerows and chained or loose dogs. If necessary, cut back vegetation encroaching from the sides (but not the surface) and above, so that it does not inconvenience the public or prevent the right of way being apparent on the ground. Bridleways should have 3 metres (10 feet) of headroom, to allow adequate access for riders.

Rights of way on cultivated land
Make sure that field-edge footpaths and bridleways and all byways are never cultivated. Keep cross-field paths clearly visible and clear of crops (other than hay or silage) and only plough or cultivate if unavoidable. If you do cultivate a cross-field path, the surface must be made good within 14 days of the first cultivation, or within 24 hours of subsequent cultivation, unless otherwise agreed with the highway authority.

Stiles, gates, bridges and signs
Make sure that stiles and gates on rights of way are maintained in good order.

Provide adequate bridges where, with the permission of the highway authority, new ditches are made or existing ones widened.

You may waymark public rights of way if you consider it necessary, and you must warn users of potential dangers (e.g. slurry lagoons or cliffs). Make sure that no misleading signs are placed near rights of way that might discourage access.

Dangerous animals
Bulls must not be kept in fields crossed by a path unless they are not of a recognised dairy breed and they are accompanied by cows or heifers, or they are younger than 10 months. Any warning notices should only be displayed when a bull is present in a field.

1.5.4 Protection of historic features
Your annotated Farm Environment Record (FER), which includes information supplied by Natural England on the Environmental Information Map (see section 2.2.1) will show the location of some of the historic features (including archaeological features and traditional farm buildings) on your land. For any of these FER features, and for any additional features of which you are subsequently advised in writing by Natural England, you must meet the following scheme conditions:

- Do not cause ground disturbance, including poaching by livestock, on known archaeological sites or areas of historic interest under grassland. (For this purpose we use the same definition of ‘grassland’ as that given for the grassland options (see section 3K): ‘land which is used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage naturally or through cultivation and which has not been subject to cultivation for at least 5 years’)

- Do not sub-soil or de-stone on areas containing known archaeological sites unless these operations have been demonstrably undertaken as a routine in the past 5 years.

- Do not deliberately plough more deeply or undertake additional groundworks or drainage on those areas already under cultivation that contain known archaeological sites.

- Do not run free-range pigs on archaeological sites.

- Do not remove any useable building stone, walling stone or traditional roofing material off the land, excluding materials produced from established quarries.

- Do not damage, demolish or remove building material from substantially complete ruined traditional farm buildings or field boundaries.

1.5.5 Archaeological fieldwork and metal detecting on your land
With the exception of Scheduled Monuments (SMs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and known archaeological sites under grassland, metal detecting is allowed on land within an OELS agreement, provided that it is undertaken in accordance with the principles of best practice laid down in the most up-to-date Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales and that you agree that all finds are reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. For details of this code, please see: www.finds.org.uk/documents/CofP1.pdf.
By ‘sites under grassland’ we mean land that is covered by the definition of grassland given for the grassland options (see section 3K): ‘land which is used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage naturally or through cultivation and which has not been subject to cultivation for at least 5 years’.

By ‘known archaeological sites’ we mean archaeological sites identified in your FER and any additional sites of which you are subsequently advised in writing by Natural England.

You must also ensure that the metal detecting does not conflict with the requirements of your OELS agreement. Specifically:

- Where the act or timing of the proposed detecting will affect your ability to meet any option prescriptions, a derogation from Natural England will be required. Section 4.8 explains how to apply for a derogation.

- As part of your OELS agreement you are required to protect and retain archaeological sites and other environmental features (ie the features identified in your FER) over the entire area under agreement. You must ensure that no damage is caused to these features, and any additional features of which you are subsequently advised in writing by Natural England, wherever metal detecting takes place.

‘Damage’ to archaeological sites is taken to mean disturbance of previously undisturbed deposits in and on archaeological sites and monuments, and any removal, loss and/or disruption of standing masonry or other upstanding structural material. If you are in any doubt about whether any operations would ‘damage’ environmental features, please contact your Natural England office (see Appendix 1 for contact details).

Details of large scale metal detecting events, including metal detecting rallies, on any OELS agreement land must be notified in writing to Natural England at least 12 weeks in advance of the event. You should provide all available details including the date, location, a map showing the fields to be searched (marked with any areas excluded), and the expected number of participants. This will enable us to provide you with additional advice to ensure that the event does not conflict with the requirements and objectives of your OELS agreement.

On Scheduled Monuments a licence is required from English Heritage before metal detecting can take place. Detecting without such a licence is an offence.

On SSSIs where actions resulting from metal detecting (eg digging or vegetation disturbance) are listed as ‘operations likely to damage the special interest’ of the SSSI, written notice must be given to Natural England of these operations. Detecting can only proceed with written consent.

A derogation is required for any proposed fieldwork that would cause, or is expected to cause, ground disturbance (such as test-pitting or excavation) or ‘damage’ (see above) to any known archaeological sites. Section 4.8 explains how to apply for a derogation.

In addition, any archaeological fieldwork (including the use of ground-penetrating radar or remote sensing) on Scheduled Monuments requires written consent from English Heritage before fieldwork can commence. Any archaeological fieldwork (including the use of ground-penetrating radar or remote sensing) on SSSIs requires written consent from Natural England (as above) before fieldwork can commence.

1.5.6 Other activities on your land

Subject to any other existing restrictions, country pursuits such as shooting, hunting and fishing are allowed. You should discuss an intended application with any sporting tenants and anyone else with rights over your land, such as profits à prendre and easements. You should make sure that any activities, and the exercise of other rights, will not conflict with the delivery of the required management of the scheme options.

1.5.7 Allow inspection

Authorised Defra staff or their agents may visit you to inspect your land during the course of your agreement. EU regulations require that in many cases there will be no warning of an inspection. You must give inspecting officers access at any reasonable time and you may be asked to accompany them to help identify work and discuss the requirements of your agreement. Deliberate failure to be available to accompany the officer will be treated as unacceptable and potentially as a breach of agreement. In addition, if you refuse an inspection, payment on your agreement will be suspended.
1.5.8 Agricultural Waste Regulations
You must abide by the Agricultural Waste Regulations, which came into force on 15 May 2006. These regulations affect whether you can burn, bury or store your waste, use your waste on the farm or send it elsewhere. These regulations also control the spreading of ditch dredgings from farm ditches on agricultural land. You must hold an exemption to carry out this practice on your farm.

1.5.9 Plaques
If the payment over the life of your agreement will be worth more than €50,000, you will need to display a plaque that meets EU requirements. We will provide you with an appropriate plaque.

1.5.10 Organic standards inspections
Inspectors from your Organic Inspection Body will visit your farm at least once a year in order to check that you are meeting the necessary organic farming standards. Natural England may need to obtain a copy of these inspection reports for administrative purposes, and in applying to enter OELS you authorise the release of these reports to Natural England.

1.5.11 Organic standards
Since 1992, the production of organic food has been strictly regulated by EU law (Council Regulation 2092/91 and, from 1 January 2009, Council Regulation 834/2007). The standards prescribed by these regulations set out the inputs and practices that may be used in organic farming and growing and the processing of organic food and feed, as well as the inspection system to be used to ensure that the standards are met. All food and feed sold as organic must therefore originate from growers, processors and importers who are registered with an approved Organic Inspection Body and are subject to regular inspection.

You should also be aware that, wherever possible, organic seeds must be used on OELS land. Where this is not possible, you must contact your Organic Inspection Body for a derogation. This does not apply to any agreed procedures allowing the use of grass seed mixtures that have a minimum organic content.

1.5.12 Keep necessary records
If your application is successful, Natural England will send you a letter to confirm your acceptance into the scheme. Your FER and Options Maps (see section 2.3.2) will be returned to you. You must retain these documents as part of your agreement and because Defra staff or their agents may ask to see them during inspections.

You must also keep records of the location and timing of 'rotational options' and any specific records referred to in the management options in Section 3 of this handbook.

You are required to keep comprehensive records as evidence of your organic farming practices. This means that you will be expected to renew the registration of your organic land each year to ensure that you are registered with an Organic Inspection Body for the full duration of your OELS agreement. Copies of these certificates and schedules must also be retained for the full duration of your agreement, and you will be in breach of your agreement if you fail to comply with this requirement (see Section 5).
Section 2

How to apply

2.1 What do I need to consider before I submit my application?

2.1.1 Register your land on the Rural Land Register (RLR)
All the land that you intend to enter into ES must be registered on the RLR before you submit your application. The RLR provides a digital record of all farmed land in England and use of this database will help to ensure that applications can be processed quickly and efficiently (see Appendix 1 for Rural Payments Agency (RPA) contact details).

Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) is a whole-farm scheme, so your application must include all the eligible RLR-registered land that you occupy and manage. This land can include areas covered by woodland and scrub, provided they are registered on the RLR (see section 1.2.4).

2.1.2 Registering split parcels on the RLR
Where a parcel of land is managed both conventionally and organically, you must split the parcel into two and register each area separately on the RLR before it can be included in your application or contribute towards either your OELS- or ELS-eligible land areas. If you need to register a split parcel, please contact RPA and request an RLE1 form (see Appendix 1 for contact details).

In order for the area of organically managed land that previously made up the split parcel to be eligible for OELS and count towards your OELS-eligible land area and points target, it must also be registered as either fully organic or in conversion with your Organic Inspection Body, and listed as such on your annual certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules.

However, where you find it difficult to split a parcel, you may choose to exclude it entirely from your application. If you choose to do this, please be aware that you will not receive any OELS or ELS payment for the excluded area.

If you need to delete a split parcel from your pre-filled application form, you should follow the instructions provided in section 2.3.4, Step 1.

2.1.3 Ensure that you have an RPA vendor number and a County Parish Holding (CPH) number
The vendor number is a unique trader registration number allocated to you by the RPA so that you can receive payments. You will need to enter this number on the OELS application form. The CPH number enables Natural England to identify the location of your holding and provide your application maps.

If you have previously claimed payments under the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) or other Defra/RPA schemes, you will already have a vendor number and a CPH number. If you do not have a vendor number or a CPH number, you must obtain them from the RPA (see Appendix 1 for contact details).

2.1.4 How do I request my application form and maps?
OELS applications must be submitted by post. If you have not received the pre-filled application form and set of application maps, you will need to follow these steps:

1. Read Section 1 of this handbook to check that you and your land are eligible for OELS/ELS;
2. Check that all the land you wish to enter into the scheme is on the RLR (see section 2.1.1);
3. Make sure you have a vendor number and a CPH number (see section 2.1.3);
4. Telephone your Natural England ISS office (contact numbers are listed at Appendix 1 of this handbook). You will need to quote or confirm the following:
   • your name and correspondence address, including postcode;
   • your vendor number; and
• the CPH number(s) covering the eligible RLR land parcels that you are entering into ES.

You should also have a list of your field details to hand, in case you also need to confirm one or both of the following:

• Individual RLR field parcel number(s) for any ineligible land registered under your CPH number(s), so that these parcels can be omitted from your application.

• Individual RLR field parcel number(s) for any additional eligible parcels that are not registered under your CPH number(s) (see section 1.2.4).

You may also request the following forms:

• Common land supplementary application form (NE-CLA1) (see section 1.3.4);

• Agent authorisation form (NE-auth) (see section 2.1.9);

• Supplementary land ownership and control form (NE-LOC) (see section 1.3.1); and

• OELS field parcel reconciliation form (NE-FPR) (see section 2.3.4, Step 11).

Natural England will then send you the pre-filled application form and application maps that you need in order to prepare your postal application (see section 2.3 for how to complete these).

Please note that requesting and receiving a set of maps and a personalised application does not oblige you to apply for the scheme. Your commitment to the scheme will only be made once you send in your application and have received confirmation of acceptance into the scheme from Natural England.

2.1.5 How to transfer land out of the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) into OELS

Section 1.4.5 sets out the circumstances in which Natural England will consider allowing the transfer of land out of an OFS agreement into OELS without waiting for the OFS agreement to finish. If, after having read section 1.4.5, you wish to proceed with an OFS-to-OELS agreement transfer, you should follow these steps:

1 Inform the Natural England ISS office that you are an OFS conversion and/or maintenance agreement holder, who wants to transfer from the OFS to OELS.

2 Advise them that you intend to transfer all or part of your OFS agreement land into OELS. Failure to transfer all of your OFS agreement land into OELS will result in action being taken to recover all of the OFS aid paid previously on the parcels that are not transferred into the replacement OELS agreement.

3 Ask for your OFS field parcels to be added to Annex 2 of your OELS application form and application maps. In order to do this, Natural England staff will need the RLR reference codes for each of the OFS field parcels you want to transfer. It is possible that your OFS agreement will list these parcels by their SPS reference number, in which case you will need to reconcile each SPS field number with their RLR equivalent using NE-FPR form before you can proceed with the transfer.

4 If you already have a pre-filled OELS application form and application maps, you will need to check that all of the field parcels covered by the OFS agreement you are intending to transfer into OELS are included. If any OFS field parcels are missing, you must contact your Natural England ISS office immediately to request a new OELS application form and maps that include these field parcels.

You must not add any field parcels to the pre-filled details at Annex 2 of your application form.

5 Once you are confident that all of the OFS field parcels you intend to transfer into OELS are included in your application form and application maps, you will need to follow the guidance in section 2.3 of this handbook for how to complete your application on your OELS-eligible land.

6 If your application to enter OELS is successful, Natural England will terminate your OFS agreement.

• Your entitlement to any remaining OFS aid due to you under your terminating OFS agreement will cease from the date on which your OELS agreement comes into effect.
If you intend to leave some of your OFS-agreement land out of the replacement OELS agreement, you should make this clear to Natural England staff and advise them of the reason, so that a record can be made of your decision and steps can be taken to recover the OFS aid previously paid on the OFS field parcels not transferred into your OELS agreement.

7 If your OELS application is unsuccessful you will be notified and your OFS agreement(s) will continue, unchanged.

2.1.6 Removing OFS land from an OELS application
If you prefer to remain in the OFS until your existing conversion and/or maintenance agreement(s) expire, the field parcels covered by these agreement(s) must be excluded from your OELS application. This means you must either:

- ask Natural England to delete the field parcels covered by your OFS agreement(s) from Annex 2 of your pre-filled application form and from the application maps before they send it to you; or

- if you already have your pre-filled application form and application maps, you must cross out the field parcels listed in Annex 2 that are covered by your OFS agreement(s). You must not include these field parcels in your calculations to establish your OELS-eligible land area.

2.1.7 Applying for OELS on holdings with Countryside Stewardship (CSS) or Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) Scheme agreements
If you already have a part-farm ESA agreement or a CSS agreement covering only part of your land, you may still be able to apply for OELS on the land that is not receiving funding under the CSS or ESA agreement.

Follow the instructions below, to determine which fields should be included in your OELS application:

a If a CSS or ESA option covers a whole field, it should not be included in your OELS application or points target. This means that you can do one of the following:
   - ask Natural England to delete the relevant field parcel number before sending your pre-filled application form, or;
   - if you already have your pre-filled application form, you can cross out the relevant field parcel number on your Field Data Sheet and on your application maps (see section 2.3.4 (Step 1) of this handbook for detailed instructions on how to delete field parcels from your pre-filled application form). If you need to delete several parcels, you may prefer to ask Natural England for a new set of forms and application maps.

b If the CSS/ESA option covers only part of a field (e.g., grass margins), you must include the whole field parcel in your OELS application, but, to avoid being paid twice for the same thing, you must not locate any OELS options on top of any of your CSS/ESA options.

c Land in CSS/ESA rotational options should be included in your OELS application, but you must ensure that each year there is no overlap of CSS/ESA and OELS options on the ground.

d Land in receipt of CSS/ESA open, linear and educational access payments only, should also be included in your application and points target. You must ensure, however, that any OELS options sited on the land do not obstruct or otherwise conflict with the objectives of the access.

e CSS boundaries – OELS boundary options can be located on boundaries that are included within CSS options (whether that is a CSS whole-field option or a capital grant). This is because the two schemes (CSS and ES) have different and complementary management requirements.

f ESA boundaries – OELS boundary options must not be located within the area covered by the ESA agreement.

Section 1.4.4 sets out the limited circumstances in which we will consider allowing a transfer of land out of a CSS or ESA agreement, without waiting for that agreement to finish.
2.1.8 Can I get help to understand the scheme and complete my application?
We hope that enough information is provided in this handbook to enable you to complete your application. In addition, you will be able to contact advisers at your Natural England ISS office who will be able to help with general enquiries. (Contact details are provided in Appendix 1 of this handbook).

2.1.9 Can an agent act on my behalf?
The application process has been designed to be as simple as possible, to enable you to complete and submit the application form yourself. However, if you prefer, you can authorise an agent to submit an application on your behalf. You can also authorise an agent to act on your behalf on all matters relating to the maintenance of your agreement. Your payments can also be made to an agent.

To authorise an agent to act on your behalf, you will need to complete and sign and return the relevant sections of the agent authorisation form (NE-auth) with your application. If you did not request this form with your application pack, you can obtain one from your Natural England ISS office (see Appendix 1 for contact details) or download one from the Natural England website: www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/forms/agrienv/default.htm.

Please note that any payment you make to an agent to help with your application will not be reimbursed by Natural England.

2.2 What do I need to consider when completing my application?
Step-by-step advice on completing the application form is given at section 2.3.

2.2.1 How should I choose which options to put in my application?
Section 3 of this handbook contains the complete list of OELS and ELS options. It describes the management to be carried out for each option and the standards that must be met. If you include any option in your application, you are agreeing to carry out the management requirements for that option. You should read the guidelines for each option carefully, to help you choose which ones to include in your application.

Your application pack will include an Environmental Information Map showing any features of particular historic, landscape or wildlife interest on your farm as well as any land included within the Less Favoured Area (LFA), subdivided into Disadvantaged Area and Severely Disadvantaged Area. You may find this map helpful when deciding which options to choose and where to locate them. You must ensure that you do not locate any options where they would be detrimental to an environmental feature.

In addition, Natural England, in discussion with Defra and other government agencies, has outlined the key characteristics of broad areas of the English countryside that have a cohesive and distinctive landscape character. Your land will be covered by one or more of these 159 Joint Character Areas (JCAs). In each JCA, priorities for the management of key features and future management issues have been identified. A short summary of the JCA description is given in the ‘Making the most of your ELS options’ notes, included in your application pack. A map showing the location of all 159 JCAs is available on the Internet, together with copies of the ‘Making the most of your ELS options’ notes and further background information. This information can be found at: www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/jca-mm/default.htm.

2.2.2 Can I have more than one option on the same area of land?
Under OELS there are a number of instances where you can have up to three land management options on the same area of OELS-eligible land at the same time – ie OELS option OU1 (which is mandatory on all OELS-eligible land parcels) plus two others, but you cannot combine more than two OELS options with OU1.

Under ELS there are a number of instances where you can have up to two land management options on the same area of land at the same time, but you cannot combine more than two ELS options.

The only exception to this rule is OK5/EK5 (Mixed Stocking) which can be co-located with 1 or 2 other options from the list of permitted combinations.

Tables 7 and 8 in sections 3.3 and 3.4 of this handbook shows permitted combinations of OELS and ELS options.

2.2.3 Should I exceed my points target(s)?
Your OELS and ELS points target(s) and their associated payment rates are fixed. This means that there is no higher payment for delivery of additional options over and above your required target.
If you are very confident that the measurements (length, area, etc) of your options are accurate, there is no need to deliver more than your separate points targets. However, if you want to make sure that there is some margin for error, you may wish to consider delivering options slightly in excess of your targets in case, on inspection, questions are raised about the eligibility of particular options or your compliance with option prescriptions. It is essential that you do not fall below your points target or you will be in breach of your agreement (see Section 5). However, you will not be paid any extra if you exceed your points targets.

If you feel that you could deliver a higher level of commitment than that required by OELS, you may wish to consider applying for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). Under HLS there are a wider range of options and payment rates with more detailed management requirements (see section 1.1.1). Discuss this with your Natural England adviser before applying for HLS.

2.2.4 What should I do if I have already sown my crops?
If you have a crop in place at the start of your agreement, and the crop would need to be destroyed to establish your option (eg nectar mixture, buffer strips), you may keep the crop in place until harvest. However, you must ensure that the land concerned does not receive any fertiliser, spray or other inputs between the agreement start date and harvest. The scheme options should then be established as soon as possible after harvest, and this must be within 12 months of your agreement start date. For all other options, you must comply with the management requirements from the start date of your agreement.

2.2.5 What happens once I have submitted my application?
Once your application has been received by Natural England, it will be checked to see:

- if you meet the eligibility requirements;
- that all the necessary details have been entered on your application form;
- that all your maps have been completed; and
- that copies of your current, valid certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules have been provided.

If your application passes these simple checks, then Natural England will notify you that you have been accepted into the scheme, and provide you with an agreement reference number that you should quote in future correspondence.

2.2.6 What will I receive if my application has been successful?
If your application has been completed accurately and you have met your OELS (and if appropriate ELS) points targets, Natural England will send you a letter confirming:

- your acceptance into the scheme;
- your agreement start date (see section 2.3.4, Step 12);
- your total annual payment;
- the OELS (and ELS) options you have chosen, locations for non-rotational options and the total amounts for each option, including rotational options; and
- summary details of the land entered into conversion and attracting conversion aid top-ups.

Your Farm Environment Record (FER) and Options Maps will also be returned to you. You must retain these documents as RPA officers may ask to see them during inspections.

You must also retain this handbook, as it forms part of your legal contract with Natural England.

2.2.7 What if my application is unsuccessful?
Provided your application has been completed correctly and you have met your points target(s), it is very unlikely that your application will be unsuccessful. However, the situation with schemes and budgets can change over time and it is possible that applications could be unsuccessful in the future due to lack of funds or a change in policy. Prior notice would be given if either of these situations were to arise.

If your application is unsuccessful, you will receive a letter explaining the reasons for the decision.
2.3 How to complete your application

2.3.1 How do I submit my application?

OELS applications can only be submitted by post.

Once the land you wish to enter into the scheme is on the RLR (see section 2.1.3) and you have received your pre-filled application form and maps, you can apply for OELS on your OELS-eligible land and (if necessary) ELS on your ELS-eligible land.

You should read Section 3 of this handbook. This contains details of the options that you will be able to select from to form your agreement.

2.3.2 How to apply

If you have not received the pre-filled application form and maps described below, you must follow the instructions at section 2.1.4.

To apply you will need the following (which will have been sent to you in your application pack):

- a personalised application form, which has been pre-filled with information about you and your land, including RLR field numbers and areas. You must use this form to submit your application;
- your Environmental Information Map. This map shows national designations on your land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Monuments and Less Favoured Areas (sub-divided into Disadvantaged Areas and Severely Disadvantaged Areas), along with a selection of other undesignated environmental features. This map should help you to identify high-priority features on your land that would benefit from the introduction of appropriate scheme options;
- your Farm Environment Record (FER) Map. This map of your land should be used to prepare your FER (see section 2.3.4 Step 5 and the example FER Map included with this handbook), and should be returned with your application form;
- your Options Map. This map of your land should be used to mark where you are putting your scheme options (see section 2.3.4 Steps 7 and 9 and the example Options Map included with this handbook). This map should also be returned with your application form.

To mark up your FER and Options Maps, you will need a number of different-coloured pencils. Please keep to the colours shown on the colour keys for individual maps.

Once completed, the application form must be submitted to your Natural England ISS office with your marked-up FER and Options Maps.

If any of your details change between you receiving the pre-filled application form and being ready to apply, the form will be out of date. If this is the case, do not amend the application form, contact your Natural England adviser for an updated form before applying.

Copies of your current, valid certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules must also be submitted along with your FER and Options maps.

Detailed instructions and guidance on how to complete the application form and how to prepare the maps are provided below. Table 2 provides a step-by-step summary of the application process.

2.3.3 Step-by-step summary of how to apply

Please read Section 1 of this handbook to make sure that you and your land are eligible, before you start to complete your application.

If you are applying for OELS only, please refer to steps 1–3, 5–8 and 11–13; If you are applying for combined ELS/OELS, please refer to steps 1–13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>OELS only</th>
<th>Combined OELS/ELS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 1a. Please record your choice of OELS boundary, rotational and traditional farm buildings options on the table below. These options are only available on your OELS eligible land. Completion of the Farm Environment Record map and selection of option OA1 is compulsory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points available</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Your points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OA1</td>
<td>Compulsory Farm Environment Record</td>
<td>3 per ha</td>
<td>107 ha</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (both sides of hedge)</td>
<td>22 per 100m</td>
<td>150 m</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB2</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (one side of hedge)</td>
<td>11 per 100m</td>
<td>234 m</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB3</td>
<td>Enhanced hedgerow management (both sides of hedge)</td>
<td>42 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB4</td>
<td>Stone faced hedge bank management on both sides</td>
<td>16 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB5</td>
<td>Stone faced hedge bank management on one side</td>
<td>8 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB6</td>
<td>Ditch management</td>
<td>24 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB7</td>
<td>Half ditch management</td>
<td>8 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB8</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB1 hedgerow management)</td>
<td>38 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB9</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB3 hedgerow management)</td>
<td>26 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB10</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB1 hedgebank management)</td>
<td>56 per 100m</td>
<td>1500 m</td>
<td>840</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB11</td>
<td>Stone wall protection and maintenance</td>
<td>15 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC3</td>
<td>Maintenance of woodland fences</td>
<td>1 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD1</td>
<td>Maintenance of traditional farm buildings</td>
<td>2 per m2</td>
<td>81 m²</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture</td>
<td>550 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF6</td>
<td>Over wintered stubbles</td>
<td>150 per ha</td>
<td>10 ha</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF8</td>
<td>Skylark plots</td>
<td>5 per plot</td>
<td>28 plots</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture in grassland areas</td>
<td>550 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG4</td>
<td>Cereals for whole crop silage followed by over-wintered stubbles</td>
<td>250 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OJ2</td>
<td>Management of maize crops to reduce soil erosion</td>
<td>18 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG1</td>
<td>Under sow spring cereals</td>
<td>150 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total points for Annex 1a
Please enter this total in the box at Section 3 table B of this application form 3242

Figure 2 How to complete Annex 1a

To record your FER:
- Record the total OELS-eligible area in the 'Measurement' column.
- Convert the measurement to points (Multiply the total OELS-eligible area by 3 points per ha) and record this figure, to the nearest whole point, in the 'Your points' column.

To record Boundary options OB1 to OB11 and OC3:
- Measure the total length of each option you have selected. Please note that it is acceptable to use the maps provided to measure boundary lengths. You do not have to measure boundary lengths on the ground.
- Record each measurement, to the nearest metre, in the relevant row.
- Convert the measurement to points, to the nearest whole point, and record this figure in the 'Your points' column.

To record buildings to be managed under the 'Maintenance of Traditional Farm Buildings' option:
- Measure the total ground floor area of buildings to be included in this option.
- Record the total area in the measurement column.
- Convert the measurement to points, to the nearest whole point, and record this figure in the 'Your points' column.

To record rotational options:
- Assess the area of land to be managed under the rotational option.
- Record the area in the 'measurement' column of the relevant row. Record the area measurement to the nearest 0.01 ha (or for Skylark plots - OF8 - record the number of plots).
- Convert the measurement to points and record this in the 'Your points' column.

Do not mark the location of rotational options in the Options Map as these will move location from year to year. However, you must ensure that the area is entered at annex 1a and that the declared area and required management is delivered in every year of your agreement.

Once you have recorded all your chosen options at annex 1a you must calculate your total OELS points for these options and record this figure at the base of the 'Your points' column. Copy this figure to Table B in Section 3 of your application form.
Section 2

Figure 3 How to complete Annex 1b

To record your FER:
- Record the total ELS-eligible area in the ‘Measurement’ column.
- Convert the measurement to points (Multiply the total ELS-eligible area by 3 points per ha) and record this figure, to the nearest whole point, in the ‘Your points’ column.

To record Boundary options EB1 to EB11 and EC3:
- Measure the total length of each option you have selected. Please note that it is acceptable to use the maps provided to measure boundary lengths. You do not have to measure boundary lengths on the ground.
- Record each measurement, to the nearest metre, in the relevant row.
- Convert the measurement to points, to the nearest whole point, and record this figure in the ‘Your points’ column.

To record buildings to be managed under the ‘Maintenance of Traditional Farm Buildings’ option:
- Measure the total ground floor area of buildings to be included in this option.
- Record the total area in the measurement column.
- Convert the measurement to points, to the nearest whole point, and record this figure in the ‘Your points’ column.

To record rotational options:
- Assess the area of land to be managed under the rotational option.
- Record the area in the ‘measurement’ column of the relevant row. Record the area measurement to the nearest 0.01 ha (or for Skylark plots - EF8 - record the number of plots).
- Convert the measurement to points and record this in the ‘Your points’ column.

Do not mark the location of rotational options in the Options Map as these will move location from year to year. However, you must ensure that the area is entered at annex 1b and that the declared area and required management is delivered in every year of your agreement.

Once you have recorded all your chosen options at annex 1b you must calculate your total ELS points for these options and record this figure at the base of the ‘Your points’ column. Copy this figure to Table D in Section 4 of your application form.

Annex 1b. Please record your choice of OELS boundary, rotational and traditional farm buildings options on the table below. These options are only available on any ELS eligible land you have on your holding. Completion of the Farm Environment Record map and selection of option EA1 is compulsory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points available</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Your points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EA1</td>
<td>Compulsory Farm Environment Record</td>
<td>3 per ha</td>
<td>40 ha</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB1</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (both sides of hedge)</td>
<td>22 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB2</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (one side of hedge)</td>
<td>11 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB3</td>
<td>Enhanced hedgerow management (both sides of hedge)</td>
<td>42 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB4</td>
<td>Stone faced hedge bank management (both sides)</td>
<td>16 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB5</td>
<td>Stone faced hedge bank management on one side</td>
<td>8 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB6</td>
<td>Ditch management</td>
<td>24 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB7</td>
<td>Half ditch management</td>
<td>8 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB8</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB2 hedgerow management)</td>
<td>38 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB9</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB3 hedgerow management)</td>
<td>26 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>EB10</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB4 hedgerow management)</td>
<td>56 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
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<td>EB11</td>
<td>Stone wall protection and maintenance</td>
<td>15 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC1</td>
<td>Maintenance of woodland fences</td>
<td>4 per 100m</td>
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<td>EO1</td>
<td>Maintenance of traditional farm buildings</td>
<td>2 per m2</td>
<td>90 m2</td>
<td>180</td>
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<tr>
<td>EF2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture</td>
<td>450 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EF6</td>
<td>Over wintered stubbles</td>
<td>120 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EF8</td>
<td>Skylark plots</td>
<td>5 per plot</td>
<td>2 plots</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>EF9</td>
<td>Unfertilised cereal headland within arable fields</td>
<td>100 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<tr>
<td>EF10</td>
<td>Unharvested cereal headland within arable fields</td>
<td>330 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<tr>
<td>EG2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture in grassland areas</td>
<td>450 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG4</td>
<td>Cereals for whole crop silage followed by over-wintered stubbles</td>
<td>230 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ2</td>
<td>Management of maize crops to reduce soil erosion</td>
<td>18 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG1</td>
<td>Under sown spring cereals</td>
<td>200 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total points for Annex 1b
Please enter this total in the box at Section 4 table D of this application form

444
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field no.</th>
<th>LFA Status</th>
<th>Tick if eligible for OELS</th>
<th>Improved land (ha)</th>
<th>Top Fruit (ha)</th>
<th>Organic management (ha)</th>
<th>OELS</th>
<th>ED4</th>
<th>Total EDEX points (this sheet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>19.83</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3.18</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total EDEX points (this sheet) = 3,937

**Notes:**
1. Total area for this sheet should be added to the total on any continuation sheets and entered into Section 3 Table A.
2. Total area for this sheet should be added to the total on any continuation sheets and entered into Section 4 Table C.
3. Total OELS points for this sheet should be added to the total on any continuation sheets and entered into Section 3 Table B.
4. Total ELS points for this sheet should be added to the total on any continuation sheets and entered into Section 4 Table D.
Figure 4 How to complete Annex 2: Your OELS and ELS Field Data Sheet

**Step A:** Where necessary, remove any ineligible fields by deleting the parcel number and field area. Additional fields must not be added manually.

**Step B:** Place a tick in the column headed ‘Tick if eligible for OELS’ against all OELS-eligible fields.

**Step C:** Record the organic registered area of each OELS-eligible field in the corresponding row of the OU1 column (to the nearest 0.01ha (100m²)).

**Step D:** Calculate the total area of all the fields that are eligible for OELS. Record this figure in Box 1 and in Table A at Section 3 of your application form.

**Step E:** Record the area of each field eligible for conversion aid in the relevant column.

**Step F:** Calculate the total area of all the fields that are eligible for conversion aid. Record the figures in the ‘Total amount’ row of the relevant columns.

**Step G:** Where necessary, calculate the total area of all the fields that are eligible for ELS, excluding fields of 15ha or more within the Moorland Line. Record this figure in Box 2, and in Table C at Section 4 of your application form.

**Step H:** Where necessary, calculate the area of all fields of 15ha or more that are within the Moorland Line. Record this figure in Box 3 and in Table C at Section 4 of your application form.

**Step I:** Place a tick in the column headed ‘Soil erosion/run-off risk’ for each relevant field (see section 2.3.4 Step 6).

**Step J:** Write the code of one of your chosen OELS and ELS options at the top of one of the ‘OELS/ELS options’ columns, working from left to right.

**Step K:** Work out the amount of this option for each field parcel that you have decided to put it in, remembering to deduct any areas ineligible for the options, such as ponds.

**Step L:** Record these amounts in the corresponding row of the ‘OELS/ELS options’ column. For each entry, calculate the area in ha, to the nearest 0.01ha (100m²) or the number of trees (for OC1 and OC2). See example 1 below.

**Step M:** Calculate the total amount of your chosen option for all field parcels. Enter this figure at the bottom of the column, in the row marked ‘Total amount (ha/no.)’. See example 2 below.

**Step N:** Record the points per ha or number available for the option in the row marked ‘OELS points per unit’ or ‘ELS points per unit’ as appropriate: eg for OE5 you would enter 500.

**Step O:** Calculate the number of points the option has contributed towards your total points target. Record this value to the nearest whole point in the row marked ‘OELS points’ or ‘ELS points’ as appropriate.

**Step P:** Once you have recorded all of your OELS non-rotational options within fields, including OU1, you must calculate your total ‘OELS points’ for the options you have chosen and record this figure at the base of the ‘Total ELS/OELS points’ column in Box 4. Copy this figure to Table B in Section 3 of your application form.

**Step Q:** Repeat Step P for any ELS options, recording the Total ELS points in Box 5 and copying the figure to Table D of Section 4 of your application form.

**Example 1.** This shows the entry for a 4m buffer strip of 2324m in length. This measurement has been converted to hectares, to the nearest 0.01ha. An example calculation is provided below:

A 4m wide buffer strip of 2,324m in length would occupy (4 x 2,324) = 9,296m².

A hectare is 10,000m² so the area occupied in hectares is 0.9296ha (9,296/10,000).

This would be recorded at annex 2 as 0.93ha (to the nearest 0.01ha).

**Example 2.** To calculate your points for each option multiply the total amount by the points per unit.

In this case the option is ED4, management of scrub on archaeological sites, so the calculation is:

3.18ha x 120 points/ha = 382 points (to the nearest whole point).
2.3.4 How to fill in your application form and mark your maps

Step 1: Check your pre-filled details and maps

Please note that if your application is approved, your application will form part of your legal agreement with Natural England. Therefore, do not use correcting fluid. If you have to make any alterations to your application form, they must be made in block capitals using black ink and must be initialled by you. It may be helpful to make a rough copy of your application and transfer this onto your application form when you are sure it is correct.

Please check the following pre-filled details in Section 1 and Annex 2 of your application form:

- **Section 1 – Applicant’s details:** Your application form should have been pre-filled with your contact details, vendor number and legal trading status. Please check that these details are correct and complete any missing information.

- **Annex 2 – Field Data Sheet:** It is your responsibility to ensure that all the land listed at Annex 2 (the Field Data Sheet) and identified on your maps is fully eligible for the scheme, by carefully studying the rules on eligibility in Section 1 of this handbook.

If you find that some of your eligible land parcels have not been included in Annex 2, you must contact the Natural England ISS office for a new application form and maps. You must not add any field parcels to your pre-filled details at Annex 2.

If you need to delete any of your field details, please follow these instructions:

- Using the Field Data Sheet(s) at Annex 2 of your application form, delete each ineligible parcel number and associated gross parcel area from the RLR field size column.

- At Steps 3 and 4 you will need to insert the correct total areas of land in Boxes 1, 2 and 3 of Annex 2 and on your application form.
If you find that you need to delete a large number of field parcels from your Field Data Sheet(s), you may find it easier to contact the Natural England ISS office and ask them to send you a replacement application form and map(s) covering the correct field parcels.

When you have checked that your land is eligible and you are sure that the pre-filled land parcel details listed at Annex 2 of your application form are correct, proceed to Step 2.

**Step 2: Calculating conversion aid and details of organic farm enterprise**

You will need:

- section 2 and Annex 2 of your application form – your Field Data Sheet(s)
- your current, valid certificate(s) of organic registration and accompanying schedule(s) issued by your Organic Inspection Body.

Use Annex 2 and your certificates and schedules to identify the field parcels that are eligible for, and on which you wish to claim, conversion aid. Record the eligible areas under each conversion aid category column in Annex 2 and complete question 12 of the application form.

Guidance on what land is eligible for conversion aid payments can be found at section 1.2.6 of this handbook.

On the application form, please remember to complete question 13 relating to your organic enterprise, as follows:

- Decide what your primary organic enterprise is, and enter a ‘1’ in the corresponding box.
- Farmers with more than one organic enterprise, or who are applying for conversion aid on top fruit orchards as part of this application, should also enter a ‘2’ in the appropriate box to identify their secondary organic enterprise.

**Step 3: Calculate your points target for your OELS-eligible land**

You will need:

- Section 3 and Annex 2 of your application form – your Field Data Sheet(s).

In order to enter your OELS-eligible land into the scheme, you will need to agree to carry out a programme of environmental management activities taken from a list of OELS options on this land. OELS options are worth a certain number of ‘points’. In order for your OELS-eligible land to qualify for entry into OELS, the points total for the OELS options you select must equal or exceed the points target on your OELS-eligible land.

Calculate your OELS points target as follows:

a Identify the relevant fields listed in Annex 2 that are eligible for OELS, by placing a tick in the ‘Tick if eligible for OELS’ column (see sections 1.2.3–1.2.5 and 2.1.2 for details of the land that can be entered into OELS). If you have already ticked this box as a result of claiming conversion aid top-up payments on that particular parcel, there is no need to tick it again.

b Calculate the total area of all fields eligible for OELS and write this figure in Box 1 at the bottom of Annex 2 and in Table A at Section 3.

c Complete Table A by multiplying this figure by 60, and record the result in the column headed ‘Points target’ in Table A. The result is your points target on your OELS-eligible land.
**Step 4: Calculating your points target on your ELS-eligible land**

You will need:

- Section 4 and Annex 2 of your application form – your Field Data Sheet.

Calculate your ELS points target as follows:

a. See sections 1.2.3–1.2.5 for details of the land that can be entered into the ELS element of your application.

b. Calculate the total area of all fields listed on the Field Data Sheet that are eligible for ELS, excluding common land (see section 1.2.5) and those land parcels of 15 ha or more within the Moorland Line. Write this figure in Box 2 at the bottom of the Field Data Sheet at Annex 2 and into Table C at Section 4.

c. Multiply this figure by 30 and record the result in the column headed 'Points target' in Table C.

d. Calculate the total area of any fields listed on the Field Data Sheet that are land parcels of 15 ha or more within the Moorland Line. Write this figure in Box 3 at the bottom of the Field Data Sheet and in Table C at Section 4 of the application form.

e. Multiply this figure by 8 and record the result in the column headed 'Points target' in Table C.

f. Complete Table C at Section 4 of the application form by adding together the points targets for the two categories of ELS-eligible land. The result is your points target on your ELS-eligible land.

**Step 5: Complete your Farm Environment Record (FER)**

You will need:

- your FER Map(s)
- the example FER Map (included with this handbook), which will help to show you how to mark your map
- Section 3 and Annex 1a of your application form
- (Combined OELS/ELS only) You will also need Section 4 and annex 1b of your application form

As a condition of the scheme you must agree to identify, map and retain the features listed and described on the FER Map key that are present on your land. These are your ‘FER features’. Please complete your FER by marking your FER features on your FER Map(s). Walking your holding and marking the features on a copy of your FER Map as you go may help you to make sure that you do not miss any.

Use the colours on the map key for marking each feature. Confirm that you have a feature on your land by marking the corresponding blank symbol on the right side of the map key with the coloured pencil you have used to mark that feature on the map. The completed map(s) must be submitted as part of your application.

Your Environmental Information Map may also indicate features that require marking on your FER Map(s).

You will receive 3 points per ha of land for completing your FER and retaining all your FER features for the lifetime of your agreement. Take time to complete it as clearly and accurately as you can. As long as the markings you make are clear and understandable, we will be able to accept your map(s).

Record your points score for the FER as follows:

a. Multiply your total OELS-eligible land area (recorded in section 3 of your application form) by 3 to give your points score for the FER on your OELS-eligible land. Record your points score in the top row of the table in Annex 1a of the application form (see Figure 2).

b. Multiply your total ELS-eligible land area (if any) by 3 to give your points score for your FER on your ELS-eligible land. Record your points score in the top row of the table at Annex 1b of the application form.
Step 6: Identify fields where soil erosion and run-off occur, or may do so in the future

You will need:

- your FER Map
- Annex 2 of your application form (your Field Data Sheet).
- Question 11 of your application form.

As part of your FER, you must consider whether any of your land is at risk from soil erosion or run-off. Controlling the problem could protect the environment and improve the productivity of your land. Please read section 3J (Options to protect soils) of this handbook for further information on soil erosion.

First identify where soil erosion and run-off occur. Consider each of your fields and mark them in dark brown hatching on your FER Map, and put a tick in column 4 of Annex 2, if any of the following apply (even if this happens occasionally or only when a certain crop is grown in that field or when stock have poached the soil):

- if rills or gullies develop in wet weather, including along tramlines;
- if muddy water from the field enters a ditch, stream or river, or sediment is deposited on a road or neighbouring properties; or
- if wind erosion of sandy or peaty soil occurs from fine dry seedbeds.

Then identify where soil erosion and run-off may occur in the future. Mark your FER Map in the same way (i.e. dark brown hatching), and tick column 4 of Annex 2, if all of the following apply, and you intend to change the management of the land, particularly if you want to cultivate grassland or increase the intensity of cropping or grazing:

- the soil is sandy or silty;
- there are slopes in all or part of the field that may cause run-off and erosion; and
- run-off will reach ditches, streams, rivers, roads, or neighbouring properties down-slope of the field.

If you have identified that soil erosion and run-off occur, or are likely to occur, consider choosing management options to reduce run-off and soil erosion. See section 3J (Options to protect soils) of this handbook.

Complete question 11 on your application form.

Step 7: Choose which options to include on your OELS-eligible land

You will need:

- Annexes 1a and 2 and Section 3 of your application form;
- your Options Map; and
- the example Options Map (included with your application form), which will help to show you how to mark your map.

Read Section 3 of this handbook to find out which OELS options can be located on your OELS-eligible land. Please read through all the OELS options and decide which ones you would like to include in your application in addition to option OU1 (organic management), which is mandatory on all of your OELS-eligible field parcels. A summary table of OELS options is provided at section 3.1.

Please also have a close look at your Environmental Information Map, your FER and the separate sheet entitled ‘Making the most of your ELS options’ (included with your application form). This information may help you to decide which options to choose and where to locate them.
To record option OU1 (Organic Management) on Annex 2 of your application form, you must:

- enter the area of the fields eligible for OELS (see sections 1.2.3–1.2.5) into the column labelled ‘OU1 Organic management’ in Annex 2. Calculate the total area of option OU1 and record this figure in the row marked ‘Total amount (ha/no.)’ in Annex 2; and

- write the code OU into each of these fields on your Options Map(s).

For all other OELS options you wish to locate on your OELS-eligible land, you must:

- decide where the option is to be located on the land (you may decide that you want to have the option in more than one location);

- mark every instance of the option with a coloured pencil on your Options Map(s) using the colour for that option as specified on the Options Map key. Do not mark rotational options on your Options Map – these are recorded at Annex 1a (see below); and

- write the appropriate option code, using a fine black pen, on or against the option in each place where you have marked it on your Options Map(s).

In addition, if you have any Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) Scheme or Energy Crops Scheme (ECS) agreement land, mark the location of non-rotational CSS/ESA/ECS agreement land (eg existing grass margins or blocks of wild bird seed mixture) that falls within the eligible field parcels identified on your Options Map(s). Please note that if a CSS or ESA option covers a whole field, the field concerned is not eligible for OELS and should be deleted from Annex 2 (see sections 1.4.3 and 1.4.4 for details).

Please take care to measure option lengths or areas and then calculate the points values accurately, as errors may lead to the reduction of payments and to penalties being imposed.

Having marked your Options Map(s), you will now need to record your choices and calculate the points you have accumulated on your OELS-eligible land, using Annexes 1a and 2 of your application form.

- Use Annex 1a for OELS boundary, rotational and traditional farm building options. Instructions and guidance on how to complete Annex 1a are provided in Figure 2.

- Use Annex 2 (the Field Data Sheet) for OELS non-rotational options within fields (eg for buffer strips). Instructions and guidance on how to complete Annex 2 are provided in Figure 4. Do not use Annex 2 to record OELS rotational options.

**Step 8: Check that you have met your points target on your OELS-eligible land**

You will need:

- Annexes 1a and 2 and Section 3 of the application form.

Once you have chosen your OELS options you should calculate the total points accumulated, as follows:

- Transfer your total OELS points from Annex 1a and Annex 2 (Box 4) (including any continuation sheets) to the corresponding boxes in Table B of Section 3 of your application form.

- Add totals from Annex 1a and Annex 2 to determine your total points on your OELS-eligible land and record this figure in Table B. This figure must meet or exceed your OELS points target (Table A of Section 3) to qualify for entry to the scheme.

Remember that you are responsible for ensuring that all of the options listed at Annexes 1a and 2 of your application form are delivered (see also section 2.2.3). This information forms the basis of your agreement with Natural England.

**Step 9: Choose which options to include on your ELS-eligible land**

You will need:

- Annexes 1b and 2 and Section 4 of your application form
• your Options Map

• the example Options Map (included with your application form), which will help to show you how to mark your map.

Read Section 3 of this handbook to find out which options can be located on your ELS-eligible land. Please read through all of the options and decide which ones you would like to include in your application. A summary table of ELS options is provided at section 3.1.

Please also have a close look at your Environmental Information Map, your FER and the separate sheet entitled 'Making the most of your ELS options' (included with your application form). This information may help you to decide which options to choose and where to locate them.

For each option you wish to include on your ELS-eligible land you must:

a  Decide where the option is to be located on the land (you may decide you want to have the option in more than one location).

b  Mark every instance of the option with a coloured pencil on your Options Map(s) using the appropriate colour for that option as specified on the Options Map key. Do not mark rotational options on your Options Map – these are recorded at Annex 1b of your application form.

c  Write the appropriate option code, using a fine black pen, on or against the option in each place where you have marked it on your Options Map(s).

If you have any CSS, ESA or ECS agreement land, mark the location of non-rotational CSS/ESA/ECS-agreement land (eg existing grass margins or blocks of wild bird seed mixture) that falls within the eligible field parcels identified on your Options Map(s). Please note that if a CSS or ESA scheme option covers a whole field, the field concerned is not eligible for ELS and should be deleted from Annex 2 (see sections 1.4.3 and 1.4.4 for details).

Please take care to measure option lengths or areas and then calculate the points values accurately, as errors may lead to the reduction of payments and to penalties being imposed.

Having marked your Options Map(s), you will now need to record your choices and calculate the points you have accumulated on your ELS-eligible land, using Annexes 1b and 2 of your application form.

• Use Annex 1b for ELS boundary, rotational and farm building options. Instructions and guidance on how to complete Annex 1b are provided in Figure 3.

• Use Annex 2 (the Field Data Sheet) for ELS non-rotational options within fields (eg for buffer strips). Instructions and guidance on how to complete Annex 2 are provided in Figure 4. Do not use Annex 2 to record ELS rotational options.

**Step 10: Check that you have met your points target on your ELS-eligible land**

You will need:

• Annexes 1b and 2 and Section 4 of the application form.

Once you have chosen your ELS options, calculate the total ELS points that you have accumulated, as follows:

a  Transfer your total ELS points from Annex 1b and Annex 2 (including any continuation sheets) to the corresponding boxes in Table D of Section 4.

b  Add totals from Annex 1b and Annex 2 to determine your total ELS points and record this figure in Table D. This figure must meet or exceed your Total ELS Points Target (Table C of Section 4) to qualify for entry to the scheme.

**Please note** you must meet or exceed both your OELS and ELS points targets for your application to be successful.

You are also responsible for ensuring that all the options listed at Annexes 1b and 2 on your application form are delivered (see also section 2.2.3). This information forms the basis of your agreement with Natural England.
Step 11: How to use the field parcel reconciliation form
Registering land on the RLR has resulted in a number of changes to field numbers. As a result, some of the field parcels listed in your current, valid certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules issued by your Organic Inspection Body may not match those listed in Annex 2 of your pre-filled OELS application form.

Your certificates and accompanying schedules may well list your fields according to their IACS or OS field numbers, whilst Annex 2 of your application form will list them by their RLR equivalent. In order for you and the Natural England staff processing your application form to easily reconcile your old IACS/OS numbers with their new RLR equivalents, you will need to identify and record each of the parcels affected in an OELS field parcel reconciliation (NE-FPR) form, a copy of which can be found in your application pack.

If your certificates and accompanying schedules already list your field parcels by their RLR reference numbers, you do not need to complete this form.

Identifying your RLR field numbers/areas for each OELS-eligible field parcel
You will need:
- your NE-FPR form
- Annex 2 of your application – your Field Data Sheet
- your current, valid certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules issued by your Organic Inspection Body.

On the NE-FPR form:
1. First list all of the RLR field parcel numbers found in column 1 of Annex 2 (the Field Data Sheet) that do not match the field’s entries in your certificates and accompanying schedules in column 1 of your NE-FPR form.
2. Then, record the size of each RLR field parcel in ha in column 2 of the NE-FPR form, as it appears in Annex 2 of your Field Data Sheet.
3. Using your current, valid certificate and accompanying schedule, list the corresponding IACS/OS field numbers for each of your fields against their corresponding RLR field parcel entries, in column 3 of the NE-FPR form.
4. Then, record the size in ha of each field parcel as it appears in your certificate and accompanying schedule, against each RLR field parcel entry in the appropriate column of the NE-FPR form.
5. Finally, record the name of each field parcel as it appears in your certificate of registration and accompanying schedule in column 5 of the NE-FPR form, against each RLR field parcel entry.

Step 12: Choose your agreement start date
You will need:
- Section 2 of the application form.

Your farming system and choice of options may influence the time of year when you would like your agreement to start. At Section 2 of your application form, you can select your preferred agreement start date or simply opt for the next one available.

OELS has monthly start dates. Our target is to provide you with an agreement within 3 months of receipt of a valid application. Agreements will commence on the first date of each month so, for example, we aim to issue an agreement by 1 October for a valid application received during July. We will give you the earliest start date we are able to, unless you ask for a specific date later than the 3-month target.
Step 13: Declarations and undertakings
You will need:

- Sections 2 and 5 of the application form.

Please read these carefully and complete and sign the declaration at Section 5 of your application form.

If you need to make a countersigned application (see section 1.3.1 of this handbook), you will need to get the relevant person to complete Section 2 of the application form and sign the declaration in that section.

If necessary, you can authorise your agent to submit an application on your behalf by completing form NE-auth. This form is available from your Natural England ISS office, and also at: www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/forms/agrienv/default.htm. Natural England contact details are provided in Appendix 1 of this handbook.

Please return the following to the Natural England ISS office in the envelope provided with your application pack:

- your completed and signed application form
- Annexes 1a, 1b and 2 of your application form
- your FER Map marked with your FER features
- your Options Map marked with the options you have chosen
- copies of your current, valid certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules, issued by your Organic Inspection Body for all of the land comprising your organic unit
- form NE-FPR (field parcel reconciliation form) – unless your current certificates and schedules already list your land by RLR reference numbers, in which case you do not need to complete this form.

Where appropriate you should also include:

- An Agent Authorisation form (NE-auth) – see section 2.1.9;
- Supplementary Land Ownership and control Form(s) (NE-LOC) – see section 1.3.1.

It is recommended that you obtain proof of postage for these and any other documents you send to the Natural England ISS office. You are advised to retain a copy of your completed application form and your FER and Options Maps.
Section 3
List of options, management requirements and points allocations

To join OELS, you must make a commitment to carry out certain environmental management options, which you choose from a wide-ranging menu on both your OELS- and, where appropriate, ELS-eligible land. Each option is worth a certain number of points per unit of area (eg buffer strip options), length (eg hedge management options), or number (eg in-field tree options) – depending on the type of land they are to be located on.

If you agree to deliver enough OELS options on your OELS-eligible land and ELS options on your ELS-eligible land to meet (or exceed) your separate OELS and ELS points targets, you will be guaranteed entry into the scheme.

The following pages contain a summary table of all the management options available under OELS and ELS, and corresponding points allocations for each.

This summary table is followed by more detailed descriptions of the management requirements for each option. The text of each prescription has been colour coded as follows:

- **Plain text**
  these instructions must be followed irrespective of whether the land is eligible for OELS or ELS.

- **Green text**
  this refers to OELS options and prescriptions that must be followed on your OELS-eligible land only.

- **Brown text**
  this refers to ELS options and prescriptions that must be followed on your ELS-eligible land only.

Options that can be located on your OELS-eligible land are prefixed with an ‘O’.
Options that can be located on your ELS-eligible land are prefixed with an ‘E’.

Please note that if you experience any difficulty distinguishing between the various colours used in the following section, please contact your Natural England regional office for a black-and-white copy of the OELS and ELS prescriptions, which is printed in an accessible format for those with visual impairment.

### 3.1 Summary table of OELS and ELS options and points available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>OU1</td>
<td>Organic management</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>B Options for boundary features</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OB1/EB1</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (on both sides of hedge)</td>
<td>100 m</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>OB2/EB2</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (on one side of hedge)</td>
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<td>Enhanced hedgerow management</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB4/EB4</td>
<td>Stone-faced hedgebank management on both sides</td>
<td>100 m</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB5/EB5</td>
<td>Stone-faced hedgebank management on one side</td>
<td>100 m</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB6/EB6</td>
<td>Ditch management</td>
<td>100 m</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB7/EB7</td>
<td>Half ditch management</td>
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<td>OB8/EB8</td>
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<td>OB10/EB10</td>
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<td>OB11/EB11</td>
<td>Stone wall protection and maintenance</td>
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**C Options for trees and woodland**

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<td>Protection of in-field trees on rotational land</td>
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<td>EC1</td>
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<td>OC2</td>
<td>Protection of in-field trees on organic grassland</td>
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<td>OC3/EC3</td>
<td>Maintenance of woodland fences</td>
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**D Options for historic and landscape features**

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<td>Take out of cultivation archaeological features that are currently on cultivated land</td>
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<td>Reduced-depth, non-inversion cultivation on archaeological features (minimum till)</td>
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**E Options for buffer strips and field margins**

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<td>4 m buffer strips on rotational land</td>
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<td>EE5</td>
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<td>Points</td>
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<td><strong>F Options for arable land</strong></td>
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<td>OF1</td>
<td>Management of field corners</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>500</td>
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<td>EF1</td>
<td>Management of field corners</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>400</td>
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<td>OF2</td>
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<td>EF2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>66</td>
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<td>OF4</td>
<td>Nectar flower mixture</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<td>OF6</td>
<td>Overwintered stubbles</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>69</td>
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<td>EF6</td>
<td>Overwintered stubbles</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>120</td>
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<td>OF7</td>
<td>Beetle banks</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>750</td>
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<td>Beetle banks</td>
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<td>Unharvested cereal headlands within arable fields</td>
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<td>EF11</td>
<td>Uncropped, cultivated margins for rare plants on arable land</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<td><strong>G Options to encourage a range of crop types</strong></td>
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<td>OG1</td>
<td>Undersown spring cereals</td>
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<td>EG1</td>
<td>Undersown spring cereals</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>EG2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture in grassland areas</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<td>75</td>
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<td>OG3</td>
<td>Nectar flower mixtures in grassland areas</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>550</td>
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<tr>
<td>EG3</td>
<td>Nectar flower mixtures in grassland areas</td>
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<td>76</td>
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<td>OG4</td>
<td>Cereals for whole-crop silage followed by overwintered stubbles</td>
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<td>EG4</td>
<td>Cereals for whole-crop silage followed by overwintered stubbles</td>
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<td><strong>J Options to protect soils</strong></td>
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<td>OJ2</td>
<td>Management of maize crops to reduce soil erosion</td>
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<td><strong>K Options for grassland outside the Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDAs) and the Moorland Line</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>OK1</td>
<td>Take field corners out of management outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Take field corners out of management outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>OK2</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
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<td>EK2</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
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<td>EK3</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with very low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
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<td>Management of rush pastures outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>180</td>
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<td>Management of rush pastures outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>150</td>
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</table>
Section 3

3.2 Detailed management requirements for OELS and ELS options

Some of the option details below refer to an ‘Environmental Information Map’ – see section 2.2.1 for more details.

Basic payment for organic management

OU1 Organic management option

This option must be located on all of your OELS-eligible land; it cannot be located on ELS-eligible land. The option must be applied to whole parcels of land.

Managing the land according to organic standards provides biodiversity benefits – both within fields and around field margins. You must:

- not use synthetic nitrogen fertilisers;
- use diverse crop rotations on mixed farms (this will contribute to soil fertility and to biodiversity on both a macro- and a micro-scale);
- limit applications of animal manure nitrogen to an average of 170 kg per ha per year – even outside Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs), thereby reducing the potential for nitrate leaching, nutrient run off or the release of pathogenic organisms into watercourses;
- only apply those substances permitted for use on land registered with an Organic Inspection Body under Council Regulation 2092/91 and Defra’s Compendium of Organic Standards;
- undertake organic management on all the land for which you claim OELS options; and
- maintain the organic registration of the land (as fully organic or in conversion) with an Organic Inspection Body recognised by Defra.

OU1: 30 points per ha.

B Options for boundary features

Hedgerow management options

Hedgerows and hedgebanks are important elements of the countryside as landscape and historic features, for
wildlife habitat, and for stock management and shelter. On long steep slopes, hedgerows may reduce the risk of soil erosion where they intercept and slow surface run-off water before it builds into damaging flow. These options could be considered in conjunction with buffer strips or field margins.

Hedgerow management options may be applied to any boundary line of shrubs (with or without trees) provided that at one time the trees and shrubs were more or less continuous.

In addition, eligible hedgerows must be:

- under your management control;
- in management by regular trimming or on a traditional hedge laying or coppicing cycle; and
- predominantly composed of native shrubs (at least 80 per cent).

Where the hedgerow includes gaps or gates, these may be included in the length measurement, providing they comprise less than 20 per cent of the total length of the particular hedge. Gaps above this 20 per cent threshold should be deducted from the length included. A gap is a complete break in the canopy. Where a tree canopy overlaps the hedgerow canopy, this is not counted as a gap (see Figure 5 below).

Figure 5 – Eligible hedgerows

You may use these options on newly planted hedgerows or hedgerows that are below the minimum heights required at the start of the agreement. However, the hedges must meet the required height by the end of the agreement.

Although maximum trimming frequencies are stated (once every 2 years or once in every 3 years), note that there is no requirement to trim at all during the agreement term. Instead, hedgerows can be left to grow unchecked and then managed in a long-term coppicing or laying rotation. Hedgerows with thick, bushy bases providing a mixture of heights and widths will offer the best range of habitat.

Road and trackside hedges that require annual or more frequent trimming for public safety are not eligible for options OB1/EB1 (two-sided management) or OB3/EB3 (enhanced hedgerow management). However, the non-road side of the hedge may be entered into OB2/EB2 (one-sided management).

Where a hedge is directly adjacent to a woodland edge, only OB2/EB2 (one-sided management) can be included.

Where a ditch runs alongside the hedge and you wish to include both, you should use options OB8, OB9 and OB10 and EB8, EB9 and EB10, rather than the separate hedge and ditch options (OB1, OB2, OB3 and OB6 and EB1, EB2, EB3 and EB6).

Hedges managed under an OELS/ELS option are eligible for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) capital item payments when you are making an HLS application.

You cannot use more than one hedgerow management option on the same length of hedgerow.


Combining OELS/ELS hedgerow management with cross compliance requirements

Follow the procedure below when you are measuring your OELS/ELS hedgerow, ditch and buffer strip options, to make sure you comply with both OELS/ELS and/or cross compliance requirements.
Single Payment Scheme (SPS) cross compliance conditions include a requirement to maintain ‘protection zones’, by not cultivating or applying fertilisers, manures or pesticides to land within 2 m of the centre of a hedgerow or watercourse. This requirement also applies to all land within 1 m of the top of the bank of a watercourse.

Hedge and ditch options (OB1–OB3 and OB6–OB10 and EB1–EB3 and EB6–EB10) have been designed to be compatible with this cross compliance requirement. If you choose to do these options, you must follow the option prescriptions laid out in this handbook. The ‘protection zone’ requirement for cross compliance is incorporated within the option rules.

**OB1 Hedgerow management on both sides of the hedge, and**

**OB2 Hedgerow management on one side of the hedge**

**EB1 Hedgerow management on both sides of the hedge, and**

**EB2 Hedgerow management on one side of the hedge**

For these options you must comply with the following:

- Maintain hedgerows to a height and width customary to the local landscape, but not less than 1.5 m in height (except when laid or coppiced as part of a regular management cycle).
- Do not cultivate or apply fertilisers, manures or pesticides to land within 2 m of the centre of the hedge.
- Maintain hedgebanks in a style that is customary to the area. Where a bank is present, measure the height of the hedge from the top of the bank.
- Cut each hedge no more than once every 2 calendar years. Do not cut all hedges managed under this option in the same year.
- Do not cut hedgerows during the bird breeding season (1 March to 31 August).
- Hedge laying and coppicing are permitted in a style customary to the local landscape, but should be completed before 1 March. However, in exceptional circumstances, work may continue up to 1 April provided you conduct a survey to ensure that there are no nesting birds present.
• Where already present, you may leave saplings to grow into hedgerow trees at intervals, for example four trees randomly spaced over 200 m, where this fits in with the local landscape character.

• Take care to minimise poaching by livestock and any channelling of surface run-off along the side of the hedge.

**OB1**: 22 points per 100 m, where management is carried out on both sides of the hedge.  
**OB2**: 11 points per 100 m, where management is carried out on one side of the hedge.  
**EB1**: 22 points per 100 m, where management is carried out on both sides of the hedge.  
**EB2**: 11 points per 100 m, where management is carried out on one side of the hedge.

**Figure 6 – Hedgerow management on both sides of the hedge**

Cut each hedge no more than once every two calendar years. Avoid cutting all hedges in the same year.

Uncultivated land extending to 2 m from the centre line of the hedge

Hedge left uncut between 1 March and 31 August to protect nesting birds

ROB3 Enhanced hedgerow management  
EEB3 Enhanced hedgerow management  

This option is only available where you have control of the management of both sides of the hedge.

In addition to the conditions for OB1/EB1 and OB2/EB2 (see above), you must also comply with the following:

• Maintain hedgerows to a height and width customary to the local landscape, but no less than 2 m in height (except when laid or coppiced as part of a regular management cycle).
• Cut each hedgerow no more than once every 3 calendar years, cutting no more than a third of your hedgerows in each year.

**OB3:** 42 points per 100 m.
**EB3:** 42 points per 100 m.

**OB4** Stone-faced hedgebank management on both sides, and
**OB5** Stone-faced hedgebank management on one side

**EB4** Stone-faced hedgebank management on both sides, and
**EB5** Stone-faced hedgebank management on one side

For these options you must comply with the following:

• Protect stone-faced banks from deterioration and repair gaps where these occur during the course of the agreement.

• Prevent damage to stone-faced gateways and to banks by machinery or by stock climbing. Where stock have damaged such features, prevent further damage taking place by making them stock-proof.

As well as supporting a range of wildlife, stone-faced hedgebanks are important landscape features.
• Do not remove any in situ stone from banks.

• Where there is woody growth on top of the bank that meets the necessary criteria, you may also apply for one of the hedgerow options OB1, OB2 or OB3. The specified height of the hedge is measured from the top of the bank.

• Where there is woody growth on top of the bank that meets the necessary criteria, you may also apply for one of the hedgerow options EB1, EB2 or EB3. The specified height of the hedge is measured from the top of the bank.

• All repair and maintenance work must be carried out in the traditional materials used in the original hedgebank construction, following the style characteristic to the local landscape.

• Do not cast up ditch dredging or spoil over stone-faced banks.

OB4: 16 points per 100 m on stone-faced hedgebank management on both sides.
OB5: 8 points per 100 m on stone-faced hedgebank management on one side.
EB4: 16 points per 100 m on stone-faced hedgebank management on both sides.
EB5: 8 points per 100 m on stone-faced hedgebank management on one side.

**OB6 Ditch management**

**EB6 Ditch management**

This option is intended for ditches forming field boundaries in their own right and aims to establish both a varied bankside and aquatic vegetation, and an undisturbed wildlife habitat adjacent to the ditch. Eligible ditches must regularly contain standing or flowing water. You must be responsible for the management of both sides of the ditch. Ditches managed by third parties, such as internal drainage boards, are not eligible. Streams that are unmanaged (or occasionally managed) natural features are not eligible. Moorland grips are not eligible. Where the ditch runs alongside a hedge, and you intend to apply OELS or ELS options to both, you must use option OB8, OB9 or OB10, or EB8, EB9 or EB10 (see below).
For this option you must comply with the following:

- You must not cultivate or apply fertilisers or pesticides to land within 2 m of the centre of the ditch. This rule also applies to all land within 1 m of the top of the ditch bank.

- You may only cut the vegetation on your ditch banks in the period between 15 September and 28 February. In each such period, you may only cut the vegetation on up to half your length of ditch bank.

- Where you are cutting vegetation growing on ditch banks, cut it in rotation so that the vegetation is not cut more than once in 2 years.

- Where necessary to prevent flooding, up to 50 per cent of the vegetation in the bottom of the ditch may be cut every year between 15 September and 28 February.

- You must clean ditches no more than once during your agreement. You must do so only in the period between 15 September and 31 January, and in any such period you must clean only up to half your length of ditches.

- Only use mechanical means (including hand tools) to clean your ditches or trim vegetation on the ditch bank.

- Any dredgings or spoil must be spread evenly across the adjacent field, at least 2 m from the centre of the ditch and 1 m from the top of the bank (to comply with cross compliance rules) and the bank-side vegetation re-established by natural regeneration. Dredgings/spoil may not be levelled on any adjacent areas managed under ES.

- Do not move, re-profile or increase the width or depth of the ditch.

**OB6: 24 points per 100 m.**

**EB6: 24 points per 100 m.**
**OB7 Half ditch management**
**EB7 Half ditch management**

This option is available for ditches as described above for option OB6/EB6, where the ditch regularly contains standing or flowing water. You must have control over the management of one side of the ditch. The aim is to establish diverse bank-side vegetation.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- **You may only cut the vegetation on your ditch banks in the period between 15 September and 28 February.** In each such period you may only cut the vegetation on up to half your length of ditch bank.

- **You must not cultivate or apply fertiliser or pesticides to land within 2 m of the centre of the ditch.** This rule also applies to all land within 1 m of the top of your ditch bank.

- **Only use mechanical means (including hand tools) to clean your ditches or trim the vegetation on the ditch bank.**

- **Any dredgings or spoil must be spread evenly across the adjacent field, at least 2 m from the centre of the ditch and 1 m from the top of the bank (to comply with cross compliance rules) and the bank-side vegetation re-established by natural regeneration. Dredgings/spoil may not be levelled on any adjacent areas managed under ES.**

**OB7: 8 points per 100 m.**  
**EB7: 8 points per 100 m.**

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**OB8, OB9, OB10 Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating options OB1, OB2, OB3)**
**EB8, EB9, EB10 Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating options EB1, EB2, EB3)**

These options are available for hedgerows with a ditch immediately alongside, where the ditch regularly contains standing or flowing water. You must have control over the management of adjacent land on both sides of the hedge and ditch. The aim is to establish a diverse hedgerow, bank side and aquatic vegetation.

You must apply for these options (OB8, OB9 and OB10 and EB8, EB9 and EB10) where you have a hedge alongside a ditch and you wish to manage both under the scheme (ie you cannot combine individual hedge or ditch options).

For this option you must follow the conditions for:

- **OB1, OB2 or OB3,** depending on whether you are managing one side of your hedge or both sides, and OB6.

- **EB1, EB2 or EB3,** depending on whether you are managing one side of your hedge or both sides, and EB6.

In addition, you must comply with the following:

- **On the non-hedgerow side of the ditch, you must not cultivate or apply fertiliser or pesticides to the land within 2 m of the centre of the ditch.** This rule also applies to all land within 1 m of the top of the ditch bank.

- **If you are managing both sides of the hedgerow, you must leave uncultivated land extending 2 m from the centre of the hedgerow on the non-ditch side of the hedgerow.** You must not apply fertilisers, manures or pesticides to this land.

- **Take care to minimise hedge trimmings entering the ditch.** Ensure that all hedge trimmings that would otherwise restrict flow are removed.
Hedge with a variety of heights and widths, achieved by cutting no more than one third of the length each year.

OB3/EB3 hedge management gives the broadest range of wildlife habitats.

Uncultivated land extending at least 2m from the centre of the ditch

2m or more

2m

Uncultivated land extending 2m from the centre line of the hedge

**OB8**: 38 points per 100 m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB1 Hedge management).

**OB9**: 26 points per 100 m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB2 Hedge management).

**OB10**: 56 points per 100 m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB3 Hedge management).

**EB8**: 38 points per 100 m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB1 Hedge management).

**EB9**: 26 points per 100 m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB2 Hedge management).

**EB10**: 56 points per 100 m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB3 Hedge management).

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**OB11** Stone wall protection and maintenance

**EB11** Stone wall protection and maintenance

Only walls over which you have management control can be included under this option.

Stone walls of all types are important for stock management and as landscape and historic features. They are also potentially important habitats for lichens, mosses and ferns, invertebrates, reptiles, birds and small mammals.

This option can only apply to complete walls or complete sections of walls (ie walls still at their original height and with their coping stones in place). Stone walls must be built of natural materials and must be of traditional dry-stone wall construction. Mortar may be used when it is the traditional method of stone walling.
For this option you must comply with the following:

- Protect stone walls from deterioration, that is regularly repair gaps where these occur during the course of your agreement.

- Carry out all repair and maintenance work in the traditional materials used in the original wall construction, following the style characteristic of the local landscape and using appropriately shaped and sized local natural stone.

- Do not remove any in situ stone from walls.

**OB11:** 15 points per 100 m.
**EB11:** 15 points per 100 m.

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**C Options for trees and woodland**

**OC1** Protection of in-field trees on rotational land, and  
**OC2** Protection of in-field trees on organic grassland  
**EC1** Protection of in-field trees on arable land, and  
**EC2** Protection of in-field trees on grassland

Establishment of uncultivated areas around these trees may help to prolong their life.
Trees are of historic and landscape significance in both arable and grassland situations. They also provide habitat for many invertebrates and birds. To be eligible for these options, trees must have a trunk diameter of over 30 cm at chest height and the trunk must be entirely within the field, that is, not part of a field boundary. A tree in a remnant boundary may be considered as an in-field tree where it is not attached to a current boundary feature.

Individual trees that form a group or line of more than four trees are not eligible for this option if the canopies overlap. If the canopies do not overlap, each individual tree can earn the specified number of points.

Dead trees are eligible for these options, with the requirement that 'a 10 m radius from the base of the tree' must be used as a minimum where the prescription refers to 'the tree canopy'. Trees that die and/or fall during the course of the agreement must remain in position and the prescriptions must continue to be followed.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Do not carry out any cultivations, supplementary feeding of stock, storage of materials or machinery or weed control (apart from spot treatment) under the canopy of the tree.
- Leave fallen timber in situ below the tree canopy.
- Do not spread lime, fertiliser or manure beneath the tree canopy.

**OC1:** 12 points per tree protected on rotational land.
**OC2:** 8 points per tree protected on organic grassland.
**EC1:** 12 points per tree protected on arable land.
**EC2:** 8 points per tree protected on grassland.
OC3 Maintenance of woodland fences

The aim of this option is to protect woodland flora and encourage natural regeneration. Woodlands are features of historic interest and make significant contributions to the local landscape character. The option should only be placed adjacent to predominantly native woodlands, in particular ancient woodlands, and where animals are likely to graze.

Only woodlands on the holding are eligible for this option. The option may not be used for woodlands that border, but do not form part of, the holding.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Maintain fences in a stock-proof condition to ensure exclusion of livestock without damaging woodland boundary banks.
- Exclude stock from the woodland.

OC3: 4 points per 100 m.

EC3: Maintenance of woodland fences

OC3: 4 points per 100 m.

Maintain fences to prevent damage to woodlands, such as overgrazing and soil erosion.
**OC4 Management of woodland edges**

The development of scrub along the edges of woodland provides important habitats for a range of wildlife, including invertebrates, birds and small mammals. This option is designed to encourage the woodland edge to grow out into the field and requires 6 m to be left uncultivated from the edge of the wood. A scrub and grass mosaic should be allowed to develop. The option should only be placed adjacent to predominantly native woodlands, in particular ancient woodlands. It may be used to enhance woodlands within the holding, as well as those that border the holding but do not form part of the holding.

This option must be located on agricultural land adjacent to woodland to allow development of the woodland edge. Therefore, if the woodland covers an entire parcel, this option should be located in the adjoining field.

The option is also eligible adjacent to woodlands where a ditch runs between the woodland and the field. However, it may not be practical to use this option if the ditch requires ongoing management or maintenance. This option may be located immediately adjacent to woodland receiving Forestry Commission funding, but there must be no overlap.

Buffer strip options may be located adjacent to these woodland-edge areas.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Do not cultivate within 6 m of the woodland edge. Allow the woodland edge to grow out for up to 6 m.
- Cover of scrub growth must not exceed 50 per cent of the area.
- Cutting is only permitted to maintain the scrub and grass mosaic and for the control of the weeds listed below.
- Trim no more than a third of the shrubby growth in any one calendar year. Do not cut during the bird breeding season (1 March to 31 August).
- Do not supplementary feed or locate water troughs and mineral licks in such a way as to cause poaching on the woodland strip.
- Control injurious weeds (e.g., creeping, spear and field thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g., Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by selective trimming or manual removal.
- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e., creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g., Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
- Do not apply fertilisers or manure.

**OC4: 380 points per ha.**

**EC4: 380 points per ha.**

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**D Options for historic and landscape features**

Archaeological sites, traditional buildings and designed landscapes such as parkland give the countryside its local character and interest, as well as providing a record of human activity over centuries. Changes in agriculture have damaged or destroyed many of these features or resulted in their dereliction. Beneficial management can protect these important sites and help to retain and enhance the distinctive and varied character of the local landscape and wider countryside for generations to come.

Before considering these options, please look carefully at your Environmental Information Map, supplied as part of your application pack. This may show some of the historic features on your farm. If you are aware of additional features, you must also mark these on your Farm Environment Record (FER) Map. You can obtain further information and guidance from a leaflet entitled *Farming the Historic Landscape: Entry Level Stewardship*, available from www.helm.org.uk or your Natural England regional office (see Appendix 1 for contact details).
Protection of archaeological features
Archaeological features – from individual sites such as barrows, settlement sites or hill forts, to more extensive landscape features such as ridge and furrow and ancient field systems – are often our only record of past human activity. They cannot be replaced, and once destroyed they are gone forever. Cultivation can be particularly destructive. Taking these features out of cultivation is an essential step in conserving them for present and future generations to see and understand.

If you have historic features (including archaeological sites and traditional farm buildings) on your farm, it is a requirement of joining OELS/ELS that you mark them on your FER and retain and protect them. This includes meeting the relevant scheme conditions detailed at sections 1.5.5 and 1.5.6 of this handbook.

If you wish to carry out works other than those specified in the measures below which affect Scheduled Monuments, you must consult English Heritage.

OD1 Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings
ED1 Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings

A traditional farm building (TFB) is a building or part of a building constructed before 1940 for a use associated with agriculture, and built using traditional methods and materials such as timber, brick, stone, tile and slate. Their construction, layout and function provide information about the rural economy and past farming practices. While many TFBs are not suited to modern agriculture, they are often valued features in the landscape and make a major contribution to local character. The annual active maintenance of weatherproof TFBs prevents the onset of serious structural problems which may need expensive restoration in the future.

'Maintenance' refers to the routine work that is necessary to protect the fabric of a building and to keep it weatherproof. It does not include any work to put right significant defects or decay, or anything required to bring a building in poor repair back to good condition. This sort of restoration work may be funded under HLS. Some maintenance works will be required annually. Others, such as clearing of gutters and vegetation, may need to be undertaken several times per year.

Typical maintenance work includes:

- undertaking a regular inspection of the TFB to check its condition and identify any problems that need attention;
- ensuring that all services are working properly, such as making sure that gutters are free of debris;
- undertaking minor repairs to the external fabric of the building, such as replacing slipped or broken roofing slates and tiles to prevent rainwater penetration, renewing cast iron gutters and drainpipes, painting woodwork and metalwork, replacing broken glass, pointing walls and clearing vegetation; and
- inspecting the building regularly to identify areas needing maintenance work, such as checking downpipes and gutters for leaves in the autumn, noting slipped slates and checking the condition of paintwork and other areas requiring rectification.

Eligible buildings include TFBs that:

- are in a sound and weatherproof condition;
- were built for a purpose associated with agriculture, such as housing machinery or animals, or storing or processing crops and food; and
- are still used for an agricultural purpose, whether or not it was the original one (for example, a barn built to house animals which is now being used for storage of feedstuffs or equipment).

Ineligible buildings include:

- farmhouses, residential or domestic buildings;
- buildings already converted to a non-agricultural use, for example to a residential or non-agricultural business use;
• TFBs already in receipt of funding from another scheme, such as the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) or Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE);

• TFBs that you intend to convert to a non-agricultural use during the life of your agreement; and

• TFBs that will not be in your ownership or control for the life of your agreement.

TFBs that meet the above conditions but which are currently unused or empty are also eligible. It is not a requirement for buildings to be on land registered on the Rural Land Register (RLR) (see section 2.1.1), but you must record them on the FER.

For this option you must comply with the following:

• Continue to protect and maintain in weatherproof condition the specified TFB(s) (including fixtures and fittings and adjacent associated features such as mounting blocks or stack/stook bases).

• Carry out maintenance works and minor repairs on a 'like for like' basis, using traditional materials and methods, to retain the character of the building in its local setting.

• Where a non-traditional material has previously been used to repair or re-clad the building (such as corrugated iron sheeting to cover roofs), this may be retained and should be maintained appropriately.
• Obtain current photographs of all elevations of the building as evidence of its condition when you joined the scheme. This should include photographs of any areas where non-traditional materials have previously been used to repair or re-clad the building.

• Keep a record of work done, and carry out and record a brief visual inspection at least once a year.

• Retain the building in your ownership or control for the life of your agreement.

• Ensure that the building is not converted to a non-agricultural use during the life of your agreement.

**OD1:** 2 points per m² of ground floor area.
**ED1:** 2 points per m² of ground floor area.

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**OD2 Take archaeological features currently on cultivated land out of cultivation**
**ED2 Take archaeological features currently on cultivated land out of cultivation**

This option is available on arable land and on temporary grass leys that are re-sown at least once every 5 years.

For this option you must comply with the following:

• Take archaeological features out of cultivation.

• Choose a boundary that encompasses the feature and provides a sensible and practical field division where necessary. This may be on the whole or part of the field where the archaeological feature is located, depending on what is practical on your farm.

• The area can be sown or left to regenerate and you must then carry out the following management:
  - Do not plough or re-seed.
  - Do manage the area as permanent grassland by grazing or mowing.
  - Do maintain a continuous grass sward and do not allow bare patches of soil to develop (for example by considering carefully the regular routing and rotation of stock movements, and gathering points such as water troughs).
  - Do not supplementary feed, or site water troughs, on or next to the archaeological feature.
  - Do prevent scrub development.
  - Do minimise the use of heavy vehicles on the feature, particularly in wet weather, to prevent damage caused by wheel rutting and compaction.
  - Do not tip or dump any material on the feature.
  - Do avoid obvious earthworks if you are harrowing or rolling.

**OD2:** 600 points per ha.
**ED2:** 460 points per ha.
This Roman mosaic was discovered a few inches under cultivated land.
OD3 Reduced-depth, non-inversion cultivation on archaeological features (minimum till)
ED3 Reduced-depth, non-inversion cultivation on archaeological features (minimum till)

Where removal of archaeological features from cultivation is not practicable, reducing cultivation depth is a ‘next-best’ option. Shallow cultivation reduces the risk of damage to archaeological features on farmland. This option may be applied to the whole, or part, of the field where the archaeological feature is located, depending on what is practical on your farm. The reduction in cultivation depth must be achieved by using non-inversion (minimum tillage) machinery – not standard inversion ploughing equipment.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Avoid deep soil disturbance by using shallow non-inversion cultivations to a maximum depth of 10 cm (4 inches) or by using no-till practices.
- Do not subsoil or mole-plough.
- Do not use machinery under conditions likely to cause rutting or compaction.
- Do not grow maize, root and tuber crops (excluding non-harvestable root crops such as grazed fodder beet and forage turnips), short rotation coppice or miscanthus.
- If sowing a spring crop, maintain the previous overwintered stubble until 14 February.
- Do not use the area as farm access.

OD3: 100 points per ha.
ED3: 60 points per ha.

OD4 Management of scrub on archaeological features
ED4 Management of scrub on archaeological features

Trees and shrubs can be very damaging to archaeological features, particularly buried deposits, as a result of disturbance by root penetration, by wind throw or by attracting burrowing animals or sheltering stock. This option helps to prevent expansion of scrub.

© English Heritage
An example of a site that would benefit from scrub clearance.
For this option you must comply with the following:

- Where scrub is present on an archaeological feature, prevent its further encroachment by grazing and/or mowing.
- To avoid disturbance to nesting birds, do not remove scrub between 1 March and 31 August.
- Prevent the spread of weeds, shrubs, saplings or scrub, to avoid damage by roots.
- Avoid using heavy machinery and ensure that works do not disturb the ground.
- If you are carrying out scrub clearance, do not grub out stumps and roots, but cut (or grind down) stumps level with the land surface. Prevent vegetation regrowth.
- Remove cuttings or brash from the feature.
- Do not tip, dump or burn any material on the feature.
- Do not remove mature trees without Forestry Commission approval.
- Do not plough or re-seed.

**OD4: 120 points per ha.**  
**ED4: 120 points per ha.**

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**OD5 Management of archaeological features on grassland**

Well-managed permanent grassland is the best agricultural management option for archaeological features and pastoral landscapes, such as ridge and furrow, to conserve them for present and future generations. This option may be claimed on the whole field – even where the archaeological feature covers only a part of the field. This option is not available on land parcels larger than 15ha within the Moorland Line.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Maintain a continuous grass sward and do not allow bare patches of soil to develop (for example by considering carefully the regular routing and rotation of stock movements, and gathering points such as water troughs).
- Do not supplementary feed on, or next to, the archaeological feature.
- Control weed growth and prevent scrub development.
- Minimise the use of heavy vehicles on the feature, particularly in wet weather, to prevent damage caused by wheel rutting and compaction.
- Do not tip or dump any material on the feature.
- Do not harrow or roll earthworks (including ridge and furrow).
- Do not locate water troughs, mineral licks, etc, in such a way as to cause poaching on or next to the archaeological feature.
- Do not plough or re-seed.

**OD5: 16 points per ha.**  
**ED5: 16 points per ha.**

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© Defra/James LePage

Maintaining land as permanent pasture preserves archaeology.
E Options for buffer strips and field margins

Buffer strips have a wide range of potential benefits, such as: creating new habitat for small mammals, invertebrates and birds; protecting habitats from sprays, fertiliser and cultivation; protecting archaeological or historic features from damage by mechanical operations; and stabilising banks.

When placed adjacent to a watercourse, a buffer strip may help to intercept potential pollutants such as sediment and nutrients transported in surface water run-off. On long, steep slopes, the establishment of buffer strips can be beneficial, by intercepting and slowing surface run-off water before it builds into damaging flow.

Where to locate buffer strips
Choose the width that is most suitable for you and your machinery and use these options alongside or adjoining environmental features, such as ponds, ditches, riverbanks, hedges, stone walls, above-ground archaeology and other historic features such as historic buildings, and metal parkland fencing. Below-ground archaeological sites can be protected by placing the buffer strip directly over the feature. Consider the impact on the local landscape character when deciding on the width, extent and location of buffer strips and field margins.

Buffer strips offer particular benefit to wildlife, if placed adjacent to watercourses, hedgerows (particularly those hedges containing mature hedgerow trees), stone walls, remnant boundary tree lines and woodland edge strips. They may also be used to create habitat and to form links between areas of wildlife habitat. Generally speaking, wider buffer strips will provide greater protection and improved wildlife habitat.

Where buffer strips are placed near a watercourse, however, take care to minimise any channelling of surface run-off along the edge of the buffer strip.

Buffer strip options in OELS and ELS must not overlap with:

- the SPS cross compliance requirement not to cultivate land within 2 m of the centre of a hedgerow or watercourse (and within 1 m of the top of the bank of a watercourse);
- any other buffer strips or uncultivated strips required under other OELS or ELS options, such as OELS and ELS options for field boundaries, trees and woodland; or
- public rights of way (eg footpaths or bridleways) along field edges.

You must start your OELS and ELS buffer strip options where your other uncultivated land ends (ie 2 m from the centre of a hedge or ditch and at least 1 m from the top of a ditch bank).
You may establish 2 m or 4 m OELS and ELS buffer strips alongside 2 m Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) grass margins, but you must not establish any OELS or ELS buffer strip options alongside 6 m CSS grass margins.

If you are locating your OELS or ELS buffer strip next to a hedge that extends further than 2 m from the centreline of the hedge, it is acceptable for part of your OELS or ELS buffer strip to be covered by the hedge, provided the land would otherwise be eligible as a buffer strip.

Buffer strips that have already been established are eligible if their management is not being paid for under another scheme. However, a buffer strip must be located on land that could, in practice, be cultivated (so for example very steeply banked strips alongside boundaries are not eligible).

For land that is part of an arable/grass ley rotation, you must manage land in buffer strip options OE1–OE3/EE1–EE3 according to the requirements of options OE4–OE6/EE4–EE6 during the years when the buffer strips are adjacent to a temporary grass ley.

**How to record buffer strip measurements**
On your Field Data Sheet (Annex 2 of your application form), you must enter the amount of each buffer strip option as an area measurement in ha for each field. This will give you a figure that you will need in order to complete your SPS return. It will also help you to work out the remaining field area available for other uses, for example cropping or other OELS (or ELS) options.

For each buffer strip, measure the length of the option in metres, and convert this to ha (to the nearest 0.01 ha (100 m²)).

**How to calculate the area of buffer strip options**
You may find it helpful to use the following worksheet to record how you have calculated the area of each buffer strip option in each of your fields. This can also be used for option OC4/EC4 (Management of woodland edges).

### Table 4 Recording Buffer Strips

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<td>Option code</td>
<td>Option description</td>
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<td>Length (m)</td>
<td>Area in m² (width x length)</td>
<td>Area in ha (divide area in m² by 10,000)</td>
<td>Area in ha to the nearest 0.01 ha</td>
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<td>OE3</td>
<td>6 m buffer strips on organic grassland</td>
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<td>1428</td>
<td>0.1428</td>
<td>0.14</td>
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</table>

**OE1 and OE2: 2 m and 4 m buffer strips on rotational land**

**EE1 and EE2: 2 m and 4 m buffer strips on cultivated land**

For these options you must comply with the following:

- Establish or maintain a grassy strip during the first 12 months of your agreement, either by sowing or, ideally, by natural regeneration. Remove any compaction in the topsoil if you need to prepare a seedbed, except on archaeological features. Regular cutting in the first 12–24 months may be needed to control annual weeds and encourage grasses to tiller. Avoid cutting when the soil is moist, to prevent further compaction.
Do not apply any fertilisers or manure to these strips.

Control injurious weeds (eg creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

After the first 12 months of your agreement, cut buffer strips only to control woody growth, and no more than once every 2 years.

Do not use buffer strips for regular vehicular access, turning or storage. There should be no tracks, compacted areas or poaching.

OE1, 2 m buffer strips on rotational land: 400 points per ha.
OE2, 4 m buffer strips on rotational land: 500 points per ha.
EE1, 2 m buffer strips on cultivated land: 300 points per ha.
EE2, 4 m buffer strips on cultivated land: 400 points per ha.

Buffer strips can protect important features and increase the diversity of the habitat.
OE3 6 m buffer strips on rotational land
EE3 6 m buffer strips on cultivated land

For this option, you must follow the management for options OE1/OE2 or EE1/EE2 and in addition comply with the following:

- After the first 12 months of your agreement, cut the 3 m next to the crop edge annually after mid-July. Only cut the other 3 m to control woody growth, and no more than once every 2 years (where next to woodland, once every 10 years).

- If you wish, you may establish all or part of the margin by sowing a mix of fine-leaved grasses and flowers, such as knapweed, bird’s-foot-trefoil, self-heal, oxeye daisy and yarrow. If you decide to do this, it is recommended that you cut each year in August or September an if excess vegetation threatens to suppress the flowers, cut again the following March or April. This will maintain the flowers in this sward, or others resulting from natural regeneration. You may remove cuttings, which will further benefit flowers.

OE3: 500 points per ha.
EE3: 400 points per ha.
OE4, OE5 and OE6: 2 m, 4 m and 6 m buffer strips on organic grassland

EE4, EE5 and EE6: 2 m, 4 m and 6 m buffer strips on intensive grassland

OE4, OE5 and OE6 are only available on grassland stocked at more than 1.00 LU/ha (refer to table in option OK5/EK5). EE4, EE5 & EE6 are only available on improved grassland receiving more than 100 kg/ha of nitrogen per year in fertiliser or manures.

For these options you must comply with the following:

- On fields that will be mown, leave an uncut 2 m/4 m/6 m buffer strip around the edge. Graze this buffer strip along with the aftermath, following the final cut.
- Do not allow livestock to poach or overgraze the buffer strip.
- Do not apply any fertilisers or manure to the strips.
- Control injurious weeds (eg creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.
- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
- It is not a requirement to fence these buffer strips.

An example of a buffer strip along the edge of a woodland.
• After the first 12 months of your agreement, cut buffer strips only to control woody growth, and no more than once every 2 years.

• Do not use buffer strips for regular vehicular access, turning or storage. There should be no tracks, compacted areas or poaching.

OE4: 400 points per ha for 2 m buffer strips on organic grassland.
OE5: 500 points per ha for 4 m buffer strips on organic grassland.
OE6: 500 points per ha for 6 m buffer strips on organic grassland.
EE4: 300 points per ha for 2 m buffer strips on intensive grassland.
EE5: 400 points per ha for 4 m buffer strips on intensive grassland.
EE6: 400 points per ha for 6 m buffer strips on intensive grassland.

OE7 and OE8 Buffering in-field ponds in organic grassland and rotational land
EE7 and EE8 Buffering in-field ponds in improved permanent grassland and arable land

To maintain their value to wildlife, the water quality of ponds needs to be protected. In areas of improved grassland management and on arable land, the creation of un-fertilised grass buffers around in-field ponds will help to protect them from nutrient leaching and run-off, and will provide additional habitat for pond wildlife. Buffers will be less effective where field drains discharge directly into the pond. The buffer areas may be designed to link two nearby ponds or to link ponds to copses or other boundary features.

This option is only available where the stocking rate on grassland or grass in rotation is more than 1.0 LU/ha. This option is only available on grassland that is currently receiving over 50 kg/ha of nitrogen (EE7), or on arable land (EE8).

Figure 9 – Buffering in-field ponds

Buffer areas may link to field boundaries/copes to benefit wildlife

Minimum distance of 10m between the pond edge and the crop

After the first 2 years, cut vegetation no more than once every 5 years to provide tussocky habitat
For this option you must comply with the following:

- Buffer areas should be no more than 0.5 ha, although areas can be linked where there are several ponds in a field.
- Buffer areas must extend for at least 10 m between the pond edge and the intensively managed part of the field within which it lies.
- On arable or rotational land, establish buffer areas by natural regeneration or by sowing.
- Remove any compaction in the topsoil if you need to prepare a seedbed, except on archaeological features. Regular cutting in the first 12–24 months may be needed to control annual weeds and encourage grass to tiller. Avoid cutting when the soil is moist, to prevent further compaction.
- After establishment, cut no more than once every 5 years to allow the development of tussocky grass and low scrub. Do not allow scrub to develop on archaeological sites.
- You may allow some scrub to develop, but this must be around less than half of the pond margin.
- Do not apply fertiliser or manure.
- Control injurious weeds (eg creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.
- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
- Where the field is grazed, limit livestock access so that less than half of the pond edge is poached.
- Do not use buffer strips for regular vehicular access, turning or storage. There should be no tracks, compacted areas or poaching.

OE7: 500 points per ha for buffering in-field ponds in organic grassland.
OE8: 500 points per ha for buffering in-field ponds in rotational land.
EE7: 400 points per ha for buffering in-field ponds in improved permanent grassland.
EE8: 400 points per ha for buffering in-field ponds in arable land.

**F Options for arable land**

Options OF1–OF9 and EF1–EF11 are only available for arable land. ‘Arable land’ is defined as ‘land that has been in arable production, including temporary grassland and long-term set-aside, during the 5 years prior to the start of your agreement’.

**OF1 Management of field corners**

The provision of a grassy area will greatly increase the wildlife interest of an arable field. These areas are often awkward to reach with machinery and are less productive. However, the provision of a natural grassy corner, containing some grassland flowering plants and scrub, will benefit wildlife, including invertebrates, birds, reptiles and amphibians (if located near a water feature). This option must not be located on archaeological features.

Although this option is designed for field corners, if you have small areas within the field that would be beneficial to take out of production, you may do so. Strategic placement of this option may help to reduce the movement of sediment, nutrients and pesticides by wind and water erosion within fields and from field to field. This option could also help to buffer sensitive habitats at risk from soil erosion and from the direct impact of agricultural activities.
For this option you must comply with the following:

- Establish or maintain field corners by natural regeneration or by sowing. Regular cutting in the first 12 months may be needed to control annual weeds and encourage grass to tiller.

- Patch size must be no more than 2 ha and there must be a maximum of 1 paid patch per 20 ha of arable land to ensure that patches are well distributed across the land.

- Remove any compaction in the topsoil if you need to prepare a seedbed.

- After establishment, cut no more than once every 5 years to allow the development of tussocky grass and low scrub. Avoid cutting between 1 March and 31 August if nesting birds are thought to be present.

- Do not apply fertilisers or manures.

- Control injurious weeds (eg creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

- After controlling weeds you may surface-seed patches with a tussocky grass mix.

- To avoid the creation of wheel ruts and other bare areas, do not use field corners for regular vehicular access, turning or storage.

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OF1: 500 points per ha.
EF1: 400 points per ha.
**OF2 Wild bird seed mixture**

**EF2 Wild bird seed mixture**

This option will provide important food resources for farmland birds, especially in winter and early spring, on arable and mixed farms. The aim is to maximise the production of small seeds suitable as bird food in either annual or annual/biennial mixtures, while also providing a source of invertebrates for birds.

This option is a 'rotational option'. This means that it can move around the farm within the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained each year. Relocating these blocks or strips will help to avoid the build up of weeds or soil borne disease.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Use only organic seeds mixes on OELS-eligible land. Where this is not possible, you must contact your Organic Inspection Body for a derogation. This does not apply to any agreed procedures allowing the use of grass seeds mixtures that have a minimum organic content.

- Sow a balanced combination of at least three small seed-bearing crops chosen from barley, triticale, kale, quinoa, linseed, millet, mustard, fodder radish, and sunflower. No single species should make up more than 70 per cent by weight of the mix, and always make sure they cover a range of crop groups, to minimise any pest and disease impacts. Large-seeded crops (such as maize) and game covers (such as giant sorghum or sweet clover) are not allowed.

- Sow in blocks and/or strips at least 6 m wide at the edges of fields. Both should be between 0.4 ha and 2 ha in size, and there should be no more than 3 ha in total per 100 ha of arable land. This will ensure that they are well distributed across your farm and that food is always available for seed-eating birds.

- In the first year, sow at the optimum time for the chosen species mixture, which may be autumn or spring, ensuring that any areas of soil compaction are removed prior to establishment, except on sites of archaeological interest. Avoid sowing too early in the spring when seedbeds may be dry, cold and of poor quality.

- To help with weed and pest management, the seed can be sown in separate drill widths or as strips within the option area.

- On sandy soils, strips must be sown along contours.

- Retain the crop mixture until at least 1 March before re-establishment in spring, which could be annually or every other year (biennial crops), to maintain seed production.

- Fertilisers, manures (but not within 10 m of watercourses) and seed
treatments may be used to aid establishment, minimise impact to non-target invertebrates and ensure sufficient seed production to deliver the option aim.

- Control injurious weeds (eg creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed). Non-residual, non-selective herbicides may be used prior to sowing, to help re-establishment.

- Only apply environmentally sympathetic insecticides – and then only during establishment – where there is a strong risk of crop failure due to severe pest attack (identified through monitoring and use of thresholds). Advice must be taken from a BASIS professional before any insecticides are used.

- Do not use the area for access, turning or storage.

- Do not graze.

OF2: 550 points per ha.
EF2: 450 points per ha.

**OF4 Nectar flower mixture**

EF4 Nectar flower mixture

Sowing an area of flowering plants into the farmed landscape will boost the availability of essential food sources for a range of nectar-feeding insects, including butterflies and bumblebees.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Remove any compaction in the topsoil if you need to prepare a seedbed, except on archaeological features.

- Use only organic seed mixes on OELS-eligible land. Where this is not possible, you must contact your Organic Inspection Body for a derogation.

- Sow a mixture of at least four nectar-rich plants (eg red clover, alsike clover, bird’s-foot-trefoil, sanfoin, musk mallow, common knapweed), with no single species making up more than 50 per cent of the mix by weight.

- Sow in blocks and/or strips at least 6 m wide at the edges of fields, in early spring or late summer.

- Individual areas must not exceed 1 ha in size, and there should be no more than 3 ha per 100 ha of arable land. This is to ensure that they are well distributed across your farm, so that there is always food available for the nectar-feeding insects. Re-establish the mix as necessary, to maintain a sustained nectar supply.
• Control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

• Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed). Non-residual, non-selective herbicides may be applied prior to sowing, to help re-establishment.

• Do not apply any other pesticides, fertiliser, manure or lime.

• To stimulate valuable late flowering to meet the peak demand from bees, cut half the area to 20 cm between mid-June and the end of the first week of July.

• Cut the whole area to 10 cm between 15 September and 31 October, removing or shredding cuttings to avoid patches of dead material developing.

• Do not graze in the spring or summer. Late autumn/early winter grazing of areas is allowed and will benefit legumes, but take care to avoid poaching damage and compaction, particularly when conditions are wet.

• Do not use the area for access, turning or storage.

OF4: 550 points per ha.
EF4: 450 points per ha.
Overwintered stubbles provide an important winter food source for seed-eating birds, from spilt grain and the seeds of broad-leaved weeds. They are also a habitat for brown hares, and early breeding site for ground-nesting birds such as lapwing and curlew. This option manages stubble following the harvest of combinable crops, such as oilseed rape, linseed, cereals or field beans (but not maize), until 14 February in the following year. It should not be located where there is a moderate to high risk of soil erosion or run-off.

This is a ‘rotational option’. This means that it can move around the farm within the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained each year (applied for on Annex 1).

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Bale (or chop and spread) straw after harvest.

- Where the stubble is predominantly clean after harvest, a light surface cultivation can be made before the end of September (or within the first month following harvest if later) to encourage weed germination and loosen any surface compaction or capping. If the stubble is already weedy, do not cultivate.

- On sloping fields, tramlines and other areas of severe compaction should always be subsoiled following harvest (except where there are archaeological features or when conditions are wet), to reduce the risk of run-off and erosion.

- Do not apply any pesticides, fertilisers, manure (including manure heaps) or lime to the stubble.

- Do not top or graze.

- Do not apply pre-harvest desiccants or post-harvest herbicides.

- From 15 February, the stubble can be returned to the farm rotation.

**OF6: 150 points per ha.**  
**EF6: 120 points per ha.**
OF7 Beetle banks  
EF7 Beetle banks

Beetle banks are tussocky grass ridges, generally about 2 m wide, that run from one side of a field to the other while still allowing the field to be farmed. They provide habitat for ground-nesting birds, small mammals and insects (including those that feed on crop pests).

When carefully placed across the slope, such banks can help to reduce run-off and erosion, but you must ensure that they do not channel water and make any existing problems worse. Do not locate beetle banks where their creation would cause damage to an archaeological feature.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Create an earth ridge between 2 m and 4 m wide and about 0.4 m high. This can be created during cultivation by careful two-directional ploughing. Alternatively, bed-forming equipment can be used if available (except on archaeological features).
- You may leave working gaps at each end of not more than 25 m, to allow machinery access.
- Sow with a mixture of perennial grasses, including some tussock-forming varieties such as cocksfoot or timothy.
- Control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.
- Only apply herbicide to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
- You may need to cut the grass several times during the first summer to help establishment. Thereafter, only cut as necessary to prevent the encroachment of woody and suckering species. To avoid causing soil compaction, do not cut when wet.
- Do not apply any other pesticides, fertilisers or manure.

**OF7: 750 points per ha.**  
**EF7: 580 points per ha.**

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![Figure 10 – Beetle Bank](image-url)
The number of breeding skylarks has halved since the mid-1970s, due largely to the switch from spring to autumn sowing of cereals and the intensification of grassland management. Arable fields support more breeding skylarks than any other habitat. Large, open fields are preferred, where the birds nest on the ground in vegetation less than 50 cm high, so winter cereals soon become unsuitable for breeding. Up to three nesting attempts are made in a long breeding season that extends from April to August.

This option will provide suitable habitat for skylarks in winter cereal crops throughout the breeding season.

This is a ‘rotational option’. This means that the plots can move around the farm within the normal arable rotation, but the same total number of plots must be maintained each year (applied for on Annex 1).

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Select a field that is more than 5 ha in area, has an open aspect and will be drilled with winter cereals. A good guide is the presence of skylarks singing over the field in previous years.

- Avoid fields bounded by tree lines or adjacent to woods, unless the field is greater than 10 ha.

- Create the plots by turning off the drill during sowing to leave an unsown area. Alternatively, use cultivation to produce a bare area within the crop by 31 December.

- Create the plots either by turning off the drill during sowing to leave an unsown plot, or by sowing the crop as normal and spraying out the plots by 31 December with an appropriate herbicide.

- The plots should be a minimum of 4 m x 4 m.

- Locate the plots away from tramlines (a middle spot between two sets of tramlines is best) and field boundaries/margins (at least 50 m into the field), to minimise nest predation.

**OF8 Skylark plots**

**EF8 Skylark plots**

Creating low open vegetation provides foraging habitat.
Space skylark plots across the field at a minimum density of two plots per ha.

After drilling, there is no requirement to manage plots differently to the remainder of the field (they can be oversprayed and can be fertilised).

You are not required to keep the plots weed-free.

There must be no mechanical weeding of plots.

**OF8: 5 points per plot**

**EF8: 5 points per plot**

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**EF9 Unfertilised cereal headlands within arable fields**

This option is only available on ELS-eligible land.

This option provides an important food supply for birds, and habitat for arable plants and insects, within any arable field during the cropping year. It will deliver most benefit when sited next to a buffer strip, stubble or area managed for wild bird seed or nectar flower mixtures.

Unfertilised cereal headlands can be difficult to manage where grass weeds are a problem, particularly where herbicide resistance is present. If an unexpected weed infestation occurs and becomes unmanageable, select a less weedy location in following years.

This is a ‘rotational option’. This means that the headlands can move around the farm within the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained each year (applied for on Annex 1). The headlands can also remain in the same place in the field. This will be especially beneficial where scarce arable plants are present.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Do not apply fertiliser or manure to the headland between harvest of the previous crop and resuming normal management.

- Sow and manage a 6–24 m wide cereal headland along the edge of an arable crop.

- Do not apply insecticides between 15 March and the following harvest.

- Only the following herbicides can be applied to control problem grass and broad-leaved weeds:
  - for broad-leaved weeds, only use amidosulfuron, and only between 1 February and 31 March; and
  - for grass weeds, use the following active ingredients only: tri-allate, fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, diclofop-methyl + fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, tralkoxydim, clodinafop-propargyl or pinoxaden/cloquintocet-mexyl.

- Where weed growth threatens harvest, you may use a pre-harvest desiccant, unless you plan to use this area as overwintered stubbles (see option OF6/EF6).

**EF9: 100 points per ha.**
**EF10 Unharvested cereal headlands within arable fields**

This option is only available on ELS-eligible land.

This option provides a year-round food supply for birds, and habitat for arable plants and insects, within any arable field over 2 cropping years. It will deliver most benefit when sited next to a buffer strip, stubble or area managed for wild bird seed or nectar flower mixtures.

Unharvested cereal headlands can be difficult to manage where grass weeds are a problem, particularly where herbicide resistance is present. If an unexpected weed infestation occurs and becomes unmanageable, select a less weedy location in following years.

This is a ‘rotational option’. This means that the headlands can move around the farm within the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained each year (applied for on Annex 1). The headlands can also remain in the same place in the field. This will be especially beneficial where scarce arable plants are present.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Do not apply fertiliser or manure to the headland between harvest of the previous crop and resuming normal management.
- Sow and manage a 3–6 m wide cereal headland along the edge of any arable crop.
- You can sow the headland in either autumn or spring (if stubble, manage it as EF6) and leave it unharvested until the following spring (1 March), before resuming normal management.
- Sow a cereal or cereal mixture at a reduced seed rate to encourage a more open headland structure. On more difficult or weedy sites, conventional seed rates can be used.
- Take action to remove any surface compaction in tramlines within the headland, if they are causing run-off.
- Do not apply insecticides between 15 March and the following harvest.
- Only the following herbicides can be applied to control problem grass and broad-leaved weeds:
  - for broad-leaved weeds, only use amidosulfuron, and only between 1 February and 31 March; and
  - for grass weeds, use the following active ingredients only: tri-allate, fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, dicloflop-methyl + fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, tralkoxydim, clodinafop-propargyl or pinoxaden/cloquintocet-mexyl.

**EF10**: 330 points per ha.

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**EF11 Uncropped, cultivated margins for rare plants on arable land**

Uncropped, cultivated margins can benefit farmland birds and other wildlife, as well as providing habitat for rare annual plants.

This option is only available on ELS-eligible land.

These margins will provide beneficial management for rare arable plants, insects and foraging sites for seed-eating birds. It is better to avoid locating these margins where you have a grass weed problem. Where run-off is a problem, a grass buffer should be considered. The option will provide greatest benefits on sandy, shallow, chalky or stony soils.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Cultivate an arable field margin annually in either spring or autumn to a depth of about 15 cm (6 inches). Varying the depth and time of cultivation may help to prevent the build-up of undesirable weeds, but should always be managed according to the requirements of the target species.
Margins should be 3-6 m wide. They can be relocated within the same field to avoid the build up of pernicious weeds but should be located on the target species site at least one year in three to benefit the target species.

Do not apply any fertilisers or manures.

Where a severe pernicious weed burden has developed, targeted broad-spectrum herbicides can be used once annual species have set seed (typically in September). Only apply herbicides to spot–treat or weed–wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort), or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

EF11: 400 points per ha

G Options to encourage a range of crop types
The decline of mixed farming is one of the causes of the falling number of farmland birds in England.

OG1 Undersown spring cereals
EG1 Undersown spring cereals

The addition of a grass/legume mix as an understorey to the cereal crop will reduce the need for agrochemical inputs, increase the diversity of habitat provided in the field and benefit farm wildlife.

This is a ‘rotational option’. This means that it can move around the farm within the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained each year (applied for on Annex 1).

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Undersow a spring cereal crop (but not maize) with a grass ley, including at least 10 per cent legume by weight but no more than 30 per cent.
A yellowhammer – one of a number of declining farmland birds that will benefit from these options.

- Establish the cereal crop between 14 February and 20 April.
- Keep the undersown plant growth until the cereal crop is harvested. This must not be before 1 July nor before the cereal crop is fully ripe.
- Do not destroy the grass ley before 15 July of the following year.

**OG1: 150 points per ha.**
**EG1: 200 points per ha.**

**OG2 Wild bird seed mixture in grassland areas**
**EG2 Wild bird seed mixture in grassland areas**

This type of crop will feed seed-eating birds in arable and grassland landscapes. The aim of this option is to provide a year-round supply of food to enhance any existing food sources on your farm.

This option may not be used on fields which have been classified as permanent grass (sown to grass for 5 years or more).

This option is a ‘rotational option’. This means that it can move around the farm within the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained each year. Relocating these blocks or strips will help to avoid the build up of weeds or soil borne disease.
For this option you must comply with the following:

- **Use only organic seed mixes on OELS-eligible land.** Where this is not possible, you must contact your Organic Inspection Body for a derogation. This does not apply to any agreed procedures allowing the use of grass seed mixtures that have a minimum organic content.

- **Sow a balanced combination of at least three small seed-bearing crops chosen from barley, triticale, kale, quinoa, linseed, millet, mustard, fodder radish, and sunflower.** No single species should make up more than 70 per cent by weight of the mix, and always make sure they cover a range of crop groups to minimise any pest and disease impacts. Large seeded crops (such as maize) and game covers (such as giant sorghum or sweet clover) are not allowed.

- **Sow in blocks and/or strips at least 6 m wide at the edges of fields. Both should be between 0.4 ha and 2 ha in size and there should be no more than 3 ha in total per 100 ha of arable land. This will ensure that they are well distributed across your farm and that food is always available for seed-eating birds.**

- **In the first year, sow at the optimum time for the chosen species mixture, which may be autumn or spring, ensuring that any areas of soil compaction are removed prior to establishment (except on sites of archaeological interest). Avoid sowing too early in the spring when seedbeds may be dry, cold and of poor quality.**

- **To help with weed and pest management, the seed can be sown in separate drill widths or as strips within the option area.**

- **On sandy soils, strips must be sown along contours.**

- **Retain the crop mixture until at least 1 March before re-establishment in spring, which could be annually or every other year (biennial crops), to maintain seed production.**

- **Control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.**

- **Fertilisers, manures (but not within 10 m of watercourses) or seed treatments may be used to aid establishment, minimise impact to non-target invertebrates and ensure sufficient seed production to deliver the option aim.**

- **Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed). Non-residual products may be used prior to re-sowing to facilitate re-establishment.**

- **Only apply environmentally sympathetic insecticides – and then only during establishment – where there is a strong risk of crop failure due to severe pest attack (identified through monitoring and use of thresholds). Advice must be taken from a BASIS professional before any insecticides are used.**

- **Do not use the area for access, turning or storage.**

- **Do not graze.**

OG2: 550 points per ha.
EG2: 450 points per ha.

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**OG3 Nectar flower mixtures in grassland areas**

**EG3 Nectar flower mixtures in grassland areas**

Incorporating flowering plants in a plot helps to boost the numbers of pollen- and nectar-feeding insects, including butterflies and bumblebees. This option may not be used on fields which have been classified as permanent grass (sown to grass for 5 years or more).
For this option you must comply with the following:

- Remove any compaction in the topsoil if you need to establish a seedbed, except on archaeological features.
- **Use only organic seed mixes on OELS-eligible land. Where this is not possible, you must contact your Organic Inspection Body for a derogation.**
- Sow a mixture of at least four nectar-rich plants (eg red clover, alsike clover, bird’s-foot-trefoil, sanfoin, musk mallow, common knapweed), with no single species making up more than 50 per cent of the mix by weight.
- Sow in blocks and/or strips at least 6 m wide at the edges of fields, in early spring or late summer.
- Individual areas must not exceed 1 ha in size, and there should be no more than 3 ha per 100 ha of arable land. This is to ensure that they are well distributed across your farm, so there is always food available for the nectar-feeding insects. Re-establish the mix as necessary, to maintain a sustained nectar supply.
- **Control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.**
- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed). Non-residual, non-selective herbicides may be applied prior to sowing to help re-establishment.
- Do not apply any other pesticides, fertiliser, manure or lime.
- To stimulate valuable late flowering to meet the peak demand from bees, cut half the area to 20 cm between mid-June and the end of the first week of July.
- Cut the whole area to 10 cm between 15 September and 31 October, removing or shredding cuttings to avoid patches of dead material developing.
- Do not graze in the spring or summer. Late autumn/early winter grazing of areas is allowed and will benefit legumes, but take care to avoid poaching damage and compaction, particularly when conditions are wet.
- Do not use the area for access, turning or storage.

**OG3: 550 points per ha.**
**EG3: 450 points per ha.**

**OG4 Cereals for whole-crop silage followed by over-wintered stubbles**
**EG4 Cereals for whole-crop silage followed by over-wintered stubbles**

The benefit of this option is the provision of a seed source in the winter stubble and from the unripe grain.

This is a ‘rotational option’. This means that it can move around the farm within the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained each year (applied for on Annex 1).

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Sow a cereal (but not maize) crop in the autumn or spring.
- Harvest as whole-crop silage. Where soils are capped, undertake a light surface cultivation within the first month after harvest.
- On sloping fields, remove tramline compaction post-harvest (except where this may damage archaeological features), to reduce the risk of run-off and erosion.
- No more than 5 ha of this option may be included in your application.
• Do not apply insecticides between 15 March and harvest.

• The following herbicides can be applied to control problem grass and broad-leaved weeds:
  – for broad-leaved weeds, only use amidosulfuron, and only between 1 February and 31 March; and
  – for grass weeds, use only the following active ingredients: tri-allate, fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, diclofop-methyl +
    fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, tralkoxydim, clodinafop-propargyl or pinoxaden/cloquintocet-mexyl. Not all herbicides
    are suitable for all cereal crops or for undersown crops. Always read the product label.

• There are no restrictions on the use of fungicides or growth regulators.

• From 15 February, return the stubble to the farm rotation.

OG4: 250 points per ha.
EG4: 230 points per ha.

J Options to protect soils
Soil is a vital resource. Damage to soil structure and loss of soil through erosion reduces farm profitability and
damages the environment. Run-off and soil erosion lead to the removal of topsoil, with the possible loss of
productivity of the soil. They can also damage crops, block drainage channels, have an adverse impact on water
quality and aquatic life and lead to localised flooding. On-farm costs of soil erosion in England and Wales have been
estimated at £9 million a year.

Sandy soils on a sloping field, next to a road. Soil on the road can be a hazard as well as forming a channel to the river.

A sloping field adjacent to a road. Heavy soils have become compacted by cultivation when wet. This has led to run-off.

Wet soils can become poached. Run-off from this sloping land has washed into the watercourse at the base of the slope.

Wet silty soils have become poached next to a watercourse.

These photos illustrate examples of land management which has led to soil erosion problems. OELS and ELS
options can help to address these problems, or prevent them from arising in the first place.
In both grass and arable fields the ability of soil to resist run-off of water and soil erosion varies due to several factors, including soil type, slope, rainfall and the structure of the soil as a result of its management. Lighter-textured, sandy and silty soils are more easily washed or blown away than heavier clays, though a fine seedbed in any soil type may be at risk. Even gentle slopes can cause run-off and erosion. Where eroding fields lie up-slope from a road, ditch, watercourse or houses, they should be considered to be in a sensitive location.

You may already be managing your land to prevent erosion, but some fields could have an inherent risk and could cause problems if circumstances change. It is important that these fields should be included in your assessment of erosion (see section 2.3.4 step 6).

In some parts of the country, wind erosion of sandy and peaty soils can also be a problem. Seeds, fertilisers and pesticides can be lost, and the loss of topsoil will reduce the productivity of the land. Sediment-laden wind can cause damage to other crops, habitats and property.

**Soil management**

The way in which the land is managed, such as timing of cultivation and grazing, choice of crops, types of cultivation and use of hedges and buffer strips, will affect how much or how little run-off and erosion may occur. Your SPS soil protection review should set out how you will manage the land to reduce the risk of erosion happening in future.

To reduce the risk of run-off and erosion you may wish to consider the following management practices:

- avoiding growing certain crops (which are considered high risk due to the nature and timing of their operations) in fields where soil erosion or run-off occur or are likely to occur (see options OJ2/EJ2);
- locating buffer strips in appropriate places (see options OE1–OE3/EE1–EE3);
- introducing beetle banks along field contours (see option OF7/EF7); and
- cultivating along field contours.

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**OJ2 Management of maize crops to reduce soil erosion**

This option must not be located on fields at risk of soil erosion or run-off (as identified on your FER). It is only available on other land where you are growing maize.

This is a ‘rotational option’. It can move around the farm with the normal rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Harvest by 1 October and plough or cultivate to leave a rough surface, ideally within two weeks of harvest, to reduce subsequent soil erosion; or harvest by 1 October and establish an autumn-sown crop; or undersow the maize with a grass- or clover-based mixture and after harvest (ideally within two weeks) remove any areas of soil compaction. Do not subsoil areas on sites of archaeological interest.
- You must not apply more than the recommended amount of slurry or manure for either the maize or the following crop to be grown on this land (see guidance in Appendix 2 for a recognised fertiliser recommendation system). Any such slurry or manure must be applied at appropriate times to minimise the risk of run-off.

**OJ2: 18 points per ha.**

**EJ2: Management of maize crops to reduce soil erosion**

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**K Options for grassland outside the Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDAs) and the Moorland Line**

These options are designed to manage grassland in a way that benefits wildlife and landscape, protects archaeological features and reduces impacts on natural resources.
Grassland should be managed in a way that promotes good soil structure and infiltration of rainwater to reduce runoff. Good general management includes managing livestock densities to avoid soil compaction, or reducing or avoiding grazing when the soil is wet. You may also consider reducing existing compaction, for example by subsoiling or spiking, provided there are no buried earthworks or archaeological remains.

For the purposes of these options, 'grassland' is defined as: land that is used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage naturally or through cultivation and that has not been subject to cultivation for at least 5 years. Inter-tidal habitats are not eligible for these options.

OK1 Take field corners out of management outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line
EK1 Take field corners out of management outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line

The provision of unmanaged areas will increase the biodiversity of the farm. This option must not be located on archaeological sites. Although this option is designed for field corners, if you have small areas within the field which it would be beneficial to take out of production, you may do so. Field corners do not need to be fenced off, provided the prescriptions are met.

OK1 is only available on improved grassland that is stocked at more than 1.0 LU/ha.
EK1 is only available on improved grassland that is receiving over 50 kg/ha nitrogen per year as organic or inorganic fertiliser.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Patch size must be no more than 0.5 ha. You may have no more than one patch for every 10 ha of land eligible for this option and, as far as possible, patches must be distributed evenly across your OELS- and ELS-eligible land.

- Do not apply lime, fertiliser or manure.

- Control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

- After establishment, cut no more than once every 5 years, to allow the development of tussocky grass and low scrub. Avoid cutting between 1 March and 31 August if nesting birds are thought to be present.

- Do not graze.

OK1: 500 points per ha.
EK1: 400 points per ha.

OK2 Permanent grassland with low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line
EK2 Permanent grassland with low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line

Permanent grassland managed with low inputs of fertiliser and sprays will sustain a greater variety of plants and wildlife. The development of a varied sward structure is of particular value to insects. Permanent grassland is an important feature of riparian and pastoral landscapes, and can help to protect buried archaeological features. This option may deliver benefits to resource protection where placed on fields that are at risk of soil erosion or run-off. This option can be used on a whole- or part-field basis.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Maintain as grass. Do not plough, cultivate or re-seed.

- Manage by grazing and/or cutting but do not cut between 1 April and 31 May. You must remove any cuttings.
• Maintain a sward with a range of heights during the growing season, except when the field is closed, or shut up, for a cut of hay or silage. At least 20 per cent of the sward should be less than 7 cm and at least 20 per cent should be more than 7 cm to allow plants to flower and to provide a more varied habitat.

• Do not top at any time, except in patches to control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort).

• Do not harrow or roll between 1 April and 31 May.

• Supplementary feeding is allowed, but move feeders as often as required to avoid poaching. Do not feed on or next to archaeological sites, steep slopes, footpaths or watercourses.

• You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 tonnes/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

• You can only apply lime with the consent of your inspection body. They must be consulted and a need must be demonstrated.

• Control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear field thistles, curled broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

• Do not apply more than 50 kg/ha nitrogen per year as inorganic fertiliser. Where animal manures are applied, either alone or in addition to inorganic fertiliser, the total rate of nitrogen must not exceed 100 kg/ha of nitrogen per year. Only apply during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. If your current manure and fertiliser application rates are less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 of the ELS handbook showing average total N supplied by various manures.

Low input permanent pasture can have a wide range of benefits for biodiversity, archaeology and resource protection.
- You may continue adding lime, where this is your regular practice.

- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

**OK2: 115 points per ha.**

**EK2: 85 points per ha.**

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**OK3 Permanent grassland with very low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line**

Grassland managed with no fertiliser has a higher value for wildlife. Much species rich grassland has been lost to agricultural intensification, so it is important to maintain and, where possible, increase this resource. This option may also deliver benefits to resource protection where placed on fields that are at risk of soil erosion or run-off. It can be used on a whole- or part-field basis. If your field has more than a third of its area covered by rushes, it must be entered into option OK4/EK4 rather than this option.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Maintain as grass. Do not plough, cultivate or re-seed.

- Manage by grazing and/or cutting, to remove the year’s grass growth, but do not cut between 1 April and 30 June. You must remove any cuttings.

- Maintain a sward with a range of heights during the growing season, except when the field is closed, or shut up, for a cut of hay or silage. At least 20 per cent of the sward should be less than 7 cm and at least 20 per cent should be more than 7 cm, to allow plants to flower and provide a more varied habitat.

- Do not top at any time, except in patches to control injurious weeds.
• Do not harrow or roll between 1 April and 30 June.

• Do not supplementary feed.

• You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 tonnes/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

• You may apply lime with the consent of your inspection body. They must be consulted and a need must be demonstrated.

• Control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

• You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 tonnes/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser application rates are less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 of the ELS handbook showing average total N supplied by various manures.

• You may continue adding lime where this is your regular practice.

• Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

OK3: 180 points per ha.
© Natural England/Dave Shenton

Damp pasture is a valuable habitat for nesting birds.

**EK3: 150 points per ha.**

**OK4 Management of rush pastures outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line**

**EK4 Management of rush pastures outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line**

This option is available for fields where at least a third of the field area is covered by rushes. Damp pasture on farmland is a very important potential habitat for lapwing, curlew, redshank, snipe and reed bunting. Different types of waders like different vegetation heights, so a variety in the sward structure is most beneficial. Rush pastures may also contain a wide range of plant and invertebrate species.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Maintain as grass. Do not plough, cultivate or re-seed.

- Cut rush-dominated fields each calendar year, but not between 15 March and 1 August. Cut no more than a third of the area of rushes in each field (or a third of the fields if they are small) in rotation. It may be impractical to cut rushes in the wettest flushes, and therefore these can be left. Cattle trampling may help to control these areas.

- Once cut, if aftermath grazing does not control rushes, a second cut should be carried out within 8 weeks, but not between 1 April and 1 August.

- Where possible, graze the aftermath with cattle.

- Do not harrow or roll between 1 April and 30 June.

- Do not supplementary feed.
You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 tonnes/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

You can only apply lime with the consent of your inspection body. They must be consulted and a need must be demonstrated.

Control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 tonnes/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser application rates are less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

You may continue adding lime where this is your regular practice.

Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

**Option for mixed stocking on grassland**

**OK5 Mixed stocking**

**EK5 Mixed stocking**

This option, previously only available outside the LFAs, has been extended and is now available on eligible parcels both outside and inside the LFAs.

The decline of mixed stocking is one of the underlying causes of the reduction in numbers of several important farmland bird species. Mixed stocking encourages a diversity of sward structure and plant and invertebrate species, which in turn can be beneficial to a variety of ecological and historic features. It also contributes to the distinctive colour and patterning of local landscapes through mixed grazing systems. This option is only available on land that is grazed by both cattle and sheep, either in the same year or in alternate years, as part of a clean grazing system. Livestock Units (LUs) are calculated over a 2-year period. This option may be co-located with up to 2 other options from the list of permitted combinations at sections 3.3 or 3.4.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- A minimum of 15 per cent of the LUs must be grazing cattle.
- A minimum of 15 per cent of the LUs must be grazing sheep.
- Supplementary feeding is allowed, but move feeders as often as required to avoid poaching. Do not feed on or next to archaeological sites, steep slopes, footpaths or watercourses.
You may not wish to graze both types of livestock in the same year. For this reason, the percentage of cattle and sheep LUs grazing the land is calculated over a 2-year period. This allows you either to graze both types of livestock on the land parcel in the same year or to graze each type in alternate years.

If you choose to graze them on the land in alternate years, at least 30 per cent of the livestock units on the land parcel must be cattle in one year and at least 30 per cent must be sheep in the other. The remaining 70 per cent of the livestock units can be made up of the same, or other types of livestock, such as horses or domesticated deer. Records are not required but would be useful if you are inspected.

Table 5 Animal numbers converted into Livestock Units (LUs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal numbers are converted into Livestock Units as follows:</th>
<th>LUs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy cow</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef cow</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle over 2 years old</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle 6 months to 2 years</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowland ewe and lamb</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill ewe</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ram and teg over 6 months</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewe follower and/or store lamb</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pony</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These values are for medium-sized breeds. Large breeds will have approximately 20 per cent higher LU values and small breeds will be approximately 20 per cent lower, for each category.

Other grazing ruminants, such as deer or camelids, should be allocated an LU value in proportion to their liveweight, ie 60 kg animal approximately = 0.1 LU.

**OK5: 8 points per ha.**

**EK5: 8 points per ha.**

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### L. Options for SDAs, including Moorland Line land

These options are designed to manage grassland in a way that benefits wildlife and landscape, protects archaeological features and reduces impacts on natural resources.

Grassland should be managed in a way that promotes good soil structure and infiltration of rainwater to reduce run-off. Good general management includes managing livestock densities to avoid soil compaction, or reducing or avoiding grazing when the soil is wet. You may also consider reducing existing compaction, for example by sub-soiling or spiking, provided there are no buried earthworks or archaeological remains.

For the purposes of these options grassland is defined as: land which is used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage naturally or through cultivation and which has not been subject to cultivation for at least five years. Intertidal habitats are not eligible for these options.

All other options may also be used on LFA land (where the option eligibility and management rules can be met) except those for lowland grassland outside the LFA (OK1 to OK4).

### Environmental Stewardship and land within the Less Favoured Areas (LFA)

**Less Favoured Areas** are areas where the natural characteristics (geology, altitude, climate, etc) make it difficult to farm. LFAs include all upland, and also some disadvantaged lower lying areas. Whilst the majority of lowland grassland is outside LFAs, some areas that are more lowland in character (e.g. Culm Measures of mid/north Devon) are located within LFAs. LFAs are shown on your Environmental Information Map provided by Natural England. LFAs are subdivided into Severely Disadvantaged Areas and Disadvantaged Areas.

#### Severely Disadvantaged Areas

- which are, in the opinion of the appropriate Minister, inherently suitable for extensive livestock production but not for the production of crops in quantity materially greater than that necessary to feed such livestock as are capable of being maintained on such land, and
- whose agricultural production is, in the opinion of the appropriate Minister, severely restricted in its range by, or by a combination of soil, relief, aspect or climate, or
- situated in the Isles of Scilly.

Your Environmental Information Map will identify which, if any, of your land is within the Disadvantaged Areas and the Severely Disadvantaged Areas.

**Moorland Line**

The Moorland Line encloses land within England which has been defined as predominantly semi-natural upland vegetation, or predominantly of rock outcrops and semi-natural vegetation, used primarily for rough grazing. The moorland line encloses nearly 800,000 ha (42%) of LFA land.

Only land within the Moorland Line in parcels of 15 ha or more is eligible to achieve 8 points per ha. All other LFA land, regardless of whether the parcel size is greater or less than 15 ha, will all be expected to achieve 30 points per ha and will be paid at the standard flat rate of £30 per ha under ELS (and 60 points per ha will be paid at a standard flat rate of £60 per ha under the OELS).
The availability of the grassland options within each areas is summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Non-LFA</th>
<th>Disadvantaged Area (DA) of the LFA</th>
<th>Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA) of the LFA</th>
<th>Parcels of less than 15 ha</th>
<th>Parcels of 15 ha or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O/EK1-4</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
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<td>✘</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✘</td>
<td>✘</td>
<td>✘✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O/EL4-5</td>
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<td>✘</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grassland, in particular in-bye land, should be managed in a way that promotes good soil structure and infiltration of rainwater to avoid run-off. You could consider reducing stocking densities or reducing or avoiding grazing when the soil is wet. You could also consider reducing existing compaction, for example by sub soiling or spiking, provided there are no buried earthworks or archaeological remains.

The table at Appendix 2 may help you to establish the nitrogen content of manures applied under the rush pasture and low-input grassland options (O/L2, O/L3 and O/L4/E/L2, E/L3 and E/L4).

**OL1** Take field corners out of management (SDA land, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)

**EL1** Take field corners out of management (SDA land, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)

This option is only available on land within the SDA but outside the Moorland Line.

Although this option is designed for field corners, it may also be applied to small areas within the field, which it would be beneficial to take out of production. The provision of unmanaged areas will increase the biodiversity of the farm. Field corners do not need to be fenced off, provided the prescriptions are met. This option must not be located on archaeological sites.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Patch size must be no more than 0.5 ha. You may have no more than one patch for every 10 ha of land eligible for this option and, as far as possible, they must be distributed evenly across your OELS- and ELS-eligible land.
- Do not apply lime, fertiliser or manure.
- Control injurious weeds (e.g. creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.
- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (e.g. creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
- After establishment, cut no more than once every 5 years to allow the development of tussocky grass and low scrub. Avoid cutting between 1 March and 31 August if nesting birds are thought to be present.
- Do not graze.

**OL1**: 100 points per ha.  
**EL1**: 100 points per ha.
OL2 Permanent grassland with low inputs (SDA land, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)

EL2 Permanent grassland with low inputs (SDA land, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)

This option is only available on land within the SDA but outside the Moorland Line.

Permanent grassland managed with low inputs of fertiliser and sprays will sustain a greater variety of plants and wildlife. The development of a varied sward structure is of particular value to insects. Permanent grassland is an important feature of pastoral landscapes and can help to protect buried archaeological features. This option may deliver benefits to resource protection where placed on fields that are at risk of soil erosion or run-off. This option can be used on a whole- or part-field basis.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Maintain as grass. Do not plough, cultivate or re-seed.
- Manage by grazing and/or cutting, but do not cut between 1 April and 31 May.
- Maintain a sward with a range of heights during the growing season, except when the field is closed or shut up, for a cut of hay or silage. At least 20 per cent of the sward should be less than 7 cm and at least 20 per cent should be more than 7 cm, to allow plants to flower and to provide a more varied habitat.
- Do not top at any time, except in patches to control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort).
- Do not harrow or roll between 1 April and 31 May.
• Supplementary feeding is allowed, but move feeders as often as required to avoid poaching. Do not feed on or next to archaeological sites, steep slopes, footpaths or watercourses.

• You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 tonnes/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

• You can only apply lime with the consent of your inspection body. They must be consulted and a need must be demonstrated.

• Control injurious weeds (eg creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

• Do not apply more than 50 kg/ha of nitrogen per year as inorganic fertiliser. Where animal manures are applied, either alone or in addition to inorganic fertiliser, the total rate of nitrogen must not exceed 100 kg/ha of nitrogen per year. Only apply during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. If your current manure and fertiliser application rates are less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

• You may continue adding lime where this is your regular practice.

• Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

OL2: 35 points per ha.
EL2: 35 points per ha.

OL3 Permanent grassland with very low inputs (SDA land, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)
EL3 Permanent grassland with very low inputs (SDA land, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)

This option is only available on land within the SDA but outside the Moorland Line.

Permanent grassland managed with no fertiliser has a higher value for wildlife. Much species-rich grassland has been lost to agricultural intensification and it is important to maintain and, where possible, increase this resource. This option may also deliver benefits to resource protection where placed on fields that are at risk of soil erosion or run-off. This option can be used on a whole- or part-field basis. If your field has more than a third of its area covered by rushes, it must be entered into option OL4/EL4, rather than this option.

For this option you must comply with the following:

• Maintain as grass. Do not plough, cultivate or re-seed.

• Manage by grazing and/or cutting, to remove the year's grass growth, but do not cut between 1 April and 30 June. You must remove any cuttings.
• Maintain a sward with a range of heights during the growing season, except when the field is closed, or shut up, for a cut of hay or silage. At least 20 per cent of the sward should be less than 7 cm and at least 20 per cent should be more than 7 cm to allow plants to flower and provide a more varied habitat.

• Do not top at any time, except in patches to control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort).

• Do not harrow or roll between 1 April and 30 June.

• Do not supplementary feed.

• You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 tonnes/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

• You can only apply lime with the consent of your inspection body. They must be consulted and a need must be demonstrated.

• Injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.

• You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 t/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser application rates are less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 of the ELS handbook showing average total N supplied by various manures.

• You may continue adding lime where this is your regular practice.

• Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

OL3: 60 points per ha.
EL3: 60 points per ha.

OL4 Management of rush pastures (SDA land within the LFA and Moorland Line parcels under 15 ha)  
EL4 Management of rush pastures (SDA land within the LFA and Moorland Line parcels under 15 ha)

This option is available within the SDA and on parcels of less than 15 ha within the Moorland Line.

This option is available for fields where at least a third of the field area is covered by rushes. Damp pasture on farmland is a very important potential habitat for lapwing, curlew, redshank and snipe. Different types of waders prefer different vegetation heights, so a variety in the sward structure is most beneficial. Rush pastures may also contain a wide range of plant and invertebrate species.

For this option you must comply with the following:

• Maintain as grass. Do not plough, cultivate or re-seed.

• Cut rush-dominated fields each year, but not between 1 April and 1 August. Cut no more than a third of the area of rushes in each field, or a third of the fields if they are small (ie less than 3 ha) in rotation. It may be impractical to cut rushes in the wettest flushes, and therefore these can be left. Cattle trampling may help to control these areas.

• Once cut, if aftermath grazing does not control rushes, a second cut should be carried out within 8 weeks, but not between 1 April and 1 August.
• Where possible, graze the aftermath with cattle.

• Do not harrow or roll between 1 April and 30 June.

• Supplementary feeding is allowed, but move feeders as often as required to avoid excessive poaching. Do not feed on or next to archaeological sites, steep slopes, footpaths or watercourses.

• You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 tonnes/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

• You can only apply lime with the consent of your inspection body. They must be consulted and a need must be demonstrated.

• Injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.

• You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 tonnes/acre) of FYM a year, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. Only apply FYM during the growing season, provided no birds are nesting in the field, and ground conditions are dry enough to prevent soil compaction. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. If your current manure and fertiliser application rates are less than this, you must not increase applications. You may find it useful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

• You may continue adding lime where this is your regular practice.

Damp pasture is a valuable habitat for nesting birds.
• Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

**OL4**: 60 points per ha.
**EL4**: 60 points per ha.

**OL5 Enclosed rough grazing (SDA land within the LFA and Moorland Line parcels under 15 ha)**

This option is available within the SDA and on parcels of less than 15 ha within the Moorland Line.

Commonly known as ‘allotments’, ‘intakes’ or ‘newtakes’, these are areas of enclosed rough land of less than 15 ha used exclusively for grazing, of which the majority has not been drained, re-seeded or regularly cultivated. They have received only minimal applications of fertiliser, lime, slag or pesticides. They will contain predominantly semi-natural vegetation, usually of moorland grasses and rushes, and sometimes rocky and very wet areas. They may also contain small areas of agriculturally improved land.

For this option you must comply with the following:

• Do not plough, cultivate or reseed.

• Protect permanently waterlogged wetlands, including peat bogs and other mires, and hillside flushes. Do not install any new land drainage or modify any existing land drainage, or remove any peat or sediment.

• Leave rocks, scree and mineral spoil in place.
• Do not increase your existing stocking level.

• Do not supplementary feed.

• Do not apply fertiliser, manure, lime or slag.

• Take action to contain bracken, rhododendron, gorse or similar infestation so that they do not spread to new areas of land, where this is within your control. For common gorse, control should be by cutting or burning in manageable blocks. If the land is in a water catchment area or scheduled monument, you must seek consent from the appropriate authority.

• Rhododendron and other invasive alien species must be cut and the stumps treated immediately with herbicide to prevent spread to new areas of land, where this is within your control. At least one follow-up treatment will be required in subsequent years to control re-growth.

• Rhododendron and other invasive alien species must be cut to prevent spread to new areas of land, where this is within your control.

• Control injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (eg Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.

• Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort).

OL5: 35 points per ha.
EL5: 35 points per ha.

EL6 Unenclosed moorland rough grazing (Moorland Line land only)

This option is only available on land parcels of 15 ha or more within the Moorland Line.

For this option you must comply with the following:

• Do not plough, cultivate or reseed.

• Protect permanently waterlogged wetlands, including peat bogs and other mires, and hillside flushes. Do not install any new land drainage or modify any existing land drainage, or remove any peat or sediment from drainage channels.

• Leave rocks, scree and mineral spoil in place.

• Where you have the legal right to carry out burning, and intend to do so, you must follow the Heather and Grass Burning Code. You can obtain a copy of The Heather and Grass Burning Code (Defra, 2007) from your Natural England regional office or download it at www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/uplands/hg-burn2007.pdf.

• Do not supplementary feed using silage or other forage wrapped in plastic. Do not use ring feeders or troughs. Move all feeding sites regularly to minimise damage to vegetation and soils, and take care to avoid damage by vehicles.

• Manage the land without applying fertiliser, manure, lime or slag.

• Take action to contain bracken, rhododendron, gorse or similar infestation so that they do not spread to new areas of land, where this is within your control. Wherever possible, control bracken by mechanical means. Where this is not possible, asulam is the only permitted herbicide, take care not to apply it to other ferns. For common gorse, control should be by cutting or burning in manageable blocks. If the land is in a water catchment area or scheduled monument, you must seek consent from the appropriate authority.
• Rhododendron and other invasive alien species must be cut and the stumps treated immediately with herbicide to prevent spread to new areas of land, where this is within your control. At least one follow-up treatment will be required in subsequent years to control re-growth.

• Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (ie creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort).

EL6: 5 points per ha.

3.3 Combinations of OELS options that can occupy the same land

As a general rule, and with the exception of OELS option code OU1, which must be located on all OELS-eligible land parcels, an OELS land management option cannot occupy an area of land at the same time as another OELS land management option.

There are exceptions for certain combinations of options, but in any case no more than two OELS land management options (including boundary management options) may occupy an area of land at the same time. The only exception to this rule is OK5 (Mixed Stocking) which can be co-located with 1 or 2 other options from the list of permitted combinations.

More than two options may be placed in the same land parcel, as long as they do not overlap on the ground.

Each row of the table below shows combinations of options that may be located in the same place at the same time. Only combinations of options shown in this table are permitted.

When co-locating options you must follow the prescriptions of both options. In the event that prescriptions of co-located options contradict each other, you must follow the more restrictive of the two. For instance: OK5 (Mixed stocking) states: ‘Supplementary feeding is allowed, but move feeders as often as required to avoid poaching’. OL3 (Permanent grassland with very low inputs in the SDA) states: ‘Do not supplementary feed’. Where these are co-located, no supplementary feeding is allowed.
### Table 7 Combinations of OELS options that can occupy the same land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option code</th>
<th>OELS option title</th>
<th>Option codes that may be located on the same land as those listed in the first column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (on both sides of the hedge)</td>
<td>OB4, OB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB2</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (of one side of the hedge)</td>
<td>OB4, OB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB3</td>
<td>Enhanced hedgerow management</td>
<td>OB4, OB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB4</td>
<td>Stone-faced hedgebank management on both sides</td>
<td>OB1, OB2, OB3, OB6, OB7, OB8, OB9, OB10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB5</td>
<td>Stone-faced hedgebank management on one side</td>
<td>OB1, OB2, OB3, OB6, OB7, OB8, OB9, OB10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB6</td>
<td>Ditch management</td>
<td>OB4, OB5, OB11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB7</td>
<td>Half ditch management</td>
<td>OB4, OB5, OB11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB8</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB1)</td>
<td>OB4, OB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB9</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB2)</td>
<td>OB4, OB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB10</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB3)</td>
<td>OB4, OB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB11</td>
<td>Stone wall protection and maintenance</td>
<td>OB6, OB7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD2</td>
<td>Take out of cultivation archaeological features that are currently on cultivated land</td>
<td>OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD3</td>
<td>Reduced-depth, non-inversion cultivation on archaeological features (minimum till)</td>
<td>OF8, OG1, OG4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD5</td>
<td>Management of archaeological features on grassland</td>
<td>OE4, OE5, OE6, OK2, OK3, OK5, OL2, OL3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE4</td>
<td>2 m buffer strips on organic grassland</td>
<td>OD5, OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE5</td>
<td>4 m buffer strips on organic grassland</td>
<td>OD5, OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE6</td>
<td>6 m buffer strips on organic grassland</td>
<td>OD5, OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE7</td>
<td>Buffering in-field ponds in organic grassland</td>
<td>OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE8</td>
<td>Buffering in-field ponds in rotational land</td>
<td>OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF8</td>
<td>Skylark plots</td>
<td>OD3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG1</td>
<td>Undersown spring cereals</td>
<td>OD3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG4</td>
<td>Cereals for whole-crop silage followed by overwintered stubbles</td>
<td>OD3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK2</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
<td>OD5, OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK3</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with very low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
<td>OD5, OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK4</td>
<td>Management of rush pastures outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
<td>OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK5</td>
<td>Mixed stocking</td>
<td>OD2, OD5, OE4, OE5, OE6, OE7, OE8, OK2, OK3, OK4, OL2, OL3, OL4, OL5, OL6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OL2</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with low inputs (SDA land, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)</td>
<td>OD5, OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OL3</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with very low inputs (SDA land, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)</td>
<td>OD5, OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OL4</td>
<td>Management of rush pastures (SDA land within the LFA and Moorland Line parcels under 15 ha)</td>
<td>OK5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Combinations of ELS options that can occupy the same land

As a general rule, an ELS land management option cannot occupy the same area of land at the same time as another ELS land management option.

However, there are exceptions for certain combinations of options, but in any case no more than two ELS land management options (including boundary management options) may occupy the same area of land at the same time. The only exception to this rule is EK5 (Mixed Stocking) which can be co-located with 1 or 2 other options from the list of permitted combinations.

More than two options may be placed in the same land parcel, as long as they do not overlap on the ground.

Each row of the table below shows combinations of options that may be located in the same place at the same time. Only combinations of options shown in this table are permitted.

When co-locating options you must follow the prescriptions of both options. In the event that prescriptions of co-located options contradict each other, you must follow the more restrictive of the two. For instance: EK5 (Mixed stocking) states: 'Supplementary feeding is allowed, but move feeders as often as required to avoid poaching'. EL3 (Permanent grassland with very low inputs in the SDA) states: 'Do not supplementary feed'. Where these are co-located, no supplementary feeding is allowed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option code</th>
<th>OELS option title</th>
<th>Option codes that may be located on the same land as those listed in the first column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OL5</td>
<td>Enclosed rough grazing (SDA land within the LFA and Moorland Line parcels under 15 ha)</td>
<td>OK5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OELS land management options may be combined with the conversion payment, provided that the requirements of both can be satisfied.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option code</th>
<th>OELS option title</th>
<th>Option codes that may be located on the same land as those listed in the first column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ED3</td>
<td>Reduced-depth, non-inversion cultivation on archaeological features (minimum till)</td>
<td>EF8, EF9, EF10, EG1, EG4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED5</td>
<td>Management of archaeological features on grassland</td>
<td>EE4, EE5, EE6, EK2, EK3, EL2, EL3, EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE4</td>
<td>2 m buffer strips on intensive grassland</td>
<td>ED5, EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE5</td>
<td>4 m buffer strips on intensive grassland</td>
<td>ED5, EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE6</td>
<td>6 m buffer strips on intensive grassland</td>
<td>ED5, EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE7</td>
<td>Buffering in-field ponds in improved permanent grassland</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE8</td>
<td>Buffering in-field ponds in arable land</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EF8</td>
<td>Skylark plots</td>
<td>ED3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EF9</td>
<td>Unfertilised cereal headlands within arable fields</td>
<td>ED3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EF10</td>
<td>Unharvested cereal headlands within arable fields</td>
<td>ED3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG1</td>
<td>Undersown spring cereals</td>
<td>ED3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG4</td>
<td>Cereals for whole-crop silage followed by overwintered stubbles</td>
<td>ED3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EK2</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
<td>ED5, EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EK3</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with very low inputs outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
<td>ED5, EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EK4</td>
<td>Management of rush pastures outside the SDA (of the LFA) and the Moorland Line</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EK5</td>
<td>Mixed stocking</td>
<td>ED2, ED5, EE4, EE5, EE6, EE7, EE8, EK2, EK3, EK4, EL2, EL3, EL4, EL5, EL6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL2</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with low inputs (SDA land within the LFA, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)</td>
<td>ED5, EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL3</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with very low inputs (SDA land within the LFA, excluding parcels within the Moorland Line)</td>
<td>ED5, EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL4</td>
<td>Management of rush pastures (SDA land within the LFA and Moorland Line parcels under 15 ha)</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL5</td>
<td>Enclosed rough grazing (SDA land within the LFA and Moorland Line parcels under 15 ha)</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL6</td>
<td>Unenclosed moorland rough grazing (Moorland Line land only)</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 4
Changes to your agreement

4.1 Can I make changes to my agreement?
Hopefully you will be able to carry out the options and management required under your agreement without difficulty. However, the situation may arise where you may need to change the choice or location of your chosen management options due to an unforeseen and serious situation arising (e.g. flooding, severe and prolonged weed infestation). An amendment may be made to your agreement in such a situation.

It is important that there is continuity of management during your agreement if the environmental benefits are to be achieved. Amendments are therefore only to be used for changes that are absolutely necessary.

You must inform Natural England about your proposed amendment before you make any changes to your options. We will provide you with Land Transfer and Amendment request form (ERDP/LTA1), which you should complete and return. Your amendment will not be valid until you have received a letter from Natural England giving consent to the amendment and advising you of the date from which the amendment will take effect.

We would not expect to amend an agreement more than once during its 5 year term. Once an amendment has been made, further amendments are only permitted in very exceptional circumstances.

4.2 What if I let, sell or transfer my land to another party?
Please notify your Natural England ISS office as early as possible in advance of any change in occupancy or ownership (including sale, transfer, inheritance, or lease) of all or any part of your agreement land. If advance notification is not possible, you must inform us within three months of the land being transferred otherwise you will be in breach of your agreement and you are likely to have to repay the grant you have received, unless force majeure or other exceptional circumstances apply (see section 5.4).

You must tell the new occupier about your agreement before you transfer any land. If the new occupier does not continue with the agreement on the transferred land, and/or Natural England does not receive their application within 4 months of the actual date of transfer, you (and not the new occupier/s) will be in breach of your agreement and you are likely to have to repay all or a part of the grant you have received.

Where the land to be transferred is registered with an Organic Inspection Body, you must also inform them of the change in ownership or occupancy and arrange for the field parcels to be removed from your certificate of organic registration and accompanying schedules. A copy of your amended certificate of organic registration and accompanying schedules will need to be submitted to Natural England along with your amendment request form before your agreement can be amended and a replacement one issued. You must also check that your Organic Inspection Body still considers the land comprising your organic unit to constitute a viable organic unit: if it does not, you will be in breach of your OELS agreement and it will either be downgraded or terminated.

4.2.1 What if I let, sell, or transfer all my agreement land?
You must contact your Natural England ISS office to confirm the lease, sale or transfer in writing, identifying the new occupier. As indicated above, your whole agreement must be transferred to the new occupier/s and either continue to its original expiry date or be re-started as a new agreement. If this does not happen, you will be in breach of your agreement. This includes ensuring that there is no break in organic registration and management across the entire OELS land.

4.2.2 What if I let, sell, or transfer part of my agreement land?
You should contact your Natural England ISS office to ask them to send you a Land Transfer and Amendment request form (ERDP/LTA). You will then have to complete and return the form no later than 3 months after the date of lease, sale or transfer, to amend your agreement.

The new occupier/s will be expected to continue with the ES agreement on the transferred land and you will be in breach of your agreement if they do not do so (see 4.2 above). This includes ensuring that there is no break in organic registration and management across all the organic registered land that is transferred.
You will be expected to continue with your existing options on the land that you have retained, in your amended agreement. Where necessary you may need to add further options to meet your revised points threshold(s). The amended agreement will run for the remaining term of the original agreement. Alternatively, you may choose to start a new agreement, (including any other eligible land that you have), provided that you meet the scheme rules at that time.

If, following a partial transfer, your remaining land will no longer meet the OELS entry criteria (for instance the Organic Inspection Body no longer considers the land comprising your organic unit to constitute a viable organic unit), the agreement may need to be downgraded or closed early. In this case, unless force majeure or other exceptional circumstances apply (see section 5.4), you will be in breach of your agreement, and you are likely to have to repay all or a part of the grant you have received.

4.3 What if I acquire land?
It is not possible to add any land to an existing OELS or OELS/ELS agreement. If you purchase land, irrespective of its status (i.e. fully organic, ‘in conversion’ to organic farming or conventional land) or if you wish to transfer land under cover of an existing OAS/OFS agreement into your existing OELS/ELS agreement (see section 1.4.5), you must either:

i) Close your existing OELS agreement and apply to start a new five year OELS agreement covering:
- All of the fully organic land comprising your organic unit including any newly acquired organic land you have purchased and any land you wish to transfer from your OAS/OFS agreement into the OELS;
- Any new field parcels that you wish to claim conversion aid top up on as part of the new OELS agreement i.e. new land ‘in conversion’. These field parcels will need to be in their first year of conversion, as evidenced by your certificate of registration and accompanying schedules, issued by your Organic Inspection Body (see section 1.2.6 of this handbook);
- Any field parcels that were already undergoing conversion as part of your existing OELS agreement (you will continue to receive the aid that was due to you under your original OELS agreement, under the new one, where applicable);
- Any conventional land on your holding.

or

ii) Apply for a separate OELS agreement on the new land, then wait until the first existing agreement expires before consolidating all your eligible land into one new agreement at that time.

Whichever option you choose it will be in your interests to notify us of the acquisition as soon as possible, to avoid a delay, or break in payment. Where the acquired land is already under agreement and does not remain at the same or higher level of management, the original agreement holder will be in breach of their agreement.

4.4 What if I want to upgrade my agreement?
If, on acquisition of land, or at any other time, you wish to upgrade your agreement, for example from OELS to OELS/HLS, you should contact Natural England in the first instance to discuss your plans. You will need to submit a new application for the relevant scheme, and if your application is successful, a new agreement will be set up and your existing agreement will be closed.

4.5 When will agreement transfers take effect?
Subject to advance notification of the transfer, Natural England will carry out transfers on the dates specified below. (If advance notification is not received, these dates may not apply and the transfer may be delayed until the next available monthly date following the notification, or an alternative agreed with your adviser).

Natural England can only carry out transfers on an OELS start date, i.e. first of a month.
For example, if the actual date of sale, lease or transfer is 15 March, Natural England will start the new agreement (for either the existing and acquired land or acquired land only) on 1 April, and where applicable, transfer the land out of the original agreement on 31 March.

For transfer of land between parties, where the actual transfer date does not align with the date on which Natural England effects the transfer, it will be the responsibility of the parties involved to apportion any payments for this period. The transferor (ie the party disposing of their interest in the land), will also remain responsible for the agreement and will be liable if there is a breach of agreement until such time as Natural England has effected the transfer. Natural England recommends these factors are built into the contract of sale.

These dates will apply except:

- where late notification is received, or
- where a transfer is being made between different schemes, or
- where transferred land is not continued at the same level of management by the new agreement holder, or
- the application is not received within the deadline.

In these cases, Natural England will advise you of the dates depending on the circumstances of the transfer.

4.6 Can I change my Organic Inspection Body?
Yes, but if you change Organic Inspection Bodies you must register your land with a different one before you de-register from your existing one, so that there is continuity of registration for the full duration of your agreement.

4.7 Are phased conversions possible under OELS?
With the agreement of your Organic Inspection Body, you may choose to convert different parcels of land in your organic unit at different stages over a number of years. In order to obtain conversion aid top-up payments on additional parcels of land after your OELS agreement has started, the following options may be available to you.

1. You can apply to have your existing OELS agreement replaced with a new agreement including:
   - the new field parcels to be converted;
   - any field parcels that may already be undergoing conversion as part of the existing OELS agreement (you will continue to receive the aid that was due to you under your original OELS agreement under the new one, where applicable);
   - any fully organic land; and
   - any conventional land.

   A new application form and set of maps will be sent to you for a replacement agreement. A copy of your current valid certificate(s) of registration and accompanying schedule(s), including details of the additional new parcels of land to be converted, will also need to be submitted in support of your replacement OELS application.

   The replacement agreement will constitute a new 5-year undertaking, and you will be expected to complete the conversion of any new field parcels attracting conversion aid and included in the new agreement, by the fifth anniversary of the replacement agreement's start date. You will also be required to complete the conversion of any transferring field parcels covered by the original agreement, in accordance with the dates set out in your original conversion plan for that land.

   Or

2. You can apply for a second, separate OELS agreement on the land in question for each new phase of conversion. Copies of your current valid certificate(s) of registration and accompanying schedule(s) covering all the land you wish to enter into this separate agreement – including the new parcels of land to be converted – will need to be submitted in support of your new OELS application. The new agreement will constitute a separate 5-year undertaking, and you will be expected to complete the conversion of the land attracting conversion aid payments by the fifth anniversary of the new agreement's start date.
4.8 Derogations
A derogation is required where a minor and temporary change from the agreed management requirements is needed on a single occasion. This may involve permission to relax a time-based requirement; to alter cutting or cultivation requirements due to practical problems; or to allow metal detecting on known archaeological features on permanent grassland.

If such a derogation is required, you should contact Natural England to request a derogation notice form (NE-DN). You must complete this form, providing the following information, and return it to Natural England.

- Why the derogation is needed.
- What exactly the proposed course of action is (including precise location details, choice of pesticide and application rate where relevant on conventional land).
- Confirmation that the situation was unforeseen and that other solutions that are within the allowed management requirements have been considered.
- Where the derogation concerns land registered with an Organic Inspection Body, you must obtain your Organic Inspection Body's prior approval to the derogation before the proposed change can be made. Your Organic Inspection Body will be expected to confirm, by countersigning your derogation request form, that your request is compatible with organic standards.
- Countersignature by an independent third party to confirm that the request is reasonable, will not compromise the objectives of the agreement and is the most appropriate response in the situation concerned (see section 4.8.1 below).

You must inform Natural England about your proposed derogation before you make any changes to your management.

You may go ahead with the proposed changes to management as soon as you have returned the derogation notice form to Natural England. The exceptions to this are:

- where the proposed derogation would affect a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in which case you will need to receive consent from Natural England before carrying out the operation; and
- where a derogation is required for an activity that would affect an archaeological site. Natural England may request additional information, including the proposed methodology and research aims of any planned activity and may consult with local authority archaeologists and, where relevant, English Heritage. The work may not go ahead until you have received written approval from Natural England.

As a guide, we would not expect to see more than three derogations during the course of a 5-year agreement.

The derogation notice form will be kept by Natural England and all details, including those of the Organic Inspection Body and countersigning adviser, will be checked during any compliance inspection.

4.8.1 Countersigning derogation notice forms
When the derogation involves the use of pesticides on conventional land, it must be countersigned by a suitably qualified independent BASIS agronomist who is trained in environmental management. This could be a private agronomist or one employed by a conservation organisation, such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group or the RSPB.

Where the derogation does not involve the use of pesticides, a farm conservation adviser may countersign the notice form.

4.9 Variation of your agreement by Natural England
Very rarely, it may be necessary for Natural England to vary your agreement in line with changes to European law and in other exceptional circumstances. In applying for the scheme, you are accepting that such changes may be made at any time. You will be given notice in writing of any such changes.

The European Commission does not have legal authority to make payment commitments beyond 2015, and decisions on the next Rural Development Programme are not likely to be made before 2012. While there is clear precedent in the current programme for continuing to make payments on agreements carried over from the previous programming period, all agreements that run beyond 2015 will be reviewed in 2012.
Section 5

Breaches and appeals

5.1 Breaches of agreement
You will be in breach of your agreement if you:

- fail to comply with any agreement conditions; or
- make any false or misleading statements in your application or in any other correspondence relating to your agreement.

This is the case whether it is you or anybody else who causes a breach. It is your responsibility to ensure that all agreement conditions are fulfilled, and that all information in your application and other correspondence is accurate.

5.2 Penalties which can apply to breaches of your agreement
If you breach the agreement, you may be liable to a penalty, depending on the circumstances of the breach, and any future payments due may be withheld. Part or all of the payments already made may be reclaimed and interest charged covering the period between the date of notification and reimbursement. Your agreement may also be terminated. Where a serious breach has occurred, you may be subject to an additional penalty of up to 10 per cent of the amount paid or payable and may be prohibited from entering a new agreement under this scheme or any other EU agri-environment scheme for up to 2 years.

Before penalties are imposed, you will be given a written explanation of the reasons for the proposed steps and an opportunity to make any written representations. In all cases, any penalties applied will be proportionate to the severity, extent and permanence of the breach. A final decision will be made after taking all the circumstances of your case into account.

The legislation which governs enforcement of breaches of your agreement is the Rural Development (Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2007.

Penalties will be applied to the following types of breaches:

- Where, on inspection, the total area of eligible land you have declared, or the points you are claiming for a particular option in a specific location, are found to be incorrect or the option is not in that location (e.g. a length of hedgerow on the boundary of one field is too short or is not there at all). See section 5.2.1.

- Where the management requirements for an option are not being followed (e.g. where a hedgerow has been entered into a hedgerow management option that only permits cutting every other year but has subsequently been cut annually). See section 5.2.1.

- Where your Farm Environment Record (FER) features have been removed or damaged. See section 5.2.2.

- Where the requirements of cross compliance are not being followed. See section 5.2.3.

- Other breaches of the general scheme conditions set out at section 1.5.

- Failure to notify Natural England that you have let, sold or transferred some or all of your agreement land to another party or that you no longer have management control of the land. See section 4.2.

- (OELS only) Where inaccurate areas have been claimed under the conversion aid top up payments.

In addition, if you are found to have made a false declaration as a result of serious negligence, you can be excluded from all agri-environment measures for the calendar year in question. If you make a false declaration intentionally, you can be excluded for the following year as well. In these circumstances, or if you breach your agreement intentionally or as a result of serious negligence, you may also be required to pay a penalty of up to 10 per cent of the payment made or payable to you.
5.2.1 Points claimed cannot be found or management requirements are not being followed

Where an inspection reveals that:

- there is a discrepancy between what you are claiming for a particular option in a particular location and the actual length/area/number on the ground; or
- you have not followed the management requirements for a particular option,

the points value for that option and location will be deducted from your total points.

This shortfall can be offset against any surplus points from other additional options on land receiving the same area payment (i.e. £60/ha, £30/ha or £8/ha, see section 1.2.8). But if you do not have surplus option points and this reduction reduces your OELS or ELS total points below your target points, your annual payment for that year will be reduced and penalties applied on a sliding scale, as follows.

Table 9 Penalties for difference between target points claimed and target points found

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference between target points claimed and points found</th>
<th>Penalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points found are less than your target points, but the difference is not more than 3%</td>
<td>Payment will be reduced (or recovered), based on points found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The difference is more than 3%, but not more than 20%</td>
<td>Difference between target and found points multiplied by 2 and deducted from found points. Payment reduced (or recovered) accordingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference is more than 20%</td>
<td>All payment for the whole agreement concerned is withheld for the year concerned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2 Damage or removal of FER features

If you damage or remove any of your FER features, your annual payment will be reduced. Any penalty will be proportionate to the severity, extent and permanence of the breach, and whether it is repeated.

Consideration will be given to the control you had over the damage or removal; for instance where this might have been wholly or partly due to the action of a third party.

5.2.3 Breaches of Cross Compliance

Similar penalties as under section 5.2.2 will be applied to breaches of cross compliance, related to the severity, extent and permanence of the breach.

5.2.4 Inaccurate areas claimed under the conversion aid top-up payments

If the area of land found at inspection is greater than the area stated in your agreement, the area in your agreement will be used to calculate your conversion aid top-up payments. If the area of land found at inspection is less than the area stated in your agreement, your top-up payments will be based on the area found at inspection less – where appropriate – a penalty reduction as follows.
Table 10  Penalties for difference between areas claimed and areas found

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference between area claimed and area found</th>
<th>Penalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area found is more than the area declared</td>
<td>No penalty, but payment will be based on the area declared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area found is less than the area declared (the difference between the area declared and the area found is less than 3%)</td>
<td>No penalty, but payment will be based on the area found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area found is less than the area declared (the difference between the area declared and the area found is more than 3% but not more than 20%)</td>
<td>The adjustment will be twice the difference (eg the area subject to conversion aid area payments is declared as 20 ha, but is found to be 17 ha. The conversion aid area payment would be based on 11 ha (17 ha - (2 x 3 ha)))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area found is less than the area declared (the difference is more than 20%)</td>
<td>Total annual conversion aid payment for the corresponding category will be withheld (ie the area subject to conversion aid area payments is declared as 20 ha; it is found to be 15 ha (a 33% difference))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Overpayment

It is your responsibility to check that payments you receive are in accordance with the details set out in your agreement. If you are paid more than you are entitled to under your agreement, you will be liable to reimburse the amount overpaid. You may also be liable to pay interest on that amount covering the period between the date we notify you of the overpayment and reimbursement. We will write to you explaining how the sum has been calculated and how the overpayment must be repaid.

5.4 Force majeure (exceptional circumstances)

Where a breach is due to circumstances beyond your control that could not have been avoided by reasonable action, Natural England has discretion not to take action to recover or withhold payments. In order for force majeure to be taken into account, you must have notified the Natural England ISS office of the force majeure event in writing within 10 working days of you, or your representative, being in a position to do so. Please note that these categories are very narrow and cover only the most exceptional circumstances.

Examples of force majeure may include:

- death of the agreement holder;
- long-term incapacity of the agreement holder;
- expropriation of a large part of the land, provided that this could not be anticipated when the agreement was signed;
- severe natural disaster gravely affecting the land, including exceptional flooding events;
- accidental destruction of livestock buildings on the land; and
- an epizootic (such as foot and mouth disease) affecting part or all of the agreement holder's livestock.

Examples of circumstances that are not force majeure are:

- if a water company has already given notice that it will be putting a pipeline over your land during the proposed lifetime of the agreement;
- if you are selling the land as part of a long-term plan for retiring from farming; and
- flooding of low-lying farmland that is regularly flooded during predictable weather conditions.
5.5 What if I disagree with any Natural England decision or proposed action regarding my application or agreement?
If you are unhappy with the decisions that we have taken in respect of your application or agreement, you should write to the Office Manager at your Natural England office (see Appendix 1 for contact details) who will ensure that your case is properly investigated and advise you of the procedure to be followed. In the event of a dispute, initially your case will be dealt with informally by Natural England advisers. Where informal discussions fail to resolve the dispute, you will be sent a written explanation of our concerns, explaining the action, if any, we propose to take.

If you remain dissatisfied with the decisions that have been taken by Natural England staff following reasonable attempts to resolve the dispute informally, you can ask to have your case referred to a Natural England officer who has not been involved with your agreement. This officer will consider any points that you have raised and report to the Natural England manager with their view on the step or steps proposed to resolve the dispute.

If you remain dissatisfied with the decision of the Natural England manager, you can have the matter referred to one or more independent persons, nominated by the Natural England manager, for further consideration.

5.6 Complaints
If you have any more general complaints about our handling of your application and/or agreement, further details of the internal complaints procedure which will be followed in the event of a dispute are available from your Natural England ISS office, or via the internet at www.naturalengland.org.uk/contact/complaints.htm

5.7 Disputes with Organic Inspection Bodies over certification issues
The question of organic status of your land and the suitability of your farming practices is, in the first instance, a matter between you and the Organic Inspection Body with which you have registered. Disputes should normally be resolved with them. If this is not possible, the matter should be referred to Defra’s Organic Strategy Branch.
Appendix 1

Useful addresses

Natural England’s Incentive Schemes Services (ISS) offices
Natural England’s ISS offices are open from 8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.

Please have your application or agreement details to hand when contacting us.

All OELS enquiries should be made to the North West regional office.

**North West**
(Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside)

Natural England
ISS North West
PO Box 380
Crewe
CW1 6YH
Tel: 0300 060 1113
Fax 0300 060 1123
E-mail: iss.crewe@naturalengland.org.uk

**East Midlands**
(Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland)

Natural England
ISS East Midlands
PO Box 8296
Nottingham
NG8 3WZ
Tel: 0300 060 1111
Fax 0300 060 1121
E-mail: iss.nottingham@naturalengland.org.uk

**East of England**
(Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk)

Natural England
ISS East
PO Box 247
Cambridge
CB2 2WW
Tel: 0300 060 1114
Fax 0300 060 1124
E-mail: iss.cambridge@naturalengland.org.uk

**North East**
(Durham and the former county of Cleveland, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear)

Natural England
ISS North East
PO Box 578
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE15 8WW
Tel: 0300 060 1117
Fax 0300 060 1127
E-mail: iss.newcastle@naturalengland.org.uk

**South East**
(Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Greater London, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex)

Natural England
ISS South East
PO Box 2423
Reading
RG1 6WY
Tel: 0300 060 1112
Fax 0300 060 1122
E-mail: iss.reading@naturalengland.org.uk

**South West**
(Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Isles of Scilly, Somerset and the former county of Avon, Wiltshire)

Natural England
ISS South West
PO Box 277
Bristol
BS10 6WW
Tel: 0300 060 1118
Fax 0300 060 1128
E-mail: iss.bristol@naturalengland.org.uk
West Midlands
(Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire)

Natural England
ISS West Midlands
PO Box 530
Worcester
WR5 2WZ
Tel: 0300 060 1115
Fax 0300 060 1125
E-mail: iss.westmidlands@naturalengland.org.uk

Yorkshire and Humberside
(East Riding of Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire)

Natural England
ISS Yorkshire & Humberside
PO Box 213
Leeds
LS16 5WN
Tel: 0300 060 1116
Fax 0300 060 1126
E-mail: iss.leeds@naturalengland.org.uk

Rural Payments Agency’s Customer Service Centre
Customer Service Centre
Rural Payments Agency
PO Box 1058
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE99 4YQ
Tel: 0845 603 7777
email: customer.service.centre@rpa.gsi.gov.uk
Appendix 2
Guidance for calculating nitrogen content of fertilisers and manures

This section may help you to establish the appropriate application rates of fertilisers or manures applied under the low-input grassland and rush pasture options OK2, OK3, OK4, OL2, OL3, OL4 and EK2, EK3, EK4, EL2, EL3, EL4.

Fertilisers
The content of each nutrient in a fertiliser is given as a percentage. Therefore, 100 kg of a 20:10:10 NPK compound fertiliser will contain 20 kg of nitrogen, 10 kg of phosphate and 10 kg of potash.

The amount of fertiliser product to apply per ha is calculated as follows:

\[
\text{Rate of fertiliser product (kg/ha) = nutrient application rate (kg/ha) x 100 per cent nutrient in fertiliser}
\]

Examples

- A 20:10:10 fertiliser is to be used to apply 50 kg/ha nitrogen, 25 kg/ha phosphate and 25 kg/ha potash. The required application rate of the fertiliser product is 250 kg/ha.
- A 34.5 per cent nitrogen fertiliser is to be used to apply 50 kg/ha nitrogen. The required application rate of the fertiliser product is 145 kg/ha.

Manures

Table 11  Typical total nitrogen content of livestock manures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manure type</th>
<th>Total nitrogen content</th>
<th>Application rate to supply 100 kg/ha total nitrogen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle farmyard manure</td>
<td>6.0 kg/tonne</td>
<td>16 tonnes/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig farmyard manure</td>
<td>7.0 kg/tonne</td>
<td>14 tonnes/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy cattle slurry (6% dry matter)</td>
<td>3.0 kg/m³</td>
<td>33 m³/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef cattle slurry (6% dry matter)</td>
<td>2.3 kg/m³</td>
<td>43 m³/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig slurry (4% dry matter)</td>
<td>4.0 kg/m³</td>
<td>25 m³/ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These typical nitrogen contents are based on analyses of a large number of samples and are useful for general planning purposes. The nitrogen content of manures can be variable and analysis of individual samples will provide more reliable information. Dry matter content will affect the nitrogen content of slurries.


Conversion table

50 kg/ha = 40 units/acre

1 kg = 2 units (a ‘unit’ is 1 per cent of 1 hundredweight, or 1.12 lb)
Appendix 3
Glossary and list of acronyms

Glossary

Agreement land
All land entered into a single OELS agreement.

Agri-environment schemes
Schemes under EC Regulation 1698/2005 which offer grants for measures to conserve and enhance the countryside.

Derogation
Agreed temporary relaxation from the specified requirements in an agreement.

Disadvantaged Area (DA)
DAs are areas which, in the opinion of the appropriate Minister, are inherently suitable for extensive livestock production but not for the production of crops in quantity materially greater than that necessary to feed such livestock as are capable of being maintained on such land, and where whole agricultural production is restricted in its range by, or by any combination of, soil, relief, aspect or climate. DAs form part of the Less Favoured Areas (LFA).

EIA Regulations

Environmental Information Map
The map which Defra will send to you, with your personalised application form, showing designations on your land such as SSSIs, Scheduled Monuments and Less Favoured Areas.

Farm Environment Record (FER)
A simple record of the environmental features on your land, required as part of your agreement. As a condition of your agreement, you agree to retain the features identified.

Field Data Sheet
Annex 2 of the OELS/ELS application form, on which you have entered your OELS or ELS non-rotational in-field options.

Force majeure
A breach of your agreement caused by unusual or unforeseeable circumstances or because of events beyond your control and which could not have been avoided by reasonable action.

Grassland
For the purposes of OELS/ELS, grassland is defined as: land which is used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage naturally or through cultivation and which has not been subject to cultivation for at least five years.

Joint Character Area
One of over 150 areas of England, each with a characteristic landscape: e.g. North Northumberland Coastal Plain, South Downs.

Leaching
The process by which percolating water removes nutrients from the soil.

Less Favoured Area (LFA)
Less Favoured Areas are areas where the natural characteristics (geology, altitude, climate, etc) make it difficult to farm. LFAs include all upland, and also some disadvantaged lower lying areas. (e.g. Culm Measures of mid/north Devon). LFAs are subdivided into Severely Disadvantaged Areas and Disadvantaged Areas.
Livestock unit (LU)
A measure of grazing pressure, allowing stocking rate comparison between livestock types. Grazing livestock units are calculated according to conversion factors which vary according to the type of animal.

Moorland Line
The Moorland Line encloses land within England which has been defined as predominantly semi-natural upland vegetation, or predominantly of rock outcrops and semi-natural vegetation, used primarily for rough grazing. The Moorland Line encloses nearly 800,000 hectares (42%) of LFA land.

Non-rotational options
Management options which remain in the same place on your land for the duration of your agreement (e.g. Hedgerow management).

Options map
The map on which you mark the land management options you wish to enter into OELS or ELS.

Poaching
Damage to the sward caused by concentrations of livestock.

Points threshold/target
This is the number of points required for an OELS or ELS application to be accepted and is based on the total area of agreement land. (OELS points threshold = 60 x Hectares of agreement land).

Rotational options
Options which can be moved around your land during the course of your agreement, e.g. skylark plots, wild bird seed mix plots, conservation headlands.

Rural Land Register
A database of land parcels and areas within England, managed by the RPA. For land to be eligible for OELS or ELS, it must be registered on the Rural Land Register.

Scheduled Monument (SM)
Nationally important sites and monuments of historic interest that have been given legal protection by being placed on a list or 'schedule'. English Heritage takes the lead in identifying sites in England which should be placed on the schedule by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA)
SDAs are areas which are, in the opinion of the appropriate Minister, inherently suitable for extensive livestock production but not for the production of crops in quantity materially greater than that necessary to feed such livestock as are capable of being maintained on such land, and whose agricultural production is, in the opinion of the appropriate Minister, severely restricted in its range by, or by a combination of soil, relief, aspect or climate, or situated in the Isles of Scilly. SDAs form part of the Less Favoured Areas (LFA).

Single Business Identifier (SBI)
A reference number allocated by the RPA to everyone registered on the RLR. This number is also used as the reference for all SPS claimants.

Undergrazing
Where annual growth is not being fully utilised, or where scrub or coarse vegetation is becoming evident, and this is detrimental to the environmental interests of the site.

Vendor number
A vendor is the name and correspondence address of a business that is entitled to receive grants and subsidies and each vendor is allocated a vendor number.
# List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BASIS</td>
<td>British Agrochemical Standards Inspection Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPH</td>
<td>County Parish Holding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSS</td>
<td>Countryside Stewardship Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defra</td>
<td>Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECS</td>
<td>Energy Crops Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELS</td>
<td>Entry Level Stewardship</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERDP</td>
<td>England Rural Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Environmental Stewardship</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Environmentally Sensitive Area</td>
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<td>EWGS</td>
<td>English Woodland Grant Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>FER</td>
<td>Farm Environment Record</td>
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<td>FWPS</td>
<td>Farm Woodland Premium Scheme</td>
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<td>FWS</td>
<td>Farm Woodland Scheme</td>
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<td>FYM</td>
<td>Farm Yard Manure</td>
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<td>HFA</td>
<td>Hill Farm Allowance</td>
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<td>HLS</td>
<td>Higher Level Stewardship</td>
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<td>ISS</td>
<td>Incentive Schemes Services</td>
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<td>JCA</td>
<td>Joint Character Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEAF</td>
<td>Linking Environment and Farming</td>
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<td>LFA</td>
<td>Less Favoured Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>Livestock Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDPB</td>
<td>Non-Departmental Public Body</td>
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<td>NVZ</td>
<td>Nitrate Vulnerable Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAS</td>
<td>Organic Aid Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>OELS</td>
<td>Organic Entry Level Stewardship</td>
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<td>OFS</td>
<td>Organic Farming Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>OIB</td>
<td>Organic Inspection Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDPE</td>
<td>Rural Development Programme for England</td>
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<td>RLR</td>
<td>Rural Land Register</td>
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<td>RPA</td>
<td>Rural Payments Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDA</td>
<td>Severely Disadvantaged Area</td>
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<td>SPS</td>
<td>Single Payment Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSSI</td>
<td>Site of Special Scientific Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>TFB</td>
<td>Traditional Farm Building</td>
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<tr>
<td>WGS</td>
<td>Woodland Grant Scheme</td>
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</table>
Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.

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